Introduction: Social Control in Asian Countries

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Asia is the world's largest and most populous continent. It covers about 30% of the Earth's land area and is currently home to more than 4 billion people, or approximately 60% of the world's population. With China and India at the forefront, Asia has led the world in economic growth for the last three decades. This economic growth has been accompanied by rapid social changes and rising crime. Asia may become the next frontier for research on the death penalty (Johnson and Zimring 2009), crime, law and society (Leheny and Liu 2010), and crime control.

Compared to Europe and North America, collectivism (or family-based values) and informal social control play a more important role in crime prevention and control in Asia (Jiang et al. 2007, 2010; Lambert et al. 2011). In many Western societies, individual independence, fair procedures, and due process are emphasized. Thus, people are more likely to believe that, in order to be an effective controlling mechanism, the law should be universally applied to everyone. In many Asian countries, however, hierarchy, common interests, and harmony for groups or communities are their strong traditions.

Several scholars have suggested that, although many Asian societies have been moving toward formal control, citizens may not favor a rigid application of law or formal regulations

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to social and crime control, and rigid application may not be as effective in crime prevention and control. Komiya ([1999](#)) argued that Japan's low crime rate may be due to its dual legal culture (or two types of norms) that are applied to two different worlds. One consists of *giri* (Japanese traditional duty with limitation), while the other, *gimu* (Japanese traditional duty without limitation), appears more similar to the Western concepts of "rights". The former stresses duty-based informal control, while the latter emphasizes rights-based formal control. The *giri*-based control applies in the world of *uchi*, or the inner circle, which consists of acquaintances or members of the group to which individuals belong. The rights-based formal control applies in the world of *yoso*, or the outer circle, which consists of strangers or non-members of the group to which individuals belong.

Similarly in China, Fei ([1985](#)) and his followers (Zai [2009](#); Yan [2006](#)) posited that Chinese society features differential association (*chaxu geju*). Interpersonal relations in China are compared to water waves on a surface of a pond. When a stone is thrown into water, water waves are formed and spread out decrementally. Self is compared to the center of the water waves; a circle of interpersonal relationships is compared to a wave. The closer to the self, the more intimate the relationship. The closeness to the self is determined by intimate relations (i.e., family members and relatives), friendly feelings, and interests. Differential association in Chinese society is associated with forms of social control. Intimate relationships or relationships within an intimate circle are more likely to be regulated by sentimental feelings (*qing*) and the circle-context-based reasons (*li*) or morality. Relationships outside an intimate circle or among strangers are more likely to be regulated by law (*fa*) or formal norms.

Taiwan, a Chinese-culture-based society, has recently transited to a democracy and has increasingly committed to the rule of law. Based on Martin's ([2007](#)) ethnographic study of neighborhood police, a macro-institutional level, Taiwan has moved toward law-based formal control in law enforcement. At the neighborhood level, traditional Confucian culture and sentimental feelings still prevail in guiding residents' activities and interactions. Thus, police and other legal authorities often face this contradiction: "consolidation of rule of law at the macro-institutional level is matched by the persistent marginalization of legal authority in ground-level social practices" (Martin [2007](#), p. 665).

Given the traditions of collectivism, group-relatedness, harmony, hierarchy, respect for authority, and an increasingly macro-level commitment to the rule of law, there are many questions needing to be examined with regard to social and crime control in Asian countries. For example, can criminological theories that were formulated in the West be applied to Asian societies? What are the beliefs among citizens in Asian societies about the importance of formal and informal social and crime control? Do they trust criminal justice agencies? Are they satisfied with criminal justice systems? How do legal authorities deal with the rule of law and traditional informal control? Although there is a growing interest in crime control in Asia, there is limited research on the topic in the English language. The purpose of this special issue is to advance the research on crime and crime control in Asia and answer some of the questions above.

Much of the research on crime and crime control has focused on Western nations, particularly the United States. Limiting research on criminal justice issues to Western, developed nations can lead to a myopic world view of insularity and ethnocentrism (Khan and Unnithan [2009](#)). Cross-national research or non-Western society research can "help to reveal not only intriguing differences between countries and cultures, but also aspects of one's own country and culture that would be difficult or impossible to detect from domestic data alone" (Jowell [1998](#), p. 168). It can also help narrow the gap between different nations and create bridges where information flows more freely (Cao and Cullen [2001](#)). For

theoretical and practical reasons, comparing and contrasting views on crime-related matters across the globe is important. No one country has a monopoly on crime and how to respond to it; therefore, there are both theoretical and practical significance for conducting studies on crime control in Asian societies.

This special issue includes five articles that are related crime and crime control in China, Japan, and South Korea. China is the most populous country in the world. It has long been influenced by Confucianism, which emphasizes family-based collectivism, hierarchy, and morality-based informal social and crime control. As family and hierarchy are stressed, individual rights and interests are often ignored. For thousands of years, the Chinese displayed abhorrence toward formal law and relied on informal rules to keep social order and control crime (Rojek 1996). Since its economic reform started in 1978, China has moved toward formal–legal control, along with a one-party political system. Given these backgrounds, can theories that were formulated in the West be applied to China? Based on a convenience sample of 414 high school students in a suburb of a large Chinese city, Cretacci and Cretacci tested several parenting and social bond models that are associated with low self-control. While a number of studies have examined the relationships among parenting styles, social bonds, and low self-control from data obtained in the United States, very few focus on these constructs with data collected in international settings in general and China in particular. In their study, measures of Gottfredson and Hirschi's parental variables as well as those of other investigators were included. Additionally, important social bonds such as maternal, school, and peer attachment were also specified. Results from their study indicate that almost all the parenting and social bond measures were significantly associated with the development of low self-control. These findings suggest that both parenting and relationship factors are potentially important to the development of low self-control in Chinese high school students.

China's economic growth, which has been the fastest in the world since 1978, has been accompanied by speedy urbanization, large-scale migration, and rising crime rates, especially property-related crime. From 1978 to 2010, China's urban population was increased from 17.92 to 49.68% of its total population (National Bureau of Statistics 2010; Xinhua 2011). China's larceny rate per 100,000 persons increased from 48 in 1978 to 496 in 2009 (National Bureau of Statistics 2010; Press of Law Yearbook of China 1987). Due to rapid change and rising crime, China's crime control strategy has changed. On the one hand, it has moved toward the rule of law. On the other hand, it still uses traditional crime controlling methods, including three "severe strike campaigns" started in 1983, 1996, and 2001 and mass-line based community policing. Are citizens satisfied with crime control in transitional China? Zhuo's study intended to answer this question. In her study, the data were obtained from China General Social Survey 2005, which is linked with provincial-level data from the China Procuratorial Yearbook 2005, the China Statistical Yearbook 2005, and the 2000 Chinese Population Census. In the China General Social Survey, 6,052 urban respondents were sampled from 28 provinces in 2005. Findings from her study reveal that satisfaction with crime control (including satisfied and very satisfied: 33%) is slightly higher than dissatisfaction with crime control (including dissatisfied and very dissatisfied: 30%), with 37% being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Based on the symbolic perspective, Zhuo's study also tests whether three dimensions of social capital —social trust, social bonds, and social cohesion—are associated with satisfaction with crime control. Her findings show that bridging trust (a trust that extends beyond one's immediate social circles to more distant others) and neighborhood cohesion were positively related to satisfaction with crime control. The effects of bonding trust (a trust in one's immediate social circles, such as friends, coworkers, and family members) and social bonds on satisfaction with crime control were not significant, however.

Japan is another society with a strong Confucian history, but it adopted a more Western-style legal system long before China. For social and crime control, Japan has practiced a dual legal culture for inner circles and outer circles (Komiya 1999). How do Japanese people evaluate their control systems in crime prevention and crime control? Quantitative investigation of Japanese citizens' perceptions of formal and informal controls and the correlates of these perceptions is lacking. Jiang, Lambert, Saito and Hara used survey data from a convenience sample of 267 Japanese college students to examine the importance of formal and informal crime control. In general, there were higher levels of support for informal methods of crime control over formal methods. Respondents felt that fear of being rejected by family, neighbors, and peers was a stronger deterrent to crime than fear of being punished by the law. The respondents ranked family as the most important mechanism in crime prevention, followed by peers, police, schools, neighborhoods, corrections, and courts. There was also a fair amount of support for blended formal and informal crime control methods. Mobility (i.e., the number of times the respondent had moved in his/her life) and age were positively associated with the belief that formal crime control deterred crime. The population size of the town where the respondent grew up was positively associated with support for formal crime control. Students who grew up in large urban areas tended to rate formal control higher than those who grew up in a small town or the countryside.

Although South Korea is a country with its own unique history and culture, as a society it also shares a great deal of culture with China and Japan, including an emphasis on family, group-relatedness, hierarchy, and respect for authority. After the WWII and the Korean war, South Korea was heavily affected by the United States. South Korea is a recent democracy and has moved toward the rule of law. How do South Korea's traditions and transition to democracy affect its controlling systems? Is a criminological theory that was formulated in the West applicable to South Korea? Nella and Kang's study is related to the first question, while Jo and Zhang's paper aims to address the second question.

In order to help bring about a shift from a colonial-style policing to a form more prevalent in developed economies pursuing the rule of law, South Korea introduced two major police reforms in 1991 and 1999. Although one of the purposes of the reforms was to improve the citizens' evaluation of police, it is not clear whether the reforms achieved their goal. Nella and Kang's study examined the impact of the reforms on the job satisfaction of police. Using a survey of a national sample of 406 South Korean police officers, Nella and Kang reported a modest support for the reform efforts in its impact on police officers satisfaction with promotion and salary/benefits. While few demographic characteristics were associated with job satisfaction (with the exceptions of age and years of experience), there is strong evidence for the relationship between organizational characteristics and job satisfaction. Management support and public support were associated with both measures of satisfaction: promotion and salary/benefit. Their study also reveals that officers who believe that the primary operating philosophy of the police—to serve the government—appear to be satisfied with their promotion prospects but not their salary and benefits. These findings may reflect the presence of a police organizational climate that is still rooted in the historical military culture of Korean police.

Jo and Zhang's study tested how Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control theory is applied to South Korea. In *A General Theory of Crime* (1990), Gottfredson and Hirschi argue that self-control, fully developed in the early stage of life (around age 8–10), is a primary explanatory factor of deviance. Research consistently supports the relationship between self-control and deviance, while only limited studies have examined whether self-control is stable after age 10. Using a longitudinal national sample of South Korean youths from age 10–14, Jo and Zhang's study provides a test of: (1) whether the development of self-control

follows a homogenous process among individuals; (2) whether the within-individual level of self-control stays unchanged over time (absolute stability); and (3) whether the relationship between age and self-control parallels across individuals (relative stability). Both attitudinal and behavioral measures of self-control were used to investigate whether different measures yielded different results in the stability thesis. Results from their study indicate that there are multiple individual developmental paths of self-control rather than a single homogeneous path. Their findings also show that different measures yielded divergent results in the stability thesis. While the analysis of the attitudinal measure reveal strong absolute stability for 50% of the sample and strong relative stability for 99.7%, the analysis of the behavioral measure show strong absolute and relative stabilities for 88.6% of the sample.

We thank you for taking the time to read this special issue of the *Asian Journal of Criminology* on social control in Asian nations. We hope that you will find the issue informative.

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