Gendered Images in Oral History Documentary: A Case Study of *Wode Kangzhan*

by

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Abstract

This essay explores the gendered discourse of gender images in oral history documentaries through the examination of a case study. The case study is an influential Chinese oral history documentary series called *Wode Kangzhan* (My War of Resistance). This essay first outlines the rise of oral history studies in recent years and its contributions to our understanding of history, especially in China. The essay next introduces the influence and importance of *Wode Kangzhan*. Then, the article examines the gendered images in the documentary through data analysis and employs discourse analysis to reveal the documentary's gendered discourse through an examination of a selection of story lines. The essay concludes that *Wode Kangzhan* has a gendered discourse in line with the gender stereotype and gender hegemony of mainstream society.

Keywords: gender representation; gender hegemony; oral history; documentary; *WodeKangzhan*

To women who have suffered from

the Second Sino-Japanese War without any trace.

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WK	*Wode Kangzhan* (My War of Resistance)
CCTV	China Central Television
CUC	Communication University of China
KMT	Kuomintang
CCP	Communist Party of China

Chapter 1.
Introduction

Oral history is now highly valued and widely used for recording people's life stories and presenting the past from their perspectives. More and more people have begun noticing that the traditional way of writing history which has always been influenced and even controlled by governments and potentates can be problematic. Only 'big figures' are considered significant and are included in official history while thousands of ordinary men and women have lived without any trace in history books and records. However, their voices matter, too. Adopting oral history and writing histories "from the bottom up" (Ritchie, 2014, p. 7) can help to deal with the problem.

As a methodology, oral history has its own merits. First, what we can gain from oral history is first-hand material. No matter how diligent and careful a historian is, he/she can never perceive a past event more clearly than those who actually lived through it (Ritchie, 2014, p. 15). Like the primary producer of *Wode Kangzhan (WK, means my war of resistance)*, Yongyuan Cui, once said in an interview, "If we can directly listen to Confucius telling his thoughts, who else would still listen to Dan Yu interpreting that[1]?" Moreover, oral history can be helpful in revealing 'untold stories' and sometimes, even counter stories (Ritchie, 2014, p. 34). It is these various stories and voices that encourage people to review their history and, finally, get closer to the 'truth'. Also, it is argued that oral narratives are more natural and direct due to their instantaneous transmission compared to written histories. It can be hard for people to constrain the impulse to refine their account of reality when writing things down while they don't have enough time to refine their accounts when telling stories in front of the interviewer in a real-time interview (Langer, 1991). In virtue of these benefits, oral history can be very vivid and lively, presenting history in a brand-new manner.

Another essential component of doing oral history is the media. The media people use to record, archive and present oral history interviews and have evolved from writing words to audio recording, video, and finally to multi-media with the rapid development of

[1] Dan Yu is a scholar in China who is famous for interpreting and presenting *the Analects of Confucius*.

media technology (Larson, 2016). Of all media, video has the benefit of presenting information in a “visually appealing manner” and making speakers more tangible, providing speakers with expressions, gestures, and emotions (Ritchie, 2014, p. 157). Another benefit of using video is that video documents can be harder to change and distorted than written ones (Ritchie, 2014, p. 157). This can help to preserve the original documents in their original form in the long run. All in all, there is a natural possibility for a “considerable synergy” (Sipe, 1991, p. 78) between oral history and video. And as Sipe (1991, p. 75) said: "the relationship between moving images and oral history is always reciprocal." Based on this kind of reciprocal collaboration, media production using oral history videos, such as oral history movies, oral history documentaries, are becoming more popular in recent years.

Oral history documentaries belong to the genre of the nonfiction film. Producing oral history documentaries are of great importance in historical studies because “documentary opens the door for a view outside official history. It provides the questioning of the official history by use of the oral history method in narration” (Senem Duruel Erkılıç ; Hakan Erkılıç, 2012, p. 80). It is believed that documentaries often “forgo creative presentation with the goal of projecting ‘objectivity’ or presenting the ‘real’”(Struckman, 2006, p. 340). However, as Hall (1997) stated, media, including documentaries, always construct meanings through manipulated and structured representations. Media productions always present the world from a particular perspective: it is not possible to represent the world in an objective way. Thus, a close reading of oral history documentaries and their construction of meanings should be conducted.

WK is one of China’s most successful oral history documentaries. It presents stories about the Second Sino-Japanese War (in official China’s national discourse, the war is called the War of Resistance Against Japan or Anti-Japanese War). WK has two seasons, 62 episodes in total, presenting history from 1931-1945[2]. Each episode has a

[2] Some scholars argue that the time span of the Second Sino-Japanese War is 1937-1945, while others think the time should be 1931-1945. It is widely believed that China's nationwide full-scale war started at 1937. Before that, many local-scale wars were starting from 1931. The Chinese government used the forme time frame for many years. It means that Chinese people learn ‘the 8-Year War of Resistance' from all Chinese official history textbooks from a very young age before 2017. However, in January 2017, the Chinese government announced that ‘the 8-Year War of Resistance' should be changed to ‘the 14-Year War of Resistance' in new textbook editions.

name and a particular topic, which last over 30 minutes. Interviewers are invisible in this documentary, which means that neither their voices nor images appeared in WK, unlike traditional oral histories where the interviewer and their questions are always included. The first season (32 episodes) was released in August 2010. This year was also the 70th anniversary of the victory of the Second Sino-Japanese War. WK was shown online first and then was broadcast in 84 television channels in China. The documentary enjoyed enormous reviews after its release and received several awards in China. Moreover, it was also shown on China Central Television (CCTV), to be more specific, CCTV-9 (CCTV's documentary channel) in April 2011. After that, the second season of WK (30 episodes) was released in October 2011. It got more than 10 million video views in merely one week (Wang, Y., 2012). WK's video views now reach more than 85 million only in *tv.sohu.com*[3], one of Chinese mainstream video platforms. In general, the documentary has popular recognition and appeal and is considered as a distinguished oral history work in China.

WK is also well-known for its primary producer. It is produced by Yongyuan Cui and the team he built. The main material of the documentary comes from an array of oral history projects conducted by Cui and his team. It took them eight years, starting from 2002, to interview up to 3,500 people, and collect more than 2 million minutes of videos and more than 3 million photos (Wode Kangzhan Program Group, 2010). The number is still growing. Yongyuan Cui is a famous Chinese celebrity who used to be a TV presenter for CCTV. Now he is a teacher in Communication University of China (CUC). He stated that he became interested in doing oral history when he was producing a TV program at CCTV called *Movie Legends (dianyin chuanqi)* in 2002 (Beijing Morningpost, 2010). In addition, in the year of 2012, an Oral History Research Center which is also an Oral History Museum was established in CUC on account of his advocacy and hard work. Because the oral history program was non-commercial and had an unpopular topic – history – one would expect that it was hard for Cui to raise funds. Cui claimed that all the money of his oral history projects came from donations and private fund-raising, mainly from his

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Retrieved from http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-01/12/nw.D110000renmrb_20170112_1-09.htm [Chinese-language article] (People's Daily. January 12, 2017)

[3] The data was collected on July 1, 2017. The first season had 46.8 million views while the second one had 36.5 million views at *tv.sohu.com*. WK was first released online at *tv.sohu.com*, and this platform offers clear video views data, so I collected the data from this platform.

entrepreneur friends. He declared that he and his team spent more than 120 million yuan (Chinese currency) in 8 years (from 2002 to 2010) on oral history interviews and “didn’t spend a penny of the nation” (Yu, 2010).

With the use of oral history videos, woodcut style animation and historical documents (including historical interviews, documentaries, photographs, newspapers, letters, etc.), WK makes a great effort to reproduce the overall situation of the Second Sino-Japanese War for audiences. Each episode has a specific topic, from government's defense strategy to citizen's domestic life, from famous fierce battles to people’s love stories. It tells stories from the perspective of different groups of individuals and shows their unique experiences as well as their daily living conditions in wartime. It should be noticed that the project has a ‘rescue’ nature because the age of the interviewees is more than 80 and they are passing away. It is about “the generation that would soon leave us” (Senem Duruel Erkılıç ; Hakan Erkılıç, 2012). Recording their stories is getting harder every day. Therefore, Cui claimed that the purpose of the oral history project and WK was to rescue the voices of the war-survivors and represent the ‘truth’ of the war, racing against time (Wode Kangzhan Program Group, 2010). In this sense, I highly appreciate their work.

As a Chinese who grew up in mainland China and received the education there, I never found myself interested in history as a subject which I considered boring and ‘remote’ during my school life. However, I was deeply attracted by WK as soon as I learned about it. Why? Because of its form as oral history. I am not drawn to emotionless official history narratives while I am always interested in listening to personal stories. This is because I feel more connected to the storyteller through storytelling –in other words, there is a relation forming between me and the storyteller in oral histories. In WK’s case, it offers vivid images of individuals and their stories, which I had never seen in Chinese official history textbooks. However, as a female and feminist, besides my love and appreciation for WK, I noticed that the gender images in the documentary did not depart from stereotypical gender representations found in mainstream media and traditional history narratives making it very problematic. On the one hand, there were, indeed, some episodes of WK mainly focusing on stories of women. And it cannot be denied that there are some women figures depicted vividly in the documentary which can be seen as a breakthrough in traditional history discourses of the Second Sino-Japanese War, such as valiant women soldiers, female activists in war mobilization and ordinary female students during wartime (see Min Li in Episode 5 in the first season of WK, 2010; Zongwen Hu in

Episode 7 in the first season of WK, 2010; Lan Yu in Episode 9 in the first season of WK, 2010) whose voices were ignored or underrepresented in official history records. However, even so, there are still gender stereotypes and gendered images in the oral history films. WK has gendered images and a gendered discourse in line with the gender stereotype and gender hegemony of mainstream society. For example, there are some important genders or more specifically sexualities that have not been included in WK (such as LGBTQ people). I would like to further discuss this in chapter 3 and chapter 4. Moreover, considering my positionality in relation to the issue of gender and the Second Sino-Japanese War, as a Chinese and feminist, I understand that my analysis can be influenced by my personal perspective and experience, which is also the case with those who write official history using a national perspective. Thus, I consider my positionality as a tool that offers me a better perspective in both experiential (as a woman and Chinese) and intellectual (as a feminist scholar) manner rather than a barrier that may create bias. It is also a legitimate basis for me to conduct my research.

Besides doing the interviews and collecting historical materials, oral history is also about the meanings, specifically, meanings about the role of women and other genders as well as gender perceptions which viewers can interpret from listening and watching the oral history documentaries that will be a legacy for the future. The core of oral history is memory – the memories of the interviewees – and so we need to ask what are the characteristics and meanings of memory, which can be extracted, understood and conveyed. Just like storytelling, the memories generated in oral history can also be used to “convey values, beliefs, morals and history” (ANCESTORS, 2005). In other words, oral histories can be used as educational materials and have great influence on the future generations. Therefore, we should be careful and pay considerable attention to people's utilization and representation of the oral history records, including their discursive strategies and agendas. These can also be complex, even problematic, which deserves further study. Take oral history documentaries for example, the gender images they portray may result in consolidating or challenging some conventional gender ideas about and current gender injustice in the real world. In WK’s case, even if it is an influential work and has a ‘rescue nature,' the conception of gender it conveys cannot be neglected. Praising the breakthroughs as well as pointing out the problems of WK from a gender perspective can be very meaningful for raising people’s consciousness of gender issues and encouraging people to consider that historical research needs to be more critical of

how it either leaves out or represents gender. Thus, I would like to draw people's attention on media representation of gender in oral history documentaries by addressing and analyzing the gender images in WK and digging into its gender discourse.

To achieve this goal, first, I have collected and analyzed the data of gender images in WK. Then, I employed discourse analysis as my research method to explore the discourse behind such gendered images. I aim to answer the following questions through my analysis: Who were portrayed in WK? What kinds of gender images are represented? Are they really gendered? What kind of gender discourse can be found in WK? Through these questions, I show that the images of different genders in WK are gendered, that align with the gendered discourse which is disciplined by hegemonic masculinity, hegemonic femininity and heterosexuality, which is in line with the mainstream gender perceptions.

I arrange my essay into five chapters. Following this introduction where I have provided the background and research questions of my topic, the second chapter will provide a literature review on the relationship between gender and oral history and gender representation in media. In chapter 3, the data of gender images in WK will be presented and examined. In chapter 4, a discourse analysis from a feminist perspective will be employed to analyze the gender images in WK through a selection of figures and storylines. The fifth chapter will be the conclusion.

Chapter 2.
Gender, oral history, and gender representation

This section will mainly review the literature on issues regarding the relationship between gender, oral history and gender representation. First, I would like to define oral history.

The origin of oral history as a methodology dates back to 1940s when Joseph Gould (also known as Professor Sea Gull) collected average people's stories in Greenwich Village in the United States and demonstrated that different from the conventional and official “history of kings and queens”, he believed “what people say is history” (Ritchie, 2014, p. 5). Furthermore, the origin of oral history as an academic study started with Allan Nevins, also in the 1940s, who introduced oral history as an academic concept and established the first archive of oral history at Columbia University (Ritchie, 2014, p. 9). From then on, more people began adopting oral history as a way to record and present history, empowering ordinary individuals rather than following conventional history narratives. In other words, they decided to write histories “from the bottom up” (Ritchie, 2014, p. 7). Donald A. Ritchie (2014, p. 1) has a classical definition for oral history in his book Doing Oral History (third edition):

> Simply put, oral history collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interview. An oral history interview consists of a well-prepared interviewer questioning an interviewee and recording their exchange in audio or video format.

As we can see in Ritchie's definition of oral history, the main content of the interview includes the interviewee's memories and narratives which are of historical significance, though what is identified as historically significant is determined by the interviewee: what she or he shares with the interviewer. Oral history interviews are often conducted years after the historic event. Part of the reason is that people always need time to figure out the significance of an event. An event can be meaningless for someone at the time but gradually shows its importance as time goes by.

As Michael Frisch has demonstrated: oral history is a powerful tool for “discovering, exploring and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory”, and for understanding “how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual

experience and its social contexts and how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them" (1990, p. 188). Memories of interviewees can be subjective, and so what you can gain from oral history may not be the "facts." However, what you can learn from oral history is how people interpret and make sense of the past. If there are discrepancies between interviewees' accounts and factual information, confronting data and analyzing interviewees' perceptions, interpretations as well as what they remember, forget and how they explain these details becomes interesting. Moreover, by interviewing many people about the same event, it is also possible to gather information about multiple aspects of the past that historians did not consider important such as the domain of women, workers or servants (about childbirth, household economies, socializing boys in contrast to girls and so on).

2.1. The relationship between gender and oral history

As a woman and a feminist, I share the view with other feminists that gender is "a key organizer of social life, just like race/ethnicity, class and nation" (Sprague, 2005, p. 3). Thus, of course, the gendered dimension of history and memory should be taken into consideration in doing oral history. It should be noticed that men's forms of both remembering and telling accounts of the past were always seen to be the norm and applied by oral historians for oral history interviewing (S. B. Gluck, 1977). Feminist scholars also demonstrated that the traditional way of doing oral history did not serve well the interests of women (S. B. Gluck & Patai, 1991). Women's words didn't receive the attention as they deserved. Moreover, some feminists realized that there were some sexist and stereotypical patterns in portraying females in oral history (Minister, 1991). And these discussions all lead to feminist oral history which demands people to keep a critical eye on gender issues, such as hegemonic femininity and gender stereotypes, in the practice of doing oral history. Most of the discussions about gender and oral history happen in the fields of feminist oral history. Therefore, in the following section, I would like to review the literature of feminist oral history as well as the development of feminist oral history in China. Feminist oral history offers me a method for understanding and analyzing WK as an oral history documentary.

2.1.1. Feminist oral history

The origins of feminist oral history start with women's history studies in the 1960s. Since then women's history and oral history have gradually grown together because they both focus on individuals and subjectivity (Bornat & Diamond, 2007). According to S.B. Gluck& Patai (1991, pp. 1–2), the definition of feminist oral history is: "women doing oral histories with other women in order to recover their stories and revise received knowledge about them." A common view for feminists is that oral history has long been considered as "male domain," and women are often portrayed as victims or even "objects for male gazing" (S. B. Gluck, 1977). To change the situation, it is necessary to do oral history research “by, about, and for women” to eliminate gender injustice and achieve the emancipation of women (S. B. Gluck & Patai, 1991). In line with this, what feminist oral history would like to achieve in oral history fields is to empower women by letting their voices heard and produced their own narratives (S. B. Gluck & Patai, 1991). In general, previous research concerning feminist oral history is quite extensive and covers many different aspects, including the significance of doing feminist oral history and its principles and approaches, the subjectivity of the interviewer and the interviewee, as well as the power relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (see S.B. Gluck & Patai, 1991; Minister, 1991; S.B. Gluck, 1977; Fobear, 2016).

There are also actual gender differences between male and female interviewees’ performance in doing oral history interviews. For instance, female and male respondents tend to talk about different topics. For example, women often talk to each other about the personal and affiliative issues that reflect “who they are” while men often talk about social and political issues that reflect “what they do” (Stewart, Cooper, & Friedley, 1986). Moreover, the society is an overall androcentric culture, and men’s forms of communication also are seen to be the norm. There is no exception in oral history (S. B. Gluck, 1977; Minister, 1991). Thus, it is necessary to call for feminist oral history to avoid continuing to adopt the same androcentric frame for recording women’s voices in doing oral history.

In oral history studies, the dynamic relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee draws considerable attention. For feminist oral history, this kind of relationship is also a key issue. Subjectivity is one of the most significant issues in feminist oral historians’ discussions and debates. In accordance with this, feminist scholars discuss

issues on who has authority over the interview and its interpretation. It is believed that the content of interviews is constructed, to be more specific, interviewers are the ones who actually control the conversation and the interpretation although interviewers have done most of the talking (Fobear, 2016; Theobald, 2013). Thus, scholars argue that we should share authority in the process of interviewing (Fobear, 2016). Moreover, the oral transmission of knowledge has been a widespread practice in many societies around the world though the origins of oral history as an academic methodology stemmed from western, thus not only western white women's subjectivity is considered in feminist oral history studies. In the larger context of oral knowledge, thus marginalized women, including women of color, indigenous women, lesbians, etc., are also highly valued. Feminist scholars have argued against "the universal commonality of women as a normative assumption that was based on a Western, white, heterosexual, middle-class, and cisgender woman" (Fobear, 2016; Rich, 1984). Based on this guideline, feminist scholars also argue that it is important to generate different frames from the views of women of color, people from different sexualities, and so on when analyzing different groups of people.

In sum, critical feminist researchers not only keep a critical eye on the gender hegemony of mainstream oral history studies, but also applying a critical perspective to their own work. It I important to admit that feminist oral history can also be gendered and problematic, which means it needs to be constantly analyzed and reviewed so it can develop. This approach can also be limited by focusing on oral history conducting "by women and for women" while this indeed provides an important corrective to male-dominated oral histories, and its application to mainstream oral histories is important as well. Whatever issues remain unresolved, oral history continues to attract researchers working in a wide range of gender explorations of the past in years to come.

2.1.2. Feminist oral history in China

Oral history was introduced into China in the 1980s from western countries. Chinese feminist scholars also noticed the “natural affinity” between oral history and feminism (J. Li, 2012, p. 95; X. Li, 2002). They believe oral history is an important ally of feminist studies. It has been three decades since feminist oral history as a field of academic research sprouted in China in the early part of the 1990s. The origins of feminist oral history in China dates back to 1992 when a research project called “Women Oral History in the 20th

Century" was launched. The program was led by Xiaojiang Li, a Chinese feminist scholar, who also organized and published a *Manual of Doing Women Oral History in the 20th Century* which provides essential guidance for female oral history practitioners. In 1998, the oral history academic seminar for international feminist oral history was held in Xi'an. The seminar was co-held by both scholars from mainland China and Germany and successfully set off the wave of Chinese feminist oral history. However, in general, Chinese feminist oral history studies mainly focus on conducting interviews on women and collecting data, and lack systematic methodological and theoretical inquiry.

In the context of contemporary Chinese history, China's feminist oral history has two major themes. The first theme is the relationship between women and war before 1949 (the year of the founding of People's Republic China). The term war refers to the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945) and the Second phase of Chinese Civil War (war between the Kuomintang (KMT) and Communist party of China (CCP) from 1945-1949). For example, Danke Li (2010) conducted interviews with women in Chongqing (the second capital of Nanjing KMT government) presenting their suffering as well as active resistance. The second theme is the relationship between women and politics after 1949, to be more specific, it is about how political movements and policies affected women's lives. For instance, Yuhua Guo (2003) interviewed women in a village in Shaanxi Province during the time of farming collectivization in the late 1950s, showing their untold experiences and the condition of national governance in rural areas. Also, as a result of China's cultural diversity and ethnic diversity, academics also conducted several feminist oral history projects focusing on the minority nationalities such as Manchus and Tibetans (Yang, 2004). With the rapid development of China's economy, scholars also paid much attention to working women, especially country girls working in cities who are considered as immigrant workers. Some researchers also took into account of women's experiences on reproduction in particular historical period. For example, scholars have examined how midwives in China's countryside in the 1950s were educated to deliver children in a scientific way and also provided information about women's reproduction condition in China's countryside (He, Wang, & Chen, 2005).

In general, it should be applauded that feminist scholars have chosen wisely regarding their subjects by considering various groups of women and value their daily life experiences in key areas of change in Chinese society. The history of the minority nationality women, and working girls and other similar groups would have been omitted

from China's records without their endeavors. As we can see the oral history academic seminar in China in 1998 (co-held by both scholars from mainland China and Germany as mentioned above), feminist oral history in China was deeply influenced and shaped by western feminist academics from the beginning. It was established with the support of western scholars. This can raise issues on the deficiency of native theoretical constructions which remains a major problem in China's feminist oral history studies (You, 2009). Furthermore, in the case of China's large population, the amount of feminist oral history projects is minimal. And most of these scholars are still obsessed and busy with collecting data rather than systematically analyzing the data and theorizing oral history as a methodology and form of knowledge. Scholars are still making efforts to defend oral history and feminist oral history as a valid and practical methodology. There are not many oral history projects (such as films or online database) available to Chinese publics, either. Therefore, feminist oral history in China has only limited influence for the time being. Chinese feminists also fail to take other genders, such as LGBTQ people into consideration. Compared to western feminist oral history study, Chinese feminist oral history study focuses more on "women" while western feminist focus more on "gender." This shows that there is much work to be done in this field if feminist oral history in China is going to improve its contributions to knowledge about society and also become more widely accepted.

2.2. Gender representation in media

It is a common idea that the concept gender is considered unstable and is socially and culturally constructed (Struckman, 2006; Tuchman, 1979). So, how is gender constructed? One source is the media. Media plays a vital role in people's everyday lives, especially in the digital era. Stuart Hall (1997) stated that media, as an important part of cultural practice in the "circuit of culture" (p. 1), are always constructing meanings through manipulated and structured representations. Media representation has effects on how we identify ourselves and how we treat others and also how we treat the world. Likewise, Goffman (1979) argued that media representation involves theatrical constructions of gender. Scholars have done many types of research on gender representations in the media. They believed that the theatrical construction of gender is exerted through encoding texts with stereotypical story lines and character representations (Van Zoonen, 1994). For example, it is said that skinny female images in media may encourage women

to develop eating disorders because they strive to attain what the media presents as idealized body shapes to feel good about themselves or just to feel like they are blending in, which can cost them their lives (Kilbourne, 1999). Thus, media representation, as an essential part of “the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged” (Hall, 1997, p. 15), should raise our concern on the impact it can have on gender conceptions.

While feminists have made substantial progress in various areas such as obtaining suffrage, fighting for equal opportunities in education and the working place, organizing all kinds of social movements, problematic gender representations still can be observed in every aspect of life. And it is believed that changes in gender representation "lag far behind societal changes" (Minister, 1991). From Tuchman’s view, the media are sexist (1979). Tuchman’s (1979, p. 533) analysis of gender and the media led her to the well-known concept, "symbolic annihilation," which concludes that the media “symbolically annihilate” women by underrepresenting them, condemning them, trivializing them in media representations. In general, critical academics argued that media representations of gender roles didn't ‘mirror' social reality but distort the reality and thus, may falsely reinforce the traditional gender differences. With the widespread use of conventional gender conceptions such as gender stereotypes, hegemonic femininity, and masculinity, the objectification of women is prevalent in all kinds of media. And this may then result in stereotypical images of women as passive, weak, and valued only if they are stereotypically pretty (Struckman, 2006; Tuchman, 1979).

There are a variety of media that have been examined and studied for gender representations. For example, television shows, movies, radio, books, advertisements and more recently, the internet (see Goffman, 1979; Van Zoonen, 1994; Taylor, 2003; Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008). Scholars explained that in these different forms of media, there are consistently problematic gender images and representations, though there are also some changes (see Inness, 1999; Inness, 2004; Brasfield, 2006; England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek 2011).

First, with capitalist consumer society as the mania of consumerism spread worldwide across populations, advertisements, which are driven by profit rather than concern for social issues, dominated publicly accessible media and drew considerable academic attention in the field of gender studies. Thus, gender representations in advertising is a popular research subject in research on media representations of gender. In general,

many critical scholars worldwide have claimed that very limited roles have been given to women in advertising, and they believe there is an overuse of young, skinny and submissive female images as well as an over representation of motherhood. For instance, Goffman (1979) studied how gender is conventionally and displayed and naturalized in advertising. He found out that female figures are often presented in lying positions (on the floor or bed), and female characters smile more frequently and more openly than male ones who can contribute to the ritualization of subordination (Goffman, 1979). Similarly, many feminist scholars have noticed that advertising is a stronghold of “straightforward objectification of female bodies” (Van Zoonen, 1994, p. 103). For example, female figures tend to wear less and are represented as highly sexualized in commercials. It is also easy to connect women to domestic matters such as raising children and doing housework (Van Zoonen, 1994).

Similar findings also exist in other media such as television, films, documentaries, video games, and even children’s books. Scholars have examined gender representation on prime-time television and found that male characters on primetime television were more likely to "inhabit work roles, including blue collar, white collar, and extracurricular activities, while women were portrayed in more interpersonal roles involving romance, friendship, and family" (Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008). Gender stereotypes also abound in children’s books. Lots of research shows that male characters constantly outnumber female ones. And women in children’s books tend to have no career and are always linked to domestic work (Taylor, 2003). For video games, scholars tend to conclude that the number of male characters is more than female ones in video games, and female characters are more likely to display helping or nurturing qualities. Moreover, male characters are always depicted as heroes with exaggerated strength while female characters are portrayed as victims with feminine features (Beasley & Collins Standley, 2002; Dill & Thill, 2007). Also, female images fell into stereotypes in films and TV series as a whole.

On the other hand, there are also increasing cases of unconventional practices for portraying gender roles in media, whether intentionally or unintentionally feminist in purpose. Scholars have pointed out that gender role portrayals in media are getting complicated, and there are trends towards egalitarian gender roles and alternative gender roles such as gays and lesbians, tough girls, powerful women. Some scholars argued that this may show a kind of growing hegemonic feminist narrative (Brasfield, 2006; England,

Descartes, & Collier-Meek, 2011; Inness, 1999) while others think these unusual gender roles are usually still disciplined by patriarchy. For example, Inness argued that, in the case of “tough girls” in the media, tough girls tend to remain pretty and feminine in appearance and caring in characteristic (which also tend to be considered as a feminine feature), and thus “toughness” is often diluted by their feminine appearance and characteristics, even though it seems that the media is “progressive” and allows images of women to change and become more powerful (Inness, 1999). She argues that even some of the strongest depictions of powerful women have perpetuated women's subordinate positions, using toughness in complicated ways to break or bend gender stereotypes while simultaneously affirming them (Inness, 1999). Women, even those with some power, are under the pressure of male dominance to be more acceptable (Inness, 2004). In another case, researchers analyzed gender images in a documentary about a terrorist attack, which contains several female terrorists. They found out that although women were portrayed as aggressive terrorists, people tried to “defend” them by introducing their tragic background stories while they didn’t do the same thing to male terrorists (Struckman, 2006).

In general, research on gender roles and stereotypes in media representation has been conducted primarily for two purposes: identifying how media representations reflect gender-related cultural values; and helping media practitioners use gender representations more progressively in their practices (Shao, Desmarais, & Kay Weaver, 2014). Following these purposes, there are many analogous pieces of research with similar findings on problematic gender representations in different media and cases. However, I do think these studies raise people's awareness and encourage them to keep a critical eye on all kinds of media representation. Moreover, it is always necessary for people to keep reviewing and evaluating problematic gender representations in not just mainstream but also alternative media or media contents with good reputations for progressive productions, which can be omitted in mainstream studies. We can only solve problems by first identifying them.

Chapter 3.
Gender images in *Wode Kangzhan*

To understand how gender is portrayed in WK and if these gender images are gendered in stereotypical and patriarchal ways, it is necessary to collect and analyze detailed statistics about the quantity of male and female interviewees in WK and their identities, which is the main aim of this chapter. Traditional gender conceptions assume that war is “men’s war” (Pan, 2014). When people talk about wars, it usually reminds them of combats, soldiers, and heroes which tend to associate with men. Indeed, it cannot be denied that whenever there is a war, most soldiers are men. However, I would like to argue that women's experience during wartime is also significant. People with traditional gender ideas tend to assume that women are just victims during wartime who are weak and passive while men are strong and dominant (D. Li, 2010; Pan, 2014; Zhang, 2009). These kinds of stereotypes are common in media representations too. It is true that Chinese women have suffered a lot in the Second Sino-Japanese War while they have made great contributions in different positions in their own way. They have done all kinds of work to engage in the resistance, including joining the army, organizing Women's National Salvation Association and so on (D. Li, 2010; Zhang, 2009). Besides these points, what should also be taken into consideration is that women’s domestic labor is always omitted (D. Li, 2010). Women’s daily work in their homes can also be a part of resistance practice. All in all, when it comes to the war, women’s stories should be valued as vital as men’s, and their voices should be heard.

In general, I will show that WK’s gender images are consistent with traditional gender conceptions. Following sections in this chapter will illustrate this point with data analysis.

3.1. General gender distribution in *Wode Kangzhan*

As I have mentioned in the introduction section, it should be noted that no images of interviewers were shown in WK. Thus, all data in this section comes from WK’s interviewees. In addition, some people showed up more than once in different episodes and are counted more than once. Table 1 shows the quantity and percentage of male and female interviewees in WK. As shown in the table, there were 470 interviewees in WK in

total. Among them, 393 of them were male while only 77 people were female. It is evident that male interviewees significantly outnumbered females in WK, accounting for 83.6%. In other words, more men were shown in the documentary. And the number of male interviewees is five times as many as the number of female ones.

Table 1 Quantity of male and female interviewees in WK

Item	Male	Female	Total
Quantity	393	77	470
Percentage	83.6%	16.4%	100%

Note: Some people reappeared in different episodes. These repeated figures are also included in the final statistics.

When it comes to gender distribution in WK's episodes, WK has 62 episodes in total. Thus, the average number of interviewees in each episode is 7.6. According to Table 2, there were 35 episodes, which have no female interviewees, accounting for 56.5% of all episodes. And there were only two episodes without men. The percentage is merely 3.2%. Furthermore, the proportion of episodes that men outnumber women is as high as 90.3% (56 episodes). These figures were overwhelmingly greater than the corresponding number of episodes without female interviewees. Only in 5 episodes (8.1% of all episodes), female respondents were more than male ones.

Table 2 Gender distribution of interviewees in WK's episodes

Item	Episodes without men	Episodes without women	Episodes that men outnumber women	Episodes that women outnumber men
Quantity	2	35	56	5
Percentage	3.2%	56.5%	90.3%	8.1%

Note: There were 62 episodes in total.

Each episode in WK has a particular theme. Generally speaking, episodes where women outnumber men can be the ones whose theme is about women. However, among all five episodes, only three episodes' themes are about women, which are *War Ladies*[4] (*Zhanhuo hongyan*, telling stories of Chinese female secret agents) (Zeng, 2010b), *Sisters*[5] (*Jiemei*, telling stories of victims of sexual violence) (Zeng, 2011b) and *Immortal*

[4] Episode 24 in the first season of WK.

[5] Episode 5 in the second season of WK

Ginling[6][7] (*Jinling yongsheng*, telling stories of Minnie Vautrin who is known for the care and protection of many Chinese female refugees as the president of Ginling College during the Nanking Massacre in China) (Zeng, 2011c). These three episodes are the only three episodes that have a "female" theme. Besides, the episode called *Eight thousand Miles*[8] (*Baqianlilu*) tells the stories of actors and actresses of a theatre troupe performing plays about people's resistance (Zeng, 2010d). And *Painful City*[9] (*Shangcheng*) tells stories of people's traumatic experiences in Nanking during and after Nanking Massacre (Zeng, 2011a). The number of male and female interviewees in these episodes are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3 The number of male and female interviewees in five episodes that women outnumber men

Episode's name	Male interviewees	Female interviewees
War Ladies	0	6
Sisters	0	7
Immortal Ginling	2	6
Eight thousand Miles	9	12
Painful City	2	4

If we take into account the storylines of these five episodes, we will find that two of them (*Sisters* and *Painful City)* mainly presented women's suffering. For example, in *Painful City*, there is a woman called Xiuying Li who was a citizen in Nanjing during wartime. She was attacked by Japanese soldiers when she was bearing a baby. She said:

> "(he) Stabbed my belly with a knife. I was having a little baby in my belly, seven months, almost seven months, a little baby……I got stabbed 37 times, 18 times on the face, 19 times on legs, one on the belly. Then during the night, near dawn, the baby's gone." (Zeng, 2011a)

This story and many other similar stories positioned women as passive and weak victims, in line with traditional gender conceptions. On the other hand, three episodes (*War Ladies*, *Immortal Ginling, and Eight thousand Miles)* demonstrated women's active

[6] Episode 6 in the second season of WK

[7] Ginling (*Jinling* in Chinese) is another name of the city Nanjing in China where the Nanking Massacre happened.

[8] Episode 7 in the first season of WK

[9] Episode 13 in the second season of WK

resistance, which admits women did make a contribution and breaks traditional gender conceptions to some extent.

In sum, despite there being some breakthroughs in gender representation (their inclusion in the oral history interviews), the ratio of female interviewees in WK (16.4%) and episodes which have more females than males (8.1%), are very small. And the number of episodes with “female” themes are also tiny (4.8%). This data shows that gender distribution in WK is consistent with traditional gender conceptions of war in general.

3.2. Interviewee’s identity in *Wode Kangzhan*

Every time an interviewee turned up in WK, there's a title appearing with the person’s name and status on the lower right corner of the screen. These titles show people’s identities, which can be divided into six major categories. As can be seen from Table 4, these categories are military personnel, citizen, student, family, artist and other. These identities are people's identities at a particular time during the war. Some people's identity changed in the different phase of the war. I use the term military personnel in a more general sense to refer to individuals who are physically involved in military practice, including soldiers, students of the military school, militiaman, doctors, and nurses in the military, etc. Citizens are normal residents without any other institutional status. Students are people who are students in schools of all kinds and levels except military school. Family refers to people whose identities are relatives of someone who is usually a military officer or a famous person of historical significance. Individuals who were actors, actress, singers, etc. were divided into the category artist.

Table 4 Identity of interviewees in WK

Identity	Military personnel	Citizen	Student	Family	Artist	Other	Total
Male	278 (95.2%)	21 (53.8%)	35 (67.3%)	21 (63.6%)	14 (48.2%)	28 (96.6%)	397
Female	14 (4.8%)	18 (46.2%)	17 (32.7%)	12 (36.4%)	15 (51.8%)	1 (3.4%)	77
Total	292	39	52	33	29	29	474

Note: 4 people have two identities in the same episode, leading to 4 more people in the full amount.

If we examine interviewees’ identity according to their genders, it can be seen from Table 4 that there were 292 male interviewees with military personnel status. Figure 1 shows that most respondents (accounts for 62%) in WK are military personnel while the

proportion of the other five kinds of people are about the same amount, around 10%. In addition, according to Table 4, 95.2% of military personnel in WK are male (278 people) while the same figure of the female is only 4.8% (14 people). The result shows that WK portrayed more military personnel and most of them were men rather than women, which is in accordance with traditional gender perceptions. However, it is understandable because the number of male soldiers was indeed more than women soldiers. Of the 39 citizens, the number of male and female citizens is nearly equal (21 male versus 18 female). It is the same with the category artists. In the category of student and family, over half of the interviewees are men. For my hypothesis, I thought there would be more women as family members, others and artists. However, different from my hypothesis, it seems that there is no clear stereotypical discrepancy between different genders in the category of citizen, student, family, and artist.

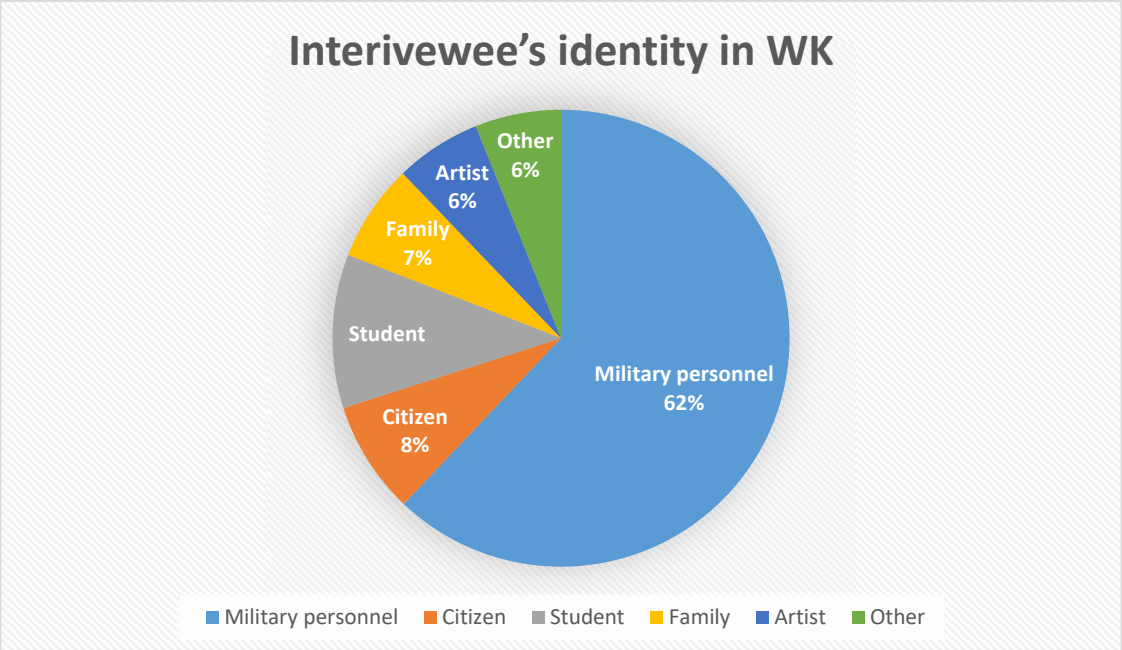

Figure 1 The ratio of interviewee's identity in WK

Figure 2 and Figure 3 present the ratio of the identity of male and female interviewees separately by pie charts. According to two charts, a majority of male interviewees (70%) were military personnel. The next largest proportion is the proportion of male respondents who were students which is 9%. The percentage of men with other identities are similar (all less than 8%).

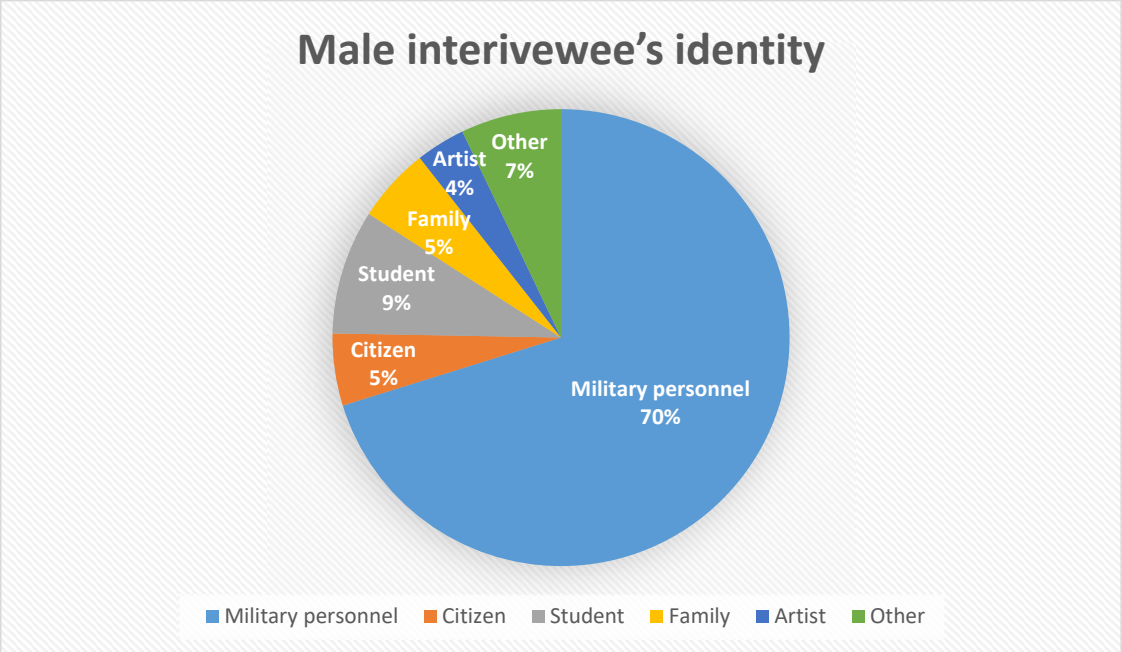

Figure 2 The ratio of male interviewee's identity in WK

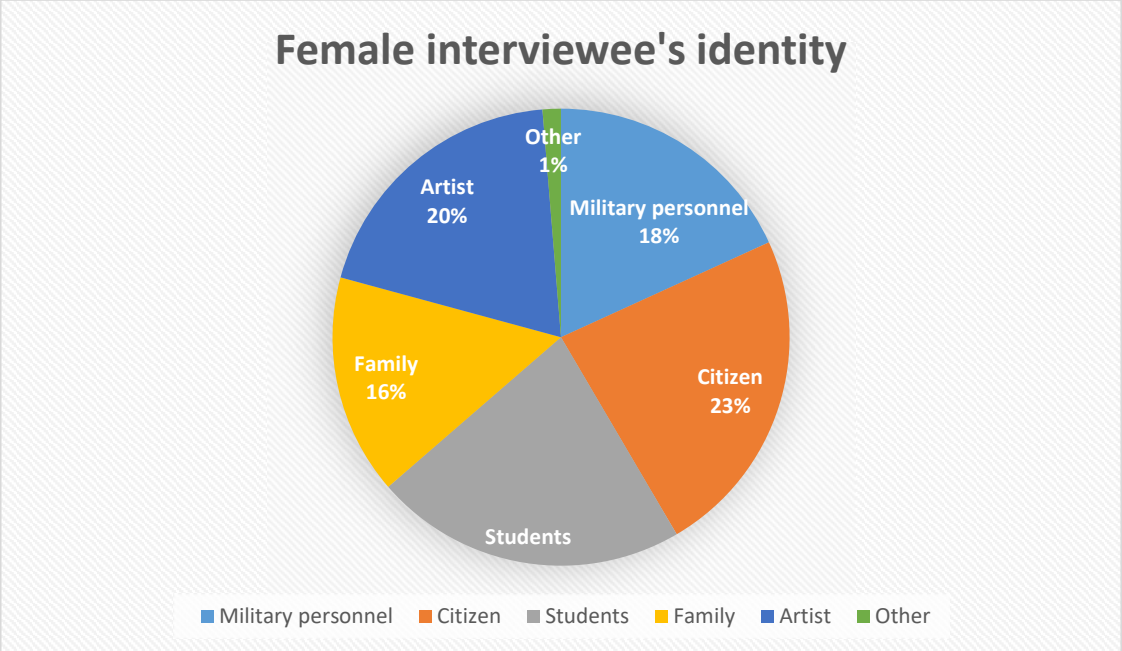

Figure 3 The ratio of female interviewee's identity in WK

When it comes to female interviewees’ identities, we can see from Figure 3 that the proportion of all categories is similar which is around 20% except the category "other." The largest percentage goes to female citizens who account for 23% of all female

interviewees, followed closely by female students and artists, accounting for 22% and 20%. Different from the large figure of male military personnel, only 18% of female interviewees are military personnel. Few female interviewees have the identity of "other," which lies last in the percentage, merely 1%.

When coupled with the graphic information from Figure 2 and Figure 3, it is clear that there is a large difference in interviewees' genders in WK. Exactly 70% of male interviewees in WK are military personnel while this number for females is 18%. And the proportion of all identity categories for female interviewees is similar while the proportion of male military personnel is significantly larger. To sum up, it is obvious that women in WK come from more diverse positions than men. In line with this, a considerable number of male interviewees talked about combats and their experiences in battles as soldiers in WK. In contrast, most women in WK talked about their experiences in daily life during wartime. In general, this is in accordance with the stereotypical gender ideas where men are associated with social and political affairs while women are associated with personal and domestic affairs (Stewart et al., 1986).

WK has made a significant contribution to admit and praise women's contribution in the Second Sino-Japanese War by emphasizing women's experiences. There are several episodes' themes that emphasize women's experiences and WK highlighted some outstanding female figures who weres engaged in political events, even including battles, which shows the producer's attention to women and their experiences. As Joan W. Scott pointed out:

> "Examinations of women's experiences in war, especially those based on oral histories, are remarkable for their emphasis on death and deprivation. They contrast dramatically with the official emphasis on heroism and valor aimed at mobilizing national support (Scott, 1987, p. 28)."

However, from my quantitative analysis, we may arrive the conclusion that the general gender representation in WK didn't depart from stereotypical gender representations in mainstream media. Men in WK are more often portrayed as courageous soldiers in order to demonstrate heroism and valor. In contrast, women are more often depicted as poor victims (with identities of students, citizens and so on). The number of women highlighted is still small, compared to the number of men. The name of WK means my war of resistance. However, it did not sufficiently present the (1) extent of women's resistance and (2) the various ways that women contributed to the resistance during the

war, instead focusing on (3) men's contribution and (4) stereotypical images of them as violent soldiers and it also (5) used ideas about what is resistance mainly based on male models of what labor and action is valued and meaningful as resistance during the war. The overall gender images in WK are gendered.

Chapter 4.
Discourse analysis on gendered images in *Wode Kangzhan*

Mainstream documentary films always claim to be objective because they aim to convincingly portray reality. And people tend to find that documentary films seem more real and reliable than other kinds of films. However, documentary films, as a kind of media representation, cannot be understood as a transparent mirror of the society free of values and beliefs (Struckman, 2006). Likewise, WK, as an oral history documentary telling stories about the Second Sino-Japanese War, derived from people's oral narratives and "real" histories were also based on producers' understandings of the war. As Hall said:

> We give things meaning by how we represent them, the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them (1997, p. 3).

WK, and its gender representation, as a "practice of representation" (Hall, 1997), can be transmitted and meaningfully interpreted. In the last chapter, we arrived at the conclusion that the overall gender representation in WK is consistent with stereotypical gender perceptions of war, in other words, they are gendered. In this chapter, I would like to perform a close reading and apply a discursive analysis on selected figures and storylines in WK to reveal WK's gendered representation in more detail. I would like to argue that WK has a gendered discourse disciplined by gender hegemony, although at the same time it did present some challenging breakthroughs in gender representations.

Gender hegemony refers to a string of concepts including hegemonic masculinity, hegemonic femininity, and heteronormativity. "Hegemony" is a pivotal concept borrowed from the ideas of the Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci's writings in the 1920s and 1930s and applied to gender studies refers to "a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes" (Raewyn W Connell, 1987). Connell (1987) first developed the concept hegemonic masculinity in her theory of gender order. Then it became a fundamental concept in gender studies. Hegemonic masculinity can be understood "as the pattern of practice (i.e., things were done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (R W Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005,

p. 4). She argued that the hegemony imposed by hegemonic masculinity upon other subordinated and marginalized masculinities, combining with the subordination of femininity, legitimates men's domination over women as a group (Demetriou, 2001). Based on Connell's theory, Schippers did an empirical exploration of masculinity and femininity and their role in gender hegemony (Schippers, 2007). She interpreted hegemonic masculinity as following:

> Hegemonic masculinity can include physical strength, the ability to use interpersonal violence in the face of conflict, and authority. These characteristics guarantee men's legitimate dominance over women only when they are symbolically paired with a complementary and inferior quality attached to femininity (Schippers, 2007, p. 91).

She then proposed the concept of "hegemonic femininity" which consists of the characteristics defined as womanly (including physical vulnerability, an inability to use violence effectively, and compliance) that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Schippers 2007:91-94). Schilt and Westbrook (2009) claim that in gender hegemony, gender order is hierarchical and people consistently put a higher value on masculinity than on femininity.

In contrast to hegemonic femininity, Schippers presents the concept "pariah femininities." Women with pariah femininities are those who "often embody and practice features of hegemonic masculinity," such as being authoritative, being physically violent, taking charge and not being compliant (2007, p. 95). It is said that having pariah femininities can be stigmatized and sanctioned because it challenges the gender hegemony. When masculine qualities are enacted by women; they are not masculine anymore.

In gender studies, the idea - gender is socially constructed - is well accepted. In this construction, gender is always constructed in a binary way which defines "men" and "women" as two classes of people on the basis of their biological sex (Butler, 1990). And according to this binary sex system, the sexual desire between heterosexual men and women is taken for granted as natural occurring as is the social norm on which it is based, that is, heteronormativity (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). Heterosexual expectations are embedded in social institutions. I would like to apply these concepts and theories to gender

representations in WK to reveal its gender discourse. In following sections, a selection of figures and storylines will be examined.

4.1 A tough girl? The case of Min Li

The episode *White mountain and black river* (*Baishan heishui*)[10] tells the story of the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army and about how it waxed and waned. There are six male interviewees and three females in this episode though the episode relies on the story of Min Li as its main narrative. Also, this episode is the only one that uses the story of a female soldier as the main storyline. Min Li was a female soldier who was only 14 years old in 1938, served in the sixth corps of the Second Route Army of Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army. Of the 77 female interviewees in WK, only 14 of them are military personnel. And there are only three women with the title, "female soldier." Others are secretaries, secret agents, nurses in the military hospital, and other feminized positions. Among those three female soldiers, Min Li is the only one who tells stories about her combat experience. When Min Li recalled her memory of a battle against the enemy's encirclement and suppression, she said:

> “Guanghai Xu shouted 'everyone stays down!' At the moment, enemy's troop in the back started charging. Machine guns raked. Xiaoma was very brave, and he grabbed a grenade, throw to the machine gunner. With the throw, the gunner's head dropped down, probably dead. Lieutenant Liu tumbled, tried to grab…grab the machine gun…very near, at that moment, when he already touched the gun, and tried to carry it back, another machine gun fired, again, behind him. He got shot. He lied on his stomach, holding the gun, didn't move. The enemy has machine guns and mortars. When they fired the mortar, (our) bodies covered by dirt…snow blocks, dirt blocks, on our bodies. At last, after 20 minutes, what we heard is that they also started a fight on the east side of the mountain. The enemy occupied there. They actually encircled us. Pei got hurt…Her legs got hurt. (she said) 'I'll cover you, go, (even) we have only one person left, it's one person's power, you must follow my orders.' (She) Was in rage. There's another solider, Li, on my left side, died, too. Xiaoma died too. (Zeng, 2010c)”

After the combat, Min Li was separated from her few remaining fellows. Then she tells the story about how she survived in the snowy woods alone for two days and nights. She described how she happily ate a dead rat (she literally smiled when she told the story), how she ran into a small group of Japanese soldiers, successfully ran away, and finally

[10] Episode 5 in the first season of WK

met up with another Chinese troop. After the fight, Min Li and remaining troops moved to and were trained in Russia.

Min Li vividly recalled what people said and remembered people's name clearly. However, all her narratives are about others fighting with the enemy (for example, Xiaoma and Liu), there's no description of how she fights the enemy during the battle. In contrast, male interviewees talk a lot about their own actions during combats. For example, Lizhi Shan, a male soldier in Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army, described the situation of their guerrilla warfare.

> "Enemies cannot see us. When we saw them, we spread out. When enemies are almost gone, we (got) orders, fire! Fired for a while, then we fled. That's called mobile warfare, (we) don't do trench warfare. Flee after a shot, and enemies cannot find us when they come. [chuckles] (Zeng, 2010c)"

Another male soldier called Zongkai Guo said:

> "They shot me, they broke my bones (pointing at his leg), although bones broken I can still walk, they fired at me again, two Japanese, I saw them clearly, very near. I just took out a grenade and threw it out. I threw the grenade out. The grenade 'boom' went blew, those two Japanese fell down. I grabbed their two guns, two Japanese guns, that's really something. (Zeng, 2010a)"

From these oral narratives, we can see that in Min Li's narratives she suffered, she hid, she survived, she fled, but she did not fight with the enemy physically in direct confrontations while the narratives of male soldiers are about their valor and initiative in battles.

Min Li, as an outstanding female soldier in the Second Sino-Japanese War, has also been covered in a news program in 2015 by CCTV (CCTV-13, 2015). In this program, her identity is also presented as a female soldier. Furthermore, she is one of the first Chinese female commandoes. As is shown in Figure 4, she wore a military uniform with several badges, and talked about her army experience. The title of her interview is "New Story of Heroic Sons and Daughters (*Xin yingxiong ernv zhuan*): story of Min Li - 'only by fighting off Japanese, will we have a home'". In the interview, besides describing how she was trained and became a commando in Russia, her stories mainly focus on her loyalty to the army and the country (China). She said, "my whole family was fighting with Japanese……whatever I do, only if you let me fight with Japanese. (CCTV-13, 2015)" and

“I don’t have a home, I’m not going anywhere (CCTV-13, 2015)" when her regimental commander attempted to dismiss the army when lacking supplies. She also talked about how she became a paratrooper: “At that time, we thought we could go back (to China) earlier if we go parachuting, then (we) just close eyes and jumped.” Her narratives were filled with statements about loyalty towards the country and her actions and thoughts were disciplined by patriotism.

Figure 4 Min Li in WK (left) and in CCTV news program (right)[11]

In contrast, in WK’s representation, Min Li wore an ordinary black shirt, spent lots of the time (6.7 minutes in her 12.8 minutes-account in WK) telling her own stories about her survival experiences - how she survived from enemy’s tight encirclement and hid in a frozen and snow-covered woods, how she ate a dead rat to keep alive, how she ran into Japanese soldiers and judged their status from their use of toilet paper (because her own Chinese troop have no toilet paper at all at that time) and ran away - which is a more personal account than her narratives in CCTV's TV news. Her accounts in WK focus on her own experience and decision-making in coherent, detailed stories rather than only presenting a few words that demonstrate her patriotism. In this sense, WK challenged the mainstream historical discourse about the Second Sino-Japanese War by breaking new ground in narrating the history from an individual’s perspective, more specifically, from a female soldier’s perspective, which gives insights into her subjectivity.

However, Min Li's subjectivity in WK is different from male soldier's subjectivity. Physically fighting with enemies, actively engaging in violence during wartime tend to be

[11]The left picture is from episode 5 in the first season of WK. Retrieved from http://tv.sohu.com/20100817/n274274318.shtml

The right picture retrieved from CCTV’s new program: Live News http://news.cntv.cn/2015/05/08/VIDE1431067202033773.shtml

seen as qualities of masculinity. Min Li's identity was a soldier in WK while her representation in WK didn't include information that showed her initiative fighting, which would have given her the same initiative and active subjectivity as male soldiers. Her story sounds more "passive." One reason can be that Min Li was not asked these questions or her narratives about fighting experience have been edited out, which need further exploration and research. Another reason could be that her narratives might have been affected by possible stigmatization and sanction of having "pariah femininities." (Schippers, 2007). She may have intentionally chosen not to provide information of her active fighting because she is socialized as a woman although she indeed was a solider. Being physically violent, taking charge and not being compliant may demonstrate pariah femininities and challenge the traditional gender hegemony.

Moreover, her representation in WK showed her "feminine side," in other words, her sensitive emotions. In this episode, Min Li sobbed twice, and her voice quivered when she recalled her fellow's death, although she seemed calm, rational and stable in the most of her storytelling. As a female soldier, a tough girl, Min Li's feminine qualities, such as not actively confronting the enemy and her sobs, undercut her power and toughness (Inness, 1999). All in all, Min Li's representation in WK seems to portray her as a tough girl while it actually, failed. Her images are gendered and influenced by gender hegemony.

4.2 Victims of sexual violence

It is apparent that WK tries to demonstrate that they value women's experience and stories in the Sino-Japanese War by producing three episodes dealing explicitly with women figures in the wartime. One of them is an episode called *Sisters* (*Jiemei*) telling stories of victims of sexual violence. This episode achieved the highest video views in all episodes of WK: 18.33 million.

It is believed that gang rape and sexual enslavement was common in the final phase of the Second Sino-Japanese War. The time of the final phase is approximately from 1942 to 1945, exactly when nightmarish tragedies happened to innocent women in the episode *Sisters* (Teunis & Herdt, 2007). There were six women's images in the 30-minute episode. Three of them were Chinese, and the other three came from colonial Korea, the Philippines, and Dutch colony (Indonesia). The experience of the three Chinese victims accounted for a substantial part of the episode while the other three women only

showed up as victims to give an international perspective. They had only a few seconds and gave a few words that condemned the sexual violence done by the Japanese troops.

When mentioned, sexual violence victims from the Second Sino-Japanese War always reminds people of *comfort women*. The term comfort women (*ianfu* in Japanese) refers to women from different countries (including China, colonial Korea, the Philippines, Dutch colonies, Japan, etc.) who were sexually exploited by the Japanese army during the war. Most of the comfort women were compelled to provide sex services, forced to be prostitutes or even sexual slaves at so-called comfort stations (*ianjo* in Japanese) (Tanaka, 2002). However, in *Sisters*, these women are not all comfort women. Unlike those who were placed in comfort stations and the comfort system that may get paid, the women in *Sisters* were victims of larger scale atrocities that included sexual violence. Three main characters of this episode were sexually abused and locked up in Japanese' Army's strongholds by the dispersed group of Japanese soldiers in the front line without payment and without systematic management, which was very common, especially in China's countryside (Liu, 2010).

All women told their traumatic stories of suffering in *Sisters.* It should be noted that most interviews in this episode were from other sources instead of oral history interviews done by the WK's team. The images are different from WK's regarding their use of color, background and lens structure. The episode started with the image of a Chinese woman called Qiaolian Hou. The image of her was in black and white. "Qiaolian Hou often says that her life only has 14 years" repeated by a male voice-over three times in the episode. Hou was captured by Japanese troops in 1942 when she was only 14 years old. It seems the image of her was cut from previously finished interviews. She kept repeating: "I was very little, a 14 years old kid, I cannot bear that (Zeng, 2011b)." She got pregnant and had an abortion and then, became mentally ill after she came back from Japanese troop. Another woman, Mianhuan Liu, was 16-year-old when she was beaten up then dragged into a turret of the Japanese army and was gang-raped there by seven Japanese soldiers. She tells the interviewer:

> "There were three Japanese soldiers. One named Maoli came in. He came in, pointed me, said 'you, girl, very good, very good' (in Mandarin). He laughed then just left. Then (they) locked us after he left…locked us in the cave house. And there're guards. Soon, Japanese came. Nothing good can happen to us when they came. They just ruined me. I don't let him, I yelled, I yelled 'help, help.' They used a towel to gag my mouth…gagged my mouth.

> You cannot yell anymore. They stripped my pants and threw it on the ground. You wanna fetch it, you just cannot reach it. Five, five Japanese, then two more came in, seven men in total, there were seven Japanese men in total. They left, I cannot get up right then.....(I) looks like a human, (pointing at her face), you look at me and see a human, but I live like a subhuman, like a subhuman…… (Zeng, 2011b)."

The nightmare ended when her family gave every penny they had to redeem her. Her father had to carry her back in a basket because she could not walk after the torture. Due to her history as a victim of sexual violence, she lived with the gossip and censures of others throughout her entire life. She said:

> "they jeered at me behind my back, behind my back. (They said) It's a shame, why you still talk that now, it's already past. Don't say it anymore, just don't mention 'that' thing. I say that I'm not afraid of people's jeer (Zeng, 2011b)."

In front of the camera, she tells her experience slowly but firmly. She mentioned that her granddaughter was once woken up by her screaming in the night. She could only tell her that she just had a horrible dream rather than pour out what actually happened. She said "Even cry, I can only cry by myself. Who dare you tell?" She ended up marrying to a widower because of her "stigma." Her husband knew everything but never talked.

The other Chinese victim-survivor is Youliang Huang. The image of her was very unusual. In WK, most of the interviewees were alone speaking on the screen. Interviewers weren't shown nor were their voices. In Huang's image, she sat on a sofa when her daughter was sitting on her left side translating her dialect into Mandarin to a man sitting next to them in an armchair, where he was taking notes in silence. In 1942, Huang was just 14, and was stalked and raped by a Japanese soldier at her home in front of her blind mother and was sexually abused for a year then taken to a comfort station. Her daughter said: "I asked her if they had stripped her clothes. She said they did, stripped her clothes. But the means……is hard to bring it up" She luckily managed to escape, but she also suffered from people's condemnation and gossip. Their accounts show how they were all sexually abused by Japanese soldiers and then socially stigmatized by their communities.

On the one hand, the stigmatization of women talking about sex and sexual violence is institutionalized in society (Van der Veer, 1998), and WK's representation of victims of sexual violence challenges this idea by exposing the victim's oral history of being attacked in a straightforward manner. It uncovers sexual abuse experienced by these women which

had been ignored or underrepresented in official records. Allowing these women to speak about their experiences about how they suffered not just during but after they were violently violated shows their subjectivities to some extent. Exposing the ugly scar of the war in detail may be extreme, but it might push people to confront historical facts people are not comfortable discussing, specifically, gender injustice. It may also encourage more victims to come forward. Also, people tend to be attracted by media content that is about sex, which can be seen from the large number of viewers of this episode. Thus, presenting these victims' experiences can be used as a very meaningful forum for stating the victims can also have subjectivities rather than only passiveness in a larger scale.

On the other hand, the representations of sexual violence victims in WK is an overt example of hegemonic masculinity. Sexual violence itself is a way to devastate women's minds and body in ways that can show perpetrators' masculinity and superiority (Liu, 2010). It is said that male soldiers can obtain and intensify a sense of conquest and subjugation by sexually violating and abusing women who belong to the group of their enemies. It is a way to dehumanize the enemy and demonstrate their own masculinity and dominant power. Likewise, the opposite of perpetrators' masculinity is women's femininity and subordination. All three Chinese women in *Sisters* were tragic victims, telling stories about how they suffered and how awful this was. All of them lived a tragic life since being abused. Their resistance wasn't represented at all. One of them even escaped successfully from a comfort station (Youliang Huang) while the escape story is presented with no details but only as a fact. The details could have emphasized the young women's initiative, bravery, determination intelligence. Women victims in *Sisters* are positioned as powerless, weak and passive women.

In addition, it is evident that these victims had internalized the hegemonic ideology of virginal femininity which requires women's sexual purity and stigmatizes sex (Hastings, 2002). For instance, when telling Mianhuan Liu's life after the sexual atrocities, the voice-over said: "she survived. She didn't go out from then on but only hiding in her house being afraid of seeing others." When Mianhuan Liu mentioned her marriage, she said

> "after a few years, I'm older. It's time to find a husband and get married…People say (to her father) 'it's hard for your daughter to find a husband, she was violated by the Japanese. She's like a widow now. Unless find someone (who was) married before. Then it can be easier.' There was no way. (My marriage) was not free love (Zeng, 2011b)."

Mianhuan Liu's view of herself is a vivid example of internalization of the idea of virginal femininity. She followed and identified with people's views that she lost her value as a woman after the attack and she did not deserve the freedom of choosing a lover. In short, the information about women who were sexually attacked as part of the Japanese wartime atrocities conveyed by WK repeats gendered ideas of women and is too passive.

The opposite of inclusion is exclusion. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to who was included and who was excluded when evaluating media's representation of a group of people. In the case of WK, all sexual violence stories happened between heterosexual males and females. In fact, all love stories in WK were heterosexual stories. Heterosexuality is taken for granted in WK. However, gender injustice does involve not only heterosexual people, but also homosexual people, transgender people, and others. Who tried to locate them and represent the stories of these people? I believe the failure may have various factors such as the limitation of time, the difficulty of finding interviewees, the sensitivity of the issue, China's censorship system[12], Chinese political reasons, etc. In general, WK's gender representation embodies and reinforces heteronormativity. A more in-depth investigation of this area would be possible and useful through interviews of the producers of WK, which may be my future study.

[12] A document called General principles of TV dramas production was put into effect on 2nd March 2016 in China. It clarified that homosexuality, extramarital affair cannot be shown in TV drama contents. (Kai Lu, BBC China news. 2016.03.02.) Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/china/2016/03/160302_china_tighten_tvdrama

Chapter 5.
Conclusion

As I mentioned above in the first part of this paper, WK was conducted by the celebrity, Yongyuan Cui, and his team. The project, thus, is a private project rather than a government one (Yu, 2010), although the topic of the Second Sino-Japanese War is of great concern for the Chinese government. They claim their aim is, first, to rescue the stories of the survivors of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and second, try to represent and get closer to the 'truth' of the war. They achieved their aim in general. However, when attention is paid to the gender representation in WK and examined from a gender perspective, the conclusion is that the representation of these females in WK has been generated from a patriarchal framework and has led to the reproduction of mainstream gendered discourses. At the same time, the film has made some progress in including women across different roles during the war, however, overall, the film still is highly disciplined by gender hegemony, including hegemonic masculinity, hegemonic femininity, and heteronormativity. The symbolic gendering of "public" and "violent" as masculine and "private" or "passive" as feminine, making heterosexuality the norm, is deeply embedded in WK. I arrived at this conclusion by conducting data analysis of overall gender images in WK and employing discourse analysis on selected figures and storylines in WK.

My recommendation is that to reveal women's contributions during the war and to empower women in historical narratives; we should not cast women only as passive victims of the war. Instead, we should highlight women's roles as activists in war mobilization and wartime production, as soldiers in warfare and even supposedly ordinary housewives should be valued and included in history narratives for their contributions to society at the time (D. Li, 2010). Oral historians and media producers should be aware that not only men have the power to resist and are able to physical fight in the battle and not only physical fighting should be considered as resistance – women and their work should also be valued in their contributions to resistance. The overall purpose of WK is to engrave the history into people's minds and rebuild collective memory, thus increasing patriotism rather than increasing gender awareness and achieving gender justice. However, if they are more sensitive to gender awareness and can develop an increasing awareness of gender justice, they may offer a better media representation of the war and Chinese people's strengths and contributions. I share the same goal with feminist oral

historians who emphasize women's experiences, portraying their experiences in ways that do not restrict them to passive roles. Achieving gender justice through proper media representation of gender constantly needs various efforts from the academic area, media production industry and audiences with progressive gender ideas. Pointing out the problematic practices and media projects and being critical about them can be the first step.

Following from this study, I would recommend more research on the production of WK. The film doesn't refer to the role of interviewers who are the first-hand listeners of the oral histories and may have played a dominant role in shaping the interviews by asking questions or showing more or less interest in certain topics. In line with this, their roles (including the types of questions that were asked) and the impact of the producer of the film are also worth researching. How did the producers decide which parts of the narrative of the survivors should be included in the films? How did they edit the raw material of oral history and for what purpose? These questions need our further analysis. Further research could focus on the production process (including collecting interviews, selecting materials and editing videos) of the documentary, and exploring the social, political, economical powers (government's agenda, commercial profits and so on) that have affected the production of the documentary.

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