ISCTE ◎ Business School
Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

WOMEN UNDERREPRESENTATION AT THE WORKPLACE: A CASE STUDY IN THE CHINESE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Fei Zhao

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Supervisor:
Prof. Maria Gabriela Silva, ISCTE Business School, Department of Human Resource Management

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the phenomenon of women's numerical underrepresentation is perceived in the pharmaceutical sales industry in China. Previous studies have suggested that sex-differentiated perceptions and organizational factors may contribute to gender underrepresentation. Yet it is not well understood how these elements connect to foster women underrepresentation in everyday workplaces in the Chinese context. Through interviewing 18 Chinese employees at a joint-venture pharmaceutical sales company, the analysis sheds light on the job characteristics and people attitudes at the workplace. The analysis reveal that job requirements of pharmaceutical sales bring pressure of work-family balance, while male colleagues and even female salespeople themselves are (un)consciously reproducing sales occupation's masculine cultures. The findings suggest that initiatives sponsored at different organizational ladders have reinforced the "status quo" – in few words, have helped to maintain existing systems of gender differences.

Resumo

Esta tese estuda como o fenómeno da sub-representação numérica das mulheres é percebido na indústria farmacêutica na China. Os estudos anteriores têm sugerido que as perceções diferenciadas quanto ao sexo e os fatores organizacionais podem contribuir para a sub-representação de género. Contudo, ainda não se compreende bem como estes elementos se ligam para fomentar a sub-representação das mulheres no dia-a-dia no local de trabalho no contexto chinês. Com base em 18 entrevistas a trabalhadores chineses num consórcio internacional na área da indústria farmacêutica, a análise destaca as características do posto de trabalho e as atitudes individuais. As análises revelam que as exigências profissionais do delegado de informação médica não promovem o equilíbrio entre trabalho e família, enquanto os colegas do sexo masculino e até mesmo os delegados de sexo feminino (in)conscientemente reproduzem a cultura da profissão masculina de vendedor. Os resultados sugerem que as iniciativas promovidas em diferentes níveis hierárquicos têm reforçado o "status quo" – em poucas palavras, líderes e colaboradores têm ajudado a manter o sistema atual de diferenças de género.

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CONTENT

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Women workforce has been discussed in extensive literatures. At global level, the female labor force participation rate was 49.6% while the corresponding figures for men was 76.1% in 2015 (International Labor Organization, 2016). But women's share of the world's board seats only account for 12% (Deloitte, 2016). Apart from the top position, women in military, sports, manufacturing, medicine and management areas are also in an underrepresented situation (Bureau of Labor, 2012). For example, in the United State, female represents one-third or less of those STEM occupations (Science, Technology, Engineer, Mathematics). Moreover, only 11.3% aerospace engineers, 17.9% software developers and 21% computer programmers are female (BLS, 2016). In China, women have a high labor force participation (64%)[1] as well as an improved representation of tertiary education (50.7%)[1], but they still have low representation in political offices and legal profession which is 23.6%[2] and 17%[3] respectively. Despite increased opportunities and participation for women in education and employment today, they are still underrepresented in some areas in today's society.

Since 1960s women's liberation movement, female's rights have developed over the years. However, gendered disparity and inequality is still a ubiquitous phenomenon in the workplace (Mulinge and Glass, 2002). The boosting technology and productivity have weakened the gendered divisions in labor market, but even today we still could hear the voice that these jobs "prefer" men applicants and those jobs are "appropriate" for women, which means some jobs are still gendered in organizations' perspective (Acker, 1990). This phenomenon, men and women tend to work in different occupations and industries, further manifest as sex-typed underrepresentation and job sorting, is defined as occupational segregation by gender (Levanon *et al.*, 2009).

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[1] The World Bank, "Percentage of Students in Tertiary Education Who Are Female, China, 2013," The World Bank Databank (2016)

[2] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "World Classification, China," Women in National Parliaments (April 1, 2016)

[3] The World Economic Forum, The Global Gender Gap Report 2015 (2015): p. 140

This study will focus on gender segregation in medicine industry in China, where female salespeople are facing the same underrepresentation problem. Industrial salesforce is regarded to be a male-centered domain and professional selling jobs have been labeled as intrinsically masculine (Comer and Jolson, 1991). In recent decades, both the United States and the United Kingdom's labor market had a trend that increasing female is entering into areas traditionally considered as male's domains (Jolson *et al.*, 1997). In pharmaceutical industry, the business is largely dependent on the sales and marketing of each drug, its sales job is competitive. According to a report from Cegedim Strategic Data, pharmaceutical sales force levels in China increased more than 17%, with 80,000 sales reps' equivalents at year 2011- situation that exceeded the U.S. reality for the first time. More than 17,000 sales jobs were newly added into Chinese market during the past five years by world-renowned pharmaceutical multinationals. In Pfizer, the top leading company, the sales force is now over 4,000. Bayer, MSD, AstraZeneca and other direct competitors almost keep the same pace (McKinsey, 2012). However, women in pharmaceutical sales industry still keeps a low representation in China. Among these soared salespeople, women's proportion occupied approximately one fifths (McKinsey, 2012).

In the Asian region, men are deemed to be more suitable for many jobs than women (Honig and Hershatter 1988). It is also the Chinese case; female is a vulnerable group in labor market due to both objective inequality facts and subjective cultural perceptions. For thousands of years, the idea of female's subordination rooted in every corner of Chinese society. Even today the feudal system was abandoned and the dross of traditional concepts were rejected by majority, the influence of this idea still remains. Women themselves, as a member in this patriarchy dominated society, gradually accepted their subordinate role which became a main source to be unawakened from seeking for support in the process of historical development. Traditionally, Chinese women are concentrated in low-status jobs. ILO found out that Chinese women are more likely in agriculture than men. Furthermore, the taking place structural change in China signals a greater "sticky

floor" for women impeding their mobility out of agrarian work compared to that of men (ILO, 2015: 62). For those educated women who already hold fairly good jobs, they also face the "glass ceiling" that are less likely to gain advancement than their male counterpart (Croll, 1995).

1.2. Research Purpose

Numerous studies have investigated female's situation in male-dominated occupations. Topics include determinants and effecting factors of women's outflow (Torre, 2014; Ashraf, 2007), women's mobility and occupational trajectories in male-typed occupations (Mandel, 2013), interaction with male counterparts (Kanter, 1977; Maume 1999), female's coping strategies for continuing career paths (Fernando and Cohen, 2011), work family conflicts and balance (Watts, 2009), and gender stereotypes' influence on female's hiring (Gorman, 2005). Earlier research emphasized the adverse impacts of women's low participation, current literature discusses more its sources and related effects. However, some knowledge gaps still exist.

These studies mostly concentrated on IT industry (Adikaram and Wijayawardena, 2016), sport area (Walker and Bopp, 2011), mathematics subject (Kessel, 2014) and aviation (Germain *et al.*, 2012). Little is known in pharmaceutical sales industry. As a main sector of the world's largest health economy, pharmaceutical industry is also one of the major high-technology industrial employers. According to the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and associations (EFPIA), research–based pharmaceutical industry generates extra upstream and downstream employment, and the indirect employment is usually three to four times more than the directly one. Identifying women's difficulties and challenges in male-typed occupation might suggest a lesson for other industries to recruit and retain female employees.

Moreover, only a finite number of studies has examined both individuals and corresponding organization's perspectives on female's underrepresentation in male-

dominated area. These involved parties may differ in their responses to this situation, which provides dual angles perspective.

Additionally, the Western academics have a full, detailed view showing women's status in majority research on occupational segregation and other related topics. However, this situation is little known in China. Unlikely the America or European countries, female would experience more gender-based disadvantages in Chinese labor market because gender issues are more severe and explicit in Chinese environment due to social norms and weak legal protection for women (World Bank 2013; Gao *et al.*, 2016). Thus, it's essential to get a better understand of the status of working women in this country, dating from the phenomenon to the reasons behind.

Contributing to fill in the gap, this study aims to analyze female salespeople's minority situation in the pharmaceutical sales industry in Chinese labor market. The aims are twofold. Recognizing that the underrepresentation, as a kind of occupational segregation, could be produce and reproduce by a multifaceted set of factors, I seek firstly to explore how sales occupation is understood in the pharmaceutical industry. Then, I try to understand how different organizational actors are (re)constructing the existing male-dominated culture.

1.3. Research Questions

In response, to contribute to the understanding of female salespeople's underrepresentation and to advance an explanation of gender segregation, this thesis tries to answer the following questions:

- What are the meanings different actors ascribed to the sales occupation?
- To what extent were different actors able to (re)construct the male dominated culture in sales context?
- What are the implications of the existing reproduction processes of the male-dominated culture for the way sales force works?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Gendered occupational segregation and gender dominated occupation

Occupational segregation refers to the inequality division of labour into different jobs and occupations according to demographic characteristics in the context of paid employment (Bergmann, 2009). Gender-based segregation is the most common segregation type referred on the literature. Conventionally, it has vertical and horizontal dimensions (Blackburn and Jarman,1997; Bettio and Verashchagina, 2009): vertical gender segregation is disproportionate participation of one specific group in the hierarchy of occupations, while horizontal occupational segregation refers to disproportionate amount of people of each gender present across occupations (Charles, 2003).

One superficial phenomenon of gendered occupation segregation is female (or male) highly concentrated on some specific jobs, like female overwhelm male in teacher and nurse's job; men overnumber women in engineer and mechanic's job. The presence of gender dominated occupations offer another perspective on occupational segregation. According to a ILO's 2003 report, in 1990 half of the working labour was in gender-dominated occupations, men fill over 80 percent in the male-dominated occupation and women only take up about 60 percent in the female-dominated occupation. The high level of segregation demonstrated a worldwide extensiveness. Gender dominated occupations topic is discussed widely and its formation has close relationship with social, cultural and historical factors. In retrospect, the division of labor in human history could provide a better understanding of the gendered work roles.

Family farm, as the typical of agriculture in the early agrarian economy period, already resulted in separated gendered work. Based on Sandra and Jeremie's (2017) research, its formation relied on the teamwork of different gender and generations. Male was in charge of the farm and managed farm business, whereas female worked as a helping role of her husband, took care of chores and social relationships, and was responsible for children. In other words, public sphere was dominated by men and private sphere was held by women. Consequently, gendered division of labor had emerged from this kind of

complementarity.

Under this historical heritage, the separated work roles conventionalized people's life and was rooted within cultures. However, gender-based work roles became more specific when the industrial economy brought about. With the boom of mechanization, the majority of men were employed in the factories because of their advantages in physical strengths and required skills. In the pre-industrial days, women's less productivity, their maternal role, household and childcare responsibility tied them to stay at home (Burnette, 2008). The industrial revolution changed female's way of life and pushed them to work outside home. Women's experience in domestic chores gave them advantage in the home-based jobs, such as cottage industries, agriculture and domestic service. Women's high proportion of employment in these areas during industrialization introduced a change of gender composition in the labor market.

The long-term tradition of labor division split men and women into different occupations. As a consequence, jobs were more on gender-types rather than on job responsibilities (Heilman, 1995). People's perception on jobs labelled as "male" or "female" is highly correlated with gender dominated occupations.

Anker (1998) discussed early researchers' definition of "gender-integrated" occupation and "gender-dominated" occupation. He suggests the boundary of "gender-dominated" occupation should be minimum 80 percentage of male(female) in the whole gender composition. According to Anker's definition, table 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate top ten occupations dominated by gender in America (CATALYST, 2015). It is clearly shown that female's participation in male dominated occupations is far lower than that of male in female dominated industries, which implies that female may experience higher potential of segregation than male in the labour market.

Although there is source regional variation, it is possible to point out approximate ranges of male and female dominated industries on the basic of American employees' selection. Men are largely concentrated on construction, mining, vehicle service and engineering

industries, while women are highly focus on education, nursing, household service and clerical domains. Similarly, European labour force survey indicated an alike distribution (OECD, 2005), and additionally emphasized that women's range of professions is more restricted than that for men. ILO's report (2003) summarized that women tend to choose occupations that require caring, domestic experience and cooperation skills while men are more inclined to select occupations that demand physical strength, technical support and scientific related knowledge. In addition, Anker's（1998）data proved that female are less concentrated in administrative and managerial occupations, as well as in production occupations.

It is noteworthy that sales occupations present a mixed picture on the basic of specific positions across different economic sectors. Industrial and professional selling show a male-dominated tendency since it requires professionalism in products while retail selling performs a worldwide female overrepresentation (OECD, 2005).

Table 2.1 Male dominated occupations in United States

Occupation (Male-dominated)	Total amount	Proportion of female employees
Brickmasons, Blockmasons, and Stonemasons	122,000	0.1%
Drywall Installers, Ceiling Tile Installers, and Tapers	129,000	0.3%
Mining Machine Operators	65,000	0.3%
Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	316,000	0.5%
Electronic Home Entertainment Equipment Installers and Repairers	50,000	0.5%
First-Line Supervisors of Fire Fighting and Prevention Workers	64,000	0.5%
Tool and Die Makers	56,000	0.8%
Heavy Vehicle and Mobile Equipment Service Technicians and Mechanics	194,000	1%
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	867,000	1.2%
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	348,000	1.3%

Source: CATALYST, Women in Male-dominated Industries and Occupations; available on http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-male-dominated-industries-and-occupations#footnote9_d58t5yk. Post on May 30, 2017.

Table 2.2 Female dominated occupation in United States

Occupation (Female-dominated)	Total amount	Proportion of male employees
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	2,768,000	4.7%
Childcare Workers	1,236,000	5.9%
Receptionists and Information Clerks	1,132,000	8.5%
Teacher Assistants	818,000	8.9%
Registered Nurses	2,605,000	9.4%
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,130,000	10.9%
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,284,000	11.9%
Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides	1,863,000	12.1%
Personal Care Aides	907,000	15.3%
Office Clerks, General	920,000	16.6%

Source: CATALYST, Women in Male-dominated Industries and Occupations; available on http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-male-dominated-industries-and-occupations#footnote9_d58t5yk. Post on May 30, 2017

2.2. Explanations for gendered occupational segregation

In explaining gender segregation, it is possible to aggregate academic studies into three categories: neoclassical model, discrimination theory and feminist theory.

2.2.1. Neoclassical model

Under the assumption of rational choices on both employers and workers, women and men will make different human capital investment decisions since women has a discontinuous participation compared to men in the labour market (Becker, 1962). Neoclassical model underlined that women's motherhood influence their career choices and it is on the supply side of labour to view women's low level of human capital. During women's absent period, their skills depreciate. Correspondingly, women tend to invest on general skills that cost less in human capital rather than specific skills with a high value of depreciation (Becker, 1985). Therefore, female is easily focused on low skilled occupations with attributes of low earning. Likewise, women would anticipate jobs with low penalties for interruptions from the labour market (Polachek, 1981) and high starting

pay.

2.2.2. Discrimination theory

However, the neoclassical model neglects practical factors and any gender segregation analysis could be very restricted if it only stands on the discontinuous participations of women in the labour market. Based on this, discrimination theory tries to advance upon another explanation.

One of the primary premises of discrimination theory is the institutions' impact on employee hiring, promotion and dismiss. Employers are described as "gatekeepers" (Cook and Corey, 1991) since their practices directly or indirectly sustain occupational segregation. Women have the potential risk of being exclude from the entry in some jobs by employers' discrimination. For example, the employer offers a full-time job and this job requires an extra training. Only after the employee has worked for a certain period the employer could have returns from the investment. Then women are probably discriminated if they are assumed to have possibilities to leave and have children (Estevez-Abe, 2005). Another argument on blocking female's entry is female's welfare support (Nielsen *et al.* 2004) during their pregnancy. In a word, employers are rational to discriminate against women on the account of men's less costs.

2.2.3. Feminist theory

Apart from the forces inside the labour market, the whole market is still under the influence of the rest of society. Correll (2004) pointed out that the long-term social attitude towards "men" and "women" typical work would influence job applicants' decision. A similar explanation was provided by Gottfredson (1981, 2002), who emphasised the perception on gender and social class identity, which is believed to shape their later occupational aspirations.

Feminist theory highlighted a close relationship between feminine stereotypes, woman's supposed abilities and characteristics of typical-female jobs. For example, Charles and

Bradley (2009) emphasise that gender stereotypes would have an impact on gender-link abilities and traits. Gender-stereotyping of specific occupations will be consistent to a significant degree with typical socially prescribed gender roles and preconceived notions of gender-related abilities. Female and male developed gendered abilities under social and cultural construction, at the same time gender stereotype internalized. This was believed by McDonald and Hite (1998), who pointed out that both gender would receive evolutionary experiences in their special fields based on the traditional labour division and finally enable them towards gender-based occupations. Table 2.3 shows Anker's (1998) summary of female's "positive" and "negative" stereotypes and makes a corresponding association with different occupations.

Feminist theory also assumes that the profound patriarchy's influence is in all levels of the society, leading to women's vulnerable status in the labour market (Anker, 1998). Both workers and employers' decision of jobs are constrained from learned cultural and social norms. For female, long term's subordination in the family and society constructed a discrimination culture. Compared to men, women had less access to education and political environment didn't provide them the same equal rights as men, which made them at a disadvantaged position in the labour market.

Table 2.3 Common stereotyped characteristics of women and their expected effect on occupational segregation by sex

Common stereotyped characteristics of women	Effect on occupational segregation	Examples of typical occupations affected	Comments
Positive			
Caring nature	Helps qualify women for occupations where others are cared for, such as children, the ill, older people.	Nurse, doctor, ayah, social worker, teacher, midwife	Often felt to be biological (i.e. sex difference), because women are mainly responsible for child care in all societies. This is, however, a learned, gender-based difference. Note that occupations that require care but also require greater authority, such as medical doctor, are often male-dominated.
Skill (and experience) at household-related work	Helps qualify women for occupations that are frequently done in the home (almost always by women), often as unpaid household work.	Maid, housekeeper, cleaner, cook, waiter, launderer, hairdresser, spinner, sewer, weaver, knitter, tailor/dressmaker	Skills easy to learn (therefore, women's greater experience before entering the labour market should not be very important).
Greater honesty	Helps qualify women for occupations where money is handled and/or trust is important.	Cashier, bookkeeper, salesperson, accountant	Higher paying and higher status occupations (such as accountant which is a professional occupation) are often male-dominated.

Other

Greater willingness to take orders Greater docility and less likelihood of complaining about work or working conditions Less likelihood of joining trade unions Greater willingness to do monotonous/repetitive work	General characteristics that help qualify women for occupations and sectors of the economy where working conditions are poor, labour laws are not applied (e.g. informal sector) and work is routinized.	These general characteristics "qualify" women for many jobs that are low paid, unskilled, unprotected and repetitious in nature.	These stereotypes have been combined because they are similar in that all imply a subservient nature. These are archetypal learned (gender-type) characteristics.

Negative

Disinclination to supervise others	Helps disqualify women for all types of supervisory and managerial occupations.	Manager (general; production; trade; catering and lodging), supervisor (clerical; sales; production), government executive officer, and administrator and legislative official	This is in many ways the opposite of willingness to take orders. This often affects vertical occupational segregation (with lower level jobs for women).
Less physical (muscular) strength	Helps disqualify women for occupations requiring heavy lifting and/or physical effort.	Construction worker, miner/quarrier, well driller	There is considerable overlap in the physical strength of individual women and men, which means that many women are physically capable of doing this work. Becoming less and less important in today's economy.

Source: Anker, 1998, Gender and jobs, Chapter 2, Table 2.1: p24-27

2.3 A closer look at Gender in the Salesforce

Because gender-based segregation restricts the individual's choice of different occupations, women's movement to male-dominated occupations has been seen as an important development towards decreasing occupation segregation and gender equality (Yavorsky *et al.*, 2016; Levanon *et al.*, 2009). Nevertheless, segregation has not been dissipated by women's increasing participation. Gender differences are persistent in productivity, earning as well as social cognition. It has been suggested that the root of gender segregation is the result of the intertwinement of a multiplicity of factors. To better understand women in male-dominated sales occupations, an efficient conceptional framework is to investigate attitudes of gender differences from both the demand and supply side of the labour market, that is the employer—organizational level, and the employee—individual level.

2.3.1. Individual level

As increasing female salespeople pursue their professional career in traditional male-centred salesforce, the anxious demand for understanding female salespeople is obvious. At the individual level, the central argument is to understand whether the differences between male-female salespersons are significant and may be a barrier block to female's entry and promotion.

Busch and Bush (1978) compared male and female salespeople in terms of pay, work, promotion, co-workers, supervision, customers and job satisfaction. Apparently, the differences were negligible and they concluded that there were no differences between male and female salesforce. Similar findings were obtained by Brief and Oliver's (1976) study, who investigated the differences between male and female retail sale managers across 25 variables. The findings supported "no difference" hypothesis. More recently, Moncrief *et al.* (2000) also pointed out that there is no difference on sale performance from gender variable.

On the contrary, a number of scholars have argued that gender difference is noteworthy since it has contributed to disparate behaviours and attitudes between male and female with effects on sale performance outcome. For example, some academic researchers have underlined that female salespeople experience lower job satisfaction (Schul and Wren, 1992; Swan *et al.*, 1978), lower organizational commitment (Deaux 1984), less self-confidence (Swan *et al.*, 1978), less role clarity (Busch and Bush,1978) and higher role conflicts (Koberg and Chusmir, 1987) than their male colleagues. To gradually reduce these differences, Schul and Wren (1992) suggest that special training program should be prepared for female salespeople in order to enhance their integration into to the industry sales environment. In addition, Lane (2000) noted that the presence of women in the male-dominated salesforce is due to their inappropriateness for managerial posts. Empirical evidences also reported that female sales representatives have weaker product knowledge (Swan *et al.*, 1984) and less persuasive selling skills (Linkemer, 1989) than their male colleagues, which reiterated gender disadvantages for female salespeople.

Although these existing differences appears not to be suitable for women in male-dominated salesforce, other scholars claim that many differences identified on the literature can be used in benefit of female workforce. For example, one possible explanation to women's inferior results on job-related attitudes is the inconsistency of individual value to organizational norms. Pharmaceutical organizations in the early period promoted the "transactional-based" model and their norms mostly emphasised toughness, control, aggressiveness (Rosener, 1990), which are the reverse of women's soft role (Carrier, 1995). Female's lower score on job-related attitude also reflected early adaptation problem to the male-dominated organizational culture. However, Douvan and Adelson (1966) revealed that men highlight recompense, promotion and job security, while women's demand is more on social and personal aspect to develop their career (Linkemer, 1989). This gender difference is also supported by Swan *et al.* (1978)'s survey on pharmaceutical sale group. Therefore, women's attention on social and personal aspect gave them an advantage in socializing their customers (Linkemer, 1989) and could be

viewed positively in sale industry.

Different from salesmen's task-related focus, female salespeople concentrate more on emotional responsive attitudes (Van Emmerik *et al.*, 2006). Women's natural ability of empathy help them knowing better about their customers, capacitate them to fulfil their customer's needs as well as avoiding conflicts. Gradually, women's relationship-oriented is being regarded as an essential competence in sales industries (Crampton and Mishra, 1999), which turns out to be an advantage.

Likewise, women and men perform different communication styles, and language skill is especially vital for salespeople since their job is dealing with customers. Carlson (1971) pointed out that men sale representatives typically are with agentic style communication while women are more in communal style. Sojka and Tansuhaj (1997) found out that women salespeople are more self-disclosing, more cooperative and gain more trust in their customers than their male counterparts. It is probably that men's agentic communication could be seen as adversarial by their clients and female's communal form evoke collaborate intention instead.

However, gender difference would be accentuated when female is at a minority status in a male dominated concentration. Thus, rather than overlooking the gender difference, recognizing and penetrating it in a specific context is helpful for utilising female resources in the labour market. However, the organization's viewpoint plays a key role in female employment.

2.3.2. Organizational level

Besides individual level's consideration, employer is another crucial dimension in recruiting and maintaining female salesforce. Lane (2000) stressed that employers' view on female reflects the job opportunities they offer for women. Their attitude pervades within the whole organisation. And the form of organizational structure is expressed exactly as a signal.

Historically, male's dominated role in the family and society derived hegemony

masculine ideology and it spill over to organisational culture today (Cha, 2013), which brings problems of acceptance and integration for women in male-dominated environments (Kanter, 1977). Today women's entry to the labour market is more freely, but obstacles obviously still exist, like fewer possibilities of career development, less participation on decision-making positions.

Tokenism

It is suggested that when a new, emerging group attempts to enter into an organization with traditional dominants (like male group enter into female-dominated cosmetics companies or female group enter into male-dominated football club), the newcomers tend to be viewed as the "out-group" rather than as inside individual (Kanter, 1977). These outsiders are exactly the group experiencing the above dilemmas. This phenomenon is known as "tokenism", which was first explored by Kanter (1977) to explain disproportionally women working in male-dominated sale industry.

Kanter (1977) indicated three types of negative experience that numerical underrepresentation could bring. The first is called visibility, which refers to token with high level concern. Enhanced visibility contributes to overachievement or underachievement because token's performance is under the attention and they have to take extra pressure from others. Polarization is the second phenomenon related with heightened group boundary. Men as the majority tend to exaggerate the differences between women and themselves, thus creating social isolation and exclusion of women. Thirdly, female would experience assimilation. Men's incomprehension of women makes them to relegate women to constrained expectations and social roles consistent with gender stereotypes.

Stereotypes

Prior literatures also suggested that negative gender stereotype is a key reason to exclude women from higher echelons in the organization (Comer and Drollinger, 1997). Stereotypes and decision makers' gender preference in favour of people with the same

gender may have impact on individual's perceptions and evaluation (Brewer and Brown 1998). For example, Gorman (2005) proposed that employer's perceptions on job candidates is probably distorted by gender stereotypes.

Social gender roles illustrate men as "self-confident, forcefulness, aggressive, competitive, dominant, and toughness" (Lyness and Heilman, 2006). Conversely, women are more described as warmth, gentle, sympathetic, quiet, caring and passive (Adams and Yoder, 1985). Under the traditional male-cantered environment, employers would view male's characteristics as the most appropriate ones to succeed in the organization and would perceive unfitness of women in management position if her characteristics are inconsistent with social view of a "competitive, dominant and toughness" male (Heilman and Eagly, 2008). Similarly, it would be transmitted to female that the perception of a successful role model is related with "male" characteristics (Orser and Foster, 1994).

Especially, Leidner (1993) proposed sales jobs is linked with masculinity based on the aggressive reality that requires strong persuasion skills on customers. Lane (2000) demonstrated that sales industries generated distinct masculine and feminine identities, which were originated from gender stereotypes, largely separate men and women into different types of job. She found evident that growing female salespeople take up customer service jobs, while actual sales still remains masculinised.

Work family balance

Another factor that drift female away from central position in the organization is the role conflicts between family and work. Previously literatures argued that female sustain more pressure than male because women have to deal with family responsibilities, such as household and child caring, and have to take account of job responsibilities at the same time (Bhagat and Chassie,1981). Recently, it is intimated that high-status occupation's time demand of job keeps constantly raise, which was regarded as a trigger that drove women to leave male-dominated jobs (Watt, 2009). Cha (2010) suggests that long-hours working culture potentially made women harder to give both consideration to career and family and finally brought work-life conflicts. Gender stereotypes, cultural norms and

conventional rules have implied the association between women and family. Compared to women's close relationship with family, men are perceived as career-oriented images and their association with family are seem weaker than female (Nosek *et al.*, 2002). It aroused employer's concern on female's ability of balancing work and family.

Since women have increased their participation in labour market, the number of dual-career couples have correspondingly grown, leading both male and female to assume family as well as career responsibility (Gilbert *et al.*, 1994). Some organizations facilitate work-family program to help employees to manage the relationship, but the majority of companies hold an unzealous attitude (Thompson *et al.*, 1999). Generally, employee's preconceptions of devotion to work prioritize career instead of family (Lobel and Kossek, 1996). As a result, organizations are informally encouraging attitudes towards working overtime and personal life sacrifice. So, those employees, who care for their families, would take the risk to receive passive evaluation pertain to lack of organizational commitment in the unsupportive organizational cultures (Allen and Russell, 1999).

Especially in the context of male-dominated industries, decision-makers within that culture would strengthen the traditional gender stereotypes. When organizational setting reinforces women–family association (Kalysh *et al.*, 2016), female employees would be viewed more as mothers than potential talents, and the gender-based selection criteria would likely be used by decision-makers in employing and career advancement decisions (Perry *et al.*, 1994).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Research Strategy

This study looks at pharmaceutical sales job's segregation and aims to understand and analyze female salespeople's underrepresentation in the male-dominated pharmaceutical sale industry in China. Based on literature reviews, gendered occupational segregation is the result of social, cultural, economic and political factors. This numerically imbalanced gender composition phenomenon refers to female workforce in human resources practices, furthermore it concerns gender disparity and inequality as a social problem. Dating from the phenomenon to reason behind, the "how and why" questions entail a qualitative research to identify the identity of sale job and the differences between female salespeople and male salespeople. Therefore, case study would be the perfect method for this kind of phenomenon, since it allows the researcher to explore further questions (Gog, 2015).

Generally, a case study describes an individual, a group, an organization or a situation, and exists in a specific time and place. According to Yin (2009: 13), a case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context". In other words, as a kind of research method case study tries to make causal links of a real existing objective or make deep explanation of what the object is. As shown in this study, what underrepresentation is, why GY company would have an underrepresentation situation of female salespeople and how this situation occurred, these "how", "what" and "why" questions require authors to capture large information to interpret the reality (Lee, 1999). Using case study could provide an insight to the gap between reality and application of theory, which also helps to develop or refine theory (Crowe et.al, 2011). Usually researchers could make implications from a case study and apply this experience to other cases with similarities.

Previous scholars had identified advantages of case study in terms of accessibility, researchers' real experiencing and defensiveness decreasing (Gomm et.al 2000). Different from quantitative research, which emphasizes variables and ignore phenomenon from its

context, case study research is on the basis of empirically and comprehensively perspective viewing specific phenomena. Yin (1984) suggests that data examination is most often conducted within the context of its use. Because it is complicated for survey and experimental strategies to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions, data collected through case study are valued at a more practical than theoretical level.

Another advantage of case study is that it allows both qualitative and quantitative data as a kind of qualitative research. As presents by Yin (2009: 19), "case studies can include, and even be limited to, quantitative evidence". With a mix of qualitative and quantitative data, case study gives author more source information.

However, the voice of criticisms also exists when taking case study as a research methodology. The main concern of case study is about researcher's subjectivity. Case study gives opportunities for author to observe and experience the specific reality. At the same time, the research himself describes what he sees and makes choices of what content to be included in the case. Then, the study is on a biased perspective because researcher's individual perspective may not be representative and holistic.

3.2 Setting

In this study, a local Chinese pharmaceutical organization with an unbalanced gender composition in its sale department was selected to be the research object. The company is labelled GY. This company will be studied to understand female salespeople's situation in male-dominated pharmaceutical sale occupation as well as the organization's attitude on their female employee.

With sixty-six years' history, GY pharmaceutical company is one of the largest Sino-foreign Joint Venture enterprise in China. As the leading pharmaceutical distributors, GY provides distribution services to around 4000 health care institutions, 1800 drug stores, and nearly 2900 retailers nation-wide.

In 2015, GY's sales revenue reached RMB 37.8 billion, which was ranked the top five on the list of national pharmaceutical industries. GY's great achievement in Chinese pharmaceutical market cannot be separated from its sale department's contribution. Unlike other departments in GY company, the sale department is the only one with visibly female employee underrepresentation. Occupied by approximately 80% male salespeople, GY's sale team is masculine. GY set up pharmaceutical sales in 1989 and since then male is the mainstream at this position. Female salespeople's underrepresentation keeps a long-term trend in GY pharmaceutical company's sale department, even after the influx of female workforce into professional selling fields.

3.3. Data generation

The key approach of data collection in this study is in-depth interviews with eighteen respondents in GY pharmaceutical company. They were interviewed in person or virtually, using a semi-structure interview format. The interview questions were constructed on the following aspects: job profile of pharmaceutical sales; the barriers and challenges people may encounter on this position; GY company's working environment; the role of saleswomen in a sale team; the perceptions of female sales' underrepresentation in GY company; and female salespeople's personal experience.

3.4. Interview participant

Eighteen interviewees including six females and twelve males are the main participants of this study. The eighteen people are all working in GY pharmaceutical company but in different departments. They could be divided into three groups: the first group contains eleven salespeople, including four females and seven males in sale department; the second group has two female informants worked in human resource department; and, the third group is the executive layer that comprises three team leaders, a supervisor and one manager. Table 3.1 provides the basic information of all interviewees. The participants' age ranges from 23 to 45 years old and their seniority in this company range from 1 to 15 years.

Table 3.1 Basic Information of interviewees in GY pharmaceutical company

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Position	Seniority (years)
1	Female	27	Married	Senior sale	3
2	Female	24	Single	Junior sale	1
3	Male	35	Married	Team leader	6
4	Male	23	Single	Junior sale	1
5	Female	32	Married	HR	6
6	Female	29	Married	HR	2
7	Male	26	Married	Senior sale	2
8	Female	23	Single	Junior sale	1
9	Female	24	Single	Junior sale	1
10	Male	24	Single	Senior sale	1
11	Male	25	Single	Senior sale	2
12	Male	28	Married	Senior sale	2
13	Male	31	Single	Team leader	5
14	Male	33	Married	Team leader	4
15	Male	27	Single	Senior sale	3
16	Male	29	Married	Senior sale	4
17	Male	38	Married	Supervisor	13
18	Male	45	Married	Manager	15

3.5. The nature of the interviews

All interviews were undertaken in June and July in 2016. The participants were informed about the purpose of interview and their identities will not be exposed at any situation. The interviews lasted on average of one and a half hours. All interviews were recorded and transcribed from Chinese to English.

Using a semi-structure format, the interview allowed flexibility and freedom for interviewees to talk more about their experiences, while the interview guideline assured the respondents provided relevant information on the topic and the same general areas of interest.

All interviews were electronic recorded. The interviews were undertaken at different locations. Most salespeople were invited to have meals since this occasion lies in the convention of the sales job itself, other interviews took place from meeting room of GY

company or nearby coffee shops, according to the preference of participants. And notes were taken for some special jargon in this industry after informant's explanation. In the meantime, participants' emotions were also recorded in the notes especially when answering some sensitive questions.

Since there are three groups of interviewees, questions vary between the different targets. The first group are salespeople, so the interview questions focus on their perception about sales jobs, barriers they experienced and organization atmosphere. Female salespeople's responses are specially emphasized and their experience are further explored.

The second group are employees in the human resource department. The key points of the interview are the recruitment and selection process of pharmaceutical sales, criteria of performance appraisal and the recall of female and male salespeople's performance.

The final group are executives in the sales department. The questions emphasize the personal attitudes on female at pharmaceutical sales position and their impressions on both male and female employees.

The interview guideline is addressed as follow:

Interview Guideline

Salespeople
- Why did you want to be a pharmaceutical sale?
- How long have you been working for GY company? Why do you choose this company?
- How do you feel about GY's company culture? What about your colleagues? How is your relationship?
- Did you have any work experience in this industry before joining GY company? What is the challenge of your position?
- Would these challenges turn to be barriers that impede your career development? Would you work at this position in the future?
- Have you ever noticed that your female colleagues face an underrepresentation

situation in the company? Do you have any comments about it?

Employees in Human Resources Department

- What is the recruitment process in the company? And the selection criteria for the pharmaceutical sales position?

- How often does the company recruit new employees for this position? How is the turnover rate in this position?

- How does the company determine the compensation and benefit in this position?

- What is the mobility paths in this position? How many people could be promoted to management layer? Do women gain the same opportunities to be promoted as men?

- I saw that the gender composition in the sales team is not so balanced as other department. Why does sales department have less female employees?

- Based on your performance appraisal system, what is the difference between male and female salespeople?

- Recently the Chinese government abandon the one-child policy, and make extension of maternity leave, would it influence recruiting female employees?

Executives

- How long have you take charge of this team/ department?

- What qualities do you think are essential for the pharmaceutical sales position?

- What is the criteria that you use to evaluate your subordinates? And how is your subordinates' performance? Do you think that male and female employees behave differently?

- I noticed that the sales department has less female employees. Why does the sales department have female's underrepresentation? How do you think about it?

- How do you view ladies' position in your team/department?

- Recently the government abandon the one-child policy, from your point of view, what will be the impact of extended maternity leaves on the recruitment policy and female career advancement in the company?

3.6. Interpretation of the empirical material

Different from quantitative research or scientific experiments, the qualitative research collects unstructured and unwieldy material, like transcription of interview, description of observation and discussion (Huberman and Miles, 2002). In the process of understanding, the researcher provides detailed interpretation and comprehensive information that allows the readers to experience what researcher's perceived (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). In this sense, author's interpretation demonstrates sufficient information and offer elements for readers to make their own judgment.

However, some early scholars put forward worries for providing coherence of cumbersome data set and communicating data through qualitative approach (Knafl and Howard, 1984). Nevertheless, like Berg and Lune (2012: 340) argued, "quantitative measures appear objective, but only so long as we don't ask questions about where and how the data were produced… pure objectivity is not a meaningful concept if the goal is to measure intangibles (as) these concepts only exist because we can interpret them".

The main goal of this study is to understand the reasons behind female salespeople's minority situation in GY company. Interviews were gathered to gain information of the problem. To some extent, initial interpretations occurred throughout the interviews. And, interviewees' responses make a composition of how these interview texts are used to portray the realities. Transcribing the recorded interviews was also involved in interpretation. Moreover, the process of interpretation continuous up to the writing up phase, as there was a need to read and record again the transcribed material and to use the theoretical lens to make sense of participants discourses for understanding women workforce in male-dominated occupations.

In order to find what was "unsaid" in the interviewees' narratives, the discourse technique will be used to inquiry the insights from those interviewees, because "it is a methodology for analyzing social phenomena that is qualitative, interpretive, and constructionist"

(Hardy et al., 2004: 19).

Discourse analysis

Usually discourse analysis is seen in linguistic discipline. According to Brown and Yule's (1983: 1) definition, the discourse analysis is "committed to an investigation of what that language is used for". Thornbury (2005) also suggests that discourse analysis consider issues "beyond the sentence". Not only the literal meaning, discourse analysis also emphasizes latent meaning of oral and written languages. Since pharmaceutical sales are at verbal position and they were trained especially in communication skills and networking ability, their expressions and comments during the interviews are courteous and tactful. To portray the realities, it's not merely what they said should be highlighted, the implied information and what they withhold also would be a significant clue closing to the truth.

Fairclough (1995) suggests a broad context should be the presupposition when doing a discourse analysis since it helps understanding their constructive effects. Before making assumption of this research, I checked out earlier internal annual reports and background information from GY's parent company, locating this company "historically and socially" (Hardy et al., 2004: 20). My half year's internship experience in GY company provided a basic understanding of GY's enterprise culture and atmosphere inside the office. And before the data generation process, I obtained the permission from an executive leader of the sale department, which motivated me to develop my research. All these factors assist me to construct the presupposition of my research question.

After making the assumption, I started to invite participants for the interview. Trying to get a full description of pharmaceutical sale job, I selected three groups of participants from different positions and hierarchies to undertake interview. On the basic of participants' position, I revised the interview guidelines in order to acquire information from various angles. Discourse analysis is standing at these angles to analyze their languages. Stenvoll's (2002) view on social world outlined the significance of language.

Through our language, we construct, reconstruct our surroundings, and use it to explain certain social phenomena. In this study, the interview texts are transcribed from interviewees' language. By understanding how these participants' meaning is made and the hidden message they transmit helps making correlation between discursive content and social contexts as Fairclough and Wodak (1997) underlined.

Besides standing at a researcher's perspective during the interview, I was inclined to be on the side of a newcomer of pharmaceutical sales industry to communicate with interviewees. It is to uncover how their meaning was made as well as to avoid "respondent bias" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Interviewees sometimes would view researcher as a threat, therefore providing a researcher's expecting answer. Since majority interviewees had the same academic background as I, newcomer's role helped me to reduce the distance and engage myself and interviewees in interaction. Just like Alvesson (2010: 1) suggests, when researchers are undertaking interviews, "they are not just revealing the truth about social conditions and people's experiences through accessing data, they are also producing specific representation of something".

At the same time, Alvesson (2010: 15) also mentioned author's personal experience would have an impact when researcher was "producing the specific representation". Robson (2011) stressed the importance of using reflexivity in qualitative research to identify researcher's bias. To put it in another way, in this study, my pharmacy trade background and my presumed objectivity would lead me to be distant, removed, neutral, disengaged from the subjects and their context. However, during the interviews I realized that I was reacting when interviewees didn't answer or react as I expected them to do so. At that time, I begun to reflect on how this assumption was made and use this preconceived idea to remind myself that I should learn to allow my scholar, cultural and social perspectives to interact with the participants' discourses, experiences and knowledge. For example, when asking about the essential requirement of pharmaceutical sales position, I expected a medical or healthcare background would be a key requirement to succeed in this business area. However, the HR and team leaders responded that

network in sales channel is the key competitive advantage, which indicated that social relations would be more welcome on this position. So, in the next interview, I would query pharmaceutical salespeople about nurturing relationships instead of concerning their professional background.

Thus, in conducting the research, reflexivity was adopted as a methodological position (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). It means that this research does not argue for the validity of the findings. Instead, I have to recognize my influences on the research process and the vital role that my authorial self takes in my writing. It means that this document registers an account of my thinking and emotions, where I question speaking subjects, discourses, roles and power relations in order to look at what it is not capable of saying.

Chapter 4 Finding

This chapter will progressively present some findings following three themes: employees' perception of sales job, internal and external environment's influence and different groups' reactions towards female salespeople's underrepresentation.

4.1 Job Requirements

4.1.1. Perceptions of Team Members

Pharmaceutical salespeople work as a link that connects doctors, hospitals and pharmaceutical companies. They inform doctors the cutting-edge information and industry trend. In the meantime, they convey doctors' feedback on clinical prescription to the pharmaceutical manufacturers, like adverse drug reaction and medicine treatment coverage. Pharmaceutical sale job is described as a "messenger" between medicine manufacturers and hospitals. However, their main task is medicine marketing and selling products. To achieve sales quota, organizing academic discussion with clients and partnering stakeholders up with local networks are commonly undertaken to maximize sales growth, which means that outside working environment and extensive travelling are an inherent necessity of this position.

In this study, almost all participants pointed out that sales' representatives schedule is inconstant since there is high demand for geographical mobility and time flexibility. However, men and women have different perceptions and career goals, and the appeared interviewees' narratives vary differently.

Male salespeople tend to have a positive experience. Some participants considered that sales job enables them to learn relevant medical knowledge and is a personally enriching process. Moreover, the high inconstancy of this position allows them to develop time management and adaptability skills, which would be useful applied and easily transferable to a new job:

"It's (schedule) tight, but I can handle everything at this moment. The working pace of medicine sale representative is really fast...To communicate with doctors, medical office management, and staff of medical facilities, the familiarity with life science and medical knowledge is required, which means you have to keep most recent information with industry changes, products and scientific updates. Now I enjoy this job, which requires me to study hard and enrich myself..." (Interviewee 4, male, single, junior salesman)

Yet, the majority of women had mixed feeling about sale's job. On the one hand, they highlight the fulfilling aspect referred by male participants. On the other hand, they experience negative attitudes. The personal safety problem was often mentioned by female salespeople. Some ladies feel uneasy about traveling alone and working late in the evening. For instance, two females expressed their feelings about working on this position:

"I grew quickly from the interaction with patients and their family, and my clients. The first time I was blamed I was at a complete loss what to do and even had grievance about it. After several times, I learned to soothe their emotions. I learned how to talk to them, with comforting words but not weakly yielding to them. With the doctors' support try to explain all possible happen reactions, convince them and make them understand side effect of drug depends on person to person. Such situation develops my ability of communication, and remaining calm in an emergency." (Interviewee 5, female, married, HR, used to be in sales department)

"I would say this work is both physically and mentally demanding, the long hours walking, standing, and traveling between multiple locations could be essential…Sometimes our clients like doctors have busy schedule in the daytime, so it is common to visit them after their work in the evening or before they go to wards in the early morning. To be honest, as a woman I don't want to work so late. Going home along late at nights always make me feel insecure." (Interviewee 9, female, single, junior saleswoman)

With regard to business trips, female was less satisfied with poor working condition and intense workload. They described business trips as "work around the clock". Sometimes they even work on the way, waiting time at train station; airport is utilized to prepare meetings or presentation for clients. Half of female participants explicitly think business travel brings extra work-related stress, including accumulation of preparation and follow-up work, social engagement obligation and physical fatigue. More importantly, frequent business trips and long hours working condition bring the possibility of absence from

home and family.

4.1.2. Perceptions of Middle Management

However, the executives in GY company view geographical mobility as an advantage of sale job. Having extensive travels and finishing heavy workload are regarded as a positive element in developing personal career:

> "Employees' initiative to extra work and business travel it's like a signal showing that you have ambition on your career and willing to spend time on work. I think these employees would be more helpful than those with less willingness, there is no doubt." (Interviewee 13, male, single, team leader)

> "I understand ladies have family responsibilities are not that willing to travel a lot and be far away from home. But the availability of business travel is good for your future development. Though it takes time, you will feel tired getting to a new place, you have the opportunities meeting different people and working in another culture. Moreover, it enables you to develop professional networks there, network means resources in a salesman's dictionary. That is valuable, no matter personally or organizationally." (Interviewee 17, male, married, supervisor)

GY explicitly encourages salespeople to move to different places to build business or personal connections. From these statements, it could be speculated that the company culture in GY values employees' devotion to work. Both willingness and competencies to business travel and extra workload are key requirements to career advancement.

However, GY's value is inconsistent with female's lives when they undertake primary family responsibilities. Even though both female and male salespeople face work-family conflicts, concerns on female balancing work and private life seems to be much higher than that of male counterparts, this situation leads female salespeople to be perceived with less willingness to business trips and extra work. GY Company's encouragement of dedication to work might pose greater challenge for female to achieve career pursuit and work-family balance.

4.1.3. The Reality: Work, Family and Private life balance

It is recognized that job requirements of pharmaceutical sales job could create potential work and family conflicts, supported by all participants regardless of their gender. Those in a cohabiting or marital relationship indicated that overtime working and business travel would affect their private life and have influence on their relations with family or partner:

> "My girlfriend complains many time I couldn't be with her, in her eye I was a 'workaholic' – sometimes even work on weekends and days off. But this is my job, I am involuntary to leave her home. I even couldn't play my favorite football at regular times. Usually I play it every Friday afternoon. It's hard to have this activity now."
> (Interviewee 10, male, single, senior salesman)

This participant expressed his job encroached on private life. In his case, there are not that much responsibilities like childcare because the participant is single. Although this participant experienced work life conflicts, it didn't go to a severe situation. But the dual career couples, particularly women, would suffer more pressure on this issue. Apart from working tasks, they still have household chores and private leisure desire. The work - family conflicts would be even more intense with children caring and education situation. Some women with children indicated they have to squeeze out the time to meet multiple demands. A respondent from HR department shared her experience previously working at sale department when talking about work family balance:

> "The situation was problematic and embarrassed when I was in the sale department. The 'lack of time' dilemma frequently occurring after being a mother. I have conflicts between time management and family life under this working environment…
> At weekdays, I have to send my kid to a day nursery school because I and my husband are the 'dual career couple', neither of us could take a look. After work, picking up my son from school, cooking for dinner, doing housework, checking my son's homework…I just feel time flies and there still much work to do… If I had unavoidable business trips and weekend meetings, not allowing me to accompany my child, I have to make several notes about childcare issue for my husband because he would be at a loss and doesn't know what to do. In the morning, I even call him up to deliver our son to school, otherwise he'll forget then it would be a problem..."
> (Interviewee 5, female, married, HR, used to be in the sales department)

In this case, the HR employee seen to spend more time on home activities than her husband. It may mean that women are more likely to take care of the family and consequently miss some inessential work activities. On the other hand, men tend to sacrifice family activities to work when work-family conflicts emerge. It happens because, in the Chinese environment, men are placed great expectation on succeeding at work while child-rearing and family responsibilities still falls primarily to women. The unequal division between family and work means that when women are pursuing their career they have extra pressure on domestic sphere, probably resulting in a higher work-family conflict than their male counterparts. Particularly pharmaceutical sales job requires overnights and weekend travels, which makes women tougher to balance work and family.

It could be deduced from the above narratives that male and female salespeople have different perceptions on pharmaceutical sales jobs. In general terms, both male and female salespeople experience similar work-family conflicts, but female is influenced on a larger extent. For female salespeople, the job requirements bring more work-related and family-related pressure than personal enrichment. But, for male counterparts, the positive consequences brought by job requirements are highlighted, which is consistent with middle management's perspectives. The team leaders and supervisors in GY company also emphasize that employees' devotion on sales jobs would develop individual advantages in future career life.

4.2 Cultural influence vs. Gender differences

Another barrier of female underrepresentation comes from gender ideology in culture. Living in the patriarchal society for more than five thousand years, Chinese traditional culture treats men's role and masculinity as superior, which cause gender favoritism of men both at birth and work. Therefore, gendered labor division emerged from this social perception. Men are expected to work outside to be "breadwinner", while women are expected to care for family inside to be "homemaker". Men's role expectation make education as a competitive factor in offering financial supporting for the family, while female's role conventionally limits women's access to the education that chucked away

money-making opportunities and developing working skills.

Female's inferior status in patriarchal society and less educated background made them at a disadvantageous position when applying jobs:

> "Pharmaceutical sales, this job was brought into China in 1988, by a famous industry giant. At that time, the job requirements were rather rigorous, either doctors with rich clinical experiences, or professional pharmaceutical researchers, were qualified enough to be a pharmaceutical sale since they were required to read medical literatures without difficulties and directly communicated with doctors…… Girls at that time usually had high school degree and only a few of them had opportunities to higher education so the majority of pharmaceutical sales have been well-educated men since this job was introduced…" (Interviewee 6, female, married, HR)

Female's under-education and deficient background exclude themselves from the entry of sales job in the early years, originating underrepresentation in pharmaceutical sales industry.

However, social norms have changed as time flied and human's liberation of freedom spreads. Nowadays, girls are provided with equal rights to education and increasing women go out of family and actively seek job opportunities in the labor market. Even though, gender stereotypes still persist in China and have impact on the typology of the work force.

4.2.1. Stereotypes of Women

Female salespeople in GY company are perceived with gender stereotypes to some extent. One aspect is that they are considered incapable of selling products. For example, one team leader commented:

> "Women are generally believed to be more approachable than males and it is easier for them to communicate with the customers. But we also worry that they would behave too submissive during the talk with our clients, which could make them lost the initiative in the follow bargaining." (Interviewee 13, male, single, team leader)

It could be seen that women's feminine characteristics like "meek, submissive and mild", are reinforced by men in male-dominated environment. And this participant suggests these characteristics would influence the sale performance. The words – "worry",

"submissive" and "lost the initiative" indicate that female's feminine characteristics are regarded as inferior to masculine qualities, which imply that men are more suitable for pharmaceutical sales position then women.

Interestingly, while men showed skeptical attitude towards female colleagues' performance, women revealed strong confidence on female salespeople and their capability. They believed their different qualities could bring new vitality to this job. This would also be seen and mentioned in the following gender different section.

Nevertheless, their leaders didn't see their potential. On the contrary, they observed more women's traditional feminine role that emphasized gender stereotype:

> "I don't know if it is because I am the only girl in the team or my paperwork is really good, my boss is likely to assign me to write reports or prepare statements. Sometimes I just confuse whether I'm a salesperson or a secretary…" (Interviewee 2, female, single, junior saleswoman)

> "Female's role is necessary, though the proportion of male is big in our department. Ladies' "feminine" roles bring some kind of balance in a male-dominated environment. It was like mother, or wife standing behind us, encouraging and pushing us forward. Girls in the team could drive males to advance and support us." (Interviewee 3, male, married, team leader)

When the first participant was assigned more clerical work by her leader, she was probably placed on her feminine role, as secretary, which is socially acknowledged as female dominated in China. Her leader's understanding of female sale job is out of sales position and tend to reproduce the stereotypical perspective. The second respondent emphasizes that female plays a role in the team. But his description didn't put female and male at the same status layer. Female is viewed more as "mother" or "wife" who stands at the back instead of a partner with equal seat.

Here it is another female saleswoman reporting her experience on bias at the workplace:

> "If my male colleagues leave the company at about four or five o'clock in the afternoon, people would deem he is going to visit a client. If I leave the company at the same time, well, they would consider I'm going to pick up my child from

kindergarten because I'm a mother." (Interviewee1, female, married, senior saleswoman)

Like the example showed above, employees in GY company would automatically related female's performance with her mother's role or "feminine" characteristics, which is gradually constructed through culture and social norms. Female being trapped into traditional gender role would undermine their competencies and further impede female's opportunities of career promotion since their potential couldn't be exploited at other positions.

4.2.2. Gender difference in selling styles

Another source of gender stereotypes is from gender differences. One of the most obvious differences is the working style by gender in this study. The following two examples are shared by a male and a female salesperson, they described how they perceive themselves or the other sex:

> "Well, as to the differences, it depends on personality. I mean everyone would have their pattern to communicate with their clients. The most obvious different point I saw is… our (male salespeople) way is more direct, keep it as business issue and strive for win-win relationship.
> My female colleague is walking on another way. She pays more attention on maintaining good relationship with our clients. I remember once she took few hours talking with her clients, I thought she could at least get some information about client's purchasing intention or something else. But she told me she didn't talk anything about business with her client, they just chatting as friends did! I was surprised, because for me I don't think it's an efficient way..." (Interviewee 12, male, married, senior salesman)

> "I think female's role make me more care my clients. Female's sensitivity helps me discover clients' real demand while my male colleagues probably would ignore, they only focus on what clients said but I care more why they said so and what he really wants. It would be good for maintaining a long-term customer relation. And more, if I gain the trust from one customer, then I probably could rely on his network to develop more potential customers.
> Men, however, they are more ambition. They would visit five or more clients a day to seek for cooperative opportunities. But for me three is the limit…" (Interviewee 1, female, married, senior saleswoman)

Two distinct selling styles are presented through these two participants' statement. Men's selling style is on a wider range and with diversity, they prefer to build their own network by visiting numerous clients. To achieve this, their way is direct and transactional-based. On the contrary, women focus on maintaining long-term relationship with some clients, they have a smaller scope but they rely on these mature clients' professional network to further develop business. This roundabout style is on the basis of client's resources, which require a totally understanding and a good relationship with them.

It could be seen that men's selling style is full of agentic characteristics, while women's selling style is with strong communal characteristics. According to Madera et al. (2009), agentic behavior requires aggressiveness, independence and achievement, like initiating tasks as male salespeople did. Communal behavior is on the opposite, it includes caring for others, being willing to cooperate and maintaining relationships, exactly as female salespeople's action (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). At this point, men and women's difference in selling styles is consistent with their gender roles.

These two gendered patterns are also found from their communication with colleagues, one team leader recalled his conversation with male and female subordinates respectively:

> "Qin (a male subordinate) is that kind of bold and unconstrained, every time he has problem he just come to me and describe the problem, asked whether I know something or I could help in some way…
>
> Meilan (a female subordinate) concerns too much things and pays more attention to details … I have to take more than ten minutes to listen to her sharing personal feeling. After that move to work-related problem… and finally take another ten minutes to comfort and encourage her. Women are in touch with the emotional side of need more than men are …" (Interviewee 14, male, married, team leader)

The above narrative suggests that male participants just express their assistance demand when they need, and they tend to seek for informational and instrumental support from their leader. And female salespeople are more likely to report details and affective interaction, tend to seek for emotional support from their leader. Furthermore, the team leader's recall about the interaction of subordinates with the superior is consistent with

their performed behaviors during the selling process.

Apparently, there is no right or wrong styles in selling products. However, since pharmaceutical sale is a male-dominated occupation and GY is a typical organization in this industry, men's working style and behaviors are naturally regarded as proper and standard. Different from the numerical majority, female's mode of nourishing customer's relations could be seen as a "heretical" way, which is hardly be accepted by male and may finally contribute to women isolation.

4.3 Actual Attempts to Reconstruct the Masculine culture

4.3.1. Women's Strategy: Proving yourselves

The above stereotypical perceptions with high personal subjectivity have had visible consequence: there is a smaller proportion of women in relation to men in the sales department. But, other consequences can also be observed. For example, female participants refer that they have to redouble their effort on working to prove their capabilities and to have a prominent sales performance to separate themselves from "submissive" image in GY's male-dominated team:

> "At that time, one of my male colleagues, derided me that there is no need to work so hard as a woman, marrying with a wealthy husband and then being a tender wife is quite easier than striving and working. I don't know if it is because I was the only female in the team he often made fun of me. I'm fine with those innocuous jokes but I really took offense at this kind of comment. So, I wanted to prove myself. It's not easy. Keep up the same level with them is not enough because that's what I should do in their eyes. I have to widen the gap to make guys convinced women could perform as men did at this position. That would be a strong evidence……
> To strive for a big order, I prepared almost all related medical literature and provided medication guidance for every possible side-effect to my clients; visited the whole related personnel and engaged in their social activities……That period I sacrificed my leisure time, long-time working I was exhausted. But I'm those indomitable styles and as the only female in my team, I hope what I was endeavoring could change their views on women and gain acceptance from others…" (Interviewee 8, female, single, junior saleswoman)

From this participant's experience, the "joke" made by male colleague was with

stereotypical role expectation, like she said "being a tender wife". Under this situation, the participant mentioned that only an exceeding performance is significant to prove herself.

As Kanter (1977) argued, in a dominant group the token would face performance pressures. The presence of female in male-centered context is easily noticed, but it doesn't mean her performance could achieve the same effect since their capabilities tend to be eclipsed by their physical appearance and stereotypical role expectation. It appears that performance pressures come from gender stereotypes, which is the primary cause making women work with extra effort to prove their competence.

Actually, the women's strategy to prove themselves is a manifestation that they are accommodating men's norms. With the goal of surpassing her male colleagues, in the above example the female salesperson emphasized men's traits. Women's strategy is to minimize the gender differences by reproducing the masculine norms. They seem to adopt the stereotypically masculine characteristics in order to be accepted by their male co-workers.

4.3.2. Peer integration

In the interviews, some participants recalled episodes suggesting that team leaders try to facilitate interaction and integration. Here it is an example of a female salesperson's experience in team building activities:

> "Actually, my team leader would organize activities like parties and meals. The team members visit the clients individually every day; so, the leader hopes us can communicate more with each other using this chance.
> However, I still have the feeling that couldn't fit in the team. They always talk about things like football, basketball, cars or politics. At first, they would ask me how do I view football player XXX, or which club looks promising…Their topics are really not my area, I don't have anything could share with them. I tried to change another topic but they also with little knowledge about what I said. Then they just shrugged, showed me a smile with a little disappointment, and then continued their conversation. Most of the time men talk about their interests in high spirits and I only watch them talking…" (Interviewee 9, female, single, junior saleswoman)

It could be seen from the above narrative that the team leader is aware of females had problem in the male-dominated sales team. But he oversimplified this problem and used a straightforward solution to solve it. According to the female participant's description, she failed to join men's conversation and felt alone in the end.

Reskin (2003) suggested that people make friends with those who have something in common. People who have similar interests or qualities easily get the empathy of each other and would rather communicate with each other. Male salespeople's common interests in sports and vehicles could be regarded as a kind of gender similarity. This similarity helps engaging peer in a closer connection and developing more friendly and cooperative relationships (Roth, 2004), bringing a closed gendered circle among male members. Therefore, female is easily excluded from this kind of ties and lost the networking opportunities because they are "different". The difference does not only come from the biological gender and their behaviors in the selling process but also from espoused values like conversation topics or interests.

This quote displays a concern that the lack of belonging feeling exists when ladies socializes with male colleagues. To some extent the saleswoman was still excluded from men's informal network. The sense of exclusion determines female's "outsider" situation in GY's male-dominated environment, which is exactly what Kanter (1977) suggested with the expression "tokenism" or "in-group and out-group" buzzwords from social identity theory (Tajfel, 1970).

4.3.3. Co-workers' Resistance

In Kanter's (1977) research, tokens' isolation from informal network probably will be extended to professional networks, causing tokens receiving less support from colleagues. These exclusions are gradually strengthened to a structural level and would turn to be strong resistance when minority groups are offered opportunities to access to higher echelon by top management.

Here it is another initiative to change the status quo in a top-down movement introduced

by a senior executive, but consequently it doesn't make any difference:

> "There was a time that my company had a big project and I was selected to be the only one female in the group responsible for it. I was delighted and felt my ability was finally acknowledged by the boss! But what I experienced in the group frustrated me after.
> Though I was included in the group, my voice was hardly heard during the decision-making process. Men were naturally take the leading actors. Most of the time they presided over the conversation. I tried to express myself but they said my ideas were with petty restrictions. They showed me more admiring feedback when I contributed with secretarial work." (Interviewee 8, female, single, junior saleswoman)

> "As a man, I will feel a little demeaning to work under a woman. I don't know how I would react, because my company has never had a female sales manager before. We already accustomed to 'alpha-male' culture. But if there is a female manager, I think her abilities, managerial traits and prestige should carry conviction." (Interviewee 15, male, single, senior salesman)

It is observed that this female participant's role in group decision making is missed, or at least grossly underemphasized. Men, however, took a granted attitude to assume the leadership positions, which implied their resistance to accept female's participation even she is got the opportunity to do so. Also, it could see male's acceptance to female leader is low. The male participant highlighted their dominative culture and showed less willing attitude being subservient to female leaders.

This quote provides an example of breaking "homosocial reproduction". In Kanter's (1977) tokenism theory, homosocial reproduction refers to gender and power relations. It described the process when top management offer authorization they have a favoritism of those with similar characteristics, usually relying on the sex. However, the top management in GY now start to change. They tried to base on employees' merits instead of gender to select talents, removing the structural barrier for women's influx.

Obviously, the majority of men will resist to change when this "homosocial reproduction" is abandoned and female salespeople are more likely placed in important position by the top. As Dent and Goldberg (1999) emphasize, what employees are resisting is the

potential negative consequence associated with change instead of the change itself. In this study, man is the "in-group" in GY company. It is common to see their male preference previously. However, now women are given the chance to enter into "in-group". It is possible for them to perceive women's rise as a threat that causing their loss of status. Thus, resistance could be a kind of men's reaction to express their disapproval. Though top leaders decide to transform the male-dominated environment, co-workers' resistance is an obstacle making the change.

In sum, this chapter demonstrates different groups' perceptions as well as their attitudes towards female salespeople's problem. At the same time, three examples of GY company's actual attempts were presented to promote women's integration and improve female's conditions. However, the result showed that female salespeople's situation is immutable even women themselves and executives make great efforts to change.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The purpose of this study is to explore the underrepresentation of female pharmaceutical salespeople in GY company. Specially, the author's aim is to reveal the perceptions employees have about sales job, to gain understanding of GY company's attitude and individual behaviors towards female employees in male-dominated workplaces, and to discuss the ineffectiveness in coping with female's integration into male-dominated environment.

In this chapter, the author will address this aim by responding to the central questions presented in the introduction chapter.

Question 1: "what are the meanings different actors ascribed to the sales occupation?"

To start with, the findings indicate that male and female salespeople have different conceptions of sales occupation. Men think more about sales job related outcomes, such as individual learning and career development, while women's "mixed feelings" focus more on relieving pressure from sales job itself. One explanation is that the job requirement of pharmaceutical sales is incompatible with female's lives on the account of their main responsibilities in family. Frequently business travels and the irregular working time required by sales job create family-unfriendly working environment for salespeople. Even though both male and female salespeople experience work-family conflicts, the traditional division of domestic work in China generates lower expectation of male but higher expectation of female on family sphere:

> "I'm so glad and grateful that my better half shoulders the whole family. I knew I focus too much on work because I want to provide conditions for good life..." (Interviewee 16, male, married, senior sale)

> "There is a time in my family party we talked about the future plan, both my husband and my parents advised me to change to a cushy or flexible job that could better take care of the family because they think my husband earns more and I should be the one to do so." (Interviewee 1, female, married, senior sale)

Male and female's priorities are perceived differently from these comments. Men tend to put career ahead of family, while no women can make the same choice. Of course, either one or the other try to balance both family and work responsibilities. However, the family involvement for women is typically higher than for men, making women with higher potential of work family conflicts (Becker and Moen, 1999; Burnett et al, 2012).

Kastner (2004) underlines that work family conflicts emerge on individual level, but should not be undertaken only on this perspective. Supported by Kossek et al. (2011), employees' experience on work-family conflicts will decrease when their employers show a care and support attitude on work-family balance. Female interviewees also expressed their eagerness that company should give consideration about work-family interference. However, in this study, GY is unlikely to promote work-family balance arrangements since employees are encouraged to devote to work on the organizational level. GY's executives value "work is primary", which is similar to men's career-oriented perception on themselves. In this sense, GY's organizational climate is more suitable for male salespeople.

Gustafson (2006) supported this finding and reported that employers show a more reluctant attitude on hiring female on positions with high mobility, considering that their heavy responsibilities at home make difficulties to satisfy company's travel demand. The family-unfriendly working environment, unequal division of domestic work and organizational work priority climate educe more restraints for women than for men, making more difficulties to balance work and family for female salespeople.

The above different perceptions of career and family life are produced under the influence of social norms, consistently matching the feminist theory. As expected, female salespeople were usually related with gender stereotype in the GY's context. Gender stereotypes are the product of particular historical, cultural and social contexts (European Commission, 2012). Originated from traditional culture, Chinese patriarchal influence

privileged men at job positions. This cultural setting generated more suitable working conditions for male than for female (Mihalčová et. al, 2015). As a result, male's superiority and female's inferiority were emerged as a gender stereotype. Given the finding in GY company, women's selling performance were regarded "passive" or "less efficient" by their male colleagues and team leaders, attached with incapable or submissive labels derived from traditional culture.

At the same time, it was found women used to be excluded from the entry of some knowledge-concentrated professions, such as pharmaceutical sales, because of the lack of equal education opportunities as men in the past. In a masculine environment, female's gender stereotypes would be activated. This finding concurred with Eagly and Carli's (2008) research that illustrated masculine occupations would emphasize men's performance advantage, so that masculine qualities were more important than feminine qualities on sales positions.

Question 2: "To what extent were different actors able to reconstruct the male dominated culture in sales context?"

The findings suggest that some initiatives are adopted in a way that reproduce the male dominated culture at GY's sales department. In the following paragraphs, the author will address three examples: the adoption of male's traits (androgyny), the promotion of gender integration, and the emphasis on meritocracy above gender.

With gender stereotypes, invisible ideological prejudices are unconsciously created and constrain women on lower positions. Even they are given access to nontraditional female's occupations, they are struggling to transform the distortion of stereotypical perception (Gorman, 2005). As female salespeople in GY had to get rid of role-based entrapments such as "mother" or "wife", they feel that they must perform harder than their male counterpart to prove they are qualified and they have competencies on sales

position.

Female's way to prove themselves is actually a process of seeking the "sameness" as men and a good example to illustrate the idea is the words: "women could perform as men did at this position" (Interviewee 8). It could be understood that adopting male's traits is a common survival strategy to integrate themselves into the male-dominated teams. Consistent with Longo and Straehley (2008), male's reluctance to abandon their masculine culture and female colleagues' failure of integrating eventually would polarize these two gender groups. However, female also become those who are reluctant to discard male's normative standard since the adoption of masculine norms reinforces their "outsider" situation and minimizes their femininity, which maintains the polarization. As Zucco and Molfino (2012: 17) emphasize "androgyny looks like an invitation to women to assimilate into masculinity". In this sense, female salespeople's "doing 'men's work" have reconstructed salesmen's superiority and suppressed their feminine identities, pushing themselves far more away.

Conducted by a team leader, the second initiative tried to facilitate peer integration through team building activity. But, conversely, it developed another polarization. It is known from Kanter (1977) that gender homophily would emerge in informal network of male-dominated occupations. Male members are likely to gather together since they are easily to communicate and nurture trust as well as develop reciprocity. As a result, men gain more social integration and other advantages from this close contact while women experience more exclusion because they differ from the majority. Gender differences from interests to selling styles are seen and highlighted by the male salespeople, creating social isolation for women. Like Roth (2004) suggested, women that are excluded from male's social network would have less opportunities to receive information and assistance from co-workers. Taylor (2010) further supplemented that employees with less support from colleagues would have limited access to career advancement. Behind the exclusion, it reflected male's homophily preferences and their emphasis of gender dualisms.

Moreover, the third initiative supported by the top management aimed to break men's categorization on themselves and manage to take merits as the standard instead of gender. Based on Eagly and Carli's (2008) observation, biological gender is one of the most distinct social categories when there is a numerical minority at workplace. And the finding showed that this gender-based social category was even more activated when top executives tried to introduce a change in the direction of building meritocracy.

On the one hand, dominant cultural ideology is evoked by men's categorization, like a women's description: "they naturally took the leading actors" or "men presided over the conversation" (Interviewee 8). Accompanied by it, men construct women as another category and reinforce they are "different", which are corresponded to Kanter's tokenism (1977). On the other hand, men also showed strong resistance of female's participation into leadership position. Women were the minority and disadvantaged group in male-dominated occupation. Their empowerment from the top management to share the privileges with men could be regarded as a threat from male's perspective. The consequential impact may include men's perception of losing advantageous status and feeling of job insecurity. Such perceptions probably contribute to utilize covert barriers against women as a response to the organizational change, such as making a void of power for female colleague in the same group, which is difficult to be managed by the management (Miller, 1997). Actually, when co-workers show resistance, ladies are constrained at a lower level within the organizational structure, even though top management wishes to transform the actual reality.

The above three initiatives attempt to bring gender equality and improve female's status in GY company's male-dominated sales department, but unfortunately all efforts seem to be ineffective. People in GY didn't gain an insight into gender problem and their superficial coping strategies are virtually reproducing GY's masculine culture. To conclude this study, the author will discuss these strategies in responding the third research question.

Question 3: "What are the implications of the existing reproduction processes of the male-dominated culture for the way sales force works?"

The first failure came from the lack of acknowledge by the female actor that her behavioral strategy is being shaped by dominant gender norms. Men, as the dominant group, initially have numerical and normative advantage on sales occupation. With no mentors or leaders' recognition and discernment on women's distinctive capabilities, women themselves spontaneously value men's norms. Given the finding of this study, female salespeople's initiative is to adopt male's traits, such as showing aggressiveness as well as developing men's interests strengthened by male norms. This unacknowledged has two probably negative outcomes. Firstly, women would be perceived as incompetent by men, since women's skills and behaviors are learnt from men whereas men are naturally gain them. Secondly, female's original abilities would be undermined.

One way to remedy women's coping strategy is to assert female's difference and recognize their feminine traits (Zucco and Molfino, 2012; Welford, 2011). If female embraces male's abilities or just men accept women's characteristics, both situation would exaggerate gender boundaries. Then, bidirectional combination and integration of men and women's strength would be a better way to minimized gender distinctions. But, of course, it demands female salespeople to develop great efforts to demonstrate their feminine abilities' positive outcomes on the job. Richman and vanDellen (2011) discuss female role models' influence and argue that a successful female role model would increase women's self-confidence as well as help to change male's stereotypes on women. At the same time, mentors, team leaders and top management's affirmative action towards feminine capabilities and traits would also work.

The second initiative is related with the reproduction of female's "lack of belonging" and exclusion in informal occasions. In an attempt to promote gender integration, people are brought to team building activities, but are left alone, without a coach, an arbiter that

helps to build bridges between two opposite groups. As a result, team members reproduce taken-for-granted behaviors learnt in previous socialization processes. And they do it without much conscious attention. In other words, team members' responses to informal socialization initiatives are probably tacit (Lam, 2000), and so they remain in their comfort zones. So, team leaders cannot expect that their employees are able to distance and disconnect themselves from those socialization processes. To learn and produce a durable change, it is important a collaborative relationship between different actors if progress is to be made in solving the problem of women unrepresentative (Misra et al., 2017). Otherwise, the sexual division is continually reproduced instead of actually being reformed.

In the third initiative, the management endeavors to build up meritocracy above gender in order to improve female's status in male-dominated environment. This strategy is also immature since managers neglect men's attitude. Men are the dominant group in GY company. Their unwilling or even resistant attitude is a key factor impeding the management's change. From the male's point of view, the meritocracy is a negative thing to be implemented, because it means the loss of their privileged status.

One important premise to achieve meritocracy is gender equality (Powell, 2016). Gender equality enables both male and female to have a fair work and promotion opportunity as well as reducing the ingroup's partiality. Kanter's (1977) tokenism theory highlights that a balanced gender composition in the workplace might reduce women's negative experiences. However, this solution is oversimplified because numerical equality is remote from gender equality. Yoder (1991) argues that female's difficult situation could be worsen if the increasing proportion of females is seen as a threat by men, which is exactly confirmed by the above example. Though everyone was given equal rights to work by laws, there is still long way towards the real "equality". It's not that easy to make majority men to relinquish their gender-based favoritism since male priority had underpinned men's hegemony in the society. It is a reality produced by social, cultural

and historical multilevel factors. The freedom of gender is a social cognition process and relies on both external social reform and the advancement of the internal individual awakening of the woman's significant identity.

However, the gender inequality persists in the society and it takes time to achieve. In practical aspect, it is suggested that equal promotion opportunities should be provided to every employee across gender, and transparent and objective appraisal criteria could be identified for talent management. Human recourses professionals could try to discover women's potential and guarantee fair hiring practices while organizations could operate an open, diversified and inclusive atmosphere, creating a "relatively equal" environment.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

By analyzing and reflecting on informants' narratives and connecting qualitative data to the topic of gendered occupation segregation, the researcher has examined female's underrepresentation in pharmaceutical sales industry in China for the first time. In the meanwhile, Kanter's tokenism theory was applied in this study after forty years, extending this theory to an Eastern social context. Focusing on both frontline employees and managers' perspectives, empirical evidence suggests that male and female salespeople have different perceptions of pharmaceutical sales job and women experience more constrains on this position based on their social role and family role in Chinese environment. Although female themselves and top management are trying to promote gender integration in GY company, their strategies are ineffective and to some extent it even reproduces masculine culture. The male counterparts' attitude is the biggest resistance since they reinforced gender difference and unwilling to renounce their gender-based privileges.

Limitation and Future direction

Despite the findings, it should be acknowledged that this study has several limitations, these limitations also suggest some directions for future research on female underrepresentation topic.

Firstly, this study only focuses on one organization. The data could not fully represent the whole China's situation. China is the third largest pharmaceutical market in the world and there are multiform pharmaceutical companies inside this market. GY is a joint venture enterprise. However, the details of multinationals, state-owned enterprise and private pharmaceutical companies are unknown. Future study could focus on organizations with different ownership structures. It would be relevant to extend the study in order to understand if this phenomenon also persists in other industries.

Another limitation is that the number of female informants in the interview is small. There

was no female participant in executive layer, which makes a blank on female leader's barrier and situation. Future research could make further investigation to explore female salespeople's perception on upper level. To gain a completely understanding of women in male-dominated industry, female's promotion, career development and subordinates' acceptance towards women as decision makers in male dominated environment also provide a noticeable direction for future researchers to examine.

Since the social context has strong patriarchal influence in this study and gender role stereotypes are embedded in the national culture for a long history, it is recommended that future research could also try to identify the different cultural factors that may have impact on female's acceptance and integration when they enter in male dominated occupations.

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