

UCSF

UC San Francisco Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Down from the Mountains, Out of Time: Addiction, Reform and China's Heroin Generation

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0768n9kj>

Author

Bartlett, Nicholas Allyn

Publication Date

2012

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Down from the Mountains, Out of Time:
Addiction, Reform and China's Heroin Generation

by

Nicholas Allyn Bartlett

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

in the

GRADUATE DIVISION

of

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO

and

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Copyright (2012)
by
Nicholas Allyn Bartlett

Acknowledgements

I have incurred many debts over the past years that I would like to recognize here. First of all, I would like to thank my dissertation committee members: Vincanne Adams for providing unusually generous and wise mentorship and serving as a role model of committed scholarship, Liu Xin for showing what it means to read, Ian Whitmarsh for sharp and generous engagement, Matthew Kohrman for insightful conversations and big-picture sensibility, and Laura Schmidt for incisive thoughts on the structure of this document and encyclopedic knowledge of the drug literature.

In my program, I have benefited from several years of generous readings and comments, support, and friendship with Alex Beliaev, Emily Chua, Eric Plemons and Anthony Stavrianakis. Other readers who gave very helpful comments have included Saleem Al-Bahloly, Chris Bartlett, Larissa Kurtovic and Mary Murrell. Thanks also to the 2011-2012 Haas China group and its convener, Rongbin Han. People I would like to recognize for various forms of assistance during my time in the Bay Area include Philippe Bourgois, Lawrence Cohen, Julie Daley, Lyle Fearnley, Michelle Friedner, Katie Hendy, Sandra Hyde, Judith Justice, Sharon Kaufman, Kelly Knight and Alex Kral, Greg Franke and Lee Brooks, Theresa MacPhail, Eugene Raikhel, Jeff Schonberg and Julie Plasencia, and Emily Wilcox. Deborah Gordon has been a generous and kind mentor throughout my time in the Bay Area. Special thanks to Kim Bissell, Dan Hayes, Dorothy Porter, and Kathy Jackson for excellent administrative and departmental support.

Gary Wilder, Kevin Platt, and Sam Yamashita were important teachers in my undergraduate years who helped foster my interest in academia. From the harm reduction world, Daniel Wolfe, Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch, Matt Curtis, Anya Sarang, Tom Kellogg, Richard Elovich and my Chinese and Indonesian grantees taught me much about providing compassionate care. From the New York and Los Angeles years I would like to thank Joel Negin, Jonathan Jacoby, Deborah Baron, Carol Vance, John Chin, Bonnie Zima, and Kate Hunt.

China-based colleagues Feng Yu, Liu Yu, Li Jianhua, Zhang Konglai, Zhao Chengzheng, Bao Xiuhong, and Li Dongliang offered help and guidance in China during my dissertation writing years. Jenny Zhan provided important research assistance at key moments in the project. Ge Rongling and Zhang Wei are inspiring young Chinese scholars who have taught me a great deal.

I had a number of wonderful mentors and co-workers in China over the years including Tim Manchester, Zhenxiu Wang, Carrie Luo, Ted Hammett, and Dorinda Welle. Thanks is also due to Vincent Chin, Michelle Rodolph, Jen Liu-Lin and Craig Simons, Victor Shih and Maria Goff, Jeremy Huff, Phil Tinari, Morgan Philbin, Kumi Smith, and Stephanie Weber. I must recognize Ralph Litzinger 13 years after the fact for agreeing to write a half-fabricated letter of

recommendation that helped start this whole journey. Adam Bund deserves special thanks not just for a lifelong friendship, but also for his pivotal role in encouraging me first to move to China and later, to go back to school to study anthropology.

Diana Dunkelberger, whose literary sensibility, intuitive understanding of the project and emotional support have greatly improved the final product and made the process of writing of this document far more enjoyable and fulfilling.

My parents, Chris and Barbara, and brother and sister, Andrew and Liz, have provided me with the love and support that has made everything else possible.

I would also like to thank the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research (DDRA) Abroad Fellowship, National Science Foundation (NSF) Dissertation Improvement Fellowship, the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship, University of California Pacific Rim Research Program Mini-Grant, UCSF Graduate Dean's Health Science Fellowship and the Presidents' Research Fellowship in the Humanities and the UC Humanities Graduate Dissertation Fellowship (UC Societies of Fellows in the Humanities) for funding various parts of this research and my graduate studies. The Freeman Foundation supported my first research in China, a project on table tennis, which turned into a lifetime relationship with the country.

Finally, thank you to the many friends who welcomed me so warmly in Gejiu, a city that now feels like a second home to me. Thanks most of all to the Heroin Generation. Over the past years, I have come to better understand some of the struggles that this group faces. I have also had the honor of witnessing and benefitting from the courage, strength, wit, kindness, intelligence and character that individuals from this group regularly display in their continual move forward in a time that does not always feel their own.

Abstract

Down from the Mountains, Out of Time: Addiction, Reform and China's Heroin Generation

Nicholas Allyn Bartlett

In the late 1980s many young workers in Gejiu left government jobs to seek their fortunes in a newly liberalizing mining industry. Soon after starting private sector careers on the mountainside, this group came into contact with heroin, a drug that had just begun to circulate in this part of southwest China. Today in their late 30s and 40s, many of these one-time entrepreneurs have continued to use the opiate off and on for more than twenty years. Though deeply pessimistic about the possibility of overcoming their addiction, this group's marginalization seems less the product of a dependency on a pharmacological substance than a lived relation to a changing world.

This dissertation breaks with biomedical researchers who see addiction as a chronic disease of the brain and social scientists who interpret illicit drug use as the mark of a sub-culture or a symptom of structural inequality. Instead, I argue the affliction of the men and women I call "China's Heroin Generation" must be understood through their shared historical trajectory. Their passage from young children living in Maoist China to private sector pioneers to labor center students to unemployed idlers has given members of this generation common ways of experiencing and reflecting on their condition.

Attention to their past illuminates common ways that members of the Heroin Generation experience the present. Consumption of heroin was one of many practices associated with the existential challenges and bodily risks of entering adulthood in the midst of a tumultuous mining boom. As new state policies continued to transform Gejiu, these men and women found that their daring dispositions no longer enabled economically productive activity. Today, this group turns to early life memories and tales of the Maoist past to make sense of the destructive cycles that characterize their lives and the growing feeling that they have been left behind. Their condition of addiction is thus best understood as "fading"—from the earning potential of their early careers, from participation in China's turbulent development, and from the sense of connectedness they feel with other heroin users as their community shrinks with the passing of time.

Table of Contents

Introduction
Introducing China's Heroin Generation
1-20

Chapter One
Mayhem on the Mountains:
Risk-Taking and the "Rush" of Heroin's Arrival
21-58

Chapter Two
Descending into Shifting Seas:
Entrepreneurialism, Addiction, and the Post-Deng World
59-93

Chapter Three
Idling after Mao:
Opiate Addiction and Compulsory Labor as Treatment
94-140

Chapter Four
Attempting to "Return to Society":
A Wedding for a Future
130-159

Chapter Five
The Fading of a Generation:
Losing Relevance, Losing Community
160-184

Appendix: Glossary of Chinese Terms
185-192

Bibliography
193-201

Introduction

Introducing China's Heroin Generation

Down from the Mountain

Moving with the gingerly, stiff gait of a retired journeyman boxer, Li Zhijun towers over most of the other pedestrians in Gejiu's dense urban center on this sunny June day in 2012.¹ His hair is shaved into a boxy, military-style crew-cut and his eyes peer out over a pronounced, disjointed nose. After enjoying a period of social and economic success in his teenage and early adult years, Li has been struggling for a long time. A divorce, several failed business ventures, and multiple stints in various government-run compulsory detention centers contributed to his growing feelings of marginalization. Li's last job was a position as an entry-level security guard, a profession known pejoratively in China as a "gate watcher".² He quit after only a couple months, finding the work painfully incongruous with his self-image as a boss. He has not held a

¹ All names of individuals appearing in these pages have been changed to protect confidentiality. In a few instances, potentially identifying details have also been altered. In order to simplify an account that would otherwise be overburdened by different verb tenses, I employ the ethnographic present whenever relating description of ethnographic encounters that occurred during my fieldwork between 2009 and 2012. Each of these passages make explicit reference to the year that the episode took place and ends with three asterisks.

² Virtually all of my fieldwork—including 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork and more than 50 recorded interviews—was conducted in Chinese. I have attempted to interpret interviewees' responses as carefully and accurately as possible. However, there are some words for which a direct translation does not capture the full meaning. In such cases, I identify the Chinese phrase and discuss the intended meaning. On other occasions, the local term—sometimes a metaphor—provides important insight into the way in which people perceive the concept or action in question. In these cases, I use the literal translation as a way of capturing some of the local context of the term. For example, the term *xiahai* is used to describe the decision to leave secure employment to enter into private business, and literally translates as "descend into the sea." Because it evokes a different conception of a transition that plays an important role in this dissertation, I explain the Chinese term and afterwards use the literal English translation of the Chinese, in quotations. An appendix provides a list of all English terms put in quotations marks alongside both Chinese pinyin and characters.

job since. Scraping by on unemployment benefits and handouts from his parents, he passes his days engaging in idle chat with friends who find themselves in similar predicaments. Li first began using heroin twenty years ago. He still uses on occasion, though far less than he once did.

Above us, new condominiums are in the process of being carved into the side of the mountains that surround this mining city, which is often referred to as “tin capital” (*xidu*). A cluster of high-rise luxury apartment buildings, slightly taller and grander than their neighbors, are nearing completion in the heart of the city.

Li does not feel part of the growth that surrounds him. Instead, he fondly remembers and frequently makes reference to Gejiu as it existed in the 1980s, when the city was just awakening from the austere routines that had structured mining life under Mao. In Li’s telling, Gejiu in that earlier moment of his youth was a place of violence, experimentation and possibility. Though only a teenager, he had displayed qualities that marked him as someone well-suited to the times. Excelling in a variety of entrepreneurial activities, Li started several different businesses in a period when few had been willing to pursue opportunities outside of state employment.

Like many other aspiring businessmen of his age in Gejiu, Li in the late 1980s ventured into the nearby mountains to seek his fortune. Policies implemented to liberalize the mining industry under Deng meant that the tin ore scattered on the mountainside almost overnight became a commodity easily converted into cash. Inspired by the new possibility of becoming rich through mining, a generation of Reform-era entrepreneurs developed new ways of producing, fighting and consuming.

Li is one of many local residents who were never able to find success in the waves of reform

that have transformed Gejiu since his youth. Today, his conviction that he could have made a fortune through private sector activities is tempered by his frustration that he seems unfit to work in the world in which he lives. The ways of looking and thinking that he developed as a young adult continue to influence both his understanding of the country's development and sense of his own place within the broader historical changes that surround him.

The time has come for us to part. I am returning to the United States the next day and neither of us knows when we will meet again. Li sighs. The act of turning his attention towards the future visibly darkens his mood. He tells me that I must take down new contact details for him, and recites for me his parent's landline phone number. He explains that his employment prospects are dwindling, and he doubts he will keep his cell phone much longer. Just before we part, he notes sadly, "my life is entering its twilight".

Like many other of his generation, Li has lost his way. Haunted by a past that inflects his ways of perceiving the world and struggling against a variety of habits that linger in his life but no longer serve him as they once had, Li has come down from the mountains and is running out of time.

A brief explanation of how I arrived in Gejiu can introduce both the place where this ethnography unfolds and the conceptual stakes of the project itself. I first heard about this city of 450,000 in late 2002 when I was working for Futures Group, an international service delivery organization contracting Chinese partners to implement HIV prevention efforts. Located less than 200 kilometers from the Vietnamese border, Gejiu at that time had gained notoriety in China

as a hotbed of heroin use. Responding to preliminary HIV surveillance data that showed high prevalence in the region, international donors and Chinese government partners selected the mining city as a focus site for HIV/AIDS prevention and care projects.

Two years later, I attended a talk in New York given by a well-known American addiction expert who had recently returned from a high-level consultation visit to China. As part of a week-long whirlwind tour, national government officials had taken him to Gejiu to see one of the country's first pilot methadone maintenance clinics, a harm reduction program that would later be scaled up to reach hundreds of thousands of heroin users throughout the country.³ The remote tin mining city was beginning to gain recognition as a "model" for the country's HIV prevention efforts (Yardley 2005).

My first visit to the city was a brief stay of less than 48 hours in in 2008. At that time working as a consultant for Open Society Institute's International Harm Reduction Development program, I met with representatives from a newly-formed prefectural network of people with drug use history. This local group had recently received a grant from the foundation to conduct harm reduction advocacy and services activities.

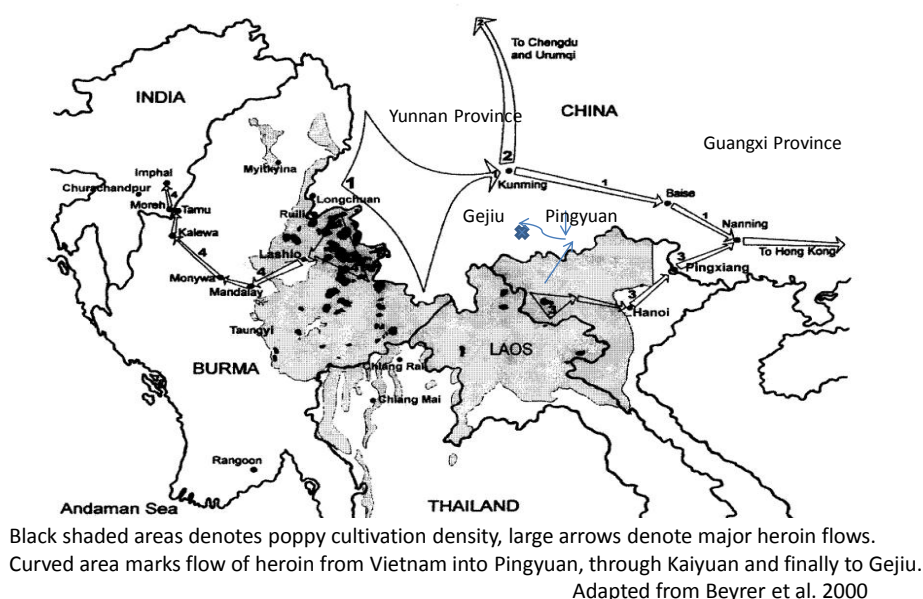
When I made the decision to move to Gejiu to conduct fieldwork in late in the summer of 2009⁴, my understanding of local heroin use and the dissertation research project were heavily

³ Harm reduction refers to a range of different public health interventions and policies designed to promote the health and dignity of targeted populations without necessarily aiming to stop the risky behavior itself. In this sense, a seatbelt wearing campaigns would be considered a harm reduction measure for car drivers. Needle exchange, opiate substitution (i.e. interventions where opiate dependent individuals are provided daily doses of methadone or buprenorphine to "replace" or "substitute" heroin), and safe injecting sites are examples of harm reduction measures for drug users.

⁴ I lived in Gejiu from August 2009 to April 2010, May to August 2011, and June 2012. I also spent several months conducting fieldwork in Beijing and Ningbo. Though experiences in those other two

influenced by my past experiences working in the public health field.⁵ At the time, a key reason for my interest in this region was my hope that it could serve as an illuminative case study to examine the dynamics contributing to what one U.N. study referred to as the country's "Titanic Peril" of HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS 2002). My ethnographic research in Gejiu was to explore the local sub-culture of heroin users to better understand risk factors associated with potentially dangerous injecting practices.⁶

Map of Gejiu's position in Regional Heroin Trafficking Routes in the 1990s



cities help to inform this analysis, they do not directly appear in these pages.

⁵ Before starting this research, I cut formal ties with the public health organizations I had previously worked with, including Open Society Institute. However, my past role as a conduit for funds undoubtedly continued to influence my relationships with the people I had met in Gejiu and other parts of China before beginning my fieldwork.

⁶ The analogy to the Titanic was made in the title of a controversial UNAIDS report released in 2002 that predicted a large-scale HIV epidemic in China (UNAIDS 2002). At that time, injecting drug use was believed to be responsible for more than half of all known HIV infections throughout the country. Though heroin use and HIV resulted in enormous suffering in affected communities, they never became a threat to national interests—a "fault line" that could tear apart the country—as some experts had predicted (Wolf 2003). Indeed, the HIV prevalence rate, which as of 2012 was under 0.1% of the general population, had led many to identify China's HIV/AIDS prevention work as an international success story (China Is a "Success Story" 2012).

The reality I encountered when I moved to Gejiu challenged my presumptions and promoted a re-thinking of my project.⁷ Soon after arriving, I learned that the total number of people using heroin locally had been declining precipitously for more than a decade. While more than 10,000 individuals had consumed the drug when use was most widespread in the early 1990s⁸, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century heroin use was limited to perhaps 2500 local residents.⁹ Moreover, heroin users in the city during my fieldwork tended to be born in the second half of the

⁷ While not the primary concern in these pages, infectious diseases remained a huge problem for people with heroin use history in Gejiu: by some estimates more than two thirds of heroin injectors in the city were HIV+ during my fieldwork, and many suffered from hepatitis C and other ailments. Public health workers told me that they believed most infections occurred in the 1990s and early 2000s before Gejiu became home to more than 40 different HIV/AIDS prevention and care project. Drug users and medical professionals alike consistently told me that new infections, like new heroin initiators, were becoming increasingly rare. Though HIV transmission rates had been greatly reduced before my arrival, I witnessed the heavy burden of previous infection during my stay in the form of opportunistic infections that often appeared among people who had contracted the virus years earlier.

⁸ The upsurge of heroin consumption in the region was often explained by experts and local residents alike as a product of Gejiu's unfortunate location near a major international drug trade route. In the 1980s and 1990s, heroin was synthesized from poppies harvested in Burma before travelling through Vietnam and then into Yunnan and Guangxi provinces before being shipped from the Eastern coast and Hong Kong to markets around the world. Drugs arriving in Gejiu often entered into China over the Vietnamese border to Pingyuan street in Wenshan prefecture and were transported to Kaiyuan before arriving in Gejiu. For discussions of regional heroin trafficking routes see (C. Beyrer et al. 2000; Luo 1995).

⁹ These figures should be taken as highly tentative estimates. The 10,000 number comes from a number of conversations with variously situated actors in Gejiu, and is meant to represent the total number of people who tried the drug during the early 1990s, not the considerably smaller number who ended up developing long-term dependence on heroin. The 2,500 estimate draws on data from NGO workers in two different local organizations in the city that systemically attempted to reach heroin users in the years immediately preceding and during my research. Another estimate made by the Yunnan Institute of Drug Abuse (YIDA) researchers in the early 2000s put the total number of illicit drug users in Gejiu to have been as high as 13,000, though this figure does not specify the breakdown between heroin and non-heroin users. The most recent publicly available estimate of the total number of "registered" drug users (people who were arrested and processed by police), taken from the mid-2000s, is 5,185 drug users. Virtually all "registered" drug users in the region at the time of my research were heroin users. Figures reporting "registered" drug users are often said to significantly underestimate the total population of drug users because they fail to take into account users who have not been arrested by police. However, in this case, I believe the cumulative total of 5,185 considerably overestimates the number of heroin users in Gejiu during my fieldwork. The police figure fails to remove the significant number of heroin users who died—city officials claim more than 1000 drug users have died of drug overdoses alone since heroin first appeared in the city—or ceased using in the twenty-plus years that the government had been keeping these statistics. See (Zhao 2008; Jing 2010; Registered Synthetic 2011; Lu, Fang, and Xi Wang 2008).

1960s and the 1970s, and to have used heroin off and on for fifteen or more years. While recreational use of “new style drugs” (*xinxing dupin*) such as ketamine, ecstasy and ephedrine in 2010 was fairly common among young people frequenting Gejiu’s nightlife establishments, heroin use was generally confined to an older group whose lives had become defined by their relationship to illicit drugs in a very different way.

Another unexpected discovery was that most of Gejiu’s heroin “addicts” were not heavy users of the drug. I had expected to encounter a community of heroin users whose daily routines were dominated by the rhythms of obtaining and using the drug (see, for example, (Agar 1973)). The group I came to know, if using at all, tended to engage in what Americans call “chipping”—consuming only occasionally and not necessarily displaying symptoms of physiological dependence.¹⁰ The local heroin glut that had been identified as a serious threat to a whole generation of young people in Gejiu in the late 1980s and early 1990s during my fieldwork was slowly but surely receding from public consciousness. Nearly every heroin user I spoke to indicated that his or her most intensive period of heroin use had occurred many years before my arrival, when the drug had been purer, cheaper and more readily available.

The lives of this group of local heroin users were marked by what struck me as an unusual paradox: Despite the fact their consumption of heroin had, on the whole, markedly decreased as time passed, they were nonetheless becoming increasingly pessimistic about their prospects of

¹⁰ Many medical professionals in China and the US alike differentiate between the clinical symptoms associated with physiological dependence and psychological dependence, which can last far longer. Despite more than a century of debate on these topics, the notion of “addiction” as a medical category remains a controversial topic (O’Brien, Volkow, and T. K. Li 2006; Shaffer 1997). This dissertation attempts to conceptualize addiction in different terms than medical researchers, exploring the condition’s locally articulated historical, social and existential aspects.

becoming something other than heroin users. Many believed their future prospects—for finding a job, new friends, a romantic partner, a family, a life free from familiar destructive cycles—were extremely limited. This marginalization seemed to derive less from dependence on a substance than a lived relation to the changing world around them.

As the months passed, I put aside my initial interest in injection practices¹¹ and began to grapple with a new set of questions: Who were the men and women that made up this group of heroin users, and how did their shared ways of thinking and acting forged in an earlier historical moment inflect their experiences in the present? What possibilities are there for understanding a condition of addiction that existed among people who were identified as heroin users but that could not be reduced to their relationship to this substance? How might the condition of addiction experienced by this group be connected to historical transformation of this city and country more generally?

Addiction in China—A Historical Condition?

The approach that I develop in the following pages is indebted to a long and fruitful social science tradition exploring illicit drug use. Starting in the 1930s, American sociologists challenged contemporary medical depictions of addiction as the expression of underlying

¹¹ For a dissertation purporting to focus on addiction, I do not dedicate much space to the discussion of drug use itself. Indeed, while my participation in previous public health research projects in China involved asking highly detailed questions about drug use practices and spending time around people who injected in my presence, I rarely witnessed heroin use in my time in Gejiu. This was due to a number of factors: Many of my interlocutors were in the process of re-building of their lives and were invested in my seeing them as drug-free. Repressive local drug laws meant individuals who were using tended to want to avoid publicizing this information. But this absence was also my deliberate choice as I became more interested about how addiction followed this group in moments and periods of their lives when they were not using or using only occasionally.

character flaws of the individual user by showing how drug use behavior could be understood as the result of social learning grounded in symbolic interaction.¹² Extending this interest in how context influences drug use, a wave of ethnographers associated with the Chicago School wrote about illicit drug users as “sub-cultures”, “types”, and inhabitants of “street environments”.¹³ These new ways of understanding drug using collectives attempted to make legible the ways in which economic, social and political factors influenced drug use in a world outside of the clinic that needed to be studied on its own.¹⁴ Rather than patients displaying medical or moral pathologies, drug users in these accounts were depicted as members of their own communities with their own distinctive cultures.

¹² Questions about whether or not the term “addiction” should denote a medical pathology, and if so which type, has been debated for many decades. Before World War Two, opium addiction was often understood by American medical doctors as an ailment of “psychopaths” suffering from pre-existing mental abnormalities or defects (Kolb 1925a:88). “Normal people” were said to generally be protected from receiving the pleasurable effects of opiates, and by extension, from becoming dependent on illicit drugs (Kolb 1925b). Alfred Lindesmith’s pioneering research attempted to fight what he characterized as a widespread “moralistic taint” against drug users. Arguing against then-widespread understandings of drug addiction as an expression of individual psychopathy, Lindesmith showed that addiction was a socially mediated process contingent on the patient’s conscious understanding of his or her context of use and effects on the body (Lindesmith 1938:597, 606). Influenced by the symbolic interactionism of Herbert Blumer, sociologists subsequently explored how context influenced the trajectory of individual addiction careers, and how social interactions shaped the ways that individuals prepared, consumed and even experienced the effects of the drug (Becker 1953:238; Becker 1967; Lindesmith 1940).

¹³ Drug using behaviors were increasingly interpreted as influenced by class, race and the organization of the local economies (Finestone 1957; Preble and Casey 1969; Jock Young 1971).

¹⁴ Though most of these studies were conducted in urban contexts in Europe or the United States, anthropologists during this period also researched drug use in other contexts. In her exploration of peyote use among the Huichol, Barbara Meyerhoff showed how a particular drug can create greatly differing bodily and social effects depending on the symbolic value attributed to its use in different contexts (Meyerhoff 1975). Meyerhoff’s attention to the ways in which place, history, and cosmology inflect local drug use practices is inspiring. However, her understanding of Huichol culture as a self-contained, stable symbolic system fails to provide a methodology appropriate for China, a place where the very fabric of daily life has been re-ordered during the career of long-term heroin use users. For a collection of recent ethnographic work that features new approaches to addiction, see (Raikhel and Garriott 2013).

In recent years, two anthropologists have contributed to new ways of situating and contextualizing drug use behavior. Philippe Bourgois' ethnography In Search of Respect humanizes crack dealers and users by showing how the lives of these often tragic figures are impacted by the pursuit of the same basic human needs that motivate other Americans. Bourgois' account foregrounds the ways in which class and race relations inflect immigrants' attempts to achieve respect and assimilate into America society. For Bourgois, the self-destructive behaviors associated with drug selling and using should be read as ways in which marginalized people "internalize their frustration, resistance, and powerlessness" (2003:319). He interprets the harms created by drugs through a Marxist frame as "epiphenomenal expression of deeper, structural dilemmas", namely various forms of inequality (Bourgois 2003:319).¹⁵

Angela Garcia's The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and dispossession along the Rio Grande presents addiction among rural New Mexican Hispanic residents as part of a shared, communal pain caused by a history of violent dispossession and persistent poverty. Garcia shows how long-term heroin users experience addiction as "in the blood", a term that references both inter-generational heroin use among family members and the experience of dependency on opiates that follows local residents as if from birth (Garcia 2010: 202). Merging with other forms of dispossession that inflect Española Valley residents' daily lives, the movement of heroin through the community bonds local residents together even as it inflects great pain and suffering.

¹⁵ His text exhibits a highly attuned sensitivity to the local and national history of the political economic context that contributes to crack and other drug epidemics (see, for example, his discussion of the transition from crack, cocaine and heroin to marijuana and malt liquor in urban areas (Bourgois 2003 xvii-xviii)). I will argue that capturing the experiences of drug users in China demands a different interpretive approach.

While the two authors have differing sensibilities and modes of writing, both attempt to re-situate drug use behavior within communities where this social problem takes root. Eschewing the tendency of earlier social science researchers to separate illicit drug users into their own distinct collective, these works introduce their interlocutors as complex subjects occupying multiple positions as family members, workers, lovers and neighbors. Garcia and Bourgois place an emphasis on the historical continuities of colonial projects, racism, and patterns of institutional exclusion to show how problems related to illicit drug use intermingle with other forms of social exclusion and reproduce inequalities through time.

Exploring local experiences of addiction in China through time has taken my own project in different directions. Before proceeding, I would like relate a story about the impact of opium use which demonstrates the challenges of researching the effects of drug use in China. Roughly the same age as the parents of many members of the Heroin Generation, Ruo was a long-time Gejiu resident who I met within two weeks of arriving in Gejiu. Like most people in his 60s, Ruo had never used illicit drugs. However, his grandmother had been one of seven people in her nearby village to suffer from chronic opium use in an earlier historical period.

First offered to Chinese emperors by foreign dignitaries as a form of tribute and smoked in the imperial court, opium use spread throughout the country in the 18th and 19th centuries, facilitated in part by the unequal treaties of the Opium Wars in the mid-19th century. By the 1930s, opium was smoked by tens of millions of people throughout the country, and had become a potent symbol of colonial domination, national humility and the ineffective policies of the Qing

and Nationalist governments. This wealth-destroying habit forced Ruo's grandmother to sell her land in the 1940s, just before Ruo was born.

This family tragedy later provided seemingly unending good fortune for Ruo. When the Communists came to power, a campaign against opium in the early 1950s depicted use of the drug as an evil habit of "Old Society" (*jiushehui*) imperialist and capitalist lifestyles. Millions of individuals gave up their habits during the tumultuous early years of Mao's rule, and the country remained virtually drug-free until the 1980s. Meanwhile, Communist land reform campaigns re-inscribed the loss of the family home with new meaning. As a teenager during the Cultural Revolution, Ruo's class background as a landless peasant allowed him to avoid punishment for his role in a local student movement controversy, aided him in gaining admittance to college at a time when national tests had been discarded in favor of political qualifications, and strengthened his credentials for his first job as a schoolteacher. Losing personal property immediately prior to the Communists' founding of the People's Republic of China was the best thing that could have happened for their family given the realities of the new political order. During my fieldwork several decades later, Ruo enjoyed a happy and prosperous life as a respected pensioner and owner of two homes. Reflecting on the arc of his life in 2010, Ruo noted with a chuckle that none of his later-life comforts would have been possible without his grandmother's opium use.

This brief tale draws attention to the methodological challenges for researchers exploring illicit drug use in China. Attempts to understand drug use through time must examine the

complex and shifting local symbolic systems within which this use takes place.¹⁶ Experiences using opium in China would have differed dramatically depending on how users were defined in a particular period and community, if and when one's drug use came to be seen a problem of the broader collective, what type of treatments were thought to be appropriate given contemporary understandings of this affliction, and under what conditions local users were able to access treatment.

Though only circulating in China in significant quantities since the 1980s, heroin, too, has come to be understood differently at different moments in the country's recent history. Different waves of state responses over the past two decades included local community-based treatment, criminalization of the drug and treatment with compulsory labor, and, more recently, standardized clinic-based medical treatment for the condition. But an understanding of the condition of heroin addiction as it is experienced in a particular moment must be attentive to historical forces.

Born in Maoist times, heroin users I encountered in my fieldwork shared host of experiences not directly related to using drugs. Most of this community in Gejiu was connected to emerging private sector activity in the 1980s and early 1990s. Long-term heroin users struggled within the context of more widespread shifts in ideas about the meaning of entrepreneurial acumen, the pursuit of money, and understandings of the good life more generally.¹⁷ Li Zhijun's outlook was

¹⁶ For an exploration of the social life of opium in China, see (Zheng 2005). For an American example of a study that attends to shifting understanding of a drug through time, see (Acker 2005). For more on "spiritual opium", see (Reaves 1985).

¹⁷ I refer to the country's recent leaders as shorthand for different historical periods throughout the dissertation. Mao Zedong ruled the country from its founding in 1949 to his death in 1978. Deng Xiaoping oversaw the early reform period between 1978 and 1992. Jiang Zemin's presidential tenure

shaped not only by the treatment constellation and contemporary difficulties that existed during my fieldwork, but also by the history of what this drug meant in relation to his life and career in earlier times. Ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that had helped Li Zhijun and others like him to earn health incomes their early adult lives by the second decade of the 21st century came increasingly to be understood as habits of the recent past that no longer served them. The condition of addiction during my fieldwork was experienced as a common problem of living in the present and a form of marginalization understood as an unfitness for the times.

If Garcia and Bourgois emphasize historical continuity to show how heroin use as a social problem is embedded within and reproduces other forms of exclusion, my project proposes a different way of conceiving the relationship between individual, drug using collective, and the social world in which they live.¹⁸ Taking seriously local claims that heroin users have come to experience the world differently, I am interested in highlighting how this group shares ways of seeing, thinking, acting and reflecting in the present that are distinct from those around them. The characteristics of addiction experienced by the Heroin Generation during my fieldwork thus must be differentiated not only from drug dependency in other contexts and cohorts¹⁹, but also from the experiences of heroin use that this group engaged in their early adult lives, when the

was from 1993 to 2003, and Hu Jin ruled from 2003 to 2012. I use the term “late Hu period” to refer to the years of my fieldwork (2009-2012).

¹⁸ Taken from Alfred Schutz (1967), the term “social world” focuses attention on the structure of subjective meanings that create the world in which individuals inhabit.

¹⁹ There are undoubtedly many similarities between the practices and experiences of heroin users in China and people who use the drug in other contexts. However, as my interest is in understanding not the logic of practices, but the shared experiences of a generation, my analysis continually returns to ways in which this group, living during a unique and tumultuous period of history, struggles with making sense of their condition within historical events that add additional complexity to classic narratives about “addict” problems.

drug moved through different economic and social spaces.²⁰ To understand how historically distinct experiences continue to inflect the condition of addiction, I explore the shared trajectory of the group I call “China’s Heroin Generation”.

Overview of the Dissertation’s Structure

Each of the following chapters makes up a part of a single extended argument about the nature of addiction as it existed for the Heroin Generation in the late Hu era. Though I explore different aspects of China’s past throughout the dissertation, this history is not given as “context” but rather serves my broader interest in elucidating this group’s shared ways of experiencing in the ethnographic present. I start Chapter One by asking a question that I neglected early in my research: Who were these men and women before their lives became defined by their heroin use? Focusing on the years between 1986 and 1992—a time I call the “Rush period”—this chapter recounts the coming of age stories of three young men who became involved in both private mining activity and heroin use. Consumed by the energy and possibility of becoming rich through activity in the mountains, heroin users in the Rush period understood themselves as anticipating the country’s imminent movement towards a market economy. By exploring the common elements of their “coming out” into a community of private sector business people

²⁰ The transformation of this social world included the privatization of state-owned enterprises, the growth and re-orientation of the entrepreneurial sector, and a rapid spread of consumerism and new forms of consumption as wealth—and inequality—among local residents grew. The extent of the changes that have taken place during the Heroin Generations’ lives—the radical re-orientation of everyday living represented from the Cultural Revolution that they were born into to the late-Hu era that they occupied during my fieldwork foregrounds the need to attend to different types of transformation and their lingering impressions previous ways of collective ways of seeing and understanding the world have left behind.

during this tumultuous period, I show how heroin amplified the feelings and practices associated with a specific type of pioneering, experimental, economically productive historical subject.

Chapter Two works against familiar narratives that would explain the rise and fall of individual heroin users as the product of the changing intensity of their relationship to the drug. Instead, I show how this group becomes caught up in a broader—and often overlooked—forms of economic and social marginalization that stem from the emergence of a newer, different set of characteristics associated with private sector activity. Approaching entrepreneurialism as a set of embodied habits, I interpret the struggles of Sam, a long-term heroin user who struggled to find employment during my fieldwork, as growing from his inability to change the habits that had initially contributed to his success as a Deng-era entrepreneur. Contrasting Sam’s career with that of Sunny, a wealthy entrepreneur who succeeded in “moving with the times”, I explore how each of these businessmen struggles in different way to inhabit the present.

Chapter Three explores how heroin users interpret their own labor practices within a historical perspective. As they are often portrayed drug users would appear to be among the least likely people to possess an acute historical consciousness.²¹ Drawing on extended discussions with this group about the proper role of the state in regulating their labor practices, I show how this group reflects upon the China that they occupied as young adults and one that they

²¹ Writers from a range of disciplines and traditions have portrayed heroin users as stuck in the reductive, repetitive rhythms of finding and using drugs and thus displaying a limited sensitivity towards historical changes around them. Whether suffering from doxa (Eagleton and Bourdieu 1992), the limited perspective of the lumpenproletariat (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009), an unspecified form of mystification (Finestone 1957) or the pharmacological effects of the drug itself (Burroughs 1977), people who exhibit signs of dependency on drugs are more often depicted as victims of structural shifts preoccupied in the rush of their destructive patterns rather than as readers of history.

imagine existed under Mao's rule to make sense of their own life trajectories. Through their reflection on and discussion of the past, members of the Heroin Generation come to see the very condition of heroin addiction as a historically particular one created in part by a set of state policies instituting compulsory labor as treatment at a time when the local economy requires subjects who exhibit a different type of relationship to their own labor. The historicity displayed by this group opens up the possibilities for powerful critiques of Hu-era state policies and contributes to the way in which they inhabit the present as their feelings of marginality grow.²²

Chapter Four shifts from documenting the Heroin Generation's shared historicity to exploring how the past inflects individual attempts to "return to society" (*huigui shehui*). Drawing on my experiences attending the wedding ceremony and participating in the early conjugal life of a couple who first met in a state compulsory laboring center, I take up the locally asserted claim that Chinese heroin users' pasts hold a different ontological weight from other people around them. The couple's tireless efforts to "return" are complicated by a condition that is produced dialogically between themselves and the community they live in. The chapter finishes by considering how to understand the relation between past, present and future as experienced by people attempting to "walk out" of addiction.

I finish the dissertation by evoking the experience of addiction as a particular relationship to the present. Following the arc of the conversation occurring during a holiday meal I spent with

²² Readers may ask why the focus here is on a particular form of historical consciousness rather than practices related to subjection (Althusser 1970; Butler 1997; Foucault 2005). Though the lives of the Heroin Generation can certainly be documented as the products of multiple, overlapping interpolations and subject making projects, the concept of historicity allows me to foreground their experience in the present and emphasize the difference between the social world they inhabit today and those that came before it.

three longtime friends, Chapter Five documents different aspects of “fading”, my own term designating the Heroin Generation’s shared experience of the present during my fieldwork. Through an attention to the way that this trio understands the concept of generation, an exploration of how addiction comes to be articulated as a relation to the development of the country through time, and an analysis of the ways in which marginalization extends to this group’s relation to the symbolic world they inhabit, I show how addiction exists for long-term heroin users as a complex historical phenomenon of “fading”. The common aspects of this generation’s shared struggles contribute to a distinct form sociality visible in the strong bonds that exists between long-term heroin users. This group struggles in part due to their belief this generational collective is also in the process of disappearing from the world.

Locating Addiction

As I watch Li Zhijun walk away from Golden Lake back in the direction of his home, I think about the various labels he has accumulated over the past twenty-plus years. Today, medical authorities either refer to him as a “patient” (*bingren*) or an “addict” (*chengyinzhe*), a Chinese term literally translated as “one who has become addicted”.²³ The police say he is a “registered drug user” (*zaicedexiduzhe*), a category that keeps Li’s name in a national database alongside hundreds of thousands of others who are tracked and frequently administered urine tests by state authorities. Some locals refer to him pejoratively as a “drug using criminal” (*xidufan*), a title

²³ Even as Chinese medical definitions are often translated and adapted from Western ones, the term *chengyinzhe* implies important differences from the Western term “addiction” as the “cheng” character designates an attainment or arrival at a particular state. The literal translation would be “one who has become addicted”.

that implies he has been “smoked into rubbish” (*xifei*) and is an incorrigible person of no redeeming value. When in Chinese state’s compulsory detoxification centers, he is a “student” (*xueyuan*) instructed by government employees who oversee his participation in a regime of compulsory labor designed to “remold” (*gaizao*) him.

But Li has also been known by names not directly related to his heroin user. In his teenage years and early adulthood, he was called as a “big brother” (*dage*) and “boss” (*laoban*). Many of his peers believed he was someone who was “moving with the waves of society” (*genzhe shehui de langchao zou*). His childhood knack for turning a quick profit and then spending his money on nightlife entertainment marked him as someone who was engaging in “spiritual opium” (*jingsheng yapian*), a term favored by the Communist party in the early years of the Reform to refer to citizens with overly consumerist lifestyles. His love of Gejiu’s nighttime activities was said to dispose him to “capitalism loving disease” (*aizibing*), a common slang term for HIV/AIDS in the Rush years.²⁴ Older people in Gejiu may have seen him as engaging in the “corrupted customs” (*louxi*) of the imperialists and capitalists. With the passing of time, he has increasingly become identified as someone who “idles” (*xianzhe*), a member of an unemployed group, who are, in the words of one local resident, “a little pathetic, a little scary” (*youkelian, youkepa*).

When I asked Li what he thought was the most fitting term to depict someone like himself, he responded with a different name. He said he and other long-term heroin users should be understood as “sacrificial offerings of Reform” (*gaige kaifang de xishengpin*). This phrase,

²⁴ “Spiritual opium” was a term employed by Communist party officials attempting to fight the proliferation of capitalist habits when Li was a teenager. See (Reaves 1985).

which I will return to in the final chapter, references not just the ill fortune of a marginalized group and their contentious relation to a drug, but a way of existing in late-Hu China that resulted from a common movement through the country's tumultuous history.

On our last meeting, Li inhabited a world that he felt no longer required people like himself. Understanding Li's experience of addiction in Gejiu requires an attention to his trajectory through China's historic shifts of the past 25 years, a movement that is aptly represented by the opening and subsequent closing of the mountains to a would-be entrepreneur.

Chapter One
Mayhem on the Mountains:
Risk-Taking and the "Rush" of Heroin's Arrival

The inescapable fate of living in and with one's generation completes the full drama of individual human existence.

— Martin Heidegger

Perched in a narrow valley 5500 feet above sea level and surrounded by mountains, Gejiu is, first and foremost, a mining city. The allure of its rich mineral deposits has attracted outsiders to this part of southern Yunnan for more than 1,000 years. Today, visitors wandering through China's "tin capital" can stumble upon traces of different political regimes' efforts to shape the relationship between the city and the mountains that surround and sustain it. Yellow stucco French colonial buildings still stand next to what used to be a busy stop on the Yunnan-Vietnam train line, a reminder of an era when China fell under what came to be known as the unequal treaties in the second half of the 19th century and tin was carted into Indochina to feed European colonial ambitions.

Another chapter in the country's recent history is visible on the paved footpaths next to Golden Lake, a body of water three kilometers in circumference at the heart of the city. Through a mix of patriotism and self-interest, Chinese nationalist businessmen successfully supplanted French influence locally in the 1910s by creating a privately funded, competing railway line that allowed tin from the region's mountains to flow in new directions (New Life,

2010). During the Qing and Republic years, Chinese investors, mining experts, and laborers from around the country swarmed to Gejiu's mountainside. Indeed, in the period leading up to the Second World War, regional guest houses that offered accommodations and even loans to speculators arriving from the same hometown as the proprietors operated throughout the city. Despite the constant ebbs and flows of itinerant fortune seekers, the tin capital in the first half of the 20th century had a permanent population of less than 20,000 residents.²⁵

Under Mao, the Communist Party oversaw the conversion of this mining outpost into a thriving urban center. Soon after the Communists defeated the Nationalists and established the People's Republic of China in 1949, the newly formed Yunnan Tin corporation (*Yunnan Xiye Jituan*, referred to hereafter as "Yunnan Tin"), a Kunming-headquartered State-Owned Enterprise (*guoyouqiye*, hereafter referred to as SOE)²⁶, began constructing a network of sorting and smelting plants, roads, tunnels, schools, hospitals, and administrative buildings on the narrow valley floor. The steady, planned growth undertaken from the 1950s to the 1980s was a testament to the competent management of local government officials and the importance of this region in the country's modernization plans. At its height supporting close to 150,000 employees and their families with steady, long-term employment and benefits, Yunnan Tin was a widely recognized symbol of the Chinese Communist state's commitment to providing stable

²⁵ Officially, there were 123,518 residents in the area in 1952, but this figure includes settlements in the mountains and valleys beyond Gejiu (Honghezhou Weixuanchuan 2009).

²⁶ The history of this mining company is intimately intertwined with different groups that attempted to harness the minerals in the surrounding mountains. Yunnan Tin's predecessor, Gejiu Tin Industry Company Limited, was created by Qing dynasty government officials in 1905. It was renamed Gejiu Tin Industry Stock Corporation in 1909, and became Yunnan Tin Company Limited in 1940 after merging with a local smelting company under Chiang Kaishek's Nationalist government. In 1950 it was nationalized under the Communist party and renamed Yunnan Tin Corporation (The Course 2011). Chapters Two and Three take up Yunnan Tin and the legacy of SOEs in more detail.

livelihoods for its worker-citizens.

While evidence of activity conducted by Nationalist businessmen and Communist SOEs is still visible, visitors to Gejiu today have to look a bit harder to find traces of the dramatic turn that the mining industry took in the second half of the 1980s and 1990s, when hundreds of small, privately-run (*minying*) enterprises appeared on the mountains and money began to spread through Gejiu in new ways. Those who venture outside the city can still see evidence of these miners' activity in the devastation of the local mountain landscape. Piles of rocks strewn haphazardly from makeshift tunnels still cause landslides on remote mountain access roads.²⁷ In the city, the legacy of this group's activity is less visible. Unlike Yunnan Tin, the private mining bosses did not erect public monuments or fund services for residents on the urban floor. Part of their legacy can be witnessed in the glut of retail shops in the downtown shopping area, including high-end luxury stores one might not expect to stumble upon in a remote corner of one of the poorest provinces in China. Outlets such as Lacoste, which during my stay in Gejiu launched an aggressive billboard campaign urging local residents to indulge in "unconventional chic", owe their presence in this mountainside community in no small part to these self-employed miners and the wealth that became concentrated in their hands.

The influence of the bosses and their associates has faded with shifts in the regulation of the mining industry and the growth of other sectors in the local economy. However, the boom in violent, private mining starting in the Deng years continues to have profound effects on the lives

²⁷ An older friend of mine in town supervised an investigative report on this damage made by his daughter and other high school students that won a regional award.

of Gejiu residents, especially a group of now middle-aged heroin users who, as young adults, became captivated by the lure of making the surrounding mountains their own.

In this Chapter, I document how a group of young people came to be shaped by new routines of accumulating and spending money in the years between 1986 and 1992, a time that I will refer to as the “Rush period”. Landmark events marked the arrival of the Rush years. In 1986, Beijing promulgated a new law opening the mining industry to private interests in an attempt to meet demand for mineral consumption under its economic five-year plan (People’s Congress 1986), one of a growing number of policies that indicated that the government was relinquishing its longtime stranglehold on private enterprise. In the mountainous region of southern Yunnan, the start of the Rush years also corresponded with the arrival of heroin. Starting in the middle of the decade, military personnel returning from tours along the Burmese border brought the drug to the city for the first time. A small group of local users began to travel by bus to other cities to purchase and bring the drug back to Gejiu for their own use.

In this chapter, I attempt to reconstruct the broader social world within which the “sons and daughters” (*zinü*) of Gejiu first began to use heroin. The great majority of heroin users in Gejiu were born between 1965 and the late 1970s. These adolescents and young adults’ early experiences of heroin use tended to occur within their pursuit of private sector careers at a time when the pull of the mountains—and the fortunes that could be made there—was particularly strong. Rather than seeing illicit drug use as a diversion from pursuit of wealth, status and emerging opportunity, young locals experienced heroin use as part of experimental new ways of

producing and consuming.

Still carrying with me deeply engrained sensibilities from my previous career as a public health worker and researcher, I initially underestimated the importance of the liberalization of the mining industry on heroin users' lives. Ignoring my prompts that asked for reductive micro-sociology description of heroin initiation²⁸, the men and women I spoke to discussed how the historical energies and opportunities of the times influenced their lives. Virtually every heroin users in Gejiu I encountered in 2010 had once been connected to the nascent, informal tin economy as short term laborers, mineral buyers, smelt plant workers, bosses, hired muscle, "little brothers" (*xiaodi*), or romantic partners of someone in the business.

One memorable conversation with a long-time heroin user named Old Kaiyuan was particularly helpful in introducing me to the importance of how the particular charge of private sector activity in the Rush Period connected to heroin use. Sporting a shaved, dome-like head and teetering on a leg that had never healed properly from an injury years earlier, Old Kaiyuan was rarely without two items: his small shiatsu dog and a bottle of inexpensive rice wine. Like many of the drug users I met in Gejiu, Old Kaiyuan started using heroin during Deng Xiaoping's last years in power. When I asked him to talk about what lead to his initial decision to use drugs, he responded by attempting to convey to me a sense of the discomfort he began to feel as a young worker. A succinct statement of the feelings expressed by many long-time heroin users I spoke to, Old Kaiyuan's explanation of his transition from Yunnan Tin worker to member of "the

²⁸ The initial questions I asked about early heroin use were influenced by public health research that reduced initiation to quantifiable variables such as immediate setting, peer pressure, and accessibility to the drug. See, for example, (X. Li, Zhou, and Stanton 2002; Z. Wu et al. 1996).

Society” (an affiliation I will shortly explain in detail) deserves to be quoted in full. He noted:

In the 80s when I first started working, the benefits at my work unit were considered good, but in Gejiu city, we saw lots of people, and slowly became unbalanced (*xinli bupingheng*). The Chinese society (we were part of), by the 1990s it wasn’t ok, seeing people in the Society, while we were tired to death from work, only making such a small amount of money, at times barely even having enough to eat, but looking at those people, each one taking out large fistfuls of money and spending it. So psychologically we became unbalanced, unbalanced. We were tempted to go looking for dangerous things, and slowly started using drugs.

Disillusionment and jealousy sparked by contact with this new community lead Old Kaiyuan to abandon his modest routine as a state worker and throw himself into a very different career helping friends with an illicit business. It was this earlier decision to “come into Society” (*chulaishhehui*) that marked the beginning of a new phase of his life that would lead to decades of intermittent heroin use. Following Old Kaiyuan’s lead, this chapter focus on Rush era “Society” and the lives that emerged through the shifting relationship between mountain mining sites and the city floor. Though heroin use would later in the 1990s and 2000s come to define a generation of one-time workers, in the Rush Period consuming the drug for many was just one of many activities related to making sense of and pursuing the emerging opportunities of the time.

“Coming into Society” in the Rush Period

“The Society”²⁹, often understood as an allusion to “Black Society” (*heishehui*) or organized crime, took on a special meaning in the Rush years. To have an “economic head” (*jingjitounao*)

²⁹ Confusingly, informants often also employ the same Chinese word (*shehui*) to refer to “society” in its more familiar usage referring to the local community in Gejiu or, at times, the larger community of Chinese citizens from across the country. I will use capital letters to distinguish the instances when informants are referring to the specific historical formation associated with Rush era activities of violent local young people conducted outside the purview of government activity.

or “economic ideas” (*jingji siwei*) marked Chinese citizens at the time as unusual and, in places like this mining town that were so long dominated by Yunnan Tin and an all-encompassing state sector, morally suspect. With Maoist institutions and ways of thinking still present in the early 1980s, people who engaged in private sector activity were viewed by many as unsavory hoodlums (*liumang*), dangerous sneaky people (*pizi*), or people who relied on intimidation to acquire assets (*qiaozha lesuo*).

Communities encompassing a wide range of activities associated with employment outside of the state sector were referred to as “the Society” proliferated throughout the country in the 1980s. The men and women who participated in these social and economic groups often had a contentious and complex relationship with the market-oriented reforms that their practices often helped to promote. Hih-Jou Jay Chen notes that Fujianese businessmen who joined sworn brotherhood associations, participated in illicit underground businesses and carried firearms were referred to as “people of (S)ociety” (*shehuishangderen*) (C. J Chen 1999:287). But the term could also be used to refer to morally charged consumptive activities. In his research on nightlife in Shanghai conducted during the same period, James Farrer notes that the commercial discotheques at the time were considered “in (S)ociety”, meaning they were considered to be cosmopolitan, expensive, “foreign,” and rough, as contrasted with “non-commercial” older dance venues that had tightly controlled admissions, promoted decorous behavior, and were generally located in neighborhood venues (Farrer, 2005). He argues that participation in the “chaotic marketplace” of the disco offered a transitional space for young Shanghai residents’ initiation into a shifting understanding of early adulthood. Though the particularities of their histories may

vary, the communities associated with “the Society” during the late 1980s and early 1990s around China shared a self-consciously experimental ethos. Members embraced potentially risky new ways of moving through the emerging informal economy in their attempts to seize opportunities created by Deng’s reforms.

Focusing on Gejiu’s private sector, I am interested in exploring tensions that existed in this historically particular social experimentation. Importantly, the size and importance of the Society in this mining town changed over time. In the first half of the 1980s—a time just before the Rush years and the liberalization of the mining industry—the term referred to a relatively small group of men and women who worked as laborers and small-time thugs struggling to make ends meet in a state-controlled economy. Strict law enforcement made operating any sort of private businesses at the start of the 1980s a dangerous proposition. Even an egg seller operating without proper paperwork risked arrest.

By the end of the 1980s, the Society in Gejiu referred to a very different type of collective energized by a new ethos. As national and local policies liberalizing a range of activities that had once been closed to private businesses, new careers emerged for “private” entrepreneurs such as hairdressers, cab drivers, clothing sellers, nightclub proprietors, under-employed teenagers and others who had eschewed or been unable to find government employment. But most important in giving this community its particular charge were the new careers that became possible on the mountains. Extracting, stealing, managing, transporting, and processing newly commodified tin and other metals offered previously unimaginable earning opportunities for a generation of young workers.

As a result, new ways of seeing and acting took hold among this growing group in the Rush years. Embracing an attitude of recklessness and experimentation, members of the Society in Gejiu, in the words of a one-time taxi driver who also became involved in Rush ear mountainside violence, “would try anything, create a mess, to live.” While describing themselves as transgressive, rough, resourceful, and tending towards anti-government views—all characteristics that might be true of the Society at other periods in China’s history—Gejiu’s Society participants in the Rush period also believed that they were pioneers for the new economy. Their jobs helped to create the infrastructure for a new market economy and their after work lifestyles fueled the opening of new markets, restaurants, dancehalls and bars.

There was thus a sense of historical destiny that characterized this community during the Rush years. On the one hand, Society members’ private sector opportunities activities were still considered “less than radiant” (*butaiguangcai*) life choices by many. However, their attempts, as one interlocutor remembered, “to create life according to our own interests and hobbies” were also increasingly validated not only by high incomes but also by government cadres who argued that the country needed men and women who could “be good at daring to reform, be innovative, and fulfill tasks” (Judd 1990:45). While the future policies of the country remained difficult to predict during the Rush years, Society members believed that their participation in emergent private sector activities left them uniquely well-positioned to thrive in the country’s inchoate future.

As a way to explore the particular energies of the times, I next recount the coming of age

stories of three men whose entry into Society eventually lead to heroin use.³⁰ Though their early career opportunities varied considerably, each found himself struggling to navigate the shared challenges of the times, namely how to respond to new opportunities that were at once sources of excitement, potential and great uncertainty.³¹

The Unlikely Mining Boss: Xun Wei

Xun Wei's narrow face in 2010 is all angles, framed by closely-shaved hair, large, chunky glasses and a giant Adam's apple impossible to miss when viewing him in profile. His voice is raspy, some might say grating, and like most men in this prefecture famous throughout the country for its cigarettes, he smokes constantly. Whitewashed jeans hiked up to his belly button and a tucked-in shirt accentuate his unusually skinny frame. There is resilience to his movements and a sturdy precision in the consistent path he carves through the world which belie the growing frailty of his body. Despite lacking the natural graces so important to social interaction this part of the country, Xun Wei is a careful, meticulous man.

Xun Wei is the youngest of four brothers, two of whom died of complications related to heroin use in the 1990s and early 2000s. His married his wife, also a long-time heroin user, in

³⁰ Gender dynamics play a large, underexplored role in this chapter. Approximately three quarters of all heroin users I came into contact with were men. In the 1980s, women were often not allowed to enter the mines due to lingering superstitions among local mining bosses that they were bad luck for finding tin.

³¹ I have intentionally stripped away language of intermediaries—I introduce narrators but then directly move to narratives. In this and later chapters I have intentionally abandoned attempts to mediate between what “actually happened” and the narratives that informants told me: my goal here is to enhance what I came to understand as the particular ethos of an era. Ultimately, this is all in the service not of a historian's balanced account of the past, but instead an attempt to understand the shared experiences of a generation in the present, a task that I build through each chapter and arrive at in the final one.

2004. When he and I began to spend time together in 2009, he had already moved through an array of different careers, including bookseller, crystal purchaser, meat stick street vendor, rice noodle maker, canteen worker, restaurant owner and chef, mine worker, mine owner, one of the city's most successful small-time heroin dealers, lottery ticket salesman, rat catcher, and, most recently, the director of one of the country's first non-government organizations to be staffed exclusively by people with heroin use history. He has achieved a high level of competency in the varied phases of his life less because of innate ability than his own unflinching determination to fashion himself into what was required of him. He is unwavering in his loyalty to a small group of friends, family members and benefactors, but holds long, quiet, burning grudges against those who he believes have wronged him.

As we become closer friends, Xun Wei and I had many conversations about his past at his home, in open-air restaurants, and at the headquarters of his NGO. Once starting a story, he is able to talk for hours at great levels of detail on many topics, especially when recounting his early adult years. His descriptions are matter-of-fact, free from the emotion-laden moral arc of loss and redemption that often marks the narratives of people who have spent time in twelve-step or therapeutic community (TC) programs. Though he would occasionally forget the names of slogans or political figures and with frustration ask his wife or someone nearby to fill in a particular detail, his descriptions of his early-life experiences were so rich that I at times felt as if he was narrating their unfolding in real time before his eyes. Through his dogged attention to detail, a particular perspective on an earlier time in Gejiu's Reform era came into focus for me,

bit by bit.³²

In 1986, as a 16-year-old job recent graduate from Gejiu's local technical high school looking for work, Xun Wei unwittingly become enmeshed in the shifting policies concerning the role of state-owned employers in the Chinese economy. For more than thirty years, state-owned and managed companies had offered a group of predominately Han employees and their families in the region the stability of what is known throughout the country as the "iron rice bowl" guarantee (*tiefanwan*), which often included lifetime job security, steady income, medical benefits, state housing, and a retirement pension.³³ In the late 1970s, under Deng's Reform Era leadership, the government began to allow local experimentation with a variety of new forms of business ventures. As early as 1982, national policy makers began to talk about "smashing" (*dapo*) iron rice bowl privileges in order help promote marketization and greater competitiveness of Chinese industries. In Gejiu during the Rush years, Yunnan Tin and its partners were attempting to honor long-held expectations that they find jobs for the "sons and daughters" of their employees while facing pressures from Beijing to become more streamlined and profitable organizations.

Xun Wei's father spent his career working for the 308 company, a highly respected SOE that

³² During my time in Gejiu, Xun Wei told me he was in the process of "writing his story" (he would reject any language as lofty as "memoirs" or "book"). I never heard him mention this project to anyone else. Lacking any pretention that these notes would ever be read by others and increasingly doubting that he would have children of his own who might one day look at this document, Xun Wei explained that this project was for himself: He found he had begun to suffer short-term memory loss and wanted to ensure that he could always access key parts of his past.

³³ See Chapter Three for a detailed discussion of the emergence of the iron rice bowl in the 1950s.

conducted mineral exploratory work on which Yunnan Tin depended to determine where and how it mined.³⁴ While his oldest brother was able to find work in 308 through family connections and his second oldest brother “held up” (*jieban*)³⁵ their father’s job when the latter retired, Xun Wei was not able to secure an iron rice bowl job after graduation. As a result of his parents’ consistent prodding, the management of 308 eventually offered the teenager a position at a newly formed collective enterprise (*jiti*) as a roaming book salesman. For just over a year, he periodically traveled throughout Honghe prefecture peddling books, including a large history tome with color photos that sold for several times his monthly salary. When the bookselling business disbanded after failing to turn a profit, Xun Wei again relied on his parents’ work-unit connections to enter a special SOE-run technical school class to study medicine.³⁶ After struggling to find a suitable job as a medical professional, Xun Wei, along with several other children from his neighborhood, joined yet another newly formed 308 collective that was digging tin on nearby Hongqi and Huangmao mountains.³⁷

In response to national directives that instructed local governments to “open large mines up, unleash the small mines, intensify extraction, and let the water flow”, city officials were

³⁴ The full name of this SOE is the “Southwest non-ferrous geological prospect office, Team 308” (*Xinan youse dizhen kanchaju 308*), though it is referred to by locals as “three zero eight”. The reports detailing the location and concentration of metals the region were classified as state secrets.

³⁵ Also known as handing off a work assignment (*diban*), this “replacement with sons and daughters system” (*zinü dingti zhidu*) had been a widespread feature of SOE employment for decades.

³⁶ This program was created by 308 to train workers in anticipation for a new mental health hospital it was planning to open for its workers. After graduating, Xun Wei discovered that the plans for a local hospital had been scrapped and his medical career stalled.

³⁷ Besides bookselling and tin mining ventures, 308 also started a chemical factory, a construction company, a supervision company, and a tin refining plant. Yunnan Tin created many more similar collective ventures, many of which were later sold to private investors.

experimenting with new ways of deploying local workers onto the mountains.³⁸ Tin deposits close to the mountain's surface easily excavated with low-cost and labor-intensive techniques were to be mined by small-scale enterprises, while Yunnan Tin and its better-capitalized SOE partners focused on lucrative, mechanized deeper mining. For decades tightly controlled by Yunnan Tin and its partners, tracts of mountainside land were beginning to open to "private" miners not affiliated with the SOEs. A trickle of non-iron rice bowl workers who had made their way onto the mountains at the start of the Rush years soon became a flood.

When Xun Wei arrived on the mountainside in 1988, different types of "private" organizations were mining side by side on the mountainside. Collectives like the one that Xun Wei joined were often closely supervised by the SOEs that helped organize them. These businesses in the Rush years tended to be medium-sized operations, employing dozens or hundreds of laborers who were paid the low monthly wages of iron rice bowl workers without their guarantee of lifelong gainful employment. Theoretically, when these collectives disbanded, profits were to be distributed among workers through bonuses and pay-outs based on length of service. However, due to corruption, much of the money made on the mountainside through enterprises like the 308 collective went into managers' rather than workers' pockets.³⁹ Another variant of private enterprise were exploratory teams sent by cash-hungry large state organs, including the military. These outfits were staffed by full-time employees of the government work unit, and profits from their mineral sales were directly collected by the government organ

³⁸ The Chinese slogan is: *dakuang dakai, xiaokuang fangkai, qianghua kaicai, youliu kuailiu*. An alternate local expression with the same general meaning is: *dakuangdawa, xiaokuangxiaowa*.

³⁹ Older workers complained that, after decades of equitable pay, corruption and larger salaries for managers began to grow starting in the 1980s.

itself.

A final type of “private” operation that proliferated in the mountains during this time was the “individual household business” (*getihu*). Run by local “mining bosses” (*kuang laoban*) and generally employing less than 50 laborers, these organizations often operated without formal backing from the local government.⁴⁰ Flexible in hiring practices and able to pay better wages than their competitors, these businesses proliferated throughout the Rush years, gradually replacing collectives as the dominant mode of extracting surface minerals from region’s mountains.

Upon arriving on the mountainside, Xun Wei began the grueling daily routine of working alongside close to three hundred other employees in the 308 collective’s mines. Soon after arriving, he cultivated friendships with two men who convinced him to pursue form his own mining operation. His first benefactor was a miner in his 60s who, by coincidence, had been a colleague of his father’s before coming out of retirement to earn extra money in the 308 collective. When the two men were assigned to watch over a remote tunnel that the collective wanted protected, this long-time miner taught Xun Wei crucial aspects of the mining trade, including how to assess the quality of tin deposits by using a prospecting bowl. The older man’s recollections of life on these same mountains in the 1940s when “Old Society” (*jiu shehui*) private bosses ruled the mining industry sparked Xun Wei’s imagination about the possibility of going out on his own.

⁴⁰ Further complicating this picture was the fact that “collectives” were often sold to private businesspeople—many of whom remained connected to the government—as part of government efforts to contract out SOE assets in liberalization campaigns that started in the 1980s and intensified through the 1990s.

Xun Wei also cultivated a close friendship with a Hui private mining boss whose outfit mined a few hundred feet away from the 308 collective's largest tunnel. The Hui, a Muslim minority community that lived in farming settlements on the valley floor a few kilometers away from Gejiu, were the earliest individual household business prospectors on the Laochang mountainside.⁴¹ This minority group had a long history of conflict with the Han Chinese who, in addition to making up 92% of China's total population, constituted the great majority of Yunnan Tin's employees. A Chinese academic expressed a sentiment that many of my Han interlocutors shared when he wrote that the Hui had the tendency to "swarm like bees" to any profitable enterprise.⁴² Due to their reputation as fighters and local favorable minority policies, police and the SOEs initially avoided interfering with their mining operations.⁴³ As a result, Hui miners in the late 1980s were among the wealthiest and most powerful private mining bosses on the mountainside.

Xun Wei built rapport with his neighbor by helping to repair this competing outfit's machines with resources appropriated from his own employer. In return, this boss taught him

⁴¹ Honghe is an autonomous Hani and Yi autonomous prefecture, meaning that the governor of the prefecture must come from one of these minority groups. However, Han make up the majority of the residents in the area. 67% of all residents of Gejiu were Han in 2008, but the city center contained a much higher percentage of Han residents as the Hani, Hui, Miao, and Yi minorities in the region tend to be concentrated in small towns and villages in the surrounding mountains and countryside (Honghezhou Weixuanchuan 2009). Though minorities in the region also used the drug, most urban heroin users were Han: as a result, so were most of my informants.

⁴² Na Qi cited in (Gray Unpublished: 32). For more on the history of Hui-Han relations, see also (Gladney 2004).

⁴³ Locals at the mining sites I visited told me that Hui minorities had set up on the mountains as early as 1981, though in certain instances they were required to pay a leasing fee. There appears to have been significant variation in local government policies at different times and on different mountains. Miners in certain satellite towns remember local government policies attempted to attract non-Han, non-local miners to the mountains because of fears that too many local state employees might abandon their primary jobs if given the opportunity. On Huangmao mountain, by contrast, locals report that the local government had welcomed local Han workers over Hui and migrant laborers.

about the intricacies of running a private mining business, including how to find and employ short-term laborers and manage local government relationships.

Within a year of arriving on the mountainside, Xun Wei had decided to leave his position at the 308 collective in order to create his own enterprise (*shiye*), a business that “would belong to me.” His first task was to find a place to mine. Relying on an introduction from his parents, Xun Wei successfully obtained a mining permit (*kaicaizheng*) that allowed him to work on a section of the mountain under the jurisdiction of 308 without having to pay a fee.⁴⁴ In those years, capital costs for surface mining were very low. With several hundred yuan (approximately \$100⁴⁵) put together from his own and other family members’ savings, Xun Wei bought basic cooking supplies as well as picks and drills. He then hired a few Hani and Guizhou workers and begun to dig.⁴⁶ After tunneling for only three days, his team struck an abandoned 308 exploratory tunnel that offered access to ore with high tin content.⁴⁷ Benefitting

⁴⁴ The happy coincidence occurred as a result of a miscommunication between the central Gejiu 308 office and its Laochang office. The government official in the branch office mis-interpreted the letter of introduction, reading it as an implicit request by 308 leadership to extend special help to Xun Wei. As a result, Xun Wei found he was never asked to pay any fees or share revenue from his mine with the enterprise.

⁴⁵ Throughout the dissertation, I give dollar estimates according to the conversation rate calculated at the time. In the early 1980s the rate was close to two yuan to a dollar, rising to five RMB to the dollar in the middle of the Rush Period and reaching more than eight RMB to a dollar in 1994. In the late 2000s, the renminbi begun to gradually appreciate and by the end of my dissertation research the conversation rate was 6.4RMB to the dollar. Fluctuations in exchange currency rates and especially international tin prices had enormous impact on Gejiu’s local economy: Employees in local stores

⁴⁶ The Hani are a local minority group most densely concentrated in counties less than 100 kilometers away from Gejiu. Guizhou is a nearby province home to a number of different minority groups, though Gejiu locals consistently refer to this group by their province of origin rather than ethnic group. These two groups made up a significant proportion of the seasonal migrant laborers that have been arriving in ever-increasing quantities since the 1980s. For a different mountain story discussing Reform, migration and local articulations of market economy shifts, see (Mueggler 1991).

⁴⁷ While exploring the mountainside to select an excavation site, Xun Wei had stumbled upon an older 308 engineer and his son making preparations for a mining site of their own. After showing his permit and willingness to fight, Xun Wei successfully chased them off the mountain. Following his hunch that an engineer responsible for survey work was likely to have access to knowledge about the

from both the untapped bounty of the mountain and the abandoned infrastructure of the SOE that had come before him, Xun Wei began to make hundreds of dollars a day from his mine. In those early days, truckers would drive up to the entrance of his mine and pay cash for the ore his outfit had produced that day. As his profits grew, Xun Wei hired more laborers, eventually overseeing a team of 30 workers. Before his 20th birthday, he had become a “hundred thousand-aire” (*shiwanyuanhu*)⁴⁸ with more money stored under his bed and in his bank account than his parents could make in several lifetimes of working at their SOE jobs.

In reflecting back on this period in his life, Xun Wei comments that his daily routines changed after he became a successful boss. In the first months of his new venture, he tended to spend most of his time on the mountainside, but as the months passed began to return every night to Gejiu, where he took out and paid for a group that included more than 20 members. Many members of this group were childhood friends of 308 employees who had often spent lazy afternoons as teenagers riding their bikes around the city. However, after Xun Wei became a successful businessman, this entourage started drinking, eating, and singing in the city’s proliferating nighttime venues most nights of the week.

Xun Wei notes that his frequent escapades in the city were in part motivated by his own interest in having fun. However, he also remembers that cultivating ties with the city’s under-employed youth was part of his strategy to maintain the “influence” (*shili*) necessary to

high-grade tin, Xun Wei decided to dig in the spot they were planning to excavate. This decision helped to lead him to discover the tunnel.

⁴⁸ The term is used in a similar sense to “millionaire” in America. In the early 1980s, “10,000-aire” were a small group. By the late 1980s, hundred-thousandaires began to proliferate in the mining industry. In the early 1990s, millionaires were becoming more common, and during my stay, tens- and even hundred-millionaires roamed the region.

keep control of his mine. Indeed, in addition to treating them to nightlife activities, Xun Wei eventually began to pay several of his childhood friends' monthly salaries of 1000 yuan (\$200) or more to accompany him on the mountainside and help him protect his site. In 1989, Xun Wei first smoked heroin. The young mining boss was soon buying and supplying this substance to his brothers and the childhood friends who surrounded him.

The Opportunity Seeker: Li Zhijun

My relationship with Li Zhijun, the unemployed and soon to be cellphone-less figure who appeared in the Introduction, developed slowly. Several months passed before I even learned his name. My early fieldnotes make sporadic references to him as “tall suit”: a reference to the fact that in 2010 when we first begun to chat he was always wearing the same matching, faded tan suit jacket and pants. Li used to be a serious gambler, but when I first met him he limited himself to playing Chinese checkers with anonymous online partners. He occasionally attended sermons delivered at the city's largest Christian church, and came from a family who loved to fish.

In contrast to Xun Wei, who saw the Reform era impacting his life only after moving to the desolate mountains, Li Zhijun said his own entrepreneurial skills and sense for seizing opportunity existed since he was a young child. He notes that his business sense was connected to his “course and wild” (*kuangye*) temperament, and frequently put him into conflict with the “traditional” (*chuantong*) and “orthodox” (*zhengchuan*) thinking of his parents and older sister.

Li Zhijun attributes this difference at least in part to the political climate in which he was raised. His older sister, a successful bureaucrat in the prefecture government, had travelled to a

nearby mountainside to live with peasants as a teenager as part of Maoist political education of the day (*shangshanxiang*). Born in 1966, Li was among the first annual cohorts of Gejiu city children who were not required to spend a period of their teenage years living in the countryside. Li believes time away from the booming mining city as a child might have tempered his aggressive disposition.

Instead, his childhood and early adulthood were marked by a penchant for getting into trouble as he changed schools several times and was forced to repeat grades on more than one occasion. While still in junior high school in 1982, he began to work as a street salesman. In Pingyuan County, Li Zhijun sold the fake Casio digital watches imported from Vietnam in the city for 50 yuan (\$25), ten times their purchasing price. Li also began to buy brand-name cigarettes sold by street salesmen outside the school gates instead of the rationed “public cigarettes” (*gongyan*) that his father preferred.

While still a student, Li Zhijun joined the “Yang Family School”, a national martial arts organization. “Bored” and “confused about the meaning of (their) training”, he remembers that he and other friends would look for fights whenever possible, joining the ongoing “inner city” versus “outer suburb” brawls that many youth were involved in at the time. He notes that there was an aimless, spontaneous element to these activities in the pre-Rush years: “It was just about fighting. We couldn’t do anything. We were not like gangs in the way that you think about them, where you fight for money, for self-interest, or to earn a piece of turf.”

If his fighting was not year driven by the pursuit of money, the income from Li’s various ventures allowed him to be among the first to experience the rapid changes that were sweeping

over Gejiu starting in the Rush years. Early consumerist experiences included buying imported alcohol, going to newly opened dance halls, and purchasing the latest fashions – including the “refugee” (*nanmin*) garments Japan that were popular among young people for a period of time in the 1980s. Li Zhijun also quickly began to take girlfriends out to eat, dance and drink. In 1986, as a 20-year-old high school senior—he had been held back in school two years—Li Zhijun had already developed social routines that required far greater amounts of disposable income than the traditional sources of entertainment, such as fishing in Golden Lake, dinners at home, and walks in Baohua park, that were favored by the great majority of Gejiu’s residents.

Upon graduating from high school, Li collaborated with Hui business partners to open a motorcycle repair shop in nearby Shadian, one of several private sector jobs he would hold in the second half of the 1980s. A couple years later, after receiving money from his maternal grandmother, he bought a truck and operated as a freelancing long-haul driver, moving around the country carting bananas and live pigs. His memories of this period in his life are peppered with details about investment costs, commodity prices, and profits per load. Seeing the world as a shifting, dynamic source of potential profit to be captured through shrewd investments and, if necessary, fighting, Li believed he had developed skills and a sense of business that few other locals possessed.

The mountains in Li’s story were one more site where he could apply an “economic consciousness” (*jingji yishi*) honed elsewhere. In 1989 after the engine of his over-loaded truck blew out in the middle of a haul, Li Zhijun decided to try his luck in the tin mining business. Partnering with locals who had grown up in an outlying mining town, Li contributed startup

capital and his reputation as a fighter to their fledging company. Like many others I spoke to, Li said that entering the mining business was like playing in a giant casino, and striking high grade tin was the jackpot that people in Society lived for.⁴⁹ Unlike gambling in a casino, however, participating in the high stakes world of private mining required the willingness to risk one's life.

By the early 1990s, the mountains near Gejiu had become very dangerous places. Dangers associated with participating in mountainside violence intensified with the proliferation of knives, guns and even homemade grenades. Due to a combination of limited state intervention, minimal start-up costs, and the huge potential payoffs offered by shallow mining at the time, over 300 mining bosses operated on the mountainside simultaneously and fights between competing outfits over land claims intensified.⁵⁰ As a result, young men who were willing to fight for bosses could easily find well-paying work “prospecting” (*tankuang*) and “protecting” (*hukuang*) tin (Yunnan 43ren 2011). Hundreds of “little brothers”, lackeys and hired muscle working for mining bosses, received money and gifts which allowed them to participate in Society evening activities. Mercenaries known as “life sellers” (*maiming*) made quick one-time payoffs by going to fight for opportunistic miners raiding a high-grade tin mine of a competitor with just-in-time armies.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Mining was risk in many ways. Beyond having the luck to strike high grade tin and selling at a time when tin commodity prices are high, miners had to avoid the bodily dangers associated with possessing a desirable piece of mountain real estate.

⁵⁰ Because of their size and government connections, collectives like Xun Wei's 308 unit generally were not affected by the violence which became concentrated among the smallest mining operations. See Verdery (1996) for a discussion of how transitions from socialism to market-oriented economies can provide conditions for the emergence of bureaucratic clienteles, gangs, corruption and illegality.

⁵¹ For a different perspective on how just-in-time armies composed in Sierra Leone are created by hiring laborers moving between mining, agriculture and economically-motivated military conflicts, see (Daniel Hoffman 2011).

Participation in this booming sector of the economy required the cultivation of particular skills. Whether a boss or an aspiring hand, individuals who built a reputation as “fierce” (*badao*) and “wanting money, not your life” (*yaoqianbuyaomin*) increased their earning potential. Those involved in the mountainside activity lived with the knowledge that they could be attacked at any time. Hired help often slept with weapons under their pillows, and bosses moved about the area knowing they could become targets of assassination attempts.

At the end of the Rush Years, Li fell upon harder times. Savings from his trucking venture were rapidly depleted when his joint business failed to find tin deposits. Once out of money, he began to work for friends as a hired hand. His duties included bringing pork and fish to their mining camp to help reward strong performances from the workers and spending time at the camp in order to deter rivals bosses from attempting a raid. He was both married and divorced within a year as his economic troubles continued. Fighting became a source of income as he signed on to raiding teams that fought for quick cash payouts. The aimless fighting of Li’s teenage years had been replaced by occasional, calculated bouts of violence.

Like Xun Wei, Li found that the mining boom affected his participation in the emerging consumption occurring in Gejiu’s city center. The ethos of Gejiu city’s nightlife reproduced the all-or-nothing violence of the mountains. At a time when state workers’ salaries were low and corruption relatively small-scale, money from private sector activity on the mountain played a major part in fueling the expanding after dark scene. Either celebrating or commiserating recent events on the mountainside, nightlife consumers tended to binge on food, alcohol and other substances. After years of being around the substance, Li Zhijun finally tried heroin at the close

of the Rush years at during a period when he was mired in economic misfortune.

The Disillusioned State Iron Rice Bowl Worker: Yan Jun

The first person from Gejiu I ever met, Yan Jun is a difficult figure to forget.⁵² He has a uniquely polarizing effect on the many communities with which he comes into contact. Our friendship over the five years we have known each other has been a complex one, bridging the professional and personal in various ways and, in my mind at least, unusual for its vivid highs and lows.

With scholarly rectangular glasses, protruding cheekbones, and a fashionable leather jacket, Yan Jun could be easily mistaken for a teacher or some sort of intellectual, an impression only enhanced by his gift for oratory performance. Skinny, but without many longtime heroin users' visible health issues, he attaches a plastic tea thermos to the belt buckle of his khakis. When he travels to other parts of China or abroad to attend international conferences, this tea bottle, knocking up against his leg as he walks, serves as a readily visible symbol to his provincial home and love for Yunnan tea.

Exceedingly clever and intellectually curious, Yan Jun devoured a number of different literatures over the years – “any book I could get my hands on” as he put it. In his late 30s and early 40s, he developed his talent as a writer and made a name for himself writing for the national anti-drugs paper, AIDS magazines, and later human rights reports. Unlike others I met, he had

⁵² I knew Yan Jun from my foundation days. He had hosted me in an earlier trip to the region and the two of us had travelled together to national and international conferences and co-facilitated training sessions together.

the ability to change his writing style to meet the requirements of different genres.

Yan Jun is also an electrifying storyteller, at once eager to please his listeners and bursting with opinions, analysis and reflection. On one occasion at a restaurant near my apartment, I started recording a chat we were having about his experiences in labor camp. Encouraged by his attentive audience, Yan Jun transformed his narration of state detainment facilities into a full-blow performance. Leaping out of his seat and weaving between restaurant tables to play the various characters in his story, Yan Jun drew on his past as a peer educator in compulsory detoxification centers and later NGO outreach activities to deliver a taught, gripping tale.

Yan Jun has an almost unparalleled ability to make people believe in him, a talent which he judiciously cultivates by building and attending to relationships in online chat forums, face-to-face meetings, and through social events he initiates. A careful student of human character, he is able to read and curry favor with people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Most who are or have been close to him would agree that he possesses talents not easily replaced. An ideas man who hatches ambitious plans for himself and those around him, Yan Jun possesses an energetic soul and the ability to inspire and cajole others into following his lead.

His easy charm, the care he generously showers on those around him and his impressive recent work history hide a darker side of his personality and past. Though he is widely recognized in the Gejiu drug user community as a rare “success case”—at the time of this writing he has abstained from heroin use since 2005—he struggled with a serious gambling problem for a significant portion of the time I have known him. Particularly when he was in the midst of periodic gambling binges, Yan Jun engaged in vicious manipulation of others. His friends in

Gejiu ruefully joked that he was easier to be around as a heroin user than he is when he is in a gambling binge. Once he gets behind a slot machine, “even ghosts are afraid of him.” While I was in Gejiu, he threatened to attack a former boss with a knife and defrauded numerous associates and family members to pay for extended gambling streaks. For a while, after his sister ousted him from his temporary home, he stopped paying for his cellular phone service and completely fell out of contact with his network of friends and family.

Inevitably, however, Yan Jun seems not just to survive these difficult periods, but to bounce back with renewed energy and conviction. Indeed, during my fieldwork period in Gejiu, I came to expect that if a number of weeks had gone by without his news, I could expect him to suddenly appearing outside my apartment door, eager to talk about the future of civil society in China and the new role he had concocted for himself in its development.

In reflecting on his teenage and early adult years, Yan Jun claims that he was profoundly shaped by the “sudden opening of the nation’s door” (*guomen yixiazi dakai*) of China’s reform during the 1980s. While at the Yunnan Tin technical high school studying mining as a 16 year-old, he was the top student in his class, and as a result received an extra 8 yuan (\$2.60) scholarship per month. However, older classmates soon convinced him that there was a changing social world beyond mining. Instead of mineralogy textbooks, Yan Jun began to spend his time reading the newly available international texts that were trickling into the country, including John F. Kennedy’s autobiography and novels by the Taiwanese author Bai Yang.

The new comparative frames that these texts created made him increasingly unsatisfied with

the realities of his own life. He felt increasingly “cheated” and “duped” by his education, which he came to believe had fostered his own “cultural ignorance” (*wenhua mengmei*). In his final year in school, Yan Jun remembers he and similarly minded friends felt “suddenly there was nothing to believe in. [Our assumptions from our youth] had been overthrown, and we were looking for something new to believe in, but couldn’t find it.” Whereas only a few years earlier he had proudly worn the Pioneers ribbon of the Chinese Communist Party mass youth organization, Yan Jun in his late teens allowed his Community Youth League membership to lapse.

Upon graduating, Yan Jun moved more than 20 kilometers away from downtown Gejiu to take an iron rice bowl job with Yunnan Tin, his parents’ employer, on Laochang mountain. Returning to Gejiu at most once a week, Yan became increasingly disheartened by the harsh realities he encountered in his post-graduation life. He was initially assigned to work deep in the mines, a physically grueling job that he hated. When his requests for a transfer based on the excuse that he was unfit for this labor due to his poor eyesight went unheeded, he left the mountain in protest. After a negotiation between his boss and his parents, he returned to the mountain to serve as a chef in the Yunnan Tin canteen.

The security of the iron rice bowl obtained through his work assignment intensified Yan Jun’s rejection of the SOE way of living. He felt a growing conviction that he had material and spiritual needs that his parents did not possess and that Yunnan Tin’s low monthly salary could not fulfill. Vowing not to grow old as a “simple-minded worker” (*han gongren*) but lacking the courage to directly disobey his parents’ wishes, Yan Jun begun to explore ways of leaving the

SOE to go out on his own.

In 1988 after coming into a bit of money, he took a leave from work to travel with a friend to Guangxi, a neighboring province. While traveling, he became consumed by the idea of opening fast food restaurants like the ones he saw in larger cities on this trip. Upon his return to Gejiu, he began obsessively reading cooking books in the hope of learning skills that could help him launch a new career as a restaurant owner. However, he never succeeded in raising start-up funds or obtaining his family's approval to start the business.

His feelings of unease and frustration with his monotonous job and life growing, Yan Jun at the close of the 1980s began seeking to supplement his income through sporadic participation in the illicit activities on the mountainside. He began to accept invitations to join parties made up of workers and unemployed hangers-on that attempted to take over valuable mines. As payment for his participation in several raids, he was treated to nighttime entertainment and in the later activity received cash payments of fifty yuan (\$10) per raid.

Yan Jun also attempted to join the growing numbers of mountain inhabitants who made their living from sneaking into Yunnan Tin's tunnels to steal high-grade tin. These raids were often organized by local "tyrants" (*ba*) and "big brothers" (*dage*) who often had previously worked as Yunnan Tin employees and possessed intimate knowledge of the mines that they pilfered. Often venturing into the tunnels at night, each tin scavenger would haul up to 55 pounds of high-content tin ore out of the mines on their backs. If working under protection of a boss, two or three hours

of work in the mines could lead to payment of 50 or 100 yuan (\$10-\$20).⁵³ Going out on one's own was more dangerous, but tended to yield much higher income per raid. Yan Jun was caught by Yunnan Tin police the very first time he ventured into the mines to steal. After receiving a fine of over 1000 yuan (\$200)—an amount exceeding a year's salary in the canteen—Yan Jun had to ask his parents to help him to pay the fee.

Ultimately, Yan Jun's most consistent extra-iron rice bowl source of income came from gambling. He discovered he had a talent for mahjong and often skipped work in the canteen in order to play in the high-wager games organized by bosses in Laochang at the time. In many months, he earned far more at the mahjong table than in the canteen.

Yan Jun first using heroin in his Yunnan Tin dorm rooms after being offered the drug by a co-worker in 1989. In those years, the opiate was smuggled to Laochang and other mining outposts by Hui and Han bosses. It spread quickly among gamblers, private bosses and others who spent large portions of their time on the mountainside. Yan Jun continued to live and work in Laochang until 1992, when his heroin habit became serious enough that he was no longer able to hold down his job in the cafeteria. At the end of the Rush Period, he moved back to Gejiu's city center and supported himself through a combination of gambling, stealing from stores, and swindling out-of-town visitors.

Heroin and the Problem of Generation

⁵³ Tin raiders had to worry about Yunnan Tin security forces as well as competing tin plunderers. Well-established local raiders often had relationships with local officials that ensured that arrested raiders would be quickly released.

Following Old Kaiyuan's lead in linking heroin initiation to the broader social phenomenon of "coming into Society", I will now draw out how these coming of age stories reveal common struggles among young people in their early working lives. Xun Wei's search for iron rice bowl work before mountain encounters awakened him to entrepreneurial opportunities, Li Zhijun's precocious love for business honed through continual participation in his own ventures, and Yan Jun's painful education and subsequent hapless risk-taking were different reactions to the shared challenge of negotiating a Rush era social reality that in many ways was radically different from the social world they had known in their childhood. For this generation of men and women, early adulthood experiences shifted between feelings of discomfort and frustration and the elation and sense of possibility that stemmed from their shared conviction that these times offered new ways of living.

Karl Mannheim's notion of "generational style" offers a powerful way of understanding the particular charge of the Society during the Rush period. Mannheim argues that "youth"—the stage of life spanning between 17 and 30 years of age—is a time when individuals leave the "appropriated memories" of their elders and feel the "real binding power" of personal experience (Mannheim, 300).⁵⁴ During tumultuous historical periods where "the latent, continuous adaptation and modification of traditional patterns of experience, thought, and expression is no longer possible", youth may coalesce into a "generational style" whereby "new phases of experience are consolidated somewhere, forming a clearly distinguishable new impulse"

⁵⁴ Mannheim distinguishes between appropriated memories, those ideas that take hold in a person through education or secondary exposure, and personally acquired memories, which he sees as most important in forming an individual's later life outlook.

(Mannheim, 309). The tin mining boom combined with more general shifts towards experimental forms of socializing in early Reform experiments provided a social context within which a generation of young people forged a shared identity by embracing the shaping influences of the times.⁵⁵

Mannheim's perspective offers an especially compelling way of interpreting the epic clashes that took place between members of the Society and the city's older residents.⁵⁶ Different reactions to Deng Xiaoping's 1983 national "strike hard" campaign (*yanda*) offered a particularly vivid example of this generational difference. Designed to reign in the crime that had proliferated under the first years of Reform, this campaign had profound effects on the residents of Gejiu. As part of the campaign designed to clamp down on escalating illegal activity, adventurous local street vendors were arrested for "speculating and profiteering" (*toujidaoba*), workers were imprisoned for arguing with bosses, unmarried lovers were arrested for sexual relationships outside of marriage, and young men playing mahjong were sent to labor camp for "hoodlum" (*liumang*) behavior.⁵⁷ After local detention centers were filled to capacity,

⁵⁵ Limited previous experiences "means a lightening of the ballast for the young", who can become "dramatically aware of a process of de-stabilization and take sides in it" while the older generation "cling to the re-orientation that had been the drama of their youth" (Mannheim 1998:301).

⁵⁶ It is worth noting that Yan Jun in part disagrees with my designations. He argues that there were three groups in Rush era Gejiu: "normal" people, entrepreneurs, and the unemployed people who became involved in crime. Having talked to many people whose lives moved between these activities—cab drivers and certain SOE employees often also participated in raiding of mines, truck drivers working the mountains needed to be ready to fight if their trucks were attacked, and mountain helpers worked as miners and "little brothers" to mafia bosses—I believe my own designation between Society and the regularized work schedule of Yunnan Tin and other enterprises is merited. Also, Yan Jun takes issue with my characterization of his descent from the mountain; he argues that his return to Gejiu marked a "withdrawal from" (*tuoli*) society, not "mixing in" (*hun*) Society as he joined a "marginal" (*bianyuan*) group. However, others using heroin in the Rush period argued that widespread stigma against heroin users in Society did not become pronounced until later in the 1990s.

⁵⁷ The strike hard campaign was in 1983, though national statistics indicate that less publicized campaigns in 1981 and 1982 arrested larger numbers of people.

apprehended suspects were shackled to poles in one of Yunnan Tin's dining hall and detained in an emptied swimming pool. Along with many others, Xun Wei's oldest brother was convicted for fighting in public and punished by three years in labor camp in this public campaign.

In subsequent years, this historical moment became a litmus test for differing generational attitudes towards how to conduct oneself in the Reform era. Many of Gejiu's residents found experiences related to the Strike Hard campaign were difficult to forget. Reading the campaign within the more than thirty years of unpredictable "political movements" (*xingdong*) that preceded it, older residents saw the arrests as a sign that the country at any point could potentially "return to past era".⁵⁸ The parents of my interlocutors during the Rush years would point to Deng's 1983 campaign to support their long-held belief that SOE iron rice bowl employment offered the best pathway to safe and prosperous futures. In part due to habit and in part due to their reading of the political winds, most long-time residents were "extremely careful" in their professional careers and deliberately tried not to think about the various ways in which they could make money through participating in new economic opportunities.

Part of what united the people who "came into Society" during the Rush years was a feeling that they were living in a different epoch that required different ways of living and acting. Arguing that parents and schoolmates were hindered by incorrect, outdated historical thinking, Society members in the Rush period consciously committed to different principles about how to

⁵⁸ In addition to this historical disposition, older workers were also less likely to "come into" Society because they had more to lose in a system that awarded housing and retirement benefits based on length of service. For workers in their 40s or 50s who had worked for decades to secure a healthy retirement package, breaking relations with the company for the risky potential of digging a tunnel didn't make economic sense. "We pretended the (newly commoditized and easily stolen) tin wasn't there", one old miner explained to me.

live.⁵⁹ As they followed opportunities that often helped them earn high salaries for the times, this group argued that their choices constituted a way of “moving with the waves of society” (*genzhe shehui de langchao zou*).⁶⁰ Their “offbeat” (*linglei*) lifestyle situated them in a vanguard position as they anticipated and helped to bring into the world new ways of producing and consuming.

As time passed in the Rush era without major crackdowns on proliferating private businesses, members of the Society believed that history was validating their own life choices. Even their parents in certain cases came to acknowledge that “(the Society way) of doing things isn’t unacceptable” (*zheyangzuo ye bushi bukeyi*) as the growing fortunes of private businesspeople in Gejiu were “proving some things” (*zhengming yixie shiqing*) to people who had once been fearful of engaging in any form of private sector activity. As state workers’ salaries failed to stay up with inflation and benefits were cut, people who held on to state jobs were increasingly appeared to be “simple minded”. Pioneering new ways of living initially alien to many older city dwellers, Rush era Society members acted on a “vital orientation” (Mannheim 1998:301) that they believe connected them to the historical trajectory of the country.

⁵⁹ Li Zhijun and his father got into severe arguments about his own need to graduate from high school (which he did, eventually) and “hold up” his father’s shift (here, he refused, creating a temporary rift in the family.) Yan Jun’s conflicts with his parents often took on more mundane, but nevertheless illuminate contexts. While his parents attempted to instill in him their own frugality (he complained they regularly forwent a range of comforts in favor of saving against future misfortune) he felt a compulsive need to spend his salary immediately on fashionable clothes, gambling or food. If meat, still considered a luxury in the late 1980s, wasn’t available, he would skip the meal altogether.

⁶⁰ Children who stayed in school tended to be more accepting of their parents’ worldview. The changes in the city’s nightlife and on the mountainside tended to impact students less dramatically; they were, according to people in the Society, living less closely to the shifts in history.

This extended discussion of Rush era Society provides the reader with a better foundation for understanding the particular appeal of heroin at this historical moment. In a world where accumulating of money was understood by many as dangerous and morally suspect, heroin fit within and amplified feelings and practices associated with a specific type of pioneering, economically productive historical subject.

The pharmacological properties of heroin, an opiate with calming and numbing properties, fit the needs and self-perceptions of young men and women who were already partially shaped by the “determining influence of early impressions”(Mannheim 1998: 298). When brought to the mountainside, the drug complimented the rhythms of Rush era private sector activity, helping mining bosses and “little brothers” pass the time while working jobs that produced both boredom through long lonely nights on the mountains and caused stress by the threat of potential violence. Several people reported that they had first used heroin to stem the pain of injuries incurred while participating in mountainside violence. More often, the long, mellow periods after inhaling helped create a release from the emotions associated with the rapid changes of fate at the time.

The potent attraction of the drug was due in part to the fact it was identified as one of many imported, newly available commodities. Unlike opium, a drug that had been used sporadically for decades among older local residents, heroin was associated with a new form of conspicuous consumption and individual profit-making. Brought into the country by banana traders, dealt by mining traders, motorcycle salesman and shop keepers, and inhaled by truckers and investors responsible for bringing local Gejiu residents new fruit, clothes, electronics, and other consumer items, heroin in the Rush years seemed connected to other forms of productive, dynamic

economic activity.⁶¹

The specific ways that “Number Four”—the common nickname for the drug at the time—circulated in Society also contributed to its symbolic potency and widespread use. Heroin in the Rush years often functioned as part of a gift economy that developed between bosses and their associates and childhood friends. Reproducing the “strong social ties” (*nong renqing*) that Society members argued lingered from Maoist China, bosses in the Rush era passed heroin through extended personal networks in a similar fashion to food, alcohol, paid sexual services, and other commodities and services associated with burgeoning local evening entertainment.⁶² That heroin in the first years it circulated in Gejiu was often received as a gift rather than bought helped to connect the substance to the privilege and consumption associated with the Society lifestyle.⁶³

⁶¹ This explanation for the popularity of heroin complicates more common ones circulating among Chinese addiction experts and scientists. One Kunming-based drug addiction researcher and psychiatrist, for example, argues that early heroin users generally came from “lowly” (*diceng*) backgrounds, and that the drug spread fastest among those with “little to lose” (Author interview, 2009). Medical anthropologist Jing Jun makes a similar claim, writing that illicit drug use among youths “always occurs after a chain of deviant conduct” and thus, in China as elsewhere, drug use serves as a marker of the shift from “minor deviant behavior to more serious deviant behavior” (Jing 2010). On “deviant” behavior and heroin initiation in China see also (X. Li, Zhou, and Stanton 2002). In linking Society members’ consumption of heroin with private sector activity that is at once dangerous and pioneering, wasteful and productive, I am intentionally attempting to complicate depictions of the heroin use in an earlier moment in China’s Reform period as merely reproducing unhappy homes, pathology, or deviance.

⁶² Here, Matthew Kohrman’s work on cigarettes smoking in Yunnan is illuminating. He argues that part of the reason for the popularity of smoking was the “fusion of commodity and relationality” among men in China. Practices of smoking—the sharing of cigarettes, the social break a smoke allows—enables particular types of bonds between male smokers (Kohrman 2007:103). Heroin use accomplished a similar function in the Rush-era social world.

⁶³ As one long-term user explained, “even if you had money and wanted to buy heroin in the early years, you could only access it if you were connected.” This early distribution of the drug through social networks also helps to explain why heroin use often became concentrated among young people from particular SOE housing complexes—I met people who told me that every single one of their extended group of childhood friends ended up developing long-term dependency on the drug. Men and women who grew up together, fought as teenagers, and made money as young adults also tended to consume heroin together.

Even in its earliest years in Gejiu, heroin was understood as dangerous—overdoses were common, and casual users had generally seen or heard about the intense withdrawal symptoms associated with the drug. However, in this moment, showing that one was not afraid of danger was part of the entrepreneurial ethos that contributed to a widely shared way of living. Thus even after realizing that the drug created physiological and psychology dependency, bosses often felt they could never finish spending their recently acquired fortunes, and boasted that their businesses could fund their heroin habit indefinitely—that they could “afford to smoke” (*chideqi*) for life. In those times this group could spend more each day on brand-name imported cigarettes – priced at more than 15 yuan (\$3) a pack – than on heroin.

In summary, for this generation of self-fashioned pioneers in the midst of a mining boom, heroin seemed to encapsulate the particular combination of uncertainty and opportunity that characterized their position within the Chinese social world more generally. Embracing an experimental project of opening themselves up to the possibilities of the time, “daring to reform” meant taking on bodily, as well as economic and social, risks. That the consumption of heroin might hasten the user’s path to glory or death was accepted. At this time, people who consumed heroin in the Rush years were not considered a different *type* of person from other risk-takers in Society. That the consumption of this drug might follow users throughout their adult lives, marking them as a different, *unproductive* type of people left out of the country’s historical development was not something that Rush era young adults captivated with “moving with the waves of society” ever considered.

It is a spring day in 2010, and I have just arrived at the Li family home for dinner. Before we sit down for the meal, Li Zhijun leads me to the small bedroom next to the living room, where his parents sleep. Li fishes out an old cardboard box from under his bed and opens it to show me an air rifle that is also at least two decades old. Li remembers a time during the Rush years when purchasing locally made, crude handguns just involved travelling a few kilometers down the road to an outlying suburb. Today, even switchblade knives and realistic model replicas of guns are hard to come by as government authorities have drastically clamped down on private citizens' possession of weapons.⁶⁴

The first signs of the increased role of the state in curtailing violence and re-asserting rule of law on the mountainside occurred in 1992, the last year of what I have called the Rush period. During that spring, Deng Xiaoping's farewell Southern Tour signaled the normalization of state-approved consumerism, commercialization and privatization that had been pioneered in fits and spurts in previous years. In Yunnan, reacting to the seriousness of the expansion of the heroin market in Gejiu and other southern cities, state authorities in September 1992 sent a military cavalcade of more than 100 military vehicles to Pingyuan, a township near the Vietnamese border approximately 170 kilometers from Gejiu. Soldiers killed or captured more than 800 individuals and seized 896 kilograms of heroin in what came to be recognized as the first large-scale strike in the country's unceasing war on drugs.⁶⁵ Perhaps not coincidentally, the end of the Rush period was also the beginning of Li Zhijun's economic struggles.

⁶⁴ Even carrying butterfly knives (*tiaodao*, literally "dancing knives") could result in fines by the local government agencies, which today, all agreed, had a much firmer grip on public safety.

⁶⁵ For more details on this raid in particular, and Hui-Han regional politics in general, see (Gray Unpublished).

Dinner is ready. Li Zhijun, his father and I sit down at the table for a family-style meal. His mother occasionally emerges from the kitchen for a few minutes, crouching a few feet away from the table to eat from her own, separate bowl before returning to the kitchen to prepare more food. Li Zhijun's father tells us about his iron rice bowl position as a mechanic, a job that required that he spend long periods of time staying on the mountainside. He tells us a story about his first digital watch, a purchase he remembers treasuring due to its superior accuracy in keeping time. During his father's story, Li Zhijun smokes a cigarette, saying nothing about the role he played as a teenager in distributing these watches in Gejiu.

Through the kitchen window of the third-floor 308 work-unit apartment, we can see Laoyin Mountain rising up behind us in the moonlight, partially obstructed by an adjacent building. After a pause in the conversation, Li Zhijun notes darkly that the hasty, low-cost methods that miners used to extract tin from the mountains over the years may have unexpected future costs. Several thousands of kilometers of abandoned, unfilled tunnels now crisscross the mountain range. A single inopportune earthquake could cause the entire hollowed-out mountain range to come crashing in on itself.

Chapter Two
Descending into Shifting Seas:
Entrepreneurialism, Addiction, and the Post-Deng World

“There is a high rate of elimination in these competitiveness times. To stay standing, to survive, to hold on to a living enterprise (*shiye*); this is what is most important. Those left standing are kings!”⁶⁶

- Sunny, Gejiu entrepreneur and CEO

“One has to adapt. (I must) now find a new way of living or a new perspective on life, to go live and work...if you were to say, what about going back to how things were before, that would be empty talk! How could that be possible?”

- Sam, one-time mining boss and longtime heroin user

“It’s not the feeling I wanted.”

I am standing with Sunny, one of Gejiu’s most successful and wealthiest private businessmen, in the middle of his most recent achievement: his own private bar. This cavernous space was created by knocking down walls of what only months before had been a three-bedroom residence across the hall from his own home. The floor-to-ceiling windows in this 12th floor lakeside apartment give us unobstructed views of Old Yin Mountain towering over Golden Lake. One wall of the converted apartment has been covered in red brick, a finish meant to evoke the spirit of Pittsburgh, a city Sunny had fallen in love with on his first trip to America the previous year.⁶⁷

Slightly doughy with round cheeks, a belly that waxed and waned with his work schedule,

⁶⁶ This is a pun on the Chinese saying that “vanquishers are kings” (*shengzheweiwang*).

⁶⁷ As a history buff and minerals expert, Sunny had been interested in the city’s important role in the development of the American mining industry. Sunny also loved the city because it had been home to Andrew Carnegies, a businessman who had transformed the world with his entrepreneurial acumen and wealth. Sunny declared that one day he would be feted in Pittsburgh as much as the Carnegie family.

and bloodshot eyes that hinted at his ongoing sleeping problems, Sunny is wearing his standard uniform of Jeep-branded baggy checkered plaid collared shirts and khakis. A one-time broadcasting student and emcee at local events, he possesses a quick wit and booming, energetic voice. Whether engaged in business meetings or leisure activities, Sunny's personality is at once playful and domineering.

For months, Sunny talked in giddy anticipation of this very moment—entertaining his first guest in his own private bar. However, watching him on this day, I find that he seems incapable of enjoying his drink, the vista, or this space that his success and money have created. Instead, he constantly moves around the room, complaining that the floors are uneven, built-in shelving and cabinets aren't properly finished, and that the finish of the giant wooden bartop falls short of what he had imagined. He shakes his head and announces that he will have to tear out much of the newly installed room. "Building in China is like this these days", he declares in a weary but self-confident tone, "you have to throw out half of what you create before you're done." Minutes after making a series of phone calls that set into motion a new round of renovations on the renovations⁶⁸, Sunny is talking excitedly about his next pet project—a much larger jazz bar, open to the public, that will offer the city's first authentic Western food. Sunny's attention, as usual, is focused on his future.

Two weeks after meeting Sunny in his bar, Sam waits for me underneath a concrete

⁶⁸ I learned a year later that my visit that evening was the only time that Sunny ever used the apartment in the initial fashion he had conceived. After the renovations on renovations, he turned the "bar" into a table tennis room and storage room for his children's toys, and then into a dance studio for his daughter.

pedestrian overpass a few meters away from the doorway to one of Gejiu's trendy nightspots. Standing nearly six feet tall with a ruddy complexion and thick brow, Sam for much of his adult life has been a physically imposing, outgoing character known for playing basketball, weightlifting, drinking and fighting.⁶⁹ On this day, however, he is perhaps 25 pounds lighter than the last time I saw him in the previous year. The familiar Adidas branded t-shirt he once filled out now appears more than a size too large for him. In recent weeks, he has been avoiding old friends and spending much of his time in the company of local heroin dealers. Mutual friends tell me his infrequent heroin use has recently escalated into a much stronger habit. At the time of our meeting, Sam has been unemployed for many months.

Despite his unhealthy appearance and recent struggles, Sam still holds a certain status among the older patrons and employees who frequent Gejiu's night spaces. As we enter the bar, he is immediately recognized by the forty-something leader of the house band, who hails him from the stage and quickly dedicates a song to him. The band finishes its set, and Sam's friend comes over to introduce us to a table of wealthy twenty-something patrons. After a few minutes of chatting, this group invites us to an after-party. Sam, somewhat hesitantly, accepts the invitation, and we move from this crowded bar to a private karaoke room at another nearby club.

Our host on this evening is a young policewoman whose mother earned a considerable fortune as the founder of a local cosmetics company. This policewoman treats her entourage to two cases of beers and multiple boxes of her favorite food, chocolate-flavored Cornetto brand ice

⁶⁹ Sam had even kept up some of these hobbies while in state laboring centers, where he was often picked by the staff to participate in guard-inmate basketball games.

cream cones. During the subsequent drinking, singing, and eating, the group becomes increasingly loud and drunk.

Throughout the proceedings, Sam's presence is barely felt. Speaking infrequently, he appears to fade into the plush sofa cushions in a corner of the room. When his turn to sing finally arrives, Sam delivers a restrained, pitch-perfect interpretation of a 1980s canto-pop song. The strength of his performance is not surprising considering that two decades earlier he had befriended and at times performed with the city's first group of professional nightclub musicians.⁷⁰ Accompanied by a grainy film of the original artist singing at a concert many years ago, his song selection and performance sharply contrasts with the slick, rap-influenced "MTV" videos favored by our much younger hosts.

While listening to Sam sing, I find myself wondering how he experiences this space. In many ways, this KTV bar is very similar to the city's earlier night spots, places that had been his stomping grounds for many years. And yet, his relative position in the local economy has changed dramatically from when he was a promising young entrepreneur. What is it like to live this difference?

After the singing and drinking finally finish and the two of us are alone, Sam confides to me that he has felt out of place the entire evening. For many years a wealthy and respected boss who often hosted groups like the one we had just joined, Sam is embarrassed to be dependent on the largess of others. In addition, he doesn't feel that he understands younger people in Gejiu

⁷⁰ The rock musicians Sam befriended two decades earlier, like Sam himself, juggled state work assignments with their budding private careers, performing in the Communist Dance and Performance Troup by day, and moonlighting in bars by night. Many of Gejiu's nighttime musicians in the 1990s used heroin.

today and what motivates them. He says he and his friends occupied these places in a different way.

I feel closer at this moment to experiencing Sam's sadness than at any other time since I have known him. The very qualities that once marked his status as one of Gejiu's entrepreneurial and nightlife luminaries in the Rush years—his bravery, loyalty, and naiveté—today remind him of his inability to keep up with the times. He no longer feels comfortable in the entrepreneurial spaces he helped to create

Of Entrepreneurs, Heroin Use and Historical Trajectories

Autobiographical and journalistic accounts of heroin users often relate the fate of the protagonist through the vicissitudes of his or her patterns of heroin consumption. Often, after following the central character through relapse and recovery, stories in this genre end with a denouement where the one-time user leaves drugs behind and embraces his or her newly promising future.⁷¹ Accounts that employ this familiar narrative focus on addiction as a problem of the relation between the individual and the substance. This primary relationship then has consequences for other parts of the user's life. Attention to shifts in the surrounding social world created through broader movements of history is generally overlooked.

The story I relate in this chapter shifts the reader's focus. Instead of recounting Sam's adult life as driven by his relationship to heroin, this account foregrounds the ways in which Gejiu's

⁷¹ This literature exists in both American and Chinese, though seem especially dominant in the latter market, where popular media coverage and published first-person accounts of drug dependency often stay closer to the narrative convention I have just outlined. For examples of this first-person genre see (Yusheng Song 2000; Yunxiang Wang 2004).

private sector transformations impact the economic opportunities available to him, and by extension his relationship to his own entrepreneurial habits. Sunny, a man who has never in his life consumed heroin, features prominently in this chapter in order to accentuate the contrast that is created between different historical moments.

Though Sam and Sunny both start their careers with strikingly similar personal outlooks and business approaches, Sunny, as local Gejiu observers are prone to comment, has successfully “moved with the developments of society”, and at the time of my fieldwork held a reputation as a successful businessman in the post-Rush economy.⁷² Sam, on the other hand, I will suggest, can be understood not simply as “an addict”, but rather an entrepreneur from the country’s recent past whose habits of thinking, acting and consuming increasingly contribute to his own marginalization.

What being an entrepreneur means in China has changed dramatically over the course of the Reform period. Legal protections and social recognition of entrepreneurs have improved steadily through time. Under Mao, with a few exceptions, entrepreneurial activity, known as “speculation and profiteering”, was considered a crime punishable by detention in labor camps.⁷³ In the early 1980s under Deng Xiaoping’s leadership, the Communist party began to allow private business owners to operate if they employed eight non-kin employees or less—a number

⁷² Here, as in Chapter One, I differentiate between two different “societies”. The Society refers to the group of young people engaging in extra-state production and consumption in Gejiu. Meanwhile, “society” refers to the broader community of Gejiu residents.

⁷³ In numerous socialist economies in the 20th century, a small private sector referred to as the “second economy” was often tolerated if it operated in a restricted fashion.

selected based on Karl Marx's assertion that eight was the inflection point for the creation of a rentier class ("Entrepreneurship" 2011). A law created in 1988 formally recognized large-scale "private firms" (*siying* or *siren qiye*). Private businesspeople were able to join the Communist party in 2001. In 2012, the country's wealthiest businessman was selected as a representative to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the highest authority in the party (Tsai 2004; FlorCruz and Xiaoni Chen 2011; Lam 2012). Despite occasional difficulties⁷⁴, government warming towards private sector activity has played a major role in the rapid growth of private sector organizations and, by extension, the social position of the people running these enterprises.

The dramatic increase in desirability and reputation of an entrepreneurial career in China is visible in Gejiu through the shifting ways that locals talked about different types of businesspeople at different moments of the Reform. In the 1980s, most entrepreneurial businesses people were classified as *getihu*, a term variously translated as "petty capitalists", "small entrepreneurs", "peddlers" and "individual household businesses." Among Society members, these heads of business were referred to as "bosses" (*laoban*), the most conspicuous consumers in Gejiu 25 years ago. Though they often enjoyed far greater incomes than the Chinese workers who stayed in public sector employment, these early entrepreneurs also faced intense social stigma from others local residents and were vulnerable to the changing political winds of the times. As a result of the semi-legal and dangerous status of their professions, the

⁷⁴ Some entrepreneurs continue to complain of severe mistreatment in a wave of "state advances, private sector retreats" (*guojinmitui*) policies. However, the growing number and influence of private businesses in China cannot be underestimated. Between 2000 and 2009, the percentage of large private enterprises (with revenues of 5 million RMB or higher) grew from constituting less than 20% of total businesses in 2000, to close to 60% of all businesses in 2009 (Entrepreneurship in China 2011).

people who ran mining, food, trade and other businesses during the Deng-era tended to have limited formal education. A significant number of these early entrepreneurs had previous criminal records.⁷⁵

During my fieldwork, “peddlers” (*getihu*) and “bosses” (*laoban*) still existed in Gejiu. However, they were accorded different status in a social space that had developed new understandings about private sector actors. Smaller-scale “peddlers” by 2010 tended to hail from other parts of the country and were often more interested in saving money to send back home than participating in the city’s consumption-oriented nightlife. “Bosses” engaging in illicit activity no longer hold the same influence they once did. Starting in the 1990s, the wealthiest people in the city came to be referred to as “captains of industry” (*qiyejia*), “Head” (*zong*) or “businesspeople” (*shangren*). The proliferation of new names reflected a newfound public acceptance of many types of economic activity conducted outside of the state sector (Hsu 2006:2, 14) and, I will argue, a different orientation towards conducting one’s business.

Academics writing about entrepreneurialism in China often take one of two approaches to making sense of the proliferation of entrepreneurial activity. Many social scientists have extensively surveyed the demographic backgrounds of those engaged in entrepreneurial activities at different times in the Reform era (S. Young 1991; Xiaomin Wang 2003; Wank 2001; Goodman 1996; Dickson 2003; Hsu 2006). These accounts tend to focus on counting, grouping and discussing trends on the distribution of different types of business activity through time. Others

⁷⁵ In the early 1980s many of the men and women running *getihu* businesses had criminal backgrounds (Young 1991), thrived in areas where (Chen 1999:287) “state control has been weak” (C. J Chen 1999:287) and tended to live as “second class citizens” “on the margin” of local communities, lacking “background” despite their relative wealth (H. Wang 2003:591–2)

working on entrepreneurialism document the emergence of entrepreneurial practices.⁷⁶ Many of these studies emphasize the spread of entrepreneurship as “a way of doing things”, “a common set of technical mechanisms” (Ong 2004) or as “global” forms articulated in new contexts (Collier and Ong 2004).

My object is slightly different. I explore “entrepreneurialism” as historically particular ways of relating to the world—sets of habits, dispositions and embodied way of engaging with one’s surroundings that persist in individual bodies and minds through time.⁷⁷ Taken up in this way, the rapid transformation of the sphere of social and economic relations in which entrepreneurial activities take place points to an important set of questions about how China’s Reform-era entrepreneurs experience shifting entrepreneurial bodily habits through time.⁷⁸ Despite the

⁷⁶ Migrants who embrace the sales pitches of city-based multi-level marketing schemes, retired government officials utilizing party connections to create their own businesses, and doctors founding private “hospitals inside of hospitals” to escape government regulations, can all be understood as examples of the emergence of new entrepreneurial practices or strategies (Lisa Hoffman 2006; Li Zhang 2006; Priscilla Song 2011; Tomba 2009; Jeffery 2001). Even government bureaucracies have been recast as “the entrepreneurial state” as government agents increasingly embrace self-serving and calculative logics in the administration of urban development projects (Li Zhang 2006). This work has explored how entrepreneurial practices have spread in public and private sectors, in homes as well as offices.

⁷⁷ This talk of dispositions and habits draws on a long line of writings on the subject, including William James’s notion of habit, Pierre Bourdieu’s work on habitus as durable disposition, and Marcel Mauss’s understanding of techniques of the body (James 1890; James 1950; Mauss 1973). Camic makes the helpful distinction of differentiation between different complexities and forms of action: In this sense, I, like Bourdieu, am most interested in habit as it “suffuses a person’s action throughout an entire domain of life” (Camic 1986), see also (Throop and K. M. Murphy 2002). While Bourdieu is primarily interested in the pre-reflexive logic of practice, I want to explore moments when old habits are understood to re-appear and how my interlocutors ruminate, reflect upon, and interpret these practices in relation to their own futures. I grant a historicity to members of the Heroin Generation that Bourdieu tends to minimize in his doxa-inflected understanding of the downtrodden drug user. See (Bourdieu 1992; Bourdieu 1975; Eagleton and Bourdieu 1992).

⁷⁸ I share with Weber a common attention to historically particular disposition of entrepreneurs formed through history and habit (Weber 1987). Others have very different definitions of entrepreneurialism and methodologies for its study. Joseph Schumpeter, for example, studies entrepreneurial activity by focusing not on disposition or ideal types, but rather, (often fleeting) economic function. He argues that intuition leads to innovation, and explicitly rejects the idea that entrepreneurial action springs from “fixed habits of thinking” (Schumpeter 1982). Even as the

recognition that the *types* of people and practices emerging in the first thirty years of the Reform have been changing⁷⁹, there has been limited investigation of the experience of the individuals engaging in entrepreneurial activities through time, in particular the first generation of young entrepreneurs shaped by coming of age in the 1980s.⁸⁰ What sort of entrepreneurial subjects have been formed at different points in China's recent past? How did certain entrepreneurs "survive" while others "went under"? How do the ethical challenges and working rhythms of "early" entrepreneurs continue to inflect this group's experiences of living in China twenty years later? How does heroin use as a practice become understood among others and associated with a specific historical period?

Though both initially shaped in similar ways by Gejiu's tin mining boom, Sam and Sunny demonstrated diverging abilities to change with the times. As a result, the two men during my fieldwork held very different orientations to the world around them. As Sam's work history shows, the very qualities associated with entrepreneurial success in the Society become liabilities in the post-Rush years. At the start second decade of the 21st century, Sam experienced the city as a boss looking back towards China's recent past and Sunny, a new type of entrepreneur

entrepreneurial practices of men like Sunny and Sam represented a break from those of their parents, their business activities would not have been possible without their exposure to the social world of the Society already partially caught up in a tin boom. The two men see their working histories and outlooks as products of recent historical shifts in contrast to Schumpeter's understanding of entrepreneurial behavior.

⁷⁹ One author notes in passing that "most" who flourished outside of the state's purview in the 1980s "quickly went under" as new types of workers swarmed towards private-sector activity with the passing of time (Wang 2003:592), but does not consider what type of life these people "going under" live in their later lives, or how this history impacts their experience of the country's ongoing transformations.

⁸⁰ Max Weber's work contrasts the European entrepreneur influenced by a Protestant ethic with other types of entrepreneurs forged in earlier historical moments, including "speculators in chances for pecuniary gain of all kinds" he calls the "capitalist adventurer" (Weber 1987:20).

reaching towards the future.

Rising in the Rush Era Entrepreneurial World, Faltering in post-Rush Shifts

In their early adult years, Sunny and Sam were both shaped by the open mountains and burgeoning social world of Rush era. The two men shared an unusual amount from the past, starting with the year (1969) and place (Gejiu) of their births. Both abandoned government posts to pursue non-government opportunities at a time when entrepreneurial activity was associated with the Society. Each became wealthy by displaying brave, aggressive decision-making in their mining-sector related businesses. And each was arrested in the mid-1990s as a result of his risk-taking behavior. Whereas Chapter One focused on the ethos of the Society under Deng, this Chapter explores how these men navigated the post-Rush Gejiu.

Sunny discovered his love for doing business in 1990. Returning to Gejiu after graduating from college in the provincial capital, he accepted a highly desirable job in the city government commerce bureau that was charged with helping Yunnan Tin expand to new domestic markets.⁸¹ After less than a year on the job, Sunny decided he wanted to start his own business. Working up the courage to demand a meeting with the head of a local bank, he presented his plan to build a tin smelting plant to compete with the massive, state-owned Number One factory. A

⁸¹ Yunnan Tin's tin was stacking up in local warehouses due to a post-Tiananmen international trade embargo on Chinese minerals. Within his first months on the job, Sunny convinced his boss to send him to Beijing. Family connections and his fast-talking, gregarious personality helped Sunny to find a number of Beijing-based buyers, an achievement that earned him new respect among his Gejiu colleagues and contributed to his growing infatuation with doing business. On subsequent trips, Sunny began to supplement his income by doing small deals representing himself in addition to his iron rice bowl business. He discovered he enjoyed the backroom dealings and the risks associated with attempting to navigate a competitive industrial landscape that he characterized as rough and incomplete.

passionate conversation in the bank manager's office was followed by a dinner meeting the next evening. Before the check for the meal had arrived, the 22-year-old had secured the first of what would become a steady stream of government-backed loans. With start-up capital in place, he left his iron rice bowl job in 1991 to become an entrepreneur, much to the surprise of his friends and family. The Chinese term used to describe this transition is “descending into the sea” (*xiahai*), a phrase that in the early years of the Reform carried with it brave and slightly reckless connotations.⁸²

Sunny used his initial loan of less than 20,000 yuan (\$4,000) to start a low-technology factory which would eventually expand to employ more than 200 local laborers. With newly capitalized local banks providing additional loans as he needed them and Society middle-men directing the Rush Period flow of minerals from the mountains to his factory at low prices, Sunny expanded his mineral refining business, building more smelting and sorting factories to process tin, lead and other minerals. Before his 24th birthday, he had already opened his third factory and become a “hundred thousandaire”.⁸³

As his wealth and reputation grew, Sunny took on more risks to expand his business. Tempted by the potential high returns of mining, in 1997 he bought excavating rights for a tract

⁸² Whereas “coming into Society” implied joining a social community as well as private sector activity and emphasized the illicit, seedy aspects of private sector activity that in the 1980s was still viewed as a morally charged sphere, “descending into the sea” referred only to the move from government to private sector work.

⁸³ I noticed that Sunny tended to mark the passing of his early adulthood years by remembering the times at which he opened particular factories. In business meetings with younger employees, on more than one occasion I heard him casually mention to an employee, “when I was your age” and then tell this person how many factories he had opened.

of land on a mountain in Wenshan, a couple hundred kilometers away from Gejiu.⁸⁴ The capital costs of this new venture, which involved hiring a team of engineers and laborers and drilling deep new tunnels, were high. His aggressive expansion and cavalier attitude had left him behind on repaying loans totaling several million yuan (close to one million USD) he had secured from a variety of banks and businesses. After failing to unearth valuable ore in his first months of drilling, Sunny defaulted on a number of obligations, including a delivery of processed minerals he had promised to a powerful SOE in Qinghai province that had prepaid for its first shipment. Angered by his delinquency, this state-owned company sent their own internal security police to Yunnan and, without notifying Sunny's family or local authorities, abducted the young entrepreneur and brought him back to their headquarters. Sunny spent more than two months locked in Xining jails, held on charges of "swindling" (*zhapian*).⁸⁵

Sam's early adult life was characterized by a similar career progression as he moved from iron rice bowl position to success entrepreneur to prisoner. After finishing two years of training at Yunnan Tin's vocational high school, he found a respectable position as a 17-year-old in 1986

⁸⁴ Sunny lacked the "influence" to excavate the mountains around Gejiu. He, like dozens of others I spoke to, remembers the local mountains as messy and violent. While he had business dealings with private bosses with "horrible names", he was not interested in attempting to stake a claim in violent and dangerous local mountain ranges.

⁸⁵ A total of about twenty people shared the single cell, which was controlled by four big brother crime bosses who were on trial for murder. A one-time real estate baron who had defaulted on obligations due to fallout from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 was also detained in the cell for swindling. While in this holding cell, Sunny was forced to "eat dumplings" (*chijiaozi*), a form of torture where cell management would pound on his chest until it hurt to breathe, as well as "watch the goldfish" (*kanjinyu*), a procedure where his head was pushed deep into the fecal-flooded communal toilet. Recently arrested heroin users went into withdrawal in his cell without medication. Sunny's knowledge of prison culture gleaned from these unhappy months created an additional, unexpected similarity between his life and long-term heroin users like Sam.

at Yunnan Tin, the local State Owned enterprise, producing tin collectibles for export.⁸⁶ He “came into Society” in 1988 when his second oldest brother, a taxi driver who had managed to save up several thousand yuan (over \$1000USD), convinced Sam to help him buy tin on nearby Makuang and Huangmao mountains.⁸⁷ As tin middle men, the brothers made purchases from “private” miners who had either collected tin ore from their own mine shafts or stolen rocks from Yunnan Tin’s tunnels. After arranging for the transport, separation and concentration of the tin, the brothers sold the semi-finished metal to Yunnan Tin to be smelted and sold to domestic or international buyers. Due to high margins and a dearth of competition, the business thrived in its first years. Sam became a “hundred-thousandaire” in 1990, when he was just 21 years old.

Like many at this time, Sam and his brother ran into trouble when more influential bosses came onto the mountain and prevented them from continuing their business. When their company faltered, Sam began to participate in the burgeoning mountainside violence, a career he refers to as “fighting and killing” or “fighting and troublemaking” (*dadashasha* or *dadanaonao*).⁸⁸ Drawing on his growing talents in making social connections and motivating others, Sam created alliances with friends who fought together for quick payouts and ongoing preferential treatment from the bosses they worked with. While his lack of interest in

⁸⁶ As he puts it, people seemed to “naturally separate themselves into groups” (*chengfen yiba yiba*), including those who liked to study and those who liked to have fun. He was in the latter category.

⁸⁷ According to my interlocutors, Makuang Mountain government policies tended to favor local Han miners. Meanwhile, Laochang’s policies reportedly benefitted non-Han, non-local miners. Conflicts between Hui, Han and other mining factions put considerable pressures on local government officials.

⁸⁸ Certain readers might disagree with the decision to classify occasional violent robbing and plundering as “entrepreneurial career”, but for many young people in Gejiu, occasional participation in mountainside violence at this time adequately supported consumptive lifestyles, at least in the short-term. Also, see Weber on capitalist adventurer, footnote 15.

committing to extended periods overseeing mining operations on the mountainside lead him to forgo much potential income at the time, Sam was able to support his night-time activities, including a heroin habit that he started in 1989, through his occasional participation in the mountainside violence. His work as a fighter also helped him preserve and expand his connections to a network of entrepreneurs who made their fortunes in the mountains. In 1994, Sam was sentenced to four years in a reform through labor center (*laogai*) after being arrested for armed robbery.

Over the course of many conversations with each of these men, I was struck not only by the striking similarities in the vicissitudes of their early-adulthood careers, but also by the fact that participation in Gejiu's Rush-era entrepreneurial activity shaped both men in lasting ways. Rather than speculate on why Sam took up a heroin habit and Sunny did not, or how their personalities or childhood experiences might have influenced later life decisions, my interest here is in showing how both men's work habits changed after they "descended into the sea."

Though never fully comfortable in Society spaces—he often preferred reading a book to celebrating in Gejiu's rough evening spots—Sunny nonetheless was deeply shaped by experiences in the city's emerging nightlife. Society bosses used to bring heroin into his office and inhale the fumes during business meetings in the early 1990s. Though Sunny never used the drug, he developed a lifelong curiosity about pharmaceutical substances and their individual

and society-level effects he that explored through writing science fiction stories.⁸⁹

Intoxicated by the opportunity to make money during the period, Sunny found he was changed by doing business in a local entrepreneurial culture where “whoever obtained money was a hero.” One traumatic experience of his early 20s was being spurned by a potential love interest who ended up marrying a well-known mining boss she thought had more economic potential. Taking on considerable bodily risk for short-term gains was considered a necessary part of becoming a successful boss. A common saying among Gejiu businessmen at that time was “doing business isn’t as good as opening a factory, opening a factory isn’t as good as getting a loan, getting a loan isn’t as good as not repaying it.”⁹⁰ The recklessness that he encountered in the city and on the mountains and a “less than fully robust” legal system contributed to his “briefcase” (*pibao*) behavior—a term locals used to describe those who accept money from others with no intention of returning it. In his choice of associates, his exploitation of potential sources of income, his focus on short-term payoffs and his fearless disregard of the warnings he received from dissatisfied competitors and creditors, Sunny in the 1990s took on many of the characteristics of the mining bosses and other early-Reform entrepreneurs with whom he had frequent contact.

Sam’s decision to leave his iron rice bowl job changed his outlook in similar ways. His

⁸⁹ His science fiction story details the emergence of a “fourth generation” of drugs—more powerful than alcohol, cigarettes, and heroin. This new drug gave its user anything that he or she desired. Set on a boat, his story documents the dystopic community that emerges from this drug’s use.

⁹⁰ The Chinese saying is “*zuomaoyi buru banchang, banchang buru daikuang, daikuan buru buhuan.*”

initial motivation for becoming an entrepreneur was a naïve desire for “life to be a bit happier, to have a few more friends, to be able to try something new every day.” His move from factory worker to tin middleman to fighter for hire represented a gradual intensification of a particular logic of a Society lifestyle. Whereas his iron rice bowl job had required that Sam engage in months of tiring work to earn enough to pay for a memorable weekend out on the town, his mountainside mineral business meant spending a week or two engaged in intense work in the mountains before he could enjoy binges in the city. His career as a fighter stretched this cycle to an extreme, allowing him to spend the great majority of his time in Society spaces with friends, only occasionally supplemented by brief, dangerous excursions to the mountains.

Sam realized how much participation in entrepreneurial ventures had changed him in the early 1990s when, to please his parents, he temporarily returned to his old iron rice bowl job at Yunnan Tin.⁹¹ Returning to his Yunnan Tin factory position, he found he “had no words” to speak to the men and women who only a few years before had been his friends. Moreover, he found he had lost his ability to do “honest” (*laoshi*) and steady work. While these iron rice bowl workers organized their lives around rigid work schedules and added extra hours for miniscule bonuses, Sam at the time could be barely bothered to pick up his monthly paycheck.

While his heroin use played an important role in his transformation from state worker to reckless boss, the distance he felt existed between himself and his former colleagues had also been created through changes occurring in years of moving between the mountains and city,

⁹¹ Following his parents’ advice, he had taken advantage of a national Reform-era policy in the 1980s known as “stop the salary but hold on to the job” (*tingxinliuzhi*). For his first several years in Society, Sam had paid a small fee every month to cover his insurance and keep his place at Yunnan Tin.

participating in violence, and spending money in Gejiu's night venues on a scale that his former factory workers colleagues could barely imagine. Sam was not simply a person with a heroin dependency. He was an entrepreneur of the Society inculcated with a different disposition towards the world.

In the 1980s a pun circulated widely in China that offers a commentary on the rupture between Mao and Reform era modes of living. Its insight hinges on a double-entendre created by the phrase "*wangqiankan*". Two different statements emerge depending on whether the "*qian*" sound is taken to mean "the future" or "money". When applied to the Maoist period, "*wangqiankan*" describes the Chinese people as "looking towards the future".⁹² This was a stock phrase when the Communist party cadres asked that citizens cast their eyes towards a collective future unfolding under the guiding hand of the Leninist-Maoist state. By contrast, tones, when associating the same sounds with different characters, the phrase can be understood as "looking towards money". This second meaning references the fact that a growing number of individuals in the Reform era live their lives pursuing personal wealth.

This pun contributes to an understanding of Sam and Sunny's stories by drawing attention to the embodied aspect of the emergence of a new, entrepreneurial way of life—specifically in how people look. Sunny and Sam's respective "descents into the sea" in the Rush years involved a way of "looking" typical of the early Reform period. If the Maoist way of looking involved

⁹² Ann Anagnost makes use of a slightly different version of the pun in her exploration of the play of interpretations surrounding Zhang Longquan's infamous case of impersonating an official's son in the early Reform period, see (Anagnost 1997:55–56).

sacrificing in the present for a better future, the Society-era businessperson looking involved “grabbing” (*gandao*) and “collecting” (*ku*) money through whatever means became available. This newer form of production was focused on the present, or as Sam put it, the attempt to “try something new every day.”

As each man sat in his respective jail cell in 1998, Sunny and Sam were both aware of that the “ways of looking” they had adopted while pursuing Rush era business opportunities could ruin their lives. However, upon their release, these two men would respond very differently to the challenges of navigating the post-Rush shifts taking place around them.

Careers Diverge as a New Entrepreneurial Spirit Spreads

When each of the two men were released from state detention and returned to Gejiu in the first half of 1998, a new entrepreneurial ethos was sweeping across the city as conventional wisdom about the undesirable status of private business activity was giving way to a broader acceptance of particular types of private entrepreneurship. At the same time, the government began implementing new rounds of reforms that attempted to “shift the shape” (*zhuanxing*) of the city towards post-industrial, consumerist future.⁹³ In this new climate, Sunny found new ways to take advantage of these opportunities as the spread of wealth, the government’s interest in promoting strategic private sector enterprises, and new partnership opportunities allowed him to achieve success on a scale he had never imagined. These same historical events had very

⁹³ “Shape shifting” was the unifying term given to a range of different government initiatives occurring during my fieldwork in Gejiu. See (Deming Li and Changdong Xu 2009). The following pages explore certain aspects of these reforms, and how they were an explicit departure from earlier Rush era policies, and were designed to benefit different types of entrepreneurs.

different implication for Sam, who experienced new local developments as the closing of the mountains, and with them, opportunities for earning and consuming that had once seemed so plentiful.

Sunny emerged from jail determined to salvage his tattered businesses and reputation. Upon his return to Gejiu he worked in a more fiscally conservative but still frenetic manner. Starting with only a single shuttered sorting plant and a 30,000 yuan (\$3600) bank reprieve, he quickly repaid his outstanding loans through the profits earned from this old business. Within two years of his release, Sunny entered into a burgeoning new sub-sector of the mining industry—the mineral recycling business—that would make him one of the city’s wealthiest businesspeople.

The success of Sunny’s company, which eventually adopted the English name “GreenEnding”, benefitted from new policies implemented by prefectural and city governments. For example, when his company was looking for a headquarters and processing plant, Yunnan Tin was conducting a fire sale of its non-essential assets as part its push to list a subsidiary on the Hong Kong stock market. As a result, Sunny was able to lease and convert an abandoned, idling Yunnan Tin smelting factory at an exceedingly low price. In addition, his company was able to hire savvy managers and semi-skilled workers who had been recently laid off at Yunnan Tin and were anxiously looking for work. Local government leaders, eager to curry favor from their superiors by promoting “sustainable” and “green” initiatives and easing unemployment pressures created through SOE staff reductions, also helped Sunny obtain permits, water, land,

and electricity at preferential prices. Under this symbiotic relationship with the local government, Sunny's company thrived.

As CEO and chairman of the board, Sunny threw himself into growing his company's business by forging strategic encounters with aging managers of SOE factories who gave him access to the toxic waste that piled up on their properties. Seemingly perpetually on the road, Sunny liked to joke that he only was only interested in travelling to the most polluted parts of the country, a reference to the fact these companies tended to be located in industrial areas.

Sunny no longer had much contact with the local bosses who had once been important partners. Instead, when back in Gejiu and attending the city's night spots, he increasingly associated with established entrepreneurs like himself who carried out their socializing in backrooms and hosted private jazz concerts. This group tended to discuss importing guitars, cars, and planes, promising international real estate investment markets, and the relative merits of sending children to private schools in America compared to Britain. Local observers commented to me that compared to the "crude" (*tu*) ways of spending money associated with mining bosses, Sunny and his associated displayed "consumptive consciousness" (*xiaofei de yishi*), a sophisticated mode of consuming that was assumed to be a healthy part of growing the city. With the family factory operating day and night, and Sunny's fortune grew and grew.

In sharp contrast to Sunny's rise, Sam in his post-release life gradually lost his economic and social prowess. In 1998, he initially attempted to find lucrative positions in the mining industry through his Society connections. However, like many "sons and daughters" of Gejiu workers at

the time, he soon discovered mining no longer offered the easy money that it once had. Would-be mining bosses were thwarted by a new set of policies starting in the second half of the 1990s that later came to be known as the “Gejiu Model” of resource management. Targeting “excessive” (*guoduo*), “wasteful” (*guolian*), “orderless” (*wuxu*), and “scattered” (*fensan*) mining activity of small-scale bosses, the new policies attempted to “tidy up the mountainside” (*zhengdun kuangshan*).⁹⁴ Close to one hundred mining outfits—more than one third of all private bosses on the mountain—were forced to leave when they could not produce documents proving legal rights to their claims. As part of the “tidying” efforts, city police and Yunnan Tin security forces confiscated 700 tents, made more than 200 arrests, and destroyed dozens of “illegal” tunnels (Gejiu Moshi 2008; Deming Li and Changdong Xu 2009).⁹⁵

A second part of the government’s efforts to reclaim the mountains was the implementation of a new division of labor between Yunnan Tin and private mining interests who had survived the raids and existed as legally registered entities. Yunnan Tin formalized partnerships with these bosses through a standardized subcontracting (*chengbao*) system. Tunnels dug less than 200 meters below the earth’s surface were hired out to private bosses, while Yunnan Tin’s own workers mined the deepest of the more than 20,000 kilometers of tunnels that crisscrossed the

⁹⁴ An exhibition in the Yunnan Tin museum offers a frank condemnation of the Rush era behaviors. An English sign reads, “From the end of the 80s to the 90s in the last century, with the negative effects of non- governmental mining and ahead-of-time exhaustion earth surface tin resources, as well as the difficulties brought on from long-term planned economy system in state-owned enterprise, the operation and business of YTC were once again slumped into the (sic) low ebb” (The Course 2011). The “once again” reference groups the period of entrepreneurial mining with the greed and damage of pre-Communist private sector activity on the mountains.

⁹⁵ In 1996, revisions to the national law were formally introduced. Locally, it took longer before there were significant changes on the mountainside. In 2002 Yunnan Tin, with support from the government, began to more aggressively force entrepreneurs without proper paperwork off the mountain (Gejiu Moshi 2008).

region. Local mining executives claimed that this allowed for an orderly and sustainable excavation of the mountains that would last at least 50 years. By dividing mines in this way, Yunnan Tin was able to combine risk management with privatization, reducing its own liability for workers injured in collapsing mineshafts while also cutting long-term personnel costs by replacing local iron rice bowl workers with cheaper laborers supplied by migrant workers and managed by third-party contractors.

By the end of the 1990s, a new rule of law on the mountain combined with a decade of fast, often inefficient” surface digging lead to “ahead of time” exhaustion of the easily accessible, high grade tin ore. As a result, mountainside violence cooled as young people attempting to stake their claims on the mountains dwindled.⁹⁶

Frustrated that the mountains had become “no good to do” (*buhaogan*) but still eager to leverage Society connections to make a healthy income, Sam followed colleagues who had found new careers in Gejiu city. Bosses who had made significant money in the mining industry in the late 1990s were expanding into a variety of new sectors including real estate, restaurants, trucking operations, government contract work, tea leaf wholesale and retail outlets, gas stations, and mineral refining factories.⁹⁷ Some of the miners who had registered their companies during the “tidying up” of the mountainside began to participate in organized crime in the city center.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Violence still occasionally occurred on the mountainside, even during my fieldwork, though its frequency and scale had dramatically decreased from the 1990s.

⁹⁷ Some bosses continued to mine tin, lead and other minerals, expanding their presence on Yunnan’s other mountains including Dianxi, Jingping, Wenshan, and Xishuangbanna where they paid local governments for long-term mining permits.

⁹⁸ Individuals had to register companies to avoid harassment and finalize their claims on the mountains. Government policies had the inadvertent effect of helping mining bosses create companies which in some cases were used to operate mafia-style businesses in downtown Gejiu

Mimicking the sub-contracting practices favored by Yunnan Tin, crime boss “companies” recruited homegrown fighters who possessed the quality of being able to draw hundreds of local Society members to participate in fights as necessary (*haozhaoli*). At the time of Sam’s release from state detention, many of these organizations were thriving, in part because of their ability to extract significant resources from local businesses.

Soon after leaving the re-education through labor center, Sam joined up with a well-known entrepreneur, Wu, whose history of mountainside fighting was visible in the scar tissue on his leg caused by shrapnel from a home-made grenade several years earlier. Wu’s recently accumulated fortune had been made by offering high-interest loans (*diandang*) to gamblers in the newly opened card and slot machine venues that begun to proliferate in the city in the mid-1990s.⁹⁹ After Sam performed satisfactorily on the loan side of the business, Wu gave him the opportunity to manage (*guanshi*) his own casino.

While Honghe residents had long held a reputation for loving to gamble, all forms of wagering had been banned during the Cultural Revolution. Older locals told me that even mahjong tiles had been hard to come by in the 1970s. Gambling venues first re-emerged in Gejiu starting at the end of the 1980s, as bosses with money to wager began to attend “tea houses” (*chaguan*) opened by intrepid entrepreneurs with Society backgrounds. By the second half of

(Yunnan 43ren 2011).

⁹⁹ In the 1990s, loan sharks like Wu would obtain permission to work in the casinos of friends. Most loans at this time were made to people who were known to be of high net worth but were unable to access money during late-night gambling streaks. These loans were often repaid the next day, when gamblers were able to access money stored in bank or other locations. Informal loan sharks still existed during my fieldwork, but tended to lend money for longer periods of time and under different terms.

the 1990s, gambling establishments were becoming an increasingly important part of Gejiu's economy. Recreation rooms around town that had once housed ping pong tables were hastily converted into businesses offering mahjong, Chinese checkers, dominoes (*paijiu*, *tuipaijiu*), and card games. Featuring wall-to-wall electronic slot machines known locally as "fruit machines" (*shuiguoji*), over one hundred different "casinos" (*duchang*) remained open during my fieldwork. For Society types with an appetite for risk looking for second chances, the gambling sector often offered desirable, well-paying jobs.¹⁰⁰

After receiving technical assistance from a Guangdong-based casino consultant specifically brought to Gejiu to show him the ropes, Sam opened one of the city's first baccarat casinos. At the time, a crucial part of his job was to avoid detection by the police. He hired young Society members to watch the door, and oversaw the packing up of the casino if he received word of an impending raid. Between his salary and percentage-based perks, Sam made an excellent income. In his best night, he cleared 10,000RMB (\$1200), and the job regularly brought in at least 5,000RMB (\$600) a month, more than ten times an iron rice bowl employee's salary at the time. Between 1998 and 2000, Sam was living a life not dissimilar to his early 20s. He went out nearly every night, frequenting venues that included large-scale discos, high-end karaoke parlors, bars and competing nightclubs with travelling 40-person dance acts. Though he drank heavily in this period, he abstained from using heroin. Sam in his early 30s had found his way back to a respectable position in Society.

¹⁰⁰ Most long-term heroin user in this account came to be involved with casinos in one way or another, either starting their own gambling establishments (Su), working for gambling bosses (Sam, Xun Wei and Wan), occasionally helping out and at one point being offered to run a large casino (Li Zhijun), or occasionally living off of gambling winnings (Yan Jun).

In 2000, after an argument with a colleague, Sam broke off his affiliation with Wu to help one of his brother's friends open a competing casino. After more than six years without using heroin, Sam began spending time with active users and relapsed. After the casino failed, he entered an extended cycle of relapse, arrest, and detention. Between 2002 and 2008, Sam was arrested three times and spent state close to five years in compulsory state detention—all due to positive urine tests.

When I first met him in 2009, Sam's connections and job prospects had dwindled. This was due in part to the growing stigma he faced as someone identified as a long-term heroin user. But his new struggles finding work were also caused by the fact that the Society itself was diminishing as the city "shifted shape". During the years he had been in and out of state laboring facilities, local officials had arrested and prosecuted some of the city's biggest and most violent bosses (Honghe Zhongjifayuan 2004). Organized crime in the city had decreased significantly, with savvy bosses erasing ties to criminal activity in order to pursue other business opportunities. As a result, men like Sam who excelled in taking bodily risk were no longer in demand in the way that they once had been.

Struggling to find a place in the social world he inhabited after his release from compulsory detoxification in 2009, Sam accepted a position as an entry-level construction worker connection in a renovation company run by a family friend. His new job involved serving as an errand runner and helper on renovation to new villas that were sprouting up in Gejiu as well as nearby

Mengzi's expanding suburbs.¹⁰¹ Sam found his salary and status far from ideal. However, he noted at the time that the job was a good opportunity to “exercise himself” (*duanlian ziji*) in preparation for new business opportunities, including perhaps a collaboration with one of his younger brothers who had recently started a promising business selling light fixtures in the provincial capital.

In 2010, Sam lost his job at the construction company when his boss found out he had relapsed. By the summer of 2011, he had been without regular work for nearly a year.

Inhabiting Late-Hu Entrepreneurial Gejiu

Drawing on Sam and Sunny's reflections and my own observation of their work habits, I propose that two distinctive forms of “looking at money” have emerged in the past thirty years in Gejiu's private sector. The entrepreneurialism associated with bosses in the early years of the Reform, best referred to as “grabbing at money” (*gandaoqian*), is characterized by a short-term, bold perspective, a fearlessness and willingness to fight, and a desire for quick returns that often preclude long-term consideration of spending and consuming. An alternative form of entrepreneurial spirit that has grown more quickly since the 1990s, “looking at one's business” (*wangshiyekan*), involves the pursuit of long-term projects and accumulating of assets. *Shiye*

¹⁰¹ Real estate speculation (*chaofang*) had become increasingly popular in Honghe prefecture in the decade leading up to my fieldwork. Wealthy locals bought up multiple properties and fueled a new wave of speculation (minerals, real estate, and pu'er tea were all bought up by speculative investors during this time). After deciding that Gejiu's slowing economy and narrow valley floor did not make the city a suitable regional hub, the local government officially moved the “prefecture seat” from Gejiu to Mengzi in 2004. A former agricultural center 35 kilometers away from the tin city, Mengzi had ample amounts of cheap, flat land that could be developed. Government loans and preferential policies helped jumpstart residential and commercial building, which in turn created opportunities for renovation companies like the one that employed Sam.

can be translated as “undertaking”, “project” or “business”. Here, the term refers both to the company or project that one engages in to support oneself and the bodily orientation to the world through which one pursues these objectives. In contrast to opportunistic grabbing, to follow a *shiye* is understood to be a lifelong occupation.

This final section explores how Sunny and Sam experienced their own differing orientations in a Gejiu that they both understood had come to be animated by a new entrepreneurial ethos. Their respective entrepreneurial dispositions not only affected their relative economic fortunes, but also colored the way they experienced their work-inflected relation to the world around them.

Sunny and I are sitting in the back seat of his Mercedes, his favorite for the time being in an ever-expanding fleet of personal cars.¹⁰² His driver is taking us back into town after a visit to his factory, which is located on reclaimed farmland about half hour drive from downtown Gejiu. As is his habit, Sunny is talking about the future. He tells me with excitement that his life is increasingly organized around a new goal. In 2011, he has already succeeded in becoming the biggest recycler in his sector in China. Growing his business—a task that has consumed him for over a decade—has taken on a new challenge as his professional life has been consumed by a

¹⁰² Sunny’s consumption patterns seemed to change almost as quickly as the precipitous climb of his net worth. While is not in danger of going bankrupt, he nonetheless felt a compulsive need to earn and spend on an ever-increasing scale, and often ended up regretting big-ticket purchases days after he makes them. For example a few days after his purchase of a \$200,000 BMW “travel truck”, he unsuccessfully attempted to return the vehicle to the dealership where he had made the purchase. He explained, in jest, that “the devil on his shoulder” made him make the impulsive purchase which he afterwards quickly realized was impractical. And yet, he shows no signs of abating. He bought properties in several other cities around the country, launched construction on a massive, state-of-the-art headquarters just outside Gejiu, investigated investing money in America and other countries where he and his family could gain citizenship, and begun to explore the purchase of yachts and private jets.

new question: Can his entrepreneurial acumen turn his Chinese, family-run company into a *global* business empire of his own imagining? His inspirational, energetic way of talking reminds me of how mutual acquaintances described Sunny as the future of their city, someone with unlimited possibilities.

On this day, Sunny eagerly offers me an analysis of the history of his entrepreneurial becoming. His release from prison in 1998 served as a “graduation” from “the MBA School of Life”. In his narrative, his personal transformation since that dark time involved developing a forward-looking focus, commitment and planning aimed at extending the meteoric growth of his company.

Overcoming the wildness that constituted his deal-making in earlier times has helped Sunny to join a group he calls the “Crazy Boys” (otherwise speaking in Chinese, he says this phrase in English). Including the favored children of government leaders, self-made industry workers with limited education, and scholarly types who later discovered a love for business, the “Crazy Boys” are professionals who embody a new type of entrepreneurial spirit. Distinct from both an older generation of government workers dedicated to the cautious completion of state projects and impulsive Society Rush-era mining bosses like Sam, this new group focus obsessively on growing the value of their companies. United by their professionalism (*shiyexin*), management skills, and ability to plan, Sunny explains this new group differs markedly from the “part-time” (*jianzhi*), “amateur” (*yeyu*) and “organized crime” (*heishihui*) elements that controlled much of the private sector in the Rush years. Smiling at me across the car, Sunny tells me with absolute

conviction that China's Crazy Boys will change the world.¹⁰³

Sunny begins to talk about his recent trouble sleeping, and his mood and narrative quickly change. This is not the first time sudden preoccupation with somatic concerns resulted in less sanguine reflections about his life and future. In our interactions over two years, Sunny expressed concerns about his reactions to drinking coffee and tea, food poisoning from eating particular meals, kidney stones problems, splitting headaches, fear of fainting, knee problems, high blood pressure, ear infections, and severe ulcers. I listened to him report on at least a dozen different doctors' visits, which included hospitalizations on multiple occasions.

He is convinced that his various recent health problems stem from his unhealthy relationship with his company. He says feels imprisoned and overwhelmed by the "unbalanced balance" (*bupinghang de pinghang*)¹⁰⁴ that has come to constitute his working life. Various resolutions to spend more time with his family, find time to improve his health, and pursue his various hobbies are never fully realized.¹⁰⁵ Instead, Sunny finds he is overcome by a compulsive need

¹⁰³ For both professional and personal reasons, Sunny loved to follow documentation of Chinese business expansion into other parts of the world. "The Chinese are Coming", a BBC documentary, was one of the many such shows that he enjoyed following and discussing.

¹⁰⁴ There are resonances here with Natasha Schüll's discussion of how her interlocutors in Las Vegas struggle to find a balance in a "circuit of modulation" (Schüll 2006). The act of living towards a particular optimization of the future also resonates with (Adams, M. Murphy and Clarke 2009).

¹⁰⁵ Frustrated by the heavy costs that his business takes on the other parts of his life, Sunny has made dozens of different promises to allocate more time to his physical well-being, hobbies, and family. Indeed, often after a new resolution, he would commit himself to leisure activities, which included practicing yoga, playing the saxophone, and acting as a patron of science fiction, sporadically for a few days and then forgotten. Family members joke that Sunny's favorite hobby was collecting exercise equipment. Treadmills, barbells, a folding bike, two stationary bikes, a dip machine, yoga mats, dozens of fitness DVDs, books, and magazines were strewn across his home and capacious office in varying states of disuse, memorials to past spectacular blitzes of fitness enthusiasm that had subsided as abruptly as they had emerged. Even his attention to his family fell into this pattern: Resolutions to lose ten kilos through exercise, be a better father to his two children, or cultivate his love of music were pursued for a few days before his business drew him away. He cites the example of missing his daughter's birth due to a business trip as an example of his corrosive, unhealthy dedication to his company.

to attend to his enterprise. He tells me dramatically that his relationship to his work—a bond he characterizes as kind of “sickness”—may literally one day be the end of him.

As we drive up the winding mountain road from the hot, dusty plain into the mountains, Sunny asks if I will accompany him on an errand before he drops me off at my home. Our car turns off the main road on the outskirts of the town and pulls up in front of Gejiu’s mental psychiatric hospital. I have been here before to visit the infectious disease hospital, which is located next door.¹⁰⁶ We ring the doorbell at the locked gate of the hospital’s outer wall. A lone patient stares at us silently from the courtyard inside as we wait for a staff member to buzz us in. After walking through the garden into a consultation room, Sunny explains to a nurse that the sleep medication he has been consuming in increasing doses has stopped working.¹⁰⁷ He hopes she can help prescribe him a more powerful medication to treat his growing stress and sleep problems. I discover that part of the reason he has brought me with him is so that I can testify to this nurse that “later generation” sleeping pills do indeed exist and are regularly prescribed in my country. He eventually receives a prescription for a different medication, though not the drug that he came for, which the local pharmacy does not stock. Shaking his head as we walk back to the car, he makes a disparaging comment about the state of mental

¹⁰⁶ I wonder if the relatively remote location of these two hospitals—most other health facilities are located on or near Golden Lake—may be due to the stigmatization against the clientele that these institutions attract. The infectious disease hospital coordinates care for patients with HVI, hepatitis and other chronic infectious diseases. Often, other hospitals in town refuse to accept these patients, making the under-resourced infectious disease hospital the last place of refuge for people with highly complicated medical histories.

¹⁰⁷ The drug he was taking at the time was estazolam. Many heroin users in Gejiu also took high doses of “early generation” benzodiazepines, primarily diazepam, that they bought in ampoules from underground pharmacies and injected along with heroin to attempt to extend the effects and reduce the cost of their heroin injections.

healthcare in China.

As the car pulls away from the hospital, Sunny collapses into the back seat, exhausted. There is much to do. His most recently articulated goal, to make himself the “Global Mineral Recycling King”, needs to be told and realized. But Sunny, his eyes bloodshot from lack of sleep, fears he will be crushed by the expectations of a narrative that he is no longer sure is his own.

Sam and I sip tea in a café on a hot August afternoon in 2011. He tells me that he recently visited the home of a former mining boss and colleague. This individual, a successful entrepreneur who today oversees a diversified company that engages in both mining and real estate investments, took Sam and some other guests to an underground garage to show them his three most prized possessions—a Ferrari, a Lamborghini and a Maserati, one of each of Italy’s great sports cars. Sam comments this other man had the good fortune and intelligence to turn his status as a violent mountainside mining boss into a tax-paying “legal businessperson” (*hefa de shangren*).

Another mining boss, Ma Zhibao, is in court this summer in a highly publicized and complex trial where he is being charged with murder, bribery, theft, and drug dealing.¹⁰⁸ Later in 2011 he

¹⁰⁸ This trial, which named 43 accomplices including a local judge, was a much discussed event among my interlocutors during the summer of 2011. Ma eventually received a death penalty sentence. His career is representative of the spectacular rise of a number of bosses who started out in the Rush period. Growing up in nearby Shiping, he came to Gejiu in 1989 to take a position in Yunnan Tin, a job which he quickly abandoned to pursue his own mining-related business on the mountains. Prosecutors alleged had made his fortune by stealing from Yunnan Tin, occupying the mountainside by force, receiving protection fees, breaking and entering private property, buying and selling mineral resources, forcing others to give shares in their mineral-related business, and wantonly

would be convicted and given a death sentence. For many of the city's former Society members, the downfall of one of the last self-made local "evil names" (*eming*) symbolized the end of an era, and with it, a certain ethos of doing business. A great challenge for long-term heroin users is to transform themselves into successful, tax-paying businessmen. People like the Italian car aficionado who came succeeded in transitioning to "legal" careers were described by my interlocutors as individuals who had successfully "washed themselves white" (*xibai*). Heroin users, tarnished by both the stigma of long-term relationships with this illicit drug and rough Society business transactions, saw themselves as in desperate need of such a cleaning.

In 2011, "descending into the sea" no longer requires "coming into" the charged world of the Society. Instead, the pursuit of a *shiye* is the best means of obtaining a variety of goals. Chen, an idler who will re-appear in the next chapter, once described the struggles of long-term heroin users as originating from their failure to develop their own project or *shiye*. This is what differentiated this group from entrepreneurs like Sam's wealthy one-time colleague. As Chen put it, "Everyone has desires, right? But us, our urge to go after money is greater than most...we've deviated from the track (*pianguai*), you know. It's a totally different issue than normal people, people with a *shiye*. Everyone else has *shiye*, and they give precedence to that profession. But we've been pursuing money and material things, others are pursuing their *shiye*. Sooner or later, you have to end up doing a *shiye*, right?" But this distinction, obvious to Chen in the late Hu era China, had not always been so obvious.

starting fights with local villagers. In recent years, he had grown and diversified his assets. One of his businesses was a popular karaoke nightclub in the city. (Fushui Wu 2011; Yunnan 43ren 2011; Gejiushi 2011).

Sam takes a sip from his tea and reflects on the differences between his own life and those of wealthy entrepreneurs. He tells me that he sees his own greatest failure as his inability to “hold on to” (*bawodehao*) the many opportunities he encountered. His heroin use, his desire for quick returns and even his compulsive need to live a little better in the moment no longer serve him.¹⁰⁹ He tells me his current challenge is to “adapt” (*shiyiing*) to the times. This requires not just abstaining from heroin, but accumulating (*jilei*)—a job, savings, contacts, a family—in ways that he has been unable to in the past.¹¹⁰ As someone who had never been able “to consider anything far away” (*henbukaolu yuandeshiqing*), Sam knows his Society ways of living cannot provide him with the life he wants, and believes he must learn to “look” in a different way to emulate the working lives of “normal people” (*zhengchangren*).

Sam has a growing sense that the trajectory of his own life and that of the country have diverged. He is consumed by sadness for what he has lost. The exclusion he struggles with—and that I felt so strongly on our evening of karaoke—originates from his sense that he remains rooted in destructive habits from the past and no longer participates in the

¹⁰⁹ In contexts that require Society qualities, Sam is still able to thrive. I saw flashes of his strengths as a boss at weddings, dinners, and other public occasions. Like Sunny, Sam was an excellent Master of Ceremonies. At gatherings with friends, Sam could dressed up in a sharp-looking suit and oversaw proceedings with charisma and cheer, easily commanding the attention and respect of those in attendance at a variety of venues. He also thrived when arrested and detained in compulsory detoxification centers, where his ability to make connections and enforce rules through threatening displays of force (*weishexing*) allowed him to take on leadership positions and accumulate power. Tragically for his own life, he had not been able to harness these skills to build for the future.

¹¹⁰ During our conversation over tea, Sam tells me he had initially planned to save a bit of money from this side business and then return to his factory and work unit housing to raise a family like his other co-workers. As a teenager, Sam had not intended for his “descent into the sea” to be more than a brief interlude in a life spent laboring for the state. At a time when the great majority of China’s housing stock was owned and controlled by work units (Dittmer and Lü 1996:253), entrepreneurs did not know what sort of futures to expect. Sam initially had envisioned returning to his iron rice bowl job before getting married.

entrepreneurial spirit of the times.¹¹¹ In both the specific challenges of living that he faces and the ways he comes to experience the present, Sam's problems are those of the Heroin Generation, a group of people struggling against shared pasts at a particular historical conjuncture.

The two men profiled in this chapter each exhibit difficulties inhabiting the present. Sam struggles with the gnawing fear that his "grabbing" marks him as a casualty of the country's recent past. He fears he lacks the ability to leave behind the short-term focused, impulsive behaviors that have followed him for more than two decades. Sunny, meanwhile, experiences exhaustion at being trapped in stories about his own becoming. His reaching for the future has cost him the ability to fully live in the moment.

For Sam, heroin use has become, in part, a means of coping with past ways of living he seems unable to relive or leave behind. Sunny's ongoing search for better, newer forms of sleeping medications are part of a consumptive consciousness that involves pursuing the newest, smartest, and best products his money can buy. Over-the-counter medications help him find respite from habits connected to the pursuit of a *shiye* that he fears may one day fatally consume him. Increasingly burdened, in Sam's case, by past ways of living that inhibit building for the future, and in Ocean's, by future expectations that seem to preclude living in the present, both men seek in drugs a temporary refuge from the history that flows by and through them.

¹¹¹ In a scene set a bar in the movie *The Wrestler*, Randy and Cassidy (played by Mickey Rourke and Marisa Tomei) listen to music that reminds them of their youth at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Both in their early 40s, they comment that the 1990s were a bad decade (leaving unspoken the fact that the 2000s have been worse), and speak fondly of the 1980s. For Sam, there is a similar sentiment, though the combined changes to the country and his own personal history led to even more pronounced feelings of marginalization and disillusionment.

Chapter Three
Idling after Mao:
Opiate Addiction and Compulsory Labor as Treatment

Located a stone's throw from Golden Lake in the heart of downtown Gejiu, Green Orchards is a central meeting spot for members of the Heroin Generation. The government-sponsored drop-in center consists of a simple three room that opens onto a large concrete patio. Whenever the staff of this organization conducts a health promotion training, the meeting room overflows with local drug users attracted by the promise of a pack of cheap, locally-produced Honghe brand cigarettes that is provided in exchange for their attendance. In the absence of any organizing event, thirty or forty heroin users arrive every day to while away the time. These "members" play mahjong, engage in conversation in small groups, or lie out on the patio. It is this last image that I most strongly associate with this space. Eyes closed, tea thermoses resting on the pavement temporarily forgotten, the bodies of these local residents barely move in the afternoon sun. The aimless activity that I witness every time I visit Green Orchards is known locally as "idling" (*xianzhe*).

Members of the Heroin Generation expressed strong opinions about the significance and etiology of their idling. This group explained that idling was not a necessary product of long-term heroin use. Instead, they maintained that the rhythm of their lives, including the ways that they attempted to fill their work-less days, were a part of a *historical* condition emerging

from shifts between different state-promoted laboring projects taken up in different eras in the People's Republic of China.

In the following pages, I will show how the Heroin Generation has developed a “historicity” around their daily routine of idling. As deployed by Frederic Jameson, historicity is defined as “a perception of the present as history; that is, a relationship to the present which somehow de-familiarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective” (Jameson 1990:284).¹¹² Often applied to the creative and reflexive practices of historians, filmmakers and other intellectual professions, this term aptly depicts the reflective activities of the Heroin Generation, a group who share a heightened attentiveness to the complex history of conflicting ideas of what it means to labor.

Drawing on events taking place in early Maoist China (1949-1957), the late Rush years (1990-1992) and my fieldwork period (2009-2012), Green Orchards members were able to trace an alternate history to contemporary Communist understandings of laboring and state treatment of addiction (see Table, next page).¹¹³ After coming to power in 1949, the Communists oversaw an ambitious set of policies and programs promoting the popularization of a “Communist attitude

¹¹² The term is used in a great variety of ways by different authors. Sahlin, for example, employs the term to talk about a mode of historical production (Sahlin 1987:x, 46). Trouillot, by contrast, takes up the term within a problematic of historians, referring to historical process and narratives about that process as “the two sides of historicity” (Trouillot 1997:4,24). Lambek uses this term to refer to how the past articulates in the current moment to give shape and form to experience of time (Lambek 1998:106). Following Jameson, my own use of the term emphasizes reflecting over experiencing.

¹¹³ In the 1950s, the great majority of illicit drug users in China smoked opium. By contrast, members of the Heroin Generation in the first years of the 21st century were generally injecting heroin. A much more potent synthetic opiate, heroin, especially when injected, undoubtedly provides greater challenges for treatment and recovery. However, both opiates have similar pharmacological effects and withdrawal symptoms and both opiates were taken up as national projects in ways that dramatically influenced individual users' prospects for recovery.

towards labor” (Yinghong Cheng 2009). A crucial goal of these activities was to break free from capitalist labor markets by creating, on the one hand, a new state-run central labor system, and, on the other, a new ethos among Chinese workers that would allow them to thrive in such a system. Efforts to nationalize private industries into massive companies known as State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) were part of the institutionalization of a new social contract where the state took responsibility for allocating, managing, and compensating the labor of its citizen-workers. Though occurring years before they were born, the events of the early Maoist period stirred long-term heroin users’ historical imagination and presented them with different ideas about model Chinese workers, the role of labor in daily lives, and what constitutes effective drug treatment.

Starting in the 1980s and intensifying since the 1990s, the Chinese Communist Party has promoted new ideas about laboring in a “social market economy with Chinese characteristics” (Entwistle and Henderson 2000; Harrell 2000). Known colloquially as “smashing the iron rice bowl” (*dapo tiefanwan*), the government’s reform efforts not only refigured how jobs came to be allocated, but also promoted new understandings of what constituted productive, healthy, and valuable labor in China. First-hand contact with state authorities during their first years of using heroin left many members of the Heroin Generation with memories of experimental, employer-run heroin treatment programs. These Deng-era heroin treatment institutions were quickly dismantled and replaced by nationally standardized state compulsory laboring facilities. During my fieldwork, members of the Heroin Generation could reference three different types of opiate treatment projects undertaken by the Communist Party which corresponded to different

understandings of what constituted health laboring lives of Chinese citizens.

Drawing on earlier moments in Chinese history to show the possibility of other ways of configuring the relationship between laboring, idling, addiction and treatment, long-time allows heroin users during my fieldwork articulated complex critiques of the state and its complicity in their suffering as idlers occasional heroin users. Members of the Heroin Generation understood their own bodily idling—and by extension the condition of addiction itself—as symptoms of historical contradictions. To recreate for the reader the perspective that heroin users conveyed to me, the structure of this chapter shifts between the ethnographic present—accounts of my encounters with idling heroin users during my fieldwork—and descriptions of different moments of state treatment for addiction that draw on their memories and imagination.

Table Summarizing State Treatment of Opiate Addiction in the PRC

	Early Maoist Period (1949-1957)	Late Rush Years (1990-1992)	Fieldwork Period (2009-2012)
Leadership	Early Mao	Late Deng	Hu
The Heroin Generation's access to this era	Imagine and embellish stories; critique government claims	Many directly experienced this treatment as young users	They currently live this condition of addiction
Most common opiate and mode of administration	Opium, smoked	Heroin (high purity), inhaled/smoked	Heroin (lower purity), increasingly injected, often mixed with benzodiazepines and antihistamines
Government Explanation of Opiate Addiction	Remnant of capitalist exploitation and leisure activities	A negative aspect of China's liberalization; a problem affecting local youth	A serious, generally lifelong condition concentrated among a small group of long-term users
The concept of "Idling"	A term that links addiction to a variety of socially undesirable habits surviving from the Old Society. An infraction	A social problem of the community, often still dealt with by local SOE policies	Non-consumptive behavior. Contrasted to "leisure", the state-promoted consumptive practice increasingly linked to

	classified as “contradiction among the people”		laboring and the healthy economic development of the country
State response and opiate treatment	Though a small number of users are sent to hospitals and compulsory labor centers, most opium users give up their habits when taking up new laboring routines	Regional differences exist. In Gejiu and nearby cities, SOEs rehabilitation centers offer a local alternative to compulsory laboring centers	Standardized national network of compulsory laboring centers, supplemented by methadone maintenance (starting in 2005) and recovery facilities (2008)
Role of Labor in Treatment	Laboring under direction of the state is a basic requirement of life in the New Society and part of the remolding all Chinese citizens	Treatment focuses on relaxing rather than laboring, but SOEs on occasion still help drug user children of workers find jobs	Drug users are often repeatedly sentenced to compulsory labor centers, becoming one pole of lives increasingly marked by movement between poles of laboring and idling
Goal of State Treatment	A break from the various habits of the Old Society and an ability to participate in the collective becoming of new social collective	In SOE centers: patient successfully detoxes, life is minimally disrupted, and the rehabilitated person can go back to work as soon as possible	State organizing laboring life of individual in treatment, , the individual is responsible for navigating the labor market outside the center

Idling and Laboring

Reclining back in his plastic lounge chair on the concrete patio, Chen’s stiff, skinny frame is obscured within the buckling folds of his crumpled suit jacket. A regular presence at Green Orchards over the past couple of months, Chen tells me that he has been getting into arguments with his mother, who takes issue with the fact that her son, a 42-year-old man, passes his days doing nothing. As she put it in their most recent clash, “as long as a person is alive, he needs something to do” (*renhuozhe, jiuyaoyoushiqing gan*). Her fiery temperament and sharp tongue, qualities he attributes to her upbringing in Chongqing, make these verbal barrages difficult for him to bear. His dark mood is made worse by his growing economic vulnerability: He

complains with frustration that he hasn't even been able to buy cigarettes since she cut his pocket money in recent days.

Though he says he wants to work, Chen has lost faith in his ability to find an acceptable job in Gejiu. In recent years, his most extensive work experience has been in the state-run compulsory laboring facilities to which he has been sentenced after failing police-administered urine tests.

He tells me he has a relative who owns a factory in Guangdong. He isn't sure if this distant cousin would be willing to help, but a trip to the East coast might offer the possibility of breaking this intolerable stretch of idling. Chen's older brother, the person with whom he started using heroin more than twenty years ago, is currently serving time in a nearby compulsory laboring center.¹¹⁴ Maybe, he says, when his brother is released in the spring, the two men can head out

¹¹⁴ After the promulgation of the country's first drugs law in 1990, arrested heroin users were sent to one of two places: "compulsory detoxification centers" (*qiangzhijiedusuo*) or "re-education through labor centers" (*laodong jiaoyusuo* or *laojiao*). The former network of centers was opened by the Public Security starting in the late 1980s. These centers could detain drug users for any time between three months and one year. Re-education through laboring centers (often referred to as "labor camps"), by contrast, had been operated by the Ministry of Justice since they were officially created in 1957. Students detained for drug use offences came to constitute more than one third of the total population of these centers nationwide (Fu 2005:822–825). In 2008, the promulgation of a new drug law changed sentencing patterns and the names of the state compulsory laboring institutions. "Re-education through labor centers" and "isolated compulsory detoxification centers" were combined into a single new type of center, known as the "isolated compulsory detoxification centers" (*geliqiangzhijiedusuo*). Supplemental guidelines released in 2011 direct Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Public Security to each operate different parts of the isolated compulsory detoxification centers. Though advertised as part of the "post-labor camp" era (Jiao 2007), the new law in practice in many parts of the country did little more than changing the name of local compulsory laboring centers. Indeed, among long-term heroin users, the law was generally understood to be bad news: whereas before, those sentenced to a "compulsory detoxification center" would serve at most one year, starting in 2008 detention in any "isolated compulsory detoxification centers" meant one to three years detention for any individual with prior history of drug use (State Council 2007; State Council 2011). Additional requirements upon release meant that in some cases drug users could be kept under state supervision for up to six years for a single positive urine test. Moreover, the isolated compulsory detoxification centers, like the re-education camps and compulsory detoxifications they replaced, still required "students" to engage in compulsory labor. For simplicity's sake, I have decided to call all state institutions where drug users are sent after arrest to engage in compulsory labor "compulsory

East together.

After this brief burst of words, Chen sinks lower into his chair, his eyes directed towards a patch of ground a few feet in front of him. A number of minutes pass in motionless silence. Finally, he nods to me and then shuffles away, heading home for dinner and, most likely, another tongue-lashing from his mother.

The aimless lounging at Green Orchards constituted one pole of lives that swung sporadically and unpredictably between idling on the margins of the city and laboring within state compulsory laboring facilities. Local police often “summoned” (*chuanhu*) drug users they encountered in the street for urine testing. A positive result meant that the offending individual was immediately sent without trial to compulsory laboring facilities for between one and three years.¹¹⁵ Monthly arrest quotas and annual “actions” (*xingdong*) organized by national and provincial governments and implemented by the local anti-drug squad ensured that government beds in regional compulsory laboring facilities were filled. I soon understood that when certain regulars, on occasion, abruptly stop attending, they may well have been picked up by the police. Conversely, many of the new faces at Green Orchards were men and women who had been recently released from the centers.

Researchers have explored the consequences of repeatedly arresting “problem drug users” in

laboring facilities”.

¹¹⁵ In addition, in Honghe Prefecture, drug users were detained for up to six years based on a conservative interpretation of a recent national law. Part of the perceived problem with this system is its inability to discern what constitutes “addiction.” Green Orchards members who have recently “stolen a mouthful” (*touzui*—Chinese slang for occasional heroin use) are detained even if, as is often the case, they are not physiologically dependent on the substance at the time of arrest.

other contexts (Lee 2000; Gilmore 2007). Some attribute these arrest patterns to the costly and destructive global war on drugs (Jürgens et al. 2010; Wolfe and Saucier 2009). Criminalization has been identified as contributing to a “destructive cycle” that characterizes the lives of drug users in many parts of the world: Drug users are arrested for their use; unable to support themselves upon release due to gaps in their work history and social stigma, they struggle to find jobs; many relapse and are again arrested, repeating the cycle. This seemingly never-ending movement in and out of state detention centers creates shared problems for individuals trapped in a “patient-prisoner” dilemma (Garcia 2010).

In part the product of repressive sentencing, lack of due process, and aggressive policing patterns, the idling of members at Green Orchards could be interpreted as a particularly vivid iteration of a common global problem.¹¹⁶ Though helpful in identifying certain types of structural violence, studies documenting forced incarceration of drug users in other parts of the world do not address the specificity of the Heroin Generation’s experiences of engaging in compulsory labor modeled on Maoist traditions and idling that took place on the fringes of a rapidly liberalizing Reform-era economy.¹¹⁷ Understanding how this group experienced idling

¹¹⁶ More than one third of all registered drug users throughout the country were detained in state compulsory labor facilities in 1999. In that year, the country had registered a cumulative total of 1.1 million drug users. Of this total, 120,000 individuals spent time in re-education through labor camps and 224,000 in compulsory detoxification centers (White Paper on Narcotics Control in China 2000). In 2012 the country had over 1.3 million registered drug users, and sent 171,000 individuals to compulsory detoxification. The relative decrease in the proportion of drug users detained in compulsory laboring facilities can in large part be accounted for by the expansion of methadone maintenance, a program which reached a total of 337,000 drug users (though a significant number of these individuals still on occasion used heroin, were arrested, and sent back into compulsory laboring facilities in a modified version of the earlier destructive cycle.) 641,000 people over a recent four year period were found to have relapsed, and presumably the great majority of them were sent back to state compulsory laboring facilities (Hu 2011; Shi and Ai Xu 2012)

¹¹⁷ Jarrett Zigon also takes up the question of how labor functions in treatment of heroin addiction in a

requires an attentiveness to a shared historicity shaped by the legacies of Communist understandings of labor and addiction.

“It wasn’t always like this”: Memories of a different Gejiu

It is another sunny afternoon at Green Orchards. Seated in a cluster of plastic chairs on the corner of the patio, three members of the Heroin Generation and I watch people busily scurrying about their daily routines in the small businesses and government offices near the water’s edge. They tell me about how they believe their current idling is related to the government’s failure to take action. State actors today “don’t care about” (*buguan*) us, they say emphatically. Despite anti-discrimination campaigns and talk of policies aimed at reducing the unemployment problem, local officials are not doing enough to help. Indeed, the three men point out, most government-related jobs are explicitly off limits to people with drug use history. In order to fulfill its responsibilities, the state should assign long-time heroin users like themselves suitable long-term work.¹¹⁸

country strongly imprinted by its socialist history. He argues that the Mill, a Russian Orthodox Church-run rehabilitation institution, “ethically train(s) rehabilitants for a responsible normal life in contemporary capitalist Russia” by structuring the rhythm of their working lives in ways that are similar to the “capitalist labor culture” outside the treatment space in post-Soviet Russia (Zigon 2011:205–6). What escapes this type of analysis of “normal work life” is the question of how earlier local Communist understandings of labor continue to inflect experiences of addiction and its treatment.

¹¹⁸ Specific ideas about the form that government help should take varied considerably—some drug users told me they wanted the government to give them their own land in a remote community where they could form their own commune. Others thought the state should provide start-up capital to urban drug user run companies (trash collecting was mentioned on several separate occasions as a potential business), while others hoped that special positions at SOE or other collectives could be reserved for them. Given that most drug users I knew had few positive words to say about their past interactions with most state agencies, I was initially surprised to hear this group argue that the government needed to take an expanded role in their laboring lives.

I begin to suspect that the sentiment behind these heartfelt statements about the state's neglect originate in part from their memories of an earlier time in the Reform era, when the government implemented different measures to treat heroin and manage the labor of its citizens. Indeed, in other conversations, many of my interlocutors referenced their earliest experiences of state treatment using heroin to make the point that government agencies had once offered its citizens a different type of treatment.

When heroin first flooded the region in the late 1980s, Gejiu was still an “iron rice bowl” city. A state-owned enterprise (SOE) with “national-level” designation, Yunnan Tin for two generations had provided its workers with salaries, welfare, retirement benefits, medical services, and long-term job security.¹¹⁹ Due in part to the fact that for decades educated state-workers had been assigned to the work unit to help in the strategic extraction of the region's mineral, Yunnan Tin at that time still enjoyed a reputation as one of the province's best employers. Though cracks in the system were beginning to appear, the conventional wisdom in the region was that a Yunnan Tin man, distinguished by his fur work hat and canvas clothes, was the best type of husband a local woman could hope for.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ For more on iron rice bowl benefits, see the following two sections and in particular footnote 18. Lisa Rofel offers an important exploration of three distinct generations in a common place of employment through a nuanced reading of the different ways of experiencing and narrating events among of women workers in a Hangzhou silk factory (Rofel 1999).

¹²⁰ The tradition of giving Yunnan Tin workers distinctive uniforms started in 1953, when each received a Wool Sun Zhongsan suit (Kusnetzky 2012:23). Men entering the work force in the 1980s also remember wearing their Yunnan Tin outfit with pride, though this had changed by the 1990s. Well-capitalized larger SOEs, military, and government work units were more likely to offer a full range of “iron rice bowl” benefits. Part of the cache of working for Yunnan Tin under Mao and in the early Reform period was that this SOE was considered wealthy and more likely than most positions to deliver on the provision of state worker perks.

In attempting to oversee the well-being of its employees and their families over time, Yunnan Tin had gradually grown into a complex conglomerate. In a legacy of Maoist times, the company's senior executive enjoyed a higher political standing than the mayor of Gejiu. The powerful managers of the SOE tended to act like "village heads" (Walder 1989:249) in displaying an acute concern for the welfare of their employees. In addition to operating mining outfits, machinery plants, a paper printing factory, and a number of smaller enterprises, the leadership of the venerable SOE also set up a network of elementary and high schools, hospitals, a technical college, mess halls, and entertainment facilities. This infrastructure constituted a "small society" (*xiaoshehui*), a set of institutions separate from those run by the city government that were specifically designed to deliver special privileges to Yunnan Tin workers and their families.¹²¹

The rampant heroin use that first appeared in the late 1980s was concentrated among Gejiu's young people, and included both a significant number of junior Yunnan Tin employees and the "sons and daughters" of older workers. Perhaps not surprisingly given its resources and traditional role, Yunnan Tin played an important early role in responding to the emerging heroin epidemic. Starting in 1990, the massive state-run employer opened its own rehabilitation centers that ran parallel to the city government detoxification center, which had become

¹²¹ During my fieldwork, local residents continued to display considerable pride about the desirability of their city, emphasizing its climate and cosmopolitanism made it a better place to live than anywhere else in the province, including the provincial capital. Indeed, I learned there has been a history of bad blood between the cities, as Gejiu locals tend to see Kunming people as provincial, narrow-minded and discriminatory towards people from other parts of the province. They call residents of the capital "Kunming bugs" (*Kunchong*)—a pun based on the fact the same character "kun" is used both in the word "insect" and the name of the city. Kunming people tend to see Gejiu residents as aggressive and uncultured, especially the wealthy businesspeople who often buy houses in Kunming and (according to some Kunming locals) tend to engage in bullying behavior.

dangerously overcrowded.¹²² Patients were brought to these SOE facilities either by concerned family members or through Yunnan Tin's own Internal Security police. Most of the teenagers and twenty-somethings that filled these centers were connected to the local work unit through personal or family ties.

The SOE centers provided a distinct type of care that drew upon the culture of the “iron rice bowl” work unit, as well as the community and understandings of labor that had grown around it. Operating on the assumption that the problem of addiction was primarily a physiological one located in the body, SOE detoxification center staff members prioritized treating patients’ withdrawal symptoms. While medical knowledge and resources were often minimal, the centers emphasized rest and recovery rather than prescribing compulsory labor for patients in their care. Located in downtown Gejiu, these centers were easy for family members and friends to visit, and staff encouraged patient contact with family members. Some relatives regularly brought home-cooked meals to patients, while others signed out detoxing patients so they could return to their family dining room to eat. Staff at the centers occasionally bought chicken and other special requests from detoxing patients as long as the patients’ families promised to pay back the money at a later date.

Perhaps most importantly, these centers saw the goal of their treatment as preparing patients

¹²² Supported by a regional directive, Yunnan Tin and other local SOEs in the early 1990s opened a total of 15 different rehabilitation centers in Gejiu. In other larger cities in Honghe prefecture, dozens of similar centers SOE centers, known officially as “work unit pilot series rehabilitation centers”, also began receiving patients. Space was often limited. In one case, local officials commandeered a school during summer break, converting its classrooms into dormitories and re-purposing its cafeteria as the meal hall for detoxing patients.

for a return to working life after detoxifying.¹²³ Detainment periods were kept short, often lasting less than a month. As one measure of the employer's commitment, some patients continued to receive between 60% and 100% of their Yunnan Tin salaries while in the facilities, as their jobs were held for them during their treatment. Though their role in allocating the labor of their employees and families were diminishing, local SOE administrators also still attempted when they could to provide the "sons and daughters" of Yunnan Tin with long-term employment opportunities.

This locally-organized SOE treatment would not last long. Most of these treatment centers were shuttered within two or three years of opening their doors, victims of the changing winds of the times. National government officials were already issuing regulations designed to curb the SOE "small society" way of organizing the working life of state employees. Maoist-era privileges provided exclusively to iron rice bowl worker families were cut in favor of city government-led social services provided to a broader group of local residents. Meanwhile, new pressures came from higher levels of government to implement the country's first drugs law, promulgated in 1990, which forced local forms of drug treatment to close their doors so that a standardized national network of state compulsory laboring facilities coordinated by the Ministry of Public Security could grow.

¹²³ While generally SOE centers received favorable reviews that recognized the "humaneness" (*renxinghua*) of this earlier mode of treatment compared to the later rise of compulsory detoxification, drug users also complained about the corruption of the local SOE security division personnel, who at times demanded fines from drug users and significant payments from families for the service. Local police stations in the early 1990s also began to open "detoxification centers" in their holding cells as a way of making additional income.

In addition, initial optimism about the prospects of successfully treating heroin dependent people became more muted as the number of heroin users grew and stories about recurring relapses spread. Family members who were initially eager to do anything in their power to help their children overcome their heroin habits had less social capital and money to spend on these goals. Gradually, local attitudes towards heroin users began to harden, paving the way for the withdrawal of SOE care from this group of young potential workers.

The men and women who first experienced state treatment in the SOE centers still remembered them fondly. In contrast to later years when repeated detention by police and long stints of compulsory laboring marked this group as life-long addicts unfit to labor, heroin users told me that in this earlier moment, treatment in the SOE centers did not foreclose the possibility of laboring alongside non-heroin users. Long after the centers closed, this form of SOE-led treatment lived on in the consciousness of the Heroin Generation as a reminder of the possibility of a different ways of thinking about addiction, the role of the state, and possible futures for people who struggle with habitual use.

Idling after Mao: Imagining other historical possibilities

In a conversation taking place over cheap take-out food ordered from a nearby restaurant and swigs of local rice wine (consumption of alcohol on Green Orchard's premises was not allowed according to the list of rules written on the center's walls, but in practice grudgingly tolerated), several men and women ask me to comment on rumors they have heard about the drug use history of America's highest ranking politicians. I tell them that all three of my country's most

recent presidents most likely used illicit drugs, and two had publically admitted their past use.

America, they reply with wonder and envy, really is a place of second chances.

In conversations at Green Orchards, Maoist China often played a similar role to the United States. Though existing beyond their direct experience, members of the Heroin Generation drew on their knowledge of these far-away societies to open new perspective and critique aspects of their contemporary social world.¹²⁴

This was particularly true of their conversations about heroin users' relationship to the local economy. Like most Chinese citizens, the men and women at Green Orchards were familiar with basic facts about the anti-opium campaign undertaken by the newly seated Maoist government 60 years ago. During this three year period in the early 1950s, millions and perhaps even tens of millions of opiate users stopped their consumption of the drug.¹²⁵ State media and politicians in the Reform era still regularly boasted that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had been the only organization in history of the world to “completely destroy” opium use among its people.¹²⁶ While Mao's policies had proven adequate to the challenges of combatting habitual

¹²⁴ During my visits to the center, this group asked me about the American healthcare system, race relations, the price of cars, fluctuations in regional real estate markets, the growth of personal debt, the likelihood of American military conflict with China in the future and changes in living standards and education over time. I came to realize Green Orchards regulars liked to hear about America in part because they believed this knowledge offered them potential new perspectives on the future of their own country. I also often found they would make reference to our previous conversations or to articles they read online or in papers when arguing with friends about China's development.

¹²⁵ In March 1953, national newspapers announced that the sale of the illicit narcotics had been “completely eliminated” (New China News Agency cited in (Lowinger 1977:168)). This claim was undoubtedly a politically motivated exaggeration—opium use continued throughout Mao's reign, albeit at greatly reduced scale and generally limited to relatively remote areas.

¹²⁶ For example, Deng Xiaoping spoke on this topic in the early 1990s: “Who in the world has the ability to completely destroy (opium)? The KMT couldn't do it, capitalism couldn't do it. Facts

opiate use in his times, members of the Heroin Generation noted that the Deng, Jiang and Hu governments failed to replicate this early success. Reflections on and comparisons with the country's earliest years fuels a historicity that allows this group to see their own idling at Green Orchards as the product of the Chinese Communist Party's evolving policies.

The group at Green Orchards made three claims about Maoist China through which they communicated a deep dissatisfaction with government policies in their own times. First, they argued that opiate users in Maoist China *had* to work. Second, they noted that opiate addiction in Maoist times was understood as a habit of the Old Society that could be left behind. Finally, they commented that the social context of the first years in the People's Republic of China created conditions under which individuals with troubled pasts were required to change. The following section heightens the illuminative contrasts made between historical periods and shows how these understandings of the past open up possibilities for seeing idling in late-Hu China in new ways.¹²⁷

Idling was not tolerated. Heroin users were appreciative of the sense of community that Green Orchards provided. However, more than one member at the drop-in center commented that while this government-supported center provided a space for idling, it did not offer opportunities to labor that could lead to a full recovery from addiction. By contrast, instead of

provide proof; the Communist party has the ability to destroy this horrible thing" (Deng 1992).

¹²⁷ Treatment of opium users in the early Maoist period has become a highly politicized topic in recent years as many former labor camp detainees who emigrated out of China make accusations about human rights abuses, arguing that the gap between discourse and reality was often great (see, for example, (HH Wu 1992). Instead of speculating what might or might not have happened during this period, my interest is in how the Heroin Generation's understanding of this past opens up possibilities for thinking about their contemporary condition.

leaving opiate users to navigate unfriendly local labor market on their own, the Maoist state took responsibility for finding wayward citizens long-term work.

The early Maoist period offered a radically different understanding of the relationship between the state, the individual, and her labor. In the first years after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Communist Party called upon its citizens to make dramatic changes in their daily lives. Efforts to realize a "communist attitude toward labor" were at the heart of the new government's ambitious agenda (Yinghong Cheng 2009:84).¹²⁸ Putting people to work was a major priority of the government. During the first several years under Mao, the industrial state-run sector increased sevenfold, and the private sector virtually disappeared. Most urban workers went to work for SOEs and nearly one million young people a year were absorbed into the burgeoning state sector. Nationally, a "high employment, low wage" policy standardized salaries and expanded state positions (Walder 1984).

The experimental social contract championed by the Communist state required that individual citizens accept labor assignments issued from a centrally-administered labor system. Workers' lives increasingly became organized through work units (*danwei*), party-controlled employer administrative units. Benefits included ration coupons for food, subsidized housing, transportation, healthcare, and retirement pension. Perhaps most importantly, SOEs generally offered employees lifelong employment security. While in practice never extended to all the

¹²⁸ For a description of the energy of this undertaking, see (Hinton 1968). Others have also argued that the "Communist attitude towards labor" as implemented by pragmatic officials was not as radical a break from the Nationalist government policies as was depicted in government documents and speeches (Perry 2007). For example, "state capitalism" allowed the survival of millions of private businesspeople, mainly craftsmen, who were required to allocate their capital according to Communist directives.

country's workers, the government-backed "iron rice bowl" guarantee of lifetime benefits became a widely recognized symbol for the new possibilities and long-term prosperity of workers laboring under Communist rule.¹²⁹

This new system promoted relations between employer and worker that had important implications for all workers in China. Employees came to "belong to" their state-connected employers in new ways as the work unit's control over residence permits (*hukou*) and personal dossiers (*dang'an*) gave Maoist administrators expansive power over the laboring lives of Chinese citizens (Dittmer and Lü 1996; Lü and Perry 1997). Consistency, long-term commitment, and political consciousness became essential qualities for workers to adopt as they attempted to live in this socialist collective.

A corollary of the Communist state-worker system was a new way of classifying and regulating workers' behaviors. For perhaps the first time in China's history, all forms of "idling"—a set of activities leisure activities associated with capitalism including the lounging associated with opium use—were formally declared to be infractions of the country's laws. People "who are able to work but insist on leading an idle life" (*youshouhaoxian*) were classified as suffering from "problems among the people" (*neibu maodun*).¹³⁰ If their idling tendencies

¹²⁹ These benefits varied depending on the prestige and financial health of the organization. Well-capitalized larger SOEs, military, and government work units were more likely to offer these benefits. Labor insurance, one indicator of the "iron rice bowl" coverage, covered only seven percent of all workers when initiated in 1952 and reached an all-time high of 30% coverage in 1958. (Perry 1996:67) The party argued that these guarantees would never have been attainable under capitalist bosses of previous politics regimes whose motive of profit led to frequent exploitation of workers.

¹³⁰ In a very different legal system, this type of infraction might be understood as the equivalent of a misdemeanor, as opposed to the more serious "felony" conviction characterized as "contradictions between us and the enemy" (*diwo maodun*). However, this analogy fails in important ways. For example, time spent in re-education through labor centers was not supposed to appear on their

persisted, they could be detained in newly created re-education through labor centers (State Council 1957).¹³¹ An editorial from the period explained that the delicate nature of the “transitional” moment in the country’s move towards Communism meant that the idling of a few could endanger the nascent working spirit of the entire nation (Shaozhi Huang 1957). Workers were no longer responsible for finding jobs. Instead, their challenge was to conform to the call of state authorities to labor for the country.

Labor Transformed Addicts. Members of the Heroin Generation, often 20 years into their relationship with opiates at the time of our conversations, increasingly struggled to conceive of heroin dependency as anything other than a lifelong ailment. Since the 1990s, popular understandings of this group as incorrigible “drug using criminals” (*xidufan*) grew, fueled in no small part by the police-run compulsory laboring detainment treatment system. Even after the state began to implement programs promoting medicalized understandings of this group as patients in the 2000s, heroin users continued to argue that government programs reinforced understanding of addiction as a lifelong, incurable condition of the individual.¹³² Neither

records—an indication of the conviction that people convicted of “problems among the people” were not supposed to be punished.

¹³¹ In an archaeology of another history of confinement and treatment, Michel Foucault argues that an early justification for confinement in European hospitals was a response to idleness, which had taken on threatening aspects in 18th century France. He writes, “Since sloth had become the absolute form of rebellion, the idle would be forced to work, in the endless leisure of a labor without utility or profit” (Foucault, 1988 52-55). Spaces to house idlers later welcomed the mad. In France, like China, the history of state treatment is inextricably tied with broader shifting understanding of social order and human nature.

¹³² The post-2004 scale-up of methadone, an opiate that can be substituted for heroin, led to other problems due to the national program’s emphasis on maintenance. Fearing that patients would drop-out, many clinics pushed to “educate” patients that enrollment in the program should be a long-term, perhaps life-long, endeavor, and in certain cases refused to cut doses to aid patients who

attributing the problem to “wasted” (*fei*) morally bereft individuals nor to addicted brains offered the release this group desired. Searching for other possibilities of understanding addiction and its treatment that might put an end to their increasingly interminable idling, members of the Heroin Generation looked to the past for other understandings of their condition.

Maoist officials offered a radically different understanding of opiate use and its treatment than those circulating among state experts and laypeople in the late years of the Hu government. In speeches and reports, officials in this earlier period argued that Chinese opium dependency should be understood as an historical and economic rather than medical problem. Spreading under Qing, Warlord, and Nationalist leadership, opium consumption was, at root, seen as a social malady fueled by class exploitation and colonialism. In early Maoist China, government officials attributed its spread “to reactionary rule and the decadent lifestyle of the feudal bureaucrats, compradors and warlords.”¹³³ A variety of nicknames for opiate use appearing during Maoist times, including “vile lingering poison of the old society” (*jiushehui de elie yidu*), “corrupt habit” (*louxi*) and “national calamity” (*huoguo*), revealed how official discourses

wished to taper and leave the program. Encounters with medical professionals who were eager to increase their clinic’s retention rates to meet national targets reinforced the fears of certain members of the Heroin Generation that the state would not let them move beyond their pasts. My most memorable moment of how a medical understanding of the condition promoted an understanding of the condition as a lifelong, chronic condition occurred in Beijing. A medical doctor lectured about the long-term damage that occurred to drug user brains to an audience included many long-term heroin users. His PowerPoint included images of what he said were irrevocably damaged heroin user brains. What the audience struggling with long-term use of opiates was supposed to do with this information was anyone’s guess. For many opiate users, while the “medical” approach was welcome alternatives to state compulsory laboring centers, none of the options advocated by the contemporary state seemed to offer the possibility of leaving addiction behind—the alternative that this group so desperately wanted, and which appeared to have been possible in other times.

¹³³ “General Order for Opium Suppression”, February 24, 1950 cited in (Zhou 2000:381; Zhou 1999:95).

connected opium with the past regimes of the Old Society (Jinxiang Wang 1996).¹³⁴

Treatment of opiate use was inextricably linked up with the Communists' broader social program. The Soviet Union, a highly influential ally at the time, had already mobilized ways of conceptualizing and treating people displaying symptoms of alcohol dependence (a much more widespread social problem in the region than chronic opium use) less as patients than victims of previous political regimes. Alcoholism, an "anomaly" that "occurred under the influence of the past and the economic and social difficulties connected with the construction of socialism in a backward country" was treated with laboring in the community and, in severe cases, a trip to the gulags (Jakobson 1992:103).¹³⁵ Alcoholics were potential members of the Russian socialist category "remnants of the past", a term describing groups of individuals suffering from "the socio-economic relations, views, ideas, customs and traditions inherited from the old society."¹³⁶

Chinese Communist leadership also saw labor as a crucial method for treating populations suffering from a variety of destructive habits originating in the past. In Maoist China, laboring,

¹³⁴ Mao Zedong, "The Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party," 1939, 616-7, cited in (Smith 2006:58). Smith notes that explanations that foreground the etiology of problem behavior with relations to the past were widespread in the earliest years of the PRC, but gradually faded over time: "Unlike older claims that 'parasites' who resisted were just like the rest of the Chinese people, victims whose incorrect mindsets could be blamed on the 'old society,' writers now [later in the 1950s] began to portray resisters as intractable delinquents and miscreants" (Smith 2006:166).

¹³⁵ Labor was prescribed for those suffering extreme cases of habitual behaviors, including alcoholism. Dan Haley, a scholar of the Soviet camps, comments that "remnants of the past" (another common formulation—*ostatki starogo byta*) was applied to a range of people engaging in undesirable behavior including prostitution, gambling, and petty criminality. He notes that "labor as a method of reforming the prisoner marked by 'remnants' was figured in the 1930s Stalinist propaganda around the camps as having an almost religious effect, triggering a conversion-like experience of coming to consciousness and conforming to socialist norms" (Healey 2011).

¹³⁶ Remnants of the Past (*perezhitki proshlogo*) is defined in a philosophical dictionary published in the Soviet Union as "individuals or groups of individuals" who suffer because the society in which they live "still have some objective ground since full social homogeneity, high level of culture and morality, activity and consciousness for all members of society are not yet reached." (Frolova 1981). Thanks to Alex Beliaev for pointing out the term and for translating.

and specifically physical bodily toil, was promoted as a tool able to “remold” (*gaizao*) individuals.¹³⁷ Under Nationalists, Qing and earlier dynasties, citizens deemed in need of rehabilitation were assigned state work to “make oneself anew” (*zixin*). If “making oneself anew” followed a more than 2000 year tradition of correcting individual behavior in relation to Confucian ideals of an enduring social order (Williams and Y. Wu 2004:26–29, 41), the Communists’ process of “remolding” emphasized a deeper form of personal transformation necessary to thrive in a society that had itself been marked by radical rupture from the past. Instead of restoring oneself to a pre-established norm, “remolding” implied participating in an individual and social becoming, a radical experiment in which the final result was still unattained and, in part, unknown. By “clear(ing) away” the “ossified” attitudes of bourgeois, feudal and capitalist pasts (Mao, 1958)¹³⁸, physical laboring “foster(ed) a habit of loving manual labor” and promoted political and social consciousness necessary for both individual and collective survival

¹³⁷ “Remolding” first made its appearance in political discourse among the revolutionaries in the early part of the 20th century when a radical discourse began to gain ground against more moderate reformers like Kang Yuwei and Liang Qichao. Chen Duxiu, one of the founding members of the Communist party, and others began to employ “remold” not just in relation to inanimate objects, but also in relation to groups such as youth organizations and other collectives aimed at transforming Chinese society. See (Williams and Y. Wu 2004:13, 47; Yinghong Cheng 2009:52).

¹³⁸ Mao discussed the central role of new working routines as a crucial factor in his own personal transformation. Mao Zedong’s narrative of his own transformation from a teenager heavily indoctrinated in capitalist attitudes into a leader of the Communist movement offers an example of how the remolding properties of labor were commonly portrayed in this period. In a speech given at Yan’an in 1942, Mao recounted how, as a college student, he “used to feel it undignified to do even a little manual labor, such as carrying my own luggage in the presence of my fellow students” (Mao 1965). He noted that his contempt for peasants at the time took shape through a strong mental association he held connecting labor and dirtiness. Years of living with the workers, peasants and soldiers “fundamentally changed the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois feelings implanted in me in the bourgeois schools.” Over time, Mao came to feel that people who toiled in the fields, “even though their hands were soiled and their feet smeared with cow-dung”, were cleaner than any other class. His own extended period of laboring alongside these common people enabled a change not merely of his external practices but also a refashioning of the instinctive classificatory schema that existed beneath his conscious thought. In this story, Mao’s laboring serves both as a mechanism of personal transformation and, in his new attitude, an indicator of his new consciousness.

(State Council 1957).

Chinese state treatment for opiates built on broader ideas about, on the one hand, attributes of Communist labor, and on the other, the problem of addiction as a lingering set of habits from past regimes. Instead of adopting biomedical or popular understandings of addiction that emphasize the problems of individual brains and bodies, state officials grouped opium users with other “social parasites” (*jisheng renkou*) whose affliction could be solved by destroying their links to the past (Cohen 1968:10, 239; Smith 2006:79, 129). The great majority of the men and women who ceased using opiates during these years were not sent to state laboring facilities, nor did they receive any formal medical treatment.¹³⁹ Instead, habitual opium use disappeared in a daily, state-mandated rhythm of laboring that left neither the time nor the means to buy and use opiates.¹⁴⁰

Chinese citizens faced an historical necessity for change. My interlocutors made a variety of claims about how early Maoist society worked in ways that differed from the social world that they inhabited in late Hu China. Sixty years ago, some claimed, incorruptible police summarily arrested and executed drug dealers in order to rapidly halt the movement of opium throughout the country. Others argued that Mao wielded a special sort of power whereby his spoken words

¹³⁹ Specific state treatments geared towards opiate users during this early period appear to have been fairly limited in scope and scale: Short-course detoxification centers, often holding drug users for less than a week—were set up in big cities, and serious chronic opium users were on occasion sent to state compulsory labor facilities.

¹⁴⁰ A relatively small number of drug users were detained in the early 1950s and sent to “New Life Schools” or other state laboring facilities before the creation of re-education through labor centers (Cohen 1968:239).

became the truth. Still others commented that their parents' and grandparents' generations "had no choice but to change" (*budebu gaiziji*) with the times. Uniting these comments is an implicit idea that there was a force of historical necessity operating in early Maoist times that no longer existed in their times.¹⁴¹

Though not discussed in academic literature on the subject, it is not difficult to imagine how members of the Heroin Generation might understand the ethos of this earlier historical period as offering unique opportunities for people like themselves to break with the past. The "addicted citizenry" (*yinmin*) in certain parts of the country purportedly made up "the great majority" (*guangdarenminqunzhong*) of local adult residents (Jinxiang Wang 1996). In a context where hundreds of millions of people were exhorted to various behaviors newly defined as inappropriate in the New Society, much of the stigma associated with heroin use was potentially diffused by other concerns. Indeed, local Communist directives regarding drug treatment emphasized that people able to respond to opportunities to change should be spared punishment.

While heroin users during my fieldwork could not name a single politician who had a known history of illicit drug use, they knew examples of opium smokers who went on to play crucial roles in the New Society. Zhu De, the founder of the People's Liberation Army, was a heavy opium user and Warlord in the 1920s whose political conversion to Communism

¹⁴¹ The Maoist state implicitly posits an understanding of social being contingent based on a particular understanding of the work of labor. For such a reading building on the work of Hegel and Marx, see (Lukacs 1980).

corresponded with his own ability to shed opiate addiction. Others, like war hero Zhang Xueliang, were also known for kicking the habit and helping the national cause.

Beyond the imagined possibility of a state and social collective willing to forgive and forget opiate-related transgressions, members of the Heron Generation saw historical necessity of the times as contributing to a dramatic and complete break from past habits. A total historical solution to the problem of habitual drug use involved collective efforts to disrupt past habits, markets, and flows of capital.¹⁴² As officials at the time explained, “by eradicating the (previous political) system, the phenomena of drug dealing and drug using will be annihilated.”¹⁴³ Giving up the drug in the early 1950s was not understood a matter of “choice”, “willpower” or “individual responsibility”, but a part of a sweeping collective project of re-shaping.

Bodily symptoms of opiate withdrawal may have been interpreted differently in the rituals that proliferated in the country at this time. Early Maoist campaigns provided forums for people to materialize and symbolically move past a range of grievances and pathologies attributed to the past. One example were the “speaking bitterness” rituals widely performed in the first years of the PRC where peasants’ voices and tears “mak(e) present the abstracted circulation of dispersed social evil” (Anagnost 1997:18). Anagnost argues that these bodily practices gave substance to

¹⁴² A wide range of policies and campaigns undertaken in the first years of the Communists’ rule, including measures to transform the labor of workers, re-distribute wealth, close privately run industries, and promote mandatory participation in “thought work” (*sixiang gongzuo*), disrupted a range of lingering behaviors. Zhou Yongming emphasizes the importance of resident committees, mass organizations, family members, and police in constituting a “social control network that could encompass every aspect of an individual’s life” (Zhou 1999:110). Drug prohibition strategies and land reforms facilitated local Chinese farmers’ transition from harvesting opium to other crops (Lowinger 1977).

¹⁴³ In Chinese, the phrase is: “*genchu zhidu, fandude xianxiang ze xidude xianxiang, jiang hui xiaomie*” (Jinxian Wang 1996).

suffering stored up from the previous political and social order as “the physical body became the medium for registering the collision of material forces in history” (Anagnost 1997:19).

Recovery from opiate dependence—a short but painful detoxification often accompanied by shivering, diarrhea, and weight loss, followed by the possibility of returning to productive laboring with the abatement of visible symptoms—offered a potentially rich site for the Party’s ritual work of making present and transcending the past. The dramatic initial withdrawal symptoms occurring in the first days of abstinence—including vomiting, cold sweats and shivers—followed by a rapid return to physical health made opium users seem designed to make this group fit into national projects of “making history speak” through the body to show the efficacy of Communist ways of living and laboring (Anagnost 1997: 44).¹⁴⁴

Drawing from their understandings of the country’s Communist past, Green Orchards’ regulars argued that state policies in the early 21st century were more concerned with mitigating the harms of their behaviors than attempting to help them break free from the underlying ailments. Corrupt police who only go after individual users instead of large-scale drug dealers, politicians who undertake ineffectual policies that lack the commitment of Maoist mass campaigns, and a society that seems to tolerate the growing proliferation of anti-social behavior among the wealthy that would have been severely punished only three decades earlier are seen by the Heroin Generation as signs of a political party that has lost its ability to lead in the way it once did.

¹⁴⁴ While opium detoxification is often accompanied by visible withdrawal symptoms, they are milder than those associated with heroin, a synthetic, more potent opioid, and generally abate after several days.

The group at Green Orchards discussed the great suffering family members had endured before they were born, and recognized that life in Maoist times had held unimaginable difficulties for many. Despite their sober acknowledgement of harsh realities and inadequate material conditions in this earlier moment, the alluring possibility of a total solution to the problem of opiates premised on state control of citizens' labor resonated among a group that experienced opiate addiction as a lifelong, increasingly inescapable set of experiences.

Laboring in Recovery

It is another beautiful afternoon at the Green Orchards center next to Golden Lake. On the patio, I can hear a faint low-pitched whirring sound punctuated by loud cracks. Local retirees have arrived at nearby parking lot to play with their tops, a common hobby in the region. Old Kaiyuan, a fixture at the center, is teasing his recently adopted dog on the porch. An eight-year-old, the son of a couple who frequent the center together, runs in between the smoke-filled indoor mahjong tables and the outside loungers. I have not seen Chen in more than two weeks. Friends say he is going through a rough patch, still anxiously awaiting the release of his brother.

On this particular day, our conversation centers around a new type of treatment center known as “recovery center”.¹⁴⁵ Kaiyuan, just 50 kilometers down the road, opened one of the country's

¹⁴⁵ The full name of this new type of centers recognized in the 2008 law is “drug detoxification recovery centers” (*jiedu kangfuchangsuo*), but I will refer to them simply as “recovery centers”. There is little guidance in the law as to how these new centers should be run. Various pilots have opened across the country, some funded by the central government. Kaiyuan's center, known as “Rain Dew Community” (*Yulu shequ*), was one of the biggest and highest profile of the first round of pilot projects. In Gejiu, a smaller “Community of Grace” also opened, temporarily shut down for a

largest pilots of this new type of facilities. This local facility has been featured in numerous national media reports and visited by high-level national and international study tours. Like compulsory laboring centers, the Kaiyuan recovery center is run by local public security officials. Also like state compulsory laboring centers, it relies on the compulsory labor of the more than 500 student-workers it houses to generate revenue through the production of labor-intensive products such as clothes and shoes for companies that sign contracts with the center. However, unlike the older generation of police-run centers, the Kaiyuan facility exclusively serves drug user “students” who voluntarily commit themselves to stays of a minimum of one year.¹⁴⁶ The center provides many material comforts that are increasingly difficult to find in Gejiu’s less desirable jobs, including heavily subsidized housing, guaranteed monthly salaries and conjugal rooms for those who marry inside the facility. In interviews and promotional materials, the officials in charge of the center promise that this government-mediated “island of safety” offers a “normal life...no different” from people living outside (Kaiyuan Yule 2007).¹⁴⁷

I ask the Green Orchard the several Blue Field members sitting around me what they think of the Kaiyuan recovery center. A cacophony of indignant voices fills the room, each attempting to

period of time due to lack of funds, and then re-opened. Both centers are located on the same grounds as local compulsory laboring centers, though each offers separate living condition and different sets of privileges for their “students”.

¹⁴⁶ I heard reports that certain workers in this center signed “lifetime” contracts committing themselves to the center in return for special benefits. Certain of my interlocutors challenged the government claim that all “students” voluntary committed to the center: according to this group, some in the recovery center sign contracts under duress in compulsory state labor centers. However, all agreed that a proportion of those in the center were there on their own volition.

¹⁴⁷ Zhao Yunfeng, the director of Kaiyuan’s community treatment center, recently explained, “when people in the process of quitting drugs run (from detention in state compulsory laboring centers), it is not detoxification from the drug that they are fleeing. They are fleeing their environment! If you provide them with an institutional environment that is even better than what they find outside, they will be able to give up drugs with a peaceful heart” (Kaiyuan Jiedu 2007).

tell a story about how the actual working conditions in the center are unlike what journalists report based on their short, specially coordinated visits. After listening to litany of criticisms, I ask the group if they hope to see this center and others like it closed. The tone of the conversation abruptly shifts. Individuals who moments before loudly criticized the pilot recovery facility rally to defend its mission, noting that they may well choose to commit themselves to it in the future.¹⁴⁸ A representative from a regional NGO proudly reports that her organization has provided legal counsel to a local heroin user whose application to enter the Kaiyuan recovery facility was, they believe, unfairly rejected.¹⁴⁹ Beyond simply hoping for the economic stability, healthcare and other benefits associated with a welfare state, certain members of the Heroin Generation express a desire to submit themselves to labor directed by the state.

This conversation about the need for state laboring centers occurred at a time when compulsory treatment of drug users was coming under unprecedented international attack. Declaring that forced labor was unscientific, ineffective, and in violation of the human rights of detainees, twelve UN agencies in early 2012 issued a joint statement urging governments around the world to find alternate ways of treating people with problem drug use (United Nations 2012).

¹⁴⁸ I am also reminded of past conversations I had where people told me they wished the government would give people with drug use history drug a piece of land to create their own laboring community on the edges of the country—one person suggested in an isolated mountain range. The fact that this form of state-mediated laboring requires living in the center and laboring according to assignments provided by local government workers does not deter this group from speaking positively of these new laboring arrangements.

¹⁴⁹ Embracing the complexity of diverging circumstances of its clientele, this particular NGO has in the past extended help to two types of clients: those who believe they were wrongly detained and wanted to leave the center and those who wished to enter the center but had been denied access for health reasons.

International advocates behind the campaign emphasized that habitual drug use must be treated as medical problem requiring proven medical treatments. In their view, compulsory laboring facilities “have no place in a civilized society” (Wolfe 2012).

These well-meaning foreign advocates promoted a strain of liberalism that emphasizes the importance of choice by autonomous subjects. Implicit in this position is the assumption that compulsory laboring centers would never survive if patient-users could access alternate, medical treatments. How to reconcile this viewpoint with the fact that Chinese long-term heroin users choose to commit themselves to a life of compulsory laboring? Is there something about the historically specific way that members of the Heroin Generation idle that contributes to their complex feelings towards state treatment?

Members of the Heroin Generation felt that state policies implemented over the course of their lives had uniquely suspended them between two different epochs with conflicting understandings of the state’s role in the laboring lives of its citizens. In the post-Deng era, the Chinese government had dismantled much of the institutional and juridical ground upon which the SOE system and Maoist ideas about labor had been built. It did so by creating new labor laws, reforming state industries, reducing guarantees given to government workers, and stripping down the work-unit administration structure that once managed, monitored, and compensated workers (Jefferson and Rawski 1994; Walder 1988; Lee 2002; Lau 1997).¹⁵⁰ Sam and many

¹⁵⁰ As delivering sustained market-driven economic growth became the guarantee upon which the Communist Party staked its legitimacy to rule, state policies since the early 1990s attempted to “shift the shape” of the role of the government and its relation to the market, a theme explored in detail in

other heroin users' increasing struggles to find work, as well as the closure of the SOE detoxification centers, were understood as part of this shift.

In addition to breaking down Maoist institutions and laws, government stakeholders in the 1990s and 2000s took a proactive role in promoting new qualities associated with market labor. For example, government programs in the 1990s began to sponsor job fairs and interview training classes rather than preparing students for state work assignments. Flexibility and initiative, qualities not previously emphasized in the iron rice bowl system, became state-sponsored attributes of the Reform-era worker (Hoffman 2001; Hoffman 2010; L. Zhang et al. 2008).

Once punishable by detention in labor camp, "leisure" activities in the post-Deng era also came to be actively promoted by the state as desirable contributions to the growth of the national economy. Perhaps the most prominent of national policies promoting newly desirable leisurely consumption was the government's 1994 decision to promote a two-day (instead of the previous standard one-day) weekend for many businesses. This move to expand the leisure time of workers was motivated by government interest in encouraging workers to spend a greater percentage of their earnings in order to fuel the growth of the domestic economy.¹⁵¹ The value of an individual's labor increasingly came to be defined not by the enthusiasm and political commitment with which it is performed or its contribution to government five-year plans, but

Chapter Two.

¹⁵¹ Policies in the 1990s and 2000s have specifically aimed to create and expand a middle class "endowed with high cultural capital and the power to consume" (Anagnost 2008:499). State agencies starting in the mid-1990s began promoting cars, luxury housing, and package travel and other forms of consumer activity. Starting in the late 1990s, "community building" (*shequ jianshe*) reorganized state workers at the local level to promote "responsible" consumption among neighborhood residents (Tomba 2009:592–3).

rather by the amount of income it allows to flow into consumptive activities. Cultural theorist Wang Jing observed that the state's promotion of leisure activities starting in the 1990s served to discipline production as "naming and administering leisure consumption as such" increased the pursuit of "a lifestyle that can spare no time for unproductive labor" (J. Wang 2001:78).

Members of the Heroin Generation recognized the enormous significance these policies had on their lives through the historicity they displayed in relation to their idling. Whereas idling in the 1950s referred to individuals engaging in illicit bourgeois consumptive activities, the term in post-Deng China came to designate the *non-consumptive* activities of people whose economic struggles fall outside the attention of a state increasingly preoccupied with fostering market-driven economic growth. Unemployed former workers like Chen found his idling carried with it a new sting at a time when the city was lurching towards an ever greater degree of commercialization, consumerization and marketization.

Aware of how their individual plights connect to government-fueled changes in China, local heroin users and non-users alike from a variety of backgrounds during my fieldwork pointed out how contemporary state policies contradicted earlier Communist attitudes towards labor. Once-respected workers "performing labor" (*laodong*) in lifelong positions were increasingly being replaced by poorly paid "temporary labor" (*dagong*), often performed by migrant laborers who, unlike previous generations of Yunnan Tin employees, were not likely to become long-term residents of Gejiu.¹⁵² The shift towards market labor, my interlocutors pointed out, produced

¹⁵² An anthropologist who conducted fieldwork in Gejiu in the early 2000s found that the retirees she spoke to were particularly likely to appeal to the region's history to critique trends they observed in the laboring practices around them. As a local Gejiu political instructor employed by Yunnan Tin

workplace abuses and insecurity in daily life for many, a situation that was not dissimilar to the exploitative practices of the private mining bosses the Communists overthrew when they first came to power more than 60 years earlier.

The Heroin Generation's sense of historicity also became evident when we discussed local city government policies. The expensive public campaign to promote this mountain city as a holiday destinations and "leisure city" (*xiuxian chengshi*) received withering criticism from many with whom I spoke. Lavish holiday-like public celebrations, the installation of the region's largest water movie screen, and the fitting of the lake, nearby buildings and surrounding mountains with coordinated blinking lights designed to transform the city into an evening nightscape in the mold of Hong Kong were widely criticized by local residents, and in particular heroin users. In their view, the government wrongly prioritized chasing tourist dollars over attempting to diminish the widening inequalities that had emerged with the introduction of market labor.

While their understanding of cutbacks in SOE benefits and in stable state sector work was shared by many of Gejiu's long-time workers, the Heroin Generation displayed a more complex

told her, "workers (*gongren*) aren't the masters anymore. They just take on a (temporary) job [*dagong*, as opposed to performing labor (*laodong*)]" (Kusnetzky 2012:342). Local Communist party narratives likely fueled both Kusnetzky's and my own informants' critiques. According to these narratives, "sandhogs" (*shading*), a derogatory name for a miner working under a private boss under the Nationalists (*guomindang*) were transformed into "workers" (*gongren*) who labored for the country, and the country in turn served them (Kusnetzky 2012:335). Heroin users were among the many local residents who felt that the country had ceased to serve them. Analogous situations can be found in other counties transitioning from socialism to market economies. In the 1990s, high unemployment in the former East Germany helped to produce a form of nostalgia for "an identity as producers that has been lost in this transition" (Berdahl 1999:199) that bears similarities to opinions expressed by local unemployed one-time workers in Gejiu.

relationship with the country's Maoist laboring traditions than other local workers due to the treatment they had received for their heroin use. Many members of the Heroin Generation first began moving in and out of state compulsory laboring centers in the Rush years in the 1990s when the government had abdicated its traditional role of coordinating work assignments for state compulsory laboring center graduates.¹⁵³ In other words, heroin users came to constitute the single most common "student" in compulsory laboring centers at the time when the central labor placement system that enforced mandated state-guided labor came unhinged.¹⁵⁴ As a result, members of the Heroin Generation repeatedly underwent months and even years of "remolding" in state detention centers that prepared them to be released back into a Maoist world of job assignments that no longer existed.

Intensive, repeated bouts of "remolding" administered to this population for close to two decades had particular consequences on their ability to navigate local labor markets during my fieldwork. More than common problems such as dislocation, stigma, breaking apart families associated with the "vicious circle" of criminalizing drug users in other contexts, this form of

¹⁵³ My interlocutors remember that "students" leaving labor camps in the mid-1980s who "had come back and were without a road" (*huilai meiyou chulu*) were provided with jobs in mining enterprises on the mountain. Through these mountain-based opportunities, a group of older (non-drug using) labor camp graduates were able to launch careers after their release from camp. See also (Cohen 1968) for a discussion of his visits with former labor camp detainees who worked in state-provided jobs near the centers where they had been detained. Increasingly struggling to meet the basic "iron rice bowl" obligations for their own staff members amid national cutbacks, RELC guards from other parts of the country wrote in online forums that they were sick of begging local police, who they call "big brothers" (*dage*)—the same term used to refer to powerful "management" in RELCs and "bosses" in organized crime rings—to assign them more arrested drug users and tired of the uncertainty surrounding the status of their unclaimed benefits (Anonymous 2011).

¹⁵⁴ The entire prison system in China under Mao was known as "remolding through labor" (*laogai*). While the country re-named its detention system in the early 1990s as "it is favorable in our international human rights struggle. Henceforth, the word 'laogai' will no longer exist, but the function, character and tasks of our prison administration will remain unchanged." January 7, 1995 edition of the government-sanctioned *Beijing Legal Daily* cited in (HH Wu 1992).

treatment China contributed to heroin users' problems of adapting to changing times. Each period of time spent laboring under the daily routine of the state centers inculcated heroin users with the message that they needed to depend on government authorities to organize their laboring lives. Once released, this group was expected to find jobs on their own. Post-release individuals were frequently criticized for exhibiting a “passiveness” (*duoxing*) that they argued was more a product of their labor center working routines and the structure of their lives than the pharmacological effects of drug use. Without employment for months or even years at a time upon their release, members of the Heroin Generation found that a “laziness” (*landuo*) grew as the “long-term habit of idling” (*changqi xianguan*) settled into their bodies. In short, neither laboring in Maoist-style state detention routines nor idling in contemporary society helped to build the qualities that this group needed to navigate the local labor market.

Aware of their own position within this broader history of laboring and idling, members of the Heroin Generation held complex views towards the new state model represented by Kaiyuan’s recovery facility. Wielding a Maoist-inspired critique of state policies, members of the Heroin Generation understood the country’s countless laid-off, unemployed, and early retired idlers as victims of history. Heroin users, like these other marginalized individuals, were “remnants of the past” whose socio-economic relations, views, ideas, customs and traditions inherited from Maoist and early Reform-era China increasingly serve as a barrier for participation in an economy that requires other laboring habits. However, the Heroin Generation occupied a unique position within this larger scattered group of idlers. Through adopting alternating practices associated with movement between the two “poles” of engaging in compulsory labor and idling, heroin users

came to embody conflicting characteristics of different historical periods' understandings of labor. The problem of addiction was understood and lived not simply as the challenge of leaving a past behind, but instead of finding strategies for navigating in a government-mediated cycle that threw them back and forth between two worlds that they were not able to fully inhabit.

Seeing their idling as a historically particular form produced by state policies, heroin users confronted unpalatable choices in late Hu China.¹⁵⁵ Seeking an escape from financial and existential dilemmas, the Kaiyuan recovery facility for this group offered a respite from the poles of addiction and the growing material and existential uncertainty of their lives. A guaranteed monthly wage and the assurance of minimal material comforts increasingly appealed to a group plagued by the growing fear that they may never overcome the late-Reform era cycle of addiction on their own.

However, long-term heroin users were also aware of the significant shortcomings of the new government pilot centers. The Kaiyuan model fails to fulfill either Maoist or contemporary state ideals about what constitutes a good laboring life. Though appearing to offer an echo of Maoist-era state promises, the implicit logic of this new form of treatment is that addicted individuals *cannot* be completely transformed through labor. If Maoist labor in the 1950s was connected to a national all-encompassing project of remolding aimed to root out lingering bad habits in the pursuit of a collective future, in the Reform era only particular types of marginalized

¹⁵⁵ Individual members of the Heroin Generation pointed out to me the irony of their inverted historical transformation: After a stage in their early adult lives when they rejected the then-norm of state iron rice bowl employment, their addiction and entry into middle-age has produced in them a desire for an iron rice bowl life at a moment when this type of job is quickly disappearing from the world.

Chinese subjects were asked to participate in state compulsory laboring projects. Heroin users' difference from other citizens—often implicitly understood as unfitness for the times—is re-inscribed and preserved in their physical segregation from the historical changes occurring outside them.

Members of the Heroin Generation longed for a way of overcoming their addiction, their idling, and their pasts, and occasionally ruminated on possibilities that may have existed decades ago when a revolutionary spirit and collective remolding project seized the land and rid countless people of their opium habits. Living in the midst of a history they cannot leave behind, lives confined to a government-mediated “island of safety” may have to be enough.

Chapter Four
Attempting to “Return to Society”:
A Wedding for a Future

“Remember your country, think about your parents, think about your own prospects.”
-Slogan painted on the wall of a state compulsory laboring facility

A Wedding

A few minutes after five on a cool, clear Sunday afternoon in early October 2009, Pan and Su take their positions just outside the door of Tin City Restaurant. The groom sports a handsome tan suit and the bride is wearing a flowing white gown and matching corsage. Stationing themselves on the sidewalk, Su picks up a tray of “double happiness” cigarettes, lighter ready in her right hand to offer guests a smoke when they arrive. Pan, meanwhile, grips a heavy round platter of sweets and peanuts. The greeting of the guests is the most public aspect of wedding celebrations in Gejiu, a time when the wedding procession is visible not only to participants, but also passers-by on the street, including cheeky local hooligans who approach the proceedings in order to snatch free cigarettes.

Thirty feet behind us, another wedding party gathers. This is not unusual in Gejiu as the half-dozen banquet-style restaurants in town often accept two weddings for the same night when a single group cannot fill up all the tables in the vast indoor spaces. Pan and Su’s wedding has captured the residual seating capacity left over from this much larger party. This other bride and groom, appearing to be in their mid-20s, stand under ten-foot high “marriage arch” covered in pink cloth and flowers that guests pass under before walking over a plush “double happy” carpet

that leads into the restaurant to their seats. For much of the greeting period, the people arriving at this other wedding must wait their turn in line to offer congratulations to the couple. A videographer and photographer document their interactions with guests.

Their arms laden with offerings, Pan and Su wait uncomfortably, casting frequent, furtive glances up the street. Su's maid of honor, her niece, is late, meaning that Yan Jun, Sam and I are the only members of the wedding party. The five of us shuffle around in the street, smoke "double happiness" cigarettes and make small talk to pass the time. Efforts to ignore the bustle of activity behind us are futile as a continual stream of new arrivals gingerly approach our group, looking puzzled, before hurrying past our party to drop off their "red envelopes" with the other couple.¹⁵⁶ A profound feeling of vulnerability sweeps over me at this moment as I stand with Pan and Su on the side of the road, waiting to see who will arrive at their wedding dinner.

People with heroin use history must change. This is a statement that virtually every person I spoke to during my fieldwork would endorse. The most common way of discussing the process through which heroin users enact this change in China is as a "return to Society" (*huigui shehui*). Appearing in myriad government documents, on banners during special events and in the everyday language of affected groups, this slogan carried powerful, if implicit, ideas about how users were to change. The Chinese characters designating "return" (*huigui*) are the same ones used to describe the process by which Hong Kong "came back" to Chinese rule after more

¹⁵⁶ "Red envelope" (*hongbao*) refers to celebratory cards stuffed with cash that guests give to couples at weddings and family members at Chinese New Year's celebrations. The term has also become synonymous with bribes offered to government officials.

than 130 years under British control in 1997 (in English an event commonly known as “the Handover”).¹⁵⁷ To “return” in this sense is to re-integrate into a previously existing set of relations with others.

But for members of the Heroin Generation attempting to leave dark parts of their pasts behind, this slogan was fraught with questions. What habits of thinking, acting, reflecting, or desiring needed to be refashioned? When does a person who “is” a drug user become something else? How is this return journey marked through time? And what sort of life could someone “returning” to a China also in the midst of change expect in their post-addict days? In short, what was the nature of the relationship to be forged between individual and collective pasts and futures? For Su, Pan and other members of the Heroin Generation, these questions held enormous practical, existential and social significance, and the lack of clear answers from the government and other key stakeholders was the source of considerable personal anxiety.

Before describing Pan and Su’s attempts to “return”, I would like to elucidate two ways of relating to the past that will help to clarify the tensions surround the couple’s attempt to create a new life for themselves. Jean-Paul Sartre’s early philosophical work explores the human condition through an attention to ontological rather than discursive, epistemological or representational approaches.¹⁵⁸ Sartre argues that, at root, “man first of all is the being who

¹⁵⁷ The term *huigui* is regularly applied not only to drug users, but other marginalized populations including labor camp detainees, orphans and street children, and former Falungong members. After a recent round of sabre rattling between Japan and China over Pacific islands claimed by both, a petition circulated asking both sides to work towards a “return to rationality” (*huiguilixing*).

¹⁵⁸ “It is not because I “represent” my past that it exists. But it is because I am my past that it enters into the world, and it is in terms of its being-in-the-world that I can, by applying a particular

hurls himself towards a future and who is conscious of imagining himself in the future” (Sartre 1987:16). The lived ontological relation between past, present and future is a crucial feature of our self-understanding as humans. We “are” our individual pasts: what we were remains in the memories of other people from our past action, is part of our “facticity”, and cannot be changed. However, humans live as a presence to ourselves and can become something other than what we were. As Sartre puts it, “a becoming is possible...because on principle my being and my modes of being are heterogeneous” (Sartre 1968:171). Moving through new “presents” gives humans the possibility of transcendence, that is, of choosing possible futures different from what we were.

Many people I encountered in my fieldwork, including the staff of drug treatment programs, promoted what might be understood as a Sartrean understanding of the work of “return”. In this voluntaristic view, heroin users trapped in cycles of repetitive behavior can be understood as living in “bad faith”: they fail to see and act upon the always-existing possibility of living in a different mode from their pasts. One example of a Sartrean understanding of the relation between past, present and future is a story I heard on several occasions about a homeless heroin user with nothing to his name who emerged from drug treatment with an unstoppable desire to “return to society.” Taking a job as a street-based shoe shiner, this individual, through hard work and his own decision to put his past behind him, gradually improved his position in society, eventually obtained a lucrative job as a self-employed businessman, found a wife and started a family. His “return” was an individual triumph of choosing to live differently.

Many heroin users I came to know would sharply disagree with Sartre’s characterization of psychological process, represent it to myself” (Sartre 1993:170).

the human condition and, by extension, the broader applicability of stories like the one just related. Yan Jun, the wedding party attendant and sweet-talking civil society advocate with a gift for language, wrote an essay that sums up my interlocutors' challenges to an implicit Sartrean understanding of the human. Addressing the fate of people with heroin use history in contemporary China, Yan Jun draws on the saying "all things are like smoke" (*wangshiruyan*). Negating this popular Chinese expression, Yan Jun writes, "For us, the past is *not* like smoke. No! To put it correctly, society hasn't allowed our history of having used drugs to dissipate like smoke."¹⁵⁹ If other people in China found that mistakes were forgotten with time, Yan Jun and other heroin users who struggled to "return" argued that there was a specificity to the ontological, lived relation of past, present and future for heroin users in late-Hu China. The social world they inhabited would not allow this group to "walk out" from their pasts.

The tensions between these two positions—a belief in the centrality of an individual's intention to create a different future, and a conviction that the social world mediates the relationship between an individual's past and future—animate the struggles of Pan and Su's marriage and their subsequent attempts to "return".

An hour passes. The guests have arrived. I watch as the bride and groom move around the banquet hall to greet and toast family members, childhood friends, fellow "students", favorite guards from the state laboring facilities, and colleagues from the local NGO where they volunteer.

¹⁵⁹ He wrote, "*Wangshibingburuyan. Bu! Zhengquedeshuoshi shehui buba womenyouguo shiyongdupin de jingli wangshiruyan.*"

Following local customs, guests attempt to inconvenience or embarrass the couple by asking them to tell stories, fulfill requests or engage in silliness before offering their symbolic consent to the marriage by accepting the couple's request for recognition through a toast.

As usual, Su leads the way. The daughter of a well-connected, high ranking government cadre, Su is a vibrant, no-nonsense woman, a person both charming and "difficult to manage" as a former boss once wryly observed. Attending a local, brutally demanding dance school as a young child, she still moves with a noticeable levity and grace. Her effortless elegance is tempered by her tendency to display her feelings when displeased. In the local dialect, Gejiu residents let out a slow, falling "ma" sound that expresses incredulous disbelief. Su on occasion produced the most scornful "ma" I ever heard in Gejiu, a cutting rebuke that she on occasion accompanied with a clenched fist that she shook menacingly.

Pan follows her lead from table to table in a slightly stooped, deliberate style. Often looking as if he had just awakened from a nap, he is a warm and accepting soul, a one-time guitar player, professional driver, fighter, crony, and lounge. Despite having worked for bosses in professions requiring he develop a "horrible name", Pan in social contexts instinctively gravitates towards conciliation. When plans were being made, he would often wait until a consensus had been reached by those around him before enthusiastically interjecting a comment which summarized, often verbatim, the positions of other members of the group.

As the couple moves from table to table, I realize that, in addition to performing the rituals associated with the start of a lifelong partnership, Pan and Su are also asking that the witnesses present at their ceremony participate in recognizing their status as people who have successfully

“walked out” (*zouchulai*) of addiction.¹⁶⁰ In the 18 months leading up to the wedding, the couple took on part-time jobs at a local NGO, cared for their aging parents, were consistently compliant patients in a government-sanctioned methadone maintenance treatment program, and achieved a degree of stability in their partnership as a couple that for many years had eluded each of them as individuals.

The couple hopes the symbolic work of the wedding ceremony could help move them from a purgatorial state of being “in recovery” to the firmer ground of having successfully “returned” from heroin addiction. Despite the jovial, celebrative and increasingly alcohol-infused atmosphere, the visceral discomfort I first experienced standing in front of the restaurant waiting for guests returns to my stomach as I fear the symbolic work of the wedding is failing to accomplish what they hoped.

The most obvious challenge to the bride and groom’s narrative of beating the odds in their “return” was the host of empty seats around us. Three out of eight tables the couple had reserved were completely unoccupied, laden with dishes of food that remained conspicuously untouched. That close to half of the invitees had not come seemed to loom as a challenge the couple’s stated future, the empty chairs silent votes against the viability of their vision of their new lives together.

Wedding guests and other observers openly expressed doubts about and challenges to Pan

¹⁶⁰ Equating recovery through time as movement in space, “walking out” is a common Chinese expression making legible one’s recovery from addiction.

and Su's carefully presented claims of "walking out." One long-time acquaintance who attended the wedding later told me he thought the ceremony was embarrassing and unnecessary. The fact that Su and Pan walked to the proceedings instead of taking a car, the modest number of invited guests, the lack of a photographer or professional host, the widely known fact that Su had been previously married, the visibly advanced age of the couple, and the presence of their sick and aging parents at the ceremony all contributed to this individual's opinion that the couple had failed to meet the norms required for a respectable wedding in Gejiu. If this couple had not achieved a minimal level of success at this stage in life, he reasoned, why have a public ceremony? Given their pasts and current economic and social standing, they should have just gone to city hall and picked up a marriage license.

Others grumbled about how Pan and Su represented their pasts. In a context where few long-term heroin users were able to stay clean for extended periods of time, Pan and Su's claims about the length of their abstinence and assurances about their future ability to abstain from the drug were questioned and challenged by variously situated groups. Members of the tight-knit Heroin Generation constantly exchanged gossip—in some cases untrue—about who had bought or used the drug. Meanwhile, family members struggled to overcome personal memories of many times in the past when Su or Pan had appeared to put their heroin use behind them only to relapse and fall into older behaviors.

Individuals who had not been invited to the ceremony made an even more damning assessment of the proceedings. People with heroin use history who had known the couple for years told me a few days before the proceedings that the entire wedding was merely a jaded

attempt by Pan and Su to turn a profit. The “red envelopes” full of cash given by wedding guests at the door generally exceeded the outlays of putting on the ceremony. This ceremony, these people implied, was a crass attempt at shaking down family and friends to make some quick money. This marriage should not be given the same weight as other weddings taking place around the city.

This celebration of the couple stirs unwanted deliberation on their pasts as memories and interpretations of their past behavior continued to follow them. While their personal commitments to “walking out” were palpable in their every action, Pan and Su knew they needed the support of the people in this wedding hall to heal and “return”. The visceral discomfort I experienced during the wedding stemmed from my suspicions that the social reality this couple inhabited might not allow them to live the future they desperately attempted to assert, one that I was eager to believe. Hopes for their new lives risk being punctured by others’ evaluations of their future prospects.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Government and non-government actors made concrete statements that implied that people with long-term heroin use were a different type of person, implying that their very being, and by extension their relationship to their own futures, were different. A couple weeks of weeks before their wedding, Pan and Su had been present at a public event organized by several local grassroots NGOs where a number of people with drug use history had discussed their struggles with a variety of police policies, including the widespread use of handcuffs when administering urine tests to suspected drug users. During any public engagement, local members of the Heroin Generation were at pains to refer to themselves as “people who had once had once been drug user” (*cengjingyouguoxidushi*), or “ex-drug users” or “ex-addicts” (*guowang xiduzhe* or *guowang chengyinzhe*). An annoyed senior police officer, taking the stand afterwards to respond to the comments made by the various people who had made testified about the impact of police enforcement policies on their lives, said “people who use the white powder tell lies” (*xibai fen, shuobaihua*), a statement that, like many others I heard during my fieldwork, deliberately lumped people saying they had *past* heroin use history within a broader “drug user” group. I heard similar statements made by even the most “progressive” public health workers, who stated openly that they thought that people with drug use history should never be allowed to take up management responsibilities, regardless of the length of their time away from drugs, because they were the “wrong type of people”. Government documents made a vaguer reference to people from this background, like other groups directly affected by HIV, as lacking necessary “self-discipline” (*zili*).

New Jobs for New Lives

In the first years of their married life together Pan and Su attempted to break from certain aspects of their past to pursue the shifting horizon of “normal people’s lives” (*zhengchangren de shenghuo*). However, the tensions that came to the surface at the wedding continued to follow them. The couple’s immediate concern in their first months of marriage was their financial situation. Both Su and Pan had been “volunteering” part-time at a local NGO providing harm reduction services for drug users in Gejiu city. Though they generally enjoyed the work and welcomed the structure it gives to their daily lives, the stipend they received was barely enough to cover their food expenditures each month. As a result, they saw their work with this organization as a temporary way to build goodwill and “exercise themselves” rather than a long-term career path.

Su’s hopes for her future life were inflected by the fact she had once been a shrewd, influential, and respected businesswoman, one of the first women in Gejiu to take advantage of Reform era opportunities of the private sector. Due in part to her father’s connections¹⁶², Su as a teenager had been able to secure a position in a high-paying government position as a buyer of tin. Working in a government-backed competitor to Sam’s mineral reselling business, Su spent long periods of time in the second half of the 1980s in mountain towns buying ore from private mining

¹⁶² Su’s father was a Beijing sophisticate transferred to this mining city in the 1960s to take a leadership role in the local government. Su joked that even though he had lived in Gejiu most of his adult life, he never fully adjusted to local customs, adamantly rejecting the local spices and the “crossing the bridge” noodle dish that had been invented in a neighboring city. He died in the months just before their wedding.

bosses. At that time, Su was not allowed to travel into the mines due to widely held superstition that any woman entering the tunnels would cause tin deposits to disappear. Instead, she set up her shop next to the road that truck drivers took on their way down from the mountains, and paid cash for minerals based on prices set by her employer.

Su eventually ended up marrying one of her clients, a powerful local boss with the most “horrible name” on his mountain and the individual who eventually introduced her to heroin. With her family’s help and her own savings, Su in the late 1980s and early 1990s opened her own auto repair shop and a teahouse, which also served as a venue for city-based gambling. In the days after marrying Pan, Su believed that moving beyond what she experienced as a liminal post-compulsory detox period required finding a lucrative job that would allow her to unleash the considerable business acumen she had built up in her early career. She would not have to wait long for a promising opportunity to find her.

One night in late fall, less than two months after the wedding, Su, Pan, Xun Wei, Sam and I were among ten attendees at a “team-building activity” dinner at a local hotpot restaurant sponsored by the NGO that employed Su and Pan. One of the guests at this event was Mrs. Rui, a highly respected 40-something Gejiu city government worker. This woman was recognized by attendees at the dinner as one of the few true friends of people with heroin use history in Gejiu.¹⁶³ During our conversation over dinner, Rui noted that she had recently tried a new product which

¹⁶³ After getting to know the community through a government AIDS-related grant she had administered years earlier, Rui, who was herself like many Gejiu residents an avid gambler, used to have people with heroin use history over to her home for occasional mahjong games, allowing them to smoke and drink as if they were in their own homes. Her guests never forgot these small acts of kindness and inclusion.

had dramatically improved the health of her skin.¹⁶⁴ When Su expressed interest in this cream, Rui immediately launched into a pitch about the wonder of Avon products.

In the following days, Su received so many calls from Rui and other Avon associates inviting her to come try their products that she eventually had her husband screen her incoming calls. Despite her complaints, she seemed more embarrassed than genuinely annoyed by this attention. Within a week she had acquiesced to Rui's requests and visited the local Avon "work room" (*gongzuoshi*) for a free makeup appointment. Impressed at the quality of the products and people she met, Su excitedly declared to me that she believed this was the opportunity that she had been waiting for to get her career back on track. In the following weeks, Su purchased vitamins, protein powder shakes, toothpaste, cleaning goods, and other products, eventually "investing" more than 2500 yuan (\$360)—the better part of a year's stipend from her NGO employer—on Avon products. Curious about this new part of her life and how it connected with her "return", I began to attend Avon events with her.

In my first visit to Avon's headquarters, I quickly learned that Su had chosen to reveal her drug use history with senior members of the Avon group. Tingting, a highly polished and heavily made-up thirty-something woman who was the Avon sales leader for the city, explained to me the specific ways in which an Avon career could improve Su's life. With Su looking on approvingly, Tingting noted that selling Avon products would not only improve Su's own life, but also help those who were still actively using drugs. Tingting explained that people who actively

¹⁶⁴ Interestingly, heroin is often complicated as preserving skin. If meth users look prematurely aged, heroin users can often maintain useful appearances, a quality some attribute to the opiate's status as a depressant, slowing down the system.

used drugs struggled because they have lost their “sense of self” (*rentonggan*), their place in society, and hope for the future. Su could help her former peers both by distributing Avon healthy living products and knowledge to this underserved and needy community, and by acting as a role model of a successful business woman for this lost group. Tingting told the two of us that Su was suited for the organization by noting that she is a “meticulous” (*xini*) person who is tender underneath her tough exterior. This suggestion appeared to embarrass Su, who that day was wearing matching army camouflage-patterned pants and vest. Tingting explained that the Avon team wanted to help Su unleash her “alluring spirit” (*yaojing*) better display her attractive inner self and improve her own ability as a saleswoman. Despite protests about her age and health¹⁶⁵, Su a couple weeks later traveled 320 kilometers to Kunming, the provincial capital, to participate as a runway model in a member-run regional talent show and product promotion event.

As her relationship with Avon intensified over the following weeks, I came to realize that Su’s enthusiasm for the organization grew from how she understood the multilevel marketing organization’s principles, support structure, and economic incentive system complemented her own narrative of “return”. On the one hand, Avon appeared to offer the techniques Su had been seeking to revive her business sense and learn the new skills she needed to begin selling again. But the organization also seemed to provide a social space that would allow her to leave behind other aspects of her past and realize a future as self-sufficient as a businessperson.

¹⁶⁵ Health worries were a constant backdrop in Su and Pan’s married life. Though there were periods of time when both members of the couple were healthy, a combination of hereditary disease, health issues lingering from their heroin using days and newly acquired ailments meant that one or the other was often struggling with bodily ailments during the time that I knew them.

Su saw Avon's working room as a rare place where people were collectively motivated by achieving a common end. One of the most powerful aspects of this environment was the organization's explicit willingness to forget certain aspects of participants' pasts. Su described this atmosphere as "an interest in where you are going, not where you have been." Indeed, speakers at meetings we attended emphasized that "Avon doesn't care about your past" and tended to draw on their own personal stories to show how a successful Avon career didn't require a degree (*xueli*) or specific ability (*nengli*), just persistence and a strong drive. In a business culture that appeared to valorize rags-to-riches stories, Su's past troubles might eventually even become an asset if she could weave them into a story about her difficult road to becoming a sales leader.

Su also frequently commented on her appreciation of the support she received from Avon colleagues, noting that the people she was surrounded by were some of the nicest people she had ever met, and much preferable to bickering drug using peers who she interacted with at her NGO volunteer job. She treasured the "personal" text messages of encouragement she received from senior Avon sales leaders she met at provincial meetings, noting that some of the wealthiest entrepreneurs in this part of the country were counseling and supporting her. That people with highly respectable careers like Rui also came to this place to make extra money only reinforced the multilevel marketing organization's appeal. In the first weeks, Su also expressed excitement about applying lifestyle skills—including healthy eating tips and advice on how to keep a marriage healthy—to her own life.

As the weeks past, Su expanded and refined Tingting's initial points about why she was well

suited to the Avon career. She told me she saw this work was a natural extension of her ongoing job as a peer educator, networking with, educating and helping to improve the health of local drug users, and in particular vulnerable women. In her view, her experience buying and selling a range of consumer products—tin, car parts, tea, card games, heroin and most recently harm reduction supplies including clean needles—meant that she also already possessed the interpersonal skills necessary to be a great salesperson. An American company with new products and information was helping to extend the local connections and ability with people she had developed on her own.¹⁶⁶

In addition to opportunities for self-improvement, Su was also struck by the economics of this endeavor. She was especially taken by the hierarchical and complex payment system, which she lauded for being at once transparent (*touming*) and fair (*gongping*), two terms that were frequently conflated in the sales pitches we heard. When attending talks by local and traveling Avon luminaries, I was struck by how the content of their pitches about the Avon family were designed to resonate with people who had a past history working in other areas of China's burgeoning economy: An Avon career offered pay based on ability rather than position (a knock on widespread frustration about nepotism in SOE appointments), a "legal" source of red envelopes in the form of a percentage bonus at the end of every year (a wink at widespread

¹⁶⁶ Others writing about global multilevel marketing organizations emphasize how techniques promoted by these global firms "take meaning within local networks, relationships, local meaning of presumed universality underwrites much of the appeal and utility of the form for individuals navigating fluctuating economic and social contexts" (Wilson 1999). See also (Cahn 2006). These authors tend to describe participation in these ventures as an opening out into "new" experiences. Su's experience of Avon's interventions breaks with these characterizations in that, for her, participating in this type of organization was a means of returning to a particular part of her past. There was something fundamentally familiar about the lessons she was being taught that harkened back to her working experiences in the 1980s.

corruption among government officials), and cooperation with a transparent, reputable Fortune 500 company instead of unproven local entities (a jab at both Yunnan Tin and other fading SOEs, as well as the proliferation of small-scale, frequently unstable small pyramid marketing schemes that competed with each other to recruit local workers). For Su, an all-encompassing career at Avon appeared to offer a mixture of possibilities for self-improvement, opportunity to demonstrate latent skills, and a reputation to ensure a clear path to a sustainable, economically self-sufficient future.

Su's rapture with Avon faded quickly. Like the wedding and other ambitious undertaking of her life, she never seemed able to completely escape the shadows of her past. At Avon, the problem grew from her inability to meet the "fair" sales targets. She grew tired of the constant pressure to order more products, an expense that had become an additional financial burden on her extended family. Nagging health issues made traveling to participate in events a burden.¹⁶⁷ She was also frustrated by her inability to convert her relationships with friends and family into sales. After giving out free samples in her first weeks of involvement at the organization, she acknowledged as time passed that she was uncomfortable pushing the people closest to her—often people who she still felt deeply obligated because of past events—to buy expensive products from her. By February, just three months after her first encounter with this new career

¹⁶⁷ She attended numerous presentations, including one occasion when she had to leave the hour and a half lecture several times to go to the bathroom to vomit. This particular event was an hour by car from Gejiu. While she was able to hold together her pleasant demeanor for the earlier part of the evening, by the end of the night, she was feeling very ill. Tingting's assistant, a tall woman who possessed Tingting's inflections and speech patterns (including frequent interjections of "*Dui, tai bangle, waoaaa! Wo de tian, tai ganjing le! Bu de liao!*") but lacked the considerable professional charm of her boss, kept making excuses to delay our return to Gejiu. Su eventually became so exasperated she came close to making physical threats to hasten our return.

path, Su stopped attending Avon events altogether.

If Su's attempts to "walk out" took her outside the home, Pan found that a tumultuous period for his family kept his energies focused on the domestic sphere. His father had died just weeks before the wedding. His mother, meanwhile, suffered a stroke earlier that summer that had left her partially paralyzed. As the only adult in his extended family without a full-time job, Pan accepted the role of his mother's full-time caretaker, a task made easier by the fact that he and Su had already been living in the extra bedroom of his parents' house. Despite living what might be described as late adolescent bachelor life—he had never lifted a finger in the kitchen and was not comfortable doing most housework—Pan nevertheless emerged as a highly capable and consistent caretaker, providing surprisingly gentle and attentive support to both his dying mother and Su, accommodating the deteriorating health of the former and fluctuating moods of the latter.¹⁶⁸

Pan changed his routines, including frequenting mahjong games, to spend more time at home. If out for dinner, he would carefully watch the time and fill up containers he brought with him whenever he left the house with food his mother would like before going home to feed her. While Su accused her silent mother-in-law of intentionally torturing her and her husband with her frequent calls for help in the middle of the night, Pan was tender and patient with his mother,

¹⁶⁸ Pan consistently accommodated Su's shifting moods. Though they both had cell phones, I found I would inevitably end up chatting with Su to finalize plans as Pan would dutifully pass her his phone so she could have the final word. Su often made references to "my" house, neglecting the fact that their modest two-bedroom apartment technically, in fact, belonged to Pan's mother and addressed as "my friends" Pan's childhood classmates who she had only met through him quite recently. Pan patiently accepted these quirks, just as Su's charm and energy nourished him.

taking her on walks, helping her eat and take her medication, and moving her through her daily routines.

Pan discussed his new role as a way of paying back for all of the grief he had caused his family. He noted that in Gejiu at that time, people didn't have the time or the interest to properly care for their parents. This wasn't just a problem with drug users: he knew many "normal" people whose neglect led to their parent's premature death. He had recovered from heroin just in time to offer his mother the filial piety (*xiaoshun*) that she deserved.

As I spent more time with Pan and Su in their home, I came to realize that his care-giving role also had a self-interested aspect. Providing his mother with late-life home-based care was, at least in part, a strategy to strengthen his claim on the family home. He and Su often talked publically about the fact that they had "earned" this house through their patience care of his slowly fading mother.¹⁶⁹ They hoped his role as caretaker could serve as ammunition if Pan's "dark-hearted" (*xintaihei*) older brother tried to dispute their claim to the house. For several months, they even discussed hiring a lawyer to have his mother sign a new will, but ultimately abandoned this plan after deciding her advanced dementia would invalidate the contract. Pan's days at home were thus in part an attempt to atone for the past, and in part grim preparations for coming squabbles over maximizing his piece of the family inheritance.

Though he had participated in mountainside violence in his teenage years, Pan spent most of

¹⁶⁹ She lived longer than many had initially expected, slowly losing weight and alertness after her stroke before dying nearly three years after the wedding, at a time when she weighed just over 80 pounds.

the 1990s as a driver.¹⁷⁰ After an SOE-backed venture in the early 1990s paid for him to study for a driver's license and then went bankrupt, Pan worked a series of jobs, operating a cab ferrying farmers on short routes between Gejiu and outlying suburbs, driving a van hauling produce (including the very first of a particular wild mushroom) to Gejiu, and later hauling gambling machinery around town for a well-known Society boss. In the years I knew him, he had not driven for many years after selling his car in order to buy heroin and then having his driver's license expire during a stint in a state compulsory laboring center. Though he owned a small 125cc motorcycle during the time I knew him, he often talked about buying a larger one that he could drive on highways. Perhaps from there, he might go on to buy a car and return to his former career as a driver.

Though the couple lacked the funds for luxury purchases such as a high-end motorcycle, I was surprised to find the degree to which compulsive consumption was a part of their daily routine. When I visited their home, either Pan or Su were often in the living room on the computer, looking at motorcycles or clothing stores online. During my time in Gejiu, items shipped to their home included earrings, matching his and her sets of "gold" chains, Panasonic phones, sets of "certified" jade jewelry, lighters, and vitamins. Often bored and passing time on the computer they had only learned to operate the year before, they tended to be lured by special low prices or "prizes" that only required that the recipient pay for shipping. On more than one

¹⁷⁰ He explained he engaged in the "fighting and killing" of that time, which included sleeping on the mountainside with a hard-hat lamp strapped to his head and knife under his cot in case anyone came to challenge their claim. He also described an episode where he and other Han threatened to blow up a building in an outlying mountain town unless local government officials helped them curtail Hui mining claims.

occasion when I was with them were targeted by scammers who called to inform them they had won free giveaway products. Despite receiving a lecture from their local postal worker about the dangers of buying from unknown vendors, they were victims of several different scams during my fieldwork. Arguing that they were only spending on what was “necessary”, “good value” or a reward for their hard work, the couple continued to spend their families’ money at a rate of consumption that far exceeded most residents of the city.

When I left Gejiu at the end of my first period of fieldwork in spring 2010, neither Su nor Pan had found new jobs. More ominously, both had begun to struggle with health problems. Though we rarely discussed it in these terms, I knew they felt they had not yet “returned” in the manner imagined at their wedding.

A Future Family?

In March 2011, 18 months after their wedding and 10 months after the end of my initial period of fieldwork in Gejiu, Su surprised me one evening on a Skype call with an announcement and a request: She and Pan had recently adopted a baby girl, and they wanted me to bring an “American” Barbie doll for their daughter when I returned to China the next month.

I was especially surprised by the news of this sudden adoption because in the previous months I had been receiving regular updates about Su’s worsening health. Soon after I left Gejiu, she had lost consciousness without warning on several different occasions. In January, after hitting her head on the floor, she had been in a coma for more than 24 hours. During several hospitalizations, doctors had performed a battery of tests, but were unable to determine

whether her seizures and loss of consciousness were due to problems in her brain or her heart. In the middle of dealing with this potentially life-threatening, still undiagnosed condition, the couple had decided to adopt a two-week old baby girl.

Upon my return to Gejiu, I went to visit Su and Pan and meet their new daughter. With a huge smile on her face, Su showed me the small child wrapped in blankets and cradled in her now painfully thin arms. As with their family home, Su tended to call the girl “my” rather than “our” child. Though outwardly supportive of this decision, Pan looked uncomfortable whenever he held the baby. When Su began to discuss the process of adopting this new baby, her wandering eyes, squirming shoulders and slight smirk made clear that she was sensitive to the criticisms that were being made about their actions.

Nearly every mutual friend of ours in Gejiu had been quick to condemn the couple’s decision to adopt. They argued that, given the couple’s financial and health difficulties, this was self-indulgent, potentially negligent behavior. They pointed out that ultimately this child would likely become a burden on the couples’ extended families, who were already struggling under financial pressures caused in no small part by to this Pan and Su’s past behaviors. Some observers went so far as to argue that starting a family in this way was a sign that Pan and Su had failed to recover and act as responsible adults—the baby, like a bag of heroin, had been acquired in a hasty manner, without consideration of the consequences.

Anticipating these criticisms, Su set out to defend her recent decisions. She explained that having a child would in many ways complete the process that she and Pan had begun years earlier when they left compulsory detoxification together. After their wedding, she had finally begun to

feel that as a couple they had reached a point where they were stable enough to start a family. Moreover, having a child would fill their lives and help them to avoid potentially dangerous feelings of emptiness (*kongxu*) that could creep in if they spent too much time idling. Engaging in the daily routine of attending to a child for Su was both a symbol of their successful recovery and an insurance policy against future slip-ups.

Su also drew on the trajectory of her own life to strengthen her case for this new family. Twenty years earlier, she reminded me, she had given birth to a baby boy conceived with her first husband. This baby had died just after birth due to complications arising from her heroin use during pregnancy. Her move into middle age corresponded with a growing fear that the window of time during which she could start a family was closing. Adopting this girl allowed Su to regain what she had lost with her son, and complete the role that she was meant to play—a mother. That parenthood was her “destiny” (*yuanfen*) had been confirmed by the immediate bond that she had formed with this baby in the hospital: when others tried to interact with the infant, she had cried incessantly, but when Su spoke, the baby had become still and content.

Still attempting to comprehend exactly how they had come by this infant, I asked about the child's biological family. Su and Pan happily replied that I would get to meet them soon. The three of us, along with their new daughter, would be going over to the biological family's house for dinner the next week.

When we arrive at the run-down building on the outskirts of town, Su is carrying the two month old infant in her arms. We enter the cramped apartment and sit down at a table that is

already crowded with several hot dishes that have just emerged from the kitchen. The father and paternal grandfather, migrant workers from a farming community outside of Chongqing, sit silently on the other side of the table. The mother, a local woman who grew up on a nearby farm, is in the kitchen. The baby girl's two sisters, aged five and three, eat at a small table next to us. The five-year-old watches our conversation from the corner of the room while a war drama flickers on the TV beside her.

Upon sitting down at the table, Pan comments in a loud voice that this apartment building suffers from poor construction and lacks a breeze. He tells me that it had been built many years earlier for Yunnan Tin workers, but today is mainly occupied by migrant out-of-towners. It is not as good a place to raise a child as their own home, he notes gravely. Su and the young mother make small talk to help avoid awkward silence.

As we begin to eat, I learn more of the confusing entanglement of money, goodwill, partial truths, and heaviness of history that surrounded the connection between these two families. The parents of this child—described by Su as “good people, but very traditional”—had decided they would keep trying to conceive until they had a son. The mother had wanted to keep her third daughter (now asleep in Su's arms), but lacked the ability to pay the associated fines.

Pan and Su had secretly hoped to adopt for some time. However, their income level, age and medical histories precluded them from being able to obtain a child through legal channels in China, forcing them to come up with creative ways of circumventing the state involvement in regulating kinship. When recently at the hospital for Su's health issues, they had learned about this baby girl and introduced themselves to the parents.

Eventually, an agreement was reached between the two families. Su and Pan found some money to pay the medical fees associated with the childbirth, and agreed to take on the costs and most of the day-to-day responsibilities associated with raising the child. They also promised to figure out a way to file paperwork that would allow this baby girl to become a legal resident of Gejiu. The two families agreed that the biological parents could continue to stay involved in helping to care for the child. Given their lingering doubts about their long-term ability to fulfill their role as parents, the two forty-something adoptive parents were happy to have this other family continue its involvement with the child's care and upbringing. As Su put it bluntly before we arrived for dinner, "If I die, the child can always go back to her biological parents." During the negotiations, Pan and Su had decided not to share their history of heroin use or the severity of Su's recent health issues with the biological parents.

We eat quickly. The women talk about children and schools. The men say little. Upon learning that the father and son have been struggling to find construction work, Pan says he will see if his sister might be able to give them a job on a renovation project she is planning for her home. Less than forty minutes after arriving, we finish our meal and get ready to head home. As we leave, Su hands the baby girl over to her biological mother, who has asked if she can borrow her for a few days so that visiting relatives can see her for the first time.

A few weeks later, Su told me that she and Pan were not the only ones hiding troubled pasts. In an unusual coincidence, heroin had also played a key role in this other couple's story. Su recently learned that the construction worker with whom we had dinner was the second husband

of our hostess. Her first husband, the father of the five-year-old daughter watching TV, had been a heroin user who had died of an overdose. Su shook her head in disbelief about the strange way that heroin connected the two families. She then noted, “It’s a good thing that her first husband wasn’t *her* father,” indicating her daughter in her arms at the time of the retelling. “If she had a drug using (biological) father, I wouldn’t have wanted her.”

In August 2010, Su again fell unconscious, and was admitted to the hospital for several weeks. After more tests, a definitive diagnosis still eluded local medical authorities. For more than six months, she moved in and out of the hospital. When discharged, she spent months at home where she was too weak to walk down the street slope outside her home. An increasingly frazzled Pan shuttled between attending to his wife and his mother, who were occasionally in the same hospital (and once even on the same hospital floor) at the same time. A year later, early in the summer of 2012, Su’s health had improved slightly, but she was never with her with her daughter. When I asked her about the child, she noted sadly that this girl, who by this time could crawl and would soon be walking, had already become too physically demanding for her to care for.

Conclusion: Remnants of the Past?

Above the couch in the center of Pan and Su’s living room hangs a large, framed wedding photo. Each time I come over to have a cup of tea or eat dinner, I find myself compulsively drawn to this photo, wanting to look at it more closely. On the right side of the frame is a photo of Su in a long, flowing white wedding dress with a veil and carriage that cascades down onto the

ground behind her.

On the left side of the collage is a close-up of the couple sitting on the ground. Once again, Su, in the same wedding dress, looks radiant. It is the man in this photo that causes me to return again and again to this photo. The groom's body faces away from the camera, but his head is turned towards the viewer. His posture, including the slight crook in his shoulders and hang-dog style of his beige wedding suit over his sloped shoulders indicates that this is Pan, the man I know. But the face in this photo is not Pan: The distinctive furrow of his brow, the immediately recognizable bump above his eye and the discoloration on the right side of his face are missing. Another, younger, nice-looking man stands in his place.

The couple jokes about the photo, and tell me that others have also commented on how strange he looks. Su notes she is quite pleased with her own appearance, which helps to explain how this particular combination of images ended up in such a prominent position on their wall. But despite the light-hearted banter, this image of their wedding day deeply unsettles me, and I find myself thinking about the creation of the image. The professional wedding photo package the couple purchased included the rental of their wedding clothing and also a "touching up" of their photos. I imagine some well-meaning attendant on his or her computer at the wedding shop deciding that this particular groom was too old and world-weary for his own wedding photo. In the process of a liberal application of Photoshop, the attendant pushed too far, smoothed out one too many lines, and lifted away the essence that is Pan. The attempt to fashion this couple into something more acceptable transformed them beyond recognition in the very image that was to represent the beginning of their lives together.

As I continue to participate in the unfolding challenges of Pan and Su's lives, I have struggled to draw lessons that can provide insights into the condition of addiction as experienced by the group of people I call the Heroin Generation. The questions with which I opened the paper—When does a person who “is” a drug user become something else? What sort of life could someone “returning” to a changing China expect in their post-addict days? —still lack clear answers. However, my own understanding of the process of “returning to society” has changed through my relationship with Su and Pan.

At the wedding depicted in the opening of this chapter, my initial desire for this couple to have a clean break from the past and realize their wish of “walking out” of drug use deflected my attention from the complexities that a “return” poses for an existing set of relations. By emphasizing my wish for them to become non-drug users, I failed to consider a positive idea of what *sort* of life the couple was to have, and what sacrifices would have to be made by others in the community to make these hopes a reality.

In contrast to other terms often employed in both Chinese and English to describe overcoming addiction—“detoxifying”, “recovering”, or “recuperating”—the local trope of “return to society” forces attention to the relationship between “returning” individual and a surrounding community through time. As Pan and Su asked for my support in validating a wide variety of claims—to his family home, to their considerable appetite for consumer goods¹⁷¹, to her need for

¹⁷¹ One moment when this challenge became particularly vivid for me we went out with two other couples that had, like Su and Pan, met in compulsory detoxification. One of these couples were well-known local heroin dealers. At this dinner, Su and Pan constantly made comparisons between

a child—I increasingly questioned what it was that they were struggling to become. I began to wonder if their requests demanded too much—of those around them, of their fragile bodies, of themselves.¹⁷² Through my own new set of worries about their “return” and what it might mean, I came to realize the condition of addiction is not just, or even primarily, about whether or not this couple would succeed in keeping their bodies free of heroin.¹⁷³ Instead, return is dialogic process, a negotiation, a series of claims that can only be recognized and realized by others within broader questions of what constitutes a good life in China’s Reform era more generally.

My understanding of “return” as something over which people “walking out” attempt to negotiate but do not control and which comes to be re-activated by the everyday choices they make in the world allows a better understanding of Yan Jun’s claim that “the past is *not* like smoke” for long-term heroin users. This challenge to a Sartrean foregrounding of individual choice emphasizes the particular existential quandaries faced by long-term heroin users. When formulated in the phenomenological lived relationship between past, present and future, people with heroin use history find that their past does not stay in the past.¹⁷⁴ Members of the Heroin

the lives of our heroin-dealing dinner companions and themselves, glorifying the former while referring to themselves as poor and downtrodden. During this dinner, seeing Pan and Su present themselves this way, I felt angry, worried and confused. I feared my own understandings of what constituted a “return” differed from theirs, and I worried about what sort of future their “walking out” might lead to.

¹⁷² There is an anthropological project in exploring my own ethical orientation and assumptions that were also often tested in this context. The couple’s attempts to interpolate me into their recovery brought these tensions into distinct relief as I was asked to judge and validate their lives.

¹⁷³ I was not interested in doubting the stories that they told me or policing their behavior. However, questions about their use, constantly following them, occasionally became challenges for me. For example, other people in the city occasionally questioned my ability to know the state of recovery of any person with drug use history in Gejiu, and on more than one occasion insinuated to me that I was being deceived by the people with drug use history who I had become closest to.

¹⁷⁴ This is, of course, one way of understanding addiction more generally: a compulsive, irrational repetition of past behavior. But here, my interest is in understanding what this means for the experience of someone in its midst.

Generation experience addiction as a questioning of their status as beings—who they were and how (or if) they are able to become something other than what they were inflect any attempts to “walk out”, as others constantly interpret their behaviors and intentions through past experiences. The heaviness of their past as addicts settles into their consciousness and has the potential to inflect decisions made in every aspect of their lives.

The idea of “return” creates unique challenges for heroin users’ relation to their own pasts. The imperatives of the social world they inhabit require that they “wash themselves white” and leave behind not just their heroin using behaviors but also—as Sam’s story demonstrated—a range of habits, ways of looking, acting and thinking that are no longer of service to them.

But this group also draws upon their pasts in order to enable their “return”. Su’s desire to rediscover her entrepreneurial talents and need to reprise the role of mother and Pan’s hopes of returning to his previous career as a driver are rooted in their complex, contentious personal histories. In a social world that does not allow this couple to return to the social positions they once inhabited, Pan and Su must articulate a return that can be recognized and validated as a departure from past destructive habits without allowing themselves to be changed beyond recognition.

Chapter Five
The Fading of a Generation:
Losing Relevance, Losing Community

“Somehow we must be able to share each other’s past in order to be knowingly in each other’s present.”

- Johannes Fabian

The fifteenth day of the Lunar Year in China is the Lantern Festival Holiday, an event celebrated throughout the country by hanging lanterns, setting off fireworks and gathering family members for large, leisurely meals. On this day in 2010, I am sitting on a couch next to Gao, who invited me earlier this afternoon to join him and two childhood friends for an impromptu holiday dinner. A short man in his early 40s with an oval face, sloping shoulders, and expressive, brooding eyes, Gao enjoys discussing current events and pontificating on the fate of China: what the country used to be, what it is today, and what it might become.¹⁷⁵

Ling, our host for the holiday dinner, is a short, barrel-chested man whose frequent, friendly grins reveal a large gap between his two front teeth. He is home alone in the family house for a few days as his parents have gone to stay with his sister in nearby Shiping for the holidays. As Gao and I talk, Ling shifts between making sudden contributions to our conversation and succumbing to bouts of heroin-induced “nodding”, his chin slowly descending to his chest before popping back up to form a 90 degree angle with his neck. His sporadic, enthusiastic

¹⁷⁵ This need to accurately make sense of the world in its historical development, I came to realize, gave Gao a sense of integrity in a life that, for much of the last 15 years, had been characterized by unemployment, repeated government detention and, more than anything else, profound disappointment in himself.

participation in our conversation reminds me of the soporific Dormouse character from *Alice in Wonderland*'s tea party.

Gao's other childhood friend, Tang, has just come back from a grocery run. A handsome man with sharp cheekbones and an intense gaze, Tang looks considerably younger than his 42 years. His youthful appearance is accentuated by his tendency to wear cotton muscle shirts and carry himself with a quiet swagger. After saying a brief hello, he disappears into the kitchen. Once a chef at a local restaurant, he has volunteered to prepare our meal.

Being together on this day clearly means a great deal to these longtime friends. Gao and Ling's voices blend with the chattering of newscasters on the television, the popping of fireworks outside the window, and the clacking of a spatula hitting a pan in the kitchen. A happy, holiday glow builds in anticipation of the coming meal.

My interest in this final chapter is to explore the condition of addiction as experienced by the Heroin Generation during my fieldwork. In considering the form this final chapter would take, I hoped to find a combination of a mode of writing and ethnographic event that could adequately convey the shared aspects of this condition, something that in the field appeared to me as a mood or feeling rather than a readily legible object in the world. I have argued in past chapters that this group shared a set of social experiences and ways of looking and acting that lead them to experience addiction not primarily as a pathology of the brain or even an epidemic of the will, but rather as a problem of relating to the historical epoch that they inhabited. The following pages explore this experience by focusing on the social interactions between these three men.

The strong bonds of friendship that I witnessed between Ling, Gao and Tang were not unusual among members of the Heroin Generation. Long-time heroin users knew dozens, sometimes even hundreds, of other local heroin users. People sharing heroin use history congregated regularly throughout the city: in the hallways and near the entrances of the two methadone clinics in town, at the Green Orchards drop-in center, and outside the infectious disease hospital, where many went to receive medications and visit friends. Some participated in regular mahjong games or attended local casinos with friends. Relatively well-off people with drug use history met regularly at favorite restaurants scattered about town. Long-term heroin users also spent extended periods together in venues which I could not access—most notably the network of regional local jail holding cells and state laboring centers scattered throughout the province.¹⁷⁶

Locals commented on the intensity of the social relations that frequently existed between members of the Heroin Generation, noting that this group possessed their own “shared language” (*gongtong yuyan*) and common interests. This distinctive sociality was often identified as a negative quality which kept this group separate from “normal” people and hindered their recovery. Observers often assumed that the primary elements motivating these friendships were shared economic interest, convenience, or the common task of procuring and using heroin. But the friendships among many long-term heroin users in Gejiu built on and referenced experiences pre-dating heroin use, including common memories of life as schoolmates and neighbors in the

¹⁷⁶ An old joke that circulated among this group was that the treatment in state compulsory laboring facilities had a 101% relapse rate. The relapse rate was above one hundred percent due to the fact that on occasion a non-drug user was accidentally picked up and detained in state laboring centers. After spending years with heroin users, the non-user would “relapse” on release with everyone else.

1980s. Moving through the same social spaces since their youth, this group in the late Hu era found solace and understanding in the presence other people who had followed a similar recent trajectory. Friendships between members of the Heroin Generation grew out of a commensurability made possible through shared pasts and common ways of experiencing and reflecting on the world around them.

The conversation from our Lantern Festival Holiday dinner touched on memories of the past, assessments of current events, and expressed anxieties about the future. The combination of the movement between conversation topics, richness of language¹⁷⁷, and shifting mood of the three men in relation to their environment over the course of the evening contributed to what I felt was a particularly vivid illustration of the condition of addiction as lived by the Heroin Generation. The participants' reflections encapsulated how common pasts contributed to their feeling a particular type of exclusion from the present.

“Fading” is my own term to characterize the complex form marginalization experienced by this group.¹⁷⁸ Evoking at once the loss of a previous freshness or vitality, a movement of sinking

¹⁷⁷ In her discussion of how farmers made sense of changes in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Caroline Humphreys argues that “metaphors express something important about how people are thinking about the changing social world around them. They are grasping at an actuality they do not feel they fully understand, and by speaking metaphorically they enable us to see that the formations that are taking shape through their actions are part of world of the imagination” (Humphrey 2002:xxii).

¹⁷⁸ This chapter's exploration of a particular type of difference between heroin users and other local residents shares certain similarities with Robert Desjarlais' study of men and women living at a shelter in Cambridge Massachusetts. In that research, Desjarlais describes a “distinct form of being” (Desjarlais 1994:898) observed among this homeless population which he calls “struggling along”. He argues that “struggling along” signifies a way of living that cannot be subsumed under “experience”, a category often take to be universal. While experience entails a “reference to a constellation of inwardness, hermeneutical depth, renewal, and narrative orderings of time...(that is the) tying things together through time”, the rhythms of living for shelter resident in particular and “life on the fringes of postindustrial societies” more generally produce a phenomenological mode of being where “future, present and past need not have much to do with one another” (Desjarlais

away, and a gradual change in visibility, the term captures the broader trajectory of this group's generational movement and the ways that shared pasts inflect their experiences in the present. Each section explores a different aspect of fading; I start with a discussion of the group's understanding of their belonging to a "sacrificial" generation. Following the arc of the conversation, the next section explores "fading" as a relation to the movement of the country itself, as addiction is described as a failure to "catch up" to the current historical moment. The third section explores how Gao and his friends experienced the world around them in a slightly different ways than other local Gejiu residents due to the fact that objects in their immediate lived environments have come to take on particular meanings for this group. The chapter closes with an assessment of this group as historical beings aware of the fact that the social collective to which they belong is in the process of disappearing from the world. Throughout the text, I show a tension that is productive of an overlooked form of sociality: heroin users are bound by their own feelings of exclusion from the times.

Generational Culture, Generational Problem

More than an hour after disappearing into the kitchen laden with groceries, Tang emerges with nine steaming dishes. The four of us sit down together to eat. The festive atmosphere

1994:897). This analysis opens up intriguing applications of phenomenology and hermeneutical insights to psychological anthropology. My account diverges from his in that his argument is based on an understanding of the homeless population he studies as "retreat(ing) from the world", while longtime heroin users' acute awareness of the world and its changes are, I argue, part of the condition of addiction that continues to mark them and their responses to changes in the world around them. Moreover, while I see fading as a distinct aspect of the lives of the Heroin Generation, I am intentionally avoiding making a judgment about whether or not this constitutes a "distinct form of being".

created by the fireworks and feast in front of us leads the longtime friends to reminisce about holidays from their childhood. Due to the fact their parents were all employed by the same work unit, they had grown up in nearby buildings, and had moved around the city as part of large, neighborhood-affiliated packs. They talk about the difficulties of those years—food shortages used to send them into the mountains to find wild herbs and fruit, and cramped living conditions meant that they had shared beds with their brothers and fathers for much of their childhoods. Gao remembers with a laugh that his older sister had spent her teenage years sleeping on the family’s kitchen floor. Despite the at times miserably inadequate living conditions, the three men agree that there was warmth to the Maoist era communal life of their childhoods that is missing today: Buildings with few doors and no locks had allowed children to flow in and out of different homes, accessing the best—however modest—of what tightly-knit groups of families had to offer.

Reflecting on how this history impacts this group today, Gao asserts that the friendships their generation formed as children—lifelong attachments that are characterized by enduring commitments, non-utilitarian loyalty and “strong” (*nong*) feelings—are of a different type than the more self-serving and shallow ties that exist among the Little Emperors and Empresses born after the institution of the one-child policy in the early 1980s. Today, Gao and his friends find they have “few words to speak” (*meihuashuo*) to this younger generation, a group that sees the world differently than they do.

I first noticed heroin users’ tendency to refer to themselves as a generation before starting my

dissertation fieldwork. In another city in southern China, the staff of a service organization dedicated to providing work opportunities for heroin users chose the name “the seven zero corporation” (*qiling gongsi*), a moniker referring to the decade in which most of its employees and clients were born. Interlocutors over the years commonly made references to “our generation” (*women zhe dairen*) when talking about heroin as a social problem. One friend who I came to know through public health work constantly added this qualifier to all of his major endeavors—he spoke of “the first generation of heroin users”, “the first generation of people in recovery”, and “the first generation of NGO workers China.” The phrase appeared in his speech with such compulsive frequency that his friends mockingly repeated him whenever they heard the words.

This group’s identification as belonging to a generation derived in part from their participation in broader sociological and historical shifts, and in part from shared practices associated with their heroin using careers. Born in and just after the Cultural Revolution during a fifteen year period spanning the second half of the 1960s and the 1970s, heroin users in Gejiu saw themselves as belonging to a broader cohort sandwiched between “Mao’s children”, the men and women who reached adulthood under the Great Helmsman, and “the One Child Generation” that came of age at a later moment in the Reform era.¹⁷⁹ Non-drug using Gejiu residents in their

¹⁷⁹ The oldest members of the Heroin Generation just missed being “sent down to the countryside” (*xiangxiang*). This had been a common form of political service and coming of age ritual that sent workers and teenage students to work in rural areas around the country. In Gejiu, children were sent down to poorer parts of the prefecture to participate in the Maoist rustification campaigns until 1977. Meanwhile, the youngest of the Heroin Generation were the last group of children to be born before nationwide implementation of the one-child policy in the early 1980s. For more on the one child policy and its broadly felt effects, see (Greenhalgh 2008; Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005).

30s and 40s also subscribed to this way of breaking up generational cohorts, and agreed with heroin users' claim that it was their generation that had played a crucial role in building a dynamic private sector that could compete in a global economy.

But members of the Heroin Generation came to read their own fate very differently from other local residents their age. Their claim to exist as “sacrificial offering of the Reform era” (*gaige kaifang de xishengpin*)—a phrase I first heard uttered by Li Zhijun but which was also repeated by Gao and others—is, in part, a commentary on the complexity of their contemporary existence as historical subjects. Gao, Ling and Tang maintained they had come to be entrapped by what they saw as the dangers of the times: the unique existential challenges and bodily risks of entering adulthood in Reform-era China that was itself in the process of “transforming” (*zhuanbian*). Confronting a disjuncture between the spirit of the times of their early adulthood and that which had preceded it, one member of the Heroin Generation argued, “What we were inculcated to believe as children and the trends in the social world [we encountered as adults] were two different things.”¹⁸⁰ Their attempts to “transform established social traditions” (*yifengyisu*), as government officials at the time urged, lead them to adopt dangerous behaviors

¹⁸⁰ As this individual put it, “Teachers taught us to warmly love our country, and humanity. The social world also had this type of thought consciousness, right? So in school you receive an education that relates to the environment that exists in the social world. So our belief was strong.” This was a challenge particular to their generation, and their times as young adults coming into adulthood corresponded with the most violent and confusing moments of the Reform period. Their parents, by contrast, found that the politicized teachings of the classroom matched the political fervor that constituted their social reality as adults. Meanwhile, the younger “One Child” generation had grown up at a time when readily accessible information on the internet and in their social circles gave these young people a clearer sense of the direction of the country’s development. They knew that the Communist party’s teachings were to be heard but not believed. Only their generation had to negotiate a rupture between a Maoist education and a Rush era economy that required a different understanding of the world. While the source of opportunity, this was also a place where many young people became lost.

that continued to negatively impact their lives. A friend of Gao's explained this historically particular danger to me in vivid language: "We were growing up and just beginning to understanding the world (*dongshi*) was when the Reform was happening, that Great Wave (*langchao*) came. If you weren't careful, it was really easy to get lost, right?"

In 2010, this group struggled with feelings that they were "useless" subjects forged fully in a previous time who were unable to find a place in the contemporary social world.¹⁸¹ The group's analysis of their own fate took on an explicit generational aspect as they argued their "sacrifice" was their participation in and subsequent ejection a country pursuing continual growth.¹⁸² Like most other heroin users I came to know, the three men had once been involved in Society activities, including trucking, restaurant businesses, and the illegal re-appropriation SOE assets. The same qualities associated with their role in promoting new forms of consumption and pioneering private sector activity that helped usher in increased living standards and prosperity lead this group into dangerous, ultimately self-destructive behaviors.¹⁸³ The sense of "destiny" and inchoate future that characterized the group's orientation as young adults was replaced with

¹⁸¹ This was the primary lesson explored in Yan Jun, Xun Wei and Li Zhijun's early career daring, and then seen more carefully in the bodily habits of Sam, the one-time entrepreneur who finds that not only his heroin habit, but more generally his perspective on the world cannot be trusted, does not serve him.

¹⁸² One person with heroin use history, reflecting on he and fellow former Society members' role in the growth of national economy, commented that "(W)hen society needs a certain type of person, that type of person comes to do what is needed. Like these cigarettes"—he pointed to a pack of locally-produced Honghe brand cigarettes on the table—"if they need a box like this to wrap them, we will make such a box."

¹⁸³ There is another aspect to the "sacrificial offering" narrative: that of innocence. By arguing that their drug use started when China was just opening its "Great Door" to the outside world, long-time heroin users acknowledge the tragic use of illicit drugs in the 1980s and 1990s, when drug education was virtually non-existent and many users "genuinely didn't understand" heroin's harms. They contrast this era with the recreational use of drugs at a much later moment in Reform-era history by a younger group who "should have known better".

the passing of time by a growing clarity about the direction of China—and by extension, their exclusion from it.

The social isolation that the Heroin Generation felt during my fieldwork also came to be expressed through the concept of generation. Contemporaries who had better navigated the past decades tended to distance themselves from the Heroin Generation. Gao and his friends also struggled to establish rapport with a “smarter” group of younger people born during or after the 1980s who had their roads “paved for them” (*puhaole*) by a different set of government policies and a different type of education. Even as they identified themselves as increasingly belonging to an era of the past, members of the Heroin Generation also struggled to connect to the perspective of their parents’ and grandparents’ generations as these older residents clung to more conservative ways of thinking and living that they did not share. While people in previous generations may have faced greater, more acute suffering—including problems such as violent political struggle and widespread famine¹⁸⁴—members of the Heroin Generation maintained that they had come to embody the fate of the dangers of their own times.

In Chapter One, Karl Mannheim’s understanding of generation helped me to specify the way in which Society youth in the Rush period felt bound together by a historical destiny. Mannheim focuses on the binding power of generational style in a positive sense—that is, as a vital coalescing in response to historical events. The Heroin Generation in 2010 remained

¹⁸⁴ There were moments when drug users compared their experiences to that of their parents. For example, a friend reported to me that his mother came to visit him in a compulsory detoxification center in the 1990s at a time when they had not been given enough to eat. He imagined that she had been shocked to see him ravenously devour the food that she brought. He said they never discussed the fact that they had both had intense experiences of being hungry—her in the widespread food shortages in the area in the 1960s and him in state compulsory laboring centers.

bound together through awareness of themselves as a generation, but in a way that Mannheim does not discuss or anticipate: as victims of history.

To Aligned with History

As the crackling sounds of another round of fireworks drift into the apartment, our conversation turns to life outside. In addition to its holiday show, the city government has recently funded biweekly nighttime pyrotechnic displays as part of a campaign to promote tourism in the region. The three men agree that life has improved dramatically in recent years. Gejiu, they tell me somewhat proudly, is the only place in the province to have won the “sanitary city” (*weisheng chengshi*) distinction, a national annual award recognizing destinations of outstanding cleanliness and beauty. Local residents, they agree, are becoming more refined, cultured, and materially wealthy with each passing day.

A heated debate breaks out over whether or not local drug users are benefiting from what they describe as the historic rise of China that is taking place around them. Gao believes that, in many ways, they are. Fifteen years ago, he tells me with a sly smile, I would have been embarrassed by heroin users’ language—every other phrase this group uttered was laced with curses. Gradually, their use of profanity has decreased as social norms have changed. Moreover, Gao points out, the Chinese state today has the resources to properly address social problems like addiction. Recent improvements in the condition of state compulsory laboring facilities, he says, are one powerful example of the state’s new wealth and power. Today, these centers are nicer than they have ever been: canteens now provide enough food, guards generally

follow the rules, and students in certain locations have begun to receive small salaries as payment for their labor. As their country develops, heroin users benefit from a treatment system that is becoming more “humane” (*renxinghua*).

While not directly disagreeing with Gao’s observations, Ling takes a different position on the problem, noting that other people’s capacity for acceptance and forgiveness have not increased with their material well-being. Ling argues that stigma associated with heroin use actually has grown with the passing of time. Moreover, Gejiu’s inextricable move towards a post-industrial future is bad news for men like themselves, who have spent recent years on the margins of the city. Living in what is undeniably the best of times for China actually makes the daily struggles of addiction more acute as the gap between drug users and others grows with the passing of time. Gao says nothing. I feel a heaviness building in the room.

If the fading described in the previous section was articulated in relation to contemporaries¹⁸⁵, the conversation over dinner shifted to talking about the three men’s relationship to the development of China more generally, as they expressed anxiety about not being able to fully participate in the changing world that envelops them.

The attention to participating in the historical movement of the times is a theme considered at length in Jochen Hellbeck’s discussion of diary writers living under Stalin in the 1930s.

¹⁸⁵ Art historian Wilhem Pinder explores what he calls the “non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous” or the idea that people experiencing qualitatively different subjective eras co-exist in the same moment (c.f. Mannheim 283). Schutz takes up the same term in a different—but also helpful—way, exploring an individual’s relationship to contemporaries and predecessors as a way of exploring the phenomenological structure of the social world (see (Schutz 1967:Chapter 4).

Conscious of both their own belonging to an “epoch in the making” and the individual work of attempting to fashion themselves into historical subjects, Soviet diary writers record their desires and efforts to adopt Revolutionary attitudes and become “aligned with history” (Hellbeck 2009:54,369). Hellbeck observes that “many of those who were unable or unwilling to think in step with the marching collective felt depressed and useless” (Hellbeck 2009). While members of the Heroin Generation belong to a different era and possess a different type of historical consciousness, I see a similarity between the two groups’ desire to fully inhabit the historical epoch within which they live, and the anguish that they carry with them when they find they are unable to do so.

For the Heroin Generation, this anxiety pervades their conversations, reflections and attentiveness to historical developments. Though Maoist narratives about the collective revolutionary ideal of “catching up to American, surpassing England” (*ganmei, chaoying*) and Marxist history books they read as children were repudiated as lies, the men and women of this generation continued to experience the passing of time through a developmentalist understanding of movement.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ That the country is governed to obtain ever increasing material prosperity is as incontrovertible fact, and an explicit pillar upon which the Chinese Communist party stakes its legitimacy to rule. For an exploration of one manifestation of this mode of governing and its forms of knowledge, see (Liu 2009). Anthropologists have explored how developmentalist narratives impact particular groups’ experiences of time. James Ferguson, for example, writes that “developmental time” is the specific belief that one’s future will lead to particular material and social qualities. He argues that “as people lose faith in developmental time, the global status hierarchy comes to be understood in new and disturbing ways” (Ferguson 2005). His “ethnography of decline” looks at the collapse of modernity narratives that once structured everyday life of Zambian Copper Belt workers and reports that the future-oriented promise of “not yet” was lost (Ferguson 1999). Where his work described how whole geographic regions came to experience developmentalist promises differently, my own project is interested in how a particular group situated within a larger collective has come to embody their relationship to history, and by extension the experience of time, differently from others around

Earlier experiences of a different relationship to the historical trajectory of the nation accentuated this group's feelings in 2010 that they had been left behind the country. As young adults cultivating their ability to "rush ahead" (*chongchuan*) and seize opportunity in pursuit of "catching the latest fashion" (*ganshimao*), this group had in part defined themselves by participating in vanguard activity that was ahead of other local residents. The persistence of destructive bodily habits and ways of looking, diminishing opportunities in the local economy, and rhythms of moving in and out of state compulsory laboring centers all contributed to a growing anxiety that they had fallen behind and were no longer able to fully occupy the historical epoch within which they found themselves. Through their attentiveness to the changes around them, their attempts to understand and adopt new practices, and their reflections on how particular trends might impact their community, members of the Heroin Generation in 2010 displayed a strong desire to move with the times, and a deeply-held fear that they lacked what was necessary to do so.¹⁸⁷

Occasionally, certain interlocutors explicitly connected a fear of falling behind the times with the condition of addiction itself. Luo, an acquaintance of Gao and vocal advocate for the rights

them. There is much more to be said about how the intersection of temporality, narrative, ideas of progress and collective experience impact the lived experiences of the Heroin Generation. Though I am not able to draw out these arguments here, I hope in the near future to write in more detail about these issues. Key texts for this still inchoate framing include (Husserl 1964; Bergson 2001; Ricoeur 1990; Osborne 2011; Koselleck 1985; Carr 1991; Merleau-Ponty 2002; Schutz 1967). Anthropologists who must be considered include (Lambek 2002; Gell 2001; Rodgers 2009; Fabian 1983).

¹⁸⁷ Comments on the fireworks, Gejiu's sanitary city award and the growing wealth of the local government are all examples from our dinner of how this group considers their own relationship to the broader shifts of the country. One example of this group's continued interest in grabbing the new was the eagerness with which Green Orchards members welcomed the arrival of Kentucky Fried Chicken, the first international fast food chain to arrive in Gejiu in 2010. On the very first day the establishment opened its doors, members of Green Orchards braved intense crowds in order to be among the first in the city to try real American fried chicken.

of drug users, made a point of educating me on the connection between national development and addiction in a conversation we had at my home a few weeks before the Lantern Festival meal. A short, skinny, resourceful man whose skill at manipulating others had helped him survive nine detentions for positive heroin urine tests, Luo noted that his own struggles to recover from long-term heroin use and its treatment were based in the fact he felt he had become a “simpleton (*shazi*)”. Given that “the progress in this period is so fast”, he believed that a great part of the damage caused by heroin use and associated practices was a falling behind caused by a failure to change with the times. He explained that while others “are moving with the development of society, we (heroin users) are still stuck in the 80s or 90s” (*tamenshi genzhe shehui fazhan, danshi women hai tingliu zai 80huo90niandai*).

Being “stuck in the past” for Luo was in part his own perceived tardiness in learning how to use an ATM card, take a taxi, play a DVD, access the internet, and use a cell phone. But he also argued that there was an embodied feeling associated with living outside the flow of the country’s recent history. As he put it, “Your brain already can’t keep up with this period” (*nidenaoping yijing ganbushang zhege shidaile*). He argued that the greatest challenge for people with drug use history was not physiological or psychological relationship with the drug, but instead the struggle to “catch up” to a “forward-facing” (*chaotian*) public that continued to move with the times.¹⁸⁸ Overcoming the condition of addiction thus took on a particular difficulty for heroin

¹⁸⁸ He continues: “Compare me to someone else who is my age from a similar background to my own. If I had also been in society this whole time, I also would have been developing these 20 years. There wouldn’t be such a difference. Psychological development can happen quickly or slowly, but this other person’s thoughts wouldn’t be so much more forward-facing (*chaotian*) than my own. The reality is the difference (between us) is huge.” Throughout this conversation, Luo switches between using the Chinese term for “thoughts” (*guannian*) and that for “consciousness” (*yishi*).

users living in a period where life around them was rapidly improving “one day at a time”.¹⁸⁹

Fading for the Heron Generation thus also designates the sensations and anxieties this group shares in relationship to the unfolding of history. The condition of addiction does not simply produce bodies that are “smoked useless” (*xifei*), but rather individuals that are able to respond to the shifting realities of the social world around them. This group’s awareness of a growing gap between themselves and “forward-facing” Chinese citizens who surround them is another way that fading inflects their experience.

Living Past Symbols

With the fireworks finished for the evening, conversation moves from the city to the spacious apartment we occupy and the immediate condition of the three men’s lives. Gao notes that while many families over the past 20 years have been able to move into homes offering more living space, this material gain has been offset by a more atomized way of living that has created greater distance between family members and neighbors.

Tang seizes on this moment to tell the story of an out-of-town thief, known locally as “SpiderMan”, who robbed dozens of apartments in Gejiu by repelling from apartment rooftops. This wall climber was finally caught when a small child saw him dangling outside his bedroom window and screamed. The others are familiar with the story, but nonetheless laugh along with me at Tang’s telling. As a result of the upsurge of burglaries that have accompanied local

¹⁸⁹ I heard various iterations of this sentiment repeated many times by members of the Heroin Generation. One of the more definitive formulations was, “development is definitely better than it used to be, if you compare now to any other time, there really is no comparison, life really is getting better one day at a time.”

residents' growing wealth, the majority of Gejiu homeowners in recent years have installed anti-theft metal grating (*fangdaochuang*) on the outsides of their windows. Ling gestures towards the closest window, which, despite being on the third floor, is indeed covered by an external metal casings. Along with deadbolts and locked gates, these gratings provide local residents with an additional feeling of safety. However, the fortification of private residences also block off occupants' potential escape routes in the case an earthquake or fire. "We have become prisoners in our own homes," Gao proclaims darkly.

It is getting late, and the uneaten food on the table has grown cold. With the merriment of the holiday quickly dissipating, we part ways. As I leave, I notice that a large padlock hangs from the master bedroom door.

I often heard heroin users comment that one factor contributing to the difficulty of overcoming addiction in a place like Gejiu was the city's small size. Beyond the fact that living in such a densely populated area meant that people with drug use history were constantly bumping into other drug users, my interlocutors explained that being surrounded by familiar objects and landmarks reminded them of parts of the past they wanted to forget. One local senior NGO worker, recently returned from a medical training on addiction in Beijing, translated these complaints into a biomedical understanding of their condition. A small place like Gejiu, she explained, simply had too many environments cues that could trigger heroin users into relapsing. She made the analogy to eating chocolate in the same place, every day—Gejiu had become a giant candy store, a stimulus that constantly brought this group's attention to the drug.

Drawing on our holiday dinner, I would like to offer a slightly different interpretation of how this group inhabits the city. Members of the Heroin Generation had come through time to share a lived relationship with a symbolic world that further served to bind them together. The “we” that floated in Gao’s final statement—“we have become prisoners in our homes”—could be understood as evoking a group extending to include all Gejiu city dwellers. Older Gejiu locals made similar statements when commenting that, after decades when burglary was virtually unheard of, attention to protecting one’s home had become necessary only since the 1990s.¹⁹⁰

Instead, I would like to argue that Gao’s offhand remark about the metal gratings evoked the “we” of the Heroin Generation, a collective that shared a relationship to the surrounding world, including the domiciles within which they dwell. For this group, homes often became spaces of confinement where well-meaning relatives attempted to protect them from dangers associated with the outside world. Handcuffing heroin users to their own beds for days at a time while they overcome withdrawal symptoms was a common local detoxification strategy, especially at an earlier moment in the heroin epidemic. Long-term confinements in family homes enforced by relatives were also common. In a more extreme version of this arrangement, a friend of the Lantern Festival trio a number of years ago agreed to her parents’ request that she remain locked up in the family home for an entire year. Gao had recently told me that he had, on his mother’s

¹⁹⁰ The theme about the need for locks is common in China. In Gejiu, the need for locks was often associated with the spread of heroin, especially in the 1990s. Indeed, an elderly retired miner in Gejiu interviewed by historian Lara Kusnetzky several years before my own fieldwork also takes up this theme of locks on doors, reading it in relation to the fading of the government from everyday lives: “Current officials are corrupt, and they let drugs enter the country. Young people become addicts and drug dealers because they can’t find jobs. In the Mao era, gambling was outlawed. In the Deng era, it returned. Crime is also rampant now. You go out in fear being mugged. In the past, none of these problems existed. We didn’t have to lock our doors”(Kusnetzky 2012:340).

urging, also tried to stay in for weeks at a time to avoid the dangers of relapse his parents associated with his trips into the city streets. Even during this holiday celebration, Ling was only allowed unattended access to his parents' home after certain rooms had been closed off to him. For this group, locks proliferated inside as well as outside of the spaces that they had once as children moved through freely.

Gao's comment about homes as prisons can also be read as a reference to home ownership, the cornerstone of expanded material well-being for many local residents in recent years.¹⁹¹ As Sam's story showed, in the late 1980s and early 1990s housing stock was still controlled by state owned enterprises, and people who became involved with heroin had often burned through their money long before the liberalization of the housing market at the end of the 1990s. During my fieldwork, heroin users were generally excluded from the social prestige and economic benefits of owning their own homes. Inhabiting spacious apartments belonging to other family members re-inscribed feelings of historically-inflected marginalization by reminding idling members of the Heroin Generation of their own failure to meet new social norms of material accumulation.

This brief discussion provides a small example of how heroin users shared ways of understanding the familiar world in which they had occupied for decades. Particular symbols like the anti-theft grating came to take on shared meaning through time for this world. Rather than categorize such shared items from the past as "stimuli" that trigger particular responses, I see these symbols as facilitating a form of sociality among members of the Heroin Generation while

¹⁹¹ Technically all real estate transactions in China are "leases" as land ownership returns to the government within 100 years. However, for practical purposes, Western notions of "ownership" in the 21st century are increasingly appropriate to refer to Chinese experiences of buying, selling and occupying homes.

at the same time re-inscribing their feelings of frustration. Fading came to be felt not just with the passing of time, but also in the shared experience of the sensible world around them.¹⁹²

Conclusion: Addiction as Fading

Gao and I are taking a stroll around Gejiu Lake on a bright day in June 2011, 15 months after our Lantern Festival dinner. He has recently celebrated his 43rd birthday. Upon returning to Gejiu, I learned in previous weeks that during my absence Ling had died while home alone—presumably of an overdose—and Tang is now in state detention after a police-administered urine test came back positive.¹⁹³ When I ask how these losses have impacted him, Gao indicates that he does want to discuss this topic. Instead, he notes darkly that these types of parting are “too common” these days.

Today on our walk, instead of asking Gao questions about his past, my usual way of encouraging him to talk about himself, I attempt to steer the conversation towards his hopes for the future. In response to my questions about his life plans, Gao offers an unfiltered and bleak

¹⁹² The idea of a shared world of symbols was championed by proponents of “sub-culture” in the 1970s. Dick Hebdige holds an Althusserian interest in understanding the reproduction of conditions of production and, through Barthes’ use of signification, the “*process* whereby objects are made to mean and mean again” (Hebdige 1979:3). Hebdige sees everywhere “subcultural bricoleurs” who work from given “material” to produce semiotic messages “as spectacle.” In his reading, everyday objects become battlegrounds upon which conflicting meanings are inscribed. “Subcultures” exist as the “representations of representations”, echoes of the images that mainstream media offers of class groups in the real (102). Subculture members manipulate styles intuitively, but remain blind to the greater meanings of their actions, which Hebdige views in a tragic frame as their “continued subordination” to the dominant class interests (18). History provides the structural inequalities which feed the energy behind the punks, but does not determine which objects are made to mean. My approach differs in granting to heroin users the ability to create a distance between the present moment to reflect and comment upon historical alternatives to the present condition (a practice I termed historicity).

¹⁹³ Unable to access the apartment due to its locked door, his neighbors had called the police complaining of a smell coming from the apartment which led to the eventual discovery of the body.

assessment of his prospects. He talks about his dwindling employment opportunities, noting with a sigh that, given his recent poor health, leaving the city to look for work in other parts of the country is no longer a practical or realistic option. He tells me that when he walks with his parents around this lake, whenever his mother sees his father dote on small children they encounter on the path, she cannot help herself, and whispers to Gao that these displays of affection for other people's children come from the father's knowledge that his son will never give him grandchildren of his own.

As we continue to walk, Gao says ominously, "China has no place in its future for heroin." Gao pauses, saying nothing. He then continues softly. "In five years, maybe ten, you will see...We will be gone."

A final aspect of fading, appearing most clearly in this last interaction with Gao, was this group's belief that they were in the process of prematurely disappearing from the world. The community of heroin users in Gejiu, at its height in the early 1990s totaling 10,000 individuals, by 2012 had shrunk to about 2,500 long-term, chronic users. Though present in this community from the very beginning, death, too, had come to occur under different circumstances and be ascribed new meanings from what it once had. In the early years of the heroin epidemic in Gejiu, death was often due to various forms of over-exertion—heroin overdoses were common, but so were casualties from tin wars on the mountainside. Attributed to "playing with one's life" (*ganwanming*), these tragedies were the unfortunate and unhappy consequences associated with a certain type of economic productivity at a time of danger and growth. By 2010, dying was

rarely associated with the strain related to the dangerous habits of the Rush era entrepreneur. Instead, death during my time at Gejiu tended to come at unpredictable times and visited already weakened individual as it came to be attributed to mundane lingering injuries, chronic medical conditions, and weak hearts, lungs and brains.

Like other aspects of their lives, members of the Heroin Generation found that death also appeared as something that seemed out of their own ability to predict or control. The body of a long-time heroin user, Gao once told me after he had recently received news of the sudden passing of an ostensibly healthy friend, could have enough at any time. Death was increasingly interpreted as the persistence of past, the consequences of decisions made long ago, or, as I heard local residents murmur, the “deserved” (*huogai*) repayment for less than virtuous lives.

At the start of this dissertation, I argued that foregrounding heroin users’ existence as historical subjects rather than medical patients would open up new possibilities for thinking about this group and the addiction they share. Exactly what sort of historical subjects are Gao, Sam, Pan and Su, Li Zhijun, Yan Jun, Xun Wei and the others encountered in this text?

Their shared condition escapes familiar forms of categorization. They are increasingly ill-suited to the world in which they find themselves. They are victims of structural violence, members of a group of unemployed, and a particular type of “left behind” (*liushouzhe*) citizens.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ One place to attempt to bring this attention to the temporal aspects is the often referenced demographic and sociological Chinese term “left behind” (*liushouzhe*). This term describes the wives, children and elderly (known as 38-61-99, the dates of their respective national holidays) who live in rural parts of China while other family members work as laborers in the cities (Biao 2007:179). In attempting to understand the marginalization of these groups, demographers and sociologists focus almost entirely on problems of and movement through space. The Heroin Generation’s struggles

They embody the “obsolete” hopes and struggles of a “lost” generation.¹⁹⁵ At times, they display characteristics of socialist subjects, displaying nostalgia for historical forces that could push them in other directions, and perhaps allow a break from the past. They are also “remnants of the past”, as they identify their disease as the lingering habits of a previous time. In addition, they are also readers of history, attentive to where the country is going and what this might mean for themselves, their community, and the world. They are subjects profoundly haunted by both what could have been, and the gap between what they are and what they wish to be.

I look at Tao, standing next to me on the path beside Golden Lake. There is nothing inevitable about fading. During my fieldwork I saw many of my interlocutors move towards “walking out” of addiction. Some married, started families, founded successful businesses, or moved out of Gejiu to begin new chapters of their lives in other parts of the country. Several have, at the time of this writing, abstained from drugs for extended periods of time. Others have managed to hold down respectable jobs while continuing to participate in the national methadone program. Some occasionally use and still act as productive family members and workers. The possibility for other futures exists.

suggest that “left behind” may be part of an experienced condition rather than simply a designation of relative inequality in material well-being.

¹⁹⁵ Arthur Kleinman in the 1980s conducted well-known studies on neurasthenia, a disorder of the nervous system associated with exhaustion that was widely diagnosed in the early Reform period in China (Kleinman 1982; Kleinman et al. 1986). Kleinman argues that sufferers of neurasthenia were often members of a “Lost Generation” of men and women who were sent away from desired positions in the Cultural Revolution and were never able to find a place in Reform era society. Kleinman argues these patients used the diagnosis as “a medical excuse” for social problems, engaging in the “sick role” to save face (Kleinman 1982:177). Though powerful in its attentiveness to cross-cultural psychiatry and attention to clinic-based attention to symptoms, Kleinman’s approach does not explore the specificity of how this group has come to feel out of the times.

With this said, fading has a way of settling deeply into the minds and bodies of the Heroin Generation. Understood as a historicity that reveals the particularities of the moment but cannot offer a break from the past, as a narrative of decline that threatens to become self-fulfilling, as the ontological heaviness of the past, as a shared, embodied way of living in and experiencing the world, as a sensation associated with the very passing of time, fading appears at times to inhabit the very being of many members of this group.

Mirroring a sentiment expressed by Li Zhijun on a different walk by Golden Lake at the opening of this document, Gao expresses to me a growing feeling of finality, a hardening of his own fate. Though only middle-aged, his existence as a historical being or Sartrean subject with the possibility of finding work, love, and his own family, is closing.

An important part of this closing is the diminishing of the social connection he had forged over the years with other long-term heroin users. Time spent with this group often offered these individuals a space for reflecting, debating, and commiserating on their shared fate. The rich, concrete intimacy of being together, and the shared language and experiences of living allowed something close to an understanding of the subjective experiences of each other to emerge. There was a sad comfort in the intimacy of this group's "growing old together"¹⁹⁶ and this sociality offered a respite from a gnawing, pervasive loneliness.

¹⁹⁶ Alfred Schutz draws a distinction between individual conscious reflection and pre-reflective stream of consciousness. He argues that the most basic social relationship, the face-to-face relationship, is based on the latter. "Growing old together" is the description of time when two physically proximate people experience "the simultaneity of two durations or streams of consciousness" (Schutz 1967:103). The presence of another body experiencing in time with my own allows us to approach "liv(ing) in each other's subjective content of meanings" (Schutz 1967:166) where "every experience is colored by that involvement" as we "witness", grow older and perhaps wiser together (Schutz 1967:172). The bond of the we-relationship, characterized by its pre-reflective immediacy, is referred to as a "community of time."

But the warmth of these friendship is also threatened as the “we” Gao belongs appears to him as disappearing from the world. Analogous in this sense to the vanishing of Native American communities a century ago, the fading of the community of Heroin Generation members takes shape in relation to “the disappearing frontier of an advancing civilization” (Gruber 1970:1297).¹⁹⁷ Gao increasingly feels he is unable to imagine a future, collective or otherwise, that could bridge the gap between his experience and the movement of the country. He fears he may soon face the finality of his fading from the world, alone.

¹⁹⁷ Specifically interested in aspects of cultures that were deemed untouched by history, (c.f. (Fabian 2002)), early anthropologists’ documentation of traditional ways of life were explicitly understood as a race against time. In the case of the Heroin Generation, the source of this historical force is Chinese state-supervised economic and social development rather than American settlers’ relentless Western expansion. Tao’s anxiety that there will be no place in the country’s future for heroin or heroin users is a profound one. Assimilation to the “forward looking” people who surround him is easier said than done.

Appendix
Glossary of Chinese Terms

English Definition	Chinese pinyin	Chinese characters
ability	<i>nengli</i>	能力
ability to draw others to a task	<i>haozhaoli</i>	号召力
accumulate (experience)	<i>jilei</i>	积累
action or campaign (often used to refer to police activities)	<i>xingdong</i>	行动
adapt	<i>shiyiing</i>	适应
addicted citizenry	<i>yinmin</i>	瘾民
addict (literally “one who has become addicted”)	<i>chengyinzhe</i>	成瘾者
afford to smoke	<i>chideqi</i>	吃得起
a little pathetic, a little scary	<i>youkelian, youkepa</i>	又可怜又可怕
an alluring woman or spirit	<i>yaojing</i>	妖精
amateur	<i>yeyu</i>	业余
anti-theft metal grating	<i>fangdaochuang</i>	防盗窗
a “big brother”	<i>dage</i>	大哥
“Black Society”, mafia, organized crime	<i>heishehui</i>	黑社会
boss	<i>laoban</i>	劳改
“briefcase”, local slang for a person who takes loans without the intent of repaying them	<i>pibao</i>	皮包
business, undertaking or project	<i>shiye</i>	事业
“by eradicating the (previous political) system, the phenomena of drug dealing and drug using will be annihilated”	<i>genchu zhidu, fandude xianxiang ze xidu de xianxiang, jiang hui xiaomie</i>	根除制度，贩毒的现象 则吸毒的现象将会消 灭
business person	<i>shangren</i>	商人
capitalism loving disease (wordplay made up of the same sounds as AIDS)	<i>aizibing</i>	爱资病/艾滋病
casino	<i>duchang</i>	赌场
catch up, unable to catch up (to the times, a fashion, etc.)	<i>ganshang, ganbushang</i>	赶上，赶不上
“catch up to American, surpass England” (Maoist national project)	<i>ganmei, chaoying</i>	赶美，超应英
collecting (money), Rush era form of	<i>ku (qian)</i>	苦（钱）

accumulating assets, also means to suffer		
collective enterprise	<i>jiti</i>	集体
community building	<i>shequ jianshe</i>	社区建设
consumptive consciousness	<i>xiaofei de yishi</i>	消费的意识
contradictions between us and the enemy (Maoist term)	<i>diwo maodun</i>	敌我矛盾
compulsory laboring center* (my own overarching English term) reform through labor centers (1955) re-education through labor centers (1958) compulsory detoxification centers (1990) isolated compulsory detox centers (2008) community treatment (20008) detoxification recovery centers (2008)	<i>qiangzhijiedusuo</i> <i>laodong jiaoyusuo</i> <i>qiangzhijieudsuo</i> <i>geli qiangzhijiedusuo</i> <i>shequjiedu</i> <i>jiedukangfuchangsuo</i>	劳动改造 (劳改) 劳动教育所 (劳教) 强制戒毒所 隔离强制戒毒所 社区戒毒 戒毒康复场所
“course and wild” (descriptions of Rush era personality characteristics)	<i>kuangye</i>	狂野
corrupted custom	<i>louxì</i>	陋习
cultural ignorance	<i>wenhua mengmei</i>	文化蒙昧
degree (i.e. academic qualifications)	<i>xueli</i>	学历
deserved (to serve someone right)	<i>huogai</i>	活该
deviate from the track	<i>pianguai</i>	偏怪
“descend into the sea” (Reform era term, to leave state sector employment to pursue private sector opportunities)	<i>xiahai</i>	下海
doing business isn’t as good as opening a factory, opening a factory isn’t as good as getting a loan, getting a loan isn’t as good as not repaying it	<i>zuomaoyi buru banchang,</i> <i>banchang buru daikuang,</i> <i>daikuan buru buhuan</i>	做贸易不如办厂，搬场不如贷款，贷款不如不换
don’t care about	<i>buguan</i>	不管
drug user	<i>xiduzhe</i>	吸毒者
drug using criminal	<i>xidufan</i>	吸毒犯
eat dumplings (a form of torture where cell management pounds on one’s chest until it hurts to breathe)	<i>chijiaozi</i>	吃饺子
“economic consciousness”	<i>jingji yishi</i>	经济意识
“economic head”, someone with a head for business	<i>jingjitounao</i>	经济头脑
economic ideas	<i>jingji siwei</i>	经济思维

entrepreneur, captain of industry	<i>qiyejia</i>	企业家
evil name	<i>eming</i>	恶名
“exercise oneself” (preparing for a job or some other opportunity)	<i>duanlian ziji</i>	锻炼自己
“ex-drug users”, “ex-addicts”	<i>guowang xiduzhe or guowang chengyinzhe</i>	过往吸毒者 过往成瘾者
excessive, wasteful, orderless, and scattered (government critique of private Rush era mining)	<i>guoduo, guolian, wuxu, fensan</i>	过多、过滥、无序、分散、粗放
fierce	<i>badao</i>	霸道
“fighting and killing” or “fighting and troublemaking” (mountainside occupation)	<i>dadashasha or dadanaonao</i>	打打杀杀, 打打闹闹
filial piety	<i>xiaoshun</i>	孝顺
forward-facing	<i>chaotian</i>	朝天
“fruit machines” (slot machines)	<i>shuiguoji</i>	水果机
gate watcher (pejorative term for security guard)	<i>kanmende (bao'an)</i>	看门的 (保安)
grabbing (Rush era form of accumulating assets)	<i>gandao</i>	赶到
great majority	<i>guangdarenminqunzhong</i>	广大人民群众
“had no choice but to change”	<i>budebu gaiziji</i>	不得不改自己
“handing off a work shift” (children replace parents at an SOE job)	<i>diban</i>	递班
head (boss)	<i>zong</i>	总
hold on to, have mastery over	<i>bawodehao</i>	把握得好
honest	<i>laoshi</i>	老实
hoodlum	<i>liumang</i>	流氓
hooligan (dangerous sneaky person)	<i>pizi</i>	痞子
humane	<i>renxinghua</i>	人性化
idle	<i>xian or xianzhe</i>	闲着
influential	<i>yingxiangli</i>	影响力
“iron rice bowl” guarantee	<i>tiefanwan</i>	铁饭碗
“island of safety”	<i>anquandao</i>	安全岛
“Kunming bug” –a pun based on the fact the same character “kun” is used both in the word “insect” and the city	<i>kunchong</i>	昆虫
laziness	<i>landuo</i>	懒惰
left behind	<i>liushouzhe</i>	留守者
legal businessperson	<i>hefa de shangren</i>	合法的商人

“leisure city” (a quality that city officials attempted to promote as part of expanding local tourism)	<i>xiuxian chengshi</i>	休闲城市
less than radiant	<i>butaiguangcai</i>	不太光彩 or 光采
life is each day is better than the one before it	<i>shenghuo shi yitian bi yitian hao</i>	生活是一天比一天好了
“life sellers”—people willing to fight for money (in Gejiu, usually in the mountainside)	<i>maiming</i>	卖命
little brothers	<i>xiaodi</i>	小弟
looking towards money	<i>wangqiankan</i>	往前看
looking towards the collective future	<i>wangqiankan</i>	往钱看
looking towards one’s enterprise	<i>wangshiyekan</i>	往事业看
lowly	<i>diceng</i>	地层
make oneself anew	<i>zixin</i>	自新
manage	<i>guanshi</i>	管事
mining bosses	<i>kuang laoban</i>	矿老板
“mixing in”, to mix, to muddle, to be reckless	<i>hun(zhe)</i>	混(着)
“move with the waves of society”	<i>genzhe shehui de langchao zou</i>	跟着社会的浪潮走
national calamity	<i>huoguo</i>	祸国
naturally separate into groups	<i>chengfen yiba yiba</i>	成分/成份一把一把
“never consider anything far away”	<i>henbukaolu yuandeshiqing</i>	很不考虑远的事情
“new style drugs”, similar to the collection of drugs in English known as club drugs—ecstasy, methamphetamines, ketamine,	<i>xinxingdupin</i>	新型毒品
no good to do	<i>buhaogan</i>	不好干
normal people’s lives	<i>zhengchangren de shenghuo</i>	正常人的生活
offbeat, avant-guard, unconventional	<i>linglei</i>	另类
Old Society (Communist term referring to China before the foundation of the People’s Republic)	<i>jiu shehui</i>	旧社会
“one-time drug user” (i.e. former drug user)	<i>cengjingyouguoxidushi</i>	曾经有吸毒经验
open large mines up, allow small players to open small mines, let the water flow or	<i>dakuang dakai, xiaokuang fangkai youliu kuailiu or</i>	大矿大开, 小矿小开 有水快流, 大矿大挖,

big mines big dig, little mines, little dig	<i>dakuangdawa, xiaokuangxiaowa</i>	小矿小挖
our generation	<i>women zhedairen</i>	我们这代人
paigow or push paigow (Chinese gambling games played with dominoes)	<i>paijiu, tuipaijiu</i>	牌九, 退牌九
part-time	<i>jianzhi</i>	兼职
passiveness	<i>duoxing</i>	惰性
the past is like smoke	<i>wangshiruyan</i>	往事如烟
patient (i.e. medical patient)	<i>bingren</i>	病人
peddlers, also translated as “petty capitalists”, “small entrepreneurs”, and “individual household businesses.”	<i>getihu</i>	个体户
people of (S)ociety”	<i>shehuishangderen</i>	社会上的人
“(people) who are able to work but insist on leading an idle life”	<i>youshouhaoxian</i>	游手好闲
“people who use the white powder tell lies”	<i>xibaifen, shuobaihua</i>	吸白粉, 说白话
performing labor	<i>laodong</i>	劳动
playing with one’s life	<i>ganwanming</i>	敢玩命
private-run (business)	<i>Minying(qiye)</i>	民营 (企业)
private firms	<i>siying or siren qiye</i>	私营, 私人企业
problem among the people (Maoist era term)	<i>neibu maodun</i>	内部矛盾
professionalism	<i>shiyexin</i>	事业心
prospecting	<i>tankuang</i>	探矿
protecting	<i>hukuang</i>	护矿
“proving some things”	<i>zhengming yixie shiqing</i>	证明一些事情
public cigarettes	<i>gongyan</i>	公烟
Rain Dew Community (Kaiyuan’s detoxification recovery center)	<i>yulu shequ</i>	雨露社区
real estate speculation	<i>chaofang</i>	炒房
“red envelope” (gifts of cash given at weddings, Chinese New Year, also a term for bribes)	<i>hongbao</i>	红包
re-education through labor center	<i>laodongjiaoyang (laojiao)</i>	劳动教养(劳教)
refugee (garments)—slang for fashionable used clothes imported from larger markets in 1980s	<i>nanmin</i>	难民
registered drug user	<i>zaicedexiduzhe</i>	在册的吸毒者
remold	<i>gaizao</i>	改造

remolding through labor center (also name of prison complex until 1990s)	<i>laodonggaizao (laogai)</i>	劳动改造（劳改）
“replacement with sons and daughters system” (SOE practice where children take parents jobs when they retire)	<i>zinü dingti zhidu</i>	子女顶替制度
residence permits	<i>hukou</i>	户口
return to reason	<i>huigui lixing</i>	回归理性
return to society	<i>huigui shehui</i>	回归社会
“road paved”, i.e. to have parents and other figures to help designate a suitable passage through life	<i>puhaolu</i>	铺好路
“sacrificial offerings of the Reform era”	<i>gaige kaifang de xishengpin</i>	改革开放的牺牲品
“sanitary city” (a national government designation awarded through an annual competition)	<i>weisheng chengshi</i>	卫生城市
self-discipline	<i>zilü</i>	自律
sense of self	<i>rentonggan</i>	认同感
Seven Zero Corporation	<i>qiling gongsi</i>	七零公司
shared language	<i>gongtong yuyan</i>	共同语言
simple-minded worker	<i>han gongren</i>	憨工人
simpleton	<i>shazi</i>	傻子
“small society” (a set of institutions specifically designed to deliver privileges to workers at SOEs)	<i>xiaoshehui</i>	小社会
smashing the iron rice bowl	<i>dapo tiefanwan</i>	打破铁饭碗
“smoked into rubbish”	<i>xifei</i>	吸废
social parasites (early Maoist period name for social undesirables including beggars, prostitutes and at certain times opium users)	<i>jisheng renkou</i>	寄生人口
sons and daughters (of workers, locals)	<i>zinü</i>	子女
“speculation and profiteering” (crime from Maoist China still enforced on occasion in early Deng years)	<i>toujidaoba</i>	投机倒把
spiritual opium (government campaign in 1980s)	<i>jingsheng yapian</i>	精神鸦片
state advances, private sector retreats	<i>guojinmintui</i>	国进民退
state owned enterprise	<i>guoyouqiye</i>	国有企业
“steal a mouthful”, have a hit of drugs	<i>touzui</i>	偷嘴

(references occasional drug use)		
“stop the salary but hold on to the job” (Deng era policy)	<i>tingxinliuzhi</i>	停薪留职
strike hard campaign	<i>yanda xingdong</i>	严打行动
strong (friendship/feelings)	<i>nong</i>	浓
subcontracting (privatizing SOE assets, assigning real estate to private miners)	<i>chengbao</i>	承包
sudden opening of the nation’s door	<i>guomen yixiazi dakai</i>	国门一下子打开
summoned	<i>chuanhu</i>	传呼
switchblade knife (literally a “dancing blade”)	<i>tiaodao</i>	跳刀
swindling	<i>zhapian</i>	诈骗
“tea houses” (often places to play mahjong)	<i>chaguan</i>	茶馆
temporary labor	<i>dagong</i>	打工
“this (i.e. the Society way) of doing things isn’t unacceptable”	<i>zheyangzuo ye bushi bukeyi</i>	这样做也不是不可以
thought work	<i>sixiang gongzuo</i>	思想工作
threaten through display of force	<i>weishexing</i>	威慑性
“tidy up the mountainside” (government term for phase of Gejiu’s development)	<i>zhenduanzhilijiedu</i>	整顿治理阶段
tin capital	<i>xidu</i>	锡都
transform established social traditions	<i>yifengyisu</i>	移风易俗
traditional (thoughts)	<i>chuantong</i>	传统
Transformation, transform	<i>zhuanbian</i>	转变
“shift shape” (also to transform)	<i>zhuanxing</i>	转型
“up to the mountains and down to the countryside”, forced agricultural experience for city youth in Maoist era	<i>shangshanxiexiang (xiexiang)</i>	上山下乡（下乡）
tyrant (refers to bosses on the mountainside, and also in compulsory laboring centers)	<i>ba</i>	霸
unbalanced balance	<i>bupinghang de pinghang</i>	不平行的平行
unbalanced mental state	<i>xinli bupingheng</i>	心理不平衡
uncultured, crude	<i>tu</i>	土
undertaking, project, activity	<i>shiye</i>	事业
use drugs (literally to inhale, though refers to a variety of administrative methods)	<i>xidu</i>	吸毒
“vanquishers are kings”	<i>shengzheweiwang</i>	胜者为王

“survivors are kings” (Sunny’s pun)		剩者为王
“vile lingering poison of the old society”	<i>jiushehui de elie yidu</i>	旧社会的恶劣遗毒
walk out (local term for recovery from addiction)	<i>zouchulai</i>	走出来
“wanting money, not your life”	<i>yaoqianbuyaomin</i>	要钱不要命
“to wash oneself white”, a post-Rush term referring to people who were able to move from illegal to legal businesses	<i>xibai</i>	洗白
withdraw from (society)	<i>tuoli (shehui)</i>	脱离（社会）
“your brain already can’t keep up with this period”	<i>nidenaojing</i> <i>ganbushang</i> <i>shidaile</i>	<i>yijing</i> <i>zhege</i> 你的脑经已经赶不上这个时代了

Bibliography

- Acker, Caroline Jean. *Creating the American Junkie: Addiction Research in the Classic Era of Narcotic Control*. 1st ed. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.
- Adams, V. "The Sacred in the Scientific: Ambiguous Practices of Science in Tibetan Medicine." *Cultural Anthropology* 16.4 (2001): 542–575.
- Adams, V., M. Murphy, and A. E Clarke. "Anticipation: Technoscience, Life, Affect, Temporality." *Subjectivity* 28.1 (2009): 246–265.
- Agar, M. *Ripping and Running: A Formal Ethnography of Urban Heroin Addicts*. 1973.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (notes Towards an Investigation)." *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*. Eds. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta. Malden, MA, 1970: 86–111.
- . *For Marx*. Trans. Ben Brewster. Verso Books, 1996.
- Anagnost, Ann. "From 'Class' to 'Social Strata': Grasping the Social Totality in Reform-era China." *Third World Quarterly* 29.3 2008: 497–519.
- . *National Past-times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China*. Duke University Press Books, 1997.
- Anonymous online posting. *Jingcha tiandi remenhuatin laodongjiayang suixiang* (Re-education through labor staff board), 2011, accessed at: <http://www.tianya.cn/techforum/content/158/1/557616.shtml>
- Becker, H. S. "Becoming a Marihuana User." *American Journal of Sociology* (1953): 235–242.
- . "History, Culture and Subjective Experience: An Exploration of the Social Bases of Drug-induced Experiences." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* (1967): 163–176.
- Berdahl, Daphne. "'(N)Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things." *Ethnos* 64.2 (1999): 192–211.
- Bergson, H. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Dover, 2001 [1889].
- Beyrer, C. et al. "Overland Heroin Trafficking Routes and HIV-1 Spread in South and South-east Asia." *Aids* 14.1 (2000): 75.
- Biao, X. "How Far Are the Left-behind Left Behind? A Preliminary Study in Rural China." *Population, Space and Place* 13.3 (2007): 179–191.
- Bourdieu, P. *The Logic of Practice*. 1st ed. Trans. Richard Nice. Stanford University Press, 1992.
- . "The Specificity of the Scientific Field and the Social Conditions of the Progress of Reason." *Social Science Information* 14.6 (1975): 19–47.
- Bourgois, P., and J. Schonberg. *Righteous Dopefiend*. 1st ed. University of California Press, 2009.
- Burroughs, W. *Junky*. Penguin, 1977 [1953].
- Butler, J. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford Univ Pr, 1997.
- Cahn, P. S. "Building down and Dreaming Up." *American Ethnologist* 33.1 (2006): 126–142.

- Camic, C. "The Matter of Habit." *American Journal of Sociology* (1986): 1039–1087.
- Carr, D. *Time, Narrative, and History*. Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Chen, C. J. "Local Institutions and the Transformation of Property Rights in Southern Fujian." *Property Rights and Economic Reform in China* (eds.: Oi, JC and Walder, AG). Stanford University Press, 1999: 49–70.
- Cheng, Yinghong. *Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.
- "China Is a 'Success Story' in Dealing with HIV Infections." *People's Daily* 21 Nov. 2012 .
- Cohen, Jerome. *The Criminal Process in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1963: An Introduction*. First ed. Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Collier, Stephen J., and Aihwa Ong. "Global Assemblages, Anthropology Problems." *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. Aihwa Ong & Stephen J. Collier. Wiley-Blackwell, 2004.
- Deng, Xiaoping. "Deng Xiaoping nanxun jianghua" (The Nanxun Talks), 1992.
- Desjarlais, R. "Struggling Along: The Possibilities for Experience Among the Homeless Mentally Ill 886." *American Anthropologist* 96.4 (1994): 886–901.
- Dittmer, Lowell, and Xiaobo Lü. "Personal Politics in the Chinese Danwei Under Reform." *Asian Survey* 36.3 (1996): 246–267.
- Eagleton, T., and P. Bourdieu. "Doxa and Common Life." *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 111–121.
- "Entrepreneurship in China: Let a Million Flowers Bloom." *The Economist* 10 Mar. 2011, 22.
- Entwisle, B., and G. E. Henderson. *Re-drawing Boundaries: Work, Households, and Gender in China*. Vol. 25. University of California Press, 2000.
- Fabian, J. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. Columbia University Press, 2002 [1983].
- Ferguson, J. "Decomposing Modernity: History and Hierarchy After Development." *Postcolonial studies and beyond* (2005): 166–81.
- . *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. University of California Press, 1999.
- Finestone, H. "Cats, Kicks, and Color." *Social Problems* 5.1 (1957): 3–13.
- FlorCruz, Jamie, and Xiaoni Chen. "China's Richest Man Hopes to Join the Political Elite." *CNN*. 29 Sept. 2011.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France 1981–1982*. Trans. Graham Burchell. Picador, 2005.
- . *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, 1st edn (Vintage, 1988).
- Frolova, I.T., ed. "Remnants of the Past (пережитки Прошлого)." *Dictionary of Philosophy* 1981 : 445. 4th edition.
- Fu, Hualing. "Re-education Through Labour in Historical Perspective." *China Quarterly* 184 (2005): 811.
- Garcia, A. "The Elegiac Addict: History, Chronicity, and the Melancholic Subject." *Cultural Anthropology* 23.4 (2008): 718–746.

- . *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession Along the Rio Grande*. Univ of California Press, 2010.
- “Gejiu Moshi Chengjiu Shijie Xiye Longtou Laiyuan. (Gejiu Model: World Success of the Tin Industry Leader’s Origin).” *Jingji Cankaobao* (2008).
- “Gejiushi Mazhibadeng Sheji Heian Yishenxuanpan Maizhibadengsanren Beipan Sixing (Gejiu’s Mazhibai implicated in criminal organization, sentenced” *Yunnan Wang* 31 Aug. 2011.
- Gell, Alfred. *The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images*. Berg Publishers, 2001.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. University of California Press, 2007.
- Gladney, D. C. *Dislocating China: Reflections on Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Goodman, D. S. G. “The People’s Republic of China: The Party-state, Capitalist Revolution and New Entrepreneurs.” *The new rich in Asia*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Gray, Robert. *Heroin, the Hui, and Historical Conflict in Yunnan: The Independent Kingdom of Pingyuan Township*. Unpublished. Dissertation chapter.
- Greenhalgh, Susan. *Just One Child: Science and Policy in Deng’s China*. 1st ed. University of California Press, 2008.
- Greenhalgh, Susan, and Edwin Winckler. *Governing China’s Population: From Leninist to Neoliberal Biopolitics*. Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Gruber, J. W. “Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology.” *American Anthropologist* 72.6 (1970): 1289–1299.
- Harrell, S. “The Changing Meanings of Work in China.” In *Re-Drawing Boundaries: Work, Households, and Gender in China* 25 (2000): 67.
- Healey, Daniel. Healthcare in Gulags. 2011. E-mail communication.
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. Routledge, 1979.
- Heidegger, M. *Being and Time*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1962 [1927].
- Hellbeck, J. *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*. Harvard Univ Pr, 2009.
- Hinton, William. *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*. Vintage, 1968.
- Hoffman, Daniel. “Violence, Just in Time: War and Work in Contemporary West Africa.” *Cultural Anthropology* 26.1 (2011): 34–57.
- Hoffman, Lisa. “Guiding College Graduates to Work: Social Constructions of Labor Markets in Dalian.” *China Urban: Ethnographies of Contemporary Culture*. Ed. Nancy Chen, Constance Clark, Suzanne Gottschang and Lyn Jeffery. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2001. 43–66.
- . *Patriotic Professionalism in Urban China: Fostering Talent*. Temple University Press, 2010.
- Honghezhou Weixuanchuan. “Honghe Fenjin 60 Zhounian (Honghe Prefecture’s 60 Year Determined Entry).” 2000.
- “Honghezhou Zhongjifayuan Chongpan Xiongjinwen25renshejiheian (Honghe Prefecture Middle Level Court Reconsiders Xiongjinwen and 25 Others Implicated in Organized Crime).”

- Yunnan Fazhibao* 26 Aug. 2004.
- Hsu, C. "Cadres, Getihu, and Good Businesspeople: Making Sense of Entrepreneurs in Early post-Socialist China." *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* (2006): 1–38.
- Hu, Jianhui. "133.5wan dengji zaice xidu renshuzhong you 27%shiyong Xinxingdupin." *Fazhiwang* 24 June 2011.
- Huang, Shaozhi. "Weishenme yao shixing laodong jiaoyu? (Why Shall We Implement Rehabilitation Through Labor?)." 4 Aug. 1957 : 1.
- Humphrey, Caroline. *The Unmaking of Soviet Life: Everyday Economies After Socialism*. Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Husserl, E. *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*. Ed. Martin Heidegger. Trans. James S. Churchill. Indiana University Press, 1964.
- Jakobson, Michael. *Origins Of The Gulag: The Soviet Prison Camp System, 1917-1934*. University Press of Kentucky, 1992.
- James, William. *Habit*. H. Holt and company, 1890, epub edition.
- . *The Principles of Psychology, Vol. 1*. Dover Publications, 1950.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press Books, 1990.
- Jefferson, G. H., and T. G. Rawski. "Enterprise Reform in Chinese Industry." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 8.2 (1994): 47–70.
- Jeffery, L. "Network Marketing in Mainland China." In *China urban: Ethnographies of Contemporary Culture*, Ed. Nancy Chen, Constance Clark, Suzanne Gottschang and Lyn Jeffery, 2001.
- Jiao, W. "New Law to Abolish Laojiao System." *China Daily* 1 (2007): 2007–03.
- Jing, Jun. "Drugs and Chinese Youth." NCHSR Kunming Social Science AIDS training workshop. 2010.
- Judd, E. R. "'Men Are More Able': Rural Chinese Women's Conceptions of Gender and Agency." *Pacific affairs* (1990): 40–61.
- Jürgens, Ralf et al. "People Who Use Drugs, HIV, and Human Rights." *The Lancet* (2010): 475–485.
- "Kaiyuan Jiedu 'Yulushequ': Chongxin Qifei Shengmin." *Renmin gonganbao* 4 Jan. 2007.
- "Kaiyuan Yule Shequ Jiedu Moshi Hui Quaguo Tuiguang." *Zhongguo jingchawang* 14 Sept. 2010.
- Kleinman, A. "Neurasthenia and Depression: a Study of Somatization and Culture in China." *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 6.2 (1982): 117–190.
- . *Writing at the Margin: Discourse Between Anthropology and Medicine*. 1st ed. University of California Press, 1997.
- Kleinman, A. et al. "Social Origins of Distress and Disease: Depression, Neurasthenia, and Pain in Modern China." *Current anthropology* 24.5 (1986): 499–509.
- Kohrman, M. "Depoliticizing Tobacco's Exceptionality: Male Sociality, Death and Memory-making Among Chinese Cigarette Smokers." *The China Journal* 58 (2007): 85–

- Kolb, L. *Drug Addiction in Its Relation to Crime*. National Committee for Mental Hygiene, 1925.
- . “Pleasure and Deterioration from Narcotic Addiction.” *Mental Hygiene* 9.4 (1925): 699–724.
- Koselleck, R. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Columbia Univ Pr, 1985.
- Kusnetzky, L. R. “Stories of Tin City: Narrative Identity and the Histories of Gejiu, Yunnan Province.” Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, City University of New York, 2011.
- Lam, Willy. “18th Party Congress to Showcase Rising Status of Private Business.” *China Brief* 19 Oct. 2012.
- Lambek, Michael. *The Weight of the Past: Living with History in Mahajanga, Madagascar*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Lau, R. W. K. “China: Labour Reform and the Challenge Facing the Working Class.” *Capital & Class* 21.1 (1997): 45–80.
- Lee, Ching Kwan. “From the Specter of Mao to the Spirit of the Law: Labor Insurgency in China.” *Theory and Society* 31.2 (2002): 189–228. 29 July 2012.
- Li, Deming, and Changdong Xu, eds. *Zhuanxing: Xidu Gejiukexuefazhanshixian* (Shifting shape: The Tin Gejiu Realizes Scientific Development). Renmin ribao chubanshe, 2009.
- Li, X., Y. Zhou, and B. Stanton. “Illicit Drug Initiation Among Institutionalized Drug Users in China.” *Addiction* 97.5 (2002): 575–582.
- Lindesmith, A. R. “A Sociological Theory of Drug Addiction.” *American Journal of Sociology* (1938): 593–613.
- . “The Drug Addict as a Psychopath.” *American Sociological Review* 5.6 (1940): 914–920.
- Liu, X. *The Mirage of China: Anti-humanism, Narcissism, and Corporeality of the Contemporary World*. Vol. 5. Berghahn Books, 2009. 20 July 2012.
- Lowinger, P. “The Solution to Narcotic Addiction in the People’s Republic of China.” *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 4.2 (1977): 165–178.
- Lu, Lin, Yuxia Fang, and Xi Wang. “Drug Abuse in China: Past, Present and Future.” *Cellular and Molecular Neurobiology* 28.4 (2008): 479–490.
- Lü, Xiaobo, and E.J. Perry. *Danwei: The Changing Chinese Workplace in Historical and Comparative Perspective*. M.E. Sharpe, 1997.
- Lukács, Georg. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. MIT Press. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. The MIT Press, 1972.
- . *Ontology of Social Being, Volume 3: Labour*. Merlin Press, 1980.
- Luo Wu. *Jinsanjiao daduxiao kunsha zhuan* (Account of the Golden Triangle Drug lord Kunsha). Qinghai renminchubanshe, 1995.
- Mannheim, K. The Problem of Generations. In *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 1952 [1923].
- Mao, Z. “The Only Road for the Transformation of Capitalist Industry and Commerce.” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*. Vol. 5. Foreign Languages Press Beijing, 1977. 112–120.
- Mauss, Marcel. “Techniques of the Body.” *Economy and Society* 2.1 (1973): 70–88. 5 Sept. 2012.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge, 2002 [1962].

- Meyerhoff, Barbara. "Peyote and Huichol Worldview: The Structure of a Mystic Vision." *Cannabis and Culture*. Ed. Vera Rubin. Walter de Gruyter, 1975, 417–438.
- Mueggler, Erik. "Money, the Mountain, and State Power in a Naxi Village." *Modern China* 17.2 (1991): 188–226.
- O'Brien, C., N. Volkow, and T. K. Li. "What's in a Word? Addiction Versus Dependence in DSM-V." *American Journal of Psychiatry* (2006): 764–765.
- Ong, Aihwa. "Ecologies of Expertise: Assembling Flows Managing Citizenship." *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. Ed. Aihwa Ong & Stephen J. Collier. Wiley-Blackwell, 2004.
- Osborne, Peter. *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*. Verso, 2011.
- Perry, E. J. "Labor's Love Lost: Worker Militancy in Communist China." *International Labor and Working Class History* (1996): 64–76.
- Perry, E.J. "Masters of the Country? Shanghai Workers in the Early People's Republic." *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China*. Ed. Paul Pickowicz. Harvard University Press, 2007. 59–79.
- Preble, E., and J. J. Casey. "Taking Care of Business-the Heroin User's Life on the Street." *Substance Use & Misuse* 4.1 (1969): 1–24.
- Raikhel, Eugene, and William Garriott, eds. *Addiction Trajectories*. Duke University Press Books, 2013.
- Reaves, Joseph. "China Smacks 'Spiritual Opium'." *Chicago Tribune*. 17 Oct. 1985. 22 July 2012.
- "Registered Synthetic Drug Users 28 Percent of China's Drug Addicts." *Xinhua News Agency* January 20, 2011.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative, Volume 3*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer. University Of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Rofel, Lisa. *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China After Socialism*. University of California Press, 1999.
- Rogers, Douglas. *The Old Faith and the Russian Land: A Historical Ethnography of Ethics in the Urals*. Cornell University Press, 2009.
- Rogers, Douglas. *The Old Faith and the Russian Land: A Historical Ethnography of Ethics in the Urals*. Cornell University Press, 2009.
- Room, R. "The Cultural Framing of Addiction." *Janus Head* 6.2 (2003): 221–234. Print.
- Room, R. et al. "WHO Cross-cultural Applicability Research on Diagnosis and Assessment of Substance Use Disorders: An Overview of Methods and Selected Results." *Addiction* 91.2 (1996): 199–220.
- Rosaldo, R. *Ilongot Headhunting, 1883-1974: a Study in Society and History*. Stanford Univ Pr, 1980.
- Sahlins, Marshall. *Islands of History*. University Of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. Washington Square Press, 1993 [1943].
- . *Existentialism and Human Emotion*. Citadel Press, 1987 [1957].

- Schüll, N. D. "Machines, Medication, Modulation: Circuits of Dependency and Self-care in Las Vegas." *Culture, medicine and psychiatry* 30.2 (2006): 223–247.
- Schumpeter, Joseph A. *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle*. Transaction Publishers, 1982.
- Schutz, Alfred. *Phenomenology of the Social World*. Northwestern Univ Pr, 1967.
- Shaffer, H. J. "The Most Important Unresolved Issue in the Addictions: Conceptual Chaos." *Substance Use & Misuse* 32.11 (1997): 1573–1580.
- Shi, Jingnan, and Ai Xu. "Woguo Sinianlai Gongqiangzhi Gelijiedu 92.2wanren (China over the last four years sent individuals to compulsory isolated detoxification centers 92,000 person times)." *Xinhua News Agency* 26 June 2012.
- Smith, A. M. "Reeducating the People: The Chinese Communists and The 'Thought Reform' of Beggars, Prostitutes, and Other 'Parasites'." dissertation, 2006.
- Song, Priscilla. "The Proliferation of Stem Cell Therapies in Contemporary China." Presentation at Stanford University, 2011.
- Song, Yusheng. *Wo de 28sui he Baise Emo* (My 28 years and the white demon). Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2000.
- State Council. "Decision Regarding the Problem of Reeducation Through Labor." 1957.
- . "Kuangchan Ziyuan Fa (Regulations Concerning Mineral Production)." 1986.
- . "White Paper on Narcotics Control in China." 2000.
- . "Jiedutiaoli (Drug detoxification regulations)" 22 June 2011.
- . "Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jindufa. (the People's Republic of China's Anti-drug laws)" 29 Dec. 2007.
- Yunnan Tin Museum, "The Course of One Hundred Years of Vicissitudes Has Built Yunnan Tin." Exhibit accessed August 2011.
- Throop, C. J., and K. M. Murphy. "Bourdieu and Phenomenology." *Anthropological Theory* 2.2 (2002): 185–207.
- Tomba, L. "Of Quality, Harmony, and Community: Civilization and the Middle Class in Urban China." *positions: east asia cultures critique* 17.3 (2009): 591–616.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press, 1997.
- Tsai, Kellee S. *Back-Alley Banking: Private Entrepreneurs in China*. Cornell University Press, 2004.
- UNAIDS. "AIDS: China's Titanic Peril." The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China, 2002.
- United Nations. "Joint Statement: Compulsory Drug Detention and Rehabilitation Centres." March 2012.
- Verdery, K. *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Cambridge Univ Press, 1996. 20 July 2012.
- Walder, A. G. *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*. University of California Press, 1988.
- . "Factory and Manager in an Era of Reform." *China Quarterly* 118.2 (1989): 242–64.
- . "The Remaking of the Chinese Working Class, 1949-1981." *Modern China* 10.1 (1984): 3–

- Wang, H. *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition*. Trans. T. Hutters. Harvard Univ Pr, 2003.
- Wang, J. "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital." *positions: east asia cultures critique* 9.1 (2001): 69–104.
- . *High Culture Fever: Politics, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Deng's China*. Univ of California Pr, 1996.
- Wang, Jinxiang. *Zhongguo Jindushi*. (China's Anti-Drugs History). Shanghai People's University press, 1996.
- Wang, Xiaomin. "China on the Brink of a 'Momentous Era'." *positions: east asia cultures critique* 11.3 (2003): 585–611.
- Wang, Yunxiang. *Diyu Tiantang: Yi Ge Xiduzhe De Xueyansushuo*. Qunzhong Chubanshe, 2004.
- Wank, D. L. *Commodifying Communism: Business, Trust, and Politics in a Chinese City*. Vol. 14. Cambridge Univ Pr, 2001.
- Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans. Talcott Parsons. Routledge, 1987[1905].
- Williams, P. F, and Y. Wu. *The Great Wall of Confinement: The Chinese Prison Camp Through Contemporary Fiction and Reportage*. Univ of California Pr, 2004.
- Wilson, A. "The Empire of Direct Sales and the Making of Thai Entrepreneurs." *Critique of Anthropology* 19.4 (1999): 401–422.
- Wolf, C. *Fault Lines in China's Economic Terrain*. Rand Corporation, 2003.
- Wolfe, Daniel. "UN on Drug Detention: Ineffective. Illegal. Close It Down." Blog Open Society, March 12, 2012.
- Wolfe, Daniel, and Roxanne Saucier. "At What Cost? HIV and Human Rights Consequences of the Global War on Drugs." New York: Open Society Foundations, 2009.
- Wu, Fushui. "Yunnan Honghe 43ren Sheheian Tingshen Zhufan Burenzui (43 Individuals from Honghe Yunnan in Court Hearing Implicated in Organized Crime Activity Maintain Do Not Admit to Guilt)", *Yunnan Wang*, June 30, 2011.
- Wu, HH. *Laogai, the Chinese Gulag*. Trans. Ted Slingerland. Westview Press, 1992.
- Wu, Z. et al. "Risk Factors for Initiation of Drug Use Among Young Males in Southwest China." *Addiction* 91.11 (1996): 1675–1685.
- Yardley, Jim. "Chinese City Emerges As Model in AIDS Fight." *New York Times*, 16 June 2005, 27.
- Young, Jock. *The Drugtakers: The Social Meaning of Drug Use*. MacGibbon and Kee, 1971.
- Young, Julian Buchanan, Lee. "The War on Drugs a War on Drug Users?" *Drugs: Education, Prevention, and Policy* 7.4 (2000): 409–422.
- Young, S. "Wealth but Not Security: Attitudes Towards Private Business in China in the 1980s." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 25 (1991): 115–137.
- "Yunnan 43ren Shehei'an Jie Minjian Kuanye Ziyuan." *Yunnan Wang* 28 June 2011.
- Ong, Aihwa and Zhang, Li. "Introduction: Privatizing China: Powers of the Self, Socialism from Afar." *Privatizing China: Socialism from Afar*. Edited by Zhang, Li and Ong, Aihwa.

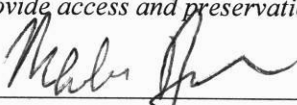
- Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- Zhang, Li. "Contesting Spatial Modernity in Late-Socialist China." *Current Anthropology* 47.3 (2006): 461–484.
- Zhao, Jinfeng. "Xidu 370wanyuan: Shanyi De 'zhenshihuangyan' (Drug Use of 3,700,000yuan: Goodwill of 'Truth of the Lies')." *Gejiu Ribao* 2008.
- Zheng, Yangwen. *The Social Life of Opium in China*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Zhou, Y. *Anti-drug Crusades in Twentieth-century China: Nationalism, History, and State Building*. Rowman & Littlefield Pub.
- . "'Nationalism, Identity and State-building: The Antidrug Crusade in the People's Republic, 1949-1952'." *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952*. Second ed. Ed. Timothy Brook & Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi. University of California Press, 2000.
- Zigon, Jarrett. *HIV Is God's Blessing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Publishing Agreement

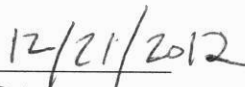
It is the policy of the University to encourage the distribution of all theses, dissertations, and manuscripts. Copies of all UCSF theses, dissertations, and manuscripts will be routed to the library via the Graduate Division. The library will make all theses, dissertations, and manuscripts accessible to the public and will preserve these to the best of their abilities, in perpetuity.

Please sign the following statement:

I hereby grant permission to the Graduate Division of the University of California, San Francisco to release copies of my thesis, dissertation, or manuscript to the Campus Library to provide access and preservation, in whole or in part, in perpetuity.



Author Signature



Date