

China-U.S. Relations: Trade Diplomacy, and Research
November 14-17, 2005
Beijing, China

Research Roundtable Summary

Session Title: GENDER POLICY AND HIV IN CHINA

Co-Chairs (name and affiliation):

U.S.: **Dudley L. Poston** (Texas A&M University)

Chinese: **Xiaoying Zheng** (Peking University), **Baochang Gu** (Renmin University)

Other Collaborators:

The other collaborators/presenters are mentioned by name and affiliation in the summary below.

Session Summary

Roundtable Session 14, Gender Policy and HIV in China, a part of the Second US-China Conference on Trade, Diplomacy, and Research, was held in the Yingjie Exchange Center of Peking University on November 16-17, 2005. There were 20 experts in attendance, whose research fields included demography, sociology, public health, and law. The experts hailed from Texas A&M University, Temple University, Harvard University, McGill University, Tsinghua University, Peking University, Renmin University, UNAIDS, UNFPA, and the Population and Family Planning Commission of China. Another 20-30 persons attended one or more of the sessions as observers and participants.

Professors **Xiaoying Zheng** (Peking University), **Dudley L. Poston** (Texas A&M University) and **Baochang Gu** (Renmin University) chaired the roundtable sessions and discussions. The main topics discussed included the current situation of HIV/AIDS in China, China's population policies, the issues of China's unbalanced sex ratio at birth, the role of women in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the role of law and law-enforcement practices in China with regard to HIV/AIDS, and some of the individual and social determinants of HIV/STD risk among female migrants.

The first speaker was Prof. **Scott Burris**, a lawyer from Temple University's Beasley School of Law. He presented a theoretical framework dealing with public health risk environments and used this framework to analyze the current situation of commercial sex in China. He focused in particular on the role of the law and law-enforcement practices. His co-author, Prof. **Guomei Xia**, a sociologist from the Institute of Sociology at the Shanghai Academy of Social Science, provided more detailed information about her current research on commercial sex in Shanghai. Dr. **Qiang Ren** (Peking University) then spoke about the relationship between the current and future size of China's population and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in China; the absolute levels if HIV/AIDS are expected to increase substantially in China. Prof. **Dudley L. Poston** (Texas A&M University) spoke about the unbalanced sex ratio at birth in China. Currently in China, about 119 boys are born each year per 100 girls born (the ratio in most countries of the world, including the U.S., is 105). He stated that this surplus of boys to girls, occurring since the 1980s, has produced around 23 million extra boys in China who will not be able to find Chinese girls to marry. He discussed the challenges China will face because of these millions of bachelors and some of the strategies that China may choose. Prof. **Xiushi Yang** (Old Dominion University) and Prof. **Guomei Xia's**

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presentation argued that given the gender inequalities in China, female temporary migrants may be particularly disadvantaged in cities in many areas, particularly with regard to the risk of disease from unprotected casual and commercial sex; their presentation focused especially on the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Dr. **Tianfu Wang** (Department of Sociology, Tsinghua University) reported the results of a study co-authored with Dr. **Joseph Tucker**, a medical doctor from the University of California at San Francisco, on migration from rural to urban areas and its impact on the spread of HIV in Central China. They reviewed the main reasons why a better understanding of male heterosexual risk is useful in the context of China; they assessed and evaluated current data describing male heterosexual risk in China; and they considered useful methodologies for surveying male sexual risk. Dr. **Sandra Teresa Hyde**, an anthropologist and sociologist from McGill University, spoke about changing gender relations and HIV transmission in Yunnan province. She focused in particular on tourism and sexual activity in hair salons in Xishuangbanna (a city in Yunnan Province), and considered the various local prevention policies that emphasized gender differences.

Findings/Recommendations:

The three Chairs (Drs. **Zheng, Poston and Gu**) then gave brief summaries of the sessions and chaired a general discussion dealing with HIV issues in China. The discussions resulted in an assortment of policy recommendations that will be presented to the Chinese government.

Among the general policy recommendations that emerged during roundtable discussion are the following:

1. Government policies regarding prostitution in China need review. Prostitution should not be treated as a crime.
2. China needs to devote more resources to the interdisciplinary study of HIV/AIDS prevalence, with a focus on gender issues.
3. China needs to begin now to consider some of the implications of having 23 million bachelors in the big cities, all unable to find wives. All evidence suggests this will lead to unprecedented levels of HIV/AIDS, surpassing those in sub-Saharan Africa. The government needs to plan better to be able to accommodate these surplus boys.
4. China needs to work toward removing the stigma of HIV/AIDS. Discrimination is a major obstacle in HIV/AIDS prevention. Public discussions need to be carried out in the daily newspapers and the media. What are the rights of persons who are infected with HIV/AIDS? How should they be treated? How may their rights be protected?
5. The NGOs in China need to play a larger role in HIV/AIDS prevention
6. Discussions of AIDS prevalence and prevention strategies need to be reported openly and honestly in the media.
7. The household registration system of China (the *hukou* system) needs to be reformed. It is not only an economic and urban planning problem but also a public health issue. The floating population (the many millions of temporary migrants) ought to be able to live and reside with their families. A reform of the *hukou* system would by itself reduce considerably the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in China's cities, given that presently there are over 100 million floating migrants in the big cities on China's East Coast, and they are a major part of the high levels of HIV transmission.
8. Patients who are infected with HIV/AIDS should be involved in the process of HIV/AIDS prevention.

Future Collaborations and Justification:

Drs. **Zheng, Poston** and **Gu** also discussed plans and a timetable for writing a book on the major features of the roundtable. We have developed a contract with Peking University Press. A book will be published in late 2006. Chapters are now being written. The book will be published in both Chinese and English.

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Other Information:

N/A