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Women rising as half of the sky? : an empirical study on women from the one-child generation and their higher education participation in contemporary China / Ye Liu

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Abstract

This article explores the changing dynamics between gender, cultural capital and the state in the context of higher education expansion in contemporary China. With a particular focus on the one-child generation and women's opportunities and aspirations, I draw upon empirical evidence from a first-hand survey study and in-depth semi-structured interviews with female undergraduates from one-child families in 2007. The findings from the survey study suggest that singleton status might mediate the impact of socioeconomic status and cultural capital on students' academic performance and elite opportunities. The qualitative interview data provide further evidence on how singleton women's aspirations are related to their socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The most significant finding is concerned with singleton girls' strategy of applying for Chinese Communist Party membership as a way to minimize their social and gender disadvantages. I argue that there emerges a bottom-up approach of women empowerment through qualifications and political selection during China's transition. Political selection is dressed up in seemingly meritocratic selection, thus

11.1.2025

becoming more appealing to female undergraduates who, in turn, take advantage of party membership to add a silver lining of political loyalty to higher education qualifications. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Liu, Ye, E-Mail: ye.liu@kcl.ac.uk