CHAPTER 4

Juvenile Delinquency and Reformatory Education in China
A Retrospective

IRVING EPSTEIN

In 1983, in the midst of a publicized spiritual pollution campaign, I traveled to China to investigate educational programs for juvenile delinquents in reformatories and work-study schools. Having spent the previous year and a half pursuing language study and comparative research on the same topic in Hong Kong and Taiwan, I understood that it would be difficult under any circumstance to complete a comprehensive study given the sensitive nature of the topic. I was also aware of the limitations placed upon the visitations I conducted: no repeat visits were permitted, public security and reformatory officials were present when questions were asked, and difficult questions remained unanswered due to feigned ignorance on the part of those who were being interviewed. In short, the use of true ethnographic methods was not possible at the time, although this work was definitely qualitative by nature. I still believed that it was beneficial to see with one's own eyes what one had read about in print, and used the visitations as a means of confirming the veracity of published material I had collected. Fifteen years afterwards, I think it is useful to reflect upon the assumptions I made in conducting research on delinquency and reformatory education, and critique those assumptions in light of the changing nature of Chinese education as a field of study. The fact that my research was not explicitly ethnographic in an interesting way highlights issues concerning the strengths and weaknesses of that method in a comparative sense, and it is hoped that this discussion will add to the discourse focusing upon the broader methodological concerns that are expressed throughout this volume.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN CHINA: THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

At first glance, juvenile delinquency in China appears to differ little from its counterparts in other regions of the world. Chinese delinquents are primarily male and engage in deviant behaviors including burglary, theft, murder, rape, arson, and gang activity. Delinquency is primarily an urban phenomenon, although rural violence has increased during the past decade and a half. Female delinquents are more likely to be incarcerated for sexually promiscuous behavior, theft, and activities less violent than those committed by males, contributing to a double standard that occurs internationally. Chinese scholars have described delinquents as being less educated and less intelligent than normal youth; they are more likely to have come from families where parental conflict has been present and have relatives who also have engaged in deviant behavior. Two important behavioral characteristics that have been attributed to delinquents include their plasticity and their eagerness to embrace a "cult of brotherhood." In the former case, they appear to be hardened individuals on the outside, but are emotionally quite fragile and easily shattered. In the latter case, they often commit crimes in groups rather than as individuals and seek peer support common during adolescence. I

During the early 1980s, specific attributions made about delinquents could be excessively romantic or often quite harsh and unflattering. They were in various publications depicted as "blossoms in the dust," ignorant *(yumei),* muddle-headed *(hutu),* tyrannical *(chengba),* despicable *(xialu),* impetuous *(jizao),* crazy *(feng kuang),* vain *(xurong),* conceited (zifei or *kuangwang zida),* reckless *(lutnang),* rotten (*fuxiu*), and savage or inhuman *(miejue renxing).* Females, it was noted, were particularly difficult to reform because, once incarcerated, they saw themselves as irreparably ruined, like a vase that once broken could not be put back together *(po guan po shuai).*[2] Certainly such categorizations reflected a traditional Confucian reluctance to separate an understanding of the nature of deviance with the ethical implications of its occurrence. What was even more striking to the Westerner, though, was the use of unicausality in explaining why delinquency even existed in the People's Republic of China.

Official explanations that sought to account for delinquency's occurrence included the effects of the Cultural Revolution, poor parenting, unsympathetic teaching, unhealthy peer group influences, and susceptibility to the dangerous influences resulting from increased contact with Western media. Certainly the effects of the Cultural Revolution received prominent attention as scholars sought to explain the embarrassing existence

of delinquency that remained visible during the post-Mao era. It was commonly pointed out that as a result of the Cultural Revolution, youth born during that time failed to obtain a clear understanding of right and wrong, as authority relationships between children and parents, as well as between citizens and government officials, were easily and regularly compromised. A significant number of youth who later got into trouble had parents who themselves were incarcerated or detained during the Cultural Revolution; certainly the political factionalism that encouraged relatives to inform on one another weakened traditional family ties.[3] But with direct reference to criminal behavior, it is clear that it was the surreptitious reentry of sent-down youth into China's cities in the latter years of the Cultural Revolution, without benefit of residence documentation, that had a significant effect upon increased social dislocation and disorder in the late 1970s.[4]

It should be stressed that it was easy to overemphasize the importance of the Cultural Revolution in contributing to Chinese delinquency**,** and the political expedience of doing so during the early years of post Maoism is clear. Scholars in the 1970s and 1980s conveniently forgot or underplayed the fact that waves of delinquency (reported as outbreaks of hooliganism) were reported in the press during the 1950s.[5] It is clear that the eradication of criminal deviance of all types held important political capital for the regime, as evidenced by the publicity given to campaigns aimed at eliminating prostitution in Shanghai and curtailing drug use in Southern China during the early years of the People's Republic.[6] In 1983, although it was no longer possible to deny that the growth of crime generally and juvenile delinquency in particular had become an important social problem, it was imperative that government officials set blame in such a way so as to deny personal culpability; the use of the Cultural Revolution, as an umbrella explanation, served that purpose.

Other explanations for the existence of juvenile delinquency contained important elements of truth but were similarly general and unidimensional. Poor parenting, for example, was attributed to the use of both overly authoritarian and overly indulgent disciplinary methods, although the negative effects of parental socioeconomic disadvantage upon one's ability to adequately perform child-rearing responsibilities were also acknowledged as a contributing factor. In a similar vein, teachers were criticized for their overly harsh disciplinary methods and their emotional distance from youth. One published example told of the inconsiderate teacher who berated the female student in front of the class, comparing her with excrement that deserved to be flushed down a toilet. The incident, it was claimed, provoked the student into committing delinquent acts. In all of these cases, the longstanding Confucian emphasis upon the power of role modeling, whereby the authority figure is normally responsible for shaping the behavior of the underling, is simply assumed as being an operative dimension of social relationships.[7]

The fear of Western "sugar-coated bullets" corrupting Chinese youth was also popularly expressed at this time and was a key issue in the general spiritual pollution campaign. Again, it was reported that when they came in contact with pornographic videos or other media produced in the West, Chinese youth were negatively influenced into conducting the very crimes that the media sensationalized. Beyond the xenophobia that belie such explanations was what many Western scholars have labeled a form of moral panic, whereby a general fear for the future direction of the society in light of de-Maoification was expressed through an ambivalence toward the independence and ethical character of the country's children.' The contradiction between viewing delinquents in such negative terms as were previously noted, as opposed to seeing them as powerless innocents, subject to the manipulation of external prurient forces from the West, can best be understood through appreciating the sense of moral panic that characterized the decade.

CULTURAL BAGGAGE BROUGHT TO A STUDY OF CHINESE DELINQUENCY

I, of course, came to my study of juvenile delinquency in China with my own set of assumptions, many of which were grounded in Western views of Chinese society. Deeply influenced by the writings of Whyte (1973), Whyte (1974), Parrish and Whyte (1978), and Whyte and Parrish (1984),[9] I viewed urban Chinese society as consisting of a set of interlocking institutions working to control individual behavior in the neighborhood, workplace, and in schools. The use of informal mechanisms for maintaining social control had its historical origins in the *bao-jia* self-policing system, first established during the twelfth century, but perfected during the Qing dynasty. Thus, the manipulation of local social institutions to informally maintain social control had some historical resonance. Reformatories could logically be categorized as institutions that ideally contributed to social control in a more formal manner, and were to be evaluated on those terms. Having read and been impressed with Etzioni's (1961) categorization of institutions such as prisons and reform schools as being normative-coercive, I viewed my task as one of evaluating the
effectiveness of these institutions in light of the ideological shifts that occurred after their initial development. A key question to answer was whether the normative value claims that rationalized coercive treatment of offenders could continue to be effective during the post-Maoist era.

The entire notion of coercion was of obvious interest, and in reading both Donald Munro's view of Mao's belief in the malleability of human character" and Bao Ruo Wang's (Jean Pasquale's) description of labor camp life,[12] it became clear to me that the degree to which institutional coercion occurred was often tied to one's participation in the selfcriticism process and one's corresponding willingness to confess to wrongdoing. Confession was a necessary precondition to character reformation, but at least there was the theoretical possibility of achieving rehabilitation. Indeed, upon reading *Prisoner of Mao*, it became evident that much of the physical maltreatment that was inflicted upon Chinese prisoners was due to widespread poverty and economic deprivation that affected everyone, rather than an intentional effort to inflict pain on the prisoners. Accounts of life in prisons and labor camps also emphasized the importance of labeling and social stigma, and their effects upon offenders as well as their relatives. The necessity of divorcing one's incarcerated spouse in order to keep one's employment, let alone maintain minimum external social contact, impressed me as being extremely significant. I, of course, understood that issues of stigma, labeling, and coercive institutional practice commonly occurred in the United States and in other Western countries too. But it was the closed nature of Chinese urban life, the lack of privacy, the reliance on connections (guanxi) for advancement, and the relatively low degree of mobility that made these issues especially compelling.

CHINESE PENAL INSTITUTIONS

Chinese penal institutions include prisons, reform and reeducation through labor camps, reformatories, work-study schools, and work-study

classes. Although the latter institutions were designed specifically for juveniles, offenders can be sent to reform and reeducation through labor camps and prisons too, depending upon the nature of their offense. There is a pecking order throughout the penal system, an institutional hierarchy based upon coercive purpose. Thus, delinquents who are not placed in reformatories are more likely to be sent to labor camps, but within the labor camp system, they are likely to enter reeducation through labor camps that house political prisoners and offenders guilty of moderate offenses rather than those camps that house hardened criminals. By Western standards, any form of incarceration that places juveniles with ad offenders is a violation of children's basic rights. Yet in the Chinese case, it is important to note that the term "youth" refers to those from the age eighteen up to the age of twenty-five. Juveniles supposedly include those aged fourteen through eighteen, although here, too, clear-cut distinction", between juveniles and youth are often compromised. Juveniles between the ages of fourteen and sixteen who commit serious crimes (homicide, bodily injury, robbery, arson, etc.) bear full criminal responsibility, a though the severity of punishment is mitigated and the death penalty Is only inflicted upon those aged eighteen and above. [13]

The two institutions that are specifically designed for youthful offenders are reformatories and work-study schools. The former hold relatively large numbers of youth who have been judged guilty of major offenses, and are well-established components of the criminal justice system. Work-study schools, which hold fewer offenders who have committed less severe offenses, were established during the 1950s.[11] They were eliminated during the Cultural Revolution, ostensibly because of their ineffectiveness, but were resurrected during the late 1970s. In 1979, they received widespread publicity as an important solution to combating growing delinquency. A long-held suspicion that remains is that they cater largely to cadre children and children of privilege who have gotten into trouble. Hooper reported that some work-study schools for girls served as little more than homes for pregnant teens.[15] In Guangzhou, two work-study factory classes, gender segregated, were established as local alternatives to the work-study school. Although work-study schools are usually operated under the jurisdiction of the municipal education bureau, these factory classes were operated with the support of the municipal government in conjunction with the public security bureau.

The range of penalties within the criminal justice system can include control *(guanzhi)*, criminal detention (juyi), fixed-term imprisonment, life imprisonment, and the death penalty. *Guanzhi* refers to public security efforts to control criminal behavior prior to incarceration. In the case of juveniles, they continue to go to school and perform normal functions of everyday behavior, but are required to report to public security regularly and inform upon their actions as well as those of friends. In the case of juyi (criminal detention), offenders are actually housed in a confined setting for a period of fifteen days to six months. 16 Juveniles who are sent to work-study schools and factory classes would generally fall under this type of mandate although the length of their incarceration and conditions for their release are quite broad. Offenders given fixed-term imprisonment can be incarcerated from six months to fifteen years and, when combined with multiple offenses, even longer. Generally, offenders housed in reformatories are punished according to this category. One informant told me, though, that some of the offenders I saw at a particular reformatory would simply be transferred to labor camps upon their eighteenth birthday; their chances of ever being released from incarceration were quite slim.

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

Upon visiting the principal reformatory serving Guangdong Province and one of the two work-study factory classes in Guangzhou during the spring of 1983, 1 had the following reactions. The Guangdong Juvenile Reformatory Institute at Shijing housed 520 offenders aged fourteen to eighteen, twenty of whom were female. Briefly closed during the Cultural Revolution and turned into a factory, the facility was reopened in 1972 and had operated continuously since then. Its physical plant, equipment, resources, and so on seemed outstanding, and when I later visited the work-study factory class, officials there apologized for their comparative dearth of resources. The reformatory was a model institution whose affluence was exceptional, but it was, nonetheless, a typically coercive penal institution.

Immediately upon entering, offenders were fingerprinted, issued uniforms, and given haircuts. They were then divided into 150 member groups that were subdivided into cells of ten. Two leaders were elected for each cell; their jobs included leading political study sessions and reporting peer behavior to cadre supervisors. This process, known as collectivist education *(jiti jiaoyu)*, played a major part of the offenders' political education. They were pressured into repenting during selfcriticism sessions, and insofar as their lack of understanding of appropriate rule-governed behavior was blamed for their willingness to engage in deviance, they were taken to People's Courts and were given lectures by public security officials. At the same time, it was extremely important that they demonstrate publicly their willingness and ability to be rehabilitated. To that end, offenders would be forced into engaging in service activities including construction, street sweeping, and other visible group service activities.

The academic component of the curriculum included instruction in basic skills as well as manual labor in the broadest of terms. Offenders were given four forty-five-minute classes per day with ten-minute intervening rest periods and a two-hour rest period after lunch. The subjects taught included Chinese, mathematics, history, and music (communal singing) with normal class size set at a 50:1 ratio. Some classes were divided into a 20:1 ratio for purposes of remediation, although ability grouping was an exception rather than the rule. The national language *(Putonghua)* was used as the language of instruction as it was noted that the Cantonese youth could at least understand teacher instruction.

Offender manual-labor activities included work in the automotive shop, fishing, growing beans and peanuts, gardening, pursuing flower cultivation and arrangement, and completing construction work. Girls would pursue light manual labor such as sweeping and dusting, but were prohibited from engaging in automotive repair or construction work. These activities are noteworthy for their general rather than technical nature, as well as their collective rather than individual orientation. Since over half of the offenders came from urban environments, the transferability of some of the work conducted at the reformatory to their native settings was questionable. It certainly was unconnected to the institution's academic program.

Offender punishment included forced participation in self-criticism sessions and documentation of repeated offenses for one's permanent record. It was claimed that 5 percent of the offender population left before their sentences were completed but 2 to 3 percent of the offenders had their sentences lengthened. Although it was admitted that incarcerated offenders were subjected to physical punishment during the Cultural Revolution, it was claimed that this no longer occurred, although the use of solitary confinement from one-half to three days in length was acknowledged. Officials were proud of the fact that the facility did not include visible physical structures that would directly impede escape; however, as 1983 progressed, offender escape did become a national issue, penal institutions were criticized for their laxity, and public executions of criminals became a popular alternative to institutional incarceration.

In viewing the Guangdong Reformatory Institute at Shijing, my main reference points included previous visits to similar institutions in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The Guangdong facilities were impressive, but what was most noteworthy was that its institutional rituals did not explicitly condone the coercive treatment of offenders. Such was not the case in Taiwan, where the largest reform school on the island was run by a superintendent who was proud of his military background as a former army officer, where offenders as young as twelve were held in shackles were given four forty-five-minute classes per day with ten-minute intervening rest periods and a two-hour rest period after lunch. The subjects taught included Chinese, mathematics, history, and music (communal singing) with normal class size set at a 50:1 ratio. Some classes were divided into a 20:1 ratio for purposes of remediation, although ability grouping was an exception rather than the rule. The national language *(Putonghua)* was used as the language of instruction as it was noted that the Cantonese youth could at least understand teacher instruction.

Offender manual-labor activities included work in the automotive shop, fishing, growing beans and peanuts, gardening, pursuing flower cultivation and arrangement, and completing construction work. Girls would pursue light manual labor such as sweeping and dusting, but were prohibited from engaging in automotive repair or construction work These activities are noteworthy for their general rather than technical nature, as well as their collective rather than individual orientation. Since over half of the offenders came from urban environments, the transferability of some of the work conducted at the reformatory to their native settings was questionable. It certainly was unconnected to the institution's academic program.

Offender punishment included forced participation in self-criticism sessions and documentation of repeated offenses for one's permanent record. It was claimed that 5 percent of the offender population left before their sentences were completed but 2 to 3 percent of the offenders had their sentences lengthened. Although it was admitted that incarcerated offenders were subjected to physical punishment during the Cultural Revolution, it was claimed that this no longer occurred, although the use of solitary confinement from one-half to three days in length was acknowledged. Officials were proud of the fact that the facility did not include visible physical structures that would directly impede escape; however, as 1983 progressed, offender escape did become a national issue, penal institutions were criticized for their laxity, and public executions of criminals became a popular alternative to institutional incarceration.
In viewing the Guangdong Reformatory Institute at Shijing, my main reference points included previous visits to similar institutions in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The Guangdong facilities were impressive, but what was most noteworthy was that its institutional rituals did not explicitly condone the coercive treatment of offenders. Such was not the case in Taiwan, where the largest reform school on the island was run by a superintendent who was proud of his military background as a former army officer, where offenders as young as twelve were held in shackles and leg irons, where one's uniform number was displayed prominently, and where the mass haircut was quite visible. Offenders there were required to sit in silence with their hands on their knees for one-half hour after they had completed eating; they regularly marched in unison from building to building. Such rituals, which are supposed to teach internal discipline and self-regulation, have the effect of degrading one's individuality, and were surprisingly absent during my visit to the Guangdong Reformatory. The use of the group for purposes of controlling individual behavior and fostering compliance was much more noticeable though.

The work-study factory class at Fangcun, one of two institutions operating in Guangzhou, served two hundred males. The other institution served females who were charged with theft and prostitution. I was not allowed to visit it because the matter of female delinquency was considered too sensitive for a foreigner to observe and presumably comment upon. The Fangcun institution was first established in 1973 as a series of political and work-study classes for mildly delinquent males. In 1975, its permanent factory component was initiated, and in 1980, it officially became a work-study factory class with an increase in the number of courses and a strengthened education program. Three part-time primary level-education teachers were contracted from the municipal education bureau to operate the program; other staff came from the factory itself.

Students attending the work-study factory class were between ages fifteen and twenty-five; some were sent from their regular schools, while the others were factory workers or those who were unemployed. The environment could easily accommodate both recalcitrant workers and

students, unlike the more restrictive environment of typical work-study schools. Most had previously attended a primary or junior-middle school, but none had attended a senior-middle school. Over 75 percent of the offenders were guilty of theft; other offenses included quarreling, hooliganism, minor gang activity, and gambling-offenses considered too minor for prosecution. Offenders typically stayed at the factory class for six months, but they were allowed to return home on Sundays. Ten percent of the offenders left before their sentence had been completed because of good behavior; 6 percent were required to stay longer because of poor behavior and attitude. Authorities admitted to a 15 percent recidivism rate within one year of release.

Since it was claimed that the purpose of the work-study factory class was to educate rather than punish offenders, a rewards system was instituted to encourage behavioral change. Offenders were assessed marks on a scale of one to ten for their behavioral and academic performance; upon receipt of eighteen hundred points they were able to leave, and each individual's score was posted on a blackboard outside of the classroom for all to see. Self-criticism sessions occurred on a regular basis, but corporal punishment was no longer used. Authorities noted that there had been seven escapes within the previous eight years; when offenders neglected to return to the facility on Sunday evenings, home visitations were made to ascertain the reasons for truant behavior.

Political education at the work-study factory class included legal and health education, but the teaching of factory discipline was especially emphasized because it was presumed that these students, at best, would be future factory workers. As was true of their counterparts in the Guangdong reformatory, they were taken to public courts and trials to see personally the consequences of criminal behavior. However, as their clothing complemented that worn by regular factory workers and as their haircuts, which were given by teachers or parents, were enforced unsystematically, they were not stigmatized by their appearance and blended in well with their larger external environment. They had access to the factory clinic if they fell ill, and were given a food allotment that included at least one meat and one vegetable dish per day.

The academic program included instruction in *Putonghua* and mathematics, with rudimentary literacy skills along with some history and geography included. The language of instruction was Cantonese as opposed to *Putonghua;* students were divided into primary, lower middle, and middle school levels, and were grouped by ability within those levels into remedial, average, and above-average categories. Class size was approximately 50: 1, and it was claimed that general curricular content paralleled that offered at ordinary public schools.

Vocational training was offered in arc welding, model making, wine making, and photographic machine operation and repair, with factory engineers specifically enlisted to teach the students how to repair electrical equipment. Most of their time, however, was spent engaging in general factory work of a menial nature, ostensibly to teach adherence to factory discipline and a respect for the rhythms of factory work. The parent factory at Fangcun produced diesel engines, though it would be unlikely that a work-study factory-class graduate would obtain employment there. Indeed, it was admitted that 70 percent of the offenders were unemployed after their release.

My impressions of the work-study factory class were positive, as I viewed the facility as a less coercive institution than its reformatory counterpart, which was not surprising since it dealt with offenders who had committed less serious crimes It was clear that there was some jealousy between officials at the respective institutions, with the work-study class cadres viewing their own institution as lacking in prestige and positive publicity. Thus, my visit as an outside international observer was useful to them in buttressing their stature, and my positive reactions to the facility were reported in an edition of the local newspaper.

Overall, I concluded that juveniles in China faced more conflict outside of institutional walls than within them. The pressures of overcoming social stigma were intense. Indeed, the Chinese national press had reported on a delinquent's suicide as a general case, caused by the offender's despondency over a lack of parental contact while incarcerated. For offenders housed at both the reformatory and work-study factory class, institutional release did not mean starting anew. These youths were regularly required to report to public security officials, to play the role of informant, and to give details of the activities of peers and friends. Thus, their place within the criminal justice system reverted to stage one, *guanzhi,* as it was never expected that they would ever be free of contact with the system. My conclusion was that the use of stigma, negative labeling, and guilt by association, although informally communicated, was nonetheless extremely powerful outside of institutional walls. As essentially Maoist institutions, the juvenile justice facilities themselves communicated quite effectively to offenders the informal terms through which social control was to be exercised in their future lives. Those terms included engaging in manual labor as a means of fostering self-discipline and character reformation, submit- to the authority of the group during self-criticism sessions, publicly displaying remorse for one's actions, and accepting formal authority through a nominal academic routine. The emphasis upon rewarding individual behavior in an effort to promote substantive change was noteworthy, but, overall, the goal of authoritarian collectivism was constantly being reinforced within the institutional settings.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN THE 1980s AND 1990s

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, juvenile delinquency and youth criminality increased significantly in China. In 1980, for example, 61.2 percent of all criminals were youths and juveniles; by 1989, the percentage had increased to 74.1 percent, [18] This is part of a larger trend where crime increased markedly, from 54 cases per 100,000 filed by public security officials in 1987 to 181 per 100,000 by 1989. [19] The extent of youth and juvenile crime as a percentage of overall crime has become one of the highest in the world. With specific reference to juveniles (as opposed to youths), there has been a significant increase in the number of juvenile criminals and the rate of their criminal

activity, although there has been a decline in the absolute number of juvenile criminals relative to other criminals. Still, criminals are getting younger. The total crime committed by fourteen- to eighteen-year-olds increased from 7 percent in 1980 to almost 20 percent in 1989.[20] More and more students are committing crimes while they still are in school, as many attend vocational middle schools and technical/worker schools, institutions with relatively low prestige that are seen as offering no chance for social mobility.

As crime has increased in China, it has grown in urban areas and coastal regions, mirroring the uneven economic development in the country. Juvenile and youth crimes have correspondingly increased with respect to theft, burglary, robbery, hooliganism, rape, and violent criminal activity.[12] The latter category includes bombing, kidnapping, and hijacking as well as homicide, assault, and battery. Crimes are increasingly brutal as firearms become easier to obtain. Gang activity has increased during the 1980s gangs are larger and more brazen in their activities. Similar to the tongs of old, gangs have become more secretive, better organized, and less spontaneous. [24]

During the 1990s, drug activity increased significantly and has had an impact upon juvenile and youth crime. Drug cases solved by police in Guangzhou in 1994, for example, were three times greater than those of 1981 through 1990 combined, while within Guangdong Province, 80 percent of drug users are under the age of twenty-five. [25] Yunnan Province traditionally has been a source of drug cultivation and smuggling, and its prominence has increased as social and political controls have decreased. As a result, drug trafficking has been accompanied by increases in gun smuggling, child kidnapping, and prostitution, with youth gangs playing a prominent role in these activities. [26] All of these trends have occurred within a general environment that has sanctioned widespread corruption on the part of government officials. From 1988 to 1993, 1.2 million cases of cadre corruption were acknowledged by the Chinese press, with 170,000 cases being reported for 1993 alone. [27]

Authorities have reacted to these trends in a number of ways. They have benefited from gaining increased access to technology, which has been used to enforce greater social control. Thus, public security bureaus now use automobiles for motor patrol and make better use of telephones and electronic equipment to solve crimes. [28] Other responses have included improving legal education within schools, offering support for mediation, and using residence committees to assist in crime prevention and neighborhood surveillance. With specific reference to reformatories and correctional institutions, efforts have been made to enhance supervision in order to prevent escapes. It was reported that in Shanghai, for example, that inmate escape decreased from 0.05 percent in 1981 to 0.02 percent in 1991.[29] In addition, reward systems have been implemented at a number of facilities (not unlike the system used at the Fangcun work-study class), goal setting and evaluation procedures have been initiated, and some effort has been made to tailor the type of manual work offered to the specific nature of the inmate's offense.[30] At the same time, it should be noted that certain reformatories, as with the larger penal system, continue to force juvenile offenders to make goods that are sold for export in the West, which contributes income to China's prison labor system. [31]

Situ and Liu generally see a shift from reliance upon informal mechanisms of social control to use of professional organizations to maintain social order. Factories and places of employment are now training their own security divisions, and joint defense brigades, whose members come from various work units, patrol recreational areas and public places. [32] This is occurring within a general professionalization of the entire legal system as more lawyers are being trained, along with participants involved in criminal justice.

Still, the ratio of 1 police officer for every 1,400 people remains one of the highest ratios in the world, where the average is 1:50; [33] and the reliance upon the mass campaign to expeditiously identify and punish criminals remains quite strong. Dutton and Lee argue that this type of informal policing allows for flexibility and gives a sense of security to the population. However, in 1996, over one thousand people were executed within a two-month span during China's *"yanda"* (strike hard) campaign, the most violent of its type since 1983, The offenders were quickly tried, convicted, and executed without benefit of appeal. Mass trials attended by up to twenty thousand people were also held, and convicts were paraded in public before being sent off to be shot. [34] It is therefore fair to conclude that in spite of some efforts to professionalize law enforcement generally as well as reformatory education specifically, reliance upon informal mechanisms for delivering justice remains strong in China.

It is tempting to associate the increase in juvenile delinquency in China during the past two decades with the material affluence that has accompanied swift economic change. However, such an attribution would be excessively simplistic if it failed to take into account increasing urban unemployment rates (officially acknowledged to be about 2.9 percent in 1997), increased urban and coastal migration, diminished control over residential mobility patterns, and structural changes within the educational system. In the latter case, authorities have successfully restricted the number of students with aspirations for attending university, so that in 1997 only 2.84 million high school graduates will take entrance examinations for 1 million available places in the country's colleges and universities. [35] The "cooling out" process begins much earlier, however, toward the end of primary school, when decisions are made as to the type and quality of middle school one can attend. At the senior-secondary level, further stratification occurs as students enter regular academic and "keypoint" high schools, secondary specialized schools, vocational high schools, and technical schools. [36] Although many delinquents do not advance this far through the system, their future aspirations are leveled at increasingly early stages of their development,

Thus, responses to increased youth crime and delinquency can be classified as both progressive and traditional. Progressive responses have contributed to a professionalization of the criminal justice system through the enhanced training and education of corrections officials, as well as through increased data collection and analysis. Chinese authorities joined Interpol in 1984, an event that has encouraged the sharing of information along with enhanced international cooperation, particularly with regard to drug trafficking. Although there is some evidence of

professionalization within juvenile correctional institutions, the evidence for a radical change of institutional culture is more mixed; these still are organizations that profess strong ideological beliefs in the redemptive value of manual labor, the importance of character reformation in a general sense, and the need to respect collective authority. Outside of institutional walls, the use of the mass anticrime campaign to address rising crime rates with expediency, swiftness, and harshness continues unabated. And the official response to increased residential mobility and unemployment lies in continued reliance upon residence committees and street offices (whose functions were first formally articulated in 1954) to work with public security and correctional officials in preserving social order and preventing crime.

RECENT WESTERN RESEARCH ON CHINESE DELINQUENCY

Since my own research on delinquency was conducted, scholars have relied upon additional firsthand accounts [37] as well as survey questionnaire research[38] to gain a broader understanding of the topic. Zhang relied upon the assistance of Communist Youth League and public security officials to administer his questionnaires, which were distributed to 369 delinquents housed in reformatories, reeducation-through-labor camps, and prisons, and to 443 youths from the general population. Liu's sample included 403 middle-school students in Shenzhen. In addition, Marvin Wolfgang of the University of Pennsylvania has undertaken a long-term study of a 1973 birth cohort from the Wuchang district of Wuhan, and it is expected that his study will be expanded to include the entire city by the year 2000.[39] Generally, the authors conclude that Western criminological theories are applicable to the Chinese case. Wolfgang's preliminary results indicate delinquent/nondelinquent differences in levels of education, unemployment, susceptibility to school discipline and punishment, dropout rates, and learning attitudes. Others have discovered positive relationships between family deviance and child-rearing practices and delinquency status,[40] and have noted the salience of labeling theory for predicting friendship estrangement but not family ties.[41] There is some disagreement regarding the importance of social control factors over internal personal control factors in explaining delinquency potentiality,[42] but for the most part, all of the research assumes that criminological paradigms refined in the West are operational for the Chinese case. Although the use of survey research in China is a testament to the growing importance of the social sciences there, it should be stressed that the results of these surveys should be treated with caution. Whenever one relies upon the local Communist Youth League director and accompanying correctional officials to administer one's questionnaire (as was the case with Zhang), it is difficult to see how, in spite of pledges of confidentiality, those administering the instruments would be viewed by delinquents as neutral parties. Further, the use of residence committee and school officials to record information while conducting the personal interviews (as pursued by Wolfgang and Liu) presents a similar if less extreme dilemma. Given the nature of their situations, reasonable questions can be raised regarding issues of informed consent and the freedom of delinquents to refrain from participating in such research. Their answers to particularly sensitive questions regarding their attitudes and value orientations must therefore be viewed with skepticism until the political implications of their participation in the research are better understood. Thus, I think that it is at least arguable as to whether the use of quasi-experimental survey research models, postulating cause-effect relationships between various delinquency factors, has been any more valuable in adding to our understanding of Chinese delinquency than the observational research that I and others conducted previously.

A REEVALUATION

When I began my dissertation research, a number of Chinese friends commented that it was strange for one to spend so much time investigating the conditions of youth who obviously would never contribute to society. Given the fact that the educational system had so many problems, in their eyes it would have made more sense for me to investigate policies that might beneficially affect a larger group of individuals who would be in a better position to enhance China's educational development. My response to my friends was twofold. First, I argued that I could better understand the nature of Chinese society by analyzing what was happening to its outcasts. Second, I argued that issues of opportunity and fairness were important in all societies and those issues deserved to be articulated and discussed, There is an arrogance to that response that I believe has colored not only my own research but also that of others pursuing work in Chinese education and Chinese studies generally. Such a response assumes that comparative social and cultural interactions can be understood totalistically. It assumes that observers can unobtrusively use their authority as outsiders to give voice to a group they view as marginalized and impotent. But more important than the naïveté that accompanied these assumptions is their negative impact upon one's ability to grasp the fundamental nature of the research being pursued. In this case, the result was an inability to appreciate the dynamics of social change, a tendency to falsely dichotomize social practices into extreme categories, and a failure to sufficiently control for Western bias in my analysis.

Comprehending the pace and importance of changing social relationships in a foreign context is extremely difficult, particularly when one's research is short-term and significant limitations are placed upon one's access to documents, human subject interviews are conducted while party officials are present, and follow-up visitations to the same facilities subject to initial observation are not possible. Nonetheless, in viewing juvenile correctional institutions as largely closed systems, self-contained organizations expressing their normative-coercive missions in traditionally Maoist terms, I neglected to appreciate either the external or internal pressures that might lead to significant institutional change. It was easy to see how internal and external conflicts might arise. The emphasis upon collectivist education, although a perfectly logical assumption on the part of authorities given the group-based nature of Chinese society, could easily foster gang affiliations that might be openly expressed upon release, since it placed offenders in constant small-group contact. Attempts to maintain contact with offenders themselves after their release, as well as with their street and residence committee officials charged with supervising their behavior and maintaining local order, would have been exceptionally difficult for reformatory officials, given the varied residences and geographical backgrounds of the offenders. Given these actual and potential conflicts, I neglected to comprehend how they would be reconciled or how the

pressures for their reconciliation would be addressed. Instead, I viewed these institutions as doctrinaire and inelastic, because that is how I also viewed the ideological principles that governed their operation.

Certainly, I tended to dichotomize the practices I observed into extreme categories. I viewed reformatory education as little more than a form of enforced socialization that legitimized the coercive function of these institutions to the society at large. In so doing, I saw socialization as unidirectional, imposed upon the offenders without their consent, and largely ineffective in changing their value orientations. In truth, it is clear that correctional institutions of all types depend upon their inmates in order to function effectively, given that offender-staff ratios are so large.[43] The question for offenders is not one of their submission or resistance to authority, but how effectively can they minimize institutional constraints and negotiate conflict so as to maximize their individual power and influence. For obvious reasons, I was not in a position to obtain direct information about the actual social dynamics of the offender-guard relationship, but I was certainly remiss in making assumptions about that relationship in the absence of useful information.

A second problem concerned my view of the treatment of released offenders, as I believed that the social stigma offenders confronted upon their release, informally administered, was quite harsh and was of greater long-term consequence than the treatment they received within institutional walls. Here, too, the dichotomies of formal (institutional) versus informal offender treatment were simplistically constructed. In the West, for example, issues of offender stigma certainly are evident in spite of efforts to professionalize probation and after-care treatments. Unemployment rates remain high, as do recidivism rates. Recent Wetern efforts 'Oat rely upon community approaches to policing and emphasize informal preventative intervention strategies, which are implemented before delinquent behavior becomes severe, further blur the distinction between formal and informal approaches to crime prevention and the eventual disposition of criminal cases.

With regard to the Chinese case, in focusing upon the importance of social labeling as a function of social control, expressed through the activities of informal organizations such as mediation, street, and residence committees, I again failed to comprehend the internal dynamics of those organizations. Impressed with the importance of group affiliation and the lack of individual privacy that was afforded individuals living in urban China, I neglected to appreciate how individuals were able to maximize their status not only within group settings, which was a traditional pattern, but above and beyond them as well. In short, the use of *guanxi* to maximize one's interests implied a reciprocity with respect to individual relationships on a one-to-one basis that I had underestimated. Released delinquents, I believed, without access to strong group support lost the personal ties necessary to successfully reintegrate within the society, and as a result, their stigma was informally codified. What has occurred over the past two decades, though, has been an erosion of group loyalty throughout many aspects of urban Chinese life due to increased individual entrepreneurship, residential migration, and a tolerance for higher unemployment levels generally, as the government has retreated from its traditional paternalism. Instead, one sees a decrease in the social stigma of having engaged in illegal or quasi-legal activity and a significant increase in corruption on an individual basis at all social levels. My analysis failed to foresee this trend.

I previously noted that I viewed the Maoist ideological principles that played an important role in the articulated mission of reformatories and correctional institutions to be doctrinaire and inflexibly administered. Insofar as I viewed ideology as performing only a conservative rather than a progressive function, I believe that I allowed Western bias to color my perspective. Certainly, I failed to challenge the ideological assumptions of carceral bureaucracies such as those in prisons or other coercive institutions, as they have evolved in the West; nor did I critique the notions of professionalism that these institutions promote. In truth, ideology can be transformatory as well as restrictive, and in the Chinese case, its Maoist variant served many by giving a sense of direction to the future without renouncing the collective past. For all of the abuses and excesses that occurred within and beyond reformatory walls in the name of ideology, it is certainly arguable as to whether Chinese delinquents are better off today in a less overtly politicized environment, or whether delinquents in Western environments have ever fared better than their Chinese counterparts did two decades ago.

The basic question that remains unresolved is whether such weaknesses are indicative of the limitations of more general research patterns, and, if so, whether ethnographic approaches have the potential for redressing these weaknesses in ways that other research methods fail to achieve. Certainly, we see the growth of collaborative research and the use of survey research in the study of Chinese delinquency and criminology over the past two decades, and these trends are representative of what has occurred within Chinese studies generally. It is arguable, however, whether those advances in themselves help in our understanding of Chinese society. If I erred in my own work, through emphasizing the cultural uniqueness of Chinese social interaction with respect to social control and labeling practices-depicting them totalistically and in dichotomous terms-more recent studies of delinquency have denied the importance of cultural context completely, and have instead attempted to use the Chinese case as evidence for the viability of their preconceived Western theories. Neither perspective does justice to the subjects of cross-cultural investigation.

Can the use of ethnographic methods make a difference? I believe that it can under certain conditions. To the extent that critical ethnography employs a reflexivity that calls into question the fundamental nature of the subject (researcher)-object relationship, the tendency to totalize the foreign in the name of cultural distinctiveness or use the foreign to superficially reaffirm the primacy of Western paradigms can be checked. At the same time, a critical ethnographic approach holds the possibility of our exploring more honestly the ramifications of the politics of access and the use or censorship of information to control social behavior, issues that have traditionally confronted scholars pursuing social research in China. It is doubtful, for example, that foreigners or natives would ever be granted the access necessary to complete a full-bodied ethnographic study of a Chinese correctional institution because to Chinese officials, the political sensitivity of the environment would

outweigh the usefulness of any information that might be gathered and shared through intensive observation and analysis. But in examining the operations of schools and their relationships to family, work, and neighborhood, the critical ethnographer has the opportunity to gain insight into the nature of ,normalcy and deviance, personal motivation and leveled aspiration, self-interest and collective loyalty, open and closed opportunity structures - in short, the fundamental conflicts that characterize so many aspects of Chinese life on a daily basis for those who are successful, as well as for those who are marginalized and dispossessed.

Chinese educational and correctional facilities share more than the most common of institutional characteristics. If correctional institutions rely upon very basic educational programs to legitimize their coercive practices, coercion, even if its appearance is less overtly visible, is regularly used within educational settings to enforce school policies as well. As Foucault so convincingly argued, the relationship between curricular discipline and the formal as well as symbolic exercise of power upon the individual has had strong historical resonance in the West,[44] and there is no reason to think that a similar relationship does not exist in contemporary China. Indeed, when the operation of work-study schools and factory classes for delinquent youths has been assigned to municipal education bureaus, such a relationship has been made more explicit and more formalized for those judged mildly delinquent. Traditional views of mainstream schools highlight their reliance upon remunerative characteristics (such as the distribution of grades and other symbolic rewards) that are supported by a modest degree of coercion (enforcement of compulsory attendance). For the Chinese case, however, the relationship between normative, remunerative, and coercive institutional goals is complex and in a state of flux, particularly as larger numbers of students have become increasingly disenfranchised, due to the imposition of rigid status hierarchies among and within schools, and their corresponding culling-out policies. The necessity of reevaluating the nature of authority patterns within schools is clear. And if such a reevaluation were to occur, the relationships between teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community members would be analyzed in terms that did justice to their complexity. Scholars would do more than simply identify the extent to which common practice corresponded to official policy. Instead, they would begin to investigate the ways in which instructors use various pedagogies in their efforts to assume control over students' private space and physical movement, while concurrently asserting authority over knowledge dissemination and production. Although the terms through which such authority is expressed are more harsh and visible within correctional institutional settings, they are no less salient to the culture of educational institutions and deserve to be scrutinized.

The usefulness of applying Basil Bernstein's notions of strong and weak framing systems (pedagogical relations between teacher and student) and classification codes (collection of curricular material on the basis of disciplinary boundaries) to Chinese educational settings has been noted by Western scholars. But because the reformatory and work-study factory class cases highlight how strong framing systems and weak classification codes can coexist in unexpected and contradictory ways, it is even more imperative that scholars investigate the pedagogical and curricular similarities and differences that exist in more traditional educational settings. Certainly, delinquency studies highlight the importance of examining the nature of peer interaction within and outside of school boundaries more intensively; and this, too, is an area that as been neglected by mainstream Chinese educational scholars.

Nonetheless, the pursuit of ethnographic research in educational domains holds particular promise because the terms of the discourse easily transcend cultural boundaries and are inherently familiar and personal to all of us. It is because our educational experiences have been crucial to the formation of our own identities that we understand that the terms through which those experiences are expressed in cross-cultural situations are so important. Although it is arguable whether critical ethnographic approaches to the study of Chinese education have to this point I filled their ultimate promise, researchers committed to the method are asking the appropriate questions, a necessary precondition to enhancing our understanding of Chinese society.

NOTES

1. Irving Epstein, "Psychological and Behavioral Attributes of Juvenile Delinquents in the People's Republic of China," *Asian Thought and Society*
12 (1987): 267-269.
2. Ibid., *268, 271-272.*
3. Ibid., *267.*
4. Thomas Bernstein, Up *to the Mountains and Down to the Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, *1977), 93, 261, 313-314.*
5. "Rascals and Juvenile Delinquents Rampant in Shanghai" *Survey China Mainland Press 1576* (July *24, 1957): 30-3 1;* "Don't Overlook e Work Concerning Teenagers," *Survey of China Mainland Press, 2675 (F*ebruary *9, 1962): 18-19;* "Don't Let Your Children Do Small Business," *Supplement to the Survey of China Mainland Press 105* (March *4, 1963): 44-45.*
6. Xiong Bo, "Jiefang chu Shanghai liumang gaizao jilue" ["Introduction to Remoulding Shanghai's Hoodlums during the Initial Post-Liberation Period"], *Shehui 2 (1982): 29;* Zhou Yinjun, Yang Jiezeng, and Xue Suzhen, "Xin shehui bagui bien chengren: Yi Shanghai gaizao changzi shihua" ["The New Society Turns Ghosts into Human Beings: A Talk on the History of Reforming Prostitutes in Shanghai"], *Shehui* 1 (1981): 46-51.
7. Epstein, "Psychological," 268-270.
8. Heidi Ross, "The 'Crisis' in Chinese Secondary Schooling," in *Chinese Education: Problems, Policies and Prospects,* ed. Irving Epstein (New York: Garland, 1991), 109-144; Delia Davin, "The Early Childhood Education of the Only Child Generation in Urban China," in *Chinese Education: Problems, Policies, and Prospects,* ed. Irving Epstein (New York: Garland, 1991), 42-65.

9. Martin K. Whyte, "Corrective Labor Camps in China," *Asian Survey* 13 (1973): 253-269; Martin K. Whyte, *Small Groups and Political Rituals in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); William Parish and Martin K. Whyte, *Village and Family Life in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Martin K. Whyte and William L. Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
10. Amatai Etzioni, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1961).
11. Donald Munro, *The Concept of Man in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977).
12. Bao Ruo Wang, *Prisoner of Mao* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoglican, 1973).
13. Guo Jianan et al., *World Factbook of Criminal Justice Systems: China* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs//abstract/wfcj.htm, 1993).
14. Daniel J. Curran and Sandra Cook, "Growing Fears, Rising Crime: Juveniles and China's Justice System," *Crime and Delinquency* 39 (1993): 309-310.
15. Beverly Hooper, *Youth in China* (Victoria, Australia: Penguin, 1985).
16. Guo et al., *World Factbook,* 1993.
17. The following information comes from Irving Epstein, "Juvenile Delinquency and Reformatory Education in Chinese Society," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1984); Irving Epstein, "Children's Rights and Juvenile Correctional Institutions in the People's Republic of China," *Comparative Education Review* 30 (1986): 359-372; Irving Epstein, "Reformatory Education in Chinese Society," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 30 (1986): 87-100.
18. Hang Hangwei, "Jinnian lai woguo qingshaonian fanzui de jiben zhuangkuang he tedian," *Qingshanian fanzui yanjiu [1991],* trans. as "The Basic Conditions and Characteristics of Youth and Juvenile Crimes in Our Country in the Last Five Years," Chinese *Education and Society*
26 (1993): 88; Curran and Cook, "Growing," 300-301.
19. Situ Yingyi and Liu Weizheng, "Comprehensive Treatment to Social Order: A Chinese Approach to Crime," International *Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminology* 20 (1996): 97.
20. Curran and Cook, "Growing," 301.
21. Hang, "Basic," 97-99.
22. Ibid., 92.
23. Ibid., 93.
24. Ibid., 96-98.
25.Liu Weizheng and Situ Yingyi, "The Causes, Control, and Treatment of Illegal Drugs," CJ *International Online* 12, no. 5, www.acsp.uic.edu/OIJC/PUBS/Cji2O5 htm (1996).
26. Michael Dutton, "Translation: The Basic Character of Crime in Contemporary Cina " China *Quarterly* 149 (1997): 161-177.
27. Joe C. B. Leung and Richard C. Nann, *Authority Benevolence: Social Welfare in China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1995), 161.
28. Situ and Liu, "Comprehensive," 106-107.
29. Ibid., 104.
30. Ibid.
31. D. Lee, R. Neff, and J. Barnathan, "China's Ugly Export Secret: Prison Labor," *Business Week* (April 22, 1991), 42-43, 46.
32. Situ and Liu, "Comprehensive," 105.
33.Michael Dutton and Tianfu Lee, "Missing the Target? Political Strategies in the Period of Economic Reform," *Crime and Delinquency* (1993): 327.
34. Amnesty International, "China: One Thousand Executed in 'Strike Hard' Campaign Against Crime," *Amnesty International Homepage,* www.amnesty.org (July 5, 1996).
35. "Competition Rate 3 to I in College Entrance Exams," *China News Digest-Global GL 97-099* (July 14, 1997): 3.
36. C. Montgomery Broaded and Chongshun Liu, "Family Background, Gender, and Educational Attainment in Urban China," *China Quarterly* 134 (1996): 53-86.
37. Curran and Cook, "Growing."
38. Zhang Lening, "Peers' Rejection as a Possible Consequence of Official Reaction to Delinquency in Chinese Society," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 21 (1994): 387-402; Zhang Lening, "Consequences of Official Reactions to Delinquency in Chinese Society," (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Albany, 1995); Zhang Lening and Steven F. Messner, "Family Deviance and Delinquency in China," *Criminology* 33 (1995): 359-387; Zhang Lening and Steven F. Messner, "School Attachment and Official Delinquency Status in the People's Republic of China," *Sociological Forum 11* (1996): 285-303; Liu Weizheng, "Perceptions of Delinquency Among Junior High School Students in Shenzhen City of the People's Republic of China: A Control Theory Perspective," (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1994).
39. National Institute of Justice, "Delinquency in China: Study of a Birth Cohort: A Summary of a Presentation by Marvin Wolfgang," Research Preview, http://www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/china.txt (May 1996).
40. Zhang and Messner, "Family."
41. Zhang, "Peers' Rejection"; and Zhang and Messner, "School Attachment:'

42. For example, Zhang and Messner (1996) argue in favor of the importance of school attachment while Liu (1994) emphasizes value orientation and socialization.
43. Finn-Aage Esbensen, "Participant Observation in a County Jail," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 30 (1986): 166.
44. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).
45. Irving Epstein, "Critical Pedagogy and Chinese Pedagogy," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 9 (1989): 69-98; Ruth Hayhoe, *China's Universities and the Open Door* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1989).