An Analysis of Variables Affecting the Outcome of Community Correction in Contemporary China

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Abstract—**Community corrections recent development in China, imported from the West. This study intends to explore the range of factors that affect the outcome of community corrections as it exists in contemporary China. The study applies the quantitative method; a questionnaire survey was used to collect research data in Guangzhou. Demographic variables and thirteen other aspects of criminals are measured by actuarial scales via face to face interview. Results reveal that minor criminals and criminals living in old street blocks are performing much poorer in community correction than adult criminals and those living in other types of communities. Relations between probation officer and criminal take a weighted precedent impact on outcome of community corrections. The status of companions, alcohol/drug problem, accommodation, family/marital, leisure/recreation also has a significant influence on criminals' performance. It concludes that strengthening the contact between criminals and probation officer, separating criminals from friends having crime background and treating their alcohol and drug problems could greatly improve the outcome of community correction.**

Index Terms—**Community correction, risk and needs factors, survey.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the drastic social transformation coupled with a rapid rise in the crime rate in China, the criminal justice system in China has been suffering from serious problems. These include overcrowded prisons, high costs of penal corrections, an inefficient penitentiary system and loss of the more humane penal ideal [1]. In order to address these, community corrections stemming from the West as an alternative approach to incarceration [2] and as a more lenient and humane approach to punishment than imprisonment has been introduced into China since 2003. To date, it has been developed and implemented nationwide.

Although community correction as a recent practice in China has been regularly accepted and emphasized by the criminal justice system, social policy makers. Practitioners and academics in the field of community correction remain uncertain how to best utilize resources to improve social environment and mental state of criminals. The concrete risk and needs factors associated outcomes of community correction have not yet been found and demonstrated by empirical research. Notwithstanding enormous evidence and results having been deduced from empirical research on community corrections in the western countries, particularly in USA, Canada and British, the degree of validity of applying these findings into other unknown places with distinct political and cultural context is unverified. What have been tested in elsewhere should be re-tested [3] and modified to confirm Chinese settings.

Therefore, synthesizing the triangular-aspect expectations, this study rooted in a Chinese context focuses on exploring the risk and needs factors of the offenders serving their sentences in community through appropriate assessment instruments, and then demonstrating significant factor weights in order to establish a model that explains the outcome of community corrections. Moreover, knowledge and understanding of community corrections in China is fairly limited because of the nation's unique social and political history. In response to this shortage of information, this study presents an entire profile of Chinese criminals in community correction, which would guide probation officers what services are truly required for criminals and how we promote effectiveness of community corrections to reduce re-offense risk.

II. RESEARCH CONTEXT

A. Community Corrections in China

Although literature about the historical development of the Chinese justice system and community based corrections institutions exists for a long time [4], the practice of community corrections in the modern sense has been developed in China only since the government announced the policy of "Developing Pilot Places for Community Corrections" in 2003. On July 10th, 2003, the Supreme People's Court, Supreme People's Procurator ate, Public Security Ministry and Ministry of Justice together issued: "The Announcement on Developing Pilot Places for Community Corrections". This announcement defines the detailed conception of community corrections t as alternative non-custodial sentences. . It means to have eligible criminals serve their sentence in the community in lieu of in prison. The Probation officer with the assistance of relevant social groups, non-governmental organizations and volunteers, correct offenders' crime idea and behavior, reduce their recidivism risk, and finally promote the criminals reintegrating into community [5]. There are five types of community corrections mentioned in the aforementioned announcement: (1) Surveillance [1] ; (2) Probation; (3) Temporary serving of sentences outside prison; (4) Releasing on parole; (5) Depriving of political rights and serving sentence in the community [6] .

Under the above criteria, the main targets of community

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[1] Surveillance and Depriving of political rights are two special types of punishment in China. Surveillance is one of five principal punishments; Depriving of political rights is one of four supplementary punishments; while probation, parole, and temporary serving of sentences outside the prison are three concrete approaches of punishment executions.

corrections emphasize those criminals who committed a first offense and negligent crime with lower severity. Meanwhile the announcement initially designated six provinces - Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Jiangshu, Zhejiang and Shandong - as the pilot areas. Three years later, the initial areas were extended to eighteen provinces and in 2009 there were a total of twenty seven provinces implementing community corrections in China. In October 2010, the Ministry of Justice extended the community corrections in the whole country [7].

On May 1st 2011, Amendment VIII to the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China came into effect [8]. This legislation stipulates the offenders who are sentenced to surveillance, probation and parole have to serve community corrections and accept supervision and treatments in the community. As a result of nearly ten-year pilot, the constitutions of community corrections have been raised up to legal rules.

On January 10th, 2012, the Supreme People's Court, Supreme People's Procurator ate, Public Security Ministry and Ministry of Justice together issued "Provisions of Community Corrections" that have been implemented on March 1st, 2012 [9]. It could conducted that the Amendment VIII to the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China relocates the situation of community correction in criminal justice system and the Provisions of Community Corrections enables the community correction operationalization in details. The growing impact of community corrections in China is anticipated.

Referring to the official definition of community corrections conception and development courses in recent years in China, several features are summarized as follows. (1) Although the model of community corrections in China aims at both protecting community safety and promoting offender rehabilitation, it mainly focuses on treatment and rehabilitation orientation. (2) Community corrections in China is one punishment execution approach rather than an independent punishment system as the West. (3) Compared with the team of probation officers consisting of professionals such as social caseworkers, psychologists and policemen who have received special training in the western countries [10] and in Hong Kong [11] , there is serious lack of professional probation officers in China. (4) The percentage of criminals serving sentence in the community is much less than that of criminals in prison, which is just the opposite situation in western countries. According to 2001 statistic figures [12], although the total number of parolees is 23,550, the parole rate is just 1.63 percent; as well as the probation rate has gradually increased in recent years but is still about 10 percent; correcting criminals under surveillance is rarely put into effect; the number of medical parole and serving of sentences outside the prison is very limited. On all accounts, over 90 percent criminals are still incarcerated in prison. (5) the most important is the traditional methods of criminal reformation through education and labor is ineffectiveness to treat criminals, though these two criminal reformative approaches are still prevalently applied in community correction. When offenders enter into community, they would encounter various problems, such as social exclusion, housing difficulties, financial problems. These risk and need factors require professional interventions, so as

to promote the effectiveness of community correction. (6) The empirical research focus on exploring the status and situations of offenders sentencing in the community are rare. Due to social-political and legal situation in China, this group is not easily contacted

A. The Variables Effecting Outcome of Community Correction

The exploring and examining variables associated with probation outcomes is a vital interest in community correction academic and practice circles [13]. There is no agreement that the whole range of possible variables would be fully considered in one study and there is also no disagreement in criminological literature about some of the variables impacting outcome of community correction [14]. Gabor [15] presented a typology of potential criminogenic variables and this typology is the framework for discussing various predictive factors, including sex, race and ethnicity, age, personality, intelligence, socioeconomic status, criminal history, institutional adjustment, drug and alcohol use, the family, peer influences, and situational factors. Gabor assorted these predictive factors with static and dynamic types. Static factors indicate that individual exercise has no control over these variables, and therefore the variables are insensitive to changes over time. That is, the static risk factors are not caused by the offender and the scholars often refer them to "Permanent factors" that are inherent to offenders and eternal in nature , such as age at first conviction, race, gender, type of current offense, prior legally charged offenses, parental criminality etc. These characteristics of static risk factors are often the best basis for security determinations [2] and decisions on re-offense prevention.

Corresponding to static and dynamic, to some extent, risk factors relate to static predictors, such as age at first crime, previous criminal times, family criminality, as well as needs factors correspond to dynamics, such as personal distress, companions. Essentially, it is no special distinctive characteristics to discriminate the typology of offenders' risk and needs factors. Generally, these two types of factors can transform to each other and both can be entitled "criminological factors". The "needs" in risk-needs assessments often include criminogenic needs [17]. Although Andrews, Bonta and Wormith [18] in their study pointed out acute risk and distal factors, they actually discriminate predictive factors in terms of the extent that causes the criminal behaviors. Because correctional agencies are responsible for managing and treating the individual risks and needs of the offenders under their supervision [19], in this context, what risk or needs factors of the offenders are, is an essential question that requires explicit answer to conveniently classify criminal cases and appropriately allocate of resources.

B. Current Study Purposes

The categories of risk and needs factors of community correction cast a light for us to explore the offense and re-offense causes and implement relevant interventions. . Whether western experience of community corrections would prove relevant to China under a distinct political and cultural society requires that these factors be re-examined in

Chinese context. Thus, the improvements of community correction practice request empirical studies to guide and inspire the development of non-custodial punishment practice in China. The transformation of academic research from "introductory stage" to "indigenization stage" in China also requests those studies in the basis of Chinese context testing the western research findings. Moreover, country-specific studies are valuable for our knowledge and understanding of global crime correction and prevention. China as a developing country with drastic social transformation and fast economic development provides a unique opportunity to broaden and particularize these imported practices.

III. DATA AND METHOD

A. Rationale

This study focuses on exploring risk and needs factors associated with the outcome of community corrections, and construct a potential model that explains the criminals' performance in community corrections at China through a composite criminological and sociological perspectives. It is an exploratory investigation through questionnaire survey methods and supplemented by triangulation strategies. The questionnaire is designed and composed of potential domains of variables that is retrieved from a battery of risk/needs assessment instruments. The test of internal reliability (>0.7) and criterion validity (Pearson coefficients between subscales and outcome of community correction are significant positive) of the subscales is accepted. The research data that are directly collected from criminals in community corrections through self-reported interview and ethical issues are given sufficient cautious.

B. Measurements

Data were collected on fourteen aspects of criminals' (1) Criminal history, 10 items; (2) Education and employment, 10 items; (3) Financial, 1 items; (4) Family and marital, 4 items; (5) Accommodations, 3 items; (6) Leisure and recreation, 2 items; (7) Companions, 5 items; (8) Alcohol and drugs, 9 items; (9) Personal emotional, 1 item; (10) Attitude and orientation, 4 items (above subscales retrieved from LSI-R [2]); (11) Community exclusion, 5 items [20]; (12) Relation with probation officers, 8 items [21], [22]; (13) Demographic information [23]; and (14) community correction outcome [24]. Except demographic information, all of items in scales are recoded as dichotomous variables (0, 1). Accumulating items values within one subscale can get total score of subscale. Higher scores means worse situation. The scale of community correction outcome as dependent variable is measured twice within a 12 months span, which describes whether the criminal committed a new crime, paid the fine, was admonished by probation officer, or had broken the community correction regulations during their community sentence. In terms of different severity, criminal reporting " Yes" on "commit a new crime" is recoded as 4, "pay the charges" recoded as 3 , "admonished by probation officer" recoded as 2, and broken the community correction regulations recoded as 1. "No" is recoded as 0. Summing scores of four items obtains the total score of community correction outcome. Higher score means much poorer performance in community correction and the total score varies from 0 (best performance) to 10 (worst performance).

C. Sample Size

The data were collected at two steps. With cooperation from one NGO specializing working on community correction and governmental permission, by May 2010, there are 550 offenders serving their sentence in the community at Guangzhou and the study was a sampling of all of them. Sample frame was created based on the name list of eligible targeted samples; the survey lasted three months. Within this time period some criminals may complete their sentences and some criminals may enter into the community starting their community correction. Thus, the exact sampling number might differ from 550. At the first step, from June to August in 2010, criminals were interviewed after the first interview survey, there are 540 criminals finally covered in the study by the end of August 2010. These samples completely cover 12 districts in Guangzhou in terms of sample frame. 527 criminals finished filling out the questionnaire, while 13 questionnaires were rejected from data analysis due to a large number of missing values. The response rate is high (97.5%). The number of samples is satisfied.

The second step was implemented 12 months after the initial interview. In the follow-up, only criminals' outcome during the intervening 12 months were investigated. Relevant data is collected not only by criminals' self-report, but also triangulated by probation officers. However, there are 78 of 527 criminals whose months left before release are less than 12 month after the initial interview. It doesn't seem smart without careful considerations to abandon these 78 samples into final assessment. In 78 samples, the percent of respondents whose time length left from 8 to 11 months accounts for 70.5%. Considering the Pearson correlation between month left before release and current outcome of community correction is not significant ($p=0.428>0.05$) , which points out without effecting other variables month left before release of criminals has no relation with the probation outcome, this study retains criminals whose months left before release are from 8 to 11 reviewing as 12 months approximately . Finally 55 samples are still covered and added into data analysis. Therefore the final total sample size is 504 (527-78+55).

D. Data Collection Procedure

The process of data collection proceeded in four steps. Firstly, the name list of potential participants is provided by the local judicial administrative stations. Secondly, six full-time social workers were voluntarily recruited from one NGO that would like to support relevant research on community correction. These social workers receive special training on questionnaire survey prior to interview. The training course involves interpretation of questionnaire, criminology theories related to this study, principle and skills during interview and emergency response. Thirdly, the local

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[2]   LSI-R: The Level of Service Inventory-Revised

probation officer provides assistance to enable us contact with the criminals. Criminals who meet the criteria are invited to take part in the interview. Interviewers approach the targeted criminals to explain the purpose of the study and ask for their consent to take part in the study. When consent is received, the interview is started in the station. Interview is conducted in a separate room where only interviewer and criminal take face to face method to complete questionnaire interview. If the criminal does not come to the judicial administrative stations, social worker is guided by probation officer to pay a visit to the criminal's home to seek their consent. In some cases, telephone contacts are also made to seek their consent. No matter what way to contact with criminal, the social worker interviews the criminal without the probation officer present. Finally, during the interview, the interviewer assists the participant to finish the questionnaire. The participant could choose to fill out the questionnaire either by himself or by question-answer method with social worker. The whole interview lasts about 20-30 minutes.

IV. RESULTS

A. Demographic Patterning

The majority of the offenders serving sentence in the community were male (91.7%) (TABLE: I). According to figures from the sixth Guangzhou census [25], the gender composition differs significantly from that of the general population in Guangzhou, which is 52.26% male and 47.47% female. Approximately 13% criminals were minor aged 16–18; 87% criminals were adult between 19 and 74 years old. The Mean and Standard Deviation of age is 36 and 13 respectively. Probation and parole are two most available types in community corrections. Both accounted for nearly 90%, while other three types, surveillance in particular, and are rarely applied into community correction. Approximately two-thirds of offenders were living in suburban and poor areas, such as urban village, old street blocks and rural area. One-third of subjects were living in modern building groups. The average living years at present residential community is 18, with SD=14, which means in usual the criminals would not be often moving and live in one familiar community for a long time.

B. ANOVA Analysis of Demographic Variables

TABLE II shows the results of one-way ANOVA analysis between demographic variables with community correction outcome. Age stage and type of residential community have significant impact on criminals' outcome of community correction via one-way ANOVA analysis, while the interactions among gender, age stage, type of community corrections and residential community have no significant impact on community correction outcome. TABLE III indicates that minor criminals and criminals living at old street blocks have worst performance in community corrections.

TABLE I: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS (N=504)

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	459	91.7
Female	45	8.9
Age		
Over 18	440	87.3
Below and equal to 18	64	12.7
Type of community corrections		
Probation	289	57.3
Parole	160	31.7
Depriving of political rights [3]	42	8.3
Temporary serving of sentences outside the prison	13	2.6
Type of residential community		
Modern building groups	186	36.9
Rural area	174	34.5
Urban village	76	15.1
Old street blocks	48	9.5
Others	20	4.0

TABLE II: ONE-WAY ANOVA ANALYSIS SUMMARY FOR COMMUNITY CORRECTION OUTCOME ON DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Variables	Degree of freedom	F	Level of significance
Gender	1	2.279	0.123n.s.
Age stage	1	18.449	0.000***
Type of community corrections	3	1.476	0.220 n.s.
Type of residential community	4	7.095	0.000***
Age stage*type of residential community	4	0.42	0.800 n.s

Note: n.s.= not significant; + = p<0.1; * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01; ***= p≤0.001. The below tables are following this note.

TABLE III: OUTCOME MEANS BETWEEN DIFFERENT LEVELS OF AGE STAGE AND TYPE OF RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY

Variables	Mean
Age	
Over 18	0.677
Below and equal to 18	1.578
Type of residential community	
Modern building groups	0.58
Rural area	0.64
Others	0.70
Urban village	1.03
Old street blocks	1.83

C. Regression Model between Risk /needs Factor and Outcome

From TABLE IV, we can observe that during 12 months; only 8 criminals committed a new crime by self-report. The data is different from official statistics that reported the recidivism rate of community correction is 0 in 2010 and

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[3]   Since the number of surveillance is only 2, combine it into depriving of political rights together as one level in terms of the same nature.

2011 [25]. It indicates some offenses had not been detected and 1.6% recidivism is still higher than national 0.2% recidivism rate [26]. One–third of criminals admitted breaking supervision regulations in community correction during 12 months. TABLE V displays the recoded total score of community correction outcome, which demonstrates 30.6 criminals admit to take, re-offend or technical violations. Approximately 70% criminals completely success in community correction during 12months, while 5% criminals seriously violated rules or supervision regulations.

TABLE IV: DESCRIPTION OF COMMUNITY CORRECTION OUTCOME

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Committed a new crime		
Yes	8	1.6
No	496	98.4
Paid charges		
Yes	39	7.7
No	465	92.3
Admonished		
Yes	58	9.5
No	456	90.5
Broke supervision regulations		
Yes	154	30.6
No	350	69.4

TABLE V: THE TOTAL SCORE OF COMMUNITY CORRECTION OUTCOME

Score	Frequency	Percent
0	350	69.4
1	79	15.7
3	30	6.0
4	20	4.0
≤10 and ≥5	25	5.0

TABLE VI demonstrates the Pearson correlation coefficients between risk/needs factors and outcome score of community correction. From the table, all the factors have significant positive correlations with outcome score. Then put all these factors into linear regression model via stepwise method. However, by Casewise diagnostics, there are 9 cases' standard residuals beyond 3, which are strong influence point should be caution and adjusted. Thus robust regression is applied: all the factors were constrained to enter into regression model and save model residuals as a new variable; then use residuals as weighted variable for stepwise regress by least square method. Through six iterative computations, Companions, Accommodations, Relation with probation officer, Family/marital, criminal history, Education/employment factors are finally included into the regression model (TABLE VII). In terms of the order of standardized coefficients, it shows relations between criminals and probation officer (Beta=0.367), Companions (Beta=0.351) have most important impact on criminals' performance in community correction.

TABLE VI: PEARSON CORRELATION BETWEEN RISK, NEEDS FACTORS AND OUTCOME SCORE

Scales	Pearson coefficient	Level of significance
Criminal history (CH)	0.297	0.000*
Education/employment(EE)	0.315	0.000***
Financial problem (FP)	0.100	0.024*
Family/marital (FM)	0.380	0.000***
Accommodation (AC)	0.412	0.000***
Leisure/recreation (LR)	0.327	0.000**
Companions (CO)	0.482	0.000***
Alcohol/drug problem (AP)	0.181	0.000**
Personal emotion (PE)	0.274	0.000***
Attitude/orientations (AO)	0.260	0.000***
Social exclusion (SE)	0.370	0.000***
Relation with Probation officer (PO)	0.337	0.009**

TABLE VII: STEPWISE REGRESSION MODEL

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Level of significance
(Constant)	-0.247		0.308
Relation with probation officer	0.431	0.367	0.000***
Companions	0.539	0.351	0.000***
Alcohol/Drug Problem	0.496	0.285	0.000***
Accommodation	0.583	0.252	0.000***
Family/Marital	0.250	0.134	0.006**
Leisure/Recreation	0.485	0.126	0.002**

Note: Adjusted R Square=0.739; Durbin-Watson=1.761; Collinearity diagnostics points out there is certain degree of collinearity between Family/marital and Accommodation (Variance proportions=0.86 and 0.58 respectively in the same one dimension).

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The data analysis reveals some interesting findings about community corrections in China. Firstly, minors perform much poorer than adults in community correction in this study. The higher recidivism rate among youth is totally different from the previous research [13]. The juvenile offender is one kind of key application groups for community corrections. Although it should have been considered that juveniles are less risk to be re-offending than adults, the supervision and treatments for juvenile delinquents in community correction requires more attention.

Secondly, the criminals living in old street blocks have higher possibility to fail in community correction than Modern building groups and rural areas, even than urban village areas. Only those who live for a long time in Guangzhou or are native residents could live in old street blocks, anonymity of criminals is much weaker than other type of communities. Therefore, in close-knit societies, people more easily know one person's criminal background, more social exclusion the offender would suffer from. Applying ANOVA analysis between social exclusion scale and type of community, the result proves that criminals living in old street blocks get highest score of social exclusion, with significant difference ($p<0.05$) from other community types. In spite of social exclusion having no direct impact on

outcome of community correction with controlling other factors, it might be an indirect factor to make interpretations.

Thirdly, In terms of social bonding and social learning theory, the leisure/recreation status and contact with criminal companions greatly affect the criminals' outcome, as do Family/marital relationship and accommodation condition deriving from social disorganization theory, which are interpreted through Chinese collective atmosphere and social transforming context. The impact of relations between criminals and probation officer on community correction outcome is confirming to that of the West [27], as well as Alcohol/drug addictions. Though criminal history was the most significant predictors in much western country, it is not the same thing in this study under Chinese context. It could be explained by that China tentatively implement community correction in a short period and the criminals who are sentenced into community are those don't have serious criminal history background. Thus, criminal history differs insignificantly from criminals' performance in community correction. Along with the development and extension of community corrections in China, more and more criminals will be released into community to serve their sentence, which will increase the variations of criminals' background of criminal history. By then, the clear result could be conducted.

Fourthly, the data of failure on community correction including re-offence and technical violation is higher by self-reported method in the study than in official report. It points out the implementation of community correction should not be as efficient and perfect as official data. In terms of sufficient ethical considerations, the criminals would like to tell the reality by self-report method, such as committing to steal something or leaving Guangzhou without permission. On the other hand, probation officer's working efficiency directly relates to criminal's performance in community correction, so to certain degree, probation officer might not report the irregularities of criminals. Although the real situation of community correction demonstrated in the study is more serious, compared with 16% recidivism rate of parolee at USA in 2007 [28], the technical violation rather than re-crime is a urgent matter in community corrections at China.

Finally, given relations with probation officer, companions and alcohol/drug problem are categorized as risk factors, and other three factors as needs factors, which points out risk factors have greater weight than needs factors on outcome of community correction. Notwithstanding we could not conclude that risk factors are more important than needs factors, strengthening the contact between criminals and probation officer, eluding criminals from friends with crime background and treating their alcohol and drug problems could greatly improve the outcome of community correction in China.

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