Title

Individualization and Citizenship-Shaping in the Chinese Education System: A Critical Qualitative Study of Chinese Elite University Graduates

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7v8660mr

Author

Li, Yihao

Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Individualization and Citizenship-Shaping in the Chinese Education System:

A Critical Qualitative Study of Chinese Elite University Graduates

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Yihao Li

2024

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Individualization and Citizenship-Shaping in the Chinese Education System:

A Critical Qualitative Study of Chinese Elite University Graduates

by

Yihao Li

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2024

Professor Carlos A. Torres, Chair

This dissertation aims to explore whether, amidst the significant trend of social individualization, Chinese citizenship education can achieve its goal of cultivating the so-called 'loyal socialist citizens'. Unlike citizenship education in Western democracies, which fosters constitutional patriotism, Chinese citizenship education seeks to transform the cultural spirit of collectivism among the Chinese populace into a political inclination towards communism and then to develop a socialist patriotism grounded in an ideological commitment to socialism and an institutional recognition on the Chinese party-state.

A qualitative study was conducted through narrative interviews with twelve graduates from different elite Chinese universities. Interviews inquired about their perceptions of citizenship, the processes that have shaped their citizenship, and their perspectives on China's dominant

narrative. Compared to the theoretical framework of citizenship for constitutional patriotism, which is centered on civic participation, this study finds the framework of citizenship for socialist patriotism has stronger explanatory power to account for the trajectory of Chinese social transformations and the potential typology of socialist citizenship. Despite the pronounced diversity of political attitudes and ideologies stances, the data suggest that real-life experiences have a more substantial impact on shaping their citizenship than formal ideological courses within the university setting.

Furthermore, this dissertation proposes a four-step process for citizenship-shaping, identifying the 'suspicion moment' as a crucial point for prompting one's skepticism towards official discourse, transforming one's ideological thinking, and motivating one to rationalize and deconstruct the grand narrative and begin the self-construction of a worldview. Meanwhile, a new form of individualism that maintains horizontal collectivism but rejects vertical collectivism is identified among these interviewees; it preserves the Confucian ethos of 'the relational self' and a communitarian concern for collective interests. However, it also emphasizes the importance of personal boundaries to resist authoritarian interference.

In conclusion, the dissertation posits that the expansion of higher education in China can facilitate the demystification of socialist ideology among the youth. Nonetheless, due to stringent censorship and speech control, dissent must be cautiously concealed. This necessity results in unquantifiable psychological stress and unresolved mental tensions, contributing to more uncertainties inherent in China's ongoing social transformations.

The dissertation of Yihao Li is approved.

Anthony Pagden

Richard Desjardins

Federica Raia

Carlos Alberto Torres, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2024

Table of Contents

List of Table

List of Figure

Acknowledgements

Regarding the completion of the dissertation, I would like to begin by expressing my sincerest acknowledgments to my PhD supervisor, Dr. Carlos Torres, not only for his valuable guidance to improve my academic work but also for that he embodies a role model of a true educator and global citizen, inspiring us to engage both in thought and action. Firstly, Dr. Torres has significantly expanded the horizons of educational research by integrating critical theory, sociology, political philosophy, cultural studies, and postmodern studies into his work. When I applied for the PhD in Education in 2018, the Social Sciences & Comparative Education (SSCE) program, which Dr. Torres had established years prior, stood out among numerous PhD programs worldwide. The program's mandate that educational research must be conducted under a comparative perspective and an interdisciplinary lens was particularly appealing to me. The subsequent years at UCLA confirmed that such an academic tradition has propelled me to push the boundaries of my thinking on educational issues. The breadth and depth of this influence are likely evident in the ten chapters of this dissertation.

Moreover, I would like to emphasize the concept of the 'role model' in the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI). With AI tools like ChatGPT capable of assisting with thinking, writing, and revising, knowledge is no longer a private possession exclusive to the so-called 'professor'.

When the potential industrialization of AI products is approaching, the traditional role of supervision will be replaced by the popularity of robotic supervisors or neural interface technologies. Instead, the 'role model' has become more crucial than ever to embody values, moral judgments, and emotional intelligence and to guide students to feel, act, and engage with the world. In my PhD journey, it was Dr. Torres who taught me to transcend narrow identifications of American, of Chinese, or of any other group entangled in identity politics, but to think for humanity for all humans. In an age when many are losing faith in human nature and collective future, this spiritual lesson is an invaluable treasure.

Admittedly, I must also extend my deep gratitude to the members of my Dissertation Committee: Dr. Pagden Anthony, Dr. Richard Desjardins, and Dr. Federica Raia, as well as other esteemed faculty members such as Dr. Teresa McCarty. While I harbor reservations about the administrative sector of UCLA, which at times resembles a state bureaucracy, it is the caring and supportive faculty who have truly enriched my PhD life, improved my academic work, and broadened my intellectual horizons. Furthermore, I am indebted to my dear colleagues—Hui Huang, Jevan Luo, Li Yan, and Fadhila—as well as senior colleagues like Jia Jiang, Yuqing Hou, and Crystal Green. Their valuable feedback, encouragement, and support have been significant, and their contributions to bringing our learning community with more care and love is crucial to everyone.

Lastly, I owe a profound debt of gratitude to my family for their unwavering support. My beloved wife deserves a special mention for her patience, support, and tolerance, especially during the intense periods of dissertation writing. The advice from my senior colleagues to

young scholars— 'publish before you pursue a family'—now resonates with me. Marriage indeed can divert one's attention from academic research. However, it also marks another beautiful beginning to transform my perspective to view the life and deepen my understanding of the world.

Education

2019-2024   Ph.D. Candidate, Social Sciences & Comparative Education
            University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
2017-2018   M.A., Education Policy & Society
            King's College London (KCL)
2013-2017   B.E., Navigation Engineering
            B.M. (minor), Business Management
            Wuhan University, China (WHU)

Book Project

Li, Y. (in progress) *Chinese Education: Origins and Goals (in Chinese).* Beijing: Chinese Social Science Pres

Conference Presentations

Li. Y. (2024) Individualization and citizenship-shaping: the unintended consequences in Chinese citizenship education. Poster Presentation, Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) 2024 Conference.

Li. Y. (2021) The Political dynamic in Chinese Higher Education reform: from "985" & "211" Project to "Double First-Class" Initiative. Poster Presentation, Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) 2021 Conference: online (during the pandemic of Covid-19).

Li, Y. (2020) The Context Analysis towards the Implementation of Chinese Education Policy: Taking the Lessen-Burden Act (LBA) as An Example. Poster Presentation, Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) 2020 Conference: online (during the pandemic of Covid-19).

Honors & Awards

2023-2024   Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA
2021   Department Scholarship, Department of Education, UCLA
2020-2021   Paulo Freire Centenary Fellowship, Paulo Freire Institute, UCLA
2020   Graduate Student Research Mentorship, Graduate Division, UCLA
2019-2020   Dean's Scholar – Hakka Foundation Scholarship, Hakka Foundation
2019-2020   Division-based Merit Scholarship, Department of Education, UCLA

Services

2019-2021   Program Coordinator of Centenary Celebration, Paulo Freire Institute

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

1.1.1 Citizenship education

Citizenship education is commonly defined as the state-operated initiative through the public schooling system aimed at shaping students' recognition of the nation and society, enhancing their political trust, equipping them with civic knowledge, values, beliefs, and skills and enabling them to actively participate in public affairs (e.g. Giroux, 1980; Hahn, 1998; Kerr, 1999). The outcomes of citizenship education are typically assessed across multiple dimensions, including civic dispositions, knowledge, skills, values, and participation (Johnston & Morris, 2010; Chen, 2018).

Globally, citizenship education in different countries plays the same role in promoting universal values and virtues, fostering a sense of law-abiding and social justice, and advocating for sustainable development (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Oxley & Morris, 2013). However, the local practice of citizenship education is varied by different political, cultural, religious, ethnic, and societal contexts. As the state is the primary agent in arranging and implementing educational agendas, the primary goal of citizenship education is to serve the state, disseminating specific ideologies, nurturing citizens' attachment to the local political system, and legitimizing state authority (Hahn, 1999; Torres, 2017). The curriculum of citizenship education is not a neutral collection of knowledge or beliefs but a deliberate selection and implementation of concepts and ideas that arise from local cultural, political, and economic conflicts and tensions (Apple, 1979; 1982). Curricular contents are carefully designed to teach

students to accept the constructed narrative or demonstrate respect or tolerance especially regarding sensitive topics such as racial issues in the United States, colonialism and war issues in Korea and Japan, or religious issues in Turkey (Sear & Hughes, 2006). Additionally, every society has hidden curricula that aim to instill dominant values, hierarchical norms, and various stereotypes (Willis, 1977).

Political regime also poses impacts on the implementation of citizenship education. Decentralized systems, like those in the United States and Australia, tend to operate citizenship education in a values-implicit manner, with the flexibility in textbook selection and a high tolerance for diverse values. In contrast, centralized states like France and Japan adopt a values-explicit approach, adopting nationally designated textbooks and delivering prescribed narratives to students (Kerr, 1999). Suggested by political scientists like Paglayan (2013; 2017; 2020), it is typical for the schooling system in autocracies to emphasize obedience, conformity, and responsibility to encourage students to make more commitments to the authority, with few efforts to cultivate students' rights awareness and promote their civic participations.

The pedagogy of citizenship education also varies by country. In democracies, citizenship education is considered an essential component of liberal education, aimed at the holistic development of human potential, so that the pedagogy is designed to respect students' subjectivity and creativity, encouraging classroom dialogue as a form of deliberation and communication (Delanty, 2003). Conversely, in autocracies, education is often viewed merely as the transmission of knowledge, with a pedagogical approach that positions the teacher as the holder of knowledge and the student as the recipient, without efforts to promote creative and

2

critical thinking (Freire, 1970). Kerr (1999) distinguishes between 'education about citizenship' and 'education through citizenship' (p. 12): the latter involves diverse social practices for students to learn and exercise citizenship actively, while the former focuses on transmitting knowledge without encouraging students' participations; different teaching agenda therefore reflects different rationality: the latter aims to cultivate the so-called active citizenship but the former merely cultivates the 'minimal citizenship' (McLaughlin, 1992, p.235) that is limited to the minimal requirement to be a law-abiding citizen.

1.1.2 Official agenda of Chinese citizenship education

In China, citizenship education is directly overseen by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC). Under the leadership of the Central Guidance Commission on Building Spiritual Civilization—chaired by a member of the CCCPC, the implementation of Chinese citizenship education is a collaborative effort between the Department of Propaganda and the Department of Education. Its overarching objective is often articulated as the cultivation of loyal socialist citizens—who are expected to uphold socialist ideologies, advocate for the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), support the proletarian dictatorship and embrace collectivist values and related virtues such as altruism, deference, and endurance (Fairbrother, 2003; 2008; Yu & Feng, 2010; Law, 2013; 2016; Zhao, 2013; 2023; Jiang, 2019; 2021; 2024; Yu, 2020).

China maintains a nationally unified schooling system, through which students around China are provided with consistent citizenship education from primary through higher education. This educational approach can be categorized as two forms: formal curricular

3

instruction and extracurricular engagement. In primary education, the curriculum of citizenship education is delivered through the major academic subject of Morality and Politics, in which political and ideological contents are instructed with the proceeding of moral education (Law, 2013). When it comes to middle education, more academics modules are arranged in the subject of Morality and Politics to teach basic principles of socialist ideologies, Marxist worldviews and the party-state's historical narratives and current agendas (Jiang, 2021).

In higher education, all college students are required to take four specialized ideological courses during their freshman and sophomore years: 1) 'Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Basic Law Education' (思想道德与法律基本素养), 2) 'An Outline of Chinese Modern History' (中国近现代史纲要), 3) 'Basic Principles of Marxism' (马克思主义基本原理) and 4) 'Mao Zedong Thought and An Introduction to the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' (毛泽东思想与中国特色社会主义理论体系概论). The last one is the most essential to highlight the so-called 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' [1]. Moreover, seven chapters on 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era' [2] have been added into the latest version of textbook to illustrate the current leader's ideas and thoughts on China's socialist development (Chen, 2024).

---

[1] Socialism with Chinese characteristics entered the common usage during the era of Deng Xiaoping (during the late 1970s to 1990s) to justify the necessity of interpreting socialism in the manner which can fit Chinese national conditions and needs. This term has been largely associated with Deng's program of adopting elements of marketing economy to boost Chinese economic productivity and now becomes the guiding ideology of the Communist Party of China.

[2] Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, which is commonly abbreviated outside China as Xi Jinping Thought, is an ideological doctrine created during General Secretary Xi Jinping's leadership that combines Chinese Marxism and national rejuvenation. It was first officially mentioned at the 19th National Congress of the

On the other hand, citizenship education is also arranged in the means of extracurricular activities, including: 1) thematic lectures on the latest policies, 2) weekly assemblies to raise the national flag and sing the national anthem, 3) the so-called 'red tours' to nearby revolutionary sites, 4) ideological cultural shows and exhibitions and other patriotist educational activities organized by local governments (Zhao, 2013). University students are mandated to participate in high-level ideological learning sessions like the serial seminar on Situation and Policy and other seminars led by the Chinese Communist Youth League (Li, 2009).

Furthermore, ideological propaganda and speech control is pervasive on campus, emphasizing loyalty to the party-state, advocating confidence in China as a socialist-oriented power, and denouncing Western values characterized by neoliberalism, possessive individualism, consumerism, hedonism, and materialism (Zhao, 2013). In universities, a full-time 'ideological counselor' (辅导员) is appointed for each grade to manage student affairs, coordinate political and ideological education, and oversee students' mental well-being (Wen, Zheng, & Yang, 2018). Beyond offering psychological counseling and career development guidance, counselors are also tasked with monitoring students' political opinions, identifying potential dissent, and dissuading and placating potential dissidents (Liu, Zhao & Starkey, 2021). Besides, the indirect surveillance is also conducted to monitor faculty members by mobilizing students to monitor instructors and report their 'inappropriate' remarks to the ideological

---

Chinese Communist Party in 2017 and was incorporated into the Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party then. Nowadays, this term has become a very essential term in many official documents, propaganda, and ideological education.

department; once if someone was deemed to have propagated incorrect ideas, he or she would be subject to disciplinary warnings, salary reductions, and even dismissal (Perry, 2015; 2020).

Since 2012 when Xi Jinping took the position of the General Secretary of CPC, China's policy orientation in the realms of propaganda and education has become increasingly conservative, with an emphasis on opposing constitutionalism (Zhao, 2016). A prime illustration of this shift is the so-called *Document No.9*, officially titled '*The Briefing on the Current Situation in the Ideological Realm*'[3] (关于当前意识形态领域情况的通报). It was initially circulated by the General Office of the CPC in 2012 and exposed in public in 2013. This document identified seven topics that were deemed off-limits for discussion in the public sphere, academia, and social media. These topics, collectively known as the 'seven don't-speaks', included: 1) constitutional democracy (covering the separation of powers, multiparty systems, universal elections, and independent judiciaries), 2) advocacy for Western 'universal values', 3) the belief to promote civil society as a means to dismantle the ruling party's social foundation, 4) advocacy of neoliberalism (encompassing unchecked economic liberalization, full privatization, and total marketization), 5) promotion of Western journalism that emphasizes the independency of news media, 6) historical nihilism, which involves downplaying the CPC's role in modern Chinese history, and 7) skepticism or any criticism regarding the socialist nature of China.

---

[3] An English translation of the document is available in ChinaFile (2013, Nov.8). Link is at:

https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation

Then, in 2016, President Xi issued an official directive stating that 'the media owned by the party and government must hold the family name of the party' (党和政府主办的媒体必须姓党), requiring all Chinese news media to demonstrate 'absolute loyalty' by aligning with the party's will, protecting the party's authority, and refraining from disseminating any contentious content (Zhuang, 2016, Feb.16th). On February 26th, 2023, the CPC announced the document 'Opinions on Strengthening Legal Education and Legal Theory Research in the New Era' and ordered Chinese law schools to stop teaching about constitutional democracy, the independence of judiciary, and the separation of power (Zhou, 2023). These mandates underscore the Chinese government's commitment to maintaining a tightly controlled ideological stance and the prohibition of certain discourses that could potentially challenge the existing political order (Jiang & Esarey, 2018).

However, while Chinese citizenship education agenda becomes increasingly conservative, its implementation and actual outcomes may be mitigated by numerous societal factors. Since the 1980s, the marketing economic reforms triggered a trend toward privatization, which catalyzed the individualization of Chinese society and encouraged people to pursue autonomy, independence, uniqueness, and self-interest (Yan, 2009; 2010; 2019). The forces of globalization and the widespread adoption of the Internet have facilitated the spread of liberal values, significantly challenging the previously held beliefs in socialism (Brown, 2012). Additionally, the substantial economic growth and the concurrent widening wealth gap have diversified people's life experiences and worldviews, and further expanded the variance in civic

values and political stances (Pan & Xu, 2018). These social transformations shifted people's manners to respond to education and propaganda, as illustrated below.

1.1.3 Societal transformations in contemporary China

Since the 1980s until now, marketing economy reform, globalization, and the popularity of Internet and information technology, have constituted three most significant societal transformations in contemporary China. These trends bring China to realize economic modernization but also create huge social inequalities and various ideological debates and confrontations, accelerating the process of individualization.

Firstly, it must be noted that China had experienced a significant ideological turn in its 1980s. Before this, China under Mao's governance was characterized by a highly centralized political regime, a planned economy, and the collectivization of both industry and agriculture, and Chinese people, influenced by the ideological fervor of Marxism and Maoism, were assigned various class labels (e.g., working class, peasantry, rightists, capitalist roaders, revisionists, bourgeoisie, etc.) and were mobilized to participate in 'class struggle' to eradicate all potential rightists, capitalists or revisionists (Yan, 2010). The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) represented the epitome of class struggle and marked the zenith of Mao's personal cult. However, this revolution brought China disastrous violence and chaos, led to severe economic stagnation, suspended almost all societal activities for an entire decade and resulted in millions of cases of political persecution, purging, harassment, and imprisonment (Wu, 2013). These devastating consequences in the 1970s had led many Chinese people to become disillusioned

with Marxist ideologies and generate a widespread skepticism of the CPC's leadership (Fewsmith & Nathan, 2019).

Then, Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader of China during the late 1970s to 1990s, made substantial efforts to drive people out of the political trauma and recover their trust on the CPC. Domestically, Deng abandoned the previous agenda of 'class struggle' and transferred the focus to economic modernization, allowing the privatization and decentralization, encouraging private entrepreneurs to play a role in Chinese socialist economy, and transforming the previous centralized planned economy into the marketing economy (Vogel, 2011). Internationally, Deng took the initiative to improve China's diplomatic relations with the Western capitalistic world to attract foreign direct investment and engage in economic globalization (ibid.). With these significant actions, Deng's era is called as the time of 'Reform and Open' and his pragmatism of creatively adopting capitalistic and neoliberal elements into socialist China is termed as 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'. This terminology successfully revived the vitality of Marxism in China and left ample space for creative interpretation, but also made the content of socialism blurred and implied a certain tolerance of Western ideologies and values (Brown, 2012). Therefore, Chinese society since the 1980s experienced a remarkable transformation 'from comrade to citizen' (Goldman, 2005, p.1), with a civil society emerging and the ideological sphere becoming diverse and rational.

Secondly, globalization has further accelerated this process. Although China and the West maintain distinct political and ideological positions, there is no denying that the economic interaction and financial interdependence between them have significantly deepened over the

past few decades (Bell, 2015). These economic ties have provided China with increased opportunities for international travel, academic exchanges, international collaborations, policy borrowing and adoption, and cultural interactions. Collectively, these factors have played a substantial role in driving China's ideological transformation. For instance, the introduction of numerous Western scholars, including Friedrich Hayek, Michel Foucault, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jürgen Habermas, and Pierre Bourdieu, has had a profound impact on the formation of the Chinese 'liberalist school'; this intellectual movement has championed liberal values, advocated for constitutional reforms, and continues to hold significant sway among the intellectual and urban elite sectors of society (Zhao, 2019).

Besides, benefiting from globalization, Chinese remarkable economic growth produced a large amount of middle-class population. However, this population have held very complex attitudes towards the party-state (Chen & Lu, 2011). Since Deng's reforms boost China's economic development and won back people's political trust, the burgeoning middle-class, as beneficiaries of these reforms, tends to feel satisfied with societal progress and remains supportive of the CPC's leadership (Wang, 2005; Chen & Lu, 2011). Therefore, contradicting Lipset's hypothesis (1960) that economic growth would lead to the expansion of the middle class and, consequently, democratization, Chinese economic growth during the 1990s and 2000s did not trigger political democratization but rather consolidated the CPC's governance (Zhong, 2014; Guan, 2018). However, this does not mean that Chinese citizens hold affirmative recognition on official ideology but involves the trap of performance that people will decline their trust immediately once if their material interests are not satisfied by the state's

performance (Wang & You, 2016). This has become rather true in recent years when China encountered the economic slowdown (Zhong & Zhan, 2021).

The third most prevailing social transformation in China is triggered by the advent of information technology and the proliferation of social media. With millions of netizens[4] actively engaging with the Internet to document, discuss, and share, a digital public sphere has been shaped. These online discussions have become more inclusive and accessible, allowing for a wider range of voices to be heard (Yuan, 2010; Jia, 2019).

However, since the economic development has significantly exacerbated social inequalities in China, individuals from different social groups possess a wide array of life experiences, perspectives, and attitudes towards the regime. This diversity makes it increasingly likely for people to encounter contrasting viewpoints and become engaged in ideological debates (Guo & Liang, 2017; Zhang, 2018). The internet has rapidly amplified this divergence of civic opinions, leading to a more polarized online environment. Chinese netizens often find themselves embroiled in identity politics, where they are labeled as either 'patriots' or 'cynics' based on whether they express praise or criticism of the country (Esarey, 2015). Some individuals have adopted nationalist and xenophobic positions, staunchly defending the Chinese regime and socialist ideology (Han, 2015). In contrast, others have emerged as 'critical citizens' who advocate for democratic systems and free markets, demonstrating growing

---

[4] By June 2022, Chinese netizens had numbered 1.05 billion, including 1.027 billion users of real-time communication, 0.96 billion users of short videos, 0.78 billion users of Netnews, according to Xinhua.net (2022, Aug. 31st) The number of Internet users in China reached 1.051 billion. Published online: https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-08/31/content_5707605.htm

dissatisfaction with the current regime and openly voicing their critiques (Wang & You, 2016).

This dynamic has resulted in a more contentious and fragmented digital society. The prevalence of disrespectful, polarizing, and provocative discussions online suggests that there is a significant deviation from the mainstream ideological norms among the Chinese populace (Hansen & Svarverud, 2010; Jiang & Esarey, 2018).

To summarize, these social transformations have brought China citizenship issues of three dimensions:

1. Vertical Dimension: This dimension addresses the power hierarchy and encompasses issues related to liberty, protest, and rights awareness. It delves into the dynamics of power and authority and how they shape individual freedoms and collective actions (Perry, 2009; Wu, 2020).

2. Horizontal Dimension: This dimension focuses on interpersonal interactions and relationships between individuals and collective entities, grappling with concerns such as social redistribution, the maintenance of stability, and the compromises individuals make for the sake of collective goals (Chen, 2013; Wang & You, 2016).

3. Varietal Dimension: This dimension examines the relationships among different ethnic, national, or social groups. It raises questions about identity politics, conflicts between minority and majority populations, and various forms of social structural and regional inequalities, such as those between urban and rural areas, or between Eastern and Western China (Guo & Liang, 2017; Zhang, 2018; Guo, 2023).

These dimensions provide a framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of citizenship issues within the context of China's diverse and complex society, which also contributes to understanding Chinese social individualization.

1.1.4 Individualization in contemporary China

Culturally speaking, individualism stands in contrast to collectivism by prioritizing personal goals and desires; it emphasizes independence and self-reliance, positing that individual interests should take precedence over collective interests. In contrast, a collectivist culture places greater emphasis on common goals rather than individual pursuits; within such a culture, individuals are encouraged to subordinate their personal happiness for the greater good of the group (Brown, 1993; Triandis, 1989; 1995).

China, with its roots in Confucian culture, has traditionally been a collectivist society. However, political reforms and cultural transformations since the 1980s have progressively shaped a more individualistic Chinese society (Yan, 2009). Privatization and ownership reforms have enabled individuals to dissociate from the previous planned economy and collectivized organizations and then to encourage people to strive for personal material possessions and to pursue autonomy. Meanwhile, the influx of Western ideas, coupled with the widespread use of the Internet, has provided new intellectual resources. These have facilitated reflection on socialist ideological dogmas and have empowered citizens to access information from diverse sources and to communicate with different social groups. These communications brought new perspectives to consider social life and then encouraged people to deviate from

collective norms and instead to pursue individuality, personal interests, and unique characteristics (Yan, 2010; Bell, 2015).

Indeed, the rising tide of individualization across various facets of Chinese society is increasingly eroding the traditional Confucian values of collectivism (Beck, 2014). There is a growing trend among Chinese people to prioritize individualist factors when evaluating their happiness and life satisfaction (Steele & Lynch, 2013). Especially among Chinese youth, known as 'Generation Y'—those born between the 1980s and 1990s who have grown up in the internet era, enjoyed a more affluent lifestyle, and are better educated—there is a pronounced focus on the self-realization of personal achievements; this focus often takes precedence over collective symbols such as group honor, group identity, and the common goods of society (Sima & Pugsley, 2010).

Hamamura et al. (2021) have identified a form of individualism with Chinese characteristics, where the rise of individualistic tendencies coexists with the enduring values of traditional collectivism: the younger generation in China exhibits a strong pursuit of material possessions and individualistic leisure activities, yet they also maintain a robust sense of community and a considerable degree of respect for collectivistic social norms. Typically, these youths have been described as 'simultaneously materialistic and idealistic, instrumental and expressive, internationalist and nationalist, global and local, apolitical but nationalistic, modern and traditional, blessed with material prosperity and yet under great pressure to strive for greater material wealth…' (Liu, 2011, p.182).

When Marxism posits that self-interestedness is a byproduct of capitalist social constructs that is intended to be overcome, the shift of social individualization functions as a counteracting force to endorse people's individual pursuits. Hence, individualization not only represents a transformation in social values of China but also suggests a bottom-up ideological dynamic that departs from the tenets of official Marxism and collectivism (Yan, 2019).

In the realm of citizenship, the gap between state rhetoric and public sentiment has expanded (Chen, 2013). Despite the state's persistent promotion of collectivism and the spirit of self-sacrifice, there is a growing demand among citizens at the grassroots level for increased opportunities for civic engagement and the recognition of personal interests and liberties (Chen, 2018; Qin, 2021). A consensus among many netizens is that 'citizenship is seen by the Chinese as a legal entitlement that they should possess, yet it remains an aspirational and, to some extent, unattainable ideal' (Xiong, 2019, p.128).

Not surprisingly, many individuals, particularly the younger generation, have become aware of the selective dissemination of information and have resorted to anti-censorship strategies and tools to access blocked content (Zhou & Yang, 2018). A notable example is the widespread use of VPNs in China. In 1998, China launched the Great Firewall[5] initiative to regulate information flow and to filter and control what can be accessed via the domestic Internet. Today, this firewall effectively blocks much foreign news and renders many foreign applications, such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, inaccessible in China. However, the existence of the Great Firewall has led to the popular use of VPNs to

---

[5] See an introduction of Great Firewall at: The Great Firewall of China. Everything You Need to Know - Techs Motion

access overseas information, an action colloquially known as 'climbing the wall'. Li (2016) discussed the techno-politics of the Great Firewall and VPNs, estimating that about 20% of netizens have utilized VPNs or proxies to circumvent the firewall. Cantoni et al. (2017) observed that it is increasingly common for Chinese students to be aware of the 'information wall', leading them to perceive domestic information as less credible and to deliberately seek out alternative sources of information. Jiang (2019) noted that many senior school students have become adept at 'climbing the wall'. Hobbs and Roberts (2018) found that the Great Firewall may have inadvertently motivated netizens to use VPNs more actively to access censored information, suggesting that the firewall has backfired. It is also logical to infer that students and teachers are responding critically and adaptively to the intensively ideologized educational agenda.

1.1.5 Implementation of Chinese citizenship education

The social transformations discussed have significantly influenced the worldviews and values of Chinese teachers and students. Teachers often hold a spectrum of values and dispositions towards the regime and society, leading them to interpret the prescribed curricula through their own subjective lenses (Jiang, 2019). Those who have become disillusioned with socialism may engage in the teaching of ideological content in a perfunctory manner, with little concern for whether students genuinely embrace these ideologies (Wong et al., 2019). At the same time, numerous teachers recognize that students are acutely aware of any attempts at indoctrination (Li, 2009). Law and Xu (2020) have highlighted the dilemma faced by teachers when handling ideological content. As one teacher in their study remarked, 'students would

notice if we presented a controversial issue in a biased manner. They might not challenge us in class, but our credibility would be undermined' (ibid, p.148). Consequently, teachers are compelled to navigate carefully, striving to avoid one-sided narratives when addressing contentious issues. Fundamentally, many teachers' conception of a 'good citizen' is more aligned with personal morality than with ideological adherence. They focus on nurturing students to become responsible individuals rather than simply adherents of a particular ideology (Li & Tan, 2017).

For students, their civic values and beliefs are largely molded by personal life experiences, perceptions of societal progress, and subjective well-being, with formal school learning having a relatively minor impact (Wang, 2019). The widespread use of the Internet and social media has provided youths with various avenues to understand the complexities of Chinese society. As a result, some have developed critical views and expressed negative sentiments towards the regime and societal structures (Bennett, Wells & Freelon, 2011). In the classroom, students are acutely aware that the primary goal of engaging with ideological courses is to succeed in examinations, rather than to genuinely endorse the ideologies presented (Law & Xu, 2020). Just as teachers have adapted their delivery of official discourse to maintain credibility, students too have become adept at selectively accepting the official narratives they are given (Jiang, 2021).

University students in China have developed a robust sense of rights and a profound understanding of the social inequalities that characterize their society (Chen, 2018). Shen and Truex (2021) have identified a pattern of self-censorship among Chinese citizens, who may

express support for the government publicly while privately harboring discontent. Concurrently, Chan (1999) has described a mentality of 'political pragmatism' among Chinese university students (p. 381). This mindset has led them to exhibit caution in political matters to avoid potential trouble, stemming from the collective memory of past political traumas. As a survival strategy, students are often careful in public discourse and participation, demonstrating obedience to authority. Furthermore, Cantoni et al. (2017) have observed that many Chinese parents encourage their children to display deference and compliance with state propaganda, rather than engaging in politically critical behavior that could provoke conflict or invite unnecessary trouble.

Besides, the commodification of knowledge has led students to prioritize the acquisition of certificates and the pursuit of high-salary employment over engagement with public issues (Jiang, 2019). The well-known public intellectual Liqun Qian (钱理群) (2007) has criticized contemporary university students as 'refined egoists' ('精致的利己主义者'), accusing them of lacking humanistic concern for public affairs and being self-interested, focusing on maximizing personal gains.

To summarize, on the one hand, Chinese party-state adheres to an ideologized teaching agenda aimed at disseminating socialist ideologies and values; but on the other hand, societal transformations are influencing individuals to adopt more individualistic, liberal, autonomous, and consumeristic mentalities, which may run counter to the state's objectives. Significantly, both educators and students have become skilled at masking their genuine attitudes during the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, the 'public transcript' of Chinese citizenship

education may not be convincing but cast doubt on its true effectiveness. This study aims to uncover the actual outcomes of Chinese citizenship education and to critically evaluate its sociological implications.

1.2 Research Problem and Its Theorization

1.2.1 'Unintended consequence'

In 1936, American sociologist Robert K. Merton published the seminal article '*The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action*', wherein he introduced the term 'unanticipated consequences' to describe outcomes of deliberate actions that are neither intended nor foreseen. Merton later employed 'unintended consequences' synonymously in his 1968 work, 'Social Theory and Social Structure' (Zwart, 2015). Merton (1936; 1968) argued that social action often deviates from rational logic due to factors such as human ignorance, self-deception, cognitive or emotional biases, varied incentives, and potential interest conflicts. While the intended consequences of an action are generally acknowledged, there exists the possibility that outcomes may diverge from expectations, leading to paradoxical and unexpected effects. These effects can be categorized into three types: unexpected benefits, unexpected drawbacks, and perverse outcomes (Merton, 1936; 1968). In the context of formally organized public policies, unexpected drawbacks and perverse outcomes can result in unintended negative effects, potentially leading to the dysfunction of the intended social action (Zwart, 2015). Therefore, examining the potential unexpected outcomes of an educational policy or agenda is crucial for evaluating its effectiveness and the possibility of its dysfunction.

The above literature review suggests that the implementation of Chinese citizenship education may be significantly influenced by the uncertainties inherent in students' mentalities and their innovative approaches to engaging with real-life situations and sourcing information. Scholars, such as Curtis (2021), have cautioned about the risks China's party-state faces regarding the 'Tacitus Trap', a scenario where citizens become distrustful of the government, questioning the authenticity and intentions behind its actions. Given that the educational system is an extension of the party-state's efforts to shape civic culture and dominate opinions among the youth, it is imperative to assess the extent to which Chinese college students have developed a critical stance towards such an educational agenda. As for propaganda, Huang (2018) has warned that the excessive use of hard propaganda in China could lead to increased public disgust and antipathy, potentially backfiring and damaging the state's image and support. In light of this, it is prudent to question whether the repressive agenda of citizenship education, when set against the backdrop of a complex and rapidly changing society, may have inadvertently produced unintended consequences in practice.

1.2.2 'Infrapolitics', 'public transcript', and 'hidden transcript'

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, James Scott (1990) identified that subordinates under conditions of high-stake surveillance and strict discipline are acutely aware of the risks associated with public protest. Consequently, they often convert their discontent into discreet personal actions or internalize it to avoid attracting the attention and potential retribution of authorities. Scott (1990) introduced the concept of 'infrapolitics' as an informal sphere of political confrontation that takes place between subordinates and the

dominant, deliberately staged offstage to evade direct confrontations. Unlike formal politics, which concern the processes of decision-making, power distribution, and overt interactions among political actors, infrapolitics is taken offstage and represents a form of 'disguised, low-profile, undeclared resistance' to domination (Scott, 1990, p. 198).

Then, Scott (1990) differentiated political behaviors into two types: the public transcript, which consists of explicit and visible interactions that demonstrate the dominant's control and the subordinate's deference, and the hidden transcript, which encompasses the implicit and offstage behaviors through which subordinates resist the dominant. The public transcript, often accepted by the authority as the complete narrative, portrays harmonious relationships and polite exchanges, as dictated by the power structure. In contrast, the hidden transcript reveals the subordinates' true attitudes and reactions to the regime and authority, which must be kept concealed (Scott, 1989).

This dichotomy implies a divide between one's public and private actions when facing authority and highlights the disconnect between internal thoughts and public expressions (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). According to Scott (1990), the political actions detailed in the hidden transcript fall within the realm of infrapolitics. These actions may outwardly appear compliant but are, in fact, part of a subtle subculture of resistance. Infrapolitics utilizes disguise, deception, and indirection, making it less visible and less likely to provoke power confrontations. As a result, it is often more prevalent in social life than public forms of contestation, representing an 'immense political terrain' (Scott, 1990, p. 201). The existence of infrapolitics acknowledges that subordinates can exercise agency in resisting authority, even if

21

their forms of resistance are nuanced and influenced by the power structure. Infrapolitics, therefore, represents a form of existential self-understanding within social conditions and reveals a shared political mentality that shapes undercurrents capable of influencing overt political behaviors of resistance (Flam, 2004).

In a general sense, the practice of citizenship education inherently involves the duality of public and hidden transcripts, especially when the state aims to enforce political correctness within increasingly dynamic and diverse social contexts. This assertion holds true regardless of the differences in the centralization or decentralization of political regimes. For instance, Singapore, a centralized state, under the strong leadership of its former President Lee Kuan Yew, embarked on a bilingual education policy in Chinese and English. Despite this, the country has faced significant challenges in forging a unified national identity among its multilingual and multiethnic population (Sim, 2008; 2011). On the other hand, Canada, which operates under a decentralized regime, grapples with the dilemma of ethnic assimilation, despite its long-standing advocacy for diversity and tolerance in its citizenship education (Kim, 2023).

Additionally, in postcolonial societies, citizenship education is often closely tied to the cultivation of nationalism and patriotism, with the aim of strengthening students' national identity and securing their allegiance to the state (Kadiwal & Duranni, 2018). However, such educational agendas can draw criticism when citizens become aware that historical narratives have been curated and manipulated to foster a sense of patriotic citizenship. For example, Wang (2008) identified that in Chinese history education, the country's semi-colonial past is often

22

portrayed as a national humiliation, a narrative used to shape students' collective memory. Similarly, Haynes (2009) discovered that Australian history education tends to romanticize its independence from British colonial rule, utilizing this event as a foundation for constructing a new national identity. Even if the state celebrates a singular set of values promoted through citizenship education as a form of political correctness, alternative ideologies and values cannot be vanished but inevitably exist. Upholding one set of values but claiming the other, this mental tension results in the so-called 'everyday resistance', as discussed below.

1.2.3 'Everyday resistance'

In *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985), James Scott documents the myriad tactics and strategies employed by the powerless to resist oppression and dominance. These include disobedience, sabotage, evasion, slander, false compliance, and feigned ignorance. Contrasting with Against Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony where people's consent to dominance is secured through cultural institutions, Scott believes that the oppressed can and do engage in everyday forms of resistance against such hegemony (Flam, 2004). Unlike public forms of resistance, such as rebellion, revolution, protest, demonstration, and march, which necessitate mobilization, organization, and planning, everyday resistance is taken in the hidden transcript, personal, private, implicit, quiet, dispersed and almost invisible (Scott, 1985). These subtle acts of resistance may not substantially alter the power structure but serve to meaningfully undermine the ruling elites' authority, disrupt their total control, and reduce exploitation and oppression, thereby enhancing the autonomy of the less powerful (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013).

Hence, everyday resistance epitomizes a blend of compliance and resistance. It involves publicly demonstrating compliance with the existing power structure while avoiding overt protests that could result in punishment. Simultaneously, it entails privately taking actions that subtly disrupt the authority's agenda, without provoking an overt confrontation (Flam, 2004). This nuanced approach is where infrapolitics differs from anti-politics. While anti-politics seeks to overturn or reject the current regime, infrapolitics involves a more complex negotiation with the regime, maintaining a critical stance while paradoxically sustaining it.

Although students engage in everyday resistance, this subtle form of opposition often still maintains an outward appearance of submission to the regime. It does not typically manifest as misbehavior, such as rebellious actions, physical aggressiveness, or vandalism (Giroux, 1983). Instead, it encompasses reactions of skepticism and disenchantment towards the official agenda (Fairbrother, 2008). Thus, this type of resistance differs from transformative resistance, which seeks to fundamentally change the regime and social conditions (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Everyday resistance internalizes discontent, limits the propensity for overt defiance, adheres to the mainstream educational agenda, and operates as both a form of resistance and recognition. It serves as a protest but is more akin to a show of respect. Actions that demonstrate this 'respect' can be seen as part of a 'spectacle' that maintains the status quo while quietly voicing dissent.

1.2.4 'Spectacle'

French Marxist philosopher Guy Debord introduced the concept of 'spectacle' in his seminal work *The Society of the Spectacle* (1977) to critique the ways in which the market economy, mass media, and culture industry have alienated society. By manufacturing

consumerist spectacles and the fetishism of commodities, these forces have created a society dominated by appearances rather than authentic social relations. The term 'spectacle' carries two layers of meaning: in a limited sense, it refers to consumerist phenomena such as advertising, television, film, photography, and the cult of celebrities. More critically, it denotes a feigned, artificial scene that celebrates consumeristic illusions while stripping away the authenticity of social reality (Kaplan, 2012).

Debord (1977) argues that the spectacle represents the autocratic rule of the market economy, signifying its total colonization of social life. Further, Debord (ibid.) notes that the spectacle is not just a collection of consumerist images; it is a social relation among people that is mediated by images (thesis 4). Its purpose is to demand subordination to commodities. When individuals become immersed in a consumeristic spectacle, they are commodified, losing agency over their own lives, and diminishing the authenticity of social existence (Kaplan, 2012).

While this dissertation does not aim to delve into capitalist production and consumerism, it adopts the concept of spectacle to describe situations where the authenticity of social action is compromised within social relations. This loss of authenticity can stem from capitalistic power in a market economy or from political power in a disciplinary regime. Under strict supervision, actions may be motivated not by genuine intentions but by the pursuit of symbolic meanings, leading to a life that is more about appearance than substance.

This analysis is applicable not only to politically centralized regimes, such as China, but also to any context where the state imposes political correctness through citizenship education. In the United States, for example, despite the expanding social inequalities perpetuated by

neoliberalism, education persists in promoting a narrative of equality and social justice. However, as Michael Apple (1993) questioned, how can one remain unmoved by 'the growing gap between rich and poor, the persistence of hunger and homelessness, the deadly absence of medical care, the degradations of poverty?' (p. 13).

Sonu (2012) found that while the government sets educational agendas for social justice, teachers and students continue to follow their personal visions of justice, often embracing the ethos of neoliberal competition. As Michael Sandel commented in *The Tyranny of Merit* (2021), the conviction of competition is deeply ingrained in American society, making the educational appeal for social justice seem more absurd than appealing to students. In essence, citizenship education, by its nature, is political and serves to establish cultural hegemony by defining the 'collective will' (Fairbrother, 2008, p. 388). To fulfill this collective will, the practice of citizenship education may transform into a spectacle.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Authentic citizenship vs. affected citizenship

Based on the reviewed literature on Chinese citizenship education, it is evident that both teachers and students often conceal their genuine civic perspectives in public, articulating only praise and loyalty to official discourses. However, the seemingly harmonious images of teaching and learning, as well as high grades on ideological coursework, do not necessarily indicate a genuine willingness to engage with the official agenda of citizenship education. Instead, they may reflect a strategic compliance with the established power relations. Thus, the

term 'spectacle' is aptly applied to describe the public transcript that celebrates political correctness within the practice of citizenship education.

This dissertation posits the assumption of a 'duality' in Chinese students' citizenship, comprising two distinct aspects:

1. **Authentic Citizenship**: this represents an individual's true political stances, civic values, and ideologies, shaped by personal effort, subjective experiences, and intellectual development.

2. **Affected Citizenship**: a product of the 'spectacle' in education, this involves a pragmatic adaptation to the political environment, where individuals may pretend to conform with the official normative expectations.

Authentic citizenship is a manifestation of one's subjective journey of understanding, synthesis, and belief formation, driven by creativity and personal growth. In contrast, affected citizenship arises from external pressures and influences that guide, induce, or even coerce individuals into certain thoughts and behaviors, representing an adaptation to external stimuli.

This study aims to deconstruct the spectacle of citizenship education to reveal the authenticity of students' intellectual development and the true shaping of their citizenship. The focus is on discerning what students truly believe from what they are led to believe, with the latter constituting the spectacle and the former being the subject of this academic inquiry.

1.3.2 Three questions

The above discussions give rise to three key research questions that warrant further exploration:

1. **Unintended Consequences**: What are the unintended consequences of Chinese citizenship education, and how do they manifest in the authentic citizenship of Chinese students?

2. **Hidden Transcripts**: What is the nature of the hidden transcript in citizenship education within classrooms? How can the synthesis of both public and hidden transcripts provide a more comprehensive understanding of the citizenship-shaping process?

3. **Social Transformation and Individualism**: How do the values and beliefs of students, shaped by citizenship education, interact with the broader social context of individualization? In what ways do students respond to the official grand narrative and Chinese Confucian collectivism, and how does this response direct them towards a new form of individualism?

These questions will be further framed in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation through an in-depth literature review and theoretical discussion.

1.4 Research Significance

1.4.1 To propose a new conceptual framework for citizenship in socialist China

Since the 1990s, the study of citizenship has emerged as a significant field, examining the state's delineation of citizens' rights and obligations, as well as its moral appeal for civic virtues and values (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Isin & Turner, 2002; Andreotti, 2014). Liberalism tends to emphasize citizenship in terms of entitlements or rights (Marshall, 1950; Quicke, 1992; Schuck, 2002), while republicanism views it as a set of legal and moral obligations to engage in civic affairs (McLaughlin, 1992; Dagger, 2002; Johnson & Morris, 2010). Despite these differing perspectives, Western democracies commonly employ constitutionalism as the

foundational principle for designing citizenship education. This approach considers citizenship

across various dimensions, including civic dispositions (e.g., political trust, self-efficacy),

knowledge and skills, values and ideologies, and civic participations, both constitutional (such

as voting) and contentious (such as protests) (McLaughlin, 1992; Hahn, 1998; Kerr, 1999;

Althof & Bertowitz, 2006; Peterson, 2011; 2020; Lin, 2015; Torres, 2017).

From the 2000s onwards, numerous scholars have utilized the lens of citizenship education

to scrutinize China's moral, political, and ideological education (Tu, 2011; Chen, 2018; Wang,

2019; Law & Xu, 2020; Jiang, 2021). However, a potential limitation in this body of work

stems from the misapplication of the republican concept of citizenship, which prioritizes civic

participation, to the context of Chinese citizenship education. This has led some researchers to

focus heavily on students' civic participation and to conclude that Chinese students exhibit

passive citizenship due to their perceived lack of political self-efficacy and limited engagement.

Critics, such as Yu and Feng (2010), argue that there is no true citizenship education in China,

as the curriculum of Morality and Politics emphasizes obligations and commitments while

neglecting rights and participation.

Obviously, this critique assumes that citizenship can only be exercised through the

fulfillment of rights and participation in civil affairs, a notion rooted in liberal or republican

conceptions of citizenship. Yet, this assumption risks confining the definition of citizenship to

these frameworks, overlooking alternative interpretations. Simplifying citizenship education as

solely liberalistic or republican risks failing to grasp the state-citizen relationship in other

cultural contexts, thereby narrowing and misunderstanding the political sociology of education.

29

In fact, public participation is not a primary goal of Chinese citizenship education nor is it a quality encouraged within Chinese social environments. Consequently, studies focusing on participation may align with a 'universal' theoretical framework of citizenship but offer limited sociological insight into local contexts.

Instead, a more effective approach to assess Chinese citizenship education would focus on students' socialist ideologies and political beliefs, which align with the education's original objectives and serve as motivators for shaping other dimensions of citizenship, including participation. This study aims to contribute an epistemological framework of citizenship suited to the context of socialist China. It continues the debate on citizenship as legal status, entitlements, participation, or civic virtue (Marshall, 1950; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Andreotti, 2011; Kester, 2023) and provides a theoretical comparison between socialist patriotism and constitutional patriotism in Chapter 2.

1.4.2 To view citizenship with a cultural lens of Confucian 'relational self'

As suggested by Samuel P. Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996), China and the United States have divergent perspectives on human rights. Beyond the differences in political systems, China is distinguished by its Confucian cultural heritage. This heritage shapes a collectivist ethos based on the 'relational self', offering a unique lens through which to understand interpersonal relations and the relationship between individuals and collective entities (Yan, 2017). In Chinese history, collective concepts such as 'people' have long existed, while the individualistic Western notion of 'one person' or 'an individual' has not. It was only in the early 20th century that the concept of 'citizen' was introduced to China, with its meaning

leaning more towards a relational context—defining the relationship between individuals and the community (state or civil society)—rather than emphasizing individual rights or participation (Goldman & Perry, 2002).

Thus, when contextualized within China, the concept of citizenship is deeply influenced by local cultural and political traditions. For instance, Perry (2009) observed that the impetus for Chinese protests often stems not from rights consciousness but from a historical 'rule consciousness', which posits that the government's role is to ensure social welfare, which is seen as a source of legitimacy (p.20). In 2003, Nathan (2003) published his famous article *Authoritarian Resilience*, in which he commented Chinese authoritarian regime differs from the classical model of authoritarianism defined by Linz (1964), due to its resilience to flexibly address social protests.

In fact, Chinese protesters typically critique the government for failing to provide welfare rather than for infringing upon civil rights. While demonstrations are a recognized form of expression in Western democracies, the belief that 'demonstrations should generally not be permitted due to their potential for disorder' persists among the Chinese populace (Chen & Lu, 2011, p.709). Given the Chinese cultural preference for social stability and solidarity, Chen (2014) notes that 'beneath the surface of noise and anxiety, the entire political system remains stable' (p.5).

Fundamentally, there is a political belief in China that strong and unified leadership is essential to maintain the country's unity and strength (Vogel, 2013). Unlike Western constitutional republics, which are characterized by the separation of powers, the Chinese

regime has focused on centralizing authority, overseen the state apparatus, and positioned itself as the ultimate leader in all matters (Zhou, 2017). This belief drives Chinese to be critical of decentralization of power. For example, Cantoni et al. (2017) found that Chinese middle school students tend to be critical of the free market and laissez-faire economics, advocating for state intervention to foster a healthier market environment. Jia (2019) observed a prevalent critique among Chinese people of Western unencumbered individualism, excessive consumerism, and elitism.

As Arif Dirlik pointed out in *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (1989), Confucian collectivism has bequeathed China with a significant ideological legacy. It fosters a sense of community belonging, which was a key factor in the Chinese populace's receptiveness to communism. Thus, the party-state's promotion of socialist education is not merely a political strategy but also resonates with Chinese cultural traditions. Chapter 3 will delve into how Confucianism establishes its 'role ethics' based on the philosophy of the 'relational self' (Rosemont & Ames, 2016), contributing to collectivism and shaping Chinese attitudes towards socialism.

1.4.3 To facilitate comparative epistemology for comparative/global citizenship education

In recent decades, the practice of citizenship education worldwide has confronted several common challenges. These include a decline in political trust (Norris, 1999; Pharr & Putnam, 2000), a surge in nationalism and xenophobia towards minority groups (Ikenberry, 2018), and a waning belief in the possibility of constructing a global community based on multiculturalism.

Torres (2017) has noted the paradoxical processes unfolding globally: the ongoing spread of democratic values alongside a growing disenchantment with democracy, a trend exacerbated by phenomena such as Trumpism, heightened racism, and increased attacks on marginalized communities. Scholars including Kimlicka and Norman (1994), Delanty (2002), Banks (2014), and Torres (2017) have concluded that classical liberalism, with its focus on individual rights and a tendency to isolate the self from others, falls short in comprehending otherness and in fostering a robust sense of community.

In this context, reviving citizenship education for democracy necessitates ontological reflection. It requires reevaluating the construction of citizenship and the definition of 'the self', thereby reshaping people's perceptions of citizenship and its relationship with the state (Torres, 2017). A comparative epistemological approach that embraces multiculturalism and draws on diverse experiences is crucial. It can help identify both commonalities and differences across various cultures, reducing misunderstandings and promoting dialogue (Tarozzi & Torres, 2016).

Studying Chinese citizenship education, particularly with a focus on Confucian collectivism, can shed light on how collectivist principles contribute to different models of governance and state-individual dynamics. It can highlight the positive effects of collectivism, such as fostering a sense of community. While Western scholars like Charles Taylor (1989) call for communitarianism, their philosophical foundation is still on the individual self and tends to theorize community as assembling of individuals rather than a real organic collective entity. The philosophical basis of Confucian collectivism on the 'relational self' can be a good complementary element to the Western counterpart of the 'individual self'.

On the other hand, understanding citizenship in socialist China can also help understand citizenship issues in other countries with similar political and ideological contexts. Svyatoslav Rybas (2010) contends in the biography of Joseph Stalin that the Russian national ethos, characterized by self-sacrifice, collectivism, and commitment to the nation, necessitates strong leadership. This leadership is required to mobilize the country's resources and inspire citizens to make sacrifices for the greater good. While this dissertation does not aim to discuss Russia, it acknowledges some similarities between China and Russia, especially considering Russia's socialist legacy from the Soviet era, namely, the regime of political centralization, the tradition of social mobilization, the spirit of self-sacrifice, etc.

1.5 Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 provides an interdisciplinary discussion from many perspectives of political philosophy, hermeneutics, education, culture and sociology. Themes discussed include: constitutional patriotism, socialist patriotism, ideological state apparatus, hermeneutics of suspicion, grand narrative, banking pedagogy, collectivism, and individualism and so on.

Chapter 3, 4 and 5 illustrate Chinese cultural and political background.

Chapter 3 illustrates how Confucianism contributed to the collectivism-oriented culture, how 'citizen' was translated and creatively interpreted in China and how Marxism arrived in China.

Chapter 4 outlines how Chinese socialist leaders such as Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Xi Jinping have developed Chinese socialist education.

Chapter 5 discusses how the grand narrative in current China is constructed on collectivism and patriotism.

After Chapter 6 discusses methodology and research design, Chapter 7, 8 and 9 outline the major findings.

Chapter 7 summarizes the research participants' authentic citizenship, compares the explanatory power of two conceptual frameworks of citizenship, and proposes a typology model for socialist citizenship.

Chapter 8 discusses the hidden transcript of these participants' learning experiences of citizenship education and summarizes the four-step model of their citizenship-shaping.

Chapter 9 introduces these participants' responses to the grand narrative and their attitudes towards collectivism. A new type of individualism is identified.

Chapter 10 concludes the political sociology of Chinese citizenship education and analyzes its impacts for potential social transformations.

Chapter 2. Theory Review

This chapter offers a thorough theoretical examination of citizenship education.

Section 2.1 commences with Montesquieu's classification of political regimes and reviews the evolution of citizenship within Western contexts (Isin & Turner, 2002). Following an introduction to the trajectory of proletarian internationalism, the study posits that the Chinese political system is characterized by a blend of monarchical bureaucracy and charismatic authority (Kuhn, 2002; Zhou, 2017) and that socialist patriotism stands as the central tenet of Chinese citizenship education.

Section 2.2 examines a variety of theoretical perspectives about cultural hegemony, including Louis Althusser's theory of ideological state apparatuses (1970), Jean-François Lyotard's critique of grand narratives (1984), and Paul Ricœur's exploration of hermeneutics and suspicion (1974). The section argues that Chinese individualization involves a tendency for individuals to express skepticism and dissent towards the official grand narrative.

Section 2.3 introduces the work of influential educators, discussing Paulo Freire's critique (1970) of the banking pedagogy and highlighting Jean Piaget's constructivism (1977) to underscore the significance of life experiences in shaping cognition.

Section 2.4 concludes with a discussion on cultural evolution. It introduces Rohald Inglehart's research on the World Values Map (1996) and outlines Harry Triandis's conceptualization of vertical and horizontal collectivism (1995).

2.1 Political Regimes, Citizenship, and Patriotism

2.1.1 Montesquieu: three kinds of political systems and their 'principles'

Montesquieu, often regarded as the father of the theory of separation of powers, is renowned for his classification of political systems. In his seminal work *The Spirit of Laws*, originally published in 1748, Montesquieu delineates three primary types of political regimes: republican, monarchical, and despotic. These classifications are based on the presence of a fixed set of laws that restrain the ruler's power and the extent to which citizens can exercise their rights (Montesquieu, 1748/1989). In despotic regimes, no such laws exist, whereas monarchical regimes are characterized by the existence of laws that check the ruler's authority. Republican regimes are distinguished by the ability of citizens to extend their rights, with democratic republics allowing broad extension of citizenship rights and aristocratic republics restricting this extension (ibid.).

Montesquieu posits that each type of regime is underpinned by a guiding 'principle' that motivates individuals to support the regime. For republics, this principle is the love of virtue, which prioritizes the community's interests over private ones. Monarchies are driven by the love of honor, an aspiration for higher rank and privilege, while despotisms are maintained through the fear of the ruler (ibid.).

Across different regimes, education plays an important role in reinforcing these principles (ibid.). In republics, the purpose of education is to instill virtues, especially the love of law and the motherland. Since each citizen has a stake in the government, a love for the law is essential for preserving the republican form (Montesquieu, 1748/1989, Book IV). In monarchies,

37

education aims to cultivate a politeness of manners, driven by the desire to distinguish oneself within the social hierarchy (ibid.). In despotisms, education is essentially discipline to mold subjects into obedient slaves, with Montesquieu noting that 'education there is, in some sense, empty: everything must be removed to put something in, and you must first make a poor subject to make a good slave'[6] (Montesquieu, 1748/1989, Book IV, Chapter 3).

According to Montesquieu, political liberty is a central tenet for all political systems; this liberty is not about the freedom to act as one pleases but rather the freedom to act virtuously, unimpeded by external coercion (Krause, 2000). Thus, the republics represent the direction of civilization, with both monarchies and despotisms replaced. While education plays a role in guiding individuals' will and actions, Montesquieu also emphasizes the need for republican institutions to safeguard political liberty. He proposes two primary means to achieve this: first, the separation of powers within the government, ensuring that the executive, legislative, and judicial functions are vested in distinct bodies. This division prevents the sovereign's will from superseding the law and allows for checks on any attempts to infringe upon political liberty by one branch of government (Montesquieu, 1748/1989). Second, Montesquieu advocates for the establishment of appropriate civil and criminal laws to ensure personal security. He highlights the importance of a robust procedural due process, where every citizen has the right to a fair trial, the presumption of innocence, and proportionality in punishment.

---

[6] Quote from the online edition: Montesquieu: The Spirit of Law, trans. Philip Stewart, 2018. http://montesquieu.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?rubrique186

Today, Montesquieu's ideas on constitutional government and the separation of powers have been influential around the world. However, some of these ideas seem to have been misrepresented, as indicated later.

2.1.2 Thomas Marshall: liberal citizenship

In modern ages, citizenship is a multifaceted term that encompasses the rights and obligations conferred by the state, as well as the virtues, beliefs, and skills necessary to exercise these rights and fulfill these obligations (Isin & Turner, 2002). Different political traditions have given rise to distinct interpretations of citizenship. Republican citizenship, for instance, is characterized by its public-spiritedness and an emphasis on active participation in public life (Turnr, 1990; Dagger, 2002), while liberal citizenship tends to be more private, focusing on individual rights, liberty, and welfare (Schuck, 2002). In the post-War era, the mainstreaming concept of citizenship has undergone a significant transformation, and shifted its focus from entitlements to civic participation, and more recently, to civic virtues, as discussed below.

In 1950, Thomas Humphrey Marshall's seminal work *Citizenship and Social Class* introduced a foundational perspective on citizenship as a set of rights that evolve with the transformation of social contexts. In the 18th century, the burgeoning civil society led to the establishment of civil rights, which included the freedoms of speech and the person, property ownership rights, and access to justice. As the middle class grew and challenged aristocratic rule, the 19th century saw citizenship expressed through political rights, notably the right to participate in governance through the election of parliamentary representatives, or universal suffrage. By the 20th century, Marshall described citizenship in terms of social rights, which

encompassed access to social welfare, including basic education, healthcare, unemployment insurance, and other essentials necessary for a civilized existence. According to Marshall, once individuals are acknowledged as full members of society, they are entitled to these social rights; hence, the realization of the citizenship for all is measured by the universalization of social welfare. This perspective was particularly influential during the 1950s, justifying the construction of welfare states (Schuck, 2002).

However, Marshall's perspective faced criticism. Michael Mann (1986; 1987) pointed out that Marshall's model was grounded in the history of England and did not account for the variations in other countries. Instead, Mann highlighted in his paper *Ruling Class Strategies and Citizenship* (1987) that in Germany and France, state apparatuses often retained authoritarian characteristics and the institution of citizenship served as a governance strategy, aiming to establish social hierarchy and encourage the lower classes to submit to and obey the higher classes. On the other hand, critics like Turner (1990) examined English liberalism and argued the expansion of personal entitlements under Marshall's model placed an excessive burden of social responsibility on the state. This focus on rights over obligations overlooked the essential role that citizens must play in actively engaging with and contributing to society.

As the welfare state regime generated significant inefficiencies, a conservative resurgence emerged alongside the economic challenges of the late 1970s (Pierson, 2012). This conservative political agenda perceived the welfare state as a major contributor to these issues and advocated for cuts in the budget allocated to social programs, including those for income maintenance, healthcare, and housing. Prominent right-wing politicians, such as then American

President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, championed the concept of the self-responsible citizen. They argued that citizens should 'go beyond entitlement' and instead strive for employment, healthcare, and housing through individual efforts to achieve self-sufficiency (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p.356).

Then, this shift towards privatization and decentralization exacerbated social inequality and bolstered the neoliberal ideology, which 'conceives persons as free and independent selves, unencumbered by moral or civic ties they have not chosen' (Sandel, 1996, p.6). Robert Putnam, in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), criticized this trend, noting the decline of the American tradition of community association and active public life. He observed a sharp decrease in people's sense of community and an increasing individualization and fragmentation of society, with a concurrent decline in social cohesion.

2.1.3 Jürgen Habermas: republican citizenship and constitutional patriotism

Since the late 1980s, there has been a call for the return of republican citizenship, which fosters a commitment to public goods, active participation in public life, and a focus on community and nation-state interests (Dagger, 2002). This shift in citizenship studies has moved the focus from defining 'an entitled citizen' to defining 'a public-responsible citizen'. For example, McLaughlin (1992) contributed to this discourse by differentiating between 'minimal' and 'maximal' citizenship: minimal citizenship is viewed in legal terms, emphasizing legitimate rights and a minimal level of social engagement; in contrast, maximal citizenship involves active engagement and a strong commitment to public affairs.

The concept of civic virtues has also been integrated into the definition of 'a good citizen'. Kimlicka and Norman (1994) have noted that 'procedural-institutional mechanisms to balance self-interests are not enough and that some level of civic virtue and public-spiritedness is required' (p. 359-360). The term 'active citizenship', rooted in Kantian philosophy, has been discussed in two senses: juridically, it refers to constitutional freedom, civic equality, and public participation; morally, it pertains to the altruistic spirit of volunteering, donating, and advocating for social justice and sustainable development (Saha, 2000). Westheimer and Kahne (2004) have identified three types of citizens that reflect the core aspects of citizenship: 1) the personally-responsible citizen, who acts responsibly for their own sake; 2) the participatory citizen, who engages in public affairs; and 3) the justice-oriented citizen, who actively addresses social issues and works towards promoting social justice within the community.

By the late 1990s, globalization had introduced a transformative shift in the perception of citizenship. This transformation occurred through two primary mechanisms: redefining the role of the state to consider external influences and elevating the importance of global commons and the collective resolution of global issues (Burbules & Torres, 2013). Alongside this, the rise of identity politics, including nationalism, feminism, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of social identification, rendered citizenship as a critical element of social identity and recognition across various social groups (Isin & Turner, 2002). The republican notion of identity was considered insufficiently broad, necessitating a more inclusive examination of citizenship that accounts for cosmopolitanism, communitarianism, and the tensions between local and global identities (Isin, 2002; Hanasz, 2006). In the absence of a global legal

framework, the ideal of cosmopolitan citizenship is largely aspirational and is pursued through the enhancement of individual morality, global awareness, and the adoption of values that reach beyond national allegiances (Andreotti, 2014).

According to Jürgen Habermas (1992), a nationalistic collective identity is unsustainable in a modern, globalized world, but instead, a post-nationalist identity is necessary to transcend individual ethnocultural identities and situate persons within a global system. Constitutional patriotism has emerged as a concept to replace traditional forms of nationality (Müller, 2006; 2007; Müller & Scheppele, 2008). In fact, this notion was originally proposed by the German liberal philosopher Karl Jaspers in the aftermath of World War II. Jaspers aimed to address the collective political guilt of Germany, stemming from its Nazi regime's perpetration of the Holocaust and other atrocities. The idea was to shift the political attachment of Germans from a traumatic sense of nationality to a commitment to constitutional politics (Müller, 2006). Later, Habermas advocated for constitutional patriotism as a means to unify West Germans. This was to be achieved by discarding the concept of ethnically homogeneous nation-states and instead fostering a community based on a shared recognition of a liberal democratic constitution (Ingram, 1996). Habermas further applied the concept of constitutional patriotism to the development of Europeanism. By doing so, he legitimized the coexistence and sense of belonging among multiple cultural and ethnic nations within a supranational entity, such as the European Union (Lacroix, 2002).

The concept of constitutional patriotism holds at least two paramount significances. Firstly, it serves as a robust source of democratic legitimacy for a regime. This is because the liberal

democratic constitution underpins the principle that modern societies rely upon—a consensus on the procedural legitimacy for enacting laws and exercising power (Müller, 2006). Secondly, constitutional patriotism redefines the relationship between individual and collective identities, thereby reinforcing cosmopolitanism (Calhoun, 2002). Individual identity is not solely shaped by the internalization of nationalistic values and cultures, but also by cosmopolitan moral concerns that transcend race, ethnicity, and cultural differences (Müller, 2006).

In a broad sense, cultivating constitutional patriotism has become the most essential goal of citizenship education in many Western constitutional democracies. Citizenship education for constitutionalism is centered on preparing students to actively engage in civic affairs. Students are taught the rule of law, human rights, tolerance for diversity, communication, and deliberative politics (Lin, 2015). However, the Marxist revolutions and campaigns have introduced an alternative trajectory for conceptualizing citizenship and citizenship education.

2.1.4 Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin: socialist patriotism and party constitution

In the early stages of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary movements, socialist patriotism was closely linked to proletarian internationalism, also known as international socialism (Jones, 1990). Marx and Engels, in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), posited that capitalism is a global system, and thus, local proletarian revolutions are not isolated events but components of a worldwide class struggle. They called for the working classes across the globe to unite in the fight against capitalism (Eagleton, 2011). The well-known slogan 'Proletarians of the world, unite!' is to articulate this idea, advocating for a steadfast commitment to socialism and a

collective effort to advance the cause of communism, transcending national borders (Lynch, 1999).

Since the establishment of Soviet Russia as the world's first socialist state guided by communist ideology in 1917, Russia, and subsequently the Soviet Union, was seen as the epicenter of communism and the hub of the global communist revolution. The Soviet Union's paramount leader, Joseph Stalin, focused on advancing the Soviet communist agenda while also promoting international socialism. This included exporting socialist ideologies and supporting communist revolutions in other countries, such as China (Ramet, 1989, p. 294).

However, the rise of nationalist sentiments within the Soviet Union's fifteen republics during the 1920s presented a challenge. Stalin recognized that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) wielded only 'limited sovereignty' in these republics (Jones, 1990, p. 1). In a manner analogous to Habermas's (1992) advocacy for constitutional patriotism as a transcendence of traditional patriotism in European countries, Stalin championed socialist patriotism to supersede previous national allegiances by encouraging loyalty solely to socialism and to the leadership of the CPSU (Jones, 1990). With the Communist Party as the sole ruling party, the party-state became the dual embodiment of the ideological and institutional aspects of the communist cause. Consequently, socialist patriotism came to encompass two dimensions: an ideological recognition of socialism and a political allegiance to the communist party (Kopeček, 2012; Zhao, 2016).

To safeguard the integrity of the communist revolution, Leninism advocated for the establishment of a party constitution that would serve as a superordinate authority to the state's

constitution, thereby leading and overseeing the state apparatus (Lenin, 1917). Traditional Marxist sociology is critical of the state's role, viewing it as an instrument of the bourgeoisie to preserve capitalist interests and perpetuate social class relations. It also questions the state's capacity to foster social equality, a skepticism that has been reinforced by the inequalities evident in neoliberal America (Sandel, 1996; Eagleton, 2011).

Moreover, as Lenin argued in *The State and Revolution* (1917), socialism is inherently fragile when confronted with the formidable forces of capitalism. Consequently, a socialist regime must be governed by the dictatorship of the proletariat to suppress the bourgeoisie and prevent the society from succumbing to capitalist liberalization. Therefore, to preserve the revolutionary essence of the communist party, the party constitution, rather than the state constitution, is deemed the ultimate authority. It supervises all socialist campaigns and underpins socialist patriotism. The primacy of the party constitution over the state constitution signifies a fundamental distinction between socialist governance and Western constitutional democracies.

Constitutional patriotism, as found in Western democracies, allows for diversity, and encourages deliberation. It operates on the principle of procedural justice, seeking consensus through democratic dialogue.

In contrast, socialist patriotism is often characterized as compulsory and exclusive, demanding loyalty solely to the principles of socialism. It prioritizes the absoluteness of socialist ideology and seeks to shape consensus around the goals of socialism. While constitutional patriotism values individual autonomy and diversity, socialist patriotism

emphasizes adherence to collective norms, obedience to the socialist authority, and a commitment to the common good and social welfare.

Table 1 outlines a comparison between constitutional patriotism and socialist patriotism, highlighting their distinct principles and approaches to governance and societal values.

Table 1. The comparison between constitutional patriotism and socialism patriotism

	Constitutional patriotism	Socialist patriotism
Source of mandate	State constitution	Party's constitution
Core principle	Procedure justice - to reach consensus through deliberation	Substantive justice - to manipulate consensus for socialism
Core values	Autonomy, dialogue, tolerance	Obedience, commitment, allegiance
Major contents	Constitutionalism, republicanism	Marxism, Socialism, and communism

2.1.5 Socialist citizenship as recognition

Basically, in the socialist party-state regime, the party is recognized as the ultimate source of power. In China, it is a widely accepted principle that the Constitution of the Communist Party of China holds the supreme authority, with the Constitution of the People's Republic of China being crafted in the spirit of the party's constitution (Backer, 2009; Bell, 2015; Smith, 2021). Consequently, the concept of constitutionalism in China is more accurately characterized as party-state constitutionalism.

A comparative examination of Chinese citizenship education and that in constitutional democracies can be approached by analyzing how differing constitutional foundations shape distinct political regimes and, subsequently, their respective citizenship education models. For instance, the United States employs the constitutional principle of separation of powers to

prevent the over-concentration of authority. In contrast, China places the party's constitution above the state constitution, aiming to address a different issue: ensuring unified leadership and preventing the divergence of power (Zhou, 2017). While the U.S. adheres to the principle of procedural justice, seeking consensus through deliberation, China aims to achieve substantive justice under the banner of socialism. However, this approach requires China to justify the necessity of the CPC's overarching power, which surpasses the rule of law, to lead and oversee the state's operations.

Regarding citizenship education, Lenin, in his seminal work *What Is to Be Done?* (1901), emphasized that the development of an understanding of socialism is paramount among educational objectives. He argued that ideological formation is not a spontaneous occurrence and that proletarians are unlikely to develop class consciousness through demonstrations or strikes alone. Instead, they must be deliberately educated. During the early stages of the Russian socialist revolution, Lenin focused on organizing the Communist Vanguard. His efforts were aimed at disseminating Marxism to the masses, educating them to adopt Marxist perspectives to understand their circumstances, and mobilizing them to follow the leadership of the Communist Party.

While citizenship education in constitutional democracies aims to prepare students to engage with constitutional procedures, the primary objective of socialist citizenship education is to instill in students an understanding and recognition of the communist revolutionary agenda. Within this agenda, students' civic participations are not expected to oriented to the value-

48

implicit deliberation – but towards value-explicit ends, specifically the socialist goal of realizing the communist utopia (White, 2004; Zhao, 2016).

To ensure that all citizens act in furtherance of socialist goals, the constitution of the communist party, rather than the state constitution, holds the ultimate authority in evaluating actions and allegiance. In such a framework, Montesquieu's advocacy for a robust procedural due process can be seen as less robust. The normative aspects of the law may be set aside if the objective is deemed justified in the pursuit of communist endeavors (Brown, 2012). While the state constitution attempts to protect citizens' civic rights, including the right to a fair trial, the presumption of innocence, and proportionality in punishment, these rights can be suspended if one is perceived as betraying the principles of socialism and the party (Chen, 2018). This dynamic has been observed in numerous political campaigns and purges throughout the history of the Soviet Union and socialist China, including during the Cultural Revolution. In such contexts, an individual may be branded an 'enemy' of socialism and stripped of their legal status if their loyalty to the socialist cause is found wanting (MacFarquhar, 1987; 1999; Wu, 2013).

Given the emphasis on ideological loyalty and institutional allegiance, the specific mode of civic participation becomes secondary. This understanding underscores the importance of locating the focus of Chinese citizenship education on students' recognition of, faith in, and allegiance to socialist ideology and the Communist Party. Given two dimensions of ideological recognition (of socialism) and institutional recognition (on the party), this study considers

socialist citizenship as recognition. A comparative analysis of these citizenship models is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The comparison among liberal citizenship, republican citizenship, and socialist citizenship

	Liberal citizenship	Republican citizenship	Socialist citizenship
orientation	Citizenship as rights	Citizenship as participation	Citizenship as recognition
Civic dispositions	Open-ended, not restricted, dissent allowed	Public spirits strongly encouraged	Closed-ended, strong political allegiance required
Civic values	Values-implicit, inclusive, individualism	Values related to communicative rationality	Values-explicit, highly exclusive, only socialist ideologies allowed
Civic participations	Minimal participation; law-abiding	Participation strongly encouraged	Strictly restricted, only compliant participation allowed

Therefore, this study rejects to take the conceptual framework of citizenship for constitutional patriotism to investigate Chinese citizenship education; instead, a conceptual framework of socialist citizenship is adopted. Although civic participations are still important domains that deserve considerations, the most essential elements in socialist citizenship are ideological recognition of socialism and political allegiance to the communist party. Further discussions are outlined in Chapter 7.

2.2 Cultural Hegemony, Grand narrative, and Hermeneutics of Suspicion

2.2.1 A brief discussion about ideology

Ideology encompasses a comprehensive set of beliefs that pertain to various aspects of society, including but not limited to the political regime, economy, justice system, social welfare, environment, race, and religion (Macionis, 2010). Political ideology, among many

types of ideologies, directly relates to how society should function, how to allocate power, and how to utilize that power to achieve an ideal society (Eagleton, 1991). Each political ideology incorporates notions of the most effective form of government (e.g. democracy, autocracy, theocracy, etc.) and economic system (e.g. capitalism, socialism, etc.) (Freeden, 1996). Because political ideologies are founded on different fundamental concepts - such as class conflict in Marxism and liberty in Liberalism - they can produce conflicting claims. For instance, Marxism views private property as a product of capitalism's exploitative nature, yet allows for state intervention, while liberalism perceives state intervention as a violation of personal liberties and supports private property (Eagleton, 1991).

Despite different claims, ideologies share similar sociological functions. First, they create a collective consciousness among people, shape a common identity, and enhance social solidarity. Ideologies usually imply a shared pattern of cognition, a certain type of reasoning, and a structure of expectations and self-definitions (Arendt, 1968). This collective consciousness also serves as the source of public morality and as the binding force that brings individuals together into society. Without ideology, a society may experience a moral vacuum, and individuals may fail to associate themselves with it, viewing it only in a purely instrumental way (Vincent, 2010).

The second role of ideology is to provide distinct implications in semiotics that direct people's actions (Freeden, 1996). According to Marxist theory, a society's economic base determines its political superstructure, which is reflected in the dominant ideology. In a feudal regime, ideology invites people to accept hierarchy and respect authority, while in capitalist

societies, liberalism is often the dominant ideology to motivate individuals to extend their entitlements through marketing economy (Eagleton, 1991).

In the context of communist revolutions, ideology is frequently perceived as a system of falsehoods deliberately propagated by the ruling class to preserve their social status (Eagleton, 1991). As a result, communist leaders are typically dedicated to disseminating Marxist-Leninist ideologies as an ideological counterweight to capitalist ideologies. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), predicted that an anti-capitalist revolution would arise from the inherent contradictions of the capitalist economy and that the ideology of the ruling class would be effectively challenged. However, by the early 20th century, such a revolution had not occurred in Europe.

2.2.2 Antonio Gramsci: cultural hegemony

Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) introduced the concept of cultural hegemony in his *Prison Notebooks* (1925-1931/1971) to explain how the ruling capitalist class sustains and consolidates its power through cultural institutions. Gramsci identified two primary methods of rule: one is through political society, which includes the police, the army, and the legal system, to dominate by coercion and enforcement; the other is through civil society, which encompasses propaganda, newspapers, the education system, trade unions, etc., to domesticate the masses and secure their voluntary consent to the existing authority.

Within civil society, the ruling class is often comprised of cultural elite groups that leads the shaping of ideology. Cultural elites selectively utilize those aspects of history or reality that

align with their preferences, formulating a set of normative claims to explain social development (Gramsci, 1925-1931/1971). Then, cultural institutions such as schools, churches, courts, as well as propaganda and media, collectively propagate these ideological codes but also deliver the illusion that the ruling class's worldview, beliefs, and values are universally beneficial and should be embraced as cultural norms by all segments of society. By convincing the working class that the current political, social, and economic order is natural, inevitable, and enduring, the ruling class cultivates a false consciousness among workers. This misperception leads them to believe that their best interests are aligned with the status quo, resulting in a sense of satisfaction with existing conditions and a willingness to consent to the authority of the ruling class (Gramsci, 2007).

Unlike enforcement that takes coercive measures to compel the masses to act as what the authority orders, cultural hegemony takes a soft and subtle approach to encourage them to accept the ruling class's preferred worldview (Anderson, 1976). However, civil society does not ensure the dominance of a single ideology. Instead, it creates a dynamic field of compromise through ideological struggles and negotiations; cultural hegemony is to compete the ideological leadership and to lead the transformation of civic culture (Fukuyama, 1992). In China, the term 'ren min' (people), used collectively as opposed to 'person' in the singular sense, embodies a form of cultural hegemony. The individualization trend among Chinese youth signifies a resistance to this cultural hegemony and suggests an ideological shift, which will be explored in chapter 3 and 5.

2.2.3 Louis Althusser: ideological state apparatus

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels defined ideology as a system of beliefs that serve the interests of the ruling class (Althusser et al., 1965). Furthermore, the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, in his seminal work *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970), articulated the role of ideology in promoting the reproduction of the relations of production.

Drawing parallels with Gramsci's distinction between political society and civil society, Althusser conceptualizes the superstructure as comprising two tiers: the political-legal level, which encompasses laws, politics, and armed forces, and the ideological level, which includes worldviews, values, and the broader cultural framework. Then, Althusser (1970) delineated two primary types of state apparatus. The first is the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), which aligns with Marx's original definition and encompasses the political-legal institutions such as the government, administration, armed forces, police, courts, and prisons. The second type is the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), which refers to the social and cultural institutions responsible for the dissemination of ideologies. Althusser extended the concept to include various institutions and spaces, viewing churches as religious ISAs, schools as educational ISAs, political parties and their propaganda arms as political ISAs, and the media, press, and radio as communication ISAs.

Through the operation of ISAs, ideology casts the individual as a subject with a defined role and identity, guiding the subject to engage in specific practices. Althusser (1970) outlined a four-step model to depict this process. As he asserted, 'there is no ideology except by the

subject and for subjects': the first phase is to conduct the 'interpellation' of individuals as subjects with particular attributes and certain missions and roles. The second step posits the existence of a unique and absolute 'Other Subject', such as God in Christianity or the communist utopia, for individuals to follow or respect. Thus, the subjects' subjection to this 'Other Subject' is constructed. The third step establishes the interaction between the subjects and the Other Subject by building mutual recognition. The fourth step is to sustain the above process, strengthen the mutual recognition, and transform the above relation into social practice.

Following these steps, individuals become enmeshed in ideologized worldviews and engage in corresponding social interactions. This process is akin to Lenin's (1902) illustration of the ideological formation and social mobilization of the working class, where they firstly realized their exploited and oppressed condition and recognized their identity as the proletariat, then, subjected to Communism and respected it as the ultimate Other Subject, then, recognized Communist Party as the main body to realize Communism while the latter also made commitments to emancipate the proletariat (subjects), and lastly, accepted the party's leadership and consolidated the relations with the party. Chapter 5 will elaborate how Chinese party-state constructs reproduction of social class among Chinese individuals.

Althusser's theory of ideology and Ideological State Apparatus has three implications. The first is to point out the alienation of cultural institutions that involves political socialization. Many institutions appear to be apolitical or part of civil society, but they actually function as components of the state, engaging in covert and symbolic ideological work. For instance, as

suggested by critical educators such as Willis (1977), schools are ostensibly tasked with nurturing the culture of social hierarchy and hidden curriculum.

The second implication is to reveal how ideology extends its reach beyond the public sphere into the private domain. While RSAs enforce political repression within the public domain, ISAs yield more thorough and lasting influences on individuals' daily life, throughout private sector from one's school to home. Ultimately, this process shapes individuals' consciousness and actions; individuals are more like products of social forces, rather than as independent agents with self-determined identities, challenging the notion of individual autonomy and free will (Freeden, 2003).

Third, Althusser's examination of ISAs leads to a reevaluation of the nature of ideology, proposing two significant theses. The first thesis defines ideology as the 'imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (Althusser, 1970, p.22). This definition posits that ideology serves as a perpetual medium of illusion but also a process of social construction; in other words, ideology is not merely a deceptive superstructure but an integral part of social existence that shapes and is shaped by human practice, which marks a fundamental departure from the traditional Marxist perspective that ideology consists of a set of falsehoods that must be eliminated.

On this foundation, Althusser introduced a second thesis, asserting that ideology possesses a 'material existence' (Althusser, 1970, p.25). This implies that ideology is not merely a construct of ideas or consciousness within individuals' minds. Instead, it also relies on empirical elements and forms an individual's genuine understanding of the world. This

understanding serves as the effective link between beliefs and actions, motivating individual behavior. In fact, in Althusser's book *For Marx* (1969), an epistemological break is identified between the early, Hegelian-influenced Marx and the later Marx who authored *Das Kapital* (1867–1883). As Althusser claimed, young Marx indeed noticed the reason for the prevalence of ideological debates in Germany, where people had no means to alter their reality but resorted to imagining it as extensively as possible so that the underdevelopment of history could lead to an extraordinary proliferation of ideology (Althusser et al., 1965). However, young Marx failed to consider the complex yet reflexive relationship between material existence and ideologies.

To summarize, ideology consists of a set of imagined relations that form a contrived unity of diverse illusions. It is the work of empirical epistemology, grounded in material existence. Ideology can explain reality to a certain extent but does not capture the true essence of reality itself. The real relation is indeed embedded within the imaginary relation, yet it is not fully and accurately reflected. Instead, it is distorted, revealing artificial indicators of various wills. These wills manifest as conservative, obedient, or rebellious tendencies, often taking the form of hope, fanaticism, or nostalgia. Such manifestations serve more as expressions of desire or belief rather than accurate representations of reality. Chapter 5 and 8 will explore how Chinese citizenship education leads students to understand the social reality in the certain manner prescribed by the ideology.

2.2.4 Jean-François Lyotard: postmodernism and its objections of grand narrative

Narrative often acts as a medium for communicating ideology by articulating stories that exemplify certain beliefs through metaphorical implications (Eagleton, 1991). Jean-François Lyotard, in his 1979 publication *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, characterized the incredulity or mistrust towards metanarratives as a defining feature of postmodernism. According to Lyotard (1979), a metanarrative, also referred to as a grand narrative, is a comprehensive story that seeks to encompass and explain all other stories. It does so by forming an abstract idea that aims to provide a sweeping explanation for historical experiences or knowledge, thereby legitimizing a society through the anticipated fulfillment of goals encapsulated within this overarching idea.

Regarding modernization, its grand narrative is a collective construct shaped by various appeals, such as those to Enlightenment and Emancipation, a progressive historical view that envisions a steady march towards civilization and moral well-being, and a universalizing belief in the knowability of all things through science, as well as the potential for absolute freedom (Peters, 2001). However, the rapid advancements in computer science and mass media have opened new avenues for understanding human nature, challenging previous teleological conceptions of human history as defined by Enlightenment thought and Marxism. Globalization, multicultural communication, and the clash of civilizations also highlight the multiplicity of paths to modernization. These factors contribute to an expanded diversity in the symbolic production of the modern world (Anderson, 1998). Moreover, science is increasingly

oriented towards pragmatism and non-rationality (Lyotard, 1979). The traditional goal of truth

has been supplanted by considerations of performativity and efficiency, often in service to

capital or the state. Concurrently, science has given rise to paradoxical findings, such as those

found in quantum theory and chaos theory, which complicate the pursuit of absolute knowledge.

Consequently, the transcendent and universal truths articulated within the grand narrative

of modernization have become increasingly untenable. The burgeoning skepticism towards

these narratives is often cited as an indicator of the advent of the postmodern era. However,

this skepticism does not denote an absolute rejection of the 'truth' presented, but rather a critical

suspicion of their purported universality and omnipresence. As individuals encounter diverse

micronarratives, they find alternative ways to conceptualize and interpret social

transformations and political issues (Anderson, 1976; 1998). Then, the totalitarian nature of

grand narratives is challenged, and the plurality of micronarratives complicates the process of

achieving consensus and diminishes the utility of grand narratives as a source of legitimacy. In

the context of China, Marxism continues to form the basis of a grand narrative that outlines the

deterministic development of human societies. Chapter 4 and 5 will discuss how grand

narrative is shaped.

2.2.5 Paul Ricœur: conflict of interpretations, prefiguration and refiguration, and hermeneutics of suspicion

According to French philosopher Paul Ricœur (1913-2005), narrative serves as an

integrative linguistic unit that illustrates the causations underlying social events (Ricœur, 1971).

As a symbolic text, a narrative is filled with symbols that embody 'a structure of signification

in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first' (Ricœur, 1974, p.13). Interpretation, in this context, is described as 'the work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning' (Ricœur, 1974, p.13).

However, according to Ricœur's influential work *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (1974), there is no single, universal method of interpretation. Instead, there exists a multitude of possibilities to understand texts, symbols, and human actions in various ways. This multiplicity can lead to contradictions and conflicts in interpretation, which arise not solely from the inherent ambiguity of the text itself but also from the differing political, cultural, religious, and social traditions that underpin distinct values and perspectives (Portocarrero, 2022).

On the other hand, interpretation approaches are often dominated and constrained by the existing power structures, social prejudices, stereotypes, and biases. Ricœur (1984) introduced a three-stage model of mimesis within his circle of narration to elucidate how a narrator influences readers or audiences. Mimesis, a term extensively utilized in literary criticism and philosophy, pertains to the imitation, representation, or presentation of an object. Ricœur's narratology delineates three mimeses: mimesis1 (prefiguration), mimesis2 (configuration), and mimesis3 (refiguration) (ibid.).

The stage of prefiguration establishes a broader conceptual framework that defines what is considered believable and sets the expectations for the audience. The stage of configuration

60

involves arranging the elements of a narrative—such as the agent, motivation, action, result, and implication—into a coherent story or plot that embodies cause-and-effect relationships. The stage of refiguration involves aligning the configured story with the real world, allowing the audience to interpret real social events through the lens of the prefigured structure and the configured plot (Ricœur, 1984). Refiguration of social events signifies not only the transformation of event-event causation but also serves as the intersection between the world of the text and the world of the reader. This stage interlaces historical narratives with fictional ones, creating a nuanced understanding of the text and inviting readers to understand the world in the prescribed manner (Borisenkova, 2010, p.96).

Given the inevitable influence of social history, culture, and politics on narrative direction, the communication landscape can become distorted. As Jürgen Habermas (1981/1984) posited, it is only through rational reflection and self-criticism that these distorting elements can be exposed and mitigated and that a communication environment free from undue influence and domination can be established. Consequently, the objective of hermeneutics—the methodology of interpretation—evolves. It shifts from merely resolving contextual ambiguities to uncovering the underlying presuppositions and implicit intentions embedded within texts (Borisenkova, 2010).

Indeed, in earlier times, hermeneutics referred to the process of iterative recontextualization. Relocating the text within its original context, extracting meanings from that context, and carefully reapplying them in a new setting, this process is called as the hermeneutic circle. As cycles of self-reference that situated our understanding in a priori

assumptions, one understands the text by interpreting its individual parts and vice versa, with each part informing the understanding of the whole and being informed by that whole (Heidegger, 1927/1962).

Later, Hans-Georg Gadamer expanded on this concept in *Truth and Method* (1960/1989). Gadamer argued that humans inherently approach understanding and interpretation with presuppositions shaped by social prejudices, premises, illusions, or other anticipatory structures of understanding. He advocated for a transformation of the hermeneutic circle from a purely linguistic exercise among texts to a dynamic dialogue between the text and the situation. In this dialogue, hermeneutics acts as a mediator between the past and the present, investigate details of existence, and examines the effectiveness of texts (Gadamer, 1975).

Furthermore, Paul Ricœur distinguished between the hermeneutics of suspicion and the hermeneutics of faith. While the latter aims to restore meaning to a text, the former is characterized as 'the practice of reading texts against the grain to expose their repressed or hidden meanings' (Felski, 2011, p. 215), which seeks to demystify illusions and mitigate potential prejudices. In *Freud and Philosophy* (1965/1970), Ricœur identified Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche as the three masters of suspicion, who collectively viewed consciousness as inherently deceptive. Ricœur termed this collective perspective the 'school of suspicion', which believe that the superficial appearances of texts are often misleading so that texts must be interpreted with skepticism to reveal their underlying or concealed meanings.

In the interpretive process, suspicion serves at least three functions: to tear apart the false assumptions inherent in original texts, to check on our pretensions, conceit, and the hubris of claiming to know everything and to combat the potential for mystification, addiction, and obsession (Itao, 2010). Thus, the hermeneutics of suspicion facilitates a regeneration of interpretations from novel perspectives. It is also called as hermeneutics of demystification or iconoclasm, which empowers the interpreter to re-understand and redefine society, highlight contradictions, disclose the content that remains unrepresented, to demystify false consciousness, and deconstruct cultural idols (Felski, 2011; Josselson, 2004).

Moreover, suspicion plays a pivotal role in the process of humanization. Heidegger (1927/1962) emphasized that humans are fundamentally linguistic beings. Our self-expression and communication with others are inextricably linked to language, and the nature of human understanding of the world is contingent upon the process of interpreting signified texts, narratives, symbols, and discourses. For Ricœur (1974), the hermeneutics of suspicion transcends mere textual analysis but becomes a means to appropriating the 'cogito' by promoting one's reflection towards the world. Different from the Cartesian cogito, 'which grasps itself directly in the experience of doubt,' (Ricœur, Reagan & Steward, 1978, p.101), Ricœur believed that it is only through reflection that the ego can be grasped. Indeed, doubt alone just estranges the subject from its own existence, which is insufficient for one to discover and sustain self-discovery. By contrast, reflection enables one to decipher the documents of real life and appropriate the meaning of existence. By generating suspicion and promoting reflection, hermeneutics of suspicion empowers the individual to develop personal

interpretations and to differentiate oneself from pathological forms of subjectivism (Itao, 2010, p.14).

Therefore, hermeneutics, by its very nature, is deeply political. It serves as a tool for the recovery, recollection, and recreation of the meanings embedded within our symbolic life. Through the discernment and identification of the authentic meanings of speech, texts, gestures, and lived expressions, hermeneutics has the potential to demystify societal constructs. This process can emancipate citizens from the shackles of cultural pathologies and ideological infections, leading to a fusion of horizons that are less distorted and more aligned with the truth (Scott-Baumann, 2009, p.44).

In the context of China, the party-state has established an official grand narrative that outlines the mission of the Chinese Dream, centered around the concept of national rejuvenation. This narrative also includes a normative pattern for the relationships between the Chinese party-state, nation, society, and individual, encapsulated in slogans such as 'party leads everything', 'sacrifice the small self for the great self', and 'to love the party is to love the nation'. The objective of citizenship education in China is to propagate this grand narrative and to refigure the social development of China in ways that align with the official ideology. However, while students are educated to refigure society within the confines of this disciplined narrative, the forces of social individualization encourage them to think differently, creatively, and adaptively. This intellectual independence can lead to the generation of suspicions and the questioning of the official narrative, which will be exemplified in Chapter 8.

2.3 Education, Banking Pedagogy, and Constructivism

2.3.1 Paulo Freire: banking education, dialogic pedagogy, and critical consciousness

According to Paulo Freire (1970), pedagogical practices can be oppressive, stifling the development of students' independent and critical consciousness. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire coined the term 'banking pedagogy' to describe the practice where a teacher mechanically deposit knowledge into student's mind without encouraging students' critical thinking. This pedagogy posits that teachers possess all knowledge while students possess none. Thus, student's mind is viewed as an empty vessel into which teachers deposit the pre-selected curricular contents, and the purpose of teaching is solely to maximize the efficiency of knowledge transfer, with little regard for students' subjectivity (Giroux, 1980). Students are positioned as passive 'containers' or 'receptacles', whose role if limited to 'receiving, filing, and storing the deposits' of knowledge, without being encouraged to creatively engage in classroom discussion (Freire, 2005, p.72). Ultimately, students are compelled to adapt to and acquiesce to the structure of absolute teacher domination, and then feel incapable of challenging their teachers' interpretations, become accustomed to silence, and get increasingly reluctant to express their own ideas and concerns (Cortina & Winter, 2021).

Pedagogy can thereby be political particularly regarding its capacity to constrain students' critical consciousness (Freire, 1973). Freire (1970/2005) emphasized this point, stating, 'the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that

world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them' (p.73). This form of education prioritizes indoctrination over empowerment, as it functions to stabilize society by inhibiting independent thought and critical reasoning among students. By doing so, it diminishes the potential for dissent (Lott, 1999). Consequently, the banking model of education has been metaphorically described as an inexpensive form of policing, which trains students to conform to the status quo and perpetuates the existing power structures by shaping students into compliant members of society (Freire, 1973).

Conversely, Paulo Freire (1970) posited that dialogue in the classroom is not just an educational exercise but also a foundational element for political deliberation. He asserted that the ultimate purpose of education is emancipation and that pedagogy can be truly humanizing only when it is dialogical. The approach of dialogue has been a part of many ancient academic traditions, such as Socratic dialogues, Confucianism, and Buddhism, where dialogue is esteemed because it places teachers and students in an equitable relationship. It encourages the consideration of diverse viewpoints (Alexander, 2001; 2006).

Dialogic pedagogy stands in stark contrast to the anti-dialogic nature of banking pedagogy. It rejects the notion that teachers are the sole repositories of knowledge and classroom dominators. Instead, it positions students as active participants and teachers as facilitators, initiating open dialogue that empowers students to confidently articulate their perspectives and engage in problem-solving discussions (Freire, 2001). Then, this approach dismantles the traditional hierarchy between teachers and students, necessitating that teachers carefully craft

66

questions to provoke reflection, consider students' viewpoints, and assist them in synthesizing new ideas (Freire, 1970). Through dialogic pedagogy, knowledge is demystified and constructed through students' experiences and perceptions, with arguments constructed on the basis of validity rather than authority (Giroux, 2010).

More importantly, dialogic pedagogy is instrumental in nurturing students' critical consciousness. By inviting students to voice their opinions, engage in discussions, and reflect on their life experiences, this approach encourages a deeper understanding of social reality. Dialogic pedagogy encourages students to think and interpret their understandings of key themes, such as social equality, liberty, community, and diversity, rather than merely echoing the discourse presented in the curriculum (Freire, 1973). This process provides students with the opportunity to discern social issues, to perceive power structure, to reawaken their sensitivity to the plight of the oppressed. It enables them to 'enter the historical process as responsible Subjects' (Freire, 2005, p.35), critically questioning the status quo and seeking self-affirmation of humanity within their daily lives. Dialogic learning thus becomes a critical journey that fosters an interrogative, skeptical, and dialogical engagement with life, prompting students to investigate social reality and develop their own understanding of social justice. As Freire emphasized, 'the conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation is not a gift bestowed by the revolutionary leadership, but the result of their own conscientization' (Freire, 2005, p.67). It is only when the oppressed recognize the dominant culture's impositions and the lack of social justice that they feel motivated to resist oppression and commit to the cause of humanization.

Furthermore, Paulo Freire (1973) elaborated the advancement of one's consciousness with more education received. In the initial stages of education, individuals often operate with an intransitive consciousness, remaining impervious to problems and challenges, and perceiving life as a series of given facts tied to predetermined reasons. As education advances, individuals may transition to a transitive consciousness, questioning social life, seeking causal mechanisms to explain their circumstances, and forming fundamental concepts regarding human dignity, liberty, equality, authority, and social hierarchy. For students, it is only when they realize that the classroom is dominated by the teacher and that the curriculum is shaped by authoritative enforcement that they start to consider the possibility of alternative knowledge constructions (Freire, 1973). Afterwards, critical consciousness may be triggered, enabling individuals to question the power structures, decipher social rules, deconstruct established norms, and develop a comprehensive understanding of society (Freire, 1970; 1973). In a manner analogous to how economic development can promote social democratization, educational development particularly in postmodern societies can facilitate the disassembly of governing ideologies (Apple, 1993).

2.3.2 John Dewey: learning through experiences

John Dewey left invaluable legacies for both educational philosophy and practice. In *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey contended that the objectives of education should extend beyond the mere acquisition of a pre-determined set of skills. He believed that education should be oriented towards the comprehensive development of an individual's humanity, talents, and potential. Dewey called for an educational reform that would move away from the

traditional teacher-centered approach and adopt a student-centered educational agenda which pays more attention to students' life experiences, personal ambitions, as well as their talents and personalities (Dewey, 1916; 1946).

Centered on the belief–'learning through experience' (Dewey, 1986, p.244), Dewey's pragmatic educational philosophy emphasizes the role of experience in shaping cognition and posits that it is through ordinary experiences that the potential of education is realized. Dewey argued that for teaching to be effective, the curriculum must align with students' life experiences. When this alignment occurs, students can more readily construct knowledge based on their experiences and better comprehend reality through their classroom learning. Conversely, if the teaching content exceeds the learner's experiential reach, true understanding and acceptance of the material are unlikely.

This principle has been widely accepted in the educational reform in America and around the world. However, when social transformations bring individuals different life experiences, educational agenda will encounter the dilemma where the standardized citizenship education cannot guarantee its curricular contents, particularly, the civic values, to be echoed by students from different groups. Within increasingly dynamic and diverse social contexts, students must shape different worldviews through their unique life experiences; when they are mandated to learn the given curriculum, learning a citizenship course is in fact a process of negotiation of their own values and the official discourse.

2.3.3 Jean Piaget: constructivism, assimilation, and accommodation

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1971) developed the constructivism of genetic epistemology. Positing that the development of human intellectuality parallels the biological process by which species adapt to new environments, Piaget (ibid.) believed that the acquisition of knowledge is fundamentally a self-generating mechanism, where individuals construct new understandings through new experiences by integrating them with prior knowledge gained from previous encounters.

Then, Piaget (1970; 1977) identified two key mechanisms underlying the construction of new knowledge. Given a conceptual schema that is inherent in human intellectual capacity and evolves through postnatal cognitive development, the mechanism of assimilation involves understanding a new event in a manner that aligns with an existing conceptual schema. Conversely, the mechanism of accommodation involves modifying an existing schema or creating a new one to accommodate a novel object or concept. In essence, all human intellectual activities can be understood through these two mechanisms, which serve to either reinforce or adapt the individual's pre-existing conceptual schemas stored in the mind (Piaget, 1977). Constructivism then presents a compelling model for pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of integrating new teaching content with students' prior knowledge and worldviews, fostering a deeper and more meaningful learning experience (Cobern, 1993).

Scholars such as Delanty (2003) and Menezes (2003) have emphasized that citizenship is inherently praxis-oriented, necessitating that citizenship education be centered on praxis-learning. However, in an era where society is increasingly influenced by market forces rather

70

than state directives, the role of education in shaping values has become more subtle (Desjardins, 2015). While students' on-campus learning experiences may be orchestrated by the state, their life experiences are profoundly shaped by a confluence of factors including family background, socioeconomic status, and the local economic and social development. These influences are highly divergent and often immeasurable.

Karl Mannheim (1954) observed that individuals would turn from the direct observation of things to a consideration of ways of thinking 'only when… in the face of a multiplicity of fundamentally divergent definitions' (p.5). As dramatic social transformations provide a wealth of diverse resources for individuals to reflect on the status quo, it becomes increasingly possible for students to develop varied understandings that may diverge from the official discourse. If we consider the official ideology as a 'cognitive schema', it is crucial to explore whether students assimilate new insights from their social experiences into this schema or whether they accommodate the schema to fit these new experiences.

2.4 Cultural Evolution, Individualism, and Collectivism

2.4.1 Ronald Inglehart: World Values Map and cultural evolution

As Montesquieu (1989 [1748]) emphasized in 'The Spirit of the Laws' that culture is also a crucial formative force of a nation's political structures: in addition to institutions and laws that serve as 'hard architecture', culture serves as the soft architecture that shapes the spirit of the people, inclining them toward certain types of political and social institutions and away from others.

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, in *The Civic Culture* (1963), elaborated on this concept by examining how citizens' orientations, preferences, and expectations regarding their political system, as well as their values and willingness to engage in civic activities, contribute to the flourishing of democratic governance.

Building on the findings of the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2013) developed the Cultural Map of the World. This map identifies two major cross-cultural dimensions: survival values versus self-expression values (x-axis), and traditional values versus secular-rational values (y-axis). According to their analysis, developed countries, particularly those in English-speaking regions and Protestant Europe, are often situated at higher positions on both axes. These nations tend to espouse secular-rational values and self-expression values. In contrast, Confucian societies, such as China, Japan, and Korea, also exhibit secular-rational values but are less inclined toward self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010; 2013).

Values analysis has also been conducted across chronological dimensions, revealing significant shifts in societal attitudes. With the progression of industrialization between the 1980s and 1990s, there was a noticeable decline in the respect for authority. Concurrently, younger generations have increasingly embraced post-materialist values, distinguishing themselves from their elders by being more inclusive, tolerant, participatory, and expressive (Inglehart, 1996). Inglehart and Oyserman (2004) introduced the concept of the 'human development syndrome' (p.1) to describe the rising emphasis on autonomy, individualism, and self-expression within the intergenerational shift in values. This transformation can be

attributed to several factors, including improved living standards, increased access to social welfare, and advancements in public education (Inglehart, 1997). As Inglehart (2018) has suggested, the process of individualization is an inevitable aspect of modernization, which is characterized by a market economy, industrialization, and deliberative democracy.

2.4.2 Harry Triandis: collectivism and individualism

In *Individualism and Collectivism: New Directions in Social Psychology* (1995), Harry Triandis articulated that collectivism is constructed upon the belief that individuals are subordinate to a social collectivity. This is how collectivism can differentiate itself from both individualism and communitarianism. Individualism rejects this belief, and communitarianism does not necessitate that individuals subordinate their interests to the collective despite its emphasis on social cohesion and the sense of community (ibid.). Triandis and Gelfand (1998) further developed a four-dimensional framework to delineate the differences between individualism and collectivism:

1. The role of the self within a community, highlighting how individuals are perceived in relation to the group.

2. The relationship between personal goals and collective goals, examining the prioritization and potential conflict between these objectives.

3. The emphasis on rights versus duties, exploring the balance between individual entitlements and societal responsibilities.

4. The approaches to interpersonal relations, considering how individuals engage with one another within certain cultural contexts

In an individualism-oriented culture, the self is viewed as independent, with personal goals often taking precedence over communal objectives. There is a greater emphasis on personal rights, needs, and interests, rather than on duties or commitments. People in such cultures often rely on contracts to guide and regulate behavior, maintaining a rational approach to interpersonal relations. By contrast, in a collectivism-oriented culture, the self is perceived as interdependent on others, with personal goals closely aligned with those of the community. Individuals in collectivist societies are expected to prioritize their duties and to respect and conform to social norms. They are also expected to uphold communal relationships, even when facing external threats or personal disadvantages. Thus, autonomy, self-responsibility, and uniqueness are frequently identified as the core components of individualism. In contrast, interdependence, commitment to others, and conformity to norms are recognized as the central elements of collectivism (Triandis, 1989; 1995; 2001).

It is important to note that individualism and collectivism are not in conflict but are orthogonal concepts. Essentially, it is authoritarianism, rather than collectivism, that stands in opposition to individualism (Gelfand, Triandis & Chan, 1996). Besides, collectivism is closely associated with authoritarianism because it often demands a high degree of moral conduct and posits that the purposes of social actions are to enhance the group at the expense of individual interests. This can lead to the collectivity intervening in the personal behaviors of its members (ibid.).

Triandis and Gelfand (1998) have distinguished two forms of collectivism:

1. Vertical collectivism, which emphasizes authority ranking and hierarchy, necessitating obedience and subordination.

2. Horizontal collectivism, which aligns more closely with communitarianism and emphasizes equality and cooperation among group members.

While horizontal collectivism may risk the tyranny of the majority, vertical collectivism can easily devolve into autocracy when it endorses two specific assumptions, firstly, the legitimacy of submission to authorities, and secondly, the acceptability of aggression towards those who deviate from social norms.

Building on Inglehart's research into cultural evolution (2018), it is logical to observe a shift from collectivism-oriented to individualism-oriented societies in the context of modernization. Japan exemplifies this shift, with a move towards individualistic lifestyles, such as smaller household sizes and higher divorce rates, while still maintaining and valuing collectivistic principles like social obligation and harmony (Hamamura, 2012). Meanwhile, a hierarchical structure persists in Japanese culture, particularly within the family and workplace, which can lead to widespread oppression and discrimination; thus, a form of individualism that prioritizes self-interest remains largely unwelcome (ibid.). Consequently, scholars like Yamagishi et al. (2008) have proposed a model where collectivism coexists with individualism. This model seeks to understand the interplay between endogenous collectivism and the exogenous individualism that has been significantly influenced by cultural transformation and semi-colonization, particularly by America following World War II.

The coexistence of individualism and collectivism highlights a significant fact: the process of individualization within collectivism-oriented societies cannot be fully understood through a one-dimensional examination of individualism that disregards collectivism. In other words, researchers cannot assert that a society is transitioning towards individualization merely by observing a growing pursuit of autonomy, self-interest, or the expression of uniqueness and personality. Instead, an inquiry into the individualization of a collectivism society must begin with an examination of its collectivist foundations. This approach acknowledges the interplay between the two orientations and the nuanced ways in which they may influence one another during the process of societal change. Chapter 3 will illustrate how Chinese Confucianism contributes to the shaping of collectivism and resonates to the coming of communism.

Chapter 3. From Confucianism to Communism

Indeed, one of China's most prominent public intellectuals, Zehou Li (李泽厚), posed a classic question: Why did many early 20th-century Chinese intellectuals readily embrace Marxism after its introduction to China (2008)? Benjamin Schwartz, in his seminal work *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (1967), suggested that the transition from China's ancient empire to its modern republic was a continuous evolution rather than a rupture, as China's traditional Confucian legacies persisted through various revolutions and ideological shifts. Arif Dirlik, in *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (1989), contended that the broad acceptance of Marxism in China was not solely the result of communist propaganda, but was more fundamentally due to the strong resonance between Marxism and the indigenous thoughts of Confucianism.

Confucius (551-479 BC) is revered as the epitome of Chinese sages, and the Confucianism he and his followers developed has been a foundational pillar for the culture and society of China and other East Asian countries (Fukuyama, 1995; Billioud, 2007). While Buddhism and Taoism are recognized as religions, Confucianism is often seen as a secular morality, which encompasses 'a worldview, a social ethic, a political ideology, a scholarly tradition, and a way of life, profoundly shaping Chinese lifestyles and social consciousness' (Tu, 1998, p.3). This chapter illustrates how Confucianism developed the philosophy of 'the relational self', contributed to collectivism, and facilitated the popularity of communism in modern China.

3.1 Confucianism, Collectivism, and Statism

3.1.1 Moral foundation of Confucianism: the relational self and 'ren (benevolence)'

During the Eastern Zhou Dynasty in China (771-256 BC), a period marked by warfare, numerous intellectuals sought to promote reforms and identify the path to a better society. Confucius (551-479 BC), one of the most distinguished philosophers of the era, proposed that the optimal form of government is one that governs through morality. He advocated for the expansion of the ancient tradition of 'li'—commonly translated as rituals—as a universal ethical framework to direct both the functioning of the state apparatus and the social conduct of its people (Schwartz, 1985). Confucius believed that the responsibility of state rulers was to educate the populace in moral ethics, fostering harmonious and reciprocal relations among individuals and striving for the perfection of social order (Tu, 1985; 1989; 1996). He posited that only by reinvigorating the role of rituals to regulate behavior could the fabric of society be restored and maintained.

Nevertheless, as Huntington (1996) suggested, China and America have significantly different perspectives on human rights. Unlike the modern Western conception of the self as ontologically independent, atomized, and separate from others, Confucianism posits that the self is inherently relational (Rosemont & Ames, 2016).

Ames (2020) outlines that the Confucian 'relational self' is underpinned by two principles: first, that relationships define the self. The self does not exist independently of relationships but is characterized by various social roles conferred by different relationships, which are

subject to redefinition should the relationships change. The ontological status of an individual as a human is not innate but must be realized through integration into a spectrum of interpersonal relations and collectives, from the family and community to the nation and the broader global context. Consequently, while the Western tradition emphasizes the concept of a 'human being' as a constituted and completed entity, Confucianism concentrates on 'human becoming' (Ames, 2020, p.96). This is an ongoing process of personal and social evolution, reflecting the transformation of one's social roles—from child to adult, from subject to leader, from junior to senior, from student to teacher, and so forth. Each role delineates a distinct self and entails a unique set of rights and obligations. Thus, Confucian moral ethics is also characterized as role ethics (Rosemont & Ames, 2016), emphasizing the dynamic interplay between an individual's moral development and their social context.

The second principle of the Confucian 'relational self' is that the goal of existence is to perfect one's relationships by fulfilling each social role effectively. From a Confucian perspective, the objective of humanization is not to achieve individual autonomy or dignity but to enhance the relationships with others. One can become a human and realize humanity only by 'cultivating those thick, intrinsic relations that constitute one's initial conditions and that locate the trajectory of one's life force within family, community, and cosmos' (Ames, 2020, p.87).

The central concept in Confucianism, 'ren' (仁), which translates as benevolence, is regarded as the pivotal moral quality to perfect one's morality and refine one's relationship with others. Interestingly, the Chinese character for 'ren' is a pictograph composed of the

characters for 'two' and 'human', suggesting 'co-humanity' or 'man-to-manness'. It symbolizes a natural affection, empathy, and benevolence towards others and embodies a spirit of altruism and selflessness that can be learned and cultivated (Wang, 2012, p. 463). In Confucianism, 'ren' is not only an inherent quality that reflects a natural love and empathy but also a quality that can be developed through nurture, representing the virtuous traits of altruism and selflessness (Tu, 1985; 1998).

Since 'ren' is both in resonance with natural morality and capable of being fostered through deliberate cultivation, it is believed as the essential ingredient in envisioning the Confucian moral utopia. This utopia is named as 'he' (和 [hɜː]), which is translated as 'harmony', 'reconciliation' or 'balance', representing a situation where everyone regardless of the social role expresses 'ren' to each other. By embodying 'ren' through moral responsibilities towards one another, it is believed that all conflicts can be resolved, leading to harmony and reconciliation within interpersonal relationships and across communities.

Confucius further articulated the ultimate goal of a humanistic society with his concept of 'tian (heaven) ren (human) he (harmony) yi (as one)' (天人合一), which advocates the idea of a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature (Zhao, 2021). This concept advocates for a reciprocal balance where human actions are in accordance with natural law, thus achieving a symbiotic continuity between the natural and cultural contexts and human experiences (Ames, 2020, p.92). With the introduction of terms such as 'ren' (benevolence) and 'he' (harmony), the earlier concept of 'li' (ritual) was expanded beyond the canonical standards of ceremony but

came to encompass all actions taken by individuals to contribute to the construction of an ideal society (Hall & Ames, 2020).

3.1.2 Discontents of Confucian collectivism: vertical collectivism vs. horizontal collectivism

Indeed, collectivism might be closely associated with authoritarianism. To illuminate this, Triandis and Gelfand (1998) introduced the division of vertical collectivism and horizontal collectivism: the former emphasizes authority ranking and hierarchy, necessitating obedience and subordination and the latter aligns more closely with communitarianism and emphasizes equality and cooperation among group members. While horizontal collectivism may risk the tyranny of the majority, vertical collectivism can easily devolve into autocracy when it endorses two specific assumptions, firstly, the legitimacy of submission to authorities, and secondly, the acceptability of aggression towards those who deviate from social norms (ibid.).

Confucianism can be susceptible to transformation into authoritarianism, a risk that stems from its emphasis on hierarchy within the framework of role ethics. Across various types of social relationships—encompassing those between lords and subjects, parents and children, husbands and wives, and the dynamics among siblings—rights and obligations are not symmetrically defined. Instead, they are often distorted in an asymmetrical manner to favor the superior party (Rosemont & Ames, 2016). In the moral codes of Confucian role ethics, there is a strong emphasis on absolute loyalty to one's lord, filial piety, ancestor veneration, and the respect owed by children to their elders, as well as by wives to their husbands (Creel, 1953).

Among many interpersonal relations, filial piety (to the senior) and loyalty (to the lord) are recognized as two of the most essential social identifications in Confucianism, which represent two dimensions of vertical collectivism of Confucianism that are easily related to authoritarianism (Hwang, 1999). Confucianism conceptualizes 'xiao' (孝), known as 'filial piety', as the ideal moral code to address parent-child relations. This filial piety is both reciprocal and authoritarian, granting the senior authority and mandating unconditional obedience and submission from the junior to the senior generations (Yan, 2016). Filial piety provides a philosophical basis to construct a contextualized personality, represented by a pair of culturally-sensitive psychological schemas of parent-child interaction (Bedford & Yeh, 2019).

Regarding social relations, Confucianism conceptualizes 'zhong' (忠), which translates to 'loyalty', as a key moral tenet. Despite the many controversies and transformations of its meanings, the concept of loyalty has been central to Confucian thought. Initially, 'zhong' was introduced to describe the faith and commitment among friends. When applied to the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, the principle of reciprocity was emphasized (Tu, 1989). Mencius articulated this principle clearly, stating, 'When the prince regards his ministers as his hands and feet, his ministers regard their prince as their belly and heart; when he regards them as his dogs and horses, they regard him as another man; when he regards them as the ground or as grass, they regard him as a robber and an enemy.'[7] Mencius further elaborated on

---

[7] English Version of Mencius, Li Lou II, Chapter 31. Translated by Chinese Text Project, archived at:

https://ctext.org/mengzi/li-lou-ii

the responsibilities of rulers, asserting that if a ruler is incompetent, he should be replaced, and if he is evil, the people have the right to overthrow him (Tu, 1989; 1996). This concept will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

However, in subsequent eras, particularly since the Ming Dynasty in the 15th century, the emphasis often shifted towards the obligations of the ruled towards their ruler, rather than the ruler's obligations to their subjects. The concept of 'Zhong' (loyalty) narrowed in meaning, coming to signify subservience to authority. Ultimately, it fostered a tradition that one must harmonize the multiple roles of both a filial son (or daughter) and a loyal subject to be considered a true ethical human being (Liu, 2009).

In fact, the Confucian conception of 'rights' diverges from the Western notion of rights as God-given and absolute, characterized by the non-interference with personal property and liberty. In contrast, Confucian rights are seen as privileges within the social order, granted and modulated by the relationships that define one's station in life (Hall & Ames, 1999). Therefore, liberty in the West is conceptualized as the absence of intervention; by contrast, liberty in Confucianism is viewed as a moral ability by which one can fully practice role ethics, adeptly manage social relationships, and appropriately intervene in or respond to the interventions of others.

While Western liberalism views intervention as an infringement upon personal liberty, Confucianism regards it as a necessary means for seniors to guide or regulate their subordinates. Moreover, Confucianism posits that intervention is an essential method to demonstrate one's commitment to improving relationships through active engagement in the social lives of others

(Ames, 2020). This cultural rationale, however, makes Confucianism susceptible to what Isaiah Berlin (1969) termed the 'abuse of positive liberty', which will be elaborated later.

3.1.3 Political philosophy of Confucianism: 'mandate of heaven' and performance legitimacy

Confucius's political philosophy is also fundamentally centered on moral principles. He creatively inherited the rationale of 'tian ming' (天命), or 'mandate of heaven', from the West Zhou dynasty. This concept posits that a ruler must embody moral integrity; otherwise, a rebellion to overthrow the ruler is not only justified but may be considered righteous (Zhao, 2009).

Indeed, the doctrine of the 'mandate of heaven' is deeply entrenched in Chinese agricultural culture (Goldman & Perry, 2002). Given the heavy reliance on suitable weather conditions for successful agricultural production, ancient Chinese people often regarded a bountiful harvest as a divine gift from the Heaven. In Chinese mythology, the emperor, as the secular leader of the people, is also referred to as 'tian zi' (天子), that is translated as 'the son of Heaven', who bears the responsibility of communicating with the heavenly realm. The emperor's morality is perceived as a critical factor by the Heaven in determining the weather and environmental conditions that the mortal world experiences. Favorable weather is interpreted as a sign of the Heaven's approval of the ruler's governance, whereas natural disasters are seen as divine retribution, indicative of the Heaven's displeasure with the ruler's conduct (Allan, 2007).

The mystical concept of the 'Mandate of Heaven' became integral to the source of political legitimacy during the conflict initiated by the Zhou against the Shang dynasty in the 11th century BC (Ebrey, 2010). Prior to this conflict, the Shang dynasty had been a formidable power, renowned for its advanced bronze civilization and robust military. However, the Shang's domineering rule sparked widespread discontent among the regional lords, leading to numerous rebellions. Ultimately, the Duke of Zhou overthrew the Shang and established the Zhou dynasty in 1046 BC. As the insurgent power, Zhou justified its rebellion on moral grounds, asserting that the Shang ruler's moral corruption had offended the Heaven, thereby sealing the dynasty's fate. The Zhou thus introduced the 'Mandate of Heaven' as a means of divine endorsement, where Heaven appoints a virtuous individual to govern the mortal realm on its behalf. According to this doctrine, the Mandate could only be obtained if the Heaven acknowledged one's moral integrity. If a ruler failed to provide prosperity and peace for the people, heaven would rescind the Mandate and designate another individual to lead a revolution, toppling the incumbent ruler and founding a new dynasty (Zhao, 2009).

With the rise of Confucianism in the 5th century BC, the doctrine of the 'Mandate of Heaven' became closely associated with the concept of 'ren' (benevolence) and evolved into the idea of 'ren politics' (仁政) (Tu, 1989). Mencius, the protege of Confucius and often referred to as the 'Second Sage' of Confucian School, championed this concept as the ideal of normative politics, thereby transforming it into a cornerstone of political legitimacy.

Expanding upon Confucius's idea of 'ren', Mencius introduced the term 'yi' (义), which translates as 'righteousness'. Based on the principle of reciprocity, 'yi' demands that one should

reciprocate benevolence when it is expressed towards them (Tu, 1989). 'Yi' functions as a moral code among individuals, fostering reciprocal relationships, and as a political norm between the state and its people. It dictates that if the people express obedience to a ruler, the ruler is morally bound to reciprocate with benevolence, and vice versa.

Regarding the Western Zhou's rebellion against the Shang dynasty, Mencius posted a sharp commentary, '闻诛一夫纣矣，未闻弑君也'[8] ('I have merely heard of the execution of a single man, not the murder of a monarch'). In Chinese history, this saying has become a proverbial warning to rulers who fail to guarantee social welfare and people's well-being. This is why the Marxist theory about proletarian revolution was resonated deeply with Chinese intellectuals as Marxism considers revolution as a plausible response to the capitalists' exploitation of the working class (Dirlik, 1978).

While Confucianism posits that the provision of public goods is a source of performance legitimacy, the process of collecting and distributing these provisions requires a robust central state. This centralization of power creates the potential for the abuse of monarchical authority (Zhao, 2009).

3.1.4 Chinese Legalism and the shaping of Confucian-Legalist state

In addition to Confucianism, Legalism has also played a significant role in Chinese history. Unlike Montesquieu's concept of the 'rule of law', Chinese Legalism aligns more closely with Machiavelli's approach, which advocates for political centralization, the strengthening of state-

---

[8] Cited from Mencius. Chapter of Liang Hui Wang II, Section 15, Achieved online: https://ctext.org/mengzi/liang-hui-wang-ii/ens

building capacity, and the strategic use of power and violence to consolidate the rule of a strong leader (Schwartz, 1985). The roots of Chinese Legalism can be traced back to a branch of Confucianism represented by Xunzi (310-238 BC). Disturbed by the incessant warfare and social chaos of his time, Xunzi found the earlier Confucian reliance on moral governance to be impractical. He proposed that moral rituals should be transformed into enforceable rules, allowing the ruler to compel obedience from the populace.

Later, Xunzi's student, Han Fei (280-233 BCE), further developed these ideas and established Legalism as a distinct school of thought separate from Confucianism. Han Fei advocated that the ruler must take on the responsibility of legislating for all, disciplining the behavior of the people, promoting social mobilization, and ensuring that the masses act in accordance with the ruler's expectations, so as to create a unified commitment to the state's collective interests (Goldin, 2011).

As Charles Tilly articulated in his many works such as *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (1975) and *War Making and State Making as Organized Crime* (1982), war often serves as a potent catalyst for political centralization and the establishment of an effective state apparatus, particularly during periods of conflict. In the context of Warring Period, Han Fei's advocacy for a ruler to enact strict laws resonated with the ambitions of several warring dukes who sought to consolidate their power and conquer rival states. Many Legalist scholars were subsequently employed by these dukes to implement institutional reforms aimed at strengthening their states. Among these efforts, the Legalist reforms undertaken by the state of Qin were the most comprehensive and successful. These reforms transformed Qin into a

formidable totalitarian polity, capable of subjugating its rivals. Ultimately, in 221 BC, Qin emerged victorious, establishing the Qin Empire as the first imperial dynasty in Chinese history.

However, the extreme totalitarian system that was effective during the warring period proved ill-suited to the needs of peacetime governance. The Qin dynasty's violent rule and military repression led to widespread rebellions, resulting in it becoming the shortest-lived dynasty in Chinese history, lasting only 14 years from 221 to 207 BC.

When the Han dynasty (202 BC to 220 AD) succeeded the Qin, the new governors recognized the pitfalls of tyranny and sought to reintroduce Confucian moral principles. Emperor Wu, the seventh emperor of the Han dynasty and one of the most accomplished rulers in Chinese history, developed a 'synthesized ideology' that drew upon both Confucianism and Legalism (Zhao, 2015, p.292). This synthesis posits that the state has a moral obligation to achieve legitimacy while also acknowledging the necessity of coercive power as an instrument of governance. This approach led to the formation of the Confucian-Legalist state model, which would shape the governance of China for two thousand years to come (Zhao, 2015).

In Michael Mann's work *The Sources of Social Power* (1986), he delineates four distinct types of power: political, ideological, economic, and military. Within the framework of the Chinese Confucian-Legalist model, often referred to as 'wai ru nei fa' (外儒内法), which translates to 'Confucianism on the outside, Legalism on the inside', the Chinese state effectively compounded political and ideological power (Qin, 2013). Confucianism was enshrined as the state ideology, and a national educational system was instituted to instruct and disseminate this doctrine. Emperor Wu then founded the first Imperial College, marking a

significant milestone for Confucianism-learning in the Chinese educational tradition (Elman, 2013). Consequently, Chinese education has been 'closely tied to state interests' (Perry, 2020, p.1), propagating the state ideology and shaping the intellectual and administrative elite of the empire.

In the 6th century, the Sui Dynasty formalized the Imperial Civil Exam system. This system assessed scholars through a national examination and allocated official positions based on their academic merit (Elman, 2013). The selection of Confucian intellectuals into the political elite led to the formation of a meritocratic polity and strengthened the bureaucracy's capacity to govern.

However, the formal recognition of Confucian intellectuals as moral authorities to interpret virtue ethics introduced a significant dilemma in Chinese politics. This dilemma involved the ruler, who wielded political power, contending with intellectuals who represented ideological power. Essentially, ancient China developed a sophisticated bureaucratic system that integrated meritocracy with ideological leadership. The emperor was required to negotiate with this vast bureaucratic apparatus to maintain governance. As a result, any political agenda in ancient China could be influenced by three potentially conflicting forces: the ruler's personal intentions, the intellectuals' moral appeals, and the bureaucracy's pragmatic considerations. This dynamic complexity means that the ancient Chinese political model cannot be straightforwardly categorized as a monarchy or despotism but is rather multifaceted (Zhou, 2017).

Drawing inspiration from Charles Tilly's comparative methodology as outlined in *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (1984), the Chinese power structure has been

characterized by the dominance of political power as its core, with ideological power serving as the foundation of legitimacy and military power utilized instrumentally, while economic power is often marginalized (Zhao, 2015). In the inevitable intertwining of political enforcement and moral order, Confucianism has historically functioned as a moral justification for an enormous concentration of power and a homogenization of society (ibid.). Education has been instrumentalized as a source of legitimacy, providing not only moral justification but also ideological discipline. This historical context is essential for comprehending the current landscape of Chinese citizenship education, whose difference from the Confucian education in the past merely lies in the substitution of the guiding ideology from Confucianism to Marxism.

3.1.5 Confucianism's resonation with communism and its discontents in modernization

Overall, the Confucian 'the relational self' has bequeathed four significant philosophical legacies:

1. Inherent Social Relations: The self is inextricably linked to society, as it is born into a network of inherent relations that encompass both vertical (hierarchical) and horizontal (peer) relationships, thereby integrating hierarchy and social bonds.

2. Relation Over Self: The relational context is prioritized over the individual self, which is considered subordinate to these relationships. As a result, personal attributes such as creativity and individual character are often de-emphasized in favor of conformity to collective norms.

3. Moral Obligations and Intervention: To fulfill the moral obligations embedded within these relationships, intervention by superiors to regulate and guide the morality of subordinates is seen as not only necessary but also a crucial aspect of maintaining social order. In this framework, liberty is not an ultimate goal.

4. Isomorphism of Family and State: The family and the state are viewed as analogous structures, with the state being an extension of the family rather than a separate entity. This conceptualization implies that the state is a broader manifestation of the self, and the public sphere, as a distinct concept, does not feature prominently in Confucian philosophy.

Based on these four traits, Confucianism generated fundamental influences on Chinese society. At the apolitical level, Confucianism shares significant common ground with communitarianism, emphasizing social solidarity and a sense of community (Hall & Ames, 1999). This is also where Confucianism resonates with communism. Firstly, Confucianism places a strong emphasis on spiritual and mental cultivation, advocating for a commitment to others and fostering a sense of community and social solidarity. Then, Chinese culture often prioritizes obligations to others and adopts the principle of reciprocity, encapsulated in the Confucian term 'yi' (righteousness or reciprocity), which guides social actions. This mentality involves expressing benevolence towards other individuals or communities, such as the state, with an expectation of benevolence in return as a form of reward (Schwartz, 1985). Such a perspective establishes a universal moral foundation characterized by philanthropy, egalitarianism, and moral cosmopolitanism, which values equality over liberty, even though the intra-family structure may be patriarchally authoritative (Xu, 2009; 2017).

Furthermore, Confucianism also contributes to cosmopolitanism through the concept of 'Tianxia' (天下), which translates to 'all-under-heaven'. This view envisions the entire globe as the ultimate collective and calls for moral and cultural universalism (Xu, 2017; Yu, 2020). The idea has been integrated into numerous Chinese official documents to express China's global aspirations and has been introduced to the English-speaking world by philosopher Tingyang Zhao (2021). This cosmopolitanism remained apolitical until the 2nd century BC when Qin Dynasty established the first empire in Chinese history. Since then, the cosmopolitanism involved with cultural imperialism, as indicated in Alastair Iain Johnston' (1995) *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*.

When considered in the political sphere, Confucianism advocates for political centralization, enabling the central state to represent collective interests and will, and to assume moral responsibility for public provision. Through the lens of Marshall's (1950) concept of citizenship, it becomes clear that the Chinese rationale of the 'Mandate of Heaven' places a premium on social citizenship—encompassing social welfare and the livelihood of the people—but it often overlooks civil or political citizenship, which pertains to rights such as election, property ownership, and freedom of speech (Perry, 2008). As history proved, Confucian collectivism was indeed associated with statism and contributed to the robust state-building power of China (Fukuyama, 2014).

Consequently, unlike Western liberalism, which is centered on rights entitlements, Chinese Confucianism is more focused on obligations (Janoski, 2014). China has historically not integrated liberty, as understood in the Western context, as a fundamental element of its

political philosophy. The classic Western political philosophy dichotomy of 'liberal versus illiberal' may not be sufficiently nuanced to fully comprehend Chinese politics. Many scholars have argued that the proliferation of protests in modern China should not be interpreted as an awakening of rights consciousness but rather as expressions of discontent with the government's failure to provide for welfare. As Perry (2008) clarifies, 'in historical context, China's contemporary 'rights' protests seem less politically threatening' since what those protestors demand is not concerning rights in the legal-rational sense but merely material provision (p.37).

However, the rationale of the 'Mandate of Heaven' has a significant shortcoming in that it often views people as passive agents, with their participation being undervalued. Under this doctrine, the political rights of the people are only articulated when the ruler is perceived to have lost the 'Mandate of Heaven', thereby justifying rebellion against the ruler (Schwartz, 1985). Meanwhile, Confucian collectivism frequently requires individuals to forgo independent thought and to defer to a higher moral authority. This deference promotes a benevolent behavior and a respect for moral authorities, typically represented by those in superior positions. Consequently, it can foster values that are favored by authoritarian regimes and lead to the assumption that Confucianism is inherently authoritarian (Xu, 2006).

Furthermore, given its emphasis on community, Confucianism can be susceptible to what Isaiah Berlin (1969) termed the 'abuse of positive liberty'. This concept encourages individuals to relinquish some of their liberties or personal interests to serve the state's interests (Yuan, 2008). When Confucianism is transformed into a form of statism that aligns with

93

authoritarianism, it can contribute to the robust state-building power of China and reinforce authoritarian traditions (Fukuyama, 2014; Fewsmith & Nathan, 2019).

When modernization is characterized by a process termed 'disembedding' (Giddens, 1990; Taylor, 2004), wherein individuals are disengaged from the constraints of local communities and establish connections with strangers across communities through social contracts or modern technologies, the limitations of Confucianism in aligning with modernity become apparent. Due to its conservative nature, Confucianism struggles to foster the development of productive forces or to transform production relations. This dynamic is a significant factor in China's historical lag behind the West following the West's industrialization. However, while liberal traditions may have been at odds with Chinese local ideology, Marxism found a congruence with the moral ideals of egalitarianism and reciprocity emphasized by Confucianism. Consequently, Marxism was introduced and embraced in China.

3.2 Colonialism, Nationalism, and Republicanism in the Early Modern China

3.2.1 Translated modernity of citizen: the small self and the great self

Over the past centuries, numerous countries have endured colonization by Western empires and struggled in achieving national independence and prosperity (Young, 2016). China, once a dominant power in East Asia for many centuries, was no exception to this trend. Following Britain's victory in the Opium War of the 1840s, China began its transformation into a semi-colonial society. Since then, Chinese intellectuals embarked on a quest to identify strategies that would fortify national power and ensure the sovereignty of their nation.

After 1861, when Britain and France invaded China and captured the capital, Beijing, Chinese bureaucrats realized the necessity of industrialization and initiated the Self-Strengthening Movement to adopt Western technology and establish modern industries, including those for steelworks, shipbuilding, textiles, and military manufacturing. During this period, politicians such as Li Hongzhang (李鸿章, 1823-1901) recognized that Western hegemony was not solely based on military power but also on the progress of civilization. Li Hongzhang warned that the challenge posed by Western civilization was 'the greatest crisis that China had never encountered in the past three thousand years' ('三千年未有之大变局').

However, these warnings did not gain widespread public traction or recognition from the governing authorities until China's defeat against Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1895. For a long period, China had been a dominant force in East Asia, often overlooking its neighbors, including Korea and Japan. It was in the 1860s that Japan began the Meiji Restoration, introducing a constitutional monarchy undergoing a Westernization process, and significantly bolstering its national power. Therefore, the defeat in the war against Japan was a turning point that not only shattered the national pride of the Chinese people but also highlighted the urgent need for constitutional reform and a comprehensive transformation of the civilization.

Following the Sino-Japanese War, both Chinese people and their governors approved the imperative to adapt and modernize in order to compete with the global powers of the time. Numerous Chinese intellectuals dedicated themselves to the translation and introduction of Western ideas into China. However, as Edward Said (1983) cautioned, the process of cross-

national idea borrowing often entails distortions and adaptations during translation and interpretation within different cultural contexts. Those intellectuals who translate and convey these concepts in local societies frequently interpret them creatively to align with specific national conditions or even personal motivations.

Consequently, the understanding of modernity in China was influenced by the biases inherent in the transition period, resulting in a form of 'translated modernity' whose meanings varied across different cultural contexts (Guo, 2014, p. 350). Liang Qichao (梁启超, 1873-1929), one of the most prominent intellectuals of the time, was instrumental in the creative translation of many Western concepts, including that of 'citizen'. In traditional China, there was no individualistic concept equivalent to the Western notion of 'citizen'. Instead, the collective term 'min' (人民), meaning 'people', was used to denote the populace as a whole (Goldman & Perry, 2002). To address this, Liang constructed the concept of 'citizen' as an individualistic idea based on the collective term 'min' and innovatively translated 'citizen' as 'xin min' (新民), which translates to 'new people'. Through this creative translation, Liang and his contemporaries were able to emphasize the novel elements of Western ideologies that advocated for individual liberty and participation, while also preserving traditional elements from China's collectivism-oriented culture.

To champion the concept of 'new people', Liang Qichao established a journal in 1902 titled 'Xin Min Cong Bao' (新民丛报), which translates to 'New People Newspaper'. On one hand, Liang criticized the authoritarian tendencies stemming from Chinese collectivist culture, which treated individuals as passive subjects characterized by slavishness, deference,

conformity, and a lack of political engagement. Consequently, Liang advocated for cultural modernization aimed at shaping individuals into autonomous, proactive, and passionate subjects with a sense of human dignity (Goldman & Perry, 2002).

On the other hand, given the deep commitment to protecting China from Western imperialism and colonialism, Liang's work involved a strong instrumental rationality to inspire public commitment to China's national development. In his promotion of the 'new people', Liang emphasized the republican ethos, calling for individual dedication to the public good over personal pursuits (Zhang & Fagan, 2016).

Furthermore, Liang introduced the dichotomy of 'xiao wo' (小我) – 'the small self' and 'da wo' (大我) –'the great self', to represent the distinction between individual and collective interests (Yan, 2010). He argued that the small self would inevitably perish if the nation were to fall, thus providing a rationale for aligning personal well-being with national survival. Liang's famous slogan 'to sacrifice the small self for the great self (牺牲小我，成就大我)' encapsulated this idea and became one of the most influential slogans in the history of modern China (Xu, 2009).

In 1987, the esteemed Chinese public intellectual Li Zehou (李泽厚) (1987/1999) published a seminal paper titled *Dual Variation of Enlightenment and National Salvation* (启蒙与救亡的双重变奏), which sought to encapsulate the rationale behind China's modernization efforts from 1840 to 1949. In this work, Li (1987/1999) posited that China, characterized by its semi-colonial and semi-feudal status, faced two critical missions in its path to modernization: the promotion of enlightenment, to promote human emancipation and active

citizenship, and the achievement of national salvation, to realize China's independence and prosperity. These missions were intended to be of equal importance. However, history has proved that the imperative of national rejuvenation often took precedence over the pursuit of enlightenment. The appeals for liberty, equality, social justice, and human dignity were often compromised when efforts were made to mobilize people to prioritize collective interests.

As a result, slogans such as Liang Qichao's 'to sacrifice the small self for the great self' (牺牲小我，成就大我) have remained pivotal in the official discourse to this day. The contemporary Chinese President's call for the "Chinese Dream" and "National Rejuvenation" also echoes this ethos, reflecting a Chinese understanding of citizenship that diverges from both liberal and republican models. Instead, the concept of citizenship in China remains closely tied to local collectivist values, which emphasize the subordination of the individual to the collective, often at the expense of individual autonomy.

3.2.2 New Culture Movement, May Fourth Movement, and the founding of the Communist Party of China

In addition to Liang Qichao, another influential intellectual, Chen Duxiu (陈独秀, 1879-1942), played a crucial role in spearheading the cultural transformation of China in the early 20th century, through which he founded the Communist Party of China in 1921.

Holding the view that traditional Confucian values were at the root of the nation's political weaknesses. Chen launched the New Culture Movement in 1915, aiming to reshape the Chinese youth into the 'new youth' (新青年). He encouraged these young individuals to become staunch iconoclasts, challenging the patriarchal family ethics, denouncing the traditional

Confucian culture, and breaking free from the constraints of the traditional patriarchal system. Meanwhile, Chen advocated for the promotion of feminism, the acceptance of free romantic relationships, and the practice of self-selected marriage. By doing so, he expected to cultivate independent individuals with strong personal convictions, who can actively participate in public affairs and contribute to China's modernization.

However, Chen Duxiu, much like Liang Qichao, faced a complex decision in his role in leading China's cultural transformation. He advocated for the dismantling of traditional Confucian culture while also employing it as a tool for social mobilization. In Chen's numerous writings, a recurring theme emerges: the assertion of state sovereignty as paramount and the call for citizens to make commitments and concessions in the interest of the nation. A notable example is found in Chen's influential 1915 article, *Today's Guidelines for Education (《今日教育之方针》)*, where he states, 'considering the current state of our nation, our people are disunited, akin to scattered sand. To meet the unique demands of this period, statism is indeed a most effective remedy for our immediate salvation' (第衡之吾国国情，国民犹在散沙时代，因时制宜，国家主义，实为吾人目前自救之良方) (Chen, 1915/1993, p.144). As Laski (1919) contended, the spirit of sacrifice has been propagated as 'the element of consent to policy' (p.17), serving as a marker of one's loyalty and commitment to the authority. Despite the modern Chinese intellectuals' call for cultural modernization and their critique of traditional cultures, several elements of Chinese collectivism, such as the advocacy for a strong state, have persisted and left significant influences in shaping China's current regime.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of the First World War served as a critical turning point, altering the Chinese mentality that had previously been inclined to venerate Western civilization. The war's brutality exposed the dangers inherent in the Western capitalistic system and led to disillusionment with the Western constitutional reform. Furthermore, when China, as an associated member of the Allied Powers, encountered an unfair treatment in Paris Peace Conference to end the war, this discontent with Western imperialism was intensified. On May 4, 1919, led by Chen Duxiu, thousands of college students in Beijing organized a demonstration to express their dissatisfaction with Western imperialism and to protest the Chinese government's weak response to the terms of the Versailles Treaty. This student-led movement was soon joined by millions of workers and businessmen across the country who went on strike in solidarity with the students' patriotic appeals. Ultimately, the movement, known as 'May Fourth Movement', achieved its goal of preventing the Chinese government from signing the Versailles Treaty. Two years later, with the mediation of the United States, China renegotiated the terms with Japan during the Washington Naval Conference in 1921-1922.

Since the May Fourth Movement extinguished the will of China to learn from the Western civilization, intellectuals were motivated to seek new sources for cultural transformation and social revolution. The success of the Russian Revolution, when introduced to China, prompted intellectuals to consider that Marxism might offer a viable alternative to both the traditional Chinese Confucianism and the Western constitutional model (Schwartz, 1967). Then, the first translation of the *Communist Manifesto* into Chinese was met with enthusiasm, as intellectuals recognized in Marxism an ideological framework that could effectively challenge both

capitalism and imperialism, while also advocating for the oppressed masses. As Meisner (1990) commented, in China's 1920s, leading a communist revolution emerged as an attractive proposition, which could 'reject both the traditions of the Chinese past and the Western domination of the Chinese present' (p.18).

In 1921, Chen Duxiu, the leading figure of both the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement, along with Li Dazhao, who introduced the Russian Revolution to China, and a group of young revolutionaries, including Mao Zedong, established the Communist Party of China in Shanghai. During the inaugural Party Congress, Chen was elected as the first General Secretary and subsequently known as 'China's Lenin' (Schwartz, 1967).

To summarize, Marxism arrived in China at a propitious moment and was rapidly adopted by Chinese intellectuals. The New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement both played significant roles in the founding of the CPC.

Firstly, the New Culture Movement fostered a robust iconoclastic tradition that significantly challenged the esteemed status of Confucianism within Chinese society. There was a broad social trend that questioned the validity of Confucian doctrine and sought new ideological and intellectual alternatives. This movement dismantled the old cultural barriers, creating a cultural vacuum that prepared the ground for the Chinese populace to learn about and embrace communism (Schwartz, 1986).

Then, during the First World War, Chinese society at large recognized the hypocrisy and tyranny of Western imperialism, particularly following the outcomes of the war and the Paris

Peace Conference. Chinese intellectuals, who had once championed the Western system, became thoroughly disillusioned with capitalism.

Lastly, the success of the May Fourth Movement demonstrated the potential for various social classes across China to collaborate and unite. It became clear to Chinese intellectuals that, with the right leadership and organization, the mobilization of peasants and workers could be transformed into a formidable revolutionary force.

Chapter 4. Adaptive Interpretation of Marxism in Socialist China

4.1 Overview: Interpretive Authority

In constitutional democracies, the constitution establishes the normative values, ideologies, and the principle of procedural justice that society is expected to uphold. As a result, the practice of citizenship education remains consistent regardless of changes in state leadership. Conversely, socialist regimes emphasize substantial justice centered on socialist values. In these regimes, citizenship education is tasked with fostering students' socialist patriotism, which encompasses both ideological recognition of socialism and institutional trust in the communist party.

However, the content of socialism is often subject to variation as it evolves with social conditions and the flexible interpretation by authorities. As Marxism continues to develop, so too do the interpretations of socialist leaders, adapting to the times. Additionally, the curriculum of citizenship education in socialist regimes is susceptible to the 'conflict of interpretations', which, as introduced in Chapter 2.2, acknowledges that different individuals may hold contrasting understandings of socialism. This dynamic nature of socialism leads to a curriculum that is constantly changing and is influenced by the latest social dynamics. Consequently, within socialist party-state regimes, despite a common front of leaders advocating for socialism, factional struggles are prevalent to compete for the socialist leadership which is demonstrated as the interpretive authority to define, enact and elucidate the political agenda for the whole party. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the contemporary history of socialist China,

as different socialist leaders, ranging from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping as well as Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, have different interpretations of socialism and directed to different political agenda.

Once socialist leaders have determined and articulated their objectives, the state apparatus begins to make consensus through propaganda and education. This is different from that of constitutional democracies, where consensus can act as a check on the leader's personal will. In contrast, the consensus in socialist regimes is prescribed upon the leader's vision, and the masses are required to align with this consensus. With no wonder, in the Chinese political system, the Department of Propaganda operates under the direct leadership of the Communist Party of China Central Committee (CPCCC). It also oversees the Ministry of Education, which is part of the Chinese State Council.

This chapter outlines how Chinese socialist leaders have creatively interpreted socialism and how their interpretations have influenced China's citizenship education agenda. Overall, the CPC has experienced three great transformations in its ideological orientation:

1. The shaping of Maoism as the creative adaption of Marxism in China since the 1930s.

2. The forming of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics as a pragmatic attempt to adopt capitalistic element into Chinese socialist regime since the 1980s.

3. The remarkable left-turn ideological shift led by the current General Secretary Xi Jinping since 2012.

Taking a few critical turning points into considerations, these three transformations can be divided into six stages in total, as outlined in the following table.

Table 3. The evolving interpretation of Marxism throughout China's contemporary history (1921-)

Period	Guiding ideology or narratives	The agenda of political/ideological/citizenship education	Outcome
1. 1921-1935 (during the CPC's early period)	The orthodox Marxism-Leninism	Propaganda for Marxism among urban workers	Failure of communist revolution under Kuomintang's military suppression
2. 1935-1949 (during the CPC's mature period under Mao's leadership)	Maoism as a creative adaption of Marxism in China	Anti-illiteracy campaign among rural peasants	Maoism as the CPC's official ideology
		Professional Marxist education among communist cadres	The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949
3. 1949-1976 (Mao's era)	Mao's personal cult	Dogmatic education for Marxism and Maoism	Collectivization
	Deification of Maoism	Education for class struggle	Anti-rightist campaigns
			The Cultural Revolution
4. 1978-1989 (Deng's era, before the 1989 incident)	Pragmatism of adopting capitalistic elements	Moral education	Open and Reform
	The rise of liberalism	Patriotic education	1989 Tiananmen Square Protest
5. 1989-2012 (During Jiang's and Hu's terms)	Socialism with Chinese Characteristics	Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilization	The deepening of Open and Reform
		Socialist Harmonious Society	Remarkable economic growth
6. 2012-present (during Xi's terms)	Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era	The reemphasis on orthodox Marxism	
		Objections to constitutionalism	

The interpretation of socialism in China has been in a state of continuous evolution. The goal of Chinese citizenship education is to equip students with a firm commitment to socialist patriotism while also fostering the adaptability to the updated ideological interpretations and shifting political agendas. The subsequent sections will offer an in-depth examination of the ideological transformations that have occurred at each stage of this developmental process.

4.2 Mao Zedong: Maoism, Ideological Education, and Class Struggle

4.2.1 Maoism: the creative adaption of Marxism in China

Communist historian Franz Schurmann (1970) articulated that the creative development of Communism in China was a consequence of the CPC's innovative integration of orthodox Marxist theory with the adaptive application of Marxism to local Chinese conditions. Mao Zedong's creative adaptation of Marxism in China can be categorized into three distinct layers.

Mao's first significant adaptation of Marxism in China was the shift in the primary subject of proletarian analysis from the urban working class to the peasantry. For Karl Marx, the proletariat was identified as the urban working class, which was oppressed and exploited by the bourgeoisie. However, China in the 1920s was predominantly an agrarian society with a limited industrial base, apart from a few major metropolises (Schwartz, 1967; 1986). From 1921 to 1927, the Nationalist Party of China[9] (NPC), under the leadership of its left-wing faction, had been tolerant of minor parties, including the CPC. This tolerance allowed the CPC to engage in political discourse and to mobilize socially among urban workers, miners, and railroad workers.

However, after Chiang Kai-shek assumed power within the NPC, he ended the collaboration with the CPC. On April 12, 1927, Chiang orchestrated a purge of communists in

---

[9] The Nationalist Party of China (NPC), also referred to as the Kuomintang (KMT), is the major political party in the Republic of China, initially based on the Chinese mainland (1911-1949) and then in Taiwan since 1949.

Shanghai, an event known as the 'Shanghai massacre'[10]. Following this purge, the remaining communists were forced to flee from the urban centers and sought refuge in the rural countryside. This shift in location isolated the Chinese communists from the urban working class but presented new opportunities to engage with the peasantry. Peasants, who were extremely impoverished yet constituted the majority of the population, became the new focal point for communist efforts.

During this period, many communists, including Mao, recognized that, much like the exploitation faced by workers under capitalism, many peasants were also subjected to exploitation by landlords. This realization led to a strategic shift within the CPC. Instead of focusing on mobilizing workers for strikes and protests in urban areas, communists carried out land reforms aimed at redistributing land resources among the peasantry in rural regions (Schwartz, 1967). Then, Mao posited that it was the peasants, not the urban workers, who should be considered the primary revolutionary class in China's march towards communism (Meisner, 1977). Consequently, the CPC's strategy for leading the communist revolution was reoriented as suggested by the famous slogan 'surrounding the cities from the countryside' (农村包围城市). This approach became a recurring theme in all communist resolutions of the time.

Secondly, Maoism provides a justification for the incorporation of violence into the communist revolutionary strategy. While neither original Marxism nor Leninism extensively

---

[10] The Shanghai massacre of 12 April 1927 marked the collapse of the NPC's collaboration with the CPC, but also led to a split between NPC's left-wing and right-wing factions. The massacre resulted in about 300000 deaths of communists and NPC dissidents.

explored the necessity of military enforcement, the context of China, along with other semi-colonial countries and those dominated by rival parties, necessitated a different approach. In these situations, the survival of the communist party was extremely challenging without the establishment of a military force loyal to the party's cause. To counter the anti-communist suppression by the NPC, early Chinese communists formed a revolutionary army dedicated to the party and committed to the revolutionary cause. Mao then articulated that ideological power could only be transformed into political power when it was supported by military might (Meisner, 1977). This concept was famously summarized in Mao's another slogan, 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun' (枪杆子里面出政权).

Furthermore, Mao named the army the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and articulated his military philosophy as the concept of 'people's war'. In this approach, the army was envisioned to serve people's collective interests and contribute to national prosperity. This idea was in harmony with Mao's other principles, such as the 'mass line' (群众路线), which emphasizes the importance of maintaining close ties with the masses and strengthening the communist ideology and organization at the grassroots level (Karl, 2010). Mao believed that the relationship between the party, the army, and the people should be characterized by the principle 'from the masses, to the masses' (从群众中来，到群众中去), arguing that that both the party and its army are both rooted in the masses and dedicated to serving them (MacFarquhar, 1987).

The third adaptation within Maoism involves the promotion of 'new democracy', which Mao contrasted with the 'old democracy' prevalent in the West. In his influential paper *On New*

Democracy (1940), Mao initially criticized Western representative democracy as 'old democracy', which, in practice, served to perpetuate the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by manufacturing consent. Then, Mao contended that colonial and semi-colonial countries should not simply adopt the Western model of 'old democracy', but instead, they should critically assess their local conditions and actively explore a model of 'new democracy'. Using China as a case, Mao illustrated that for many underdeveloped and industrially immature countries, aligning with the peasantry would be a more viable strategy for leading a revolution. Furthermore, Mao emphasized that China's path to democratic revolution would not only diverge from the Western model but that every colonial country would also need to forge its own unique path to democracy, tailored to its specific social and material conditions.

Although Mao had formulated most of his ideological contributions during the 1930s, it was not until 1942 that he was formally elected as the paramount leader of the CPC, assuming full leadership responsibilities. In 1949, the establishment of the People's Republic of China as a socialist state marked a significant validation of Maoism. Following Stalin's death in 1953, Mao emerged as the preeminent authority on interpreting Marxism, not just within China but across the socialist world. From this point forward, while Maoism had previously demonstrated adaptability, it began to be deified as dogmatic precepts and become less appealing.

Li Honglin[11] (李洪林，1925-2018), the former Deputy Director of Theory Bureau of Chinese Department of Propaganda, had narrated in his memoirs the change in many intellectuals' attitudes to Marxism and Maoism before and after 1949:

'In the 1920s and 1930s, the communist prospect to establish an equal and affluent society was very appealing to all Chinese people living in poverty and chaos. This is why many intellectuals had truly believed in Marxism and yearned for the governance of the Communist Party. At this time, their communist beliefs were completely voluntary and sincere without any coercive element. But when the Communist Party came to power, combining Marxism as an ideological tool with political power and forcing people to accept and obey its precepts, things turned to the opposite and the life of Marxism as a pure theory ended.' (Li, 2008, Aug 22nd).

4.2.2 'Red and expert': ideological education in Mao's era

After a challenging ascent to leadership within the CPC, Mao Zedong fully understand the significance of occupying the interpretive authority to define Marxism and justify his political agenda. Consequently, Mao dedicated considerable efforts to ideological work, which can be categorized into three primary domains, regarding ordinary masses, party members, students respectively.

---

[11] Li Honglin (1925-2016), as the well-known Marxist theorist, had been responsible for compiling and editing the collection of Excerpts of Mao Zedong's speeches and essays in the 1950s. However, since the 1960s, Li resigned from many crucial positions as he realized Mao's revolutionary campaigns deviating from principles of Marxism. After Mao's death in 1976, Li began to engage in many ideological debates and played a significant role in leading China's Thought Liberation Movement.

For the general populace, Lenin (1902) had emphasized that a crucial mission for the Communist Vanguard was to educate the proletariat, making them aware of their subordinate roles and awakening their revolutionary consciousness. Similarly, Mao Zedong called on communists to organize teaching sessions aimed at educating illiterate peasants, not only in reading and writing but also in understanding their condition of exploitation. Furthermore, the CPC was adept at introducing various symbolic resources from local historical and cultural legacies to interpret their communist agenda, thereby gaining public resonance and recognition (Perry, 2008). For instance, the 'mass line' principle, reflecting Confucian cultural beliefs of collectivism, resonated easily with the peasantry. In the 1930s, many normal schools in rural China had been taken over by communists as headquarters for disseminating Marxist theories and the party's agenda (Cong, 2007). This strategy, as Cong (ibid.) found, allowed the CPC to cultivate many rural intellectuals who became young generation of communist cadre. Additionally, Mao intensified professional ideological propaganda through journals such as *Emancipation Daily* (解放日报), transforming these publications into the party's 'mouthpiece' (喉舌) and aiming to 'make the whole country a great school' (使我们的国家整个地变为一座伟大的学校) (Liu, 2020).

Regarding party members, Mao Zedong employed political tactics to solidify his ideological authority. As previously mentioned, Mao introduced novel concepts that diverged from orthodox Marxism and the Soviet revolutionary experience. These innovations were frequently challenged by colleagues, particularly those who advocated for traditional Marxism or Leninism. Consequently, Mao had to establish himself as the sole authority on the

interpretation of Marxism, dismissing alternative interpretations offered by other leaders (Gao, 2018). Between 1942 and 1945, Mao initiated the Yan'an Rectification Movement, aimed at identifying and eliminating potential dissidents within the party ranks. Ideological seminars were conducted regularly, requiring each party member to articulate their understanding of Marxism and Maoism. Additionally, specialized courses were organized to instruct party members on Mao's most recent speeches and ideas. Through these measures, Mao formalized his ideological contributions as a distinct system, separate from classical Marxism and Leninism. His efforts culminated at the CPC's Seventh National Congress in 1945, where Mao's thoughts were officially recognized as 'Mao Zedong Thought' (Maoism) and were endorsed as the guiding ideology for the entire party.

In 1949, following the establishment of socialist China by the CPC, the party-state initiated a comprehensive reform of the schooling system to integrate Marxist education for its students. As stipulated in the party's constitution, Chinese education was mandated to serve proletarian politics and to cultivate successors committed to the socialist revolution. Chinese students were expected to uphold the socialist system, support the CCP as the sole ruling power, and endorse all socialist ideologies (Yu & Feng, 2010). This educational goal was succinctly encapsulated in the phrase 'red and expert' (又红又专), which prioritized ideological loyalty to socialism over professional or technical learning (Yu, 2020).

Throughout the 1950s to 1960s, courses on ideology and thought constituted the most significant portion of the Chinese curriculum. All narratives related to social analysis were strictly regulated to conform with Marxist doctrine. Students were required to learn, and only

permitted to learn, the Marxist perspectives on politics, economics, sociology, education, and history (Meisner, 1999). Faculty and students alike were required to denounce capitalism, liberalism, imperialism, and other ideologies associated with the West. Any expression in defense of these so-called Western ideologies risked being labeled as counterrevolutionary.

Interestingly, while students in China are expected to learn Marxism and Maoism from a young age, the complexity of Marxist theory presents a challenge for children. To address this, primary schools often simplify Marxist principles into memorable slogans or directly teach Mao Zedong's speeches, which are typically more accessible to young minds. This pedagogical approach has led to the proliferation of numerous socialist slogans in China, such as 'socialism will ultimately replace capitalism', 'capitalism will inevitably perish', 'surrounding the cities from the countryside', and 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun', among others.

On the other hand, since the mid-1950s, Mao Zedong endeavored to reconstruct China's economy and society on communist principles by establishing 'People's Communes' (人民公社) across rural villages. Within these communes, personal property was collectivized, and all members were expected to participate in collective living and working arrangements. Through this initiative, the CPC completed a nation-wide agricultural collectivization which realized the public ownership of all financial, labor, and material resources that had previously belonged to every household (MacFarquhar, 1987). The People's Communes subsequently served as the fundamental administrative units through which the CPC aimed to achieve social mobilization, organize social production, and carry out propaganda and educational campaigns. Children in the People's Communes were not only required to learn Mao's slogans and speeches but were

also encouraged to engage in collective labor, thereby contributing to the actual social production processes (Meisner, 1999).

Besides, Mao also questioned whether urban youth with limited exposure to peasant life could genuinely comprehend the principles of proletarian dictatorship. Thus, he launched the 'Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement' (上山下乡运动) in the mid-1950s. The initiative sought to mobilize urban youth to participate in the life of the People's Communes in rural China, engaging in manual agricultural labor and learning from the local workers and farmers. As Mao posited, only through immersion in rural communities could urban students achieve a true proletarian transformation, thereby becoming revolutionary youth in support of the proletariat. This movement, which lasted until 1978, resulted in the relocation of approximately 17 million young people to rural areas.

4.2.3 Ideological education and class struggle

In essence, Maoism is a revolutionary theory that places a significant emphasis on leveraging the peasantry as the driving force for communist revolutions. When it comes to modernization and economic development, Maoism has been characterized by radicalism and utopian-romanticism, leading to numerous setbacks in Mao's urban construction initiatives (Wen, 2012). In contrast, a substantial portion of Mao's efforts was directed towards class struggle (阶级斗争), which resulted in the intensification of Chinese ideological education and its association with political purging.

In the early 1950s, the CPC Central Committee identified China as being in a 'Transition Period' (过渡阶段) from its previous semi-feudal and semi-colonial state towards a modern,

industrialized society, prior to the realization of socialism. Mao agreed to prioritize modernization efforts to restore social order and foster economic development. Besides, recognizing that the CPC had not yet solidified its control in urban areas, Mao also agreed to cultivate a democratic consultative environment, encouraging collaboration and deliberation with other political parties and various social classes within urban areas, including workers, merchants, intellectuals, the bourgeoisie, and potential dissidents (Dirlik, 1978).

However, the initial peaceful atmosphere was soon supplanted. By 1956, the CPC had completed the Three Socialist Transformations, encompassing agriculture, handicraft industry, and capitalist industry and commerce from 1953 to 1956. In contrast to the Soviet Union's fraught socialist transition, marked by resistance and collective protests, China's was notably smooth. The rapid organization of cooperatives and the conversion of private enterprises into publicly owned socialist businesses met with minimal opposition. This success affirmed Mao's belief that the CPC had firmly established its leadership across all societal sectors, thereby enabling the institution of the proletariat's dictatorship under the CPC's absolute authority (Meisner, 1999).

On February 27, 1957, Mao Zedong issued the pivotal resolution *On Correctly Handling Contradictions Among the People* (关于正确处理人民内部矛盾的问题) (Mao, 1957, Jun. 19). In this document, Mao delineated the criteria for identifying 'the people' and 'the enemy' of socialism, and addressed the dynamics of 'class contradictions', including the potential for transformation between these categories. Mao declared that CPC had finished the elimination of 'external enemies', such as Western imperialists and domestic landlords, and then needed to

shift its focus to the eradication of 'internal enemies', particularly 'rightists'. This marked a departure from previous moderate policies, as the CPC initiated 'anti-rightist' campaigns targeting those perceived as proponents of capitalism or critics of Marxism and Maoism (MacFarquhar, 1974).

As the Argentine post-Marxism theorist Ernesto Laclau (2012) indicated, every individual in communist revolution must struggle to obtain the political recognition from the communist polity, drowning in the mass group with a special class label to elude political purge. Therefore, educational curricula in China were realigned to instill a class-based framework for social analysis. Students were categorized by social class, such as peasants, workers, and cadres, and taught to perceive social issues through the lens of class contradiction (Law, 2013). The emphasis on class struggle as a solution to societal problems was a key tenet of this educational reform. This approach served to integrate education with political purging, teaching students to discern 'class friends' from 'class enemies', thereby embedding political ideology within the educational system (MacFarquhar, 1974; 1987; 1999). A dialogue between Mao and his nephew Mao Yuanxin (毛远新) in 1964 had been well-known:

> 'Class struggle is one of your main subjects. Your college should go to the countryside to engage in the 'Four Purging' and go to the factory to engage in the 'Five Objecting'. If you do not take part in the 'Four Purging', you do not know peasants; if you do not take part in the 'Five Objecting', you do not know workers. How can you be a college graduate if you don't know about class struggle?' (阶级斗争是你们的一门主课。

你们学院应该去农村搞'四清'，去工厂搞'五反'。不搞'四清'就不了解农民，不搞'五反'就不了解工人。阶级斗争都不知道，怎么能算大学毕业？)(Mao, 1998, p.96)

In 1962, the rising of revisionism in the Soviet Union under Nikita Khrushchev intensified Mao's apprehensions about the trajectory of China's communist revolution. Khrushchev's belief in the peaceful coexistence of socialist and capitalist states, and the possibility of establishing socialism through constitutional processes within capitalist democracies, were seen by Mao as a perilous deviation from socialist principles (MacFarquhar, 1999). Mao perceived this revisionism as a betrayal that risked a 'peaceful evolution' away from socialism and back towards capitalism. Furthermore, Khrushchev's ascent to power following the denunciation and de-Stalinization campaign stirred fears in Mao of a potential posthumous betrayal or overthrow. This context led Mao to the conviction that China needed to undertake a sweeping purge that extended beyond the party to include a rectification movement throughout society (Meisner, 1999).

In 1966, with an assertion that capitalist and revisionist elements had infiltrated the CPC, Mao determined to launch a comprehensive revolution aimed at empowering the proletariat to identify and purge the so-called 'Chinese Khrushchev' and any potential dissidents. At this time, Mao had generated a profound skeptical of Chinese ideological education system, which he believed had failed to instill socialist values effectively. Instead, Mao was convinced that only through a genuine revolutionary experience could the Chinese youth understand the authentic socialism. To enable these youths 'burst into revolution in the deepest soul' (在灵魂深处爆发革命), the Cultural Revolution was initiated.

4.2.4 Ultimate of ideological education: Cultural Revolution and Red Guards

During the 1960s and 1970s, a wave of social democratization movements swept across the globe, with the Chinese Cultural Revolution being internationally recognized and positively associated with events such as the May 1968 protests in France, the American anti-war movements, and the political liberalization efforts of the Prague Spring. However, within China, the Cultural Revolution is commonly referred to as the 'ten years of chaos' (十年浩劫). According to the formalized resolution by the CPC Central Committee (1981, Jun 27th), Cultural Revolution 'was erroneously initiated by Mao Zedong and manipulated by the counterrevolutionary groups of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing and brought serious disaster and turmoil to the Communist Party and the Chinese people'.

In 1966, the CPC Central Committee endorsed the mobilization of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, with objectives that included: 'crushing those in power who advocated a capitalist path; criticizing reactionary bourgeois academic authorities; condemning the ideology of the bourgeoisie and other exploiting classes; and reforming education, literature, art, and other components of the superstructure to align with socialist principles' (CPC Central Committee, 1966). Following Mao Zedong's directive, formal education was suspended to allow student to participate in the revolution. Similar to the earlier mobilization of peasants in the Land Revolution, students were now mobilized to march on the street and spread the tenets of the Cultural Revolution (MacFarquhar, 1974).

Initially, students' focus was on the eradication of the 'Four Olds'—Old Ideas, Old Culture, Old Customs, and Old Habits—which were seen as remnants of traditional culture. However, Mao Zedong was dissatisfied with the initial restraint shown by students, who were hesitant to challenge their teachers, elders, and authorities. To encourage a more confrontational approach, Mao introduced the new slogan 'to rebel is justified' (造反有理), which emboldened students to take control of educational institutions and scrutinize teachers for any feudalistic or capitalist tendencies. This full mobilization of students led to the formation of the Red Guards, a paramilitary organization tasked with investigating teachers, intellectuals, officials, and local authorities for counter-revolutionary activists (MacFarquhar & Schoenhals, 2006). The Red Guards expanded rapidly, adopting increasingly radical stances with the aim of thoroughly purging Chinese society and spreading socialist ideals globally, as encapsulated in their aspiration to 'plant red flags all over the universe' (把红旗插遍全宇宙).

During this period, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*[12], well-known as the 'Little Red Book', was widely disseminated and became a central text of Mao's cult of personality. Students, armed with the book, used Mao's quotations to demonstrate their loyalty and to legitimize their authority in judging suspected counter-revolutionaries. The Cultural Revolution thus became characterized by vigorous class struggle and the great purging around the country.

---

[12] The *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, was firstly published in 1964, covering 23 topics with 200 selected quotations from Mao. As the book was printed in small sizes that could be easily carried and was bound in bright red covers, it was also called as the 'Little Red Book'. This book had very large printings, with an estimation that over 6.5 billion printed volumes were distributed in total.

During the Cultural Revolution, individuals perceived as aligning with capitalist or revisionist ideologies, termed 'Capitalist-Roaders' (走资派), faced persecution for their supposed deviation from socialist principles. The 'Five Black Categories' (黑五类)—comprising landlords, rich farmers, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, and rightists—were subjected to renewed purges. This led to the widespread persecution of tens of millions, who endured public humiliation, imprisonment, torture, forced labor, confiscation of property, and in some cases, execution or were driven to suicide. The scale of the purges escalated rapidly, spiraling beyond control. Radical factions within the Red Guards clashed with military and local authorities, severely undermining public safety. As tensions mounted, urban massacres became prevalent, culminating in millions of deaths. The Guangxi Massacre[13] stands out as a particularly egregious incident, where extremists engaged in mass human cannibalism as a form of 'physical extermination' aimed at the so-called 'class enemies'. This period was marked by extreme violence and internal conflict, reflecting the chaos and tragedy that unfolded during the Cultural Revolution.

On the other hand, Mao capitalized on the momentum of the Cultural Revolution to eliminate dissent and consolidate his power, targeting political rivals who held differing views. Chairman Liu Shaoqi[14], previously recognized as Mao's successor, was vilified by the Red

---

[13] According to Wikipedia, Cultural Revolution resulted in a large-scale massacre in Guangxi Province. The methods of slaughter included beheading, beating, live burial, stoning, drowning, boiling and disemboweling. In April 1981, an official investigation group reported an estimated death toll from 100,000 to 150,000, which marked Guangxi Massacre as the most miserable case during the Cultural Revolution.

[14] In 1959, Liu Shaoqi succeeded Mao Zedong's position as the Chairman of China, but Mao still served as the Chairman of Central Military Commission (1949-1976), remained powerful in the party, and controlled the party's policymaking.

Guards with labels such as 'the biggest capitalist roader in the Party', 'Chinese Khrushchev', and the 'traitor' to the Chinese Communist Revolution. In 1967, Liu was arrested and subsequently imprisoned; he died under persecution in 1969. His persecution significantly intensified factional conflicts within the Party. Following Liu's downfall, Lin Biao and the Gang of Four[15] ascended to power, perpetuating internal struggles and largely ignoring the social upheaval their actions caused. However, after Mao's death in 1976, the Gang of Four were swiftly arrested, marking a widely acknowledged conclusion to the Cultural Revolution.

To summarize, the Cultural Revolution, spanning from 1966 to 1976, represents one of the most enduring and profound revolutionary campaigns in the history of socialist China, with lasting and devastating effects on every aspect of the society. With economic activities disrupted, China suffered a severe economic stagnation. With educational institutions largely shuttered, an entire generation of students were sidelined from academic pursuits for a decade, as they were mobilized into class struggle and revolutionary activities. The great purging led to extensive political persecution, with an estimated 1.728 million 'unnatural deaths' reported, including a significant number of party members and intellectuals, according to Wikipedia. At last, the fervor for Marxism that had previously characterized Chinese society gave way to political disillusionment and a widespread loss of faith in socialist ideologies (Fewsmith & Nathan, 2019).

---

[15] The Gang of Four was a Maoist political faction composed of four paramount officials, including Jiang Qing (Mao Zedong's wife), Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen. All of four had taken significant positions as Mao's personal secretaries or as leading figures in CPC's propaganda and ideological work. They controlled the power through the later stages of Cultural Revolution. After Mao's death in 1976, they were arrested immediately.

4.3 Deng Xiaoping, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, and Confrontation between Constitutionalism and Socialism

Following Mao Zedong's death, Deng Xiaoping, who had been previously purged during the Cultural Revolution, reemerged as a central figure in Chinese politics. On December 18, 1978, Deng was formally acknowledged as the paramount leader during the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee in Beijing. He subsequently launched the 'Reforms and Opening-up' policy, shifting the party-state's focus from class struggle to economic development.

Under Deng's leadership, three reformist leaders, Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, and Jiang Zemin, were promoted to serve as the CPC General Secretary from 1981 to 1987, 1987 to 1989, and 1989 to 2002, respectively. Despite their roles, Deng continued to wield significant influence over major decisions until 1992. The period from 1978 to 1992 is widely recognized as the Deng Xiaoping era, characterized by progressive reforms, internal party struggles between reformists and conservatives, and the ideological tension between constitutionalism and statism (Vogel, 2011).

4.3.1 Farewell to the class struggle

After the Cultural Revolution, given widespread disappointment about the CPC and disillusionment with socialist ideals, Deng Xiaoping recognized the urgent need to restore public confidence in the party and reestablish social order.

In September 1977, Deng introduced the 'Boluan Fanzheng' policy, which translates to 'Eliminating Chaos and Returning to Normal', aimed at rectifying the errors of the Cultural

Revolution and normalizing societal functions. To do so, Deng championed the principles of 'liberating thoughts' (解放思想) and 'seeking truth from facts' (实事求是), which encouraged open critique of the Cultural Revolution and questioned the deification of Maoism. This shift away from dogmatic adherence to Mao's quotations allowed for a more nuanced approach to political decision-making. The 'Thought Liberation' campaign prompted intellectuals to critically re-examine Maoism and reassess Marxist theory. This initiative then revitalized Marxism not just as a revolutionary doctrine but as a critical analytical framework, which promoted the discussion about humanism and contributed to the rise of liberalism, as discussed in Section 4.2.3 (Wang, 1980; 1986).

With the effort to remove ideological constraints, Deng also took actions to unlock institutional chains. He abolished the class-label system, which had categorized individuals based on their perceived class status, such as landlords or capitalists, a practice that had been central to the class struggle under Mao Zedong.

Furthermore, Deng initiated a reinvestigation of three million 'unjust, false, wrongful cases' (冤假错案) that happened in Cultural Revolution, which led to the rehabilitation of seventy million individuals who had been wrongly accused as 'Capitalist Roaders' or counter-revolutionaries. The former Chairman Liu Shaoqi, who had been wrongly persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, was posthumously rehabilitated and granted a national memorial service.

In 1981, the CPC Central Committee passed the 'Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China', offering an official

evaluation of the major historical events since 1949, with particular emphasis on the Cultural Revolution. This resolution acknowledged Mao's pivotal role in the Chinese communist revolution and the establishment of a socialist state. However, it also recognized Mao's 'left' errors in post-1949 period, which, despite being valuable explorations, resulted in significant disasters for the party and the Chinese populace. By demonstrating an official recognition of past mistakes and a commitment to rectify them, CPC effectively alleviated the public's disappointment and discontent, thereby restoring people's faith in its leadership (Zhao, 2016).

During this period, Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦，1915-1989) played a pivotal role in leading the Thoughts Liberation Campaign and directing a special reinvestigation group tasked with addressing the 'unjust, false, wrongful cases' resulting from the Cultural Revolution. His efforts to redress past injustices and refresh ideological discussions earned him considerable acclaim among both the populace and party members. In 1981, Hu was elected to serve as China's Chairman from 1981 to 1982, followed by his tenure as the CPC General Secretary from 1982 to 1987. His advocacy for a marketing economy and political liberalization, however, positioned him against the conservative faction within the party, resulting in confrontations between reformists and the conservatives and leading to the tragedy in the 1989 protest, as discussed in Section 4.2.4.

4.3.2 'Reforms and Opening-up', 'don't argue', and 'cat theory'

In 1977, Deng Xiaoping's inspection of rural areas revealed profound poverty and underdevelopment, leading to his widely cited remark, 'poverty is not socialism' (贫穷不是社会主义). This statement aroused wide resonation among populace, which allowed Deng to

realize that people's expectations was centered on getting rid of poverty rather than engaging in socialist revolutions (Vogel, 2011). Therefore, Deng resolved that China should shift its focus from class struggle to economic construction (Dynon, 2008).

However, a significant dilemma arose. The previous socialist propaganda and education made people hold strong hostility towards market and get convinced of that the adoption of market economy by a socialist state would inevitably lead to capitalism. Indeed, as many post-communism studies proved, it was challenging for socialist regimes, that had previously condemned private ownership and purged capitalists, to reintegrate these elements into their societies (Eyal, Szelenyi & Townsley, 1998; Selenyi, 2003).

To manage pressures from the conservative faction within the party, Deng employed a 'don't argue' (不争论) strategy. He set forth the 'Four Modernizations' (四个现代化) as national goals for agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology, but on the other hand, deliberately left the specifics of what constituted modernization and how to achieve it open to interpretation (Vogel, 2011). In 1979, Deng declared that there were only 'Four Cardinal Principles' (四项基本原则) that were non-negotiable: upholding the socialist path with Chinese characteristics, upholding the people's democratic dictatorship, upholding the leadership of the Communist Party of China, and upholding Mao Zedong Thought and Marxism-Leninism. By upholding these four principles, everything could be discussed freely. Since then, these principles have been enshrined in China's constitution and continue to be referenced in official discourse.

Regarding the economic reform, Deng recognized the need to liberate China's economy from the constraints of central planning and resource redistribution that had previously stifled productivity. In the rural China, Deng sanctioned the dissolution of the inefficient and unprofessional People's Communes, replacing them with a system where land and property were reassigned to individual households, thereby permitting private farming and production (Vogel, 2011).

In the urban areas, reforms were taken to abolish or relax four systems that had regulated and collectivized urban life: the social class label system (cheng fen, 成分), the household registration system (hukou, 户口), the work unit system (dan wei, 单位), and the political dossier system (dang an, 档案) (Yan, 2010). A pilot program for private enterprise was introduced.

Internationally, Deng set aside Mao's diplomacy, which was heavily predicated on the ideological divide between socialism and capitalism, in favor of an 'opening-up' policy towards Western capitalist nations. This shift aimed to enhance diplomatic ties and attract foreign direct investment. A pivotal moment in this strategy was Deng's 1978 visit to Japan, which significantly bolstered China-Japan relations and facilitated substantial financial support from Japan.

These economic reconstruction policies, facilitated by a relaxation of ideological constraints, the initiative of reformists, and the support of conservative factions, coupled with global financial investment, achieved significant success. A notable outcome was the emergence of a privatization trend and the encouragement of entrepreneurship. The previously

dominant model of absolute public ownership evolved into a mixed-ownership system that included both State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and private businesses.

Deng's pragmatic approach to integrating market economy elements to stimulate economic growth sparked extensive debate. Domestically and internationally, his policies were scrutinized for their deviation from traditional socialist principles. As suggested by many scholars such as Schoenhals in *Doing things with words in Chinese politics* (1992) and Link in *An Anatomy of Chinese: Rhythm, Metaphor, and Politics* (2013), Chinese communists were very skillful of adopting various metaphors, rhythm, and creative interpretations to facilitate their governance and obtain people's recognition and resonance. Deng Xiaoping also inherited this tradition. In a response to above ideological debates, Deng quoted an old proverb stating, 'it does not matter whether a cat is black or white, if it catches mice it is a good cat' (不管黑猫白猫，抓住老鼠就是好猫) and posited that the effectiveness of a policy in promoting economic development was the true measure of its value, rather than its ideological alignment. Deng's pragmatism was then referred to as the 'cat theory' (猫论). As Deng (1994a) articulated, the choice of economic system did not inherently determine the nature of the regime's ideology. A socialist system could effectively adopt market economy mechanisms, as long as they served to enhance social productivity.

Since the 1980s, China has experienced an extraordinary period of economic growth, with its GDP increasing by approximately 8 to 10 percent annually. During this time, private entrepreneurs began to play a significant role in the economy, contributing to over 50 percent of China's GDP by the 1990s. This share rose to 70 percent in the early 2000s, following

127

China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), which integrated China further into the global market.

Given this economic progress, at the 13th National Congress in 1987, General Secretary Zhao Ziyang presented the report 'Advance Along the Road of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'. Zhao highlighted two main reasons for this distinct approach: the unique and complex social conditions of China, which Mao Zedong had recognized, and the fact that China's socialist development was in a nascent stage, necessitating tailored strategies to foster comprehensive growth before fully embracing socialism. This marked the first public articulation of the term 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' (中国特色社会主义) (Vogel, 2011). The concept was further solidified when, at the 15th National Congress in 1997, Deng Xiaoping's ideas on socialism and market economy reforms were formalized as 'Deng Xiaoping Theory' and incorporated into the Party Constitution, establishing it as a guiding ideology alongside Maoism.

4.3.3 Curricular reform, 'Four-Have' citizen, the rise of liberalism in China

Along with economic reforms, Deng Xiaoping also carried out educational reforms. In 1977, he focused on revitalizing educational activities that had been disrupted by the Cultural Revolution, urging students to return to formal learning.

Deng then spearheaded a comprehensive overhaul of China's curriculum. Recognizing that China's science and technology, as well as its educational content, had fallen behind Western standards, he assembled intellectuals from various academic disciplines to develop new textbooks that would align with the cutting edge of academic research. These new curricula,

modeled in part after Japanese educational frameworks, were enhanced to include an increased focus on science and technology. Additionally, they provided a more balanced and informed view of social progress in Western capitalist countries, countering the negative stereotypes that had been prevalent during Mao's era (Goldman, 2005).

On the other hand, Deng Xiaoping, having been personally affected by the Cultural Revolution, was acutely aware of the complex sentiments harbored by the Chinese populace towards ideological dogmas. Consequently, he aimed to reduce the prominence of ideological content in education, distinguishing moral and legal education from ideological indoctrination, which had previously occupied a dominant role in the curriculum.

At a Central Committee conference in 1980, Deng introduced the concept of the 'socialist new citizen', emphasizing that the purpose of education was to nurture individuals who would contribute to the modernization of society, moving beyond the confines of class struggle (Deng, 1994b). Further refining this vision in 1982, Deng articulated the 'Four-have citizens' (四有公民) as the educational objective: citizens who 'have ideal', 'have morality', 'have knowledge', and 'have discipline' (Deng, 1994b, p.408). This shift then signified a significant transformation in Chinese educational agenda, moving from the previous focus on ideological cultivation to one that prioritized moral development, knowledge dissemination, professional training, and academic research (Yang, 2003). Characterized by the transition 'from comrade to citizen' (Goldman, 2005, p.1), this transformation was part of a broader rationalization and reorientation of the educational system to align with the needs of a modernizing society.

Meanwhile, the introduction of Western philosophical traditions into China ignited vigorous academic and ideological discourse. This influx of Western thought, including postmodernism, humanism, and existentialism, represented by thinkers such as Michael Foucault, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jürgen Habermas, and Pierre Bourdieu, not only provided opportunities for Chinese intellectuals to learn about Western ideologies but also prompted a critical reflection on the Chinese party-state regime.

Wang Ruoshui (王若水，1926-2002), the deputy editor-in-chief of the CPC's official media outlet, *People's Daily*, emerged as a prominent figure opposing the CPC's official narrative. Wang (1980) advocated for a transformation of Marxism towards humanism, redefining concepts such as alienation, rectification, and humanity. In his seminal article '*A Defense for Humanism*' (1983), he argued that humanism was the essence of Marxism and that the previously excessive reliance on class analysis had alienated Marxism. Further, Wang (1986) differentiated between two types of Marxism in China: the official Marxism, which involved cultural hegemony and suppressed dissent through political power; and the real Marxism, which was purely academic and theoretical, serving as a tool for analyzing social issues.

Wang's advocacy for a humanistic interpretation of Marxism drew significant criticism from the conservative faction. Notably, Deng Liqun[16], the Minister of the CPC's Department of Propaganda, authored articles challenging Wang's perspective and upholding the Party's orthodox narrative. However, these contentious debates succeeded in capturing the public's

---

[16]. Deng Liqun, one of the significant leaders in the CPC during the 1980s, accounted for the party's propaganda work. As the representative figure of the conservative faction, Deng Liqun opposed political liberalization and was the most vocal member of the party's hardline wing in dealing with the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

attention, thereby amplifying the appeal of Wang's call for a humanistic approach to Marxism. Indeed, Wang's view resonated with several intellectuals who had achieved an agreement that China required further enlightenment to move beyond its entrenched feudal ideological traditions. As Guo (1989) argued,

'China's feudal ideology has been deeply entrenched. A direct leap from this traditional mindset to Marxism is infeasible without the intermediary phase of bourgeois rationality. An absence of a thorough understanding and assimilation of the positive aspects of bourgeois ideology could lead to a superficial application of Marxism, which plants the flower of Marxism into the soil of feudal ideologies, violating the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, but reinforcing the very elements of tyranny, privilege, and terror.' (中国的封建意识形态极其发达。如果不通过资产阶级理性这个中间环节，企图从传统思想直接跳跃到马克思主义，是办不到的。对资产阶级意识形态的优秀成果还没有理解、没有掌握，就去'灭资兴无'，只能是移马克思主义之花接封建的意识形态之木。灭'自由、平等、博爱'，不过是兴专制、特权、恐怖而已。)[17]' (Guo, 1989, p.1)

The ideological debates of the reform era further catalyzed the emergence of liberal thought in China. As economic privatization progressed, urban elites increasingly advocated for political liberalization. They demanded freedom of speech, substantial rights to participate in deliberative processes, and an independent media capable of holding the bureaucracy

---

[17] In fact, such comments had been widely discussed by many intellectuals since the 1910s to the 1950s; but during Chinese Great Leap Forward Campaign and many anti-rightist campaigns, all intellectuals that had kept critical of the CPC's political agenda had been purged.

accountable. Starting in the mid-1980s, a growing number of intellectuals began calling for constitutional reforms aimed at decentralizing the power of the Communist Party. These reformist efforts intensified the conflict between the reformist and conservative factions within the party, culminating in the tragic events of 1989.

4.3.4 Twin-peak politics: confrontations between reformists and conservatives

According to Linz (1996) in *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (1996), societies undergoing transition frequently encounter significant obstacles inherited from previous authoritarian regimes. The political reform efforts in China during the 1980s underscored this challenge. Deng Xiaoping, though revered as the paramount leader of the party, had to contend with the influence of the conservative faction, led by Chen Yun, who was widely acknowledged as the party's second most powerful figure. To advance his progressive reform agenda, Deng was obliged to negotiate with Chen, seeking his approval and cooperation. This dynamic resulted in a 'twin-peak politics', wherein the two leaders jointly shaped the direction of China's political reforms (Vogel, 2011).

Initially, conservative officials were supportive of Deng Xiaoping's reform efforts, acknowledging the need to restore social order and stimulate economic growth. However, as Deng aimed to extend his reforms into the political realm and the liberal movement gained momentum, conservatives began to resist. They labeled the calls for political liberalization as 'spiritual pollution' (精神污染), perceiving it as a threat to China's socialist path. In October 1983, the conservative faction launched the 'Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign' (清除精神污

染), targeting Western philosophical influences such as humanism, individualism, and existentialism, as well as what they saw as an unhealthy fixation on wealth and Western artistic expressions. This campaign led to numerous intellectuals being compelled to engage in self-criticism and to acknowledge their alleged ideological errors. Following Deng's intervention, the campaign concluded in December 1983.

Nevertheless, demonstrations continue to occur to call for political liberalization between 1984 to 1987. General Secretary Hu Yaobang, with Deng Xiaoping's approval, engaged with peaceful dialogues with demonstrators, assuring them of the party's commitment to further political reforms. Under Hu's leadership, initiatives were taken to streamline institutions, delineate the Party from the state apparatus, delegate more authority to the State Council, and reform the lifelong employment system.

However, these efforts were met with criticism from conservatives, who accused the reformists' 'laxness' in its ideological stance to accommodate the trend of liberalization (Vogel, 2011). Additionally, Deng's economic reforms, while transformative, also generated problems such as corruption, inflation, and an expanding wealth gap. These issues provided the conservative faction with ammunition to criticize Deng's reform agenda. Amidst mounting pressure, General Secretary Hu was compelled to resign as General Secretary in 1987, signaling a contraction in Deng's influence. In the aftermath, while civil forces advocating for constitutional reform gained momentum in society, it was the conservative faction, opposed to political liberalization, that began to ascend within the party (Wu, 2015).

On April 15, 1989, the former General Secretary Hu Yaobang, who was widely respected among intellectuals, urban elites, students, and private entrepreneurs, died of a heart attack. Thousands of college students in Beijing voluntarily gathered at Tiananmen Square to participate his memorial service. However, the memorial service quickly evolved into a large-scale demonstration that called for the rehabilitation of Hu's reputation and advocated for the democratic principles that Hu championed, which sparked the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protest.

Initially, General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, who had succeeded Hu Yaobang in 1987 and shared his reformist stance, attempted to open a dialogue with the student protestors and successfully persuaded them to disperse and return to their universities.

However, on April 26, the official media, *People's Daily*, under the control of the conservative faction, published an article titled as *We Must Take a Clear-cut Stand against Disturbances* (必须旗帜鲜明地反对动乱) to accuse student's demonstration as an anti-party revolt that should be resolutely opposed. This article, then known as *April 26 Editorial* (四二六社论), greatly enraged student protestors. As a result, on April 27, students assembled at the square again to protest and demand the government to withdraw the editorial. To allay the anger of students, General Secretary Zhao Ziyang promised that the editorial would be rescinded. However, Zhao's attempt was rejected by the party's conservative faction, leaving the tension between the reformist and conservatives greatly intensified.

In early May, anticipating the arrival of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev for a state visit, students strategized to heighten the impact of their demonstration. They planned to occupy the square and initiate a hunger strike to compel the CPC to address their demands swiftly. This

call to action attracted students from across the country, culminating in an estimated 300,000 students gathering in the square by May 13th. The hunger strike resonated nationwide, prompting millions of residents to demonstrate in solidarity.

Then, General Secretary Zhao Ziyang made further attempts to engage with the students. Through dialogues, students agreed to end the hunger strike and depart from the square only if the government formally retracted the April 26th editorial and rebrand the protest as 'patriotic and democratic'. However, Premier Li Peng, a leading figure in the conservative faction, rejected this proposal again. This decision led students to feel deceived, prompting them to persist with their hunger strike throughout Mikhail Gorbachev's visit. Then, numerous international journalists reported this protest and brought global attention to Beijing. This widespread coverage led many party leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, to perceive the student movement as running out of control and posing a threat to the party's governance (Vogel, 2011).

On May 17, Deng Xiaoping held a Politburo Standing Committee meeting at his home and criticized Zhao Ziyang for his incorrect sympathy with students that put the CPC into a dilemma. Then, Deng articulated the decision to move troops into Beijing to declare the martial law, taking strong actions to put the movement to an end. Zhao Ziyang expressed the objection to Deng's decision and claimed that he had determined to resign his position as the General Secretary.

On May 20, the CPC declared the martial law and mobilized at least 30 divisions, about 250,000 troops to enter Beijing. Under this circumstance, intellectuals appealed for the students to stop the strike and leave the square immediately. Local citizens also helped surround military

vehicles to prevent them from advancing into the square. However, those student protestors had become disorganized and split up into many factions. With most of them dispersed back to university, some still stayed on the square.

On June 1, Li Peng issued a report titled 'On the True Nature of the Turmoil' and accused those student protestors as terrorists and counterrevolutionaries with the aims of overthrowing the party's leadership.

On the evening of June 3, the official television warned Beijing's residents to stay indoors. Then, the troops advanced to Tiananmen Square. By the morning of June 4th, the military force expelled all protestors and cleared the square, resulting in a death toll estimated from several hundred to several thousand.

Days later, numerous student representatives were arrested. General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, the paramount leader who rejected the martial law, was also placed under house arrest for the rest of his life until 2005 when he died of diseases.

Then, Jiang Zemin (江泽民，1926-2022), the party secretary of Shanghai, who had skillfully negotiated with Shanghai's student protestors and subdued the protest without violence, obtained Deng Xiaoping's recognition and was promoted as the new General Secretary, serving as the paramount leader from 1989 to 2002.

Overall, the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protest represents one of the most pivotal moments in the history of contemporary China, posing the greatest challenge to the CPC's governance. While Mao Zedong's efforts were aimed at eradicating potential revisionism and preserving the orthodoxy of Maoism, Deng Xiaoping pursued a contrast path, seeking to reform Maoist

principles, prioritizing economic modernization over class struggle, thereby creating tensions with the conservative faction. Students also took contrast roles in these periods, despite a timespan of merely one to two decades. The Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution were mobilized in service of Mao's personal cult and the propagation of communist ideals. College students in the 1980s were driven by a desire to decentralize the CPC's leadership and advocate for political liberalization, thus reflecting a significant evolution in the political consciousness and demands of the student population.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Chinese communists recognized the imperative to modernize and adapt their ideological stance. In 1992, Deng Xiaoping embarked on his renowned 'Southern Tour' across China's southern provinces. Through speeches in major cities, Deng underscored his conviction that socialism remained fundamental to China's national identity, while a market economy was indispensable for the country's economic modernization. As Deng emphasized, the hallmark of a Socialist Market Economy lies in its strategic blend of market mechanisms with appropriate state intervention, ensuring that economic liberalization would not compromise the socialist framework (Vogel, 2011). Requested by Deng, Jiang Zemin officially formalized the term 'Socialist Market Economy' during the 14th National Congress in the same year.

However, political liberalization and constitutional reform became highly sensitive topics in China. The violent suppression of student protestors had a profound impact on public sentiment, shattering many people's beliefs in the possibility of political reform. Since then, Chinese students have increasingly adopted a pragmatic approach to politics, opting to avoid

public expression on political matters and focusing primarily on their personal lives rather than engaging in public life (Chan, 1999). The well-known historian Wu Si (吴思, 1957-), who had personally witnessed and participated in the 1989 movement as a young man, has narrated how the events in 1989 significantly altered his political beliefs:

'Before the June Fourth Incident… we had long regarded ourselves as socialist successors and held a strong sense of belonging to the party-state. But after that, I began to form an independent character, realizing that I was not a part of you (party-state) anymore. Ideologically, I also broke free from Marxism, no longer approaching those Marxist classics with a learning mindset, but sought for new source of knowledge. 在之前…就是把自己当成接班人，认为这个党是我们的党，这个国家是我们的国家。但以后就开始形成独立的人格了，从此你就是你，我就是我，不是你们的什么接班人。思想上我也跳出了马克思主义，不再以学习的态度读那些书。当时一个心态的变化，就是要寻找新的知识。' (Wu, 2015, April 16th).

4.4 Construction of 'Socialist Spiritual Civilization'

4.4.1 Patriotic education and the rise of Chinese New-Left School

Throughout China's Communist revolutions, ideology has been instrumental in forging a common purpose, shaping collective identity, and fostering social cohesion. However, with the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution in 1978 and the onset of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, the previously dominant strains of Maoism and orthodox Marxism began to wane, allowing for more diverse and creative ideological interpretations.

138

To maintain ideological guidance amidst these changes, Deng introduced the concept of 'Socialist Material Civilization' (社会主义精神文明) at the 12th National Congress in 1982. This new term, softer and more inclusive than the previous 'ideological work', aimed to steer both ideological discourse and cultural transformation (Link, 2013). To balance economic modernization with ideological integrity, Deng further delineated the realms of material and spiritual civilization. He designated China's economic growth as the development of the 'Socialist Material Civilization', while ideological work was cast as the construction of the 'Socialist Spiritual Civilization' (Deng, 1987). Deng emphasized the importance of both dimensions, famously stating, 'in grasping with two hands, both hands must be tough' (两手抓，两手都要硬), advocating for equal emphasis on material and spiritual progress (Perry, 2013).

In 1986, during the 6th Plenary Session of the 12th National Congress, the CPC Central Committee issued *The Resolution with Regard to the Guiding Principles of the Construction of a Socialist Spiritual Civilization* (中共中央关于社会主义精神文明建设指导方针的决议). This document articulated the objective of cultivating a Socialist Spiritual Civilization that would 'align with the demands of socialist modernization. It aimed to develop socialist citizens endowed with ideals, morals, culture, and discipline, thereby enhancing the overall moral and scientific-cultural caliber of the Chinese nation' (CPC Central Committee, 1986). It also emphasized a multifaceted approach that encompassed 'not only the advancement of education, science, and culture but also the reinforcement of communist ideology, ideals, faith, ethics,

discipline, revolutionary principles, and the cultivation of comradely relations among individuals' (ibid.).

This shift in ideological work led to a notable reduction in the intensity of ideological indoctrination. Consequently, China's propaganda apparatus experienced a process of de-ideologization and secularization. The propaganda content shifted towards apolitical subjects, such as traffic safety, birth control, hygiene, and social order, reflecting a pragmatic approach to social governance (Law, 2013).

Despite the decline in the public's ideological adherence to socialism, the CPC intensified its efforts to foster patriotism, emphasizing the party's role in leading China to national independence from its semi-colonial and semi-feudal past (Zhao, 2004). By tapping into nationalist sentiments, the party-state aimed to restore positive public perception.

In 1982, the CPC launched the 'Three Loves' campaign, promoting the slogan 'Love the party, love socialism, and love the motherland' (爱党，爱社会主义，爱国) (Liu, 2020). Deng Liqun, then Minister of the CPC's Department of Propaganda and the leading figure of the conservative faction, equated love for socialism with love for China, asserting that genuine patriotism necessitates a deep affection for the socialist system and the communist party. As he argued, 'loving the Chinese Communist Party is the highest expression of Chinese patriotism' (Ding, 2006, p.144-145). Such a slogan was infused into China's propaganda, advocating for a form of socialist patriotism that sought to intertwine political allegiance with ideological and national emotions. Consequently, the CPC worked to render socialism and patriotism as two

140

sides of the same coin, reinforcing the notion that they were increasingly inseparable (Zhao, 1998). As Zhao (2004) summarized,

> *'Socialist patriotism (in China) has three levels. At the first level, individuals should subordinate their personal interests to the interests of the state. At the second level, individuals should subordinate their personal destiny to the destiny of our socialist system. At the third level, individuals should subordinate their personal future to the future of our communist cause' (p.28).*

Concurrently, the emergence of the New Left school, which championed neoconservatism and authoritarianism, also engaged in the ideological shifts of the 1980s. This movement provided a counterpoint to the call for political liberalization, advocating for the necessity of power centralization and establishing a robust state apparatus. Prominent among these was Wang Huning (王沪宁, 1955-), who, by the age of 30, had become the youngest associate professor of Political Science in China at the time.

In 1988, Wang Huning published a pivotal paper titled *The Structure of China's Changing Political Culture*. In this work, Wang delineated a critical distinction between cultural values and ideologies, cautioning against the perils of the CPC's overemphasis on ideological work at the expense of nurturing core societal values. Wang (1988) critiqued the CPC for having eradicated traditional values through past campaigns without successfully instilling a new set of core values that were both responsive to local Chinese conditions and congruent with socialist ideology. He also highlighted the double-edged nature of Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic 'cat theory', which, while liberating China from strict ideological constraints, risked

obfuscating the country's value system and leaving the populace susceptible to external cultural influences (ibid). Therefore, Wang argued that the CPC must take on an assertive role in guiding the transformation of the nation's 'software'—encompassing culture, values, and beliefs—to effectively support the modernization of its 'hardware', which refers to the economic, systemic, and institutional structures.

Wang's warning was testified by the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protest. Deng Xiaoping acknowledged his fault as an overemphasis on economic development at the expense of ideological and spiritual education. As Deng admitted, 'The biggest mistake in the past ten years was education... I refer to the political and thought education, which was not only for schools and young students but also for the whole population' (Deng, 1989, p. 306). Reflecting on his own proverb, 'in grasping with two hands, both hands must be tough', Deng conceded that there had been an imbalance, stating, 'only one hand is tough, but the other is soft', which symbolized his prioritization of economic progress over ideological work (Lynch, 1999).

Post-1989, the New Left school in China gained official recognition, leading to its swift rise (Fewsmith, 1994). During this period, the conservative thought of German political philosopher Carl Schmitt and the classical political philosophy of American philosopher Leo Strauss were translated into Chinese, achieving considerable popularity despite ongoing Western academic debates. Chinese scholars like Liu Xiaofeng (刘小枫) and Gan Yang (甘阳) spearheaded the Chinese Straussian School, embracing conservative perspectives to critically assess Western modernity and to reevaluate the value of Chinese traditions.

The introduction of Samuel Huntington's influential work *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993) further stimulated discourse on Chinese cultural identity, fueling Chinese nationalism and the resurgence of New-Confucianism (Bell, 2010). These intellectual trends converged with the traditional Maoist-left, collectively contributing to the ascent of the Chinese New Left. This movement advocated for centralized power, robust state intervention, socialist patriotism, and the promotion of the so-called 'China Model' (Zhao, 2019).

The New Left, with its ideological roots in Maoism and support from senior officials, emerged as a prominent force in China. Wang Huning, as a leading figure of the movement, was appointed as the director of the CPC Central Policy Research Office during the 1990s. His influence was further solidified in 1997 with the establishment of the Central Guidance Commission on Building Spiritual Civilization (中国共产党中央精神文明建设指导委员会), which serves as the paramount ideological body overseeing national propaganda and the dissemination of socialist values. In 2017, Wang has begun to chair this commission. As the prominent ideologue of the CPC, he assisted three paramount leaders, Jiang Zemin (1989-2002), Hu Jintao (2002-2012) and Xi Jinping (2012-) in developing their ideological theories, as introduced below.

4.4.2 Jiang Zemin: 'The Three Represents' and the CPC's transformation as a ruling party

Jiang Zemin's tenure as the CPC General Secretary from 1989 to 2002 was marked by a significant economic growth and a progressive, outward-looking China. Jiang's ideological

contributions included redefining the CPC's nature and reorienting the country's development strategy.

In fact, the economic progress since the 1990s led to a deepening social division of labor and the emergence of a growing middle class, which in turn widened the wealth gap (Yan, 2011). The rise of private entrepreneurship and the expansion of the middle class resulted in a demographic shift where the 'proletariat' no longer constituted the majority of the Chinese population. This shift challenged the traditional concept of 'Proletarian Dictatorship', which had been a key tenet of socialist governance. Consequently, the CPC faced the imperative to redefine its role and ideology in response to the burgeoning non-state sector (Brown, 2012).

In July 2001, Jiang Zemin introduced the 'Three Represents'[18] (三个代表) theory during his speech commemorating the 80th anniversary of the CPC's founding. This theory, which was later enshrined in the state ideology and incorporated into the CPC's constitution, redefined the CPC's role on three fronts: 1) as the representative of China's advanced productive forces, 2) as the representative of China's advanced culture, and 3) as the representative of the fundamental interests of the vast majority of the Chinese people[19].

Contrasting with Maoist ideology, which emphasized class struggle and categorized the populace into 'friends' and 'enemies' through 'class labels', Jiang's theory embraced a more

---

[18] Since 1998, the representative of Chinese New-Left School, Wang Huning, had worked as an ideological consultant for Jiang Zemin. It is widely believed that Wang played an important role in modifying Jiang Zemin's thought of 'Three Represents' and drafting the relating manuscripts.

[19] The theory of Three Represents has been widely propagandized in China. See an introduction at:
http://www.china.org.cn/english/china_key_words/2021-09/23/content_77769290.html

inclusive approach, recognizing all individuals as 'people', irrespective of their social status, effectively discarding the concept of 'class enemy' that had been prevalent for decades. Since then, capitalists, including private entrepreneurs and affluent urban elites, were formally acknowledged, and permitted to join the Communist Party. As Jiang argued then, all social groups had contributed to the socialist cause in China (Dirlik, 2012). This shift towards a 'party for all' concept made the CPC more appealing to a broader demographic, including businessmen, managers, the middle class, and intellectuals. It bolstered the party's meritocracy and unity by integrating social elites. By the 2010s, it was observed that approximately 30 to 35 percent of Chinese entrepreneurs were party members (Marquis & Qiao, 2022).

Xiao Gongqin (萧功秦), a prominent scholar of Chinese Neoconservatism, noted in 2006 that the innovation of the 'Three Represents' (三个代表) signified a pivotal shift in the CPC's identity—from a revolutionary party to a ruling party. This theoretical development allowed the CPC greater flexibility in policy-making, unbound by the ideological constraints that previously required it to maintain a revolutionary stance against private ownership and capitalistic production. Domestically, the party-state could now adapt its political agenda to align with the evolving fundamental interests of the population, as defined by the party itself (Chen, 2014). Internationally, the 'Three Represents' sent a nuanced message to Western democracies, suggesting that China was embracing an open future oriented towards advanced productive forces and culture, which was not necessarily restricted to its traditional socialist rhetoric (Brown, 2012). As Jiang navigated the party towards deepening market economy

reforms, the CPC's political legitimacy increasingly rested on a new pillar: economic competence (Bell, 2015).

As China's ideological control eased, the country pursued market economy reforms, leading to comprehensive social development, the rise of a middle class, and the emergence of a civil society, all while adhering to certain uncrossable redlines. Its citizenship education underwent further de-ideologization, with the curriculum reducing socialist content and incorporating discourse on universal values, humanism, and cosmopolitanism (Goldman, 2005).

The proverb 'signal to turn left, but turn to right' (打左转向灯，向右转) encapsulates the perception that China has, in practice, embraced a liberal agenda, driving society towards capitalism while still asserting its socialist identity (Link, 2013; Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018). Over this period, the 'China Model' emerged, characterized by strong state interventions across various sectors to mitigate the negative impacts of liberal markets and capitalist production (Bell, 2015). Despite controversies surrounding this term, Dirlik (2012) observed that if there is a China model, its most notable feature is the country's willingness to experiment with different models (p.277).

4.4.3 Hu Jintao: 'Scientific Outlook on Development' and 'Socialist Harmonious Society'

Following China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the country achieved significant economic growth, with an annual GDP increase of 10 percent. However, this rapid growth also introduced a series of social challenges, including corruption, social

inequality, unequal redistribution of wealth, issues with urban migrant labor, and environmental pollution (Bell, 2015).

General Secretary Hu Jintao, who led the country from 2002 to 2012, addressed these issues by introducing the Scientific Outlook on Development (科学发展观) at the Third Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in October 2003. This outlook 'emphasizes a people-centered approach, advocates for comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development, and promotes the all-round development of the economy, society, and individuals' (坚持以人为本，树立全面、协调、可持续的发展观，促进经济社会和人的全面发展) (*Guangming Daily*, 2010, Jan 9th). As Hu articulated, the CPC should consider the interests of the people as the ultimate goal of all its work, aiming to continuously fulfill the diverse needs of the populace and to foster their overall development (Marquis & Qiao, 2022, p.50).

Building upon Mao Zedong's slogan 'serve the people' (为人民服务), Hu Jintao expanded its scope, asserting that the CPC's mission was to foster a social environment that allowed for equitable, coordinated, and sustainable development for all. This directive led to a reorientation of CPC policies towards social equality and sustainable development (Shambaugh, 2008). Hu made efforts to enhance social welfare, extending insurance and pension coverage, abolishing agricultural taxes, and providing financial support to underdeveloped regions. Concurrently, he moved away from the previous approach of economic development at any cost, particularly environmental degradation (Alkon & Wang, 2017). During his tenure, environmental protection laws were strengthened and more rigorously enforced at the local level (Ding, 2020).

In line with Wang Huning's (1988) earlier calls for the infusion of the appropriate moral values into socialist China, Hu Jintao introduced the 'Socialist Concepts on Honors and Disgraces' (社会主义荣辱观). This framework was articulated as the 'Eight Honors and Eight Disgraces'[20] (八荣八耻), serving as a new moral benchmark for evaluating the conduct and work of Chinese citizens.

Furthermore, Hu Jintao integrated the ancient Confucian concept of 'harmony' into the socialist framework, forging the term 'Socialist Harmonious Society' (社会主义和谐社会). This synthesis of socialist ideologies with Chinese cultural traditions is widely recognized as a successful blend of the two (Bell, 2015). In 2006, Hu elaborated on this concept in a speech titled *Resolution on Major Issues Concerning the Building of a Socialist Harmonious Society* at the 6th Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the CPC. The resolution (Hu, 2006, October 18th) aimed to apply the principle of harmony to various aspects of Chinese society, including social justice, regional development, labor relations, the relationship between humans and nature, multiethnic relations, and the development of the private-ownership

---

[20] Chinese Xinhua News Agency posted an official English translation in October 2006 for the Eight Honors and Eight Shames: 1. Honor to those who love the motherland, and shame on those who harm the motherland. 2. Honor to those who serve the people, and shame on those who betray the people. 3. Honor to those who quest for science, and shame on those who refuse to be educated. 4. Honor to those who are hardworking, and shame on those who indulge in comfort and hate work. 5. Honor to those who help each other, and shame on those who seek gains at the expense of others. 6. Honor to those who are trustworthy, and shame on those who trade integrity for profits. 7. Honor to those who abide by law and discipline, and shame on those who break laws and discipline. 8. Honor to those who uphold plain living and hard struggle, and shame on those who wallow in extravagance and pleasures. The translation is available at:

https://web.archive.org/web/20080303120342/http://news3.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-10/18/content_5220576.htm

economy. The goal was to foster reconciliation and reciprocity among different social groups and between humans and the natural environment.

In this way, the concept of 'Socialist Virtues' was broadened to encompass not only socialist ideologies but also Confucian moral values such as collectivism, diligence, community care, and respect for the elderly (Link, 2013). These traditional values, recontextualized as Socialist Virtues, were then incorporated into citizenship education, positively influencing people's beliefs in socialism (Bell, 2015).

Overall, Hu Jintao's leadership had a significant impact on rectifying the previous imbalances in China's development and creatively merging the country's local cultural heritage with socialist values. Hu's tenure (2002-2012), along with that of Jiang Zemin (1989-2002) and the earlier period of Deng Xiaoping's dominance in Chinese politics (1978-1992), is often seen as a continuous era of reform. During this time, both Jiang and Hu continued Deng's reformist agenda to further China's economic and social transformation, while Xi Jinping's ascending to power marked a turning point to reorient Chinese ideological work.

4.5 Xi Jinping's Agenda on Ideological Work

4.5.1 Xi Jinping Thoughts on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era

Xi Jinping's leadership since 2012 has indeed marked a significant shift in China's policy orientations. During the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017, the formalization of *'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era'* (习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)' (which is commonly abbreviated as Xi Jinping

149

Thought) into the Party's Constitution solidified Xi's ideological influence. This elevated Xi's speeches and writings to the status of required study material in various aspects of Chinese society, including education, propaganda efforts, and training for government officials.

The term 'new era' has been widely employed to emphasize the significant changes in China's social conditions under Xi's leadership, which underscores the transformative nature of the current period. Xi also introduced the concept of the 'new normal' (新常态) for China's economy in 2014. This concept acknowledges that the Chinese economy has transitioned from the rapid growth seen in the past to a new phase characterized by slower but more sustainable development with an innovation-driven model (Xinhua.net, 2014, Nov.10th). Concurrently, the 'new normal' was also referred to the new conditions of both international geopolitics and natural environment, which posed new requirements in China's diplomatic policies and agenda of sustainable development (Hilton & Kerr, 2017).

In the same year, Xi proposed the 'Four Comprehensives' (四个全面) as crucial aspects of the CPC's overarching agenda. These include 1) building a moderately prosperous society, known as a 'Xiao Kang' society, 2) deepening reform comprehensively, 3) governing by law comprehensively, and 4) strengthening the party's self-discipline comprehensively. While the first three had been addressed by previous leaders, the emphasis on the party's self-discipline was new under Xi, reflecting his anti-corruption campaign. This campaign, alongside efforts to curb extravagance and regulate bureaucratic inefficiency, has reshaped the Chinese bureaucracy and garnered support from the public (Wang & Yan, 2020).

Overall, Xi's new concepts and ideas intersect with four domains directly relevant to the research problem in this dissertation:

1. The rise of nationalism, epitomized by Xi's promotion of the 'Chinese Dream' and 'National Rejuvenation'.

2. A notable shift towards equalitarianism, exemplified by the Poverty-Alleviation campaign and the pursuit of 'Common Prosperity'.

3. A heightened opposition to constitutionalism.

4. A noticeable preference for collectivism over individualism.

These intersections will be elaborated below, respectively.

4.5.2 'Chinese Dream' and 'National Rejuvenation'

The concept of the 'Chinese Dream' (中国梦) was proposed at the very beginning of Xi Jinping's tenure. On November 29th, 2012, during an official visit to the exhibition 'The Road of Rejuvenatio' at the National Museum of China, Xi delivered a speech questioning, 'What is the Chinese dream?' He asserted that rejuvenating the Chinese nation represented the greatest aspiration for modern Chinese history, spanning across generations and embodying the collective interests of the nation (Xi, 2012, p. 36).

This vision was encapsulated in two goals, known as the 'Two Centenaries': first, to achieve the material goal of China becoming a 'moderately prosperous society' by 2021, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China; and second, to realize the modernization goal of China becoming a fully developed nation by 2049,

marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (The Economist, 2013, May 4th).

The 'Chinese Dream' was frequently linked with the concept of 'Great (National) Rejuvenation' (伟大复兴), symbolizing China's mission to reclaim its historical glory, establish a prosperous and sustainable society, and regain a prominent position on the global stage (Wang, 2014). This term resonated strongly with the Chinese public on an emotional level. Today, it serves as a defining feature of Xi Jinping's administration, under which all his initiatives are framed as efforts towards fulfilling the Chinese Dream (Lee, 2017).

Despite the ambiguity surrounding the definition of the 'Chinese Dream', two key principles emphasized in Xi Jinping's speeches are evident. Firstly, the goal of the Chinese Dream is envisioned to lead to national prosperity and glory, fueling an ethnic nationalist revival and aspiring for increased global influence, even surpassing the United States as a cultural exporter. Secondly, Xi underscores that the realization of the Chinese Dream necessitates collective efforts from the Chinese populace. Moreover, Xi Jinping has also emphasized the importance of military development, asserting that the realization of a 'strong-nation dream' must be underpinned by achieving a 'strong-army dream'. This highlights the significance of military strength in China's vision for national rejuvenation. However, this assertive stance has contributed to escalating tensions between China and the West, with China increasingly perceived as a threat by many Western countries (Shirk, 2018).

4.5.3 'Poverty Alleviation Campaign' and 'Common Prosperity'

As the second imperative agenda, the 'Poverty Alleviation Campaign' and the call for 'Common Prosperity' represent a significant shift towards equalitarianism under Xi Jinping's leadership. While Hu Jintao's administration (2002-2012) had already begun addressing unbalanced development and promoting social equality, Xi Jinping's leadership saw a heightened focus on poverty alleviation.

At the 18th National Congress in 2012, Xi announced a prioritization of poverty alleviation and mandated all Communist cadres to take strong actions in this regard. By 2021, the Communist Party of China announced the eradication of absolute poverty, marking a significant milestone in realizing the first goal of the Chinese Dream - achieving a moderately prosperous society by the party's 100th anniversary. On April 6th, 2021, the State Council published the *White Paper Report on Poverty Alleviation*, affirming Xi's effective leadership in leading an unprecedented battle against poverty and obtaining a victory in eliminating extreme poverty (PRC State Council, 2021, April 6th).

Despite its intended goals, the Poverty Alleviation Campaign has faced criticism regarding its impact on the broader economic agenda. Its heavy focus on poverty alleviation has sometimes diverted attention and resources away from other economic priorities, leading to concerns about efficiency and overall economic balance (He, Lu, & Lee, 2023). The stringent cadre appraisal system, which heavily weighs performance in poverty alleviation, has incentivized officials to prioritize rural development at the expense of urban economic growth.

While this approach may have resulted in short-term increases in rural income, it has also created imbalances and tensions between rural and urban areas.

Moreover, the Poverty Alleviation Campaign, coupled with the agenda of Common Prosperity, has stirred concerns about compulsory property redistribution and echoes historical revolutionary practices such as Land Reform (Crossley, 2021). The concept of Common Prosperity has been associated with redistributive measures reminiscent of past policies, leading to apprehension among certain sectors of society. Xi's policies aimed at curbing the influence of the non-state sector, justified under the banner of Common Prosperity, have included large-scale regulations and crackdowns on private industries, notably in the technology, property, and tutoring sectors (He, 2021, Sep. 11th). Additionally, China pledged to address housing issues by building low-cost rental houses, but economic challenges have led to a downplaying of this commitment since 2022.

4.5.4 Opposing constitutionalism

The intensified opposition to constitutionalism marks another significant shift in recent Chinese society. While China had previously exhibited a degree of tolerance towards the Chinese Liberalist School and liberalist intellectuals, events such as the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent political incidents in Western countries bolstered China's determination to assert its own experiences and ideologies (Bell, 2015). Growing disillusionment with Western regimes has fueled an increasing number of voices in China opposing Western ideologies and constitutional democracy (Chen, 2024). The rise of the internet has amplified the divergence of civic opinions, leading to a more polarized online environment where Chinese netizens often

find themselves categorized as either 'patriots' or 'cynics' based on their expressions of praise or criticism towards the country (Esarey, 2015).

The party-state has maintained a tightly controlled ideological stance and prohibited certain discourses that could potentially challenge the existing political order. A notable example of this control is *Document No.9*, as introduced in Chapter 1.1, which identified a range of topics, including constitutional democracy, civil society, judicial independence, and press freedom, as off-limits for discussion in the public sphere, academia, and social media.

On February 26th, 2023, the CPC released the document *'Opinions on Strengthening Legal Education and Legal Theory Research in the New Era'*, instructing Chinese law schools to cease teaching about constitutional democracy, judicial independence, and the separation of powers. This move further solidifies the party-state's control over ideological discourse and underscores its commitment to maintaining its grip on power (Zhou, 2023).

One of the most provocative reasons behind these ideological actions is the CPC's serious consideration of a neoconservative agenda. The New-Left School, represented by figures like Wang Huning, who currently serves on China's Politburo Standing Committee, has played a significant role in shaping the national ideology. Wang Huning, known for his critical stance towards American politics, published a book titled *America Against America* (美国反对美国) during a six-month academic visit to the United States in 1991. In the book, Wang (1991) argued that in a parliamentary democracy, the involvement of the bourgeoisie can significantly influence the electoral process, leading to elections that are not genuine for disadvantaged groups. Wang concluded that China, with its vast proletarian population, should not adopt such

a system, as it could undermine the legitimacy foundation of socialism and erode the party's authority (Wang, 2017, Nov. 6).

5.5.5 Promoting collectivism and stifling individualism

The fourth characteristic of China's ideological approach is the promotion of collectivism while restraining individualism. Xi has actively advocated for a revival of revolutionary spirit, emphasizing commitment and sacrifice to strengthen social solidarity and reciprocity. The Chinese government has encouraged philanthropy, volunteerism, and the not-for-profit sector to embrace voluntaristic ethos and contribute to the Socialist Spiritual Civilization.

On the other hand, individual aspirations are often overshadowed by the collective interest. This perspective is evident in the official discourse surrounding the Chinese Dream, which Xi (2012) described as representing the interests of the entire Chinese nation and people, shared by every Chinese individual. However, it's important not to disregard other dimensions of personal ambitions. As Zhao (2016; 2023) noted, the Chinese Dream differs significantly from the American Dream in that it asserts the Chinese Dream as a collective goal for all, with room for individual dreams to be incorporated within it, whereas the American Dream focuses primarily on the achievement of individual ambitions through personal efforts. Nowadays, Xi's vision for the future has kept evolving in concerning ways, shifting towards collective goals and showing less tolerance for individual dreams. This may imply more confrontations between the collective and individual goals in the current China, as observed by *The Economist* (2022, Nov. 10th).

In October 2022, during the 20th National Congress, Xi Jinping was reelected as China's paramount leader for a third term, solidifying his continued dominance over the country's political landscape. Additionally, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era was further enshrined as the paramount ideology guiding China's socialist development (Xinhua.net, 2022, October 22). Xi's continued leadership ensures his ongoing influence on Chinese society and its citizenship education. Chapter 5 will provide further detail on the current grand narrative and outline the citizenship education agenda under Xi's leadership.

Chapter 5. China's Grand Narrative and Citizenship Education

As introduced in Chapter 2.2, a grand narrative is a type of political construction that provides people with a shared vision of society, contributing to the construction of consensus and enhancing social solidarity (Ross, 1995, p.653). While the West adopted Enlightenment and progressivism to constitute its grand narrative of 'modernization', communism has served as the source of a grand narrative to envision a communist utopia (Agadjanian, 2006). This chapter outlines the construction of the Chinese grand narrative upon two pillars of collectivism and nationalism (patriotism). Chinese citizenship education, which includes ideological education, patriotic education, and historical education, is arranged to disseminate this grand narrative among students and persuade them to accept the prefigured party-state-nation-society relations and make commitments to the party-defined political agendas.

5.1 Grand Narrative in the Current China

5.1.1 'People's Democratic Dictatorship' and the people-oriented approach

Before delving into the analysis of the Chinese grand narrative, it is essential to introduce the fundamental form of government of socialist China, termed as 'People's Democratic Dictatorship (人民民主专政)', a phrase incorporated into both the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Constitution of the Communist Party of China. On June 30th, 1949, a few months prior to the establishment of the PRC, Mao delivered a public speech titled 'On the People's Democratic Dictatorship' (1949). Although Mao failed to clearly define the previous term 'New Democracy' by contrast with 'Old Democracy' in his earlier work *On New*

Democracy (1940), he indeed articulated the premise of People's Democratic Dictatorship. This premise asserts that the CPC represents and acts on behalf of the people, preserving the dictatorship of the proletariat, and possesses and may use powers against reactionary forces (Meisner, 1999, p. 58).

By asserting that 'the party and the people are one' (Brown, 2012, p.63), the CPC underscores its mission to enhance the well-being and living standards of the populace. Consequently, the concept of 'people's democracy' is closely linked with the ancient Chinese term 'min sheng' (people's livelihood) and is interpreted as aiming to improve public goods and welfare (Perry, 2008). As discussed in Chapter 3.1, the understanding of 'democracy' in the Chinese context is not closely aligned with its modern sense but is rooted in Chinese Confucian philosophy. Chinese political traditions thus prioritize social citizenship, concerning social welfare, over individual political and civil rights (Perry, 2008). Additionally, 'people's democracy' emphasizes the collective rather than the individual. This implies that individual interests may be readily sacrificed for the sake of collective interests, reflecting the culture's orientation towards collectivism (Yan, 2009).

Furthermore, by emphasizing 'dictatorship', the concept of People's Democratic Dictatorship dictates that the party must exercise dictatorial control to prevent the government from succumbing to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (Deng, 1994). This notion also served as the source of legitimacy for the CPC's conservative faction in the 1980s when it launched the anti-spiritual pollution campaign against political liberalization (Brown, 2008). Unlike Western constitutional republics, which are characterized by the separation of legislative,

159

judicial, and executive powers, the socialist state mandates the centralization of power, serving as the ultimate authority to identify potential threats to the communist cause and to enforce control over them (Zhao, 1998).

In the Chinese high school textbook of *Thoughts and Politics*, a defense of the People's Democratic Dictatorship is provided as follows: 'Historical practice has proven that the People's Democratic Dictatorship and the People's Congress System are the achievements of the Chinese people and the choices of history. They are good systems that adapt to China's national conditions. If we wish to develop Chinese socialist democratic politics, we must uphold and improve the People's Congress System. We must not simply emulate Western political systems' (People's Education Press, 2015b, p. 61).

In 2003, during the Third Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee, General Secretary Hu Jintao formalized the idea of adopting a people-oriented approach in policymaking (CPC Central Committee, 2003, Oct. 14th). This approach prioritized people's livelihood and the comprehensive development of individuals, highlighting their rights to access education, medical care, and employment. It aimed to create a just, sustainable, and vibrant environment, as outlined in Hu's Scientific Outlook of Development.

In line with this belief, Xi Jinping has argued that the fundamental nature of the Chinese Dream and China's socialist development is people-oriented, with people regarded as the focus of all his agendas (Blaxland, Shang & Fisher, 2014). Expanding upon the slogan 'serve the people', Xi Jinping has emphasized that the Party must always prioritize serving the people (Wei, 2020). Consequently, the current Chinese grand narrative encompasses various agendas

such as the 'Chinese Dream', 'National Rejuvenation', and 'Common Prosperity', along with projects such as 'Poverty Alleviation' and 'One Belt, One Road', all grounded in this people-oriented approach (e.g., Loh, 2021). Slogans emphasizing being 'people-oriented', 'people-centered', and 'for the people' have become central themes in current propaganda and education efforts (Chen, 2024).

5.1.2 Nationalism: the source of performance legitimacy

In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2016), Young argues that postcolonial societies often exhibit a strong tendency to promote nationalism. Stemming from the populist nature of communist revolutions, which typically rely on populist movements, socialist regimes often emphasize nationalism to assert themselves as the institutional embodiment of a nation's socialist trajectory. This is exemplified in Stalin's efforts to distinguish Soviet socialism from that of the Communist International (Ramet, 1989).

Throughout the Chinese communist revolution, nationalism has been a driving force in promoting communist ideals. As detailed in Chapter 3.2, the establishment of the CPC stemmed from the 1919 May Fourth Patriotic Movement. When Chinese intellectuals became disillusioned with Western constitutionalism, communism emerged as a potent tool to rescue the semi-colonized society and challenge Western capitalism and imperialism. For these intellectuals, Marxism was seen as a utilitarian means to achieve national independence and establish a society of equality and prosperity (Schurmann, 1965).

Today, with Xi Jinping proposing the 'Chinese Dream' as the goal of socialist China, the call for socialism has become intertwined with nationalism, giving rise to socialist patriotism.

It's not surprising to witness a surge in nationalism in China (Zhao, 1998; 2016). This also aligns with the rationale behind the 'Three Loves' campaign (to love the party, to love the state, and to love socialism) in the early 1980s, as discussed in Chapter 4.3.

Furthermore, nationalism serves to justify the uniqueness of China's socialist path, reflecting Chinese cultural identity, local conditions, and the creative adaptations of its leaders. By adapting Marxism into Maoism and formalizing 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics', Marxist ideologies have been imbued with national labels. Additionally, the metaphor of 'Chinese Characteristics' allows for considerable space for the authorities' arbitrary or creative interpretations, with any elements not well-explained by orthodox Marxism being attributed to 'Chinese Characteristics' (Dirlik, 2012).

In the Chinese high school textbook *Thought and Politics: Cultural Life* (4th ed.), the contribution of Marxism to China's national destiny is clearly articulated: 'Practice has shown that only under the leadership of the CCP and the guidance of Marxism can China achieve a new flourishing of culture and realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' (People's Education Press, 2014, p. 65). This also underscores that the CPC's performance legitimacy is not fragile but is deeply rooted in strong historical bonds with Chinese nationalism, owing to its historical contributions (Dirlik, 1978).

5.1.3 Collectivism: the cultural foundation for communism

Collectivism plays a pivotal role in bolstering the communist agenda across three dimensions. First, the collective action required for a successful communist revolution is facilitated by the inherent nature of collectivism. This is epitomized in Maoism's central tenet,

the mass line, which underscores the importance of social mobilization, shared commitments, and solidarity with the masses (MacFarquhar, 1974).

Second, collectivism directly aligns with the emphasis on collectivity and public ownership, which are core elements of the communist utopia. Historical examples from the Soviet Union and Mao-era China demonstrate how collectivism facilitated the collectivization of agriculture and industry, thus establishing economies based on public ownership (Szelényi, 2013).

Third, collectivism provides crucial legitimacy for the 'People's Democratic Dictatorship' by framing the populace as a collective entity. In the socialist slogan 'serve the people', it is the 'people' as a collective, rather than individuals, who are recognized as the subjects that the party serves. Consequently, the pursuit of public provisions, social welfare, and 'min sheng' (people's livelihood) can be justified as collective interests, which align with the ultimate goal of collectivism.

In a more direct sense, collectivism shapes the concept of 'collectivity' as a metaphor. Early intellectuals like Liang Qichao introduced the dichotomy of the 'great self' and the 'small self' to encourage individuals to prioritize collective goals over personal ambitions and interests (Ames, 2020). In Confucian role ethics, the relationship with the collective is viewed as the most essential criteria for recognizing the significance of one's life. Cultural habits of collectivism, such as self-sacrifice, commitment to the community, and altruism, serve as spiritual motivations for individuals to contribute to the communist agenda (Backer, 2009). The cultivation of these values is often included in the curricula of many countries (Paglayan, 2017).

5.1.4 Forming and transmitting the grand narrative

Adopting nationalism and collectivism as two intermediary agents to connect individuals to the nation and society (the 'people'), the Chinese grand narrative prefigures a set of relations between individuals, the party-state, the nation, and society.

In Chapter 2.2, Althusser (1970) outlined a four-step model to depict how ideological state apparatuses realize their role in transmitting ideology among individuals. The first phase involves the 'interpellation' of individuals as subjects with particular attributes, missions, and roles. The second step posits the existence of a unique and absolute 'Other Subject', such as God in Christianity or the communist utopia, for individuals to follow or respect. This constructs the subjection of subjects to this 'Other Subject'. The third step establishes interaction between the subjects and the Other Subject by fostering mutual recognition. Finally, the fourth step sustains this process, strengthens mutual recognition, and transforms this relation into social practice.

Inspired by this model, the ideology-shaping mechanism of Chinese citizenship education can be summarized as follows:

First, students are taught to embrace their roles as prospective 'socialist successors' (社会主义接班人) who are expected to champion the communist cause.

Second, nationalist discourse and collectivism-related rhetoric are conveyed to underscore the CPC's significant contributions in achieving China's national independence and prosperity, from which all citizens benefit. Consequently, students are encouraged to recognize the greatness of the party and adhere to its leadership.

Third, the CPC's current agenda is elucidated to promise a more promising future, and students are instructed to actively participate in advancing this agenda, thereby reinforcing mutual recognition between the party-state and students.

Fourth, teachers are tasked with guiding students to participate in public affairs and engage in requisite activities.

The prescribed party-state-nation-society-individual relation is portrayed in the following figure.

Figure 1. The prefiguration of party-state-nation-society-individual relations in China's grand narrative
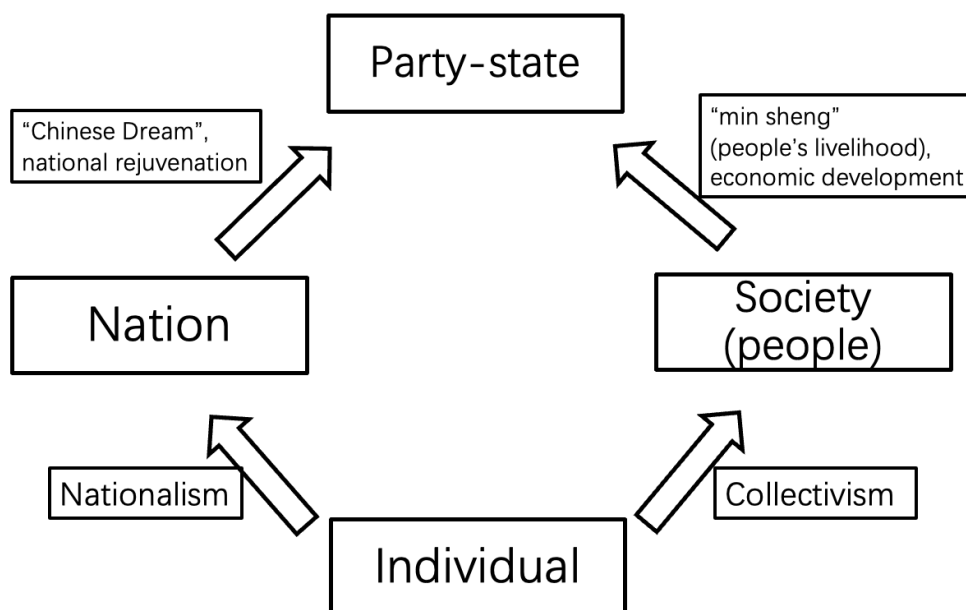
According to the above figure, it is evident that both nationalism and collectivism contribute to one's recognition of the party-state. This helps explain why official propaganda often intertwines patriotism, nationalism, and socialism (as proximate to collectivism in Chinese contexts).

Implicit in the concept of the People's Democratic Dictatorship is the notion that the party serves the people collectively rather than individuals. Therefore, individuals are expected to immerse themselves in a collective sense of identity as part of the people. By subjecting themselves to the collective identity of the people, they effectively subject themselves to the party. The discourse of collectivism thus promotes the idea that 'to love the people is to love the party', creating an illusion that those pursuing personal ambitions are not devoted to the people and the party (The Economist, 2022, Nov. 10th). This is exemplified in the ongoing 'Three-Loves campaign', which requires people to love the party, love the nation, and love socialism (Ding, 2006). Socialist patriotism then emerges as a synthesized stance that incorporates recognition of socialism, patriotism, and collectivism. This stance implies that the party, state, nation, society, and people are inseparable from each other, and the party is responsible for leading all collectivities. Individuals, as part of the people, are expected to follow its leadership.

5.2 Current Agenda of Citizenship Education

5.2.1 Ideological education: Marxism and opposition to constitutionalism

Ideological education in Marxism permeates the entire Chinese educational system, representing the primary content of subjects such as 'Thoughts and Morality' in primary education, 'Thoughts and Politics' in junior education, and then further specified into courses like 'The Basic Principles of Marxism' and 'Maoism and Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' in higher education.

These courses not only offer theoretical introductions to Marxist ideologies and elaborate on their adaptations in China but also make ideological judgments on the present domestic and international environments. By instilling the Marxist conviction that capitalism will ultimately collapse and be replaced by socialism, students are expected to endorse China's socialist nature and its goal of communism (Jiang, 2019). Alongside propaganda efforts, ideological education contributes to the fervor for Marxism, imparting a sense of certainty about the Marxist path to the future, discouraging alternative political imaginaries, and asserting that only the CPC can ensure China's stability and prosperity (Liu, 2020).

In the past decade, with the deepening of West-China relations, Marxist education textbooks have cautioned youth to be wary of hostile Western forces and their intentions to westernize China. As a Chinese senior school textbook on 'Thoughts and Politics' states, Western countries 'attempt to permeate Chinese culture with Western culture in order to westernize and divide China. Therefore, it is crucial to protect our culture' (People's Education Press, 2015, p. 22). General Secretary Xi Jinping has publicly argued that 'Western capitalism has faced setbacks, financial crises, credit crises, crises of confidence, and wavering self-conviction. Western countries have begun to reflect and openly or secretly compare themselves with China's politics, economy, and path' (Buckley, 2014, Feb. 13th). As Chen (2024) has identified, Chinese Marxist education has served more for cultural politicization to subjugate its masses rather than for ideological education, propagandizing socialism and opposing constitutionalism, pathologizing political discontents, and rejecting alternative narratives.

5.2.2 Moral education: collectivism and opposition to individualism

China's moral education serves a significant purpose in transforming people's cultural habitus of collectivism into advocacy for communism (Xu, 2017). As Dirlik pointed out in *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (1989), Confucian collectivism has left China with an important ideological legacy, fostering a strong sense of community and an expectation for an egalitarian society. In Chinese senior school textbooks on *'Thoughts and Politics'*, it is stated that 'When practicing rights and obligations, citizens should unify individual interests and state interests. When individual interests conflict with state interests, individual interests should be subject to state interests' (People's Education Press, 2015, p. 11).

Given this root of collectivism, Chinese citizenship education is also referred to as 'peopleship education' (Xiao, 2013, p.21), which targets people, rather than the individual, as the subject. Therefore, the criteria of 'liberal or illiberal' may not be sufficient to illuminate Chinese politics and its citizenship education. Instead, it is the way one relates the self to the family, society, state, and the globe that reflects the core of Chinese culture and its citizenship education. In short, one's recognition of the collectivity of 'China' determines one's recognition of the party-state, thereby endorsing the legitimacy of the CPC (Yu & Feng, 2010).

5.2.3 History education: Chinese history humiliation and opposition to Western imperialism

History education in China is tasked with transmitting a historical narrative prescribed by the party-state. This narrative typically comprises two main components:

The first part revolves around the theme of 'One Hundred Years of National Humiliation' (百年国耻), which delineates Chinese modern history from 1840 to 1949. During this period, China experienced defeat, oppression, and colonization by Western imperialism (Wang, 2008).

The second part focuses on the party's history, particularly its role in leading China to 'stand up' and achieve national independence in 1949. It also highlights the party's efforts in implementing the 'Reforms and Opening-up' policy since 1978, resulting in significant economic growth and positioning China as a rising power on the global stage (Jiang, 2019).

Through the teaching of this narrative, students are expected to develop a sense of aggrieved victimhood, fostering nationalist sentiments. Simultaneously, they are encouraged to take pride in China's current progress, thereby appreciating the leadership of the CPC and trusting its ability to achieve further accomplishments (Chen, 2023).

5.2.4 Patriotic education: nationalism and 'Chinese Dream'

In the party-state regime, the role of patriotic education is to instill the conviction that loving the nation equates to loving the party, and that a strong country is intrinsically linked to a stable and robust party. It is emphasized that only the party can bear the great trust of the Chinese people and the Chinese nationality (Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018).

As Deng Xiaoping (1994b, p.392) articulated, 'some have said that to reject loving Socialism is not equivalent to rejecting loving one's motherland. Is the motherland something abstract? If you do not love socialist New China led by the Communist Party, which motherland do you love?'. Deng Liqun, the then Minister of Propaganda, further emphasized, 'one cannot demonstrate that he or she loves the motherland without showing deep love for the socialist

system and the Communist Party'. Therefore, 'in short, in our times, loving the Chinese Communist Party is the highest expression of Chinese patriotism' (cited from Ding, 2006, p.144-145).

While historical education is primarily conducted through classroom teaching, patriotic education is often integrated into extra-curricular activities. These may include practicing patriotic rituals such as raising flags and singing the national anthem regularly, celebrating traditional and revolutionary festivals, visiting revolutionary memorial sites, and organizing arts and cultural shows with patriotic themes (Zhao, 1998; Camicia & Zhu, 2011; Jiang, 2019). Additionally, patriotic education is often intertwined with other campaigns. For example, in the previous 'Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign', patriotism was promoted to suppress enthusiasm for foreign products and ideologies (Liu, 2020). Currently, patriotic education is often linked to themes such as the 'Chinese Dream', 'National Rejuvenation', and 'Chinese Characteristics', aiming to channel national sentiment towards the recognition and endorsement of the current political agenda.

5.3 Three Hypotheses

Based on the discussions above, it is evident that Chinese citizenship education aims to cultivate students as socialist, patriotic individuals who uphold the leadership of the CPC and maintain a strong commitment to collectivism.

However, the process of individualization in China compels people to adopt a more individualistic, adaptive, and creative perspective in considering society. While the Chinese grand narrative seeks to foster recognition of socialist ideology and loyalty to the communist

party-state, there has been an increasingly widespread skepticism towards the official discourse (Wang & You, 2016; Pan & Xu, 2018; Chen, 2020). Moreover, economic slowdown and escalated international conflicts have prompted Chinese youth to become more critical of the current regime (The Economist, 2022, Nov. 10th).

Corresponding to the three research questions listed in Chapter 1.2, three hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Chinese citizenship education may have 'unintended consequences', leading students' civic views, opinions, stances, and values to deviate from the official ones. Additionally, this dissertation may demonstrate that the theoretical framework of socialist patriotism, centered on ideological recognition and institutional trust, has stronger explanatory power than that of constitutional patriotism.

Hypothesis 2: Chinese citizenship education involves a 'hidden transcript', where both teachers and students may engage in everyday forms of resistance against ideological inculcation. Skepticism may significantly influence students' citizenship formation.

Hypothesis 3: Chinese students may develop alternative understandings of the relationship between individuals and the party, state, nation, and society, leading to disenchantment with the grand narrative. This variation may contribute to the emergence of new forms of individualism, while some influence from collectivism may persist.

Chapter 6. Research Design and Methodology

This chapter introduces the methodological approach for conducting research on Chinese citizenship education. The study opts for a critical qualitative method, specifically narrative interviews, to delve deeply into students' perspectives on state-individual relations and citizenship, which facilitates capturing the rich, descriptive data essential for understanding students' civic values, political stances, learning experiences, and the shaping of their citizenship identities. By exploring individual stories, researchers can bypass the limitations of generalized frameworks and gain insights into the complexities of Chinese citizenship education.

Two sampling strategies, maximum variation sampling and critical case sampling, are employed to ensure diverse perspectives are represented. The selection of twelve elite college graduates for individual interviews further ensures depth and richness in data collection. Given the logistical challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews are conducted online via platforms like Zoom or WeChat Video Chat, adhering to safety protocols.

6.1 Taking A Critical Qualitative Approach

The chapter starts with a critical evaluation of previous research methods used in studying Chinese citizenship education, highlighting their limitations and the need for a more nuanced approach. Three main methods are discussed: quantitative analysis through questionnaires or surveys, classroom observation, and interviews.

Regarding questionnaires, the critique centers on their oversimplified design and the quantification of responses. For example, questions like 'how satisfied are Chinese urbanities

with the performance of their local government?' (Zhong, 2014, p.32) cannot adequately capture the complexity of citizens' mentality. The reliance on one-time survey data often fails to uncover nuanced perspectives (Wang & You, 2016).

Classroom observation, while valuable in understanding how teachers interpret curricula and define ideal citizenship, is hindered by the potential for self-censorship among both teachers and students due to censorship and speech control, as introduced in Chapter 1.2. This self-censorship distorts the observed public transcript, making it challenging to reveal students' authentic reactions and attitudes.

Interviews, though valuable for exploring detailed responses, often fall short in addressing the unique context of Chinese citizenship education, particularly its emphasis on socialist patriotism. Many existing studies approach citizenship issues through the lens of liberal values (e.g., Chen, 2018; Wang, 2019), neglecting the context of socialism and collectivism prevalent in China.

Given these limitations, the research design of this study aims to satisfy two key requirements: uncovering participants' authentic citizenship perspectives and contextualizing citizenship within the framework of socialism and collectivism. A critical approach, challenging prevailing assumptions and inquiring 'against the grain' (Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p.105), is deemed necessary to achieve these goals. Acknowledging the influence of domestic power structures, stereotypes, and ideological biases on participants' responses (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011), the research design aims to encourage participants to narrate their subjective and contextual stories, perceptions, and perspectives. In-depth narrative interviews are selected

as the primary research method, with carefully designed questions aimed at eliciting nuanced insights.

6.2 Interview Design

6.2.1 In-depth interview for theme 1: citizenship

According to Seidman (2013), in-depth interviews are an inquiry approach used to generate rich descriptions of abstract themes, especially sensitive topics like political attitudes, sexual orientation, or illegal behavior, which participants may find reluctant or difficult to address. These interviews offer a certain level of openness for participants to narrate their experiences, providing specific themes or a framework of questions to guide participants' responses (Creswell, 2014).

Previous chapters have compared two frameworks of citizenship: constitutional patriotism and socialist patriotism. Consequently, interview questions regarding citizenship are divided into two parts. In the first part, questions are framed within the context of constitutional patriotism, focusing on political interests, self-efficacy, and civic participation. Participants will be asked about their interests, self-efficacy, and real actions taken to engage in public affairs. In the second part, questions are framed within the context of socialist patriotism, emphasizing one's ideological views on socialism and institutional recognition of the Communist Party. Open-ended questions will be asked, such as how participants perceive socialism in comparison to liberalism, and how they evaluate and understand the party-state.

174

6.2.2 Narrative interview on theme 2: citizenship-shaping

In a narrative interview, the researcher typically serves as a facilitator, employing open-ended questions to encourage participants to share rich narratives about their life experiences and associated meanings (Creswell, 2014). The narrative interview protocol typically involves three phases. It begins with an introductory question that emphasizes the interview's focus, then gives the participant the complete freedom to construct a detailed narrative in a manner that best responds to the question and ends with follow-up questions to elicit additional comments or clarify points raised during the narrative (ibid.).

In this study, two dimensions of factors are considered for students' citizenship-shaping: on-campus learning experiences and off-campus life experiences.

For learning experiences, questions are structured into three dimensions:

1. Formal Curricula Engagement: Inquires about students' approaches to engaging with formal curricula.

2. Opinions on Pedagogy: Explores students' perspectives on teaching methods and educational approaches.

3. Extra-curricular Activities and Ideological Engagement: Examines students' experiences in extra-curricular activities and their engagement with the university's ideological framework.

For life experiences, questions are focused on:

1. Family Background: Explores the influence of family upbringing on students' citizenship perspectives.

2. Social and Work Experiences: Investigates how social interactions and work experiences shape students' citizenship outlook.

3. International Experiences and Global Perspectives: Explores students' exposure to international contexts and how it shapes their understanding of citizenship on a global scale.

6.2.3 Semi-structured interview on theme 3: the official grand narrative and individualism

The semi-structured interview in this study features a pre-designed question list, where major questions are clearly defined but can be modified as needed. While the interviewer may have identified main themes and assumptions, interviewees are encouraged to share their stories in an open-ended manner that aligns with the interviewer's requirements (Creswell, 2014).

Given the Chinese official grand narrative's intention to portray a strict pattern of the party-state-nation-society-individual relation, interview questions are divided into three domains, regarding nation-related discourse, society-related discourse, and globe-related discourse. By probing participants' understandings of these three-dimensional discourse, descriptive data can be obtained that not only reflects their opinions of the grand narrative but also reveals their stances on individualism.

Regarding the narrative of the party-state, questions focus on participants' views on nationalist rhetoric such as the 'Chinese Dream', the concept of people's democratic dictatorship, and sentiments towards the state and the party.

Regarding the narrative of the nation, questions explore participants' view on introverted nationalistic discourse such as Chinese Dream and extroverted nationalist discourse such as 'Chinese Characteristics'.

Regarding the narrative of the society, questions delve into participants' perspectives on collectivism-oriented slogans like 'sacrifice the small self for the great self'. Additionally, inquiries about communitarianism aim to uncover participants' attitudes towards community and marginalized groups.

The complete interview protocol is attached as Appendix A.

6.3 Data Collection

6.3.1 Research subject

Taking Chinese elite university graduates as the subjects of research, this study explores the sociological implications of Chinese citizenship education in two ways.

First, elite university graduates, as part of the well-educated youth cohort, typically possess an international perspective, high cognitive capacity, strong self-efficacy, and have access to a diverse array of values and information sources. The professional training they receive during higher education is likely to foster their creative thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. This raises questions about the extent to which they may hold conservative or exclusive ideological views. Since the 1990s, China has expanded its higher education system, with the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for higher education increasing steadily from 5% in 1990 to 50% in 2019 (Central People's Government, PRC, 2020, May 5th). This expansion has led to a significant increase in the number of well-educated individuals. Investigating the current

generation of elite university graduates can provide insights into how this proliferating well-educated group responds to the current educational agenda.

Second, this group also represents the burgeoning middle class and is thus likely to be sensitive to societal changes, economic fluctuations, and geopolitical tensions. On August 23, 2023, China suspended the release of monthly youth unemployment data after reaching consecutive record highs (CNN, 2023, August 18th). It is evident that the current society cannot satisfy expectations of well-educated youths. As a result, Chinese youth are increasingly reevaluating their views on society and the party-state (Liu, 2020). There has been a notable rise in digital activism among Chinese youth, expressing their discontent online (Zhou & Yang, 2018). Consequently, studying Chinese citizenship education can help analyze how societal tensions impact the mentality of the youth and potentially precipitate societal transformations, a topic further explored in Chapter 9.

6.3.2 Sample size: data saturation

Prior to data collection, it is essential to determine the sample size and criteria for selecting interview participants.

Unlike quantitative research, which relies on large-scale data collection to generalize hypotheses, qualitative research aims to generate high-quality codes that are conceptually interrelated and sufficiently explanatory to provide a contextualized understanding of phenomena or mechanisms (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In qualitative research, the sample size is typically determined by the point of data saturation, which occurs 'when no new additional data are found to develop aspects of a conceptual category' (Francis et al., 2010, p.1230). This

means that the sample size is based on the number of participants required to achieve data saturation, rather than a predetermined number.

Data saturation is commonly understood as either code saturation or meaning saturation in qualitative research. A code represents a word or short phrase that symbolically captures the essence of data, categorizing it effectively. Code saturation occurs when a researcher consistently observes the same code emerging in the data, and all common, identifiable codes have been fully collected with no new codes emerging (Creswell, 2007; 2014). In contrast, meaning saturation refers to the point where the collected data contains rich meanings and exhibits a strong explanatory power to address the research question (Hennink, Kaiser & Marconi, 2017).

In practice, while there is no standardized threshold for determining the number of samples needed to achieve code or meaning saturation, researchers have identified some common ranges. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggest that data saturation could occur between 7 and 12 interviews if the research is well-conceptualized, and the sample is well-selected. Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi (2017) found that 8 to 16 interviews are typically sufficient to reach code saturation. However, the sample size required for meaning saturation depends on the depth, richness, and complexities intended by the research methodology. Francis et al. (2010) recommend conducting a pilot study to identify a minimum sample size for initial analysis and to assess how many interviews need to be added to enhance the explanatory power.

In the pilot study of this research[21], the civic values of three interviewees varied significantly based on their backgrounds. This not only supports the earlier argument that diversity in social transformation triggers diverse values but also indicates the potential impact of sampling methods on research outcomes. As a result, the research recruits 8 participants for the first-round interview and 4 for the second round, totaling 12 participants.

6.3.3 Sampling strategy: purposive sampling

Sampling is a crucial task in qualitative research, determining how to maximize the probability of finding the 'right persons' to study and better inform the research question. Since this research has been fully conceptualized with constructed hypotheses, purposive sampling is adopted to select interviewees effectively. To identify common mechanisms concerning Chinese college graduates' citizenship-shaping and similar patterns in their responses towards the Chinese grand narrative, this research employs two strategies of purposive sampling: maximum variation sampling and critical case sampling.

Maximum variation sampling involves selecting cases with as heterogeneous attributes as possible relevant to a particular phenomenon. This strategy aims to uncover shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from their diversity (Patton, 1990, p.172). These patterns have strong explanatory power and can be applied to varied cases.

Critical case sampling operates on the assumption that 'if it can happen there, it can happen anywhere' (Patton, 1990, p.174). It seeks the most representative case that can reveal insights

---

[21] Pilot study of this research was conducted during the academic year of Fall 2020 to Spring 2021, as the course assignment in the course EDU 222: Qualitative Methods, provided by Graduate School of Education, UCLA. Three participants were selected for an interview concerning civic values.

to illuminate other similar cases. This strategy is suitable when the researcher has identified key factors that may affect participants' attributes and aims to distinguish their responses to the research topic.

This research aims to select Chinese elite university graduates as research subjects. Previous chapters have highlighted several social background factors that could shape one's citizenship, which can be summarized into three dimensions:

1. Residential Background: There is regional imbalance in China, with the eastern coastal areas being more developed than middle inland areas, while western areas tend to be the most impoverished.

2. Hukou Status: Hukou refers to the household registration system in China, which is bound to one's birthplace. There is a significant imbalance between urban and rural areas, where citizens with urban hukou generally have greater access to social welfare.

3. Parents' Occupation: Parents' occupation often reflects the socioeconomic status of a family and can influence various aspects of an individual's life, including their educational opportunities and social mobility.

Given these three dimensions, potential participants are purposively selected to ensure that each participant represents a typical category, such as urban middle-income class in East China or rural low-income class in West China. Additionally, participants are chosen to differ from each other as much as possible within these categories. By selecting participants with diverse backgrounds, the project aims to draw similar patterns from narratives across different demographic groups. This approach allows for a persuasive conclusion regarding the salient

mechanisms of citizenship-shaping among well-educated Chinese groups and the common trends of cultural evolutions.

6.3.4 Participants recruitment and selection

This research recruits participants via social media, utilizing a Public WeChat Account to publish recruitment announcements in the WeChat Moment (friends circle). This attracts potential participants who express their willingness to participate in the research. For the first-round interview, 8 participants are purposively selected to ensure coding saturation. Interviews are scheduled for the fall and winter of 2022. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown policy in China, interviews are conducted online via Zoom or WeChat video meeting. Each interview, covering three themes, is planned for a total of 3 hours. If necessary, interviews may be divided into two sessions. All interviews are audio-recorded, manually transcribed, and securely stored for further data reduction, coding, and analysis.

It is crucial to note that after the first-round interview in fall 2022, the researcher found that participants' academic majors could serve as a fourth dimensional factor impacting their perspectives on civic affairs. Therefore, for the second-round interview conducted in winter 2022, four participants from different academic majors were purposively chosen to enrich the diversity of the sample and evaluate if common patterns of citizenship-shaping can be identified despite varying majors and related occupational trajectories.

The essential information of the research sample is summarized as the table below. Interviewee A to H were interviewed in the first round and interviewee J to M in the second round.

Table 4. Essential information of the research sample (12 interviewees)

	Residential Region	Hukou	Parents' occupations	Academic Major	Current Job Career
Interviewee A	East China	rural	businessman	Philosophy	businessman
Interviewee B	Northeast China	urban	program manager	Electronic Engineering	technology researcher
Interviewee C	East China	rural	businessman	Comparative Education	in PhD
Interviewee D	North China	urban	state-owned enterprise staff	Economics	financial analyst
Interviewee E	Central South China	urban	university faculty	Mathematical Statistics + Public Health	public health consultant
Interviewee F	North China	urban	kindergarten teacher	English-Translating and Interpreting	English teacher
Interviewee G	Central China	urban	salesman	Telecommunication Engineering	engineer
Interviewee H	Central South China	rural	peasants	Law	civil servant
Interviewee J	West China	rural	private enterprise staff	Marxism	in PhD
Interviewee K	Northwest China	urban	civil servants	History	publishing editor
Interviewee L	West China	urban	middle school teacher	Geoscience	state-owned-enterprise staff
Interviewee M	North China	rural	peasants	Politics + Education +History of Science	in post-doc

6.4 Data Processing and Analysis

In this research, thematic narrative analysis is employed for the in-depth interview of citizenship and the semi-structured interview of the official grand narrative and individualization. This method is used to identify how narrators interpret themes related to civic values or terms such as Marxism, liberty, socialism, propaganda, collectivism, or official slogans like 'sacrifice the small self for the great self'. By categorizing different attitudes (e.g., trust or distrust, recognize or reject) towards these themes, participants' citizenship can be typologized and differentiated, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Additionally, structural narrative analysis is utilized in the narrative interview of citizenship-shaping. This approach tracks the evolving trajectory of interviewees' citizenship, particularly focusing on critical points where individuals change their opinions on citizenship education and the official discourse, shifting from being faithful to unfaithful or vice versa. By analyzing these critical points experienced by different interviewees, a similar pattern of citizenship-shaping process can be revealed, as indicated in Chapter 8.

6.5 Validity and Verification

In qualitative research, validity is concerned with ensuring that the findings faithfully represent participants' experiences and illuminate social reality by uncovering mechanisms of phenomena. This differs from the aim of quantitative research, which is often focused on predicting, generalizing, or establishing causal relationships. Validity in qualitative research is thus seen as 'the ways that researchers can affirm that their findings are faithful to participants' experiences' (Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p.186).

The verification of the integrity of qualitative research is based on the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maxwell (1992) suggests examining validity in three dimensions:

1. Descriptive Validity, that emphasizes the factual accuracy of data, such as the completeness and correctness of interview transcriptions.

2. Interpretative Validity, that emphasizes the match between the researcher's attributed meanings and the participants' actual perspectives.

3. Theoretical Validity, that emphasizes the ability to connect data and theory, allowing data to inform existing theories and existing theories to conceptualize data.

To promote validity across these dimensions, several techniques are employed.

1. Participant Validation: Participants are invited to verify the accuracy of statements and transcripts after the interview transcriptions are completed.

2. Thick Description: Emphasis is placed on encouraging interviewees to provide contextualized information regarding every question and aspect of their lives, including their hometown, family background, and relevant personal experiences.

3. Triangulation: This involves examining the consistency of participants' views across different interview questions. Icebreaking discussions include current news and hot issues, and follow-up questions are asked after each narrative to assess if the interviewee's argument has changed regarding the previous topic.

6.6 Ethical Considerations

The primary challenge in studies on Chinese citizenship education is ensuring that participants feel free to share their authentic civic views and life stories about citizenship-shaping. Factors such as self-censorship or shyness may contribute to this challenge (Cantino et al., 2017). To address this, several measures are implemented in this research:

1. Voluntary Participation: Participants are assured of their voluntary participation and have the right to withdraw from the research at any time, refuse to answer any question, or revise any answer they have given.

2. Informed Consent: An informed consent form (provided as Appendix B) is required. The researcher ensures that all potential participants understand the study's purposes, procedures, benefits, risks, and all relevant information necessary to decide whether they want to participate.

3. Confidentiality: Confidentiality is carefully maintained. Participants have the right to protect their privacy, and the researcher must keep their information hidden from everyone else. Personal identifiable data is anonymized, and data is pseudonymized (coded as interviewee A, B, C, etc.) in the report. The collected data is securely stored and only accessible to the researcher.

6.7 Potential Limitations and Challenges

The research encounters three main difficulties or challenges.

Firstly, there is the issue of 'doability' due to the strict lockdown policies implemented in China during the Covid-19 pandemic since 2020. This impacted the feasibility of conducting classroom observations to observe how teachers interpret curricula. Consequently, the research focused solely on college graduates as research subjects and utilized social media for participant recruitment, with interviews conducted online.

Secondly, there is the challenge of generalization, particularly concerning the themes of citizenship and individualization. Given the complexity of Chinese social conditions and the diversity of students' citizenship, it is difficult to generalize findings to the entire generation, even with purposive sampling and a focus on elite university graduates.

Thirdly, there is a limitation related to the researcher's positionality. It is recognized that data collection for qualitative research cannot be entirely value-neutral, as researchers inevitably bring their values into the research process. The researcher is background in cultural collectivism may influence their interpretation of the data, potentially overstating the role of Confucian collectivism in China's social transformation.

Future studies could explore different avenues, such as connecting Chinese individualization with other social trends like the rise of feminism by focusing on a group of female graduates. More suggestions for further research are discussed in Chapter 10.

Chapter 7. 'Unintended Consequence' of Citizenship

This chapter summarizes the characteristics of the research sample's citizenship. Using the framework of citizenship for constitutional patriotism, which is based on political interests, self-efficacy, and political participation, the 12 interviewees exhibited a notable similarity in strong interests, low levels of political efficacy, and limited civic participation. Their responses indicate a form of political pragmatism, as they seek to avoid attracting trouble from political censorship. In contrast, when considering the framework of citizenship for socialist patriotism, significant divergence emerged in their responses regarding ideological beliefs and political stances. Additionally, they may hold inconsistent attitudes toward the party-state and the official ideology; some recognize socialist ideologies but distrust the government, while others trust the government but reject socialist ideologies. Overall, it is evident that the framework of citizenship for socialist patriotism provides greater explanatory power than that for constitutional patriotism. The chapter also summarizes four types of citizenship in socialist regimes.

7.1 Within the Framework of 'Citizenship for Constitutional Patriotism'

7.1.1 Political interests

The data indicated that most interviewees had strong political interests, although their focuses and motivations varied. Many interviewees expressed concerns about the increasingly arbitrary policymaking in China and the extensive political interventions affecting various

aspects of social life. For instance, Interviewee F, an English teacher in a private education enterprise, expressed worry about the uncertainty surrounding government education policies and the party's stance on private sector development. In 2021, China's 'Double Reduction' education policy[22] severely impacted the off-campus tutoring industry, resulting in widespread layoffs. This event not only raised concerns among educational practitioners about the industry's future but also undermined people's confidence in the party-state's commitment to private sector development (Wu, 2021).

Interviewees also acknowledged that their political interests have increased in recent years, with many social issues prompting them to reevaluate the nature of the Chinese regime. For instance, Interviewees D and F observed political interactions between Beijing and local provinces, prompting them to reflect on the differences between political centralization and decentralization. Interviewee L shared that she had previously not paid much attention to politics, but her perspective changed during the lockdown period of Covid-19. She recounted sending a proposal to the government's mailbox questioning the necessity of a county-wide lockdown due to a few cases of Omicron. However, her proposal was denied, and her ID was restricted from logging into the government's mailbox, leading to disappointment and a reevaluation of China's policymaking. For these interviewees, their political interests were

---

[22] In September 2021, the Chinese government implemented the 'Double Reduction' education policy, aiming to reduce on-campus homework and regulate off-campus tutoring services provided by for-profit private education enterprises. Under this policy, all existing tutoring companies were required to transition into non-profit organizations, with their daily operations supervised by local authorities. This measure resulted in widespread unemployment across the education sector and heightened concerns about the party-state's extensive and unexpected interventions in various public sectors.

driven more by fear, anxiety, or triggered by social incidents, rather than a passion for justice or a willingness to engage in public goods as defined in the Kantian concept of active citizenship (Shaw, 2016). Despite the increase in political interests, they still maintained a low level of political self-efficacy.

7.1.2 Political self-efficacy

Political self-efficacy reflects one's confidence in making a tangible difference in civil society, with strong political self-efficacy indicating a belief in one's ability to influence political affairs and feeling motivated to do so (Wang, 2019).

In this study, all interviewees expressed very low political efficacy and recognized their inability to impact political affairs. The primary reason cited is institutional pressures; Interviewees F and G believed they could only make a difference in their immediate circles but could not affect society or the regime. As Interviewee D stated:

'In the Chinese political regime, there are very few channels for effective participation in political life, and you have no choice but to be obedient.' (Interviewee D)

Interviewee B agreed that:

'I'm just an ordinary person with no power and very limited access to political change. In Chinese society, do you really believe an individual can make a big difference?' (Interviewee B)

The second reason for low political self-efficacy involves 'deliberative modesty', where individuals tend to believe that leaders are competent to make fair decisions, while ordinary people are not. Interviewee J emphasized that huge regional inequality and information gaps

constrain local authorities or individuals from making comprehensive considerations for the whole society. However, centralized policymaking can overcome partiality or self-interest. Interviewee A believed that China has deep-rooted meritocratic traditions that allow elites to account for policymaking for all – as he argued:

'The decision made by the elite alone is not necessarily worse than the decision made by a collective leadership through democratic deliberation.' (Interviewee A)

7.1.3 Civic participations

Given the low political efficacy, passive civic participation is predictable. Civic participation typically encompasses two domains: institutional participation (e.g., voting) and contentious participation (e.g., protests, petitions, demonstrations) (Fu & Distelhorst, 2017). However, in Chinese contexts, only institutional participation is allowed, while contentious participation remains highly politically sensitive and may entail serious consequences (Bell, 2015).

As for institutional participation, the CPC conducts voting to select representatives and form the People's Congress, the legislature at every administrative level from county to city, province, and state. However, these elections are indirect, as the party-state controls candidate nominations and dominates the election process, often pre-determining the results beforehand. Consequently, citizens' institutional participation through voting makes very little difference in politics, as noted by interviewee H:

'Elections in China are actually orchestrated by the authorities. You merely have procedural rights to vote, which have no bearing on the outcome. It's a meaningless exercise. People don't take it seriously.' (Interviewee H)

Interviewee F shared more details:

'I voted once during my junior year in college. Our university instructed us to go to the gym to vote for a teacher representative. However, the voting process felt very strange to me: while it seemed formal, with each candidate's picture and profile displayed around the sports ground, I knew nothing about these candidates. Moreover, I had learned from our political education that my vote was not significant. In the end, I randomly selected a candidate and left.' (Interviewee F)

Furthermore, making proposals or suggestions to local authorities is another form of institutional participation, but it often yields limited responsiveness, as illustrated by Interviewee L's experience mentioned earlier. Interviewee G also shared an instance where he reported serious physical punishment at a local school to the education department, but received no response. Ultimately, as Interviewee M concluded, although he once cared deeply about public life, the moment that made him realize the limited impact he could have led him to view such efforts as meaningless.

Indeed, in China, all institutional participations are strictly regulated to align with the directives of the party-state, leaving little room for deviation. As a result, exploring civic participation under such institutional pressure seems futile. Unsurprisingly, interviewees reported no instances of contentious participation, opting instead for a stance of 'political

pragmatism' (Chan, 1999, p.381), wherein they exercised caution in public expressions and civic activities to avoid trouble. While civic participation is considered a crucial dimension of citizenship in constitutional democracies, neither institutional nor contentious participation is seriously addressed in the realm of Chinese citizenship education.

Following the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protest, China's party-state enacted the new Law on Assemblies, Processions, and Demonstrations[23]. While officially aimed at safeguarding citizens' rights to assembly, procession, and demonstration according to the law, in practice, this law imposed excessively strict restrictions on demonstrations. It was often used to regulate, deter, and suppress protests, allowing authorities to label protestors as 'illegal' and arrest them for violating the law (Chen, 2012). Consequently, contentious participation, while ostensibly protected by law, is highly risky and subject to the authorities' tolerance. As a result, the number of collective actions such as protests, demonstrations, and assemblies in China is significantly lower compared to democracies like France and the United States (Fu & Distelhorst, 2017).

Under Xi Jinping's leadership, China has exhibited decreasing tolerance towards dissidents, implementing increasingly stringent regulations on thoughts and speech. Political censorship has become pervasive, forcing individuals to be cautious about expressing their opinions, even on the internet. Interviewee A admitted to preferring anonymity online. Interviewee C shared her experience of having her social media account censored and banned for posting comments on Xi's constitutional amendments in 2018, leading her to refrain from making any political remarks publicly thereafter. Interviewee J acknowledged that about half of her political views

---

[23] To see the English translation at: Refworld | China: Law of 1989 on Assemblies, Processions and Demonstrations

likely diverged from mainstream opinions, prompting her to avoid discussing political issues in daily life to steer clear of trouble.

To some extent, these authoritarian mechanisms indeed deter dissidents. All participants in this research expressed concerns or hesitations about publicly proposing dissent or criticism; however, they remained highly self-reflexive and conscious of the political situation. One notable coincidence was that both interviewee H and K cited the Non-cooperation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi to illustrate their opinions. They believed it was impractical to engage in contentious protests but meaningful to adopt a stance of indifference and less cooperation with the government agenda.

The White Paper Protests[24], which began in November 2022 in opposition to China's zero-covid policy and internet censorship, exemplify this sentiment. Many Chinese youths chose non-violent and moderate methods, rather than violent or uncivil means, to express their discontent. In these protests, demonstrators held up blank white papers, symbolizing 'everything we want to say but cannot speak', as well as the internet under censorship, where

---

[24] In 2022, China's zero-covid policy led to widespread lockdowns, confining many people to their homes and causing difficulties in accessing daily necessities. The prolonged lockdown resulted in unemployment and tragic incidents like the Urumqi fire on November 24th. However, internet censorship prevented negative reports about these consequences from circulating. Chinese college students were irritated and responded by holding up sheets of white paper as a symbol of the censored internet, highlighting the lack of reliable information. The protests quickly spread, with over 50 universities joining in to oppose the zero-covid policy, speech control, censorship, and authoritarian governance. As the protests gained momentum nationwide, the Chinese government responded by easing some of the strictest rules on December 7, 2022, reducing lockdowns and restrictions on population mobility.

critical posts are deleted and silenced. Subsequently, hundreds of universities across China joined the protests, advocating for freedom of speech and opposing internet censorship.

These findings strongly suggest that current elite Chinese university students possess a deep understanding of the political landscape and maintain a critical stance towards the party-state. This indicates that the official citizenship education, which aims to instill recognition of the party-state among students, may not be achieving its intended objectives. Moreover, these students appear to operate with two distinct sets of citizenship: one onstage and conforming to the normative standards promoted by the party-state, and another, offstage, more critical and independent set that may not be recognized by the authorities.

7.2 Within the Framework of 'Citizenship for Socialist Patriotism'

7.2.1 Ideological propositions

With the educational slogan 'red and expert' prevailing since Mao's era, the cultivation of ideological recognition of socialism ('red') has been viewed as the most essential dimension in the Chinese education agenda (Goldman, 2005). However, social transformations in modern China have led to wavering beliefs in socialism (Yan, 2010). In this study, more than half of the interviewees indicated that they were indifferent to socialism. When asked about their opinions on China's official discourse, they often responded with an awkward smile, citing excessive propaganda. As interviewee H commented:

'When you get used to seeing it anytime and anywhere, you see it just like you do not see it.' (interviewee H)

Moreover, interviewees critically assessed the role of ideology in society. Interviewee E characterized socialism as merely a symbol to bolster social solidarity. Interviewee K argued against deifying socialism or other ideologies like liberalism, stating,

'Ideology can neither be completely unreasonable, nor can it be completely reasonable, so there must be somewhere in between, where you have your own thinking.' (Interviewee K)

However, there were still a few interviewees who asserted their strong recognition of socialist ideologies, particularly its moral appeal for social equality. Interviewee G argued that only socialism aims to construct a society where everything is affordable and available to everybody. As Interviewee M responded,

'I strongly agree with values represented by communism, because, in such a large country, communism leads to the only way to achieve social justice.' (Interviewee M)

Besides, criticism of capitalism seems to contribute to one's recognition of socialism. Interviewee B criticized the West's complete privatization of nearly everything and praised China's efforts to keep public ownership for public sectors like education and medical care, making public services affordable and accessible to the mass population. Interviewee E provided a detailed example from his observations on the privatization of Britain's public sectors during the Russia-Ukraine War since February 2022. He said:

'I don't agree with some practices of capitalism that allow private ownership to control most of society's resources. Take privatization in the UK, for example. During risky events such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, hydropower and coal prices soared

rapidly, bringing many problems to society. Privatization did not necessarily improve

efficiency but made public services more vulnerable.' (Interviewee E)

7.2.2 Political stances

The decline of political trust is a global trend (Wang & You, 2016; Ikenberry, 2018),

evident also in Chinese society with the polarization of political stances between patriots and

cynics (Pan & Xu, 2018). Interviewees in the study showed remarkable variation in their

political trust, yet all exhibited a complex mindset toward the Chinese party-state. Among those

expressing political allegiance, Interviewee G maintained strong faith in the party-state's

commitment to social equality but doubted the feasibility of socialist goals. Both Interviewee

E and F mentioned that the deteriorating political order globally had lowered their expectations

of 'good governance', leading to a resurgence of belief in the Chinese party-state; as

Interviewee F said:

> *'When I found that many other countries' governments also faced many problems and*
>
> *challenges, I realized the Chinese government not too bad.' (Interviewee F)*

On the other hand, some interviewees expressed negative impressions of the government

but also exhibited complex attitudes. Interviewees B, C, and D doubted China's policymaking,

questioning its claimed democratic nature. Interviewee K commented:

> *'I don't mean to oppose the government. It is hard to say being loyal or not loyal.*
>
> *Politics is politics, it is never beautiful. I just discuss it case by case'. (Interviewee K)*

Interviewee H explained that her working experiences had shifted her attitudes:

'I had trusted the government; but after I worked for years, I found our society very cruel and politics brutal and inefficient. There are many things ridiculous, but somehow reasonable.' (Interviewee H)

Overall, while interviewees' responses to political interests, self-efficacy, and participation may appear similar and uniform, their responses to questions about ideological recognition and political allegiance exhibit remarkable divergence. This suggests that the framework of constitutional citizenship, which emphasizes civic participation, offers only a lateral lens for assessing Chinese citizenship education. Conversely, the framework of citizenship for socialist patriotism, which emphasizes socialist recognition, allows for a more nuanced analysis of internal variables in Chinese society. Through the lens of Western citizenship concepts, one might conclude that Chinese students' citizenship is passive, minimal, personally responsible, limited, and constrained. However, considering students' attitudes towards socialism and socialist institutions reveals a variety of citizenship closely linked with Chinese social transformations, as discussed below.

7.3 Typology of Citizenship in Socialism China

7.3.1 Four types of citizenship

Based on the discussions above, interviewees exhibit many similarities in terms of their political interests, self-efficacy, and civic participation, but they vary greatly in their ideological and political stances. These variations can be further explored to propose a typology of citizenship in socialist China. By considering each dimension of ideological recognition and political allegiance, and incorporating positive or negative responses, we can identify four

patterns. By marking the two ends of both political trust and ideological recognition as P (Positive) and N (Negative) respectively, four types of citizenship can be defined as follows:

1) PP – Strong political trust and strong ideological recognition

2) PN – Strong political trust but weak ideological recognition

3) NP – Weak political trust but strong ideological recognition

4) NN – Weak political trust and weak ideological recognition

Only the first type, PP, conforms to the normative citizenship defined by the party-state, representing a loyal socialist citizen who advocates the party-state and recognizes socialism. However, the other three types of citizenship—PN, NP, and NN—deviate to different extents from the normative citizenship, leading to what Robert Merton termed as 'unintended consequences' (1936), characterized by disenchantment with the government, the ideology, or both.

The citizenship type of PN, satisfied with the government but disregarding ideological requirements, can be termed pragmatic citizenship. This concept has historical roots in Deng Xiaoping's pragmatism during the 1980s, when he led China's market economy reform, setting aside the ideological baggage of planned economy while introducing neoliberal elements. Deng famously invoked an ancient Chinese proverb, the 'cat theory', stating 'it doesn't matter if a cat is black or white so long as it catches mice', which conveyed the idea that any ideology, whether capitalist or socialist, could be effective if it facilitated China's economic development (Bell, 2014). Despite adopting many capitalist features, this pragmatism still asserts a socialist nature and upholds CPC leadership. Contrary to Lipset's hypothesis (1960) that economic

growth leads to the expansion of the middle class and eventual democratization, China's neoliberal economic reforms did not spur political democratization but instead reinforced CPC governance (Liu, 2020). Nonetheless, it highlights a discrepancy between the party's ideological nature and its policy orientations.

The citizenship type of NP, disappointed with the party-state but still expressing recognition of socialism, can be termed idealistic citizenship. This concept represents individuals who continue to adhere to socialist values, such as social equality, despite the challenging social realities, including economic slowdown, deteriorating international relations, and heightened ideological control. While China's ideological landscape has diversified significantly, a substantial portion of the population remains committed to socialism and engages with other 'left' ideologies like New-left and Neo-Confucianism (Zhao, 2019). Deng's economic reforms, which exacerbated social inequalities, prompted some individuals to reaffirm their belief in socialism and advocate for social equality (Pan & Xu, 2018). Wang and You (2016) also noted a growing trend of citizens becoming increasingly critical and cynical toward the government as they raise their expectations for social democratization.

The citizenship type of NN, characterized by negative views toward both the party-state and socialism, can be termed dissident citizenship, representing ideological and political dissidents. This perspective was prevalent among the so-called 'Liberalist Camp' from the late 1980s to the 2010s, advocating for constitutional reform (Wu, 2020). With the advent of the internet, critical voices found expression in the digital sphere (Jiang & Esarey, 2018). However,

intensified ideological regulation in recent years has marginalized and silenced liberalist voices, although they still persist beneath the surface (Zhao, 2019).

Figure 2. The typology of citizenship in socialist China

Strong ideological recognition (P)

NP: idealistic citizenship	PP: normative citizenship
NN: dissident citizenship	PN: pragmatic citizenship

Weak political trust (N) — **Strong political trust (P)**

Weak ideological recognition (N)
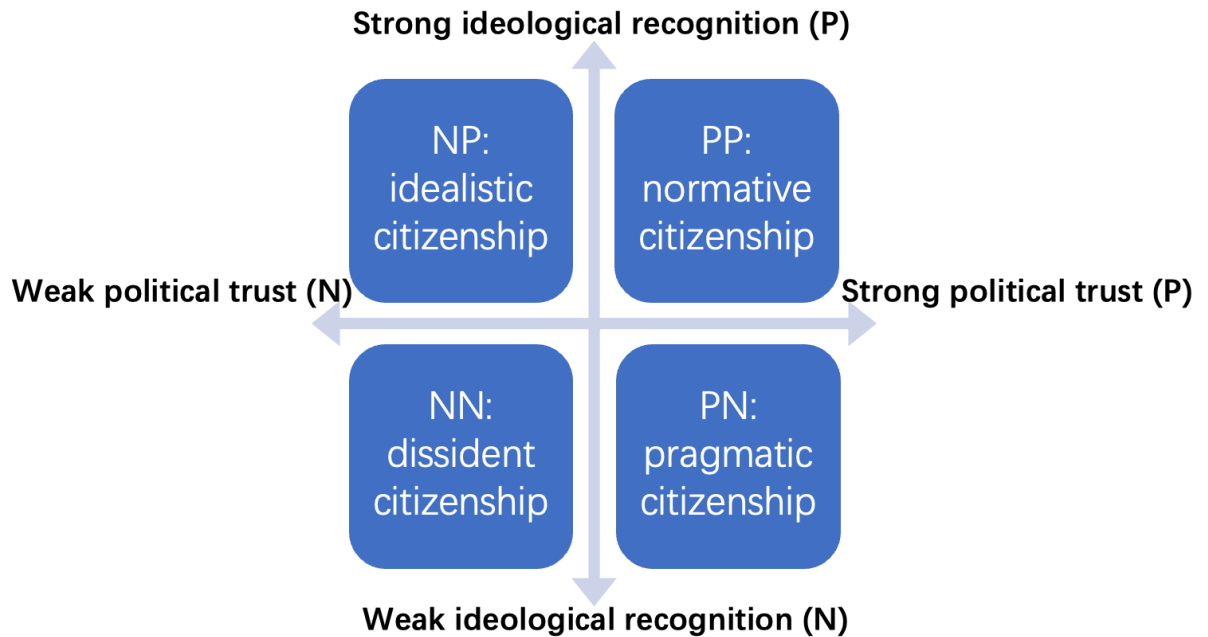
15

In this research: 1) three interviewees (A, E, and J) held the normative citizenship by which they trusted the government but also recognized the official ideology; 2) three interviewees (F, K, and M) held the pragmatic citizenship by which they recognized the government's performance but disregarded socialist ideologies; 3) two interviewees (B and G) held idealistic citizenship by which they held the recognition of socialist ideologies but doubted the government's will or competence to realize the socialist agenda; 4) four interviewees (C, D, H, and L) held the dissident citizenship by which they were disenchanted from the ideology and dissatisfied with the party-state's performance, as summarized in the following table.

Table 5. Interview findings: interviewees' typology of citizenship

Example	Typology	Citizenship	Features
Interviewee A, E, J	PP	Normative citizenship	Holding recognition of both socialism and the party-state
Interviewee F, K, M	PN	Pragmatic citizenship	Holding a high political trust but indiffeence with the socialist ideology
Interviewee B, G	NP	Idealistic citizenship	Recognizing the socialist ideology but disregarding the party-state
Interviewee C, D, H, L	NN	Dissident citizenship	Keeping disenchanted from both the party and the socialist ideology

7.3.2 Potential transformation of citizenship

The evolution of citizenship is intricately tied to shifting social landscapes. For instance, Deng's pragmatic economic reforms ushered in a wave of pragmatic citizenship (Chan, 1999). However, recent years have seen economic stagnation and heightened ideological control, leading to growing dissatisfaction and a shift towards dissident citizenship (Wang & You, 2016; Qin, 2021; Zhong & Zhan, 2021). Concurrently, patriotic education and nationalist propaganda have fueled a resurgence of nationalism and idealization of socialism (Wang, 2008). In online forums, 'red' patriots engage in heated debates with cynics, reflecting a clash between top-down control and bottom-up social change (Esarey, 2015; Jiang & Esarey, 2018). The interplay between these forces poses many uncertainties in transforming individuals' citizenship, yet the outcomes remain unknown (Zhong & Zhan, 2021).

7.4 Discussion: Unintended Consequence of Chinese Citizenship Education

In conclusion, this study moves beyond characterizing Chinese students' civic engagement solely by efficacy, participation, and mental stress. Instead, it offers a nuanced classification

202

based on their ideological and institutional attitudes. While existing studies often view dissidence as the sole departure from normative citizenship (Chen, 2014), this research identifies pragmatic citizenship and idealistic citizenship as intermediate states. Thus, alongside the normative citizenship emphasized in official education, three alternative citizenship types emerge—less faithful, less socialistic, or both.

By employing two citizenship frameworks to scrutinize the outcomes of Chinese citizenship education, this study reaches conclusions in two dimensions. Firstly, there exists a commonality in students' citizenship, characterized by passive engagement, evidenced by low political interest, limited self-efficacy, and restricted civic participation. Secondly, there is considerable diversity in ideological beliefs and political orientations among these students.

While nearly all interviewees exhibited passive citizenship, adhering to the prescribed citizenship education agenda, their political ideologies and beliefs diverged significantly, creating stark contrasts among them. This polarization of the Chinese ideological landscape signals a precarious trend within a heavily centralized and ideologically charged regime. With deliberate self-censorship, students outwardly demonstrate obedience while grappling with internal tensions between their genuine values and public expressions. Thus, Chinese citizenship education risks dysfunctionality and may even exacerbate this dysfunction through self-reinforcement.

Chapter 8. 'Hidden Transcript' of Citizenship-shaping

This chapter delves into the citizenship-shaping process based on the narratives of interviewees' learning and life experiences. Examining these experiences reveals a tension between the 'public transcript' and the 'hidden transcript'. On one hand, interviewees engaged in curricular learning to meet graduation requirements and navigate political censorship, thereby adhering to the public transcript and outwardly supporting political correctness. On the other hand, they harbored skepticism towards the curriculum, pedagogy, and other elements, all while feigning allegiance to the official discourse, contributing to the hidden transcript and concealing their true views.

This chapter presents a four-step model of citizenship-shaping, beginning with 'mechanical acquisition', akin to Paulo Freire's banking pedagogy. It progresses through a 'suspicion moment', prompted by life experiences or professional learning, leading to self-reconstruction, and culminates in the reconfiguration of one's understanding alongside the official discourse. The chapter concludes that education plays a crucial role in fostering rationalization and triggering the suspicion moment, prompting reflection on one's existence and creating a dilemma between citizenship through education and citizenship post-education. This argument is further explored in Chapters 9 and 10.

8.1 Citizenship-shaping within Learning Experiences

8.1.1 Students' skepticism on teachers' pedagogy and interpretations

The first notable similarity evident from participants' narratives is the impact of maturation and university attendance on ideological transformation. Interviewees suggest that while they may have adhered to official ideologies to varying degrees before high school, their perspectives shifted upon entering university, where they gradually recognized the indoctrinating nature of Chinese citizenship education. As Interviewee H remarked,

'Initially, I believed that the textbook's opinion was the standard answer, but after I attended university, I realized that political theory and ideology had so many possibilities. Then I discovered our ideological education was problematic because it confined my conclusions rather than led me to think.' (Interviewee H)

As for those extra-curricular patriotism activities, Interviewee F mentioned that during her childhood, she felt motivated to participate in activities like 'red tours' to visit the party's memorial sites, revolution museums, and communist martyrs' cemeteries. However, she admitted that such motivation decreased as her conception of the state changed when she got older.

More importantly, since Chinese students have been exposed to these ideological contents from a very young age, they often become too familiar with the official discourse to be captivated by textbooks. Therefore, they tend to pay closer attention to how teachers teach and interpret the curriculum and whether teachers can offer something new (Li & Tan, 2017). Not surprisingly, it is not difficult for college students to discern if a teacher simply presents one-

sided interpretations of ideologies and historical issues. For example, Interviewee A, despite

his strong faith in socialism, criticized the ideological course teacher's sycophantic speeches

and banking pedagogy, which treated students as fools. As he narrated:

'In one class on Maoism, the lecturer, who was the dean of the department, delivered

numerous monologues without making any effort to interact with students or solicit their

feedback. The way he taught us felt like being in a circus show, merely singing praises for

the party-state. It felt as though I had returned to kindergarten and attended a class where

the lecturer did not treat us as college students but as brainless infants.' (Interviewee A)

Interviewee D recounted that her college Marxism teacher had tried to innovate the

pedagogy by incorporating numerous real-life examples and introducing more discussion

sessions. Initially intrigued, she soon became disappointed upon realizing that all classroom

discussions were directed towards predetermined conclusions that aligned with the curriculum.

Furthermore, Interviewee J shared how contrasting interpretations of Marxism had piqued her

curiosity and led her to critically reflect on Marxist principles. She described her high school

learning experiences:

'My civic values have been heavily influenced by my high school learning experiences.

In high school, I had contrasting experiences with my history and political teachers. My

history teacher held a critical view of China's political system, considering it

undemocratic and dictatorial, and harbored strong dislike towards the Communist Party.

On the other hand, my political teacher, who also served as our class tutor, was

exceptionally patriotic and supportive of the party. This stark contrast in perspectives

greatly impacted my thinking. It taught me to view things dialectically, rather than in terms of black and white. I learned to appreciate different interpretations and became more eclectic and tolerant in my views. Loving or not loving the party was no longer a matter of right or wrong for me.' (Interviewee J)

8.1.2 Students' everyday resistances

Aware of the indoctrination inherent in these educational activities, these participants recounted how they engaged in 'everyday resistances' against the excessive ideological indoctrination. Through data analysis, various forms of these everyday resistances emerged, including sluggishness, perfunctory learning, neglect, and rejection. Students strategically selected teachers, disguised their true beliefs, and provided flattering answers on exams—all in an effort to obtain high grades with minimal effort invested in these ideological courses.

It is clear from the responses that the main objective for the interviewees in taking these ideological courses was to fulfill their academic requirements and earn credits rather than genuinely engaging with the material. As a result, they approached these courses with a lack of seriousness, often resorting to perfunctory efforts just to pass exams. Interviewee D recalled how many classmates would try to avoid the teacher's attention by sitting at the back of the classroom, using the time to work on assignments for their major courses or simply engaging in leisure activities like playing computer games or chatting with friends.

Interviewee G put it in a more straightforward way:

'We had spent the most of time studying and working in the lab; as for these ideological courses, aren't they something to let us relax?' (Interviewee G)

207

As for those extra-curricular patriotism education activities, ideological seminars, and ideology-related thematic exhibitions, interviewees expressed a direct rejection. Interviewee K commented:

> *'As for those ideological courses required for academic credits, many of us did not wish to take; then, as for extra-curricular activities that are not required for academic credits, why should we participate?' (Interviewee K)*

In Chinese universities, students have the flexibility to choose their ideological courses based on their preferences and schedules. Interviewees C, D, and H, despite attending different universities, shared a common strategy for enrolling in courses: selecting the 'kind' teachers who assigned fewer tasks but awarded higher grades. Interviewee C, for example, consulted senior students to learn about their experiences with different ideological teachers and ultimately chose a course taught by a teacher who offered guidance to help students achieve high exam scores without mandating class attendance.

Furthermore, interviewees also reported that passing exams for ideological courses did not necessitate a deep understanding of society or a sincere acceptance of the official ideology. Instead, success relied on good memory to recall textbook content and techniques for answering questions. According to the interviewees, exams were typically straightforward, requiring students to analyze a social issue and propose solutions. The key to obtaining high marks was aligning every argument with the official narrative as closely as possible. As Interviewee J argued:

'This kind of exam was not necessarily related to how much the student knows or whether he or she truly believe.' (Interviewee J)

Instead, as Interviewee H answered,

'In these exams, as long as you demonstrated your patriotic sentiments, your recognition on the party's historical contributions, and your loyalty to the party's leadership, you would not lose grades.' (Interviewee H)

8.1.3 Teaching staff's acquiescence and informal collusion

As for students' perfunctory approach to learning in ideological courses, it's difficult to imagine that teachers cannot perceive their unconcern and indifference. The study of interviewees' interactions with their ideological teaching staff has challenged the stereotype (e.g., Lott, 1999; Paglayan, 2020) that ideological teachers tend to assume a repressive role to instill official ideologies and discipline students' thinking. Instead, interviewees reported that their ideological teachers made efforts to facilitate their fulfillment of course requirements as easily as possible. These teachers, as authorities in the classroom who could have chosen to exercise formal power to discipline students, opted not to do so.

It is typical for teachers to overlook students' superficial engagement not only because they understand that these course materials are not appealing to students, but also because of the consensus that college students should devote more time to their professional studies than to ideological courses. Therefore, ideological teachers often lower the requirements for students' class attendance and facilitate their passing of exams. As Interviewee K mentioned, his ideological course teacher allowed students to skip class as long as they showed up for the

exam. Interviewee E, F, and M noted that exams for ideological courses were usually open-book, allowing students to consult all learning materials to answer questions. Interviewee B recounted:

> *I was studying at a technical institution, and our department didn't prioritize these types of courses. We students just went through the motions in class and signed the attendance sheet. The ideological course teachers were aware of this, so they would inform us of the key exam content in advance and arrange open-book exams to help us pass. (Interviewee B)*

In Chinese universities, there is one specialized ideological counselor assigned to each grade (or class) in every department. In addition to offering career guidance and psychological counseling, an ideological counselor is also responsible for disseminating official discourses, monitoring students' political thoughts, and communicating with students suspected of dissent (Liu, Zhao & Starkey, 2023). When asked about their interactions with ideological counselors, many interviewees like B, C, F, G, and K responded that their ideological counselors also understood that the most significant mission for students was to complete academic work, and they cared more about the graduates' employment rate and academic competence rather than their ideologies—as long as they did not publicly criticize the party-state. Therefore, both teaching staff and students reached an informal agreement to prioritize professional studies over ideological work in pursuit of academic excellence.

Finally, another significant aspect of ideological work in colleges is to promote the promising prospects of joining the CPC and recruit new party members from college students.

However, the primary motivation for college students to join the party is not necessarily due to their recognition of communism but rather driven by the material benefits and privileges associated with party membership (Chen, 2018). Among the interviewees in this study, B, C, and H are party members, but they are disenchanted with communist ideologies, as H narrated:

Being a party member is very instrumental because it directly concerns one's promotion and every aspect of social life. If I didn't join the party, I would become disadvantaged in many activities I participated in my work. To apply to join the party does not necessarily require sincere recognition or good moral standards, but merely depends on if you understand how to logically interpret official narratives and how to persuasively express your recognition of the party-state. Thus, I don't think those who are enrolled as party members are very committed and loyal to the party or the state; they just try to obtain more benefits, and so do I. (Interviewee H)

8.1.4 Summary: between public transcript and hidden transcript

Interviewees in this study illustrated how they learned ideological courses perfunctorily and perceived ideological contents as cliches. They adopted many forms of everyday resistance, ranging from sluggishness and evasion to strategic enrollment and tactical answers by pretending to advocate patriotism and socialism. Surprisingly, their teachers manifested acquiescence and tolerance for these behaviors. Furthermore, both college students and teaching staff emphasized the importance of professional studies to justify the perfunctory practice of teaching and learning in citizenship education.

The discrepancy between the intentions of the Chinese party-state to escalate the intensity of ideological inculcation and the negative coping strategies employed by teachers and students highlights a significant tension in Chinese citizenship education. In addition to the public transcript, characterized by heavy course loads and high grades, there exists a hidden transcript. In this hidden transcript, both teachers and students engage in infrapolitics, resisting the excessive ideological inculcation and the high-stakes ideological evaluation inherent in the schooling system.

Indeed, the ideological evaluation in Chinese citizenship education may have overstated students' conformity and faithfulness to the official ideology. Given the strict ideological censorship, students may feel compelled to conceal their authentic civic views. Teachers face similar pressures; propagating ideas deemed incorrect may lead to disciplinary actions such as warnings, salary reductions, or dismissal (Perry, 2020). Likewise, students who express dissenting views may be subject to special ideological consultations and have records of misbehavior created. These measures serve to enforce conformity and restrict the expression of alternative perspectives within the educational system (Liu, Zhao & Starkey, 2023).

The impact of formal learning activities on students' citizenship formation appears to be limited, according to the insights shared by many interviewees. While citizenship education may have influenced their perspectives in their youth, their views evolved significantly as they matured. Many became skeptical of the official discourse, critical of its inflexibility and preachy tone. Upon entering university, their engagement with citizenship education became increasingly perfunctory, often accompanied by various forms of hidden resistance. This

suggests that while formal education may shape initial perceptions, individuals ultimately develop their own critical perspectives over time.

8.2 Citizenship-Shaping within Life Experiences

It is significant to explore how life experiences beyond formal education shape one's citizenship. In this study, three key factors—family background and home education, social and work experiences, and international exposure—were found to have a profound impact on individuals' civic perspectives. Interviewees commonly agreed that these experiences, rooted in the broader context of Chinese societal changes, play a more substantial role in shaping their views and values as citizens.

8.2.1 Family background and parents' influence

The family background and parental influence emerged as significant factors shaping individuals' citizenship, according to all interviewees. While the specifics varied, they all acknowledged learning worldviews and moral values from their parents, which in turn influenced their perspectives on society.

For instance, Interviewee A, raised in a family business environment, gleaned social experiences from negotiating with various societal groups, giving him insights into the government's efforts to boost the local economy. Interviewee M, coming from rural areas, developed a critical viewpoint on China's rural development, informed by firsthand experiences of its challenges and complexities. Interviewee F's parents encouraged exposure to Western literature and media, broadening her international perspective and emphasizing the importance of diverse sources of information. These examples underscore how social transformations, such

213

as economic development, rural issues, and exposure to foreign influences, are mirrored in familial backgrounds and subsequently shape individuals' worldviews.

Several interviewees expressed gratitude for their parents' encouragement and tolerance for their autonomy and personality. Interviewee E described his home environment as open and liberal, where he was allowed to express diverse ideas and make independent choices, fostering a sense of autonomy and independence. Interviewee G highlighted how his parents granted him freedom to pursue his interests and develop his character, enabling him to read extensively during his childhood. This exposure to diverse literature enriched his understanding of Chinese history and society, leading to perspectives divergent from those propagated in official curriculum.

Moreover, many interviewees agreed that their parents had indeed imparted valuable life lessons on how to navigate society, which they deemed more significant than ideology itself. As Interviewee M mentioned,

> *'Although my parents are very ordinary people, they taught me the wisdom to live, to communicate with others, to contribute to a better society. These lessons are more important than ideology because they can make a difference everywhere, but ideology cannot.' (Interviewee M)*

Ideology may serve as a political construct, but moral values remain integral to the essence of morality and humanity. While ideology reflects an imagined connection to material conditions, moral values embody the authenticity of social life, prompting individuals to recognize the disparity between authenticity and societal perception.

8.2.2 Social and working experiences

Social and working experiences are integral components of one's life. As emphasized by Paulo Freire (1974), praxis is crucial not only for deepening one's understanding of reality but also for provoking consciousness to reflect on social structures and consider one's existence. In this study, interviewees expressed concerns about China's future, citing the economic slowdown and deteriorating international relations with Western countries. Interviewees D, F, and H lamented the increasingly arbitrary policymaking in China, leading to a sense of uncertainty and insecurity. Furthermore, interviewees H and M gained a deeper understanding of social hierarchy through their experiences working with local bureaucracy, realizing that the official grand narrative oversimplified Chinese reality and overstated China's capacity to achieve its agenda.

A notable example comes from Interviewee B's criticism of China's widespread '996'[25] working hour system. As he narrated:

> *'Graduates in our field, as technical engineers, are subjected to overtime work every weekday, often adhering to a '996' schedule. With such severe exploitation and ineffective labor laws, it's incredulous to claim that China operates as a socialist country. In my view, China exhibits characteristics more akin to capitalism, surpassing many capitalist nations in its pursuit of profit.' (Interviewee B)*

---

[25] The '996' working hour system, practiced by many high-tech companies in China, requires employees to work from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, six days per week, with only Sunday off. Critics denounce this system as a serious violation of Chinese labor laws, likening it to modern slavery. Despite these criticisms, no effective legal action has been taken to regulate it thus far

Interviewee L astutely observes that while the party-state focuses on promoting grand narratives of 'national rejuvenation' and 'common prosperity', the reality on the ground tells a different story, with many groups still struggling in poverty and a significant wealth gap persisting. Interviewee D highlights the peril of citizenship education's grand content potentially creating unrealistic expectations among students, which could lead to greater disappointment when they encounter issues like unemployment due to economic slowdown post-graduation. Interviewee H also commented:

> *'This is the digital age. With an increasing number of social problems being exposed online, it becomes evident that the grand terms portrayed by official propaganda are often far removed from the truth.' (Interviewee H)*

Althusser's (1970) concept of ideology posits that it represents an imagined relationship with material existence. However, individuals may perceive inconsistencies between this imagined relationship and their actual experience of social reality. This dissonance can lead to skepticism towards the prevailing discourse, prompting individuals to either accommodate or assimilate their mentality to align with new experiences, as discussed in Chapter 8.3.

8.2.3 Overseas experiences and international horizons

According to the narratives of the interviewees, overseas experiences can effectively broaden one's horizons and enable them to envision different possibilities for governance while reconceptualizing the relationship between the state and society. Given China's economic model, which is primarily based on public ownership, domestic students may find themselves intrigued by Western economies that prioritize private ownership. Both Interviewee B and E,

who had studied in America and Britain respectively, expressed negative sentiments towards the privatization of public sectors such as education and healthcare in Western societies. In contrast, they advocated for the Chinese regime, which emphasizes public provision and social welfare.

On the other hand, interviewees also expressed discontent when making comparisons with their Western counterparts. Interviewee F shared her experience of attending a summer school in America after graduating from middle school. During this summer school program, there was a session focused on citizenship cultivation, which involved constructing a mini society. Students were assigned various social roles, including mayor, lawyer, policemen, law enforcement personnel, and ordinary citizen, and were encouraged to simulate voting and elections. Interviewee F enjoyed this experience and commented that:

> *'I feel like I'm truly a part of this so-called mini society. But I never felt I was a part of that of China. In China, I was the governed by default.' (Interviewee F)*

Interviewee C shared a similar sentiment, feeling very touched when she witnessed people's enthusiasm and commitment to vote for their leaders in America. However, she experienced a sense of loss when she thought of the elections in China, a practice typically orchestrated by the party-state and reliant very little on the voters' efforts. As she said,

> *'Here, I could feel everybody's participation and power in making a decision, but I had never imagined this to happen in China because all decisions were merely made by the party.' (Interviewee C)*

Directly, Interviewee B posted a sharp criticism towards Chinese citizenship education by comparing it with the American counterparts:

'I strongly dislike Chinese citizenship education, not only in terms of the teaching content, but also in terms of the teaching method – which is stupid and inefficient. The state mandates four compulsory courses for all college students and plaster slogans all over the streets. In this regard, the United States does much better; although I do not agree with many of its civic values, the communication method is much better than ours. By embedding its values in games, movies, and advertisements, it simply informs you without forcing you to accept them, but then you automatically contemplate them.' (Interviewee B)

Furthermore, the use of VPNs deserves attention because it provides access to new sources of information. As introduced in Chapter 1, China has established the Great Firewall to block many overseas information sources such as Google, Twitter, and Facebook. Due to the existence of this 'wall', domestic IP addresses can only access domestic websites, with few foreign information sources allowed (Hobbs & Roberts, 2018). However, to facilitate academic research and communication, universities may permit faculty and students to use VPNs or other Internet proxies to access overseas websites. Therefore, it is not uncommon for university students to use VPNs (Li, 2016).

In this study, all participants had experiences of using VPNs to access information from other sources. Many interviewees expressed that they felt motivated to 'cross the wall' because they understood that domestic media was heavily censored. By accessing information 'outside the wall' in the digital sphere, they became aware of many negative incidents and comments

about the party-state, which influenced their perceptions of the current regime. However, quite a few of them also expressed concerns about the Western media's hostile rhetoric and negative portrayal of China. Interviewee H introduced a Chinese proverb, 'crows are black all over the world', and argued that all political actions are perceived negatively, as Western propaganda often portrays China in a distorted and unflattering light, with little positive commentary. Interviewee G expressed:

> *'I held my own way of understanding reality, so the censored propaganda didn't affect me as much because I had learned how to filter it out. I could disregard it and reflect on what it was trying to convince me of.' (Interviewee G)*

8.2.4 Summary: considering life experiences with existential reflection

In summary, all interviewees acknowledged that their life experiences had a greater impact than their on-campus learning experiences in shaping their civic values and beliefs. Their family backgrounds provided them with a direct channel to comprehend social transformations. From their families, they learned fundamental moral values and beliefs to guide their lives, which effectively shaped their expectations of society.

Social experiences then provided them with real-life contexts to reflect on their existence (Dewey, 1916). As Mannheim (1954) argued, ideological beliefs are susceptible when individuals recognize the variability of the causation prescribed by political authority. The economic slowdown has directly undermined people's political trust and ideological faith in socialism, which emphasizes social equality and sustainable development.

International experiences can introduce more uncertainties in the shaping of citizenship. Overseas societies represent a world free from Chinese control, offering individuals multiple perspectives to consider public affairs. This can lead to increased criticality or tolerance towards domestic Chinese society. These dimensions influence one's self-construction of understanding of society, interacting with the formal teaching agenda organized on campus. A four-step model is provided in the next section to outline the potential trajectory of citizenship-shaping.

8.3 Discussion: Four-stage Model of Citizenship-shaping

Through a thematic analysis of interviewees' narratives, this study identifies a four-stage model of Chinese elite college graduates' citizenship-shaping, as depicted below:

Stage 1 – 'Mechanical Acquisition': Students mechanically learn the official discourse and grand narrative through ideological education.

Stage 2 – 'Suspicion Moment': Students are impressed by unexpected social facts or real-life experiences, leading them to become suspicious of the grand narrative.

Stage 3 – 'Self-Construction': Students take initiative to depart from the influence of the grand narrative and exercise rationality to construct an independent worldview to understand societal issues.

Stage 4 – 'Reconfiguration': Students reconcile the grand narrative with their personal understandings of society, reconfiguring the party-state-society-individual relations, and eventually shaping an individual narrative.

It is noteworthy that the end of the 'reconfiguration' stage does not necessarily lead to a critical or supportive stance, but rather promotes openness to negotiation between one's individual narrative and the grand narrative.

Figure 2. The four-stage model of Chinese elite college graduates' citizenship-shaping
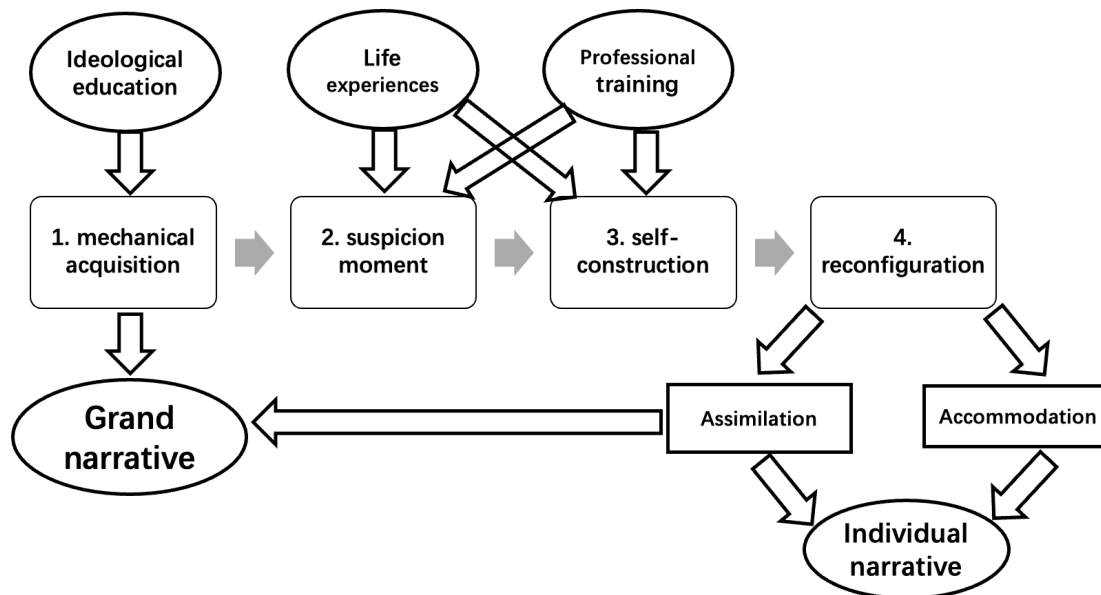
8.3.1 Stage 1: 'Mechanical Acquisition'

In correspondence with Paulo Freire's concept of 'banking pedagogy', the first stage of citizenship-shaping is termed 'mechanical acquisition'. In this stage, students receive codified civic knowledge and ideas through the educational system's banking education of official ideology and narratives, which they may not necessarily understand or recognize. Teachers, ideological counselors, or other ideological workers aim to prepare students to internalize the prefiguration of Chinese official ideology, encouraging them to think or conceptualize Chinese reality in a manner conforming to the grand narrative. This involves accepting the officially-defined party-state-society-individual relations, recognizing the party's overarching role in leading everything, understanding the systematic division between Western capitalism and

Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, and fostering selfless and devoted commitments to the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

However, substantial empirical research (e.g., Li, 2009; Law & Xu, 2020) suggests that both teachers and students may rarely give serious consideration to these contents. Teachers might merely fulfill their teaching mission without making efforts to persuade students to have authentic faith in these dogmas. Similarly, students tend to disregard these ideological courses, focusing instead on memorizing important contents to prepare for exams and obtain credits, while investing more time and effort into their professional courses.

All interviewees in this study shared similar learning experiences as described above. Indeed, the College Entrance Exam (known as 'gao kao' in Chinese) in China is highly competitive, and ideological courses are typically mandatory components of all exams or evaluations. It's undeniable that the primary objective for students is to achieve high grades and gain admission to reputable schools or colleges. Interviewee C mentioned that before attending university, she prioritized nothing except her academic performance. Similarly, Interviewee M recounted that in his hometown, which was economically disadvantaged and less developed, obtaining competitive grades in the College Entrance Exam was the only path to admission to a good university and access to opportunities in larger cities. As he stated:

'My mission was to memorize these ideological contents well to get high grades rather than to think about or question them' (Interviewee M).

222

Additionally, in preparation for the exam, Chinese students typically dedicate 65 to 77 hours per week to learning on campus and participating in off-campus tutorials[26]. This leaves them with nearly no time to engage in other social activities or access information from diverse sources. Consequently, students have limited opportunities to develop and access civic values and beliefs beyond what is provided by the schooling system. Like Interviewee G commented,

'Chinese students may be particularly susceptible to the influence of citizenship education during their middle school years. This susceptibility is compounded by their largely enclosed campus environment, where all information channels are strictly controlled and opportunities to engage with society outside of the campus are limited.'

(Interviewee G)

Moreover, some interviewees highlighted that young students often lack a deep understanding of social events, making them susceptible to propaganda and ideological indoctrination. Both Interviewee E and F noted that during their childhood, their comprehension of the world was limited to their immediate surroundings, with their knowledge of broader society largely shaped by propaganda. Interviewee C recalled idolizing party leaders and passionately embracing ideological slogans and principles, despite not fully comprehending the concept of communism at the time. Similarly, Interviewee K shared similar experiences of being unaware of political distinctions during childhood, viewing the party as the ultimate authority without understanding its broader role.

---

[26] See more introductions about tutorial industry in China at: Kids in China Spend 77 Hours a Week Studying | NextShark.com

In summary, Chinese citizenship education appears to have a significant impact on students, effectively instilling the official ideology and narrative into their minds. Young Chinese children are compelled to learn these contents thoroughly to pass exams, leaving them with little time or opportunity to explore alternative civic views and critically analyze the material. This mechanical acquisition of the official ideology typically persists throughout primary and middle education until students enter university, where they become more mature, gain access to diverse sources of information, and engage in social activities. While students may excel in ideological courses and demonstrate a solid understanding of the prescribed knowledge, their ideological beliefs may be vulnerable to real-world experiences and modifications in their worldview.

8.3.2 Stage 2: 'Suspicion Moment'

Building upon Paul Ricœur's concept of the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', this study identifies the second stage of Chinese elite college graduates' citizenship-shaping as the 'suspicion moment'. During this stage, students encounter unexpected societal facts that reveal discrepancies between reality and the official grand narrative, leading them to harbor suspicions toward the latter. However, it is important to note that the mechanism driving suspicion in this study differs from that of Ricœur's hermeneutics. While suspicion in hermeneutics involves critical reflection in textual or contextual analysis to reconstruct symbolic meaning (Robinson, 1995), suspicion in citizenship-shaping involves reflecting on 'reading the world' rather than just 'reading the word'. It signifies a disenchantment with the

preconceived symbolic life and serves as a catalyst for questioning, doubting, and deviating from the grand narrative and ideology.

Louis Althusser (1970) defines ideology as having both a material existence and representing an imaginary relationship of individuals to real social conditions. Therefore, a grand narrative constructed upon official ideology incorporates truths from social events alongside imaginary assumptions. However, as Karl Mannheim (1954) argued, ideology and material existence do not maintain a static relationship in an unchanging universe; rather, they continuously condition each other. If society remains relatively static or develops according to the prefigured manner depicted in the official ideology and grand narrative, the consistency between ideological imagination and the society's material existence can be sustained. Conversely, if unexpected social transformations occur, shifting social structures or affecting people's beliefs and expectations regarding social development, the gap between narratives and reality widens. Thus, while the shift in the manner of reading and narrating contributes to the hermeneutics of suspicion, it is the transformation of society, critical incidents in one's life experiences, or modifications of one's intellectual capacity or viewpoint that trigger suspicion against ideological illusions.

In China, significant social transformations have dramatically altered the social reality, creating new conditions that compel ideology to evolve. However, Chinese propaganda and ideological education persist in intensifying ideological control, repeating previous narratives, and increasingly embracing chauvinism and conservatism (Zhao, 2016). In contrast to students' on-campus learning experiences, which can be firmly controlled and influenced by the party-

state, their childhood experiences with parents, social and working experiences, and international experiences are somewhat removed from the state's intentional influence and more open to different viewpoints.

For instance, both Interviewee B and G recounted how their working experiences led them to question the socialist nature of China, particularly when they were required to work overtime with labor laws having little practical significance. Interviewee G remarked that workers in China seemed more like 'tools' used to enhance productivity rather than being the subjects of a purportedly proletariat-led country.

Indeed, over the past few decades, China has undergone significant social transformations, including shifts towards privatization and a market-oriented economy, the widespread adoption of the Internet and social media, notable changes in foreign relations, the spread of liberal ideas alongside their critiques, and challenges such as economic slowdowns and the Covid-19 pandemic. These changes have collectively contributed to the process of individualization among Chinese people, particularly the younger generation. As a result, they have developed clearer perceptions of their individual destinies, personal interests, and the diverse nature of society and politics. This has led to a growing conflict between their individual expectations and the narratives presented in the grand narrative (Yan, 2009; 2019).

For instance, Interviewee L dedicated significant effort to propose suggestions for local quarantine policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, she was met with largely negative responses, leading her to feel deeply upset about the local authority's indifference and hypocrisy. She concluded that:

'The state calls for the Great Rejuvenation everyday but does not care if I am happy

or not. It seems that I am not a part of China'. (Interviewee L)

More examples of these interviewees' suspicion moments are outlined as the following table. Indeed, Ricœur (1974) emphasized that suspicion, or the willingness to suspect, can profoundly influence people's perceptions of the world and themselves. Once individuals become aware of the potential gap between the prefigured narrative and reality, they become increasingly conscious of these disparities. This awareness leads to a recurring cycle of suspicion, prompting individuals to analyze society and initiate the self-construction of their worldviews. This process is facilitated by the exercise of rationality, which is often deeply ingrained through professional training received in higher education.

Table 6. Significant examples of suspicion moments of research participants

Interviewee	Educational qualification	Significant example of suspicion moment
Interviewee A	Bachelor of Philosophy	When realized that society was merely an imagined community and propaganda shaped people's imagination
Interviewee B	Master of Engineering	When felt depressed by the "996" work hours system while Labor Law did not work at all
Interviewee C	PhD of Education	When realized the policymaking in other countries was more democratic than that in China
Interviewee D	Master of Economics	When realized China's marketing economy not very different from that under Western neoliberalism
Interviewee E	PhD of Statistics	When learnt that all conclusions could be manipulated by statistics
Interviewee F	Master of Translation	When realized the state held the overarching power to control everything (e.g. private tutoring industries)
Interviewee G	Bachelor of Communication	When realized workers were "toolmen" rather than "subjects".
Interviewee H	Master of Law	When observed the dilemma of local bureaucracy
Interviewee J	PhD of Marxism	When heard two teachers interpreting totally different civic views
Interviewee K	PhD of History	When realized history was merely a narrative defined by power
Interviewee L	Master of Geology	When made appeals on civic issues but no responses received
Interviewee M	PhD of History of Science	When found grassroots experiences mattered more than ideological teaching in developing one's worldview

8.3.3 Stage 3: 'Self-Construction'

The third stage of citizenship-shaping is 'self-construction', wherein a student, having

experienced the suspicion moment, begins to take the initiative to construct independent

understandings of China's party-state-society-individual relations. Drawing from cognitive constructivism, self-construction occurs throughout one's life cycle as new knowledge is integrated with prior experiences (Piaget, 1970). In this study, self-construction refers to the process by which individuals derive insights from their life experiences and formulate an individual narrative to comprehend social reality.

More importantly, this process involves the exercise of one's rationality to promote social consciousness. With increased education, one's social consciousness advances further, as Freire (1970; 1973) pointed out, progressing from intransitive consciousness to transitive consciousness, then critical consciousness. This progression involves moving from being impervious to social problems to being curious, and finally, seeing through social rules and questioning the power structure.

This study selects elite college graduates as research subjects because, as well-educated youths, they have already developed critical thinking, at least in their academic areas, and are expected to possess a strong intellectual capacity to conceptualize and analyze grand social terms. Indeed, this study suggests that professional training throughout higher education, regardless of academic subject, can refine a set of professional perspectives to critically assess the grand narrative, reflect on social reality, and develop systematic individual views to understand the party, state, and society. The following elaborates on how different professional backgrounds contribute to different rationales that determine one's considerations about civic issues.

As for Interviewees E and J, they shared a general recognition of the official Marxist discourse but for different reasons stemming from their diverse professional academic backgrounds. Interviewee J, a graduate student in Professional Studies in Marxism, was deeply moved by the humanistic appeal of Marxism. She recalled one of her supervisors interpreting the nature of human society as 'one person producing another person, and one life producing another life'. As a result, she felt a strong sense of social responsibility, fully comprehended the challenges in improving the living standards for such a vast population and commended the CPC's efforts in poverty eradication.

On the other hand, Interviewee E also acknowledged socialism, not necessarily because he truly understood and endorsed it, but due to his professional training in Mathematical Statistics, which convinced him of the prevalence of data manipulation and the inevitability of flawed truths – as he narrated:

> *In the field of statistics, there are various ways to interpret data. In positive terms, statistics can be described as data adjustment, but in negative terms, it may be labeled as data manipulation. Data can be manipulated to support any desired outcome. With extensive training in statistics, we begin to perceive things differently because they understand that data itself is not the reality, and any conclusion drawn is merely a representation of what statisticians aim to demonstrate. Consequently, they instinctively seek different perspectives and alternative data sources to explore whether different conclusions can be reached by examining data from different angles. Therefore, when discussing propaganda and grand narratives, I refrain from categorizing something as*

correct or incorrect because fundamentally, there may be no definitive answer at all.

(Interviewee E)

For interviewees like H, M, and K who became disenchanted with socialist ideology, their professional learning experiences also played a significant role in shaping their civic views. Interviewee H, as a Master of Laws, emphasized that her professional learning in social sciences exposed her to the complexities of social structures and the challenges of social transformation. Consequently, she began to doubt the idealism of socialism and became indifferent towards grand terms like 'Chinese Dream' and 'Common Prosperity'.

As for Interviewee M, who held a Ph.D. in the History of Science, he offered an ontological criticism of Marxism. He argued that throughout human history, empiricism has mattered more than rationalism. Therefore, he believed that authorities should prioritize solving realistic problems rather than propagating excessively theorized discourses.

More directly, Interviewee K, who held academic degrees in Chinese modern history, had witnessed how historical research in China became increasingly restricted in recent decades. He observed that any historical narratives critical of the CPC were condemned as historical nihilism, aimed at deliberately sabotaging the party's image. These experiences led him to understand how Chinese historical narratives were constructed and how different historical interpretations could affect political legitimacy. As he summarized,

'History is just a series of narratives selected by power, and ideology is the same'.

(Interviewee K)

Interviewees A, E, J, F, K, and M expressed a relatively positive impression of the current regime, but for different reasons. While Interviewees F, K, and M remained disenchanted with socialist ideologies, they found the performance of the Chinese government acceptable for two reasons: one is the government's moral appeal for social equality, and the other can be summarized as an acceptance of the realities of governance. As Interviewee F mentioned, 'I think all governments have their faults. Look at other countries; the Chinese government did not do badly'. Meanwhile, Interviewee A expressed his political trust due to his belief in the necessity of political centralization. As a graduate of Philosophy, he advocated Hobbesian philosophy and argued that China must be unified under strong leadership. Otherwise, as history has witnessed, China would descend into chaos and internal conflict.

In conclusion, Interviewees C, D, and F, who expressed negative views on the Chinese government, attributed much of their political distrust to their academic backgrounds. Interviewee C, who conducted research in cross-national comparative studies of education policy, initially held a positive image of the Chinese system. However, as she delved deeper into education policymaking in other countries, she realized that Chinese policymaking lacked democratic processes and often disregarded public opinions. This led her to become increasingly critical of the Chinese government, viewing it as arbitrary, authoritarian, and bureaucratic.

Interviewee D, a graduate in Economics with a keen interest in the history of neoliberalism, came to a realization about the nature of the Chinese economy. Upon observing similarities between the market economy under 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' and neoliberalism,

she recognized that the notion of 'Chinese characteristics' or 'Chinese exceptionalism' served as political metaphors to obscure the state's interventions in enterprises. This understanding prompted her to question the narrative surrounding China's economic model and contributed to her skepticism towards the government.

Interviewee F, a graduate in English Translation, shared how her professional training deeply influenced her perception of Chinese politics. During her studies, she received advice from her teacher regarding the role of a translator, emphasizing the importance of remaining impartial and merely serving as a conduit for others' voices. While the intention was to instill fidelity in translation, these words made her contemplate the power dynamics between the state and the individual. She realized that while only a select few had the privilege of self-expression, many others were confined to echoing predetermined narratives.

In summary, after experiencing the suspicion moment, interviewees felt compelled to deconstruct and reconceptualize the grand terms they had previously accepted. This process of self-construction heavily relied on their life experiences, particularly their professional learning experiences, which equipped them with professional perspectives to analyze various aspects of society more deeply, thus reshaping their worldview. However, this process was not linear; it was iterative and reflexive. While individuals may deviate from the official ideology, they may also find aspects of the grand narrative acceptable or view the current regime as justifiable. The effort to consider and reconcile the gap between the grand narrative and personal understanding marks the last stage of citizenship-shaping, as illustrated below.

8.3.4 Stage 4: 'Reconfiguration'

The final stage of citizenship-shaping is referred to as 'reconfiguration'. In this stage, individuals attempt to synthesize and reconcile the grand narrative with their personal understanding of society and then develop an independent individual narrative that reconfigures all essential elements in civic life, including the relationship between the state and society, the causation among social events, the social structure and hierarchy, and the different roles played by various agents.

In contrast with Ricœur's term in narratology – 'configuration', 'reconfiguration' in citizenship-shaping implies a dualistic reversal of subjectivity between teachers and students, narrators and readers, and authority figures and individuals. While 'configuration' refers to the process where the narrator dominates the structuring of events into a coherent narrative, 'reconfiguration' is a more interactive and reflexive process taken by the audience to actively engage in the reconstruction of narratives. Reassembling, rearranging, and redefining concepts and cause-and-effect relations to create new, reconfiguration allows individuals to assert their agency in shaping their understanding of citizenship and society.

Furthermore, this new narrative must also explain how and why personal understanding differs from the grand narrative and articulate the manner in which one should react to the grand narrative. It should address questions such as how to 'live with', 'live for', or 'live against' the grand narrative. As introduced earlier, Piaget (1971) articulated assimilation and accommodation as two mechanisms for humans to conceptualize new knowledge within pre-existing cognitive schemas. In fact, the way students connect their understandings of life

234

experiences and social transformations to the prefigured grand narrative, often shaped by ideological education and propaganda, can be likened to Piaget's cognitive mechanisms. That said, students can choose either to assimilate their personal understanding with the grand narrative and eventually conform to the official discourse, or to alter their cognitive schema to accommodate their new understanding of society, thereby departing from the official discourse and developing a new individual narrative.

While the Chinese grand narrative instills in students the commitment to communism as an expression of patriotism and collectivism, students have the option to utilize either assimilation or accommodation to reconsider their worldview and the grand narrative, ultimately shaping their individual narratives. In this study, certain participants (e.g., Interviewees A, E, F, J, K) assimilated their individual narratives into the grand narrative and opted to embrace it for various reasons, while others (e.g., Interviewees D, G, H, L) diverged from official discourses, adjusted their worldviews to accommodate social dynamics, and crafted unique individual narratives to signify their renegotiation of party-state-society-individual relations.

In this process, the perspective that one positions the self in the society is crucial to affect one's attitudes towards the grand narrative. As many indicated:

'I never felt like I was part of the 'people' who is claimed as the master of this country, I was the governed by default ... I do have some different opinions, but they make no sense to change the reality' (Interviewee F)

'I am just one of ordinary people. What can I do (in face of the propaganda)? I can only choose to live with it as something unavoidable.' (Interviewee G)

'Individuals can never escape the influence of the society. To some extent, everyone is the slave of the society so we must learn to pacify our spirituals by ourselves, to seek a balance in yourself and keep your inner world alive.' (Interviewee K)

The formation of recognition or dissidence in contemporary China is notably intricate. While certain groups genuinely embrace socialism, viewing it as the ideology of the 'Mao-left' or the 'New Leftist' which still holds sway (Zhao, 2019), others express a pragmatic recognition due to their reliance on institutional support that provides material benefits (Guan, 2018; Perry, 2020). Conversely, dissidents, or semi-dissidents—individuals who may maintain trust in the government but have become disillusioned with ideology, or those who uphold strong socialist beliefs but feel disillusioned with the government—must carefully navigate their relationship with the official discourse. Given the stringent ideological control and the risks associated with dissent, they may opt to either actively resist pervasive propaganda or, as observed by Havel (1985), outwardly conform in public while privately harboring disdain, concealing their true sentiments to evade political censorship. This approach reflects a passive acceptance of the regime, which, while not necessarily manifesting in overt civil disobedience, can exacerbate internal tensions and yield unforeseen consequences. More discussions are conducted in Chapter 10.

8.3.5 Summary: education, empowerment, and the rise of skepticism

Based on the outlined four-stage model of ideology-shaping, this study yields three key conclusions. Firstly, it underscores the significant role of ideological education, which proves influential but not immutable or enduring. Nearly all interviewees acknowledged the impact of rigorous ideological coursework in partially or fully persuading them of the credibility of the grand narrative. However, this impact cannot sustain for long and individuals' perspectives may undergo substantial transformations over time.

The second conclusion highlights the pivotal role of various social incidents in expediting and amplifying what can be termed as the 'suspicion moment'. Events such as the Trade War between China and America, China's quarantine measures and epidemic control during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War, as well as the conspicuous economic deceleration and mounting unemployment rates, have compelled college graduates to reevaluate China's political norms, social structure, and international standing. These reflections subsequently prompted them to critically assess the validity of the grand narrative.

The third conclusion emphasizes the significant impact of professional training on enhancing students' reasoning abilities and intellectual acumen, thereby facilitating their comprehension of various societal facets. As China endeavors to expand higher education to nurture talents for fostering a knowledge-based economy, this higher education system can paradoxically serve as a catalyst for rationalization and demystification. Consequently, it may inadvertently undermine the deification of ideological dogmas, posing a challenge to their sustained authority.

Hence, Chinese citizenship education grapples with a dilemma between fostering 'citizenship by education' and 'citizenship after education'. On one hand, citizenship education endeavors to instill a closed, conservative, and predominantly socialist worldview. On the other hand, education, particularly at the higher level, inherently equips individuals with the tools for rationalization, analysis, and reflection. Consequently, following higher education, graduates' ideologies and civic convictions may become highly fluid, adaptable, and subject to transformation. It becomes increasingly untenable for the party-state to expect these well-educated youths, proficient in STEM subjects vital for the knowledge economy, to concurrently adhere exclusively to socialist principles in the realm of social sciences. Further discussions will be conducted with the analysis of cultural influence of Confucianism, as indicated in Chapter 9.

Chapter 9. Grand narrative and New Individualism

Building on previous chapters, Chinese citizenship education is structured to reshape individuals' cultural habitus towards collectivism, leveraging it as a driving force to promote socialism. The party-state underscores collectivism as a means to encourage the populace to set aside personal ambitions, reconcile individual interests, and collectively commit to the broader interests symbolized by the Chinese Dream and National Rejuvenation agenda. However, the prevailing social trend of individualization acts as a countervailing force, facilitating the dismantling of the collectivism-centric discourse and influencing individuals' commitment to prioritizing collective interests.

This chapter delves into participants' perspectives and sentiments towards China's official grand narrative. Through an analysis of their responses, it becomes evident that interviewees have exhibited a rejection of the official narrative concerning party-state-society relations. Instead, they engage in a reconceptualization of the individual's relationship with the nation, society, and the global community. Therefore, these participants are undergoing a process of political individualization within the context of previous collectivism-oriented cultural norms. This shift entails a retention of horizontal collectivism while shedding elements of vertical collectivism and then contributes to a new individualism in China, which is characterized by a communal concern and heightened awareness of autonomy, as further elaborated below.

9.1 Demystification from the Grand Narrative

The core tenet of the CPC's official discourse revolves around the trinity of party, state, and nation, as extensively documented (Zhao, 1999; 2016). Notably, the Chinese language's rich polysemy lends ambiguity to the term 'state' ('guo'), which can signify nation, country, or government. Consequently, patriotism in Chinese discourse, when unspecified, may encompass recognition of the state or a political allegiance to the government (Xu, 2017). This interrelation allows patriotism, political trust, and collectivism to reinforce each other.

Hence, the CPC often juxtaposes 'party' and 'state' in official literature and crafts slogans such as 'to love the party is to love the nation, to love the nation is to love the party' (Ding, 2006). Directly, Zhao (2004, p.28) summarized socialist patriotism has three levels. 'At the first level, individuals should subordinate their personal interests to the interests of the state. At the second level, individuals should subordinate their personal destiny to the destiny of our socialist system. At the third level, individuals should subordinate their personal future to the future of our communist cause.' All these three levels correspond with famous slogan '(to) sacrifice the small self for the great self', compromising personal pursuits for the interests of the state, destiny of socialist system, and future of communist cause. However, this study unveils that all participants possessed a critical stance of this slogan. They sustained the communitarian concern to care about the 'great self' but also emphasized their autonomy of the 'small self', with the rejection of abuse of 'great self' as a political metaphor.

9.1.1 Grand narrative of the party-state

In Chinese citizenship education, the grand narrative of party-state is constructed on the historical narrative wherein the CPC led China to realize national independence and prosperity so that individuals are expected to harbor affection for the party and endorse its leadership of the state. This research identifies that all participants possessed a keen awareness of the demarcation between the party and the state. Despite expressing deep-seated affection for the Chinese nation, they held critical perspectives towards both the party and the state.

Numerous interviewees shared the idea that the performance in the past did not necessarily relate to the performance in the future. Many, like Interviewee B, D, F, L and K, responded that the party also made mistakes such as Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution in its past. Interviewee K mentioned that the party-state in different periods also signified different things. For example, the party-state in the 1990s and 2000s paid more attention to substantial economies rather than ideological propaganda, while the latter was prioritized nowadays. Even Interviewee J, whose academic focus was Professional Studies in Marxism and exhibited strong political trust in the party, maintained a discernible detachment between her views on the state and her adherence to Marxism. She contended that any political party, including the CPC, must continually adapt and might fall short of fulfilling its mission and agenda.

While the party-state articulates the discourse of People's Democratic Dictatorship and claims the 'people' as the master of the state, interviewees felt strange with such terms and felt distant from the state. As Interviewee F commented:

'I never felt like I was part of the 'people' who is claimed as the master of this state,

I was the governed by default ... I do have some different opinions, but they make no sense

to change the reality' (Interviewee F)

Many, like Interviewees D, J, and K, share the sentiment that the party-state cannot expect citizens to serve either the party or the state, as the party-state effectively controls all aspects of governance and societal affairs. Interviewee G illustrated the party-state intended to incorporate the whole society as he drew comparisons between the 'Chinese Dream' and the 'American Dream':

'The distinction between the American Dream and the Chinese Dream is stark. The

American Dream typically conveys the idea that individuals can achieve their personal

aspirations through their own efforts and initiatives. Conversely, the Chinese Dream

portrays individuals more as beneficiaries rather than agents, with the party bearing the

responsibility of ensuring a fulfilling life for its citizens. In the current official narrative

of China, there's an attempt to assert that the party represents not only the state but also

the society. However, it's evident that these are distinct entities, with society being the

primary actor. Even if the polity undergoes some changes, the society would endure.'

(Interviewee G)

Moreover, the transformation of social conditions, particularly the economic slowdown, pose very serious impacts on people's political trust (Wang & You, 2016; Zhong & Zhan, 2021). This shift is also deeply perceived by interviewees in this study, as elite university graduates, who were sensitive with social dynamics and should have held high expectations of their job

careers. Their attitudes towards the relationship between the party-state and the society were significantly influenced. As Interviewee A suggested,

'All these terms such as party, nation, state are something like imagined communities, what I would like to serve was only myself and the society that really surrounded myself rather than the nation or the party-state'. (Interviewee A)

9.1.2 Grand narrative of the nation

The grand narrative of the nation encompasses two domains: one is introverted, concerning the national agenda such as 'National Rejuvenation' and the 'Chinese Dream', and the other is extroverted, positioning China vis-à-vis the Western and the global world. It is evident in this study that interviewees clearly perceive the nation as an imagined community or somehow a political metaphor for pragmatic purposes.

In the introverted nationalist discourse, individuals can easily become disillusioned if they encounter unpromising personal experiences. This is conceivable, particularly against the backdrop of economic slowdown. Nearly all interviewees mentioned that national rejuvenation is hardly imaginable if individuals are grappling with challenges such as unemployment, stagnant salaries, pessimistic career prospects, and so forth. Interviewee H also commented:

'This is the digital age. With an increasing number of social problems being exposed online, it becomes evident that the grand terms portrayed by official propaganda are often far removed from the truth.' (Interviewee H)

In fact, the Covid-19 pandemic also played a significant role in shifting individuals' mentalities. Interviewee C emphasized that the pandemic compelled her to prioritize caring for

the small circles around her over grand terms like nation and the so-called 'people', which is a crucial term in China's official discourse symbolizing collectivity. Additionally, interaction with local authorities during quarantine deepened individuals' understanding of the regime. For instance, interviewee L recounted her experiences of how her life was severely disrupted by China's one-size-fits-all lockdown policy to combat Omicron. Despite her efforts to propose suggestions or apply for exemptions, she encountered largely negative responses, leaving her deeply upset about the local authority's indifference and hypocrisy. She concluded that:

> *'The state calls for the Great Rejuvenation everyday but does not care if I am happy or not. It seems that I am not a part of China'. (Interviewee L)*

In the extroverted nationalist discourse, China has put an emphasis on increasing its 'international discourse power' (国际话语权) and the appeal to 'tell China's story well' (讲好中国故事) to create a more favorable global opinion (Jones, 2021, Nov. 24). On one hand, China appears to aim at inheriting the Confucian legacy of moral cosmopolitanism, known as 'tianxia' (all-under-heaven), particularly in cultural dimensions. On the other hand, its official discourses in political and ideological realms remain exclusive (Wang, 2020).

This study reveals that in apolitical dimensions of global commons, interviewees expressed concerns for global issues and advocated for peace, global sustainability, and poverty eradication. However, in the political dimension, such as when China propagates 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' to distinguish its ideology as unique, diverging from both Western capitalist nations and other socialist countries, interviewees disconnected national sentiments from their judgments of Chinese national conditions. Indeed, they were critical of

244

such a narrative of Chinese exceptionalism. Interviewee M remarked that every country, province, and city has its own specific conditions, making it unnecessary to overly emphasize 'Chinese Characteristics'. Interviewee K observed that the term 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' served as a diplomatic tactic, allowing China to be flexible and adaptive. This flexibility enabled China to accept universal values when cooperation with Western countries was necessary or to emphasize its own specialties when expressing rejection.

In a more direct manner, several interviewees argued that every society possesses unique conditions, leading to distinct cultures and values. Therefore, no set of local values should be considered 'universal' or labeled with exaggerated exceptionalism. This perspective allowed these interviewees to critique both Western universal values and the notion of 'Chinese Characteristics'. For instance, Interviewee B criticized the American approach to propagating its universal values, likening it to China's promotion of socialism. Interviewee J characterized the American narrative of universal values as a form of soft power, contrasting it with China's narrative of 'Chinese Characteristics' as a pragmatism-oriented response in cultural warfare. As she argued:

> *'This designation of ideology seems more like a weapon in the ideological and cultural competition between countries. If China were to accept the universal values defined by other countries, it could lead to a complete collapse of its political and economic systems. After all, the Western narrative of universal values cannot justify a state-owned economy and public ownership. How can we expect private entrepreneurs to*

make commitments to low-profit public sectors under such circumstances?' (Interviewee J)

Additionally, interviewees such as B, C, and K believed that the term 'characteristics' contained some truths but also served as a political metaphor that was temporal, volatile, and subject to the leader's creative interpretation and the varying needs posed by social transformations. Interviewee E referenced Max Weber's classic work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in support of their argument:

'Western countries held diverse values across different historical periods. The purported universal values emphasized today are closely linked to the Protestant ethic that just emerged during modern times. In pre-industrialization eras, they promoted the spirit of diligence to meet the demands of industrialization. Yet, in the post-industrial period characterized by the welfare state, there's a perception that people have become complacent, merely demanding everything under the guise of human rights.' (Interviewee E)

Interviewee K posed a stark question regarding Chinese modern history:

'Do you think the uniqueness of China that early communists had claimed in the 1930s to prevent the intervention from Soviet is same as the 'Chinese Characteristics' that we emphasize today?' (Interviewee K)

9.1.3 Grand narrative of the society

The third domain of the CPC's grand narrative revolves around various rules and agendas set for Chinese social development, including principles such as 'collective interests',

'common prosperity', and 'sacrifice the small self for the great self'. These slogans echo traditional Chinese collectivist values, encouraging individuals to prioritize collective interests and willingly sacrifice personal rights or interests for the greater public good.

However, this study reveals that the interviewees harbor complex sentiments towards these slogans. On one hand, they express a genuine concern for social equality, social welfare, and collective interests, and commend the CPC's initiatives aimed at achieving common prosperity. On the other hand, they have developed a strong awareness of individual rights and oppose coercive measures by the authorities to compel obedience or accept intervention. This reflects a nuanced perspective wherein they recognize the importance of collective well-being but also assert their rights and autonomy as individuals.

Indeed, in a famous article, *Collectivism predicts mask use during COVID-19,* its authors, including Lu, Jin, and English (2021), pointed out that 'the link between collectivism and mask usage was robust to a host of control variables', including political affiliation, demographics, population density, socioeconomic indicators, and so on (p.1). This argument is echoed by many related studies such as Jiang, Wei and Zhang's (2022) and Xiao (2022). When discussing China's efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, many interviewees agreed that the Chinese government leveraged the country's collectivist culture effectively. They noted that Chinese citizens were willing to cooperate with government-imposed lockdowns and quarantine measures, prioritizing public health over individual liberties.

Furthermore, these interviewees' responses strongly echoed the principles of collectivism, emphasizing respect for collective norms, social cohesion, and welfare. For example,

Interviewee F expressed that her moral philosophy centered on collective utilitarianism to maximize the good of the group. Interviewee M commented that, compared to some political parties in other countries that usually disregard the disadvantaged group, it was very admirable for the Chinese party to enact agendas and achieve performance to care about the poor. Interviewee E compared Chinese redistribution with what he observed about financial transfers in the European Union – as he argued:

'I strongly advocate for China's fiscal transfer system. The economically developed regions benefit significantly from migrant labor populations and the stable market environments ensured by society as a whole. Therefore, these prosperous regions ought to contribute more tax revenue to benefit the entire society, particularly the underdeveloped regions. Without such transfers, China could face a situation similar to the European Union, which has monetary unity but lacks fiscal unity. For instance, while Germany attracts human capital from other areas, it doesn't redistribute adequately. This leads to regional inequality within the EU, exacerbating numerous problems.' (Interviewee E)

However, several interviewees cautioned against the potential misuse of positive liberty, highlighting that the paramountcy of stability should not come at the expense of individual autonomy and personal interests. For instance, Interviewee J acknowledged the significance of social stability but advocated for a degree of tolerance from the party-state towards dissent and protests to alleviate social tensions. Similarly, Interviewee B asserted that basic liberties must be upheld and should not be compromised under any circumstances.

These arguments can be reflected in interviewees' opinions regarding China's rigorous control policy during the pandemic of Covid-19, as they voiced concerns that the government might exploit this collectivist culture to enforce overly rigid lockdown policies, infringe upon citizens' rights, and dismiss legitimate appeals. Several interviewees, including D, F, G, H, J, and L, recounted experiences where local governments implemented lockdown policies arbitrarily, leading to unnecessary inconveniences. Interviewee D remarked that the government wielded authoritarian power without considering citizen input or opinions. As Interviewee L said,

> *'We've been compliant and cooperative with every policy for so long. Why then are quarantine policies becoming increasingly arbitrary? Mandating a one-size-fits-all approach to quarantine overlooks individual circumstances. This lack of consideration is concerning.' (Interviewee L)*

Interviewee H introduced her experiences as an example:

> *'Social stability is undoubtedly crucial, but it's problematic to prioritize it above all else. Overemphasizing social stability risks overshadowing individual autonomy and interests. After all, if my basic liberties are infringed upon, social stability loses its significance. In my city, arbitrary lockdowns resulted in numerous unforeseen issues such as food shortages and unemployment. Millions were confined indoors, with their legitimate appeals ignored. Witnessing the widespread suffering around me, how can you convince me that the 'great self' is being served?' (Interviewee H)*

In fact, all interviewees expressed objections to the traditional Chinese moral dogma of 'sacrificing the small self for the great self', which continues to be widely emphasized to instill a sense of sacrificing personal interests for the collective benefit. Interviewee G contended that in collectivist environments where many individuals already exhibit voluntary sacrifice and commitment to others, the government should refrain from promoting such sacrifices further. Interviewee L agreed, suggesting that this morality should be a matter of personal choice rather than mandated by legislation. Interviewee D criticized this narrative as a governing tactic to coerce loyalty to the community by compelling self-sacrifice.

Indeed, this notion of sacrifice within collectivist discourse presents an ethical dilemma: when individuals are persuaded to sacrifice themselves for 'the great self', they may find themselves excluded from that very collective. Consequently, anyone could become the sacrificed 'small self'. Moreover, since the CPC aims to supplant the concept of society with that of the party-state, it is the party, rather than citizens, that wields the teleological power to define collective interests and legitimize the notion of the greater good. This fundamental flaw in collectivism is keenly observed by the college graduates interviewed in this study.

9.2 New Individualism in China

9.2.1 Sustained horizontal collectivism: communitarian concern

Despite holding varying attitudes towards socialist ideologies and the party-state, all research participants expressed appreciation for the party's efforts in promoting social equality and welfare. Motivated by a sense of communal responsibility, participants demonstrated a strong concern for marginalized groups, collective interests, social cohesion, and egalitarianism.

It is therefore unsurprising that many of China's political agendas, including anti-poverty initiatives, the promotion of 'Common Prosperity', redistribution, state-owned enterprises in public sectors, and quarantine measures during the pandemic, resonated with them.

This communitarian concern for public goods suggests that horizontal collectivism persists among these Chinese young adults. Its primary feature is a strong concern for the welfare of the entire community. It still adheres to a moral principle that individual interests and even life can be sacrificed if justified and if done voluntarily. Therefore, when asked about their views on the Chinese moral slogan of 'sacrifice the small self for the greater good', it is noteworthy that all interviewees recognized the justification for 'sacrifice'. Significantly, what they rejected was coercion or arbitrary power mandating individuals to make sacrifices, not the possibility of individuals voluntarily making sacrifices or compromises.

The second feature of the communitarian concern reflects a strong commitment to social equality and the welfare of the poor, marginalized, and disadvantaged. This is evident when asked about their views on disadvantaged groups, such as those who missed out on opportunities for higher education. These interviewees, as graduates from elite university, did not respond with the meritocratic arrogance depicted by Michael Sandel in The *Tyranny of Merit* (2021). They did not attribute their academic success solely to their own merits, destinies, or personal efforts. Instead, they identified themselves as ordinary individuals and acknowledged the pervasive social inequality, recognizing that some of their peers may have benefited from numerous privileges while others were constrained by their social circumstances. As Interviewee J responded that:

'A state apparatus is built upon the accumulation of surplus value created by people from all walks of life. It's crucial not to overlook disadvantaged individuals, as they too contribute to and form the foundation of social development. They are integral parts of the collective effort and deserve recognition for their contributions to society.'

(Interviewee J)

Considering Confucian philosophy of the 'related self', the third attribute of communitarian concern represents a non-utilitarian moral appeal to prioritize commitments to human relations over material pursuits or individual possessions. In contrast to possessive individualism (Macpherson, 1962), which regards one's prosperity, skills, and possessions as commodities to be bought or sold, with consumption and exchange at the core of human behavior, communitarian concern does not negate individual possessions but underscores one's bonds with the community. This highlights the fundamental difference between collectivism and individualism, wherein moral standards in collectivism are based on collective welfare, and individuals are expected to enhance community welfare rather than prioritize their own possessions (Triandis, 1995).

Indeed, in Chinese Confucian philosophy, 'gong' (公), namely, the public, has consistently been deemed greater than the 'si' – the private . Many Chinese ancient classics shared the belief that excessive pursuit of individual possessions fosters competition and undermines community solidarity, thereby jeopardizing the common welfare (Schwartz, 1985). Although this belief had been severely countered since the 1980s when China adopted marketing

economy reform to encourage private ownership and private entrepreneurship (Yan, 2009), the

spirit of emphasizing the consideration for the community seems to persist, as analyzed above.

9.2.2 Diluted vertical collectivism: autonomous awareness

In this study, while interviewees exhibited a communitarian concern, they also

demonstrated a clear awareness of individual rights and the distinction between the public and

the private spheres. Consequently, they voiced concerns about the polity's arbitrary

policymaking and interventions into their personal lives and were critical of the mandate for

the 'sacrifice'. This autonomous awareness indicates a departure from the vertical collectivism

inherent in Confucianism, which traditionally prescribed obedience to social hierarchies and

acceptance of authority's interventions.

Indeed, the withdrawal of vertical collectivism within Confucianism has been evident in

the familial sphere. Studies conducted by Yunxiang Yan (2016, 2018) indicate that China has

experienced a rise in descending familism, which focuses more on the younger generation than

the older. This new form of familism moves away from the expectation of unconditional

obedience and submission from the younger to the older generations, which aims to reconstruct

intergenerational intimacy by minimizing interventions and respecting privacy. Various factors,

including social transformations and China's one-child policy, have contributed to this shift.

As a result, the younger generation in China often exhibits a strong desire for independence

and autonomy in managing intergenerational relationships (Liu, 2011; Bedford & Yeh, 2019).

While loyalty and filial piety are two complementary elements in shaping social identities

within Chinese traditions (Hwang, 1999), it is plausible that a decline in one could influence

the other. This study supports this notion by highlighting participants' rejection of vertical collectivism in social and political contexts. Many interviewees reported growing up in progressive families that fostered their independent character and self-responsibility. However, they did not experience the same level of autonomy on campus or in society as they had within their families.

By contrast, there might be two reasons triggering their thinking about the autonomy and self-centeredness in the serious sense. Firstly, due to practical considerations, the current economic slowdown has exacerbated social inequalities in China, leading to unequal benefits from social development and collective interests, and generating many uncertainties to individuals' personal fates.

As many, like Interviewee B, D, F, G, and K, acknowledged, prioritizing collective welfare would be acceptable if social development were equitable and sustainable, and if collective interests aligned with one's own personal interests. However, they also admitted that there is no justification for individuals to neglect personal well-being, given the foreseeable deterioration of the employment market in China. As many mentioned, they must secure the job and obtain a decent salary before thinking about the society. Otherwise, like Huang (2018) identified, the hard propaganda of 'sacrifice' may backfire to make individuals increasingly opposed to the abuse of collectivist discourse. As Interviewee K pointed out:

'If one's well-being is severely sacrificed, how can you force him or her to care for others?' (Interviewee K)

Secondly, interviewees have developed their own legal-rational perspectives on politics, liberty, and human rights, which enabled them to achieve a rational understanding of civic affairs. Moreover, these youths have greater access to information, broader international perspectives, who are competent to engage in critical thinking about the social reality and shape their own understandings.

Interviewee F argued that various political incidents, ranging from 'Brexit' to the chaotic protest against 2020 U.S. president election, had disenchanted her expectations of good politics. Interviewee H agreed,

> *'It appears to be a global trend for governments to adopt authoritarian and xenophobic tendencies, but there must be a bottom line to ensure the protection of people's fundamental liberties.' (Interviewee H)*

Directly, Interviewee C articulated:

> *'Covid-19 taught me to think for the whole humankind rather than merely a nation or a state, the former is real, but the latter is just political. (Interviewee C)'*

As Paulo Freire (2008) pointed out, education has intrinsic roles in exercising one's rationality to reflect one's social existence, despite the abuse of pedagogy and the purposive selection of curriculum that may negatively affect this process. Indeed, authoritarianism typically correlates positively with age and religiosity, and negatively with education (Triandis & Suh, 2002, p.139). Given a strong positive correlation between education levels and egocentrism, individuals tend to develop higher levels of efficacy and possess greater needs for autonomy and self-realization as they receive more education (Triandis, 1985).

As such, it becomes increasingly challenging for the party-state to monopolize epistemological authority and dominate the ideological sphere among college students. With the expansion of higher education, today's well-educated youth have greater access to information, broader international perspectives, and more cultural capital, who are undoubtedly competent to engage in critical thinking about the social reality, critically considering the official discourse, and shaping their own understandings.

9.2.3 The shaping of individual narrative: against grand narrative

In Chapter 5, Chinese citizenship education is portrayed as aiming to transmit a grand narrative that outlines prescribed party-state-nation-society-individual relations to students. However, Chapter 8 reveals that students' citizenship-shaping is influenced more by their life experiences, which play a significant role in shaping their subjective understanding of society based on their observations and perceptions. As well-educated youths, elite university graduates possess strong intellectual capacity and critical thinking skills, enabling them to reflect on their existence. They engage in reconstructing key concepts such as liberty, equality, and rights, reconceptualizing social issues, and reevaluating political agendas.

Boulding (1956) argued that understanding politics is essentially a process of image formation influenced by messages transmitted through communication networks. The young generation, living in the era of the Internet and mass media, have access to a wide array of sources to form their understanding. These enriched life experiences enable them to shape their individual narratives, depicting their relationships with society, nation, state, and the party, as illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 3. The shaping of individual narrative against grand narrative
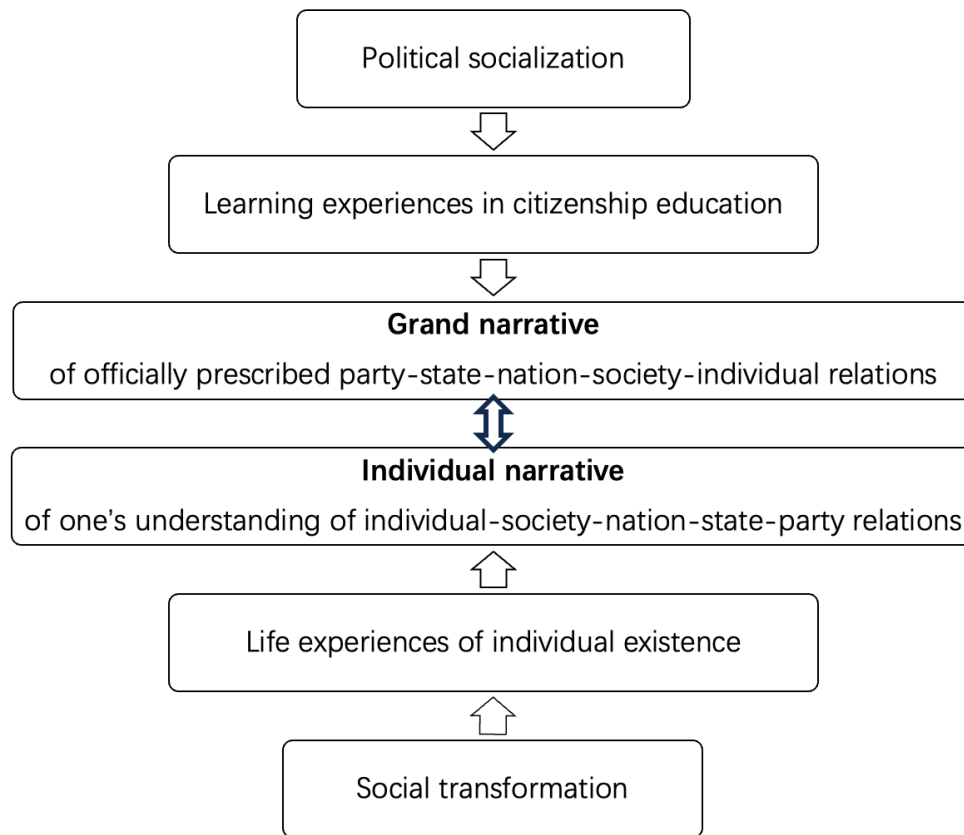
9.3 Discussion: Fading Away of 'Collectivity' as A Political Metaphor

As illustrated in previous chapters, communism in China resonates deeply with Chinese Confucianism, and Chinese citizenship education aims to nurture a cultural inclination towards collectivism, channeling it into support for communism. Indeed, China's legitimacy in governance is derived from people's concern for communal welfare, symbolized by the ancient term 'min sheng' (people's livelihood), rather than from individual personal satisfactions (Perry, 2008).

In the cultural context of collectivism, collectivity functions as a bidirectional metaphor. It is used by rulers to justify governance in the name of the public commons, while individuals

use it to assert their rights and entitlements by claiming personal interests within the collective framework. Cultural collectivism elevates the value of tolerance for the infringement of personal boundaries, and this tolerance will shape the trajectory of social and political transition in future China. Currently, the excessive promotion of collectivism appears more like an exploitation of people's communitarian concerns. One's political stance on the regime depends on how they balance their communitarian concerns with their tolerance for violations of collectivity and interventions into their private domain.

With the onset of economic slowdown, the previously observed positive correlation between individual well-being and collective social development has been disrupted. This disconnect represents the initial fracture in the prefigured relations of party-state-nation-society-individual, leading to a decline in people's trust in the party-state. Consequently, the individual narrative undergoes reconstruction, challenging the hierarchical structure outlined in the grand narrative while maintaining a communitarian concern for society. Despite the societal trend towards individualization, which encourages the pursuit of autonomy and self-interest, youths continue to uphold a commitment to collective welfare and public goals, demonstrating a non-utilitarian dedication to the greater good.

Indeed, the communitarian concern and autonomous awareness represent two contradictory sentiments that influence one's considerations regarding the trade-off between personal interests and collective goals. In situations where propaganda promoting common prosperity is met with a negative economic outlook, it becomes uncertain whether individuals

would still be willing to compromise their personal pursuits for the purported collective interests and remain committed and faithful to the socialist agenda.

If considering modernization as a process of disembedding (Giddens, 1980; Taylor, 2004), China's modernization since 1978 can be understood through two phases of disembedding. In the 1980s, the first phase, in the physical sense, disembedded individuals from various organizations restricted by planned economy and collectivization of agriculture and industrialization (Yan, 2009). Since 2000s until now, the second phase, in the cultural and psychological sense, disembeded individuals from vertical collectivism, featured by the rise of new middle-class, the arrival of 'critical citizens' and their fluctuating political trust (Wang & You, 2016). This period is also featured by the new individualism with a rising autonomous awareness but also a strong collective commitment.

Nevertheless, the potentiality of the third disembedding cannot be underestimated, that is the disembedding from the horizontal collectivism. That said, the new individualism identified in this study is somehow the intermediate of the transformation from collectivism to the individualism of the purely 'independent self'. The orientation of cultural transformation relies on how Chinese youths respond to social dynamics and how they balance their moral concerns for collective goods and practical considerations for personal interests. According to this study, interviewees do resonate with contents of collective commitments, social equality, common goods, as well as national rejuvenation. However, they are critical of the way these contents are excessively preached. If individuals relinquish their communitarian concern, the third wave

of disembedding may occur and the legacy of the Confucian 'relational self' may be compromised. Further discussion on this topic follows in Chapter 10.

Chapter 10. Dysfunction of Citizenship Education

Chapter 7, 8, and 9 have responded to research questions of this study and outlined the major findings regarding unintended consequences of citizenship education, the hidden transcript of citizenship-shaping, and the new individualism deriving from collectivism, respectively. This final chapter aims to generalize these findings into a wider scope of social sciences and explore the political sociology of citizenship education. The unintended consequence and hidden transcript of citizenship education contribute to the students' duality of citizenship. The political sociology of knowledge is critically discussed within the background of capitalistic transformation in post-communist societies. Finally, a comparative epistemology of the self is introduced to generalize the finding of this study.

10.1 Duality of Citizenship in Social Transformation

10.1.1 'Spectacle' of 'political correctness'

As Tsakalakis (2021) defined, political correctness refers to those popular values, ideologies, and beliefs that are favored by the state or society, occupying a dominant role in shaping the mainstream of public opinion while stifling alternative voices. Citizenship education is aimed at safeguarding such political correctness. In America, this political correctness refers to a set of values including equality, liberty, human rights, constitutionalism, and social justice (Sonu, 2012). In China, however, political correctness is aligned with socialism, the correct leadership of the CPC, nationalist discourse, people's livelihood,

common interests, and other dimensions, with liberty and human rights being important but not granted the same level of importance as the former dimensions.

In Chinese citizenship education, while teachers and students can act as active agents in classroom teaching and learning, the education evaluation and accountability system still serve as the ultimate authority, acting as the 'visible hand' of neoliberalism to control and supervise educational activities (Ball, 1994; 2017). Therefore, despite teachers' active agency in creatively interpreting the curriculum, they are still required to fulfill the teaching mission as requested and ensure that students meet the requirements to succeed in academic evaluations. Similarly, students must accept the given teaching agenda and obtain the necessary academic credits before graduating. This dynamic illustrates how both teachers and students contribute to the public transcript of celebrating political correctness.

French Marxist philosopher Guy Debord introduced the concept of the 'spectacle' in his masterpiece *The Society of the Spectacle* (1977) to critique how the prevailing market economy, mass media, and culture industry had alienated society by manufacturing the 'spectacle' of consumerism and the fetishism of commodities. 'Spectacle' encompasses two layers of meaning. In a narrow sense, it refers to consumerist phenomena such as advertising, television, film, photography, stars, and celebrities.

However, in a broader sense, spectacle also refers to a feigned, affected, and artificial scene that celebrates illusions while depriving social reality of authenticity (Kaplan, 2012). Indeed, this concept can be aptly applied to describe the public transcript manufactured in the practice of citizenship education, which aims to celebrate the official discourse for political correctness.

262

As mentioned above, this spectacle of teaching and learning does not necessarily reflect the genuine willingness of teachers and students to teach or learn, nor does it reveal their authentic civic views. Instead, the harmony observed in the classroom of citizenship education appears more like an artificial conformity to the relations of power. Despite students demonstrating everyday resistance, this silent form of resistance still ultimately upholds submission to the regime. Unlike transformative resistance, which aims to actively transform or rectify the regime and social conditions (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), everyday resistance internalizes discontent, constrains the willingness to engage in overt resistance, conforms to the mainstream educational agenda, and functions both as resistance and recognition, protest, and respect.

10.1.2 Social obstacles of practicing citizenship education

When the political agenda diverges from the goals of social transformation, citizenship education, tasked with consolidating political correctness, often faces constraints from social contexts. The practice of citizenship education inherently involves hidden transcripts, especially when the state seeks to enforce political correctness within increasingly dynamic and diverse social contexts. This assertion extends beyond the case of China and remains relevant regardless of the centralization or decentralization of political regimes.

For example, Singapore, a centralized state under the strong leadership of its former President Lee Kuan Yew, implemented a bilingual education policy in Chinese and English. However, the country has encountered significant challenges in fostering a unified national identity among its multilingual and multiethnic population (Sim, 2008; 2011). Conversely, Canada, operating under a decentralized regime, grapples with the dilemma of ethnic

assimilation despite its longstanding advocacy for diversity and tolerance in citizenship education (Kim, 2023).

In postcolonial societies, citizenship education often intertwines with the cultivation of nationalism and patriotism, aiming to strengthen students' national identity and secure their allegiance to the state (Kadiwal & Duranni, 2018). However, such educational agendas can face criticism when citizens realize that historical narratives have been curated and manipulated to foster a sense of patriotic citizenship. For instance, Wang (2008) identified that in Chinese history education, the country's semi-colonial past is often portrayed as a national humiliation, shaping students' collective memory. Similarly, Haynes (2009) found that Australian history education tends to romanticize its independence from British colonial rule, using this event to construct a new national identity. Even if the state promotes a singular set of values through citizenship education as a form of political correctness, alternative ideologies and values inevitably persist and cannot be eradicated.

Moreover, the state apparatus may employ ideological enforcement tactics. Václav Havel, the former Czech statesman, recounted that in the 1970s, Czech citizens were required to display the sign of 'Workers of the world, unite' as a demonstration of their loyalty to the communist party. Failure to display this sign could lead to suspicion of disloyalty, compelling citizens to comply even if they did not truly advocate for it. In his seminal work, *The Power of the Powerless* (1985), Havel introduced the concept of 'tender totalitarianism', which portrayed ideology as a 'secularized religion' that all citizens were compelled to adhere to. As Havel commented:

'They must live within a lie. They need not accept the lie. It is enough for them to have accepted their life with it and in it. For by this very fact, individuals confirm the system, fulfill the system, make the system, are the system.' (Havel, 1985, p.4)

According to Linz's (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, transition periods typically involve numerous negotiations and struggles between government enforcement and bottom-up power stemming from social transformation. While it may be relatively straightforward to adapt the education agenda to cultivate human capital, foster knowledge innovation, and promote economic development, it proves challenging to adjust it to the changes in society, cultures, ideologies, and values.

10.1.3 Alienation of citizenship education: learning as submission

As Ivan Illich articulated in his seminal work *Deschooling Society* (1971), schooling itself is a process of institutionalizing to enforce students to accept prefigured curricular contents. In citizenship education, the act of learning is not merely educational but also political, as it demonstrates at least a willingness to obey the discourse from authority. It is a political act to signify one's readiness to struggle for recognition from the regime. This does not necessarily suggest that citizenship education is inherently suppressive but rather that it is susceptible to political dynamics. As Paulo Freire (1970) pointed out, education can only assume one role: either domestication or emancipation, either prohibiting or developing suppressed consciousness. It is the political regime that ultimately determines the nature of citizenship education, despite the diverse implications citizenship may entail.

In non-democratic regimes where the governing body holds cultural hegemony and citizenship education does not prioritize values of consensus, citizenship learning becomes synonymous with submission to the regime. Even if some students have shaped their own individual narratives, they are compelled to 'live within a lie' (Havel, 1985, p.4), conforming to the feigned recognition of the official discourse. When their ideas diverge significantly from the official discourse, the act of learning becomes a process of alienating or negating oneself rather than recognizing or fulfilling oneself. Such learning is not driven by genuine motivation and fails to integrate one's intellectuality into the learning process.

Instead, learning activities can easily transform into a form of hidden resistance against ideology inculcation. As elaborated in Chapter 8, various forms of 'everyday resistance' were commonly observed in students' experiences with ideological courses. Students perceived socialist slogans and dogmas as clichés with no expectation of gaining truly valuable knowledge from these courses. Consequently, they often engaged in actions such as skipping classes, displaying sluggishness, and engaging in perfunctory learning to minimize their involvement in these courses. Then, they employed tactics such as providing answers and feigned recognition of the official discourse to achieve high grades. However, the high grades obtained in these ideological courses do not necessarily indicate that students maintain a high level of conformity and faithfulness to the official ideology. Instead, they reflect the duality of citizenship, wherein students navigate between outward compliance and inner resistance to ideological indoctrination.

10.1.4 Duality of citizenship in China

When an inflexible and uncompromising contradiction arises in the structural tension between social transformation and political socialization, it inevitably leads to heightened competition between different appeals and dissidents. In a multi-party democratic system, civil disobedience and dissent are permitted, fostering an environment where diverse voices can be heard. However, in a one-party system, any attempt to demonstrate dissent is typically viewed as a potential threat to the party's authority. For self-protection, one must learn to internalize the dissent. The internalization of dissent results in the duality of citizenship, as introduced in Chapter 1. One dimension is the authentic citizenship, including one's genuine civic values, views, and motivations to participate in public affair. The other dimension is affected citizenship, characterized by adherence to the spectacle of political correctness, which involves political pragmatism and adaptation to external stimuli such as censorship, evaluation, and discipline.

Indeed, university students and graduates often find themselves at the forefront of social and cultural transformation. In China, historical movements such as the New Culture Movement in the 1910s and the May Fourth Patriotic Movement in 1919, which directly contributed to the establishment of the CPC, underscore this reality. However, the student movement in the 1980s marked a significant shift in China's tolerant policy towards university students, leading to a renewed emphasis on ideological education.

Today, Chinese college students have adapted to ideological restrictions by adopting certain behaviors: they may pay attention to civic affairs but refrain from active participation,

harbor their own thoughts and ideologies but refrain from expressing them openly, and dilute their elite consciousness, choosing to focus primarily on their own fate and life rather than broader societal responsibilities.

In response to speech censorship and supervision, these students have learned to navigate the two statuses of citizenship: outwardly behaving as compliant citizens in public while internally harboring authentic ideas. They manage to dissolve and internalize the tensions between their discontent and the grand narrative by advocating the grand narrative of socialism onstage but becoming disenchanted offstage.

10.1.5 Dissensus and the divided 'common'

The concept of the duality of citizenship suggests the simultaneous existence of consensus and dissensus within society. In *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (2010), Jacques Rancière argued that dissensus is essential to politics and maintained that the art of politics lies in how to manage dissensus and mediate conflict. According to Rancière (2011), dissensus involves 'a difference between sense and sense: a difference within the same, a sameness of the opposite' (p.1). It represents disagreement among individuals, indicating the inability of a group to reach unanimous agreement and signaling the potential for resistance against consensus.

To address dissensus and seek common ground, deliberation is widely regarded as a crucial aspect of modern democratic practices aimed at facilitating communication, negotiation, and mediation among different viewpoints, thereby fostering a more inclusive and participatory democratic process (Habermas, 1981).

However, with a belief that unanimity among people is unattainable, Rancière (2011) posited that the concept of the 'common' is inherently divided and consensus is almost impossible to achieve. Some scholars, such as Landemore and Page (2015), argue that Habermas' stringent criteria for consensus, which requires legitimizing value, set a high bar to make it too challenging to use the shaping of consensus as a stopping rule in deliberative democracy. Instead, Landemore and Page (ibid.) suggest that deliberation with a form of deliberative disagreement is more feasible, expecting to generate the 'positive dissensus' that can facilitates policymaking or predictions.

Indeed, despite calls for tolerance and respect for dissensus, modern politics often disregards it. In contemporary politics, individuals, who should ideally be the political subjects, are often reduced to mere masses to be governed by those in power. As a result, the dissensus among ordinary people becomes technically insignificant, as policymaking primarily requires an approachable consensus (Rancière, 2010). Moreover, the transformation of politics into the domain of numerous professional politicians and governmental experts can exacerbate elitism and authoritarianism. The privilege to think and speak is often granted only to a small group, while the majority are marginalized and silenced (ibid.). This trend further marginalizes dissenting voices and perpetuates the dominance of established power structures.

Therefore, politics, or deliberation, should not solely revolve around rational debate among multiple agents but should fundamentally involve the struggle to contend for the right to speak and be heard. According to Rancière (2011), the essence of politics lies in the confrontation between political elites and those who are relegated to the bare life of economic and social

269

necessity, unable to manage social interests but only capable of reproducing their lives. Therefore, it is imperative for politics to shift its focus from negotiating among multiple power centers to embracing class struggle. This approach enables the powerless to participate in political life, express their dissensus, and have their voices heard in deliberative processes (Blechman, Chari, & Hasan, 2005). By centering on the inclusion of marginalized voices and acknowledging their struggles, politics can become more inclusive, representative, and responsive to the diverse needs and concerns of society.

In this study, it is evident that interviewees harbor dissensus or individual narratives that diverge from the official discourse. However, they are unable to express these views openly and instead feel compelled to conform to the consensus dictated by socialist ideologies. Essentially, Chinese citizenship education and its propaganda perpetuate a form of symbolic violence. Karl Marx's famous comment in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* where he remarked, 'They (the French peasants) cannot represent themselves; they must be represented by others', rings true in the context of China as well. Here, collective interests, as defined in official agendas such as the Chinese Dream, National Rejuvenation, and Common Prosperity, serve as the ultimate 'consensus' that overrides individual pursuits. Individuals find themselves unable to advocate for their private interests or express skepticism toward the official discourse, with their agency limited by the ideological hegemony of the regime.

Žižek (2002) observed the increasing justifiability of interventions into freedom, noting that 'we feel free because we lack the very language to articulate our unfreedom' (p.2). For the masses, true freedom is only attainable within the confines of existing power structures, while

the promised freedom to question these power hierarchies remains elusive. The duality of citizenship, encompassing both the public and hidden transcripts of citizenship-shaping and comprising authentic and affected citizenship, underscores the divide between actual freedom and promised freedom. On one hand, students are compelled to exhibit favorable citizenship in the public transcript, conforming to the prescribed consensus. On the other hand, students cultivate authentic citizenship through their own efforts, engaging in the hidden transcript and concealing their dissensus. This dual nature of citizenship reflects the tension between the constraints imposed by the existing power structures and the yearning for genuine autonomy and freedom, as indicated by the following figure.

Figure 4 Duality of citizenship and coexistence of consensus and dissensus
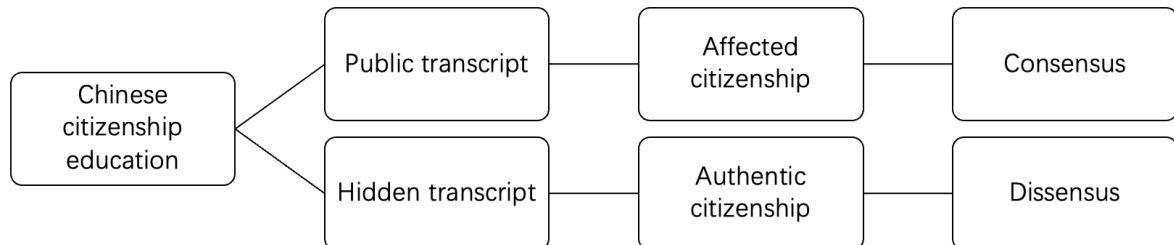
Given the hidden existence of dissensus, the consensus cannot be considered genuine, collective interests cannot truly be collective, and the notion of the 'common' is inherently divided. As cautioned in Chapter 9, the trend of social individualization is particularly uncompromising, especially against the backdrop of economic slowdown. The current young generation has undergone a second wave of disembedding, shedding hierarchical notions while maintaining a sense of communitarian concern, thus shaping a new form of individualism.

As the Chinese party-state continues to urge the public to prioritize national rejuvenation over personal aspirations, individuals increasingly recognize the inconsistency between their individual pursuits and national interests. If the notion of collectivity as a political metaphor is excessively exploited, individuals may embark on a third wave of disembedding, diluting their sense of community. This transformation would shift individuals from a 'relational self' to an 'atomic' self, prioritizing the self over relational ties, which may undermine the cultural justification of collectivism and erode the legitimacy of communism in China. As individuals increasingly prioritize their own interests over collective goals, not only the ideological foundation of collectivism but also that of communism may become increasingly untenable.

10.2 Political Sociology of Knowledge in Post-communist Regimes

10.2.1 Higher education, academic meritocracy, and coordination goods

Chapter 1 and 8 have elucidated the political and ideological dilemma inherent in China's expansion of higher education. On one hand, China seeks to cultivate a significant number of talented individuals with creativity to drive its knowledge economy forward. On the other hand, ensuring that this well-educated cohort remains exclusively loyal to socialist ideologies and supportive of the current regime presents a formidable challenge (Robertson & Wu, 2023).

Indeed, as Chinese youth are nurtured with creativity in academic research, they are also expected to possess the ability to critically and creatively engage with the ideological framework presented to them (Shaw, 2016). Freire argued that education empowers individuals to 'relate to their world by responding to the challenges of the environment' and to 'begin to

dynamize, to master, and to humanize reality' (Freire, 2008, p.4). Professional learning equips college students with the rational spirit of professionalism and fosters critical thinking.

Compared to previous generations, today's well-educated youth have greater access to information, broader international perspectives, and more cultural capital. This positions them to better comprehend social reality and construct more rational narratives to understand social relations. Their diverse experiences and perspectives contribute to a richer and more nuanced understanding of societal issues.

Triandis and Suh (2002) posited that authoritarianism typically correlates positively with age and religiosity, and negatively with education and exposure to diverse individuals (p.139). As such, it becomes increasingly challenging for the party-state to monopolize epistemological authority and dominate the ideological sphere. Triandis (1985) highlighted a strong positive correlation between education levels and egocentrism. As individuals receive more education, they tend to develop higher levels of efficacy and possess greater needs for autonomy and self-realization. Education plays an intrinsic role in promoting individualization by fostering autonomous awareness, prompting individuals to question the imagined grand narrative and form independent understandings of society. Therefore, as tensions continue to escalate between the Chinese authoritarian government and the well-educated public, higher education, once used as a tool by the state to shape society, may inadvertently become the catalyst for resistance. The very education that was intended to instill loyalty to the state could ultimately empower individuals to challenge authoritarian control and advocate for greater autonomy and self-determination.

Indeed, the provision of public goods plays a crucial role in sustaining political legitimacy, as Amartya Sen (2008) acknowledged. In impoverished social conditions where the civic minimum, including basic access to primary education, healthcare, and social security, has not been met, any improvement in social and economic development can significantly enhance people's recognition of the regime. However, in societies that have achieved moderate development, citizens tend to focus more on their desire to participate in public affairs and exhibit a stronger willingness to influence politics.

Mesquita and Downs (2005) published a seminal article titled *Development and Democracy*, wherein they emphasized that the provision of 'coordination goods' (p.82) poses a threat to the survival of repressive governments. They defined coordination goods as public goods critical to the ability of political opponents to coordinate, including higher education, political rights, free speech, the right to organize, and the rights to religious and racial non-discrimination. If a state experiences economic growth while suppressing coordination goods, the regime's chances of survival increase significantly, and the likelihood of democratization diminishes (Mesquita & Downs, 2005). However, when a state provides coordination goods, such as broad access to higher education, citizens' ability to communicate and organize effectively improves, leading to the emergence of a political presence. This can potentially create a large pool of potential opposition leaders and facilitate movements towards democratization. This situation will become more complicated in post-communist countries, as indicated below.

10.2.2 Capitalistic production, technocratic elites, and dissidents

Lenin (1902) emphasized that the consensus of socialism revolves around the legitimacy of socialist regimes. For socialist leaders, leadership entails persuasion. Unlike the procedural justice involved in shaping consensus, socialist regimes require a pre-established consensus of socialism. This consensus of socialism is essential for incorporating the masses as a political subject that is expected to be led by socialist leaders. Consequently, all socialist regimes require political purging to ensure their purity.

However, since the late 1970s, China, along with many East European socialist countries, embarked on a path of embracing a neoliberal economic agenda and engaging in economic globalization. To facilitate capitalist production, regulations on dissent were relaxed, and intellectual capital was reevaluated.

Indeed, Gyorgy Konrád and Ivan Szelényi identified a crucial trend of class formation in (post-)communist regimes in their seminal work, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (1979). They observed that as the state shifted its focus to economic production, dissidents became less politically significant. Instead, intellectual dissidents were promoted as technocratic elites tasked with leading economic development, thereby shaping a new class of technocratic elites. This new class enabled socialist regimes to implement capitalism without traditional capitalists. In this model, the state controls capital, while technocratic elites oversee production. This arrangement allowed socialist regimes to adapt to the realities of a globalized economy while maintaining a degree of state control over economic processes.

The relationship between the state and the new class of technocratic elites became crucial. On one hand, the state must maintain good cooperation with these elites to facilitate economic development. Szelényi and Mihályi articulated in *Varieties of Post-communist Capitalism* (2019) that to enhance capitalist production, the socialist state needs to transition from an ideological party to a meritocracy politics by incorporating these technocratic elites into the regime and forming a collusion with them. This transition is evident in the Chinese meritocracy, as described by Andrew Nathan as 'Authoritarian Resilience' (Nathan, 2003, p.6), and the so-called 'China Model', wherein technocratic elites play a central role in governance and decision-making, leveraging their expertise to drive economic growth and maintain social stability (Bell, 2015).

On the other hand, the state apparatus must implement skillful policies to control and supervise these technocratic elites and intellectuals. While seeking their endorsement for the regime, the state also aims to prevent them from deviating from the official agenda. For instance, Perry (2015) observed the phenomenon of 'authoritarian resilience' in Chinese higher education, where various approaches are employed to regulate university faculty's public speeches and restrict their creative interpretation of sensitive topics in the classroom. These measures have become increasingly stringent in recent years. As Perry (2020) updated, faculty members deemed to propagate incorrect ideas face severe punishments ranging from disciplinary warnings to salary reductions and even dismissal.

Given the unique relationship between the regime and intellectuals, the political stance of college students carries significant implications. Undoubtedly, the expansion of higher

education enhances citizens' abilities to communicate, organize, and develop political perspectives. In essence, the knowledge economy fosters the proliferation of dissident possibilities, posing a potential threat to the socialist regime.

Historically, the Chinese middle class has been supportive of the regime. As discussed in Chapter 1, they resemble the new middle class emerging in America in the 1940s, as documented by Wright Mills in his book *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951), pragmatism-oriented, lacking a unified class consciousness. However, the intensified ideological control in recent decades has led this group to become increasingly critical and cynical. Intellectuals and technocratic elites, who were primarily instrumental to economic development rather than ideologically committed to the regime, are at risk of transforming into dissidents. This phenomenon has been widely observed in post-communist East European countries (Eyal, Szelenyi & Townsley, 1998).

Recognizing the momentum of social individualization in China, it is increasingly difficult to unify pluralistic ideologies. Well-educated graduates play dual roles as technocratic elites and potential dissidents. The dilemma of Chinese citizenship education is essentially a systematic dilemma that stems from the regime's shift of its performance source from ideological recognition to economic performance.

10.3 Envisioning Citizenship Education and Democracy

10.3.1 Dismantling of democratic education around the globe

Globally, citizenship education faces significant challenges in upholding democracy and social justice. These challenges include declining political trust, the rise of nationalism and

xenophobia, and deteriorating global justice (Tarozzi & Torres, 2016; Ikenberry, 2018). Identity politics, social fragmentation, and racial and class tensions are increasingly apparent worldwide (Desjardins, 2015). As observed by Torres (2017), the current use of race to divide and conquer by the Trump administration highlights the limitations of education in altering ideological commitments.

Thus, investigations into citizenship education should focus on the ontological analysis of societal construction. Amidst the 'New Cold War' between China and America, this study aims to contribute to cultural dialogue by drawing on Confucian philosophy, particularly the concept of the relational self. This perspective may trigger a comparative epistemological analysis.

10.3.2 Comparative epistemology of the 'self'

In the West, individualism has successfully defined the inviolable boundary of private property but has failed to maintain individuals' connections with others and the community. Influenced by John Mill's liberalism, the cult of the individual emphasizes atomism, portraying individuals as self-sufficient outside of society. In this view, the state's role is utilitarian, focusing solely on securing citizens' liberty and maximizing their happiness (Taylor, 1985).

However, this perspective often overlooks the importance of societal restraints, as Dagger (2002, p.146) commented that 'liberals make the mistake of thinking that all forms of restraint deprive people of freedom'. As a result, the state struggles to intervene in citizens' lives to pursue any notion of the common good, leading to a neutral stance on public goods and a fading moral horizon. In the end, the worship of the self, as criticized by Taylor in *Source of The Self*

(1989), results in a diminished focus on others, with individuals maintaining only minimal morality towards the common good.

As more theorists, including Michael Sandel (1981), have critiqued modernity's reliance on liberalism and individualism, communitarianism has gained renewed attention as a corrective to modernization. According to Delanty (2002), communitarianism occupies a middle ground between individualism and collectivism, emphasizing a deeper cultural notion of community characterized by proximity, totality, and the integration of self and other. While still valuing individual autonomy, communitarianism rejects the view of the person as a separate self and emphasizes moral connections among individuals and their communities (Dagger, 2002). It advocates for commitments to public life, opposing extreme individualism and rejecting laissez-faire policies that neglect the public good. Instead, it emphasizes collective consciousness, contributing to collective identity, social capital, and public morality. Facing globalization, communitarianism encourages collaborative commitments, promotes public goods, and fosters culturally and socially cohesive communities (Grange, 1996).

In a cultural context, this study on Chinese citizenship education suggests implications for understanding how collectivism can be both adopted and misused in education and politics. Despite its flaws, Chinese citizenship education's emphasis on collectivism offers insights into the relational self, prioritizing relationships over the self. While Chinese collectivism may provide theoretical resources for the West to counterbalance excessive liberalism by emphasizing the relation, Western individualism can help mitigate hierarchical elements within Chinese collectivism, preventing relationships from becoming oppressive. As Hartmut Rosa

279

(2016) noted in his seminar work *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*,

the philosophy of relation is key to reconstructing the world.

Appendix A. Interview Protocol

Icebreaking Questions

1. Could you briefly introduce your home background, educational experiences, job career and so on?
2. Could you tell me the reason why you choose the university and the undergraduate major?
3. Could you talk about the reason why you choose to take part in this interview?

Part 1 – In-depth interview on the theme of 'citizenship'

1.1 Citizenship under Constitutional Patriotism

- **Political interests**
1. Do you have interests to care and talk about politics?
2. How do you engage in public discussion?
- **Political self-efficacy**
1. Do you trust you could make a difference in public affairs? And why?
- **Civic participation**
1. Have you ever taken institutional participations such as voting, proposing and advising through official channels?
2. Have you taken contentious participations such as protests and boycott?

1.2 Citizenship under Socialist Patriotism

- **Ideological stances**
1. How do you feel like Marxist ideologies, including Maoism, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, etc.?
2. How do you feel like liberal values?
- **Institutional attitudes**
1. How do you feel like the current regime of party-state?
2. How do you express you attitude about the government?

Part 2 – Narrative interview on the theme of 'citizenship-shaping'

2.1 On-campus Learning Experiences

Now I hope to know how on-campus learning experiences have affected the shaping of your citizenship. Could you tell me about your learning experiences in the four ideological courses? How did you learn these courses, and how do you evaluate the lecturers, curriculum, pedagogy, or anything about the course? How did you engage in the ideological work of your department, patriotic activities, and how you interact with your ideological counsellors? You can also tell anything that you find might be related to the shaping of your civic values, stances, and participations.

2.2 Off-campus Life Experiences

Now let us talk about how your life experiences might have affected the shaping of your citizenship. You may start from your home background, your major life experiences, educational experiences, social and career experiences, international experiences and anything you find significant in shaping your citizenship.

Part 3 – Semi-structured interview on the theme of 'grand narrative and individualism'

3.1 The narrative of state

1. How do you evaluate your patriotism?
2. How do you connect the love to nation with the love to the state?
3. To what extent would you like to prioritize national interests to your personal interests?

3.2 Narrative of the nation

1. How do you understand nationalist discourse such as 'Chinese Dream'?
2. How do you understand the Chinese Characteristics?
3. How do you understand the so-called universal values?

3.3 Narrative of the society

1. Do you agree with the slogan 'sacrifice the small self for the great self'?
2. Do you agree elite university graduates, as 'winners' in College Entrance Exam, are supposed to take more responsibilities for the society?
3. Do you think 'losers' in China's exam system are destined for a disadvantaged life?

Appendix B. Informed Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Individualization and Citizenship-shaping in the Chinese Educational System

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Yihao Li, a PhD student in the Division of Social Sciences & Comparative Education of the Department of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles, under the supervision of Dr. Carlos Torres. You are selected as one potential participant because you graduate from one Chinese elite university and feel interested in the research. Your decision to participate in the research is voluntary.

Purpose of the research

This research is aimed to investigate Chinese elite university graduates' citizenship and the shaping of their citizenship within the social transformation of individualization.

Procedure of the research

If you agree to join this study, you will be arranged for an individual interview that

- will be conducted for approximately 3 hours in total;
- will be split into two sessions if it cannot be finished once;
- will be conducted online if unexpected conditions were posed by Covid-19.

Interview questions are related to three themes:

1. Citizenship, including your civic values, ideologies, political interests and stances, participations and so on.
2. Citizenship-shaping process, including your learning experiences of ideological courses and extra-curricular activities and your life experiences, home background, and social and career experiences.
3. Individualization, including your understandings of the official grand narrative and your understandings of one's relation to the society, state, and global world.

Rights of the participant

- You have the right to withdraw from this research at any time.
- You have the right to refuse to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable to answer.
- You have the right to express any concerns or ask any questions in the interview.
- You have the right to make revisions or supplements to your previous answers.

- You have the right to review the interview transcripts to check if the researcher's transcriptions are consistent with your original opinions and to ask the researcher to revise those transcriptions that you find not faithful to your original opinions.

Confidentiality

All interviews will be audio-recorded. The recording will be securely stored for transcribing and destructed once if the transcription is finished and approved by the interviewee. Transcriptions will be only available to the researcher for further data processing and analysis. Your data, including de-identified data, may be kept for use in future research. Findings of the research will be outlined in an anonymous manner. All your identifiable information will be hidden. Every interviewee will be labeled as 'Interviewee A', 'Interviewee B', 'Interviewee C' …

The potential risk, discomfort, and benefit to the participant

The potential risk or discomfort is that you may feel shy, encumbered, worried or self-restricted to tell your opinions, propositions, and experiences. The research is conducted in a confidential manner and monitored and regulated by UCLA personnel. The researcher is responsible for making participants feel at ease as much as possible to narrate their opinions and experiences. No direct benefit of monetary payment is arranged. Instead, at the end of this study, you will receive a book (from the researcher's collection) as a gift as a thank you for your participation.

Contact for communication, inquiries, or complaints

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, please feel free to contact the researcher:

Name: Yihao Li   Email address: yihaoli0613@ucla.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406

Reference

Agadjanian, A. (2006). The search for privacy and the return of a grand narrative: religion in a post-communist society, *Social Compass*, 53 (2), 169-184.

Alexander, R. J. (2001). *Culture and Pedagogy: International Comparisons in Primary Education.* New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell

Alexander, R. J. (2006). *Towards Dialogic Teaching: Rethinking Classroom Talk.* Cambridge: Dialogos.

Alkon, M. & Wang, E.H. (2017). Pollution lowers support for China's regime: quasi-experimental evidence from Beijing. *The Journal of Politics,* 80 (1), 327-332.

Allan, S. (2007). On the identity of Shang Di 上帝 and the origin of the concept of a Celestial Mandate (Tian Ming 天命). *Early China*, 31, 1-46.

Almond, G. A. & Verba, S. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations.* Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press

Althof, W. & Bertowitz, M.W. (2006). Moral education and character education: their relationship and roles in citizenship education, *Journal of Moral Education*, 35(4), 495-518, DOI: 10.1080/03057240601012204

Althusser L., Balibar E., Establet, R., Macherey, P. & Rancière, J. (1965). *Reading Capital*, translated by Ben Brewster, London and New York: New Left Books.

Althusser, L. (1969). *For Marx*, translated by Ben Brewster. London and New York: New Left Books.

Althusser, L. (1970). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation). Translated: from the French by Ben Brewster; Archived at: *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm

Ames, R. (2020). *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary.* New York: State University of New York.

Ames, R. (2020). *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary.* New York: State University of New York.

Anderson, P. (1976). *Considerations on Western Marxism.* New York: New Left Books.

Anderson, P. (1998). *The Origins of Postmodernity.* New York: Verso.

285

Andreotti, V. (2011). (Towards) decoloniality and diversity in global citizenship education. *Globalization, Societies and Education*, 9 (3-4), 381–397.

Andreotti, V. (2014). Soft versus critical global citizenship education. In S. McCloskey (Ed.) *Development Education in Policy and Practice* (pp. 21-31). London: Palgrave Macmillan

Apple, M. (1979). *Ideology and Curriculum.* Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Apple, M. (1982). *Education and Power*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Apple, M. (1993). The Politics of Official Knowledge: Does a National Curriculum Make Sense?, *Discourse*, 14(1), 1-16, DOI: 10.1080/0159630930140101

Backer, L. (2009, Jan 10). The Party as Polity, the Communist Party, and the Chinese Constitutional State: A Theory of State-Party Constitutionalism. *Penn State Legal Studies Research Paper*, No. 05-2009, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1325792 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1325792

Banks, J.A. (2014). Diversity, Group Identity, and Citizenship Education in a Global Age, *The Journal of Education*, 194 (3), 1-12.

Beck, U. (2014). Individualization is eroding Traditions worldwide: A comparison between Europe and China. In U. Beck (Ed.)., Ulrich Beck: *Pioneer in cosmopolitan Sociology and Risk Society,* New York, NY: Springer, pp.90-99.

Bedford, O. & Yeh, K. (2019) The History and the Future of the Psychology of Filial Piety: Chinese Norms to Contextualized Personality Construct. *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol (10): 100

Bell, D. A. (2010). *China's New Confucianism: Politics and everyday life in a changing society.* Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400834822

Bell, D. A. (2015). *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bennett, W. L., Wells, C., & Freelon, D. (2011). Communicating civic engagement: Contrasting models of citizenship in the youth web sphere. *Journal of Communication*, 61(5), 835-856.

Berger, P. L. (1963) *Invitation to Sociology*. NY: Doubleday (Anchor Books).

Berlin, I. (1969). Two Concepts of Liberty. In I. Berlin (Ed.) *Four Essays*, (pp. 118–172). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Billioud, S. (2007). Confucianism, 'Cultural Tradition', and official discourse in China at the start of the new century, *China Perspectives*, 3, 50–65.

Blaxland, M., Shang, X. & Fisher, K. (2014) Introduction: People Oriented: A New Stage of Social Welfare Development in China. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 40 (4), 508-519.

Blechman, M., Chari, A. & Hasan, R. (2005) Democracy, Dissensus and the Aesthetics of Class Struggle: An Exchange with Jacques Rancière. *Historical Materialism*, 13 (4), 285-301.

Borisenkova, A. (2010). Narrative Refiguration of Social Events: Paul Ricœur's Contribution to Rethinking the Social. *Ricœur Studies*, 1 (1), 87-98.

Brown, K. (2012). The communist party of China and ideology. *China: An International Journal*, 10 (2), 52–68.

Brown, K. & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, U.A. (2018) Ideology in the Era of Xi Jinping. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 2018 (23), 323-339.

Brown, S. (1993). *The Politics of Individualism: Liberalism, Liberal Feminism, and Anarchism.* Montreal, Quebec: Black Rose Books.

Buckley, C. (2014, Feb. 13). Xi Touts Communist Party as Defender of Confucius's Virtues. The New York Times. Archived at: https://archive.nytimes.com/sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/13/xi-touts-communist-party-as-defender-of-confuciuss-virtues/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=1

Burbules, N.C. & Torres, C.A. (2013). *Globalization and education: Critical perspectives. (3rd ed.).* New York: Routledge.

Calhoun, C. J. (2002). Imagining Solidarity: Cosmopolitanism, Constitutional Patriotism, and the Public Sphere. *Public Culture.* 14 (1): 147–171. doi:10.1215/08992363-14-1-147

Camicia, S.P. & Zhu, J. (2011). Citizenship Education under Discourses of Nationalism, Globalization, and Cosmopolitanism: Illustrations from China and the United States, *Frontiers of Education in China*, 6 (4), 602-619.

Cantoni, D., Chen, Y. Yang, D., Yuchtman, N. & Zhang, Y. (2017). Curriculum and Ideology. *Journal of Political Economy, 1*25 (2), 338-393.

CCP Central Committee, & State Council. (1966). 中共中央国务院批准教育部党组关于1966-1967 学年度中学政治、语文、历史教材处理意见的通知 [Circular from CCP central Committee and State Council on the report from Party committee of the Ministry

of Education on how to deal with the textbooks of politics, literature, and history in secondary education for the academic year 1966–1967]. In D. C. He (Ed.), 中华人民共和国重要教育文献(1949–1975) [*Important documents in education for the People's Republic of China (1949–1975)*] (p. 1401). Hainan: Hainan Press

Chan, C. P. (1999). The political pragmatism of Chinese university students:10 years after the 1989 movement. *Journal of Contemporary China,* 8(22), 381-403. doi: 10.1080/10670569908724354

Chen, D. (1993).今日之教育方针.[Today's Guidelines for Education]. In 陈独秀著作选(第一卷) [*The Selection of Chen Duxiu's Work, Volume 1*]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press. (Original work published 1915)

Chen, J. & Lu, C. (2011). Democratization and the Middle Class in China: The Middle Class's Attitudes toward Democracy, *Political Research Quarterly*, 64 (3), 705-719.

Chen, S. (2013). The discrepancy of meaning of citizenship between the state and society in China: Implications for citizenship education and policymaking. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 8(3), 263–275.

Chen, S. (2018). *The Meaning of Citizenship in Contemporary Chinese society*. London: Springer.

Chen, S. (2020). Rethinking Citizenship and Citizenship Education in Contemporary China: Discourses and Politics, *Chinese Education & Society*, 53 (1-2), 3-13.

Chen, S. (2023). The culturalization of politics in contemporary Chinese citizenship education. *Comparative Education*. doi:10.1080/03050068.2023.2209396.

Chen, S. (2024). The culturalization of politics in contemporary Chinese citizenship education. *Comparative Education*, 60 (1), 22-38.

Chen, X. (2014). *Social Protest and Contentious Authoritarianism in China.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CNN (2023, Aug. 18th) China stops releasing youth unemployment data after it hit consecutive record highs. CNN. https://edition.cnn.com/2023/08/14/economy/china-economy-july-slowdown-intl-hnk/index.html

Cobern, W. (1993). Constructivism. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 4 (1), 105-112

Cong, X. (2007) *Teachers' Schools and the Making of the Modern Chinese Nation-State, 1897-1937.* Vancouver BC: The University of British Columbia Press.

Cortina, R. & Winter, M. (2021) Paulo Freire's pedagogy of liberation, *Current Issues in Comparative Education,* 23 (2), 8-19.

CPC Central Committee (1981, Jun 27) Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China. (关于建国以来党的若干历史问题的决议). Accessed at: https://www.gov.cn/test/2008-06/23/content_1024934.htm

CPC Central Committee (1986). 中共中央关于精神文明建设指导方针的决议 [Resolution of the CCP Central Committee with regard to the Guiding Principles of the Construction of a Socialist Spiritual Civilization]. Retrieved from ：https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/%E4%B8%AD%E5%85%B1%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E5%85%B3%E4%BA%8E%E7%A4%BE%E4%BC%9A%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89%E7%B2%BE%E7%A5%9E%E6%96%87%E6%98%8E%E5%BB%BA%E8%AE%BE%E6%8C%87%E5%AF%BC%E6%96%B9%E9%92%88%E7%9A%84%E5%86%B3%E8%AE%AE

CPC Central Committee (2003, October 14). The 16th Central Committee of Communist Party of China the third plenary session E-bulletin. Xinhua. Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2003-10/14/content_ 1123116.htm

Creel, H. G. (1953). *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed.).* Thousand oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Crossley, G. (2021, August 26). China's 'common prosperity' push does not mean 'killing the rich', official says. *Reuters*. Retrieved 8 August 2022.

Curtis, J. S. (2021) Springing the 'Tacitus Trap': countering Chinese state-sponsored disinformation, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 32 (2), 229-265

Dagger, R. (2002). Republican citizenship. In E. F. Isin & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *Handbook of citizenship studies* (pp. 145–158). London: Sage Publications

Debord, G. (1977) *The Society of the Spectacle (F. Perlman & J. Supak, trans.)* Detroit, MI: Black and Red Press. (Original work published 1967)

Delanty, G. (2000). *Citizenship in a Global Age: Culture, Politics and Society.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Delanty, G. (2002). Communitarianism and Citizenship. In E. F. Isin & B. S. Turner (Eds.) *Handbook of Citizenship Studies* (pp. 159-174). London: Sage.

Delanty, G. (2003). Citizenship as a learning process: disciplinary citizenship versus cultural citizenship, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 22 (6), 597-605, DOI: 10.1080/0260137032000138158.

Deng, Xiaoping (1994a) 邓小平文选. [*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Volume 1 (1938-1965)*]. Beijing: People's Press.

Deng, Xiaoping (1994b) 邓小平文选. [*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Volume 2 (1975-1982)*]. Beijing: People's Press.

Deng, Xiaoping (1994c) 邓小平文选.[*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Volume 3 (1982-1992)*]. Beijing: People's Press.

Desjardins, R. (2015). The Precarious Role of Education in Identity and Value Formation Processes: the shift from state to market forces. *European Journal of Education,* 50 (2), 134-146.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education.* New York: Macmillan.

Dewey, J. (1946). *The Public and its Problems: An essay in political inquiry.* Chicago: Gateway Books.

Dewey, J. (1986). Experience and Education, *The Educational Forum*, 50 (3), 241-252.

Ding, X. (2006*). The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977–1989.* UK, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dirlik, A. (1978). *Revolution and History: The Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919–1937.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dirlik, A. (1989) *The Origins of Chinese Communism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dirlik, A. (2002). Rethinking Colonialism: Globalization, Postcolonialism, and The Nation, *Interventions*, 4 (3), 428-448, DOI: 10.1080/1369801022000013833.

Dynon, N. (2008). 'Four Civilizations' and the Evolution of Post-Mao Chinese Socialist Ideology. *The China Journal*, 60: 83–109.

Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology*. New York and London: Verso.

Eagleton, T. (2011) *Why Marx Was Right.* New Jersey: Yale University Press.

Ebrey, P. B. (2010). *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China (2nd ed.).* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Elman, B. (2013). *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Emerson, R., Fretz, R. & Shaw, L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes (2nd Edition).* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Esarey, A. (2015) Winning Hearts and Minds? Cadres as Microbloggers in China, in: *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 44, 2, 69–103.

Eyal, G., Szelenyi, I. & Townsley, E. (1998) Making Capitalism Without Capitalists: *Class Formation and Elite Struggles*. London: Verso.

Fairbrother, G. (2003). *Toward Critical Patriotism.* HK: Hong Kong University Press.

Fairbrother, G. (2008) Rethinking Hegemony and Resistance to Political Education in Mainland China and Hong Kong. *Comparative Education Review*, 52 (3), 381-412.

Felski, R. (2011). Suspicious Minds. *Poetics Today,* 32 (2): 215–234.

Fewsmith, J. & Nathan, A. J. (2019) Authoritarian Resilience Revisited: Joseph Fewsmith with Response from Andrew J. Nathan, *Journal of Contemporary China,* 28 (116), 167-179, DOI: 10.1080/10670564.2018.1511390

Flam, H. (2004) Anger in Repressive Regimes: A Footnote to Domination and the Arts of Resistance by James Scott. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 7(2), 171–188.

Francis, J., Johnston, M., Robertson, C., Glidewell, L., Entwistle, V., Eccles, M.P. & Grimshaw, J.M. (2010). What is an adequate sample size? Operationalizing data saturation for theory-based interview studies, *Psychology and Health,* 25 (10), 1229-1245.

Freeden, M. (1996) *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freeden, M. (2003). *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum

Freire, P. (1973). *Education for Critical Consciousness.* New York: Seabury.

Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed* (R. R. Barr, Trans.). New York, NY: The Continuum. (Original work published 1992)

Freire, P. (2001). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage* (P. Clarke, Trans.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (Original work published 1998).

Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed (*The 30th Anniversary Edition). New York: Continuum

Freire, P. (2008). *Education for critical consciousness* (The 30th Anniversary Edition). New York: Continuum.

Fu, D. & Distelhorst, G. (2017) Grassroots Participation and Repression under Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping, *The China Journal,* 79, 1-23.

Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man.* New York: Free Press.

Fukuyama, F. (1995). Confucianism and democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 6(2), 20–33.

Fukuyama, F. (2014). *Political Order and Political Decay: from the industrial revolution to the present day*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Gadamer, H.G. (1987) *Truth and Method.* 2nd Edition. (J. Weinsheimer, & D.G. Marshall, Trans.). New York: Crossroad. (Original work published 1960)

Gao, H. (2018) How the Red Sun Rose: The Origins and Development of the Yan'an Rectification Movement, 1930-1945 (J. Guo & S. Mosher, Trans). Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giroux, H. (1980). Critical theory of rationality in citizenship education, *Curriculum Inquiry,* 10 (4), 329-368.

Giroux, H. A. (2010). Rethinking education as the practice of freedom: Paulo Freire and the promise of critical pedagogy. *Policy Futures in Education,* 8 (6), 715-721. https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2010.8.6.715

Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Goldin, P. R. (2011). Persistent Misconceptions about Chinese 'Legalism'. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 38 (1), 1-25.

Goldman, M. (2005). *From Comrade to Citizen: The Struggle of Political Rights in China.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Goldman, M. & Perry, E. (2002). *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gramsci, A. (1971). Hoare, Q. & Smith, G. N. (Eds.), *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (11th printing). International Publishers. Retrieved via Internet Archive at: https://archive.org/details/AntonioGramsciSelectionsFromThePrisonNotebooks/page/n1/mode/2up (Original work published 1929-1935)

Gramsci, A. (2007). Prison notebooks, Volume 3 (J. A. Buttigieg, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Grange, J. (1996). The Disappearance of the Public Good: Confucius, Dewey, Rotty. *Philosophy East and West,* 46 (3), 351-366.

Guan, Y. (2018) Demand for democracy in resilient authoritarianism: evidence from rural China. *Democratization*, 25 (7), 1073-1092.

Guangming Daily (2010, Jan. 9th) The proposing of Scientific Outlook on Development, published on the official website of *The History of the People's Republic of China (HPRC)*, the link is at: https://baike.baidu.com/reference/317422/4469a4LaS8WX79rNFPXBAXOHHTFF5NmpU05L7p-R3QIcenR-n8yv8-ditA013wB6qx7wa54yKqA-Y6hcTPX1LV3YQiVwdL2Hh_10g8misSHlwMAjCJkVWi1zAKFcUQ

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods,* 18, 59–82.

Guo, Z. (2014). The Emergence of the Citizen Concept in Modern China: 1899–1919, *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 2014 (19), 349-364.

Guo, Z. (2023) From ethnic segregation to equal political status: the Making of the concept of citizenship in early modern China, *Citizenship Studies*, 27 (6), 637-653

Guo, Z. & Liang, T. (2017). Differentiating citizenship in urban China: a case study of Dongguan city, *Citizenship Studies*, 21 (7), 773-791,

Habermas, J (1987). *Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (T. A. McCarty, Trans.). Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press. (Original work published 1981)

Habermas, J. (1984). *Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. (Thomas A. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press. (Original work published 1981)

Habermas, J. (1988). *On the Logic of the Social Sciences.* (S. W. Nocholson, & J. A. Stark trans.) Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. (Original work published 1970)

Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.* Cambridge, MA: Polity.

Habermas, J. (1992). Citizenship and national identity: Some reflections on the future of Europe. *Praxis International*, 12(1), 1–19.

Hahn, C. L. (1998). *Becoming political: Comparative perspectives on citizenship education.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Hall, D. & Ames, R. (1999). *The Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the hope for democracy in China*. Chicago and Lasalle, Ill.: Open Court.

Hamamura, T. (2012). Are cultures becoming individualistic? A cross-temporal comparison of individualism-collectivism in the United States and Japan. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16 (1), 3–24.

Hamamura, T., Chen, Z., Chan, C. S., Chen, S. X., & Kobayashi, T. (2021). Individualism with Chinese characteristics? Discerning cultural shifts in China using 50 years of printed texts. *American Psychologist*, 76(6), 888–903. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000840

Han, R. (2015). Defending the authoritarian regime online: China's 'voluntary fifty-cent army.' *The China Quarterly,* 224, 1006–1025.

Hansen, M. H., & Svarverud, R. (2010). *iChina: The rise of the individual in modern Chinese society.* Copenhagen, Denmark: NIAS Press

Havel, V. (1985). *The Power of the Powerless*. London: Routledge.

Haynes, B. (2009) History Teaching for Patriotic Citizenship in Australia, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 41(4), 424-440.

He, H. (2021, Sep. 11th). Common prosperity in China: rich or poor, people have questions about Beijing's attempt to spread the wealth. *South China Morning Post.* https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3148338/common-prosperity-china-rich-or-poor-people-have-questions

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time*. New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1927)

Hennink, M.M, Kaiser, B.N. & Marconi, V.C. (2017). Code Saturation Versus Meaning Saturation: How Many Interviews Are Enough? *Qualitative Health Research*, 27 (4), 591-608.

Hilton, I. & Kerr, O. (2017) The Paris Agreement: China's 'New Normal' role in international climate negotiations. *Climate Policy*, 17 (1), 48-58.

Hobbs, W.R. & Roberts, M.E. (2018) How Sudden Censorship Can Increase Access to Information, *American Political Science Review*, 112 (3), 621-636.

Hu, J. (2006, Oct. 18th) Resolution on Major Issues Concerning the Building of a Socialist Harmonious Society. The 6th Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of CPC. The speech is archived at: https://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/ccp-resolution-on-major-issues-regarding-the-building-of-a-harmonious

Huang, H. (2018) The Pathology of Hard Propaganda, *The Journal of Politics*, 80 (3), 1034-1038.

Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster

Hwang, K. (1999) Filial Piety and Loyalty: Two Types of Social Identification in Confucianism. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 2 (1), 163-183.

Ikenberry, G. J. (2018) The End of Liberal International Order? *International Affairs*, 94 (1), 7-23.

Illich, I. (1971) *Deschooling Society*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row

Inglehart, R. (1977). *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles in Advanced Industrial Society.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, R. (1988). The Renaissance of Political Culture. *The American Political Science Review,* 82 (4), 1203-1230.

Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, R. (1996). Generational Shifts in Citizenship Behaviors: The Role of Education and Economic Security in the Declining Respect for Authority in Industrial Society', *Prospects*, XXVI (4), December, 653-662.

Inglehart, R. (1997). *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, N.J, Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, R. (2018). *Cultural Evolution: People's Motivations Are Changing, and Reshaping the World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Inglehart, R. & Oyserman, D. (2014) Individualism, Autonomy and Self-Expression: The Human Development Syndrome. In H. Vinken, J. Soeters, & P. Ester (Eds.), *Comparing Cultures, Dimensions of Culture in a Comparative Perspective* (pp. 1-47). Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

Inglehart, R. & Welzel, C. (2013) The WVS Cultural Map of the World. *WVS*. Archived from the original: https://web.archive.org/web/20131019112321/http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder_published/article_base_54

Ingram, A. (1996, November 1). Constitutional patriotism. *Philosophy & Social Criticism,* 22 (6): 1–18.

Isin, E. F., & Turner, B. S. (2002). Citizenship studies: An introduction. In E. F. Isin & B. S. Turner (Eds.). *Handbook of Citizenship Studies* (pp. 1-10). London, England: Sage.

Isin, E.F. (2002). Citizenship after orientalism. In E. F. Isin & B. S. Turner (Eds.) *Handbook of citizenship studies* (pp.117-128). London: Sage Publications.

Itao, A.D. (2010) Paul Ricœur's Hermeneutics of Symbols: A Critical Dialectic of Suspicion and Faith. *KRITIKE*, 4 (2), 1-17.

Jia, L. (2019). What public and whose opinion? A study of Chinese online public opinion analysis, *Communication and the Public*, 4 (1), 21-34.

Jiang, J. (2019). *Cultivating Good Citizens: The State, Textbooks, and Agency in Contemporary China.* PhD dissertation. Los Angeles, University of California, Los Angeles.

Jiang, J. (2021) Teaching a minimal citizenship in China: Testing, official discourse, and teacher agency. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 106, 103441.

Jiang, J. (2024) Agentic citizenship learning in China: official curriculum and student agency, *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 2024 (25), 243-254.

Jiang, M. & Esarey, A. (2018). Uncivil Society in Digital China: Incivility, Fragmentation, and Political Stability, *International Journal of Communication,* 12, 1928-1944.

Jiang, S., Wei, Q. & Zhang, L. (2022) Individualism Versus Collectivism and the Early-Stage Transmission of COVID-19. *Social Indicators Research*, 2022 (164),791–821.

Jones, R. A. (1990) The Soviet concept of 'limited sovereignty' from Lenin to Gorbachev: the Brezhnev Doctrine. MacMillan.

Josselson, R. (2004, Jul. 1). The Hermeneutics of Faith and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion. *Narrative Inquiry*, 14 (1), 1–28

Kadiwal, L. & Duranni, N. (2018) Youth negotiation of citizenship identities in Pakistan: Implications for global citizenship education in conflict-contexts, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 66 (4), 537-558.

Kadiwal, L. & Duranni, N. (2018) Youth negotiation of citizenship identities in Pakistan: Implications for global citizenship education in conflict-contexts, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 66 (4), 537-558.

Kaplan, R.L. (2012) Between mass society and revolutionary praxis: The contradictions of Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. 15 (4), 457-478.

Karl, R. E. (2010). *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-century World: a concise history.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Kerr, D. (1999). *Citizenship Education: An International Comparison*. (International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Paper 4). London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Kester, K. (2023) Global citizenship education and peace education: Toward a postcritical praxis, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 55 (1), 45-56

Kim, J. (2023) Thinking citizenship as a cultural mythology? Contemporary good citizenship discourses at the heart of K-12 curriculum in Canada, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 55 (4), 483-495

Konrád, G. & Szelényi, I. (1979). *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power: A Sociological Study of the Role of the Intelligentsia in Socialism.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Kopeček, M. (2012) Historical Studies of Nation-Building and the Concept of Socialist Patriotism in East-Central Europe 1956–1970. In *Historische Nationsforschung im geteilten Europa 1945–1989*, edited by Kolář, Pavel and Řezník, Miloš, pp. 121–136. Köln: SH-Verlag.

Kymlicka, W. & Norman, W. (1994) Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory, *Ethics*, 104, 352-381.

Laclau, E. (2012). *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism.* London: Verso, New Left Books.

Lacroix, J. (2002). For a European Constitutional Patriotism. *Political Studies.* 50 (5): 944–958.

Landemore, H. & Page, S. E. (2015) Deliberation and disagreement: Problem solving, prediction, and positive dissensus. *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*, 14 (3), 229-254,

Laski, H. (1919). *Authority in the Modern State*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Law, W. (2013). Globalization, National Identity, and Citizenship Education: China's Search for Modernization and a Modern Chinese Citizenry, *Frontier of Education in China*, 8 (4), 596-627.

Law, W. (2016). Cultivating Chinese citizens: China's search for modernization and national rejuvenation. In G. P. Zhao & Z. Y. Deng (Eds.), *Re-envisioning Chinese education: The meaning of person-making in a new age* (pp. 13–33). New York, NY: Routledge.

Law, W. & Xu, S. (2020). Re-examining teaching and learning in citizenship education: a tale of two Chinese cities, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(1), 138-159

Lee, S. (2017) An Institutional Analysis of Xi Jinping's Centralization of Power, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 26 (105), 325-336.

Lenin, V. (1902). *What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement.* Lenin Internet Archive, the link of Archive is at https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/; the link of paper is at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/index.htm

Lenin, V. (1917). *The State and Revolution*, Lenin Internet Archive, the link of Archive is available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/; the paper is available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/index.htm

Li, H. (2008). 我的"理论工作者"经历 [My experiences as a Marxist theorist]. The Past. 往事(71). Published online at aisixiang.com at: http://www.aisixiang.com/data/23234.html

Li, H. & Tan, C. (2017). Chinese teachers' perceptions of the 'good citizen': A personally-responsible citizen, *Journal of Moral Education,* 46(1), 34-45.

Li, J. (2009). Fostering citizenship in China's move from elite to mass higher education: An analysis of students' political socialization and civic participation. *International Journal of Educational Development,* 29(4), 382-398.

Li, J. (2016). China: the techno-politics of the wall. Theory on Demand. In R. Lobato & J. Meese (Eds.), *Geoblocking and Global Video Cultures* (pp. 110-120) Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

Li, Z. (1999). Dual Variation of Enlightenment and Nationalism. M.E. sharp, Inc. (Ed.) *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Winter, 1999, 31 (2), 40-43. (Original work published in 1987)

Li, Z. 李泽厚 (2011). Is it the Turn for Chinese Philosophy to Appear in the Arena? Shanghai: San Lian

Li. Z. 李泽厚 (2019). 人类学历史本体[Anthropological Historical Ontology]. Beijing: People's Press.

Lin, A. (2015) Citizenship education in American schools and its role in developing civic engagement: a review of the research, *Educational Review*, 67 (1), 35-63

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Link, P. (2013). *An Anatomy of Chinese: Rhythm, metaphor, and politics.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Linz, J. (1964). *An Authoritarian Regime: Spain.* Helsinki: Westermarck Society.

Lipset, S. M. (1960). *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics.* New York: Doubleday.

Liu, F. S. (2011). *Urban youth in China.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Liu, H. (2020). *Propaganda: Opinions, Discourses and its Justifications*. Beijing: China Encyclopedia Press.

Liu, Q. (2009) To Become a Filial Son, a Loyal Subject, or a Humane Person?—On the Confucian Ideas about Humanity. *Asian Philosophy*, 19 (2), 173-188.

Liu, X. Zhao, X. & Starkey, H. (2023). Ideological and political education in Chinese Universities: structures and practices. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 43 (2), 586-598.

Loh, D. (2021) The 'Chinese Dream' and the 'Belt and Road Initiative': narratives, practices, and sub-state actors. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 2021 (21), 167-199.

Lott, J. R. (1999). Public Schooling, Indoctrination, and Totalitarianism. *Journal of Political Economy*, 107 (56), 127-157.

Lynch, D.C. (1999). *After the Propaganda State - Media, Politics and 'Thought Work' in Reformed China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Lyotard, J.F. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (G. Bennington and B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

MacFarquhar, R. (1974) *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution. Contradictions Among the People, 1956–1957, Volume 1*. New York: Columbia University Press.

MacFarquhar, R. (1987) *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution. The Great Leap Forward, 1958–1960, Volume 2*. New York: Columbia University Press.

MacFarquhar, R. (1999) *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution. The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961–1966, Volume 3*. New York: Columbia University Press.

MacFarquhar, R. & Schoenhals, M. (2006) *Mao's Last Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press

Macionis, J. J. (2010). *Sociology* (13th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education.

Mann, M. (1986). *The Sources of Social Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mannheim, K. (1954). *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD.

Mao, Z. (1940). On New Democracy, in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, archived at: https://web.archive.org/web/20181109212043/https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm

Mao, Z. (1949). On the People's Democratic Dictatorship, in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, archived at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4_65.htm

Mao, Z. (1957, Jun. 19). Questions on Correctly Handling Contradictions among the People. *People's Daily*.

Mao, Z. (1977). On the correct handling of contradictions among the people 关于正确处理人民内部矛盾的问题. In *Selected Writings of Mao Zedong* 毛泽东文集 (Vol. 7, pp. 204–244). Beijing: People's Press 北京: 人民出版社.

Mao, Z. (1998). 教育制度要改革[Education system needs to be reformed]. In 建国以来毛泽东文稿 [*Mao Zedong's manuscripts since the founding of the PRC,* Volume 11] (pp. 96-97). Beijing: Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee.

Marquis, C., & Qiao, K. (2022). *Mao and Markets: The Communist Roots of Chinese Enterprise.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Marshall, T. H. (1950). *Citizenship and social class and other essays.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

McLaughlin, T. H. (1992). Citizenship, diversity and education: A philosophical perspective. *Journal of Moral Education*, 21(3), 235–250.

Meisner, M. (1977). *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic (The 3rd edition).* New York: The Free Press.

Meisner, M. (1999). *Mao's China and After.* New York: Free Press.

Menezes, I. (2003). Participation experiences and civic concepts, attitudes and engagement: implications for citizenship education projects, *European Educational Research Journal*, 2 (3), 430-445.

Merton, R. K. (1936). The unanticipated consequences of purposive social action. *American Sociological Review*, 1(6), 894–904.

Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure*. New York: Free Press.

Mesquita, B.B. & Downs, G. (2005). Development and Democracy, *Foreign Affairs*, 84 (5), 77-86.

Mills, W. (1951) *White Collar: The American Middle Classes.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Montesquieu (1989) *The Spirit of the Laws*. (A. M. Cohler, B. C. Miller, & H. S. Stone, trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1748)

Morrow, R. A. & Torres, C. A. (2002). *Reading Freire and Habermas: Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Social Change.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Morrow, R., & Torres, C. A. (2019). Rereading Freire and Habermas: Philosophical anthropology and reframing critical pedagogy and educational research in the neoliberal Anthropocene. In C. A. Torres (Ed.), *The Wiley handbook of Paulo Freire* (pp. 241–274). Wiley.

Müller, J.W. (2006) On the Origins of Constitutional Patriotism, *Contemporary Political theory*, 5, 278-296.

Müller, J.W. (2007). *Constitutional Patriotism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Müller, J.W. & Scheppele, K.L. (2008) Constitutional patriotism: An introduction, *International Journal of Constitutional Law,* 6 (1), 67-71.

Nathan, A.J. (2003) China's Changing of the Guard: Authoritarian Resilience. *Journal of Democracy,* 14 (1), 6-17.

Norris, P. (1999) *Critical citizens: global support for democratic government.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Oxley, L. & Morris, P. (2013). Global citizenship: A typology for distinguishing its multiple conceptions. *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 61, 301–325. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2013.798393.

Paglayan, A. (2013). *Durable Goods for Enduring Voters? Preliminary Evidence from a School Construction Program in Argentina.* Paper presented on December 15, 2013. Available at: https://www.agustinapaglayan.com/publications

Paglayan, A. (2017). Civil War, State Consolidation, and the Spread of Mass Education. *Paper presented at the APSA Annual Conference 2017.* San Francisco, CA.

Paglayan, A. (2020). The Non-Democratic Roots of Mass Education: Evidence from 200 Years. *American Political Science Review*, 2020, 1-20.

Pan, J. & Xu, Y. (2018). China's Ideological Spectrum, *The Journal of Politics*, 80 (1), 254-264.

Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd Edition).* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

People's Education Press. (2014). 思想政治：文化生活 [*Thought and Politics: Cultural Life (4th ed.)*]. Beijing: People's Education Press.

People's Education Press. (2015). 思想政治：政治生活[*Thought and politics: Political life (7th ed.)*]. Beijing: People's Education Press.

Perry, E. J. (2008). Chinese conceptions of 'rights': From Mencius to Mao-and now. *Perspectives on Politics,* 6 (1), 37–50. Doi:10.1017/S1537592708080055

Perry, E. J. (2009). China Since Tiananmen: A new rights consciousness?, *Journal of Democracy,* 20 (3), 17-20.

Perry, E. J. (2013) *Cultural governance in contemporary China: 'Re-Orienting' party propaganda.* Harvard University. http://www.harvard-yenching.org/features/hyi-working-paper-series-elizabeth-perry.

Perry, E. J. (2015). Higher Education and Authoritarian Resilience: The Case of China, Past and Present. *Harvard-Yenching Institute Working Paper Series.* Available at: http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:30822717.

Perry, E. J. (2016). How to understand the resilience of Chinese polity. Preface in Yan, X. (2016). *How China Remains Stable: Observations and Thoughts from fieldwork. 中国何以稳定，来自田野的观察与思考.* Hong Kong: San Lian Academic Press. 香港：三联学术文库。

Perry, E. J. (2020). Educated acquiescence: how academia sustains authoritarianism in China, *Theory and Society,* 49, 1-22.

Peters, M.A. (2001) *Poststructuralism, Marxism, and Neoliberalism: Between Theory and Politics.* Maryland, the U.S.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Peterson, A. (2011) The common good and citizenship education in England: a moral enterprise? *Journal of Moral Education*, 40 (1), 19-35.

Peterson, A. (2020) Character education, the individual and the political. *Journal of Moral Education*, 49(2), 143-157

Pharr, S. J. & Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Disaffected Democracies: what's troubling the trilateral countries?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Piaget, J. (1970) Piaget's theory. In P. H. Mussen (Ed.), *Carmichael's manual of child psychology*. Vol. 1 (3rd ed.). New York: Wiley.

Piaget, J. (1971). *Genetic Epistemology.* New York: W.W. Norton.

Piaget, J. (1977) *The Development of Thought: equilibrium of cognitive structures.* New York: Viking.

Pierson, P. (2012) *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher, and the politics of retrenchment.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Putnam, Robert (2000) *Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Qian, L. 钱理群 (2007). Those Absolutely Delicate Egoists in College Campus. 大学里绝对精致的利己主义者. Available at: https://edu.qq.com/a/20150520/041737.htm

Qin, G. (2021). Liberal or Conservative? The Differentiated Political Values of the Middle Class in Contemporary China. The China Quarterly, 245, 1-22. doi:10.1017/S0305741020000296

Qin, H. 秦晖 (2013). *共同的底线.* [*The Common Baseline*]. Nanjing, China: Jiangsu Provincial Arts Publishing

Quicke, J. (1992) Individualism and Citizenship: some problems and possibilities, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 2 (2), 147-163

Ramet, S. P. (1989) *Religion and nationalism in Soviet and East European politics.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Rancière, J. (2010) *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics.* Steven Corcoran (ed. & trans.) London and New York: Continuum.

Ranciere, J. (2011) The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics. In Bowman, P. & Stamp, R. (eds.) *Reading Ranciere.* London: Continuum.

Ravitch, S.M., & Carl, N.M. (2021). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological (2nd ed.).* Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Ricœur P. (1970). *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation (D.* Savage, Trans.). New Heaven, NJ: Yale University Press. (Original work published 1965)

Ricœur, P. (1971). The model of the text: meaningful action considered as a text. *Social Research,* 38 (3), 529-562.

Ricœur, P. (1974). *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Domingo, W. et al., Trans.). Evanston: Northwest University Press.

Ricœur, P. (1981). *Hermeneutics and the human sciences.* In J.B. Thompson (Ed). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

Ricœur, P. (1984). *Time and Narrative: Volume 1*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1988). *Time and Narrative, Volume 3.* McLaughlin, K.& Pellauer, D. (trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ricœur, P. (1991). *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics* II. Thompson, J. B. (trans.) Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Ricœur, P., Reagan, C.E. & Steward, D. (1978). Existence and Hermeneutics. In *The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur: An Anthology of His Work*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Robertson, S. L. & Wu, J. (2023, Aug. 1). New imperialisms in the making? The geo-political economy of transnational higher education mobility in the UK and China, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2023.2241627

Robinson, G. D. (1995). *Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion: A Brief Overview and Critique,* University of Toronto Press.

Rosa, H. (2016). *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World* (J. C. Wagner, Trans.). Polity

Rosemont, H. & Ames, R.T. (2016). *Confucian Role Ethics: A moral vision for the 21st century?*. Birkach, Germany: Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Ross, D. (1995). Grand Narrative in American Historical Writing: From Romance to Uncertainty, *The American Historical Review,* 100 (3), 651-677.

Rybas, S. (2010). *Stalin*. Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya.

Saha, L.J. (2000) Education and Active Citizenship: Prospects and Issues, *Educational Practice and Theory,* 22 (1), 9-20.

Said, E. W. (1983). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Classics.

Sandel, M. (1996). *Democracy's Discontent.* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Sandel, M. (2021). *The Tyranny of Merit: Can we find the common good?* London: Picador Paper.

Schuck, P. H. (2002). *Liberal citizenship.* London: Sage Publications.

Schurmann, F. (1965). *Ideology and Organization in Communist China.* Berkeley: University of California Press

Schwartz, B. (1967). *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*. New York : Harper and Row

Schwartz, B. (1985). *The World of Thought in Ancient China.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Schwartz, V. (1986). *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Schwarzmantle, John (2017). Nationalism and Socialist Internationalism. In J. Breuilly (Ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (pp. 643-651). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Scott-Baumann, A. (2009) *Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion.* London: Continuum.

Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak*. Yale University Press.

Scott, J. C. (1989) *Everyday Forms of Resistance*, *Copenhagen Papers*, No. 4, pp. 33- 62.

Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Scott, J.C. (2009) *The art of not being governed: an anarchist history of upland.* Yale University Press, New Haven.

Scott, J.C. (2012) Infrapolitics and Mobilizations: A Response by James C. Scott. Revue française d'études américaines, 2012 (1), 112-117.

Sears, A. & Hughes, A. (2006). Citizenship: education or indoctrination?, *International Journal of Citizenship Teacher Education*, 2(1), 3–17.

Seidman, I. E. (2013). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences (4th ed.).* New York: Teachers College Press

Sen, A. (2013). *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Shambaugh, D. (2008). *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation.* University of California Press.

Shaw, B. K. (2016) China Confronts Kant When University Students Experience the Angst of Freedom, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 48 (6), 605-620

Shen, X. & Truex, R. (2021) In search of self-censorship, *British Journal of Political Science,* 52 (1), 1672-1684.

Shirk, S. L. (2018) China in Xi's 'New Era': The Return to Personalistic Rule. *Journal of Democracy*, 29 (2), 22-36.

Sim, J.B. (2008) What does citizenship mean? Social studies teachers' understandings of citizenship in Singapore schools, *Educational Review*, 60 (3), 253-266.

Sim, J.B. (2011) Social studies and citizenship for participation in Singapore: how one state seeks to influence its citizens, *Oxford Review of Education*, 37 (6), 743-761.

Sima, Y. & Pugsley, P.C. (2010). The rise of a 'Me Culture' in post-socialist China: youth, individualism and identity creation in the blogosphere, *The International Communication Gazette*, 72 (3), 287-306.

Smith, E. (2021) On the informal rules of the Chinese Communist Party, *The China Quarterly*, 248 (Nov). 141-160.

Solorzano, D. G., & Bernal, D. D. (2001) Examining Transformational Resistance through a Critical Race and LatCrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban. *Urban Education*, 36 (3), 308–342.

Sonu, D. (2012) Illusions of Compliance: Performing the Public and Hidden Transcripts of Social Justice Education in Neoliberal Times, *Curriculum Inquiry*, 42 (2), 240-259

Steele, L.G. & Lynch, S.M. (2013). The Pursuit of Happiness in China: Individualism, Collectivism, and Subjective Well-Being During China's Economic and Social Transformation. *Social Indicators Research*, 114: 441-451.

Stewart, A. (1995) Two concepts of citizenship, *British Journal of Sociology,* 46 (1), 63-78.

Szelényi, I. (2013). Varieties of social structure during and after socialism: Russia, East Europe, and China. *Chinese Sociological Review*, 46(2), 3-31.

Szelényi, I. & Mihályi, P. (2019). *Varieties of Post-communist Capitalism.* Leiden: Brilll Publishers.

Tarozzi, M. & Torres, C.A. (2016). *Global Citizenship Education and the Crisis of Multiculturalism: Comparative Perspectives.* London & Oxford, Bloomsbury Publishing.

Taylor, C (1991). *The Malaise of Modernity*. Ontario: Anansi.

Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the Self.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern Social Imaginaries.* Durham: Duke University Press.

The Economist (2013, May 4th) Xi Jinping and the Chinese Dream, Special Issue, p.11; pp.24-26. https://www.economist.com/china/2022/11/10/xi-jinping-amends-the-chinese-dream

The Economist (2022, Nov. 10th) Xi Jinping amends the Chinese Dream: As the economy slows, the social contract between party and people changes. See the link at: https://www.economist.com/china/2022/11/10/xi-jinping-amends-the-chinese-dream

The State Council, PRC (2021, April 6th) White Paper Report on Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution. http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2021-04/06/content_77380652.htm

Tilly, C. (1975) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tilly, C. (1982) War making and State Making as Organized Crime. In P. Evans, et al. (1985) (Eds.) *Bringing the State Back In* (pp. 169–87). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tilly, C. (1984). *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Torres, C.A. (2017). *Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Critical Global Citizenship Education.* New York: Routledge.

Torres, C.A. (2019). *Wiley Handbooks of Paulo Freire.* Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Triandis, H. C (2001). Individualism-Collectivism and Personality. *Journal of Personality.* 69 (6), 907–924

Triandis, H. C. (1989). The Self and Social Behavior in Differing Cultural Contexts. *Psychological Review*, 96 (3), 506-520.

Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism and collectivism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Triandis, H. C., & Gelfand, M. (1998). Converging Measurement of Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 74 (1), 118-128.

Truex, R. (2021) Political Discontent in China is Associated with Isolating Personality Traits. *The Journal of Politics*, 84 (4), 2172-2187.

Tsakalakis, T. (2021). *Political Correctness: A Sociocultural Black Hole*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Tu, W. (1985). *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press

Tu, W. (1989). *Confucianism in Historical Perspective.* Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies.

Tu, W. (1996). *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: moral education and economic culture in Japan and the four mini-dragons.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Tu, W. (1998) Confucian and Confucianism. In W. H. Slote & G. A. De Vos (Eds.) *Confucianism and the Family.* New York: The State University of New York Publishing.

Tu, Y. (2011) A Chinese Civil Society in the Making? Civic Perceptions and Civic Participation of University Students in an Era of Massification. PhD Dissertation. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto

Turner, B. (1990). Outline of a theory of citizenship, *Sociology*, 24(2), 189-217.

Turner, B. (1995). Karl Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia, *Political Studie*s, XLIII, 718-727.

Vincent, A. (2009). *Modern Political Ideologies*. (3rd ed.) Chichester, the UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Vinthagen, S. & Johansson, A (2013) 'Everyday Resistance': Exploration of a Concept and its Theories. *Resistance studies Magazine*, 2013 (1), 1-46.

Vogel, E. (2011) *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*. Cambridge, MI: Harvard University Press.

Vogel, E. (2011) *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*. Cambridge, MI: Harvard University Press.

Walder, A. (1983). Organized Dependency and Cultures of Authority in Chinese Industry. *Journal of Asian Studies,* 43(1): 51-76.

Wang, C. (2020). Educating the Cosmopolitan Citizen in Confucian Classical Education in Contemporary China, *Chinese Education & Society*, 53 (1-2), 36-46.

Wang, H. (1988) The Structure of China's Changing Political Culture. *Fudan Academy (Social Sciences)*, 3: 55-64.

Wang, H. (1991) 美国反对美国 [*America Against America*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Arts Press

Wang, H. (2012) Ren and Gantong : Openness of Heart and the Root of Confucianism. *Philosophy East & West*, 62 (4), 463-504.

Wang, P. & Yan, X. (2020) Bureaucratic Slack in China: The Anti-corruption Campaign and the Decline of Patronage Networks in Developing Local Economies. *The China Quarterly*, 243 (Septermber), 611-634.

Wang, Y. (2017) Meet the mastermind behind Xi Jinping's power. The Washington Post. https://web.archive.org/web/20171106220804/https://www.washingtonpost.com/amphtml/news/theworldpost/wp/2017/11/06/wang-huning/

Wang, Y. (2019). *A Comparative Study of Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Students' Civic Participation, Political Trust and Political Efficacy.* Master Dissertation. Hong Kong: The Education University of Hong Kong.

Wang, Z. (2005). Before the Emergence of Critical Citizens: Economic Development and Political Trust in China, *International Review of Sociology,* 15(1), 155-171.

Wang, Z. (2008). National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China. *International Studies Quarterly* (2008). 52, 783–806.

Wang, Z. (2014). The Chinese Dream: Concept and context. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 19, 1–13.

Wang, Z. & You, Y. (2016). The arrival of critical citizens: decline of political trust and shifting public priorities in China, *International Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 105-124.

Wei, X. (2020, Sep. 18) Xi underscores CPC's people-oriented nature. *China Daily.* https://www.chinadailyhk.com/hk/article/143656

Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2), 237–269.

White, S. (2004) *Russia's new politics: the management of a post-communist society.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Willis, P.E. (1977). *Learning to Labor: How Working-Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Wong, K.L. et al. (2019). Teacher self-efficacy in cultivating students to become 'good citizens': a Hong Kong case, *Teacher Development*, 23 (2), 155-173.

Wu, B. (2021) Research on the Impact of China's 'Double Reduction' Policy on Out-of-School Remedial Classes, Advances in Economics, *Business and Management Research,* 203, 548-552.

Wu, J. (2020). *Categorical Confusion: Ideological Labels in China,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Wu, L. (2013). "Cultural Revolution (China)." In *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Xi, J. (2012). 实现中华民族伟大复兴是中华民族近代以来最伟大的梦想.[To realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream for the Chinese nation since Modern China]. In J. P. Xi, *习近平谈治国理政[Xi Jinping: The governance of China]*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Xiao, G. (2006) 改革开放以来意识形态创新的历史考察[A Historical Review on the Ideology Innovation since the Reform and Open-up Era], *Tianjin Social Science*, (04), 45-49.

Xiao, W. (2022) The Role of Collectivism–Individualism in Attitudes Toward Compliance and Psychological Responses During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology.* 12: 600826.

Xiao, Y (2013). "China's peopleship education: Conceptual issues and policy analysis". *Citizenship Teaching and Learning.* 8 (1): 21–39.

Xinhua.net (2022, Oct. 22nd). Full text of resolution on Party Constitution amendment at the closing session of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the official English translation is published at: https://english.news.cn/20221022/fea670f419d7426ab564a795d5737b52/c.html

Xiong, B. (2019). Communicating citizenship in China's digital society, Journal of *International and Intercultural Communication*, 12 (2), 128-145.

Xu, J. (2009). 大我的消解：现代中国个人主义思潮的变迁[The disappearance of big self: The change of the idea of individualism in modern China]. *中国社会科学辑刊[Chinese Social Sciences Quarterly]*, Spring, 26.

Xu, J. (2017).*家国天下*. [*Family, Country, Tianxia*]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press.

Yamagishi, T., Hashimoto, H., & Schug, J. (2008). Preferences versus strategies as explanations for culture-specific behavior. *Psychological Science,* 19(6), 579–584. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02126.x

Yan, Y. (2003). *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999,* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Yan, Y. (2009). *The Individualization of Chinese Society.* Oxford, England: Berg.

Yan, Y. (2010). The Chinese Path to Individualization, *The British Journal of Sociology,* 61 (3), 489-512.

Yan, Y. (2016) Intergenerational Intimacy and Descending Familism in Rural North China. *American Anthropologist*, 118 (2), 244-257.

Yan, Y. (2016) Intergenerational Intimacy and Descending Familism in Rural North China. *American Anthropologist*, 118 (2), 244-257.

Yan, Y. (2017) Doing Personhood in Chinese Culture. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 35 (2), 1-17.

Yan, Y. (2018) Neo-Familism And The State In Contemporary China. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 47 (3&4), 181-224.

Yan, Y. (2019). The Rise of Individualism Among Chinese Youth. The interview by US-China Today, available at: https://www.bing.com/search?q=The+Rise+of+Individualism+Among+Chinese+Youth. +The+interview+by+US-China+Today%2C&cvid=a5078464f4e549319b609c0da12af45f&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbW UyBggAEEUYOdIBCDQzNDNqMGo0qAIAsAIA&FORM=ANAB01&PC=U531

Yan, Y. (2019). The Rise of Individualism Among Chinese Youth. The interview by US-China Today, available at: https://www.bing.com/search?q=The+Rise+of+Individualism+Among+Chinese+Youth. +The+interview+by+US-China+Today%2C&cvid=a5078464f4e549319b609c0da12af45f&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbW UyBggAEEUYOdIBCDQzNDNqMGo0qAIAsAIA&FORM=ANAB01&PC=U531

Young, R. (2016). *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction.* Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Yu, J. & Feng, T. (2010). Civic Education and Transition Governance in China, *Peace Review*, 22(3), 295-302

Yu, T. (2020). Does Democracy Still Have a Chance? Contextualizing Citizenship Education in China, *Chinese Education & Society,* 53(1-2), 14-24, DOI: 10.1080/10611932.2020.1716609.

Yuan, W. (2010). E-democracy@China: does it work?, *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 3 (4), 488-503.

Zhang, C. (2018). Governing neoliberal authoritarian citizenship: theorizing hukou and the changing mobility regime in China, *Citizenship Studies*, 22 (8), 855-881.

Zhang, C. & Fagan, C. (2016) Examining the role of ideological and political education on university students' civic perceptions and civic participation in Mainland China: Some hints from contemporary citizenship theory. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 15 (2), 117-142.

Zhao, D. (2009). The Mandate of Heaven and Performance Legitimation in Historical and Contemporary China. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53 (3): 416–433.

Zhao, D. (2015). *The Confucian-Legalist State: A New Theory of Chinese History.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zhao, D. (2019) 当前中国最大的潜在风险 [The most prominent potential danger in the current China]. *The 21st century comment.* 173 (6), 4-20.

Zhao, S. (1998). A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies,* 31 (3), 287-302.

Zhao, S. (2016). Xi Jinping's Maoist Revival. *Journal of Democracy.* 27(3), 83-97.

Zhao, T. (2021) *All under Heaven: The Tianxia System for a Possible World Order*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Zhao, Z. (2010). Practices of citizenship rights among minority students at Chinese universities, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 2010, 40 (2), 131-144.

Zhao, Z. (2013). The shaping of citizenship education in a Chinese context. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 8(1), 105–122.

Zhao, Z. (2023) What does the ideal citizen look like in China's new era? A bottom-up view, *Citizenship Studies,* 27 (6), 744-760.

Zhong, P., & Zhan, J. V. (2021). Authoritarian Critical Citizens and Declining Political Trust in China. *China Review*, 21(2), 117-152.

Zhong, Y. (2014). Do Chinese People Trust Their Local Government, and Why? *Problems of Post-Communism*, 61 (3), 31-44.

Zhou, K. (2023, March 2nd). China's New Directives on Law Schools: They Should Teach that Separation of Powers Is Wrong. *Bitter Winter.* Available at: https://bitterwinter.org/chinas-law-schools-separation-of-powers-is-wrong/

Zhou, X. (2017). *The Institutional Logic of Governance in China: An Organizational Approach.* Beijing: Sanlian Press.

Zhou, Y. & Yang, Y. (2018). Mapping contentious discourse in China: activists' discursive strategies and their coordination with media, *Asian Journal of Communication*, 28(4), 416-433, DOI: 10.1080/01292986.2018.1434803

Zhuang, P. (2016, Feb. 16th). China's top party mouthpieces pledge 'absolute loyalty' as president makes rare visits to newsrooms. *South China Morning Post.* Link is available at: https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1914136/chinas-top-party-mouthpieces-pledge-absolute-loyalty

Žižek, S. (2002). *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!.* London & New York: Verso.

Zwart, F. (2015). Unintended but not unanticipated consequences, *Theory and Society*，44, 283-297.