

Institution: University of Westminster
Unit of Assessment: UoA 27; Area (Asian) Studies
Title of case study: Gender difference, gender rights and social change in China
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Evans' internationally acclaimed research on gender and sexuality in China has had significant impact on critical debate, heightening public awareness of gender as a key marker of social difference and hierarchy, and encouraging diverse professional organisations to address gender in their work on China. Through radio broadcasts, television appearances and web-based media, NGO and government consultancy, gender training workshops and translation, Evans' work has influenced the thinking and practice of representatives of international and Chinese NGOs working on women's gender and sexual rights, and reproductive and sexual health. Prominent amongst the organisations she has worked with is the world's largest state-based women's organization, the All China Women's Federation, and UK non-governmental and legal organisations. In recent years, Hird's research on men and masculinities in China has broadened the reach and significance of this impact through attracting the attention of international and Chinese NGOs, and commercial advertising interests seeking to include men and ideas about masculinity in their work on gender and sexuality rights and representations.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Evans' <i>Women and Sexuality in China</i> (1997) broke new ground in its analysis of gender difference in modern and contemporary China. Her next book, <i>The Subject of Gender: Daughters and Mothers in Urban China</i> (2008), many scholarly and non-academic publications, as well as Chinese, Italian and French translations of her work confirmed her status as a leading international scholar of women and gender in modern and contemporary China. Evans' work has been widely acclaimed for its influence on Chinese feminist thought, and has significantly contributed to public as well as academic debates in China and the West about Chinese women's lives and gender relationships.</p> <p>Evans' research covers analysis of diverse materials going back to the 1920s, including educational, medical and popular publications, magazines and journals, party and 'mass organisation' documents, and long-term ethnographically-based fieldwork with women in Beijing and elsewhere (notably the rural northwest). Her main arguments in <i>Women and Sexuality in China</i> were that i) official policies of gender equality in social, political and cultural practice are sustained by naturalised assumptions that identify the female body as a site of physical and emotional vulnerability, responsiveness and weakness; ii) rehearsed in scientific, educational and official texts, the 'scientific' evidence of women's physiological and emotional characteristics sustain hierarchical social and cultural differences between women and men, and iii) the possibilities of realising official policies of gender equality are constrained by such assumptions as well as by cultural practices of patrilineal inheritance and patriarchy. Her 2008 monograph added to this work by arguing that across different generations, women's subjective and shifting understandings of gender difference commonly subscribe to similar discursive and cultural assumptions about the female body, and that although gender practice in employment and education has changed radically over the past half century, opportunities for gender equality in personal and social relationships are pervasively mediated by embedded assumptions about the limitations of women's bodies, emotions and minds.</p> <p>Emerging out of his PhD work on white-collar masculinity in China, Hird's research draws on long-term fieldwork in Beijing as well as analysis of diverse print media and internet-based narratives. Although an early career researcher, Hird has produced important articles and a monograph, <i>Men and Masculinities in Contemporary China</i>, co-authored with Song Geng (ANU), one of the world's leading scholars working on masculinity and sexuality in China. Hird's work has been widely disseminated through international conferences and workshops, and has led to many collaborative initiatives with NGOs, LGBT and queer activists and advertising personnel.</p> <p>Hird's main arguments are that i) the figure of the 'white-collar' man is widely associated with the success of China's economic transformation; ii) the gender characteristics of the 'white-collar' man are</p>

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rooted in local cultural as well as global notions of gender difference; iii) such gender characteristics grant men cultural, social and sexual privileges in public, professional and domestic contexts, and iv) views of male privilege are profoundly influential in the education of young children and in popular media discussions about how to be a successful man. These arguments constitute a highly original contribution to debates about gender and sexuality in China.

3. References to the research

Harriet Evans

Women and Sexuality in China: Dominant Discourses of Female Sexuality and Gender since 1949, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997; New York: Continuum, 1998. (Chinese translation published by Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2007)

'The language of liberation: gender and 'jiefang' in early Chinese Communist Party discourse,' in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, ed., *Twentieth Century China: New Approaches*, London: Routledge, 2003, 193-220.

The Subject of Gender: Daughters and Mothers in Urban China, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008

'The gender of communication: changing expectations of mothers and daughters in urban China', in Harriet Evans and Julia Strauss, eds., *Gender in Flux; Agency and Change in Contemporary China*. Special issue of the *China Quarterly* 204 (December 2010): 980-1000.

- CHOICE Review gave a 'high recommendation' for Evans' *The Subject of Gender* (spring 2008) and the blog The China Beat nominated it as one of the ten best books about Chinese women (January 14, 2009). The historian Gail Hershatter (University of California, Santa Cruz) wrote that '*The Subject of Gender* suggests new ways of thinking about women, emotional life and historical transformation.' (2008) In *The China Quarterly*, Delia Davin (Leeds) gave critical acclaim for the book's contribution to understanding the subjective processes of change in gender attitudes and practices (2009).

Derek Hird

'The Paradox of Pluralisation: Masculinities, Androgyny and Male Anxiety in Contemporary China', in P. Aggleton, P. Boyce, H. L. Moore and R. Parker, eds., *Understanding Global Sexualities: New Frontiers*, London: Routledge 2012, 49-65

Men and Masculinities in Contemporary China, monograph co-authored with Song Geng, Brill Publishers, 2013

These references to the research underlying this case study have been selected to indicate the range of Evans' and Hird's publications that have led to their impact. As a new career researcher Hird's publications are recent, but his work on masculinities has been widely disseminated since 2008 through conference and seminar papers, and engagements with scholarly and activist networks. That Song Geng invited him to co-author *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary China* is evidence of the international recognition of his scholarship well before the appearance of his first publications.

4. Details of the impact

Evans' work on gender in China has been disseminated through diverse outlets including frequent BBC radio programmes and TV interviews, blog postings, women's organizations in China, workshops and meetings with NGOs, activists and corporate personnel (Deloitte's and Flamingo London), and consultancy with charitable organizations and legal practices. Since 2008, it has spawned numerous collaborative projects and activities, with the Shanghai International Female Forum and the All China Women's Federation (2008-2009), the Ford Foundation (2010-2012), Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family (2010), WAGnet (2011), Marie Stopes International (2011), diverse UK-based NGOs working on and in China (including Xin Ran's 'Mothers' Bridge of Love', 2011), Chinese educationists and health professionals working on gender and sexuality education (2008-2011), UK-based legal practices (2008-2011), and with the Institute of Sexuality, Renmin University, Beijing. In Chinese translation, Evans' work has reached diverse audiences in China, evidenced by a dialogue with Lin Yinhe, one of China's leading feminist activists, filmed at CASS and distributed on Youtube, and in reports and reviews of her work in popular outlets in Hong Kong and China. Through translation and numerous meetings and conferences, Evans' work has influenced the ideas and work of significant members of the provincial and Beijing branches of the All China Women's Federation, and activists

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working on women's and gender rights. Her work with international and Chinese NGOs working on gender issues in law, family, health (including HIV/AIDS) and reproduction led to an invitation to become a Trustee of the UK-based charity and NGO The Rights Practice (TRP), specifically to bring her expertise on gender issues in China to bear in its work with Chinese lawyers and legal associations to promote the rights of Chinese citizens in judiciary and political procedures. The Executive Director of TRP has noted that "Evans' commitment to thinking about how legal and human rights practice in China needs to give greater recognition to gender difference has been crucial in our decisions about the allocation of funds to promote our work with legal institutions. TRP's support of diverse initiatives in China on women's legal and political rights [is] in significant measure a result of Professor Evans' work with us."

Despite his status as early career researcher, Hird's work has already had a significant impact in non-academic circles, through his contribution to founding the Queer Chinese Working Group (2011), his work with the Ford Foundation (Beijing) in sponsoring activist work on sexual rights in China (2011-2012), and with Ogilvy and Mather (Shanghai) where he spent a week conducting gender-training workshops (2011). Hird and Evans held a highly successful gender training workshop as the first of a series of workshops with UK based NGOs working on and in China (2011). The impact of these activities has been to change attitudes about the significance of gender in social and political campaign work; open up debate in China about gender identities in same-sex and heterosexual contexts, and explore new avenues for advertising campaigns, specifically with Ogilvy and Mather's Volkswagen Team. Following Hird's visit to Ogilvy and Mather, the Account Director of Ogilvy One Worldwide, Beijing, a participant of Hird's workshop, wrote that "During the past few weeks the team has worked on a creative direction and idea that was initiated and stimulated by the workshop....The topic, the agenda, the breadth and depth chosen for the workshop has been ideal for us and we would be looking forward to any similar initiative if planned in the future."

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- The Rights Practice, London
- Ogilvy and Mather, Shanghai, PRC
- Renmin University, Beijing, PRC
- Marie Stopes International to Handicap International-China, Beijing, PRC
- Ford Foundation, Beijing, PRC