

How CEOs can Increase Public Engagement via Microblogs:

The Role of CEO Gender and Content Orientation

Abstract

In the social media era, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are increasingly using microblogging sites to communicate with the public. Drawing on schema-congruity theory and gender egalitarianism, we investigate how CEO gender and content work-life orientation interact to influence public engagement with CEOs on microblogs. Using China as our research setting, we conduct a content analysis of data collected from 63 high-profile CEOs' microblogs and four laboratory studies with some 2000 respondents. Our results show that for female CEOs, work-related content leads to greater engagement than life-related content; for male CEOs, the effect is reversed. We find that such outcomes are driven by the incongruity between stereotypical gender roles and content orientation, which enhances perceived novelty and audience interest, thus leading to greater engagement. This effect diminishes when the audience has a very high or very low perception of gender equality in their society; or when the audience supports male privilege values personally. Our research provides new theoretical insights for online leadership communication, public engagement and gender research. It also offers useful managerial guidance for executives to effectively leverage the capabilities of social media in engaging with the public.

Keywords: engagement, microblog, CEO, gender, work-life content, schema-congruity

Introduction

Microblogging sites, such as X (formerly Twitter) and Sina Weibo, are popular communication channels for senior management, especially for Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) (Weber Shandwick 2017). The presence of a CEO on a microblog improves his or her perceived transformational leadership abilities (Hwang 2012) and demonstrates a more human side of the organization, in turn facilitating more direct, personal and interactive communications with the public online (Craig & Amernic 2020; Tsai & Men 2017). What is more, by tweeting, CEOs have an opportunity to initiate and influence online conversations with the public. Rather than waiting for impressions to be driven by the media or individuals with ulterior motives, CEOs can use microblogs to help shape the conversation (Malhotra & Malhotra 2016).

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of women assuming CEO positions (Pew Research Center 2015). As a result, we have observed a rise in the participation of female CEOs on microblogs. For instance, in our search on Weibo, a prominent microblogging site in China, we found that out of 63 influential CEOs, 26 were female. However, little research has examined the influence of CEO gender on public engagement with microblog content. Therefore, this paper aims to bridge this research gap by investigating how the content of CEOs' microblogs affects public engagement and exploring the role of CEO gender in this process.

Regarding the content of a CEO's microblog, prior research suggests that it can be categorized according to its work-life orientation. A CEO's microblog content can be either more work-related, e.g., offering business insights, advice on leadership, reporting on daily work activities, business trips, corporate events, products and services, or more life-related, e.g.,

leisure, hobbies, family, friends, seasonal greetings, daily life activities and reflections (Alghawi et al. 2014; Huang & Yeo 2018; Wu et al. 2022).

Schema congruity theory offers a compelling framework for our investigation into the impact of CEO gender and microblog content on public engagement. This theory, which explores the effects of congruence or incongruence between individuals' existing cognitive schemas and new information, illuminates the potential dynamics at play. Specifically, drawing on schema-congruity theory (Mandler 1982) and gender research (Eagly & Wood 2012; Emrich et al. 2004), we conduct five studies in field and laboratory settings and find that for female CEOs, work-related content, which is less congruent with the traditional gender role (i.e., domestic for women, bread-winning for men, Eagly 1987), triggers the public's perceived novelty of and interest in the CEO's microblog content, which, in turn, drives engagement. Notably, for male CEOs, the effect is reversed in that personal content increases engagement. This effect is moderated by the public's gender equality perception and values.

Our research contributes to the current literature in three ways. First, by examining the relationship between gender roles, content orientation and public reactions, our study provides a better understanding of CEO's social media communication and suggests what to communicate (i.e. work- versus personal life-related content) and who communicates (i.e. the gender of the communicator) both matter in the social media era. Second, we incorporate gender roles into the online leadership discussion and provide novel insights into gender research in marketing. Our research shows that the traditional association of women with domestic activities and men with bread-winning work can influence the public's responses to communications from a female versus male CEO. Third, building on schema-congruity theory (Mandler 1982) and gender egalitarianism (Emrich et al. 2004), we investigate the underlying mechanism and boundary

conditions for the phenomenon. As such, we provide new insights into potential drivers of online user engagement on social media, as well as extend the scope of schema-congruity theory and gender egalitarianism to corporate leader communication with the public.

As for practice, our research findings regarding the interaction effect of CEO gender and content work-life orientation provide useful implications for executives and corporate communication professionals. This is particularly relevant in light of the significant rise in the number of women occupying CEO positions in recent years (Pew Research Center 2015).

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. First, we review relevant literature and develop our hypotheses. Second, we test our hypotheses by conducting five studies in field and laboratory settings. Finally, the paper concludes with theoretical and managerial implications, research limitations and directions for future research.

Theoretical Framing and Hypotheses Development

CEO Gender and Gender Associations

CEO gender and its impact on public response

There is a long history of leadership research on gender (Broadbridge & Hearn 2008). Studies have found that women are considered less desirable candidates for leadership positions, and once in these positions, they are less likely to be evaluated positively relative to similarly-qualified male counterparts (Eagly & Chin 2010; Heilman 2012; Heilman & Parks-Stamm 2007; Joshi et al. 2015). This may be because the communal traits (e.g., caring, interdependent, warm, emotionally sensitive) ascribed to women are less consistent with prototypical agentic leader characteristics (e.g., task-focused, ambitious, independent, rational) (Heilman 2001; Schein 2001). However, these effects are context-dependent and mainly observed among mid-level managers (Rosette & Tost 2010). For example, at the uppermost levels of organisational

hierarchy – such as CEOs and chief financial officers (CFOs) – researchers find little evidence that female leaders are evaluated as less competent or less effective than their male peers (Paustian-Underdahl et al. 2014; Rosette & Tost 2010; Rule & Ambady 2009; Schaumberg & Flynn 2017). Recent evidence has revealed that female CEOs are favoured over men during crises (Ryan et al. 2011); banks actively reward female entrepreneurs with privileged access to loans because they put forward more realistic and cautious funding proposals compared to hubristic male entrepreneurs (Liu & Cowling 2023); and female executives and CEOs earn more than their male counterparts after controlling for human capital and organizational characteristics (Gayle et al. 2012; Hill et al. 2015; Leslie et al. 2017).

Although the gender association with communal/ agentic characteristics seems to have little influence on how top-level leadership are evaluated, they are still influential when it comes to CEO communication with the public. For example, Cowen and Montgomery (2020) find that following a product failure, people respond more favourably to unqualified apologies, i.e., those accepting full responsibility, than other types of accommodative messages when these communications are issued by female CEOs; however, public reactions to unqualified apologies versus other types of accommodative messages do not differ when these communications are from male CEOs. Cowen and Montgomery (2020) attribute such effect to the communal norms elicited by the female CEOs which make statements conveying an apology and accepting full blame most effective in mitigating negative public reactions.

Traditional gender-role associations with work-life activities

Gender association with communal/ agentic characteristics is considered to stem from the traditional division of labour – women have been disproportionately observed as performing the majority of the domestic activities, such as childcare, cooking and sewing, while men have more

continuous employment with longer hours and higher wages. Although women's participation in the workforce has increased in the past thirty years (Eagly & Wood 2018; Ortiz-Ospina et al. 2018; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018), women are still frequently associated with wifely and maternal duties, and men with competing in the workplace (Eagly et al. 2020; Haines et al. 2016; Heilman 2012).

If we consider that beliefs about women being communal and men being agentic can influence how the public react to messages communicated by female versus male CEOs, it is reasonable to assume that the traditional gender association of women with domestic activities and men with bread-winning work, which contributes to gender stereotypical beliefs, can also impact the public's response to CEO communications. However, there is a lack of research investigating such impact. Therefore, this paper aims to fill this research gap by examining how CEO gender, specifically the traditional gender association with work-life activities, influences the public's response to CEO communication on microblogs.

CEO Communication on Microblogs: Work versus Private Life Content

As of the third quarter of 2023, the average monthly active user base of X (formerly Twitter) and Sina Weibo, two of the largest social networking and microblogging service sites, has reached 666 million and 605 million respectively (Statista 2023; Weibo 2023). Many CEOs are using microblogs to interact, create dialogues and build relationships with the public. This has led to a call for a new type of leader – namely a “Chief Engagement Officer”, a term coined by Edelman Trust Barometer (2014) to emphasize CEOs' engagement responsibility in the social media age.

The CEO's new role as corporate ambassador in engaging the public represents an emerging research domain. Researchers have shown interest in deciphering the nature and content of CEO

social media communication. Current research suggests that CEOs' microblog content can be classified according to their work-life orientation. For example, Jameson (2014) categorizes CEO microblog communication into professional, which arises from a person's work, vocation, or organizational roles, versus personal, which arises from other roles and contexts. Similarly, Huang and Yeo's (2018) study analyzes 1,068 original tweets from Fortune 1000 CEOs and find that one key communication goal for CEOs using microblogs is to update either their work or personal life status. Moreover, based on a content analysis of more than 65,000 tweets by 338 CEOs, Wu et al. (2022) suggest that a CEO's microblog content can be either more work-related or more life-related. The former covers topics such as business insights, advice on leadership, daily work activities, business trips, corporate events, and products and services, whereas the latter includes non-work-related topics that are ranging from leisure, hobbies, family, friends, seasonal greetings, to daily activities and reflections.

Given the traditional association of women with domestic activities and men with bread-winning work, incongruity may arise when a female CEO predominantly discusses her work over her personal life, and conversely, when a male CEO speaks more about his personal life than his professional duties. According to Mandler's (1982) schema-congruity theory, new information aligned with existing knowledge structure is deemed schema congruent, while new information that does not align with an existing semantic network is considered incongruent. When schema incongruity is encountered, the novelty of the information may increase interest and is likely to prompt extensive cognitive elaboration. The process of resolving the incongruity is considered rewarding and therefore may lead to a positive response (Meyers-Levy & Tybout 1989).

The effects of schema incongruity have received extensive support in the marketing communication literature (e.g., Chun et al. 2015; Gerrath & Biraglia 2021; Wang & Liu 2020). In this paper, we extend the application of schema-congruity to corporate leader communication by studying the effect of gender-role incongruent CEO microblog content on public engagement.

Engagement with CEO microblogs

User engagement has been the focus of attention for management researchers in the social media age. Indeed, social media has enabled companies to constantly interact and build relationships with the public, including current and potential customers and investors (Lemon & Verhoef 2016; Van Doorn et al. 2010; Verhoef et al. 2010).

Scholars are generally in consensus that engagement comprises three dimensions – cognitive, affective and behavioral (Dessart et al. 2016; Dwivedi 2015; Hollebeek et al. 2014; Pansari & Kumar 2017; So et al. 2016; Zhang et al. 2015). Cognitive engagement often connotes the mental states that a user experiences such as attention and absorption; affective engagement refers to the emotional reactions such as enthusiasm and enjoyment; whereas behavioural engagement is generally defined as behavioural manifestations towards the engagement partner beyond the purchase. In particular, Khan (2017) distinguishes between two forms of engagement on social media: consumption (i.e., viewing and reading content) and participation (i.e., liking, commenting and sharing of such content). In this paper, we focus on the participation aspect of behaviour engagement. These behavioural aspects are considered as more practical, offering more actionable insights and being in line with predominantly used social media communication (e.g., Dhanesh et al. 2022; Dhaoui & Webster 2021; Giakoumaki & Krepapa 2020; Malhotra et al. 2013; Men et al. 2018; Yue et al. 2019). As this study seeks to extend insights on social media

communication, we conceptualize and define public engagement with CEOs on microblogs as the liking, commenting, and sharing of content posted by CEOs on the microblog.

Recent research suggests that incongruent and non-conventional content is an important driver of user engagement. For example, Ashley and Tuten (2015) find that creative content such as experiential, image, and exclusivity messages, enhances user engagement on social media. Boukes et al. (2022) analyzes the social media posts of a wide variety of American TV shows on Facebook, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter), and reveals that satire genre is more likely to evoke user-content interactivity than regular news and partisan news shows. Wang and Liu (2020) show that less congruent brand extensions can lead to superior evaluations when consumers perceive strong conceptual competence in the brand. Chun et al. (2015) suggest that consumers evaluate low-fit extensions of brands with strong reputations more favorably if innovative brand benefits are presented. Moreover, Gerrath and Biraglia (2021) find that an announcement of a new product with less congruence with the brand leads to greater consumer engagement with the posted announcement on social media. Therefore, we propose that content incongruent with traditional gender roles, such as messages with work-related (versus private life-related) content posted by a female (versus male) CEO, may be particularly engaging in the social media environment.

H1. CEO gender and content orientation of the CEO's post have an interaction effect on public engagement with microblogs.

H1a. For female CEOs, work-related content leads to greater public engagement than life-related content.

H1b. For male CEOs, life-related content leads to greater public engagement than work-related content.

The Mediation Role of Perceived Novelty and Interest

Traditions play a crucial role in shaping individuals' schemas, which are the mental representations of their experiences stored in memory (Strauss 1992). When a stimulus or an event does not align with one's existing mental categories or schemas, it is perceived as novel (Förster et al. 2010). In our daily lives, terms like "new" or "unusual" are commonly used to describe novelty. As highlighted earlier, there exists a traditional association of women with domestic activities and men with bread-winning work. Consequently, when a female (resp. male) CEO showcases a greater (resp. lesser) emphasis on their work rather than their personal life, it may be unexpected and perceived as novel due to the incongruity with conventional gender stereotypes.

Novel events or stimuli can inspire interest in the content (Berlyne 1960; Bohme 1980; Burke & James 2008). Interest is generally defined as a psychological state that emerges from a person's interaction with an object or environment (Krapp et al. 1992). Interest can be either personal, i.e., a person's relatively long-term preference in something (Ainley 2012; Ainley & Hidi 2014; Krapp & Prenzel 2011; Schiefele 2009) or situational, i.e., triggered by certain stimuli where a person feels interested in something at a particular time (Hidi 2006; Hidi & Renninger 2006; Schraw & Lehman 2001). The latter has received extensive academic attention with an effort to understand individuals' situational interests and identify potential interest triggers. One key trigger that has been frequently proposed for situational interest is novelty. For example, Berlyne (1960, 1971, 1974) was among the first researchers to consider stimuli-based causes of interest. He concludes that interest is a function of collative variables such as novelty, surprisingness, unexpected events and/or ideas. Anderson et al. (1987) and Deci (1992) also

suggest novelty as a key component that leads a person to a psychological state of being interested in a piece of text or an activity.

Novel and interesting content has been frequently identified as a major driver of user engagement on social media. For example, Stathopoulou et al. (2017) suggest that topics of shared interest by the brand and the consumer lead to greater engagement. Dolan et al. (2016) posit that informative, relational or entertaining content drives engagement. Borah et al. (2020) show that marketing content characterized by humour and unanticipated content positively affects online ‘virality’, such as sharing and conversations about the brand. These results are consistent with research on word of mouth and sharing behaviour showing that atypical and surprising content tends to be favoured and become more popular (Berger & Packard 2018); original and interesting products tend to bring higher levels of word of mouth (Berger & Schwartz 2011; Moldovan et al. 2011); sharing unusual content may reflect positively on the sharer of such information (De Angelis et al. 2012).

Therefore, we propose that the traditional gender-role incongruent content would enhance the perception of novelty and interest, and ultimately engagement. That is, when a female CEO posts work-related content or a male CEO posts life-related content, the public will be more likely to perceive the content as novel, which will trigger stronger interest, thus leading to greater engagement with the CEO on the microblog.

H2. The interaction effect between CEO gender and content orientation on public engagement is mediated by the perception of novelty and the resulting interest in the content.

The Moderating Role of Gender Equality Perception and Values

Drawing on gender equality research, we propose that the public's gender equality perception and values serve as moderators for how CEO gender and content orientation interact to affect public engagement. Gender equality, or gender egalitarianism, describes the extent to which members' biological sex determine the roles that they play in their home, business organization and communities (Emrich et al. 2004). Societies with greater gender equality rely less on members' sex in determining the allocation of roles between the sexes. For instance, low gender-egalitarian societies are characterized by traditional gendered division of labour, such that men are viewed as breadwinners and women are viewed as caretakers and mothers; whereas in high gender-egalitarian societies, there is less compliance to these traditional gender role prescriptions and more similarity in women and men's involvement in work and non-work domains (Emrich et al. 2004).

According to Emrich et al. (2004), gender egalitarianism is comprised of two elements: (1) people's perception of the current degree of gender equality in their societal practice (GEP), such as whether they agree or disagree that in their society men and women have equal chance of finding a job, and (2) people's values regarding gender equality (GEVs), such as whether they agree or disagree that in their society men and women should have an equal chance of finding a job.

An individual's perception of GEP may influence their perception of novelty of gender-role incongruent content on CEO microblogs. Specifically, those who perceive high, moderate, or low levels of GEP may, in turn, weakly, moderately, or strongly link gender to traditional roles. Consequently, they may find a female (resp. male) CEO's focus on work (resp. life) on

microblogs to be varying in degrees of novelty, ranging from not novel to moderately novel, to highly novel.

According to schema congruity theory, increased novelty does not always evoke more favourable responses. In fact, there is an inverted-U relationship between perceived schema incongruity and affect, wherein moderate levels of incongruity lead to more favourable responses than either extreme congruity or incongruity (Mandler 1982; Meyers-Levy & Tybout 1989). This is consistent with the well-known “MAYA” (Most Advanced, Yet Acceptable) principle from Raymond Loewy (Raymondloewy.com 2023) regarding new product evaluations: people can easily get bored with new products that are congruent with their expectations, but they can also reject products that are too incongruent with their expectations – too much incongruity can be difficult to resolve, thus results in negative affect such as anxiety and frustration. In contrast, moderate incongruity, offering a balance of novelty, tends to be engaging and easier to integrate into existing schemas, potentially leading to positive reactions such as curiosity and interest (Berlyne 1966; Goodstein 1993; Mandler 1982; Noseworthy et al. 2014).

Therefore, we propose that while moderate GEP fosters an optimal level of perceived novelty, enhancing interest and engagement, perceptions of GEP that are either very high or very low diverge from this balance. In these instances, interest and engagement may not increase as significantly as they do with moderate GEP, because the resulting level of perceived novelty becomes either too low, potentially leading to boredom, or too high, which could be overwhelming.

H3. The interaction effect of CEO gender and content orientation on perceived novelty will be diminished when the public perceive a very high level of GEP.

H4. The interaction effect of CEO gender and content orientation on public interest (a) and engagement (b) will be diminished when the public perceive a very high or very low level of GEP.

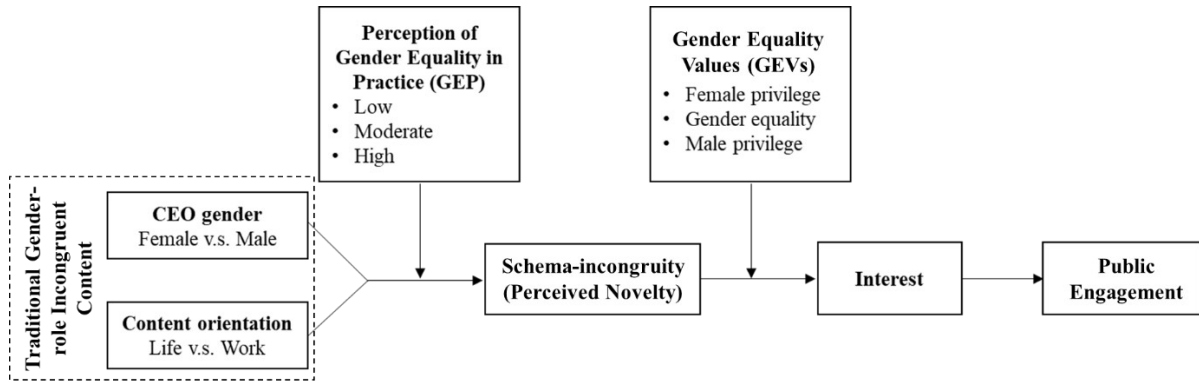
Next, we further propose that whether moderate novelty ultimately leads to engagement also depends on the person's GEVs. Regarding individuals' personal GEVs, there are three groups: (1) individuals who believe in female privilege, i.e., there should be preferential treatment of women in society (for example, women should have a greater chance of finding a job than men); (2) people who believe in gender equality, i.e., opportunities should be equally available for men and women (for example, men and women should have equal chance of finding a job); and (3) those who believe in male privilege, i.e., opportunities should be more available for men than for women (for example, men should have greater chance of finding a job than women) (Emrich et al. 2004; House et al. 2004).

We postulate that individuals who advocate for female privilege or uphold gender equality values are more receptive to content that is incongruent with traditional roles, viewing it as an opportunity to promote broader societal progress towards equality. In contrast, those who subscribe to male privilege values might find content that deviates from traditional gender norms more provocative, as it conflicts with their established values, potentially reducing their interest and engagement.

H5. The interaction effect of CEO gender and content orientation through perceived novelty on public interest (a) and engagement (b) will be diminished when the public support male privilege values.

Our hypotheses are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual model.



Below we test the developed hypotheses empirically, using China as research context. Study 1 is a content analysis of data collected from 63 high-profile social CEOs’ microblogs aimed at testing the interaction effect of CEO gender and content orientation on public engagement. To enhance internal validity, Study 2 tests the above effect in a laboratory setting. The mediating roles of perceived novelty and interest are examined in Study 3. Studies 4 and 5 respectively verifies the proposed moderating roles of perceived GEP and GEVs.

Study 1

Study 1 aims to test the interaction effect of CEO gender and content orientation on public engagement (H1). Specifically, we expect that for a female CEO, work-related content leads to greater public engagement than life-related content, and such an effect would be reversed for a male CEO.

CEO Weibo Sampling and Coding

Weibo was selected as our data collection platform. As a leading microblogging site in China, one of the most active microblogging markets in the world, Weibo had 605 million monthly active users and 260 million daily active users as of September 2023 (Weibo 2023). Many users follow popular business leaders in the country. For example, Ms. Lan Yang, co-founder and chairperson of Sun Media Group and Mr. Jun Lei, billionaire entrepreneur and CEO

of Xiaomi, are two of the well-recognized corporate leaders on Weibo, with over 40 million and 23 million followers respectively.

To the best of our knowledge, there is no Weibo CEO list available in either the academic or the practitioner literature. Thus, we adopted a grounded approach to identify CEOs on the platform by using Forbes lists and Weibo search queries.

First, we referred to a number of Forbes lists, including Forbes China's Best CEOs 2021, Forbes China's 100 Richest 2021, Forbes China's Top 100 Businesswomen 2022, Forbes Under 30s – China 2021. A search was conducted on Weibo for a verified account¹ under the CEO's name with his/her identity as a CEO displayed in the profile. This process enabled us to identify 31 CEOs (11 female, 20 male) on Weibo.

Second, multiple search queries were also conducted using keywords such as CEO, founder, chairperson and general director. Weibo was able to classify users by their gender and to return a list of either female or male users whose profile information included the specified keywords. Names on the first two result pages of each search query were collected, yielding an initial list of 309 (159 female, 150 male) "potential CEOs", i.e., users who described themselves as CEOs or top executives of a certain brand. Among these users, those with a verified account and brand² with over 1 million followers were included into our sample. This yielded 32 additional CEOs (15 female, 17 male) for our research.

Therefore, by referring to Forbes lists and using Weibo search queries with keywords, we identified a total of 63 CEOs (26 female, 37 male) on Weibo (see Online Appendix 1 for full lists). A random sampling method was then used to collect 30 posts from each CEO account over the last six months. Note that for CEOs who posted fewer than 30 during the targeted time frame,

¹ An account with a "V" badge on Weibo is a verified account.

² The brand stated in the profile should have an authentic official website/app or should have been mentioned by a trustworthy media outlet.

all of his/her posts were included in the sample. After filtering out posts that mention celebrity endorsers with a huge fan base or Weibo auto-created content (i.e., announcing the birthday of the CEO), our final sample consisted of 1,384 posts and the associated Weibo metrics (number of likes, comments and shares) from 63 high-profile Weibo CEOs.

One of the study authors and a research assistant served as coders. Posts with work-related content, such as business insights, advice on leadership, daily work activities, business trips, corporate events, products and services, were coded as 1; whereas life-related content, e.g., leisure, hobbies, family, friends, seasonal greetings, daily life activities and reflections was coded as 0. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the two coders categorised 50 posts independently. The categorizations were then compared, with differences discussed and definitions updated. Each coder then encoded the rest of the post independently. The intercoder reliability ($\alpha = .91$) and agreement (Kappa = .84) indicated a high reliability and agreement between coders.

Model Specifications

We define our model as

$$Engagement_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Gender_i + \beta_2 Cont_i + \beta_3 Gender_i Cont_i + \beta_4 Ctrl_i + \varepsilon_i$$

where i represents the CEO, $Gender$ stands for CEO gender (0 = female, 1 = male), $Cont$ for content orientation (0 = life, 1 = work), and $Ctrl_i$ for all control variables, i.e., follower count, CEO years on Weibo, CEO age, post count, day count since the post had been published, post length, media richness (whether the post is attached with an image, video or a web link), industry, and CEO specific fix effects.

Accordingly, when $Gender = 0$ (female CEOs), the coefficient β_2 for $Cont$ represents the effect of content orientation on Engagement. If $\beta_2 > 0$, it suggests that for female CEOs, work-related content leads to greater engagement than life-related content, thus supporting H1a. When

Gender = 1 (male CEOs), the coefficient β_2 for *Cont* and the coefficient β_3 for *GenderCont* combined to indicate the influence of content orientation on Engagement. Therefore, if $\beta_2 + \beta_3 < 0$, that suggests that for male CEOs, work-related content leads to lower engagement than life-related content, thus supporting H1b.

Results

Our sample consisted of 1384 posts from 63 high-profile Weibo CEOs. There were 641 posts (46.32%) from female CEOs and 743 posts (53.68%) from male CEOs. The CEOs had an average of 4.99 million followers and had published an average of 313 posts ($SD = 1, 260$) during the last 6 months. They had an average age of 45 years and 12 years of experience in using Weibo. Regarding post content, the CEOs are slightly more work-oriented ($M_{\text{prof.}} = .59$).

We explored the impacts of CEO gender and content orientation on engagement using hierarchical regression analyses, controlling follower count, CEO years on Weibo, CEO age, post count, day count since the post had been published, post length, media richness, industry, and CEO specific fix effects. Because of the large variances in the dependent variables, normality of residual's distribution was checked and revealed significant positive skewness and kurtosis. To address this issue and meet the normality assumption of regression, natural log transformation was utilized on the outcome variable (i.e., number of likes, comments, and shares) prior to fitting linear regressions. Log transformation is a technique commonly used to transform skewed data to approximately conform to normality (Benoit 2011; Men et al. 2018). Engagement was thus measured by averaging the natural log of likes, comments and shares. The residuals in the linear regression models were rechecked and met the normality assumption of regression analysis. Besides, the collinearity test showed that all $VIF < 10$.

We conducted four models: Model 1 included only the variables of interest, namely CEO gender, content orientation, and their interaction term. Then, subsequent models (2-4) incorporated blocks of controlled variables. As shown in Table 1, across all models, the main effect of content orientation is consistently significantly positive (all $p < .05$), suggesting that for female CEOs ($Gender = 0$), work-related content increases engagement. A post-hoc analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of model 4, which included all controlled variables, further shows that when a female CEO tweets, the public are likely to be engaged more with work-related posts than life-related content ($M_{life} = 3.35$, $M_{work} = 4.11$, $F(1,1316) = 29.80$, $p < .001$), therefore supporting H1a. Furthermore, across all models, the interaction effect of CEO gender and content orientation is significant (all $p < .001$), with $\beta_2 + \beta_3 < 0$. A follow-up ANCOVA of model 4 – the full model, suggest that for male CEOs, life-related content is likely to generate greater engagement ($M_{life} = 4.31$, $M_{work} = 3.62$, $F(1,1316) = 52.47$, $p < .001$), thus supporting H1b. Therefore, H1 is supported.

[Insert Table 1]

Study 2

To enhance the internal validity of Study 1, Study 2 was conducted in a lab setting, testing again H1, i.e., whether CEO gender and content orientation interact in influencing engagement.

Study 2 used a 2 (CEO gender: female vs. male) x 2 (content orientation: life vs. work) between-subject design. An online experiment was run on Surveystar³, a large Chinese survey and experiment website. A total of 238 Chinese respondents (99 women, 139 men) participated in the study for a payment of RMB 6 (~ USD 1) and a chance to win a prize from a lucky draw sponsored by the website. The average age of the participants was 31 years (see Online

³ Surveystar (previously Sojump): <http://wjx.cn>, similar to platforms such as MTurk and Prolific Academic, predominantly consists of Chinese users.

Appendix 2 for details on design and procedure, including manipulation checks and reliability checks).

An ANOVA of engagement as a function of gender and content orientation, controlling for participant gender, yielded a significant two-way interaction ($F(1, 233) = 27.29, p < .001$). For female CEOs, work-related content led to greater engagement ($M = 5.24$) than life-related content ($M = 4.25, p < .001$), supporting H1a; whereas for male CEOs, the effect is reversed – the audience indicated greater engagement with life-related content ($M = 5.08$) than work-related content ($M = 4.63, p = .02 < .05$), supporting H1a. Therefore, H1 is supported.

Study 3

The purpose of Study 3 is to test our proposed mediation path: the interaction between CEO gender and content orientation would result in perceived schema-incongruity (novelty), which would enhance interest, thus boosting the public's engagement with the CEO microblog (H2).

A total of 272 Chinese participants (182 women, 90 men) were recruited on the SurveyStar website for a payment of RMB 6 (~ USD 1) and a chance of winning a lucky draw. The average age was 38. Participants were randomly assigned to one of 2 (CEO gender: female vs. male) x 2 (content orientation: life vs. work) conditions of a between-subject design (see Online Appendix 2 for details on design and procedure, including manipulation checks and reliability checks).

An ANOVA, controlling for participant gender, suggests a significant two-way interaction between content orientation and CEO gender ($F(1, 267) = 17.97, p < .001$). In particular, for female CEOs, work-related content generated greater engagement ($M = 4.95$) than life-related content ($M = 4.35, p = .01 < .05$); whereas for male CEOs, the effect is reversed – the audience were engaged more with life-related content ($M = 4.96$) than work-related content ($M = 4.16, p < .001$). These results reaffirm our findings in Study 1 and 2, supporting H1.

A mediation analysis was then conducted using the PROCESS macro with 5000 bootstrapping (Model 83, Hayes 2018). As expected, the interaction between CEO gender and content orientation was a significant predictor of perceived novelty ($\beta = -1.02$, $t = -3.30$, $p = .0013 < .05$). Furthermore, perceived novelty had a significant effect on interest ($\beta = .60$, $t = 14.72$, $p < .001$). For engagement, both perceived novelty ($\beta = .36$, $t = 6.61$, $p < .001$) and interest ($\beta = .61$, $t = 10.10$, $p < .001$) have a significant effect on engagement. Of central importance, the bias-corrected bootstrapping analysis supported the proposed sequential mediation: CEO gender \times content orientation \rightarrow novelty \rightarrow interest \rightarrow engagement. In particular, for female CEOs, the indirect effects of content orientation on engagement through perceived novelty and then interest was significantly positive with 95CI [.01, .33]; for male CEOs, the indirect effects of content orientation on engagement through perceived novelty and subsequently interest was significantly negative, 95CI [-.40, -.04]. Therefore, H2 was supported.

Study 4

We propose two boundary conditions for the interaction effect of CEO gender and content orientation on public engagement: the public's perception of GEP and their personal GEVs. Study 4 is to verify the first boundary condition, i.e., perceived GEP.

Study 4 adopted a 3 (perceived gender equality in practice: low vs. moderate vs. high) \times 2 (CEO gender: female vs. male) \times 2 (content orientation: life vs. work) between-subject design. A total of 771 Chinese participants (437 women, 334 men, $M_{age} = 32$) were recruited on SurveyStar for a payment of RMB 7 (~USD 1.04) and a chance of winning a lucky draw (see Online Appendix 2 for details on design and procedure, including manipulation checks and reliability checks).

A three-way ANOVA, controlling for participant gender, was conducted to examine the impact of GEP, CEO gender, and content orientation on perceived novelty, public interest, and engagement. The results of the pairwise comparison analysis, presented in Table 2, revealed significant interaction effects between CEO gender and content orientation on perceived novelty, public interest, and engagement when participants perceived a moderate level of GEP. Specifically, when female CEOs posted work-related content, it generated greater perceived novelty, public interest, and engagement compared to life-related content. In contrast, male CEOs generated greater perceived novelty, public interest, and engagement with life-related content compared to work-related content.

However, for participants with a high level of GEP, the interaction effect between CEO gender and content orientation on perceived novelty, interest or engagement was not significant. This indicates that participants did not find it particularly novel when a female (or male) CEO posted work-related (or life-related) content, resulting in no significant interest or engagement.

It is important to note that although participants in the low gender equality perception group perceived significant differences in novelty between the work-related and life-related content posted by female or male CEOs, they did not feel interested or engaged with this method of microblogging. In other words, while they acknowledged the novelty of a female (or male) CEO focusing more on work (or life), it did not generate interest or engagement among participants.

[Insert Table 2]

These results support H3 and 4 regarding the moderating effect of GEP on novelty, interest and engagement.

Study 5

The purpose of Study 5 is to verify the second proposed boundary condition, i.e., personal GEVs, for the interaction effect of CEO gender and content orientation on engagement.

Study 5 employed a between-subject design, consisting of three factors: GEVs with three conditions (female privilege, gender equality, and male privilege), CEO gender with two levels (female and male), and content orientation with two levels (life and work). A total of 770 Chinese participants (391 women, 379 men, $M_{\text{age}} = 33$) were recruited through Surveystar and offered a compensation of RMB 10 (~USD 1.48) along with a chance to win a lucky draw (see Online Appendix 2 for details on design and procedure, including manipulation checks and reliability checks).

To explore the influence of GEVs (gender equality values), CEO gender, and content orientation on perceived novelty, public interest, and engagement, an ANOVA, controlling for participant gender, was conducted. The results from the pairwise comparison analysis (presented in Table 3) indicated significant interaction effects between CEO gender and content orientation in relation to perceived novelty, public interest, and engagement among participants who embraced non-male (i.e., female or equal) privilege values. Specifically, when female CEOs shared work-related content, it evoked a greater sense of novelty, public interest, and engagement compared to life-related content. Conversely, for male CEOs, life-related content elicited higher levels of perceived novelty, public interest, and engagement in comparison to work-related content.

Interestingly, among participants who held male privilege values, there were significant differences in perceived novelty when exposed to work-related and life-related content from female and male CEOs. However, despite these perceived differences, they did not express a

substantial level of interest or engagement with this particular microblogging approach. In other words, while participants acknowledged the novelty associated with a female (or male) CEO focusing more on work (or life), it did not translate into notable interest or engagement.

[Insert Table 3]

These results support H5 on the moderating effect of GEV on public interest and engagement.

Discussion

Drawing on schema-congruity theory (Mandler 1982) and gender egalitarianism (Emrich et al. 2004), this study examines the interaction effects between CEO gender and work-life content orientation on public engagement. Based on an analysis of 1,384 microblog posts of 63 high-profile CEOs and four laboratory studies, we find that for female (resp. male) CEOs, work-related (resp. life-related) content leads to perceived novelty and interest, which in turn, drives engagement. Note that this effect diminishes when the public have a very high or very low perception of gender equality in their society; or when the public support male privilege values.

Theoretical Contributions

Our research makes several theoretical contributions to the existing literature. Firstly, while previous studies have established work-life orientation as a significant dimension characterizing CEO communication on microblogs (e.g., Huang & Yeo 2018; Jameson 2014; Wu et al. 2021), the influence of content orientation on public reactions remains understudied. By investigating the relationship between content orientation, gender roles, and public engagement, our study provides a better understanding of corporate leaders' communication and emphasizes the importance of both content (i.e., work- vs. life-related) and communicator gender in the context of social media.

Secondly, we contribute to the discussion on leadership by incorporating gender roles and offering novel insights into gender research in leadership communication. Although recent research suggests that gender associations with communal/agentive characteristics have limited influence on the evaluation of top-level leadership, these associations continue to be influential in CEO communication with the public (Paustian-Underdahl et al. 2014; Rosette & Tost 2010; Rule & Ambady 2009; Schaumberg & Flynn 2017). Our research further supports this line of inquiry by demonstrating that the association of women with domestic activities and men with bread-winning work, which underlies gender stereotypical beliefs, can impact the public's responses to communications from female and male CEOs.

Moreover, our study enriches current gender research in social media communication by exploring the traditional gender-role incongruent content as a driver of public engagement. Unlike previous studies focusing on gender congruity between individuals (e.g., consumer gender and robot gender, consumer gender and anthropomorphized product gender) as a behavioral determinant (Hende & Mugge 2014; Pitardi et al. 2022), we investigate the effect of incongruity between communication content and communicator gender. This provides novel insights into gender research and highlights the importance of considering the congruence/incongruence between communication content and communicator gender.

Additionally, our research advances the understanding of gender roles and their impact on CEO communication by introducing a more nuanced and flexible perspective that encourages cross-gender exploration. While the existing corporate communication literature frequently explores masculine versus feminine leadership styles (e.g., Feenstra et al. 2023; Jongen 2023), our study highlights the importance of considering gender fluidity in leadership communication. Rather than strictly adhering to traditional gender norms, we propose that female CEOs focusing

on work-related content and male CEOs engaging in life-related content can be viewed as forms of gender exploration. This new perspective invites a reevaluation of the traditional binary understanding of gender roles and promotes a more inclusive approach to examining CEO communication.

Thirdly, we investigate the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions of the phenomenon by drawing on the literature on schema congruity and gender egalitarianism. We find that traditional gender-role incongruent content from CEOs can lead to greater perceived novelty and heightened interest, ultimately enhancing engagement. However, such effect would be diminished when the public perceive a very high or very low level of GEP or when they hold male privilege GEVs. Interestingly, we also observe that people may acknowledge the novelty of a female (or male) CEO focusing more on work (or life) but it does not generate interest or engagement among individuals who perceive very low GEP or hold male privilege GEVs. By taking into account GEP and GEVs, our research integrates diversity and inclusion aspects into the schema congruity theory. It suggests that the public's response is not solely influenced by congruity or novelty of the message, but also by broader societal and cultural factors such as gender equality and gender role perceptions. This opens new avenues for applying schema congruity theory to societal issues, an area that is currently underexplored in the literature.

Overall, our study provides insights into the potential drivers of engagement and expands the scope of schema congruity theory and gender egalitarianism to encompass corporate leadership social media communication.

Managerial Implications

Our research finds CEO gender to be an important moderator of the relationship between content orientation and public engagement on microblogs. Given the substantial increase in the

number of women assuming top positions in organizations (Pew Research Center 2015), our research findings provide useful guidance for CEOs and corporate communication professionals.

In particular, to engage the public, female executives can post content more related to their work, such as business insights, advice on leadership, daily work activities, business trips, corporate events, products and services; whereas male CEOs can post more about their personal life, such as leisure, hobbies, family, friends, seasonal greetings, daily life activities and reflections.

Organizations may consider to invest in providing their CEOs, regardless of their gender, with training and development that focuses on effective social media communication. This could involve building their capacity to deliver both work and life-related content effectively, permitting them to adjust their strategies to different contexts and audience groups.

Note that the above content strategy works best for audience who perceive a moderate level of GEP in their society (very likely in countries with moderate gender equality scores) or for audiences which do not support male privilege values (very likely among female or young individuals). Therefore, we suggest communication professionals to check the country's gender equality index to gauge the practice in the target market as well as their target audience's general attitudes towards gender equality issues before advising CEOs to adopt the content strategies proposed in the paper. Communication professionals might find it beneficial to use data mining with artificial intelligence (AI) to provide deeper insights into the target audience's engagements and attitudes about gender roles – empowering CEOs to tailor their content more engagingly.

Limitations

Our study has several limitations that provide valuable insights into the boundaries of our research. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that our investigation primarily focuses on the

work-life content orientation dimension in CEO microblog communication and its interaction with CEO gender. While this dimension provides valuable insights, other dimensions of CEO microblogging, such as language formality, expressed emotions, and the degree of effort made by the CEO to interact with their audience on microblogs, have not been explored extensively.

Secondly, our research mainly emphasizes the participation aspect of public engagement in relation to CEO microblog communication, aligning with prevalent social media metrics. However, we have not extensively explored the cognitive and affective aspects of engagement with social media. To this end, our study may not fully capture the broader range of processes of public reactions.

Thirdly, the generalizability of our findings may be limited due to the primary use of Weibo, the prominent microblogging site in China, as the main data collection platform. Although we manipulated participants' GEP and GEVs in Studies 4–5, it is important to acknowledge that extending our research to other microblogging service sites, such as X (formerly Twitter), would enable validation of our findings across diverse cultures, which potentially yield greater variance in GEP and GEVs.

Lastly, it is important to note that our study primarily focuses on the microblogging context and does not explore the role of other media context in shaping our findings. Contextual factors, such as traditional media, might impact the public's perceptions and reactions differently compared to microblogging platforms.

Future research

Building upon our research, we have identified several opportunities for future investigation. Firstly, future research could explore additional dimensions of CEO microblogging beyond the work-life content orientation. Investigating dimensions such as language formality, expressed

emotions, and CEO-audience interaction could provide a deeper understanding of how these elements influence the public's reactions when combined with content orientation.

Secondly, there is an opportunity to further investigate the cognitive and affective aspects of public engagement with CEO microblog communication. For example, sentiment analysis of comments could reveal how users respond to CEOs' Weibo content conditional on CEO gender.

Thirdly, future research should consider cross-platform and cross-cultural validation. Replicating and validating our findings on microblogging platforms other than Weibo, and among samples from diverse cultural backgrounds, would enhance the generalizability of our results.

Lastly, exploring the role of media context in shaping public reactions is an intriguing avenue for future research. Investigating how factors such as the distinction between social media and traditional media impact public perceptions and reactions would provide a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between CEO gender, content orientation, and public reactions. Our provisional expectation is that our results would hold in social media contexts where novelty is highly valued; while in traditional media contexts, role congruity rather than incongruity might be more appreciated.

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Tables

Table 1. Study 1 Regression Analysis Results

Predictors	Engagement							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	SE	t	SE	t	SE	t	SE	t
CEO gender	.22***	5.12	.17***	4.12	.28***	6.69	.18***	2.70
Content orientation	.17***	4.21	.09**	2.40	.11**	3.16	.18***	5.46
Interaction	-.30***	-5.93	-.23***	-4.92	-.32***	-7.49	-.37***	-9.00
Follower count			.30***	10.99	.23***	7.82	.04	1.01
CEO years on Weibo			.09***	3.38	.03	1.29	.02	.66
CEO age			-.19***	-7.13	-.36***	-11.51	-.25***	-5.64
Post count			-.02	-.75	.09***	3.63	.17***	6.17
Day count			.02	.89	.01	.67	.42	1.01
Post length			.16***	5.96	.18***	7.28	.17***	7.90
Media richness			.03	1.10	.05*	1.92	.08***	3.66
Industry					Controlled		Controlled	
CEO							Controlled	
R ²	0.03		.16		.36		.57	
ΔR^2			.13***		.20***		.21***	

*p < .1 ** p < .05 *** p < .001

Notes:

- (1) Log_Shares is obtained by natural log transformation of (number of shares + 1) to include posts with 0 shares into the regression. The same procedure is applied to obtain Log_Comments and Log_Likes.
- (2) Engagement is obtained by averaging Log_Shares, Log_Comments and Log_Likes.
- (3) Media richness is obtained by checking if a post is attached with an image, video or a web link.
- (4) Industries are classified according to the Industry Classification Benchmark – Globe Classification System (FTSE). A dummy variable is created for each industry to account for the fixed effects of the industries.
- (5) Dummy variable is created for each CEO to account for the fixed effects of the CEOs.

Table 2. Study 4 Results

GEP	CEO Gender	Mean Difference (Work-Life)		
		Novelty	Interest	Engagement
Low	Female	.46**	.18	.00
	Male	-.48**	-.32	-.41
Moderate	Female	.56**	.48**	.64**
	Male	-.58**	.68**	-.74**
High	Female	.02	.02	.30
	Male	-.04	.02	-.27

*p < .1 ** p < .05 *** p < .001

Note: Participant gender has been included as a covariate across all models.

Table 3. Study 5 Results

GEVs	CEO Gender	Mean Difference (Work-Life)		
		Novelty	Interest	Engagement
Female	Female	.39*	.47**	.57**
	Male	-.43**	-.42*	-.60**
Equal	Female	.57**	.54**	.39*
	Male	-.36*	-.60**	-.41*
Male	Female	.42**	.19	.34
	Male	-.45**	-.30	-.18

*p < .1 ** p < .05 *** p < .001

Note: Participant gender has been included as a covariate across all models.

Online Appendices

Appendix 1. CEO Names and Affiliations in Study 1

	no.	CEO	Company	Industry ⁽¹⁾	Number of followers	Years on Weibo	Weibo count	Age	Posts in analysis	Source
Female CEOs	1	Mingzhu Dong	Gree	Household Appliance	571,000	6	25	68	25	Forbes: China Best CEOs List 2021; Forbes: China's Top 100 Businesswomen 2022
	2	Isabel Ge Mahe	Apple	Consumer Electronics	457,000	5	29	49	29	Forbes: China's Top 100 Businesswomen 2022
	3	Ni Li	Huan Dian	Entertainment	56,000	12	4	36	4	Forbes: China's Top 100 Businesswomen 2022
	4	Jinqing Cai	Kering China	Luxury Items	147,000	12	29	55	29	Forbes: China's Top 100 Businesswomen 2022
	5	Yuqi Wu	Mantu Photography	Photography	3,341	11	4	31	4	Forbes: China's Top 20 Rising Businesswomen 2022
	6	Ronghua Zhang	Rockcheck Group	Investment Services	23,000	11	39	52	30	Forbes: Philanthropy List - China 2021
	7	Qian Qi	Choice Power	Education Services	746,000	9	339	31	30	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	8	Jingqing Long	Kindforce	Investment Services	6,126	11	36	29	30	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	9	Jingqi Yan	Yiqin Media	Media Agencies	1,514,000	4	40	28	30	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	10	Yixuan Huang	Xiangzhen Media	Media Agencies	7,685	10	5	29	5	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	11	Chenyang Zheng	Tianjiantangang	Software and Computer Services	406,000	5	41	25	30	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	12	Qingyang Zhou	Grace Chow	Clothing and Accessories	11,144,000	12	294	34	30	Weibo search
	13	Yinyin Su	ChristineSheii	Clothing and Accessories	3,244,000	7	1928	28	30	Weibo search
	14	Yanli Ma	Maryma	Clothing and Accessories	3,079,000	13	80	47	30	Weibo search
	15	Hua Xia	Eve Fashion	Clothing and Accessories	2,915,000	12	19	53	19	Weibo search
	16	Tianzhen Yang	Plusmall	Clothing and Accessories	1,788,000	13	89	37	30	Weibo search
	17	Fanmo Zhang	MO-AMOUR	Cosmetics	12,933,000	12	94	30	30	Weibo search
	18	Shutong Wang	Dhgate	Diversified Retailers	1,948,000	12	8	54	8	Weibo search
	19	Wei Liu	Zhixue Education	Education Services	1,802,000	12	1344	45 ⁽²⁾	30	Weibo search
	20	Xiao Zheng	Mind Power Education	Education Services	1,551,000	10	156	45 ⁽²⁾	30	Weibo search
	21	Jingyuan Sun	Ju Yi	Entertainment	2,739,000	13	110	35	30	Weibo search
	22	Ying Yu	Shu'an Youlin Clinic	Health care	4,299,000	12	178	48	30	Weibo search
	23	Wanwan Yu	Yu Holdings	Investment Services	4,557,000	11	60	32	30	Weibo search
	24	Yueqing Chen	Cancer Care Foundation	Investment Services	2,071,000	10	307	69	30	Weibo search
	25	Lan Yang	Sun Media Group	Media Agencies	40,168,000	13	84	54	30	Weibo search
	26	Mani Fok	Emperor Entertainment Group	Media Agencies	5,282,000	12	793	50	30	Weibo search
Male CEOs	1	Ning Li	Ning Li	Clothing and Accessories	3,261,000	7	15	59	13	Forbes: China Best CEOs List 2021
	2	Hongbo Fang	Midea	Household Appliance	671,000	7	13	55	13	Forbes: China Best CEOs List 2021
	3	David Zhang	Matrix Partners China	Investment Services	8,758,000	12	165	45 ⁽²⁾	30	Forbes: The Midas List 2021
	4	JP Gan	INCE Capital	Investment Services	431,000	9	4	40	4	Forbes: The Midas List 2021
	5	Tuck Lye Koh	Shunwei Capital	Investment Services	34,000	10	10	51	10	Forbes: The Midas List 2021
	6	Xiaopeng He	XPeng Motors	Automobiles	1,010,000	10	46	44	30	Forbes: China's 100 Richest 2021
	7	Bin Lin	Xiaomi	Consumer Electronics	7,884,000	12	7	54	5	Forbes: China's 100 Richest 2021
	8	Dongqi Qian	ECOVACS	Household Appliance	14,000	10	8	64	7	Forbes: China's 100 Richest 2021
	9	Yuanqing Yang	Lenovo	Consumer Electronics	14,716,000	7	2	58	1	Forbes: Philanthropy List - China 2021
	10	Mingyong Chen	Oppo	Consumer Electronics	3,892,000	11	3	53	3	Forbes: Philanthropy List - China 2021
	11	Lixin Tang	Xinshang Group	Investment Services	6,794	10	2	59	1	Forbes: Philanthropy List - China 2021
	12	Guangchang Guo	Fosun Group	Recreational Products	9,019,000	11	9	55	9	Forbes: Philanthropy List - China 2021
	13	Hongyi Zhou	Qihoo 360	Software and Computer Services	11,456,000	12	59	52	30	Forbes: Philanthropy List - China 2021
	14	Xiaochuan Wang	Sogou	Software and Computer Services	2,909,000	12	4	44	4	Forbes: Philanthropy List - China 2021
	15	Zhi Yan	Zall	Transportation Services	510,000	10	8	50	8	Forbes: Philanthropy List - China 2021
	16	Zihao Zhang	Sirui	Consumer staples	196,000	12	8	28	8	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	17	Jingnan Guo	Sier Education	Education Services	805,000	12	27	31	27	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	18	Yuanpeng Yan	Postgrad Foundation	Investment Services	6,936	10	15	26	14	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	19	Shenhui Meng	Chengmei Media	Media Agencies	2,407	11	23	30	23	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	20	Changbao Zhao	Tongming Media	Media Agencies	90	4	1	31	1	Forbes: Under 30s List - China 2021
	21	Shenghua Huangfu	SAMAY	Clothing and Accessories	2,290,000	12	1	32	1	Weibo search
	22	Jun Lei	Xiaomi	Consumer Electronics	22,764,000	12	690	52	30	Weibo search
	23	Yonghao Luo	Smartisan	Consumer Electronics	17,739,000	122	261	50	30	Weibo search
	24	Chengdong Yu	Huawei	Consumer Electronics	7,567,000	11	106	53	30	Weibo search
	25	Ming Zhao	Hihonor	Consumer Electronics	3,536,000	12	166	49	30	Weibo search
	26	Guangbiao Chen	Huangpu Renewable Resources	Diversified Materials	5,627,000	12	84	54	30	Weibo search
	27	Xuefeng Zhang	Fengxuweilai Education	Education Services	6,363,000	12	150	38	30	Weibo search
	28	Lanxin Jiang	Shihua Education	Education Services	4,810,000	12	701	45	30	Weibo search
	29	Dongsheng Li	TCL	Household Appliance	9,701,000	11	52	65	30	Weibo search
	30	Bin Dan	Dongfang Gangwan Investment	Investment Services	12,891,000	13	9828	55	30	Weibo search
	31	Peng Shen	Waterdrop	Investment Services	2,744,000	12	48	35	30	Weibo search
	32	Nanchun Jiang	Focus Media	Media Agencies	12,228,000	11	206	49	29	Weibo search
	33	Jinbo Lu	Guomai Media	Media Agencies	3,726,000	13	65	47	30	Weibo search
	34	Shi Wang	Vanke	Real estate	22,369,000	13	223	71	30	Weibo search
	35	Guoqing Li	Dangdang	Software and Computer Services	5,417,000	11	84	58	30	Weibo search
	36	Weiwei Guo	Kingsoft	Software and Computer Services	4,028,000	11	48	40	30	Weibo search
	37	Gang Huang	Headscm Logistics	Transportation Services	1,670,000	12	438	45 ⁽²⁾	30	Weibo search

Note:

(1) CEO industries are classified according to Industry classification benchmark - Globe Classification System (FTSE).

(2) There is no information available for these four CEOs' age and therefore the average age is used.

Appendix 2. Design and Procedure incl. Manipulation & Reliability Checks of Studies 2–5

Study 2

Design and Procedure. Participants were first asked whether and how often they used Weibo. Those who had never or seldom used Weibo were filtered out. Participants were then randomly assigned to four conditions. Groups 1 and 2 were instructed to imagine that just when they were browsing Weibo, the website suggested an account for them to follow; as they clicked into the account page, they found that it was “Ms. A, CEO of a certain well-recognized brand”. Groups 3 and 4 had the same instructions except that they were told that the CEO was male. Next, participants were presented with a set of messages from the CEO. Specifically, Groups 1 and 3 would read life-related content while Groups 2 and 4 would see work-related content.

CEO messages used in the study were adapted from real CEO posts on Weibo. A typical life-related message reads “In the blink of an eye, holiday raced by” while a work-related one goes like “Ding-a-ling, the grand opening of our Chengdu Store: avant-garde, chic, fun, exciting!” (see Online Appendix 3 for the full translation of CEO messages used in the study). These messages were pilot tested with 64 participants (35 women, 29 men, $M_{\text{age}} = 31$) on Surveystar on key microblog communication dimensions, including content, language style, emotion, interaction effort (Wu et al. 2022) as well as perceived authenticity (Kennick 1985). Through the pilot test, we confirm that the two sets of CEO messages significantly differ in terms of content orientation (work-orientation: $M_{\text{life}} = 3.18$, $M_{\text{work}} = 5.32$, $F(1, 62) = 41.79$, $p < .001$; life-orientation: $M_{\text{life}} = 5.79$, $M_{\text{work}} = 3.83$, $F(1, 62) = 37.50$, $p < .001$), but not in other key dimensions (all $p > .05$); perceived authenticity is high for both groups ($M_1 = 5.48$, $M_2 = 5.42$, $F(1, 62) = .042$, $p > .05$).

After viewing the CEO messages, participants clicked to proceed to a questionnaire. Their engagement level with CEO messages was measured by three items (De Vries et al. 2014). The questionnaire continued with a manipulation check on perceived orientation (Wu et al., 2021). The last section of the questionnaire included questions to probe participants' motivations in using Weibo (Muntinga et al. 2011). All items were listed in Online Appendix 4 and measured on a seven-point scale (1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree"). In the end, participants were asked to recall the CEO's gender. Cases that identified the incorrect gender were deleted.

Manipulation checks. Participants reported that they saw more work-related content in the work-orientation conditions ($M = 5.47$) than the life-orientation conditions ($M = 3.31$, $F(1, 236) = 197.10$, $p < .001$). Also, participants discerned less life-related content in the work-orientation conditions ($M = 4.38$) than the life-orientation conditions ($M = 5.61$, $F(1, 236) = 63.08$, $p < .001$). No significant differences arose between conditions regarding participants' gender or their various motivations (information, entertainment, social interaction, self-expression) in using Weibo (all $p > .05$).

Reliability checks. Reliability analysis confirmed the validity of our measures: the three items for engagement ($\alpha = .78$), two items for perceived work-related content ($r = .73$), and two items for perceived life-related content ($r = .71$).

Study 3

Design and Procedure. The experiment procedure was similar to Study 2 but provided more detailed fictional information about the CEO. Participants were asked to imagine that they were browsing on Weibo, the website recommended an account to them; they followed the link and found it was Ms. Qi Liu (for conditions 1 and 2)/ Mr. Qi Liu (for conditions 3 and 4), who was the CEO of a digital product company called JoyMelon. Note the name of the CEOs and

company were fictional. Next, participants would view a set of CEO messages with either life- (groups 1 and 3) or work- (groups 2 and 4) related content (see Online Appendix 3 for a full translation of CEO messages used in the study).

The questionnaire contained the same questions as in Study 2 regarding perceived content orientation, Weibo usage motivations, engagement and CEO gender recall (cases which failed to recall the correct CEO gender were deleted). In addition, participants answered questions related to perceived schema-incongruity (novelty) (Berlyne & Parham 1968; Cox & Locander 1987), interest (Alexander et al. 1995; Chen et al. 2020), and their attitudes towards the fictional CEO/company name as well as the digital industry (Cox & Locander 1987). All items, listed in Online Appendix 4, were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = “strongly disagree”, 7 = “strongly agree”).

Manipulation checks. Participants reported a higher degree of work orientation in work-related content conditions ($M = 5.41$) than life-related content conditions ($M = 3.52$, $F(1, 270) = 150.12$, $p < .001$). Also, participants discerned a lower degree of life-orientation in work-related content conditions ($M = 4.09$) than life-related content conditions ($M = 5.86$, $F(1, 270) = 128.32$, $p < .001$). No significant differences were found between conditions regarding participants’ gender or their attitudes towards the CEO’s name, company name, and the digital industry, as well as their various motivations (information, entertainment, social interaction, self-expression) in using Weibo (all $p > .05$).

Reliability checks. Reliability analysis confirmed the validity of our measures: the three items for engagement ($\alpha = .87$), two items for perceived work-related content ($r = .74$), two items for perceived life-related content ($r = .80$), two items for perceived novelty ($r = .65$), and two items for interest ($r = .67$).

Study 4

Design and Procedure. We told the participants that the study comprised two unrelated tasks. In the first task, participants were randomly assigned to read three messages allegedly summarizing key findings from a government report on current gender equality practice in China. In each message, participants were provided with data on women and men's access to higher education, jobs, company boards and congress. Data were manipulated such that gender gaps were greatest (resp. smallest) in the low (resp. high) gender equality practice condition. Following the message was a bar chart based on the data described in the message to further illustrate the intended gender gap. After reading the message, participants reported their perception of GEP (GLOBE 2020; House et al. 2004; McDaniel 2008) along a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (see full scale items in Online Appendix 4 and full messages and charts in Online Appendix 5).

In the second task, participants were told that we were interested in their social media usage habits. Participants were randomly assigned to 2 (CEO gender: female vs. male) x 2 (content orientation: life vs. work) conditions. We first asked participants whether, when and how often they used Weibo. Those who had never or seldom used Weibo were filtered out. Participants were then instructed to imagine that when they were browsing on Weibo, they came across a CEO's Weibo page. That was Ms. A or Mr. A, who was the CEO of a home appliance brand. Next, participants would view a set of CEO messages with either life-related or work-related content (see Online Appendix 3 for full translation of CEO messages used in the study).

The proceeding questionnaire contained the same measurement items as in Study 3 regarding perceived content orientation, Weibo usage motivations, attitude towards to industry,

engagement, perceived novelty, interest, and CEO gender recall (responses from those who failed to recall the correct CEO gender were removed). After participants completed the questionnaire, they were thanked and informed that the gender gap report provided at the beginning of the study was fabricated for experimental purpose.

Manipulation checks. Participants' perception of gender equality in practice was the highest in the high gender equality condition and the lowest in the low gender equality condition ($M_{\text{high}} = 5.46$, $M_{\text{moderate}} = 4.35$, $M_{\text{low}} = 3.95$, $F(2, 768) = 82.40$, $p < .001$). Participants felt that they saw more work-related content in the work-orientation conditions ($M = 5.34$) than the life-orientation conditions ($M = 3.45$, $F(1, 769) = 687.74$, $p < .001$). Also, participants discerned less life-related content in the work-orientation conditions ($M = 4.12$) than the life-orientation conditions ($M = 5.44$, $F(1, 769) = 228.41$, $p < .001$). No significant differences arose across conditions regarding participants' gender, or their attitudes towards the home appliance industry, as well as their various motivations (information, entertainment, social interaction, self-expression) in using Weibo (all $p > .05$).

Reliability checks. Reliability analysis confirmed the validity of our measures: the four items for perception of gender equality in practice ($\alpha = .90$), three items for engagement ($\alpha = .87$), two items for perceived work-related content ($r = .73$), two items for perceived life-related content ($r = .70$), two for perceived novelty ($r = .63$), and two for interest ($r = .64$).

Study 5

Design and Procedure. Participants were informed that the study comprised of two unrelated tasks. In the first task, they were randomly assigned to read three messages, each advocating a specific GEV (complete messages can be found in Online Appendix 6). Following the reading of the message, participants rated their GEV using seven items adapted from

previous research (House et al. 2004; McDaniel 2008; World Value Survey 2020). These items included questions such as “In your opinion, who should place a higher importance on receiving a university education?” (1 = women; 7 = men), “In your opinion, who should have a greater right to a job when there is a scarcity of jobs?” (1 = women; 7 = men), and others (see Online Appendix 4 for full scale items).

In the second task, participants were told that we were also interested in their social media usage habits. Participants were randomly assigned to two conditions: CEO gender (female or male) and content orientation (life or work). Initially, participants were asked about their usage frequency of Weibo. Participants who reported never or seldom using Weibo were filtered out. Participants were then instructed to imagine coming across the Weibo account of a fashion design brand CEO, either Ms. A or Mr. A. A set of CEO messages with either life-related or work-related content was presented (refer to Online Appendix 3 for translation of these messages). Subsequently, participants responded to various measures including perceived content orientation, motivations for Weibo usage, attitude towards the industry, engagement, perceived novelty, interest, and recall of CEO gender, using the same measurement items employed in previous studies. After participants finished the questionnaire, they were thanked and informed that the message given at the beginning of the study was not the authors' opinion – it was fabricated for the purpose of experimentation.

Manipulation checks. Participants' GEVs were the highest in the male privilege value condition and the lowest in the female privilege condition ($M_{\text{female}} = 4.34$, $M_{\text{equal}} = 4.55$, $M_{\text{male}} = 4.87$, $F(2, 767) = 28.08$, $p < .001$). Participants reported a higher degree of perceived work orientation in the work-related content conditions ($M = 5.44$) than the life-related content conditions ($M = 3.66$, $F(1, 768) = 397.75$, $p < .001$). Also, participants discerned a lower degree

of life orientation in the work-related content conditions ($M = 4.20$) than the life-related content conditions ($M = 5.48$, $F(1, 768) = 189.21$, $p < .001$). No significant differences were found between conditions regarding participants' gender or their attitudes towards the fashion design industry, as well as their various motivations in using Weibo (all $p > .05$).

Reliability checks. Reliability analysis confirmed the validity of our measures: the seven items for GEVs ($\alpha = .83$), three items for engagement ($\alpha = .84$), two items for perceived work-related content ($r = .70$), two items for perceived life-related content ($r = .73$), two for perceived schema-incongruity or novelty ($r = .64$), and two for interest ($r = .60$).

Appendix 3. CEO Messages Used in Studies 2–5

Work-related CEO messages

Surprise! This is our new ad!!! With such a talented team, we shall be the best 🥳

Every day we come across new challenges and new opportunities ~~ I am so happy to see our old customers today. Grateful for their support and care!!!

We will work together to always bring you better products and design 😊

All our new products brought to you today have one thing in common: they have the look and the core 😁

Ahhhhh, that's our new product launch show! Today we bring you two new items, sharp and chic! And thank you to our brand ambassador @Bo Li, for coming to our show ~

Here is our Corporate Social Responsibility Report 2021 ❤️

Today is the start of Spring, everything is reviving and the new year begins ✌️ Looking ahead, we have a new show on Feb 3, 16pm, live on our official website.

Ding-a-ling, the grand opening of our Chengdu Store, avant-garde, chic, fun, exciting!

The gala is over but our journey just kick started! Look forward to more breakthroughs in 2022! 😁😁

Life-related CEO messages

Video of my hometown Huangshi ... This year Hubei is severely affected by the floods

In the blink of an eye, holiday raced by ~~ 🐧🐧




The winds are getting stronger. Now I live on dried food 😊😊

The youngers in my company call me advanced Greatwall [PC game] player. Yesterday, we cleared the stage of Lakeside Greatwall. No wonder people say “exotic view, canal landscape, all at the Lackside Greatwall”! Stunning graphics!



This year, I've travelled to Hangzhou twice and each time Hangzhou was hit by the

pandemic... so I had to get tested or I couldn't go anywhere.

Yo, last day of 2021~ I stay with my daughter in the library, with a cup of coffee and a cup of tea, collecting my mind and sorting out some reading notes. Nice ~

Everything seems out of place due to the pandemic. Yet we come across many touching moments... people trying their best finding light in the dark   The worst of times make us cherish every little sweet moment in life 

Winter Solstice [traditional Chinese solar term] is coming, let's have dumplings. Come on come on

Well, compared to nowadays fictions which are easily forgettable, Jin Yong's novels are classic and savoring. Like the "no trick is the best trick" philosophy, it works for our life and corporate management as well  

Appendix 4. Key Measurement Scales in Studies 2–5

Variables	Measurement Items	Reference
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I like quite a few of the CEO messages that I've just read. - I would comment on quite a few CEO messages that I've just read. - I would repost quite a few CEO messages that I've just read. 	adapted from De Vries et al. 2014
Perceived schema incongruity (Novelty)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I feel that this CEO's microblog is novel. - I feel that this CEO's microblog is different from others. 	adapted from Berlyne & Parham 1968; Cox & Locander 1987
Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I find this CEO's microblog interesting. - I got interested in what this CEO says on microblog. 	adapted from Alexander et al. 1995; Chen et al. 2020)
GEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In China. men and women are equally encouraged to pursue higher education. - In China. men and women have equal chance of finding a job. - In China. men and women have equal chance for leadership positions in organizations. - In China. men and women are equally likely to serve in a position of high office in government. 	GLOBE 2020; House et al. 2004; McDaniel 2008
GEVs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In your opinion, it should be worse for whom to fail in school? (1 = girls; 7 = boys) - In your opinion, a university education is more important for whom? (1 = women; 7 = men) - In your opinion, when jobs are scarce, who should have more right to a job? (1 = women; 7 = men) - In your opinion, opportunities for leadership positions should be more available for whom? (1 = women; 7 = men) - In your opinion, the society would be more effectively managed if there are more women or men in the positions of authority? (1 = women; 7 = men) - In your opinion, who make better political leaders? (1 = women; 7 = men) - In your opinion, who should contribute more to the family income? (1 = wife; 7 = husband) 	House et al. 2004; McDaniel 2008; World Value Survey 2020).

Weibo usage motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I use Weibo for information. - I use Weibo for interacting with others. - I use Weibo for entertainment. - I use Weibo for expressing myself. 	adapted from Muntinga et al. 2011
Attitude towards the CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I like the CEO's name. 	Cox & Locander 1987
Attitude towards the CEO's company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I like the company's name. 	Cox & Locander 1987
Attitude towards the CEO's industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I like the digital industry. 	Cox & Locander 1987
Perceived content orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I feel that the messages are all about the CEO's work. - I feel the messages show the professional side of the CEO. - I feel that the messages are all about the CEO's personal life and thoughts. - I feel the messages show the personal side of the CEO. 	devised based on Wu et al. 2021
Language style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I feel that the CEO uses quite informal and casual language on the microblog. 	devised based on Wu et al. 2021
Emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I feel that the emotions expressed by the CEO on the microblog are quite positive. - I feel that the CEO tends to show quite strong emotions on the microblog. 	devised based on Wu et al. 2021
Interaction effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CEO doesn't seem to interact a lot with followers. 	devised based on Wu et al. 2021
Authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The messages are quite real. I've seen content like that on microblogs. 	Kennick 1985

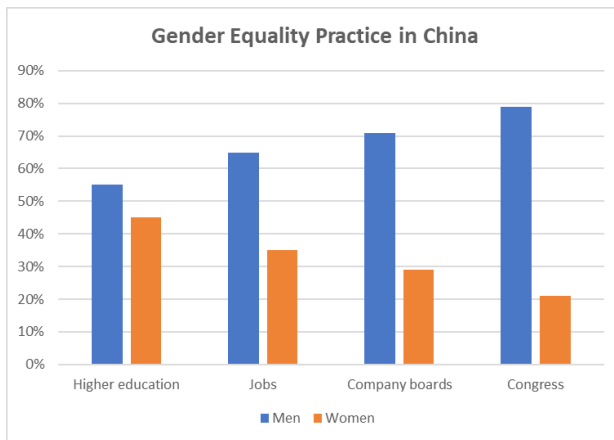
Appendix 5. Messages Used in Study 4

Low gender equality practice condition:

China's constitution guarantees women "equal rights with men in all spheres of life." However, there are still noticeable gender gaps in our society. We have to work harder to further improve gender equality and women's development.

According to our National Bureau of Statistics' 2021 report,

- In universities, gender ratios still skew toward men. The current male-to-female ratio is 55 to 45.
- In the job market, female workforce participation is still low. The current male-to-female ratio is 65 to 35.
- In companies, there is a notable lack of women in managerial positions, with a male-to-female board member ratio of 71 to 29.
- In the National People's Congress, large disparities in gender remain, with a male-to-female ratio of 79 to 21.



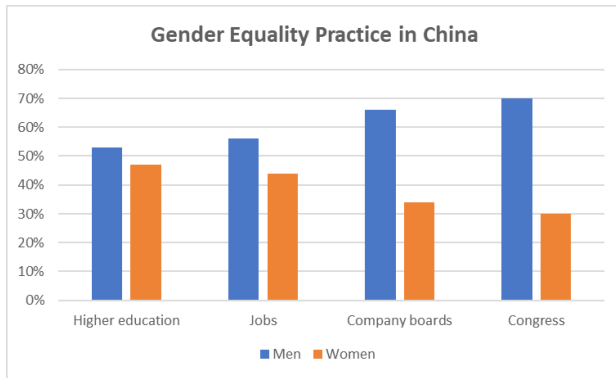
Moderate gender equality practice condition:

China's constitution guarantees women "equal rights with men in all spheres of life," and over the last several decades, women in our country have enjoyed notable gains. However, there is still some gender gaps in our society. We have to work harder to further improve gender equality and women's development.

According to our National Bureau of Statistics' 2021 report,

- In universities, gender ratios still skew toward men. The current male-to-female ratio is 53 to 47.

- In the job market, female workforce participation is relatively low. The current male-to-female ratio is 56 to 44.
- In companies, there is a lack of women in managerial positions, with a male-to-female board member ratio of 66 to 34.
- In the National People’s Congress, disparities in gender remain, with a male-to-female ratio of 70 to 30.

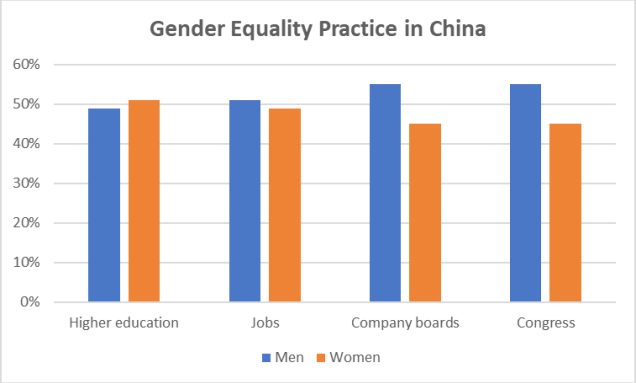


High gender equality practice condition:

China’s constitution guarantees women “equal rights with men in all spheres of life,” and over the last several decades, women in our country have enjoyed satisfactory gains.

According to our National Bureau of Statistics’ 2021 report,

- In universities, the number of female students has surpassed their male peers. The current male-to-female ratio is 49 to 51.
- In the job market, female workforce participation steadily growing. The current male-to-female ratio is 51 to 49.
- In companies, women have increasing access to managerial positions, with a male-to-female board member ratio of 55 to 45.
- In the National People’s Congress, the number of female members has reached a historical height, with a male-to-female ratio of 54 to 45.



Appendix 6. Messages Used in Study 5

Female privilege value condition:

Promoting Women's Empowerment and Achievements

In the modern era, recognizing and valuing the empowerment and achievements of women is of utmost importance.

To begin with, prioritizing women's access to education is crucial. Not only does it provide women with equal opportunities for personal growth and self-fulfillment, but it also enables society to benefit from their immense talents and contributions.

Moreover, creating ample opportunities for women to participate in the workforce should be a key focus. This not only empowers women to achieve financial independence but also drives economic growth and fosters a more inclusive and equitable workforce. Women bring a diverse array of skills, perspectives, and innovative ideas that can enhance efficiency and contribute to business success.

Furthermore, emphasizing the importance of women in leadership positions is vital. By promoting women to leadership roles, organizations can benefit from diversified perspectives and more inclusive decision-making. Research consistently suggests that women leaders exhibit greater compassion, and adopting flexible management practices is more likely to result in higher profitability and cultivate a positive work environment for all employees.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the multiple advantages that stem from women contributing to household income. The active involvement of women in the workforce not only promotes their personal development and economic independence but also establishes the foundation for happiness and harmony within families. Studies have shown that a family model that challenges traditional gender roles, where women contribute to the breadwinning and men

engage in domestic responsibilities, cultivates confidence and happiness among women. Additionally, men taking on household chores and caregiving responsibilities creates a nurturing environment for children, fostering their courage, creativity, and overall development. Ultimately, such an approach enables all family members to live a more balanced and fulfilling life.

Gender equality value Condition:

Creating a Society of Gender Equality

In our pursuit of progress and social justice, we advocate for an inclusive and fair society that transcends gender biases and stereotypes.

First and foremost, it is imperative to ensure equal access to university education for both men and women. By opening educational opportunities without discrimination, individuals of all genders can showcase their talents, pursue their passions, and contribute to societal advancement, leading to a more prosperous and progressive society.

Additionally, in times of limited employment prospects, it becomes essential to establish equal employment rights and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their gender. Promoting equal employment opportunities for women and men not only fosters diversity in the workplace but also creates a balanced and inclusive work environment where each person can reach their full potential, contribute to economic growth, and support themselves and their families.

Furthermore, attaining gender equality in leadership positions is paramount in driving inclusive decision-making processes and achieving a harmonious balance of diverse perspectives. It is crucial to strive for a society that treats men and women equally, creating a

diverse and balanced environment. Gender equality in leadership positions will lead to more effective governance, organizational success, and societal progress as a whole.

Lastly, it is vital to acknowledge that both women and men play significant roles in contributing to their families' income. Encouraging shared responsibility and an equitable distribution of economic duties within the family fosters shared decision-making, enhanced well-being, and strengthened familial bonds. By promoting a balanced approach, where both men and women actively participate in family responsibilities, we can achieve improved family dynamics and overall societal well-being.

Male-privilege value condition:

Understanding the Historical Division of Labor and Acknowledging Men's Contributions

Throughout history, the traditional division of labor between men and women has served specific purposes and brought certain benefits to the functioning of communities. Men have traditionally engaged in physically demanding tasks like fishing, hunting, and defending against external threats, thereby protecting essential resources and ensuring human survival. Women, on the other hand, have primarily focused on household chores and nurturing, creating a stable environment for raising the next generation.

Confucianism regards this division of labor as a reflection of the natural order of the universe. It emphasizes the interdependence and complementarity of these gender roles, arguing that a harmonious society depends on the fulfillment of these specific responsibilities. According to Confucianism, men should undertake their roles as protectors and providers, while women should concentrate on managing the household and caregiving.

It is important to recognize and appreciate the contributions of men throughout history. Men have played vital roles in advancing science, exploration, innovation, governance, art, literature,

philosophy, and more. Their physical strength, resilience, courage, leadership, intellectual talent, and ambition have propelled societies forward, spurring innovation, cultural progress, and shaping the course of civilization. From individuals like Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, Aristotle to political leaders like Nelson Mandela and Winston Churchill, these male figures have left a lasting legacy that continues to inspire and shape our world.

In today's society, while we strive for gender equality and recognize the importance of dismantling traditional gender roles, certain qualities often associated with being a gentleman continue to hold value and are appreciated. Qualities such as courage, care towards women, responsibility, and respect offer a foundation for fostering healthy relationships, promoting empathy, and encouraging positive interactions among individuals. These traits contribute to the development of a more harmonious society.

Appendix 7. Survey on Chinese Weibo Users

According to the Global Gender Gap Report issued by the World Economic Forum (2021), China's gender equality score is 0.682 (score 0-1: 0 = full gender disparity; 1= full gender parity) and ranks 107th out of 156 countries around the world. It seems that China can be considered as a society with moderate low level of gender equality. A preliminary survey was conducted to measure Chinese Weibo users' perceived GEP in their society and their GEV. The survey also measured Chinese Weibo users' gender stereotypes and examined the relationship between people's gender stereotypical associations and their perceived GEP.

The survey consisted of four items for GEP (GLOBE 2020; House et al. 2004; McDaniel 2008) along a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and seven items for GEVs (House et al. 2004; McDaniel 2008; World Value Survey 2020). For gender stereotypical associations, we presented ten activities to participants, among which five are traditionally related to women (i.e., childcare, cooking, sewing, household chores, taking care of elderly at home – each counted for -1point) while the other five are traditionally related to men (i.e., farm work, fishing and hunting, bread-winning, money-making, having a career – each counted for 1 point). Participants were asked to select at least five activities that they considered closely related to men.

The survey was conducted on Surveystar. There were 432 respondents (218 women, 214 men) who participated in the study for a pay of RMB 3 (~ USD 0.5) and a chance to win a prize from a lucky draw sponsored by the website. The average age of the participants was 32 years.

Reliability analysis confirmed the validity of our measures: the four items for perceived GEP ($\alpha = .84$), seven items for GEV ($\alpha = .78$). Participants showed a moderately high level of perceived GEP ($M = 5.47$, significantly lower than high level (6), $t(431) = -9.19$, $p = .00$) and

their GEV tends to be non-male privilege ($M = 4.67$, significantly different from male-privilege values (5), $t(431) = -9.00$, $p = .00$).

What's more, as shown in the table below, a linear regression of participants' gender stereotypical association as a function of GEP, GEV, gender, age, and education level indicated that the strength of participants' gender stereotypical association is negatively related to their perceived GEP ($SE = -.12$, $p < .05$) while not significantly related to all other variables. That verified our premise that people with low (resp. high) GEP are likely to hold strong (resp. weak) gender stereotypical associations.

Predictors	Stereotypical Gender Association	
	SE	t
Gender	-.01	- .23
Age	.05	1.07
Education level	.06	1.23
GEP	-.14**	-2.72
GEV	.07	1.35

* $p < .1$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$