

THE UPROOTED FAMILY TREE?:

***THE IMPACT OF THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION
ON THE CHINESE INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY***

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HISTORY SENIOR HONORS SEMINAR 1998

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INTRODUCTION

*The ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was one of the most chaotic periods in Chinese history. During this time, goodness and beauty went underground and ugliness and evil were given wanton release. Millions of lives were affected: innocent people were unjustly criticized, wrongfully accused of imaginary crimes, or murdered in the name of ideology!*¹

In October of 1949, following a brutal civil war, Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in China. One of Mao's and the CCP's primary objectives was to redirect traditional loyalty and devotion from the family to the state. This effort culminated in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. From 1966 until 1976, Mao engaged the People's Republic of China (PRC) in one of the boldest social experiments ever attempted, one that sought to direct China's course of modernization through the creation of a new culture. This new socialist culture was to replace all the old ideas, customs, habits, and values of "traditional Confucian China." The family, as the foundation of this traditional China, was directly attacked. In the hostile political climate that ensued, husbands and wives were told to divorce one another, children were encouraged to denounce their parents, and relatives and friends were turned against each other. In addition, everyone was required to put their personal lives on hold and to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to Mao's cause. As I have discovered, however, this ten year period of chaos produced unexpected and unintended results, both during and in

¹ *Ten Years of Madness: Oral Histories of the Cultural Revolution*, Feng Jicai (San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals, Inc., 1996), back jacket cover.

the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution (hereafter termed the "post-Mao era"). This paper will show how this "turbulent decade" played a key, and as yet unrecognized, role in the reshaping of the Chinese family in the post-Mao era.

I will begin by presenting the historical background to the paper by first giving a brief summary of the changes that led to the establishment of the PRC by the CCP, and highlighting the key aspects of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. This will be followed by a discussion of the influence and power of the family in traditional China, as reflected in child rearing practices, arranged marriages, marriage ceremonies, and patrilocal residence. Turning to the family in the Maoist period, I will then discuss Mao's and the CCP's policies and goals for the transformation of the family, and how these efforts culminated in the Cultural Revolution. I will focus on three particular groups within the family, namely: children, young adults, and married adults. Following each discussion of the three groups of individuals, I will illustrate how Mao's and the CCP's efforts often produced ironic results during the Cultural Revolution. These policies, by Mao and the CCP, have also produced many paradoxes in relation to the Chinese individual and family in the post-Mao era. My concluding remarks will touch briefly upon these results and their implications for the future of China. By doing so, it is my hope to broaden our understanding of the ultimate impact this watershed event has had upon China and the Chinese.

In undertaking this study, I have used a variety of source material. For the background information on Chinese history and family relationships I have focused on

scholarly materials on the traditional Chinese family unit and its unique "cult of filial piety." For my discussion on the Cultural Revolution policies and its unintended results, I have gleaned most of my information from the ever-growing number of memoirs and oral histories of the time period, which has unfortunately been largely overlooked by most scholars. This pool of personal histories will allow us the opportunity to experience the Cultural Revolution through the eyes of its participants and victims. As is the case with all memoirs and personal histories, we must read these sources critically keeping in mind who wrote these records, how soon after the events they were written, what audience they were written for, and to what end (personal, political, educational, financial).

I have not overlooked these problems, in reading the nearly twenty memoirs that I have analyzed for this paper. I have discovered, however, that similar experiences are described in a number of these records, and that the interviews conducted in China by scholars and journalists in the post-Mao era provide accounts similar to those found in the memoirs. In this qualitative approach, I in no way assert that these memoirs are representative of all of the nearly billion people who lived during the Cultural Revolution. I merely use them as case studies on the micro-level in an effort to understand the goals and results that these ten chaotic years had upon some individuals and their families. I feel these valuable sources of information must be taken into account if we are to begin to understand the complexities of the Cultural Revolution period.

In addition, little attention has been given linking the Cultural Revolution to social problems that surfaced in the late 1970's and 1980's, such as the increases in juvenile

delinquency, pregnancies by unwed mothers, and the divorce rate. I believe there is a fairly substantial correlation between the Cultural Revolution and these social problems and attention must be given to these connection. For the information on these social problems and their link to the Cultural Revolution, I have used a variety of sources including Chinese magazines, short stories, films, and television programs, in addition to scholarly material on the post-Mao era. It is my desire to tie each of these bodies of sources together, in order to elucidate the influence of the Cultural Revolution on some of the changes (and continuities) in the modern Chinese family.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*The History of China is as rich and strange
as that of any country on earth. Yet
for a long time China was a completely unknown
quantity to those living in the West, and even
today seems set apart by differences of language,
custom, and attitude. There is no easy way
to understand China. But the attempt is worth making,
for China's story is an astonishing one and has much
to teach us. To understand China today we need
to know about China in the past.²*

The wars, chaos, and change that have marked Chinese history in the 20th century are, in some ways, a product of the internal and external disruptions from the latter half of the 19th century. In 1841 the infamous Opium War came to a close with the Qing (Manchu) empire's humiliating losses to the British in the Treaty of Nanjing. This in turn led to what is often referred to as the "carving up of the Chinese melon," wherein many Chinese ports and trade routes, were divided among the British, French, Americans, and other Western powers. This process continued after China's devastating military loss to Japan during the early 1890's. In addition to the struggles "without" China, more damaging to the Qing empire were the struggles "within." Domestic uprisings during the later half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, including the Taiping, Nian, and Muslim rebellions, were all visible signs of civil unrest due to wide scale suffering and oppression by the Manchu empire. The Boxer Uprising of 1900, was a reaction to the humiliation that China had suffered at the hands of foreigners. An acute Chinese resentment of

"foreign barbarians" eventually extended to the Manchu empire, who had ruled over the

Chinese for the last 268 years. Sensing this rising agitation, the Qing empire initiated many reforms, in the 1870's and early 20th century, known as the "Self-Strengthening" movement. These efforts came too late, however, and the dynasty was forced to abdicate their rule in 1911. Thus the dynastic cycle which had continued for over 2,000 years, "Long ended."

Along with this anti-foreign and anti-dynastic sentiment at the end of the Qing dynasty, came also a significant rise in Chinese nationalism and a desire to establish a viable republic. In 1912, under the guidance of Sun Yat-sen, and ruled by Yuan Shikai, a parliament, composed of provincial delegates, was established in Beijing. Within a few short months, however, this collapsed, giving rise to a power vacuum, with rival ideologies and claims, and eventually led to what is known as the "Warlord" era. This period of political insecurity led to an unparalleled intellectual self-scrutiny and exploration which culminated in the "May fourth movement" of 1919.³ This movement provided the "soil" in which the doctrines of Marxist and Leninist socialism gained root, and which, in turn, led to the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921. Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of China's Nationalist Party (KMT), founded in 1911, one of the main contenders for power in the warlord era, became increasingly threatened by the rising popularity of the communist forces in China. This led to many years of bitter war between the CCP, led by Mao Zedong, and the KMT, led by Chiang Kai-shek.

² Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search For Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), ix-xx.

³ A similar Chinese "self-scrutiny" movement, which parallels the May 4th Movement, occurred in the wake the Cultural Revolution chaos caused. Both sought to understand, and to provide answers for, the tremendous problems that China faced in those two decades. I will discuss this more later.

During this struggle, the CCP established their strongholds in the countryside, while the KMT maintained dominance in the cities. The KMT then led an attack on the Communists at their home base in Jiangxi, where the Communists were ultimately forced to abandon under the cover of darkness on October 16, 1934. This inaugurated the "Long March," one of the central heroic sagas in Chinese Communist history. In the span of 370 days the communist troops trekked almost 6,000 miles across some of the most hazardous country in China and established a new base in Yan'an. Later, the CCP and KMT combined forces, for a brief time, against the Japanese, who invaded China in the 1940's. Shortly after the war with Japan ended, however, the "united front" of the CCP and KMT ceased because the differences between them came back to the fore-front, eventually forcing Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT to flee to Taiwan.

On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong established the People's Republic of China and is said to have declared, "the Chinese people have stood up."⁴ In order to prevent the resurgence of so-called "feudal" or "capitalist" practices, the CCP, in the early 1950's, inaugurated several political campaigns. These campaigns, modeled after Soviet practices, were initiated to suppress these "counter-revolutionary activities." In May 1956, a directive from the CCP, entitled "Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom; Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend," established a new policy of openness in literature and art. In April 1957, The CCP then called on the people to help by raising suggestions and criticism on the Party's work. Surprised by the amount of criticism that was put forward, Mao

⁴ It has been questioned by scholars, of late, whether or not Mao actually said these words. However, shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, it became a "beacon" phrase to the Communists, and

launched an "Anti-Rightist" campaign against those who had criticized the CCP. In one year, more than half a million intellectuals and cadres were labeled "rightists."

Foreshadowing the Cultural Revolution, these "rightists," were humiliated by being paraded around, forced to confess their "crimes" in front of their peers, beaten, imprisoned, and often sent to work in "labor reform camps." These same "rightists," were also the first to be attacked ten years later during the Cultural Revolution.

In 1958, Mao initiated the "Great Leap Forward," an agricultural and industrial plan which was supposed to allow China to catch up with Great Britain in seven years, and with the United States in fifteen years. In an effort to abolish private agricultural plots and to organize "people's communes," community dining rooms, kindergartens, nurseries, sewing groups, and public baths, were established. In this intoxicating atmosphere of "community" and "progress," production figures were severely falsely inflated in an attempt to show the success of these communes. Unfortunately, the massive over-production of the land yielded minimal harvests. The result was large scale famine, which claimed over 20 million lives between 1959-62. In addition, the industrial production efforts, too, failed tremendously. The "Great Leap Forward" had flopped. Embarrassed by this failure, Mao stepped down as the head of the state and was replaced by Liu Shaoqi.

In an effort to re-establish himself as China's supreme leader, Mao began to rally supporters around him and criticize others. In March of 1966, Mao attacked the authors of Notes from Three-Family Village and Evening Talks at Yanshan (Deng Tuo, Wu Han,

and Liao Mosha) for being examples of "anti-socialist poisonous weeds," which had sprouted up in the Chinese "cultural garden." These attacks, though pointed at the "Three-Family Village" authors, were symbolically geared toward party members who opposed Mao. On May 16, the Politburo adopted the "Circular of the Central Committee of the CCP" which called for the unrestrained mobilization of the masses against the "bourgeois" which had sneaked into the Communist Party as "counter-revolutionaries." This circular also launched the reorganization of the committee which oversaw the cultural policies dealing with literature and the arts, to now be directed by Jiang Qing (Mao's wife) and other leftist-radicals (who would later be referred to as the "gang of four").⁵

Similar reorganizations with "radical line" members in key leadership positions followed in the CCP, People's Liberation Army (PLA), and other departments. Later that summer, Nie Yuanzi, a radical philosophy professor at Beijing University, wrote a large wall poster (*dazibao*) attacking the administration at her university for "taking the capitalist road." This act, which was condoned by Mao, provoked similar protests and criticisms of administrations and cadre leaders at other universities, high schools, and work places. The young protesters were then issued red arm bands by Party radicals, given the title of "Red Guards," and declared to be the "vanguard of the new revolutionary upheaval."

⁵For a comprehensive, straightforward, and detailed chronology of the Cultural Revolution, see *Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution* (Wenhua dageming shinian shi), Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao. The First edition became an instant bestseller in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Shortly thereafter it was banned by the CCP. It was later translated and edited by D.W.Y. Kwok (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996). See also *Cambridge History of China, vol.15: The People's Republic: Revolutions Within the Chinese Revolution 1966-1982, pt. 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Early in August, Mao wrote his own version of *dazibao* entitled, "Bombard the Headquarters--My Big-Character Poster," which criticized Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and other top ranking party leaders who were, according to Mao, trying to "subvert the revolution from within." On August 18, upon the gate of Tiananmen Square (former imperial "Forbidden City" in Beijing), Mao began to review, praise, and give his formal blessings to the "gigantic parades of chanting Red Guards, all waving their copies of his little red book of quotations."⁶ Their call was to assist Mao in ridding China of the "four olds" (old customs, habits, culture, and thinking). The whirlwind of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had been unleashed.

To allow young Chinese the opportunity to devote all of their time to his cause, Mao had all the schools closed. The Red Guards, eager to prove their "revolutionary integrity," began to demolish old buildings, temples, art objects, and anything else that was "tainted" with pre-1949 or non-Communist influences. The Red Guards were then encouraged to attack old "feudal" or "bourgeois" ideas held by their teachers, school administrators, party leaders, and parents. Those who had received Western education, dealt with Western businessmen or missionaries, had relatives living outside of China, had ties to relatives in the KMT, anyone previously labeled a "rightist," or who were considered intellectuals, were severely attacked. Techniques for public humiliation became increasingly complex and painful as the "identified victims were forced to parade

⁶ These "red books" were officially titled Quotations From Chairman Mao Zedong, and were compiled by Lin Biao, in 1964, and originally designed for the PLA. During the Cultural Revolution, however, Beijing flooded China with literally tens of millions of copies of it in an effort to deify Mao. They became sacred scripture for many Chinese and set the ideological standard for the revolution. In an ironic twist, Lin Biao, previously Mao's

through the streets in dunce caps or with self-incriminatory placards around their necks." They were then required "to declaim their public self-criticisms before the jeering crowds, and to stand for hours on end with their backs agonizingly bent and arms outstretched" in what was infamously called the "airplane position."⁷ Although the exact figures were never tallied, it has been estimated that the Cultural Revolution claimed between one and ten million lives due to these and similar "struggle sessions."

On January 1, 1967, following Mao's directives, the People's Daily and the Red Flag magazine published an editorial, "Carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to the End," calling on the masses to "launch a general attack on the handful of persons within the Party who are in authority and taking the capitalist road, and the demons and monsters in society."⁸ This sparked what is known as the "January Storm," in which "revolutionary rebel" groups (workers who followed Mao's call for rebellion) began to seize power, nationwide, from existing authorities in the party and administration. These "rebels" then held "struggle" meetings where they forced the cadres and intellectuals to confess their "crimes." Confession became essential, as one document stated:

Disclosure is better than no disclosure; early disclosure is better than late disclosure. If one sincerely discloses his whole criminal story and admits his crimes to the people humbly, he will be treated leniently and given a way for safe conduct, and his case will not affect his family.⁹

Unfortunately, for those who believed such statements, this promise was not fulfilled, as

"close comrade-at-arms," became a despised enemy after his assassination attempt of Mao in 1971.

⁷ Spence, 606.

⁸ Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 279.

⁹ Quoted in Spence, 613.

one's family background soon became the primary point of attack. Hundreds of thousands of cadres (party leaders) and intellectuals were then sent to the countryside to what became known as "May Seventh Cadre Schools." These "schools" combined hard agricultural labor with unending "self-evaluations" and the study of Mao's works, in order to instill a deeper understanding of the socialist revolution (which supposedly they had forgotten because of "bourgeois" and "rightist" influences).

The overturning of party leadership positions led to competition over who was the most loyal to Mao. Various factions of "Red Guards" and "Revolutionary Rebel" groups arose, and competed with one other to be the "True followers of Mao Zedong Thought." These "grassroots" groups appeared in almost every corner of the nation. Schools, factories, hospitals, government departments, and nearly every work unit had at least one organization.

Increasing chaos, factional infighting, and severe bloodshed were signs that the "whirlwind" started by Mao was out of control. In an effort to deal with this problem, in December of 1968, Mao called upon the urban educated youths (high school graduates and college students) to go to the countryside to assist in spreading the Cultural Revolution to the villages and also to be "re-educated" by the poor and lower-middle class peasants. Great parades, celebrations, and farewell parties including song and dance, accompanied the departure of these urban youths. Over the next few years, it is estimated that around seventeen million youths were sent "up to the mountains and down to the villages." Because of these policies for the "rusticated youth," several years of separation

from one's family, horrible living conditions, meager food allowances, and often pointless labor, were often the only results.

After the youth were "sent down" in 1969, the cities became significantly calmer. Changes in the top ranking positions of the party and party policies, however, continued. The nation was shocked in 1971, when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) leader, Lin Biao (Mao's "close comrade in arms"), died in a plane wreck while attempting to flee China after a failed military coup d'etat. Within a year, Deng Xiaoping, whom Mao had previously labeled a "rightist" and ousted from power, was re-named Vice Premier by Mao and put in charge of everyday state affairs. These leadership changes prompted changes in China's foreign policy, too. In February 1972, President Richard Nixon visited China to begin the process of normalization of US-China relations.

On January 8, 1976, Zhou Enlai died, prompting huge outpourings of emotion and mourning. This quickly turned into a political protest against the radical policies of the Cultural Revolution. These protests were viewed as attacks on Mao, so ^{the} "Gang of Four" led by Jiang Qing, dispatched the police to break up the "protesters" and consequently banned the mourning of Zhou Enlai. The "Gang" then attacked Deng Xiaoping and blamed him for being the "behind-the-scenes" leader of the protests. Deng once again was ousted from leadership in the Party. On September 9, 1976, Mao Zedong died, which prompted the arrest of the "Gang of Four" on October the 6th. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had ended but not before leaving lasting consequences upon virtually

all aspects of Chinese politics, culture, and relationships.¹⁰

We are so poor that we cannot even support mother.
 How can we then support mother's food?
 Why can't we do this? We may have another
 way of support should she be against others but against!

The family has always been the foundation of Chinese society. The importance of the family was further developed through the implementation of the teachings of Confucius and Mencius (4th Century B.C. and 3rd Century B.C., respectively). Though some aspects of the family, such as inter-generational power, gender divisions, and marriage ceremonies, did change somewhat under different dynasties, the family structure to serve as the key social institution and was valued over the individual. Recognizing the role of stereotyping families in China's long history, we can say that the "traditional" Chinese family has had some serious defects.

From birth until death, the family who determined the individuals' physical and moral upbringing, the direction of his education and attitudes, his educational training, his public career, his social responsibilities, [and] his emotional and material security.¹¹ In this way, we can see the example of Wu Xiang, from The Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety, who showed himself to be eaten by mosquitoes in order to divert them from his parents. An extremely punishment for unfilial children, by law, was death.

¹⁰ This is how I read the Chinese text of the Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety, who said that parents in his will. But with all this, it is not the case. When the son began to dig the grave, he discovered a very full stomach of the filial piety. The second son, who was the first, found a Chinese family and family. (The Chinese Family and Family, 1940), 25-6.

¹⁰ Spence, 271-617. Also Feng's, *Ten Years of Madness*, 275-82.

THE "TRADITIONAL" CHINESE FAMILY: PRE-MODERN TO THE PEOPLE'S
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*We are so poor that we cannot even support mother.
Moreover, the little one shares mother's food.
Why not bury this child? We may have another;
but, if mother should die, we cannot obtain her again!*¹³

The family has always been the foundation of Chinese society. The importance of the family was further developed through the implementations of the teachings of Confucius and Mencius (5th Century & 3rd Century B.C., respectively). Though some aspects of the family, such as inter-generational power, gender relations, and marriage ceremonies, did change somewhat under different dynasties, the family continued to serve as the key social institution and was valued over the individual. Recognizing the risks of stereotyping families in China's long history, one can say that the "traditional" Chinese family has had some salient features.

From birth until death it was the family who determined the individuals "physical and moral upbringing, the formation of his sentiments and attitudes, his educational training, his public career, his social associations, [and] his emotional and material security."¹⁴ A filial son would follow the example of Wu Mang, from The Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety, who allowed himself to be eaten by mosquitoes in order to divert them from his parents. An acceptable punishment for unfilial children, by law, was death.

¹³ This is the story of Kuo Chu (from the *Twenty-four Examples of Filial Piety*), who said these remarks to his wife. The wife did not dare to contradict him. When Kuo Chu began to dig the grave, he discovered a vase full of gold—a gift to the filial son. The moral was simple, parents come first! Quoted in *Chinese Family and Society*, Olga Lang (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 25-6.

The father, as head of the family, held title to all its property, controlled the earnings and savings of all its members, and retained the right to sell its members into slavery.¹⁵

According to the Classic of Filial Piety, the authoritarian Confucian family represented a Confucian state in miniature:

Inside the smaller doors leading to the inner apartments are to be found all the rules [of government]. There is awe for the father, and also for the elder brother. Wife and children, servants and concubines are like the common people, serfs, and underlings.¹⁶

The dominance of the family over the individual, and men over the women, was seen as crucial to enable society to remain stable and secure.

According to Mencius, the worst of all unfilial acts to one's ancestors was to not produce descendants (meaning male offspring).¹⁷ As such, the birth of a daughter was only considered a "small happiness," whereas the birth of a son was considered a "great happiness."¹⁸ After all, the boy would remain in the home throughout his life because of the tradition of patrilocal residence. He would continue the family name, help out on the farms or family business, and could take and pass the exams which would qualify him for an official position, which in turn would bring status and prestige to his family and

¹⁴C.K. Yang, *Chinese Communist Society: The Family and The Village* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965), 5.

¹⁵Lang, 24-27.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁷Patricia Ebrey, "Women, Marriage, and the Family in Chinese History," 35.

¹⁸1993 documentary entitled *Small Happiness*.

ancestors. A girl, on the other hand, did not have these opportunities for advancement and was thus seen as a burden, because after all she would marry "out" of the family.

The privilege and duty of arranging for the marriage of their children was one of the most prominent expressions of the authority of Chinese parents. The purpose of marriage in "traditional" Chinese society was not for the joining of two individuals who had fallen in love. Rather, as Confucius taught, it was to unite a bond of affection between two surnames.¹⁹ The personal affection of the bride and groom for each other was not only considered unnecessary, but harmful as well. As such the young people seldom ever met before the marriage ceremony. According to Mencius, "If the young people, without waiting for the orders of the parents, and the arrangements of the go-betweens, shall bore holes to steal a sight of each other, or get over the wall to be with each other, then their parents and other people will despise them."²⁰ Simply put, the main goal of the marriage was to fulfill "the sacred duty of producing male heirs for the perpetuation of the ancestor's lineage, the acquiring of a daughter-in-law for the service and comfort of the parents, and the begetting of sons for the security of the parents' old age."²¹

In essence, marriage itself was used to continue the family line and to keep social

19. Weiyan Farmer, "Attitudes Toward Marriage and Divorce Among Women in Modern China" (1993), 82. Note that the affection here does not connote love or attraction between the couple, but rather fondness or tender feelings between families.

20. Lang, 32.

21. C.K. Yang, 23.

order intact. All the necessary arrangements for the new couple, were made by the parents including the choice of partner, ceremony, costs, and living arrangements. In fact, the bride and groom had little involvement in the process except to attend the ceremony. Marriage was considered much too important to be based upon the feelings, thoughts, and desires of either the bride or groom. Such feelings would hardly have had time to develop anyway, given how early young men and women married and how little contact was allowed between the sexes. The average age of marriage for pre-20th century sons of urban parents, was between sixteen and eighteen years old. Only in extremely rare cases did girls remain unmarried past the age of nineteen.²² It was also not uncommon to have children betrothed before they were even born, known as a "belly engagement."²³

Everything involved in the marriage process was done with the intent of deepening the married couple's ties of loyalty, devotion, and affection to the groom's family. The costs of the whole process of betrothals, expensive dowries, and lavish ceremonies complete with sedan chair, gifts, and luxurious feasts, often escalated to the equivalent of several years of the parents' income.²⁴ Many families would never fully recover from these outrageous debts. The wedding ceremony itself with its performances of service and homage to the ancestors was to further instill deep ties of loyalty and devotion to the

²²C.K. Yang, 27. Statistics for the average marriage age of those in rural areas would have been even lower.

²³Lang, 36. Also Rae Yang, *Spider Eaters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 87-88.

²⁴For a detailed description of the wedding and other ceremonies, see *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals: A Twelfth-Century Chinese Manual for the Performance of Cappings, Weddings, Funerals, and Ancestral Rites*, translated, with annotation and introduction, by Patricia Buckley Ebrey (Princeton: Princeton University Press,

family of the groom. After the marriage ceremony, the groom and his new bride would begin (and often finish) their married lives as residents of the groom's parents' home. This, along with the reliance upon the family financially, would add to the sense of dependency upon the family and increase their indebtedness. To society, it was considered a sign of prosperity and honor to be able to have "several generations of a family under one roof."²⁵

For the newly married couple, as is evident, there was little (if any) room for personal freedom of choice. If a couple wished to avoid being considered unfilial and scorned by society, it was necessary to submit to these norms. After marriage, if the newlyweds were fortunate enough to find each other compatible, they were prohibited from showing their affection openly. According to tradition, it was felt that an affectionate couple would not be able to grow old together.²⁶ Therefore, any sort of a public display of affection between husbands and wives was discouraged, especially if they were newlyweds.²⁷ After all, this would signify that love, affection, and loyalty would be focused on each other and not upon the family and ancestors. This would not have been acceptable in a society which placed emphasis on love for, and loyalty to, the family above one's spouse. In order to show others that a man's loyalty was not on the wife and also to

1991).

²⁵Jung Chang, *Wild Swans* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 54. Although large extended families like this were usually only reserved for the wealthy. See Lang, 16.

²⁶Fu Shen, *Six Records of a Floating Life*, (London: Penguin Books, written in 1809, translated in 1983), 89.

²⁷C.K. Yang, 23.

show that "he was a man, not a women," men would often beat their spouses.²⁸ The focus of the family was not the relationship between husband and wife, but rather between father and son. After all, the son would be the one responsible for continuing the family line and for taking care of the parents in their old age.

Although cases of divorce were rare and considered tragic occurrences in old China, marriage was not indissoluble. This, too, was a decision controlled by the family, and generally only reserved for the men. A man could discard his wife for reasons such as, if she failed to obey his parents or to bear a male child, if she committed adultery, or if she exhibited jealousy (including a wife's reluctance to accept her husband's desire to take in additional wives and/or concubines).²⁹ The taking in of additional wives was a common practice upheld by Confucian teachings. It was also considered a mark of success and prestige. The wife was supposed to be a devoted and loyal spouse, and not waver in her filiality toward her husband.

Should the women be widowed, as was often the case, she was strictly prohibited from marrying again. According to the Classic of Filial Piety for Girls, "Husbands perform a hundred activities; wives focus on a single commitment. Men have the duty to remarry; for women there is no text authorizing 'a second dip'."³⁰ It was considered more moral and filial for a woman to starve to death than to lose her virtue by remarrying. For many

²⁸Farmer, 12.

²⁹Lang, 40-1.

³⁰Ebrey, 26.

women in China's past, the only means for divorce was to commit suicide.³¹

Although romance and love were not supposed to figure into the traditional marriage relationship, the emotional appeal of romance and love did not cease to exist. The popularity of legends like "The Weaver's Star", and books like The Romance of the Western Chamber, Love Story of Butterflies, and Six Chapters of a Floating Life, attest to this emotional appeal.³² Some marriages were not typical of the traditional models previously mentioned. Shen Fu, born in the late 1700's, described how from the moment he got married, he and his wife "were inseparable, like a man and his shadow. Words could not describe [their] love." He was also fortunate enough to meet his spouse before their marriage.³³ One must realize, however, that this example of a romantic and love-filled marriage relationship was an exception to the standard before the twentieth century.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, however, an influx of Western ideas opened the eyes (and hearts) of many Chinese. These ideas which were circulated in books, pamphlets, and magazines, eventually led to the "May Fourth" movement (began in 1919) which fostered increased dissatisfaction with the traditional institutions and sparked a desire for furthering the Revolution of 1911, which had toppled the last Chinese dynasty. Along with these revolutionary desires to reform the Chinese government, came also revolutionary ideas to reform the Chinese family. With the introduction of Western ideas

³¹Farmer, 84.

³²Fu Shen, 28, 32-3.

³³*Ibid.*, 29.

of individual liberties and rights, also came the introduction of Western style marriages and romantic love.³⁴ The CCP assisted in this "family revolution" by promising that it would put an end to "traditional" and "feudal" practices like arranged marriage and concubinage. Therefore, the CCP became very attractive to those who would gain the most from its implemented policies: the young men and women.

The CCP kept its promise, to a certain extent. On May 1, 1950, less than a year after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the CCP promulgated the new "Marriage Law." This document contained twenty-seven articles that revolutionized the institution of marriage in China. It prohibited the practices of arranged marriage, polygamy, and concubinage. It established a legal minimum age at which people could be married: age 20 for men and 18 for women. The document also set forth the rights and duties of husbands and wives, and stipulated that they "are companions living together and shall enjoy equal status in the home," and that they "are duty bound to love, respect, assist, and look out for each other, and to live in harmony."³⁵ It also laid down the guidelines for divorce, which women were now allowed to initiate. Other articles were later added to allow greater freedom from other "feudal" practices of marriage.

Freedom of marriage, however, was never truly achieved by the CCP during this

³⁴ C.K. Yang, 10-15. For information on the impact that this "family revolution" had leading up to the establishment of the PRC, and for information regarding resistance to CCP policies regarding the family, see *World Revolution and Family Patterns*, William J. Goode (London: The Free Press of Glencoe Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1963), also *The Family Revolution in Modern China*, Marion J. Levi, Jr. (New York: Octagon Books, 1963).

³⁵ "The Marriage law of the People's Republic of China" (May 1, 1950), C.K. Yang, 221-26.

time: rather, love itself became politicized. Romantic love became associated with "capitalists" and the "bourgeoisie." Love for the "revolution" and Chairman Mao soon became popular propaganda slogans. Throughout the 1950's there were many Party proclamations, essays, and editorials, which sought to teach the masses to build "happy revolutionary homes." In addition, magazines and newspapers (CCP controlled, as all were), focused on educating youth on how to develop revolutionary marriages and families.³⁶ Virtually all aspects of marriage previously controlled by the family now became controlled by the state.

In theory, the CCP sought to end the abuses of the old patriarchal system. In reality, it became the new patriarch. As is clear, the CCP sought "to shift the center of loyalty from the family to the state." No one appeared more successful in causing this shift in loyalty than Chairman Mao. Through intense "propaganda, indoctrination, and pressure from the law," Mao effectively gained the personal devotion, gratitude, and love of the people.³⁷ This was done through the control of the theatres, newspapers, cinemas, radio stations, and other forms of the media.³⁸

In no other period of Chinese history, "has the interest of the state and its machinery been more sharply defined and loyalty to it more drastically demanded," than

³⁶For further reference, see "What is the Cause of the Breakdown of the Marital Relationship of Lo and Leu?" in *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 8:3 (1975), and "We Must Adopt a Solemn Attitude Toward the Problem of Love and Marriage" in *Survey of the Chinese Mainland Press* 1966 (8 Feb 1957), and "On the Question of Family" in *Survey of the Chinese Mainland Press* 1961 (26 Feb 1959).

³⁷C.K. Yang, 173-4.

³⁸Spence, 517.

under Mao's rule. As Wang Hongbao, a survivor of the Cultural Revolution, related in Enemies of the People, "Mao's status was very high; his authority was great. He was like a god."³⁹ And nowhere is this more evident than during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The idolization of Mao caused many to accept whatever he said, whether or not it made any sense at the time. As Zhu Xiao Di stated in Thirty Years in a Red House, the response of people to Mao's orders would be, "Well, if I cannot see it, it's my fault. The great leader is much wiser, and what he says cannot be wrong."⁴⁰ During the ten year campaign of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Mao and the CCP sought to further change the individual and the family. I shall first highlight how they sought to do this among the children.

³⁹ Wang Hongbao as quoted in an interview with Anne Thurston, *Enemies of the People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 155.

⁴⁰ Zhu Xiao Di, *Thirty Years in a Red House: A Memoir of Childhood and Youth in Communist China* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 45-6.

CHILDHOOD DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION:
NORMATIVE BEHAVIOR

*Heaven and earth are great,
but greater still is the kindness of the Communist Party;
father and mother are dear,
but dearer still is Chairman Mao*⁴¹

One of Mao's many purposes in launching the Cultural Revolution was to train China's children to be his "revolutionary successors." Dealing with the children, as Mao proclaimed, was "an extremely important life-and-death question that will determine the fate of our Party and of our state, and with respect to our proletarian revolutionary undertaking a matter of fundamental importance for centuries, millennia, and ten thousand years to come."⁴² After all, most of China's youth in 1966 had been born after the 1949 revolution. As such, they would not have had sufficient knowledge of what China was like before the Communist Party took over. They would not have been old enough to have participated in the struggle against feudalism, foreign influences, and the corrupt and "bourgeois" Nationalist Party. They would not have experienced the infamous Long March. In essence, they would not be able to fully comprehend the progress made by the Communist Party in China. Mao feared that as the children became adults, they would not have the keen insight necessary to distinguish the subtle influences of "feudalist" and "bourgeois" practices. Mao suspected that there were special agents of the United States,

⁴¹ Popular saying in the years leading up to, and especially during, the Cultural Revolution. Quoted in *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Ji Li Jiang (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), 1.

⁴² Mao Zedong quoted by the Heilongjiang Provincial Revolutionary Committee "After-School Activities of Middle School and Elementary School Students" *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not A Dinner Party*, Michael Schoenhals, ed. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 180.

the Soviet Union (after the Sino-Soviet split), and Taiwan active on the mainland, who, along with the "bourgeois headquarters" inside the Communist Party, were trying to undermine and overthrow the Communist Party. As such, these bad influences, according to Mao, could once again make steady inroads and undo the progress which Mao and the Party had made. Mao felt that continual vigilance was necessary in order to prevent the resurgence of the remnants of the old society and protect China from outside influences.

The chief way in which Mao sought to prevent the resurgence of harmful influences, was to train "revolutionary successors," through public education. Mao's periodic closing of the schools during the Cultural Revolution demonstrates how closely related he felt the educational and political systems of his new China were. The first lessons in English (when English was allowed in a few select schools after Nixon's visit in 1972) for primary students included the phrase "Long Live Chairman Mao" and Mao's proclamation, "You should concern yourself with the affairs of state and carry through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to the end."⁴³ In addition, when the schools were reopened, admission to higher education was based predominately on political behavior and family background.

Mao's desires are clear enough: he sought to produce individuals at the primary school level, who were aware of the benevolence of this "new" China, were loyal and devoted to him and the CCP, had "collective" feelings, and who understood their social

⁴³ Mao Zedong, quoted in *Childhood in China*, William Kessen, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 115. See also Zhu Xiao Di's, *Thirty Years in a Red House: A Memoir of Childhood and Youth in Communist China* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 88.

responsibilities. These core values of this ideal "citizen-child," were those through which they were to interpret the nation, its leadership and their policies, and every citizens role within the nation.

To be "revolutionary" implied conformity. Any of the children's goals of personal achievement were to remain secondary to the pre-eminent responsibility of contributing to the common good of the new society. The Party and all its organs were portrayed as being devoted to the welfare of the people. Mao portrayed himself as the guiding spirit of the nation, who was devoted and concerned for each individual personally, and was responsible for destroying the old China and creating the new. The masses were then expected to, in turn, sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the state.⁴⁴

Childhood was not defined as a time for the individual's autonomous quest for self-identity and meaning as some argue is the case in the West. The challenge for these children was to submit to, and internalize, the official definition of these things in the fashion of the selfless, unquestioning, model soldier Lei Feng.⁴⁵ Lei Feng's childhood was one of endless hardship until his village was "liberated" by the Communists. He went on to become a revolutionary activist, PLA soldier, CCP member, and died an accidental death in 1962 at the age of twenty-two. Lei Feng secured his place in history because he kept a diary in which he recorded his acts of charity and his devotion to the Party. He

⁴⁴Charles Price Ridley, Paul H.B. Godwin, and Dennis J. Doolin, eds. "The Model Child" in *The Making of a Model Citizen in Communist China* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1971), 184-91.

⁴⁵Zhu, 31-2. Once again, the CCP replaced a traditional model of loyalty to the family with a model of loyalty to the state.

became one of the foremost national models for emulation because he personified total gratitude, unflinching loyalty, and unswerving and unquestioning dedication to the Party.⁴⁶

As his writings suggest, he was the most self-effacing of heroes, "whose highest ambition was to be an 'unrusting screw,' a minute but tireless component in the great revolutionary machine."⁴⁷

Red-painted posters extolled China's young people to mimic Lei Feng's heroic deeds. School children were made to recite statements about this exemplar of Communist rectitude, such as, "In the winter Lei Feng repairs cars regardless of the cold. Lei Feng walks a thousand miles and does 10,000 good things. Working for the Party and the people, his heart is red and never changes."⁴⁸ Anonymity while doing good deeds was also important. After all, "When Lei Feng helped someone, he never told them his name."

⁴⁹ In addition to the revolutionary model of Lei Feng, revolutionary operas, novels, and many other tools of the media were used by the Party to ensure that the message of self-denial became ingrained in the minds of the children.

In addition to the political indoctrination of school children, militaristic themes

⁴⁶Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 60-1.

⁴⁷Richard King, "Models and Misfits: Rusticated Youth in Three Novels of the 1970's" *New Perspectives on the Cultural Revolution*, eds. William A. Joseph, et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 255-6.

⁴⁸Fox Butterfield, *China: Alive in the Bitter Sea* (New York: Times Books, 1982), 182.

⁴⁹From a Chinese reader used in primary schools. Quoted in *Childhood in China*, ed William Kessen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 175. It is interesting to note that the reason we know so much about Lei Feng is because of the fact that he wrote down all of his good deeds. So, it could be questioned whether or not he really wished that his deeds remained anonymous. In addition, many debate whether or not Lei Feng actually

were also commonly used. This started as early as nursery school, as this song chanted by three-year-olds illustrates:

"Little brother, where are your little hands?"

"My hands are here.

They can grasp guns, they can fire, pow, pow, pow.

Little sister, where are your little hands?"

"My hands are here. They can do physical labor.

When the kerchiefs are dirty, they can wash them."⁵⁰

The "kerchief" mentioned in this song, referred to a red scarf which was worn by members of the "Young Pioneers." This was a CCP sponsored "boy/girl scout" type group which was organized along "revolutionary" and "militaristic" lines. With titles like "company commander" and "squad leader," the children were to understand that they were to behave with all the seriousness of adulthood and to be models to other children. According to Ji Li Jiang, who was a member of the Young Pioneers, twelve years old in 1966, and author of Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution, responded:

My friends and I grew up with the stories of the brave revolutionaries who had saved China. We were proud of our precious red scarves, which, like the national flag, were dyed red with the blood of our revolutionary martyrs. We had often been sorry that we were too young to have fought with Chairman Mao against the Japanese invaders, who tried to conquer China; against the dictator Chiang Kai-Shek, who ruthlessly oppressed the Chinese people; and against the American aggressors in Korea. We had missed our chance to become national heroes by helping our Motherland. Now our chance had come!⁵¹

existed, or if he was simply made up by the CCP propaganda team.

⁵⁰ Butterfield, 209.

⁵¹ Ji Li Jiang, 28.

When older people related to them these stories of the days before liberation, the children were expected to cry out with loud emotion. According to one Young Pioneer, "All the students cried when they heard the stories. The atmosphere was that if you didn't, others might think you didn't have class consciousness."⁵² Other activities of the Young Pioneers included contests to see who had the most blisters after working in the fields.⁵³ The winner was viewed as having a greater class conscience and as such more of a "revolutionary."

Membership was awarded based on one's political zeal, enthusiasm for voluntary labor, and active participation in song-and-dance troupes at school. For a child to remain "scarfless" (not inducted into the group) by the end of fourth grade, was considered an embarrassment and a marking of a child as a naughty reject. In the final years of primary school, the decision of entry was placed in the hands of all the classmates who were already members. The result was the turning explicitly to peer group pressures to reward conformity and to impose sanctions against misbehavior.

The scarf itself, became one of the visible signs of a child's success in being a "revolutionary successor." The scarf became a sacred symbol of the child's revolutionary attitude and a clear sign of seniority over those who were not members of the Young Pioneers. When asked about how one member felt about the scarf, she responded, "It is a corner of the red flag. It's dyed red in the blood of the revolutionary martyrs. That was

⁵² Butterfield, 55.

why we cherished it so much."⁵⁴

Children were to be the successors of the revolution not only in the schools but at home, too. As such, they, in a sense, became the property of the state and no longer of the parents. In order to hide their "bad class" status, some would change their names.⁵⁵ Others changed the names that their parents had given them out of loyalty to Mao. Often they adopted more revolutionary names such as Xiaobing (Little Soldier), Weidong (Protect Mao), and Yongge (Forever Revolutionary).

The children were also encouraged to instruct their parents on Mao Zedong's teachings and to denounce them if they exhibited bad class behavior or came from a "bad" family background. One thirteen year old girl wrote a letter to her father instructing him to "reform" his "counterrevolutionary tendencies. She wrote, "You have already become an enemy of the people. Now you must do your best to reform yourself. Not until you have earned your right to return to the midst of the people will I again call you 'Dad'."⁵⁶ For children like this girl, Mao gave them an official right to rebel against their parents and relatives. Zhu Xiao Di, in his memoir, Thirty Years in a Red House, recalled how some friends he knew pressed their father to confess to "counter-revolutionary" crimes. The father, who was also criticized by his wife, became deeply depressed and eventually

⁵³ Zhu, 83.

⁵⁴ Chan, 28.

⁵⁵ Ji Li Jiang, 214.

⁵⁶ Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 52-3.

committed suicide (a sign of guilt to the masses).⁵⁷

One would have been criticized if one allowed family relationships to interfere with one's "political principles."⁵⁸ Ji Li Jiang recalled how some children walked right past their injured "counterrevolutionary" mother, while other children participated in beating their own parents.⁵⁹ Liang Jia, as recorded in The Red Mirror: Children of China's Cultural Revolution, recalled how at the age of thirteen he was confronted by his father about his rebellious behavior. Liang Jia then pulled out a gun and held it in his father's face while shouting, "Listen carefully! Chairman Mao has already urged us to rebel. How dare you try to restrain and discipline me? I am not your son anymore. I belong to Chairman Mao and to the Revolution!"⁶⁰ More than likely, this would have been a sufficient sign of "unfiliality" in old China, and as such warranted the execution of the son. Clearly, Mao had succeeded in changing childhood during the Cultural Revolution. Or had he?

⁵⁷ Zhu, 72.

⁵⁸ Ji Li Jiang, 45.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 142, 225.

⁶⁰ Liang Jia's experiences as quoted in *The Red Mirror: Children of China's Cultural Revolution*, Chihua Wen (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1995), 60.

CHILDHOOD DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION:
SUBVERSIVE BEHAVIOR

*In this world, things are complicated
and are decided by many factors. We should
look at problems from different aspects,
not from just one!*
—Mao Zedong⁶¹—

The children during the Cultural Revolution were no different than any other children. They, too, wanted to be accepted. They, too, wanted to avoid being teased or harassed. As such many succumbed to peer pressure to follow Mao as a way to avoid being "different." After all being different during the Cultural Revolution could be seen as "bourgeois." For many children, they also realized that good political behavior would be helpful in securing admission to junior high and other higher levels of education. Their personal dossiers held by the Party would record this behavior and influence their future careers. As such, they went along with the crowd.

The Cultural Revolution also brought out severe competitiveness amongst the children, as each child sought to prove that he was more loyal than the others. One example of this occurred when a group of children stayed at school overnight. While pretending to be asleep, one boy shouted out "Long live Chairman Mao," as a sign that even in his dreams he had deep class feelings and love for Mao. These displays of loyalty would have been rewarded with positions of power among the children. These positions of power brought not only special status but special privileges as well. The boy was not

⁶¹ Mao Zedong quoted in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, ed. Stuart R. Schram (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 122.

asleep, however, and did this not as a sign of loyalty, but rather out of competitiveness and desire for power.⁶² Zhu Xiao Di recalled that he had made criticisms of others in order to build up his revolutionary repertoire.⁶³

At home however, the "scarves" of revolutionary loyalty often were "taken off." Many children took advantage of the "free time" that the Cultural Revolution ironically created for them. When classes were suspended to allow the children "to make the revolution," some spent their time in the bookstores, or read "banned" books.⁶⁴ In the chaos that ensued, others avoided participation in "revolutionary activities" by hiding out in their homes, and used the time to spend with their siblings and parents (as many work units were also closed down).⁶⁵ Other children to avoid participation in the Cultural Revolution, went fishing.⁶⁶ Others used the time to practice their musical instruments and as such became quite proficient.⁶⁷ Some spent their days walking around town reading the *dazibao* which covered the walls of almost every building. In an ironic twist, although pornographic literature was strictly prohibited in China since 1949, extremely lewd and detailed stories about "counter-revolutionaries" showed up on the *dazibao*. These always

⁶²Chan, 52-8.

⁶³Zhu, 36

⁶⁴Qiaoyu's experiences as recorded in *The Red Mirror*, 98. Also Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 22, 43.

⁶⁵Ji Li Jiang, 52.

⁶⁶Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 13.

⁶⁷Zhu, 78-9, 126, 130, 150.

attracted huge audiences. In addition, by reading the *dazibao*, many children learned their first swear words.⁶⁸

Because of the non-structured nature of many Cultural Revolution activities, children quickly became bored.⁶⁹ In a report circulated nationwide in the summer of 1967, by the CCP Central Committee General Office, it was announced that the problem of juvenile delinquency had become extremely visible. In an investigation done by the CCP itself, the after-school activities of middle and elementary school children were detailed. In the report it was stated that the children had "all received a profound education and training, and developed a revolutionary spirit of daring to think, daring to speak, daring to act, daring to charge, and daring to rebel."⁷⁰ This was intended to be a compliment to the inroads the CCP had made with the education of the children. The report then proceeded to discuss some of the after school "unhealthy tendencies" that had developed among these young children (supposedly influenced by "bourgeois" ideology). These included picking pockets and other acts of theft, engaging in causing serious damage to public property, joining and forming gangs, bullying younger students, blocking the road, threatening teachers and local cadres who criticized them, and being involved in gang fights.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 53.

⁶⁹Ji Li Jiang, 125.

⁷⁰Heilongjiang Provincial Revolutionary Committee "After-School Activities of Middle School and Elementary School Students" *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not A Dinner Party*, Michael Schoenhals, ed. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 177.

The investigation further reported how the adults were not allowed to criticize them, and that those who did risked all kinds of reprisals because the young kids were doing this all in the name of "making rebellion" and "opposing slavishness" (behavior which was approved by Mao). Consequently, nobody listened to what the teachers and local cadres said, and some teachers and local cadres were even made to suffer for speaking up against the bad behavior of the students. The excuse given for this delinquency was that the students were spending too few hours in school (some only having two hours of classes). Also, no homework was given and nobody to encourage them to study on their own, and so some of them spent their time just playing and causing mischief.⁷¹

In a document circulated by the CCP and the PLA at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, soldiers were given the express order not to suppress any revolutionary student movements.⁷² Were not these young children following Mao's orders by "rebellious" and "tearing down the four olds?" After all, they had Mao's permission to rebel, were praised for their revolutionary behavior, and were protected by pleading "revolutionary activities." As can be expected, however, these children behaved as many children do when given the "green light" to engage in chaos.

Writing *dazibao* and attending criticism meetings became monotonous for these children. According to one young man, to avoid boredom, some participated in

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 176-181.

⁷² PLA General Staff and General Political Department "Regulations Forbidding the Use of Military Force to

"revolutionary duties" with ulterior motives:

For us, writing big-character posters was a means of practicing calligraphy; writing criticism articles was a way to practice composition; singing "The East Is Red" and "Sailing on the Sea Depends on the Helmsman" was a way to practice singing techniques.⁷³

In a similar example, one instructor organized a "Little Red Guards Artists Group." This group under the guise of being a revolutionary activity was merely an opportunity for the children to practice their art.⁷⁴ Others used the spare time to practice English. In one example, a boy was given the Complete Works of Mao in English by the boy's father. During this part of the Cultural Revolution studying English was forbidden. Studying Mao's works, however, were not. The boy, when his classmates and factory leaders were present, would read Mao's works in Chinese. When they were not around he would only study the English version. The boy recalled that the leaders began to think of him as a good youth, "trying to reform himself" and willing to break off his relationship with his "counter-revolutionary" father. They were impressed with his vigorous study of Mao's teachings. They even considered transferring him to a better job. He however, did not study Mao's teachings out of loyalty or a great desire to become a "reform himself," but rather to learn English.⁷⁵ This secret study of the English language paid off for him, and

Suppress the Revolutionary Student Movement" in Schoenhals, 48-9.

⁷³Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 22.

⁷⁴Zhu, 52.

⁷⁵Lingmu's experiences as recorded in *The Red Mirror*, 144-54.

others, as it became approved and encouraged toward the end of the Cultural Revolution.⁷⁶

Uterior motives for participation in the Cultural Revolution seem endless. Some children who were the one's that were teased by others, for reasons such as funny features and inability to succeed in schoolwork, before the Cultural Revolution, now became the teasers. Children used the Cultural Revolution as an excuse to get even with those who had previously made fun of them. Some used the Cultural Revolution as an excuse to get revenge upon teachers who had given them bad grades.⁷⁷ Personal vendettas were often masked by the accusers claiming that they were getting rid of "bourgeois counter-revolutionaries."⁷⁸ Some criticized and denounced others to achieve their own goals of advancement and to bolster their personal dossiers.⁷⁹

Other children participated out of fear and coercion. Anchee Min in Red Azalea, recalled one experience she had with severe pressure. One afternoon, instead of going to play with friends after school (which was her usual activity at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution), she was visited by the school Party secretary. In this interview she was told

⁷⁶Zhu, 35, 78, 178-9.

⁷⁷Ji Li Jiang, 42.

⁷⁸Wen, 149. See also Zhu, 44, 51.

⁷⁹Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 45. The dossier was kept by the school or work unit and contained vital information such as a person's school history, family history, awards, failings, and political history. The individual did not have access to his dossier. During the Cultural Revolution, once labeled a "counterrevolutionary" or similar crime, this remained in one's dossier until corrected (sometimes posthumously).

that she was chosen to be the student representative at a meeting to denounce a "hidden class enemy" and "American Spy". This "hidden enemy" was none other than her favorite teacher, Autumn Leaves. In the past this teacher had spent extra time helping Anchee, had brought her own books from home to loan to her, and had given up her raincoat, rain shoes, and umbrella to a child who had forgotten their own. Anchee was told that this teacher was now somehow "A wolf in sheep's skin." For the next two hours, the secretary informed Anchee that the teacher had secretly tried to win her over to the "imperialist" side.

At the age of thirteen Anchee was called upon to prove whether she was a "real revolutionary or an armchair revolutionary," by denouncing her teacher at a mass rally, with two thousand people in attendance. This she did, though very hesitantly and only after being told of the consequences for her and her family if she did not comply. Anchee gave in to the pressure, not because of a burning loyalty to Mao and the Revolution, but rather to protect herself, her family, and her future.⁸⁰

While some children were "model revolutionaries" who "followed" Mao's instructions, others, however, risked everything to remain loyal to their families. Ji Li Jiang recalled how a Party cadre severely pressured her to denounce her father after he was labeled a "counterrevolutionary." He had told her:

You are different from your parents. You were born and raised in New China. You are a child of Chairman Mao. You can choose your own destiny: You can make a clean break with your parents and follow Chairman Mao,

⁸⁰ Anchee Min, *Red Azalea* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1994), 29-42.

and have a bright future; or you can follow your parents,
and then you will not come to a good end!⁸¹

Ji Li Jiang put her family first, before Mao and the Cultural Revolution.

Other children took great personal risks to visit their parents who had been imprisoned or sent to the work camps in the countryside. During these travels and visits, some children became adept at deceiving the guards. Zhu Xiao Di, a ten-year-old when his parents were sent to the countryside in 1968, recalled one experience he had when visiting his mother. He got up before the sun one morning and set out for an all day bus ride and walk to her work camp. When he arrived with the food and gifts for his mother, he was told to go home and that they would give the items to her. Frustrated after the long trip without achieving his goal, he decided to find her himself. When he finally found her she looked thin, sickly, and overworked. After telling her of his love for her, he sensed a guard approaching and instantly Zhu began shouting Maoist slogans at her. When the guard arrived and asked why he did not leave like he was told, Zhu stated that he stumbled upon his mother while looking for the bathroom.⁸² Zhu, like many other of his contemporaries, found ways to show their love and loyalty to their parents. The parents of children like Zhu Xiao Di, no doubt, gained an increased amount of love for the children as a result.

In a similar story, two girls, under the age of ten, risked their lives by hitching a ride on a military truck destined for the countryside. Their parents had been labeled as

⁸¹Ji Li Jiang, 190, 262.

"bourgeois" and "counter-revolutionaries," and had been sent to a "re-education" camp among the peasantry. The two young children, before dawn, climbed into the back of the truck for a five hour uncomfortable ride, in order to spend a few short hours with their parents. Others who had not seen their parents for several years, scrimped and saved enough to make the train fare for the sometimes several thousand mile journey.⁸³ Risks were taken time and time again to bring a few morsels of food or gifts to one's parents, in order to show the child's love and devotion.

Many children who had witnessed their families being beaten, imprisoned, "sent down", and persecuted, during the Cultural Revolution, ironically, became closer to their parents.⁸⁴ These children risked everything to remain loyal to their families, and by their actions, denounced Mao and the Cultural Revolution. Others who did denounce their parents and relatives, did so not out of loyalty to Mao and the Party, but rather to protect themselves and their futures. Other children used the Cultural Revolution to pursue their own interests. All these represent unintended results or failures of the Cultural Revolution. Was Mao and the CCP any more successful in achieving the total dedication and loyalty of the young adults than he was with the children?

⁸² Zhu, 117-8.

⁸³ Wen, 72-81.

⁸⁴ Gao Yuan, 143.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION:
NORMATIVE BEHAVIOR

*To ensure that our Party and Nation
 will not change their colors,
 we not only need our correct lines
 and policies but also have to
 foster and train thousands upon
 thousands of successors to our
 proletarian revolutionary cause*

--Mao Zedong--⁸⁵

Like the nursery and elementary schools, Mao and the CCP politicized junior-high and high-schools. In accordance with these policies, math, science, and history books were exchanged for the notorious "little red book" of Mao Zedong's quotations. Mao's words were to be taken as dogma, and not to be questioned. Independent thinking was to have no place. Mao's quotations became one of the very few things the children were allowed to read. Some memorized them so well that they could recite them backward and forward.⁸⁶ These sayings would then be used to "further the revolutionary cause," by attacking others who did not follow them. The students, as they carried on their revolutionary duties, would wave the little red books high in the air, as a sign of their loyalty to "Mao Zedong thought."

In addition, the young people were urged to become activists in the "Red Guard" movement (a group similar to the children's Young Pioneer group). The Red Guards were

⁸⁵ Mao Zedong quoted in *Wild Lily, Prairie Fire: China's Road to Democracy, Yan'an to Tiananmen 1942-1989*, ed Gregory Benton & Alan Hunter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11.

⁸⁶ How ironic when we consider Mao once said to his niece, "Don't read too much. Too much study can kill people." Obviously this was not supposed to apply to his own writings and sayings, which did in fact lead to many deaths. As quoted in Butterfield, 179.

told to view the Cultural Revolution as the struggle of one class to overthrow another, and that everything which did "not fit the socialist system and proletarian dictatorship should be attacked."⁸⁷ As such, they participated heavily in the destruction of the "four olds" (old customs, habits, culture, and thinking).

The students were also expected to write *dazibao*, which essentially were replications of what they read in the press or what people with inside information about the power struggles told them to write. These posters literally covered all sides of a building, with statements like:

The Moment for burying the bourgeois educational line represented by Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and Lu Dingyi [Right-wing Party leaders] has come! Let us give play to our proletarian revolutionary rebel spirit and throw the hotbed breeding the seeds of revisionism into the garbage bin of history! Let us look to the future! Our educational position must be a new type, of the great school of Mao Zedong's thought, and a good classroom for training successors to our proletarian revolutionary cause! Long live Chairman Mao! Long, long life to Chairman Mao! Long live the great ever-victorious thought of Mao Zedong!⁸⁸

These posters were also vehicles for the young people to show their loyalty to the Party by denouncing their families, friends, and associates with unfavorable backgrounds. Liang Heng, a former Red Guard, recalled the time he got into a fight with his father about his father's bad class background. When the father was told that his son was breaking ties

⁸⁷. Spence, 606.

⁸⁸. The Jinggangshan Fighting Corps of Beijing Normal University for Smashing the Collective Boarding Schools for Children of Cadres, and the Liaison Center for Smashing the Collective Boarding Schools for Children of Cadres, printed in *Spring Thunder* (a Red Guard newspaper) on April 13, 1967. Quoted in Benton, 120.

with him, the father called him stupid. Liang Heng immediately picked up an ink brush and wrote in big characters, "It's Right to rebel! Liang Shan says a Revolutionary

Pathbreaker is stupid! If he doesn't admit his wrongs, Liang Heng will open fire on him!"⁸⁹

Liang Heng then marched into his father's room and tacked this *dazibao* to the foot of his father's bed. Gao Yuan, verbally berated his "counterrevolutionary" father, by saying, "I'm not your son! I won't be a capitalist-roader's son! I'm a revolutionary! I want to make revolution! Attack by reason and defend by force! If you attack me, I'll counterattack."⁹⁰

Another way for the young people to demonstrate "revolutionary" dedication was to travel to Beijing to see Chairman Mao. To help facilitate this opportunity for the "revolutionary vanguards," Chairman Mao announced that they would receive free travel passes and accommodations while in Beijing.⁹¹ As such, thousands of young people poured into Tiananmen Square during the latter part of 1966, each waving their "little red books" high in the air, and singing songs such as "Sailing the seas depends on the Helmsman."⁹² The excitement of one young man could not be contained when he saw the Great Helmsman, as he wrote in a letter to some friends:

Comrades,

Let me tell you the great news, news greater than heaven.

At five minutes past seven in the evening on the 15th of September 1966, I saw our most most most dearly beloved

⁸⁹Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro. *Son of the Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 48.

⁹⁰Gao Yuan, 247.

⁹¹Zhu, 39-41.

⁹²Gao Yuan, 119.

leader Chairman Mao! Comrades, I have see Chairman Mao!
Today I am so happy my heart is about to burst. How can I
possibly go to sleep tonight? I have decided to make today
my birthday. Today I started a new life!⁹³

Most were not as fortunate as this young man to see Chairman Mao, and as such those
who had become instant celebrities in their home towns.⁹⁴

Another way for these young people to show their "revolutionary" dedication was
to follow Mao Zedong's call, in December 1968, to go "up the mountains and down to the
villages." Mao stated:

How should we judge whether a youth is a revolutionary?
How can we tell? There can only be one criterion, namely,
whether or not he is willing to integrate himself with the
broad masses of workers and peasants and does so in
practice. If he is willing to do so and actually does so, he
is a revolutionary; otherwise he is a non-revolutionary or a
counter-revolutionary. If today he integrates himself with
the workers and peasants, then today he is a revolutionary;
if tomorrow he ceases to do so or turns round to oppress
the common people, then he becomes a non-revolutionary
or a counter-revolutionary⁹⁵

Within the next few years, an estimated seventeen million young adults headed Mao's call.

This "rustication" movement had a three fold purpose: to narrow the gap between the
cities and the villages, to revive the young generations flagging revolutionary spirit, and to

⁹³Bei Guancheng (1967), 148-9.

⁹⁴Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 7-8.

⁹⁵Mao quoted in Schram, 167.

relieve some of the excess population pressure in urban areas.⁹⁶ This move to the villages was to be a permanent transfer in residency away from their families. Parents, who encouraged and supported their children's decisions to "take the revolutionary road" by moving to the countryside, were held up as examples.⁹⁷

As is evident, Chairman Mao and the CCP sought to transform the individual and to strengthen the ties of the people to the state. This is clear in regards to courtship as well. The young people were to direct all their time, talents, and energies toward furthering the cause of the "revolution." According to Chairman Mao, "a revolutionary should be a pure person, a noble person, a virtuous person, a person who is free of vulgar desires, a person who is valuable to the people."⁹⁸ Personal desires such as romance, sexuality, and love, were to be postponed. It was believed that if the young people were not "burdened" with the problems of courtship and marriage then they would be able to devote more time to the study of Marxist, Socialist, and Maoist principles. The more one studied, the more one's eyes would open. This would lead to a heart that is more "red." The more one's heart became red, the more efforts one could make toward the Revolution.⁹⁹

This postponement of personal desires soon evolved into active repression.

⁹⁶Butterfield, 184. See also *Zhongguo zhiqing shidian* (Encyclopedia of "Educated Youth"), ed. Liu Xiaomeng, Ding Yizhuang, Shi Weimin, and He Lan (Chengdu: Sichuan People's Press, 1995).

⁹⁷Schoenhals, 181.

⁹⁸Rae Yang, 136.

⁹⁹Liu Liang-ch'ung, "Family Planning is Good" in *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 11:1 (1978).

According to Jung Chang, author of Wild Swans, it was under Mao (and his wife):

that the Chinese suffered extreme sexual repression. With [their] controlling of the media and the arts for nearly ten years, any reference to love was deleted from the hearing and sight of the population...in the few European films which were allowed--all scenes of men and women standing close to each other, let alone kissing, were cut out.¹⁰⁰

During the Cultural Revolution sexuality became even more taboo than previously.

Whenever love was mentioned it was only supposed to characterize a brotherly,

"comrade-in-arms" type love.¹⁰¹ Examples of political love based on common

revolutionary goals are found in stories such as The Place of Love, Lost Love, and I Love

This Kind of Work.¹⁰² Love became defined as when two people who wanted to build

socialism decided to marry, and was supposed to be bound up with "class feelings."

Anything outside this narrow definition was simply seen as "bourgeois."

Loyalty to Mao and the Cultural Revolution needed to be of utmost concern if relationships were to be considered "revolutionary." A "revolutionary" man and a "counter-revolutionary" woman could not create a "revolutionary" family. As such, family backgrounds became a primary concern for those seeking companionship. Jung Chang recalled a time when she had developed a strong relationship with a young man from an

¹⁰⁰Chang, 489-90.

¹⁰¹Elisabeth Croll, *The Politics of Marriage in Contemporary China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 83.

¹⁰²Kam Louie. "Love Stories: The Meaning of Love and Marriage in China" in *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society, 1978-1981* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 65-66. Though these were published shortly after the Cultural Revolution ended, they characterize the "political-love" based relationships that were formed during it.

"undesirable" family background. She told of how they were unable to show or mention their love even in private. "One could not let oneself go, because consideration of one vital factor, family background, was ingrained in one's mind. The consequences of being tied to the family of a 'class enemy' were too serious."¹⁰³ Because of this "subconscious self-censorship," she never fully allowed herself to completely fall in love with this man. Soon they became alienated and drifted apart.

Jung Chang's "rebuffed lover" was not the only one who suffered dejection in this way. Some people were left with little choice but to abstain from marriage because of fear due to their family labels.¹⁰⁴ They might well have been highly intelligent, hard working, "and the most refined young men around. Their gentleness and gracefulness [may] set them apart. However, in spite of all their good qualities, still no girls" would want to marry them.¹⁰⁵ In *Son of the Revolution*, Liang Heng recalled how his family background ended his relationship with his first love. He recalled the following conversation he had with his girlfriend in 1974:

"I've loved you for such a long time, I whispered.
 "I know," she nodded.
 "I was afraid, I said. "Your family won't agree."
 "What makes you so sure?"
 "Reality. Life. My fate."
 "Nonsense"
 "Everyone at the factory says you're my girlfriend. They tease me."
 She laughed. "They're right."

¹⁰³ Chang, 450.

¹⁰⁴ Feng Jicai, *Voices From the Whirlwind* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), 52.

¹⁰⁵ Chang, 421-2.

"But if they knew your background they'd never believe it.

What's the advantage in your being with me?"

"Advantage?" She asked. "I love you and you love me, isn't that enough?"¹⁰⁶

Unfortunately for Liang and his girlfriend, love was not enough to overcome the family background problems, and their relationship soon ended. For some young suitors, the revolution came before their personal relationships.

When revolutionaries did fall in love, according to Rae Yang, in her memoir, Spider Eaters, "they loved with their hearts. They didn't even touch hands." No flowers were to be given. No serenades were to be presented. Gifts to each other had to be practical or they would be seen as "bourgeois." Items such as woolen socks and farming sickles (which would assist in the Party's cause), would be given as expressions of love. Pre-marital sexual relations, as well, were considered "bourgeois," and revolutionaries were immune from such "bad" habits. Rae Yang further stated that young people "did not have sex or even think about it...only the bad guys were interested in it. Revolutionaries had nothing to do with it."¹⁰⁷

In a 1979 letter to the editor of a Shanghai newspaper, Zhang Shan recalled how, as a Red Guard, she had gone around with clubs, sticks, and leather belts to chase "away all the young couples who were courting beneath the light of the moon among the flowers." She would yell, "Get out of here! Stinking hoodlums! Stinking perverts!" She regarded love as a "detestable sentimental petty-bourgeois emotion, a degenerate activity

¹⁰⁶ Heng, 252.

that must be strictly banished from any revolutionary experience." She even thought that the very word "love" was in itself "the vocabulary of hoodlums, that it was [a] polite euphemism for sex, for lewd, degenerate, corrupt, evil behavior, a word that a revolutionary would never use." Later, when sent to the countryside she organized and led an "anti-heart battle" waged against any couples or lovers, wherein she spied on them, went through their private belongings looking for "secret" clues, and criticized the "guilty" couples.¹⁰⁸

The Party, after all, became the new patriarch of the nation and the one to bestow all privileges. It became an obligatory procedure for people to request "permission to 'talk about love' with a view to marriage," from the Party.¹⁰⁹ After a background check, the application to marry was either approved or denied by the Party.¹¹⁰ In the 1950 Marriage Law, the Party set the minimum age for marriage at 20 years old for men and 18 for women. During the Cultural Revolution, however, the recommended age by the Party rose as high as age 32 for the men and 28 for the women.¹¹¹ Many followed these recommendations. As Anchee Min recorded in *Red Azalea*, "A good female comrade was

¹⁰⁷Yang, 136, 251.

¹⁰⁸Zhang Shen in a letter to the Editors of *Renmin Chubanshe*, reprinted with the title "From 'Beating the Mandarin Ducks' to the Search for Love" *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 14:2 (1981-82), 11.

¹⁰⁹Chang, 463, 127.

¹¹⁰Margery Wolf, *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 149.

¹¹¹*Ibid*, 145-50.

supposed to devote all her energy, her youth, to the revolution, she was not permitted to think about a man until her late twenties, when marriage would be considered."¹¹²

Another "rusticated" youth recalled how she felt that the Party's direction on postponing marriage meant the later the better, "and not to marry at all is by far the best." She felt that "it is entirely improper for young people in their twenties to think about individual problems. For the present, we shall not look for mates, shall not talk about love. These are the demands of the present situation, demands of the times, demands of the revolution." This, she felt, "was what distinguished those who were wholeheartedly for the revolution from those who were only half-heartedly for the revolution," and that it "distinguished the thorough revolutionary from the 'half-baked' revolutionary."¹¹³

If a couple were to marry "before the appropriate age, they would indicate to the political leadership of their [work] unit their lack of concern about society's welfare."¹¹⁴ This often led to a denial of advancement to higher-status jobs. For those from the city who married while working in the countryside, permission to return to the city was denied. For those who waited until the "appropriate" age to marry, housing, furniture, and other necessities, were often provided by the government. It is obvious that being loyal to the government, for some, had its advantages.

Another thing that Mao and the CCP changed (and controlled) during the Cultural

¹¹²Min, 64.

¹¹³Zhang Shen, 12.

¹¹⁴Wolf, 150.

revolution, was the marriage ceremony itself. Mao and the Party instituted a "frugal approach to weddings," which, in traditional China, had been the occasion for huge expenditures. Lavish ceremonies and feasts were now considered "show-offishness" and in the spirit of the "capitalist" class. People were now required to show restraint by having a simple, lively, frugal, and enjoyable ceremony, presided over by the Party branch or League branch of the production brigade.¹¹⁵ On the day of the wedding there was usually a very small wedding ceremony (if one at all), a small dinner (no feasts), and gifts presented to the bride and groom such as Mao portraits, Mao buttons, or Mao's collected works.¹¹⁶

A story published in China Youth in 1966 illustrated the desire of a young woman to follow the new Party line of frugality. She did not want a lavish wedding nor an expensive dowry. Instead she replied, "If I bring any dowry at all it should be revolutionary ideas and several farm tools." She was held up as an example of a true revolutionary.¹¹⁷ After a brief ceremony, newly married couples would then simply collect their wedding certificate from the Party, and go back to work. Honeymoons, like pre-marital sexual relations, were considered "bourgeois."¹¹⁸ It would appear that Mao and

¹¹⁵Lu Yang. "The Correct Handling of Love, Marriage, and Family Problem's" In *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 1:3 (1969), 32-36.

¹¹⁶For a fabulous visual example of these "revolutionary" gifts and marriage ceremonies, see Zhang Yimou's movie, *To Live* (1992).

¹¹⁷Kao Shou-ch'eng. "Getting Married Without a Dowry and the Bridal Sedan Chair" *China Youth* 2 (Jan. 16, 1966).

¹¹⁸Chang, 132, 425.

the CCP were successful in achieving complete dedication and support for his cause among the young adults. But were they?

SUBVERSIVE BEHAVIOR

*The worshipped destroyed
the worshippers
by killing their souls¹²⁸*

The "ideal socialist man," which Mao and the Party envisioned for the youth, "was a completely self-sacrificing individual quietly performing drudgery for the construction of socialism."¹²⁹ But did Mao and the Party's efforts to channel the young adults' loyalty into following the Party line? For many, as discussed earlier, they did. It is questionable whether or not they, like the children, followed the guidance of the Party out of loyalty, fear, peer pressure, or for other personal reasons. Paradoxically, during this time of repression and chaos, the lack of guidance afforded many opportunities for "freedom" to flourish like never before among these young adults.¹³⁰ One former "revolutionary" Red Guard recalled the Cultural Revolution as a time of unparalleled freedom and power. He testified:

To us teenagers, this was a period without parental control, without school control, without party control. We teenagers became our own masters. We discussed politics with the nation's top leaders when we were still in their favor. When we were out of their favor, we became traveling performing artists. We became newspaper and magazine publishers. We became banned-book readers. We became listeners to forbidden Western music. We became writers of taboo literature. We tried our first romances. Except for a minority

¹²⁸ Peng Jie, *Ten Years of Madness*, 125.

¹²⁹ Chen, 63.

¹³⁰ Peng Jie, *Ten years of Madness*, 40.

YOUNG ADULthood DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION:
SUBVERSIVE BEHAVIOR

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¹¹⁹Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 125.

¹²⁰Chan, 63.

¹²¹Feng Jicai, *Ten years of Madness*, 40.

of people, I believe everybody had a good time somewhere,
sometime, during the Cultural Revolution.¹²²

The chaos of the Cultural Revolution, ironically, created a lack of guidance and parental or party supervision which freed up the students' time to pursue their own interests.

According to Jung Chang, much of her free time during the Cultural Revolution was spent with her friends. She recalled:

The only action the three of us stirred up was the attention of
some young men from the now defunct factory basketball team.
We spent a lot of time strolling on the country roads together,
enjoying the rich evening scent of the early bean blossoms.¹²³

With the lack of adult supervision, many were able to pursue opportunities for personal relationships which had not been afforded previously. Jung Chang went on to say that, "we would meet frequently in the home of one or another of us, and linger there for the whole day, and often into the night as well, having nothing else to do."¹²⁴

Like these young adults, many others used their unintended "free time" to pursue their own interests. In 1966 Mao gave an order that all the youth who wished to come to Beijing could do so for free. So, in accordance with Mao's directives, the whole transportation system in China became free for awhile. In addition to the free train tickets,

¹²²Luo Xiaohai quoted by Anthony Spaeth in "Casualties of the Cause: Celebrated, feared and later discarded, the Red Guards paid for their zealotry. But many survived," *Time International* 147:20 (May 13, 1996).

¹²³ Chang, 364. For non-memoir research on additional "non-politically-correct" reasons for youth participation, see Susan I. Shirk's *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) and Jonathan Unger's *Education Under Mao: Class Competition in Canton Schools, 1969-1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

the youth were also to receive food and accommodations wherever they went.

Consequently, millions of young people used the permission to travel and free train fares as an excuse for personal vacations and sightseeing.¹²⁵

During the travels to "make revolution," there were many opportunities which arose to find romance. Despite the fact that these actions were considered "bourgeois" and actively discouraged, examples can be found throughout the memoir literature. One group of students took "revolutionary action" (a euphemism for beating someone up in the name of the revolution) against a young lady because "she had met her husband on a bus. They got to chatting, and fell in love. Love arising out of a chance meeting was regarded as a sign of immorality" and considered following a bourgeois lifestyle.¹²⁶ However, these "chance meetings" were extremely frequent during the Cultural Revolution, resulting in many love affairs and marriages.

On the roads to the countryside work farms, work trucks would often pull over to pick up the young people walking to the farms (or prevalently the girls, as the truck drivers were predominately men). Jung Chang recalled, "From the lucky female hitchhikers, there were a few reports of rape, but there were many more reports of romance. Quite a few marriages resulted from these journeys."¹²⁷ Instances of rape, however, were widespread among the urban youth in the countryside work camps. It has

¹²⁵ Zhu, 40. Also Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 11.

¹²⁶ Chang, 294.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 397-8.

been reported that in some camps, as high as 80% of the "rusticated" young women were raped.¹²⁸ Consequent to the chaos in the cities, stories of rape, especially by gangs, were also rampant. According to Zhu Xiao Di, the most notorious case happened in Shanghai where a group of high-ranking officials' sons were involved in group rapes in their luxurious homes.¹²⁹

Mao's and the Party's plan to send an estimated seventeen million youth to the countryside also produced unintended results. Whatever flame of excitement the young people had when embarking for the countryside was quickly extinguished by the realities of rural life. What the youth found was hardship, boredom, and home-sickness which in turn debilitated their revolutionary zeal. The youth were supposed to be re-educated by the peasantry, however, many realized, as one man stated, that "the peasants didn't want anything to do with us. We couldn't understand their dialect. And they said we were lazy; they blamed us for consuming their food without earning our share."¹³⁰

These youths, born and raised in the cities, had neither the tools, experience, nor the capacity for the work which was required of them. They quickly discovered how backward and primitive rural China was. Although the traditional ritual practices of Confucianism, Shamanism, and Buddhism, were strictly prohibited, the peasants still held onto these deeply entrenched beliefs (obviously not what the young people were supposed

¹²⁸ Thomas P. Bernstein, *Up To The Mountains And Down To The Countryside: The Transfer of Youth From Urban To Rural China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 156.

¹²⁹ Zhu, 225.

¹³⁰ Butterfield, 185.

to be learning from them). For example, if someone "was ill, family members would toss their best food into a 'sacred' valley." This sacrificial food was to appease the demons who sought to take the sick person's soul.¹³¹ Other traditions, such as these, remained with the peasants throughout the Cultural Revolution. This backwardness was shocking to the rusticated youth, who had been told throughout their lives of the progress the CCP had made in the countryside. One young man in an interview with Feng Jicai, stated, "It was a blow to my sacred feelings toward the revolution. I was deeply hurt. My mind was full of question marks."¹³²

Many youths also came to the realization "that regardless of how loyal they might be to Mao and to the Party, and regardless of how sympathetic they might be toward the peasants, even in the long run they were not going to reform the countryside of China."¹³³ The practices in the cities of using pens, posters, and debates to transform society, were not going to be effective in the countryside. According to Chihua Wen, author of The Red Mirror, upon reflecting on his time in the countryside, stated:

All the idealistic fervor of the Red Guard units and the Propaganda Teams for Mao Zedong Thought faded under the relentless sun and endless fields of wheat and rice. In the face of such a tough reality, Mao's once-

¹³¹ Wen, 113-4. This chapter also contains an interesting story of how a "rusticated" young man would steal this sacrificial food in order to survive.

¹³² Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 12. These sentiments helped spark a "revolution" in the Chinese film industry in the 1980's. Examples include, *Yellow Earth*, *King of Children*, and *On the Hunting Ground*.

¹³³ Wen, 27.

powerful ideology seemed vapid.¹³⁴

The young people realized that the first priority of the peasantry was to feed himself and his family. This perceived extreme selfishness of the peasants was very surprising to the youth.¹³⁵ The youth, however, quickly learned that in order to survive in the countryside, they, too, would have to be selfish and make food their first priority.

In addition, the practice of sending youths "down to the countryside," like the closing of the schools and free access to transportation, created many opportunities for romance. Rae Yang, who as previously mentioned was very adamant in asserting that the revolutionaries had nothing to do with romance and sex, "achieved" both while working in the countryside.¹³⁶ Premarital sexual promiscuity among the urban youths in the countryside was a common occurrence. Jung Chang also recalled, that "in the evenings, under the starry vault of the sky, the paths between the paddy fields were frequented by young couples. Romance bloomed."¹³⁷ According to one "rusticated" young man:

Since we had lots of spare time, love came to occupy our lonely hearts. We found a secret path behind the tents that led to the forest. This became the place for young lovers' rendezvous. We lovingly called it the "Ho Chi Minh Trail." It was covered by young birch trees, winding all the way through a piece of grassland with blooming flowers. It was so beautiful, quiet, and secret that many young lovers, with

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 28.

¹³⁵Chan, 54.

¹³⁶Rae Yang, 245-60.

¹³⁷Chang, 411. See also Bernstein, 340.

trembling hearts, left their footsteps there.¹³⁸

Red Guards, themselves, were often involved in sexually promiscuous relationships.¹³⁹

The consequences if they were caught could have been devastating. The person's political and employment future could be ruined. They would be viewed as "counterrevolutionary" and "following the bourgeois line." They could be abandoned by society and could become a disgrace to their family. Some were even punished by death, as Anchee Min related.¹⁴⁰ Yet, as the memoirs attest, these risks were taken time and time again by young couples. Indeed, what does this demonstrate about the loyalty and devotion to Mao and the Party that was so desperately sought after? Was Mao any more successful in achieving complete loyalty, as reflected among marriage adults?

offered this advice for revolutionary couples:

Marriage is an important affair in our lives. Therefore, in dealing with this problem, we young people must adopt a solemn attitude and act in the spirit of Communist morality, just as we do in dealing with revolutionary tasks [and] adopt the proletarian concept of morals. [They have] cultivated such great qualities as solidarity, mutual aid, organizational ability, disciplinarian quality, progressiveness, demand for common ownership of property, opposition to all exploiters, fighting spirit, and firm resolution.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Dr. Keife's article, "On the Question of Family" in *Shen Ribao*, (26 Feb. 1959) reprinted in *Survey of the Chinese Mainland Press* (1961), 1.

¹³⁹ Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 23.

¹³⁹ Zhu, 147.

¹⁴⁰ Min, 65.

ADULTHOOD DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION: NORMATIVE BEHAVIOR

*We, Communists, are determined to destroy
the old family system and build a new one.
We stand for the abolition of the irrational
patriarchal system inherited from the past
and for the development of family life in
which there is democracy and unity. This stand
has been warmly received by the masses.*¹⁴¹

Once married, a couple's relationship was supposed to be grounded in the politics of the revolution. After all, for revolutionaries, the "love between a husband and wife [was] built on common political thinking and on the foundation of struggling for the revolutionary cause."¹⁴² This was to be an undisputable and unchanging principle for revolutionaries. Shortly before the Cultural Revolution began, Liu Shaoqi, a Party leader, offered this advice for revolutionary couples:

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¹⁴¹Du Kefu's article, "On the Question of Family" in *Jilin Ribao*, (26 Feb 1959) reprinted in *Survey of the Chinese Mainland Press* (1961), 1.

¹⁴²Croll, 83.

¹⁴³Liu Shaoqi. "The Class Character of Man" quoted by Yu Ming, "We Must Adopt A Solemn Attitude Toward the Problem of Love and Marriage" *Survey of the Chinese Mainland Press* (Feb. 8, 1957): 1466.

As such, the husband and wife were to encourage the spirit of hard work and conscientious study in politics, and apply moral qualities in the marriage and family so as to develop a happy revolutionary home.

The husband and wife were expected to carry out a "struggle" against all behavior found in the home, that was detrimental to the interests of the state and the people. Therefore to avoid "bourgeois individualism," couples must follow the appropriate political principles to criticize and educate a failing loved one, and to wage an uncompromising struggle against incorrect thinking.¹⁴⁴ Although the question of love was officially considered a matter of one's own private life, it was believed to be linked to the interests of the whole society. If a couple's love was not established on a foundation of progressing and striving together for the enterprise of socialist construction, then it was felt that their love would inevitably come to a standstill.

The Cultural Revolution became a test to see how loyal married couples were to Mao and the Party. To discover this, husbands and wives were often pitted against one another. They were to criticize, expose, denounce, and avoid their spouse if they were considered "anti-revolutionary" (bad elements, rightists, capitalists, revisionists, reactionaries, etc.). Many obeyed Chairman Mao. Once their spouse was "exposed," clear lines of demarcation were to be drawn between them. This was the only way for spouses to demonstrate their own innocence and loyalty to Mao and the Party. A common justification for the denunciation of a loved one is related by one woman, who,

¹⁴⁴Chen Chi. "What is the Cause of the Breakdown of the Marital Relationship of Lo and Liu?" in *Chinese*

when faced with the decision to remain loyal to Mao or to her spouse, stated, "All I could say was that this was a revolution, that we must support this revolution, because it was Chairman Mao's revolution, and Chairman Mao was always right."¹⁴⁵

Divorce was commonly used by both the husbands and wives to prove their complete separation from their "counter-revolutionary" spouses.¹⁴⁶ Rae Yang, told of how her aunt (Shenshen) reacted when her uncle was labeled a "counter-revolutionary." As soon as Shenshen found out, "she went straight to the district court and asked for a divorce. As divorce was considered a revolutionary act, the court soon approved it." Yang later said that, Shenshen "did this on her own free will," and that "nobody put pressure on her."¹⁴⁷ People like Shenshen were praised for taking such firm "proletarian" stands. They were held up as examples of those who were truly loyal to Mao and the Party. One estimate declares that as many as 90% of those who were imprisoned for political infractions, were eventually divorced by their spouses.

Such praises were not only for those who divorced "counter-revolutionary" spouses, but for those who divorced adulterous ones, too. Gao Yuan recounted how his teacher who, "as soon as his wife's unfaithfulness became known, put up a poster saying

Sociology and Anthropology 8:3 (1975): 47-50.

¹⁴⁵ Anne Thurston, *Enemies of the People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 185.

¹⁴⁶ Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 73. Also Gao Yuan, 223.

¹⁴⁷ Rae Yang, 47.

that he would have nothing more to do with her. The next day he filed for divorce."¹⁴⁸

Some people went insane or committed suicide after they found out their loved ones had deserted them, and "some people came out of prison with the wife divorced, children taken away, houses occupied, and the ex-wife now living with the person next door."¹⁴⁹

This merely added salt to bleeding wounds and frost on top of snow.¹⁵⁰ Mao himself declared, "Revolution is not a dinner party."¹⁵¹

Some adults coerced their children as well to band together and gang up on the "counter-revolutionary" parent. These children's parents were often commended for such revolutionary behavior. Even death could not quench some people's desire to avoid their "guilty" spouse at all costs. An example of this is drawn from Gao Yuan's Born Red. Gao relates the story of how his Vice Principle, Lin Sheng, committed suicide after he was accused of being "Anti-Party." In an attempt to show their disapproval of Lin, Gao recalls, "Lin's wife and children refused to come to the funeral, saying that they wanted to cut off all relations with this Anti-Party element."¹⁵² Jung Chang recounted the story of her friends divorce, "While he [the friend] was in prison, his wife had been forced to denounce him, and had changed the surname of their children from his to hers to

¹⁴⁸Gao Yuan, *Born Red* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 80.

¹⁴⁹Feng, *Voices From the Whirlwind*, 106-7.

¹⁵⁰Rae Yang, 48.

¹⁵¹Gao Yuan, 79.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 59.

demonstrate that they were cutting him off forever."¹⁵³ Loyalty to Mao and the Party over and above loyalty to one's spouse and family was expected.

In addition, parents were supposed to be good examples to their children by demonstrating their loyalty to Mao from the moment they woke up till the time they went to bed. In the morning they were to lead the family by standing in front of their picture of Chairman Mao, reciting some of his quotations, wishing him a long, long life, and "getting instructions" for the day. They were also to lead the family in the discussion of Mao Zedong recitations. They were also encouraged to sign songs praising Mao and to dance the "loyalty dance" to these songs.¹⁵⁴ In the evening they were supposed to "report back" to Mao's portraits.¹⁵⁵ But did the adults follow Mao out of complete loyalty?

¹⁵³ Chang, 451.

¹⁵⁴ Zhu, 81-2

¹⁵⁵ Gao Yuan, 318.

ADULTHOOD DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION:
SUBVERSIVE BEHAVIOR

*That which is not destroyed
by the ten year holocaust
will endure forever¹⁵⁶*

With the previous examples of husbands and wives found betraying each other in the name of the revolution, it would appear that Mao had succeeded in achieving the ultimate loyalty of the people. Marriage and divorce would appear to have become a public and political issue. The question that must be asked is whether or not these individuals, like the children and young adults, followed out of loyalty to Mao or for some other reason. If a person is forced (or severely coerced) to divorce and they finally gives in, can that be interpreted as a sign of loyalty to Mao?

In Wild Swans one woman was forced to denounce her imprisoned spouse and then changed the surname of their children to hers "to demonstrate that they were cutting him off forever."¹⁵⁷ As soon as he was released from prison, however, they were immediately reunited. Rae Yang's aunt, who had also divorced her husband, remarried him as soon as he was released from prison.¹⁵⁸ Although both women were legally divorced, they upheld traditional fidelity and remained devoted to their husbands. These women did not act out of loyalty to Mao, but merely said what they needed to say to

¹⁵⁶Feng Jicai, *Voices From the Whirlwind*, 116.

¹⁵⁷Chang, 451.

¹⁵⁸Rae Yang, 47-8.

protect themselves and their children.¹⁵⁹ In fact, parents often told their kids to follow party line to keep them out of harm.¹⁶⁰ And although they followed the policies of kneeling before Mao in the morning and at night, some parents continued to pray to Buddha under the guise of "praying" to Mao.¹⁶¹

Tricks and schemes were often used to get people to divorce their spouses, as Feng Jicai related in Voices from the Whirlwind.¹⁶² Those in charge of the prisons went to a lot of trouble to do this in searching people's backgrounds and getting friends and relatives to cooperate. They promised many things to those who would cooperate, including new jobs, houses, Party membership, and possibly a new spouse. Those in jail were in turn told that if they did not confess to their "crimes", their families would desert them.¹⁶³ One woman, whose husband was labeled a spy and a "counterrevolutionary," for speaking out and for having overseas relatives, was pressured by a local Party secretary to get a divorce. She was told that her husband was an enemy of the people and that he did not deserve her love. She was warned that if she did not divorce him, then she would be viewed as supporting the enemy, and actions would be taken against her. It was then explained that the masses would support her in her decision to denounce her spouse. In

¹⁵⁹Gao Yuan, 156.

¹⁶⁰Wen, 141.

¹⁶¹Feng, *Voices from the Whirlwind*, 114-16.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³Chang, 347.

the end, she divorced her husband and married another, although she said she always regretted her decision.¹⁶⁴

It is clear that many were "sailing with the wind in order to survive," as Gao Yuan testified.¹⁶⁵ A desire to protect oneself, one's spouse, and one's family rather than loyalty to Mao seems to have been the key. In asserting this, I do not say that all were not loyal to Mao. Many were loyal. I do propose, however, that many (if not most) followed "orders" for personal reasons. Some were tricked and therefore cannot be regarded as obeying out of loyalty. Some simply saw this as an opportunity to get out of an undesirable marriage. Most followed orders out of fear or out of a desire to protect themselves and their loved ones. They simply bent, like the famous Chinese "bamboo in the hurricane" analogy, along with Mao and the Cultural Revolution.

By far the most impressive thing that happened during the Cultural Revolution was that many in the face of the most heated opposition withstood the pressures to give in to the Maoists and remained loyal and devoted to their spouses. In some cases, everything possible was used to break up the strength of the family and marriage union. The couples were "struggled" against and told to make self criticisms. They were beaten, their homes were destroyed, and their privacy was invaded. They were separated through imprisonment or relocation in the countryside to be "retrained" through hard labor with the peasants. Other family members, friends, and neighbors denounced them and ignored

¹⁶⁴. Wolf, 91.

¹⁶⁵. Gao, 293.

them. Hospitals would not treat them. Post offices would not deliver their mail to them. All the evils of the Cultural Revolution worked together to divide many couples.

Temptation to give in (at least with their lips) and deny devotion to their spouses was extremely widespread. Yet many resisted. Rather than pulling them apart, as would be expected, the Cultural Revolution paradoxically brought many husbands and wives closer together. Heart-warming stories of couples who made it through the Cultural Revolution with their love intact are found throughout the memoir literature. Perhaps the greatest example of this is found in Voices from the Whirlwind. In this collection of oral histories of personal accounts, Feng Jicai interviewed a couple that was separated for ten years because of the Cultural Revolution. The husband, after only sixty days of marriage (and his wife already pregnant), was "discovered" as being a "counter-revolutionary." Within days of this discovery, he was severely beaten in front of his wife, and then imprisoned.

During the interview with Feng Jicai, however, the husband focused predominately on the sorrows that his wife had to endure during his absence. While he was locked up, their apartment was ransacked and looted six times, leaving nothing but the bare mattress to sleep on. Some of the looting came from neighbors, who saw this as an opportunity to snatch prized possessions. Money became scarce, as well, because no one wanted to hire this "counter-revolutionaries" wife. Neighbors and relatives also ignored and avoided the wife and her new baby, which only added a new dimension of hardship to her problems. Frozen water was the only "food" they had to eat on some occasions. On top of this,

during the man's time in prison, his wife was only allowed to see him for fifteen minutes a month. Under these circumstances of loneliness and poverty the wife was encouraged many times, by a Party representatives, to divorce her husband. One Party representative, in turn, wanted the woman to marry him.

During the interview with Feng Jicai, the woman was questioned about the reasons for her unwavering loyalty and devotion to her spouse under such grave circumstances. She replied that she remained faithful to him, and was able to survive the "ten years by recalling our happy times during the honeymoon, my trust in him, and counting the 3,650 days one by one."¹⁶⁶ It is no surprise that this man (as he asserted to in the interview), and many other husbands in similar circumstances, gained a greater love for, appreciation of, and devotion to their wives. As Jung Chang's grandmother testified, "If you have love, even plain cold water is sweet."¹⁶⁷

Many couples, like the one just mentioned, were separated by great distances and for long periods of time. In some families, husbands were sent away to work camps in other parts of the country, thousands of miles away, and allowed a short "marital leave" (12 days in most cases) only once a year. As Nien Cheng recounted in Life and Death in Shanghai, many "children grew up hardly knowing their fathers, while women faced the dual responsibility of bringing up the children single-handedly and holding down

¹⁶⁶ Feng, *Voices from the Whirlwind*, 110.

¹⁶⁷ Chang, 155.

demanding jobs."¹⁶⁸ This spatial separation of husbands and wives was used extensively as a "divide and conquer" method. Isolation, for many, was often harder to bear than the torture, hunger, or humiliation inflicted in the name of the revolution.¹⁶⁹

Some couples who were sent down to the countryside to different camps, like the children discussed earlier, took many risks in order to see each other. As Yang Jiang relates in Six Chapters from my Life "Downunder", she and her husband created many opportunities to see each other, because of the proximity of their camps. They risked severe punishment by finding excuses to travel the distance to spend a few minutes with each other or occasionally sharing a meal together.¹⁷⁰ Their love, devotion, and loyalty to each other enabled them to overcome the pressures to conform to Mao's ideology and desires. As such, they risked their own lives. In doing so, these couples and families often became closer and more devoted to each other. These were obviously unintended result of Mao's policies during the Cultural Revolution.

¹⁶⁸ Cheng, 418.

¹⁶⁹ Feng, *Voices from the Whirlwind*, 174.

¹⁷⁰ Yang Jiang, *Six Chapters from My Life "Downunder"* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), 56. For a memoir dealing predominately with the phenomenon of families growing closer together because of the Cultural Revolution, see Wu Ningkun's *A Single Tear: A Family's Persecution, Love, and Endurance in Communist China* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993).

THE AFTERMATH OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

How can we expect anyone to know the United States without understanding the effect the sixties had on all of us?

Similarly, how can we know China without comprehending the impact the sixties and the Cultural Revolution had on its politics, culture, and people?¹⁷¹

The recurrent power struggles, political turmoil, and chaos of the Cultural Revolution had a devastating effect upon the economy, and as such, prevented China from achieving significant economic progress. Recognizing this underdevelopment, Premier Zhou Enlai proposed at The National People's Congress in 1975, that "in this century, we must accomplish the all-out modernization of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology," so that China's national economy would proceed "into the front-row of the world!"¹⁷² In January, 1976, Zhou Enlai died. In September, Mao died.

In July of 1977, Deng Xiaoping was again reinstated to his position as vice-Chairman of the Party Central Committee. In August, the entrance examinations to the university, which had been abolished during the Cultural Revolution, were resumed. By December, the process of rehabilitation of the unjustly persecuted during the Cultural Revolution began and the "rusticated" youth were officially allowed to come home to the cities.

¹⁷¹ Lisa See, author of *On Gold Mountain: The One-Hundred-Year Odyssey of a Chinese-American Family* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), as quoted on the back jacket cover of *Spider Eaters*.

¹⁷² Zhou Enlai, 1975, quoted by Wen-Hui Tsai in "New Trends in Marriage and Family in Mainland China: Impacts from the Four Modernizations Campaign" in *Changes in China: Party, State, and Society*, ed. Shao-Chuan Leng (New York: University Press of America, 1989), 232.

In December of 1978, the Cultural Revolution policies of continued class struggle were officially abandoned, and the policies of "opening to the outside world" and economic reform were begun. The two fold approach of opening up to the outside world and revitalizing the domestic economy, soon became known as "The Four Modernizations" and was the key slogan of the Deng Xiaoping administration. In essence, these policies opened up China's domestic markets to foreign investment, established joint business ventures, sent students to study abroad, abolished the commune system, replaced elderly Party members in industrial management positions with younger and technologically competent new leaders, established a bonus incentive system for state employees, and allowed for the private ownership of property and the accumulation of wealth.

The result of these policies were overwhelmingly positive. The annual growth rate in the national income in the twenty-five years between 1952 and 1977 rose only 6 percent. Yet from 1978 to 1984, in only six years of Deng's reforms, it increased 8 percent.¹⁷³ As China's economy grew so did the overall living standards. Deng and the CCP often stated, that "To get rich was glorious," as it in turn would increase the nation's wealth, stimulate the economy, and motivate idlers to strive harder.¹⁷⁴ Within ten years of the Cultural Revolution, Mao's policies of isolation from the outside world, communally based development, and anti-bourgeois sentiments, had nearly done a complete about face.

¹⁷³ Tsai, 233.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas B. Gold, "Youth and the State" in *The Individual and the State in China*, ed. Brian Hook (Oxford:

With the post-Mao reforms of economic changes and outside influences in China, came also increasing demands for intellectual and ideological freedoms. In addition, there began the re-emergence of "traditional" cultural practices (also known as "backsliding") such as religious worship, marriage ceremonies, and the collection and preservation of ancient artifacts (during the Cultural Revolution considered elements of the "Four Olds").¹⁷⁵ Mao had attempted to isolate and protect China from "traditional" practices and "foreign" influences, but in reality, fostered an environment where these influences flourished in the aftermath of his Cultural Revolution.

Shortly after Mao's death and the arrest of the "Gang of Four," a "seeking roots" movement began which bitterly denounced the Cultural Revolution as the cause of many of China's social problems. In much the same way as its predecessor of the "May 4th movement" of the early 1920's, China became flooded with new waves of thought in addition to the "literature of the wounded." These poems, essays, stories, plays, novels, films, and songs were written by those who had experienced the horrors of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁷⁶ Disillusionment with Mao's and the CCP's failed utopian goals became

Clarendon Paperbacks, 1996), 190.

¹⁷⁵ Tsai, 235.

¹⁷⁶ For examples of this new literature in the wake of the Cultural Revolution, please refer to *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*, Geremie Barne & John Minford, eds. (New York: Hill & Wang, 1988). This in fact was dedicated to Lu Xun, the most famous author of the May Fourth Movement. Also see *Mao's Harvest: Voices From China's New Generation*, Helen F. Siu & Zelda Stern, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

rampant.¹⁷⁷ The Chinese, after so many years of being isolated from the outside world and enduring the absurdity of the Cultural Revolution, were ready to accept anything different. So in a very real sense, Mao actually sped up the foreign influences in China, rather than the opposite.

Some would argue that the social changes that have occurred in relation to the individual and the Chinese family, in the post-Mao era, are simply due to the results of modernization, urbanization, and Westernization.¹⁷⁸ These changes in China, as seen in the late 1970's and 1980's, however, were more the result of Mao's Cultural Revolution. I will now highlight some of these changes as seen among the children, young adults, and married adults, and then draw implications for the future of the Chinese individual and family.

¹⁷⁷ Or as Paul G. Pickowicz describes as "Postsocialism" and "Dystopia" in his article "Huang Jianxin and the Notion of Postsocialism" in *New Chinese Cinemas*, eds. Nick Browne, et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 57-87.

¹⁷⁸ Those who do follow this line of reasoning often quote William J. Goode's book *World Revolution and Family Patterns* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1963).

CHILDHOOD IN THE POST-MAO ERA:
UNINTENDED RESULTS

China won't have another Cultural Revolution.

**These days people are really
money-conscious—they'd do anything for a buck.**

**No one these days can get people all riled
up over some cause. The only way to get
people's attention these days is with money!¹⁷⁹**

The post-Mao reforms of opening up to the world, the de-politicization of everyday life, increased autonomy from direct Party control, expansion of opportunities and alternatives, and the opening up to the outside world and improved standard of living (all of which came about as a result of the destructiveness of the Cultural Revolution), have been felt by all Chinese. However, the major beneficiaries of these reforms have been the millions of children born after, or toward the end of, the Cultural Revolution.¹⁸⁰ The parents of these children, though they themselves have insisted on a "proletariat" lifestyle in appearance, have sought to provide a comfortable and "bourgeois" life for their children. In essence they want to be rich, yet appear poor.¹⁸¹ These parents by channeling so much of their energy and emotion into bringing up perfect children, have created children who, some argue, "are turning out to be selfish and spoiled monsters"¹⁸² Obviously these "little emperors" (as they are known by in China) are not, and do not

¹⁷⁹ Interview with a young man born in 1977. Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 252.

¹⁸⁰ Gold, 189.

¹⁸¹ Kam Louie. "Love Stories: The Meaning of Love and Marriage in China" in *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society, 1978-1981* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985): 79.

¹⁸² Gold, "After Comradeship: Personal Relations in China Since the Cultural Revolution," 671.

figure to be, the army of conformists that Mao envisioned and tried to create as the foundation of an egalitarian China in the 21st century.¹⁸³

Why has there been such a drastic change in attitudes concerning child-rearing in the post-Mao era? Most would argue that it is because of the "One-child" policy implemented in 1979 or because of urbanization. I would argue, however, that these changes are at least in part due to the Cultural Revolution. In fact, from 1970 to 1978, the urban fertility rate was cut in half and China's total fertility rate fell drastically from 5.8 to 2.7. In short, Chinese women, in advance of the "One-child" policies of 1979, had already significantly reduced their fertility.¹⁸⁴ Why such a drastic drop in the number of children?

To understand this we must recall the previous discussion of Mao's policies for delayed marriage during the Cultural Revolution. As these youths delayed their marriages, they in turn delayed having children. In addition, when the millions of "rusticated" young adults (now in their mid-twenties) returned to the cities they faced severe unemployment. This being the case, they could not provide financial security, housing, or similar benefits to a spouse, and as such again delayed their marriages (and in turn delayed having children), defacto.¹⁸⁵ What is evident is that the "One-child" rule, implemented in 1979,

¹⁸³Dusko Doder, "China's 'Me' Generation" *U.S. News & World Report* 105:23 (Dec. 12, 1988), 28.

¹⁸⁴Deborah Davis and Steven Harrell's "Introduction" to *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 14. For additional information, see Esther Ngan-ling Chow and Kevin Chen's article, "The Impact of the One-Child Policy on Women and the Patriarchal Family in the People's Republic of China" in *Women, the Family, and Policy: A Global Perspective* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994).

¹⁸⁵Martin King Whyte and William L. Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 149-50. I will continue the discussion of the effects of the "rustication" movement in the

merely officially sanctioned an already present national trend which began during the Cultural Revolution. Although this trend of low fertility, in absence of the "One child" policy, might have been discontinued in the Post-Mao era, the point is that it began during the Cultural Revolution and has ironically created a generation of "bourgeois" children.

Studies have shown in China that "most single-child-parents believe their child deserves whatever they have and tend to be overprotective"¹⁸⁶ Ironically, the children of the late 1970's and 1980's were in some respects more sheltered than their predecessors of the 1950's and 1960's. Those parents, who endured the Cultural Revolution, want their children to take advantage of all the opportunities for education and advancement that they themselves missed out on. The parents of these children, in an effort to enable their children to succeed, have kept them busy reviewing lessons even on Sunday (in addition to the regular 6 day school week).¹⁸⁷ As such some of these "little emperors," though spoiled materially, have described themselves as "caged birds," culturally.

Math, science, and technology, are the primary focus areas for childhood education. Noticeably absent from their childhood is the "little red book," or anything of political nature for that matter. In fact, since the close of the Cultural Revolution, there has been a steady decrease in Communist youth group enrollment. Instead of spending

next section.

¹⁸⁶ Tsui, 743.

¹⁸⁷ Xiaoyun Meng "Don't Push Us Too Hard!" *China Youth* 7:2 (March 1987): 22-23. For a wonderful story that illustrates this, see "A Hard Night," a Contemporary Chinese Story by Yu Chai Fang in *Children's Literature* 21 (Yale University Press, 1993), 135-40.

their Saturday afternoons digging wells and working for the "proletarian" cause, these children practice their studies in hopes of eventually studying abroad. In fact, those who do participate in the service projects are often made fun of. An obvious ironic twist from only a few years before. The children in the post-Mao era are focused on planning for their futures, making friends of both sexes (when not "caged"), and thirsting for knowledge. The political, communal, and egalitarian goals of the Cultural Revolution have withered away.

Public and private discussion of the Cultural Revolution, too, continues to be virtually non-existent. Scholarship on the topic faces severe restrictions and historical documents remain locked up.¹⁸⁸ As such, lack of understanding about the Cultural Revolution is prevalent among the generation born after the Cultural Revolution. In 1996, Feng Jicai, author of Ten Years of Madness, Voices From the Whirlwind, and many other collections of oral histories of the Cultural Revolution, interviewed people born after 1976 to understand their impressions of the decade of chaos. The results of these interviews are on the one hand fascinating, and on the other hand disturbing. One gentleman born in 1976 stated, "I never saw the Cultural Revolution, but it's gotta be better than we got these days!" Other young people responded that they wanted to initiate another Cultural Revolution, "because it would be something different, a new experience. It'd be fun!"¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Matt Forney and Yu Wong, "Trying to Erase a Catastrophe" *World Press Review* 43:8 (August 1996), 21. See also Forney and Wu's article "Suppressed Memories: The Cultural Revolution's Anniversary Goes Unmarked" *Far Eastern Economic Review* 259:20 (May 16, 1996), 24.

¹⁸⁹ Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 252-3.

Discussions about the Cultural Revolution, when touched upon in school, is extremely "watered down." Middle-school students can expect a single page in their history texts which skates through all ten years pointing blame at Mao and the Gang of Four. Senior highschool classes read about six pages. In addition, there are no universities in China which teach classes on the Cultural Revolution.¹⁹⁰ One young lady born in 1979 responded, "Right now we are studying the Cultural Revolution in our history class. The textbook isn't very specific--no one really understands what happened. I'm not that interested, I just want to pass the final exam." Another student born in 1979 frustrated by this lack of understanding, replied, "But what I don't understand is why people seem to avoid the topic of the Cultural Revolution. We were reviewing for our history exam, and the teacher said, 'You won't be tested on this part, don't bother preparing it.' The only thing my grandparents will tell me about the Cultural Revolution is 'You mustn't talk about these things!'"¹⁹¹

As it is still a politically sensitive issue, private discussion on the Cultural Revolution continues to remain silent. According to one father, when asked why he had not spoken about the Cultural Revolution with his 14-year-old son, the father responded, "I tell him to wait until he's older for the stories. He'll have to take a political exam to get this young man so closely represents, the generation of children born after the Cultural Revolution are nothing but Mao's 'revolutionary successors.' This is obviously not what

¹⁹⁰Forney, 20-1.

¹⁹¹Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 253, 255. See also Teresa Poole, "Mao's Frenzy of Mass Violence" *World Press* 43:8 (August 1996), 18-20.

into college. How can he pass if everything I tell him will make him fail?"¹⁹² As a result, the generation born after the Cultural Revolution has little understanding of what their parents and grandparents endured. Not only do their parents remain silent on the issue of the Cultural Revolution and its horrors, but they are also silent on politics in general. As such, a dearth of understanding of Communism itself is widespread.

Despite this lack of public and private discussion of the events of the Cultural Revolution, one college sophomore, born in 1976, had a profound grasp of the eventual results. He wisely stated:

My generation, we don't have any memories of the Cultural Revolution, so we can only use our powers of reason to think about it, without the slightest emotional involvement. My personal opinion is that there were some positive aspects of the Cultural Revolution. If the Cultural Revolution hadn't been so vicious, so out of control, so extremist, the Left would never have lost power. Today's economic reforms were really helped along by the Cultural Revolution. So the Cultural Revolution did make a contribution to Chinese history. Of course, that wasn't the original intention behind it. The effects of the Cultural Revolution were exactly the opposite of its goals.¹⁹⁴

The benefits of modernization and China's opening up to the outside world, were actually sped up as a reaction to the isolation and stagnation of the Cultural Revolution era. As this young man so clearly represents, the generation of children born after the Cultural Revolution are anything but Mao's "revolutionary successors." This is obviously not what

¹⁹² Forney, 20.

¹⁹⁴ Feng Jicai, 251.

was intended by Mao.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD IN THE POST-MAO ERA: UNINTENDED RESULTS

*In ancient times people shouted 'long live' on their knees;
during the Cultural Revolution, people shouted 'long live' on their feet.
During the May Fourth Movement, the main theme was to get rid
of feudalism and to promote a new culture.*

*However, during the Cultural Revolution, all those feudalistic
cultural traditions were revived: the monarchial loyalty, literary inquisition,
obscurantist policy, personality cult, blood lineage, and so on.¹²⁷*

At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution the vast majority of the youth (and the country for that matter) wholeheartedly believed in Mao's Utopian cause and saw participation in it as a wonderful opportunity to show their dedication. Many instances, however, began to open these young people's eyes which in turn lessened their dedication. Some of these "awakenings" came from a realization of the horrors of the Cultural Revolution and the realities of the "rustication" movement. Others became disillusioned over the confusion of the fall of Lin Biao, one of their previous heroes. For others, the party fell out of favor with the harsh reaction of the "Gang of Four" to the people's mourning of the death of Zhou Enlai. Still other youth became disheartened as they returned to the cities to find their hopes for further education, desired employment, and happy marriages again pushed aside. They soon felt that their time dedicated to Mao's cause had been in vain. They felt their lives had been sacrificed for an undesired end. They felt they had been cheated of their precious youth. The young adults became, as one

¹²⁷ Interview with this young man who was born in 1961. Feng Jian, *Two Years of Adolescence*, 233.

YOUNG ADULthood IN THE POST-MAO ERA:
UNINTENDED RESULTS

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cultural traditions were revived: the monarchical loyalty, literary inquisition,
obscurantist policy, personality cult, blood lineage, and so on.¹⁹⁵*

At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution the vast majority of the youth (and the country for that matter) wholeheartedly believed in Mao's Utopian cause and saw participation in it as a wonderful opportunity to show their dedication. Many instances, however, began to open these young people's eyes which in turn lessened their dedication. Some of these "awakenings" came from a realization of the horrors of the Cultural Revolution and the realities of the "rustication" movement. Others became disillusioned over the confusion of the fall of Lin Biao, one of their previous heroes. For others, the party fell out of favor with the harsh reaction of the "Gang of Four" to the people's mourning of the death of Zhou Enlai. Still other youth became disheartened as they returned to the cities to find their hopes for further education, desired employment, and happy marriages again pushed aside. They soon felt that their time dedicated to Mao's cause had been in vain. They felt their lives had been sacrificed for an undesired end. They felt they had been cheated of their precious youth. The young adults became, as one

¹⁹⁵ Interview with this young man who was born in 1961. Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness*, 233.

writer has termed it, "casualties of the cause."¹⁹⁶

In addition to this widespread disillusionment, there were many other unintended outcomes as a result of the Cultural Revolution. In the aftermath of these ten chaotic years, Chinese society was marked by a vast increases in juvenile delinquency, premarital sexual relations, abortions among unwed mothers, and many other social problems among the youths. Some have attempted to draw a connection between these problems and the opening up of China to the West and other Foreign influences. I believe this connection is at best incomplete, however, and rather point to the Cultural Revolution as the predominate influence.

Since the Cultural Revolution began, juvenile delinquency has increased tremendously and has become a serious concern for the Chinese people and the government. Crime statistics for juvenile offenders in Beijing, Shanghai, and four other large cities in 1965 (the year before the Cultural Revolution began) was reported to be as low as 2%.¹⁹⁷ In a report published in 1988 by China Youth, it was found that during the Cultural Revolution, juveniles accounted for as high as 50% of the criminals brought to court in China.¹⁹⁸ And from 1978 to 1988, juveniles accounted for 60 to 70% of the cases

¹⁹⁶Anthony Spaeth, "Casualties of the Cause: Celebrated, feared and later discarded, the Red Guards paid for their zealotry, but many survived" *Time International* 147:20 (May 13, 1996), 59.

¹⁹⁷As noted in *China Facts and Figures Annual* 8 (1985), 352.

¹⁹⁸Keep in mind that this does not include crimes done in the "name of revolution", such as vandalism, theft, and violence against "bourgeois" or "counter-revolutionaries." In addition, it is also highly likely that there were many "unreported" cases.

in the countryside and 70 to 80% of the cases in the cities.¹⁹⁹ In a study done by juvenile crime expert, Shao Daosheng, it was found that 65.9% of the criminal cases in 1982 were of juvenile offenders.²⁰⁰ In a speech given by Jiang Hua, president of the Supreme People's Court, he stated that juvenile delinquency was ten times higher in 1980 than in the early 1960's.²⁰¹ In other words, the proportion of crimes by juveniles was smaller before the Cultural Revolution than after it, and since the Cultural Revolution ended, it has reached a peak.

Why has this been the case in China? Some argue that it is because of the influence of the "Western decadent customs" that have entered China through literature, movies, and television programs, or that it has just been part of the modernization and urbanization processes. This argument would be more persuasive if we were dealing with the statistics of the late 1980's or 1990's, however the increase in juvenile delinquency began at the outset of the Cultural Revolution. This, as we know, was a period of almost complete isolation from foreign (and especially Western) influences.²⁰² It would also be difficult to argue that it was the influence of foreign media in the cities that caused these early juveniles to become delinquent, as access to those media influences would have been

¹⁹⁹ Gang Liang "Juvenile Delinquency in China" *China Youth* 10:6 (1988), 4-6.

²⁰⁰ Shao Daosheng's comments found in *China Daily* (7 Nov 1987) and summarized in *China Facts and Figures Annual* 11 (1988), 302.

²⁰¹ Reference made in Butterfield, 193.

²⁰² Having said this, however, I do admit that during the Cultural Revolution there was access to *some* foreign literature through the black markets, etc. This was not a widespread problem, however. Besides the books that were available in the late 1970's and early 1980's were not ones that advocated crime, sex, etc.

minimal. After all very little of anything foreign permeated China during this period of "anti-Western" and "anti-bourgeois" influence. Furthermore, how do we explain the rise of delinquency in the countryside? We would be hard pressed to find serious evidence linking the rise of juvenile crime, up through the mid-1980's, in the backwoods of China to foreign media where access to foreign television, movies, and literature was even more limited than in the cities. Yet, as the statistics show, juvenile delinquency rose both in the cities and in the countryside during and shortly after the Cultural Revolution. It is evident, that the "seeds" of delinquency were planted long before the West gave nourishment to the already fertile soil.

Rather than blaming the West, I assert that the chaos of the Cultural Revolution contributed significantly to the rise in China's problems with juvenile delinquency. It was China's youth, as we recall, who were the ones called upon to destroy the "four olds" and "bourgeois" ideology in society. The youth then, with party approval, organized themselves into Red Guard and Rebel groups which participated in destruction, physical violence, and mental torture of "bad elements." These acts of violence and destruction, combined later with disillusionment with the party, would naturally affect their future lives. Thomas Gold, a noted authority on youth in the post-Mao era, also believes that the Cultural Revolution "era of lawlessness and disrespect for authority," had a profound impact upon the rise in the juvenile delinquency rate.²⁰³ After all, Mao's teachings that

²⁰³ Gold, 186. For additional information on this see T. Gold's "After Comradeship: Personal Relations in China Since the Cultural Revolution" *China Quarterly* 104 (Dec 1985), 657-75. And also T. Gold's "China's Youth: Problems and Programs" *Issues and Studies* 18:8 (Aug 1982), 39-62.

"It's OK to rebel" and that "to rebel is justified", spread ideas of "anarchism" that deeply affected many young people. Liang Gang, reporter for China Youth, also suggested that this "anarchism" is one of the many harmful legacies that continued among the young people, and was a major cause of the juvenile delinquency of the 1970's and 1980's.²⁰⁴

In a study done in 1983, it was found that 85% of the juvenile offenders were between the ages of 18 and 25. Only 15% of the accounted crimes were committed by juveniles under the age of 18.²⁰⁵ The older age group corresponds directly to those youth who would have returned to the cities and been unemployed or dissatisfied with meaningless busywork. Disillusionment which began in the countryside, was compounded by hopelessness in the cities. Juvenile crime, then, in the post-Mao era, can be seen as merely a repetition of the "habits" which began during the Cultural Revolution.

The rise of youth involvement in crime also had a direct correlation to the influx of the millions of "rusticated" students who came back to their native cities at the close of the Cultural Revolution. This problem was compounded because of the 14 million rural people who were brought to the cities to work in the factories during the Cultural Revolution. In addition, between 5 and 7 million senior high school graduates joined the work force from 1977-81. In essence, there were not enough jobs to deal with this

²⁰⁴Gang, 4-6.

²⁰⁵As noted in *China Facts and Figures Annual* 8 (1985), 352. The chapter, "Crime and Social Order," found in *Urban Life in Contemporary China*, Martin King. Whyte and William L. Parish (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), provides an interesting commentary on crime in China's past. Essential, the rise of crime and banditry was often interpreted by the populace as a sign that the current rulers were about to lose the "Mandate of Heaven" that legitimized its rule, and that a new set of rulers were necessary to restore peace and order in people's lives. This could very easily be applied to the rise in the delinquency in the aftermath of

unexpected population surge in the cities. Often the jobs that were created for these 20 million unemployed, "youth waiting for work," were meaningless and temporary (for those lucky enough to get jobs).²⁰⁶ This unemployment and job dissatisfaction, much like tasks given during the Cultural Revolution, led to severe boredom and unusual amounts of spare time. In essence, the Cultural Revolution helped to create severe economic hardships which in turn led many to participate in crime. In essence, the Cultural revolution helped to create severe economic hardships which in turn has led to the increases in juvenile delinquency. Several films and television programs made in the 1980's, such as *Juvenile Delinquents* and *Transmigration (Samsara)*, also emphasized the social origins of this problem.

In addition, much of the crime that was committed in the cities had been gang related. The majority of the crimes committed by these gangs were theft related, although vandalism, physical violence, and rape were also not infrequent. Many argue that this is because youth were mimicking foreign novels which popularized gangs. This argument is questionable, however, because "underground" gangs and rebel groups were already prevalent during the Cultural Revolution.²⁰⁷ In addition, instances of rape and other acts of physical violence (usually performed by gangs) became rampant during the Cultural

Mao's Cultural Revolution.

²⁰⁶ Statistics from the *China Daily* and compiled in *China Facts and Figures Annual* 11 (1988), 303.

²⁰⁷ For that matter, "gangs" have been a part of Chinese tradition for many centuries. They flourished during the early part of this century, as well. See David Strand's *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

Revolution, and especially during the rustication movement of youth in the countryside.²⁰⁸

Their (re)appearance in the post-Mao era, then, should not be surprising.

These gangs were used not only as means of protection, but also for connections.²⁰⁹ In today's Chinese system, where bureaucracy and "red tape" flourish, the use of "connections" (*guanxi*) and the "back door" (*houmen*) are the preferred methods used to get results quickly. Having said this, I do not assert that those who use the "back door" are necessarily considered criminal "gangs", (though use of the "back door" is against the law). What I merely assert, is that the skills of the use of *guanxi* and *houmen* were perfected, in a large part among the youth gangs, during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution.²¹⁰ This networking of connections was used in the post-Mao era to find better schooling, housing, and employment, to achieve desired promotions and services (daycare, medical treatment, etc), and to get scarce items of indulgence and necessity. The interdependence of friends and relatives on each other, rather than sole dependence on the state, was one of the many unintended and ironic results of the Cultural Revolution.

To combat the serious problems of juvenile delinquency and as part of a drive for

²⁰⁸ Richard King, "Models and Misfits: Rusticated Youth in Three Novels of the 1970's" in *New Perspectives on the Cultural Revolution*, ed. William A. Joseph, et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 243-64.

²⁰⁹ Butterfield, 185.

²¹⁰ For additional discussion on the use of "guanxi" by the youth and their families, see Thomas B. Gold's "Youth and the State" in *The Individual and the State in China*, ed. Brian Hook (Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1996), 175-95.; Gold's "After Comradeship: Personal Relations in China Since the Cultural Revolution" in *China Quarterly* 104 (Dec. 1985), 657-75.; C. Montgomery Brodhead's, "China's Lost Generation: The Status Degradation of an Educational Cohort" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 20:3 (Oct. 1991), 352-79.

stability in the wake of the Cultural Revolution, the state promulgated China's first criminal code in 1979 and undertook a massive campaign to educate people about the law. The state also created juvenile delinquency institutes to find jobs for these troubled youth. The state also used public trials and numerous executions (many of whom were these young adults) to get their point across.²¹¹

Since 1988, partly through the effectiveness of these campaigns, but mainly as these young people have readjusted to city life through the pursuit of higher education and career advancements, there has been a significant decline in the number of juvenile offenders.²¹² This has been accompanied by the increase in the influence of foreign customs, values, and trends. The conflict then arises, if the root cause of the increases in juvenile delinquency in the late 1960's, 1970's, and early 1980's, were due to foreign influence, then it should follow that the numbers would increase and not decrease among this age group with the continued influx of foreign ideas.²¹³ This has not been the case in China, however, and therefore blame for the previous increases in juvenile delinquency can not be attributed to the West but rather to the residual affects of the Cultural Revolution.

In addition to the rise in juvenile delinquency, there was a similar increase in

²¹¹ Thomas B. Gold, "Youth and the State" in *The Individual and the State in China*, ed. Brian Hook (Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1996), 187.

²¹² Gang, 4-6.

²¹³ Blame for the relative increase of juvenile crime among those born during the 1980's and 1990's could be directed against the influx of foreign influence, but not those who grew up during and experienced the Cultural Revolution. As a side note, it could be argued, as well, that rather than the foreign influences being the cause for the rise in delinquency among these "new youth", it is the influences of the older brothers and sisters who experienced the Cultural Revolution that have had a greater impact.

openness concerning relationships between the sexes, which is also related to the Cultural Revolution. As a cartoon describing the behavior of young couples in big cities illustrates, much has changed in the discussion of courtship and marriage in China:

One in front, the other at the back,
That was in the '50s;
Walking side by side,
That was in the '60s;
Walking arm in arm,
That was in the '70s;
Walking together embracing,
That is in the '80s²¹⁴

In China, young people of the late 1970's and 1980's looked for quite a bit more than their own or older sibling's "political-based" marriages of yesteryear. As a popular poem suggests: Love should be as fragrant as flowers, as romantic as poems; marriage should be as sweet as mellow wine, as touching as lyric songs²¹⁵ During the Cultural Revolution, in the public sphere, fragrant flowers and mellow wine were associated with something shameful. Love songs were considered obscene and unbearable to the ears. Novels mentioning love (unless comrade love) and romance were considered pornographic.²¹⁶

But in the middle 1980's, according to two surveys done by *China Youth* magazine, when young people were asked "What is most important in the choice of a spouse?" the most frequent responses showed the priorities of good personality, good education, common

²¹⁴ "New Trends in Marriage" *China Youth* 7:1 (Feb. 1987), 7.

²¹⁵ Chen Qun, "New Ideas of Marriage" *China Youth* 12:2 (1989), 6.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

hobbies, and good appearance. External conditions such as political status were considerably lower on the priority.²¹⁷

During the Cultural Revolution, and shortly thereafter, a pattern was developed, where "men were overcautious, lacking masculinity; women were all-powerful, lacking gentleness and charm." Yet, Chinese young people today are disgusted by such characteristics found in political marriages, and instead, attach more importance to the other person's personality and charm when they consider marriage. Men look for beauty, graceful bearing, and sex appeal. Women, on the other hand, look for strong masculine spirit, firmness, optimism, confidence, indomitability, strong sense of responsibility, sense of humor, tolerance, and height (those below 5.5 feet are called "the disabled")²¹⁸ This focus on appearances comes as quite a surprise in relation to marriages a few years previous. With the close of the Cultural Revolution, the "ultra-left," political guideline of "taking class struggle as the key link," has been abandoned.

The widening of social contact made it more possible for both men and women to meet many people at the same time. This is termed "spread[ing] the net all over but focus[ing] on one or two." Such a method of choosing spouses was considered "degenerate" during and shortly after the Cultural Revolution, but today is widely accepted. Opportunities for China's young people to meet the opposite sex (also known as "making a friend") have increased tremendously. A popular meeting place in Beijing, is

²¹⁷ "New Trends in Marriage" *China Youth* 7:1 (Feb. 1987), 7-11.

²¹⁸ Chen Qun, 6-7.

the infamous "Love Corner," where people come with a common theme: to find love and/or a lifelong companion.²¹⁹

According to Mayfair Yang, a Chinese-American anthropologist, there was a severe dearth in the public discussion of sex during the Cultural Revolution, which in turn led to increased sexual ignorance.²²⁰ As such, in the post-Mao era, there have been many seminars created to deal with subjects such as love, sex, and marriage. Such seminars, which became fashionable among the Chinese, allowed the opportunity for the young people to ask questions, express their own opinions, and receive answers to subjects which were previously "taboo."²²¹

Magazines, newspapers, and other forms of media such as China Youth, The Young Generation, Chinese Women, and the Guangming Daily, have all focused much time and energy in discussing youth, courtship, sexual relations, marriage, divorce, and other related issues in their editorials and column's.²²² This contributed to a new sexual awareness which was reflected in new ideas toward sex by the young people. Statistics show a late-marriage trend: average age among urban young women in the 1950's was 20,

²¹⁹ Zheng Yong, "Beijing's Famous 'Love Corner'" *China Youth* 12:2 (1989), 15.

²²⁰ Mayfair Yang, "From Gender Erasure to Gender Difference: State Feminism, Consumer Sexuality, and Women's Public Sphere in China" in *Spaces of Their Own: Women's Public Sphere in Transnational China* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota press, 1998), 7. (forthcoming)

²²¹ "Speaking Out on Love, Marriage, and Sex" *China Youth* 12:2 (1989), 17.

²²² For more examples on State programs, writings, etc. on dealing with proper love relationships, see Thomas B. Gold's "After Comradeship: Personal Relations in China Since the Cultural Revolution" *China Quarterly* 104 (Dec 1985), 672.

21.5 in the 1960's, 23.1 in the 1970's, and 25.4 in 1982. This fits with young people's desires where a majority favored age 25 for men and age 23 for women as the ideal time to marry, still considerable lower than the Cultural Revolution averages.

Late marriage, however, does not mean late love. It is quite common now for Chinese young people, especially once they are engaged, to be increasingly more demonstrative in their displays of affection, and premarital sex has increased.²²³ Although these people are called "children eating forbidden fruit," many youth are quite at ease about premarital sex. A common response is, "How can we wait until we have got that legal piece of paper (marriage license)".²²⁴ Young people's attitudes toward premarital sex depend a great deal on whether the couple is in love or not. According to one young woman:

I think as long as the young couple really love each other, even if they have done something that is only allowed after marriage by law, they should not be criticized. In contrast, if the behavior is not for love, but for sheer pleasure, without consideration of the other's feelings, then it is nasty and immoral"²²⁵

Others think that this behavior does not reflect a sense of responsibility, suggesting that only by waiting until after marriage for sex can a man or woman prove that their love is sincere. With the rise in sexual relations and cohabitation before marriage, there has been

²²³ Thomas B. Gold. "After Comradeship: Personal Relations in China Since the Cultural Revolution" *China Quarterly* 104 (Dec 1985), 666.

²²⁴ Chen Qun, 8.

²²⁵ "Speaking Out on Love, Marriage, and Sex" *China Youth* 12:2 (1989), 23.

a similar rise in premarital pregnancy. With birth control policies and the continued stigmatization of unwed mothers, abortions were on the rise among the youth in the late 1970's and 1980's. According to Beijing hospital statistics, an ever increasing percentage of these abortions were being performed on unmarried women.²²⁶ Some statistics from the mid 1980's, report the number of abortion cases among this group, to be as high as 80%.²²⁷ If we take into consideration those who received private abortions or those who took precautionary measures, we begin to realize the extent of this change in sexual relations in China.

Why was there such drastic changes in marriage partner choice, sexual awareness, and sexual activity in the late 1970's and 1980's? Again, I argue the Cultural Revolution has had more of an impact upon these changes than all other forces. In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, as discussed earlier, a "seeking roots" movement began in literature. Within this literature, we begin to understand why the social changes have occurred. These changes did not occur over night, but rather began to slowly change by 1979, at a time literature began to explore many areas that had long been forbidden. In 1979, Kong Jiesheng wrote Because of Her, which depicts a man who falls in love with a teenager who is eight years his junior. Interestingly, what he finds most attractive about her is that "she is so pure, so lovable. She is more beautiful than all the girls in the world,

²²⁶Chen Qun, 8. See also Whyte and Parish, 130-1.

²²⁷Stanley Rosen, "Value Change Among Post-Mao Youth: The Evidence from Survey Data" in *Unofficial China: Popular Culture & Thought in the People's Republic*, ed. Perry Link, et al. (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989), 208.

she is like Beauty personified!" A significant change when we consider that love during the Cultural Revolution, if it were based, even a small degree, on physical attraction, was considered "bourgeois."

Kong Jiesheng's Across the River, was even more controversial when it was published. This is the story of how a rusticated young man and woman, who lived across the river from each other, became attracted to each other and eventually lovers. The theme "if one is afraid to love, one might as well be dead," comes across strongly in Zhang Jie's controversial story, Love Cannot Be Neglected. In this story, a 30-year old woman concludes that she should not accept a marriage proposal because she does not love the man. This conclusion is quite remarkable, because to most people in China, a woman unmarried at 30 was viewed as being disabled in some way. This was the first of many stories dealing with "old spinsters", who were educated youths that returned from the countryside after the Cultural Revolution.²²⁸

Other stories depicted more complex love situations which were the result of the Cultural Revolution. One such story, What Should I Do?, told of a woman whose husband was in prison during the Cultural Revolution and how she was told that he had committed suicide. After not hearing from him for three years, she married someone else. Five years later, the first husband returned. So she has two husbands, both of whom she loved.²²⁹

²²⁸Kam Louie, 70-73.

²²⁹*Ibid.*, 69.

Other stories indicate even more complex love affairs, reflected in Zhang Kangkang's Northern Lights which describes a young women's fleeting romances with three men.²³⁰ Though not considered part of the official high literature and banned, sexually evocative stories such as A Young Girl's Heart and other such erotica literature is widely read and dispersed.²³¹

Wang Anyi, one of the most prolific Chinese writers of the 1980's, wrote three novelettes, popularly known as the "Three Loves." These three: Love on a Barren Mountain, Love in a Small Town, and Love in a Beautiful Valley, all dealt with the same themes of relationships between men and women, love and courtship, sexuality, and interpretation of the roles of men and women. These stories struck familiar chords with the millions of the young Chinese who experienced the rustication movement and were part of, or had heard of, similar love stories during the Cultural Revolution.²³²

This literature, then, can be seen as reflection of already visible changes, and a reaction to the political nature of relationships during the Cultural Revolution. This decade, unintentionally, caused the young people to reject completely the policies and goals of the Maoist years. The Cultural Revolution years had been so closed to everything else in the world, that when China finally opened up in the late 1970's and 1980's, it was

²³⁰*Ibid.*, 80.

²³¹*Ibid.*, 86. (As were *The Golden Lotus* and *The Prayer Mat of Flesh* from China's past)

²³²Eva Hung, "Introduction" to the 1991 translation of Wang Anyi's *Love on a Barren Mountain* (Renditions Paperback: Hong Kong, 1991), ix-xii. All three stories are included under the one collective title of this book. For a film example of youths participating in romance, see *In the Heat of the Sun* (1988).

willing to accept anything different. As such, the Cultural Revolution, ironically, sped up a sexual revolution, and the modernization processes.

It is amazing to look at the 1980's to see such changes in Chinese society as compared to the Cultural Revolution period. Just ten years after the close of the Cultural Revolution, "the younger generation in China today is of course anything but Red Guards!"²³³ The children born during the early part of the Cultural Revolution were the same generation of youth who were the majority of the Tiananmen Square demonstrators. These young people, like their "May Fourth Movement" predecessors, sought answers to deal with China's numerous problems. As such, "The Cultural Revolution laid the foundations for China's pro-democratic movements and provided indispensable motivation for the country's reform," and also "changed the people and the Communist Party and has caused a bankruptcy of Mao Zedong's ideological system." In addition it also "wiped out a system of morality, leaving a strong sense of cynicism" and disillusionment among the young people.²³⁴ These results were obviously not what Mao envisioned for his infamous

²³³ "Youth & the World" *China Youth* 7:2 (March 1987): 17. Interview of Mark Eliot (American Journalist) while in Beijing in 1987 to indicate that the rest of the world had (at the time and still does possibly) a false impression of what young people in China were like following the Cultural Revolution.

²³⁴ Wu Zhong and Pamela Pun, "Finding Good in Evil" *World Press* 43:8 (August 1996), 21. For more discussion on these drastic changes among the young people, see Orville Schell's *Discos and Democracy* (New York: Pantheon, 1988) and *Mandate of Heaven: A New Generation of Entrepreneurs, Dissidents, Bohemians, and Technocrats Lays Claim to China's Future* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), also Jianying Zha's *China Pop: How Soap Opera's, Tabloids, and Bestsellers are Transforming a Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1995). For additional memoirs dealing with the post-Mao era and the Democracy movements, see Niu-Niu's *No Tears For Mao: Growing Up In the Cultural Revolution* (Chicago: Academy Publishers, 1995), Shen Tong and Marianne Yen's *Almost A Revolution* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990), and Li Lu's *Moving the Mountain: My Life in China, From the Cultural Revolution to Tiananmen Square* (London: MacMillan Press, 1990).

"revolutionary successors."

ADULTHOOD IN THE POST-MAO ERA: UNINTENDED RESULTS

Divorce has now become a major social issue, especially amongst our age group. There were many unhappy marriages as a result of political pressure.

My feeling is that if couples cannot get on well, why should they maintain their marriages just in name? Divorce is the way to end dead marriages. In the 1960's-1970's, people felt embarrassed to divorce, even if their marriages were unhappy."²¹³

Marital unhappiness, separation, and divorce has become an epidemic among young, well-educated urbanites in China. The picture of marital harmony that has pervaded the pages of official publications since 1949 has become a farce in Post-Mao China. The divorce rate in China has steadily increased since the close of the Cultural Revolution. The second marriage law instituted by the CCP in 1981, made the absence of love a sufficient criterion for divorce. According to the People's Daily report, divorce cases taken to court in Beijing in 1981 registered an increase of 45.7 percent over 1980.²¹⁴ Between 1981 and 1984 the number of divorce cases nearly tripled.²¹⁵ According to official statistics published in the China Encyclopedia in 1986, the divorce rate increased from 0.33 per thousand population in 1979 to 0.88 in 1985. In addition, reports show that

²¹³ A response of a 45-year-old Beijing woman in an interview with Varner, 87.

²¹⁴ "New Trends in Marriage" *China Youth* 7:1 (Feb. 1987), 11.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 241.

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²³⁵A response of a 46 year-old Nanjing women in an interview with Farmer, 87.

²³⁶"New Trends in Marriage" *China Youth* 7:1 (Feb. 1987), 11.

²³⁷Tsai, 241.

70% of these divorces have been initiated by the women.²³⁸ We must keep in mind that although one can divorce for "lack of love," there are still many restraints which prohibit many from divorcing, such as back-logs, costs, and ever present societal attitudes against these.

Spatial separation of husbands and wives due to difficulties in occupational and housing allocations has been given as one reason for this increase in the divorce rate. Another common reason is the pattern which occurs when one partner having recently been promoted through higher education or a change in occupation or migration to the city seeks a "more appropriate spouse."²³⁹ Some also argue that the rise in the divorce rate has been the natural fruit of modernization, urbanization, and the Westernization of China. Ke Yunlu, a famous Chinese writer in the 1980's, argued that the problems associated with marriage were "the natural outcome of the rapid ideological and cultural progress of Chinese society" in the post-Mao era.²⁴⁰

Although these influences may have had a greater impact upon the divorce cases of the 1990's, the Cultural Revolution, I assert, is the key cause of the increases of the 1980's. The statistics from the mid-1980's note that nearly 80% of these divorces were filed by people under 35 years of age.²⁴¹ What can be deduced from this? That age

²³⁸Ocko, 332.

²³⁹Croll, 195.

²⁴⁰Ke Yunlu as paraphrased in "New Trends in Marriage" *China Youth* 7:1 (Feb. 97), 11.

²⁴¹Tsui Ming, "Changes in Chinese Urban Family Structure" *Journal of Marriage & the Family* 51:3 (August 1989), 741.

group, also known as "third generation" youths, would roughly correspond to people born around 1950. These would have been the ones who were the active youth participants in the Cultural Revolution and also the ones who would have spent a prolonged time (many spent 10 years or more) in the countryside. If we take the average age of those married during the Cultural Revolution that would put the bulk of them married between 1972 and 1975, right in the middle of the decade of highly politicized marriages. During the Cultural Revolution when peasants and workers with high political status were officially defined as "preferential marriage mates," many intellectual and other young people with high economic status deemed it prudent to select such mates. Now that the pendulum of the status system has swung in favor of socio-economic status, they regret these matches, and as such have pursued divorces.²⁴² Some divorces have come after the "hasty marriages" of these returned "rusticated" youth. Others who married as an excuse to leave the countryside while others married as a means of obtaining scarce housing in the cities, have since divorced.²⁴³

As the opening quote to this section on marriages in the post-Mao era relates, unhappy marriages which were the result of political pressure during the Cultural Revolution, and were confirmed to be a major cause of the increased divorce rate in the 1980's. According to an interview conducted by Weiyan Farmer in 1990, another Nanjing woman who was 44 at the time of her interview in 1990, and married a peasant during the

²⁴²Croll, 195.

²⁴³Stanley Rosen, "Youth in China Today" in *China Facts & Figures* 6 (1983), 456.

Cultural Revolution, proclaimed this:

It was very naive of me to choose the wrong person, but during that time propaganda slogans such as 'Love is found in a common political faith and revolutionary purpose' were so powerful. There are many people like me who are suffering, because they based their marriage on political considerations. Now young people do not have this kind of political problem. They consider other aspects, such as economic situation and cultural level, but never political status. Now, you will have difficulty in finding a partner if you are a Party member. Society has been totally changed.

We were born at the wrong time. I am filing for divorce now."²⁴⁴

Many of these divorces, however, have come after children have been born. This, naturally, has had an impact upon the children of these previously "political-love" based and now defunct marriages.

In 1994 in Shanghai, an extremely popular mini-series called *Nie Zhai (Bastard Debts)*, was aired. This documentary of real people and real life stories, was about a group of Shanghainese people who were sent down to Xishuangbana, Yunnan province, as youths. While in the countryside these youths (assuming that they were required to stay for life) got married and had children. At the end of the Cultural Revolution, when they discovered that they could return to the cities, they promptly filed for divorce in order to come back to Shanghai, leaving their spouses and children in the countryside. The series then discussed how five of these "bastards" come to Shanghai twenty years later as young adults to find their parents (most of whom have new spouses and children who were unaware of their half siblings in the countryside). When this series showed for the first

²⁴⁴Farmer, 87. For additional examples of "political marriages" resulting in divorce in the post-Mao era, see

time, all of Shanghai watched. This television series, which dealt with the breakdown of politically correct marriages after the Cultural Revolution, was something which many could relate to.²⁴⁵

Other people have struggle with marriage in the post-Mao era because of different reactions to the Cultural Revolution. Wu Xiaojiang, a thirty-five year old man in 1987, had experienced increased independence during the Cultural Revolution while being sent down to the countryside, and struggled with sustaining a marriage in the post-Mao era. In an interview with Zhang Xinxin, he stated:

Maybe my past had molded me to be this way. During nine years in the countryside, one year working in the city, and five years of college, I had always lived in a dorm. Whatever the environment, or kinds of people in it, I would always find a little nest for myself, a nest that gave me my own psychological space. When I had to share the nest with somebody, maybe it just got too close and I Couldn't adjust.²⁴⁶

Many of Wu Xiaojiang's generation have had similar frustrating experiences with relationships and marriage. They, too, came of age during the Cultural Revolution and spent much of their time working in the countryside. Their marriages followed a period during which they had been at loose ends, fending for themselves as they labored in the countryside, returned to the cities, and then looked for work or sought entry into college.

Ocko's section "Women, Property, and Law."

²⁴⁵I would like to thank Brett Sheehan at University of California, Berkeley for bringing this television series to my attention.

²⁴⁶Xinxin Zhang, "How Come You Aren't Divorced Yet?" *Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic*, eds. Perry Link, Richard Madsen, & Paul G. Pickowicz (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989), 64. Many other examples of Wu Xiaojiang's generation and their struggles with marriage are

After returning to the cities, they all felt a strong desire to settle down, however, in life they had found that goal to be much too elusive.

Zhu Weigo, male, thirty-two years of age in 1987, also felt that the Cultural Revolution was to blame for his unhappy married life in the post-Mao era. He stated:

When we were still young, we traveled to various places, tasted all kinds of bitterness went through ups and downs of political campaigns, and saw all kinds of ugliness and cruelty. But we were never so lonely as now. When the future was full of uncertainties, we clung harder to our other half. It was no longer a struggle with the world, nor a confrontation in ideology. It was just a peaceful stroll of two people, hand in hand.²⁴⁷

After coming of age during the ten years of chaos, Zhu, like many of his counterparts, could not handle the peace in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Unfortunately this has had an lasting effect upon some marriages and families in post-Mao China.

Some of the "political" marriages of the third generation (those who married during or shortly after the Cultural Revolution began) have not ended in divorce. Over time, some of these "political" marriage relations have developed into warm and affectionate marriages.²⁴⁸ Others have opted to avoid divorce to protect the children. Many seem to follow the guidelines of a "morality of duty," as explained in the 1986 publication of China's most authoritative law journal (*Fa-hsueh yen-chiu*). According to

included in Zhang Xinxin's essay.

²⁴⁷Xinxin Zhang, "How Come You Aren't Divorced Yet?" *Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic*, eds. Perry Link, Richard Madsen, & Paul G. Pickowicz (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989), 70.

²⁴⁸Ocko, 336. (As did many Chinese "arranged" marriages in days past).

this journal, even "loveless" marriages should remain intact "because the marital relationship forms families that in turn function as units of production, of support for the young, infirm, and aged, and of education for the young." In essence, "the morality of duty treats marriage, not as an individual activity, but as a complicated relationship of rights and duties." The study then cited evidence of the rise in juvenile delinquency in America and Russia and related that rise to the increase in "broken" homes in those two countries.²⁴⁹ This subversion of individual happiness for the benefit of the children, prohibited or at least delayed many divorces in the 1980's.²⁵⁰ Others have avoided official divorces because of the high costs, social prejudice, time delays, and other annoyances associated with the process. Still others have not formalized the divorce yet live in separate residences.

Another phenomenon that these "political" marriages helped create is simply known as "a third party stepping in."²⁵¹ In essence, extra-marital love affairs have become rampant in post-Mao China. According to a reporter for the popular magazine, China

Youth:

Because of the chaotic social environment of the times, the marriages (of the third generation youth) were either distorted, very odd, fragile, or sad. Although they have sons and daughters, still they are unwilling to confine themselves within the family structure. Many are experiencing problems and

²⁴⁹Ocko, 336.

²⁵⁰Yun Yun, "Great Vibrations in Love and Marriage" *China Youth* 12:2 (1989), 14. See also Farmer, 91.

²⁵¹Zhang, 59.

uncertainties.²⁵²

Many of the third generation have sought "a compensator beyond marriage."²⁵³ Zhang Xinxin, in her article, "How Come You Aren't Divorced Yet?", discussed this trend of the "third party" in the "third generation" Chinese marriages. In her article Zhang suggested that "the outsider in certain triangular relationships is rightly viewed as one of the married couple--for example, in the provocative film title *Who is the Third Party?*"²⁵⁴ Li Lihua, in an interview with a journalist from *China Youth*, stated, "Having an extra-marital relationship is not necessarily a disgrace. Since the basis for marriage is love, one spouse should give freedom to the other when love dies out between them."²⁵⁵ This findings represent an ironic and amazing shift in belief from the political based marriages just ten years previous.

Additional studies of the post-Mao 1980's have discovered a shift in emphasis on monetary possessions at the time of marriage. Objects included in this list are: color TV's, refrigerators, tape players, washing machines, and cameras. This desire for a "cozy nest", which was scorned during the Cultural Revolution, is now a proud accomplishment.²⁵⁶

²⁵² Yun, 12.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁵⁴ Zhang, 60.

²⁵⁵ Li Lihua as quoted in "Speaking Out on Love, Marriage and Sex" *China Youth* 12:2 (1989), 18.

²⁵⁶ Chen Qun, "New Ideas of Marriage" *China Youth* 12:2 (1989), 9. For statistics and graphs of wedding ceremony changes among urban couples, see "Marriage Related Consumption by Young People in China's Large and Medium Cities" in *Social Sciences in China*, ed Qian Jianhong, et al. (March 1988), 217. See also Jonathan Unger's "Urban Families in the Eighties: An Analysis of Chinese Surveys," 38-49 and Deborah

Most, however, can not afford these luxuries on their own, and so therefore rely heavily upon their parents. Wedding expenses in the 1980's have returned to their pre-Maoist extravagance, again placing a heavy burden on the parents. In an interview by a journalist from *China Youth*, a newlywed couple discussed their financial dependance upon their parents while establishing their cozy nest. In response to a question about who paid for the wedding, the husband stated, "most of the money was our parents'. My salary each month is only 100 Yuan. I saved enough for a color T.V. set. The rest of the household things, such as a refrigerator and furniture were bought by our parents."²⁵⁷ A common practice of young couples was to request a large amount of money and gifts from the parents at the time of the wedding. Expensive wedding celebration dinners at their parents expense, usually amounted to several thousand Yuan, which was the equivalent of 40 to 80 times the average monthly income.²⁵⁸

In addition, many young couples continued to receive financial support from their parents after marriage. Housing shortage is one key problem. In a study done in 1988, nearly three-quarters of urban newlywed couples continued to live with their parents, some for several years. Inadequate social services, such as a shortage of day care for children, seriously hindered self-reliance, and most young married couples had to rely on

Davis's "Urban Households: Supplicants to a Socialist State," 66-71, both in *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

²⁵⁷ Wu Jiaqing as quoted in "Life as Newlyweds" *China Youth* 12:2 (1989), 29.

²⁵⁸ Ming, 740-1.

their parents to solve the problem.²⁵⁹ As such dependance upon one's family rather than the state has been the result.

The rise of conjugality has also been a surprising development in the post-Mao era as reflected in this story. During a cold night in the winter of 1990, Mr. Li, a 64-year-old man in a northeastern Chinese village, took his own life by drinking a bottle of pesticide. His suicide was hardly a surprise to his community because he had been fighting with his younger son and daughter-in-law, and had threatened suicide previously. According to his neighbors, Mr. Li was an aggressive person in public life and a tyrant at home. Through his talents of managing economic affairs, his family was better off than many of his neighbors. Li, however, demanded authority over every decision at home and struggled to control his own behavior (often beating his wife and children). Li, following customary practice, after his wife had passed away, moved in with his youngest son and daughter-in-law. Disputes soon raged, even eventually involving village cadres, as Li struggled to defend his position of power from his son's independent wife. In the end, Li took his own life.

During fieldwork in 1991, Yan Yunxiang investigated this tragedy to discover the reactions of the older villagers who had either children of marriageable age or who had experience in dealing with married sons. In his studies he found common agreement that the daughter-in-law had at times been disobedient, and that the husband should have

²⁵⁹ Ge Xiangxian & Zhao Yining, "An Apartment Building For Young Couples: An Access to a Better Understanding of Urban Youth" *China Youth* 8:1 (Jan. 1988), 24-26. This is also discussed in Yunxiang Yan's article "The Triumph of Conjugality" *Ethnology* 36:3 (Summer 1997).

stopped the conflict before it got out of hand. Nonetheless, seventy-three percent of the older informants (average age 48) suggested that the late Mr. Li should also be held responsible.²⁶⁰ Eleven of the informants suggested that Mr. Li was ill tempered and that his demands were reasonable. The other five agreed and added that he was unwise in continuing to live with his son after the disputes had arisen (especially because he had significant savings and could have had a comfortable retirement alone). Much, as I shall discuss, can be learned from this example about Chinese families in the post-Mao era.

This important issue, concerning where a married son's loyalty and support lies when his wife quarrels or has a conflict with his mother or father, is of concern in determining which relationship is held as more important. According to tradition, a man was supposed to stand firm by his parents' side regardless of whether or not his wife was right or wrong. In recent days, however, it is the perception of some mothers-in-law that their sons always "can find a reason for their wives to be right and for their parents to be wrong."²⁶¹ Some even argue that staying neutral in a family quarrel is the son's strategy to support his wife. There seems to be a significant breakdown of the power of extended family.

Other studies on Chinese family structures, like the one done by Yan, indicate that since the 1970's there has been a substantial increase in the number of nuclear type families and a corresponding decrease in extended and stem families. These studies include

²⁶⁰ Yan Yunxiang, 191-2.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

statistics which place the national trend toward the formation of nuclear families at around 75 percent of the total population. This, of course, has altered the traditional importance which was placed upon the father and son relationship, as well as other family relationships. In fact, these strong desires for conjugal independence, have advanced significantly the time of family division and the customary correspondence of newlyweds upon the groom's parents has lost considerable prominence. In Yan's study, by 1994, some couples did not even bother to observe the traditional custom of patrilocal co-residence at all. Immediately after their wedding they moved directly into a new house and began their independent households. Two of these were young men who were single sons in their respective families. This would have been unthinkable in China's past.²⁶²

Why the changes in family structure and filiality/loyalty? Again, some argue that these changes are natural consequences of modernization, industrialization, urbanization, and Westernization. I submit that, in addition to these reasons, they are natural consequences of the Cultural Revolution. Young men and women, in the post-Mao era, were no longer content with the Cultural Revolution "political" or traditional "basic daily necessities" type marriages. Romantic love was considered an essential requirement for a happy marriage union. There was also a strong hope for spiritual co-operation. As a result of these transformations, young people are more likely to chose their own marriage partners. A study done in Baoding, during the 1990's, has provided evidence that 87 percent of the members of the younger generations, reported that they, and not their

²⁶²*Ibid.*, 199.

parents, had made the decision about whom they should marry.²⁶³ In addition, public displays of affection have not only become more acceptable but also more visible. This is an obvious fruit of marriages based upon love and romance and conjugally structured homes. This, too, is a reaction to both the traditional involvement of the extended family as well as the invasion of the CCP into the private sphere of the family during the Cultural Revolution.

The CCP succeeded somewhat during the Cultural Revolution, at least on paper, in replacing the center of loyalty from the family to the state. However, in the post-Mao era, what we find is a reaction against both centers of loyalty with the new center on the individual and the marriage partner. Statistics that have been compiled on the increase in nuclear type families indicate that a notion of family privacy is strongly desired. Yan Yunxiang argues that in these nuclear family a couple may have more time to "develop conjugal intimacy, to be left alone, and to make decisions without parental intervention" or political pressure.²⁶⁴ Martin Whyte argues in "The Fate of Filial Obligations in Urban China," that although there has been this pattern toward nuclear households, filial duties and obligations to the parents of married couples remain intact, though somewhat lessened.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Whyte, Martin King, "The Fate of Filial Obligations in Urban China" (1997), 3.

²⁶⁴ Yan, 197.

²⁶⁵ Whyte, 8. See also Farmer, 95.

CONCLUSION

Many historic lessons were obtained through tremendous sacrifice. Such as eating food—if something is poisonous, we all seem to know it. It is common sense. But in the past many people must have eaten this food and died so that now we know better. Therefore I think the first person who ate crabs was admirable. If not a hero, who would dare eat such creatures? Since someone ate crabs, others must have eaten spiders as well. However, they were not tasty. So afterwards people stopped eating them. These people also deserve our heartfelt gratitude.²⁶⁶

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, as is evident, has had a solidifying effect on the one hand, and a devastating effect on the other upon the Chinese family both during and in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. During the ten years of chaos, Mao Zedong attempted to channel the traditional loyalty of the family to the state. Mao also sought to create individuals whose first priority was complete dedication to his cause of continual revolution. Everyone was required to put their personal lives on hold to this end. Mao used the educational system, media, and tight party control over people's lives to gain this loyalty. But he and the CCP pushed too far, and their policies often gave rise to unintended and unexpected results both during, and in the aftermath of, the Cultural Revolution. This is clearly visible, as I have shown, among the adolescents, youth, and adults.

During the Cultural Revolution, adolescent children were asked to prove their revolutionary dedication by studying Mao's teachings, rebelling against their teachers, and

by denouncing their parents. Frequently, however, these "revolutionary" actions were not inspired by pure loyalty to Mao, but rather to be accepted by their peers, or because of intense pressure from their revolutionary leaders, or the need to protect themselves, their families, and their futures.

In an effort to allow these children more time to pursue "revolutionary" activities, Mao closed down all the schools. During this time of unsupervision, however, children often found opportunities ^{to pursue} their own interests such as playing with friends and siblings. Others became involved in delinquent and gang activities. Still, others were able to spend valuable time with their parents. In an ironic twist, many of these children actually became closer and more loyal to their families as a result of the Cultural Revolution.

Similar results are found among the youth, as well. They, too, were encouraged to dedicate their lives to Mao's. To this end, they were allowed to travel freely in order to gain revolutionary experiences and to share ideas with others. In addition, over seventeen million young people were sent to the countryside to teach and to learn from the peasants through hard labor. These implemented policies, like the closing down of the schools, brought many unintended results. For one, many became sidetracked during their travels and began to use them as an excuse to vacation. Others became involved in romantic and sexual relations as a result of the lack of supervision from the parents and Party leaders. Most importantly, while in the countryside, the youth became disillusioned with adults. In addition, while in the countryside, many became disillusioned with Mao's policies and

²⁶⁶ Lu Xun (1881-1936), preface to Rae Yang's memoir, *Spider Eaters*.

realized that they were merely used as pawns in a power struggle within the Party. They soon began to form their own ideas, pursue their own desires, and create their own independence.

Unintended results of the Cultural Revolution occurred among the adults as well. Mao and the Party sought to create revolutionary marriages and families by emphasizing politics before romantic love. Mao pushed parents to be loyal to himself and the Party first, before their spouses and families. In this effort the Party pressured many husbands and wives to denounce and divorce one another. Evidence that couples did so out of this immense pressure rather than from personal convictions lies in the fact that many of those who followed Mao's call to divorce, remarried their spouses when the Cultural Revolution was over. As evidenced among the children and young adults, these spouses often followed Mao's ideals, at the time, in order to protect themselves, their children, and their futures.

Other husbands and wives stood by each other even amidst severe persecution. They often risked their own lives to stay loyal to their spouses, visit them in prison, or travel to the countryside to bring them gifts of love and affection. As such, the Cultural Revolution actually enabled these and other couples to become more reliant on, and loyal to, each other, rather than the state.

In addition to these ironic and unintended results that occurred during the Cultural Revolution, there were also many unexpected repercussions in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. This is clear among the children of the late 1970's and 1980's. The

parents of these children, who endured the hardships of the Cultural Revolution, have sought to give their children all of life's "bourgeois" comforts and opportunities that they did not have. In turn, this has created a generation of spoiled children, otherwise known as the "little emperors." These children have also been pushed heavily by their parents to succeed in academics in order to secure one of the few spots in the most prestigious schools in China. In contrast to the Cultural Revolution, these scholarly pursuits (and not political pursuits) are one of the few "tickets" to success whereby these children later can hopefully go abroad to study and receive high paying jobs. In addition, these children have in many ways been sheltered, as discussion of politics, especially about the Cultural Revolution, by their parents, schools, and the government is very minimal.

With regards to the youth in the post-Mao era, there has been similar ironic results. For one, the juvenile delinquency rate (which includes people up to 25 years of age) skyrocketed as young people were no longer "devoted" to building Socialism, but rather to disrupting social order. The increases in theft, violence, rape, and other crimes can be significantly attributed to the "anarchism" which was prevalent during the Cultural Revolution. In addition, when the youth were allowed to come back to the cities, many were unemployed and reverted to "habits" they acquired during the ten chaotic years.

In addition to the rise in the juvenile delinquency rate, there has been a drastic rise in the public discussion and awareness of romance, love, and sexuality. The ideal mate for youth in the post-Mao era was beautiful in appearance, and had a good personality, good education, good financial prospects for the future. They wanted nothing to do with the

"political-based" relationships of the Cultural Revolution. In defiance of Cultural Revolution taboos, there has also been an increase in pre-marital sexual relations which in turn has led to an increase in pregnancies and abortions by unmarried youngsters. The Cultural Revolution, on the one hand allowed opportunities for sexual relations during the ten chaotic years, and on the other hand has increased the demand for a "sexual revolution" at the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution. In addition, one of the most ironic results of the Cultural Revolution has been a generation of youth disillusioned with the political goals of "denying" oneself. Instead, these youth have placed their priorities solely upon individual gratification and in achieving their own goals.

Unintended results in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution are visible among married couples as well. For one, with the adoption of the second marriage law of 1981, China was flooded with divorce cases. The new marriage law made the "absence of love" a sufficient reason to divorce. As such, many of the marriages formed during the Cultural Revolution out of "political correctness," were quickly dissolved. Others have looked for a "compensator beyond divorce" and have participated in the huge increases of extra-marital affairs known as a "third party stepping in." In addition to these changes, the lavishness in wedding ceremonies, ruled as "bourgeois" during the Cultural Revolution, has resurfaced. This in turn with the shortage of housing and day care, has consequently led to an increased dependance upon one's family rather than the state.

The Cultural Revolution, as is evident, has had a huge impact upon the Chinese family and individual both during and in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Many

of the results are ironic when compared to what Mao's and the Party's goals were. The rise of individualism, conjugality, loyalty to one's family, and the devastating social problems of juvenile delinquency, sexual immorality, and divorce are all unintended and unexpected consequences of the Cultural Revolution. Gao Yuan, a survivor of the Cultural Revolution and author of the memoir *Born Red*, so profoundly stated, "A thing turns into its opposite if pushed too far."²⁶⁷ This has most certainly been the case in contemporary China.

²⁶⁷ Gao Yuan, 270.

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