

U.S./China Joint Conference on Women's Issues

Beijing, People's Republic of China

Aug. 24-Sept. 2, 1995

Proceedings



Conference cosponsored by the Citizen Ambassador Program of People to People International • China Women's Association for Science and Technology • China International Conference Center for Science and Technology

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Contents

- Section I: Opening Remarks
- Section II: Chinese Co-chairs
- Section III: Biographies, Abstracts, ~~Presentations~~ and Discussion
Topics: Chinese Co-chairs and Participants
- Section IV: Delegate Biographies: American, European, and other
delegates from outside China
- Section V: Poster Presentations and Working Session
Presentations

Documents have been printed exactly as received by fax, letter, or e-mail, in most cases.

SESSION 1

WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE

SHARON SCHUSTER

HOW SCHOOLS SHORTCHANGE GIRLS

Women can only live up to their potential as equal workers, leaders, and members of the community if they receive an education that stimulates rather than dampening their natural talents. The AAUW Report: How Schools Shortchange Girls documents the shortcomings of the U.S. educational system, a system that was established during the industrial revolution of the 1800s to train the workers of that day—who were men.

Girls and boys start school on roughly equal ground, but by high school graduation girls are behind as measured by most standardized tests. These tests, which determine admission to college and access to scholarships, limit a girl's opportunities for the future. Girls are shortchanged in the educational system by how they are treated, by what they are taught and what they are not taught, by standardized tests, and by tracking into traditional careers.

Studies that include videotaping of classrooms show that the school environment, even though most teachers are women, favors boys. Girls receive less attention in the classroom, both qualitative and quantitative. Teaching styles and classroom formats, often authoritative and lecture oriented, generally favor boys. Sexual harassment in schools is increasing, promoting a negative environment for girls.

Curriculum still portrays women as peripheral to society. It stereotypes women, undervalues and under-represents them. Girls are not taught about issues critical to them such as eating disorders, sex education, and sexually transmitted diseases.

The gender gap in science achievement is increasing. Even girls who are honors students don't choose science careers in the same proportion as boys. Vocational education programs tend to categorize girls in the same low-paying careers.

Fortunately, the experience of the American Association of University Women, working in collaboration with the educational establishment, shows that these factors can be overcome, if parents, teachers and administrators and the community want to make changes. Teachers, when shown successful teaching techniques, can provide a gender bias-free education. Curriculum can be reformed to provide images of women as valued members of the society and to include the "evaded" issues. Counseling, mentoring, and community programs help girls learn that all careers are available to them, including math and science. There is no "math gene" that precludes them from doing well in these fields.

After over a hundred years of working to make it possible, colleges now enroll equal numbers of men and women. However, girls' self-esteem is still lower than boys, limiting their self-image and their aspirations. Girls must be able to dream if they are to achieve.

SESSION 2

WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

DR. LINDA CLARK

DR. CLARK'S ABSTRACT OUTLINES HER OPENING REMARKS.

Introductory remarks and general information regarding Women in Management will serve to set the stage for the working session. Remarks will highlight the following: a brief historical perspective on women in management positions; training and education that is necessary for women to be successful in management positions; barriers presently faced by women as they seek to enter management positions and once they have attained them; current management practices and philosophies in place in business and the professions and how women operate within each; and the special contributions that women can make in management positions.

Presentation will also draw parallels between the contexts for women in management in the United States and in the People's Republic of China, including brief remarks regarding the three previous delegations and the insights gained by the delegates. A brief discussion of terms and the difference in their meanings (such as entrepreneur, etc.) will also be part of this presentation.

SESSION 3

WOMEN IN PUBLISHING

SANDRA PAUL

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF WOMEN IN BOOK PUBLISHING

EDITORIAL

- Juvenile
- Elhi Education
- Adult
 - Romance
 - Other

PUBLICITY

PERSONNEL

.....1985.....

MARKETING

- Catalogs
- Other Sales Promotional Tools
- Sales

PERMISSIONS

- Subsidiary Rights
- Legal

FINANCE

- Data Processing
- Electronic Publishing

MANAGEMENT

- Department
- Imprint

.....2000.....

COMPANY

SESSION 4

ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

M. JOAN CROMER, ED. D.
PRESIDENT, SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS 1995-96

There was a time when women in most countries of the world were considered chattel with few, if any, rights as individuals. While progress has moved at a more rapid rate the past century, it is interesting to note women in many developed countries did not gain the right to vote and run for office until after 1920 and in some countries, not until the 1960's.

The advancement of women in the areas of education, employment, health, public service and equal service and equal legal rights has been a long, slow, but steady, process. While we applaud and celebrate the process, statistical data reminds us that we have not achieved equal status. Women still struggle for equality. Of the 1.2 billion global poor, 70 percent are women. The advancement of women requires change—change at several levels: societal change, community change, organizational change and personal change. *“Until the rights and full potential of women are achieved, enduring solutions to the world's most serious social, economical and political problems cannot be achieved,”* Boutross-Ghali said in a speech to mark Women's Day.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton speaking in Copenhagen, Denmark, on International Women's Day, reminded the 193 nations gathering that more than two-thirds of the world's nearly one billion illiterate people are women. Girls and women are undernourished in many parts of the world as men and boys are fed first, with the food remaining available to the women and girls. Studies in 12 southern countries showed that women consistently work longer hours per day than men, and girls begin working at an earlier age than boys, and spend more hours working each day (paid and unpaid) throughout their lives. Women's adult literacy rate is less than half the male rate in many poor countries. (Source: Prodigy Services Company).

During the spring and summer of 1994, the U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, distributed a questionnaire called “Working Women Count” across the country as an outreach effort to contact America's 60.2 million working women. The same questionnaire was also used to solicit a view of 1200 women selected to be part of a scientific random sample. The views of the scientific sample approximated the reports of self-selected respondents. Over a quarter of a million women returned the questionnaire. While 79 percent said they “loved” or “liked” their jobs, they also spoke with consensus about their concerns as working women. The three major concerns identified were: pay and benefits, work and family, and valuing women and women's work. Sixty-five percent of respondents said that “improving pay scales” and “health care for all” were their two highest priorities for workplace change in terms of pay and benefits. The Bureau of Labor statistics reports that women in the United States still earn only 71 cents on an annual basis for every dollar a man earns. The dual responsibilities of women in the workplace and at home cause them to be exhausted and stressed. Sixty percent of women with children six and under are in the workforce and 76 percent of mothers with school-age children work. Fifty-six percent of mothers with children five and under report that “finding affordable child care” is a serious problem.

SESSION 5

WOMEN'S STATUS

PATRICIA IRELAND

BEGINNING WITH A SINGLE STEP

This working session presentation will outline the opening remarks.

This presentation will follow the opening of the session and welcoming of the delegates. The objective will be to set a direction and a tone for the work to follow.

The presentation will introduce two overriding themes:

(i) the issues which will be presented and discussed throughout the Working Sessions are inextricably linked as part of women's lives.

(ii) the need to work effectively to improve women's lives, within our individual countries and cultures as well as globally, is urgent and ongoing.

The presentation also will underscore the importance of each delegate's active participation in the formal and informal interchange and the value of sharing not just statistics and facts about women's status, but also, importantly, our personal experiences and observations.

Concerns related to valuing women and women's work include lack of access to training, limited management positions open to women and the lack of opportunity for women to advance. Only 5 percent of senior management positions within the private sector are held by women, and an even lower proportion by women of color. Of the Working Women Count respondents, 61 percent reported having "*little or no ability to advance.*"

Current budgetary constraints threaten to limit and in some instances threaten the advancements made by women in the workforce including equal opportunity programs, funds for child care and summer jobs for youth.

Working women's issues which require our on-going concern and efforts include equal pay for equal work, attitude and economic adjustments regarding the low value and low pay accorded traditionally female jobs by society, encouragement and assistance for women's entrepreneurial enterprises, and the development and implementation of family friendly workplace policies and programs.

Many challenges to the advancement of women remain for our awareness, advocacy and action; equal education and training opportunities, access to quality health care and nutrition, research focused equally on women's health and well-being, an equal role in governance in the private sector at all levels: local, state, and national.

SESSION 6

WOMEN'S EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

FLORENCE HOWE

I want first to greet our Chinese friends, not only for all of us here in this room, but for the hundreds of people I represent in my working life. I bring you friendly greetings from the staff of The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, from the Board of Directors, from the scholars and writers who form our advisory committees, and from our hundreds of authors. I want also to greet the American members of this group. I am honored to be your conveyor, and, with you, I expect to enjoy fruitful discussions with our Chinese friends.

Twenty years ago, when I first had the opportunity of visiting China, I arrived with a newly republished volume of Agnes Smedley's *DAUGHTER OF EARTH*, as talisman. On that occasion, Rewi Alley took me to visit Smedley's grave here in the Beijing Cemetery of Honor. Today, I carry another volume of Smedley's work, one we published shortly after my return from China. *PORTRAITS OF CHINESE WOMEN IN REVOLUTION*, by Agnes Smedley, was edited by two other friends of China, Jan and Steve MacKinnon. You will see in a moment why I am beginning by remembering Agnes Smedley, to whom I would like to dedicate my time in these sessions.

WOMEN'S EQUAL OPPORTUNITY—what does it mean? Clearly, it's a broad topic. For this workshop, we will speak of women's opportunity in a singularly specific and yet highly charged area. This area is literary expression. Literature has often been one of the areas most accessible to women, once they gained literacy, since one needs only paper and a writing implement—and the power to tell stories. Of course, even in preliterate states, women have always been storytellers, composers of lullabies, and creators of myths. For verbal and storytelling and musical skills are not confined to a single gender.

But in many literate societies in which women have contributed significantly, for reasons we are only now beginning to understand, the literature produced by women has often been “lost.” I use the word “lost,” for we have been able, when we have searched, to “find” it, generally in libraries. Even the books of Agnes Smedley, who was unfairly defamed by the anti-Communism rampant in the United States in the 1950s, were not thrown out of all libraries. In 1972, we managed to find a copy of *DAUGHTER OF EARTH* in the Mechanics Library in San Francisco. But of course we had to know that Smedley had existed in order to look for her book. And we were helped in that case, and in many other cases, by Tillie Olsen, another friend of China, and one of our prize-winning authors, who has asked me to bring you her very special greetings.

Since 1970, The Feminist Press has been in the forefront of the search for “lost” women writers, not only in the United States, but in Europe, India, Bangladesh, Latin America, and more recently in Africa. I am hopeful that, while here in China, I will meet people who are also searching for “lost” Chinese women writers.

the United States these days are women: Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Paule Marshall--all African American women, just to name a few. It is difficult, to take another example, to name a male poet as esteemed as Adrienne Rich. And we've been at work on this area of opportunity only for a bit more than a generation.

Literature can be very powerful: we may remember the power of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*. Perhaps some of us remember James Baldwin's *THE FIRE NEXT TIME*. And in our own recent time, the thousands of books beginning with Kate Millett's *SEXUAL POLITICS* in 1970 that have changed the way women think of themselves and the world they live in, not only as individuals, but more importantly, as groups powerful enough to change national laws and policies. And of course I have mentioned here only American books. In every culture, some literature has powerfully enlightened a generation, perhaps shifting its patterns of consciousness and behavior. Some of those powerful books have been written by women, not only in recent times, but in the past. Perhaps our Chinese colleagues will speak of Li Hsin and Ding Ling and others as I have spoken of Agnes Smedley and Kate Millett.

I am certain that we will, together, share the love of reading, the interest in women's equal opportunity, and the interest in cultural exchange that have brought us here to Beijing.

Why is this search essential to the lives of living women? Why do I believe that women's equal opportunity begins with literature? The stories we learn, the stories we remember, the stories we know to tell others shape our lives. They give us our past and from that past we in the present envision our future. If the stories tell only of women's pain, or if the stories do not include women at all, what sense can women make of their lives?

Over the past twenty-five years, the stories found in the masses of "*lost*" literature have given women a sense of history, a portrait of many different women living hundreds or thousands of years ago, who longed as women today do: for freedom of expression, and the time and educational tools with which to enjoy that expression; for the right not only to work but to enjoy leisure-time reading and writing; for the pleasure of writing stories for the next generation to read. What is not always present in the writings of our foremothers is a sense of their connections to a past. And that is the most important difference between then and now.

Because of the recovery of "*lost*" literature, and thus the "*lost*" voices of women we have—also in the past twenty-five years—been able to conceive and write women's history as it has never been written before. Never before have so many sources been open at the same time to a single generation of historians living in this present moment. If it is difficult to comprehend what this means, consider what it was like—if you are over 45—in any history course in school or college. Did you learn anything about the lives of women in daily life? in times of war and revolution? What writers did you read in literature courses? Was there a single woman you studied? What images of a future life could you imagine for yourself when you were a small girl or even a young woman?

Maria Mies, a German scholar and feminist theorist, suggested a decade ago that, for the first time in history, women can now hold in their minds the knowledge of a rich stream of their history. And for the first time in history, these women—all of us in this room and millions beyond us—have the opportunity to pass this knowledge on to future generations. This history, I remind you, comes from the literature we have been finding. I am not thinking only of fiction poetry, and drama: I am thinking too of letters, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies, essays, songs, even leaflets. Finding these, restoring these works to visibility has made a new history of women possible.

But there is more to this story. For we are also interested in the literature that stirs the imagination and feeds the spirit, that provides a view of life's meaning, and a sense of hope for a humane future. Not surprisingly, women who have themselves been oppressed, or have themselves felt inequality, have often been sensitive to the sufferings of those far worse off than they, have written of such sufferings of, for example, members of minority groups, or of victims of war and other forms of violence. This seems to be true the world over, though we have not, of course, yet uncovered all the "*lost*" women's literature of the world. That, my friends, is a century-long task, or so it seems to me.

In the process, of course, this newly "*found*" literature has been made available to our daughters and our granddaughters, many of whom have been inspired by it to become writers. When I was growing up in the United States, to be a writer was to be a man. Only men were great writers, said my male and female teachers at Hunter College, then a women's college in New York. And of course when I became a professor myself in the early 1950s, I taught the same message to my women students. But all is different now. Some of the most highly-acclaimed fiction writers in