Should I Quit?
Tobacco, Fraught Identity,
And The Risks of Governmentality
In Urban China

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ABSTRACT: How do people come to understand, produce, and respond to emergent regulatory initiatives of public health, new complications in the management of desire, citizenship, health, and identity? This is explored in terms of current media involvement with the regulatory regime of tobacco control in an urban Chinese setting. Several theorists have suggested that tobacco control is emblematic of recent sociopolitical transformations pertaining to risk. Rather than arguing for either the broad scale applicability of a "risk society" framework or its outright mismatch, I agitate for a different tack, wherein risk is seen as one of several factors at play in shaping the form and reception of tobacco-control media in urban China today. I argue that equal if not more important than risk has been a distinctive form of post-socialist governmentality, oriented around producing and managing identity. This argument is developed through discussions of various forms of tobacco-control media found in Kunming, China. Such media currently work to problematize lives, to create what Dean has called a "critical ontology of our selves" (1996). They involve less the production of risk, and instead a specific type of fraught modern embodiment: a self-regulating, cosmopolitanism-seeking, conflict-ridden masculinity.

Green Lake Tea

One day, during the fall of 2003, I was sitting near Green Lake, at a venue where months later I wrote much of this article. I was on the second floor of a Kunming tea house, busy with the sorts of activities that often occupy anthropologists during early stages of a new field project. I was writing up interview notes, making journal entries, and phoning people who might help move my research along. For years now, this tea house has been one of my favorites in Kunming, the capital of China's southwestern Yunnan province. It sits inside Kunming's Green Lake Park, the former home of Yunnan's provincial library and today a hub of seemingly all things ideally urban: planned gardens, paddle boat rides, and finely designed stone walkways for recreation, romantic walks, and views through foliage of the surrounding high-rise buildings.

At first, on that afternoon, I paid little attention to the fact that the college-age couple sitting next to me at the tea house was smoking. I was in Kunming, after all, a city that for years has been referred to often as China's Tobacco Kingdom. Over the years, as I have conducted research in cities like Kunming, I have learned to live with second-hand smoke, wishing it was not there, trying to delimit my exposure, but ultimately resolving myself to its frequent inevitability.

If anything about the smoke wafting my way that afternoon caught my attention initially, it was the fact that much of it was being produced by the young woman. Smoking among women has long been relatively rare in much of China, and still remains noticeably uncommon in Kunming.[1] Indeed, unlike her hard-puffing partner, the young woman at the table next to me came across as quite a newcomer to smoking, awkwardly manipulating her cigarettes, rarely joining one to her lips, and refraining from noticeable inhalation.

As minutes past, what struck me most about this young couple, though, was less their cigarette use and instead the

reflective, languid expressions on the man's face. Whenever I happened to look his way, he seemed to be staring glumly, at times tearfully, into his hands or his partner's eyes. What dilemma could be so distressing him? I wondered. A bump in the road of a freshly forming romantic relationship? A business, educational, or kinship calamity?

By four o'clock, my tasks were complete and I was readying to leave. As I stretched and looked up, my line of vision rose past the couple and through their swirling smoke and the fumes rising from two men who had just occupied a table further beyond, and who were deeply involved in the distinctively male Chinese custom of cigarette exchange. I could only chuckle. How had I not registered earlier this familiar piece of public media hanging over everyone's head, a piece of media seemingly as fraught with contradiction located here in this tea house as the young man across from me was fraught with distress? There, a short distance from me, just beyond where the newly arrived men sat, was a bright white, red, and black sign, prominently displaying a circle with a line through it. At the bottom, the sign stated *Jinzhi Xiyan* (Smoking is Prohibited).

Abiding Questions of Biopolitics

Regulatory regimes of risk reduction, such as efforts to control tobacco, have been expanding recently in many locales, China included. But these regimes have not been expanding everywhere nor with the same intensity from place to place. Emergent forms of biopolitics, like transnatonal capital today, are selective. They skip around and take noticeable root in some places while skirting others. One setting inside and outside of China where public health efforts at reducing risk have long found footing and thereby often helped define is the city (Dierig et al. 2003). For years, cities have been springboards and magnets for new forms of risk-reduction efforts by health

activists. And such efforts have been fundamental for the conceptual and practical framing of cities and their denizens as either generating unique health risks or as centers for sanitary certainty, medical progress, and thus juxtaposed to an untamed, unwashed, underdeveloped, rural periphery.

Yet, if health risks have been important for defining the urban as modern, and vice versa, this raises a set of analytical and substantive questions. First, an analytical problem: How should researchers investigate the relationship between risk and modernity in terms of *being* urban? By what analytical means should one explore how risk-reduction efforts of public health (as those efforts become instantiated *through* and *as* the modern) shape everyday experiences of city life for men and women?

Like tobacco consumption, tobacco control is not a new phenomenon for cities, whether in China or elsewhere. For centuries in many parts of the world there have been people using tobacco and there have been interventions to control that use. But, as with its use, tobacco's control has undergone highly visible transformations of scope and intensity in numerous locales over the last two decades, much of it springing forth in cities. In part, these transformations stem from the ways that the cigarette, more so than almost any other "hazard" in our current era, has been positioned as a bête noire of global risk-reduction efforts.

This brings us to a substantive problem of abiding importance for policymakers and academics alike. In cities, how are rapidly expanding regulatory initiatives of risk reduction like those having to do with cigarettes (quickly shifting sea changes in the mixing of governance, public health, and embodiment) understood and framed by local actors who are not simply "culturally embedded," so to speak, but who are enmeshed in distinctive sociopolitical assemblages marked heavily by state institutions, political economics, forms of desire, and discourses pertaining to class, residency, and gender?

In this paper, I explore these broad analytical and substantive questions vis-à-vis male urban subjectivity by simultaneously interrogating two issues: *risk society* theory's relevance to and media's involvement with the contemporary regulatory regime of tobacco control in one Chinese city.

Risk Considered

In the last few years, several scholars have examined the rising prominence of tobacco control in various locales as being emblematic of risk's new roles in the making of modernity (Denscombe 2001; O'Malley 1996). These scholars assert that tobacco control is well understood in terms of the most widely circulating sociological framework for analyzing risk, what the theorist Urlick Beck (1992) has come to call *risk society* (also see Giddens 1994). Rather than arguing for either the broad scale applicability of a risk society framework or its outright mismatch, I agitate for a different, more context-specific, gender-oriented tack here. Inasmuch as this article explores the relevance of Beck's risk society theory to China, the pages that follow are designed to assess how such theory resonates with various sociopolitical specificities that are producing distinctive effects at the level of media production and male experience. I argue that tobacco media in Kunming during recent years has been, at once, part of and a springboard for a unique form of reflexivity, wherein discursive interactions among risk, urbanism, and sociopolitical assemblages have been shaping an emergent type of fraught male identity.

According to Beck (1992, 1999), major shifts have been underway in recent decades across much of the world in the ordering of certainty and uncertainty, and these shifts mark a movement to a new age of modernity, one dominated not just by risk but by representations of risk, both of which increasingly defy easy calculation and management. These risks come in

numerous stripes, everything from environmental problems of water and air, toxins in food and consumer products, and terrorism, to cancer, infectious disease, and computer viruses (Beck 2002). Beck's paradigmatic example is the nuclear accident (see also Petryna 2002). Risks are not just more significant in magnitude and more deterritorialized than in previous epochs, Beck says, but their causation and controllability today is understood to be quite different from what was the case in the past. Owing to a host of sociopolitico-technological processes now underway (e.g., the spiraling sense that *science* [the hallmark of modernity] may no longer just enhance but so too inadvertently endanger wellbeing; globalization's reputed erosion of nation-state authority; the surge in actuarial-based goods and services; and the proliferation of public discord among experts on how best to avoid any specific danger) large-scale risks are increasing and an earlier modernist notion that risks may be controlled is being eclipsed gradually by a new outlook that risk is something we must all live with and accommodate.

Mass media plays particularly pivotal roles in this transition, what Beck has phrased as the transition from a "first" (i.e., early) to a "second" (i.e., late) stage of modernity (1995, 1999). By increasingly trafficking in bloody reportage and actuarial statistics about humanmade hazards, mass media fuel not only the expansion of risk awareness but also doubt in former solidarities and science. By reporting on debates among experts on how individuals might manage and reduce risk, mass media encourage the *citizen as media judge*, in juxtaposition to an erstwhile more passive model of citizen as recipient of super-ordinate directives designed to lead one down a clear path to risk avoidance. Moreover, by incessantly marketing lifestyle options, mass media fuel the notion that the healthy and responsible individual is one capable of exercising rational thought to produce a distinctive biography, to wisely manage the choppy seas of risk and uncertainty and produce a unique life form.

Thus a key feature of all these transformations, Beck argues, is a fundamental change in notions of self. Dovetailing with other processes of late modernity, most notably those associated with globalization, risk proliferation comes to intensify expectations of self conduct. The combined force of risk and globalization corrodes traditional, communal, and regional solidarities; erstwhile bonds of class, family and nation are weakened. People are expected to become more *reflexive*, more self assessing of how they should live and how they should rationally avoid, if not control, risk.

Risk Society in China?

In what ways does risk society theory resonate with current transformations underway in parts of China's sociopolitical landscape? More specifically, how might a risk society framework help us understand the quickly changing and highly variable lifeworlds of Chinese citizens today? Curiously, to date, these questions have animated few academics who work in the PRC, despite the fact that the sociology of risk has been explored so often elsewhere in recent years (cf. Thiers 2003).

With little effort, one could say that the trappings of risk society have been increasingly at play in many parts of China, especially urban landscapes. As part of its expanding embrace of neoliberal economics, the party-state has withdrawn from much of its earlier Maoist commitments to social provision, thereby heightening people's vulnerability to basic risks. Various processes, what numerous China studies scholars have been referring to as globalization, have been reconfiguring features of governmental control, raising the expectation that individuals will be more self regulating in areas like job creation, education, and health management. Actuarial products have become a major growth industry in cities during the last few years, with wide varieties of insurance, lottery tickets, and

home loan programs being heavily marketed. Large segments of China's swelling urban populace have been bemoaning that aspects of everyday life are becoming increasingly unanchored from previously well-understood ethical and social principles and they lament that community and family ties are not as dependable as once experienced.

Mass media in urban China today likewise seem to follow, if not fuel, features highlighted by risk society theorists. After a decade of relatively tranquilizing news reporting, the last few years have witnessed a raging stream of sensationalist accounts (not only about murder, mayhem, and sudden reversals of fortune, but also about environmental catastrophes, traffic accidents, and air pollution) flowing out of both older (print, TV, radio) and newer (internet, text messaging) forms of media. These together with other media forms (DVD/VCD, billboards, and hand-distributed adverts) have in turn become awash with both messages about lifestyle diversification and conflicting expert advice on how to manage risks which are often represented as wrought by modernization, everything from marital infidelity to food toxins and crime, to market fluctuations, consumer fraud, and medical charlatanism. City bookstores today, including the "New China" outlets, are creating ever more shelf space for newly demarcated sections in self-help, career advancement, interior design, health improvement, fashion, cooking, pet care, popular psychology, travel, and connoisseurship. China's advertising industry is growing at a record pace; and in forums like city newspapers, much of this growth is being fueled by healthcare marketing to individual consumers. These newspapers regularly include page after page of advertisements for specialty hospitals, boutique clinics, pharmaceuticals, as well as new procedures in cosmetic surgery, vision correction, oncology, and urology (often a code word for the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases).

The more specific terrain of public health also seems to resonate with risk society precepts. Perhaps the most notable

topics filling the cauldron are AIDS, SARS and avian flu. People across many segments of urban China today hear and fret about those conditions, attributing their presence to processes often associated with globalization and modernization, and they decry how such diseases are emblematic of worrisome erosions of party-state commitments. SARS in particular has triggered deep reflection across China and in its mass media about the decline of state healthcare financing and the consequent necessity for most families today to bear the burden of nearly all medical expenses. Community members, public health officials, and producers of mass media are not just becoming ever more vocal about contagion and cost, however. They are also expressing more and more concern about how to manage what they view as being ineluctable, modern health threats such as chronic diseases (e.g., hypertension and diabetes), counterfeit drugs, tainted blood supplies, agricultural toxins, and carcinogens.

Tobacco Warnings in Years Past

From October 2003 to August 2004 I lived in Kunming conducting fieldwork on smoking and tobacco control. Something affirmed by this research is that, while risk society theory may hold promise for making sense of broad-sweeping changes ongoing in China or elsewhere, one must be quite cautious in applying such theory, always giving significant attention to the ways that historical, discursive, political-economic, and interpersonal specificities configure risk (also see Lupton 1999; Tulloch and Lupton 2003).

For instance, close attention to risk society theory's notions of first and second modernity could easily lead one to assume that tobacco control in China is a relatively recent phenomenon, one spawned by transnational processes. That is clearly not the case. Tobacco control has been around for quite some time in

China, and in fact dates back far earlier than the origins of any modern public health institution. Perhaps the earliest known anti-tobacco edict dates to the reign of emperor Chong Zhen, who ruled from 1627 to 1644. Chong Zhen banned the cultivation and smoking of tobacco on the grounds that it greatly harmed youth, and declared that "lawbreakers would be decapitated" (see Ma 1985: 1). Tobacco control goes back even further, though, if one is willing to take a broader perspective. Tobacco has been present in many parts of China since at least the third century. And since then, the issues of *use* and *regulation* have been inseparable. They have together comprised what several contemporary Chinese scholars have called China's "tobacco culture" (Deng and Xu 1992; Yan 1995). This is a particularly apt phrase, for, like all culture, China's tobacco culture has involved both shifting prescription and proscription. No doubt, one of the central regulatory features of this culture has been structured around gender. Whereas in many contexts men have been encouraged to smoke and they have frequently used tobacco consumption as a positive signifier of their masculinity, women have been more commonly discouraged and have at times used tobacco avoidance, however indirectly, as a mark of womanhood.[2] One should be little surprised then that the earliest known record of smoking in China involves a distinctively male-coded group. That record is from the year 225 and is about a group of rank and file soldiers who are being helped to cope with demands, dare one say risks, of China's southwestern climate. Local residents provided the visiting northern army "Nine Leaf Yunnan Tobacco" (*jiuye yun xiangcao*) and instructed them to smoke it in order to cure their affliction with "tropical miasma" (see Wang, 1992: 44).

This brings us to another concern for the application of risk society theory. When one looks back in time, it is quite clear that, in China, tobacco has long been associated with risk, either as an agent of its reduction or its creation (cf. Hughes 2003). In terms of the former, key explanations that Yunnan scholars

have given me for why inhaling burning tobacco was common in China, well before the advent of the cigarette, is that tobacco smoke (*xiang yan*, literally fragrant smoke) was understood as medicinally curative. What's more, perhaps because of its linguistic and practical similarity to incense (*xiang*), tobacco smoke has long been viewed as a tool for propitiating gods, ghosts and ancestors, and thereby reducing ill fate. Prior to James Duke and others introducing cigarette rolling machines to China during the early 20th century (Cochran 1980), a common means for smoking tobacco, was the bamboo water pipe. A key byproduct of that smoking technique, the acrid and blackened pipe water, has long been used for risk reduction. One can still see this in parts of the Chinese countryside, especially in Yunnan. Some families regularly spread pipe water around residential compounds and gardens to keep away vermin, to scare off beasts, and to discourage the entry of evil spirits.

In terms of public pronouncements about risk, the earliest appearance of health warnings against tobacco in written Chinese well precedes declarations by the World Health Organization or, for that matter, by any other institution emblematic of our (or prior) modern epoch. Warnings appear as early as the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). In the cannon of herbal medicine, *Shiliao Bencao*, it states smoking tobacco should be avoided because it "consumes the blood and decreases life years." The 1643 opus *Wuli Xiaozhi* (Notes on the Principles of Things) more specifically warns that smoking tobacco too long will "blacken the lungs, which no drug can cure, and which can prompt diseases that suddenly trigger both vomiting of yellow phlegm and death" (see Ma 1985: 1).

A Porous and Contradictory Party-State

Thus, when one looks at issues of tobacco regulation from a long-term historical perspective, threads of continuity with

the present are plainly visible. On the other hand, one can not ignore the fact that, over the last two decades, distinctive transformations have been underway in the area of tobacco control in China, with radical amplifications of form and content in efforts to not only regulate but also measure smoking. What has been causing these amplifications? Clearly, processes of globalization (notably, the ongoing growth of international biopolitics as well as the proliferation of information-delivery medium) have been key. In recent years, spurred by the global anti-tobacco movement, growing streams of health and regulatory information critical of tobacco have been flowing forth at residents of the PRC. In the mid-1990s, a consortium of Chinese and U.S. public health scholars conducted China's largest nationwide smoking survey to date (Yang et al. 1997). A few years later, another multinational group of epidemiologists released the groundbreaking findings that more than a hundred million Chinese citizens (nearly all men) are expected to die of tobacco-related disease between 2000 and 2050 (Liu et al. 1998). And in November 2003, China became incorporated into the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Still, inasmuch as such processes have been quite significant in tobacco control's rising stature in China over recent years, what we have been witnessing is certainly not a story of a shrinking state, as strict application of risk society theory might suggest. This may not be immediately apparent for some observers, in part because recently many members of the international media and public health community have bemoaned the inadequate efforts of the post-Mao state and other entities to stem cigarette consumption. Be that as it may, when one examines closely what has actually been done and how much of the knowledge that has been produced in the anti-tobacco field has come about in recent years, it is patently clear that China's party-state has been pivotal. More to the point, the party-state has been the central node through which anti-tobacco efforts

nationwide have been promoted, shaped and coordinated, including the proliferation of mass media messages. The two multinational epidemiologocal studies mentioned above are cases in point. Each was partially funded and coordinated by Chinese state agencies. Moreover, in terms of the WHO's FCTC, it was China's UN ambassador, Wang Guangya, who signed the treaty in 2003 on behalf of the People's Republic, and it is China's National Peoples' Congress that must still ratify it.

All that said, when analyzing current anti-tobacco efforts in China, one must be vigilant not to swing too far toward a state-centric model, particularly one that depicts the state as a monolith. For clearly, the party-state has not been acting alone when it comes to anti-tobacco efforts, nor has it been working as a unified entity. As with so many other administrative areas, when it comes to tobacco, the party-state today has been working as a multi-level, porous, highly diversified apparatus, one that has innumerable internal contradictions. And, perhaps nowhere has a notion of the party-state as an organization riddled by contradiction been more apparent than with tobacco. At the same time that the party-state has been the central node for managing anti-tobacco efforts in recent years, it has also been the central node for, at once, developing and managing China's tobacco market. In spite of many economic sectors in China being significantly influenced by processes of liberalization over the last decade, the production, marketing, and distribution of tobacco has remained under the watchful control of China's State Tobacco Monopoly Bureau. A reason that control of the tobacco sector has been so much slower to experience market reform is no doubt that the industry has been such a cash cow for taxation. Over the last decade, tobacco has perennially been the largest contributor to China's tax coffers by industry. In 2003 alone, tobacco taxes nationwide totaled approximately US $29 billion (Wu 2004).

Listening to Smokers

How are we to make sense of all this activity in terms of the lives of cigarette smokers? At present, how are these contradictory forces being expressed through and shaped by local forms of embodiment? One way to begin plumbing this terrain is by listening to some of the most significant consumers of tobacco in China today, that is, urban men.

Recently, I have spent a good deal of time talking to men in Kunming about smoking.[3] In my first few months of research during fall 2003, something that caught me by surprise was the sizable number of men of various socioeconomic backgrounds that professed to have experienced personal struggles with cigarettes. These struggles take a variety of forms, including efforts to avoid starting smoking, to reduce the number of cigarettes smoked, or to initiate, or maintain a quit.

Such struggles were surprising for several reasons. First, because cigarettes have been such a significant part of male social and economic life in post-Mao China (Wank 2000), possibly nowhere more so than in Kunming, I assumed that most men I would meet while conducting fieldwork in 2003 would be uninterested in avoiding or giving up cigarettes. Second, during a previous visit to Kunming, a relatively brief stay in the summer of 2000, the vast majority of men that I met not just smoked but also expressed little desire to stop. Finally, China's 1996 National Prevalence Survey of Smoking found that only a modest percentage of smokers studied (17%) indicated interest in quitting (Yang et al. 1997).

Because of the dearth of longitudinal data on the topic in Kunming, I have no way of assessing if there is indeed rising sentiment among its residents to avoid cigarettes. What is clear, and what I have found particularly intriguing, is that many men who have paused to describe for me their personal struggles over cigarettes have used language similar to that of Kan Libo, a 37-year-old Kunming taxi driver:

> I've smoked for 18 years now. I started when I left school and began to work. It was fun at first, just something I played with. Everyone did it. It was about being manly, being a real man (*nanzihan*), and it seemed important to success at work. What's the [Chinese] phrase? "Men who don't smoke will work in vain to ascend to top of the world." I still like smoking. I like opening a new pack of cigarettes, exchanging them with [male] friends. I like that smoking helps me get through the tedium of work. And I like that I'm making enough money now to buy good brands.
>
> But I've also tried to quit several times, each time to no avail. My will-power just isn't strong enough. Cigarettes are like so many other things these days, they're easy to buy, but better to avoid. It's all a matter of will-power (*yili*). I'd like to be free of cigarettes, but I'm just not strong enough. Those who can do it, I respect them a lot. They've got will-power, and that means they're strong and have cultural quality (*wenhua sushi*).
>
> The government and foreigners are now always saying that smoking is uncivilized and unhealthy. That's why it's against the rules for people to smoke in Kunming's taxis. It can hurt business, too. Recently, I've had people get in my cab and then immediately get out because it smelled of cigarettes. But of course, other patrons get in and light up, completely ignoring the No Smoking sticker put up by the government. So, who knows if I'll ever muster the strength to quit.

Kan's monologue, like others I have heard from men in Kunming, strikes me as an articulation less of a rational-choice-making figure fashioning his lifestyle and more that of a man confronting a sense of personal weakness and working through fraught issues of identity. Kan's is a distressed language of failed self-management and desire-regulation in the face of immense demands made by an addictive, pleasurable, and common form of consumption. His is also the distressed language of place, distinction, and status, in particular of membership to either a modern and civilized urbanism *or* a socially and politically salubrious world of masculinity.

To what social practices should we look in order to under-
stand how this fraught form of embodiment (which seems to
so echo Kunming's and the party-state's contradictory relation-
ship with tobacco) is being informed?

Risk society theory would lead us to believe that the mass
media, particularly its communication of expert knowledge,
is key. And nothing would seem to fit Beck's argument more
than publicly disseminated forms of expert knowledge falling
under the rubric of self help.

Self Regulation

The trademark self-help text for smoking cessation is most
certainly the self-help quitting manual. A small number of
such manuals have recently been produced in China. After 5
months of searching, I found one for sale in Kunming, high
on the upper floors of a bookstore. This manual is designed to
be a humorous text, written in the first person about a man's
experiences of quitting. The manual is small, about six-by-five
inches square, and 29 pages in length, largely taken up with
cartoon drawings.

This manual is worth our consideration not just because it
startlingly reflects ways that tobacco-control media have been
framed by and are framing the notion of the angst-filled urban
man. It also merits our attention because of how it illustrates
a specific limitation of risk society theory.

With a significant nod toward the humorous, the manual
outlines the tumult for men of both smoking and trying to
quit, framing the former at times in terms of male erectile
dysfunction and the latter in terms of nicotine withdrawal. It
also clearly associates these two sources of tumult with a third
source, that of becoming more engaged with, if not in control
of, the tribulations of modern urban life. To grasp this third
feature, one needs to consider the overall book in which the

manual is printed. This book is actually two manuals in one, both translated from British publications. One manual begins from one of the book's covers, the second starts from the other cover. Moving inwards from each side, the two manuals end in the middle of the volume. One manual is titled STOPPING SMOKING, A SURVIVAL GUIDE; the other is titled THE OFFICE, A SURVIVAL GUIDE (Baxendale 2003).
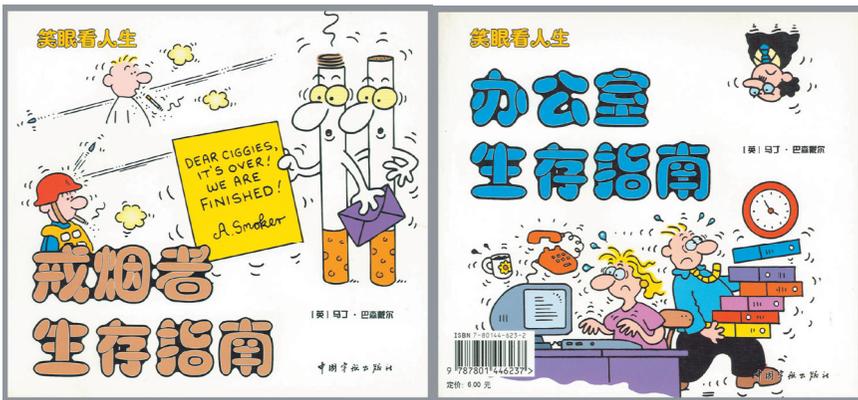
I have shown this book to several of my smoking acquaintances. After a good deal of laughter about the humorous cartoons, most have expressed dismay. The comments of Xu Bo, one of my Kunming neighbors, seem particularly poignant:

> This manual is great for a laugh. But, how does it really help me quit cigarettes? It seems like it gives more advice on how to become a stronger and more civilized man. What I get from this book is that to enjoy sex more, I need to quit, and to quit, I need to depend on my individual will (*geren de yili*). But you know what? I'm sad to say, my will power probably isn't strong enough. I wish it was. But it's not. I've tried to quit before. I just get irritable. And then I start again. That leaves me feeling angry and even more uncertain of what to make of all these messages that smoking is bad for me and that I'd be a better person if I didn't smoke.

While one might say that this narrative betrays a growing sense of reflexivity in Xu's life, as Beck would predict, it certainly does not betray rational choice in action, rational choice working to help someone produce their own biography, rational choice acting to accommodate risk. Instead it strikes the ear as a narrative about troubled manhood, expressed in terms of flawed competency and failed self management.

This returns us to a significant problem for the application of risk society theory, or by that matter any other decontextualized, rational choice-oriented approach, to the terrain of tobacco control.[4] Decisions about if, when, and where to smoke cigarettes involve far more than rational choice, or at least they do in much of China. To be sure, tobacco companies in the PRC, like elsewhere, have been striving to frame the issue of whether or not people smoke today as being an issue of individual choice and freedom. I was provided that narrative quite matter-of-factly during a brief conversation I had with one of the top managers of Yunnan's largest tobacco company: "People should have the right to choose whether or not to smoke. That's a basic freedom. If I want to keep smoking, or if I want to quit, that's my decision."

However, not only are cigarettes intensely addictive, but in a social landscape like China, there remains enormous pressure for people to smoke, particularly men. Again, as Kan Libo and many others like to quip, *nanren buchouyan baizaishi shangding* ("Men who don't smoke will work in vain to ascend to top of the world"). The room for rational choice is further eroded by the fact that there are few effective smoking-cessation drugs sold in China. Briefly in the 1990s, one of the most efficacious drug families, nicotine-replacement therapy (NRT), was sold in various forms at exorbitant prices by its patent holder, GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceutical. A few enterprising Beijing-based drug companies are now in the early stages of manufacturing NRT as well as bupropion, taking advantage of expirations in GlaxoSmithKline's patents, but so far the distribution of

the medications is limited, particularly beyond the nation's capital.

Against this sociopolitical and indeed pharmacological backdrop, it seems less analytically productive to examine public media pertaining to risk reduction for how they create the effect of choice. Instead a more valuable tack seems to be examining how and why, in dialogue with local forms of power, such media come to be produced and how they promote other effects at the level of subjectivity.

In what follows, I examine two further tobacco-related media, which are far more visible in Kunming than quitting manuals, and I explore how the local histories of these media relate to the production of distinctive and indeed problematic effects for Kunming men. My analysis of these media is informed less by Beck's work than by recent Foucaulidan scholarship on "governmentality," what Foucualt (1991) called "the conduct of conduct."[5] As governmentality scholars like Dean (1997) have shown, when it comes to considering the relationship between risk reduction and the problematization of identity, it is important to be especially attentive to knowledge and symbolism, both their production and effect (also see Lupton 1999: 84-102). One must be attentive to not only "the relation between the *forms of truth* by which we have come to know ourselves and the *forms of practice* by which we seek to shape the conduct of ourselves and others," but also how state and non-state entities are complicit in the creation of those forms (Dean 1996: 217).[6] In the context of China where the state remains so pivotal to social organization, I would suggest, this approach is particularly useful in that it encourages us to flesh out attempts made by governmental regulatory agencies to discursively problematize people's lives, their forms of conduct. and their selves (Dean 1996: 220).

In the remaining pages of this article, as I discuss two types of media pertaining to tobacco, much of my focus is on how a specific state office has become involved in generating what

Dean (1996: 220) would call a "critical ontology of self." I show that this office's management of these two media, both in terms of that management's intent and effect, has been helping to frame not so much a rational choice-making reflexive actor who opts for a smoke-free lifestyle, but instead a more gender-specific type of problematic embodiment, a cosmopolitanism-seeking, conflict-ridden man.

One could say that Kunming is an unusual place in which to study tobacco-related media and their effects given the fact that the city is a central hub of China's premium tobacco industry. On the other hand, if one holds to the proposition that biopolitics are always influenced by regionalism, then it could be said that Kunming simply offers one variation of tobacco governmentality currently present in China, no doubt a highly distinctive one. Also, if one recognizes that the Chinese state is riddled by contradictions about how to deal with tobacco, then likewise the argument stands that Kunming provides a highly intensified, indeed highly productive, case for fleshing out the role and effects of those contradictions. Lastly, inasmuch as Kunming is a tobacco kingdom, it is certainly not an island. It is deeply enmeshed in the larger polity that is the PRC, and its residents are embedded in many of the same discourses that denizens of other Chinese cities confront daily.

Signs and More Signs

The first of the two media forms to be discussed here is highly proscriptive. It is the most overt type of anti-tobacco symbolism found across Kunming. It is the slogan inscribed on brass and bonded to the wall behind the young couple in the Green Lake tea house, the message on plastic affixed with glue to the inside of Kan Libo's taxi.

No Smoking signs are an increasingly prevalent sight in Kunming. Their presence owes in large part to one state institution. This is the Kunming Patriotic Health Office (KPHO).

An arm of Kunming's Public Health Bureau, the KPHO has approximately one dozen employees and has been the city's representative to the larger national Patriotic Health System, which is run under the auspices the Ministry of Health.

In 1985, in response to directives from Beijing, the KPHO began distributing No Smoking signage, initially on mimeographed paper. At first, the scope of the distribution was quite narrow and indeed ephemeral, since the mimeographs decomposed quickly. All this changed at the end of the 1990s, when the Kunming government hosted the 1999 International Horticultural Exposition, the city's largest and most important international event to date. This exposition was a consummately urban phenomenon. The Expo was informed by and expressed a spate of transnational discourses, aesthetics, and practices of urbanism, including civic planning, garden design, nature as simulacrum, convention services, metropolitan distinctiveness as tourist commodity, and land reclamation for city expansion. It was designed to showcase Kunming as a modern, sanitary, international, well-cultured metropolis, open for business and boldly progressing into the 21st century. It was also designed to showcase Kunming residents as progressive and sophisticated urbanites.

Toward both ends, in anticipation of the Expo, the KPHO applied to the city finance bureau for funds to cover a significant upgrade in No Smoking signage. Since receiving those and subsequent funds, the KPHO has produced signs in burnished brass, with the hope that they would be more durable and far more welcomed by target destinations as objects of worldly sophistication and cultural quality (*wenhua sushi*). Also, in coordination with the Horticultural Exposition, the KPHO began issuing No Smoking stickers to taxi companies, and conducting follow up checks to ensure that they receive placement in prominent positions, specifically on the plexiglas dividing the driver from the rear passenger compartment. By early 2004,

the KPHO estimated that it had distributed between 20,000 to 30,000 brass signs and at least 20,000 taxi stickers.

The choice to target taxis is an interesting one to consider in terms of men's identity formation. Taxi driving is a profession that across China remains predominantly male, and today is closely tied to the current engagement of Chinese masculinity with both modernist patriarchal ideas about mobility and authority creation and a more longstanding androcentric gendering of public space (Kohrman 1999).[7] In the spring of 2004, I heard the following from one taxi driver about effects he has felt since his profession was selected as a governmental target for tobacco control:

> Since these stickers started going up in taxis, Kunming police have become very strict about drivers smoking, especially when we have passengers. I've been pulled over twice and fined. As a consequence, my wife has been pushing that I let her drive [our taxi] more during the day. She doesn't smoke, so the new laws are not such a problem for her. I agree that Kunming needs to become more civilized, but it's so frustrating that I'm not allowed to smoke. I need cigarettes to make it through my work day. Driving a cab is stressful and exhausting. Not being able to smoke only makes my work harder. Also, I'm in this little space all day with passengers who are always smoking, and the police don't care about them. Am I to tell them not to smoke? That'd be rude, and it'd hurt my income.

The second media form to be discussed is even more visible across Kunming than No Smoking signs. This media is something that people who drive cabs see innumerable times a day. It appears in vivid colors atop major buildings, blazoned along sky bridges at major intersections, as backdrop to bus stops, and peppered around innumerable other city sites. In smaller allied formats, less under the supervision of the KPHO, such media can be seen in magazines, on television and websites, and at times ephemera like plastic bags, lighters, and ticket

stubs. These items are tobacco-industry advertising, with the billboard being the most prominent iteration. In Kunming, such signage usually promotes Yunnan's major cigarette brands, including names like Yunyan, Honghe, Hongtashan, Xiaoxiongmao, Yuxi, Fu, Ashima.

How did the KPHO become involved in the management of tobacco billboards? How has this media been communicating messages about tobacco control? And what does it have to do with the formation of a conflicted and decidedly urban ethos?

The KPHO has been drawn into shaping tobacco billboards by two regulatory regimes. The first regime began to develop in the 1990s largely as a consequence of pressure placed on the Chinese leadership by various international organizations. Owing to that pressure, increasing numbers of directives have been created by central government branches that restrict the form and content of tobacco advertising nationwide. Among their features, the earliest directives prohibit tobacco advertisements from showing people actively smoking, displaying cigarettes, and communicating overt messages about cigarettes. They also require that the words "Smoking Harms Health" appear on all ads. Since the start of this regulatory process, the task of ensuring that these directives are followed has been largely shouldered by China's network of Patriotic Health offices.

I visited Kunming for one month in the summer of 2000, and then it was not until October 2003 that I returned. The transformation in tobacco billboards during that three-year period was patent. When I arrived in 2003, gone were the bus-stop diptychs in red and yellow, one panel extolling the Communist Party and the other featuring a glossy pack of cigarettes, both paid for by Yuxi Hongta Tobacco Corporation. Gone were most of the billboards of 1 by 1.5 meter packs of cigarettes, which used to hang every 15 meters along many of Kunming's major roads. Filling some of the gaps left by these earlier forms of tobacco advertising was a spectrum of tobacco

signage, much more influenced by graphic art techniques. By 2003, many billboards had become heavily focused on brand identification. For instance, the manufacturers of Yunyan and Fu (Good Fortune) were now simply displaying their names, elegantly laid out in subtle but vividly airbrushed graphics. Many other billboards had taken a different turn, one decidedly toward the hyper-masculine. The previously stayed Honghe billboards were now replaced by ones depicting either a group of massive bulls charging across an open field or a close-up image of a Formula One race car. Hongtashan was in the early stages of launching a new billboard campaign showing a rugged expedition mountaineer, ice axes in hand, scaling a snow-covered peak.

Not only had tobacco billboards' form and content changed during this period, so too had their number. Moving around the city when I returned in 2003, I found myself confronted by far fewer cigarette ads.

This thinning of billboards caught me by surprise. I was well aware of the new regulations flowing forth from Beijing covering tobacco advertising. I had read about the regulations in the U.S. Still, little did I expect the numbers of billboards to decline dramatically, at least not in China's tobacco kingdom. It is hard to overstate the political-economic weight that Yunnan's tobacco corporations wield in the provincial capital Kunming. In recent years, tobacco has not just been the largest industrial sector in Yunnan, but it has been responsible for approximately 70% of the province's tax revenues.

So, when I returned to Kunming in the fall of 2003, I had to wonder, had other China scholars and I been misreading the transformation of the Chinese polity in recent years? Does China's post-Mao leadership actually have much more authority to implement laws, notably health-risk reduction laws, in localities where such laws directly threaten local taxation? Do global health institutions, like the WHO, which have been advocating not just for tougher anti-tobacco rules but also stricter

implementation of such laws, wield more legal influence across China than they or most scholars have acknowledged?

Keeping Clean, Being Urban

As it turns out, the patent transformation in Kunming's tobacco billboards in recent years has owed as much to overt attempts by Beijing and global organizations to curtail tobacco advertising as it has to an altogether distinct regulatory regime, one informed by discourses about risk and, even more, modern citizenship. This regime is titled the National Clean City Program (*Guojia Weisheng Chengshi Biaozhun).* And, like tobacco-advertising legislation, this program has been closely tied to the Patriotic Health System. In the 1990s, it was developed by the system's Beijing headquarters and, since then, the task of implementing it has rested on the shoulders of the system's local offices.

The National Clean City Program is a standardization and certification mechanism. Its criteria cover a broad gamut, some of which are present in earlier codes and regulations. The criteria are a kind of smorgasbord of sanitary and urban planning standards, covering everything from trash-can design, pest control, and food hygiene, to sewage and garbage disposal, green space ratios, and street cleaning, to public toilet placement, epidemic disease prevention, air and water surveillance, and health education. Through this program, the central government is prodding participating cities to become more modern and well regulated, and it is prodding each of these cities' body politic, the local population, to embrace lifeways that are not only less risky, but, more to the point, reputedly clean and advanced.

There is something particularly interesting, indeed quixotic, about Kunming's involvement in the Clean City program and the city government's decisions to ostensibly work actively

to fulfill the program's criteria. From the outset, Kunming's leaders have known that the city would likely never be certified as a Clean City, since Kunming would never meet all of the program's standards. Stated another way, since 1999 when the national Clean City apparatus was launched, Kunming has been actively pursuing an administrative course of planned failure. The key stumbling block has not been, say, toilet design, lidless-garbage-can replacement, water quality or any other aforementioned criteria. The main glitch is a clause found at the end of section two, article six, of the "National Clean City Criteria" (Committee 2001). That article begins by stating that candidate cities must comply with supra-ordinate rules covering tobacco-control work, such as rules about creating smoke-free public spaces. Then it goes on to state that participating municipalities must also establish tobacco-advertisement-free city districts (Committee 2001: 4).

In April 2004, I discussed this program with a senior staff member of the Kunming Patriotic Health Office. We talked for several hours. He was dressed neatly, sporting an energetic demeanor as well as the distinctive smell of cigarette smoke on his breath. He explained the logic undergirding how and why Kunming has participated in the Clean City program.

> Kunming had little choice but to join the program. To be a modern city, one attractive to foreign investment, Kunming has to become cleaner. So, even though they knew we'd probably never get certified, our city leaders figured that joining the program would be good for Kunming. We'd be showing respect to the central government and it would make us a more modern city. . .
>
> From the start, it was clear we probably couldn't fulfill all the tobacco-control aspects of the program. Distributing No Smoking signs, no problem. We've done it for years. The city's leaders are okay with that. No Smoking signs in public spaces – all modern cities have that, right? But tobacco-advertisement-free zones? We could anger lots of important people if we tried that. . . . . So my office

has decided to take a different tack in implementing the Clean City program. We've focused on existing tobacco billboards. We've pressed hard to get tobacco companies and their ad agencies to follow the rules about content, and we've pressed them to reduce the total number of billboards in Kunming.

It hasn't been easy. We've had to push every step of the way. Most of our own government officials are smokers. So, at times, we've had to make threats that we'd go to the press or that we'd put up anti-tobacco billboards. But, slowly everyone has come along. They've come to understand that if we want to have a modern city, and be able to compete for investment with cities like Beijing and Shanghai, we've got to make changes. The public image that so many people in Kunming love cigarettes has got to change. . . . After his trip to Paris in 2002, our office's director started to press hard for the big ads here to be more artistic. He argued with everyone that, if these ads were more artistic, like what he saw in Paris, like what Honghe is now producing, fewer ads could serve the tobacco companies' goals, even ads without images of cigarettes.

The outcome has been positive, we've got fewer billboards in the city, we're following the rules more closely, and Kunming is looking more modern and civilized.

Inasmuch as we can decry that this interview betrays the egregious degree to which tobacco company interests have been diluting the strength of tobacco control in Kunming, I find the interview far more interesting for what it tells us about other workings of tobacco governmentality, about how knowledge, practice, political-economics, and tobacco have been shaping the conduct of conduct. First, it lays bare that attention to health risk reduction has not, in and of itself, been a significant factor within the KPHO's decision-making process about tobacco. Second, it displays that struggles are underway within Kunming's city government over how best to handle tobacco in terms of internal and external economics pressures. How much should the city pursue external investment? How much should it protect its current tobacco revenues? Can it do

both? Third, the interview clearly indicates that cross-cutting pressures having to do with the creation of a "wealthy" yet "civilized" urban populace have been at once confounding and fueling officials' regulatory efforts to manage the city's largely cigarette-addicted male citizenry.

That billboards have been reflecting these various pressures has not been missed by people across Kunming. Many city dwellers have made clear to me that they are keenly aware that tobacco billboards have been changing. And they have told me that, for anyone well versed in Kunming sociopolitics, the changing billboards express a complex and conflicted set of practicalities, faced not just by the municipality's leaders, but also by its residents. As the father of one of my daughter's Kunming nursery school classmates told me when I brought up the topic of tobacco billboards:

> I look at those big ads and I see how much this city is struggling with tobacco. The ads have all changed so much lately. There's fewer around Kunming and they're all so much more beautiful. Why the change? Because tobacco is bad, because it's backward. It says it right there along the side of each ad, tobacco is bad for you. But how can Kunming quit (*jieyan*)? This city is addicted to tobacco money. We need cigarettes to become modern. But cigarettes are so backward. No one knows what to do.

Life on the Ward

Before concluding, it is compelling to consider a unique group of Kunming men who work in a traditionally hyper-masculine subspecialty. Pausing to consider these men, however briefly, not only helps illuminate how tobacco-control media are simultaneously dovetailing with and challenging discourses regarding being a modern urbanite, but also highlights further how regulatory efforts around tobacco are leaving many male smokers in Kunming feeling increasingly contorted in terms

of who they are and who they should be. I originally got to know this group of men, who are all doctors, because I wished to meet their patients, people suffering from lung cancer. All these men are surgeons. They work at one of Kunming's flagship hospitals, and together they comprise the all-male clinical staff of the hospital's department of thoracic surgery.

To reach their department, one has to navigate a veritable forest of No Smoking signs. One day I counted the signs that I spotted from the moment I entered the hospital's in-patient building until I arrived at the doctors' duty office inside the thoracic surgery ward. I counted over 20 signs, most of them measuring at least two-feet-square. One afternoon a week later, I decided to count something else. I counted the number of cigarette butts on the floor of the surgeons' duty office. The total came to over 15.

Despite all their exposure to tobacco-related disease, nearly all these doctors smoke. And nearly all of them smoke at work. They favor mostly Yunnan's premier brands: Yunyan, Hongtashan, Honghe and Yuxi. They smoke before and following lunch. They smoke while discussing clinical cases. They smoke in advance and in the wake of excising a tumor from someone's lung.

These doctors, however, do not smoke everywhere. In fact they stick to a tightly regulated smoking geography during much of the day. None smoke on the surgical floor, between hospital buildings, or anywhere on the in-patient ward except for one place. In and around the hospital, they light up only in their duty office.

One day, Dr. Jiang helped me understand why and to what effect he and his colleagues follow such a strict regulatory geography in and around the hospital:

> We'd embarrass the hospital if we smoked in plain view. Hospitals are special institutions in China. And doctors are supposed to set good examples. We're supposed to be walking No Smoking signs. How would it look if

our patients saw us smoking? We're always telling them to quit. They come here, many from the countryside far away, for advanced care. We're supposed to heal them and teach them how to be healthier.

Sometimes I envy patients. They have the easiest time quitting. I don't want to be sick like them, of course. But getting sick . . . it's the most effective way to give up smoking, to mobilize the necessary will power. I can't seem to do it otherwise, or at least not for very long. My longest quit was in Shanghai, when I was training there. My supervisor didn't smoke, and there was a real feeling among doctors in Shanghai that if you were a physician and smoked, you were culturally inferior. So, I hid the fact that I smoked, and eventually just quit.

Once back in Kunming, though, I started again. How frustrating! I'm a lung surgeon after all. If anyone should know better it's me, right? Everyday walking by all the hospital's no smoking signs, and then coming in here to the duty office where everyone is lighting up. Starting to smoke again after Shanghai really got me down at first. It still does at times. That's why, now, I try to smoke no more than a pack every couple of days. But how can I dump cigarettes altogether? As you've seen, everyone here in this department passes out cigarettes to each other, at least the doctors, not the nurses. Smoking, it's part of getting along, part of what keeps us all friendly and relaxed. It's very stressful being a surgeon here. Maybe we're not as civilized as our colleagues in Shanghai. But you know what? We get along a lot better.

Conclusion

When I describe statements like Dr. Jiang's to public health colleagues inside and outside of China, a common response I receive is a lament that is doubly remedial. Many a colleague bemoans that China has much to redress before becoming fully modern and that, in order to curtail smoking rates there, more information about the hazards of tobacco needs to be disseminated to the general public.

Inasmuch as risk information dissemination can aid smoking-cessation efforts, those who allocate health-promotion resources in China should also consider several points highlighted in this article. First, there are people who are already striving to quit in China. Even in a highly pro-tobacco city such as Kunming, a desire to quit can be found among many long-term male smokers. Secondly, this interest in quitting is being fueled by a distinct and powerful blend of regulatory impulses visible within mass media. For many male smokers, what has been driving their interest to quit has been as much a self/societal aim to evade the risks of disease and improve life expectancy as an equally potent normalizing urge to fend off backwardness and become modern. Thirdly, because most people today who are addicted to tobacco in China have little access to effective smoking-cessation tools and environments, the blend of regulatory impulses that they are facing leaves them often feeling fraught over who they are and who they should become.

In light of this situation, it seems that public health personnel interested in curtailing smoking-related suffering in China must consider acting not just remedially, but nimbly. Rather than aiming to bring China in line with some modernist telos, rather than devoting resources at generating citizens fully versed in the details of tobacco risk, it might be equally if not more effective (a) to understand better the unique blend of normalizing impulses already militating against tobacco in China and (b) to leverage shrewdly those impulses, integrating them with new efforts now nascent within the PRC to provide greater access to well-proven, smoking-cessation techniques (e.g., quitting clinics, drug therapies, socioculturally-matched manuals, and hotline-based counseling).

There is no time for lament, as any visit to a PRC hospital today makes patently clear. Tobacco-related suffering is already ravaging the country, and its arresting effects are growing daily. Men and women in China are increasingly aware of those facts.

And many are struggling to stave off cigarettes' acute costs, sometimes articulating those struggles through a lexicon of risk, modernity, or both.

NOTES

1   Epidemiologists only began in the late 20th century to study to-bacco smoking in China on a large scale, so long-term statistical knowledge on the subject does not exist. According to two nation-wide surveys of tobacco use conducted in 1996 and 2002, rates of women smoking in contemporary China pale in comparison to that occurring among men. In 1996 and 2002, 63% and 58% of men over 15 years of age who were surveyed reported that they currently smoked a tobacco product. During the same periods, only 3.8% and 2.6% of women who were surveyed reported smoking (Chinese Association of Smoking and Health 2004:7). In terms of Kunming, the 1996 survey found that 77% of men and 4.5% of women were current smokers (Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine 1997: 197). 2002 data for Kunming have yet to be released.

2   Over the last hundred years, there have been several exceptions to this trend for women. Higher than average rates of female tobacco use, for instance, have been noted among (1) youth in large costal cities during the 1920s and 1930s; (2) elderly in China's northeast; (3) several minority groups in China's southwest; and (4) present-day, fashion-conscious, young urbanites (Yang Gonghuan, personal communication).

3   I have spent somewhat less time, though still considerable, talking to Kunming women about smoking and anti-tobacco media. Be-cause this article's central focus is that of male identity formation, I will wait until another venue to describe at greater length what I have learned from my female informants.

4   Although decontextualized self-help manuals like the one discussed in this essay, when applied alone in a highly pro-tobacco environ-ment like Kunming, seem highly problematic in terms of their likelihood of helping smokers to quit, it is more than plausible that such manuals – if designed to fit local sociocultural contexts; mar-ried with efficacious smoking-cessation drugs; and used together with counseling programs – could be useful in helping Kunming residents and other Chinese citizens to quit.

5   I have written in some detail about problems inherent to early gov-
         ernmentality theory (Kohrman 2005), notably Foucault's reluctance
         to grant the State much role in sociopolitical formation (also see
         Agamben 1998; Hall 1985). But, if we are willing to take the State
         more seriously than Foucault, as Dean seems to be and as I have
         done in my writings about biobureaucracy (Kohrman 2005), there
         may be much to be learned by applying governmentality ideas to
         the study of contemporary China.
6   The emphasis here is mine.
7   Although the majority of taxi drives in Kunming are men, especially
         during the daytime, women in greater numbers seem to work in
         the profession there than in other large cities across China that I
         have visited over the years. This relatively higher rate of female
         drivers in Kunming has been explained to me by women drivers
         there as possibly owing to the large numbers of non-Han Chinese
         "minority" women who have been attracted to the local profession.
         It is also plausible that, to some degree, women are driving taxis
         in Kunming in greater numbers in recent years, and that this has
         been occurring because of male cabbies' growing frustration over
         new constraints on driving and smoking.

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