

# Violence and Violent Crimes in China

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## Violence in China

The *2010 Bluebook of Legal Issues in China* for the first time in 10 years reported an increase in the overall number of crimes in China in 2009. The *Bluebook* also reports significant increase in both violent and property crimes, among which criminal cases increased by 10% (5,300,000 cases in 2009) and public security cases increased by 20% (9,900,000 cases in 2009) from January 2009 to October 2009.

In the past 10 years, serious violent crimes, such as murder, rape, and robbery had been decreasing (Bakken, 2004; Liu, 2005; Trevaskes, 2006). This is the first time since 2001 violent crimes showed an increase according to the *Bluebook*. When causes of this increase are concerned, the *Bluebook* contribute it mainly to the economic depression, increased unemployment rates, enlarged economic inequality, and increased population under poverty, as well as a number of mass events occurred in 2009; economic depression and slack fiscal policies provides more criminal opportunities, especially for property crimes. The number of crimes of intentional homicide was in rise (Bakken, 1993); robbery, especially firearm robbery cases significantly increased, many along with hostage taking or victim killing. The number of bank robberies, however, decreased since 2002 due to increased preventive strategies taken by Chinese banks (Nestor, 2007; Wang, 2002; Williams & Godson, 2002). The *Bluebook* predicts a continuous increase in both violent and property crimes, as well as economic crimes in 2010.

## Research Focuses of Chinese Scholars

In order to find out the key research areas on violence in China, we retrieved papers published in the *China Journals Full-Text Database* in the recent three years (from 2007 to 2009) for violence-related topics and found about 215 articles. The *China Journals Full-Text Database* provides accurate authoritative coverage of all aspects in academic research in China. Table 1 shows the paper distribution in terms of different topics. Among the 215 violence-related articles, crime, and floating population research accounts for about one third, closely followed by school violence research (31.16%). The third most often studied violence is domestic violence, which accounts for slightly more than 1/5 of overall violence-related studies. Other violence-related topics include male violent behavior, internet violence, juvenile violence, violent attack of police, etc. (See Table 1).

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**Table 1***Violence-related Research Topics in recent three years, 2007-2009*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Crime and floating population	70	32.56
School violence and crime	67	31.16
Domestic violence	44	20.47
Male violent behavior	7	3.26
Internet violence	7	3.26
Juvenile violence	5	2.33
Violent attack of police	3	1.40
Female violence	3	1.40
Violent culture	3	1.40
Mass violence	2	0.93
Criminal law definition of violence	2	0.93
Street violence	1	0.47
Government official violence	1	0.47
Total	215	100.00

*Source: China Journals Full-Text Database***Crimes Committed by Floating Population/Migrant Workers**

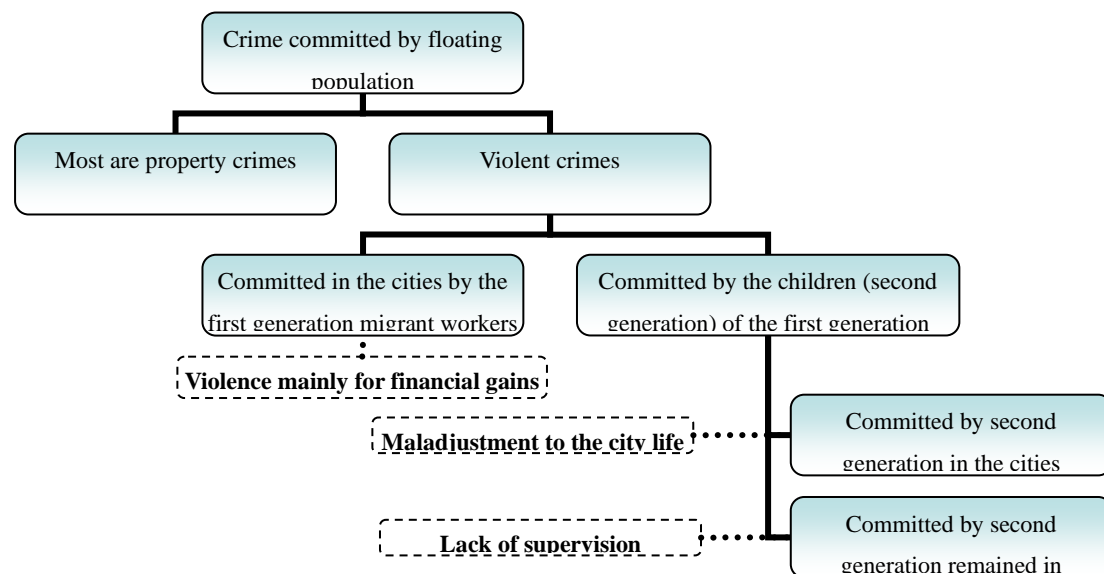
A review of the articles on floating population shows that most studies are descriptive in nature. Many involve only theoretical explanation of crimes committed by floating population (CURRAN, 1998; Edlund et al., 2013; Messner et al., 2007). No rigorous empirical studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between crime and floating population (Liu et al., 2009; Lo & Jiang, 2006).

Most crimes committed by floating population are property crimes (Wang, 2004; Zhang et al., 2007). Chinese researchers are concerned not only crimes committed by the first-generation migrant workers, but also crimes committed by their children (second generation floating population or second-generation youth who remain in the countryside) (Chen & Zhong, 2013; Liu & Liu, 2016; Wang, 2008). We propose following three hypotheses about the relationship between violent crime and floating population.

- 1) Violent crimes committed by floating population seem to be driven by economic gains.
- 2) Among the second generation who live with their parents in the cities, violent crimes are primarily the result of maladjustment to the city life along with other social factors.
- 3) Children who remain in the countryside commit crimes primarily due to the lack of supervision.

**Figure 1**

*Crimes Committed by Floating Population*



**School Violence and Crime**

A review of the studies on school violence shows that many Chinese scholars are concerned with theoretical explanation of school violence and preventive policy suggestions. Many studies are from the perspective of educators. Very few empirical studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between school violence and its correlates (Huesmann et al., 2003; Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015; Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Vagi et al., 2013). Policy suggestions are not based on solid empirical studies, either.

**Domestic Violence**

A large proportion of the papers study domestic violence from legal perspectives, among which many focused on the “battered women syndrome” and its legal issues (Dutton, 1993; Faigman, 1986). Some papers discuss the causes of domestic violence as a social phenomenon (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Levinson, 1988). Others focus on victimization of domestic violence as well as policy suggestions.

**Who Conducted Research on Violence in China?**

Table 2 lists the distribution of author field of affiliation for the three most often studied research topics. For studies on crime and floating population, about 46% of researcher affiliations are law schools or schools of political science and law; 19% are criminal justice departments, including the prosecutor’s office, the courts, the police departments, and the correctional facilities/institutions. Slightly more than 5% are police academies or university of public security. Other fields of author affiliation

include sociology and social work, social science and humanities, public administration, etc. Comparatively, scholars from law schools and professionals in criminal justice departments conducted more studies on floating population compared with those who are from the field of sociology and social work.

Among studies focusing on school violence and crime, author affiliation distribution is quite different from studies on floating population. Instead of law schools and criminal justice departments, more scholars are from the field of education and medical science. Domestic violence studies, in comparison, are dominated by scholars from the field of law and sociology (See Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Author Field of Affiliation*

Topic	Author Field of Affiliation	N	%
Crime and floating population	Law School/School of Political Science and Law	34	45.95
	Criminal Justice Departments (Prosecutor's Office, Courts, Police Departments, and Correctional Facilities)	14	18.92
	Police Academy/Public Security	4	5.41
	Sociology and Social Work	4	5.41
	Social Science and Humanities	2	2.70
	Public Administration	2	2.70
	Other (science and technology, economic development, economics, information science, etc.) and Unknown	14	18.92
	Total	74	100.00
School violence and crime	Education /Normal University	18	25.35
	Medical/Health School	5	7.04
	Law School/School of Political Science and Law	5	7.04
	Police Academy/Public Security	5	7.04
	Public Administration	3	4.23
	Psychology	2	2.82
	Sociology and Social Work	2	2.82
	Psychology	2	2.82
	Youth/Student Affairs	2	2.82
	Agriculture	2	2.82
	Social Science and Humanities	1	1.41
	Juvenile Crime Institute	1	1.41

	Other (science and technology, economic development, economics, information science, etc.) and Unknown	22	30.99
	Criminal Justice Departments (Prosecutor's Office, Courts, Police Departments, and Correctional Facilities)	1	1.41
	Total	71	100.00
Domestic violence	Law School/School of Political Science and Law	11	25.00
	Sociology/Social Science	7	15.91
	Education /Normal University	4	9.09
	Criminal Justice Departments (Prosecutor's Office, Courts, Police Departments, and Correctional Facilities)	3	6.82
	Other (science and technology, finance and economics, public administration, etc.) and Unknown	19	43.18
	Total	44	100.00

Note: The total number of affiliations is not equal to the total number of articles due to multiple authors for a few articles.

## A Further Look at Crimes Committed by Floating Population

### Crimes Committed by Floating Population

Because there are no systematic official data or reports on crimes and floating population in China related statistics are only dispersive in research articles and academic research projects. We collected statistics from a number of research articles. Table 3 shows that in 2002 the overall floating population in China committed about one third of theft cases, 14.5% robbery cases, 8.3% prostitution cases, 7.8% assault cases, 5.3% drug offenses, and 4.3% fraud cases. The number of crimes committed by floating population is especially high for several megacities including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjing, Guangzhou, and Shengzheng. This may be since these super metropolitan cities accommodate a large proportion of migrant workers. The lives and behaviors of the floating population have become a great concern in these cities.

In Beijing, Dewai Police Station record shows that the second-generation migrant workers committed 16% of overall crimes in 1995; from 2004 to 2006 crimes committed by migrant workers accounted for over 50% of overall crimes in Shunyi district. In Shanghai Qingpu district, the second generation of migrant workers was responsible for over 60% of overall juvenile cases in that district in 2004. In Shenzhen, the proportion of juvenile crimes committed by the second-generation migrant workers was even higher, over 80%. In Tianjin, floating population committed less

than 30% of overall cases during 2000 and 2003. This number quickly increased and reached 35.5% and 39.0% in 2004 and 2005 respectively. In Dongguan City of Guangdong Province, the court data revealed as high as 95% of juvenile cases committed by floating population.

### **Pattern of Crimes Committed by Floating Population**

Crimes committed by floating population show following patterns:

- The predominant crime type is property crime; however,
- There is an increasing trend of violent crimes;
- More crimes involves gangs;
- Many cases are sexual assault cases;
- Many cases are committed by second generation juveniles;
- The way of committing a crime is quite simple;
- Offenders committed crimes without thinking about the consequences;
- Offender's educational level is quite low

### **Theoretical Explanations**

A number of articles provide explanations of crimes committed by floating population. They focus mainly on the following correlates:

- Enlarged level of inequality
- Poverty
- Parenting style
- Desire to achieve monetary success and lack of legal opportunities
- Social disorganization
- Family background and low educational level
- Cultural conflict and cultural discrimination
- Lack of social support
- Relatively thin awareness of legal system
- Need of communication with others in the city
- Maladaptation to the city life
- Psychological letdown

These explanations seem to fit well with various western criminological theories. Very few Chinese scholars, however, consistently linked these explanations with specific criminological theories. In addition, most studies are descriptive in nature. There is no rigorously designed study to examine these theories.

**Table 3***Crimes Committed by Floating Population*

City/Province	District	Year	Data Source (Prosecutor's Office/ Court / Correction)	Overall/ Juvenile /Second Generation	No. of criminal cases	No. of overall people involved	No. of cases by floating population	No. of floating population involved	% by floating population	Reference
China	---	2002	Research Group on Study of Crimes Committed by Floating Population in Guangzhou, 2003	---	---	---	---	---	Theft 32.3%, robbery 14.5%, prostitution 8.3%, assault 7.8%, drug offense 5.3%, fraud 4.3%	Cheng & Fu, 2007
Beijing City	Shunyi	2004-2006	Prosecutor's Office	Overall	1953	2863	1021	1524	>50%	Hanlin, 2007
	---	1995	Dewai Police Station	Second generation	---	---	---	---	16%	Duan & Zhou, 1999
Shanghai city	Qingpu	2004	---	Juvenile	---	---	---	---	>62% among juvenile cases	Wu, 2008
Shenzhen city	---	2004	---	Juvenile	---	---	---	---	>85% among juvenile cases	Zhao, 2006

City/Province	District	Year	Data Source (Prosecutor's Office/ Court / Correction)	Overall/ Juvenile /Second Generation	No. of criminal cases	No. of overall people involved	No. of cases by floating population	No. of floating population involved	% by floating population	Reference
Tianjin city	——	2000-2003	Report on Crimes Committed by Floating Population in Tianjin	Overall	——	——	——	——	<30%	Wu, 2008
		2004		Overall	——	——	——	——	35.50%	
		2005		Overall	——	——	——	——	39.00%	
Guangdong Province	——	2002	Research Group on Study of Crimes Committed by Floating Population in Guangzhou, 2003	——	——	——	——	——	Theft 23.1%, robbery 21.9%, assault 6.8%, drug offense 5.9%, fraud 4.5%, prostitution 2.2%	Cheng & Fu, 2007
Dongguan city/Guangdong Province	——	——	Court	Juvenile	2003- July, 2004	——	651	749	95% among juvenile cases	Guo, 2004



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