

SPECIAL SECTION

Towards the Beijing Conference: Selected Papers from the International Symposium on Women's Roles and Social Support (16 - 19 March ; Hua Xiang, Beijing)

The papers which comprise this special section were selected from the papers read during the International Symposium on Family, Family Education, Women's Roles and Social Support" held in Hua Xiang, Feng Tai District, Beijing, P.R. China 16 to 19 March under the sponsorship of the Women's Research Institute of the China Academy of Management Science, the Chinese Society of Marriage and Family, the Family Education Society of China and the Women's Research Center of Ren Min University. In particular, these papers were read in the section on Women's Roles and Social Support presided over by the Women's Research Institute assisted by the Department of Sociology, Beijing University.

Attended by some 200 participants from different parts of China and five other countries, the conference was remarkable for the candid and open discussion of the roles of women and the problems they face during the transition from a planned economy to an open one. Salient among these problems is violence against women which includes wife-battering, rape and sexual harassment. Tong Xin in "A Study of Family Violence in China," included here, reports on an empirical study made in four places and analyzes the characteristics of both offenders and victims as well as the

causes of domestic violence. She suggests ways of protecting women and preventing violence.

Participants from Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines and the United States discussed similar problems in their countries, allowing conference participants to look at these from a comparative viewpoint. Kazuko Watanabe links domestic violence and human rights in Japan in her paper by that title while Thelma B. Kintanar discusses the problem of sexual harassment in both academe and the workplace in the Philippines and steps taken to solve the problem. Both papers are included here.

One of the most interesting ways of providing social support was the creation of a nationwide women's hotline in China. Although only a little over two years old, the hotline has apparently been successful, performing both social assistance and psychological functions. The ways in which the hotline performs these functions and the constraints under which it operates are discussed here by Ma Feng zhi in "Social Assistance Functions of the Women's Hotline" and Wang Feng Xian in "The Role of the Women's Hotline in Protecting Women's Mental Health"

Finally, in "Women in Contemporary China: Work, Family and Well-being," Kaisa Kauppinen, a participant from Finland, contributes a non-Chinese perspective to the psychological problems of Chinese women.

Other countries who are similarly undergoing a period of transition such as those in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe were not represented at the symposium, but the organizers are planning to present the results at the NGO Forum in Beijing. They expect that, at this time, a broader exchange of views can take place.

T.B.K.