

# The Educational Implications of Female Consciousness in Shih Shuching's Novels

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 18 Dec 2024 Revised: 10 Feb 2025 Accepted: 28 Feb 2025	<p>The study employs textual analysis to examine the awakening of self-awareness in female characters, their pursuit of economic independence and personal equality, and their resilience in realizing self-worth under challenging circumstances. The paper puts forward a series of specific methods for incorporating Shih Shuching's novels into the educational curriculum, including thematic courses, group discussions, creative exercises and interdisciplinary projects. These educational approaches are designed to enhance students' literary comprehension while fostering awareness of gender equality, cross-cultural understanding and social responsibility. By offering new perspectives on integrating literature and gender equality education, this study makes a significant contribution to educational innovation and the advancement of gender equality in society.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Shih Shuching's novels, female consciousness, literary education, educational practice, practical application.</p>

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of literature in the context of classroom education. The use of realistic and delicate descriptions in literary works can evoke emotional resonance and enhance perceptual understanding of gender issues. University students are typically equipped with a certain degree of literary literacy and critical thinking abilities, which enables them to analyze and comprehend gender issues in literary works with greater depth. To effectively promote gender equality in education, particularly at the university level, it is crucial to integrate literature imbued with a profound sense of femininity into teaching methodologies. Portrayal of the inner world and life experiences of female characters in literary works offers students a unique perspective on the experiences and views of different genders, thereby cultivating diversified thinking. An analysis of female characters and their situations in university literature courses can prompt students to consider gender issues in real society, thereby developing their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the study of women's literature from different periods and cultural backgrounds can assist students in understanding the complexity and diversity of gender issues, thereby broadening their cultural horizons.

In the university literary education lessons, students are encouraged to engage with these works through reading and discussion. Moreover, students are instructed to conduct academic research and compose essays to deepen their comprehension of the subject matter of gender equality. By analyzing the representation of women's consciousness in the works of authors such as Shih Shuching, teachers can cultivate students' sense of social responsibility and encourage them to actively engage in the advancement of gender equality. The incorporation of these works into the curriculum at the university level serves to enrich the content of literature courses while simultaneously furnishing tangible and illustrative teaching materials for the education of students in the field of gender equality. The oeuvre of Shih Shuching is distinguished by a profound feminist perspective and a sensitivity to psychological nuances, encompassing a vast array of historical periods and geographical regions. This rich and diverse representation of women's lives provides readers with a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the complexities inherent in the female experience (Chen Fangming, 2021). An examination of the female characters in Shih Shuching's works

provides an invaluable opportunity for students to gain insight into the complexities of women's awakening of self-consciousness, their pursuit of independence and equality, and their resilience in the face of adversity, as they strive to realize their self-worth within the university classroom.

The incorporation of literature imbued with a profound sense of femininity into university education practices not only enhances students' literary literacy but also fosters their awareness of gender equality, develops critical thinking, enhances cross-cultural understanding, and cultivates their sense of social responsibility. This educational approach provides novel perspectives and methodologies for integrating literary education and gender equality education and is of great significance in promoting educational innovation and gender equality in society. Through this type of education, the objective is to produce university graduates who can think critically about gender issues and possess a global perspective, a sense of social responsibility, and the ability to engage with complex issues in a nuanced manner.

literary are not only considered to possess universal significance and timeless value but is also uniquely understood in terms of classification and appreciation (Gossman, 1971). This perspective posits that literary classics occupy a pivotal role in the educational sphere due to their capacity to transcend temporal and cultural boundaries, offering enduring value to readers across diverse historical and cultural contexts. The roots of literary works are firmly planted in reality, and they reflect the thoughts, feelings, and values of their authors objectively (Sun Sihua, 2022). This quality renders literature an invaluable lens through which to gain insight into the nuances of society and the intricacies of human nature. Concurrently, the act of reading literature can assist individuals in identifying their optimal life trajectory, thereby underscoring the pivotal function of literary education in facilitating personal growth and the formation of values.

It is incumbent upon teachers to view literature as a vital educational resource (Deng Yuxia, 2022). By persistently investigating the fundamental aspects of literature and seeking to identify its aesthetic qualities, educators can construct a comprehensive representation of the intrinsic beauty of literature. This approach not only enhances students' capacity to appreciate literature but also fosters the development of their aesthetic sensibilities and humanistic attributes. The field of literary education is undergoing significant transformations in the context of the digital age. Alexandra Milyakina (2018) investigates the various models of literary education that are currently in use in school classroom. This demonstrates that conventional approaches to literary education are being modified to align with the evolving technological landscape and evolving pedagogical needs. B. Sevara and I. Abdunazarova (2020)'s research, on the other hand, concentrates on the introduction of innovative technologies into literary education. This indicates that educators are proactively seeking to utilise new technologies to enhance the efficacy and appeal of literary education. The field of literary education is confronted with the dual challenge of reconciling traditional values with modern innovations. On the one hand, literary classics retain their enduring value and play an essential role in personal growth and development.

The concept of "female consciousness" refers to women's awareness of their status, role, and value as subjects in the objective world. The development and maturation of this consciousness can be attributed to the process of acquiring knowledge and learning, which enables women to recognize themselves as independent individuals with natural human rights (Wei Guoying, 2003). Shih Shuching's writing expresses the strong, albeit sometimes biased, sense of autonomy exhibited by urban women in 1980s Hong Kong (Zhang Shuyun, 2006). Through her novel, Shih Shuching portrays the journey of modern women from awakening to accusation and ultimately to redemption (Dai Hui, 2004). Yu Na (2010)'s research highlights how writers reveal the deep instinctive desires of modern urban women through their works. In a related analysis, Zhou Fan (2006) examines the difficult choices Shih Shu-ching's female characters face when confronted with their destinies. Zhou attributes these struggles to the penetration of enlightenment consciousness, while also noting that the insufficient depth of this consciousness contributes to the characters' dilemmas. This body of literature collectively illustrates the complex evolution of female consciousness in modern urban settings, as depicted through the lens of contemporary fiction and literary analysis.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this study is to examine the representation of female consciousness in Shih's novels and its implications for educational practice. Specific objectives include: analysing the process of awakening self-awareness and the characteristics of female characters in Shih Shuching's novels; exploring how to integrate the theme of female consciousness in Shih's novels into the practice of literary education and gender equality education; and examining

the methods of using these literary works to cultivate students' critical thinking, cross-cultural understanding and sense of social responsibility. The study adopts the method of textual analysis to read Shih's representative works, such as the "Hong Kong Stories" series of novels, the "Hong Kong Trilogy" (《香港三部曲》) and the "Taiwan Trilogy" (《台湾三部曲》), and analyses the female roles, plot development and themes to reveal the underlying female consciousness. At the same time, this study also compares Shih Shuching's works in different periods to highlight the development of his theme of female consciousness. In terms of theoretical framework, this study is based on feminist literary criticism theory, combined with curriculum and pedagogy theory, multicultural education theory, etc., aiming to provide new perspectives and methods for the integration of literary education and gender equality education. Through this study, we hope to give new impetus to literary education provide strong support for gender equality education, and promote students' gender equality awareness, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding.

## ANALYSIS OF FEMALE CONSCIOUSNESS OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN SHIH SHUCHING'S NOVELS

### The quest for economic independence and personal equality

In Shih Shuching's novels, financial independence is presented as a fundamental aspect of women's pursuit of equality. This theme is a pervasive element in her oeuvre, particularly in the juxtaposition of working women and housewives. Through a nuanced and sensitive approach, Shih Shuching explores the intricate relationship between economic independence and women's autonomy, decision-making capacity, and status within the family and society. A case in point is the series of novels on "Married Life", which demonstrate the far-reaching impact of economic dependence on women's lives. In *Trapped* (《困》), Ye Qia; in *The "Perfect" Husband* (《完美的丈夫》), Li Su; and in *Looking Back* (《回首·蓦然》), Fan Shuixiu, we encounter three highly educated women who have chosen to become full-time housewives. Despite their knowledge and ability, these women are often hesitant when faced with the problem of marriage and lack the courage to leave because of their lack of independent financial resources. Through the experiences of these characters, Shih effectively illustrates how economic dependence constrains women's autonomy and decision-making ability, placing them in a disadvantaged position within marriage and preventing them from achieving true equality of personality.

In contrast, Shih's portrayal of women in the workplace reveals a markedly disparate outcome. In the "Hong Kong Stories" series, when Su Xi discovers her husband's infidelity in *Su Xi's complaint* (《慄细怨》), she decides to leave him and refuse his offer of a room share. This enables her to succeed in the workplace independently. The experience of Su Xi serves to illustrate how economic independence bestows upon women greater autonomy and equality. She is no longer beholden to her husband but is instead empowered to make her own choices, thereby markedly enhancing her autonomy and independence. Furthermore, Fang Yue in *Kiln Change* (《窑变》) and Lei Beijia in *One night Tour* (《一夜游》) are also characterized by their possession of careers and stable sources of income. This financial independence affords them a greater range of choices and autonomy in life.

The sharp contrast between the two statuses of women in the text of the novel profoundly reveals the importance of economic independence in women's quest for personal equality. Economically independent women have more say and decision-making power in family relations and social status. They are no longer dependent on others but can plan their own lives independently, which not only changes their living conditions but also profoundly affects their self-perception and value judgments. In Shih Shuching's works, economic independence is portrayed as an important way for women to pursue self-worth and social status. By comparing the different responses of working and non-working women to life's changes, she shows how economic independence enhances women's bargaining and decision-making power, thereby promoting personal independence and social status. This emphasis on the importance of economic independence not only reflects the author's deep insight into women's development but also provides an important dimension for thinking about gender equality in modern society.

### Awakening of independence

The growth process of the female characters in Shih Shuching's novels shows a strong awakening of the sense of autonomy. In the case of *Su Xi's complaint*, for example, the course of Su Xi's life clearly outlines this process of

transformation. When she discovers her husband's betrayal, she does not opt for the traditional sense of patience and compromise but resolutely chooses to leave (Shi Shuching, 2003). This decision marks the awakening of her sense of independence. Su Xi's process of transformation is full of internal struggles and external challenges, as she deals with the pain and loneliness of losing her family and overcoming financial difficulties. However, it was these challenges that unlocked Su Xi's inner potential. She began to dedicate herself to her work and achieved some success. Su Xi's growth reflects not only the enhancement of her skills, but also the full awakening of her sense of autonomy, as she no longer defines her value as limited to her family role, but seeks self-realization in a wider social sphere. In *Kiln Change*, Fang Yue's character also demonstrates the struggle and choice between pursuing one's artistic dream and the reality of life. Despite her husband's cold shoulder, Fang Yue continues to dedicate herself to her work at the art center, learning new fields, meeting people, and seeing the wider world (Shi Shuching, 2003). Fang Yue's experience shows that career development is not only a means to economic independence but also an important way for women to realize their self-worth and express their subjectivity. Through her work, Fang Yue has redefined her identity, not just as someone's wife, but as an individual with independent aspirations and values.

In addition to the previously mentioned Su Xi and Fang Yue, Wang Zhangzhu in the third book of the "Taiwan Trilogy", *Living through Three Eras* (《三世人》), is another typical example, whose experience vividly demonstrates the process of women's self-awareness awakening under the complex historical background. The narrative of Wang Zhangzhu commences with her status as an objectified entity. As a result of being sold as an adopted daughter at an early age, she is effectively an object that can be transferred at will under the prevailing patriarchal system. Wang Zhangzhu was wearing a traditional long gown that her adoptive mother had discarded. She was imprisoned in her adoptive parents' home, and this dress symbolized her bondage and identity. However, Wang Zhangzhu's sense of independence began to emerge in the context of this oppression. She identified an opportunity to extricate herself from her adoptive parents' home by learning Chinese and becoming an attendant of Zhu Xiucan (Shi Shuching, 2012). This marks the commencement of her active pursuit of strategies to modify her destiny and the inaugural awakening of her sense of autonomy. She became preoccupied with women's issues and exhibited a pronounced identification with the women's liberation movement. This marks the point at which her sense of independence is no longer confined to the personal level, but begins to connect with broader social issues.

At this juncture, Wang Zhangzhu's sense of autonomy is well-developed, manifesting not only in her cognitive processes but also in her tangible actions. From her initial aspiration to evade the conventional expectations associated with the role of a wife and mother to her active pursuit of becoming a female spokesperson, Wang Zhangzhu's experience provides a compelling illustration of how a woman gradually becomes aware of her potential and subsequently assumes control over her destiny in a context characterized by social complexity and change. In the case of Wang Zhangzhu, Shih provides an illustrative example of the process of awakening a woman's sense of autonomy. This process is not instantaneous, rather, it is characterized by internal struggles, shifts in external circumstances, and a commitment to ongoing learning and personal development.

The ability of Shih's female characters to make their own decisions in the face of adversity further emphasizes their awakening sense of independence. Whether Su Xi decides to divorce and restart her career, or Fang Yue's insistence on pursuing her artistic endeavors, these decisions reflect their ability to think independently and control their destinies. The formation of this autonomous decision-making capacity signifies that these female characters have broken away from the traditional social definitions and limitations of women and have begun to plan their lives according to their standards and values.

### **Self-actualization and resilience in the face of adversity**

Shih Shuching's works, especially the character of Huang Deyun in the "Hong Kong Trilogy", vividly demonstrate how women can change their destiny through their efforts in the face of all kinds of difficulties, embodying a strong sense of femininity (Shi Shuching, 2010). In an interview, Shih Shuching said that the most satisfying female figure in her creations is Huang Deyun, who rises to the occasion despite triple discrimination on the basis of gender, class and ethnicity (Zhang Li, 2019). Huang Deyun's growth process can be seen as a typical case of women's awakening and self-realization, and her experience shows how women break through traditional definitions and build their personal value systems amid social change. Huang Deyun's growth can be divided into several key stages: initial dilemma, germination of consciousness, self-awakening, capacity building, and final self-realization. As a prostitute, Huang Deyun was initially at the bottom of the social ladder, facing severe identity discrimination and pressure to

survive. However, when she becomes pregnant and is abandoned by her lover Smith, she begins to realize that she must survive on her own, marking the beginning of her budding femininity. The turning point for Huang Deyun came when she was abandoned by Qu Yabing. She made a crucial decision: she refused to return to her old job and chose to become independent. This decision reflects a significant increase in her self-awareness and the fact that she has begun to take charge of her own life. She then applies for a job in a pawnbroker's and studies with Eleven Aunts, a process that demonstrates her determination to improve herself. Her sense of femininity is further developed and manifests itself in a thirst for knowledge and skills. With the success of her career and personal growth, Huang Deyun eventually achieved financial and personal independence. She has fully awakened her feminine consciousness and can make her own decisions about her lifestyle and direction in life.

Huang Deyun has achieved not only financial independence but also a spiritual realization of her self-worth. Her story also reflects how women seek to achieve balance and self-worth in their multiple role identities. As a single mother, she had to balance her dual roles as a mother and a working woman. By acquiring new skills and improving her abilities, Huang Deyun gradually built up her self-confidence and established her place in society.

The image of Huang Deyun, as conveyed by Shih Shuching, serves to illustrate a significant message: even in the most challenging circumstances, women possess the capacity to alter the course of their destiny through their actions. This perspective challenges the conventional portrayal of women in traditional societies and underscores their capacity for self-determination and agency. Huang Deyun's development not only reflects her struggle but also represents the awakening of women's consciousness across the entire era. In essence, the narrative of Huang Deyun enables Shih Shuching to delve profoundly into how women can demonstrate resilience in challenging circumstances, ascertain their intrinsic value through their endeavors, and reinforce their sense of femininity in the process. Such portrayals not only illustrate an individual's personal growth but also reflect broader societal shifts in the status and consciousness of women. They offer insights that can inform our understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment in the real world.

## EDUCATIONAL REVELATIONS

### **Fostering women's sense of autonomy and independence**

The novels of Shih Shuching offer a fertile ground for examining and nurturing the autonomy and individuality of women. By examining the female characters created by Shih Shuching, it is possible to identify a three-stage model of self-awareness and value cultivation. This model comprises the germination of consciousness, self-reflection, and action practice. This model not only reflects the process of women's awakening of their sense of autonomy but also provides valuable guidance for the design of relevant educational strategies. In the initial phase of consciousness-raising, women begin to acknowledge the injustices inherent in their circumstances. In contrast to the conventional virtues of patience and obedience, Su Xi, the protagonist of *Su Xi's Complaint*, begins to recognize the necessity for an independent life when confronted with the failure of her marriage. This awakening marks the beginning of self-awareness. Educational strategies may include organizing role-model learning, asking students to study cases of successful women in real life, and analyzing literary works to help students identify gender inequalities in society. In the self-reflection stage, women begin to question traditional gender roles and explore their self-worth.

The character of Fang Yue in *Kiln Change* provides an illustrative example of the process of self-reflection, as she grapples with the tension between pursuing her artistic aspirations and the demands of everyday life. Educational strategies may include the design of self-exploration programs, the objective of which is to encourage students to reflect on their values and life goals. Additionally, group discussions may be conducted to enable students to share and compare their respective life plans. In the action-practice stage, women engage in concrete actions to modify their circumstances and achieve self-worth. In Shih Shuching's novels, financially independent women demonstrate greater autonomy and determination in the face of marital crises, which reflects the importance of action and practice. Educational strategies may include the provision of career planning courses, the organization of entrepreneurship seminars and workshops, and the offering of internships and social practice opportunities. The objective of these strategies is to assist students in developing an understanding of the various career paths available to them, to cultivate their innovative spirit and sense of financial independence, and to enable them to practice their autonomy in real-life situations.

In general, the process of self-awakening of female characters in the novel allows us to construct a systematic model of self-awareness and value development. This model emphasizes the gradual process of consciousness awakening and its subsequent manifestation in concrete action, while also underscoring the importance of diversified development. In an educational context, it is recommended that courses and activities are designed by this model to assist students, particularly female students, in developing a healthy sense of self-awareness, positive values, and an understanding of their worth. This concept of education is beneficial in cultivating women's sense of autonomy and independent personality, while also assisting all students in identifying their orientation and direction of development within the complex social environment.

### **Enhancing gender awareness and critical thinking**

The novels of Shih Shuching illustrate the process of women's awakening to their sense of autonomy and offer a compelling insight into the persistence of gender stereotypes and discrimination in society. They serve as a valuable educational resource, enhancing students' awareness of gender equality and critical thinking. In *The "Perfect" Husband*, Li Su, a housewife, is relegated to a status of inferiority within the marriage and family unit. Her husband exhibits indifference toward her and fails to seek her input on matters of family affairs. Instead, he demands her compliance in assuming the role of a conventional couple on various occasions (Shi Shuching, 1987). The disparate treatment meted out to Li Su serves to illustrate the pervasiveness of sexism within the marital relationship. This portrayal allows students to recognize that gender inequality is not merely an isolated occurrence, but rather a pervasive and deeply entrenched issue that is embedded within the social structure. Teachers may facilitate student-led investigations into the underlying causes of these discriminatory practices and their ramifications for women's advancement. Such discussions facilitate students' ability to identify gender discrimination in real-life scenarios and to consider strategies for addressing these issues. A comparison of the portrayal of women in Shih Shuching's novels with that in traditional literature offers students an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of gender roles. To illustrate, the portrayal of Lei Beijia in *One night Tour* exemplifies the shifts in the status and social perceptions of women when contrasted with the female characters in traditional talent novels. By undertaking a comparative analysis, students can observe the evolution of female roles in literature and recognize how societal expectations of female roles have changed over time. This historical perspective enables students to comprehend the socially constructed nature of gender concepts, thereby enhancing their critical thinking abilities.

A theoretical framework for 'gender critical thinking' can be constructed which includes the following elements: the identification of gender bias, the analysis of power structures, and the construction of equality programs. The identification of gender bias enables students to discern gender stereotypes and implicit discrimination in everyday life. The analysis of power structures necessitates an examination of the social, cultural, and institutional factors that give rise to gender inequality. The construction of equality programs entails the formulation of concrete strategies for improvement. This framework offers students a theoretical framework for analyzing and responding to gender inequality, as well as for identifying and responding to similar issues in real life. Shih Shuching's novels not only enrich the discussion of gender equality in literature but also provide a theoretical foundation for educational practice. Through in-depth analyses of these works, students can better understand and reflect on gender inequality, enhance their awareness of gender equality and critical thinking skills, and contribute to the promotion of social equity and harmony.

### **Educational concepts that promote women's self-realization**

The process of self-realization of female characters in Shih Shuching's novels offers valuable insights for modern education, particularly in terms of supporting women's pursuit of self-worth and personal growth. By demonstrating how female characters surmount adversity and pursue self-improvement, her works assist in the construction and practice of an educational philosophy that promotes female self-realization. The fundamental tenet of this pedagogical approach is the concept of 'diversified self-realization'. This posits that the process of self-realization is a multifaceted and evolving phenomenon, shaped by a multitude of factors, including individual capabilities, social milieu, and cultural heritage. This philosophy is comprised of three core elements: diversified development paths, resilience development and role balance.

The significance of diversified pathways of development is fully articulated in the "Hong Kong Trilogy". From a position of extreme disadvantage, Huang Deiyun ultimately attains a position of financial independence and social status through a process of continuous learning and self-improvement. Her story illustrates the multiplicity of



pathways to self-realization. In light of this revelation, teachers may wish to consider designing discussion activities to guide students in contemplating the various paths of personal development. Such activities could also encourage students to formulate personal growth plans by their circumstances and to develop long-term goal-setting and planning skills. Furthermore, teachers may wish to provide diversified choices of courses and activities to support students in exploring different interests and talents. The narrative of Wang Zhangzhu in *Living through Three Eras* provides an exemplar of resilience development. Wang Zhangzhu's trajectory begins with her being sold as an adopted daughter and culminates in her ascension from the lowest rung of the social ladder to a financially independent woman with social status. This transformation is achieved through a combination of continuous learning and self-improvement. Her experience serves to illustrate the significance of resilience in the process of female self-realization. Educational practices can facilitate students' acquisition of the capacity to confront setbacks and difficulties through case analyses and role-playing. Furthermore, they can conduct mental resilience training to enhance students' resilience and problem-solving abilities. Additionally, educational practices can establish a support system to provide students with the requisite counseling and resource support.

The cross-cultural elements evident in Shih Shuching's oeuvre serve to illustrate the importance of cultivating students' global vision and cultural sensitivity within the educational sphere. The implementation of cross-cultural exchange programs can facilitate the expansion of students' international perspectives. The incorporation of multicultural content within the curriculum can enhance students' cultural understanding and inclusiveness. Furthermore, encouraging students to participate in international academic or social activities can establish a foundation for their development in a globalized society. By examining Shih Shuching's work, we can construct a comprehensive framework for comprehending and implementing educational concepts that facilitate women's self-actualization. The framework places particular emphasis on self-awareness, capacity building, social participation, and continuous growth. By engaging in self-exploration and reflection, students can gain clarity regarding their values and life goals. Diversified learning opportunities are provided to facilitate the development of the requisite knowledge and skills. Students are encouraged to actively engage in social practices and to recognize their self-worth in real-life situations. Furthermore, an attitude of lifelong learning is fostered, enabling students to develop sustainably within an ever-changing society.

These educational concepts not only inform the implementation of specific educational practices but also provide a valuable foundation for further research and the development of educational policy. The implementation of these concepts facilitates the enhancement of female students' understanding of themselves, the development of their potential, the overcoming of challenges, and the realization of their self-worth and acquisition of greater opportunities for development and voice in society.

## **LITERARY EDUCATION IN PRACTICE**

### **Design of thematic courses**

To incorporate the theme of women's consciousness in Shih Shuching's works into the teaching of literature, it would be beneficial to design a specialized course focusing on this topic. It is recommended that a course entitled 'Exploring Women's Consciousness in Shih Shuching's Novels' be offered, and that the following classics be included in the required reading materials: The "Hong Kong Trilogy" and *Living through Three Eras*, etc. In this course, teachers should facilitate students' analysis of the personal growth of female characters in the novels, the social challenges they encountered, and how they overcame obstacles and realized their self-worth. The curriculum is designed to facilitate not only an enhanced comprehension of Shi Shuching's literary oeuvre but also the development of analytical skills about the representation of women in literature. To guarantee that students can explore women's consciousness in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, the course should employ a variety of teaching strategies, including, but not limited to, in-depth textual readings, interactive group discussions, thematic presentations, and role-plays. The employment of a variety of teaching methods will assist students in examining and understanding the expression and impact of female consciousness in literature from a variety of perspectives.

### **Organize group discussions and role-plays**

To foster students' capacity for empathy and critical thinking, it is recommended that educators implement group discussions and role-playing activities centered on the portrayal of female characters in Shih Shuching's novels. It would be beneficial for educators to meticulously select pivotal female characters in the novels, such as Huang Deyun

in the “Hong Kong Trilogy” and Fang Yue in *Kiln Change*, as a foundation for discourse. The discussion should concentrate on the difficulties faced by these characters, their decision-making processes and their character traits. For instance, students may be encouraged to examine the social obstacles and coping mechanisms encountered by Huang Deyun as she transitions from a sex worker to a prosperous entrepreneur. Furthermore, educators may opt to devise role-playing activities, which would permit students to gain direct experience of the scenarios and dialogues depicted in the novel. To illustrate, students may engage in role-playing activities wherein they assume the roles of Fang Yue, her admirer, and other pivotal characters in *Kiln Chang*. This allows for the simulation of communication and interaction between these characters. Such immersive role-playing experiences facilitate a deeper comprehension of how gender role expectations influence individual decision-making processes, whilst simultaneously developing critical thinking abilities and enhancing empathy. Such activities facilitate a more comprehensive comprehension of the representation of women in literature, while simultaneously fostering analytical and problem-solving abilities in the context of genuine interpersonal interactions.

### **Stimulating creative practice**

To enhance students' comprehension of women's issues, it is recommended that educators employ pedagogical strategies that encourage the creation of literary works that reflect the contemporary consciousness of women. Teachers may wish to consider organizing a series of creative writing workshops, to inspire students to create short stories, poems, or theatre pieces, using the female characters in Shi Shuching's novels as a source of inspiration. For instance, educators may direct students to construct a narrative of female growth that reflects the contemporary social context, based on the story of Wang Zhangzhu in *Living through Three Eras*. During this creative process, students will be encouraged to consider the challenges that modern women may encounter in society and the strategies they employ to cope with these challenges. Such an exercise will not only enhance students' literary abilities but also prompt them to engage in profound reflection on the lived experiences of contemporary women. To further promote communication and reflection among students, teachers may wish to consider organizing work-sharing sessions, during which students present their creations and provide feedback to each other. Such interaction serves to enhance students' understanding of women's issues, while also developing their critical thinking and empathy. The aforementioned activities afford students the chance to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experience, thereby facilitating more comprehensive growth in the realms of literary creation and gender studies.

### **Cross-curricular learning**

The design of interdisciplinary project learning activities, which combine the theme of women's consciousness in Shih Shuching's novels with other disciplines, enables students to effectively broaden their knowledge horizons and exercise their comprehensive analytical skills. For instance, educators may direct students to undertake an interdisciplinary research project on the nexus of “Literature and Sociology,” investigating the correlation between the social status of female characters in Shih Shuching's oeuvre and the transformation of female roles in the actual world. Students may select their research topics, such as the advancement of women in the workplace or the evolution of women's educational opportunities, and analyze them in depth by integrating the narratives of the novels with empirical data from the real world. Furthermore, teachers may opt to design an interdisciplinary project on the intersection of literature and history. This would entail encouraging students to study the living conditions of women in different historical periods as depicted in Shih Shuching's novels and to compare and analyze them with the actual records in historical documents. Such projects facilitate not only an enhanced comprehension of literary works but also the development of historical awareness and research skills. Such interdisciplinary projects allow students to relate literary studies to a multiplicity of real-world issues, thereby enhancing their literary literacy while strengthening their ability to solve complex social problems. This approach to learning encourages students to transcend the boundaries of a single discipline, facilitating the development of a more holistic and critical mode of thought.

### **Application of digital learning platforms**

To enhance the interactive learning experience for students, modern technology can be employed to develop electronic visual aids. For instance, the creation of an interactive digital map could be undertaken, to mark key locations mentioned in the novel and provide text excerpts accompanied by historical background information. Such a platform enables students to engage with the novel's scenes in greater depth through virtual travel, facilitating a more intuitive understanding of women's lives in diverse geographical and historical contexts. Furthermore,



establishing an online discussion forum represents an effective means of facilitating sustained engagement and inquiry into the subject of women in the novel. Teachers may post new discussion topics or reading materials on the forum regularly, thus encouraging students to continue their thinking and discussions outside of the classroom. Such digital learning initiatives not only motivate students but also facilitate the development of their digital skills and capacity for independent learning. Furthermore, teachers may wish to consider the creation of virtual exhibits or multimedia presentations that demonstrate the evolution of female characters in Shih Shuching's novels. Furthermore, the involvement of students in the creation of digital content allows them to not only enhance their comprehension of the works in question but also to develop their digital creation skills.

## CONCLUSION

The novels of Shih Shuching offer a profound feminist perspective and a delicate portrayal of the process of women's self-realization. They provide rich materials and profound insights for literary and gender equality education. By analyzing how typical female characters in Shih Shuching's novels overcome social and familial pressures and ultimately achieve a breakthrough in self-worth, this study reveals the strong female consciousness embedded in these works. This female consciousness is primarily manifested in the pursuit of economic independence and personality equality, the awakening of the sense of independence and autonomy, as well as self-realization and resilience in challenging circumstances.

The study revealed that integrating the theme of female consciousness in Shih Shuching's novels into educational practice can effectively cultivate students' sense of autonomy and independent personality, enhance their awareness of gender equality and critical thinking, promote the educational concept of women's self-realization, and cultivate a more holistic sense of women's consciousness in a cross-cultural perspective. Specific educational insights include the cultivation of student's sense of autonomy through the growth process of female characters in the novels; the enhancement of students' critical thinking by making use of the gender issues in the works; the cultivation of students' resilience and positive attitudes by drawing on the stories of women's breakthroughs in the novels; and the cultivation of students' global vision and cultural sensitivity by making use of the cross-cultural elements of the works.

This study provides detailed methods and concepts for the effective integration of feminist literary works into educational practice. This integration not only enriches the content and form of literary education but also provides new perspectives and resources for gender equality education. However, the study is not without limitations. The selection of Shih's works may not be comprehensive enough, and the analysis of their applicability to different educational stages requires further investigation. Further research could expand the scope of the texts and undertake a comparative study of Shih Shuching's works with those of other feminist writers. Additionally, the feasibility of applying these educational concepts in different cultural contexts and educational systems could be investigated.

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Not applicable.

### Conflict of Interest

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