# IMPLEMENTING THE MASS LINE IN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION IN CHINA: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## LI Yongtao

Associate Professor, Dr, Deputy Dean of Crime Countermeasures Research Centre, China Criminal Police University, Shenyang City, Peoples Republic of China

## Alan Beckley

Adjunct Research Fellow, School of Social Sciences & Psychology, Western Sydney University, Australia

September 2016

**Implementing the mass line in criminal investigation in China: A review of literature**
LI Yongtao[1] and Alan Beckley[2]

**Abstract**
This article takes a rare look into operational policing in China. It examines the literature, written in the Chinese language and in English, on the subject of the mass line (ML) in criminal investigation. While there are many studies on the wider aspects of ML policing, there are few studies on the specific area of criminal investigation in operational policing in China. The studies that were identified focused on three aspects: the need for relying on the masses, the problems encountered in the reform era in implementing this guideline and the causes of these problems, and the strategies for enhanced implementation of this guideline in criminal investigation. Studies written in English concentrate on the history and policy changes in Chinese policing that tend to be introductory and descriptive in nature. This study concludes that relying on the masses (the public) in solving a criminal case is definitely a significant aspect for carrying out the ML in criminal investigation work, but not the only one. A more in-depth study on implementing the ML in criminal investigation is needed particularly focusing on how to effectively concentrate the ideas and efforts of the rank and file within a police force through implementing the appropriate style of leadership.

**Keywords**: the mass line, relying on the masses, style of leadership, criminal investigation, China

**Introduction**
        Braithwaite recently stated (2015) western criminal law and criminology practitioners should revise their theories of crime and consider learning from wider sources of information such as those in Asia. Coincidentally, this paper investigates methods of investigating crime in China; although there are similarities in police investigation globally, it is interesting to examine differing techniques described in this literature review. Criminal investigation work in China, as in any nation, is only one arm of the three basic police functions: criminal investigation (including enforcement), order maintenance, and service provision. Furthermore, criminal investigation activities make up only a small portion of all police functions (Bayley, 1992). However, these activities are closely connected with and underpinned by the other two functions. Therefore, to understand fully the mass line (ML) in criminal investigation work, it is necessary to consider the Chinese policing system as a whole while focusing on criminal investigation in particular. In order to define what ML in criminal investigation work it is first necessary to describe ML as a political idea, which, in the Chinese political system, has been described as a 'policy prerequisite' (Jianlin, 2011:23). Sklair (1979:314) states: 'The mass line, which I shall use more or less as a development of democratic centralism ….. It is a principle of mass mobilisation whereby the will of the masses and the leadership of the cadres are brought into contact…' Mass line policing takes this idea and builds further on it as according to Zhong (2009:158), ML policing is:
        'The mass line refers to "for the masses, relying on the masses, from the masses to the masses". It embodies two layers of meaning. First, policing is based on the interests of both the state and the masses, with a focus on "for the masses". Second, policing relies

[1]Associate Professor, Dr, Deputy Dean of Crime Countermeasures Research Centre, China Criminal Police University, Shenyang City, Peoples Republic of China
[2] Adjunct Research Fellow, School of Social Sciences & Psychology, Western Sydney University, Australia

on the masses and on the mobilization of the masses, and police function to win the understanding and support of the masses'.

More detailed descriptions of ML policing and its method of operation are included later in this paper. Based on the characteristics of police systems in various countries, scholars have categorised police systems into three general models: centralised, decentralised, and integrated (Bayley, 1992; Ma, 1997). Generally speaking, China's police system can be regarded as the integrated model, also known as the combination system or the composite system, which refers to the organisation and administration of the police being a shared responsibility of the central government and the local authorities (Ma, 1997). Japan, Germany, Australia, and the United Kingdom (UK) fall within this category (Bayley, 1992; He, 1995; Ma, 1997).

According to *The People's Police Law 1995* and *The Organisational Management Regulation of the Public Security Organs*, Chinese police are under the joint leadership of the State Council and local governments and are accountable to both. At national level, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) represents the State Council, directing and regulating the police forces throughout the country. Moving one level down is the Public Security Department at each province-level jurisdiction, including the twenty-two provinces, five autonomous regions, and four municipalities directly under the central government in the Mainland of China. These provincial public security departments have broad discretionary power in making local policies in line with the over-arching national policies and laws. Under the provincial level are public security bureaus at city or county level, where city districts have been established, public security sub-bureaus may be established. City/county public security bureaus may establish public security police stations. Police stations are not independent but dispatched agencies of their immediately superior bureaus (Figure 1.1).
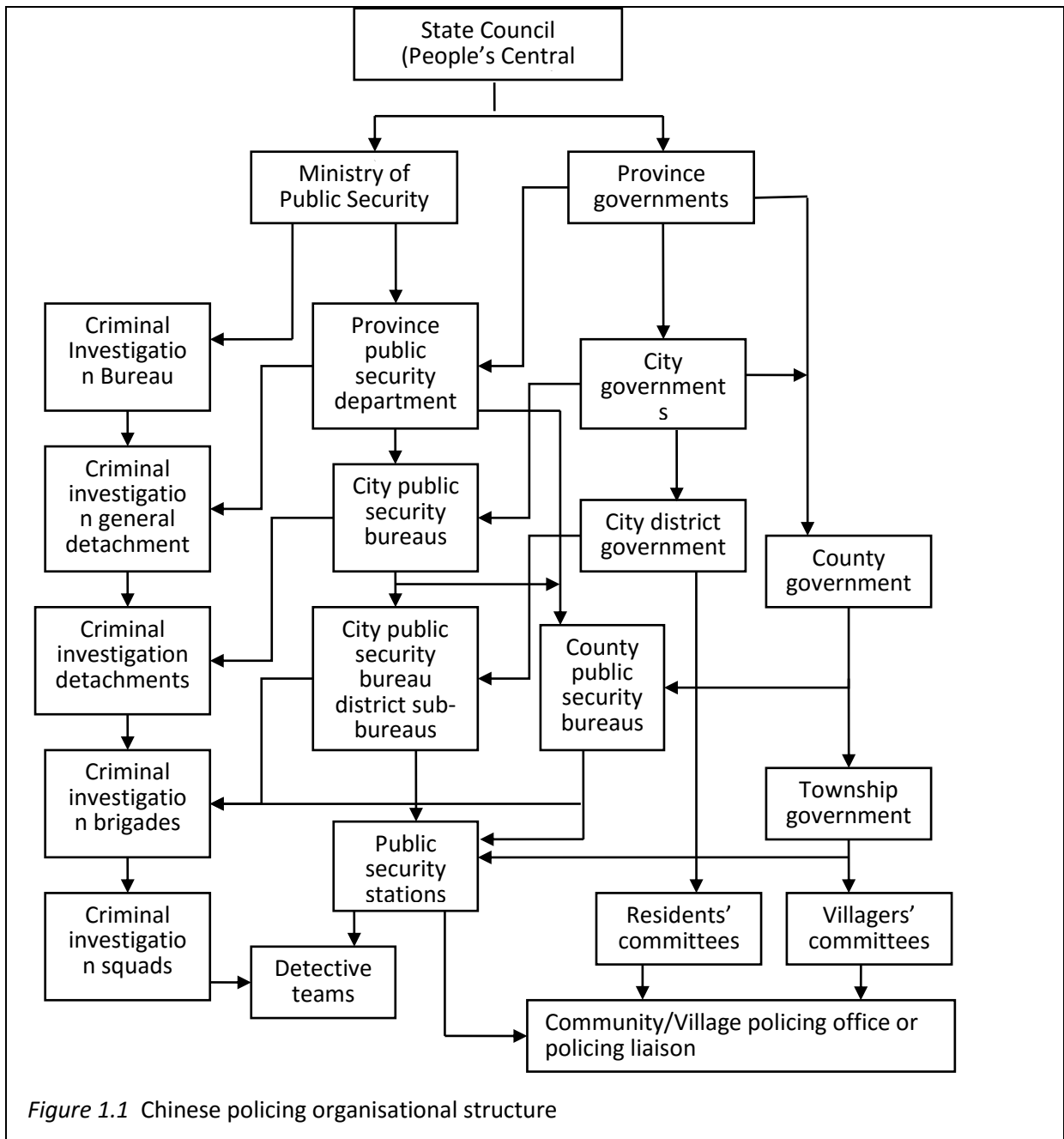
*Figure 1.1* Chinese policing organisational structure

There are two major advantages of the dual leadership hierarchy. On the one hand, it ensures the nation's police forces remain under the control of the State Council so that national policies, fundamental laws and professional standards can be effectively implemented across the country. On the other hand, it provides the local governments with necessary autonomy in determining how to use the police resources to the best local interests and circumstances. Such a democratic-centralism style is the application of the ML into political activities in China (CPC, 2007).

Police work guided by the ML demonstrates a triple structure in organisation and a triple role played by the police. First, in terms of organisation, the Party committees and the governments at various levels exert their leadership in making general policing policies and strategies; second, the police enforce laws and play the leading role in crime investigation and social order maintenance; and third, the masses support and participate in a variety of policing activities such as providing clues about crimes, participating in social order maintenance, and helping to guide traffic and pedestrians. Police practitioners from Western

cultures will recognise similarities in this concept to the *Neighbourhood Policing* model and its links to maintaining public confidence in the police (Myhill and Quinton, 2010). This review has collected and examined literature on implementing the ML in police work in general and criminal investigation work in particular consists of two types: Chinese language literature and English language literature.

## Method

A literature search was undertaken for subject matter relating to the ML in criminal investigation in the Chinese language and English. The search results through China's key e-publishing database CNKI showed that a total of 8,808 items (including journal articles, doctoral theses, and master's dissertations) included the terms "the ML" and "criminal investigation" in their contents. However, there were only four articles with "the ML in criminal investigation" in the title, and 44 articles listing "ML" and "criminal investigation" in the abstract. No doctoral or masters dissertations had the words "the ML in criminal investigation" in their research title. In Chinese language literature, studies on ML policing are numerous, but specific studies embracing "the ML in criminal investigation" in their title or as the major study subject are few; even so, these studies cover a range of topics. Within the English language literature, it is difficult to locate any studies specifically about implementing the ML in criminal investigation. The available studies mostly concentrate on the history and policy changes in Chinese policing. Among these studies, those related to the ML in police work focus on two topics. One is concerned with the connection between the campaign-style policing strategy and the ML policing strategy. The other concerns the debate of "the end or continuity" of ML policing which will be discussed in a later section. The literature review follows the thematic approach to summarise, evaluate, and synthesise the arguments and ideas. Points of interest and issue have been highlighted in the discussion section followed by a conclusion.

## Findings from Chinese literature

### The concept of the masses

According to Liu (2004), the masses outside the police force can be categorised into at least three tiers. The first tier refers to most law-abiding citizens which constitute the majority of the masses and the major supporting forces that the police can rely on in criminal investigation. The second tier of masses can be categorised as the special groups of the masses. They are law-breakers but do not fall into the category of "enemies", which means that their crimes are not aimed at overthrowing the government or threatening the security of the state. The first two tiers refer to human beings existing either as an individual or as a group. The third tier can be named the "organisational masses" (Liu, 2004, p. 126), and comprises of such things as companies, banks, hospitals, prisons, and non-criminal investigation police agencies. According to Liu, this proposal is helpful for clarifying the relations between different police agencies (Liu, 2004). Based on this proposal, criminal investigation agencies are the main force in investigating, while all other agencies including other police agencies can be regarded as the "masses" that may provide support to the criminal investigation agencies.

Zhang (2008) also argues that the "masses" should not be narrowly understood as individuals alone; instead, economic companies, institutes, schools, and other social organisations should all be included in the concept of the "masses". However, Zhang does not clarify whether non-criminal investigation police agencies are also the masses as Liu has indicated. In addition, some authors propose the concept of "expert masses", including technical experts, scholars, accountants, and others with professional knowledge in a certain

area (Xu, Zhang & Wang, 2009). Although the broad definition of the masses in criminal investigation has been accepted by most authors, conversely, some have defined the masses in a very narrow way. According to Wang, "the masses in criminal investigation refer to persons that criminal investigators can rely on, unite with, or win over, except for criminal suspects and their associates" (2004, p. 17). This definition is challenged by Li (2013) who argues that, in the investigation stage of police work, excluding criminal suspects and their associates from the category of the masses runs potentially great risks because it implies the presumption of guilt, which is neither beneficial for protecting the legal rights of criminal suspects, nor helpful for winning the potential support of their relatives. Li (2013) upholds that criminal suspects and their associates should be regarded as a special category of the masses, which is close to the second tier of the masses identified by Liu (2004).

**The need to rely on the masses**

The importance of relying on the masses in criminal investigation has been discussed by all authors in this review (Jing & Wang, 2011; Lin, 2014; Pan, 2015; Wang, 2004; M. Yang, 1999). For example, relying on the masses is believed to be "the foundation for victory in criminal investigation" (Wang, 2004, p. 17). It has also been argued that, since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), "the practice proves that the criminal investigation work must follow the ML, closely rely on the masses" (Liao, 1988, p. 66). That the ML must be followed in criminal investigation is a unanimously upheld and declared principle. For example, the ML is considered to be "the magic weapon for the development of criminal investigation work" (M. Yang, 1999, p. 36), "the lifeline for fighting against narcotics" (Ma, 1999, p. 65), and "the indispensable work method in criminal investigation, which shall be strengthened further" (Jing & Wang, 2011, p. 148). Some also argue that innovative thinking, method, and institution are needed for implementing the ML in police work in a social transformation era (Ju & Yao, 2014; Liang, 2012; Lin, 2013; Pan, 2015). However, when discussing the implementation of the ML in criminal investigation, the concept of the masses in all of those studies refers to the ordinary people outside the police forces (Lin, 2014; Wang, 2004; Wei, 1999; L. Wu & Ma, 2002).

When arguing the need for relying on the masses in criminal investigation, authors have tended to focus on three factors. The first factor explains the inseparable social relations between the criminals and the masses. Some authors have argued that criminal suspects all grow up among the masses, hide themselves among the masses, and are bound to be revealed to the masses (Lin, 2013; Lin, 2014; Pan, 2015; Wang, 2004). Similarly, Jing and Wang maintain that "because lawbreakers and offenders are living among the masses, it is impossible for them to remain living among the masses for a long time without disclosing their crimes" (2011, p. 148). Liao also claims that "offenders need to survive; they have no choice but to live among the masses, hence all their activities are inevitably under the surveillance of the masses" (1988, p. 67). These ideas all focus on the fact that crimes are committed among the masses and offenders are living among the masses, so someone among the masses should know about these crimes and criminals. Consequently, if criminal investigators want to find out who has committed a crime, they should go to the masses for collecting clues and evidence.

The second factor concerns the opposing relations between criminals and the masses, between committing crimes and protecting the interests of the masses. Most authors uphold that all crimes directly violate the interests of the state and the masses, so the masses hate crimes greatly and anyone who has a conscience, even if they are relatives and friends of those criminals, will not support or tolerate their anti-social conduct (Liao, 1988; Pan, 2015; Peng, 2011; Wang, 2004). Therefore, the masses have the enthusiasm not only for fighting crime of their own accord but also for supporting police in criminal investigations because

criminal investigation represents justice that is valued by the majority of the masses (Liang, 2012; Lin, 2014; Wang, 2004).

In addition to the first two factors, some authors argue that current crimes are increasing not only in quantity but also in quality in that some crimes are committed with the use of modern technology or involve specialist knowledge, thus demanding support and help from experts within the community who have relevant specialised knowledge (Cai, Wang, & Bao, 2001; Pan, 2015; Yang, 1999). For example, when explaining the need to rely on the masses in criminal investigations, Yang argues that some criminal cases involve special technological knowledge that requires police to "consult with experts and scholars who have such special knowledge, relying on them for solving technological problems" (Yang, 1999, p. 37). Although Yang does not state explicitly that experts are also a type of the masses, his view is consistent with the concept of expert masses proposed by Xu et al. (2009). The above authors have taken three different perspectives to explain the reasons why police should rely on the masses in criminal investigations. In common, however, they all discussed the implementation of the ML in criminal investigation based on the concept and definition that the masses referred to those who are outside the police force.

**Contemporary problems encountered and their causes**

Relying on and mobilising the masses in the struggle against crime had been greatly emphasised and was successful in Mao's era (Dutton, 2000; Li, 2006; Zhong, 2009). However, in the new economic reform era, the implementation of reliance on the masses in criminal investigations is facing some problems that can be placed in three categories. The unwillingness of the masses to support and cooperate with the police ranks is the first. In the process of conducting criminal investigations and arresting criminal suspects, police officers are often acting in an isolated situation without support from the masses (Li, 1993; Pan, 2015). The masses' unwillingness to provide support is usually attributed to changes in social values and social structure that emerged under the market economy, and to the unfriendly attitudes and responses of the police to the masses (Lin, 2014; Pan, 2015; Wang, 2004; Yang, 1999).

The second main problem with relying on the masses is connected with the rapid development and application of modern technology in criminal investigation, which weakens the investigators' awareness of, and willingness to rely on, the masses (Jing & Wang, 2011; Liu, 2004; Pan, 2015; Wu & Ma, 2002). More specifically, some authors criticise criminal investigators for being too obsessed with modern technology, that the technology is in the hands of the masses and that human beings are the key element in criminal investigations (Liao, 1988; Lin, 2014; Wang, 2004). Although authors have differing opinions about the role of modern technology in criminal investigation, most agree that the integration of modern technology with the support of the masses is essential for the success of criminal investigation in the new era (Lin, 2014; Liu & Hao, 2009; Pan, 2015).

The third main problem with relying on the masses concerns the estranged police-masses relations mainly caused by the unethical conduct of some criminal investigators who are not conscientious about providing high levels of service, "but employ simple and rude methods to their operations, treating the masses with cold, indifferent and unresponsive attitudes" (Li, 1993, p. 6). Some criminal investigators are not good at communicating with and learning from the masses or are not willing to do so (Jing & Wang, 2011; Li, 1993; Wu, 2001). In addition, corruption, extorting confessions by torture, misuse of police power, and other forms of misconduct are still common practices among some police officers, and this has badly damaged the image of the police (Li, 1993; Li & Li, 1999; Wu & Ma, 2002). Such unethical, unlawful, and even criminal conduct leads the masses to lose trust in police and exacerbates alienated relations between the police and the masses.

**Strategies for improvement**

Corresponding to the problems encountered and their causes, a number of authors have proposed strategies for improving the implementation of the guideline of relying on the masses in criminal investigation in the new era (Jing & Wang, 2011; G. Li, 1993; J. Li, 2006; Wang, 2004; Wei, 1999; C. Wu, 2001; L. Wu & Ma, 2002; M. Yang, 1999). These suggestions involve four aspects. The first is concerned with improving the quality of the criminal investigation force; the second deals with how to build and keep harmonious, cooperative, and trustful police-masses relations; the third explores how to innovatively integrate modern technology with traditional methods of relying on the masses; and the fourth suggests institutionalising the methods of relying on the masses.

*Improving the quality of the criminal investigation force*

Chinese culture places high value on the virtue of rulers. This can be observed both in the Chinese ancient Taoist and Confucian philosophies of the benevolent government (Jin, 1993; Lin, 2009) and in Mao's doctrines of virtuous leadership (Mao, 1938; 1949; 1957). According to Li (2006), Mao placed great stress on public security force building and said that:

> public security organs are a knife in the hands of the proletariat. Well-controlled, they could attack enemies and protect the people; ill-controlled, they are easy to hurt oneself. If this knife were grasped by enemies, it would become more dangerous (Li, 2006, p. 80).

In addition, Sui (2007) has pointed out that Mao had put more stress on the quality than on the quantity of the police. For example, Mao once stated that "the quantity of the public security force shall not be too big, but the quality must be very keen-witted and capable" (Mao, cited in Sui, 2007, p. 61).

In order to build high standards within the police force, Mao laid great stress on ideological and ethical education of police officers (Li, 2006; Meng, 2008; Wu, 2009). Such qualities and ethical standards were specifically stipulated in the 1957 *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the People's Police* (National People's Congress, 1957) and the 1958 *Eight Main Rules of Discipline and Ten Points for Attentions for Public Security Police* (MPS, 1958). Although these regulations have been replaced by the newly promulgated *The People's Police Law 1995* and other police regulations, the emphasis on improving the quality of the police has been maintained. At the legislative level, all these "laws and regulations, rules and points" put stress on adhering to the leadership of the Party, no violating the interests of the masses, and building highly qualified police forces with a firm political stand, exemplary ethics, and practical, considerate, and professional conduct (MPS, 1958, 2010).

*Developing technological methods of relying on the masses*

Although stressing the importance of adhering to the traditional methods of relying on the masses, Chinese scholars and law enforcers have been willing to accept the need for innovative technological ways of operating. As Western experts have realised the relations between the development of technology and crime commission and control (Clarke, 2004; Grabosky, 1998; Haque, 2005), so have Chinese police circles. A number of Chinese scholars have pointed out the importance of integrating the traditional methods of relying on the masses with newer methods supported by modern technology (Jing & Wang, 2011; Lin, 2014; Liu & Hao, 2009).

For example, in addition to DNA testing, GPS (Global Positioning System) monitoring, video surveillance, and television broadcasting, Chinese police are trying to extend traditional

foot-based door-to-door neighbourhood canvasses to netizen[3]-supported Internet canvasses, or "Renrou searches"[4] for collecting crime clues and identifying criminal suspects (Cheng & Xue, 2011; Liu & Hao, 2009; Yao & Guo, 2008). The Renrou search tactic has not only helped Chinese police successfully solve several criminal cases since 2008 but also helped British police solve a murder case (Liu & Hao, 2009), and has been described as a new method of implementing the ML in criminal investigation in the Internet era (Cheng & Xue, 2011; Liu & Hao, 2009). It is also reported that Chinese police have successfully used the "MicroBlog"[5] to track down some fugitives and persuade them to surrender (He, 2011; Huang & Xu, 2011; Yu & Wang, 2011). New investigative techniques need pertinent legal stipulations so that their use does not undermine the protection of the masses' legitimate interests while effectively combating crime. (Bai & Ji, 2008; Cheng & Xue, 2011; Liu & Hao, 2009). However, further studies should not concentrate only on using modern technology to mobilise the masses for detecting crime, but also how to implement ethical policing practices. With the development of modern technology, extorting confessions by torture is regarded as a cruel method and has been prohibited by law worldwide, including in China. Although such illegal and unethical behaviours are not routine in Chinese police practices, they have occasionally occurred and have produced very grave damage to the masses' trust in police (Li, 1993; Wu & Ma, 2002). It seems that replacing the method of extorting confessions with innovative technological methods in solving criminal cases may be a good option for the police to regain the masses' trust and support.

### *Institutionalising the methods of relying on the masses*

The necessity for institutionalising the methods of implementing the ML has been discussed by a number of authors in China (Li & Zhao, 2004; Lin, 2014; She, 2010). The mass campaigns, as one important and well-known method for carrying out the ML, need particularly to be institutionalised to avoid any ill-controlled mass campaigns leading to social damage, even social chaos (She, 2010). The strike-hard[6] campaigns launched since the 1980s in China are in essence the continuation of mass campaigns in crime control (He, 2008; Tang & Miao, 1997). According to He (2008), the strike-hard policy should be adhered to as a long term policy but be operated in more regularised and legislated ways and should be integrated with a policy of balancing severity and leniency so that it can better protect the interests of the masses and human rights.

Some Chinese authors have proposed that the current "reward system for reporting crimes" should be improved so that relying on the masses guideline in criminal investigation can be better implemented in the new market economy situations (Cheng, 2006; Li & Zhao, 2004; H. Liu, 2007; Yu, 2005). This improved "reward system for reporting crimes" should not only include more detailed protocols such as the amount of prizes and the protection of crime reporters, but also encourage the masses to report corruption and other crimes associated with abusing powers (Huang, 2010; Peng, 2011; Yang, 2010). In addition, it has been suggested that the mass supervision system over judicial work should be regularised and

---

[3] Netizen is a newly created word from *Net* (=Internet) and *citizen*, referring to someone who spends a lot of time using the Internet.
[4] "Renrou search", also called "human flesh search", is a practice popularised by Chinese netizens that involves hunting down the personal details of a publicly despised person and posting them online.
[5] *MicroBlog* is a type of web site diary that usually contains someone's personal experiences, interests, comments on various issues, and provides links to other places on the Internet.
[6] This refers to the Yanda Campaigns (campaigns for severely fighting serious crimes) launched periodically throughout 1981 to 2001 in China aiming to solve the soaring crime rate that emerged after the economic reform since the late 1970s.

institutionalised so that openness and justice can be better achieved (Cheng, 2007; Pan, 2015; Peng, 2011).

## Findings from English literature

Within the English language literature, it is difficult to locate any studies specifically about implementing the ML in criminal investigation. The available studies mostly concentrate on the history and policy changes in Chinese policing. Among these studies, those related to the ML in police work focus on two topics. One is concerned with the connection between the campaign-style policing strategy and the ML policing strategy. The other concerns the debate of "the end or continuity" of ML policing.

## Campaign-style policing and ML policing

Available English literature related to ML policing theories and practices includes a number of articles and books that discuss the strike-hard policy and campaign-style policing in China in the 1980s. Trevaskes (2007) argues that official justification for the policy has its roots in the organisational and ideological connections between "Mao's ML and the strategies of crime control in criminal justice work, which originated in the revolutionary period and were further developed in the post-revolutionary period after 1949" (p. 31). At the start of the 21st century, China's criminal justice policy saw a shift from severe punishment to "balancing severity and leniency", attempting to limit a decades-old strike-hard policy toward serious crime (Trevaskes, 2010).

Trevaskes' (2010) studies focus mainly on how the Party's political policy informs the Supreme People's Court in adjusting criminal justice policy in two aspects: one is the relationship between the Party's political policy and criminal justice policy making; the other is the policy changes within the court system or judicial system. Studies such as hers can provide valuable and insightful contextualisation for studies on the implementation of the ML in criminal investigation because Chinese criminal justice policies, whether they focus on the court system or police system, are both informed by the Party's political policies.

Under the guidance of the strike-hard policy, Chinese police launched campaign-style policing. According to Tanner, campaign-style policing refers to concentrated, fixed-term, special targeting of particular categories of crime for arrest and severe punishment — hence the colloquialism "stern blows" (*yanda*) is applied (2005, p. 171). Tanner argues that a key feature of these anti-crime struggles has been the use of Maoist techniques of mass campaigning (2005, p. 171). Tanner makes the criticism that "Deng Xiaoping, who had called for an end to such mass campaigns (yundong) in 1978, nevertheless argued in 1983 that without mass involvement, these struggles would not succeed" (Tanner, 2005, p. 171). Tanner comments that, "with hallmark bluntness, he [Deng] accordingly labelled these 'campaigns that we simply will not call campaigns' " (Tanner, 2005, p. 171).

Although Tanner's descriptions and observations of campaign-style policing are reasonable, he appears to mistranslate and misinterpret the nature of mass campaigns and mass involvement from the original Chinese. Deng's original speeches about launching the anti-crime campaigns include the following: "We do not regard these as making movements because we are not making person-persecuting movements, but we must mobilise the masses for concentrated fight against crime; such are movements but not the so-called movements" (Tang & Miao, 1997, p. 452). Apparently, Deng generally divides movements into two categories: political movements aimed at persecution, and non-political movements targeted at solving particular social problems. The strike-hard campaigns belong to the latter, which are aimed at fighting crime instead of political persecution. Deng stresses that "we shall not let crime offenders fear of nothing, which requires strengthening the power of dictatorship"

and "stern legal punishment", because "we are protecting the security of the maximum majority of the people, and this is humanism" (Tang & Miao, 1997, p. 452).

**ML policing: end or continuity**

The English literature reviewed demonstrates two views in stark contrast vis-à-vis the fate of ML policing. On the one hand, some of these studies have recognised the ML as the dominant principle in Chinese policing (Bracey, 1989; Chen, 2002; Wong, 2001). In theory, *The People's Police Law 1995* continues to acknowledge the ML as the fundamental principle which stipulates that "people's police must rely on the masses, keep close ties to them, listen attentively to their comments and suggestions, accept their supervision, safeguard their interests, and serve them wholeheartedly" (Dai, 2008, p. 213). Western practitioners might notice that there is a parallel to this within the fabled *nine principles of policing* of the London Metropolitan Police when initiated in the nineteenth century: 'To recognise always that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.' (Peel's *Nine Principles of Policing*, principle 2) (Cited in Bronitt & Stenning, 2011, p. 332)

Within the same perspective, some authors argue that ML policing practices have never stopped, but have developed to keep pace with social changes (Dai, 2008; Zhong, 2009). Taking the community policing reform in recent years as an example, Zhong regarded it as "nothing more than old wine in new bottles" (2009, p. 158). This means that the new package of community policing reforms is more a label for an imported concept than a change in nature, because the community policing reform maintains the essential characteristics of the ML approach (Zhong, 2009). Similarly, Dai argues that the traditional Chinese policing methods will remain but some new elements will be "incorporated periodically as a reaction to social economic needs" (2008, p. 225).

In striking contrast to the above perspectives, Dutton (2000, 2005) has predicted that the end of the Chinese ML policing, as it had previously been known, is imminent. He argues that the economic reforms have inculcated Chinese people with the values of commerce and "the contract responsibility system it has relied upon reinforces a type of equivalence that is central to the new Chinese value system" (2000, p. 89). According to Dutton, within such a macro social context, Chinese police have devised their own money-based version of contract responsibility ostensibly to reinvigorate the ML and are themselves increasingly subject to the law of the contract (Dutton, 2000, 2005). He asserts that the law of the contract has "transformed the mass line into a mass-production line for the maintenance and extension of values that the revolution once fought against. This perhaps is the final irony and lasting legacy of the mass line in policing and quite possibly the end of socialist policing in China" (Dutton, 2005, p. 220).

**Discussion**

The review of literature on Chinese policing shows English literature primarily focuses on being a general introduction to and a discussion of the relevant history, culture, policies, and reforms. This literature, blended with Westerners' critical views, may provide comparative perspectives and beneficial references for reflecting on the problems revealed in Chinese ML police work. Among other issues, the better protection of the human and legal rights of criminal suspects (Tanner, 2005; Trevaskes, 2007) is one area where China needs to learn more from the Western world, particularly as serving the people and protecting the interests of the masses are intrinsic ingredients of the ML. The authors of this paper are sure that policing practitioners in Western countries will identify familiar policing principles and issues identified such as the use of the mass media to help solve crimes and the use of covert

human intelligence sources (informants). However, Wong has claimed that there is still a paucity of studies from outside China about Chinese policing and that knowledge about Chinese policing is "sketchy, spotty, and superficial" (2009, p. 1). Dai reflects a similar viewpoint, writing that many studies in English literature about Chinese policing are "introductory and descriptive in nature" (2008, p. 224). Furthermore, some studies tend to "generalize Chinese policing, especially in the discussions of how one strategy has been replaced by another in the history of Chinese policing" (Dai, 2008, p. 225). This may result from the lack of research interest, difficulty in obtaining data, inaccessibility to places and/or people, scarcity of bilingual researchers, and/or incompatibility of scholarship styles (Wong, 2009). In addition, lack of empirical studies, use of secondary information, language barriers, and the dearth of cultural background knowledge could have all attributed to the problems in English language studies about Chinese policing (Dai, 2008). Probably due to these difficulties in studying Chinese policing, none of the literature available in English has focused on the implementation of the ML in criminal investigation.

Among the limited English literatures discussing the ML in Chinese police work, there exists misinterpretation of the mass campaign, mass involvement, and the ML. To comprehensively understand the implementation of the ML in criminal investigation, it should be kept in mind that the mass involvement differs from the mass campaign, and the mass campaign does not equal the ML (Luo, 1958; She, 2010; Tang & Miao, 1997). The mass campaign is only one aspect of mass involvement and only one method of implementing the ML. For example, a mass campaign in criminal investigation usually focuses on some targeted crimes (murder, robbery or rape) and will last for a fixed term (six months or one year). It may also target a particular criminal case (an explosion or a murder case), or a very dangerous criminal suspect (a serial killer or a most wanted suspect). When launching a mass campaign, the police will mobilise the masses through various media (newspapers, posters, television, radio, Internet, and mobile messages) to report crimes, provide clues, and even help to arrest a criminal suspect. This is a campaign-style mass involvement in criminal investigation. There are many other forms of mass involvement in criminal investigation, such as recruiting of secret informants from the masses, accepting mass supervision over criminal investigation activities, and seeking technical support from experts among the masses in solving technical difficulties encountered in criminal investigation (Cai et al., 2001; Li, 2006; Pan, 2015; Zhang, 2008). As stated above, Tanner has made confusion in understanding the relations among the mass campaign, mass involvement, and the ML in police work.

The basic doctrines of the ML are now briefly elaborated as doing everything for the masses, relying on them in every task, and carrying out the principle of "from the masses, to the masses" (CPC, 2007). "Doing everything for the masses" demonstrates the Party's aim and relying on the masses" indicates the Party's strategy in fulfilling a task, which two aspects are similar to Lincoln's political philosophy of "for the people, by the people". The third aspect of "from the masses, to the masses" is the core and soul in Mao's philosophy that Mao elaborated as following:

> In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily "from the masses, to the masses". This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses so that the ideas are persevered in and carried through. And so on, over and over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas

becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge ([Mao, 1943, p. 119](#)).

According to Mao's definition, this ML principle can be generally categorized into three methods: the method of knowing the world, the method of leadership, and the method of solving problems. In its core, Mao's ML emphasises that the social practice of millions of the masses is the origin for all human knowledge[7]. Hence the masses' ideas (or mass cognition) are the sources for making correct leadership decisions or policies (or leadership cognition) for solving problems. In short and in essence, the ML can be interpreted as methods aimed at constantly and democratically concentrating the wisdom and efforts of the masses in the process of forming decisions, policies, or theories, and implementing them into practice as well, to effectively solve problems. In the context of implementing the ML leadership method of concentrating ideas from the masses, the masses refer to not only those ordinary people in the society such as workers and peasants but also the rank and file within an organization the leadership can rely on in solving concrete problems. Which groups of the masses may be involved in solving a concrete problem should be decided in concrete conditions. This is the footing for obtaining more thorough understandings of how to implement the ML in practice to solve concrete problems.

Though Chinese researchers have discussed broadly on the ML in criminal investigation, nearly all the studies focused on how the police as a whole could/should maintain close ties with the masses or the general public and how to mobilise the masses to help in solving a criminal case or fighting crimes. The reviewed Chinese studies have explored the causes that led to the deteriorating relations between police and the masses (the general public outside the police forces). Corresponding to the problems encountered and the causes of these problems, a number of authors have proposed strategies for better implementing the guideline of relying on the masses in criminal investigation in the new era. These suggestions involve four aspects. The first is concerned with improving the quality of the criminal investigation force; the second deals with how to build and keep harmonious, cooperative, and trustful police-masses relations; the third explores how to innovatively integrate modern technology with traditional methods of relying on the masses; and the fourth suggests institutionalising the methods of relying on the masses. However, according to Mao, the ML in essence is the Marxist theory of knowledge and methods of leadership (Mao, 1943). Particularly, Mao emphasised that building close ties between "the Party's leading bodies and the masses within the Party (between the cadres and the rank and file)" is the prerequisite for ensuring that the ML is effectively implemented (Mao, 1945, p. 208). In other words, maintaining close ties and effective interactions between the leadership and the led within an organisation is the prerequisite for ensuring the ML is thoroughly implemented by the whole organisation when it interacts with the masses outside this organisation. In other words, the leadership of an organization should show model examples for the led within that organization in implementing the ML method of work. Analogically, maintaining effective interactions between a criminal investigation commander and other criminal investigators should be the indispensable element in thoroughly and effectively implementing the ML in criminal investigation. Yet no currents studies have focused on how the ML should be implemented between the police leadership and the ordinary constables or detectives within the police force. This indicates it is imperative to conduct a further study on the impacts of the quality of police leadership on the implementation of the ML in police work.

## Conclusion

---

[7] For more information, please read *On Practice* in the Selected works of Mao Tse-tung (1st ed., Vol. I, pp. 295-309). Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965.

In China, adherence to the guidance of the ML has been stipulated as a constitutional principle for all government agencies and functionaries (Constitution of the PRC, 1982/2004). Implementing the ML in police work is also clearly stipulated as a principle in the Chinese police law. Such a situation indicates that ML will not end, at least not in the near future, but methods of implementing it will change to accommodate changes in society. In practice, however, even in Mao's era, the dreamed relationship like the harmonious state of "milk blended with water" between the masses and the police was never fully achieved (Luo, 1958). With the commencement of the reform era after Mao's death, China saw a worsening police-masses relationship. Some suggest that the police must improve their mass viewpoint, which includes having firm faith in the masses, being willing to learn from the masses, relying on the masses, and serving the masses (Pan, 2015; Ren, 2010; Wang, 2004). At the same time, the police should improve their ethical standards and professional skills, and should enforce laws strictly and justly (Lin, 2014; Pan, 2015; Wang, 2004).

However, our review shows that in current studies related to implementing the ML in criminal investigation, the issues on how the ML should be implemented within a criminal investigation force have been greatly neglected. Furthermore, other questions, such as who the masses are in the context of criminal investigation under the macro background of the rule of law era ongoing in China, how to protect the interests of the masses, and when and how to mobilise the masses to help in solving crimes should be further explored. Western police practitioners can also empathise with this point in relation to over-specialisation in police resources, also being overly-intrusive to obtain criminal intelligence (Beckley, 2013) and certainly themes such as maintaining the support and trust of the community (Beckley, 2014). The issue of leadership and professionalism in policing is perennial and on-going (Herrington & Colvin, 2015). It appears that a more in-depth study is necessary to obtain more comprehensive understanding of the ML for informing the better implementation of the ML in criminal investigation and to provide a standard against which the practice of criminal investigations can be judged. This requires a researcher to build a solid theoretical ground from the concept, but also conduct an empirical study through field researches such as interviews with Chinese frontline police officers to obtain their experiences and understanding of the implementation of the ML in criminal investigation.

Mao's ML is not simply an elegant political slogan, otherwise, the CPC could not have built a "fish and water" relationship with the masses and won the victory of the revolution. Today's social conflicts in China also indicate that when the ML is not well implemented, that "fish and water" relationship will degenerate to a "frog and water" relationship, which is where leaders squat on the riverbanks feasting and croaking their political achievements in good times but jump into the water for help and security in bad times or in danger. Such practice will lead to an "oil and water" relationship, and finally will be exacerbated to a "fire and water" relationship, with the water putting out the fire. If that situation was allowed to happen, it would ironically prove the truthfulness of Mao's ML.

# References

Bai, X., & Ji, S. (2008). "Human flesh search engine": An Internet lynching? *Technology.* Retrieved February 5, 2012, from http://english.sina.com/china/1/2008/0704/170016.html

Bayley, D. H. (1992) Comparative organization of the police in English-speaking countries. In M. Tonry (Series Ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research: Vol. 15. Morden Policing* (pp. 509-545). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Beckley, A. (2013) Intelligence: a risk too far or 'dignity and justice for all of us'? *Salus Journal,* Issue 1, Number 2, 52-72

Beckley, A. (2014) Organisational justice: is the police service ready for it? *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 9:2, 176-190

Bracey, D. H. (1989). Policing the People's Republic. In R. J. Troyer, J. P. Clark & D. G. Rojek (Eds.), *Social control in the People's Republic of China* (pp. 159-168). New York: Praeger.

Braithwaite, J. (2015) Rethinking criminology through radical diversity in Asian reconciliation. *Journal of Asian Criminology.* 10:183-191

Bronitt, S. & Stenning, P. (2011) Understanding discretion in modern policing. *Criminal Law Journal*, 35 CrimLJ 319

Cai, Y., Wang, C., & Bao, H. (2001). Several questions concerning the principles of modern criminal investigation. Investigation and academic discussion of the Pinghu City criminal investigation work. *Journal of Zhejiang Police College* (06), 9-14.

Chen, X. (2002). Community and policing strategies: A Chinese approach to crime control. *Policing and Society, 12*(1), 1-13.

Cheng, B. (2006). Reflections on the major problems and countermeasures concerning rewards for reporting crimes in current Chinese criminal investigation organs. *Hubei Social Science* (04), 157-159.

Cheng, J., & Xue, H. (2011). The application and regularization of "Renrou search" in criminal investigation. *Social Science* (07), 114-121.

Cheng, L. (2007). *A study on the People's Supervisor System.* (Master), Anhui University, Hefei.

Clarke, R. V. (2004). Technology, criminology and crime science *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 10*, 55-63.

Constitution of the PRC. (1982/2004). Retrieved May 21, 2010, from http://www.alin.or.kr/upload/alin/copy_no/3/Constitution_1138078572343.pdf

CPC. (2007). Constitution of the Communist Party of China (Amended and adopted at the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 21, 2007). from www.cctb.net

Dai, M. (2008). Policing in the People's Republic of China: A review of recent literature. *Crime Law Soc Change, 50*, 211-227.

Dutton, M. (2000). The end of the (mass) line? Chinese policing in the era of the contract. *Social Justice, 27*(2), 61-105.

Dutton, M. (2005). Toward a government of the contract: Policing in the era of reform. In B. Bakken (Ed.), *Crime, punishment, and policing in China* (pp. 189-233). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Grabosky, P. (1998). Technology and crime control. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice,* (78), 1-6.

Haque, A. (2005). Information technology and surveillance: Implications for public administration in a new world order. *Social Science Computer Review, 23*(4), 480-485.

He, J. (Ed.). (1995). *Crime investigation systems in foreign countries*. Beijing: Chinese People's University Press.

He, L. (2011). Fugitive "Microblog surrender to police" first appeared in Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province. Retrieved December 12, 2011, from http://gd.people.com.cn/GB/123935/123955/15701219.html

He, T. (2008). *Study on "strike-hard" criminal policy*. (Doctor), China University of Political Science and Law, Beijing.

Herington, V. & Colvin, A. (2015) Police leadership for complex times. *Policing*, doi:10.1093/police/pav047

Huang, Y. (2010). On the theoretical grounds of the People's Supervisor System. *Study Theories* (27), 172-173.

Huang, Y., & Xu, L. (2011). Guangdong Zhaoqing police "Microblog" fugitive pursuit led to over 200 suspects caught. Retrieved December 12, 2011, from http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2011-10/02/c_122115623.htm

Jianlin, W. (2011) The history of the CPC is a history of the shaping and improvement of its mass line, *Social Sciences in China*, 32:4 19-28

Jin, Y. (1993). *History of Chinese People-as-root ideas* (1st ed.). Taibei: Taiwan Commercial Publishing Corporation.

Jing, Y., & Wang, Y. (2011). Implementing mass line in modern public security law enforcement. *Laws and Society* (35), 148-149.

Li, F., & Zhao, N. (2004). Analysis of reward system for reporting crimes. *Journal of Zhejiang Industrial and Commercial University*(06), 63-66.

Li, G. (1993). Problems and suggestions concerning the implementation of the mass line in police work in the new era. *Henan Public Security Journal* (03), 6-7.

Li, H., & Li, A. (1999). On the qualities of criminal investigators. *Journal of Henan Police College* (04), 61-63.

Li, J. (2006). On public security troops building thought of Mao Zedong. *Mao Zedong Thought Study, 23*(1), 80-82.

Li, Y. (2013). Stepping out of the epistemological limitation in the mass line in criminal investigation. Retrieved March 30, 2013, from http://www.cssn.cn/30/3003/201303/t20130328_321827.shtml

Liang, L. (2012). On innovative issues concerning the mass work in criminal investigation. *Journal of Beijing People's Police College* (6), 59-62.

Liao, C. (1988). Criminal investigation work must rely on the masses. *Faxue Pinglun (Law Review)* (05), 66-68.

Lin, L. (2013). Follow the mass line and improve the police work. *Window of the Northeast* (15), 32-33.

Lin, W. (2014). Rethinking of the mass line in criminal investigation in the new era. *Journal of Beijing Police College* (6), 41-44.

Lin, Y. (Ed.). (2009). *The wisdom of Laotse*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Liu, B. (2004). Human-first and enforcing law for the people - On the mass line in criminal investigation work. *Journal of Guizhou University (Social Science)* (04), 125-128.

Liu, H. (2007). *A study on Chinese reward system for reporting crimes*. (Master), Suzhou University Suzhou.

Liu, N., & Hao, H. (2009). On applying network "Renrou search" to criminal investigation. *Journal of Chinese People's Public Security University (Social Science)*(06), 9-16.

Luo, R. (1958). Several questions concerning the summations of the nine-year struggle In MPS (Ed.), *Luo Ruiqing talking about the people's public security work* (pp. 406-434). Beijing: Qunzhong Chubanshe.

Ma, Y. (1997). The Police Law 1995: Organization, functions, powers and accountability of the Chinese police. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategy and Management, 20(1)*, 113-135.

Ma, Z. (1999). Mass line is the lifeline for narcotics combat. *China Criminal Police* (04), 65-66.

Mao, Z. (1938). The role of the Chinese Communist Party in the national war *Selected works of Mao Tse-tung* (Vol. II, pp. 195-212). Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965.

Mao, Z. (1940). On policy *Selected works of Mao Tse-tung* (Vol. II, pp. 441-449). Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965.

Mao, Z. (1943). Some questions concerning methods of leadership *Selected works of Mao Tse-tung* (Vol.III, pp. 117-122). Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965.

Mao, Z. (1945). Resolution on certain questions in the history of our Party *Selected works of Mao Tse-tung* (Vol. III, pp. 177-225). Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965.

Mao, Z. (1949). Methods of work of Party committees *Selected works of Mao Tse-tung* (Vol. IV, pp. 377-383). Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1961.

Mao, Z. (1957). Persevere in plain living and hard struggle, maintain close ties with the masses *Selected works of Mao Tse-tung* (Vol. V, pp. 436-439). Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977.

Meng, F. (2008). *A study on theory and practice in public security work of Chinese Communist Party during the initial stage of China.* (Master), Northeast Normal University, Changchun.

MPS. (1958). Public security officers' eight main rules of discipline and ten points for attention. Retrieved 24 January, 2012, from http://www.raga.gov.cn/gajl/gajl05.htm

Myhill, A., & Quinton, P. (2010) Confidence, Neighbourhood Policing, and contact: drawing together the evidence. *Policing,* Volume 4, Number 3, 273-281

Pan, Z. (2015). The mass line in police work in a social transformation era: Predicament and ways out *Journal of Beijing Police College* (4).

Peng, Q. (2011). *A study on procuratorial crime reporting system.* (Master), Southwest Political Science and Law University.

Ren, E. (2010). Mass line is the only road to build harmonious public-police relationship. *Gong'an Yanjiu (Policing Studies)* (5), 85-88.

She, X. (2010). *1949-1978: A study of the contributing factors to the mass campaigns in China.* (Doctor), Party School of the Central Committee of CPC, Beijing.

Sklair, L. (1979) Relations of production, productive forces and the mass line in the formulation of the rural people's communes in China. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 6.3, 311-341

Sui, C. (2007). *A study of Mao Zedong's thought on public security work.* (Master), Shandong University, Ji'nan.

Tang, Y., & Miao, X. (1997). Making the decision of "strike-hard" for protecting reform. In Guo Dehong (Ed.), *The Journey of the Party and the State in making significant decisions* (Vol. V, pp. 450-457). Beijing: Hongqi Chubanshe.

Tanner, M. S. (2005). Campaign-style policing in China and its critics. In B. Bakken (Ed.), *Crime, punishment, and policing in China* (pp. 171-188). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Trevaskes, S. (2007). Severe and swift justice in China. *British Journal of Criminology, 47*, 23-41.

Trevaskes, S. (2010). The shifting sands of punishment in China in the era of "Harmonious Society". *Law and Policy, 32*(3), 332-361.

Wang, C. (2004). Relying on the masses is fundamental for victory in criminal investigation. *Journal of Jiangxi Public Security College* (2), 17-19.

Wei, H. (1999). Practice and reflections of following the mass line in criminal investigation in the new era. *Journal of Zhengzhou Public Security Cadres Administration College of the Ministry of Railway* (3), 39-40.

Wong, K. C. (2001). Community policing in China: Philosophy, law and practice. *International Journal of the Sociology of Law, 29* (2), 127-147.

Wong, K. C. (2009). *Chinese policing: History and reform*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Wu, C. (2001). On mass line in public security work. *Journal of the Party School of Tianjin Committee of the C.P.C., 1*(94), 73-75.

Wu, L., & Ma, J. (2002). On criminal investigation line in the new era. *Journal of Fujian Public Security College* (01), 47-50.

Wu, S. (2009). *Mao Zedong's public security work theory and its contemporary value.* (Master), Sichuan Academy of Social Science, Chengdu.

Xu, K., Zhang, D., & Wang, Z. (Eds.). (2009). *Criminal investigation system and rationale*. Beijing: Qunzhong Chubanshe.

Yang, M. (1999). Mass line: Magic weapon for the great development of criminal investigation work. *Journal of Public Security - Journal of Zhejiang Police College* (05), 36-37.

Yang, X. (2010). *On the openness of procuratorial work.* (Master), Southwest Political Science and Law University.

Yao, J., & Guo, L. (2008). The influence of modern science and technology to criminal investigation. *Journal of Shangdong Police College, 6* (102), 93-97.

Yu, L., & Wang, W. (2011). Approximate a million Microblog fans support Liaoning Chaoyang police "fugitive pursuit". *Legal.* Retrieved December 12, 2011, from http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2011-10/02/c_122116376.htm

Yu, X. (2005). *On constructing the reward system for reporting crimes.* (Master), Huandong Political Science and Law College, Shanghai.

Zhang, H. (2008). On the principle of relying on the masses in criminal investigation in the new era. *Journal of Henan Public Security Academy* (1), 126-128.

Zhong, L. Y. (2009). Community policing in China: Old wine in new bottles. *Police Practice and Research, 10*(2), 157-169.