

THE MIND OF THE NEW SOCIALIST STUDENT IN THE CHINESE REVOLUTIONARY  
IMAGINATION, 1949–1958

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## **Abstract**

Between 1949 and 1958, the nascent People's Republic of China witnessed a radical shift of knowledge about the human mind that transformed pedagogy. Against the Cold War and the changing Sino-Soviet relation, Chinese psychologists progressively repudiated American and Soviet schools for their shared deterministic philosophy and disinterest in human agency and class struggle. In light of this critique, educators abandoned psychological science as the basis of pedagogy and endeavored to create a supreme "new socialist student" to meet China's economic and political agendas. This dissertation explores this "exteriorization" epistemic transition by juxtaposing psychology and education. Taking advantage of so far untapped archival and published sources, this dissertation explores how psychologists, educators, and students navigated between a utopian communist dream and China's harsh socioeconomic reality in the creation of the new socialist student ideal. Chapter One "Wrestling with Human Nature" argues that the critique of psychology instantiated China's progressive ethos that, in the endeavor of transforming human mentality, rejected scientific discovery of mental laws. Chapter Two "Laborizing Education" argues that students faced excessive academic and labor tasks due to China's pursuit of post-war recovery, of success in Cold War competition, and of forestalling future labor-based class stratification. Chapter Three "Engendering Citizenship" scrutinizes how educators tapped into students' subjectivity to produce a new citizenship identity capable of dismantling existing social relations.

**Keywords:** China, citizenship, education, labor, psychology, socialist revolution

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# Introduction

## *Psychology and education in transition*

After the Opium Wars in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, China was dragged into decades of wars with several European countries, as well as America, Russia, and Japan. Heavy defeats by industrialized opponents led Chinese governors to doubt their century-old agricultural economy and Confucianism-dominated culture. The Qing governors' attempt to modernize China did not prevent their dethronement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and their successor, the Nationalist Party, struggled to reign in a country divided by warlords. The Second World War further plunged China into the abyss of chaos and poverty. In 1949, China finally saw a ray of hope. With the ending of the Second World War, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) reunified the nation and promised to bring China a future of modernity, strength, and equality.

This dissertation focuses on the first decade of the People's Republic of China (PRC), from 1949 to 1958. In this ten-year span, the CCP gained tremendous success in repairing its war-torn economy, industrialization, and collectivization. Meanwhile, its unrelenting class struggle campaigns generated widespread social disorders, confusion, and anxiety. Amid these historic changes, the role of the human subject came to the forefront. The aspiration to create the “new socialist human” – an ideal citizen who capably and ceaselessly contributed to various economic and political initiatives – was premised on a particular understanding of human nature, especially of the malleability of the human mind. Intrigued by the emergence of this new conceptualization of the human mind, my dissertation is a response to Eghigian and colleagues' (2007) call for bringing together in conversation the history of politics, the history of human sciences, and the history of the self. To this end, I situate my dissertation in the fields of psychology and education, where the Chinese revolutionary ambition was projected onto individual human being. To begin

with, I outline psychology and education in 1949 and in 1958 to highlight what drastic changes occurred over the decade.

In 1949, educators from various backgrounds jostled to provide insights regarding what should constitute a socialist education. Among them, some had loyally supported the CCP during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) and the Civil War (1945–1949). They recalled having taught elementary school children how to make gunpowder, bandages, and propaganda posters; how to calculate the number of burnt-down houses; and why “saving a grain of rice equaled saving a bullet” (S. Liu, 1950, p. 61). According to these educators, socialist education should incorporate practical lessons even in China’s newly secured peaceful time.

Meanwhile, some educators advocated pedagogical thoughts from the Soviet Union. Informed by a particular interpretation of Marxism, the Soviet model began to infuse China’s curriculum with politicized content. Of particular note was the role of Pavlovian psychology. Ostensibly a neutral, scientific theory, Pavlovian psychology became appropriated to justify the new progressive ideology that permeated socialist education. Its focus on how neural structure determined mental activities was considered to embody the Marxist dialectical view of the relationship between matter and idea. Its classical conditioning method was held up as a means of cultivating the “new socialist human” with its potential to modify human behaviors.

Interestingly, Pavlovian ideas did not immediately displace the great amount of American educational thoughts, especially those inspired by Dewey, that had taken root in China in the preceding decades (Y. Sun, 1999; G. X. Zhang & Sheese, 2017). Educators bearing this intellectual inheritance suggested that teaching should be based on student’s mental traits at each developmental stage. That is, because of their mental immaturity, students should be assigned schoolwork of a moderate quantity and difficulty; be treated with patience, care, and compassion;

and be exempted from class struggle. The educators advocated for a democratic relationship between teacher and student, and for recognizing each student's individuality despite the emerging emphasis on promoting collectivism.

In the course of the 1950s, Chinese schools went through significant changes in a tumultuous domestic and international political environment. 1958 saw early signs of the Sino-Soviet split (Z. Shen, 2009). Pavlovian psychology, with its emphasis on the determining power of physiology, was now accused of justifying the mental status quo. The Pavlovian laboratories were torn down, and the experimental dogs were publicly shamed for having eaten beef, apples, and bananas – the hard-earned products of the working class (R. Ren, 2010).

American educational philosophy was systemically purged as well. Educators stopped claiming that “children are just children” (J. Wang, 1950, p. 2). The pre-1949 wartime emphasis on student labor had a resurgence, frequently pushing students to their mental and physical limits. At schools, factories, and communes, students strove for high grades, performed propaganda dances, made steel, and collected feces for fertilizer. To become qualified socialist workers, they were expected to master not only comprehensive academic subjects but also physical skills needed by diverse occupations.

This expectation on the display of extraordinary capability was complemented by a new vision of citizenship identity. No longer adjusting pedagogy to meet students' interests, educators now stressed self-discipline, patriotism, and class consciousness as the primary drivers for study. They proudly observed that grade-one students replaced the idea that “mom made my clothes, dad bought me food” with that of “factory workers made my clothes, farmers grew my food” (Department of Culture and Education, Jilin Province, 1952, p. 11). Although undergraduates

learned to humbly accept criticism from classmates, many did not shy away from composing textbooks on their own or from denouncing their professors for spreading capitalist thoughts.

*The “new socialist human” ideal*

There is no better notion other than the “new socialist human” to capture the ideal that emerged over the course of the 1950s. The impulse of bringing about a new type of human being, a key project of global modernity, was rooted in the Enlightenment and bolstered by the French and industrial revolutions (Y. Cheng, 2009; Eghigian et al., 2007). In different societies, the various contours of the new human entailed the transformation of physical features, gender ideals, mental capacities, and so forth, which would enable a breakaway from preexisting religious, moral, and political structures (Fritzsche & Hellbeck, 2009). A notable example can be found in the Nazi German project, which involved the creation of a racial hierarchy with the Aryan on the top. The Russians required individuals to self-transform their souls and bodies to join a deterministic history leading to the liberation of humanity (Fritzsche & Hellbeck, 2009; Hellbeck, 2009). The latter project spread to international communism (Clair, 2008; Dimitrova, 2016; Fisher, 1962; Gerovitch, 2007; Heller, 1988; Marcuse, 2014; Medyesy, 1980; Mosse, 1998; Ronnas, 1989; Sinyavsky, 1990; Vujosevic, 2017), including China (Y. Cheng, 2009; L. K. Chin, 1980; Lynteris, 2012; Swetz, 1986).

Extant historiography has more frequently addressed the human subject itself: its social relations, living conditions, occupations, and so forth (W. Ye & Ma, 2005). My dissertation instead focuses on the knowledge of human being, which, as an indispensable intellectual resource for organizing society, is intimately entwined with the challenges and aspirations of the society in which it is found and calls for desired human subjects to come into being (Bauer, 1952). As remarked by Drucker (2011), “Every organized society is built upon a concept of the nature of

man and of his function and place in society. Whatever its truth as a picture of human nature, this concept always gives a true picture of the nature of the society which recognizes and identifies itself with it” (p. 45). Behaviorism, which compared human beings to machines that mechanistically responded to external stimuli, rose in America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as it offered a toolkit for adapting immigrants to industrial life in the cities (Bakan, 1966). The Darwinian emphasis on natural selection played a crucial role in justifying the European and American eugenics movements (Paul, 2009). Likewise, I situate my project on knowing the mind in socialist China’s economy, class struggles, and Cold War geopolitics. In this regard, my dissertation is as much a history of psychology as a history of socialist China.

I define “knowledge” broadly to include scientific data, theories, assumptions, beliefs, and imaginations – any idea about the human subject that claims for truth value and has normative potential. While prioritizing knowledge making, I will nonetheless delineate the Chinese mental reality for two reasons. First, knowledge about the mind was partly derived through empirical observation of the Chinese mental reality, which was in a flux of change resulted from the revolution’s progress. One goal of my dissertation is to understand how psychologists and educators observed and interpreted mental reality to engender knowledge. Second, the effect of such knowledge in transforming the human mind, for better or for worse, is an important indicator for appraising the knowledge.

Chinese revolutionaries envisioned the creation of a new human, one who was utterly selfless, who fully obeyed the Party even regarding personal life choices, who passionately engaged in ideological study and resolutely denounced class enemies, and who possessed enthusiasm and diverse capabilities in productive activities (T. H. Chen, 1969; Y. Cheng, 2009). Since the Yan’an Rectification in the 1940s, this ideal has lurked behind a variety of Chinese

thought reform techniques (H. Gao, 2017), such as “criticism and self-criticism” (Lifton, 1961), “speaking bitterness” (G. Wu, 2013), “accusation” (Strauss, 2002), and “emotion work” (Perry, 2002). Due to its prevalence in the family (W. Ye & Ma, 2005), workplace (Bray, 2005), social relations (Vogel, 1965), arts (Andrews, 1994; DeMare, 2015), literature (Cai, 2016), and media (Evans & Donald, 1999), it would have been difficult for scholars addressing the human subject in China’s revolution to circumvent this ideal.

Yet, despite its ubiquity, only a handful of works provide concentrated accounts of the new human ideal (A. S. Chen, 1964; T. H. Chen, 1969; L. K. Chin, 1980; Gurley, 1970; Kobayashi, 1971; Lynteris, 2012; Swetz, 1986), and still fewer on its historical evolution (Y. Cheng, 2009; Munro, 1971). My dissertation aims to understand the evolution of the new human ideal, namely, how particular qualities came to be considered as desirable and feasible attributes of the new human.

Certain aspects of the new human ideal were fundamentally utopian. For one thing, this ideal depicted human beings as capable of becoming utterly altruistic and willing to sacrifice personal well-being for the sake of societal good. Scholars across disciplines have cast doubt on this rosy portrait, and warned that this shaky assumption risks undermining the enterprise of socialism (Freud, 1927; Hölldobler & Wilson, 1994; Kemp, 2016; Mill, 1880; Panichas, 1983; Pipes, 1996, 2001).<sup>1</sup> These doubts indeed frequently turned out to be true in the behaviors of many

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<sup>1</sup> John Stuart Mill argues, on the basis of his utilitarian understanding of human psychology, that the communization of individual property would decrease productivity (Mill, 1880; Panichas, 1983). Through his psychoanalytic eyes, Sigmund Freud (1927) argues that since it is impossible to nullify individuals’ aggressive instincts, some individuals will remain anti-social and anti-cultural; harmonious interpersonal relation envisioned in communism will not become true. Very recently, psychologist Simon Kemp (2016) devotes an entire book to argue that a number flaws of communism in psychological aspects reduce the effectiveness of a communist society and undermine people’s faith in it; such flaws include the neglect of incentives for production, the deprivation of sense of ownership, and learned helplessness in economic and political contexts. Richard Pipes (1996, 2001), one of the most vehement critics of communism, also intensively relies on discourses about human nature to argue against communism. The sociobiologist Edward Osbourne Wilson, whose research on the self-sacrificing behavior of ants was quoted by

a Chinese student (Shirk, 1982), businessperson (Y. Lin, 2009; Solinger, 1987), and peasant in socialist China (Cai, 2016; H. Li, 2006). Further, the new human ideal required socialist citizens to possess an extravagant range of capabilities that seemingly surpassed an ordinary human being's limit. Were these idealistic qualities merely a reflection of revolutionaries' wishful thinking? To what degree were they discursive products resulted from China's socioeconomic challenges?

Readers less sympathetic with communism may find a few other aspects of the new human ideal repressive, and their opinion is supported by substantial historical evidence. How can we explain the lack of individuality and freedom in this ideal? How should we account for the political frenzy that led to the humiliation, torture, and murder of fellow citizens? My dissertation is interested in explaining how the seemingly problematic conceptualizations of the mind, whether those expressive of a longing for idealistic qualities, or those that swung a utopia into dystopia, became amalgamated into the contour of the new human ideal.

### *Exteriorization and politicization*

In order to position the new human ideal in China's revolution, I revisit the distinction between the interior and the exterior of the mind. The interior refers to the psychological activities, such as sensation, memory, and skills, that are conventionally considered to be located inside the person. The exterior refers to the sociopolitical milieu that demands particular mental functions and social inclinations from the individual. My tripartite dissertation addresses three central topics – human nature, labor, and citizenship, which each represents a nexus that interlaces the interior and the exterior. In Chapter One, the issue of human nature was caught up in the conflict between scientific discovery of mental laws in the realm of nature, and the Marxist (1845) thesis that human being is the ensemble of social relations. In Chapter Two, individual capabilities such as abstract thinking,

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Pipes, provided a parody that became widely circulated: "It would appear that socialism really works under some circumstances. Karl Marx just had the wrong species" (Hölldobler & Wilson, 1994, p. 9).

creativity, and sensory-motor function were seen as resources of productive labor for economic advance. In Chapter Three, the formation of citizenship identity required remolding of subjective affects – such as honor, hatred, and modesty, so that social relations could be readjusted.

I argue that over the course between 1949 and 1958, the Chinese view of the human subject transitioned from a focus on the mind's interior to a focus on its exterior, a process I call "exteriorization". In 1949, under the influence of American thoughts, there was a stress on intrapersonal, natural psychological processes such as instinct, capability, interest, and individuality (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1949b; S. Lu, 1949). Over the years, a radical revolutionary discourse came in vogue, maintaining that sociopolitical factors influenced mental development more potently than did inborn dispositions. It replaced psychological analysis with ideological analysis for understanding the human subject, now conceived of as a bearer of class.

The exteriorization process consisted of two parallel historical shifts. First, the shift from a naturalistic view of the mind to a sociopolitical one. Intellectual investigations into topics of human psychology have often been torn between two priorities, one in favor of the "natural", and the other the "social" (Murray, 1963; Schwitzgebel, 2007). The naturalist view posits that the human mind has an essence, be it rationality, moral intuition, or the instinct of self-preservation, that is relatively independent of historical or cultural influences. Psychologists divide the mind into various structures and processes, such as personality, emotion, and skills, and consider them to be universal modes of existence, the manifestation of which is modestly mediated by environmental factors such as culture. Voices opposing this naturalistic, essentialist understanding of the human mind are made by hermeneutic, social constructionist, and postmodernist scholars, who see subjectivity to be a historical product (Elias, 1978; Foucault, 1979, 1982). To them, it is a problematic attempt to identify a pristine human nature. One must presume a given environment

as normal before considering certain human qualities – such as physical features, attitudes, and sexual orientations – that prevail the majority of the population found this environment to be natural (Schwitzgebel, 2007). By rupturing the naturalistic discourse’s claim of objectivity and revealing its underlying normativity, these scholars intend to unsettle existing status quo. This critical spirit found full expression in Marx’s (1845) view of mental phenomena as a class product and in turn at the service of class domination. This is the conceptual map in which China’s sociopolitical turn took place.

Second, the exteriorization process entailed a shift of attention from individual behavior to societal objective. Before arriving at this argument, it should be noted, though, that the regulation of individual behavior itself has a history of “interiorization” dating to the Enlightenment (Y. Cheng, 2009; Eghigian et al., 2007). In post-medieval Europe, scholarly and everyday attention became increasingly attuned to individual conduct. Everyday activities such as sexual behavior, bodily functions, and table manners became increasingly regulated by shame and repugnance (Elias, 1978). The Enlightenment, coupled with the French Revolution, was in part a champion for individual rights (Eghigian et al., 2007). From the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, state-exercised physical punishments were replaced by discipline, a gentler practice that produced a docile, self-surveilling subjectivity (Foucault, 1979). In modern liberalism, governance was increasingly carried out by instilling particular desires and aspirations in populations (Foucault, 1991). The rise of the human sciences in the last century marked the apex of the history of interiorization (Eghigian et al., 2007). The human sciences, especially psychology, functioned as a key tool in developing the vocabulary, knowledge, and techniques to manage individuals in various contexts (Rose, 1988, 1996, 1998). In industry, scientific management gained currency by its capacity to boost efficiency through streamlining human movements and reducing fatigue (Nelson, 1991; Rabinbach, 1992;

Waring, 2016). The expansion of the school system, selection of skilled workers, and regulation of immigration gave rise to intelligence testing (McPherson, 1985; Zenderland, 2001). Representative democracy led to the popularity of surveying the population's attitudes and opinions (Bardes & Oldendick, 2012; Herbst, 1993). Self-help literature, too, proliferated in neoliberalism, encouraging individuals to be self-governing and entrepreneurial (Davies, 2015).

The shift of attention from naturalistic to sociopolitical view, and that from individual behavior to societal objectives, both took place in the 1950s China. This shift, again, needs to be situated in China's intellectual history. In ancient China, debates about human nature had a prominent presence. Mencius conceptualized human beings to possess moral intuition, which could be discovered through self-reflection. Xunzi, in contrast, considered human beings to be instinctually selfish, and required social constraints and indoctrination to ensure moral integrity (Schwitzgebel, 2007). The Confucian emphasis on individual conduct was reflected in its requirement of self-cultivation as the prerequisite of regulating the family, the state, and the universe (Kim, 2017). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, western-style modernization, with its concomitant focus on mental laws, started to take root in China. This trend remained visible by the founding of the PRC in 1949, when scientific psychology played a major role in informing education. In educational administration, psychology supplemented knowledge about students' intellectual and moral development to help with the calibration of educational objectives. In everyday teaching and interaction, teachers were encouraged to analyze students' learning process in light of basic psychological categories, such as sensation, attention, and imagination (S. Lu, 1949).

This scientific approach to knowing the human subject was largely abandoned by the CCP, which honed its own set of skills in dealing with the population during its ascendance to power through guerrilla wars. Since its birth in 1921, the CCP accumulated rich organizational experience

through personnel recruitment, propaganda campaigns, worker revolts, land reforms, and wars (Bianco, 1971; H. Gao, 2017). According to Perry (2002), the CCP's extraordinary ability to mobilize the emotions of the masses was an important factor in its Civil War victory. Lifton (1961) also confirmed that the CCP's effective "thought transformation" techniques stemmed from revolutionary experience, and not the interventions of psychologists.

Given their past success in mass mobilization, the CCP and its followers came to see scientific psychology to be inessential at best, and counter-revolutionary at worst. For one thing, the CCP found fault with psychological science for its practical constraints. Scientific psychological knowledge was usually produced in a laboratory via experimental and quantitative tools. It was then applied to the real world with the assumption that the human mind operated according to generalizable natural laws. In contrast, the practical knowledge Chinese revolutionaries relied upon rose from real-life interactions. It remained immersed in the social world all the way from its inception to its application. Less committed to the pursuit of scientific generalizability, practical knowledge more readily situated mental activities in their historical, social and cultural contexts.<sup>2</sup> The practical approach to understanding the human mind required trial and error, not the kind commonly applied in experimentation to identify causal relations, but one occurring in real society and testified in the population's life course. The society should become the laboratory, and real-life practice become the means through which the revolutionary experimentation be carried out.

At a more basic level, the Chinese revolutionaries were suspicious of empiricism in science. For example, they considered intelligence tests to be designed to justify unequal distribution of

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<sup>2</sup> To be exact, the difference between scientific and practical knowledge is not clear cut. Psychological research, regardless of its claims of objectivity, often embodies particular societal objectives and cultural values (Ash, 2007; Bauer, 1952). Nonetheless, as argued here, a few major differences exist between the two modes of knowledge.

educational resources (S. Chen, 1957; T. Zhang, 1950). This view signaled a distrust of not only the tests, but also individual differences in intellectual capacity, even if such differentiation indeed existed in reality. Psychologists used to take observable mental reality as empirical evidence representing the nature of the human mind, but now Chinese communist theorists saw it to be a distortion of reality, or a handicapped version of human mind (Smith, 2013a). Seen from a quasi-social constructionist perspective, mental reality lost its epistemological significance. According to the revolutionary theorists, in order to understand what human beings were truly capable of, one should not be deluded by observations of mental phenomena in a class-dominated society, and should instead create conducive social conditions for citizens to actualize greater potential. In other words, Chinese communist theorists considered real world practice to be a more valid method than empirical science for gaining an authentic understanding of the human mind.

If scientific psychological knowledge was based on a handicapped or distorted version of human reality, it could not properly guide the cultivation of the new student. In the global history of disenchantment, science has usually functioned as a progressive force that challenged mysticism with discoveries about “nature”. But in China’s revolutionary ethos, the human sciences came to be seen as too conservative. As groundbreaking transformations rapidly took place in China’s economy, social relations, and culture, Chinese citizens were required to go through associated mental transformation. Marx and Engels themselves had high expectations that future socialist citizens would work spontaneously and for pleasure rather than out of necessity (Marx, 1875), master multiple skills across the typical division of labor (Marx, 1875; Marx & Engels, 1845), and enjoy communal activities to a greater extent than did citizens of capitalism (Marx, 1844). If psychologists were correct that man was by nature selfish and has limited capability, how could the creation of a new socialist human be possible? To the

revolutionaries, the answer was that both scientific psychology and the moral authority of nature it purported had to be overthrown (Daston & Vidal, 2010). As in the Soviet Union (Dallin, 1958; DeWitt, 1962; Pollock, 2006; Razran, 1958; Shalin, 1978; Wetter, 1960), the Chinese revolutionaries considered western-imported human sciences, including psychology, to be counter-revolutionary (L. Cheng & So, 1983; K. Dai, 1993; Guldin, 1992; Gupta, 1972; S. K. Li, 1966; M. Liu, 2003; Wong, 1975).<sup>3</sup>

The prevalence of psychology as a tool to manage the population in contemporary North America and a few other regions had led to the worries of some critical scholars. This concern is reflected in the coinage of the term “psychologization”, which refers to the practice of inappropriately reducing social, cultural, and political problems to a psychological one. Psychologization is considered a potent mechanism through which the potential of concerted sociopolitical action is diminished in a neo-liberal culture (Davies, 2015; J. Yang, 2017). In the 1950s in China, the interpretative bias occurred in the opposite direction – that is, psychological questions were overly politicized. Through “politicization”, the Chinese revolutionaries were able to subject all thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, which were previously located in the realm of nature and thus free from political responsibility, to ideological and political education or thought reform. The Marxist statement that the essence of human is the ensemble of social relations received an extreme interpretation (Marx, 1845).

The attack of natural-scientific understandings of the human mind was part and parcel of the politicization project. In light of the enshrinement of Pavlov’s theory in the preceding years, the sudden explosion of criticisms in 1958 almost appears to be paradoxical. What remained

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<sup>3</sup> Most social sciences in China were put under strict political regulation (Gupta, 1972; S. K. Li, 1966; Wong, 1975). Sociology was declared a pseudoscience and banned in 1952 (K. Dai, 1993). Anthropology was almost fully repudiated with only ethnology remaining (M. Liu, 2003). Meanwhile, the CCP heavily funded natural sciences and technologies to aid industrialization (Gould, Rice, & American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1961).

consistent between the two periods was the movement away from naturalistic notions about the human mind. Whether Pavlov's theory was celebrated or attacked, the criterion always rested on its relationship with human nature. The persistent anxiety about human nature stemmed from the need of revolution: that the human mind must be uprooted from its physiological basis, removed from the abstract, value-neutral intellectual realm, in order to join class struggles, where the human subject was obliged to undergo ideological transformation. True to Marx's (1847) assertion that "all history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature" (p. 192), the Chinese revolutionaries, by renouncing scientific psychology, declared war on human nature. The discussion of exteriorization and politicization constitutes Chapter One, and serves as the conceptual foundation of the other two chapters.

### *China's twin objectives*

Due to exteriorization and politicization, knowledge about the human mind was no longer centered around so-called human nature. Instead, it gravitated toward state projects. Thus, in order to understand the significance of the human subject, a move must be made from the discipline of psychology to China's grand social transformations. The chronological scope of my dissertation, between 1949 and 1958, was the formative decade of PRC that had far-reaching repercussions on China's socialism. In 1949, the CCP ascended to power and began to manage national affairs while advancing its socialist revolution. On the international front, the CCP made painstaking efforts to purge China of American ideas that had been taking roots since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, it intensively emulated the Soviet Union in its social reforms, until starting to explore its own path in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split toward the end of the 1950s. As will be discussed throughout the dissertation, the Cold War transnational flow of ideas significantly reconfigured the Chinese approach to the human mind.

Domestically, the CCP faced the dual tasks of economic development and socialist revolution (Tsang, 2000). Economically, it needed to accelerate industrial and agricultural development to repair pre-1949 wartime destruction and to secure China's place in Cold War competition. These factors, combined with personnel shortages, raised the demand for productive labor. Regarding revolution, the CCP endeavored to break with China's existing social structures and moralities, and to develop new social relations in favor of the working classes. Classical Marxism maintains that productive forces shape social relations, which in turn feed back to the productive forces. This theorization explains the distinction between China's twin objectives: economic development required the increase of productive forces, and revolution prioritized the change of social relations. Revolution involved a redistribution of wealth, change of ownership of lands, factories, machines, and technologies, as well as re-assignment of labor. In comparison to the developmental objective, which stressed efficiency achieved through physical and technological means, the revolutionary objective often exercised ideological struggle as an approach to realize social justice. These two objectives respectively constitute the topics of Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

The economic objective consisted of developments in agriculture, industry, technology, and military. It required the accumulation of material goods to guarantee domestic supply, infrastructure construction, and national defense. The economic agenda was partly determined by China's bleak historical reality. Before the onset of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, China's annual per capita national income was about 58 yuan or 15 U.S. dollars (1933 price). Being a predominantly agrarian society, China had less than one-fifth of a hectare arable land per capita (Lardy, 1987). In 1933, modern factories only produced two percent of the national GDP and employed 0.4 percent of the overall workforce (Naughton, 2007). The eight-year Second Sino-

Japanese War pushed the already weak economy to the brink of collapse. In 1950, China produced 1.1 kilogram of steel per capita, while India had 4.1 and America had 577; China generated 8.2 kW·h electricity per capita, which was much lower than India's 14.3 and America's 2,153 per capita (Z. Shen, 2009). The Cold War created further pressure but also a truce period for China to hasten its economic development (B. Wang, 2006).

Significant disagreements frequently recurred in the central CCP leadership regarding the pace of economic growth. Mao Zedong (1893–1976), with his revolutionary ambition and unshakable power, disregarded Stalin's warning (Z. Shen, 2009) and wrestled with Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai to speed up the economy (Y. Lin, 2009).<sup>4</sup> By 1952, China's agriculture and industry had surpassed their highest pre-PRC levels (Naughton, 2007). Between 1952 and 1957, China carried out its first five-year plan, which proved to be a tremendous success. On average, annual national income increased by 8.9 percent, with agricultural and industrial output growing by 3.8 and 18.7 percent. This formed a sharp contrast with China's economic growth in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – about 1 percent per annum, or with most newly independent developing countries, which sat at about 2.5 percent (Lardy, 1987).

Although Beijing's central planning and the Soviet Union's aid played indispensable roles in the success of China's economic development, all would have been in vain without the support of workforces. Yet China had been facing serious shortage of manpower, partly because of war atrophy. In the Second Sino-Japanese War, China lost 14 million lives (Mitter, 2013). The following Second Civil War caused 4,968,000 deaths (Rummel, 2017). Those who survived the wars were not sufficiently educated to constitute a capable workforce. Upon the founding of PRC, only twenty percent of Chinese people were literate (S. Guo, Wang, & Su, 1989). In 1947, among

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<sup>4</sup> Although Mao initially planned to complete the transition in between ten and fifteen years, it turned out that the transition was completed in merely a little more than three years (Y. Lin, 2009).

every 10,000 Chinese people, only three had received higher education, 38 had received secondary education, and 486 had received elementary education (S. Guo et al., 1989). In 1951, among college graduates there were roughly 10,000 who had degrees in the natural sciences, 25,000 in engineering, 10,000 in agriculture, 7,000 in medicine and health, and 60,000 in law and the social sciences (Lindbeck, 1961). The low literacy and skill level was a grave concern in light of China’s industrialization plan. It was estimated that during the first five-year plan period (1953–1957), higher and secondary education was able to supply 286,000 graduates, yet merely the industrial and transportation sectors alone required an increase of 395,000 skilled workers (Z. Shen, 2009).

Following Mao’s call, Ma Xunlun (1950), the Minister of Education, declared that education should foremost serve economic development. Part of this initiative was found in a massive expansion of the Chinese education system. Although economic difficulty kept China’s educational expenditure no more than 2.62 percent of the national GDP between 1952 and 1959 (W. Li & Liu, 2013), the accomplishment was impressive. By the end of 1965, it had 434 higher education institutes, increasing the 1947 level by 1.1 times. Student enrollment made a gigantic leap as well:

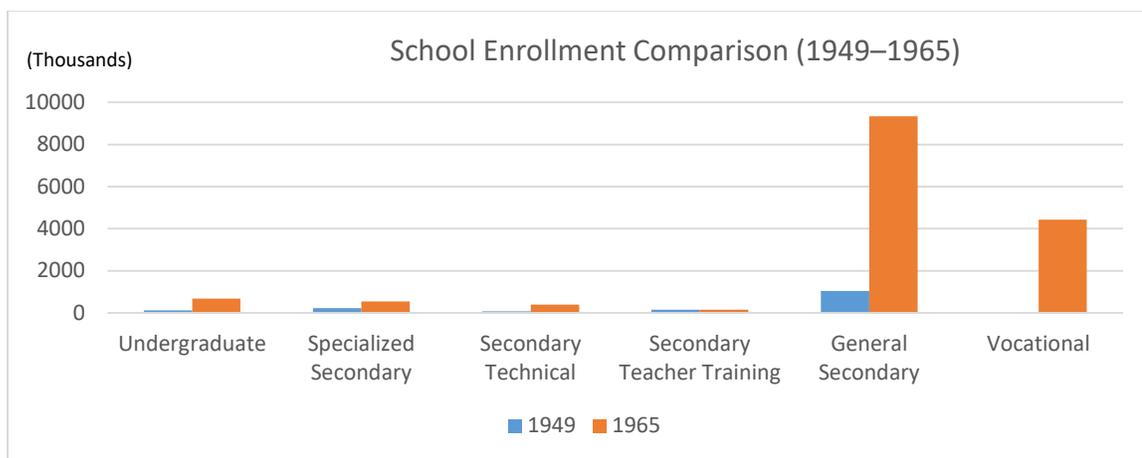


Figure 1. School Enrollment Comparison, 1949–1965. Source: (Ministry of Education, 1999)<sup>5</sup>

Besides expanding enrollments, increasing learning efficiency and labor activities became other means to meet economic demands. In Chapter Two, I discuss in detail how the pressure of accelerating economic growth eventually translated into increased school workload through the introduction of speed learning, intensive curricula, longer teaching hours, “voluntary” services, and labor education.

The CCP’s second objective, revolution, aimed to establish a proletarian society under its leadership. For instance, Between 1950 and 1953, it launched the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries to guard the regime from potential subversion by opposition elements, especially the followers of the Nationalist Party (Strauss, 2002; K. Yang, 2008). In 1955 and 1956, the Sufan Movement took place against alleged hidden counterrevolutionaries, this time including not only Nationalist functionaries but also wealthy families and intellectuals (Meisner, 1999). China’s participation in the Korean War and the campaign to learn from the Soviet Union also required massive ideological work.

The most important events of ideological struggle treated in this dissertation are the Hundred Flowers Campaign, the Anti-Rightist Campaign, and the Educational Revolution. By 1956, China had achieved considerable progress and stability. It largely completed the collectivization of industry, agriculture, and commerce. The thought reform of intellectuals appeared to be successful. The CCP’s policy toward the intellectuals oscillated between two directions: repression when the CCP needed to control the intellectuals, and relaxation when it needed the intellectuals to be productive and cooperative (Fairbank & MacFarquhar, 1987). As the CCP gradually gained confidence, it decided to grant intellectuals more freedom so that they could

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<sup>5</sup> Because of the Great Leap Forward, the data of 1958 and the early 1960s were greatly exaggerated. This figure adopts the data of 1965 instead as the parameter of comparison.

make a greater contribution (Xue, 2007). In 1956, Mao initiated the Hundred Flowers Campaign, encouraging intellectuals to express freely their academic, artistic, and political opinions. Unexpectedly, the Hundred Flowers Campaign led to severe criticism of the CCP's policies. The range of problems included the CCP's intervention with science and education, the suppression of dissents, and even the CCP's monopoly of power.

The unexpected outcome of the Hundred Flowers Campaign was compounded by several international events. In the mid-1950s the Soviet Union was undergoing major transformations. Nikita Khrushchev's (1894–1971) de-Stalinization movement and the Soviet Union's economic stagnation made Mao to question the Soviet Model. In 1956, protests against the communist governments took place in Poland and Hungary. Against this background, Mao called a halt to the Hundred Flowers Campaign and began to crack down on so-called "rightists" in 1957. At least half a million were labeled as rightists and suffered persecution, though most of them were later vindicated (Veg, 2014).

In 1958, Mao launched the Educational Revolution [*jiaoyu geming*] partly as an extension of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, and partly as a move to break away from the Soviet model (T. H. Chen, 1981; L. S. Zhu, 2008). The basic principles of the Educational Revolution maintained that education must conform to the CCP's leadership, serve proletarian politics, and incorporate labor production. Thus, one of its main objectives was to consolidate communist ideology. Foregrounding this aforementioned series of movements, in Chapter Three, I discuss how class/ideological struggles engaged students to develop a new citizenship identity.

China's twin objectives did not always complement each other and often resulted in conflicts. Torn by the two objectives, two major factions emerged in the Central Committee of the CCP. Mao and his followers, the "radicals", endeavored to reform social relations through

uncompromising class struggle, whereas the “moderates”, led by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, placed greater emphasis on economic development (Lieberthal, 1971; Y. Lin, 2009; Tsang, 2000). It should be noted though that, in the 1950s, the two factions remained tightly bound together by the same goal of building communism, and the difference in opinion was relative (Fairbank & MacFarquhar, 1987). The radicals recognized the importance of economic development, and the moderates were not blind to the necessity of class struggle, the defining feature of communism. Nonetheless, the factionalism frequently resulted in negotiations and contestations and accounted for many abrupt policy shifts (Y. Lin, 2009).

When it came to education, the radicals and the moderates saw the shaping of the citizens’ minds in different lights. Revolution required a large-scale dissatisfaction with the existing social inequality, enthusiasm for the envisioned outlook of communism, and willingness to make personal sacrifices. The developmental objective required less intense volition or group dynamics, and had a greater reliance on a self-disciplined, skilled, and cooperative workforce to achieve high productivity. The economic and political contexts thus often pulled education to different directions (T. H. Chen, 1981). The economic objective required students to contribute their physical labor to industrial and agricultural production (J. C. Cheng, 1959). Meanwhile, the revolutionary objective often assigned ideological and political education a more important role than academic training (T. H. Chen, 1981). Accordingly, I structure Chapter Two and Chapter Three to respectively address the twin objectives. Meanwhile, I do not wish to imply that economic and revolutionary activities were entirely separate from each other. In each chapter, I will highlight moments and debates where the two were entangled – such as labor education’s dual function in economic growth and class struggle, and the productive value of socialist virtues.

*Psychologists, educators, the CCP, and students*

Permitted by the archival thaw in the 1990s and the 2000s, historians of socialist China have made unprecedented findings about state ideology and high-level power struggle (H. Gao, 2017; Z. Shen, 2012). My dissertation moves beyond the executive, legislative, and judicial power (Eghigian et al., 2007), and is instead curious about the roles played by intellectuals, namely psychologists and educators, and explores how they navigated among official policies, disciplinary commitments, and their interaction with students. Historians have often cast intellectuals in a sympathetic light, lamenting on how they were humiliated, tortured, and persecuted in the Yan'an Rectification (1942–1944), the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957–1959), and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). However, an emergent body of scholarship, especially that on socialist literature, arts, and sciences (Cai, 2016; DeMare, 2015; Kremmentsov, 1996), is increasingly revealing that intellectuals were not always passive victims of a repressive political environment. Instead, driven by political pressure and inspired by the prospect of socialism, some submitted themselves to become functional parts of the state apparatus (A. Yu & Lei, 2006). Following this direction, my dissertation investigates how educators and psychologists contributed to the evolution of the new human ideal.

My decision to include education, in addition to psychology, as the context of my historical investigation is informed by Teo's (2017) program "psychological humanities". According to Teo, better understandings of mental life can be achieved through supplementing and enriching psychological science with insights from the humanities and social sciences.<sup>6</sup> Education was most intimately engaged with the human mind, and was a core site where the CCP attempted to bring

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<sup>6</sup> A history of psychology, as my dissertation is committed to, has the potential to tease out the socially constructed nature of psychologists' theories, vocabularies, methods, and social aspirations by situating them in historical events that conditioned their emergence and applications.

up new generations (Y. Cheng, 2009; Munro, 1971). As a major instrument of state power, formal education was responsible for instilling new generations with the knowledge, skills, and morality desired to ensure economic growth and social reproduction. Chinese revolutionaries especially valued the function of education in readjusting social relations (Price, 2012). Methods-wise, the field of education fortuitously contained excellent archival resources. Educators were acute observers and theorizers of students' mental activities from developmental and interactive perspectives. Educational policies, administration, theories, curricula, and records of teacher–student interactions were all indicative of how the mind was construed, and these materials are relatively well preserved.

In China, as well as in many other countries (Cirino & Miranda, 2015; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2014), psychology was closely tied to education.<sup>7</sup> In early 1950s, approximately over 85% Chinese psychologists worked at educational institutes (S. Pan & Chen, 1959), supplying vocabulary and concepts to inform teachers of students' mental development, learning patterns, and personal characteristics. Meanwhile, certain tension existed between the two fields. While educators were mostly oriented toward interaction with students in the real world, many psychologists were interested in producing experimental findings in the laboratory. As mentioned earlier, psychologists' interest in identifying basic laws and maintaining value neutrality was not favored in an era of revolution. Toward the late 1950s, as psychology became labelled as a reactionary science, educators exerted greater influence in defining the possibilities and social relevance of the human mind. Thus, the entanglement and differentiation between psychology and education creates a productive space for a historical investigation into, on the one hand, the

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<sup>7</sup> Historically, psychology was closely tied to education. After the Qing government started modernizing its school system, the new teacher training curricula consistently contained psychology imported from Japan and America (Z. Gao, 2013). In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Child psychology, educational psychology, and psychological testing became the most important branches of applied psychology due to their connections with education (S. Yan, 2015).

idiosyncratic disciplinary culture and social roles of psychological science and education, and, on the other, how knowledge of the human mind was made in a transdisciplinary context.

Psychologists and educators worked in relation to two more groups of actors. First, members of the Chinese Communist Party, who propelled China's social changes and penetrated the administration of schools. Second, in schools, the new human ideal was concretized in the student population. Although students constituted the object being known and modified according to the new human ideal, I argue that they were not passive raw materials molded by psychologists and educators at their will. Instead, I highlight moments in which, for instance, students took advantage of psychologists' theories to defend their "backward" thoughts, and overrode the authority of educators to compile their own textbooks.

These four groups of historical actors – psychologists, educators, the CCP, and students – all contributed to the assemblage of the new student ideal through complex processes of domination, cooperation, and negotiation. In so doing, they occupied different social positions, had different political commitments, and drew on different epistemic/cultural resources. The CCP attempted to solve the predicaments of war, poverty, and social conflicts with Marxist theories as well as by its pre-PRC revolutionary experience. The majority of psychologists, in contrast, were attracted by natural laws and had little interest in politics. Educators occupied a middle position between these two poles. While assimilating psychological vocabulary to inform teaching, they were simultaneously mindful of social affairs – whether out of professional ethics, under political pressure, or through internalizing the cause of revolution. Working together with considerable difficulty, the three groups contributed different forms of ideas – utopian imagination, cultural assumptions, scientific knowledge, and practically derived theories – to the new student ideal.

Further, none of the groups was free from intellectual and political disagreements from within. In the CCP, Mao had to constantly wrestle with his associates to promote his revolution-inclined strategy. The Central Committee and local cadres played very different roles in the making and enacting of policies. Likewise, educators and psychologists were frequently torn between scientific thinking and political advocacy. Even though most educators and psychologists endorsed China's revolution, they often disagreed on what was the best approach to it. In my dissertation, I draw attention to "radical revolutionaries" ("radical" for short thereafter), a group of members who were scattered in various social positions but shared tight adherence to official doctrines and radical progressive approaches to political affairs. One focus of my dissertation is to understand how the contestation and negotiation between the radical revolutionaries and their milder opponents undergirded the making of the new student ideal.

#### *Methods and materials*

As Cheng (2009) demonstrates in *Creating the New Man: From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities*, a most up-to-date, authoritative monograph, the new human ideal had a complex world history. According to Cheng, the idea of creating a new human originated in the Enlightenment, became appropriated and radicalized by the Russians, and entered China at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Alongside the CCP's growth, this ideal acquired distinctive Chinese features in its application to workers, farmers, intellectuals, and soldiers, and fully manifested its disruptive potential in the catastrophic Cultural Revolution (1966–1976).

In contrast to Cheng's broad synthetic thesis, my dissertation is of a modest scale. While Cheng examines the two-century-long history of the new human ideal, my dissertation focuses on the span of mere ten years. Instead of creating a top-down, panoramic narrative, my dissertation is more interested in scrutinizing the intricate historical processes at the grassroots level. Empirically,

I choose a localized, scaled-down approach to research data, primarily relying on the Beijing Normal University (BNU) archive and the journal *People's Education*. That the university and the journal each played key roles in linking the Ministry of Education with nationwide educators allows me to conduct a meso-level analysis of how fine-grained statements instantiated the “great idea” about the new human. Analytically, I step down from a bird’s eye view and reconstruct, from the ground, how historical actors’ horizons were configured by their social positions, intellectual backgrounds, and political engagements. These methodological decisions are indispensable for understanding the micro-mechanisms of acts of knowing. This standpoint permits me to reveal how the texts, persons, and institutions negotiated epistemic/political fissures in light of ongoing national events.

I focus on the new student ideal as a specimen of the new human ideal, because as the first generation under China’s socialist regime, the students’ youthful developmental process has the potential to bring the conceptualization of the new human ideal into light. Education particularly proves to be a productive research site. Although situated in local institutions and networks, educators were deeply concerned with China’s domestic and international affairs, and were mindful about delivering a suitable workforce to aid the revolution. They also were called upon to intervene when students were torn between love for the country and love for family, when local cadres demanded more personnel for free services, and when graduates refused to accept undesired job assignments. Thus, education was a transitional site that mediated between the state and individual, and between the ongoing social events and the imagined future socialism. By linking local dynamics to national and international affairs, I demonstrate that the making, circulation, expression, and transformation of the new student ideal was at once centralized and dispersed.

My interpretation is guided by both re-constructive and deconstructive strategies. On the re-constructive side, no matter how “strange” or “problematic” the new student ideal might appear to modern western readers, I aim to work out the historical rationality and plausibility with which the ideal was created. By doing so, I restrain from re-inscribing the binary opposition between, on the one hand, the image of an indoctrinated socialist subject repressed by crude totalitarianism, and, on the other, the notion of a self-knowing, agentic liberal subject that upholds the values of democratic capitalism (Krylova, 2000). On the deconstructive side, by approaching the new student ideal from a social history perspective, I argue that the ideal was not merely a utopian brainchild of international communist theorists including Marx, Stalin, and Mao. Instead, I identify how group dynamics, ideological environment, and social problems fueled its evolution. To put it another way, the new student ideal was not always an intellectual resource that guided educational practices; it was often a discursive product to name and justify emerging educational practices called for by socioeconomic agenda.

My main archival site, Beijing Normal University (BNU), was founded as the leading teacher training institute in 1902 by the Qing government to incubate China’s modern education. After surviving multiple international and civil wars and witnessing regime changes, in the socialist era, BNU continued to turn out the most promising teachers for all levels of education. It was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to develop national curricula and to host most of the Soviet educational advisors aiding China. With its strong leftist tradition, BNU powerfully propelled the Educational Revolution and the critique of psychology in 1958, in which the new student ideal became radicalized. A particular strength of BNU as a research site is that, as a teacher training institution, it contained a circular relation between the teacher and the student. Students at BNU were trained to become future teachers, so that they had a double identity in

living their university life. To a certain degree, the distinction between student and teacher collapsed at the conceptual level, but remained embedded in the power structure of the everyday activities on campus.

I collected my research data from the BNU Archive in 2015 and 2016. Located in the Academic Affairs Office [*jiaowu chu*] section between 1949 and 1958, these materials were mostly produced by BNU administrators, teachers, and students, but also included some documents from the elementary and middle schools affiliated with BNU, as well as from other educational institutes. These materials engaged with matters of the mind in both theoretical and practical terms. Theoretically, they represent the most advanced pedagogy of the country; pedagogical practice-wise, they richly describe the interactions among the BNU residents.

I supplement the BNU archival materials with the journal *People's Education* (S. Liu, 1950), founded in 1950 to serve as a key venue through which the Ministry of Education carried out “comprehensive guidance on the policies, ideologies, and expertise of education nationwide” (Editor, 2010, p. 4). Monthly volume of *People's Education* contained between twenty and thirty articles, including official policy statements, pedagogical theories, teaching practices, news, book reviews, editorials, and readers' letters.<sup>8</sup> Most of these articles were written by Chinese educators, while some were translated from the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup>

Historiographical analysis requires close attention to be paid to the production, circulation, and curation of historical materials. These issues take particular forms in my project. First, concerning the nature of data, the BNU archival materials were mostly circulated in small groups to address issues taking place inside the university. This feature permits me to investigate the

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<sup>8</sup> A few volumes are no longer available and are thus not covered in my dissertation.

<sup>9</sup> I conducted most translations of the BNU archival materials and *People's Education*. In some cases, i.e., important policies and Mao's writings, I borrowed existing English translations. All of my information about the Soviet Union was acquired through English and Chinese sources.

process of events in greater depth and detail. *People's Education*, in contrast, was a public platform that monitored nation-wide developments and delivered messages to a broad audience. Its content was curated to a greater extent through carefully-crafted media strategies. Second, due to the CCP's trial and error in governance, its conflicting objectives, and its negotiations with educators and students, the history of socialist China contained much fragmentation, incongruity, and even paradox. In consideration of this, my historiography highlights incoherence and multivocality. In fact, I argue that disarray was a key factor shaping the radical knowledge of the mind (Leuridan & Froeyman, 2012). Third, to overcome any potential limitation of the BNU archive and *People's Education*, I have moved beyond the two datasets and scouted out a wider range of policy documents, textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, memoirs, and diaries so as to identify counter-discourses whenever possible.

#### *Dissertation structure*

As mentioned earlier, my dissertation is comprised of three thematic chapters. The first chapter explores the processes of “exteriorization” and “politicization”.<sup>10</sup> Its conclusion requires a move away from scientific psychology's focus on the interior of the mind to a practical attention to China's socioeconomic milieu. The other two chapters respectively analyze the role of the human subject in China's economy and revolution. In each chapter, I highlight controversies and debates. The conflictual moments were particularly important in China's socialist history. China's revolution was centered around vehement clashes between different systems of ideas, moralities, and social relations, each entailing a particular way of understanding and governing the human subject. In response to this challenge, Mao and his followers applied a dialectical philosophy, one committed to the reconciliation of contradictions to achieve unity between opposite notions, such

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<sup>10</sup> This chapter includes some excerpts from my two published/forthcoming articles with reprint permission (Z. Gao, Forthcoming, 2015).

as materialism and idealism, collectivism and individuality, political loyalty and academic expertise (T. Mao, 1937a; Soo, 1983). Throughout my dissertation, I discuss how the application of dialectical philosophy turned out lopsided in shaping the new socialist student ideal.

In Chapter One, “Wrestling with Human Nature”, I inquire into the nature versus nurture controversy that manifested in Maoist philosophical and political theory, education, and psychology. Under American influence, in early 1950s China, natural-scientific psychology served as the basis of child-centered pedagogy by supplying developmental laws regarding capability, interest, individuality, and so forth (L. Guo & colleagues, 1949). Over time, as child-centered pedagogy came under attack, so did American-influenced psychology. As a substitute, Ivan Pavlov’s theory of higher nervous activity was hailed as an embodiment of Marxist dialectical materialism and enjoyed sheer popularity in China, until it was found to share similar deterministic assumptions with its American rival. Having denounced scientific psychology and its claim of moral authority of nature (Daston & Vidal, 2010), Chinese radicals proposed a sociopolitical ontology of the mind, which posited that the external sociopolitical environment was the ultimate source of mental development and individual differences.

In Chapter Two, “Laborizing Education”, I explore the extraction and management of three forms of labor in fulfillment of China’s economic tasks. First, China’s heavy demand for workforce translated into intensified learning and teaching, which, to students and teachers, constituted a form of “dutiful labor”. Second, because of China’s material hardship, rapid social transformation, and personnel shortages, students and teachers were increasingly called upon to perform a wide range of voluntary services on and off campus, which I call “free labor”. Third, the issue of the division of labor structured China’s pedagogy because education has the potential to give rise to labor-based class stratification. To forestall class stratification, educators attempted

to proletarianize students by requiring them to acquire well-rounded capabilities in an extravagant array of academic subjects and production skills. Controversies involved in this chapter include debates on student and teacher's capability, the conflict between "all-round development" and "teaching in accordance with aptitude", the struggle between the centralized placement system [*fenpei*] and students' career aspiration, and the pedagogical versus economic values of labor activity.

In Chapter Three, "Engendering Citizenship", I scrutinize the enactment of class and ideological struggles to develop a new citizenship identity in China's nation-building. First, I reconstruct the radicals' rationale as to why they prioritized ideological struggle over academic subjects, with a focus on the roles of faith, confidence, and devotion in/to the new regime. Next, I scrutinize how ideological education tapped into students' affective experiences through the methods of criticism, role modeling, and socialist competition. In the following, I discuss the reconfiguration of students' social relations on both spatial and temporal dimensions. Spatially, the weakening of intimate relationships created an uncurdled social space for building comradeship and imagining a proletarian community at distance (Anderson, 2006). Temporally, I discuss state-sponsored youth rebellion against the elder generations as an instance of China's central notion of governance, "people's democratic dictatorship". This chapter encompasses several controversies, including the "red and expert" debate, the conflict between loyalties to the family and the state, intergenerational conflicts, and the tension between democracy and dictatorship.

# Chapter One: Wrestling with Human Nature

## Historical background

### *Indigenous discourses in ancient China*

Ancient China began accumulating a rich body of knowledge about the mind more than two thousand years ago. As manifested in three major debates below, Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism, Mohism and other schools coexisted and competed with each other, contributing to the diversity of views (G. Yan, 1998). In the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC), the disagreements on whether human nature was good or evil led to the discussions on human beings' biological and social natures. The rise of Buddhism in the Northern and Southern dynasties (420–589 AD) kindled debates on whether the spirit was ever-lasting and free from corporeality. In the Song and Ming dynasties (960–1279; 1368–1644), Neo-Confucian philosophers backlashed against the Buddhist nihilism by reaffirming the reality of human life and the universe. Meanwhile, they bifurcated into two schools with disagreements on the relation between reality and the mind (S. Huang, 1999).

These metaphysical speculations on the mind formed the conceptual foundations and cultural resources with which the population was governed. For instance, the Confucian notion of benevolence [*ren*] differed from the Moist notion of universal love [*jian ai*] in that it took filial piety and brotherly respect as the starting point of social relations (S. Huang, 1999). Regarding the relation between the individual and the state, one of the most well-known social contracts was articulated by Mencius: “The person who gains the heart of the people reigns the world” [*de minxin zhe de tianxia*]. What Mencius had in mind was a “benevolent governance” [*ren zheng*], an ideal form of governance that based its legitimacy on the citizens' well-being. As lofty as this ideal was, in the history of China, as well as elsewhere, the heart of the people was more frequently captured *in the name of* benevolence rather than *through* benevolence (Foucault, 1979).

### *Modernizing education*

During western modernity's spread to China, which approximately began in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the human subject acquired new significance in relation to the fate of the nation. In 1839, the British canons crushed the Chinese governors' pride, marking the beginning of a series of international wars that would bring the Qing dynasty to its demise. China's shattering defeats led the Chinese to doubt their time-honored Confucianism and to start modernizing their society. In 1865, some Qing officials launched the Self-Strengthening Movement through emulating western military and industry. To these reformists' dismay, China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 signaled the failure of their movement (Elman, 2004). The contrast between China's continued decline and Japan's sudden rise made the politicians adjust their self-preservation strategy. They came to the realization that technology alone was insufficient to secure China; the human subject should play a more prominent role in reforming China, as demonstrated in Japan's successful Meiji Restoration. The human subject became a central object in China's modernization.

Thus, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in order to reinvigorate the society, the Qing government decided to forgo the centuries-old civil service examination, China's main examination mechanism to select governors since the seventh century. The content of the examination included primarily the classics and literature, but also military, legal, and technological competencies when relevant to bureaucratic governance (Elman, 2013). To a large degree, the examination tested the abilities of abstract thinking, memorization, and persuasion. A small portion of exam takers succeed to enter state bureaucracy, and the rest converted themselves into teachers, notaries, merchants, and so forth. Depending on varying levels of success with the examination, select members of the educated population formed a powerful gentry-literati class that welded scholarship with political power and economic activity. Besides enabling constant

supply of talents into a meritocratic governing body, the civil service examination also performed the function of moral education, as it ensured that newly chosen officials loyally served the ruling family and that those failed exam takers transmitted state-sponsored ideology to various corners of the society. But now, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the civil service examination appeared obsolete in front of the threat from western powers and domestic unrest. Guided by the idea “saving the country through education” (Schulte, 2013), China began to modernize its education, in which psychology was an integral component.

The Xinhai Revolution in 1911, which ended China’s two-thousand-year monarchy and gave birth to the Republic of China, quickly succumbed to decades of civil conflicts among warlords. Upon reflecting on the failure of his revolution, Sun Yat-Sen (1866–1925) wrote extensively on “psychological construction” as a prerequisite for building a new China (Y. Sun, 1917). According to Sun, attempts to restore monarchy occurred because the Republican Revolution did not receive adequate support from the populace. To ensure a successful revolution, the mass must be educated to have their obedience to imperial power replaced with democratic participation. Sun’s proposal of linking education, psychology, and revolution was well received by contemporary intellectuals (P. Zhang, 1934). Pan Shu, the later president of the Chinese Psychological Society, went to America to study education with the idea of “saving the country through education”, but it did not take long for Pan Shu to switch to psychology, as he came to think that American education may not necessarily suit China’s reality, and psychology could provide a conceptual foundation to pedagogy (S. Pan, 2007).

Educational psychology covered a wide range of topics, such as reading, comprehension, teacher’s psychology, and learning, with a particular emphasis on children’s developmental laws. Among the most important figures was Chen Heqin (1892–1982), who received training from

Edward Thorndike (1874–1949), a forerunner of educational psychology at Columbia University. Dissatisfied with children’s obedient role in traditional Chinese families, Chen argued that children should not be treated as just “little adults”. Instead, parents and teachers should respect children’s will and feelings, and educate in accordance with their unique mentality, such as activeness, curiosity, the propensity of imitation, and love for play. Chen’s view instantiated a child-centered pedagogy, which I will elaborate on shortly.

Psychological testing – the testing of individual mental differences – was another field that aided academic screening. It was an irony, as pointed out by Elman (2013), that the decline of civil service examination in China took place concurrently with the rise of mental testing in the West, which eventually entered China with a scientific cover and much popularity. To a certain degree, the precedence of civil service examination created an institutional space and cultural acceptance for psychological testing to enter the school. Taking advantage of China’s ascending scientism, psychologists branded their tests as being more objective and more capable of measuring innate aptitude instead of literary knowledge. The standardization of intelligence quotient by age further dovetailed with the modern school system (Zuo, 1940). Some psychologists adapted western tests, and others created their own. In the 1920s, psychological testing achieved tremendous popularity: one project between 1923 and 1924 covered over 100,000 students across 19 cities (Zuo, 1940). But, at the end of the decade, some scholars began to question the validity and social implications of psychological testing (J. Wang, 1933). Educational psychologists swiftly organized the National Association of Psychological Testing in 1931 to defend their cause (Y. Hu, 2009).

Educational psychology was one of the applied branches that could be aptly linked with China’s national concerns. In exceptional cases, even basic research bore signs of psychologists’

concerns with national affairs. Guo Renyuan<sup>11</sup> (1898–1970) pursued doctoral studies under the supervision of Edward C. Tolman (1886–1959), a leading behaviorist psychologist. Behaviorism was an approach that focused behavioral modification through manipulating external stimuli. Guo embraced the behaviorist tenets but went even further than most of his peers by proposing the full elimination of notions about heredity and instinct. Guo’s radical behaviorism provoked heated debates among established academics in America and China alike (Y. Hu, 2009). After his return to China in 1923, Guo raised cats that could live peacefully with mice and demonstrated that chick embryo’s behaviors *in vivo* were effected by external stimuli such as food and oxygen supply (Blowers, 2001). Although these laboratory-based experiments were not immediately associated with social affairs, they were part of Guo’s larger concern about human engineering as a means of revolution. Marxism, in his view, was neither scientific nor revolutionary enough in comparison to the behaviorist modification of human beings (R. Guo, 1927). Guo’s approach to strengthening individual psychology without unsettling the regime was well aligned to the agenda of the Nationalist Government. Taking advantage of his presidency over Fudan University and Zhejiang University, Guo implemented pedagogical measures informed by behaviorism. He revamped curricula, heavily punished academic misconduct and mediocrity, and made military training compulsory. These authoritarian measures backfired, leading to student revolts and accusations that Guo was a “hired scholar” [*yu yong xuezhe*] and a “fascist dog”. After bitter resignation, Guo continued to argue that “the source of illness of China was inherent in her own people” (E. Baum, 2015, p. 157), although years later he conceded that biological and genetic factors do play a role in determining behaviors.

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<sup>11</sup> In the West, Guo Renyuan published under the name of Zing-Yang Kuo.

### *The rise of the Chinese Communist Party*

In the 1930s the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rose as a formidable political and military force in rivalry with the Nationalist Party. In the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), Mao brought up the idea that the human subject was a crucial factor in shaping the outcome of war. Rejecting the idea that “weapons decide everything”, Mao argued, in anticipation of protracted war with poor equipment, that people were the decisive factor. To Mao (1938), “the contest of strength is not only a contest of military and economic power, but also a contest of human power and morale. Military and economic power is necessarily wielded by people” (p. 144). Mao’s idea mirrored Stalin’s talk in 1935, in which he criticized the idea that “technique decides everything”, claiming that “of all the valuable capital the world possesses, the most valuable and most decisive is people” (Stalin, 1935/2006, p. 338). Mao’s emphasis on human factor was far beyond the war context. In 1940, when still engaged in the war with Japan, Mao (1940) had proclaimed his wish of not only transforming China’s politics and economy, but also “to change the China which is being kept ignorant and backward under the sway of the old culture into an enlightened and progressive China under the sway of a new culture” (p. 340).

In the late 1940s, the CCP evicted both the Japanese army and the Nationalist Party from the mainland and gained control over most of the territory. The successful founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, however, did not draw the CCP’s mission to a closure. Rather, it merely signaled the transition from military action to the tasks of administration and revolution (Cai, 2016). Arising from rural-based warfare, the CCP was very new to city management, science and technology, and industry, yet it faced the task of repairing a war-torn economy with limited personnel support. The situation was exacerbated by the Cold War competition, which demanded

accelerated economic and military development. Regardless, the CCP was determined to launch one of the most groundbreaking revolutions, one that aimed to bring equality to all Chinese.

### *Socialist education in the making*

Upon founding the new regime, the CCP lost no time in reforming China's education. Waves of reforms persisted throughout the 1950s, affecting education at multiple levels, including funding, administrative structure, textbook and curriculum, enrollment, and pedagogy. In 1949, it was still too early for Chinese educators to fathom the degree to which the CCP would impose political directives to the schools. The marching of the revolution rapidly pushed forward the ideological frontier and required repetitive revisions of pedagogical materials. Little more than a year after its publication in 1949, *Principles of Modern Education*, which had been appointed by the Ministry of Education as a reference book for normal colleges, fell under criticism for containing passages discussing genetic inheritance and individual dispositional difference (L. Zhang, 1951c). The *Textbook for Peasant's Education*, originally published in 1949 and reprinted two years later, contained the introduction: "this is a textbook for cultural education, not for politics. It is mainly focused on the skills of reading and writing [...] should not be forcefully related to politics". The Department of Culture and Education of the Shandong Province, which had approved the textbook's release, was soon criticized by *People's Daily* for downplaying politics (S. Li, 1952).

Chinese educators had heard that new socialist education would "be based on the new educational experiences gained in the old liberated areas, incorporate useful experiences from old education, and borrow from the Soviet experiences" (J. Qian, 1949, p. 7), beyond which they had little idea about what socialist education would be like. As new national curricula were not yet available, educators scabbled ideas from several different sources to put together their teaching materials (L. Guo & and colleagues, 1949; Pepper, 1987). The heterogeneity of the ideas contained

in the 1949 BNU documents indicates that educators were making tentative explorations in an environment still not fully subjected to ideological pressure. As a 1956 document retrospectively commented: “A couple years ago in some teachers’ lectures, proletariat thoughts and capitalist thoughts coexisted in peace, and Ivan Andreyevich Kairov was paralleled by John Dewey. Just as confessed by some, their lecture notes used to be similar to assorted cold dishes with all kinds of contradictory opinions. Someone else had the metaphor that they used to pair dialectical materialist coat with idealist pants” (Anonymous, 1956a, pp. 3–4).

### **From child-centered pedagogy to politics-centered pedagogy**

#### *Child-centered pedagogy*

In the Introduction, I discussed the notion “exteriorization”, the shift of scholarly attention from the interior of the mind to the exterior sociopolitical milieu, and from individual behavior to societal objective. In education, the process of exteriorization found manifestation in a transition from child-centered pedagogy to a politics-centered pedagogy. Upon the founding of the new regime, many leading educators remained interested in an American-influenced child-centered pedagogy that they had been promoting in the Republican period (W. Fang, 2007). They recommended pedagogy to be based on students’ mental development, individuality, learning capacity, existing knowledge and experience, and family background (L. Guo & colleagues, 1949). The principle of “in accordance with students’ capability” [*liangli xing yuanze*] was in place to ensure school tasks were not too challenging (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1951a, 1952). Wang Jing (1950), a teacher of the Second Elementary School Affiliated with BNU, reminded impatient teachers that “after all, children are just children” (p. 2). According to Wang, the minds of children were premature, pure, and paper-white; their characters were yet to be developed.

Teachers and parents responsible for children's development because children were sensitive, love to imitate, and susceptible to suggestions.

It was suggested that children's problematic behaviors was not deliberate and should not be subject to adult standards (Wang, 1950). This view was expressed in how the teachers at the Elementary School Affiliated with BNU helped a student who was too shy to have himself bathed by the nurse, and another who was too scared to receive an injection (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1949b). The teachers viewed each case as normal and encouraged fellow teachers to find ways to help students overcome their weaknesses. Regarding troublesome students, it was advised that teachers should display extra patience, care, and understanding, avoid criticism and discipline as long as possible, and replace the bad habits with healthy activities.

Regarding assignments, teachers at Yucai Elementary School encouraged teachers to take into consideration students' capability and interest (L. Guo & colleagues, 1949). Unlike adults, they argued, children often felt confused and having nothing to say due to lack of writing experience. This was why they needed the teacher to provide a topic. Meanwhile, the Yucai teachers recognized that each child had his or her own life experience and interest, which could help teachers develop engaging topics. But how could they discover children's characteristics? The Yucai teachers suggested a variety of methods: interacting with students; observing their behaviors; listening to their voices; conducting survey, and so on. The Yucai teachers' own survey showed that, upon receiving teachers' feedback, students tended to first look at the letter grade, and then the comments, and finally the content being corrected. This finding was corroborated by one of the teachers' recollection of being a student:

When I was in elementary school, I always felt extremely happy to see that a lot of what I wrote was kept by the teacher. I would read my essay again and again. When more than

half of my essay or the entire essay had been corrected, I would feel very disappointed and leave my essay aside without finishing reading the comments. I did not wish others to look at my essay; I did not even want to read it again myself. (L. Guo & and colleagues, 1949, p. 41)

The conclusion they drew was that teachers should be supportive and compassionate when providing feedback. For example, when comments were needed, teachers should highlight the merits. When pointing out shortcomings, they should say “it is a shame that you did not...” or “it would be better if you...”, rather than “too bad”, or “this is unacceptable”, so as not to frustrate the student (L. Guo & and colleagues, 1949, p. 43).

In his *Pedagogical Methods* course at BNU, Professor Lu Shiying (1949) discussed children’s psychology using a more theoretical approach. According to Lu, teaching must meet students’ interest. What was “interest”? Lu meticulously divided “interest” into various categories: intrinsic versus extrinsic, practical versus theoretical, immediate versus remote, and interest as means versus interest as an end. Lu listed a dozen of methods to help stimulate students’ interest. Meanwhile, Lu made clear that interests alone were not sufficient to ensure academic excellence, and that a given interest was not necessarily applicable to every student. He argued that since children had different individualities and keep growing, a teacher should be familiar with each student’s talents, moral characteristics, aspiration, life experience, and family background. He cautioned that as the expanded enrollment after 1949 had led to a greater diversity, it was now more important for teachers to take into consideration student’s individuality.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Toward the end of his lecture outline, Lu posed the question for BNU students to discuss: “Is there contradiction between the development of students’ individuality and the spirit of collectivism?” (S. Lu, 1949, p. 13) The style of the entire document suggests that Lu leaned to a negative answer, but perhaps Lu’s answer mattered little in the upcoming turmoil concerning individuality and collectivism, on which I will elaborate in chapters two and three.

Child-centered pedagogy existed not only in BNU and its affiliated schools, but also, to certain degree, elsewhere in the country (Ding, 1950a; Su, 1951; Z. Zhang, 1950).<sup>13</sup> Three features could be discerned about child-centered pedagogy. Regarding mental development, the “intrinsic growth” view stressed children’s natural propensity to grow, requiring teachers to conform to developmental laws. Regarding capability, the “tender childhood” view recognized children’s mental limits and presented children to be premature, innocent and vulnerable, thus requiring patience, care, and compassion from teachers. Finally, regarding political engagement, this pedagogy saw children to be in a spontaneous life stage and not yet ready to participate in the revolution. The accountability of children’s problematic behaviors lay in the adult custodians rather than in the children themselves.

Clearly, educators at China’s leading institutes were theorizing and practicing an American-influenced humanistic pedagogy. However, it is also important to note that at a time of radical changes, many texts were multivocal, containing mixed ideas from varied sources with different commitments. Even child-centered educators made considerable efforts to cater for the official policies and the Soviet model (L. Guo & colleagues, 1949; S. Lu, 1949). Initially, their references to the official discourse may be unsystematic and superficial, but they signaled that things had already started changing. Within a few months, child-centered pedagogy started to fall under attack. By 1952, Zhang Yiyuan (1952), Head of the Department of Early Childhood Education at the Ministry of Education, had proudly claimed that “many kindergartens have changed the pure children-centered, individualistic education in the past, and started to emphasize

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<sup>13</sup> The new set of textbooks adopted by the Northeastern region was praised for following a few child-centered pedagogical principles: it reflected laws of learning and met youth’s expectations; the language was clear, easily understandable, and intriguing; and its content progressed from easy to difficult levels, from what children were familiar with to what was unknown, and from concrete phenomena to abstract ideas (L. Su, 1951).

the cultivation of the citizen moralities such as collectivism and ‘five loves’” (p. 15).<sup>14</sup> Child-centered pedagogy gradually gave place to a politics-centered pedagogy.

### *Politics-centered pedagogy*

An early sign of the decline of child-centered pedagogy could be found in the reception of Zhang Zhongchun’s thoughts. Zhang Zhongchun (1914-?)<sup>15</sup> used to work as a teacher and a journalist before joining the CCP in 1938. In the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region, he began editing newspapers while continuing teaching. In the 1950s, he worked at a few educational institutes in the Northeast region, Peking University, and North Vietnam. An effective administrator and contagious propagandist, Zhang (1956) believed that education should serve socialist politics. He suggested that students be guided to apply Marxist analysis to academic subjects, but was against politicized discipline of students’ everyday behaviors, which was a common practice. Further, Zhang (1949) was cautious about determining the scope, depth, and difficulty level of curricula in accordance with the stage of schooling.

In 1950, Zhang Zhongchun (1950), then Deputy Chief of the Department of Education of Liaoxi Province, published an article entitled “Understanding Children is an Important Prerequisite to be a Good Teacher” in *People’s Daily*, a leading national outlet of the CCP. In it, Zhang Zhongchun described school children’s psychological characteristics at various developmental stages, which he considered to be shared by all human beings regardless of social origin and should serve as the basis of pedagogy. Concerning personality, Zhang Zhongchun argued that children naturally had self-confidence and self-esteem, and were keen to compete with peers. Even though in class societies these instincts could evolve into selfishness, they should not be hastily labeled as an expression of exploitative consciousness. Zhang Zhongchun also recognized children’s natural

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<sup>14</sup> “Five loves” refer to “love of country, the people, labor, science, and public property”.

<sup>15</sup> There is limited information about Zhang Zhongchun as he was not a particularly well-known figure (1966-1976).

instinct to satisfy their desires. Sometimes children did not consider it to be immoral to lie or steal, and other times they mentally minimized the moral wrong to excuse themselves. These behaviors, according to Zhang Zhongchun, were natural instincts and should not be subjected to moral or political accusations.

Zhang Zhongchun's "intrinsic growth" view immediately incurred a rebuttal from Zhang Tengxiao (1915–2017), an educator, ideologist, and university administrator from Renmin University. After working as a teacher and propagandist, Zhang joined the CCP when he was 23-years old. Since then, he became a leading textbook editor. In 1945, in response to Mao's call for a productive movement [*shengchan yundon*], Zhang dedicated 37% of his textbook content to labor education (M. Liu, 2006).<sup>16</sup> Having taught in the harsh wartime, Zhang (1947) was ardent about discovering students' intellectual capacity and morale to overcome difficulties. Immediately after the founding of PRC, Zhang was assigned to help with the creation of Renmin University, which, under the guidance of Soviet advisors, incorporated several CCP-sponsored educational institutes. Renmin University was a hub in China's ideological education, with a particular strength in training cadres. Zhang lived up to the spirit of Renmin University as an administrator and professor, spreading Marxism and training a large number of cadres with sheer capability. With his talent, extensive revolutionary experience, and adherence to the party policies most of the time, Zhang carved out a successful career path, eventually assuming positions including the Party Committee Secretary and Vice President of Renmin University.

According to Zhang Tengxiao (1950), although Zhang Zhongchun presented some perfunctorily brief critique of western knowledge, he remained fundamentally under its influence. The major problem of Zhang Zhongcun's article, it was suggested, lay in that western knowledge

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<sup>16</sup> Labor education will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

reduced the human mind to its physiological basis. In the eyes of Zhang Tengxiao, sociopolitical factors played a more significant role in shaping human mental life than physiology did. Loosely quoting Liu Shaoqi,<sup>17</sup> Zhang Tengxiao argued that human beings did not have a fixed, invariable nature, and located children's selfish behavior in the political context: "The exploiting class considers that it is justified to exploit others' labor and establish their happiness on the pain of the mass" (p. 54). Zhang Tengxiao further quoted Lenin's (1920) speech delivered to the Young Communist League maintain that children's lying and stealth had a social origin:

The old society was based on the principle: rob or be robbed; work for others or make others work for you; be a slave-owner or a slave. Naturally, people brought up in such a society assimilate with their mother's milk, one might say, the psychology, the habit, the concept which says: you are either a slave-owner or a slave, or else, a small owner, a petty employee, a petty official, or an intellectual – in short, a man who is concerned only with himself, and does not care a rap for anybody else. (pp. 293–294)

Thus, according to Zhang Tengxiao (1950), children's lying and stealth must be explained in terms of a corrupted social environment rather than through "mysterious" notions about human nature (p. 54). Against Zhang Zhongchun's caution, Zhang Tengxiao insisted that ideological struggle was applicable to children, because "over the past, we have learned one lesson about thought work, that is, any problem can be solved on the ideological level, which is the ultimate solution" (p. 54).

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<sup>17</sup> Zhang Tengxiao cited Liu Shaoqi's (1941) theorization in *Mans' Class Nature*: "In class societies, class is a kind of human nature. There are two kinds of human nature. The first one is natural, which includes physiological constitution, cleverness, health, and instinct (for example, there are different kinds of physiological constitutions from a medical point of view). The other kind is social nature, which includes man's psychology, ideas, consciousness, viewpoints, habits, and needs. In class societies, all individuals exist as individuals of class." (p. 1) "This class phenomenon is gradually formed as people occupy particular positions and have particular life style in production, and it becomes a kind of human nature. But this kind of nature is social rather than natural; it is not inborn." (p. 5) Liu Shaoqi's text had much influence in the emergence of China's new knowledge about the human mind (Y. Cheng, 2009; Munro, 1971; L. Zhang, 1951c).

Zhang Zhongchun did not deny the influence of environment on children, but he paid most attention to children's innate tendency to grow. In contrast, Zhang Tengxiao's arguments assumed a sociopolitical ontology, stressing the power of social milieu on mental development. His view radically elevated the significance of external molding to the degree that it largely denied the natural aspects of the mind. Zhang Tengxiao's rejection of notions about "human nature" was attuned to the new regime's revolutionary ethos. Zhang Lingguang (1951b), who would soon assume the Vice Editorship of *People's Education*, argued in 1951:<sup>18</sup>

Education is an aspect of human endeavor to transform the world. Based on certain socioeconomic conditions, it is the planned transformation and cultivation of people with an emphasis on ideology. Whatever that is natural or grow organically is not perfectly fitted for human purpose or fully meets human interest; it necessarily requires more or less transformation by human efforts. Chinese ancestors had a saying "gems unwrought, can form nothing useful". It is very meaningful to use this as a metaphor for education. (p. 20)

The use of metaphor to define education is a common practice in the philosophy of education (Scheffler, 1978). Zhang Lingguang's (1951b) comment on the transformation of human nature through education reflected a metaphor that compared the teacher to the "engineer of human souls", a Soviet-imported idea that highlighted instrumentality and authority, and downplayed the student's individuality.<sup>19</sup> The Chinese gems saying quoted by Zhang Lingguang resembled another "molder" metaphor that compared education to a process of molding clay to certain shape (Scheffler, 1978). Both metaphors implied by Zhang Lingguang subjected the student, who was

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<sup>18</sup> A more detailed introduction to Zhang Lingguang will be available in Chapter Two.

<sup>19</sup> The metaphor of "engineer of human souls" was first proposed by Stalin in praise of Gorky, and later on reinvented by Mikhail Kalinin to celebrate the teaching profession (G. Chen, 2006). The same metaphor appeared in *People's Daily* and *People's Education* in 1951 (Y. Liu, 2017), and was later quoted by Zhou Enlai in the first National People's Congress in 1957 (G. Chen, 1997). Stalin did not make up the "engineer of human souls" metaphor on a whim. In mourning Lenin, Stalin (1924) opened his speech at the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets with the remark "we Communists are people of a special mould. We are made of a special stuff" (p. 47).

conceived of to lack essence or idiosyncrasy, to the teacher's authoritative hand. Zhang Zhongchun, in contrast, argued that teachers should recognize each child's characteristics; their task was to nourish the positive ones and mitigate the negative ones. This child-centered stance reflects a sculpture metaphor, according to which the teacher guided each student according to his/her characteristics, just as an artist sculpted according to the raw material's properties (Scheffler, 1978).

Having criticized Zhang Zhongchun's paper by relocating children from the realm of "nature" to politics, Zhang Tengxiao continued to challenge his view of children's capability. One of the tenets of child-centered pedagogy maintained that since children had not yet reached maturity, the amount of schoolwork must not exceed their capacity. Meanwhile, suggested Zhang Zhongchun, children needed enough physical activities, contact with nature, and timely alternation between study and rest. Mindful of the existing overburden, Zhang Zhongchun (1950) warned:

Do not take "diligent study" [*qin xue*] to mean the overly exhausting "running night bus" [*kai yeche*] or "get up upon the morning rooster crowing, and work until midnight" [*sangeng denghuo wugeng ji*]. Do not accelerate study via intensive course or competition, or require children to sit straight for hours-long lectures as if they were adults. (p. 5)

Zhang Zhongchun (1950) also suggested that teaching be based on children's life experience and ability of comprehension. For example, when lecturing on how landlords bullied peasants, or how imperialist countries oppressed Chinese people, teachers should supply concrete stories that could be immediately grasped by the children, rather than abstract terms and grand principles such as "the nature and motivation of revolution" (p. 5). According to Zhang Zhongchun (1950), children began to perform "simple understanding, thinking, imagination, and memory about what they are familiar with in everyday life" at the age of seven or eight (p. 5). Zhang Tengxiao (1950) disagreed with this assessment; to him, children were capable of doing so well before six. He asserted that

children of seven or eight were well capable of comprehending more abstract notions such as “the nature of revolution”. He also criticized Zhang Zhongchun’s application of notion of mental age, claiming it to be a western unscientific concept that should be banned. According to Zhang Tengxiao, intelligence test failed to consider students’ class and family background, so that the results were always biased in favor of the ruling class. Citing a Soviet finding that showed, contrary to the test results produced in France, that Soviet students were smarter than the French, Zhang Tengxiao implied that students in socialism were more capable than claimed by western scientists.

While not fully fledged, Zhang Tengxiao’s (1950) idea foreran an emerging discourse which maintained that psychologists and educators had underestimated students’ capability. In a few years, child-centered pedagogy would be accused of indulging children. An inspection of Chen Heqin’s former Shanghai Municipal Normal Kindergarten School reported that its students were desultory and lacked discipline because Chen’s pedagogy centered around their interest (“Live education” investigation team, 1953). This same shift occurred at other stages of education as well.

A Beijing University Professor complained about college education:

[In the past, teachers] one-sidedly emphasized the receptibility of materials, and considered only how to make students obtain knowledge easily. Sometimes [pedagogical content] could be taken in without requiring any thinking. [Teachers] tried to ensure students not encounter any difficulty, not even slight ones that can be overcome easily, as if any tiny difficulty would smash students’ confidence. [Teachers] approached students with indulging attitudes, lowered grading criteria, and were satisfied with performance measured against compromised standards. (M. Chen, 1953, p. 42)

Finally, the two educators disagreed on the extent of human agency. In reference to Marx, Zhang Zhongchun (1950) proposed that unlike adults, children tended to be powerlessly

surrounded by existing social arrangements beyond their comprehension or control. The environment had great power in shaping children's habits and interests, facilitating or modifying their talents, and affecting their maturation. Zhang Tengxiao (1950) refuted Zhao Zhongchun's distinction between adults and children. He argued that in primitive societies, children of twelve could already collect fruits or hunt animals; in the German-Soviet War, Soviet children created "countless heroic legends" (p. 56); in the Sino-Japanese War, Chinese children took part in production, propaganda, and intelligence – all these activities had transformed the external environment. He compared Zhang Zhongchun's view to western pragmatic educational philosophy, which exaggerated the environment's power to persuade the working class to adapt to an unjust social status quo. It should be noted here that Zhang Tengxiao had a specific definition of "environment" in mind. By prioritizing the social environment over the natural one, Zhang Tengxiao celebrated the role of politics in shaping mental development. Meanwhile, he criticized Zhang Zhongchun's loose definition of "environment", accusing it of disguising capitalism in the name of "nature".

Zhang Tengxiao certainly was a more prominent figure than his opponent. But, as I will demonstrate throughout my dissertation, the victory of politics-centered pedagogy could hardly be explained by his status alone. It was instead the result of millions of radical-minded educational theorists and teachers, who either self-censored their dissents, or adhered to an ascending state-sanctioned radical ideology with genuine enthusiasm or expedient careerism. It should be noted that Zhang Tengxiao's intellectual and political life was more complex that revealed in his rebuttal of Zheng Zhongchong. Ten years earlier, Zhang Tengxiao had clearly summarized his experience in editing textbook: "No matter how valuable textbooks are, they should not be adopted if they do not correspond to children's actual capacity or fail to stimulate their interest in studying" (J. Song

& Zhang, 2016, pp. 552–553). In 1962, as the “red and expert” debate had quieted down,<sup>20</sup> Zhang Tengxiao delivered a workshop to a group of young teaching assistants, when he commented that professional expertise was no less important than socialist consciousness (W. Zheng, 2013).<sup>21</sup> Nor did Zhang Tengxiao’s refusal of child-centered pedagogy prove him a callous person. In his instructions on how to administer exams, Zhang Tengxiao (1951) encouraged teachers to help relieve student’s anxiety; to remind those who neglected information; to provide alternative set of questions for those who lacked familiarity with the assigned ones; and to allow inspired students extra time. Zhang Tengxiao had a certain humanistic approach in mind and practice, though this approach was frequently combined with, and sometimes overridden by, a commitment to radical politics.

Zhang Tengxiao’s criticism of Zhang Zhongchun showcased how thoughts about human nature, labor, and citizenship were interrelated. The idea that mental development was primarily influenced by sociopolitical milieu instead of innate potential was a foundational thesis that set in motion the other two: that Chinese students were more capable than indicated by the western scientific knowledge, and that they should engage in class struggle. Zhang Tengxiao’s four-page article in 1950 was still far away from exhausting the complex sociopolitical implications involved in the Chinese debate about human nature. As time moved on, his argument would be expanded by more and more educators, and applied to the youth and adult populations as well.

Zhang Tengxiao and his fellow radicals displayed unusual optimism about the malleability of the human mind. Throughout my dissertation, I will argue that their optimism stemmed from a

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter Three for a more detailed account of the “red and expert” debate.

<sup>21</sup> In 2016, the 102-year old Zhang Tengxiao and his colleague co-edited an article summarizing his educational thoughts and practices, which highlighted Zhang’s writings in 1940 on textbook meeting students’ age characteristics and capacity (J. Song & Zhang, 2016). Before passing away in 2017, Zhang refused to be buried at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery, an extraordinary honor bestowed to the highest-level CCP officials only.

welter of intellectual, economic, and organizational factors. To begin with, I discuss in the following section how Mao's dialectical materialism underpinned Zhang Tengxiao's optimism.

## **Dialectical materialism and psychology**

### *Dialectical materialism*

The radicals' subversive understanding of human nature can be traced to Mao's (1937b, 1937a) theorization of dialectical materialism, which reconciled idealism and materialism, two antagonistic camps of philosophy that he deemed problematic. According to Mao, idealism maintained that spirit (or consciousness, ideas, the subject) was the cause of everything in the world. It found manifestation in superstition, religion, and other unfounded beliefs. A primary problem with idealism was that, according to Mao, it overemphasized the power of man's consciousness and ignored the laws of the material world. Idealism served the ruling class's interest by consolidating its ideological foundation. For example, idealists considered heroes as makers of history and said that the only way to revitalize the nation was to restore traditional virtues. Idealism made the working class believe that their oppression was destined by fate, so that they could not see the possibility of emancipation (Z. Qi, 1957; Teaching and Research Unit of Educational Psychology, Northeast Normal University, 1956).

In opposition to idealism, materialism held that matter was the cause of everything in the world. In terms of natural history, it argued that consciousness depended on materiality. When the society was concerned, it was said that the economic base determined the superstructure – namely politics, law, philosophy, arts, and education. Regarding human beings, it was said that physiological basis determined the mind. However, materialism in its radical form – namely mechanistic materialism – also had problems. In Mao's (1963) words, it “did not emphasize the activity of thought in knowledge, it only assigned a passive role to thought and regarded it as a

mirror reflecting nature” (p. 274). In other words, Mao saw mechanistic materialism as a deterministic philosophy that denied the agentic power [*zhuguan nengdong xing*] of human consciousness, and, by extension, the prospect of revolution. In response to Mao’s philosophy, psychologists and educators dismissed several traditional Chinese sayings as embodying mechanistic materialism: “heroic father gives birth to courageous son” [*Laozi shi yingxiong, erzi jiushi haohan*], and “it is easier to move rivers and mountains than to change a person’s basic nature” [*jiangshan yi gai, bingxing nan yi*] (Psychology Teaching and Research Unit, Kaifeng Teachers’ College, 1958, p. 6; Z. Yang, 1958, p. 6).

Mao’s critique of mechanistic materialism largely resembled the Bolsheviks’ philosophical stance (Bauer, 1952; Fritzsche & Hellbeck, 2009). In Russia in the 1910s and 1920s, two interpretations of Marxism co-existed. The mechanistic orientation stressed the deterministic aspects of Marxism, predicting that capitalism was destined to collapse due to its intrinsic antagonism. By implication, the progress of history would spontaneously change the Russian society. This stance was disliked by the Bolsheviks and received the label of “vulgar Marxism”. The Bolsheviks proposed a radical version of Marxism by exploiting its revolutionary aspects. Their radical stance, labeled as “dialectic Marxism”, rejected determinism and provided theoretical justification to the Bolsheviks’ active role in intervening in social and economic affairs. These two conflicting philosophical positions had implications on understandings of the human mind. The mechanists argued that a person was passively shaped by inherited and environmental factors, and thus held little responsibility for his or her actions. They also assumed that humans were born to be good, so that education should provide a free space for this positive potential to flourish spontaneously. The dialecticians, in contrast, saw that human behaviors were purposeful and malleable. According to them, a person had much power – and responsibility – to transform the

world as well as him/herself. In the 1930s, the Stalinists won the philosophical debate through factional struggles. Guided by the Stalinist interventionist ideology, the Soviet Union began to replace the previous European and American-influenced pedagogy that allowed spontaneous learning in a unconstrained environment with deliberately directed training (Bauer, 1952).

The Maoist and Soviet critique of mechanistic materialism found expression in Zhang Tengxiao's article. According to Zhang Tengxiao, Zhang Zhongchung committed mechanistic materialism for emphasizing physiology and the environment in determining mental functions. Zhang Tengxiao's critique regarding physiology was relatively straightforward. If a person's behavior was driven by natural impulses, it would not seem plausible to subject this person to a political struggle. If one's capability was determined by his/her physiological constitution, there would be a significant obstacle to the objective of high productivity.

More complex than physiological determinism was environmental determinism – the idea that human's characteristics and activities were determined by environment, including education (Cornforth, 1953). Concerning this, Zhang Tengxiao's critique mirrored Marx's thesis, maintaining that similar to physiological determinism, environmental determinism downplayed the power of human agency. At first glance, environmental determinism may resemble the radical revolutionaries' "external molding" thought in that they both emphasized the power of environment. But Zhang Zhongchung's "environment", according to Zhang Tengxiao, was fixed; the environment for "external molding", in contrast, referred to an environment that had been purposefully designed to cause desirable changes. As elaborated by Marx (1845):

The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing and that, therefore, changed men are produced by changed circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that circumstances are changed precisely by men and that the educator must himself

be educated. (p. 7)

This was why, as mentioned earlier, Zhang Tengxiao (1950) distinguished the social environment from the natural one because it was under the control of human will.

To overcome idealism and materialism, which were both seen to be flawed, Mao developed his theory of dialectical materialism, which recognized the interaction between matter and idea. Amending mechanistic materialism, the dialectical principle maintained that under appropriate circumstances, human beings were capable of transforming the world as well as itself. With the dialectical principle, Mao proudly proclaimed that “man must conquer nature” [*ren ding sheng tian*] (Shapiro, 2001, p. xi). Throughout my dissertation I will analyze how Mao and his radical followers failed to maintain the balance purported in dialectical materialism and led to an overemphasis on human agency. To begin with, I discuss the ascendance of Pavlovian psychology in meeting Mao’s interventionist ideology.

#### *The purging of western psychology*

The CCP’s treatment of psychology was part of its ideological campaign. While generously funding natural sciences in coordination with industrialization, it suppressed social and human sciences as they were laden with ideology to a greater extent. Although psychologists claimed their discipline to be a natural science, its subject matter, the mind, was highly pertinent to ideology (N. Zhong, 2008). Although psychologists had played a considerably active role in the Republican period in education, military, and mental hygiene (S. Yan, 2015), under the new regime they were largely suspended from performing practical tasks, and spent most time criticizing their previously favored American schools and learning Pavlov’s theory (Brown, 1981). Along with Zhang Tengxiao, educational psychologists denounced intelligence testing and the preceding civil service examination for producing bourgeois-favoring results (S. Chen, 1957). They also condemned

Dewey's writings for isolating education from social relations (Hubei Renmin Chubanshe, 1955). Some accused psychoanalysis of embodying idealism with its notion of unconsciousness. They also said that its theory of irrational instinct as a primary drive of human behavior justified the aggressiveness of imperialism (Anonymous, 1955a).<sup>22</sup> Other schools, including functionalism (Z. Zhu, 1956a) and Gestalt psychology (T. Fu, 1957), were all subjected to impassioned accusations.

Of particular note was the purging of behaviorism. A most vocal critic of behaviorism was Ni Zhongfang (1903–1974). Ni received training from Karl Lashley (1890–1958), a leading behaviorist at the University of Chicago, and completed his dissertation with behaviorist methods (C.-F. Ni, 1934). Yet it was precisely this person who castigated behaviorism most vehemently. According to Ni (1957), behaviorism was born in the 1920s, a time of capitalism's decline after the First World War. As capitalists were fearful of their dethronement by the rising revolutionary consciousness, behaviorism came as a rescue as it denied the existence of consciousness itself. Behaviorists' favorite metaphor that compared human to machine revealed their hidden agenda to generate machine-like obedience in workers. Ni also attacked the metaphor that compared human to animal. According to him, this metaphor saw workers as stupid, submissive cows and horses, having no idea of resistance against exploitation. Underlying Ni critique of behaviorism was an impulse to create a theoretical space to allow human agency (Q. Yang, 1957).

It should be noted, though, that unlike in America, in China behaviorism had rarely been applied outside of academic settings. So, what was all the fuss about behaviorism? I argue that the critique of behaviorism, as that of other schools, was a means of consolidating official ideology. The anxiety was articulated by Tong Shuye (1908–1968), a historian who, after receiving successful psychiatric treatment, became a convert and popularizer of psychiatry, including

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<sup>22</sup> In so doing, a 1940 translation of R. Osborn's volume on integrating Marxism and psychoanalysis was disregarded without refutation (Osborn, 1940).

behaviorism, in the 1940s. Under the new regime, Tong was pressured to criticize himself and his writings. In 1953, Tong (1953) confessed his changing attitude toward behaviorism:

A little before the liberation of Shanghai, I had initially realized the problems in behaviorism, thanks to my reading of dialectical materialism. In my correspondences with friends, I had pointed out the shortcoming of behaviorism – mechanistic materialism. However, behaviorism had exerted too deep influence on me, [...] preventing me from completely accepting the dialectical materialist view of the universe. (p. 784)

Here, Tong channeled his critique of behaviorism toward a glorification of dialectical materialism. Guo Renyuan, following Watson's lead, had proudly claimed that behaviorism was a pure science that had no connection to philosophy. This view reflected mainstream psychologists' century-old effort to secure themselves an independent scientific status, but their anti-philosophical stance was not endorsed by the CCP's proselytization of Marxism. China's official discourse, as Ni (1957) reasserted in his critique, maintained that there was no escape from philosophy, and dialectical materialism was the only correct philosophy to guide psychological research.

The purging of western schools went hand in hand with the enshrinement of Soviet psychology. Jing Qicheng (1958), who later became a leader of Chinese psychology, explained the contrast between western psychology and Soviet psychology in historical context:

In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, [...] two schools of psychology simultaneously emerged in the European continent [...] In Russia, Sechenov established materialist psychology based on Russian democratic philosophy; in Germany, Wundt established idealistic psychology on the basis of 18<sup>th</sup>-century empiricism and German classical philosophy [...] The two schools were completely opposed to each other, and led modern psychology into two trajectories [...] They both reflected the fundamental social conflicts

of the era between proletariat revolution and its suppression by the bourgeoisie. Sechenov's psychology reflected the Russian worker-farmer emancipatory movement. Wundt's ideas were formed when the German bourgeoisie was repressing the workers' movement. (p. 1) Apparently, Jing failed to point out the fact that Wundt actively participated in the workers' movement in Heidelberg (Bringmann, Ungerer, & Bringmann, 1995).

### *Pavlovian psychology and dialectical materialism*

To a certain degree, Ivan Sechenov (1829–1905) was made into a historical symbol because he was considered to have heralded the research of Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936), whose theory of higher nervous activity was taken up as the golden standard in guiding Soviet and Chinese psychological research. It is famously known that during his physiological experiment, Pavlov noticed that after repetitive feeding accompanied by bell ringing, dogs started salivating after hearing the bell even without the presence of food. In other words, he identified a method through which dogs acquired new behavior, which he called “classical conditioning”. With this method, Pavlov explored the neural basis of the mind and built a theoretical system to explain mental changes.

Pavlov had been, for most of his life, an outspoken critic of the Bolshevik regime regarding politics, science, and religion (Joravsky, 1989). The Bolsheviks, however, made painstaking efforts to support Pavlov's research in hopes of winning him over (Todes, 2014). Pavlov received the Bolsheviks' exceptional treatment not only because he was an internationally renowned scientist and intellectual,<sup>23</sup> but also because his research could be appropriated to justify Marxist ideology. According to the official narrative, Pavlov's research on the neural basis of the mind embodied dialectical materialism, which maintained that human consciousness originated from the physiological basis and could at the same time feed back to it. His conditioning method, with its

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<sup>23</sup> Pavlov was the first Russian Nobel laureate and received much international respect as a defender of religion, scientific freedom, and democracy (Todes, 2014).

ability to modify dog's behavior, was said to promise the cultivation of the new socialist human.

In Pavlovian theory, there were two kinds of reflexes, or associations between external stimuli and behavioral response (Todes, 2014). The unconditioned reflex referred to inborn associations, such as that between food and salivation. The conditioned reflex referred to acquired associations, such as that between bell ring and salivation, which was initially bridged by food but later on became independent. The emergence of conditioned reflex out of the unconditioned one could be understood as learning, through which human beings acquired social skills beyond natural instincts. It was said that with this discovery, Pavlov saw that:

Animal behavior can be controlled, and human being, with his instincts and social nature, could and should become a self-regulated system, and master the existing natural forces... physiology, as broadly defined, along with other good sciences, is gradually making human a powerful creature. Human being not only gradually conquers the world's natural force and utilize it for human good, but also begins to slowly grasp his own natural force to pursue happiness. (Department of Health of the Chinese Military Committee, 1954, p. 17)

Another major component of Pavlov's theory was the distinction between two signal systems (Todes, 2014). The first signal system contained conditioned reflexes linked with physical stimuli – food, for example, in the case of dog salivation. Closely associated with natural instincts, the first signal system was shared by animal and human being alike. The second signal system contained reflexes linked to symbolic stimuli, such as words. It was at a higher level than the first one and was possessed only by human being, who was capable of complex thinking. The second signal system was what made human society and culture possible. Pavlov's theorization of the two signal systems was said to substantiate Marx's discussion of human evolution through language (Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, 1952). In either case, Pavlov's theory was

interpreted to have reconciled human being's natural and social states of existence. The emergence of conditioned reflex out of the unconditioned one, as well as the evolution of the second signal system on the basis of the first, both highlighted human being's potential to transcend the constraints of biology and achieve a more desirable, socially-oriented existence.

It should be noted, however, that contemporary Marxist scholars outside the communist block often refute the association between Pavlov's theory and Marxism.<sup>24</sup> They argue that Pavlov's approach was fundamentally mechanistic, reductionist, and incompatible with the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin (Joravsky, 1977; Spencer, 2004).<sup>25</sup> Further, Chinese psychologists clearly violated the Marxist tenet on integrating theory and practice, as their Pavlovian neurological research left many social issues disregarded (S. Pan, 1960). Nonetheless, Chinese psychologists made strenuous efforts to establish the connection between Pavlov's theory and dialectical materialism (S. Chen, 1958). In numerous texts, Chinese psychologists rejected idealism with the argument that the material world preceded consciousness, which was a product of the brain. They praised the idea that the "brain is the organ of mind" to be a "glorious" statement of dialectical materialism (Z. Zhu, 1952, p. 40). Thus, they celebrated Pavlov's theory for providing a scientific grounding to dialectical materialism (Committee for learning Pavlov's theory at the Ministry of Health, 1954; Department of Health of the Chinese Military Committee, 1954; Teaching and Research Unit of Educational Psychology, Northeast Normal University, 1956; Xia, 1956).

Pavlovian psychology's entanglement with dialectical materialism ran parallel with Michurin-Lysenko genetics. In the Soviet Union, the western heredity-based Mendel-Morganism

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<sup>24</sup> Although Vygotsky's work is often viewed by today's scholars as an emblem of Marxism (Elhammoumi, 2006), at that time it was suppressed until Stalin's death (Spencer, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> Dmitrii Fursikov, Pavlov's assistant and colleague, had success in implementing a few dialectical principles into Pavlov's theory (Todes, 2014). However, his ideas were barely found in Chinese psychology.

theory was replaced by Ivan Vladimirovich Michurin (1855–1935) and Trofim Lysenko’s (1898–1976) theory, which maintained that human beings could fundamentally shape organic changes, including the evolution of species, by manipulating the environment (Lysenko, 2001; Schneider, 2003). This emphasis on human control instantiated the communist pursuit of conquering nature: agricultural products could be exponentially increased, and food plants could be improved to grow in previously hostile environments. In China, the Michurin-Lysenko theory exerted widespread impact through the China Michurin Study Society, agricultural schools, and research stations. Critics of the Michurin-Lysenko theory were removed from posts. In the discussion of biological science, dialectical materialism was frequently referred to as its philosophical basis. Soviet advisor Fumin (1953) once commented during an interview with BNU professors:

Science does never exist outside of politics; a science must follow idealism if it does not follow dialectical materialism. Take Michurin’s biological theory and Morgan’s reactionary theory as examples. Michurin’s theory is based on the Marxist and Leninist scientific materialism, therefore it could transform the nature, capable of relocating trees to cold regions where they bear fruits. It is based on dialectical materialism. (p. 4)

However, as argued by Schneider (2003), the rise of Michurin-Lysenko theory in both the Soviet Union and China was achieved through propaganda. It gradually became clear that the Michurin-Lysenko theory did not create any sustained improvement in plant production. Around 1952 it started to be criticized by leading Soviet biologists. In the following years, it caught the CCP leaders’ attention. Influenced by Lu Dingyi’s (1956b) “Double Hundred” address, the Lysenkoites lost power in the “Genetics Symposium” in 1956.

### *The rise of Pavlovian psychology*

In the late 1940s and the early 1950s, Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) heavily intervened in the sciences.

Besides serving national security and industrialization, the Soviet sciences also became the battle ground of ideological struggle (Dewitt, 1958; Pollock, 2006). In order to maintain the government's legitimacy and the people's worldview, it was necessary for scientific research to conform to communist ideology. Scientific accomplishments could be said to demonstrate the superiority of the Soviet social system. In the Soviet science wars, Stalin and his trusted lieutenants directly intervened in six important scientific debates concerning philosophy, biology, physics, linguistics, physiology, and political economy. Regarding Pavlov's theory, in 1950 Stalin established the Scientific Council on the Problem of the Physiological Theory of Academician I. P. Pavlov, which served as a watchdog to guarantee the Pavlovianization of physiology and related disciplines, including psychology (London, 1952). Between June 28 and July 4 1950, the USSR Academy of Sciences and the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences jointly sponsored a conference to combat western influences on Russian disciplines related to Pavlov's theory (Brushlinsky, 1997; Gordon, 1951; London, 1951). Costing nearly half a million rubles, this conference was attended by 1400 physiologists, medical scientists, psychologists, and others. Under Stalin's directives, this conference granted the highest authority to Pavlov's reflexology and relentlessly criticized scientists who deviated from it.

Before 1949, many Chinese intellectuals did not have a favorable view of the Soviet Union (M. Yu, 2003). Pavlov's theory had sporadically entered China since the 1920s, but had no major impact (Y. Li & S. Yan, 2014). In the early 1950s, the CCP spared no effort to promote Pavlov's theory via translation, scholar visits, workshops, curriculum reform, and criticism and self-criticism regarding one's adherence to Pavlov's theory (R. Cao, 1951; Learning Pavlov's Theory Workshop Committee, 1953). On August 21 of 1953, the Ministry of Health directed the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the All-China Federation of Natural Science Societies to hold a

“Learning Pavlov’s Theory Workshop” in Beijing (Editor, 1953d). This workshop was momentous in terms of scale, prestige, and meticulousness. The opening speeches were given by the leaders of the sponsoring institutions. The workshop involved over 100 leading psychologists, physiologists and medical scientists representing universities and research institutes across the country (Learning Pavlov’s Theory Workshop Committee, 1953). With a carefully planned curriculum, it required scientists to conduct group discussions, attend keynote speeches, write reports, and visit laboratories. In a manner close to worship, the workshop held two ceremonies: one celebrating Pavlov’s 104<sup>th</sup> birthday, the other mourning Pavlov’s death seventeen years previously (Editor, 1953b, 1953c).<sup>26</sup> The intensive training lasted for 40 days. It was reported that the attendants arrived at the consensus that it was necessary to guide psychology with Pavlov’s theory, an embodiment of Marxism. A number of scientists confessed that they had misunderstood Pavlov’s theory and now they were determined to make corrections (Learning Pavlov’s Theory Workshop Committee, 1953). In many aspects, this event was reminiscent of the Pavlov Session in the Soviet Union held three years ago.

Under the CCP’s painstaking promotion, Pavlov’s theory quickly attained the highest authority in psychology. Having denounced western approaches, now Chinese psychologists used Pavlov’s theory to define their research methods, objectives, and topics such as higher nervous activity, memory, mental development, and language (Z. Gao, 2015). It should be noted that the Chinese adoption of Pavlovian psychology did not merely result from top-down political pressure. In the West, philosophical speculation about the mind existed for many centuries, but it lacked the methodological toolkits to form an independent scientific discipline. The belated appearance of modern scientific psychology in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century owed much to several developments at the

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<sup>26</sup> There was no special meaning attached to the number 17 or 104 in the Chinese culture.

intersection between physiology and the mind, such as brain function and the correlation between physical stimulus and sensation. Similarly, Pavlov's research extended from physiology to the mind, and was taken up by many Chinese psychologists to consolidate their natural-scientific status. After years of vowing of loyalty to Pavlov's theory, and by grafting it onto dialectical materialism, psychologists gradually gained the CCP's trust. In 1956, as part of the liberalizing Hundred Flowers Campaign, the State Council directed scientists to develop a long-term development plan, which permitted psychologists to conduct research of practical relevance.

Chinese writings generated under the Pavlovian framework fell into three categories: personal experience of learning Pavlov's theory, empirical research, and theoretical speculation. The first category consisted of personal reflections on learning Pavlov's theory. Authors of this genre glorified Pavlov's ingenious research and personal charisma, reported their thought reformation through reading Pavlov's writing, and reaffirmed how Pavlov's theory embodies dialectical materialism (Committee for learning Pavlov's theory at the Ministry of Health, 1954; Learning Pavlov's Theory Workshop Committee, 1953). This genre illustrated how Pavlov's theory could help establish dialectical materialist outlook, as proposed by educators.

Second, there was a limited number of empirical studies (S. Pan, 1958). Similar to Pavlov and his team (Todes, 2014), Chinese psychologists were unable to establish a complete chain of reflexes, which would link individual stimulus-response reflexes to explain complex behavior and thought. This led to a lurking problem regarding the practicality of Pavlovian psychology. Under the Pavlovian framework, Chinese psychologists made little empirical discovery to aid pedagogy even though most of them worked in departments of education. Psychological vocabulary applied in teaching was either remnants from the western knowledge system or, in the case of Pavlovian notions, speculative in nature. The CCP was famed for conducting thought work with the aid of a

massive network comprised of cadres, writers, and artists through various organizational and literary techniques, such as “remembering [past] bitterness and appreciating [present] sweetness” [*yi ku si tian*] and criticism and self-criticism (Farquhar & Berry, 2004). These practices barely required expertise from psychologists (Lifton, 1961; Perry, 2002). In rare occasions, psychologists attempted to perform politics-related tasks in alignment with the official ideology. In 1955, BNU psychologists coached teaching interns to assess students’ psychology of collectivism, but found themselves lacking appropriate expertise (Z. Zhang, 1955).<sup>27</sup> Later, BNU no longer required teaching interns to conduct psychological assessments (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1958c).

In comparison to empirical studies, much more writings were speculative in nature, which was the third category of Pavlovian products. In tandem with the critique of western schools, these speculative writings served as a means to establish a dialectical materialist outlook among students (S. Chen, 1957; Teaching and Research Unit of Educational Psychology, Shanghai Number Two Teachers College, 1957; Z. Zhu, 1952). Many psychologists acutely perceived their potential in providing a scientific rhetoric to Marxist dialectical materialism. As commented by Jing (1958), “the basic question of psychology is precisely the key question that determines materialist and idealist worldview, namely how human beings know the external world as well as the relation between consciousness and matter” (p. 4). Informed by Soviet literature, Chinese psychologists extensively speculated how different mental processes – perception, dreaming, learning, psychopathology, and so on – could have taken place in Pavlovian terminologies without attempts of empirical verification (Psychology Teaching and Research Unit, Southwest Normal College, 1955; Teaching and Research Unit of Educational Psychology, Northeast Normal University, 1956; Teaching and Research Unit of Educational Psychology, Shanghai Number Two Teachers College,

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<sup>27</sup> They assessed, for instance, each student’s attitudes toward the collective, responses to criticism, and remaining capitalist ideas.

1957). A most popular topic was how socialist mental transformations took place in the Pavlovian framework. For instance, learning was essentially the establishment of new neural reflexes; thought reform resulted from the replacement of old neural patterns with new ones; pleasure or pain took place depending on whether external stimuli satisfied the existing neural patterns; and so forth.

Liu Zeru (1897–1986) was a loyal CCP member who started pioneering Marxist psychology in the 1930s and steadfastly criticized Pavlov's theory as essentially mechanistic (Z. Guo, 1987; Z. Liu, 1985). In the 1950s, he suffered politicized criticism for remaining vocal about Pavlov's theory (Y. Liu & Lai, 1959; Z. Liu, 1958). According to Liu, neural patterns tended to respond to stimuli that had contributed to their formation, and to reject those alien to them – this explained why people usually desired what was habitual. However, the continuous presence of new stimuli was capable of modifying existing neural patterns. Once new neural patterns were formed, they began to reject the old stimuli. This was how new desires and political stances replaced the old ones. Liu used infant feeding as an example. An infant tended to chew whatever items available. While foods could be successfully swallowed and digested, the nonedible items led to pain. After repetitions, the infant formed neural patterns that welcomed foods and rejected the nonedible things. This was how an infant developed a desire for foods only. Similarly, Liu continued, an adult obtained food only after work. Gradually, this person formed neural patterns that made him love production activities and hate exploitative landlords. Since establishing new neural patterns took time, ideological struggles must persist. With this theorization, Liu attempted to explain the formation of socialist virtues. In a quasi-evolutionary fashion, he argued that a person always came to possess needs that met his/her best interest. How could this theory address the Marxist notion of false consciousness, or the complexity of human culture? Liu's rosy

depiction remained mechanistic as well. Nevertheless, Liu and others' speculative writings performed important function in consolidating China's official ideology, and was in a sense made Pavlovian psychology of practical value.

### *The downfall of Pavlovian psychology*

Several problems lurked behind the celebration of Pavlovian psychology in China. First, American behaviorism shared fundamental similarities with Pavlovian psychology because its inception was inspired by the latter. Chinese psychologists superficially accused behaviorism of having "stolen" Pavlov's theory, without providing convincing arguments as to why one was mechanistic and the other dialectical (S. Tong, 1953, p. 27). Second, Chinese psychologists frequently quoted Lenin's (1908) statement that the mind was a function of the brain and the reflection of the outer world. While Pavlovian psychologists had an intricate theoretical system to explain brain function, they tended to downplay the latter half of Lenin's statement, namely how the mind reflected the outer world, especially the political environment (Z. Gao, Forthcoming). Other than rehearsing philosophical rhetoric, Pavlovian psychologists created little more space for revolutionary agency than behaviorists did.

While Pavlovian psychology was enjoying its heyday in China, it already faced a changing situation in its home country. Nikita Khrushchev's (1894–1971) de-Stalinization Movement from 1953 onwards resulted in far-ranging repercussions, including Sergey L. Rubinstein's challenge to Pavlovian psychology (Tucker, 1956). After 1956, China began to move away from the Soviet model. In his famous talk "On the Ten Major Relationships", Mao (1956/1977b) cautioned that China should learn from the Soviet Union "with an analytical and critical eye, not blindly", and "mustn't copy everything indiscriminately and transplant mechanically" (p. 303). Lu Dingyi (1906–1996), Minister of Propaganda, warned that China had emulated the Soviet Union

dogmatically and should stop doing so (D. Lu, 1956a). In 1958, the Sino-Soviet disagreement escalated over sovereignty and military cooperation. In the same year, Mao launched the Educational Revolution that further politicized scientific psychology (L. S. Zhu, 2008).

In the Educational Revolution, Pavlovian psychology came to be seen as conservative. Kang Sheng (1898–1975) was a key CCP official as well as an honorary professor at BNU, one of the leading institutions in Chinese psychology. Following Kang’s lead in July 1958, a number of radical BNU administrators, junior academics, and students started criticizing psychology as a bourgeois science. In a few months, the campaign expanded from BNU to many cities. Critical volumes were compiled, and provocative papers were mass published (Z. Gao, 2015). In terms of style, the critique was more speculative than empirically based. Instead of rebutting experimental findings with counter-experiments, the critical arguments were mostly derived from Marxism and Maoism, as well as observations of “new socialist phenomena” that did not always faithfully reflect the reality. Further, they frequently contained politicized accusations targeting scholars’ intention. Nonetheless, there were insightful comments that touched on several fundamental questions about human nature and psychological science, to which I apply “sympathetic”, reconstructive reading.

Resonating with Russian psychologists’ post-Stalin evaluation of Pavlovianism (Brushlinsky, 1997), the radical critics argued that it was wrong for psychologists to view the human mind as an ahistorical, asocial entity reduced to its physiological basis (S. Wu, 1958; L. Yu & Jiang, 1958). The critique of psychology was targeted at the Pavlovian theory along with the western concepts that still hung on in Chinese textbooks, such as instinct, sensation, emotion, and personality. The radicals had come to the realization that Pavlovian psychology, with its emphasis on physiology and laboratory experimentation, shared much of the philosophical commitments and sociopolitical implications with western natural-scientific psychology. Accordingly, my

following discussion is not interested in the fate of Pavlovian psychology *per se*. Instead, I take the critique to be a broader attack on psychological science as well as the naturalistic epistemology embedded in human sciences. It will be made clear that some critical comments coincided with western hermeneutic and post-colonial critiques of psychology. My following reconstructive reading of the critique is not confined to the year of 1958. The 1958 critique was merely a culmination of revolutionary thoughts that had been burgeoning in the preceding decade. Thus, I take the 1958 articulation as an opportunity to examine underlying conceptual issues.

### **From physiological psychology to sociopolitical psychology**

#### *Nature versus nurture*

The most fundamental debate pertained to the ontological status of mind – namely, whether the mind was a natural or social entity. Marx (1845) made a famous statement on this topic: “the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations” (p. 7). This view was elaborated by Mao (1942c):

Is there such a thing as human nature? Of course there is. But there is only human nature in the concrete, no human nature in the abstract. In class society there is only human nature of a class character; there is no human nature above classes. (p. 90)

The nature versus nurture controversy persisted throughout the history of global psychology. Three general principles were identified. First, the form or process of the mind, such as memorization, was seen to be more dependent on physiology, whereas the content of the mind – such as the content of memory, was thought to bear greater influence from society and culture (Teo, 2005). Second, across lifespan, a person tended to develop from a natural state of being – an infant that instinctively sought food and safety – to become socialized. Third, the “lower” mental processes, such as sensation and perception, tended to be primarily at the mercy of physiology,

whereas the “higher” processes, such as attitude, were more conditioned by sociocultural environment. Although, it should be pointed out that the cultural-ladenness of a particular mental state was not fixed. Depending on context, anger could stem from primitive survival instinct or be a socially constructed response to the breach of honor. The distinction between nature and nurture was not black or white. Creativity, for instance, involved both giftedness and rich knowledge. The three principles were open to flexible interpretations. Because of the intricacy and complexity involved, the nature versus nurture debate persisted throughout the history of psychology and had far-reaching sociopolitical repercussions in China.

Against Mao’s (1942c) theorization, Pavlovian psychologists had presumed a notion of “human nature above classes” (p. 90). Pan Shu, the head of the Institute of Psychology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, elaborated that the second signal system is the basis of consciousness (S. Pan, 1956). This statement suffered criticism for prioritizing brain function over social experience. To the radical critics, it was easier to explain the contradictions among thoughts in term of class distortion than in terms of the second signal system (Peng, 1958a; Ruan, 1959). The discussion about “character” served as another example. Pavlovian psychologists defined characters to be “essentially the patterns of higher nervous activity” (K. Guo, 1958a, p. 34). There were four primary patterns: for instance, some individuals were enthusiastic and social because they had a sanguine nervous system; some were analytical, wise, and quiet because of a melancholic nervous system. This theory, too, was found to endorse a natural essence inside an individual’s mind (Subject Matter Critique Team, BNU, 1958).

The radical theorists’ stake in the nature versus nurture debate was more than intellectual inquiry. They were concerned that once human conducts were located in the realm of nature, they became no longer morally or politically accountable. A BNU textbook contained an example to

illustrate how motivation was determined by needs. In this example, an elementary student wrote: “I’m going to study very hard, because I wish to become an engineer like my dad [...] I wish I could receive five points, so that I will be on the honor roll [...] and my dad will buy me a pair of skates. So I’m definitely going to study very hard” (G. Fu & Wang, 1958, p. 110). According to the textbook, this student was driven by a variety of motivations to study: the motivation to satisfy material needs, and that for honor and recognition. This analysis was criticized for attributing the student’s egoistic, materialistic desires to ostensibly “natural” needs and reaffirming a bourgeois life attitude (G. Fu & Wang, 1958). Another BNU textbook explained that children sometimes tore toys apart out of curiosity. This explanation perplexed the critics, who considered such behavior to be a reflection of a corrupted capitalist attitude that devaluated labor products (Group for Criticizing Psychology from the Third and Fourth Year of Pre-School Education Major, BNU, 1958). In the following, I discuss from various angles how the nature versus nurture debate was interwoven with China’s revolution.

### *Meaning, purpose, and will*

Another central controversy lay in whether mental phenomena were meaningful and directed by purpose and will. Pavlovian psychologists had used the maintenance of a conditioned reflex to explain how memory worked. According to them, once an association between a stimulus and response had been established, it could either receive recursive exercise, which led to lasting memory, or lack exercise, which led to memory loss. The radical critics brought up the counter argument that some people had clear memories of the landlord cruelly demanding rent, even though the event no longer occurred after their childhood. The lesson to be learnt from this case was that Pavlov’s theory could explain rote memory only; memories laden with meaning and significant subjective experience did not follow this law (W. Zhang, 1958). To study the

development of volition, psychologists used to measure how long children of different ages were able to keep a posture, without revealing to them the purpose behind. In the eyes of the critics, this contrived setting demonstrated the development of children's muscle, strength, and endurance – all but their volition, which required the guidance of a sense of purpose (Group for Criticizing Psychology from the Third and Fourth Year of Pre-School Education Major, BNU, 1958). A theory proposed that emotions were caused by physiological changes such as breathe, pulse, and blood pressure. This theory received impassioned objection from critics:

Is it true that the rightists hate the CCP and the new society simply because of temporary changes to their breath and pulse, instead of their counterrevolutionary stance? This applies to the confession of the rightist leader, Long Yun, that he made rightist remark because temporary increase of blood pressure made him excited and unable to constrain what he said. Following this logic, our revolutionary hero Huang Jiguang would have block the enemy's machine gun with his chest only because temporary physiological changes created "passion", leading to his revolutionary, self-sacrificing action. (Z. Yan, 1958, pp. 41–42)

These above examples all pertained to higher mental processes – memory, volition, and emotion. What about the basic processes, such as sensations, perception, and attention, which were conventionally thought to be tied to physiology?<sup>28</sup> According to the critics, basic mental processes inevitably mapped onto, and became reconfigured by, holistic actions in real-life contexts. They discussed attention as an example. When the weather became hot, capitalists immediately thought of air conditioning, yet farmers hurried to dig wells to secure the harvest (L. Yu & Jiang, 1958). Soldiers in the Korean War fought the enemies in front of roaring cannons and guns, yet intelligence agents were able to detect the subtlest stimuli. When working on farms, most BNU

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<sup>28</sup> Historically, psychology had a difficult time evolving from a component of philosophy to a natural science, and the breakthrough was made via a focus on physio-psychological phenomena such as sensation and perception.

students noticed the farmers' down-to-earth quality, and the capitalist professors, in contrast, only paid attention to whether the farmers were drinking unprocessed water and whether the children were suffering from malnutrition (K. Guo, 1958a).

In a time that celebrated revolutionary volition, the critics mocked Pavlovian psychologists: "Man needs to eat. He feels satisfied as long as being fed by whomever, otherwise he feels unsatisfied. Apparently, this is a dog or a pig, but never a human being" (D. Zhao, 1958, p. 103). Physiologically based notions of the mind did not reveal what the critics considered the most important: the role of sociopolitical experience in directing human action (Peng, 1958b, p. 45). A socialist citizen's nobility lay in his/her transcendence above the domination of nature.

#### *Between the form and the content of the mind*

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a debate took place in Germany concerning the form and the content of the mind, and it heralded the bifurcation of modern psychology into natural-scientific and humanistic branches. Natural-scientific psychology addressed the form of the mind, i.e., the processes through which the mind developed and operated. The famous nonsense syllabus experiment, invented by Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850–1909), required participants to memorize artificial syllabuses unrelated to real words, in order to study one's capacity of memorization without being interfered by past learning. This method was questioned by the Chinese critics for having already precluded the effect of social background on memory (Z. Yan, 1958). In contrast, hermeneutic philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) was more interested in the content of the mind – such as beliefs, attitudes, and emotions that are laden with meaning. He famously argued that the content of memory was more important because it determines who a person is (Teo, 2005). This idea was more in line with the Chinese radical view of the mind.

Lenin (1908) proposed a synthetic view to the form versus content controversy, arguing that the mind was a function of the brain as well as the reflection of the outer world. Although Chinese psychologists had often quoted Lenin, in practice they were primarily interested in the function of the brain. This focus was now criticized for endorsing pragmatism or instrumental rationality devoid of political content (T. Wang, 1957). Again, take the study of memory for example. By investigating the retention of memory, Ebbinghaus's nonsense syllabus research contained an implicit value judgement: the more enduring one's memory was, the better. Was this appraisal conducive to the revolution? The critics did not think so. A student might be driven by egoistic motivation to aptly memorize professors' salaries. Apparently, this competence did not deserve applause. According to the critics, it was more important to study why, when working in the countryside, most BNU capitalist professors memorized the inconvenient living conditions, while students from the working class mostly memorized farmers' high spirit (W. Zhang, 1958). If Ebbinghaus and Dilthey's debate was mostly confined to the intellectual realm, its sociopolitical implications became revealed by the Chinese critics.

Readers familiar with the history of psychology in western societies might protest against the Chinese critique of the scientific study of the form of the mind. Indeed, experimental studies of mental processes displayed great potential in applied settings. Scientific management, for example, studied human sensory-motor functions to boost productivity (F. W. Taylor, 1947). In industry, mechanistic mental processes played important roles. But the Chinese radicals were more concerned with class struggle than economic development. To clarify this point, it is instructive to compare BNU with the Institute of Psychology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. BNU had a strong tradition of social sciences and humanities, and its psychologists worked in the Department of Education, where they had more opportunities to interact with students and keep informed of

social affairs. It is not surprising that the critical movement was launched in BNU. In contrast, the Institute of Psychology, which was the national center of psychological research, preferred natural-scientific research. Since 1953, psychologists at the Institute of Psychology studied workers' sensations, attention, fatigue, and motor movements (L. Zhao, 1996). In response to the CCP's call for increased steel productivity, they also trained workers to better time steel-making observing the color of flames (Chou, 1959). These projects had the potential to increase industrial efficiency and reduce accidents, but had little to offer about social relations in industry – a topic that would reflect the agenda of socialist revolution.

In the industrial context, China's acceptance of scientific modernization was largely limited to technological and infrastructural developments. When it came to human factors, the priority was given to the maintenance of workers' motivation in the lack of monetary incentive. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, "socialist competition" – competition for honor through team cooperation – was frequently applied to boost productivity (Kaple, 1994). Role modeling, such as that reflected in the Stakhanovite Movement, was another popular method to generate enthusiasm.<sup>29</sup> Thus, in spite of its leading role in psychology, the Institute of Psychology had little impact on industry, and was unable to resist the BNU criticism campaign (L. Zhao, 1996).

#### *Moral governance over psychological terminology*

The radical critics further criticized instrumental rationality contained in the vocabulary of psychological science. They examined an incident in which two BNU professors' children stole electronic wires from construction sites and sold the copper inside. According to scientific terminology, the children displayed complex "skills" to accomplish a clearly defined "goal". But

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<sup>29</sup> The Stakhanovite Movement was named after Aleksei Grigorievich Stakhanov, a model miner who reportedly created broke records of productivity. The movement called for workers to increasing productivity through diligence and enthusiasm (Siegelbaum, 1990).

should they, asked the critics, be praised for having successfully achieved mental development (Third and Fourth-Year Students from Pre-School Education Major, BNU, 1958, p. 59)? Psychologists used to maintain that rich emotions could make one's life more colorful and fulfilled, whereas impoverished emotions made one's life dull. This view was refuted for failing to specify the political orientation of emotional fulfillment (D. Zhao, 1958).

The Chinese radical critique of psychological science contained two layers. At the surface, psychologists considered their knowledge to be objective representation of reality. This discourse of value-neutrality, in the eyes of the critics, risked the danger of ignoring political engagement. At a deeper level, the critics argued that scientific psychology in fact contained value judgements. With instrumental rationality, psychologists had suggested that the more one was able to memorize, the better, regardless of the content of memories. This judgement, too, appeared to dampen revolution, as one's political stance depended on subjective experience instead of formal capacities. Thus, the critics moralized value-neutral terms and aligned them to respective classes:

In the vocabulary of our working classes, words such as 'enthusiastic', 'resolute', and 'brave' must not be used to describe the enemies; what is left for them is only 'greedy', 'obstinate', and 'cruel'. However, our science of psychology obliterates this class content. (G. Chen, 1958, pp. 11–12)

To them, every single sentiment or action must be examined through a political-moral lens, which was only possible by studying the content of the mind. This sociopolitical ontology reflected Mao's (1937b) theorization that "in class society everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class" (p. 296).

#### *Class in-between individuality and universality*

The 1958 critique foregrounded two opposite tendencies in psychological science. First,

psychologists shared a belief that there were universal laws governing the mental activities of all human beings. This assumption, labeled as “abstractionism”, was criticized for ignoring how mental life was divided by the fault line of class (R. Chin & Chin, 1969; Ching, 1984).<sup>30</sup> In other words, “abstractionism” had too broad a scope. Second, applied psychologists were committed to identifying individual differences in interest, talent, character, and so forth, and frequently attribute them to natural causes (K. Guo, 1958a). In the eyes of the critics, this focus on individual differentiation was too narrow. It ignored a more important topic, “class nature” [*jieji xing*] – common characteristics shared by individuals from the same class (G. Chen, 1958). Teachers increasingly incorporated the notion of class nature in lectures. Some encouraged students to discuss whether a landlord’s evilness reflected an individual-based character, before arriving at the conclusion that it stemmed from the class background (P. Xu, 1950).

In short, the radical critics considered both the two tendencies problematic – whether the pursuit of abstract universal laws, or the interest in individual differentiation. Although seemingly opposing to each other, the two extremes were both considered to justify capitalist lifestyles by putting on a naturalistic cover. Between these two extremes, the critics proposed “class” as an intermediate condition that structured mental characteristics at a fundamental level. It is notable that the critics rarely mentioned other social divisions, such as gender and ethnicity, as denominators of the mind. This class-based theorization was championed by Mao (1942c), who criticized the notion about abstract human nature [*ren xing*]:

It is a basic Marxist concept that being determines consciousness, that the objective realities of class struggle and national struggle determine our thoughts and feelings. But some of our comrades turn this upside down and maintain that everything ought to start

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<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that contemporary post-colonial historiography of psychology has provided much critique of the universalistic pursuit of natural-scientific psychology (Danziger, 2006, 2009).

from “love”. Now as for love, in a class society there can be only class love; but these comrades are seeking a love transcending classes, love in the abstract and also freedom in the abstract, truth in the abstract, human nature in the abstract, etc. (pp. 73–74)

In the eyes of the radical critics, the bourgeoisies were by nature exploitive, vulgar, and snobbish, and the proletariats were by nature united, revolutionary, and selfless (S. Chen, 1957). Besides, there was a “party nature” [*dang xing*], an ideal that encapsulated the quintessence of human virtues (B. Chen, 1957; R. Fu, 1957). Party nature consisted of several qualities: proletarian revolutionary stance, adherence to Marxist thoughts, and absolute conformity to the CCP, which represented the interest of the people. The acquisition of party nature meant that one had embraced all noble qualities and forsaken common human weakness:

At any time, his every single word and action is done in consideration of the CCP’s benefit. For the CCP, he could experience tens of thousands of ordeals, and sacrifice everything including his life. He does not love vanity or comfort; he knows nothing but working hard for the CCP. He is just, selfless, and honest. He embraces truth and willingly corrects his mistakes. (P. Chen, 1947, p. 10)

One might wonder if this idealistic figure permitted the existence of individual characteristics at all. According to radical theorists, individuality indeed existed because each person had a unique environment and participated in particular activities. The radical theorists even promised to facilitate the growth of individuality through liberating members of the working classes from slavery and poverty (T. Wang, 1957). When it came to organizational practice, the radical theorists proposed that the CCP should consider individuality when assigning jobs to its members. However, all the assurance was premised on that individuality did not threaten collective goals. It became a problem when, for instance, individuals resisted job assignment because of its

conflict with personal characteristics (B. Chen, 1957). On such occasions, the valuing of individuality was seen to have resulted from individualism, a tendency to seek personal benefits in disregard of the collective. Theorist Chen Boda (1957) firmly maintained that “when the Party, based on the needs of revolution and socialism, requests a member to perform a particular job, he or she should consider party nature instead of individuality. This aspect is unconditional” (p. 11).

The conceptualizations about human nature, class nature, and party nature bore far-reaching political and practical implications. In various movements, many reported on the political problems of their family members and friends, or persecuted those labeled as reactionaries. Upon reflection, some individuals recalled that these events occurred because “party nature” had suffocated “human nature” (1958 Graduates of Chinese Language Major, BNU, 2012). In this narrative, the Chinese term for “human nature” [*ren xing*] contained a moral sense, meaning humaneness or compassion. The CCP took this discourse to be an attack on it. According to the radicals, moralities, whether the Confucian virtue of “benevolence” [*ren*] or the western notion of humanism, always came into being in particular historical contexts and served particular classes. Given the injustice in capitalism, the proletariat should not show any pity in battles with the bourgeoisie (R. Fu, 1957). Some radical theorists acknowledged that adherence to party nature indeed entailed the sacrifice of some forms of human nature:

Members of the CCP do not have the human nature or human feeling displayed by landlords and the bourgeois (if there exists the tiniest bit, it must be cleaned out)... this kind of human nature and human feeling cannot co-exist with ‘party nature’ just as water cannot co-exist with fire” (J. Ma, 1958, p. 19).

## **Psychological development and educability**

### *Subverting biological determinism*

In general, the very enterprise of pedagogy is based on the premise that human minds are malleable. Socialist China gave the notion of human malleability particular significance as it promised the creation of the new human. Physiological psychology, however, often departed from this assumption by studying the constraints of instinctual, inborn, and hereditary factors on mental activities. In light of Mao's critique of mechanistic materialism, the radicals saw the "biologization" (S. Wu, 1958, p. 29) of psychological phenomena to deny human agency and justify the existing mental status quo (S. Chen, 1957; Z. Yan, 1958; L. Yu & Jiang, 1958). If the popular saying that "Dragon born dragon, chicken born chicken, mouse's son can make hole" were true, the new student could never come into reality (M. Lin, 1956, p. 5). The radicals called for an alternative theory that downplayed the power of heredity to the minimum, as expressed in one of their favorite quotes from Marx (1844): "by nature a philosopher is not in talent and in intelligence half so different from a street porter, as a mastiff is from a greyhound, or a greyhound from a spaniel, or this last from a shepherd's dog" (p. 318).

Consistent with Zhang Tengxiao's critique, psychologists were no longer allowed to administer intelligence testing to aid education. They did not trust the results obtained in America that favored children from rich, white, urban families over the marginalized population (Editorial Office, 1953c). It was an even bigger problem to attribute the results to an innate intelligence that matured over time, independent of education and family backgrounds. In the eyes of the critics, intelligence testing justified the domination of the exploiting class on the basis of their intrinsic superiority (S. Chen, 1957), and prevented the children of the working class from attending school

(Nusenbaum, 1951).<sup>31</sup>

The denial of innate intelligence led to a vexing question: how did geniuses such Marx and Engels come into being, if they were not born with extraordinary talents? The radical theorists maintained that the emergence of Marx and Engels was largely attributable to the heightened class conflicts of their time, and their high level of self-discipline. There was no great variation of intelligence level among healthy individuals – a finding also applicable to Marx and Engels. Nor did their (auto)biographies contain signs that they were particularly gifted (M. Ye, 1956).

Pavlovian psychology appeared to imply that undesirable consciousness could hardly be changed. Some of its theories maintained that mental traits, such as temperaments, were largely determined at birth. Other theories did not foreclose mental changes but contained other problems. For instance, it was that neural patterns undergo changes after the repetitive presence of new stimuli, which involved negative feelings. A BNU textbook used this theory to explain why thought transformation produced negative experience. In the eyes of the critics, this account prioritized biological laws over the proletariat's need for new revolutionary phenomenon; it also rationalized the capitalist roaders' refusal of thought transformation (G. Chen, 1958).

### *Soviet influence on educability*

The Chinese radicals' uncompromising belief in the educability of students was partly derived from Maoist ideology and partly influenced by the Soviet Union, as reflected in the demise of pedology (Steiner, 1958). Pedology, or the science of the child, combined interdisciplinary knowledge, including psychology, to study how inherited and environmental factors affected children's mental and physiological developments. In the 1920s, pedology enjoyed much popularity with prominent psychologists, including Vygotsky and Blonsky, as its proponents (Holowinsky, 1995). One of its

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<sup>31</sup> Historians of American psychology arrived at a similar conclusion that intelligence testing had been historically biased against the marginalized populations (Murdoch, 2007).

major impacts was the reassignment of certain children diagnosed of being “backward” or “retarded” to reform schools (Ewing, 2001, pp. 486; 487). This practice incurred the banning of pedology in 1936 for violating the official view that a child’s life was not determined by heredity and could always be re-educated under a teacher’s enthusiasm and dedication (Kelly, 2007).

Soviet advisor Grinner brought the belief in educability to the Kindergarten Affiliated with BNU. One child at the kindergarten had limited knowledge and skills due to attention deficiency and epilepsy, so teachers always gave her more lenient assignments. In 1951, Grinner encouraged the teachers to apply a normal standard to this child. It was reported that she made “significant progress” in her performance (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1951b, p. 19).

In China, the belief in educability was applied to cases of moral deviance, disability, and aging (Xiang, 1957). In a popular genre, Many idlers, and even hooligans, were reportedly transformed in to cadres and labor role models, and were now happily serving the people (Y. Cheng, 2009; Smith, 2013a). Many war heroes were said to have managed to learn effectively after suffering an injury (F. Zhang, 1958). After teaching worker and farmer students, BNU interns reported that to their relief, these adult students did not necessarily have weakened memory capacity in comparison to the youth; what mattered was the application of effective learning methods (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1951c). The radicals took these examples to demonstrate that the human minds were primarily shaped by the society instead of “nature” (L. Zhang, 1951c).

#### *Child psychology, maturity, and education*

In the Republican era, educators tended to see school education having the advantage over family education in its to systematically arrange pedagogical tasks according to developmental laws. Recognizing the gradual nature of maturation, they particularly cautioned, in reference to the Chinese fable *Helping Shoots Grow by Pulling Them Upward* [*ya miao zhu zhang*], against adults’

mistaken expectation that children perform tasks beyond their current capability (B. Liu & Liu, 1948). In the new regime, this view along with psychological science fell out of favor. Chinese psychologists used to argue that children of three or four years of age could not distinguish dog from sheep because their internalization inhibition mechanism has not yet fully developed. This view met the rebuttal that only children from bourgeois families could not make the distinction because they did not attend animal farms (G. Chen, 1958; Group for Criticizing Psychology from the Third and Fourth Year of Pre-School Education Major, BNU, 1958). In other words, a proletarian background had the power to foster mental development (Group for Criticizing Psychology from the Third and Fourth Year of Pre-School Education Major, BNU, 1958).

The revision of developmental laws had implication to pedagogy. Zhu Zhixian (1908–1991) was the chair of the BNU Department of Education and a leading child psychologist influenced by renowned Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980). According to Zhu, infants were born like animals in the sense they were not socialized. Under parental care, they gradually learned how to wear clothes and how to play games. After age seven they were sent to school, where their main task was study: “study as the preparation for work is not required to produce wealth; school should emphasize study and not physical labor” (quoted in Guo & Wang, 1958, p. 66). Until eighteen, they were not ready to decide about a future career. According to the critics, such a naturalistic understanding of child development contradicted the revolutionary principle “education serves politics, education be integrated with productive labor”. The correct role model should be found in the case of a four-year-old child who earned a heroic honor for collecting fertilizing feces, a twelve-year-old who made numerous inventions, and members of the Youth League who captured intelligence agents (J. Guo & Wang, 1958). Zhu also claimed that pre-school children were not yet

capable of understanding politics. From a revolutionary perspective, this statement negated the possibility and necessity for children to engage in class struggle (J. Guo & Wang, 1958).

According to psychologists, since children's liveliness and restlessness were determined by their immature neural system, teachers should not assign demanding tasks until students were physiologically ready. The critics saw this view to "deny the role of education in shaping children's personality development, and let children grow freely" (Group for Criticizing Psychology from the Third and Fourth Year of Pre-School Education Major, BNU, 1958, p. 52). Since children's "lack of discipline" was a social problem to begin with, they must undergo ideological struggle (Y. Zhang & Feng, 1958, p. 132). The most extreme accusation was that the attempt to educate on the basis of age was counterrevolutionary denial of the CCP's policy (Group for Criticizing Psychology from the Third and Fourth Year of Pre-School Education Major, BNU, 1958).

#### *Pavlovian psychology in student culture*

The critique of physiological psychology as an embodiment of false consciousness contained two layers. The first layer challenged the validity of the scientific claims being made. The second that, regardless of their validity, once scientific statements seeped into popular beliefs, they might gain the potential to modify individual self-understanding and cause concrete changes<sup>32</sup>. The latter concern was particularly acute to the radicals upon their observation that Pavlovian psychology was gaining currency among students (G. Chen, 1958). Students had expressed ideas such as "some people are born smart or stupid", "some kids are born with stubborn nature", and that

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<sup>32</sup> In western philosophy and critical psychology, similar ideas were developed regarding how psychological knowledge can function as self-fulfilling prophecy. Hermeneutic philosophers, especially Charles Tylor (1985), argue that human beings are self-interpreting animals. This view considers that the self is constituted through self-interpretation and not determined by a given nature. In human sciences and psychology in particular, this theory gives rise to the notion "looping effect" (Brinkmann, 2005; Hacking, 1995). Looping effect occurs when individuals accept newly-invented psychological discourses and act in accordance with the meanings prescribed by them, they experience certain self-transformation. In this way, psychology is able to "make up" people (Hacking, 1986).

capitalist individualism could never be eliminated, because certain traces of underlying neural patterns always remained (Peng, 1958b; Z. Zhang, 1958). Sometimes Pavlovian theory was applied to analyze specific incidents. A BNU student explained a family of rightists to be the result of similar neural types instead of social background (Subject Matter Critique Team, BNU, 1958, p. 3). Some considered rightists' aggressive and suicidal behaviors to have stemmed from problems with their cerebral cortex and neural patterns (S. Wu, 1958).

On some occasions, individuals refused undergoing thought transformation in reference to Pavlovian theory. A BNU student claimed that his chronic depression was caused by neural patterns, the objective existence of which could not be changed easily (D. Zhao, 1958). A fifteen-year-old student from a bourgeois family said: "Because my brain had its neural connections formed over the past 15 years, to change them I need 15 years as well" (Subject Matter Critique Team, BNU, 1958, p. 3). When one student was criticized for being sympathetic with rightists, he replied "what can I do? My neural system is not agile; it works slowly" (p. 3). It is uncertain whether these students genuinely believed Pavlovian psychology or were merely using it as an excuse. In either case, Pavlovian psychology posed the threat of eroding the legitimacy of ideological struggle.

#### *Teachers' belief in human malleability*

The Chinese radicals also monitored the spread of physio-psychological knowledge among teachers, who gave up disadvantaged students: "there is nothing we can do about student A", "B will never make progress, no matter how hard she tries", "C is so stupid, he will never catch up" (Cong, 1953, p. 33). These ideas had been criticized by Soviet educators:

The most prevalent mistake is to use children's "nature" as an excuse. Some parents and even teachers defend their failures in education by saying "he is a person born to be so".

They would further prove this by listing characteristics a child shares with his/her grandparents, aunt, and uncle. (Baolisuowa, 1951, p. 29)

Chinese radical educators argued that students could make progress precisely because they were labelled as being stupid, and that the “talent-privileging education” [*tiancai jiaoyu*] must be given up (Office of Secondary Education, Department of Culture and Education of Liaoxi Province, 1953, p. 48).

In 1953, Tang Ying, a 26-year-old woman, enrolled in the Program of Music at BNU. Ying had much difficulty with her study after having finished only grade 10 with little exposure to music. No matter how hard she tried, Ying was commented by her teachers to be “of low quality”, with “no sense of musical talent”, and “having no prospect in the future”, and was asked to change her major (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954d, p. 72; N. Qi, 1954, p. 38). Tang exercised with extraordinary efforts that led to a bleeding throat. Eventually, after being ridiculed by a fellow student, Ying suffered a nervous breakdown. With gravity, BNU organized multiple meetings that concluded the “ideology of quality” to be responsible for Ying’s tragedy (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954d, p. 72; N. Qi, 1954, p. 38).

Similar discussion took place regarding students’ characters. In 1951, after evaluating a problematic elementary student, Hu Zukang, it was commented:

The teachers [of Hu Zukang] drew such a conclusion: “We also feel that he has a very strong temperament of being naughty”. That is to say that Hu Zukang was born to be naughty [...] so he could no longer be educated. This idea is entirely wrong. Yes, we should acknowledge that inborn temperament has certain effect on children’s development, but it

“is not existing talents, ideas, opinions, personality traits, or professional habits; rather, it is the hidden possibilities of development...”<sup>33</sup> (Z. Han, 1951, p. 64)

## **Calling for revolutionary education**

### *Unleashing potential through revolutionary voluntarism*

In the 1930s, the Bolsheviks started to conceptualize the human subject to be highly self-voluntary and less constrained by natural laws. Meanwhile, they added further pressure on individuals to relate their activities to state objectives. This biopolitical approach passed on to China. M. H. Skatkin (1900–1991), whose works enjoyed popularity in China, emphasized that one’s interest in tasks would bring increased efficiency. To him, “interest” should be more closely related to the new communist life than individual intrinsic motivations. Quoting Stalin: “great perseverance can only be produced in front of grand goals”, Skatkin (1950) suggested instilling children with the idea that study was their patriotic duty (p. 33). The clearer the connection children saw between their study and communism, the harder they learned (Skatkin, 1951).

This discourse soon prevailed in Chinese schools (X. Guo, 1953; Student unit at the Youth League Committee at Anyang, 1953). Students were encouraged to discuss the question whether one’s “smartness” or diligence determined the learning outcome, and the answer was, unsurprisingly, the latter (P. Xu, 1950). Psychologists used to propose three methods to improve memory: cultivate interests, grasp the laws of memory, and develop a cognitive structure. These methods were now seen by critics as “trivial”, as they missed the most important factor: “elevating one’s initiatives for learning, mustering revolutionary energy, and unleashing one’s full energy in order to memorize more” (G. Chen, 1958, p. 14). A similar argument was applied to creativity. The radicals criticized that idea that creativity was dependent on individual-based talent and

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<sup>33</sup> The quotations were made from the Chinese translation of Kairov’s *Pedagogy* (1950, p. 32).

knowledge, seeing it to justify the authority of the “old brand experts” [*lao zhuanjia*] and to repress the emergent creative minds of the young generation (G. Chen, 1958, p. 28). The true foundation of creativity must be found in a high level of political consciousness, a sense of responsibility to the country, and the “spirit of audacious thinking and doing” [*gan xiang gan gan*] (G. Chen, 1958, p. 28; L. He, 1958, p. 116).

The radicals challenge even basic physiological laws. A BNU textbook noted that health status, such as fatigue, lack of sleep, and disease, could cause bad mood (quoted in G. Chen, 1958; D. Zhao, 1958). But, in the eyes of the radicals, revolution meant the transcendence of physiological constraints. They reported that in labor campaigns, some worked for several days and nights in a row with little sleep, yet the more they worked, the happier they felt (G. Chen, 1958; D. Zhao, 1958). This view was internalized by BNU students. In 1958, BNU students were called upon to volunteer in the construction of Shisanling Dam in Beijing, when they had only wotou (steam cornbread) and pickles for meals. Several students composed the *Song of Wotou*:

Wotou, wotou, I used to dislike you,

Now at the construction site, you’ve become my bro.

Wotou, wotou, fill my stomach and make me powerful,

I’m thinking while eating, labor can transform my thoughts.

Doctors say you are not nutritious but they are totally wrong,

You are tasty and sweet in my mouth, three or five pieces are just too little.

At work I’m like a fierce tiger, it’s all because of you.

[In the past] it wasn’t that you lacked nutrition,

It was because my thoughts had problem. (B. Wang, 2010, p. 63)

### *Toward class struggle*

The new student ideal was often described as “red expert”, namely one who possessed both revolutionary consciousness and professional expertise (T. H. Chen, 1969). In order to achieve this goal, one was required to participate in social practice, according to a BNU undergraduate student who passionately contributed to the critique of psychology:

The only way to convert oneself into a red expert, an intellectual who belongs to the working class, is to resolutely participate in class struggle, and to receive lasting arduous transformation in productive labor...can one really acquire socialist spiritual outlook by simply identifying his strengths and weaknesses through analysis of his inner state? (K. Guo, 1958a, p. 38)

According to the radicals, “social practice” encompassed a wide range of activities, with class struggle as the defining feature (K. Guo, 1958a). Sewing clothes, writing articles, and designing experiments used to be considered forms of practice, but in the 1958 were dismissed for lacking the class struggle component (K. Guo, 1958b).

The call for social practice required new educational space. Previously, it had been suggested that teachers consider how to arrange the classroom environment, including facilities, plants, and toys, so that children would develop desirable behavioral patterns. In the eyes of the critics, this proposal degraded education to an abstract notion that produced politics-free conditioned reflexes (Group for Criticizing Psychology from the Third and Fourth Year of Pre-School Education Major, BNU, 1958). Underlying this critique was a view of not only the mind, but also the world, as fundamentally sociopolitical. Psychologists had defined mental phenomena to be “the brain’s reflection of the properties of the objective world”. The notion “objective world” came under fire. Unlike animals, argued the critics, human beings should not see the world as an

objective existence. Eventually, the 1958 educational revolution saw the school as an insufficient space for pedagogy, and mobilized students to receive “labor education” at factories and farms. More details of labor education can be found in Chapter Two.

### *Agentic conquering of nature*

To Chinese radicals, socialism required a sweeping transformation of both the human and the natural worlds. As Shapiro (2001) argues compellingly, Maoist ideology took an intransigent oppositional stance against the natural environment. Maoists saw nature as something external to humanity that needed to be overcome. The critique of scientific knowledge about “human nature” was part and parcel of the revolutionary ethos that exalts human agency in effecting transformations, only this time it identified nature inside of humanity.

Pavlovian psychology was criticized partly because it implied that the human mind could only passively reflect external reality as a mirror does (Peng, 1958a; D. Song & Wang, 1958). Western evolutionary thinking was criticized as well for its assumption about the survival value of consciousness: that consciousness helped organisms satisfy physical needs and avoid dangers to ensure survival (K. Guo, 1958a; Peng, 1958b, 1958a). Both these ideas, according to the critics, denied human agency in transforming the environment (G. Chen, 1958; K. Guo, 1958a; Peng, 1958b). Quoting Mao’s (1937a) dialectical materialism, they stressed that consciousness was capable of reacting to and changing the world (Peng, 1958a).

Pavlovian psychology also appeared to have the potential to justify the lethargy of the masses. BNU teachers used to explain that changes in living conditions disturbed existing neural patterns and caused unpleasant feelings. If this view were correct, argued the critics, soldiers would be in a persistent bad mood as they kept relocating. The critics called for attention to cadres who were undergoing rustication and BNU students who were helping dam building – both were

reportedly happy. Further, the critics asked: how could one explain the working classes' high spirits in front of the accomplishments of communization (S. Wu, 1958)? In the eyes of the critics, only those with capitalist ideas would feel unhappy to have their living conditions changed. What truly mattered was one's socialist spirit – not inner neural patterns (D. Zhao, 1958).

Psychologists used to comment on the working class's destitute mental state:

A child said: "I wish to have a little piece of coco candy, just to find out how it smells".

Another said: "I wish my dad will find a job and buy mom, little brother and me something to eat" [...] The cruel oppression from imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek's government has made the mass lost hope in their future; students imagined unemployment after graduation.

(F. Zhang, 1958, p. 91)

This portrait of the working class's victimized mentality, ostensibly created in alignment with the official ideology of class struggle, was accused by the radicals of smearing the proletariats. The radicals argued that the proletariats had displayed, as they should, revolutionary spirit and faith in victory during their struggle against reactionary powers (F. Zhang, 1958).

The radicals' objective was far from humble. By recovering agency from natural laws, the radicals exhorted the working class's soaring energy (G. Chen, 1958) and "boldness of removing the mountains and upsetting the seas" (S. Wu, 1958, p. 33) so that they could make ground-breaking accomplishments. Exactly what the "socialist spirit of audacious thinking, speaking, and doing" meant will be discussed in Chapter Two (S. Wu, 1958, p. 33).

## **Chapter conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored how the "nature versus nurture" controversy manifested in China's political-intellectual culture, including Mao's critique of mechanistic materialism, the pedagogical

transition from centring the child to centring politics, and psychologists' transition from a natural-scientific interest in the physiological basis of the human mind to a sociopolitical ontology.

In Section I, I provided historical background information. I traced China's discourses about the mind before 1949, including the ancient philosophical speculations on the mind, the rise of modern education and psychology in response to China's colonial crisis, and the CCP's view of human factors in relation to its twin objectives, economic growth and revolution.

In Section II, I argued that upon the founding of PRC, Chinese educators adhered to an American-influenced child-centered pedagogy. This pedagogy saw childhood to be a tender state requiring careful protection, and posited that pedagogy must be based on an understanding of developmental laws. Next, I argued that Zhang Tengxiao's critique of child-centered pedagogy signalled the emergence of politics-centered pedagogy, which downplayed developmental laws and urged accelerated completion of pedagogical tasks.

In Section III, I analyzed how Mao's philosophy guided the transitions in pedagogy and psychology. More specifically, I situated Zhang Tengxiao's critique of human nature in Mao's dialectical materialism, which provided a conceptual foundation for understanding the relation among the human mind, physiology, and society. I further discussed how the rise and fall of Pavlovian psychology was conditioned by its shaky marriage with dialectical materialism.

In the final three sections, I discussed how the 1958 critique of Pavlovian psychology, as representative of natural-scientific psychology, constituted the climax of the Chinese revolutionary war against human nature. Section IV presented the critique of the mind as a natural entity, involving the purposeful property of mental activities, instrumental rationality, and class as a primary determinant of the mind. Section V focused on the relationship between developmental psychology and pedagogy, especially the antagonism between biological determinism and

educability. The final section introduced key pedagogical notions that emerged out of the radical critique, including revolutionary voluntarism and class struggle.

The central thesis of this chapter posited that in the 1950s, the Chinese approach to the mind transitioned from a focus on the mind's interior to its exterior. In spite of Mao's theoretical attempt to strike at a balance between mechanistic materialism and idealism, educational policy and practice eventually leaned toward idealism through glorifying human agency. To shed further light on the revolutionary denial of notions about human nature, it is instructive to visit Mao's (1937a) thesis on the relationship between the internal and the external, which, in my dissertation, is applicable to the relationship between the mind's interior and exterior:

The fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal; it lies in the contradictoriness within the thing. There is internal contradiction in every single thing; hence its motion and development [...] and [materialist dialectics] hold that external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change, and that external causes become operative through internal causes. (pp. 313–314)

Evolving over half a century, Mao's philosophical thoughts were as complex as they were flexible (Soo, 1983). The interpretation of his writing was always selective in light of given historical circumstances. This chapter demonstrated that although dialectical materialism was held as a sacred guideline over knowledge about the human mind, whether Pavlovian psychology embodied or betrayed it was conditioned by China's international and domestic events. If there was any persistent trend at all, it must be discerned in the building up of China's ultra-progressive ethos, which brought about an anti-scientific mode of biopolitics regarding the human mind. As will be discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, Mao's emphasis on the internal causes was

frequently forsaken in China's eager attempt to harvest manpower toward economic growth and class struggle.

## Chapter Two: Laborizing Education

In Chapter One, I have discussed the processes of exteriorization and politicization, namely, the radicals substituted scientific knowledge about human nature with a sociopolitical ontology that saw the human mind to be highly malleable in properly designed environments. This view posited that students possessed a greater capability than typically acknowledged. Thus, child-centered pedagogy gave place to greater demands on students through a politics-centered pedagogy. The radical re-conceptualization of the human mind provided theoretical justification for China to launch its twin projects: economic development and revolution. This chapter addresses the former in light of China's personnel shortage, material hardship, the socialist aspiration for high productivity, and Cold War competition.

In approaching the relation between the human subject and economy, I focus on three forms of labor. The first form of labor consisted of learning and teaching, the bread and butter of students and teachers, which I call "dutiful labor". Certainly, learning and teaching did not directly contribute to material production. But, their efficiency was called for to ensure timely supply of qualified personnel to workforces. Further, these activities, just like other forms of labor, required intellectual capacity, physical energy, and time input. In Section I, I conduct three case studies concerning the reforms of textbook, curriculum, and teaching workload, and discuss how issues regarding human capability were implicated in the reforms.

The second form of labor included an array of services students and teachers were called upon to perform: campus maintenance, road building, propagandization, and so forth. I consider these activities to constitute "free labor", as they, as embodiment of China's collectivist ethos, were not compensated in monetary means. Thus, they differed from capitalist form of labor associated with economic transaction. Nonetheless, the free services contributed a tremendous

amount of labor input in aid of China's development. While Section I focused on the space of textbook and classroom, Section II guides readers to explore a broader terrain of China's society.

In Section III, I examine a number of social dynamics that conditioned both "dutiful labor" and "free labor". Labor education was introduced to mold students into hard workers as well as to legitimize the extraction of student labor toward economic ends. Observing the widespread decline in academic performance and health caused by excessive workload, protesting teachers won policy changes to mitigate student labor activities. However, these policy initiatives failed for several reasons: governance at central and local levels, dogmatic adherence to Soviet advisors, and most importantly, a utopian imagination of students as possessing boundless potentiality.

In the final two sections, I approach the division of labor, which lies at the heart of Marxist political economy. If "dutiful labor" and "free labor" both took tangible forms, in the sense they could be measured by course completion or material production, the division of labor was to a certain degree invisible but profoundly undergirded class relations. In Section IV, I discuss that educators, inspired by the dream of creating a classless society, required students to achieve "all-round development" so that they would not be predisposed to particular division of labor, and consequently, class stratification. All-round education was eventually pushed back by teachers who took advantage of the Hundred Flowers Campaign and de-Stalinization to defend students' individual characteristics [*gexing*]. In Section V, I discuss the contestation between the centralized placement system [*fenpei*] and students' deployment of education as a channel to better professions. The clash between the state and students eventually led to the radicalization of labor education into a means of class struggle, as manifested in the Educational Revolution of 1958, which mobilized millions of students to work at factories and farms.

## **The “dutiful labor” of learning and teaching**

As introduced in Chapter One, after decades of wars, China’s economy was at the brink of collapsing. Given the Cold War tension, there was an urgent need for China to resuscitate its economy as rapidly as possible. Further, the realization of communism entailed the accumulation of material wealth. However, the majority of the Chinese population lacked literacy and technical skills to support the daunting economic tasks. All these factors created a demand for personnel supply, and this pressure eventually translated to learning, teaching, and social services performed by teachers and students. A Chinese language class at BNU required the newly enrolled workers, farmers, and soldiers, who had little previous school training, to complete six years’ worth of high school education within three years (Chinese Language Unit, BNU, 1951; C. Liu, 2012). In 1952, a Soviet five-year engineer program at college level was squeezed into four years in China. Against many teachers’ complaints, educational policy makers argued that in the next five years China would need 150,000 industrial cadres. Restoring the engineering program from four to five years would reduce the number of graduates by half by the fifth year. Thus, they insisted on keeping the program in four years, with only minor adjustments to the curricula (H. Fang, Hao, Song, & Chen, 2006; M. Yang, 1952).

Some readers might suspect whether students were able to complete such demanding tasks. Educational policy makers gave a positive answer. As discussed in Chapter One, the radical conceptualization of students’ capability paved the way for increased exaction of productive labor. In this section, I conduct three case studies in which the issue of human capacity was implicated in the acceleration of learning and teaching. Concerning the students, I discuss how the goal of their intellectual development was created and contested during a textbook reform and a curriculum reform. My third case study focuses on a teacher workload reform to show that teachers

were subjected to the new human ideal as well. All three reforms involved controversies about individual capability.

### *Textbook reform of 1952*

Since 1922, Chinese elementary schools had required six years of study. In order to quickly deliver graduates to the workforce, in 1951 the Government Administration Council [*zhengwu yuan*] (1951) ordered reducing the six-year education to five years. In response to this call, the newly established People's Education Press started publishing its first series of textbooks. The first volume of the Chinese language series, meant to be used in the first semester of grade one, sparked a major controversy concerning its difficulty level. In comparison to the previous regional textbooks, it had a huge jump in terms of the number of characters contained:

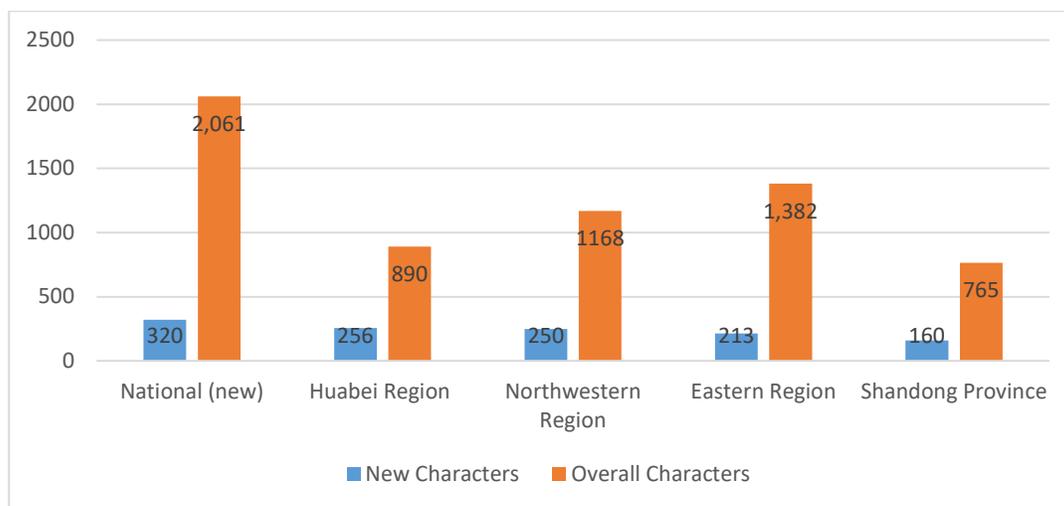


Figure 2. Comparison of Numbers of Characters in Textbooks, 1952. Source: (Y. Liu, 1952a).

In terms of pedagogical objective, this textbook required teachers to guide children to “approach natural laws through understanding natural objects in their movements”, and to point out that “all matter keeps moving and developing” (Y. Liu, 1952a; Xiao, 1952, p. 47). The chief editor of the textbook, Liu Yu (1952b), provided more detailed guidelines, using the article *Hand* as an example. He required teachers to explain to students that even a tiniest ordinary object might

contain numerous instances of manual labor: a piece of cloth contained the labor of weaving, dyeing, and tailoring, following the production and transportation of textiles. Further, textile workers needed tools, and the making of tools required coal mining and steel production. In addition, all workers involved in this long chain of production needed basic substances such as food and housing, which led to further productive processes (Y. Xiao, 1952, p. 47).

Why did Liu make his textbook so demanding? It is helpful to note that Liu (1912–1988), after a revolutionary youth, joined the Party in 1935. Either in charge of educational affairs in the pre-PRC communist Shanganning Border Region, or working at People’s Education Press, Liu (1950) persistently emphasized the value of hard labor. This view is revealed in *Little Hero*, a poem Liu (1950) composed for kids:

Liyou lad,	Less talking,
Of little age,	More doing,
Picking up cotton fruits without bending waist.	A huge pile in a short while.
Eyes crystal-clear,	With adults,
Hands swift,	Let’s compete,
Coming and going with agility.	Kids won’t be defeated! (p. 100)

Complaints about Liu’s textbook reached the Department of Elementary Education, Ministry of Education, chaired by Wu Yanyin (1886–1975). When working at the Republican Ministry of Education, Wu used to be responsible for the editing of elementary textbooks. Under the influence of Dewey, he was be a champion of child-centered pedagogy (S. Huang, 2014; Y. Lv, 2005). As the CCP assumed power, Wu did not suffer direct persecution though still had to write confessional reports to vow his break away from Deweyan philosophy (Y. Wu, 1949, 2000).

With the support of Zhou Enlai, Wu was able to continue performing major duties in the PRC Ministry of Education. Under Wu's influence, in 1953 the Ministry of Education collected 434 pieces of feedback on Liu's textbook (H. Jin & Jiang, 1999). Educators across cities and provinces predominantly considered this textbook too difficult (Q. Ma, 1953; Y. Wu, 1953; Y. Xiao, 1952). While 16 pieces of feedback welcomed the textbook's difficulty level, 62 considered that it involved too broad and abstract knowledge beyond students' ability. Besides 23 pieces of feedback that appreciated the length of the articles, 157 considered them too long. 33 considered the sentences too long, and none said the opposite. 95 thought there were too many new characters, 8 considered some terms, such as "honorary soldier's family", "grand savior", and "enemy", to be too abstract. As a result, most schools were unable to accomplish the teaching objectives assigned by the textbook (Z. Li, Bao, & Zhang, 1957; Y. Wu, 1953).

At the end of 1953, the Government Administration Council (1953) decided to abort its reform and restore elementary education to six years, attributing its failure to textbooks and lack of teaching resources. Underlying these stated reasons were administrative mistakes. As pointed out by He Dongchang (2007), the Ministry of Education experimented among top-tier classes of six leading schools to assess the five-year proposal. This sampling apparently failed to consider the heterogeneity of China's schools. Further, the Ministry of Education hastily launched the reform in less than a year, before the experiment had produced a solid result.

Wang Jing was a teacher of the Second Elementary School Affiliated with BNU, one of the six leading schools that participated the experimentation. When the new textbook suffered overwhelming criticism, Wang (1953) made a rare outcry, complaining that the textbook was too lenient on students. She took issue with the textbook's requirement that students did not have to achieve "four masteries" – the ability to fully read, speak, write, and use new characters (Y. Liu,

1952a). According to Wang, despite that at the beginning some students were so stressed as to talk in dreams, some of her fellow teachers were able to achieve “four masteries”. Wang proudly reported that two top-tier classes of her school managed to grasp 500 new characters in their first semester, considerably exceeding the textbook requirement. It should be noted, though, that another source indicates that Wang’s school considered the textbook materials too much and too difficult; teachers either could not finish them within a semester, or, by forcefully rushing them through, created fatigue, stress, and health problems among students (Y. Wu, 1953). It remains a mystery whether Wang exaggerated to manage her school’s responsibility in the experiment, or to please the CCP. Even assuming that the two top-tier classes indeed achieved what Wang claimed, they could barely represent the huge amount of rural schools, many of which had to spread the textbook materials over two semesters (Y. Wu, 1953).

#### *Curriculum reform of 1956*

In spite of his past ties with the Nationalist government, Wu Yanyin was permitted to assume an important position in the PRC Ministry of Education, partly because the new regime faced a dire shortage of educators (Pepper, 1987). But he and fellow American-influenced educators were unable to reverse the tide of the radicalization of education. In 1953, when debates concerning Liu’s textbook were ongoing, the Ministry of Education had already started planning another reform, one that, in emulation of the Soviet Union, separated Chinese language and literature into two courses (Y. Lin, 2008; Taskforce of Hu Qiaomu’s Biography, 2014). Perhaps affected by the textbook incident, policy makers discussed students and teachers’ capabilities in creating the new curricula. Ye Shengtao (1894–1988), the Vice Minister of Education, delivered a mixed message regarding this issue. Ye (1956) acknowledged that the new curricula should, in alignment with students’ age characteristics, proceed from concrete phenomena to abstract ones,

from perceptual experience to rational one, and from comprehensive knowledge to specialized one. Yet, having outlined these principles, when it came to concrete matters, Ye (1955b) complained that the existing curricula were too easy. Accordingly, the new curricula significantly dwarfed the previous ones. In the textbook for the first semester of grade seven, three articles each exceeded 14,000 words. In the past, Zhao Shuli's 3,000-word article *Floor* was allocated four class hours. Now, the same author's *Marriage of Little Hei* was allocated the same class hours, in spite of its more than tripled length. The number of articles had a significant increase as well. The old curriculum used to require grade eight students to study 17 sessions, and grade nine students 16 sessions. The new curriculum, in comparison, required grade nine students to study 30 sessions and grade ten students 43 sessions, plus 16 special topics (J. Liu, 1956; Tao, 1956). Ye (1955b) also insisted that teachers should strive to improve themselves to meet the curriculum requirements:

Our teachers generally lack mastery of language and literature in depth and breadth, this is a fact. But, we cannot wait. Because education must serve socialist construction, which requires students to achieve comprehensive development, we cannot wait for the time to come slowly. (p. 32)

Clearly, the Ministry of Education had learned little from the textbook controversy, and Ye had overestimated teachers and students' capacity. In 1956, shortly after their circulation, the new curricula provoked overwhelming criticism (Y. Ding, 1956; Editorial Office, 1956d; C. Huang, 1956), with only a few exceptions (S. Han, 1956; Z. Wang, 1956). The criticisms mirrored exactly those of Liu's textbook, bringing up again old problems concerning quantity and difficulty. Take the lecture session *Literature before Qin Dynasty* for example: this session included an article of approximately 10,000 words, footnotes of 7,000 words, and references of 25,000 words. According to Ding (1956), she took four hours to merely read through the article, without fully

grasping it. Classical literature posed a particular challenge to teachers, who were, in general, undertrained (W. Gao, 1956; Tao, 1956). The references were of little help because they were simply too much. Indeed, some teachers had to work until midnight and get up at 4 am, without taking a break in the noon (Tao, 1956).

In class, *Literature before Qin Dynasty* was allocated two hours only. Ding (1956) protested that merely reading the article aloud to students would fully consume the two hours, leaving no time for interpretation. It was no surprise that many teachers had difficulty completing the teaching objectives and sometimes had to gloss over the materials (Y. Lin & Liu, 1956; Tao, 1956). Ill prepared for lecture, they became embarrassed by students' tough questions (Tao, 1956).

Students suffered because of their poor knowledge foundation. Many of them already had difficulty with the modern Chinese language. Classical literature, involving extensive ancient mythologies and histories, posed even greater challenges (Y. Ding, 1956; C. Fu, 1956; Teaching and Research Unit of Chinese Language, Beijing Colledge for Advanced Teacher Training, 1957; M. Yuan, 1957). The national government required students to spend no more than 24 hours per week on self-study, and no more than 140 minutes per week on the self-study of Chinese literature. However, a survey revealed that on average students spent 190 minutes (W. Gao, 1956). The new curricula led to copious complaints, headaches, and sleep problems (B. Chen, 1956). Merely a few months after enactment, the classical literature components began to suffer cuts. By 1958, the new curricula was fully phased out (Y. Lin, 2008).

#### *Teaching workload reform of 1955*

While the textbook and curriculum reforms were underway, the Ministry of Higher Education was planning to unleash more teachers' potential through introducing a quantifiable workload regulation. Guided by Lebedyev, the chief Soviet educational advisor, in 1954 the Ministry

conducted surveys with three colleges in Beijing. The surveys indicated that college teachers spent between 0.87 and 1.98 hours on teaching every day (Ministry of Higher Education, 1954). These hours were significantly lower than the Soviet counterpart, which, as required by a 1938 regulation, ranged between 2.25 and 3.5 hours depending on tenure ranks (Zeng, 1954). This survey, however, failed to calculate the hours spent on non-teaching activities. Adding all tasks together, Soviet teachers were required to work 6 hours to fulfil daily quota, but Chinese teachers worked between 8.21 and 9.83 hours per day, excluding time spent on preparation for lectures.

Next year, the Ministry (1955a) enacted a teaching workload regulation, requiring college teachers at various ranks to teach between 480 and 640 hours per year. It appeared to be more lenient than the Soviet requirement (between 540 and 840 hours per year). The new regulation was based on the flawed survey and added further burden to teachers.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps being aware this issue, the Ministry first promoted the regulation in a few select institutions.

Several other issues exacerbated the situation. Given the low qualification of some BNU teachers, and that the Sovietization movement required overhauls in pedagogical contents and methods, teachers had to spend a huge amount of time on re-learning. Since Chinese translations of Soviet texts were limited, many teachers had to learn Russian language (Ministry of Higher Education, 1954). Teachers of social sciences in particular often needed to prepare two to three days before a two-hour lecture. Research took up extra time as well; due to the lack of assistants and library support, many professors had to collect research materials on their own, sometimes by handwriting. There were also problems involved in the calculation of working hours. For example,

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<sup>34</sup> The new regulations claimed that college teachers should have a cap of 6 hours' work per day, but provided few solutions to reduce tasks (Ministry of Higher Education, 1955a). It advised that teachers having difficulty meeting the workload quota could postpone scientific research, but must not ignore the study of political thoughts (Ministry of Higher Education, 1955b).

each attendance in an undergraduate internship usually cost no less than 10 hours but was counted as 2 hours only (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1956b).

Regardless, Vice Minister Zeng Zhaolun (1954) (1899–1967) asserted that China was ready to embrace the new regulation:

The Soviet Union has acquired valuable experiences in its socialist construction. With its generous aid, we could progress faster than the Soviet Union in the past. Although our path is basically the same with the Soviet one, by starting these reforms ahead of time we will be able to accelerate our country's socialist construction. For example, the Soviet industry did not launch Stakhanovite movement until 1935, whereas we have already begun a technological reform movement this year [...] In the same vein, it is possible for us to apply the teacher workload policy right now as part of our educational reform. Also, it is entirely possible, and indeed predictable, that the implementation of the new regulation will help advance the reform of higher education, and better guarantee the planned cultivation of cadres in both quantity and quality. (p. 3)

Similar to Ye Shengtao, Zeng was mindful of health issues, but meanwhile prioritized external demands. How was it possible to enact the workload regulation without undermining teachers' health? Zeng placed vague hopes on innovations in effective teaching methods without pointing out what these methods were.<sup>35</sup>

Zeng's optimism turned out to be ungrounded. A few months after the new regulation was implemented, the majority of BNU teachers failed to meet the requirements:

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<sup>35</sup> Zeng (1954) argued that the rationalization of industrial management demonstrates that teaching can be made more efficient, but he hastily warned that education is by nature different from industry and cannot fully borrow the latter's principles. The only suggestions he came up with were "improving the organization of teaching to more rationally employ human resources", and that "teachers gradually transform their methods of thinking and working, and equip themselves with Marxism and Leninism as the methods of thinking" (pp. 4–5).

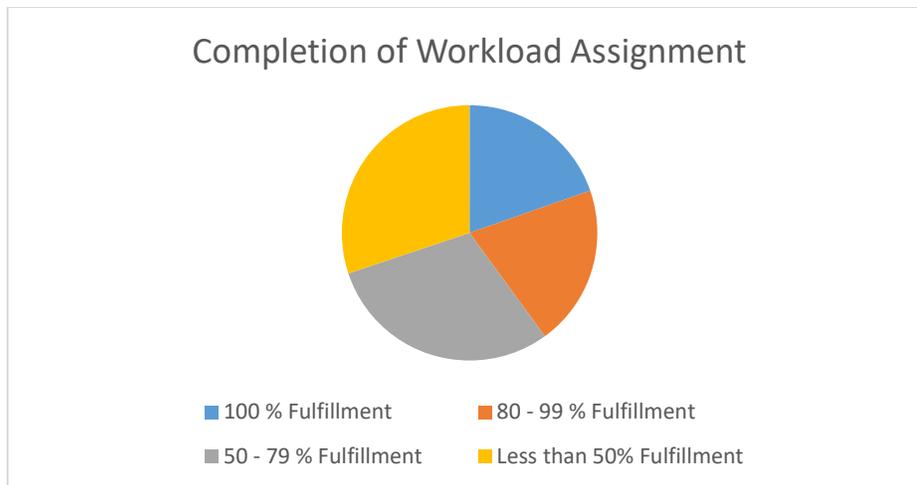


Figure 3. Completion of Workload Assignment, 1956. Source: (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1956b).

On average, the BNU teachers fulfilled 68 percent of the required workload. In 1957, the teaching workload reform was aborted, without moving beyond the experimental stage (Ministry of Higher Education, 1957).

#### *Productivity and human labor*

The above three reforms were targeted at different populations on different issues. Yet they shared a common theme: productivity. The textbook reform sought to compress a six-year elementary education into five years; the curriculum reform aimed to equip students with more skills without extending the length of study; the teaching workload reform was meant to squeeze out more teaching hours from teachers' already crammed schedules. In one way or another, they were part of the same attempt to boost the efficient delivery of manpower to workforces. The pursuit of productivity originated from China's seek for economic development amid the Cold War competition. The 1958 Great Leap Forward had the goal of "surpassing England and catching up with America" as quickly as possible. "Speed is the soul of the general line" became a catchphrase (S. Cheng, 2006). Shapiro (2001) summarizes that speed was the defining feature of socialist China's campaigns: "urgency in reorganizing society, urgency in catching up with Britain in

industry, urgency in raising agricultural yields, urgency in building water conservancy projects, urgency in ridding China of pests, and so on” (p. 71).

The pursuit of high productivity was also motivated by a utopian vision of a materially abundant communist society (Marx & Engels, 1848). However, material wealth entailed only improved living and working conditions, but also reduced working hour, according to Marx (1863):

If everybody has to work, if the contradiction between those who have to work too much and those who are idlers disappears [...] and if, in addition, the development of the productive forces brought about by capitalism is taken into account, society will produce the necessary abundance in six hours, [producing] more than it does now in twelve, and, moreover, all will have six hours of “disposable time”, that is, real wealth; time which will not be absorbed in direct productive labor, but will be available for enjoyment, for leisure, thus giving scope for free activity and development. (p. 390)

It should be noted, though, that Marx’s dream of reducing working hours to six would only be realized in a relatively advanced socialist stage, and China had a long way to go before that point. According to Marx, a socialist/communist state should take advantage of the industrial resources inherited from preceding capitalism – factories, machines, skills, and so on – toward its own benefit. However, under the Russian influence (Fritzsche & Hellbeck, 2009), the CCP precipitated its revolution, and consequently did not have an opportunity to enjoy these resources. As introduced in Chapter One, China faced dire economic conditions due to war damages. Its means of production remained largely agricultural. The first Five-Year Plan made ground-breaking achievements, but came at a heavy price of human labor.

## **The “free labor” in aid of socialist construction**

### *Campus maintenance*

The maintenance of schools provided a miniature snapshot of China’s economic hardship compounded by the lack of manpower. In the war period of the 1930s and 1940s, schools run by the CCP faced dreadful material shortages. Students at the Yucai Elementary School had to creatively make themselves color chalks, specimens, and mouse traps. Textbook copies were duplicated by handwriting, and dictionaries were collectively bought for shared use (L. Guo & colleagues, 1949). Some textbooks, as those compiled by Zhang Tengxiao and Liu Yu, contained a very high portion of instructions on production activities (Z. Li, 1950). A demonstration model “It is not Easy to Have Buns to Eat” displayed the entire process in which wheat was planted, harvested, processed and made into buns (L. Guo, 1950). These pedagogical/labor activities were praised to have boosted harvest, increased revenue, and lessened the burden of adults (Z. Li, 1950).

Material hardship extended to the new regime (Anonymous, 1951a), when the BNU Elementary School listed “Overcome Hardship” as one of its guidelines (H. Hu, 1950, p. 1). The Girls’ Middle School Attached to BNU (Girls’ School for short) had to recycle old wooden materials from a torn-down corridor for campus renovations (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1949a). Children at the BNU kindergarten lacked suitable chairs, and sometimes had to reuse truncated adult-size desks (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1951b). The practice of utilizing student physical labor also entered the new pedagogy (S. Liu, 1951). The method of pooling money to buy dictionaries was introduced by teachers at Yucai Elementary School (L. Guo & colleagues, 1949) and picked up by the Girls’ School (Girls’ Middle School Attached to BNU, 1954).

Meanwhile, schools faced shortages of personnel, partly due to expanded enrollments (Girls' School, 1953). In 1951 it was estimated that in the next five years, there would be a shortage of approximately one million elementary school teachers; 200,000 professional teachers in worker and farmer part-time schools; 130,000 secondary school teachers; 10,000 teachers in higher education; and at least dozens of thousands of kindergarten teachers (Editorial Office, 1951a). It was common for teachers and staff to work overtime, and this effort was labeled as "revolutionarily use one person as two to overcome the shortage of personnel" (Y. Feng, 1952, p. 40). The shortage of campus employees was compensated by student labor. Students were often asked to give up spare-time entertainment and physical exercise to aid campus construction. They dug foundations and carried bricks and timber, sometimes involving a walk of 35 kilometers (Zhan, 1950). One school mobilized its all 415 students to construct lawns, which took about 15 hours per student (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953).

Many students helped with school administration tasks that ranged from collecting tuition fees to distributing movie tickets. In the school canteen they helped with groceries, dishwashing, and pig feeding (School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953). Four students in the Second Middle School of Chongqing, for example, got up at four every morning to ground soy beans for making tofu. One student responsible for the school canteen's accountancy often worked until 11 pm, and missed 49 class meetings/self-study sessions in one semester alone. The First Middle School of Kunming dispatched several students to purchase pigs 200 kilometers away (School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953).

At the Student Association of Sichuan University, the General Affairs Unit was responsible for a variety of tasks, such as helping with the university barbershop and managing feces pits. The

Unit of Health maintained rehabilitation facilities. The Unit of Entertainment and Physical Exercise was in charge of performances. Each performance usually required over 100 students to work for half a month. Some unit members complained: “Our job is almost like that of regular staff!” (School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953, p. 61). The Arts Unit was responsible for the design and layout of meeting venues. In 13 months, they worked for 173 days. Its members complained: “Since we came to the school, we spent half of every year providing services”. Even students not belonging to the Arts Unit mocked: “Sichuan University uses the Arts Unit to take care of all the weddings and funerals” (p. 61).

### *Students as a “raid squad”*

The utilization of student labor was not confined to campus. As the pressure from personnel shortages built up, various social organizations resorted to schools for help. Some of them directly scooped ungraduated students from schools. In less than a year between 1951 and 1952, over 320,000 ungraduated students at secondary and higher education institutions across the country ended up quitting school for employment (J. Zhang, 1952a), causing deep concerns among educational administrators (Anonymous, 1951b; L. Zhang, 1951a).

At other times, without asking students to quit school, social organizations recruited students to “volunteer” for them. Students were a special population. Collectively regulated in schools yet not subjected to nine-to-five occupational obligations, students were considered to be a good “raid squad” that could be easily utilized at no cost (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953, p. 60).<sup>36</sup> Their youthful enthusiasm, literacy,

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<sup>36</sup> Sometimes students were called upon to deal with emergency situations: searching for lost horses, dealing with drought (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953), and helping with rush planting (Zhan, 1950). In the first semester of 1952, the Yingjiang Middle School in Anhua County received a government notice at 10 pm requesting eight students to help with paperwork. The eight students had to walk 7.5 kilometers under heavy rain to the government, worked from midnight to morning, and then walked back again in the rain (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953).

and communication skills were all assets to be taken advantage of. In the following, I briefly discuss three areas where the students made most contributions: agriculture, social reforms, and propaganda.

Although agriculture was not the CCP's top priority, it was responsible for keeping the city population fed and supporting industrial development. In this regard, students were often recruited to help with regular farm tasks, including fertilization, pest control, weeding, and tree planting – tasks which often took weeks (Anonymous, 1953d; Office of General Education, Department of Culture and Education of Shanxi, 1956; Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953). In the 1956–1958 work plan, the First Middle School of Hanzhong asked its students to deliver 50,000 kilograms of feces fertilizer, produce 500 kilograms of oil, and collect 1,500 kilograms of leftover wheat seeds after harvest (Office of General Education, Department of Culture and Education of Shanxi, 1956). In an extreme case, the Sixth Normal College of Hunan Province refused to enroll students who did not bring agrarian tools (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953).

Student participation in agriculture went beyond direct production. In 1950, the CCP launched the land reform, aiming to redistribute land from the rich to the poor. Teachers and students were asked to contribute their skills in the measurement of land and agricultural productivity, conducting agricultural levy, and doing paperwork (Anonymous, 1953d, 1953b). In the Fall of 1952, various schools were reported to have mobilized hundreds of students to work for months. Schools in six of the seven districts of Jinyu County, Jiangxi Province, had to postpone the beginning of the semester from September to November 17th (Anonymous, 1953d, 1953b; School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953).

Land reform was one of the CCP's major initiatives to transform China's society, but far from the only one. The 1950s was a hectic decade, full of reforms concerning the legal system, taxation, insurance, and so forth. Again, a surprisingly wide range of organizations requested student service: such as Sino-Soviet Friendship Associations, police stations, residents' committees, health offices, department stores, cinemas, and communes (Anonymous, 1953d; Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953). The array of tasks students helped with included developing commune members, injecting vaccines, constructing city roads, and standing sentry (Anonymous, 1953d; Girls' School, 1949; Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953; Zhan, 1950).

The CCP made its social reforms widely known to ordinary people, whether to gain their cooperation or to showcase the new society's advantages. As explained by Mao (1942), propagandists could come from a wide range of groups. Not only teachers, journalists, literary authors, and military directors were propagandists: "whenever a man speaks to others, he is doing propaganda work" (p. 60). Correspondingly, students were called upon to propagandize all the social reforms and novel phenomena. In the 1950s, students were called upon to create wall newspapers, posters, and exhibitions. Students at the High School of Xinhui County in Hubei Province spent half a month creating over 10,000 banners. 420 students from four schools in Zunyi City left classes to greet role models at the train station (Anonymous, 1953b; School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953; Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953; Zhan, 1950).

The most popular student contribution to propaganda was theatrical, musical, and dance performances, which were time-consuming (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953). In 1952, to celebrate the anniversary of the May Fourth

Movement, students at Yao'an Middle School in Yunnan spent six hours per day for three weeks on dance rehearsals. In 1953, students at the Girls' Normal College of Chongqing had thirty performances in a month (Anonymous, 1953b; C. Dong, 1951; H. Liu, 1952; School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953; Zhan, 1950).

### *Coordination failure*

The degree to which students were caught up in the hectic social reforms reveals an alarming lack of coordination. Torn among requests from different organizations, teachers and students often had to multitask (Anonymous, 1953d; Office of General Education, Department of Culture and Education of Shanxi, 1956; Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953). The First Central Elementary School of Chongwen District of Beijing was invited to attend multiple meetings on the same date: the second anniversary of the Korean War, a workshop on the bylaws of worker association, a seminar on the new five-year elementary school system, a meeting on worker movement, and the inauguration of "Youth's Home". Some of the events required representatives only, but others required the attendance of all teachers (Editorial Office, 1953a).

In a single meeting in 1952, schools in East Fourth District of Beijing received a list of multiple tasks for completion, including an educational survey, redistributing study time, criticizing wrong attitudes toward campus workers, eliminating rats, and collecting opinions about broadcasts. Among all tasks, the educational survey gave the teachers the worst headache. It was assigned by the Department of Education of Beijing, which, due to lack of experience, designed questionnaires detached from reality and failed to explain the tasks clearly. Some teachers conducted the survey without understanding what information was needed. Initially, the Department gave the schools only three days, so that some teachers had to miss classes to complete

the survey. All these problems undermined the survey results. The schools had to conduct the survey three times to produce a satisfactory report (Editorial Office, 1953a).

Unsurprisingly, educators and administrators complained about having too many tasks unrelated to teaching (Academic Affairs Office of Xiangtan Normal College, 1956), which consumed about 40 percent of their working hours (J. Zhang, 1953a). Between February 22 and June 6 of 1956, Xi'an Middle School received 307 official documents, among which only 43 were related to teaching (Office of General Education, Department of Culture and Education of Shanxi, 1956). The vice principal of a school in Xi'an joked that he was an irresponsible principal, as he knew little about how the school was doing. He attributed the problem to organizational disorder. Between 15 August 1955 and 28 February 1956, he was dispatched to work for the province, and was unable to take care of his school for half a year. After returning to school, he had to attend too many meetings. In four months, he spent 36 full days at meetings. Over the course of five and a half months, he received about 300 guest visits. Over six and a half months, he received 350 letters and official documents, among which only fewer than 40 were related to teaching (Y. He, 1956).

## **Labor education and negotiation**

### *The economization of labor education*

Indeed, the incorporation of labor activity in schools was not a novel notion. China's history of labor education [*laodong jiaoyu*] dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. At different times, the Republican national curricula contained craftsmanship [*gongyi ke*], labor activity [*laozuo ke*], and household work [*jiashi ke*] for female students. According to a 1932 curricula, labor activity should occupy two hours per week, namely 6.4 % of overall school hours (Editing Committee, 1996). Often guided by Three Principles of the People [*san min zhuyi*] – nationalism, democracy, and the livelihood of the people, Republican educators heatedly debated over the purposes of labor

education: the cultivation of ideal personality, increased productivity, and universal access to education (Z. Mo, 1933). Around the May Fourth Movement in 1919, some BNU students reflected on the relation between education and manual labor. They formed a Work-Study Association that not only helped poor students secure means of living but also had the vision of integrating education with manual labor, which they considered as a means to create a democratic society free of class oppression (BNU Writing Board, 1984). Among the champions of labor education, the most notable figure was Li Dazhao (1888–1927), who at the same time pioneered Marxism in China (D. Li, 1919).

In the 1940s, the CCP systematically integrated education with labor to aid its war with Japan and the Nationalist Party. Although this approach expediently helped alleviate economic pressure and bridged the gap between cadres and the working mass, it lost much its theoretical richness. In the 1949 *Common Program*, “love of labor” was listed as one of the “five loves”, besides the love of the country, the people, science, and public properties. It is important to note, however, in the earliest years of the PRC, the call for labor education more rested at the policy level than in concrete pedagogical practices. It was in 1953 and 1957 labor education became intensified for reasons that I will elaborate in the second half of this chapter.

Labor education was delivered through a mixture of curricular and extracurricular activities. In class, all textbooks were combed through to identify opportunities where labor could be discussed (Department of Education, Shandong Province, 1955). In Chinese language classes, for instance, teachers explored how to glorify productive labor in lectures on stories of role model factory workers, scientists, and miners (Unit of Chinese language, First Middle School of Jinan, 1955). Biology was one of the majors that conveniently served labor education. In campus gardens, students transferred biological knowledge into practice by cultivating grains, fruits, and produces

for industrial usages (Biology Teaching Unit, Liangxiang Middle School, 1956; First Middle School of Heze, 1955). However, lectures were not always perfectly rendered to facilitate labor education. In a lecture on internal combustion engines, a physics teacher extensively elaborated on the history of the combustion engine in China, and how they could be used to aid agricultural activities. At this point, the teacher made an abrupt twist, saying that given China's household-based economy, individual farmers could not afford combustion engines. Where laid the solution? He told students that they should join communes to help with agriculture. This lecture was pointed out to be too contrived (K. Liu, 1955).

Extracurricular activities included guest lectures by role model workers, radio broadcasts, workshops, and blackboard newspapers (Department of Education, Anhui Province, 1955). At labor exhibitions, students were exposed to how the human species and the world co-evolved through labor activities (First Middle School of Heze, 1955). In the 1954 Spring break, middle schools in Shanxi Province organized 1,727 students to visit factories, 2,250 students to visit farms, and 2,490 students to visit communes (J. Fang, 1955). Participation in family house chores and farming was an alternative means of labor education (Anonymous, 1954g).

From a pedagogical perspective, labor education was meant to make students acquire production skills as well as a number of qualities such as the love of labor, perseverance, and meticulousness (Anonymous, 1954e, 1955d). Labor activities exposed students to a variety of challenges – physical discomfort, exhaustion, dirtiness, and frustration. Through overcoming these difficulties, students were expected to experience a self-transformation. A student at Tsinghua University would not clean the lathes so as to keep hands clean. When he had to touch gadgets, he had to first cover them with paper. After undergoing labor education, he reportedly started to enjoy

working in the factory, and was excited to observe the stones delivered by him were put into use in a construction site (Shang & Guan, 1955).

Through experiencing challenges in labor production, students were expected to become appreciative of hard-earned agricultural and industrial products. Some students used to think that construction workers were too slow in ramming the foundations, but when they helped with ramming, their arms became sore after a few minutes. Consequently, they began to realize the hardship of construction work, and became more appreciative of campus facilities (Shang & Guan, 1955). Even minor labor tasks such as planting at campus gardens produced positive educational effects. Teachers were delighted to report that some middle school students woke up at midnight to the sound of a storm, and hurried to protect the trees in the garden (J. Yi, 1955). Also reported was the remark by a student: “I felt really cold after the evening review session, and went to check out our seedlings, worrying they might be frozen. I so wished I would cover them with my coat! In the end, I found some grass to cover them”; “In the past I hated raining, because it causes inconvenience, especially on Sundays. But now, as I think of the plants’ needs, every day I look forward to raining. Today I’m so happy that it rained!” (First Middle School of Heze, 1955, p. 31).

The notion of labor education contained potentially laudable insights. To certain degree, it inherited Marx’s (1867b, 1867a) call for combining productive labor and education, which, according to him, promised to raise children of the working class above the level of the middle and higher classes by making them all-round developed citizens.<sup>37</sup> But, alongside this idealism, labor education in fact provided a justification for imposing extravagant productive demands on

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<sup>37</sup> According to Marx, in order to be educational, labor tasks must involve the training of mind, body, and technological skills. The working hours proposed by Marx was relatively high: no more than two hours for children aged 9–12, four hours for those aged 13–15, and six hours for those aged 16–17. These hours should be read against the exploitation of child labor in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Europe that Marx observed: children as little as six years old were pressured to work between 12 and 15 hours per day (Marx, 1867a), an “abomination” he saw must be stopped (Marx, 1867b, p. 188).

students, which would otherwise be deemed beyond the legitimate content of schooling. Labor education overlapped with students' involvement in services on and off campus. As it turned out, the productive activities carried so much urgency that they often eclipsed the pedagogical purpose (Anonymous, 1954d; C. Dong, 1954; Editorial Office, 1954b, 1954c). Labor education was frequently celebrated for its material and economic accomplishments. The facts that 18,000 college and secondary school students in Beijing had dug half of the foundation of the Soviet Exhibition Museum; that students from a middle school in Shanxi had helped construction workers in building 473 gyms; that over tens of thousands of students in Wuhan and Nanjing had helped with overcoming flood, and so on, were all perceived as triumphs of labor education. On top of everything else, these activities were frequently assessed in cash value (Editorial Office, 1956c; Shang & Guan, 1955; Youth League committee, 1956).

Since the birth of the PRC, there had been competition between education and the production sectors for financial and personnel resources. Now, this chronic dilemma had a murky solution: It was claimed that education and economic progress can be achieved simultaneously through labor education (Anonymous, 1957d). The notion of labor education served as a linchpin to weld education with economic tasks. The discourse about labor education was not purely a theoretical inspiration to guide pedagogy, but was often produced *post hoc* to sugarcoat the exaction of student labor. Toward the end of this chapter, I will revisit the production of the discourse about labor education, this time in relation to class struggle. In the following sections, however, I first discuss how teachers and students responded to labor demands, and how their voices were heard.

### *Academic performance and health*

Students often internalized the call for hard working (Anonymous, 1953e; The Twentieth Middle School of Tianjin, 1955). It became commonplace for them to keep working regardless of weekends, illness, or even death in the family (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954g; Anonymous, 1953e). Students invented various methods to squeeze out more time for study. The ten-minute between-class break must not be wasted (Fourth Middle School of Beijing, 1954); dining and toilet time could be shortened; even bed time was used to mentally review course materials before falling asleep (Anonymous, 1953e). Imitating the ancient scholar Su Qin, who jabbed himself to remain awake during study time, some students pinched their thighs to keep studying (Anonymous, 1953e). Copious tears were shed in front of difficult assignments or low grades (Anonymous, 1953e; Hangzhou Normal College for Worker and Famer Speed Learning, 1952).

Teachers were anxious to make rapid progress as well. Music teachers at Yucai Elementary School were unsatisfied with students learning only a dozen songs per semester. Outside of class hours, they created an interest group where students allegedly learned between 40 and 100 songs per semester (L. Guo, 1950). One of these teachers even endeavored to teach children how to compose songs, in spite of their lack of confidence (H. Hu, 1950).

Students and teachers were seen by the radicals to possess tremendous untapped potentials, which could be kindled by revolutionary spirit. But, even with devotion, they failed to meet the overwhelming academic and labor demands (Anonymous, 1953d). According to a survey conducted in Hunan Province, 189 out of 221 schools reported having “too many and inappropriate” activities (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953, p. 59). Teachers tended to work more than 10 hours per day, sometimes reaching 14 or 15 hours (J. Zhang, 1953a). The following is a breakdown of the weekly working hours of Wang

Chuipei, a teacher of Chinese language at the Second Middle School in Datong. Wang was considered an experienced teacher – namely, he was able to finish tasks more efficiently than most others.

Weekly Working Hour Breakdown, Wang Chuipei, 1956 <sup>38</sup>					
Task	Hours	Task	Hours	Task	Hours
lecture	16	Reading student diaries	1	grading	13
preparation	16	Reading homework	1	Professional development	3
Political study	6	Union	2	Meetings & miscellaneous tasks	10
Total hours: 58					

Figure 4. Weekly Working Hour Breakdown, Wang Chuipei, 1956. Source: (Y. Ding, 1956).

Students tended to study more than 10 hours per day (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954a, 1954c; T. Lv, 1954; Ministry of Higher Education, 1955c; L. Zhang, 1950), leaving little time for entertainment (Anonymous, 1953e). Evenings, weekends, and the Spring Festival were often eroded by school tasks (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954d, 1954c; Anonymous, 1953e).

As a result of the excessive tasks, student academic performance declined sharply. At the Girls' Normal College in Chongqing, students who used to receive four or five marks out of five in 1952 now received two or three in 1953 (School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953). Hunan province faced the most appalling situation, with grade retention rates ranging between 17% and 35% (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953). In the 1952 college entrance exam, only approximately 2% of all 8,193 students in Hunan's eight districts/cities passed all six majors:

College Entrance Exam Report, Eight Districts/Cities of Hunan Province, 1952							
Number of majors failed	All pass	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number of students	210	1240	1892	1817	1478	1221	406

Figure 5. College Entrance Exam Report, Eight Districts/Cities of Hunan Province, 1952. Source: (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953).

<sup>38</sup> This regular working hour breakdown does not include tasks regarding work reports, midterm exams, administrative meetings, temporary meetings, report attendance, volunteering, and campus cleaning completed by Wang in the evenings and on weekends (Y. Ding, 1956).

Students in Xi'an city performed better, but still suffered a high rate of course failure:

Academic Performance Report, Xi'an City, 1956				
School	Middle School of Xi'an	Xi'an Normal University	Middle School Attached to Xi'an Normal University	Girls' Middle School of Xi'an
Percent of students failing more than one course	17.5%	22%	23%	28.4%

Figure 6. Academic Performance Report, Xi'an City, 1956. Source: (Office of General Education, Department of Culture and Education of Shanxi, 1956).

Lack of study time was clearly a major reason for the declined performance (Anonymous, 1953b, 1953d), given that students often had to skip classes to perform services (Anonymous, 1953d), had insufficient time to review course materials (Kai, 1953), or desperately read materials too hastily without digestion (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954c). Teachers' lack of time for class preparation and inability to complete teaching objective had likely contributed to students' academic failure as well (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954d; Anonymous, 1953b).<sup>39</sup>

Another negative consequence was health problem. As early as 1950, health problems were reported concerning several northern and eastern provinces – places that had the strongest revolutionary tradition and had responded most swiftly to the call for intensified labor (L. Zhang, 1950). At BNU, 60 percent of graduate students at the Department of Education had health problems in 1954. Undergraduate students enrolled in the pre-school education major had the most serious health problems. In 1953, 19 out of 47 of them had neurasthenia, while in 1956, 18 out of 27 were unable to attend the final exam. One student reportedly vomited blood due to exhaustion

<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that teachers were required to be familiar with current affairs, they often lacked time to do so (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954c). In October 1952, the Department of Culture and Education in the Second District of Chengdu City tested over eighty teachers from three relatively good schools on their knowledge about current events. The average score turned out to be less than thirty (Lan, 1953). The Second Department of Culture and Education in Chengdu City conducted a test among eighty teachers in three elementary schools, which revealed a shocking result: only one teacher passed the test (Anonymous, 1953b).

(Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954d, 1954c, 1955d; W. Zhu, 1956). The Girls' Middle School of Xi'an provided a breakdown of its students' health problems:

Student Health Problems at the Girls' Middle School of Xi'an, 1956 (878 students in total)					
Condition	High blood pressure	Suspected tuberculosis	Heart disease or neurasthenia	Kidney disease or tracheitis	Weakened eye sight
Number	14	25	16	30	185

Figure 7. Student Health Problems at the Girls' Middle School of Xi'an, 1956. Source: (Office of General Education, Department of Culture and Education of Shanxi, 1956).

Increasingly, student health problems were reported nationwide. In 1953, all 44 students in the infant education major of Chongqing Girls' Normal College had irregular menstruation and dizziness. In 1957, 45 out of 51 students at the First Middle School of Luoyang lost 1–7 kilograms within half a year (Administrative Office of Ministry of Education, 1957; Anonymous, 1953b; Fourth Middle School of Beijing, 1954; School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953; The Twentieth Middle School of Tianjin, 1955).

While acknowledging other factors such as malnutrition and poor medical care, many educators, including the Ministry of Education, concurred that excessive workload was a major reason responsible for students' declining health (Che, 1954; Ministry of Education, 1955; L. Zhang, 1950). Some students immediately fainted after carrying feces or had a swollen mouth after practicing wind instruments for long hours (School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953; Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953). Contrary to the radicals' belief, there seemed to be a limitation to human being's physical potential, the disregard of which eventually backfired.

### *Protecting students*

It is not surprising that students frequently complained about school pressure (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954f). Some said: "Our life can be summarized as 'three points and one line'. For those living in the residence, 'three points' mean dorm, classroom and canteen. For those live at

home, ‘one line’ means the line between home and school” (Anonymous, 1953e, p. 6). Some composed a parody:

Sleep is never long enough to be rested,  
assignments are never short enough to be manageable.  
We have no Sunday,  
only the seventh weekday. (Anonymous, 1953e, p. 6)

Since then, it became a cliché for Chinese students to call Sunday [*libai tian*] as the seventh weekday [*libai qi*] (X. Yang, 1956; W. Zhu, 1956).

The lowered academic performance and health status of students led to widespread concerns among teachers and parents (Che, 1954, 1954; J. Wang & Shan, 1950; H. Yin, 1954; L. Zhang, 1950). Educators made reference to official policies and CCP leaders’ talks to support their protests (L. Zhang, 1950): that the 1949 *Common Program* had included protection of children, and that Vice Chairman Zhu De’s (1955) comment that education should “cultivate our citizens to become physically healthy and spiritually joyful; only this way they could better perform in occupations and schools, and fulfill the heavy tasks of constructing new China” (p. 8).

It would be wrong to assume that the Chinese government did not care about its people’s health. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Chinese had been perplexed by the label “sick man of Asia”, and the new regime was motivated by a desire to strengthen its citizens’ health to ensure its socialist construction (M. Chen, 2015). After hearing protesting voices, in 1950 and 1951, Mao (2015) wrote two letters to Ma Xulun (1884–1970), Minister of Education, asking him to protect students’ health: “health first, and study second” (p. 151). In 1953, Mao wrote *The Youth League in Its Work Must Take the Characteristics of Youth into Consideration*. In this article, Mao (1953) said that “youth is the age of physical growth, much is imperilled if their health is neglected” (p.

96). Knowing that students had only six or seven hours for sleep, Mao urged a nine-hour sleep a rule. On 13 July 1951, the Government Administration Council (1951) issued a directive, requiring schools at all levels to limit study and service hours, and ensure enough sleep, according to the following standards:

The Directive from the Government Administration Council to Improve Student Health at All School Levels, 1951				
Academic level	Elementary school	Grades 7–9	Grades 10–12	College
Maximal daily study hours	6 (higher levels only)	8	9	9
Maximal service hours	1.5	2	3	3
Minimal daily sleep hours	10	9	9	8

Figure 8. The Directive from the Government Administration Council to Improve Student Health at All School Levels, 1951. Source: (Government Administration Council of the Central People’s Government, 1951).

Correspondingly, there were local initiatives made to protect students’ health. Concerned with its student’s health, BNU made multiple efforts to reduce course content, seminar participation, and class meeting times (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954d, 1958b; Teaching and Research Unit of Pedagogy, BNU, 1954). Schools in Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Liaoning, Shanxi, and Jiangsu self-reported to have adjusted their workload assignments, including downsizing bureaucracy and reducing study hours (Department of Education, Liaoning Province, 1956; Editorial Office, 1953a; Office of General Education, Department of Culture and Education of Shanxi, 1956; The First Middle School of Jinan, 1955; The Twentieth Middle School of Tianjin, 1955; H. Yin, 1954). These measures helped teachers and students to recuperate and improve their performances (Editorial Office, 1953a; Student Unit of the Huabei Worker Committee of the Youth League, 1953; The First Middle School of Jinan, 1955; B. Yang, 1953).

Unfortunately, this movement failed to overcome existing problems or to prevent newer ones from emerging. In 1953 and 1954, when protests reached a climax, the CCP started to exhort schools to incorporate more physical labor (Anonymous, 1955c; Department of Propaganda, 1954). It was paradoxical to see, for example, the co-existence of contradicting voices from Shandong Province in a same 1955 issue of *People’s Education*, some offering suggestions regarding

reducing student workload (The First Middle School of Jinan, 1955), others introducing methods of carrying out “labor education” using both class and extra-class time (Department of Education, Shandong Province, 1955; First Middle School of Heze, 1955). In 1955, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education had to issue further orders to reduce student workloads (Ministry of Education, 1955; Ministry of Higher Education, 1955c).<sup>40</sup> Yet, in the following years, teachers continued to complain about having too much work pressure (Administrative Office of Ministry of Education, 1957; C. Chen & Chen, 1957; Y. Ding, 1956; Luo, 1956). During the Educational Revolution, when student labor reached the apex, educational theorists began to assert that labor activity was beneficial to health (Editorial Office, 1957d). The Educational Revolution was followed once again by directives to protect student health (State Council, 1960).

#### *Central and local governance*

Obviously, one of the reasons for the failure of the workload reduction movement lay in the CCP’s unstable governance style (Y. Lin, 2009; Naughton, 2007). In the 1950s, the CCP lacked administrative experience while facing tremendous challenges. Its governance was thus characterized by trial and error, and constant adjustment, resulting in frequent policy shifts. The implementation of new policies – criticism of western sciences, learn from the Soviet Union, new curriculum, new pedagogy, and so forth – always added burden to schools. Furthermore, the CCP was used to using campaigns to achieve its objectives (H. Gao, 2017), and, guided by the “mass line” [*qunzhong luxian*] policy, these campaigns frequently required the participation of students. Since there has been enough scholarly treatment of these topics, my following discussion focuses

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<sup>40</sup> These directives, as well as Mao’s call, indeed reached nationwide teachers (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954f; Anonymous, 1951c, 1954b, 1954b; Che, 1954; Editorial Office, 1955b; Fourth Middle School of Beijing, 1954).

on the role of cadres, who, employed in local government and agencies, were the ones primarily responsible for extracting free labor from teachers and students.

First, problems often occurred in how cadres mistakenly enacted state policies. When Mao's (1953) call for ensuring good health, good study, and good work of students, the key message was that students should be better rested. Unfortunately, this call was interpreted out of context. In order to achieve all "three goods" [*san hao*], many schools pressured students to participate in physical exercises and contests, paradoxically adding further burden (Editorial Office, 1956b).

Second, cadres often prioritized political tasks over school activities (School Committee in the Youth League Worker Association of the Southwestern Region, 1953, p. 61). Some countryside cadres even told teachers: "teaching well doesn't count as achievement; achievement can only be made by finishing central tasks!" (Anonymous, 1953d, p. 4). The cadres in Yanfeng County of Fujian Province dispatched teachers to construct roads. Noticing that some teachers hired other people to fulfil the assignment, cadres beat gongs and shouted "must do it on your own!" (Anonymous, 1953d, p. 4). In 1951, a counterrevolutionary went to hide in Shaheyingzi Village in Liaoxi Province. The Unit for Suppressing Counterrevolutionaries called upon the local elementary school for help. Two school administrators and a dozen students played helped capture the counterrevolutionary, and were given honorary titles. Li Qinglian, an officer of the local department of culture and education, thought otherwise, that students should have focused on study. He was subsequently criticized for "not caring about politics" (Department of Education, Northeastern People's Government, 1952, p. 43).

The narrative of "political task" was utilized by cadres as a powerful rhetoric to suppress dissents (Anonymous, 1953b). Once the responsible cadres defined their requests to be "political

tasks” and brought up the slogan “education serves politics”, it became very difficult for any person to refuse assignments. School principals often had to comply with cadres’ requests to avoid the label of “not caring about politics” (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953). In Huangzhuang village, a school principal supported the students to refuse cadres’ order to help build railways on the basis of policies of the district government. However, the principal quickly succumbed to the cadres’ threat of investigation into his family background (Anonymous, 1953b). The power of cadres eroded academic values. Some school principals told students: “After all, the government needs cadres. Whether you can learn math well is not important; knowing how to calculate percentage would be enough” (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953, p. 60).

Some cadres abused their power for personal convenience. In a few villages in Changge County of Henan Province, cadres frequently required students to perform music and dances to celebrate their family events (Anonymous, 1953d, p. 4). In Huaihua County of Hunan Province, the magistrate also served as the principal of the Middle School of the County. Every time important officials passed by the county, the magistrate/principal would organize students to create welcome ceremonies on the road. To recover a little time, some classes carried blackboards to the roadside, where they had lecture while waiting for the officials to come (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953).

### *Soviet influences*

Still, one more problem stemmed from the Soviet influence. In a widely circulated speech, Pushkin (1952) sharply criticized BNU teachers and students’ requests to reduce workload, considering them to be “extremely wrong and unhealthy” (p. 3). He claimed that Soviet college students attended lectures for eight hours every day and still took extra time to participate in research,

political thoughts studies, and services. Chinese college students, whose life was “like a vacation” in comparison, should work as much as required and never harbor ideas such as “I am tired” and “I have done much work and cannot do more” (pp. 2–3).

Ironically, soon after, it was revealed to Chinese educators that the Soviet Union had similarly suffered from excessive school pressure, and that its Ministry of Education had been reducing curriculum contents (Ministry of Education, Soviet Union, 1954, 1955b, 1955a; Runovski, 1953). This news corroborated by Fumin (1953), another Soviet advisor, who told BNU teachers that some Soviet schools had reduced workload. Unfortunately, in spite of his empathy for the BNU people, Fumin was unable to exert much influence against the famous Pushkin.

Another influential person was Lebedyev, chief Soviet advisor working at the Ministry of Higher Education of China. A protagonist of the teaching workload reform, Lebedyev was convinced that there was still room for Chinese teachers to become more productive (Lebedyev, 1954a). His visit to BNU did not change this conviction. Instead, Lebedyev (1954b) commented:

In the case of BNU, the teachers do not seem to be overly burdened if we calculate the number of the students. When some teachers are indeed overloaded, a very important reason is that some [other] teachers have too little workload. Therefore, one of the tasks in front of us is to make each teacher responsible for certain teaching workload, as well as to have certain level of teachers supply. (p. 2)

In 1954, Ferratov visited East China Normal College. Unlike Lebedyev or Pushkin, he acknowledged the validity of the teachers and students’ complaints, and mentioned the possibility to ask the Ministry of Education to re-evaluate curriculum. However, more importantly, Ferratov (1955) provided three major suggestions to make improvements: that teachers must learn better

pedagogical methods, take more responsibility to help students, and accomplish teaching objectives with creativity.

*Boundless human potentiality*

Ferratorov's suggestion is reminiscent of Ye Shengtao and Zeng Zhaolun's hope that teachers may somehow creatively come up with better teaching methods to boost efficiency. Indeed, these ideas embodied a problem-solving strategy common in Maoist China, one that attenuated structural problems and located responsibility in individuals. In front of daunting external predicaments, it was maintained that individuals possessed tremendous potentiality to overcome difficulties (S. Gao, 1953; W. Qian, 1952).

Cheng Jinwu (1908–1970), a previous Deweyan educator who later assumed key positions at the Ministry of Education and the Department of Propaganda, claimed that it was a good thing to be busy; it signaled a transition from harmful idleness under the Nationalist Party's governance to positive liveliness in the new society. According to Cheng (1950), "the problem was not about busyness; rather, it was that our inappropriate and inefficient busyness has led to routinism" (p. 16). Cheng offered several suggestions regarding how to maximize efficiency, and asked teachers to spend more time going through thought reform.

Zhang Jian (1919–2011) received education under close mentorship of Tao Xingzhi, a leading Deweyan educator in Republican China, and defended Tao in the 1950s. After joining the CCP in 1936, Zhang briefly worked as a propagandist before embarking on a smooth career as an educational theorist and administrators in Yan'an and the Northeast region. In the new regime, Zhang was appointed to become the Vice Deputy [*fu chuzhang*] of the Department of Elementary Education. Differing from Tao, who busied himself mentoring students, Zhang took an administrative approach that emphasized tailoring education to meet China's central planning. In

1953, when complaints prevailed in education, Zhang (1953a) kept pushing teaching efficiency. He optimistically remarked that teachers had the potential to boost up teaching hours by five percent. Considering that China had 1.4 million teachers, the seemingly tiny increase could bring about 11,830 more cadres, 96,220 more middle school graduates, and 2,310,000 more elementary school graduates. In this proud calculation, the increase of each individual's productivity, multiplied by the massive population of the teaching profession, promised to make a gigantic difference in pushing China's socialism forward.

### **“All-round development” versus “teaching in accordance with aptitude”**

#### *Historical and intellectual origins*

The heavy school pressure cannot be fully understood without an examination of the goal of “all-round development” [*quanmian fazhan*], which encompassed the development of moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic aspects, in addition to labor activity.<sup>41</sup> The notion of cultivating holistic persons was not novel; it had appeared in many places of the world (Miller, 2015; C. Zhang, 1956). Chinese educators were well aware of this fact (T. Wang, 1956); the Republican schools had a “Four Cultivation” [*si yu*] principle covering exactly these four aspects (Gu, 2015; Z. Pan, 1951; L. Zhang, 1951d).<sup>42</sup> The CCP's notion of all-round development was partly rooted in Marxism. Marx and Engels (1845) believed that human beings possessed the potential to excel in a diversity of activities, but this potential was constrained by the division of labor:

As soon as the division of labor comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a

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<sup>41</sup> The all-round development ideal went through a few transitions (X. Wu, 2011). The so called “three goods” derived from Mao's (1953) call also became part of the ideal. Sometimes this ideal contained polytechnic development, but in 1957, it contained only moral, intellectual, and physical developments.

<sup>42</sup> It was said, for instance, that the Republican aesthetic was saturated with “corrupted”, “degraded” bourgeois sentiments, and that the new aesthetics served the interest of the people and the country (Z. Pan, 1951, p. 20).

hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; whereas in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. (p. 47)

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the increased division of labor restricted each worker to a particular role, and industrial production further forced the workers to become mechanical parts of a machine. Opposing this alienation phenomenon, Marx envisioned that members of communism would be able to master a wide range of skills and could freely shift from one activity to another. This is why Marx (1867a) approvingly quotes Hegel: “By well educated men we understand in the first instance, those who can do everything others can do” (p. 368). This ideal, according to a quote of Stalin (1952) popular in China, required education to provide comprehensive training:

Ensure such a cultural advancement of society as will secure for all members of society the all-round development of their physical and mental abilities; so that the members of society may be in a position to receive an education sufficient to enable them to be active agents of social development, and in a position freely to choose their occupations and not be tied all their lives, owing to the existing division of labor, to some one occupation. (p. 76)

While Marx’s notion of all-round development encompassed mental, physical, and technological developments, Chinese radicals created their own emphasis (G. Chen, 2008). What mattered the most to them was the overcoming of the division between mental and manual labor. Given this division, children of the working class could not receive sufficient intellectual

development, and children of bourgeois families had little labor skills to contribute to production. Quoting a proverb, the radicals mocked that bourgeois intellectuals “could neither use one’s four limbs nor tell the five grains apart” [*si ti bu qin, wu gu bu fen*] (Zhen, 1957, p. 16). Chinese radicals’ solution, as contained in the notion of all-round development, was a call for simultaneous intellect and physical developments (J. Qian, 1951). At the structural level, Chinese radicals denounced the two-track school system inherited from European and American education (Altenbaugh, 1999; Kleinberger, 2014).<sup>43</sup> In this system, students were differentiated upon entering secondary education. Those from rich backgrounds were able to attend regular schools where they were prepared for higher education. Children from the working class, in contrast, could only attend vocational schools to become physical workers. To disrupt this pattern of class stratification, the principle of all-round development required that all children, regardless of family background, receive general education (Z. Pan, 1951).

There were further noticeable deviations from Marxism. The Chinese radical ideal ignored the industrial context of Marx’s analysis in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Chinese students were primarily asked to perform rudimentary, unskilled tasks in farms, factories, and on the streets. The Chinese appropriation of the Marxist notion appeared to project the spotlight to the person, but, in fact, its focus quickly gave way to the needs of economy and revolution (G. Chen, 2008). Another feature was that the Chinese radical understanding of physical development was closely tied up with productive labor and economic development (M. Chen, 2015). As will be shown below, these unique interpretations made a huge impact on Chinese education.

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<sup>43</sup> After the Second World War, the rise of welfare in all Anglo-American countries led to the fast and substantial increase of educational provisions; “Secondary education for all” became a top priority until the early 1970s (Manzer, 2003). This update was not discussed in China.

While Marx and Engels incorporated the notion of all-round development in the theoretical horizon of communism, it was the Soviets who provided Chinese educators with a concrete – and rigid – model to follow (Pinar, 2014). Take Kairov’s (1953) *Pedagogy*, a Soviet text that exerted the greatest influence in China, for example. The 1948 version of *Pedagogy* was first made available in Chinese in 1950. Before 1956, it was reprinted ten times, and produced 291,516 copies – or approximately one for every urban elementary/secondary teacher (D. Yang, 2008). In this text, Kairov argued that the goal of general education was to “deliver to students experiences toward the achievement of all-round general development” (p. 97) and that “regardless of future profession, each student should learn the same basic scientific knowledge” (p. 93). While stressing the acquisition of basic general knowledge, Kairov provided little discussion of students’ individuality. Further, Kairov’s *Pedagogy* was characterized by a heavy emphasis on uniformity: It required that schools use centralized curricula and textbooks, that teachers conduct collective teaching and research, and that students participate in numerous collective activities. This centralizing approach created considerable dogmatism that restrained individualized pedagogy.

#### *All-round education gone astray*

In the creation and promotion of the all-round development principle, educators needed to address a fundamental concern: whether this goal was feasible at all, or, whether China was ready for it. Qian Junrui (1951) (1908–1985), Vice Minister of Education, took a relatively conservative stance and suggested that all-round development could only be fully achieved after the arrival of communism. Given that the current initiative was only “the first step of a Long March” (p. 86),<sup>44</sup> schools should not promote it over-hastily or impose too-high standards. However, Qian’s caution

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<sup>44</sup> Long March (1934–1935) was a military retreat of the CCP’s red army to evade the Nationalist Army’s pursuit. It involved extraordinary hardship, through which only 10 percent of the participating military force survived. It has been presented by the CCP as one of the most crucial episodes of its history.

was soon forgotten. Many other educators asserted a speedy promotion of the principle with several reasons: that China was eliminating class separation, that education was becoming available to all children, that the Soviet Union provided guidance, and that industrialization was creating opportunities for students to learn about production (F. Cao, 1956; M. Lin, 1956; B. Liu, 1957; Zhen, 1957). Adversarial factors were downplayed in the name of care:

Although some schools, especially the rural ones, do not have very good conditions, the CCP and government care about children's health. School principals and teachers, too, care about children's health and physical development, and strive to develop their physical strength. Teachers do not delude children with fragmented, scattered knowledge, religion, and superstition, and instead deliver basic scientific knowledge to them and cultivate their morality in accordance with nationally regulated curricula and textbooks [...] Although our job is not flawless, it is essentially embodying the principle of all-round development. Is there anything that could prevent us from fostering rural children's all-round physical and intellectual development? It can be positively said that such impediment has been eliminated by us. (Zhen, 1957, p. 20)

These eager defenders rarely considered schoolchildren's capacity. As one educator particularly made clear: "the goal of our proposed all-round development education is utterly determined by the objective needs of socialist society. It is to cultivate the 'new socialist human' in meeting of the demands of new society" (B. Liu, 1957, p. 17). Some teachers protested that they were not yet fully prepared to facilitate all-round development. One educational theorist acknowledged this fact, but insisted that teachers should not lower school requirements because of their lack of preparedness. Instead, they should enhance their expertise to meet the demand (M. Lin, 1956).

The all-round development principle was quickly launched, but its enactment was far from smooth. In different periods and different schools, priority was often placed on one aspect over the others. This was partly due to each school's interpretations and preferences. Some schools highlighted the political and moral aspects at the expense of academic training; some did the opposite (C. Dong, 1954). When academic and political components were both taken care of, the physical aspect began to suffer. But the schools were not the sole party to blame. The CCP's frequent campaigns often prioritized certain aspects under the cover of the all-round development rhetoric. When officials spoken to a certain audience, they tended to stress a particular aspect using the same all-round development rhetoric. It was certainly the case in Zhou Enlai's (1954) address to the Physical Exercise and Sports Committee, in which physical development was the key:

Everybody should equally develop in moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic aspects. Unequal development will necessarily lead to weakness that negatively affects both individual performance and the well-being of the country. Equal development means thoughts and body are both healthy.<sup>45</sup> (p. 98)

Here, all-round development aptly turned into "equal development". Indeed, after recurring directives from governing agencies that required schools to strengthen each aspect of all-round development, the message practically became that students must achieve equal development (J. Su, 1956). Guided by this principle, teachers commonly required each student to achieve at least 80 percent on every subject (Editorial Office, 1956b; S. Liu, 1956). In other words, each student had to grasp all knowledge, regardless of individual interest and strength (S. Dai, 1956). Under

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<sup>45</sup> In a similar vein, in reflection on excessive study pressure on students, Yang Xiufeng noted: "Students' health and ideological and political education suffered because of our insufficient enactment of all-round development principle" (X. Yang, 1955, p. 439).

these rigid requirements, students often had to memorize rote knowledge without gaining in-depth understanding or creative insights (Wei, 1955).

The dogmatism was exacerbated by the emulation of Soviet pedagogy, which emphasized the national unification of curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, and school schedules (Z. Zhang, 1956). Teachers' lecture notes had to be collectively discussed and approved in the "teaching and research unit", a basic work unit invented by the Soviets. Each student was required to attend all collective activities: dancing, singing, sports competitions, and listening to radio broadcast, having few opportunities to receive individualized guidance, and little time at one's own disposal (Editorial Office, 1956b; B. Liu, 1957). These uniform requirements, without emphasis or differentiation, took a toll on students' academic performance and health (Y. Zhang, 1956).

#### *Zhang Lingguang's dissent*

Upon launching the all-round development principle, several educational theorists already recognized this principle's potential tension with individuality – individual student's interest and talent – and the societal need for specialized personnel (Qing, 1952). Qian Junrui (1950) optimistically declared that all-round development and specialization were unified, and a person embodying this unification was neither a simple gadget nor a useless person of general education.

Zhang Lingguang's caution deserves the greatest attention. Zhang Lingguang (1904–1974) was a dedicated member of the CCP yet did not shy away from criticizing its policies. In his youth, Zhang was expelled from school for his participation in a student movement. After working several months as an elementary school teacher, Zhang once again lost his job for his oppositional thoughts. Having read Marxism for years, in 1938 Zhang walked from his hometown in Anhui Province to the CCP's headquarter, the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region, to help with resisting the Japanese, and joined the CCP next year. There, he worked as an assistant to Xu Teli (1877–1968), a

renowned revolutionary and educator, at the Yan'an Academy of Natural Sciences and the Central Department of Propaganda. When working with Xu Teli and others, Zhang was known for vocally defending his own opinions. During the Cultural Revolution, Zhang suffered severe persecution for having criticized the Great Leap Forward, and passed away prematurely (Z. Wang & Lu, 1991).

In 1951, Zhang (1951d) was working at the Ministry of Education, and would soon assume the Vice Editorship of *People's Education* next year. He explained that all-round development should not exclude individuality. Although students of lower grades should achieve a certain degree of competency over all academic subjects, at higher grades they should develop special expertise based on each one's talent. He suggested that curricula should be of moderate difficulty and quantity, so that students would have time to delve into areas of individual interest. Zhang was wary of equating all-round development with good marks. It was more important, according to him, to acquire inquisitive spirit and in-depth thinking.<sup>46</sup>

As insightful as Zhang's proposal was, it required fine navigation between holistic development and individual accommodation, two likely conflicting goals.<sup>47</sup> The subtle balance he proposed was difficult to achieve. More importantly, when all-round development made a hit, its relation with individuality was rarely brought up (J. Su, 1956; T. Wang, 1956). For all of these reasons, combined with widespread revolutionary enthusiasm and the fear of appearing to be politically backward, teachers tended to err on the side of equal development. As a teacher recalled: "Teachers could not endure the strike of big waves, and did not dare defy the mass and get a

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<sup>46</sup> It should be noted that Zhang shared the radical faith in human malleability. While cautioning against equal development, Zhang (1951d) also argued that teachers should not lower academic requirements with the perception that some students are born to have difficulties in certain areas.

<sup>47</sup> Messages delivered to national teachers were not always clear. Take Lin Ming's booklet *Learn the Principle of All-Round Development* for example. In this booklet, Lin Ming (1956) first criticized the idea that all-round development was equal to excellence in all academic subjects, yet he was also concerned with the possibility that some teachers might slacken requirements on students, and asked: "In our schools, which science will not be urgently needed by students in their future life and work?" (p. 24)

bewildering political label. So, even when teachers were aware of something wrong, they had to follow the ‘tide’ with their teeth clenched and tears held back” (Z. Zhang, 1956, p. 10).

Observant of ongoing problems caused by all-round education, Zhang Lingguang (1954, 1955) published two more papers reiterating his concern. A few years after its implementation, all-round education had come to be seen by many educators as the quiescence of socialist education. Zhang’s uncompromising stance irritated many. Between March and August of 1955, *People’s Education* received 117 letters from concerned readers, among which 101 expressed disapproval (Editorial Team, 1955). Similar negative opinions dominated a forum hosted by the Ministry of Education on Zhang’s proposal (Editorial Office, 1955a). While all critical of Zhang, they had different assessments of all-around development. Some insisted that different aspects were indeed of equal importance, while the others attributed whatever problems to teachers’ misinterpretation instead of the all-around development principle itself (Z. Lu, 1955; T. Wang & Xu, 1955).

Zhang was frequently accused of expressing capitalist ideas such as learning based on interest [*xingqu xuexi*], one-sided development, talent-privileging education, and premature specialization (Editorial Office, 1955a; J. Fang, 1956). Ding Ding (1955), Vice Director [*sizhang*] of Department of General Education at the Ministry of Education, commented that Zhang Lingguang “stealthily brought out pragmatist theory” with the intention to mislead readers (p. 58). Zhang (1955) used to argue that Marx and other communist theorists had not yet solved many concrete problems involved in all-round education, and that Soviet textbooks were being constantly modified. Ding (1955) refuted: “So, Marx, Engels and the Soviet big brother cannot even solve comrade Zhang Lingguang’s question. Does that mean comrade Zhang Lingguang is the cleverest?” (p. 57)

Ding’s article, provocatively titled “Do Not Lead Secondary Education Astray”, signaled

the apex of outcry against Zhang's proposal. In the prologue of Ding's article, the editors of *People's Education* cautiously stated that "comrade Zhang Lingguang's two articles contained false opinions, and caused confusing ideas among many readers" (D. Ding, 1955, p. 56). After a summary in October 1955 featuring predominant criticisms of Zhang's proposal, discussion of all-round development came to a halt. In the words of a teacher who expected further discussion, "academic research was shrouded in stifling atmosphere; it felt terrible" (P. Yang, 1956, p. 61).

### *Hundred Flowers Campaign*

When Zhang Lingguang was suffering from overwhelming opposition, changes in China's political environment unexpectedly turned to his favor. In 1956, Mao initiated the Hundred Flowers Campaign, encouraging intellectuals to express freely their academic, artistic, and political opinions. Amid this liberalizing atmosphere, Lu Dingyi, Minister of Propaganda, and Yang Xiufeng (1897–1983), Minister of Higher Education, both endorsed Zhang's proposal (X. Yang, 1987). They further called for nationwide teachers to consider the possibility of making "teaching in accordance with aptitude" [*yin cai shi jiao*] a parallel principle to complement all-round development (C. Zhang, 2013). Teaching in accordance with aptitude meant that pedagogical objective and methods should be based on a student's talent, interest, age, knowledge level, and other individual characteristics (C. Zhang, 1956, p. 9).<sup>48</sup>

The call for discussion about teaching in accordance with aptitude reignited teachers' enthusiasm. For nine months – between November 1955 and July 1956 – *People's Education* had not mentioned a single word about Zhang's proposal. In the following months, however, discussions suddenly exploded. In a mere two months, the journal's editorial office received 162

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<sup>48</sup> Given that theory of heredity had been repudiated, educators frequently emphasized that "aptitude" [*cai* – 材] means "quality" or "material" rather than "inborn talent", so that teaching in accordance with aptitude would not give rise to talent-determinism (W. Liu, 1956; Y. Wu, 1956).

letters on this matter (Editorial Office, 1956b). Many educators, including Guo Moruo (1892–1978), President of Chinese Academy of Sciences, enthusiastically voiced support of the teaching in accordance with the aptitude principle (S. Chen, 1956; M. Guo, 1956). On the other hand, some teachers remained apprehensive of previous ideological campaigns, and restrained themselves from participating in the Hundred Flowers Campaign (Cui, 1956; W. Qian, 1957; P. Yang, 1956).

The discussion about teaching in accordance with aptitude was complicated because it is related to the legitimacy of all-round development. As a teacher commented, “if we bring up ‘teaching in accordance with aptitude’ as a principle, even though it is merely complementary to the all-round development principle, it can still easily mislead people to think that the latter principle is incomplete” (X. Chen, 1956, p. 15). Many teachers passionately insisted that the all-round development principle was impeccable: it already contained insights about individual characteristics. If any negative phenomena occurred, it was because teachers failed to grasp the principle’s essence due to their low qualifications or the influence of capitalist ideology (Hou, 1957; M. Xiao, 1956). This line of argument was a continuation of the pre-Hundred Flowers Campaign narrative, one that defended government policies by blaming ordinary teachers (D. Ding, 1955). Many others verbally endorsed the all-round development principle and at the same time subtly challenged it (Z. Gao, 1956; F. Guo, 1956). According to them, in the process of communication, the term “all-round development” alone was prone to misunderstanding; the addition of teaching in accordance with aptitude would help clarify the message (L. Liu, 1957). In response to the argument that teaching in accordance with aptitude only qualified as a method instead of a principle, they contended that even Mao himself had sometimes included method as principle (F. Guo, 1956, 1956; Zheng, 1957).

The defense of all-round education was championed by a greater number of high-level

educational theorists and administrators, especially several officers at the Ministry of Education who speedily had multiple meetings to discuss Zhang Lingguang's opinion. These leaders included Zhang Jian (1956, 1956), the Vice Deputy [*fu chuzhang*] of the Department of Elementary Education; Hou Junyan (1955, 1957), director [*sizhang*] of the Department of Secondary Education,<sup>49</sup> Ding Ding, Vice Director [*sizhang*] of the Department of General Education (1955), Cao Fu (1956), editor of People's Education Press;<sup>50</sup> and Wang Huanxun (1956), Professor and Director at BNU, and editor of *Educational Research*.<sup>51</sup> They were mostly members of the CCP or at least took its perspective, and their arguments were theoretically derived in connection with China's sociopolitical agendas. Voices in support of teaching in accordance with aptitude, in contrast, more frequently came from ordinary teachers across the country, and these arguments were mostly based on phenomena that occurred in schools (F. Liu, 1957; L. Liu, 1957; S. Liu, 1956). In the latter camp, some teachers argued that policy makers should quote less Marxism and Stalinism, and conduct more surveys in schools (Cui, 1956; S. Dai, 1956; S. Liu, 1956; D. Zhu, 1957).<sup>52</sup> They also complained that the administrations had kept too many policy documents

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<sup>49</sup> Hou Junyan (1910–1980) joined the CCP in 1927. After being expelled from Peking University for participating in anti-government demonstration, Hou studied social sciences in Japan between 1935 and 1937. After returning China, Hou worked in the military. As the CCP took over Beijing in 1948 and 1949, Hou became the deputy director [*fu juzhang*] of the Beijing Department of Education. Since 1953, Hou became the director [*sizhang*] of the Department of Secondary Education at the Ministry of Education.

<sup>50</sup> Cao Fu (1911–1968) taught education and psychology at Fudan University between 1937 and 1947. In the following two years and half, Cao received graduate training in education at the University of Colorado, with Deweyan philosophy of education as his dissertation topic. One year after returning to China in 1949, Cao published a series of articles at *People's Education* criticizing Dewey. In the early 1950s, Cao taught at and administered Fudan University and East China Normal University before working as an editor at People's Education Press in 1954. In 1956, when Cao participated in the all-round development debate, he began to found the National Institute of Educational Science [*zhongyang jiaoyu kexue yanjiuyuan*].

<sup>51</sup> Wang Huanxun (1907–1994) joined the CCP in 1943. Since 1939, he had been teaching at North China United University, a CCP-directed school later transformed into Renmin University of China under the leadership of Wang Huanxun and Zhang Tengxiao. Indeed, Wang and Zhang had long-term collaboration on a number of textbook editing projects in the 1940s and 1950s. Since 1952, Wang taught at BNU as Professor and Director of the Teaching and Research Unit of Education. In 1954, Wang became the editor-in-chief of *Educational Research* [*jiaoyu yanjiu*], an offshoot of *Guangming Daily*.

<sup>52</sup> Similar dynamics also occurred among students. It was reported that student cadres generally claimed that their workload was reasonable or even too little; ordinary students tended to complain about the workload (D. Zhu, 1957).

classified from ordinary educators. With very limited information, teachers had difficulty following the purpose of the Hundred Flowers Campaign (Cui, 1956; W. Qian, 1957).

Thus, to a certain degree, *People's Education* became a battlefield where high-level educational leaders and grassroots teachers fought. Some from the latter camp complained about the editorial office's inconsistent and obscure stances (F. Cao, 1956; Cui, 1956; W. Qian, 1957). While what happened in the editorial office remains unknown, it should be noted that Zhang Lingguang was himself the Vice Editor, and still suffered criticism. In the beginning of 1957, when the Hundred Flowers Campaign gained more momentum, the editorial office asked contributors to engage less in theoretical discussions and provide more discussion in light of concrete issues in reality (Editorial Office, 1956a, 1957b). The call was in favor of the latter camp. By the end of 1956, some teachers gained the courage to imply that all-round development was an intrinsically problematic principle that distorted Marxism (Y. Zhang, 1956; Zheng, 1957).

#### *Individual characteristics [gexing]*

The tension involved in the debates was partly clouded by efforts of legitimacy maintenance. In addition, there were concrete contradictions between the two principles, especially regarding individuality (X. Chen, 1956). With this concern, much debate took place surrounding the notion of individual characteristics [*gexing*] (X. Chen, 1956).

In response to suspicions, Mao (1945) used to argue that the new regime would create a favorable condition for developing individual characteristics:

It is foreign oppression and feudal oppression that cruelly fetter the development of the individual characteristics of the Chinese people...It is the very task of the New Democracy

we advocate to remove these fetters and stop this destruction, to guarantee that the people can freely develop their individual characteristics within the framework of society.<sup>53</sup> (p. 36)

Following Mao's call, educators often claimed that communism valued individuality and aimed to achieve the integration of commonality and individual characteristics (F. Cao, 1956; B. Liu, 1957; T. Wang, 1956). However, in reality, individual characteristics were ignored in all-round education (W. Liu, 1956). In Zhang Lingguang's (1956b) words, teachers wanted students to "have only commonalities with little differentiation, only possess the same general knowledge without developing any special expertise" (p. 48).

Zhang Lingguang (1956a) proposed that "we are not supposed to use one mould to shape and standardize individuals. Instead, we should make each of them blossom on the basis of commonly or relatively holistic development" (p. 14). In support of Zhang, educators such as Guo Moruo (1956) and Wu Yanyin (1956) suggested that talented children should enjoy opportunities to develop corresponding areas of specialty (S. Dai, 1956; W. Liu, 1956). Their arguments found theoretical support from psychology. Zhu Zhixian (1956b), who had suffered criticism for spreading western developmental theory, now argued that each individual was unique due to in-born constitutions, life experiences, and education. Even though commonalties could be found among different individuals, especially those in the same class, there were always individual differences. Zhu criticized that many teachers had, with the aspiration to create the "new socialist human", sought only commonalities and ignored individual differentiation. Contrary to the radicals who prioritized the demand of socialist construction, in the title of his article, Zhu emphasized that "teaching in accordance with aptitude reflects the objective laws of individual characteristics development" (p. 16). A few teachers at the First Middle School of Henan Jiaozuo even conducted

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<sup>53</sup>The English version of Mao's article translated *gexing* into "individual initiatives" instead of "individual characteristics" (T. Mao, 1945, p. 231). My translation is more accurate.

several experimental and survey studies, rediscovering that students had different sensations, attention spans, abilities to understand lectures, as well as moral characteristics. They considered all these findings in support of teaching in accordance with aptitude (S. Yang, 1957).

However, as mentioned in Chapter One, many radical teachers denied psychological theories about individuality. Cao Fu (1956) complained about the very term “individual characteristics”, because it tended to lead readers to approach the debate from a psychological perspective. Those who did bother to engage with psychology commonly maintained that although children and teenagers appeared to have different interests, they were, in fact, subject to change under the influence of environment and education (Editorial Office, 1956e; J. Fang, 1956; M. Lin, 1956). It was particularly important, according to some, to recognize that individual characteristics were determined by means of production instead of inborn factors (X. Chen, 1956; T. Wang, 1956; M. Xiao, 1956). With this assumption, an educator proposed an alternative principle: “correctly enact the principle of all-round development, be attentive to the cultivation and development of individual characteristics, interests, and strengths” (M. Xiao, 1956, p. 10). In comparison to this lengthy slogan, another educator had a more elegant expression: “children’s interest is the result instead of the starting point of education” (M. Lin, 1956, p. 17).

The anxiety surrounding individual characteristics can be explained by the association between individuality and individualism. “Learning based on interest” [*xingqu xuexi*] was a criticism applied to Zhang Lingguang (Hou, 1955, p. 43), because following one’s interest was considered a form of individualism. Concerned educators thus proposed their version of teaching in accordance with aptitude, which directed individual characteristics toward a common ideal. Zhang Cuizhong (1956), for instance, argued that it is wrong to “develop individual characteristics toward various directions away from commonality” (p. 10). Similarly, Cao Fu (1956) argued that

teaching in accordance with aptitude should be strictly limited to the teaching method, with reference to a story about Confucius.<sup>54</sup> It would be wrong to allow students to have different educational objectives or to learn different contents. The radicals' examples of pedagogical success all involved the overcoming of individual weakness toward a common goal (L. Guo, 1956; Hao, 1957).

Similar to many others, Zhen Qilong (1957) made a compromise by changing all-round development to "all-round development of individual characteristics" (p. 12):

Under the influence of conducive social environment, living condition, and education, a child enjoys normal physical and mental development, his bodily constitution, knowledge, skills, thought, emotions, outlooks, interests, temperament, and personality achieve holistic and sufficient development, he would qualify to be a new socialist human with all-round development of individual characteristics. (p. 12)

In this definition, the individual was merely a unit, a single person that bound various characteristics together. What we commonly conceived as "individuality" – characteristics that distinguished one person from another – was entirely missing. In the above cases, the very notion "individual characteristics" became relativized or simply evaporated. Mao was famous for his dialectical philosophy. Concerning the relationship between the general and the particular, Mao (1963) said: "Objective truth is the harmony of the general and the particular. Without the particular the general cannot exist, and without the general there can be no particular" (p. 273).

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<sup>54</sup> Teaching in accordance with aptitude largely embodied an approach common in many countries, though Chinese teachers frequently traced it to a story about Confucius (F. Cao, 1956; Z. Gao, 1956). According to this story, Confucius was approached by two students with the same question: "should I take immediate action upon learning a good suggestion?" He told the timid student an affirmative answer, and the other hot-tempered student that he should first consult with others first (Huyan, 1957).

Mao's followers, however, overlooked individuality – the particular – in their keen search for a general good.

### *Independent thinking*

Another concern of Zhang Lingguang and his supporters was that students displayed a lack of ability for independent thinking and creativity (X. Chen, 1956; S. Dai, 1956; Editorial Office, 1956b; H. Feng, 1956; F. Liu, 1957). This phenomenon was so widely observed that even their opponents could not deny its existence (F. Cao, 1956; D. Ding, 1955). In the earliest proposal about all-round development, educational leaders were still mindful about independent thinking and creativity. In the First National Meeting of Higher Education in 1950, Ma Xulun (1950) suggested that a person of all-round development should have “true skill and genuine knowledge [*zhen cai shi xue*], analytic ability, and creativity” (p. 12). However, in the following years, greater attention was made to ensure that students grasped systematic knowledge rather than cultivating their ability for independent thinking and creativity (J. Fang, 1956). In support of this goal, some quoted Lenin (1920) to demonstrate the importance of comprehensive knowledge: “You can become a Communist only when you enrich your mind with a knowledge of all the treasures created by mankind” (p. 287). Yet, this dogmatic parroting, in fact, took Lenin's comment out of context. In his original talk at The Third All-Russia Congress of The Russian Young Communist League, Lenin (1920) clarified that the common knowledge consisted of only fundamental facts, and that there was a need of in-depth comprehension:

We have no need of cramming, but we do need to develop and perfect the mind of every student with a knowledge of fundamental facts. Communism will become an empty word, a mere signboard, and a Communist a mere boaster, if all the knowledge he has acquired is not digested in his mind. (pp. 287–288)

Lenin's warning resonated in Wu Yanyin's critique of all-round development. Wu (1956) scathingly criticized teachers for turning all-round development into equal development, then "one-sided development", and finally "all-round lack of development" (p. 16). Eventually, students were crammed with a large amount of materials like a "stuffed ducks" (p. 16). In order to get high marks on all subjects, they had to mechanically memorize articles and formula, and therefore had no opportunity to develop independent thinking or creativity.

Besides high-profile figures such as Wu Yanyin, insignificant teachers also voiced discontent with all-round education. One of these teachers mocked that many students were bookshelves with two legs: in spite of their possession of a large amount of knowledge, they did not have the ability to work independently (Y. Zhang, 1956). According to him, given the constraint of time and energy, teachers could not provide individualized tutorship to every student. To fully realize teaching in accordance with aptitude, it was important to make students independent, critical thinkers with strong initiative. He illustrated this point with a metaphor told by Xu Teli: The key of education is not to provide students with golds; it is to provide the philosopher's stone.

### *De-Stalinization*

Another event that coincidentally intervened in the debates was De-Stalinization. In the middle of 1956, Chinese educators gained access to the news about the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Community Party. In June, *People's Education* started cautioning that educators, in their dogmatic emulation of the Soviet Union, had neglected Mao's call for adapting the Soviet experience to China's reality (Anonymous, 1956e). It was made clear to them that Soviet pedagogy was undergoing criticism in its home country, and Kairov was revising his textbook (L. Zhang, 1956a).

The news about de-Stalinization emboldened Zhang Lingguang. No longer beating around the bush as he did in the preceding years, Zhang (1956a, 1956b) gained the nerve to pointed out

that Kairov's pedagogy had one-sidedly emphasized uniformity and downplayed individuality. Some teachers followed Zhang's lead to reflect on the dogmatism (Y. Zhang, 1956). However, the trend of de-Stalinization was neither stable nor clear, and the authority of the Soviet model was continuously supported by many (Jiang, 1956; Y. Liu, 1957).

At the end of 1956, Chinese teachers gained access to a preliminary summary of Kairov's new edition of *Pedagogy*. In this summary, it was highlighted that the spirit of the principle of teaching in accordance with aptitude permeated the entire textbook (Y. Chen, 1956). At the turn of 1957, Kairov made a visit to China. In his meetings with Chinese teachers, the topic of all-round education was most frequently brought up. During a conversation with teachers at Kunming Normal College, Kairov (1957b) commented that a person could not possibly be all-round perfect [*shi quan shi mei*]. He said that he himself was not an all-round person, but that fact did not impede his political activities over the last forty years. When it came to education, teachers should develop a priority plan instead of requiring students to make all-round progress at the same time. He acknowledged that, after the repudiation of pedagogy in 1936, Soviet educators faced a fundamental problem: They had limited understanding of children's memory, imagination, attention, and thinking, and did not understand how a child's mental characteristics change from one stage to another. Kairov mentioned that teaching should be based on each child's talent and interest, which required patience. Kairov mentioned a conversation he had with a gardener, in which he learned that the cultivation of a tree took at least ten years. The lesson he learned was "when we cultivate children, we complain about not seeing effect after spending merely two or three years. This is wrong" (p. 11).

Two months later, Kairov's (1957a) new *Pedagogy* became available in Chinese. In keeping with his talks, this edition added a new chapter on students' age characteristics, and

incorporated the issue of age in light of various educational theories and methods. In combination with Kairov's recent visit to China, the new edition created another wave of enthusiasm, as manifest in the production of 193,897 copies. But, as the Sino-Soviet relation faltered, it made much less impact than the previous edition did (G. Zhou & Xu, 2000).<sup>55</sup> Most importantly, among the elite educators, Kairov, as representative of Soviet education, had lost much of its aura.

Teaching in accordance with aptitude won support at least in theoretical debates and official policies. In its 1957 student recruitment brochure, BNU (1957a) branded itself with this principle. In each department, there were selective courses; some were meant to assist regular courses and others allowed students to gain specialization. Next year, the Party Central and the State Council (1958) required teachers to combine all-round education with teaching in accordance with aptitude. However, there was little time for this principle to be implemented. After the onset of the 1958 Educational Revolution, the focus of pedagogy soon turned away from campus life to factories and farms, which I will discuss shortly.

At first glance, the proposal of all-round development reflected a utopian imagination of unrestrained human capability. My analysis of the controversies surrounding all-round education reveals that it was fundamentally a historical product. Its emergence was partly inspired by Marx's vision but imbued with a Chinese emphasis on class struggle. Its enactment was complicated by the central-local dynamics. The campaign-based governance frequently disrupted the all-round ideal, and in efforts to restore it, turned it into "equal development". Local cadres' simplistic interpretation further led the ideal astray. Meanwhile, there was contestation between high-level educational theorists who emphasized ideological orthodoxy and ordinary teachers who relied on real-life observation. Internationally, Soviet educators played an important role, first in launching

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<sup>55</sup> In 1958, Lu Dingyi (1958) commented that Kairov's proposal of developing all-round members of socialism who could "assume duties in any profession" was a daydream [*kong xiang*] (p. 823).

all-round education and then in its debacle in China. As mentioned earlier, the strongest impulse behind all-round education was the effort to overcome labor-based class stratification. In the final section of Chapter Two below, I will expand on this issue.

## **The division of labor and class struggle**

### *The imperative of specialization*

The discussions about all-round development were in a sense future-oriented. That is, the intervention into students' learning was an anticipatory measure to prepare for China's future socialism. As Cao Fu (1956) commented in defense of all-round education, "society's requirements for the cultural and knowledge level of *future* excellent productive workers and social activists are very different from those for *today's* workers, farmers, and cadres" (p. 21). It is uncertain how long it would take for the envisioned future to arrive, but before that point, a more immediate and concrete problem was looming large. After a few years' training, most students would be joining the workforce, and since communism had not become a reality yet, each student still needed to commit him or herself to a particular profession. How did educators resolve the tension between the imperative of division of labor and all-round development?

In imperial China, the civil service examination stressed the classics and literary knowledge. Scholars taking the examination were trained in the same pool of knowledge to become generalists. After the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the examination included more technological and practical questions (Elman, 2013). China's westernization fostered the emergence of a new class among the intellectual community: the professionals (X. Xu, 2000). The professionals worked in increasingly specialized fields with compartmentalized scope of knowledge.

Lin Handa (1900–1972) received PhD in education from the University of Colorado in 1939. After returning to China, he assumed important positions at the Ministry of Education and

several universities. A renowned scholar of Chinese history and language, Lin also championed the modernization of China's education. With the latter interest, Lin (1950) provided a vivid metaphor to criticize generalist training in the past. He compared specialized knowledge to separate keys, each of which had a particular pattern of serrated edges to open one corresponding room. The master key, albeit in a much simpler shape, could open all rooms. People used to understand a generalist's knowledge to be sufficient of solving all problems, similar to the master key. According to Lin, this belief resulted from the historical separation between mental and manual labor, and in turn impeded scientific and technological innovation. Lin quoted Stalin (1928) to argue for the importance of specialized knowledge:

We cannot now confine ourselves to training communist cadres *in general*, Bolshevik cadres *in general*, people who are able to prattle a little about everything. Dilettantism and the know-all attitude are now shackles on our feet. We now need Bolshevik *experts* in metallurgy, textiles, fuel, chemistry, agriculture, transport, trade, accountancy, and so on and so forth. We now need whole groups, hundreds and thousands of new Bolshevik cadres capable of becoming masters of their subject in the most diverse branches of knowledge. (pp. 81–82, italics in original)

Messages imported from the Soviet Union were often multivocal. Inspired by the Marxist ideal about human perfectibility and a classless society, Kairov's *Pedagogy* stressed all-round development in primary and secondary education. But when it came to the reality of economic development, specialization was frequently called for. Elsewhere, Stalin (1939) mentioned:

The training and moulding of our young cadres usually proceeds in some particular branch of science or technology, along the line of specialization. This is necessary and desirable.

There is no reason why a man who specializes in medicine should at the same time specialize in physics or botany, or vice versa. (p. 408)

In China's First National Meeting of Higher Education, Soviet advisor Alsinchef (1950) claimed that Soviet higher education was committed to the growth of specialized expertise with concrete skills, such as engineers, doctors, economists, mining experts, and scientists. At the same meeting, Ma Xulun (1950) explained that a person of all-round development should possess special expertise, and that one's basic scientific knowledge should be combined with specialized technical knowledge. The objective of cultivating specialized experts became included in the national regulations on higher education (Ministry of Education, 1950).

The imperative of specialization was one of Zhang Lingguang's concerns as well. In his criticism of all-round development, Zhang (1956b) argued that the world was very different from the time of Confucius or Aristotle. Modern scientific knowledge had developed into too many categories, and people could no longer possibly grasp all knowledge available. Zhang's concern was not purely derived from speculation. A few years early, China had faced the problem of assigning graduates to specific jobs.

#### *Centralized job assignment*

Starting in 1950, the Chinese government began to assign jobs to graduates instead of letting graduates look for jobs on their own (Y. Zhao, 2016). This centralized placement system [*fenpei*] effectively increased employment rates, but also risked assigning graduates to unfitting positions. In 1952, *People's Daily* pointed out that a considerable amount of skilled personnel had received inappropriate job assignments, and called for organizations to examine their own employment arrangements (Anonymous, 1952e; Z. Dong, 1952). This call provoked much discussion in education in the following months. Many teachers took the opportunity to voice their

dissatisfaction (L. Lu, 1952; Q. Zhang, 1952). In some cases, they were required to teach subjects unrelated to their training (S. Wu, 1953). For instance, a teacher trained to be an engineer might be asked to teach music, sports, and political thoughts (R. Han, 1953). These cases received sympathy. However, heated debate took place surrounding other cases. While some analyzed the issue of suitability, i.e., whether a technician should teach courses related to his/her training, many radical teachers focused on the protestors' motivation, accusing them of prioritizing personal gains over the interest of the country (G. Xu & Cai, 1952). Such accusation contradicted the spirit in which *People's Daily* called for discussion (X. Wang, 1953). In fact, one outspoken teacher suffered harsh criticism for sending *People's Education* a ranting letter:

Concerning the nature of this problem, your journal seems to have failed to scratch the itchy spots, and of course won't bring up an effective solution [...] I suggest that you please organize a team to conduct field survey of 100 engineers' living and working conditions, and those of 100 secondary school teachers, calculate their salaries, workload, honors, promotions, and so on, see if it's true that teachers have low salaries, hard work, less honor, and no hope of promotions. (Editorial Team, 1953b, p. 59)

As implied in the disgruntled letter, the teaching profession was not a priority career option due to its low social status and payment (Anonymous, 1952a; T. H. Chen, 1960a). Many students entered normal universities because they had no other options, and felt disappointed and ashamed about where they ended up (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954d). Given the lack of monetary incentives, educational administrators had to persistently persuade college applicants that being a teacher was an honorable and meaningful service (X. Chen, 1952). To students interested in becoming engineers, BNU administrators said that teachers were also a kind of engineers responsible for shaping human souls and producing the constructors of socialism (X. Chen, 1952).

They invited students to calculate the following: if a middle school teacher produces 100 students per year for 40 years, he or she would contribute to the country 4,000 little screws, including some wheel gears and machines. When talking to students interested in scientific research, it was said that teaching itself was a form of research. Further, it was exhorted that teachers should display the spirit of self-sacrifice; they would arrive at the summit of educational science once their students arrived at the summit of sciences (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1957a). These painstaking efforts maintained a constant supply of applicants to teacher training institutions.

A thought campaign was conducted through criticizing Han Youfan (Anonymous, 1955b). Youfan graduated in 1951 from Shanghai Private Nanyang Role Model Middle School, a school of upper-class heritage with an emphasis on scientific training. Being hailed by his school as an exemplary student, Youfan excelled in study but was indifferent to politics and labor activity. Upon graduation, Youfan grabbed an opportunity to join the Shanghai Electricity Company with the hope that the company would allow him to become an engineer. However, he soon found out that he did not enjoy doing physical labor, the factory environment, or his working-class colleagues. Merely five weeks into employment, Youfan refused to return to work and started to re-apply for university. As it turned out, Youfan lost student status [*xue ji*] and could no longer apply for university. After a year and half, Youfan returned to his post.

Han Youfan's story, along with confessions from him, his father and teachers, was circulated nationwide for discussion. This discussion reaffirmed the importance of all-round development in opposition to individualistic pursuits. Teachers maintained that the division of labor in a socialist society was based on collective production, thus differed from that in exploitative capitalism. Further, they denounced Han Youfan's negative stereotype attached to manual labor. This discussion instantiated numerous thought work campaigns through which

graduates learned about the expected relation between the individual and the state. These campaigns effectively made most graduates obey job assignments (Lian, 1953), with graduates of BNU (1954) claiming “I will go anywhere according to the needs of the country” (p. 13).

This was the destiny of graduates in employment. In the wake of central planning, an all-round graduate was perhaps not the best expert in a particular field, but must be ready to go to the most needed place, like a little standardized screw functioning in a machine (Y. Cheng, 2009). Seen from this angle, the plan of centralized placement saturated various stages of schooling. It was no wonder why Jiang Nanxiang (1956) (1913–1988), President of Tsinghua University, pitted teaching in accordance with aptitude against the national placement system:

[We] cannot, for the sake of teaching in accordance with aptitude, create pedagogical plans on the basis of students’ interest and strengths, and let them study whatever they like (or are suited to) [...] Of course, we should teach in accordance with aptitude, but it is more important and urgent to meet the needs of national socialist construction [...] Objective needs come first; individual aspirations and strengths occur and develop on this objective basis. Further, individual aspirations are not fixed. (p. 12)

Jiang’s comment reflected a standpoint common in official narratives that posited national development as an objective reality and individual interest as subjective and impressionable (Anonymous, 1952a). In Marx’s dream, that communist citizens would be able to freely shift from one profession to another was a sign of holistic individual development. The Chinese conception of a versatile graduate was meant to meet centralized placement. This agenda is reflected in the argument of Chen Boda (1957) (1904–1989), China’s leading politician and theorist: “Today the Party, based on needs, asks him to perform a job; and tomorrow the Party could, based on needs, and ask him to change to another job” (p. 12). Radical theorists such as Chen and Jiang either

refused to acknowledge that antagonism existed between the imperative of division of labor and all-round development, or resolved it with a heavy-handed approach at the expense of students' individuality. Behind the repetitive emphasis on the malleability of individual interest and strengths, there was a non-accommodating state immersed in its grand scale of projects, as well as a group of radical educators who fleshed out its command.

### *Hacking job assignment*

Contrary to the radical utopian imagination of the socialist citizens being selfless, many graduates were not ready to have their fate decided by the ill-informed, insensitive centralized placement. In the eyes of graduates, there was a huge gap between mental and manual labors. In 1,300 years of Imperial China, entering the state bureaucracy through the civil service examination was seen as an unparalleled achievement that brought glory to one's ancestors. Those who failed the exam were often able to resource their scholarship to enter other respectable occupations (R. Wang, 2013). The stratification between the bureaucratic class and peasantry became a strong drive for the intellectuals to avoid manual labor, as reflected in the popular sayings: "The intellectual governs others, the laborer is governed by others" [*Lao xin zhe zhi ren, lao li zhe zhi yu ren*] (H. Lin, 1950, p. 35) and "to be a scholar is to be the top of society" [*Wan ban jie xia pin, wei you dushu gao*] (Editorial Office, 1954a, p. 44; M. Ye, 1954).

The policies of elevating the working class did not erase the difference between mental and manual labors in terms of salary and working conditions. Manual labor remained to be perceived as dirty, exhausting, and shameful (Department of Propaganda, 1954). Further, the rosy pictures depicted by teachers about a rich, industrialized communist China ignited many students' hope that they would enjoy a life better than where they started. As a result, many students wished to become cadres or technical experts, and were opposed to employment in the factory or on the farm

(Anonymous, 1954a; Department of Propaganda, 1954). This applied to not only students from bourgeois families but also many from the working class (Editorial Office, 1954a).

If students were allowed to choose a profession, they had a clear priority list with well-paid, comfortable, and respectable jobs on the top: engineer or cadre were better than factory worker; factory worker was better than farmer (Lian, 1953). If one had to enter a factory, large factories equipped with automatic systems were preferable over small ones. If one ended up in the most unfortunate destination, the countryside, students would prefer to assume principal positions in the communes, or at least teach at school, rather than farming (Editorial Office, 1954a). In addition to this priority list, minor differentiations existed among various professions. Sciences and engineering were preferred over teaching, agriculture, the humanities, and arts (Anonymous, 1954c; Z. Yin, 1954; J. Zhang, 1953b).

Although students had little power to decide employment, they could nonetheless specialize in particular subjects and maximize the chance to be chosen for a desired job. Taking education as a career strategy, students developed preferences regarding academic subjects. Amid China's industrialization campaign and suppression of social sciences, the phrase came into vogue: "If you study math, physics and chemistry well, you will be the strongest of the world" [*xuehao shu li hua, zoubian tianxia dou bu pa*]. Some students circulated the saying "Math, physics and chemistry live ten thousand years; literature, history and geography live nine thousand years; music, physical education and painting do not harm" [*shu li hua wan sui, wen shi di jiuqian sui, yin ti mei bu aishi*] (Editorial Office, 1954a, p. 43). These preferences contradicted the spirit of all-round education as well as its underlying anxiety about class stratification.

### *Labor education and unemployment*

Hoping for an ideal future job, students popularly considered it a shame to prematurely join the low-level workforce, and made painstaking efforts to continue education (Department of Propaganda, 1954; L. Fang, 1957). Some students even brought bedding and food to day schools so that they could study for longer hours (S. Liu, 1953). Parents often shared the same goal with their children (J. Fang, 1955; Hubei Department of Education, 1954). Schools tended to take their graduates' acceptance rates to next level of education as indicative of their pedagogical success (Department of Propaganda, 1954; T. Yuan, 1954).

Students' insistence on continuing education placed great pressure on the capacity of schools. Since the CCP called for schools to open doors to the general population, especially children from the working class, enrollments increased massively:

Enrollments at Different Educational Levels, 1950–1954					
	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954
Elementary	28,924,000	43,154,400	51,100,100	51,663,800	51,217,700
Secondary	1,566,540	1,964,071	3,144,513	3,620,079	4,245,864
Higher	138,731	155,570	193,910	216,430	257,781

Figure 9. Enrollments at Different Educational Levels, 1950–1954. Source: (W. Liu, 1957).

Due to limited resources, the school system permitted only a small portion of graduates to move on to the next level of study. The rapidly developing economy also competed with schools for manpower (E. Zhou, 1957). In 1953, this situation led to large-scale dissatisfaction, including protests by students and their families. In August and September, the Shanghai Department of Education received 18,580 petitioners, and processed 4,411 petition letters (X. Lv, 1994).

After being rejected by colleges, many students became depressed (Anonymous, 1954a). Unwilling to work as farmers, some stayed unemployed (Tian, 1954). In Henan Province alone, there were at least 99 incidents of suicide, plus five graduates who lost sanity (Party Central, 1955). Some students went to cities for a livelihood, joining the migrant population that was already a

headache for the city administrators (W. Ren, 2014). Now teachers were assigned the task to deal with large-scale unemployment and forestall unrest. With numerous workshops, role modeling, and door-to-door visits (Editorial Team, 1954), they encouraged most graduates to join the agricultural sector, which was more labor-intensive than industry (Anonymous, 1957c; Editorial Team, 2009; Party Central, 1955).<sup>56</sup>

In 1953, through strenuous propaganda campaigns, the CCP persuaded many graduates to accept employment in the countryside or in low-skill professions. By the end of summer in 1953, the secondary school system managed to admit 830,000, or 31.6 percent of all elementary graduates (Anonymous, 1954d). However, propagandization could not fix things once and for all, as the same problem tended to recur every year. In 1954, among 286,073 elementary graduates, 192,073 could not continue schooling. Out of 63,882 secondary graduates, 31,921 could not move on to colleges (Department of Education, Jiangsu Province, 1955).

A more sustainable solution lay in education instead of propaganda. Upon reflection, teachers realized that they had previously made a pedagogical mistake. The widened access to education, as well as the glowing portraits of China's communist future, made students optimistic about their career. However, they were not yet prepared to contribute to the realization of this utopian dream. Some students perceived helping parents with house chores as something shameful, and had negative attitudes toward the campus workers (Girls' Middle School Attached to BNU, 1954). Some remarked that only fools work hard in communism (Anonymous, 1954f). Imagining

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<sup>56</sup> There were a few reasons for the CCP to redirect graduates to the countryside. Many graduates, especially the elementary ones, had not reached the legal age to be employed in factories (X. Shu, 1957). After 1955, China entered a high tide of agricultural communization, which required literacy skills for accountancy and coordination, further drawing graduates to the countryside (Anonymous, 1955e). This arrangement did not work out seamlessly though. Some communes already had excessive workforces (W. Li, 2007; J. Zhang, 1957) and farmers were concerned that the graduates may not be as productive. Recruitment of female graduates were sometimes considered "bad deals" [*pei qian huo*], and had greater difficulty joining communes (Tian, 1954, p. 16).

that China would be industrialized after ten years, when working in the factory would require only switching buttons, some students expressed the wish “only if I were born ten years after!” “What a shame that I’m born in China. What if I were born in the [industrialized] Soviet Union!” Upon moving to the city for study, a student sentimentally spoke to his rural hometown: “When motors start to sound on your land, I will be back to your embrace!” (Editorial Office, 1954a, p. 44). During weekends and semester breaks, some students refused to help with family farm, and stayed at school for the better living condition (Z. Dong, 1957; G. Jin, 1954).

The pedagogical failure, reckoned teachers, was that they had too often depicted rosy images of China’s future communism and paid little attention to preparing them for going through hardship (Anonymous, 1954g). While students were given many opportunities to admire role models, they rarely connected with the more ordinary members of the working class and their daily routines (Editorial Office, 1954a). Qian Junrui (1954) expressed dissatisfaction with existing elementary textbooks. One lecture presented the Soviets’ happy life, including how they used helicopters and tractors to farm, but failed to mention the hard labor this achievement entailed. Another lecture depicted farmers’ high spirits after the land reform, concluding that farmers now had the opportunity to move to the city and their children could enter factories after graduation.

As mentioned earlier, after 1949, labor education had more or less stayed at the policy level. Now, labor education embraced its first wave of popularity. At the turn of 1954, it was sanctioned by the National Meeting for Secondary Education as a solution to unemployment (Anonymous, 1953h; L. Lin, 1954; J. Qian, 1954). As articulated by the editorial office of *People’s Education* (1954b), schools were required to “take labor education as a regular pedagogical task, so that future secondary and elementary graduates will see both further education and employment as something natural, and no longer experience conflict in their thoughts” (p. 9). Following Qian Junrui’s (1954)

complaint, the Ministry of Education immediately requested new materials to be published to complement the textbook (Anonymous, 1954g). Soon, articles appeared that traced how the Soviet Union achieved its status through extraordinary hardship. Students used to say that “the Soviet Union’s today is China’s tomorrow”, but were now reminded that “China’s today is Soviet Union’s yesterday” (Y. Lu, 1954, p. 5). The resounding message was that the realization of socialism depended on each student’s contribution through labor, regardless of profession. Early on, teachers had emphasized factory workers’ high spirit, and avoided mentioning that they worked day and night, in case students formed the impression that factory life was difficult (S. Sun, 1952). Now, they reversed this approach. Even engineers’ image was changed. Students used to imagine engineers to wear glamorous western dresses and leather shoes, and to work in well-equipped offices. After visiting factories, they learnt that engineers, similarly to ordinary workers, wore grease-tainted uniforms and worked at production lines (K. Liu, 1955; R. Song, 1954). Here, labor education served not only as a solution to unemployment, but also a subtle means of class struggle.

The implementation of labor education was not smooth, however. One obstacle was teachers’ lack of cooperation. Some felt that they had fulfilled duties in training students, and no longer held themselves responsible for the problem of unemployment (Department of Education, Anhui Province, 1955). Many continued to perceive the school to be a venue for academic training (K. Liu, 1955). Placing their pride on students’ admission rates, teachers frequently incentivized students with the possibility of upward social mobility, which in practice contradicted the spirit of labor education (Anonymous, 1954g). When pressured to deal with disgruntled graduates, some teachers placed ever greater efforts on increasing admission rates, because one more student getting admission meant one fewer to pacify, and thus less trouble (K. Liu, 1955). In extreme cases,

labor tasks were assigned as a punishment to mischievous students, who in turn resented labor (Editorial Office, 1954a).

Some problems were caused by conflicting interpretations of what constituted labor. There were teachers who thought that study alone sufficed as labor, an idea much welcomed by students (Department of Education, Shandong Province, 1955). Some teachers had the opposite interpretation, maintaining that labor education involved physical tasks only, to the extent of bringing up “to be a farmer is to be the top of society” [*wan ban jie xia pin, wei you nongye gao*], an antidote to the popular saying “to be a scholar is to be the top of society” [*wan ban jie xia pin, wei you dushu gao*] (Editorial Office, 1954a, p. 44). Impassioned teachers asked students to criticize the “ideology of continuing education”, and to serve as role models by giving up opportunities of further education (J. Fang, 1955).

Part of the confusion originated in the intricateness – and perhaps deliberate elusiveness – of the theoretical network in which labor education was contained.<sup>57</sup> Sometimes labor education was related to productivity as China’s central task:

The task of China’s education is to boost the people’s productivity. This first means educating the people to possess socialist attitude toward labor, to see labor as honorable career, and treat labor as the rightful duty of anyone who is able to work. Therefore, our education absolutely cannot be separated from productive labor. Without exception, graduates of elementary, secondary, and higher education should all actively participate in labor production. (Department of Propaganda, 1954, p. 7)

Labor education, as one facet of all-round development, was mapped to the new student ideal (C. Dong, 1954). The discourse about eliminating the gap between mental and physical labor

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<sup>57</sup> Sometimes *People’s Education* had to elucidate the key messages contained in official documents to ensure a clear delivery to nation-wide teachers (Anonymous, 1957a).

also became increasingly prevalent (W. Chen, 1954). According to this discourse, graduates were asked to work in the countryside because China had advanced socialist values regarding physical labor (Anonymous, 1953h). Lost in these grand theories, many teachers failed to catch the key message, namely labor education as a solution to unemployment. Some decoded the message but were reluctant to follow it (Unit of Chinese language, First Middle School of Jinan, 1955). These phenomena were consequently criticized.

In schools that perceptively grasped and carried out the central task regarding unemployment, labor education was more frequently practiced in graduating classes than lower classes, and often became intensified in April and May, prior to the graduating season (Anonymous, 1955c; J. Fang, 1955; Keheng Liu, 1955). Students mocked this campaign-style labor education, comparing it to a swallow that comes in the spring and leaves in the fall (Shang & Guan, 1955). Given the yearly recursive nature of the unemployment problem, schools were encouraged to proactively work on the non-graduating classes as well. Further, it was warned that a narrow focus on the graduating classes risked backfire, as graduates might see labor education to be specifically designed for them (Department of Education, Anhui Province, 1955).

### *Labor education and class struggle*

Labor education turned out to be more effective in some years than others. It was reported that after intensive labor education in 1954, the rate of malcontented graduates dropped from 90 percent to between 10 and 20 percent (J. Fang, 1955). Over a dozen provinces and districts reported that by October of 1954, 78 percent of graduates denied further education had been incorporated into the workforce (Party Central, 1955). More than half of the 1958 graduates from the BNU Chinese Language major went to Qinghai, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang, the remotest provinces of China (1958 Graduates of Chinese Language Major, BNU, 2012).

But, in 1957, the unemployment problem resurged with no less severity (Ministry of Education, 1957). Out of over 5 million elementary graduates, 3.6 million were denied entrance to further education. Close to 80% of the over 1 million secondary graduates could not continue education (Ministry of Education, 1957). Worse still, the 1957 unemployment problem occurred at an inopportune time. As this point, the Soviet Union's De-Stalinization, the political unrest in Poland and Hungary, and the failure of the Hundred Flowers Campaign had spurred Mao (1957b) to reassess China's situation, and concluded that China still faced the contradiction between the intellectuals' capitalist consciousness and the demands of the new society.

In fact, Mao had held amnesty toward the intellectuals a long time ago (T. H. Chen, 1981; L. Wang, 2003). In 1942, Mao (1942b) had commented: "actually many so-called intellectuals are, relatively speaking, more ignorant and the workers and peasants sometimes know more than they do" (p. 39). In 1958, Mao (1958/1968) developed this thought into the widely circulated saying "lowly people are the smartest, and noble people are the most stupid" [*beijian zhe zui congming, gaogui zhe zui yuchun*] (p. 33). This spelled out the anti-intellectual sentiments of many university administrators of cadre background, who obtained the position primarily because of political loyalty instead of academic qualification (L. S. Zhu, 2008). Following Mao's call, educators began to see the widespread unwillingness of graduates to join professions of manual labor in a new light: it was not merely about unemployment and potential unrest. The "ringing of the alarm bell" was that almost a decade into socialism, the growing population of the intellectuals were no yet ready to identify themselves as belonging to the working class (Anonymous, 1957a, p. 4). The pre-1957 lectures and initiatives about labor education appeared to be inadequate, as they did not stress enough about instilling proletariat consciousness (Anonymous, 1957a, 1957b).

The solution lay in a new form of education. Mao (1942b) complained that regular education provided students book-learning only, and the only way to overcome this shortcoming was “to get them to take part in practical work and become practical workers” (p. 40). This required the intellectuals to overcome their weaknesses through learning from the working mass (T. H. Chen, 1981). This method was also implied in a story of Mao’s own spiritual journey. According to Mao (1942c), he used to find distaste in the dirty clothing of workers and farmers. But, having gone through revolutionary activities together, he gradually learned more about them, and realized that they were, in fact, cleaner than the intellectuals. Consistent with this story, Mao (1957c) asked intellectuals to go to the factories and the villages and be integrated with the proletarian mass. By doing so, they were expected to better coalesce with the working class and shape their socialist outlook. Labor education became a key component in Mao’s approach to the new human ideal. In Mao’s (1957b) own words, education must “enable everyone who receives education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and become a worker with both socialist consciousness and culture” (p. 405). Labor education acquired a greater significance than address the unemployment problem; it had become an approach to class struggle.

In early 1957, a call was widely distributed via newspapers and booklets that labor education must be made regular (Anonymous, 1957a, 1957b). In 1958, the Educational Revolution took place, reasserting that education must be combined with productive labor (Central Committee & State Council, 1958; T. H. Chen, 1981). Labor education was required to be a major mandatory component in curricula, and classrooms were filled with production tools (B. Wang, 2010). The Educational Revolution overlapped with the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962), a movement aimed at a rapid transformation of China’s economy through mass participation in production. Schools were asked to make a great leap forward as well by opening more schools, compiling texts, helping

eliminate illiteracy, and participating in labor production. BNU's involvement in these two movements was particularly bolstered by Kang Sheng, who also masterminded the 1958 criticism of psychology discussed in Chapter One. Following Kang's exhortation, BNU teachers and students allegedly built over sixty factories of various kinds (B. Wang, 2010), and compiled 169 new curricula in half month (Anonymous, 1958c). Students in the education major were said to have trained 4,600 secondary, elementary and kindergarten teachers. They also reportedly created over 300 child care teams to deliver service to over 16,000 children (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1958a).

In the frenzied movement, labor tasks did not always correspond to students' expertise. For instance, people from the history major allegedly built textile, hydrochloric acid, aluminum, cement, and cloisonné factories. Usually, one needed four months of training to grasp the basic cloisonné-making techniques, but it was reported that the history major took merely nine days to achieve that (T. Chen, 2011). These reports were barely reliable, given the staggering pervasive tendency of fabricating reports in this period (Chan, 2001). Most of the new "factories" were, in fact, rudimentary workshops, and the quality of their products was rarely guaranteed. Nonetheless, it is easy to discern the degree to which education was intertwined with labor activities.

At communes, teachers and students were required to wholeheartedly work and live with peasants. They were encouraged to lodge in the poorest homes and share the same food, because only in that way they would be accepted by the villagers (Anonymous, 1958a). In the steelmaking campaign in late 1958, it was frequently declared that the process of making steel was simultaneously one that "made people" (The Fifty-Fourth Middle School of Shanghai, 1958, p. 5). Through steel making, students first learned from workers and then practically rendered themselves into workers. In light of the popular Soviet-imported novel, *How the Steel Was*

*Tempered*, and China's emphasis on heavy industry, the making of steel with furnace served as a contagious metaphor for the creation of the new student through labor activity:

The CCP and our country wish that the intellectuals could become “steel” and be useful to the country and the people, but we cannot say that nowadays all intellectuals are already “steel”; some of them are not even qualified to be “wood” [...] Right now, labor production is the furnace of trial, and our plunging into it is not a “waste” [of talents] and instead the inevitable route. (Chi, 1957)

As a metaphor for human nature, steel invited stringent pedagogical demands by casting the students' mentality as unyielding and indestructible.

Students were frequently reported to be passionately praising labor education: “In the past [I] postponed or avoided labor tasks when possible, but now I don't feel well when there are no assignments”; “since joining labor production, I could sleep well and no longer need pills” (Anonymous, 1958b). This was perhaps true in some cases, but did not apply to the entire student population. In fact, many BNU students were disappointed by the disruption of study (1958 Graduates of Chinese Language Major, BNU, 2012; B. Wang, 2010). In Tianjin, massive withdrawals occurred along with the intensification of labor assignments in the summer of 1958. In the fall, among the 160,000 secondary school students, 10,000 did not return to school (F. Guo & Li, 2000). At the turn of 1959, problems caused by the Educational Revolution became apparent. The Ministry of Education began to reverse it (D. Lu, 1959). In the following years, the Educational Revolution died down, until its resurgence in the Cultural Revolution (1966–1967).

## **Chapter conclusion**

In this chapter, I have examined three forms of labor at the conjunction between the human subject and China's economy via education: the “dutiful” labor of learning and teaching, the “free labor”

contributed to socialist construction, and the division of labor. Along this sequence of inquiry, I moved from the central space of the school – textbook and classroom, to China’s socioeconomic terrain, and finally to the deep buried issue of class relation. These three forms of labor conditioned and transformed labor education, which first found its pedagogical purpose overridden by economic ends and later converted into a means of class struggle.

In Section I, I examined “dutiful labor” as embedded in the reforms of textbook, curriculum, and teaching workload. All three reforms aimed at speedier supply of workforce to China’s economy, and they all failed due to an overestimation of human capability. In Section II, I discussed the “free labor” extracted from students and teachers to help with a wide range of services on and off campus. China’s hectic reforms involved a severe lack of coordination, and students were utilized as a “raid squad” for their literary skills and dispatchability.

In Section III, I offered an intersessional reflection on several social dynamics undergirding “dutiful labor” and “free labor”. First, I presented how labor education became economized in the new regime to legitimize the extraction of student labor. Second, I argued that policy initiatives had limited effects on reducing school burden due to problems at the central and local levels of governance, dogmatic adherence to Soviet advisors, and, most importantly, the radical notion that the teachers and students possessed boundless potentiality.

In the last two sections, I examined the dream of cultivating all-round socialist members, which, with its emphasis on proletarianizing the intellectuals, deviated from Marx’s original conception. In Section IV, I discussed the origin, implementation, and problems surrounding all-round education, as well as how Zhang Lingguang and his followers took advantage of the Hundred Flowers Campaign and de-Stalinization to promote “teaching in accordance with aptitude” in defense of individuality. In Section V, I discussed how all-round education was interwoven with

China's centralized placement, and how students resisted this system through navigating school training. The inopportune clash between the state and the students during political unrests eventually led to the Educational Revolution of 1958, in which industrial and agricultural production became a key pedagogical method in the service of class struggle.

The myriad of tasks surrounding school reform, services, and centralized placement signaled the CCP's painstaking efforts to resuscitate its economy. Notwithstanding China's rapid industrialization and economic growth, these endeavors met frequent frustrations and setbacks. A key problem lay in the one-sided prioritization of national projects, which were claimed to embody an objective reality dictated by the will of history. Pitted against the non-accommodating state, the human subject was conceptualized to be highly malleable in possession of boundless potentiality.

Against the enslaved state of productive labor in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, Marx (1875) envisioned that, in communism, work would no longer be painful: It should be "not only a means of life, but life's prime want" (p. 87). This utopian vision inspired the inception of labor education in early Republican China, but, in the new regime, became appropriated into radicalized forms of labor education that legitimized the extraction of student labor and that performed class struggle. In order to understand the evolution of labor education, it is necessary to examine how the radicals exercised their institutional power and ideological vocabulary to graft the new student ideal onto the issues of workforce supply, social reforms, unemployment, and division of labor.

## Chapter Three: Engendering Citizenship

The exteriorization shift of the Chinese epistemology regarding the human subject had different implications for China's twin objectives. In the context of economy, the negation of psycho-psychological laws implied that the human subject possessed tremendous potential to enable demanding academic and labor activities. In the context of class struggle, in contrast, the human subject was seen to possess certain sociopolitical inclinations. As psychologists shied away from discussions of moral issues in keeping with scientific value-neutrality, they were frequently accused by the radicals of reifying bourgeois consciousness as natural propensity. As mentioned in Chapter One, examples of such alleged reification included one's need for material gratification and social recognition. Further, besides psychologists' understanding of the mind in terms of natural laws, in Chinese culture, the notion of human nature [*ren xing*] was deeply rooted in the moral realm, encompassing common human desires regarding self, family, friends, and so forth. These social inclinations of the human mind were suggested by radical theorists to be characteristic of particular classes, and thus needing to be replaced with a nobler consciousness, as epitomized in so called "party nature" [*dang xing*]. This break away from the conventional notion of human nature constituted a key step in the molding of a new socialist citizenship and in turn in China's approach to nation-building.

In this chapter, I begin with the rationale of class/ideological struggle in the 1950s, move to the methods of ideological remolding, and finally discuss the reconfiguration of Chinese students' social relations on spatial and temporal dimensions. Perry's (2002) research demonstrates that emotion work played a key role in the CCP's techniques of mass mobilization, including "speaking bitterness" [*suku*], "denunciation" [*kongsu*], and "rectification" [*zhengfeng*], and in turn guaranteed its military and political success. In this chapter, I expand Perry's inquiry

to position an array of affects in China's regime security, interpersonal relations, and socialist revolution.

In Section I, I foreground the "red and expert" controversy, which ended with a prioritization of "redness" (socialist consciousness) over the acquisition of expertise. In the following, I discuss how Mao's followers sought the creation of a faithful, confident, and devoted student population in consolidating China's socialism.

In Section II, I discuss a few common pedagogical methods to cultivate new citizenship identity among students. These methods, including criticism, role modeling, and socialist competition, stimulated the creation of a community of responsibility and fostered the circulation of desirable affects in the classroom. Meanwhile, I observe these approaches' side effects, including the diffusion of responsibility, uniformity, and lack of independent thinking.

In Section III, I examine the pedagogical reconfiguration of social relations on the spatial dimension. I argue that the erosion of intimate relations went hand-in-hand with the growth of an imagined national community, where students were encouraged to affectively immerse in a proletarian coalition regardless of physical distance.

In the final section, I explore the reconfiguration of social relations on the temporal dimension, with a focus on generationality. I discuss how assumptions about individual life-long development mattered in the contestation between teachers and students, as well as between teachers of different seniority. In the end, I situate the state-sponsored youth rebellion against the older generations in the notion "People's democratic dictatorship", a foundational official principle that defined China's form of governance.

## **Ideological and political education**

### *The prioritization of ideological and political education*

China's dual objectives were respectively epitomized in two types of educations: the economic objective in labor education, and the revolutionary objective in ideological and political education [*sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu*].<sup>58</sup> As mentioned earlier, I do not wish to imply that economic and revolutionary activities were fully separate from each other. These two types of education both pertained to the all-round development ideal. I also explained how labor education eventually served both material production and class struggle. Regardless, in many moments, the twin objectives went into different directions or came into fierce clashes. This section discusses their competition, and how, in a period of radical politics, class struggle prevailed.

Immediately after the founding of the new regime, the Ministry of Education declared:

Teachers' learning primarily consists of two aspects: political and [Marxist] theoretical learning, and the learning of expertise [...] Political and theoretical learning is the foundation of teachers' learning no matter when. If anybody confuses their status and relation, sees them in parallel, or one-sidedly emphasizes the learning of expertise, that would be inappropriate. The learning of expertise cannot be improved without political and theoretical foundation. (J. Cheng, 1950, p. 17)

This call found varying degrees of compliance among schools (Chinese Language Unit, BNU, 1951; Girls' School, 1949). The Girls' School (1949), for instance, required that problems regarding teaching methods to be directly communicated among teachers and students, while those

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<sup>58</sup> It was also occasionally called "political thoughts education" [*zhengzhi sixiang jiaoyu*] or "political education" [*zhengzhi jiaoyu*].

regarding teaching attitudes and philosophies must be reported to the Office of Teaching and Guidance [*jiao dao chu*].

In many schools, the implementation of ideological and political education encountered considerable resistance, as teachers clung to the conventional notion that academic training was more important than political thoughts (J. Chen, 1950; Communication Unit of Beijing University, 1952). Some BNU (1953a) teachers complained: “today everybody’s political awareness has been elevated, why are there still so many political theory courses?”; “why do science students have to take political theory courses, as social science students do?” (p. 4). These sentiments were shared by BNU (1953b) students, who disparaged: “Political theories are neither expertise nor science, anybody knows that” (p. 3). Students from other schools also complained: “I can serve the people all the same without learning about politics” (Editorial Office, 1953b, p. 8).

The Hundred Flowers Campaign created an opportunity for teachers and students to openly voice their frustration with the imposition of politics on academic issues. To combat these critical voices, Mao (1957a) exhorted the Chinese to possess red socialist consciousness:

Politics and the professions form a unity of opposites, in which politics is predominant and primary [...] Nowadays some cadres are no longer red since they have succumbed to rich peasant thinking. Some people are white, like the Rightists in the Party who are politically white and technically inexpert. Others are grey and still others pinkish. It is the Left who are really red, blazing red, like the color of our five-star red flag. (pp. 488–489)

Here, the color white designated the possession of capitalist consciousness. Earlier, students used to be compared to white paper in the sense that they, born to the new society, had not been exposed to corruptive influences in the past. This metaphor was now criticized for overestimating the purity of students (Y. Ma, 1958).

Following Mao's call, debates on the relation between redness and expertise quickly swept through universities of the entire country. Unlike the shocking blowout of criticisms during the Hundred Flowers Campaigns, the red and expert debates were carefully planned and regulated by university administrators. Take, for example, Tsinghua University, which was retrospectively praised by Deng Xiaoping for its success in cultivating "red experts" (X. Wu, 2011). Between 27 November 1957 and 4 January 1958, Tsinghua University organized over 2,000 debates (K. Liu & Fang, 2011). Each of the nearly 10,000 students attended eight or nine meetings on average (M. Yuan, 1959). Given that 571 Tsinghua University individuals had been labeled as rightists, students were afraid to expose their real thoughts (T. Wang, 2001). Other than rehashing the official messages, students usually remained silent. A few anxious organizers even tried to break the ice by threatening to prolong the meeting and requiring students to expose one another's reactionary thoughts. These measures were not desired by Tsinghua University administrators, who made painstaking efforts to reassure students: If the Anti-Rightist Campaign was aimed at crashing counterrevolutionaries, the red and expert debates were merely intended to elevate students' political consciousness. In Maoist terminology, this time the contradiction lay within the people instead of between the people and the enemy (M. Yuan, 1959).

Feeling encouraged, the majority of students began to voice the wish of receiving more academic training. In one class, only one CCP member espoused both red and expert. The expertise advocates proposed a number of views. According to "more expertise and less redness", China faced the task of conquering adversarial natural environment, and increase in technical competence was indispensable for catching up with England in fifteen years. Ideology-wise, it was considered to be sufficient that, after the Anti-Rightist Campaign, university students would not become rightists and would willingly accept job assignments (M. Yuan, 1959, p. 513). Some supported

“expertise first and redness second”, because it was more difficult to master expertise than acquiring a socialist consciousness (Anonymous, 1957f).

The university cadres generally saw the advocacy of expertise undesirable but disagreed among themselves regarding how to respond. One group proposed that they repress the expertise advocates in case things went beyond control. The other group, which gained the upper hand, insisted on continuing the debates as an opportunity for the mass to self-educate. This strategy was presented by a *People’s Daily* coverage as “present facts, speak of reason, freely debate, and convince with truth” (Anonymous, 1957f, p. 7). Meanwhile, the speech of Jiang Nanxiang, the university president, as well as commentaries from the CCP’s mouthpieces, already clearly pointed out the desired direction (Anonymous, 1957f; X. Wu, 2011; Yao, 2014).<sup>59</sup> Another purpose of continuing the debates was to hone junior activists’ capacity in ideological struggles. On this matter, senior university cadres trained the redness advocates how to analyze opponent arguments, collect evidence, and make refutations.

The overarching objective of the debates was to elevate students’ worldviews, which was thought to be of paramount importance in safeguarding socialism. This was expressed in a popular math-informed discourse: “redness is about direction, and expertise is about velocity” (T. Wang, 2001, p. 19). Or, in Jiang Nanxiang’s metaphor, if one wished to leave Tsinghua University for Tiananmen Square, one must walk southeast. When confused about the direction, the more one walks, the further one moves away from Tiananmen Square (X. Wu, 2011; Yao, 2014). In early

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<sup>59</sup> Expertise advocates faced the risk of being persecuted. A debate between two BNU students escalated into a fight, when the expertise advocate slapped his opponent in the face. He was sent to work at Mohe, China’s northernmost point, for fifteen years and only received vindication in 1980. The Vice-President of BNU, Fu Zhongsun, was labeled as a rightist, partly because he merely asked the fighting student to make an apology – a punishment considered too light (Fan, 2006; S. Li, 2006).

1958, a consensus was arrived at that, confirming Mao's call, one must possess both redness and expertise, with priority given to the former.

*Faith: Establishing legitimacy*

The prioritization of redness over expertise counts as one of the moments that may appear to readers as ill-informed. In order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to reconstruct how various events fueled the evolution of the Chinese notion of ideological struggle. Given the significance of the student body in constituting the backbone of China's future generations, as well as its active role in China's social movements – such as its intervention in the Hundred Flowers Campaign, it is important to examine how policy decisions were made in light of the ideological contour of the student population.

Mao and his followers' keen interest in ideological struggle stemmed from a persistent concern over how Chinese students related themselves to communism. Having unified China and promised an egalitarian future, the CCP was hailed by many. Meanwhile, there was also widespread suspicion regarding its promise about building a better society. The following three sections respectively deal with three mental qualities that the CCP sought to establish among the students: faith, confidence, and devotion to/in communism.

According to Weber (1958) and others, governments seek legitimacy as a pillar of governance. In other words, they must have their authority accepted by the people in order to exercise power. This law applies to both dictatorial and democratic regimes. In the Chinese case, the socialist regime enjoyed much what Weber calls charismatic legitimacy, derived from Mao's authority. Many students in the 1950s wholeheartedly embraced the belief that Mao was the savior of China and would bring a bright future to it (A. Yu & Lei, 2006). But, on other fronts, the regime faced great challenges of legitimacy. Relatively new to power, the CCP did not enjoy much

historically accumulated traditional authority (Weber, 1958). Rational-legal legitimacy was frequently absent in China's class struggle campaigns that culminated in extralegal persecutions. The post-war poverty created further pressure for the CCP to improve the country's economic performance, another foundation of legitimacy (White, 1986). By challenging the existing social hierarchy and cultural norms, the socialist revolution risked provoking resistance. China frequently promoted political and labor campaigns through mobilizing the masses (Bernstein, 2010), making legitimization an even more urgent task.

In education, the task of legitimization boiled down to the establishment of faith in the CCP's leadership, which was taken as the basis for forestalling revolts against the regime. In the early 1950s, despite many people's outpour of optimism, some intellectuals remained suspicious of the CCP (T. H. Chen, 1960b; Nanchang Second Middle School, 1953). Some overtly expressed antagonistic sentiments and behaviors. A teacher from Jiaozuo County spread the message: "proletarians have dogma; only Jesus and the Holy Bible possesses the genuine truth" (M. Qi, 1951a, p. 15). In Meng County, a teacher with a landlord background reclaimed confiscated properties, and the school head took no action other than remarking "it's the government's problem, let the government deal with it" (p. 15). As a consequence, six more teachers of the same school followed the lead to reclaim their properties. One student from a suppressed anti-revolutionary family wrote "since the suppression of counterrevolutionaries, workers can no longer work, farmers can no longer produce", which did not concern the teacher, who posted the writing on a wallpaper in praise of its concise writing style (p. 16). By 1953, it was still reported that teachers in Nanchang were apprehensive of the CCP (Nanchang Second Middle School, 1953).

In addition to ideological and political education, various campaigns were carried out to overcome these problems. If the earliest Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries (1950–

1953) was a response to actual hostile powers against the new-born regime (Strauss, 2002; K. Yang, 2008), two later campaigns, the Sufan Movement (1955) and the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957–1958), over-estimated the number of hidden enemies and subjected millions to false accusation. These two campaigns were witnessed by Fan Yihao, a BNU student.

There was a saying: “Beijing is the most leftist across the country, universities are the most leftist in Beijing, BNU is the most leftist among universities, and the Chinese language major is the most leftist at BNU” (Lei, 2010). Yihao was one of the most leftist students studying Chinese language and literature, but later turned out to be identified as a rightist (Fan, 2014). After entering BNU in 1953, Yihao became an active member of the Youth League. In 1955, he was called upon to help with the Sufan Movement, aimed at wiping out hidden counterrevolutionaries (Meisner, 1999). Passionately devoting himself to the initiative, Yihao busied himself reviewing student personal histories, soliciting reports, and interrogating suspicious individuals. With Yihao’s contribution, BNU identified 443, or 10 percent, of its teachers and students as potential counterrevolutionaries. One student could not bear the accusation and attempted suicide (1958 Graduates of Chinese Language Major, BNU, 2012).

More than two months of exhausting work triggered Yihao’s rheumatoid arthritis, forcing him to take a one-year break from school for treatment. On his sickbed, Yihao received shocking news: all suspected BNU counterrevolutionaries were found to be innocent (Fan, 2014; F. Yu, 2001). Nation-wide, among the 1.3 million people identified as counterrevolutionaries, more than 97 percent were later vindicated (Fan, 2006). Deeply remorseful for the harm he had done to his fellow students, Yihao had a painful soul-searching about his role in the Sufan Movement and became doubtful of his previous loyalty to the CCP. Meanwhile, the news of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union arrived in China. Similar to many other Chinese intellectuals, Yihao became

further disillusioned about blindly following a party's leadership (Fan, 2006; Shao, 2016). He brought up the idea that students should not just be “good kids” of the CCP; for the sake of a successful socialist revolution, they must have their own independent thinking (Fan, 2014, p. 35). Following a heated debate on this proposal, Yihao's application for CCP membership was rejected.

Encouraged by the Hundred Flowers Campaign, in May of 1957 BNU students organized forums to reflect on the wrongs of the Sufan Movement. There, Yihao once again assumed his leadership role, but this time serving as a host and supporter of student victims. In line with the Hundred Flowers Campaign, student participants pointed out that “subjectivism”, “bureaucracy”, and “factionalism” among the CCP were responsible for the movement, and called for rectification. To BNU students' surprise, on June 8<sup>th</sup>, *People's Daily* claimed that many rightists had been taking advantage of the Hundred Flowers Campaign to attack socialism (Anonymous, 1957e). Unaware of himself as already being targeted, Yihao and a classmate posted an article on campus, warning that the commentary might lead to further false accusations and suppression of free speech. Crowds reading and hand-copying this article stayed until the night, and journalists came to take photos of it. The next morning, Yihao's fate was decided: Hundreds of articles appeared surrounding Yihao's article on the wall – almost all of them advocated *People's Daily*. Yihao's previous defense of independent thinking was declared as evidence proving him a rightist (Z. Ren, 1958). Yihao was required to go through labor education in remote areas until 1979, when he received a vindication letter from BNU (Fan, 2014).<sup>60</sup>

### *Confidence: Overcoming difficulties*

Mere faith in the CCP was not enough to guarantee China's social transformation. In order to advance the revolution, the mass must believe socialism is a feasible goal to obtain. The latter task

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<sup>60</sup> Decades later, confessions were made by BNU students who had participated in the suppression of rightists (D. Wang, 2007).

involved building confidence in the feasibility of the revolution against skepticism, which emerged from time to time. A BNU professor once mocked: “I don’t think the CCP is going to be finished as quickly as in three or five years” (Gong & Kai, 1952, p. 21). Another Fudan University teacher remarked: “The new society is no different from the old one. The only difference is that now we receive salary by month and do not get fired. If the CCP continues like this, it won’t achieve communism in a thousand years” (Editorial Office, 1957c, p. 103). The lack of confidence stemmed from a host of reasons. As discussed in Chapter Two, China faced tremendous material hardship, lack of workforce, and an insecure international environment, which made the lofty goal of communism appear even less attainable.

The Chinese call for confidence could be partly traced to the Soviet influence. Translations of Soviet educational thoughts suggested that teachers “must tirelessly and resolutely inspire students’ confidence in their power, in order to exercise their will and help them cultivate the quality of socialist warrior” (Porisov, 1951, p. 39). During the Korean War, Chinese teachers also revived Mao’s (1938) rejection of the idea “weapons decide everything” in earlier years (p. 143), telling students that morale is what determined the outcome of the war (Harbin Department of Culture and Education, 1952). Beyond the war context, educational theorists asserted that Chinese schools’ ill-equippedness did not necessarily entail compromised education, as long as students had full confidence to overcome the objective difficulty (T. Yang, 1952). The implementation of new academic and labor tasks were usually accompanied by exhortations of overcoming difficulties with revolutionary confidence (Zeng, 1954). The second national meeting on higher education called for, among other grand objectives, the elimination of illiteracy among the 300 million population in seven years, and the popularization of elementary education to over 100

million children in twelve years. Reviewing these ambitious goals alongside material hardship and organizational difficulties, the commentary *Overcome Difficulties and Embrace Tasks* remarked:

It is foreseeable that we are going to experience many difficult tasks. Our job will definitely encounter great obstacles [...] this year the enrollments at various schools doubled, tripled, or even quadrupled, but the number of instructors only minimally increased. Who could say there is no difficulty with this? Who could say the gap between our current educational infrastructure and the blueprint of twelve years later does not pose difficulty? [...] We must not give up or lower our heads in front of difficulties. (Anonymous, 1956d, pp. 4–5)

The repetitive mention of “difficulty” eventually led to, rather than a revision of plan, a reassertion of unyielding stance buttressed by confidence in China’s future.

The ideology surrounding “confidence” resonated with the 1958 critique of scientific psychology for giving too much emphasis to human constraints. What was needed, according to the critics, was the “breaking of superstition, elimination of self-abasement, and the establishment of a socialist spirit of audacious thinking, speaking, and doing” (Z. Qi, 1958, p. 23). The view reflected a radical celebration of human agency in overcoming nature – whether such nature was located in the human subject or in the world. In front of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, one was exhorted to display “revolutionary spirit”. Revolutionary spirit refers to a number of attitudes grounded in human agency, such as confidence, resolution, and perseverance. For example, when a secondary school graduate was asked to teach solid geometry, a course she was unfamiliar with, she expressed: “Our school lacks teachers specializing in solid geometry, and I am a member of the Youth League. As long as I work hard enough, is there any difficulty that I cannot overcome?” (The First Girls' Middle School in Wuhan, 1953, p. 31). Revolutionary spirit was associated with “revolutionary method” – bold approaches that led to success in defiance of conventional beliefs.

With revolutionary method, several fourth-year undergraduate students at Tianjin University taught an engineering drawing course to first-year undergraduates (C. Huang, 1953). This story was picked up by a teaching assistant at Shandong University, who, having received no training in general chemistry, claimed that he managed to teach an advanced chemistry course (Xing, 1953).

In 1956, BNU launched the *March to Science Campaign*, which encouraged not only professors, but also teaching assistants, and graduate and undergraduate students, to produce more scientific outputs. The university administrators were not concerned with the fact that over eighty percent of the research team were newbies; what mattered was whether they had revolutionary spirit (Anonymous, 1956c). They celebrated new recruits' high morale and were wary of occasional expressions of self-doubt (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1956c). The most welcome reports contained narratives of glowing confidence. As proudly quoted in a report, a teacher remarked: "I firmly believe that we can conquest any scientific fortress, as long as we carry out our scientific research steadfastly following the direction of the Party" (Anonymous, 1956a, p. 9).

*Devotion: Contributing to socialist construction*

The establishment of faith and confidence, intended to forestall subversion and skepticism of the regime, was not yet sufficient. A third challenge came from political apathy, as displayed in many individuals who passively dissociated themselves from state initiatives. Some teachers had the idea "I teach my class and have nothing to do with politics" (M. Qi, 1951a, p. 15). Some discouraged students from aiding the Korean War (Communication Unit of Beijing University, 1952) or the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries (J. Li et al., 1952). It was also frequently reported that teachers took their academic training as an asset for personal gains and provided teaching only in accordance with the amount of payment (M. Yuan, 1952).

Students did not always meet expectations, either. In 1950 a BNU class attempted to organize an anti-America propaganda campaign, which became delayed due to lack of enthusiasm from the students (Literary and History Training Class, 1950b). BNU students majoring in geography were mocked for having their university life messed up: “Unsettled in the first year, messing around in the second year, teaching part-time in the third year, and fucking off in the fourth year” (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1953b, p. 3).<sup>61</sup> Some were found to have skipped teaching internships for watching sports and films, or to have plagiarized others’ internship reports (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1956a). Professional training schools faced worse situations, including gambling and alcoholism, with money sometimes obtained by selling clothes and quilts (Editorial Team, 1953c).

The spread of Marxism and Maoist Thoughts was not without obstacle. They were sometimes considered to be overly simple: “teaching was more difficult in the past, since some hold this opinion and others hold that opinion, each got some unique things to say. Now there is one definitive view, making things a lot easier” (Literary and History Training Class, 1950a, p. 1). Current affairs was a core curriculum component, but the test results were sometimes disappointing (Anonymous, 1953c). Occasionally, students came up with answers such as: “America is good, it helps China”, “Kim Il-sung is General of the People’s Liberation Army”, and “Gorky is an American writer” (M. Qi, 1951a, p. 16).

As mentioned earlier, the CCP frequently launched study and labor campaigns to put the revolution in motion. This externally imposed drive, however, was seen to be inadequate. It was suggested that study and production must be performed through voluntarism (X. Li, 1953; Shang & Guan, 1955; Skatkin, 1950). Highly voluntary subjectivity was an inexhaustible source of

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<sup>61</sup> In Chinese: “*Yi nianji bu anxin, er nianji guihun, san nianji waibian jianke, si nianji gundan*”.

energy that promised the arrival of communism. This conceptualization was contained in educational theorist Skatkin's (1951) description of a "common scene" in the Soviet classroom:

Although the off-class bell has rung, the kids seem to be enchanted by something and cannot leave the chairs. This is because they do not want to leave. They have such great passion for exploring new knowledge and elevating their knowledge level". (p. 44)

Concerning teacher training, it was suggested that the outcome largely depended on the trainees' attitude. No matter how hard others wish to help, no progress would occur unless the trainees actively sought improvement (Anonymous, 1953f).

#### *The productive value of socialist virtues*

So far, the virtues of faith, confidence, and devotion were called for to bind individuals to the revolutionary cause. In addition, the new socialist citizenship encompassed several more virtues, such as voluntarism, discipline, and sense of responsibility. On some occasions, these virtues were considered to have productive values. As pointed out by Baum (1964), proponents of ideological and political education often praised the power of virtue in commanding talent. According to them, cadres who fully surrendered their hearts to the people could become more capable workers than the self-interested citizens of capitalism (Anonymous, 1957f). Similar to labor education, these virtues traversed the economic and revolutionary spheres. The difference is that the two moved in opposite directions. That is, labor education extended from economic concerns to have an impact on class relations, whereas the socialist virtues overflowed from the ideological/moral domain to lubricate productive activities.

The productive function of socialist virtues was stated by a team of students from BNU (1950) in reflecting on their internship experience. The very first paragraph of their report read:

Firstly, as we are conducting internship on child care, we should recognize ourselves as child caregivers, and perform the internship with the attitude of working on the post. Secondly, [we should] first stabilize our emotions, and not be distracted by other things during the internship ... [we should] have not only the spirit of serving and learning, but also the courage to overcome difficulties as well as friendly attitudes. (p. 17)

The emphasis on attitude had a partial Soviet origin. In an article translated into Chinese, Trivolskyov required children to develop several qualities: conformity to regulation and punctuality, as well as resolution, efficiency, and accuracy in executing tasks. Trivolskyov (1950) claimed that she had made her students highly self-disciplined:

Having asked students to preview the text, I warned them that I would explain the quiz questions once only. Meanwhile, nobody was allowed to talk, not even in lowered voice. In case the children kept listlessly holding their notebooks, I would say “Start!” Suddenly, the classroom went all quiet, and I began reading the questions. At that moment, the children had fully heightened attention and were so quiet and engaged. (p. 44)

The scenario described by Trivolskyov was very similar to the experience of Hu Hanjuan, who taught at the Elementary School Attached to BNU. Hu Hanjuan (1950) proudly recorded how disciplined students were in her music class:

There was once when the small kids were in a mess when lining up, and some kept chatting. So, they started singing: “[...] lining up should be fast, quiet, and straight [...]” Immediately they came into order. This was more effective than the teacher shouting for a long time. (p. 1)

The aforementioned red and expertise debate reiterated the commanding power of socialist virtues. The redness advocates argued that capitalist intellectuals tended to fall prey to pride when

experiencing success and suffer frustration when their interests were not met. In order to attain social status, they made risky research decisions or worked on esoteric topics that were useless to socialism. In contrast, those devoted to the noble revolutionary cause would not run into any of these problems and would display greater constructive energy (J. Zhang, 1958). However, many of the arguments barely held together. Advocates of expertise once brought up the question that scientists such as Newton and Einstein were capable of making great discoveries even in capitalist societies. If they had to spend a lot of time studying Marxism, they might have made fewer achievements. Guo Moruo replied that “although Newton and Einstein were not Marxist or Leninist, their ways of study coincided with Marxism and Leninism. If young people could accept Marxism and Leninism in their early years, we believe [they] would make less detour and more likely become Newton and Einstein” (quoted in J. Zhang, 1958, p. 11).

### *Binary discourse*

Mao’s philosophical thoughts were characterized by dialectical thinking, which emphasized the reconciliation of binary oppositions. But, as pointed out by Soo (1983), it was very difficult to maintain a dialectical balance, and Maoist China in fact tended to lean toward subjective factors, represented by redness, and to downplay the objective factors, represented by expertise. This one-sidedness was responsible for the 1958–1962 great famine and following economic difficulties (Dikötter, 2010). At the discursive level, the CCP’s legitimacy was often maintained through the establishment of irreconcilable contrast between the old society and the new one. This discourse vividly portrayed teachers’ life being miserable in the old society, and contrasted it with the new society which restored security, social status, and meaningfulness to the teachers (L. Guo & colleagues, 1949). However, as mentioned earlier, throughout the 1950s the teaching profession remained disadvantaged, and school administrators had to make painstaking efforts to recruit new

teachers and prevent the existing ones from leaving (T. H. Chen, 1960a). Still, the new society should be celebrated, maintained educational theorists, because “in the old society, the smiles of a few people was based on the tears of the mass” (Anonymous, 1952d, p. 4).

Another discursive apparatus maintained the contrast between socialism and capitalism. In the early 1950s, there was still a widespread favoritism for American culture (Editorial Team, 1953c). Professors required laboratory equipment to be imported from America (Ji, 1952), and students admired trainings at MIT and Harvard (K. Ding, 1952). The CCP took its engagement in the Korean War as an educational opportunity, and explicitly required the attitudes of “loving, fearing, and worshiping America” [*qin mei, chong mei, kong mei*] to be replaced by “hating, belittling, and despising American imperialism” [*choushi, mieshi, bishi meidiguozhuyi*] (L. Wang, 2003, p. 30). A textbook published by the prestigious People’s Education Press fell under attack for containing the idea “labor initially brings people a little pain, which is followed by great pleasure” (H. Wang, 1951, p. 22). The critic argued:

In the old society, the working class had to labor under the ruling class’s whips; it was indeed a pain. But today every worker has acquired new attitudes toward labor. [They understand that] labor is no longer for others, it is for oneself, for our country. It is a very honorable and pleasant thing – how can it be called a “pain”? (H. Wang, 1951, p. 22)

This black-and-white indoctrination ran counter to Stalin’s (Stalin, 1928, p. 81) exhortation to the youth: “We must learn from everyone, both from our enemies and from our friends, especially from our enemies. We must clench our teeth and study, not fearing that our enemies may laugh at us, at our ignorance, at our backwardness” (p. 81).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> The translation of Stalin’s speech appeared in *People’s Daily* in 1950.

Although binary thinking was questioned by some students, such as Fan Yihao, it was entrenched in many more minds. As a BNU student recollected, until he was identified as a rightist, to him, “the CCP” and “new society” stood for “light” and “progress”. “The Nationalist Party” and “old society” was synonymous of “darkness” and “corruption” (T. Shu, 2006). The red and expert debates often followed binary thinking, too. As explained by a theorist:

If the battlefield inside of people’s minds is not occupied by socialist thoughts, it must be occupied by capitalist thoughts. It is impossible to find a middle ground. Therefore, “redness” is the key factor that determines all human thoughts and behaviors. “Redness” is the commander and the soul of expertise. (Niu, 1958, p. 9)

Soon, the prioritization of redness showed negative outcomes. Students began to feel uncomfortable to read academic subjects. They sometimes requested approval from the local CCP Committee before checking out academic books from the library. Inside the library, they often hastily covered up academic readings with *Selection of Mao’s Thoughts* or *Red Flag* when others were passing by (B. Liu, 2011; T. Wang, 2001). Jiang Nanxiang (1961) had to encourage students to make greater efforts on academic study. Zhou Yang (1908–1989), Vice Minister of Propaganda, also cautioned about the danger of having too many political activists without professional knowledge (Fairbank & MacFarquhar, 1987). This alert was soon ignored as the Cultural Revolution was under its way.

### **Methods of ideological struggle**

Having discussed the rationale behind the ascendance of ideological struggle in China, in this section I examine several common methods through which ideological and political education was conducted: criticism, role modeling, and socialist competition. These methods often effectively

welded virtues with affects, but also led to negative consequences, including diffusion of responsibility, uniformity, and lack of independent thinking.

### *Criticism and modesty*

It would be very hard to exaggerate the significance of the method of criticism in the building of China's socialist culture. Initially a mechanism of inner-party struggle (H. Gao, 2017), criticism was introduced to schools as an approach to facilitate thought reform. This approach stemmed from the CCP's recognition that the intellectuals valued evidence and loved reason (Y. Xiao, 1950).

This meant:

Once they are crushed at the theoretical level, any problem can be solved. What does it mean to crush them with theory? It is to explain theoretically why the old ideologies are wrong, and why the new ideologies are correct, why we say and advocate this. (p. 43)

Modesty was hailed as an important virtue to ensure that critical opinions were well received. A surprisingly wide range of misconducts were linked with conceit: unfriendliness, lack of cooperation, disobedience to school regulation, resistance to learning from the Soviet Union, and so forth (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954b, 1957b). In light of these problems, all teachers and students were required to accept criticism with modesty. This communication ethics was meant to ensure undesired behaviors be quickly identified and corrected. The group dynamics surrounding criticism and modesty is exemplified in the BNU internship activities. When spotting problems in interns, directors were delighted to find out that the interns were, overall, receptive to suggestions and could make quick improvements (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1955c; History Program at BNU, 1954). Outstanding student interns were reminded that their achievements could not have been possible without the help of fellow interns and students of the internship class, so that they would not become self-conceited (Russian Language Program, BNU, 1955b). Here,

criticism and collectivism complemented each other. On the one hand, criticism must be conducted in a collective, where each participant contributed insights and motivations for the criticized to make progress. On the other, as pointed out by BNU educators, collectivism became possible when everyone was modest and eagerly learned from others (History Program at BNU, 1954).

The trend of criticism became normalized. In order to join the Youth League, one needed to attend a review meeting and receive comments from others. A BNU candidate enjoyed great popularity, as indicated by the many gifts – notebooks and towels – he received from classmates. However, because criticism was an indispensable component in the review meeting, he received friendly teases packaged as criticism: such as that he never used the gifts, which implied that he either preserved them with capitalist vanity, or was too shy to use them in the presence of others (T. Shu, 2006).

Constructive criticism was an art, the success of which depended on the person, manner, and context involved. In evaluating BNU students' teaching internship performance, the directors faced the challenge in striking a balance between making criticisms and being supportive. Sometimes interns could not help crying upon their unsatisfactory performance. In this situation, it was advised that the director should kindly help the interns to identify where they went wrong and restrain from offering too much criticism. Encouragement was needed to protect the interns' confidence and interest in teaching. In group-based evaluation sessions, interns were supposed to provide mutual comments. There, things might get out of control when interns brought up too-harsh comments. These moments were taken as opportunities for conducting education of collectivism. To mitigate the intense atmosphere, the director was advised to first endorse the efforts made by the criticized intern. Next, the director should conduct severe self-criticism for not having provided enough support to the interns. It was suggested that the more blame the director

put on him or herself, the more deeply the interns would be touched, and the more responsible the interns would become in the future. Further, it was suggested that since students took their “face” very seriously, certain comments should be communicated privately after the group session. In the private conversation, instead of performing self-criticism, the director could feel free to straightforwardly criticize the intern. In fact, deeper criticism was likely to produce a better effect, because it would reveal to the intern that the director had been kindly keeping the harsh words until now. Alternatively, if an intern had suffered much criticism in the group session, the director should provide more encouragement afterwards (Russian Language Program, BNU, 1955b).

Criticism faced a pair of opposite predicaments: Some participants held back critical comments due to misgivings, and some went overboard and applied political labels [*kou maozi*] (Pedagogy Teaching and Research Unit, BNU, 1954). The latter scenario, as mentioned earlier, tended to become more pronounced during tightened ideological struggles. In the wake of the Hundred Flowers Campaign, BNU organized a scientific forum to promote free discussion. While passionately praising this opportunity, the organizers were worried that political accusations might creep in, which they cautioned against in the welcome speech draft:

Any misapplication of [Marxist] principle in scientific problems, namely violent, arbitrary attitudes and the acts of condemning and labeling, does not help solve scientific problems [...] We oppose any interpersonal animosity, grudge, and the mingling of scientific problems with individual moral consciousness. (Anonymous, 1956c, pp. 5; 6)

Aimed at promoting scientific research, this welcome speech still emphasized modesty as the condition for participants to learn from each other and develop open dialogue. At the end of the draft, the BNU CCP committee secretary attached a commentary, complaining that “the atmosphere of criticism and self-criticism is not intense” (p. 10). By reducing scientific discussion

to criticism and self-criticism, this commentary heralded the lurking Anti-Rightist Campaign. In the latter campaign, criticism evolved into a basic mechanism of class struggle, and the rightists were accused of harboring counterrevolutionary thoughts rather than merely lacking modesty.

*Role modeling, responsibility, and affective contagion*

As discussed by Cheng (2009), the new human ideal often found personification in role models. China's exemplary culture was rooted in the Confucian tradition, entrenched by Soviet experience, and keenly promoted by the CCP. The most well-known role models include Pavel Korchagin, the protagonist of the novel *How the Steel Was Tempered*; Norman Bethune, a Canadian Communist Party member and a doctor who came to aid China in the Second World War; and Zhang Side, a guard who died in an accident while working.

The teaching profession occupied a unique position in China's exemplary culture. As explained by a BNU educator, teachers were expected to, in addition to transmitting knowledge, serve as role models of virtue [*wei ren shi biao*] (Haochuan Ding, 1950a). The very Chinese words for "normal" in "normal university", *shi fan*, literally mean "teacher-model". The motto of BNU, "Study as the teacher of others, and behave as the role model of the world" [*xue wei ren shi, xing wei shi fan*], reiterates the same notion. In the 1950s, Soviet advisors who made their way to China were hailed as role models who demonstrated professionalism, diligence, patience, frugality, and, perhaps most importantly, the spirit of socialist internationalism (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954e; Psychology Teaching and Research Unit, Department of Education, 1954). The CCP also actively promoted the identification of domestic role model teachers. *People's Education* published a guideline regarding how role model teachers should be selected:

The selection of role models must be prudent. But, it is impossible for every role model to be perfect and impeccable. Therefore, once a role model is discovered, [we] must assign

cadres to take charge, patiently educate him/her, and regularly report [on the progress]. Officers must carefully analyze and study, correct their weakness, promote their strengths, help them make gradual improvements. [We should] especially educate the role models himself, make sure that he/she will not become proud after receiving praises from the mass. So many role models have collapsed because of conceit. (Anonymous, 1952b, p. 8)

China's exemplary culture made the teaching profession a certain community of responsibility. Teachers and teaching interns frequently expressed a sense of responsibility in the presence of students. A BNU student reported realizing the value and responsibility of their profession, because during her internship, "there were dozens of eyes staring at me, keenly wishing to absorb useful knowledge from me and become qualified personnel" (H. Ding, 1953, p. 9). Another teacher proclaimed:

Students placed so much value in a teacher's conclusions, and immediately render them into their thought weapon: "Mr. Xu said this and that" sufficed to settle arguments. This situation gave me a tremendous education, making me realize what great responsibility I bear for every single word and behavior of mine! (P. Xu, 1950, p. 56)

When teachers occasionally failed to prepare a lecture plan, they would feel "anxious", "restlessly guilty", and repentant to the country and the students' precious forty-five minutes (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954f, p. 3). Given the gaze and expectation from students, teachers and teacher trainees were obliged to make self-improvements regarding instructional skills, political thoughts, and personal characters. A BNU student of a quick temper tended to keep others at a distance. During his teaching internship, he reportedly made much effort to transform himself a friendly and caring person in order to approach students (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1955c). In a propaganda campaign pertaining to the Korean War, BNU brought up the slogan "in order to

persuade others, one must have clear thoughts him/herself; in order to make others resolute, one must make him/herself resolute” (Haochuan Ding, 1950b, p. 35).

In return, students were expected to appreciate their teachers’ efforts and therefore, study harder: “It is not easy to be a teacher!”; “teachers need to teach, grade our homework, guide our self-study, and also carefully prepare the teaching plan. It would be too disrespectful if we do not earnestly listen to the lectures!” (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954f, p. 3).

The interaction between teachers and students enabled not only a mutual sense of responsibility, but also the circulation of positive affects. Quoting Kairov (1950), it was suggested that teachers’ attitudes toward textbook material and the energy teachers delivered to students played an indispensable role in determining teaching outcomes (N. Liu, 1953). Only through this could students develop not only their intellect, but also emotions and volition, and have their love, hate, and sympathy awakened. It was considered wrong for teachers to take a third-person position with an objectivist attitude, because it would generate a tedious lecture attended by uninterested students (Chinese Language Unit, BNU, 1951). In order to achieve a better pedagogical effect, teachers were encouraged to immerse themselves in the ideas and emotions contained in the textbook. It was reported that teacher was choked by sobs when reading a story about self-sacrifice. The classroom became quiet, as students were profoundly affected by the teacher’s tearful presentation (P. Xu, 1950).

In order to move students, a teacher must first move his or herself (S. Chen, 1953). They were encouraged to fuse their own life experience to textbook materials. Various BNU teaching interns reported that through reflecting on how they gained the opportunity for education and free marriage, they became more capable of injecting passion into lectures (Chinese Language Unit,

BNU, 1951). When teachers faced material in which they lacked lived experience, they utilized the power of imagination to project themselves into the stories. A BNU teacher discussed:

When lecturing on how the Huangjing Rebellion mobilized farmers, I felt as if I was a member of the farming class; I saw a picture in front of my eyes. When I lectured on how the farmers formed a grand force, my voice was so excited and elevated, as if I was among the troop of farmers with weapon in my hand and the fire of anger burning in my heart. When I lectured on the appearance of a traitor in the farmer's troop, I used such despising and ironic voice and angered emotion to narrate about the traitor, as if the hateful person was standing in front of me. When I lectured on the suppression of the Rebellion, my voice was sad, powerful, and full of agony. (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954f, p. 62)

With such immersive imagination, teachers fulfilled Kairov's (1950) requirement – the utilization of narrative styles, tones, expressions, and postures toward tapping into students' affective subjectivity.

### *Socialist competition*

The 1950s witnessed the rise of socialist competition. In the early 1950s, teachers at Yucai Elementary School encouraged students to put down their thoughts on wall newspapers freely. They attributed this activity's popularity to children's strong sense of competition: One keenly started writing when seeing others doing so with the wish to catch up and do better (L. Guo & colleagues, 1949). At this point, though, competition was not a widespread pedagogical tool, and it displayed few socialist features.

The notion of socialist competition originated in the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks dismissed competition in capitalism because of its association with egoist profit-seeking, and initiated a new form of competition, driven by collectivist pursuits and freed from monetary

incentives (Miklóssy & Ilic, 2014). In education, socialist competition took place at various levels: in the classroom, between classrooms, and between schools (Bronfenbrenner, 1962). Outstanding units would receive honorary titles and were expected to help the backward ones to make improvements. The power of group dynamics in socialist competition lay in both carrot and stick. While eagerly working toward praise, students also watched peers who were undermining the achievement of the team (Bronfenbrenner, 1962). In this Foucauldian panopticon-like group dynamic, everyone was held responsible for the collective outcome.

In China, the first tide of socialist competition took place during the Korean War, and spread from the industrial sector to education.<sup>63</sup> At BNU, the automobile department doubled its efficiency (Editorial Office of BNU, 1950), and the workers at the printing factory shouted the slogan “one person will do three people’s job” (H. Ding, 1950b). Although some BNU students were concerned that the Korean War might interfere with their study, many others took the war as one more reason to speed up study (H. Ding, 1950b; Editorial Office of BNU, 1950).

In the following years, local departments of education and schools across the country quickly picked up socialist competition (Biduhove & Bikrina, 1952; Zeng, 1954), inventing various competitive events, such as the “contest for quick and bulk learning” (Anonymous, 1953e, p. 6). Some schools required that 25 percent of students must achieve five marks out of five, 55 percent achieve four out of five, and no one should fail a single course. Excellent students were awarded red flags with the painting of a racing train, and backward students received yellow flags with a rickshaw (Editorial Team, 1953a). A slogan elucidated the group-oriented nature of socialist

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<sup>63</sup> It was reported that, motivated by China’s participation in the Korean War, the Li Junting Mining Team was able to mine 108 tons of coal in 5.5 hours. In order to surpass this record, the Song Yukun Team mined 150.75 tons in 6 hours. As the competition moved on, on April 16 the Song Yukun Team mined 223.5 tons in less than 7 hours, and the next day the Li Junting Team achieved 258.75 tons in 7 hours. Published in *People’s Education*, this story was used to exhort teachers to develop similar competition movements to speed up education (M. Qi, 1951b).

competition: “promote the spirit of collectivism, and oppose individual initiatives!” (Editorial Team, 1953a, p. 37). The passing of Stalin in 1953 was another occasion to exhort students to compete for the honorary title “hero class” in the spirit of carrying on Stalin’s dream (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1953c).

Socialist competition did not exactly work out well. It directed pedagogical attention to test marks instead of more substantial learning outcomes. Some teachers reduced lecture material or lowered grading criteria to boost up their classes’ test result. These tricks caused distrust among teachers, who sometimes swapped tests to ensure fair grading (K. Liu, 1953). In 1953, *People’s Education* made it clear that schools should not practice socialist competition. Unlike industrial and agricultural products, it was argued, the bringing up of students required a long-term process and could not be sped up or properly assessed in hasty campaigns (Editor, 1953a; K. Liu, 1953).

However, it was difficult to curb the tides of socialist competition, which gained its momentum partly from the grassroots level. Dovetailing with Maoist China’s favorite campaigning approach to boosting productivity, socialist competition appeared to university administrators as an effective method in boosting students’ morale. Impassioned teachers and students sometimes brought up higher goals themselves. In 1952, the Middle School of Huaihua County was asked by the local government to collect 60,000 buckets of feces fertilizer, and the school decided to boost the quota to 100,000 in order to complete for an honorary title (Work Committee of the Youth League, Department of Education of Hunan Province, 1953). In 1956, the rapid progress of industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture generated unprecedented optimism about completing the first Five-Year Plan (1953–1957) ahead of time and above quota. One hindrance to this target, in the eyes of the CCP, was bureaucratic conservatism. As a solution, the CCP (1956) called for socialist competition at the grassroots level. This solution was

publicized through the mouth of a factory worker: “When planned quota arrived at the manager, the difficulty level is 100%. At the team leader, it becomes 60%. In the hands of workers, only 20% remains” (Anonymous, 1956f, p. 1). The CCP’s call for bottom-up initiatives led to renewed interest in socialist competition. Some educators claimed that socialist competition was a method of adjusting the relation between the CCP’s leadership and the mass. In other words, socialist competition instantiated a democratic ethos rooted in the initiative and creativity of the mass (C. Guo, 1956). This argument was again based on a revolutionary understanding of human nature. To them, socialist competition was capable of activating the mass’s tremendous potential and transforming their subjective consciousness. They considered their opponents’ catchphrase “proceed in an orderly way and step by step” [*xun xu jian jin*] to be an excuse for conservatism (C. Guo, 1956, p. 25). Knowing that the Soviet Union had suffered a setback with their own socialist competition at schools, these educators nonetheless maintained that the Soviet failure did not preclude the possibility for China to succeed (C. Guo, 1956). Finally, they proudly exhibited plenty of reports about the achievements of socialist competition, and claimed that a decision should be on the basis of “facts” (Di & Shou, 1956; S. Sun, 1956).

But, perhaps the opponents of socialist competition had better insights into the fact that many of the reports were constructed to meet the quota, and the quick boosting of academic performance could not last in the long run (R. Li, 1956; Meng, 1956). A half year after the CCP’s call, the Ministry of Education (1956) decided to, in light of the negative reports collected, bring socialist competition to a halt. However, during the Educational Revolution of 1958, socialist competition practically resurged, and once again disrupted both education and the economy.

*Diffusion of responsibility, uniformity, and independent thinking*

In the process of forging collectivism, educators noticed a few problems (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1953a; S. Dai, 1951). Diffusion of responsibility was one of the pitfalls of collectivism. In the expectation of receiving help from classmates, some students stopped preparing for tests (C. Hu, 1953). A similar problem happened to what Chinese teachers labeled as “chorus” [*da hechang*] – a popular method of in-class interaction. With this method, a teacher would ask the entire class if his or her point of view was correct, or if they had understood the lecture. And the class would produce a “yes” or “no” answer together. This method was criticized by multiple Soviet advisors for violating pedagogical principles. In a chorus, students, especially those with difficulty in lectures, tended to rely on others. BNU teachers determined that although chorus should be eliminated despite its potential association with collectivism (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1955a; Russian Language Program, BNU, 1955a). In addition, they warned that when teachers prepared for lectures on a group basis, they must still make each own initiative. Otherwise,

“You harbor the idea of taking advantage [of colleagues], and I have the thought of reliance, everybody waits for another to pave the way and seeks materials from others, but all turn out to be empty-handed. Without preparation ahead, [everyone hastily] scrapes materials from here and there. It was a waste of time. Further, how could one give birth to a baby without ten months pregnancy?” (Chinese Language Unit, BNU, 1951, pp. 12–13)

Secondly, given the prevalence of dogmatism, collectivism easily veered into uniformity. Individuals were expected to display minimal personal characteristics: everybody’s clothes lacked color and school girls had the same haircut style (H. Gao, 2007; W. Liu, 1956). Uniform collectivism facilitated the centralization of activities and ideas on campus. Soviet advisor Ferratov noticed the existence of contradictory ideas being lectured by different BNU professors. One

considered a piece of work correct but another considered it wrong, leaving the task of making a judgment to the students. According to Ferratov (1957), this phenomenon was abnormal, as it lowered learning outcomes and damaged the authority of teachers. Debates should take place in the teaching and research unit instead of in the classroom. During a question and answer session with Soviet advisor Fumin, a BNU teacher asked if the new curricula should be based on local conditions to ensure that they were practical, instead of on theory and teaching objectives. Fumin (1953) suggested that Chinese teachers should consider local conditions, but overall put most emphasis on the necessity of achieving uniformity:

If we emphasize local conditions, we either cannot arrive at a uniform teaching plan, or have to create a uniform plan according to the lowest standard. For example, BNU is able to offer *The Foundation of Marxism and Leninism*; Shanghai cannot do the same. BNU is unable to offer psychology; Shanghai is able to. A uniform teaching plan can only include very few courses. In addition, today we cannot offer *The Foundation of Marxism and Leninism*, it doesn't mean inability continues tomorrow. Otherwise, it means we can never offer the course. We cannot modify our teaching plan next year when we have acquired teachers to lecture on *The Foundation of Marxism and Leninism*, because by doing so, the teaching plan will be modified once every year, or even a few times every year, undermining the consistency of the teaching plan [...] In addition, if a school does not have teacher of Marxism and Leninism, and this course is not included in the teaching plans, the school would then stop thinking about it or cultivating the needed teacher. This means we all compare with the poorest standard [...] We can produce according to the relatively high standards [underlining in original], those who fall behind should receive help from those who do well. (p. 1)

The final problem was regarding independent thinking. In the early 1950s, independent thinking was among pedagogical objectives. Soviet advisors proposed that students should have three hours every day for self-study so that they could develop independent thinking (Bopov, 1952). The Girls' School administrators (1953) were alerted by their 1952 graduates' feedback that they were not good at analytic skills, and suggested that students should be given more freedom to explore extracurricular readings. It compared independent thinking to a key that opened the gold mine of knowledge and was determined to foster it. However, The Girls' School's (1954) solution dubiously lay in teachers' study of Marxist-Maoist theories:

In order to cultivate students' analytic and critical abilities, we ourselves must be able to analyze better and criticize. But none of us can accomplish this well because of our limited capacity. What we lack are primarily systematic political theory and rich expertise knowledge [...] We must try even harder to systematically study Marxism, Leninism, and Maoist thoughts, as well as carefully delve into our expertise. That is the only way for us to teach better, and to better cultivate the student's thinking capability. (pp. 89–90)

During the Hundred Flowers Campaign, the problem of independent thinking resurfaced again. Educational theorist Liu Baichuan (1957) cautioned that under strict collectivization, students' talk and behaviors became mechanical. They tended to speak what others had said, and obey all orders without expressing their own wishes and sentiments. Guo Moruo (1956) told a story from England:

There was a child named John. His parents keep him under strict control, always saying "don't" to this and that. One day a visitor of the family asks him what his name is, John answers: "My name is 'don't' John!" (p. 7)

With this story, Guo commented that heavy discipline was likely to make youngsters passive followers who were incapable of independent thinking. Zhang Zhongchun (1956), the advocate of child-centered pedagogy, argued that criticisms dominating student's everyday behaviors was responsible for the suppression of independent thinking.

Yet, in the subsequent Anti-Rightist Campaign, independent thinking was seen as almost equal to defiance of the CCP, and became a common reason for which students suffered accusations (1958 Graduates of Chinese Language Major, BNU, 2012; R. Zhang, 2006). Fan Yihao (2014) was labeled as a rightist for having “promoted independent thinking, opposed being a good kid”, and for having said that “even the Party Central and Chairman Mao's words should be first thought through before promoting” (p. 52). Another BNU student, Lei Yining (2006), also became labeled as a rightist partly because she advocated independent thinking. It was commented by a radical theorist: “Having the courage to think independently is a sign of youthful strength. But, without a compass, courage turns into blindness, independent thinking turns into fantasy, and ambitious aspiration turns into arrogance” (F. Guan, 1957a, p. 74). The same idea was applied to academic research, where scientific knowledge must be subordinate to ideological demands, as demonstrated in the fate of psychology in Chapter One.

### **Readjusting social relations**

The methods of ideological and political education – criticism, role modeling, and socialist competition – were applied toward a reconfiguration of social relations on both the spatial and temporal dimensions. This section focuses on the first spatial reconfiguration. There were a range of relations occupying particular social spaces, such as one's relation with self, family, the collective, and the party/state. The building of a collectivist culture involved a flattening of social spaces, in the sense that conventional intimate relationships such as the family were weakened,

while more distant relationships, especially the imagined proletarian coalition and one's subordination to the party/state, became established. The emergent comradeship thus entailed a diffused network of compatriotism, uncurbed by conventional relationships. To a certain degree, the new social space was flat and open, and was at the same time overseen by an omnipresent party/state.

*The self, the collective, and the party/state*

Various forms of new collectivist activities required generous sharing and reciprocal care. Students were required to form mutual help groups, in which more capable students helped those falling behind (Office of Secondary Education, Department of Culture and Education of Liaoxi Province, 1953). Teachers were organized into teaching and research units, in which they worked together, including lecture preparation (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1953c, 1954f). Emergency situations often received aid from the collective. Teachers giving birth had their lectures voluntarily covered by colleagues, and ill students received tutorship from classmates (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1953c; Y. Bai, 1953). Broken friendships were repaired with the aid of the collective; problematic students were treated with patience and support (Z. Han, 1951; Russian Language Program, BNU, 1955a; Q. Yu & Ke, 1954).

China's collectivism is often said to involve self-abnegation (Lynteris, 2012). This statement reveals a true aspect of the picture. As mentioned earlier, whether the speeding up of teaching and learning, the placement of graduates, or voluntary services, all involved the sacrifice of individual time, energy, and opportunity toward the advancement of the collective. Teachers were praised for donating money to equip the school and working over-time regardless of poor health (R. He, 1952; Pedagogy Teaching and Research Unit, BNU, 1954). Through labor education, students were required to understand why individual interest should be subordinated to the will of

the collective (Feidaoluowa, 1954). The CCP's hostility toward egoism, in fact, contradicted Marx's and Engels's (1845) original theorization:

The communists do not preach morality at all [...] They do not put to people the moral demand: love one another, do not be egoists, etc.; on the contrary, they are very well aware that egoism, just as much as selflessness, is in definite circumstances a necessary form of the self-assertion of individuals. (p. 247)

Marx and Engels (1845) saw the contradiction between egoism and selflessness to be a false notion because general interest was always produced by private interest. Instead of placing moral pressure for individuals to become selfless, communism would transform material conditions to bring about a new mode of life in which the two were united.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the CCP promoted not only self-abnegation. The ideal form of collectivism also entailed self-sublimation through merging with the collective. In this regard, educators at BNU (1955c) praised that “one person taught successfully, everybody became happy, as if it is they own success. On the contrary, when one failed, everybody felt sad, as if it is their own failure” (p. 11). The feeling of being trusted by others was construed as a great happiness (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1955c).

One lesson Chinese educators inherited from their pre-PRC experience was that the party/state should always constitute the ultimate authority. Teacher Zhang at Yucai Elementary School invited a grade-two student to live at her home to overcome the student's bed-wetting problem. After a while, this student shyly asked teacher Zhang “Can I call you mom? You take better care of me than my mom does!” Teacher Zhang explained to her: “I should take care of you because you are the offspring of revolution. You don't have to call me mom, calling me teacher is the same” (L. Guo & and colleagues, 1949, p. 6). Another popular teacher from the same school

was asked to leave his students for another post, a decision opposed by the students. However, once the students were told that the re-assignment was a correct decision made by the CCP, they willingly accepted it. Both cases reflected the notion that students should be guided to respect the CCP instead of forming bond with any individuals. If teachers demonstrated great kindness toward students, they did so for the sake of the revolution (L. Guo & and colleagues, 1949).

In the 1950s, it was maintained that the key to unity lay in the enhancement of the CCP's leadership (Anonymous, 1956b). At the pedagogical level, students were frequently taught the idea that in order to protect and develop China, they should study diligently (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1955b). Starting from the kindergarten level, children were expected to love the CCP and the country (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1951b). Through visiting factories, mines, and farms, students were expected to relate first-hand experiential knowledge about production with the fate of the country. A grade-ten student wrote:

In the past, I often saw terms such as “industrialization” and “heavy industry”, but they appeared to be empty and abstract. This time [upon our visit to the textile factory], the technician introduced that they “newly installed a machine, which tripled the efficiency, and in the future, it may boost up the efficiency by 5 or 6 times. But, we cannot yet produce this kind of machine. It was bought from Poland”. That deeply touched me: How could we make weaving and dyeing machines, if we do not have heavy industry, the industry for producing machines? (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1955b)

Upon graduation, students were told that whether they could continue study or not, and regardless of what profession they were assigned to, they were always needed by the country and should be proud about it (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1955b). Again, the socioeconomic separation between school and the outside world, as well as that between different professions,

was portrayed as irrelevant, as every single citizen was promised to warrant the sure embrace of the party/state.

### *Coalescing the proletarians*

Teachers and students were required to ally with the working class. The expanded school system gave more opportunities to students from the working class. Between 1952 and 1958, students from the working class in higher education rose from 20.5 percent of overall enrollment to 55.28 percent; in 1965 it increased again to 71.2 percent (H. Ma & Gao, 1998). Yet students from working backgrounds were not always welcome at schools; some schools refused to accept their applications due to concerns that they would slow down the overall academic progress (M. Qi, 1951a). In the distribution of scholarships, some teachers leaned toward the urban poor and students from landlord families that had suffered persecution (P. Ding & Office of Education, Sunan District, 1953). Some teachers disliked students from peasant families because of their mannerisms (Tao, 1953). One teacher even told students of farming backgrounds that they were born with hands for chopping firewood (P. Ding & Office of Education, Sunan District, 1953).<sup>64</sup> This posed grave concerns in the eyes of the CCP.

As briefly mentioned earlier, labor education provided an opportunity for students to approach the working class and know them better. As part of labor education, students visited factories, farms, and communes, and workers and farmers came to schools to interact with students (H. Ding, 1953; Liaodong Office of Education, 1954; R. Song, 1954). The Second Middle School of Changsha reported that students used to look down at an old campus worker, but after getting many suggestions from him during campus services, they came to respect this worker (Shang &

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<sup>64</sup> Although Marx (1894) considered peasants to be a “class of barbarians” (p. 800), the CCP had a strong agrarian background and was well aware that China’s greatest working population remained in the countryside. Thus, it considered the peasants to be an important proletarian group.

Guan, 1955). Upon visiting the house of a landlord, a girl indignantly expressed: “Why should they live so comfortably? They don’t even work!” (Shan, 1950, p. 3). Even kindergarten kids were impressed by how efficiently postal workers delivered postcards on their behalf (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1951b).

Soldiers were another group with whom students were expected to develop an affinity. In the earliest years of the PRC, the Liberation Army [*jiefangjun*] continued to combat the remaining Nationalist Army. During field trips in the countryside, students were exposed to injuries and war-torn buildings, allegedly caused by the Nationalist Army (Shan, 1950, p. 3). During the Korean War, kindergartens invited soldiers from the People’s Volunteer Army [*renmin zhiyuanjun*] to interact with students, who keenly shared their candies with the soldiers (Y. Zhang, 1952). After reading stories about the battles in Korea, children were able to draw paintings of Chinese families under the bombardment of American fighter planes (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1951b). By holding back the American force, the People’s Volunteer Army was popularly dubbed as “the most lovable people” who warranted great admiration (West, 1992, p. 386). When a group of grade-one students were scared almost to tears by a thundershower, their teachers brought up the stories of the People’s Volunteer Army, and students were quickly rid of their fear (Department of Culture and Education, Jilin Province, 1952).

The glorified images of worker, farmer, and soldier created an imagined national community (Anderson, 2006), in which students mentally and emotionally immersed themselves. This imagined community provided students a basic parameter against which they could project their own roles in the society. The 1952 Chinese language textbook compared students’ love for books and pens to workers’ love for machines, farmers’ love for the land, and soldiers’ love for guns and cannons (Q. Ma, 1953). In an essay from this textbook, a mother asked her three sons

what they wished to do after they grew up. The three respectively expressed the wish to become a factory worker, a farmer, and a soldier (C. Fang, 2013). Here, the school served as a network of conduits through which the same textbooks, discourses, and images circulated, performing a function similar to print capitalism in engendering an imagined community (Anderson, 2006).

The imagined community, as well as the comradeship that came into being through collective activities described in the preceding section, endorsed a universal form of interpersonal relations rooted in one's role as a citizen. The formation of the imagined community came at the price of private relations based on personal affinity or preference, such as friendship (Vogel, 1965). It was maintained that relations of production, or class relations, were the most fundamental social relations. Family and friendships were of secondary importance, and should be given up in the struggle between the proletarians and the bourgeois (R. Fu, 1957; F. Guan, 1957b). At school, small groups were discouraged, as they were seen as a threat to the collective (J. Zhou, 1953). In ideological campaigns, students were pressured to report on each other's political problems, which significantly strained friendships (Vogel, 1965; R. Ye, 2012). Some good friends stopped spending private time together, in case they were considered to have formed a "small group" disassociated from the larger collective (S. Dai, 1956). Romantic relations were constrained as well (Y. Shen, 2015). Following the enactment of the Marriage Law in 1950, educators maintained, on the one hand, that free marriage was a human right, and, on the other, that students should not marry so early as to interfere with their service to the people (Anonymous, 1953g, 1953a). Students were asked to report on their lovers, and those who disobeyed suffered accusations (C. Liu, 2012). The dismissal of "natural" affections toward one's close associates created an emotional space for one to embrace a higher affective object and authoritative figure, the party/state.

### *Between school and family*

The relationship between school and family provides an opportunity to examine how state ideology prevailed in private life. Engels (1884) did not have a favorable view of the family. According to him, the nuclear family as a unit of consumption emerged only with the advent of capitalism, and it reinforced social inequality through inheritance of private properties. In China, the reform of family began in the New Culture Movement of the late 1910s, when American-influenced radical thinkers endeavored to free the individual and conjugal family [*xiao jiating*] from the Confucian extended family. Their achievements, however, became appropriated by the Nationalist government with its increasing judicial regulation of the family. Educators in this period frequently cautioned that children were future citizens of the country, and should not be seen as merely a member of the family (B. Liu & Liu, 1948). After 1949, the CCP inherited considerable components of the Republican approach to family, only with greater forcefulness in subjecting the family to state intervention (Diamant, 2000; Glosser, 2003).

Confucian filial piety remained as one of the most attacked values (A.-L. S. Chin, 1970). The idea “filial piety is the foundation of all virtues” [*bai shan xiao wei xian*] was rejected because it competed with nationalist and political commitments (S. Sun, 1952). A role model teacher was concerned with the observation that, in 1952, most grade-one students only loved their own family. She made meticulous efforts to extend the students’ love for their parents to teachers and classmates, and subsequently the working mass and Chairman Mao. The key to her method was to make clear to students that there was no hometown if there was no country. To her satisfaction, students replaced the idea that “mom made my clothes, dad bought me food” with that of “factory workers made my clothes, farmers grew my food” (Department of Culture and Education, Jilin Province, 1952, p. 11).

This role model teacher's pedagogical philosophy – extending filial love to class love or transforming one's attachment to the hometown into that to the country – appeared to reflect natural human sentiments, at least according to the Confucian teachings. The Chinese term, “*guo-jia*” [country-family), relates to “country”, “nation”, as well as “state”. Its emphasis lies in the Confucian idea that the family is the ultimate ground of political order (Rosemont Jr & Ames, 2016). Indeed, some theorists attempted to appropriate this ancient legacy to advance nationalist education. A book theorized: “Parents and siblings make up the family, families make up the hometown. Loving the family means loving the hometown, and loving the hometown means one should love the country that protects the family and the hometown” (quoted in Li, 1951, p. 46). Yet, this view became criticized by the radicals for prioritizing filial piety over the love of the country (Z. Li, 1951). The Soviet-imported metaphor that family was the basic cell of society implied a potential nationalist interpretation (Acker, Megarry, Nisbet, & Hoyle, 2006). In this metaphor, instead of being an extension of the family, the country was now a supreme being, whose existence buttressed the very purpose of the family.

The debates on *Retreating Figure* [Bei Ying] instantiated a telling example of how filial loyalty was rejected. *Retreating Figure* was a masterpiece by writer Zhu Ziqing (1898–1948). In this reality-based essay, Zhu Ziqing reminisced a farewell scene between him and his father. His father, having lost job and suffered family mishap, had to relocate for employment while Zhu Ziqing was on his way to school. At the train station, his father clumsily and lovingly took care of every detail of his trip. Gazing at his father's retreating figure, Zhu Ziqing found himself overwhelmed by tenderness and gratitude for the aging man. Written in 1925, *Retreating Figure* quickly made its way into textbooks (C. Fang, 2013). It was so successful that it was praised to represent the standard image of good father in China (Z. Wu, An, & An, 2013).

In the socialist regime, *Retreating Figure* stayed in the Chinese Language textbook for grade-eight students, published by People's Education Press. There, the editor cautiously added a comment: "This kind of sad sentiments were only displayed by middle-aged men in the old society. In our rationally arranged new society, if the father had 'done many great things' in early years, he could not possibly become 'so defeated'" (quoted in Editorial Office, 1951, p. 47). As it turned out, this little disclaimer did not fend off political attack. In 1951, Huang Qingsheng, an otherwise obscure teacher from Fengxin County in Jiangxi Province, sent *People's Education* an article expressing confusion with *Retreating Figure*. Huang (1951) found it difficult to decide the pedagogical objective contained in this essay. At the beginning, compelled by the observation that "every word and line bear the deep affection between father and son", Huang considered the pedagogical objective to be "make students understand and experience the greatness of father's love, in order to stimulate their love for their own fathers" (p. 53). But, after delving into the nature of father's love, Huang found it to be blindly based on filial instinct and lacking an ultimate purpose. The antagonism between a father's love and nationalism was captured by Huang in the case of army recruitment. In 1951, China was participating in the Korean War and was recruiting students to join the army. Huang was concerned that Zhu's masterful depiction of father's love might strengthen students' attachment to their families and discourage them from joining the army. Thus, Huang had to switch to an alternative pedagogical objective: "make students perceive the depth of father's love, extend this love to their family and eventually to the country" (p. 53). Yet, despite his painstaking search, Huang could not find a single idea in *Retreating Figure* that related to the love of the country. Further, China's Land Reform and the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries had inflicted many families. Since a third of Huang's students came from a landlord family background, Huang was concerned that *Retreating Figure* might provoke bitter

sentiments on “family mishap” [*jiadao zhongluo*], the pain of losing fatherhood [*shi fu zhi tong*], or even the opposition against the people and the state. Frustrated, Huang had to adopt a third pedagogical objective: “make students understand how to write a touching article that remembers the relatives” (p. 54), circumventing the ideological content of *Retreating Figure*.

The editorial team of *People’s Education* added a prelude to Huang’s (1951) article, claiming that *Retreating Figure* did not deserve a space in the textbook. If teachers had to lecture on it, they should showcase it as a negative example of the unhealthy emotions of the petty bourgeoisie. Solicited by *People’s Education*, six other teachers contributed their opinions. Two teachers closely echoed the voice of *People’s Education*, claiming that in the new society, *Retreating Figure* had lost its value and should no longer be included in the curriculum. Among these two, a Beijing teacher displayed a high level of political consciousness by quoting Mao’s (1942c) prioritization of politics over artistic style in her 450-word short comment (Y. Dai, 1999). The other teacher from Henan province lambasted: “throughout *Retreating Figure*, there is no ‘love for the people’ or hatred of the ugly. The only thing there is a weak, fat ‘retreating figure’ tearfully represented” (S. Chen, 1951, p. 50). The other four authors from Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, and Hebei took a milder stance (D. Bai, 1951; Min, 1951; Z. Wang, 1951; H. Zhang, 1951). They suggested that *Retreating Figure* could still be kept for its literary accomplishment, though its ideas and sentiments must be criticized as a negative example. According to them, in the new society, the sad and dispirited filial love should be replaced by a healthy one. What was healthy fatherly love? One of the authors answered this by invoking *Memories of Mother* by Zhu De. This essay was included in the same textbook preceding *Retreating Figure*, but contained “overflowing positive, healthy, forward-looking spirit” (D. Bai, 1951, p. 49). Having recounted how his mother taught him the spirit of overcoming difficulties, production knowledge, and revolutionary will,

Zhu De wrote: “How could I return my mother’s deep love? I will continue to be loyal to our nation and people, and be loyal to the hope of our nation and people – the CCP” (quoted in D. Bai, 1951, p. 49).

The editorial office of *People’s Education* insisted on the removal of *Retreating Figure* from the textbook (1951b). In half a year, People’s Education Press (1954) made a public apology, reaffirming that *Retreating Figure* was “absolutely detrimental” and removed it from the upcoming reprints (p. 33). *Retreating Figure* did not return to textbooks until 1982.

*Retreating Figure* and *Memories of Mother* mirrored each other in reverse. The crackdown of the former’s filial love was accompanied by the latter’s notion that family should foremost serve the revolution. According to the radical educators, filial love should not be unconditional. Students were taught to love their parents for the contributions they make to the family, the people, and the country through labor, and not purely because of the blood bond (Y. Liu, 1952b; S. Sun, 1952). In other words, only parents reflecting the values of the new society deserved love from their children (Z. Li, 1951). This view was consistent with the Soviet proposal that children should be made aware that once they behave well, their parents would become more available to serve the country (Skatkin, 1950). Given the mental plasticity of childhood, school education seemed to be a potent venue to influence family dynamics. Some elementary school children started applying labels learned from the school to their parents (J. Wang & Shan, 1950).

Thus, Soviet and Chinese educators intervened in parenting approaches. They delegitimized the power of patriarchy in the family, and argued that parents must see the education of their children as a responsibility to the country instead of conducting it at their will (W. Gao, 1950; Makarenko, 1950a). Chinese teachers developed systematic methods for working with parents. As mentioned in Chapter Two, between 1953 and 1957, many graduates, along with their

families, became frustrated at the fact that they could not pursue further education. Teachers made frequent family visits to settle the situation. Their presence, as representatives of the government, appeased some parents, who now reportedly thought “how can we continue to blame the government, when it cares so much about our children?” (J. Fang, 1955, p. 39). Although, not every teacher was patient enough to perform this task. Some revealed more than was necessary, saying “this is a decision made by the government, I do not have an option” (Department of Education, Jiangsu Province, 1955, p. 58). Before paying a visit, teachers first assessed each family’s class element [*cheng fen*], economic status, and expectations for their children, so that they could, as the Chinese saying went, “open a lock with a specific key” [*yiba yaoshi kai yiba suo*] (Editorial Office, 1957a, p. 14). Rural parents usually wished that, with the benefit of education, their children no longer had to live laborious lives. These parents were reassured that their children would have a bright future even staying in the countryside, as the villages would become communized and machines would be in place to help with farming. Urban parents were concerned whether their children could find a job at all. They were told that it was unrealistic to rely on the government to secure employment for all, and were encouraged to creatively find a career for their children – in craftsmanship and the service sector, for instance. Parents holding official positions received the warning that they should not demand college admission with a sense of entitlement. If their children ended up in a blue-collar profession or no job at all, they would have served as a role model for the mass (S. Ye, 1955a). All these principles were applied in light of each family’s specific condition (Editorial Office, 1957a), so that cooperative parents could be won over and disgruntled ones could be appeased (Diaoyutai Elementary School, 1954).

Besides, there were several principles applicable to all families regardless of class background. During a family visit, teachers were advised to first discuss the student’s study and

behavior, and then find an appropriate entry point to the topic about career prospect. They should praise the student and display genuine concern with the student's future in order to gain trust from the parents (Diaoyutai Elementary School, 1954). Two messages were always delivered to the parents. First, instead of blaming their children, the parents should collaborate with them to accept available employment. Second, parents should not blame the government, in case they fall in the trap of counterrevolutionaries (S. Ye, 1955a). Receptive parents were then invited to give talks at workshops to help persuade other families.

During class struggle movements, family background was usually identified to be the main cause of students' reactionary stance (Y. Ma, 1958). Even in ordinary days, when teachers became concerned with problematic students – students who lacked independence, failed courses, disrespected teachers, stole things, and more – their first step was to investigate into the students' family situation (D. Zhang, 1953). Without exception, various problems were identified in the family: some families indulged their children, some were negligent, and some were illiterate and too poor to educate. The most common and serious situation was found in rich families, in which the parents knew only “eating, drinking, and having fun” and barely cared about their children (Du, 1953, p. 25). Once the root cause in the family was unearthed, teachers proceeded to prescribe a correction plan, which consisted of various techniques: educative conversation, group support, punishment, and role modeling (Nanyang Secondary School, 1955). Teachers developed congenial rapport with the problematic students and tracked their daily progress. Contrary to the denial of student's individuality discussed earlier, here, teachers paid acute attention to each student's interests, strengths, and concerns to ensure improvement (Du, 1953; S. Guan, 1953). Often, according to reports, teachers were able to transform problematic students through a winding journey, as demonstrated by the students' academic achievements and happy smiles. Having been

rescued from their unhealthy families, these students now found a new sense of belonging in the school collective and were determined to contribute to socialist construction. One unsociable student was badly treated by his stepmother but received gentle care from teachers and classmates. He exclaimed: “I finally realized that there could be overflowing love between people! The love from the [CCP] organization is something I have never felt before!” (S. Guan, 1953, p. 51).

### **Collective rebellion**

Having addressed the reconfiguration of Chinese students’ social relations on the spatial dimension, this section focuses on the temporal dimension. Generationality, or the succession of generations, increasingly became an impetus of social changes in modernity. Since the May Fourth Movement, China’s progressive thinkers, including Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), the founder of the CCP (Feigon, 2014), placed high hope for a better country on the emergence of generations of new consciousness (Schwarcz, 1986). Indeed, the youth, especially young students, played major roles in spearheading China’s various social movements (Lanza, 2012). The advent of the socialist regime entrenched a demarcation of China’s history into two parts – the old society and the new society. This view of historical demarcation projected on to different generations. The attack of the Confucian veneration of the elderly constituted an instance of breaking with pre-existing value and authority (Cai, 2016; Selden, 1995). In the following, I first discuss how views of human life-long development was implicated in China’s intergenerational conflicts at schools, before proceeding to the cultivation of young students under the guidance of “people’s democratic dictatorship”.

#### *The subversion of generational authority*

In Maoist China, generational differences were partly located between teachers at junior and senior levels. In the eyes of school administrators, although junior teachers possessed less knowledge or expertise, they had stronger political passion, sensitivity to new things, and “the breadth of mind

and attitude of workers of the new society”, so that they promised faster and more capable learning of Soviet knowledge (J. Zhong, 1956, p. 12). In comparison to young teachers, the older ones received more education abroad or from universities in the old society. They tended to be more interested in research than political participation, and sometimes, to the ire of the administrators, took pride in their greater academic expertise (B. Yang, 1958). Senior teachers were found to be less cooperative than the young ones in appeasing graduates who were denied entrance to further education (Department of Education, Anhui Province, 1955). All in all, it was considered that they made progress at a slower pace, and that some of them even had “horrendous excrescence in their consciousness because of family background, education, and age” (J. Zhong, 1956).

The CCP’s differential treatment of the two generations led to friction between them (J. Hu, 1954; X. Ma, 1954; Tang, 2011). Some senior professors withheld cooperation with the university in bringing up young teachers, as they thought they would be replaced by the young trainees (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1953a; J. Zhong, 1956). Many young teachers, on the other hand, thought their senior colleagues to be passé, and found it shameful to learn from them (Party Committee, Taiyuan First Normal College, 1955). Generational conflicts often required administrative intervention (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1954d; S. Yang, 1956).

Generational differences existed not only among teachers, but also between teachers and students. A continuum could be drawn along people’s age in correlation with their political attitude: It was reported that while young teachers considered the old professors to be conservative, they themselves were not as revolutionary as the students (B. Yang, 1958). In fact, the generational differences between teachers and students provoked even greater anxiety. Ding Haochuan (1950a), a BNU administrator, commented:

The passion and the pace at which young students progress surpass those of their teachers [...] In the political thoughts study at many schools, teachers have become students, and students serve as teachers [...] Until we recognize our time and the need for self-transformation, old knowledge and old life experience necessarily are a burden that impedes our progress. (p. 36)

A similar complaint against teachers was made by a soldier. During a night march, he and two teammates entered a school in the hope of getting rest in a classroom. The teacher watching the school refused this request with the excuse that he could not decide while the principal was away. Furthermore, he disgustedly covered his nose and kept a distance from the sweat-soaked soldiers. The soldiers had to move on in darkness. Luckily, they met an elementary student, who cordially invited them to stay over, made beddings for them, and eagerly asked many questions about military life. During a conversation, it was revealed that this student coincidentally attended the same school where the soldiers were denied entrance, and the unfriendly teacher was, in fact, the school principal (M. Wu, 1952). In 1958, it was commented that students constituted a main force of the Great Leap Forward, possessing the highest enthusiasm and the greatest energy. Some students had already purchased train tickets for summer break home visits – some were even going to hold marriage ceremony, but ended up cancelling the tickets to join the campaign. Among the teachers, only a limited few leftists were spirited. The older teachers were said to be generally passive; they were more interested in lecture preparation than the campaign (B. Yang, 1958).

Indeed, the issue of generationality received attention not only in China. In a speech, Lenin (1916) defended the high proportion of young workers in the composition of the Bolsheviks:

Is it not natural that youth should predominate in our Party, the revolutionary party? We are the party of the future, and the future belongs to the youth. We are a party of innovators,

and it is always the youth that most eagerly follow the innovators. We are a party that is waging a self-sacrificing struggle against the old rottenness, and youth is always the first to undertake a self-sacrificing struggle. (p. 164)

To Lenin (1916), the problem of having the “tired man of thirty” was that they would make the party “somewhat sluggish, putting a brake on political adventures” (p. 164).

Since the Republican era, students had spearheaded progressive social movements. In the socialist regime, they continued to be seen as a source of revolutionary energy, capable of helping teachers to transform their consciousness. The method of criticism was introduced to fulfill this purpose. Unlike in the Soviet Union, where teacher’s authority was strictly protected (Makarenko, 1950b; Ministry of Education, Soviet Union, 1953), Chinese students were encouraged to point out their teachers’ mistakes and shortcomings, and the teachers should readily accept such criticisms. The idea “teacher for a day, father for a lifetime” [*yiri wei shi, zhongshen weifu*] became passé. Quickly, the trend of criticism became widespread. Some schools planned weekly meetings for students to provide critical comments to the teachers (L. Guo & colleagues, 1949). Some students published letters in *People’s Education* to criticize their teachers’ political consciousness, work attitudes, and teaching methods (Y. Li, Chen, Wang, & Du, 1952; J. Song, 1953).

Although schools frequently presented teachers’ conformity to criticism as their administrative achievements, not all teachers accepted criticism from students with ease (Girls’ School, 1949). After being criticized by his students, a BNU teacher stopped teaching classes and withdrew from interacting with students, despite the fact that he was less affected by criticisms published in newspapers (B. Wang, 2010). Some teachers requested to quit (M. Xu, 1952). The radical reversal of the teacher-student status worried some, including Deng Xiaoping (Ministry of Education, 1999). Noticing that criticism evolved into sarcasm, educators and administrators had

to reiterate that criticism must be made in a sincere and respectful manner, and that a teacher's loss of authority could be detrimental to education (Chang, 1956; Lian, 1954; Wen, 1953). In the Anti-Rightist Campaign, students were asked to report on their teachers' political problems. One BNU student refused to comply. He expressed:

They are professors, and they talked to me only about academic questions and no politics. I have nothing to report on. Even if there are, I cannot possibly stand on the stage and criticize them. How can I qualify as a human being, if I do so? 'Teacher for a day, father for a lifetime'. I do not betray my teachers" (B. Yuan, 2006, p. 30).

Partly because of this protest, he was labeled as a rightist (B. Yuan, 2006).

It should be noted that there was counter discourse against the devaluation of the older generations. While generally having an unfavorable view of senior teachers, school administrators did not yet give up hope. Upon the observation that junior teachers looked down at the senior ones, they urged the former to recognize that the latter "are not empty rooms or piles of garbage regarding scientific achievement and teaching experience. Objectively, they have storage" (J. Zhong, 1956). Addressing to senior teachers, Ding Haochuan (1950a) commented that through self-transformation, their old knowledge and life experience could become rich learning material, which the youngsters did not possess. Under the transformist ideology in 1958, radical critics argued that the ability to grasp Marxism was dependent on one's proletarian stance instead of age. According to their report, some old factory workers quickly mastered Marxist philosophy and were invited to give lectures, meanwhile, some youth turned out to be rightists (Z. Qi, 1958).

Nor were the youth always perceived in a positive light. Students' critical engagement in the Hundred Flowers Campaign came as a shock to the CCP. Following the Anti-Rightist Campaign, a high-level cadre reportedly revealed: "The Party Central used to have high hope on

university students in continuing the revolution. But they were disappointed during the rectification and Anti-Rightist Campaign. It seems that university students cannot be relied on” (T. Shu, 2006, p. 79). After the Anti-Rightist Movement, the national entry-level salary standard for university students lowered. In 1959, Mao began to caution about the danger of “peaceful evolution” (Pang, 1990). Peaceful evolution referred to an alleged proposal made by Foster Dulles about subverting China’s socialism through the spread of western ideas and life styles (T. Liu, 1991; Ong, 2007). In this perceived danger, the issue of generationality played a different role: if cadres of the older generations had proved their unshakable political loyalty in founding the socialist regime, the upcoming generations might forsake the hard-earned revolutionary outcome. More vehement class struggles were considered necessary to establish a firmer political stance among the younger generations.

#### *People’s democratic dictatorship*

Socialist China contained many contradictions at both intellectual and political levels. The perception of young students to possess both revolutionary potential and threat to the regime, and the contradiction between the notion of collectivism that emphasized mutual care and collegiality on the one hand, and unrelenting class struggles on the other, were two instances of China’s paradoxes. In Mao’s philosophy, contradiction existed in all things and were the major impetus of change. The task of dialectics was to study contradiction and arrive at the unity of opposites (T. Mao, 1937a; Soo, 1983).

In China’s governance, the most central contradiction, one sanctioned in official policy, was no other than “people’s democratic dictatorship” [*renmin minzhu zhuanzheng*]. The “democracy” component recognized the interest and opinions of the people in determining social and political affairs, while the CCP served as the centralizing power to represent the people’s will.

Dictatorship applied to the enemy of the people to protect the socialist regime (T. Mao, 1949). People's democratic dictatorship proved to be a powerful guideline in reconfiguring interpersonal relationships and group dynamics.

In education, people's democratic dictatorship found expression in "democratic management" [*minzhu guanli*], which originated in the late 1940s (S. Shu, 1946; P. Yi, 1946). Most frequently theorized by radical educators, it also incorporated many insights from American-influenced pedagogy, including Chen Heqin's school of "live education" (Z. Yu, 1950). The goal of democratic management was to help students become independent, self-initiated citizens who could participate in democratic governance. Meanwhile, given the uproar brought about by the revolution, there was an acute need to establish order and discipline, as reflected in the "management" component (P. Wang, 1950). Democratic management thus operated by navigating between two potentially conflicting demands.

In the earliest years of the PRC, much emphasis was placed on the respect of individual will and liberty. It was proposed that regulation should be a result of voluntary consensus and not be imposed on individual thoughts (Q. Li, 1950). One educational theorist passionately pitted democratic management against dictatorship:

What reasons do we have for not letting them [students] do things, think, or speak? We don't have such reasons. If we do have some, they must be reactionary reasons. Because only the reactionaries, in order to carry out dictatorial education, do not let them do things, think, or speak, just as Emperor Qin forbade the people to read in order to secure his throne. We are different. (X. Mo, 1950, p. 31)

Democratic management called for a "positive approach" to students, one aimed at not merely preventing misbehavior, but more importantly the growth of capacities such as independent

thinking, self-initiative, and consciousness of cooperation. Encouragement was more valued than criticism (B. Tong, 1951). It encompassed many elements of the child-centered pedagogy. Regarding the maintenance of order and fulfillment of pedagogical goals, teachers were encouraged to utilize students' potential by walking on the "populist road" [*qun zhong luxian*] (T. Wang, 1951a, p. 50). It was proposed that students should gain access to information about school administration, budgets, and pedagogical decisions, though few schools were able to make this happen (X. Mo, 1950).

Democratic management required the existing hierarchy between teachers and students to be replaced with friendly, equal relations (Z. Han, 1950). To allow this new democratic relationship to happen, the first and most important step was to abolish physical punishment. A widely accepted practice in the pre-PRC period, physical punishment was perceived by teachers to be a simple, effective method to maintain order. Parents often believed "spare the rod and spoil the child" (F. Chen, 1949; J. Wang, 1950). According to selected surveys, 30 percent to 80 percent of teachers physically punished students at the turn of the 1950s (F. Chen, 1949; Z. Han, 1950). In the new regime, physical punishment was claimed to bear feudal ideology, and produced blindly obedient and slavish students (Ministry of Education, 1952; J. Wang, 1950). Through physical punishment, teachers imposed their will on students while making little attempt to understand students' issues or to provide students with clear explanations. This apparently conflicted with the democratic requirement that students should actively participate in social and political lives by making independent contributions.

The crackdown of physical punishment did not prove to be a smooth process. Many teachers refused to give it up, and how it might undermine democracy was not their concern (Z. Han, 1950; Tianwangzhen Xiaoxue, 1950). Further, there was doubt as to whether elementary

students were capable of comprehending notions about democracy (Z. Han, 1950; T. Xu, 1950). In fact, widespread confusion even existed among teachers. Some thought that democratic management meant that they could take a laissez-faire approach, leaving academic issues and misconduct for students to decide without providing necessary guidance (Mu, 1950). Some students enjoyed this new liberty, frequently disobeying the teachers, skipping class, and engaging in fights and vandalism (J. Zhang, 1950). Teachers were often unable to deal with these problems, as any forceful measure might be said to violate democratic management (Z. Xu, 1950).

Teachers had to apply several other methods to restore order. Mutual criticism, family visit, role modeling, competition, and campaigning, were all thought to contain elements that would foster the spirit of democratic management (Z. Yu, 1950). The most common approach was the collective making of codes of conduct. Since students all contributed to the making of the codes, they were obliged to obey to them. Influenced by emerging discourses of class struggle, some teachers mobilized the majority of a class to repress problematic students, or divided the class into managers and the managed (Anonymous, 1952c; Z. Han, 1950). Evaluation of individual students was made through a collective process, led by the teacher and conducted by classmates (Q. Li, 1950). This approach was controversial, as it was unclear whether elementary students were capable of producing a constructive evaluation, instead of causing interpersonal tensions and creating emotional stress in those being evaluated (T. Wang, 1951). The establishment of student organizations was another method. The most prominent student organization was the Young Pioneers of China under the auspices of the CCP (M. Li, 1990). In the process of creating a local branch of Young Pioneers of China, students were invited to discuss whether a local branch was needed, why, and what achievements it could bring about. Unsurprisingly, students were directed to come up with answers in conformity with the official mandate of Young Pioneers of China (L.

Guo, 1951; Yanli Hu, 1950). Various competition and campaigns were organized, in which students played an active role (J. Zhang, 1950). Later on, these events were criticized for placing too much pressure on students and harming their health (L. Guo, 1951; T. Wang, 1951b).

Given all the confusion and chaos, the implementation of democratic management, from the beginning to the end, was accompanied by repetitive clarifications and readjustments (Anonymous, 1952c). Toward the end of 1951, given the CCP's tightening ideological grip, a stronger emphasis was placed on discipline than democracy. Contrary to the earlier proposal that every single student's will deserved consideration, it was now pointed out that students should learn to respect discipline, and enforcement was applicable to disobedient behaviors. The idea "every decision should pass the mass, paternalism and patronism are opposed" (Q. Li, 1950, p. 27) came to be seen as a threat to the CCP's leadership (T. Wang, 1951). Soon, democratic management gave way to the principle of all-round development, which, by projecting the spotlight on the person, attenuated the role of students in participating in school management.

Nonetheless, several approaches – including competition, campaigning, and criticism – that used to be encapsulated in democratic management stayed alive. More significantly, the notion of democratic management silently veered into a revolutionary impulse, which buttressed the idea that the mass should be mobilized to enter fields in the possession of existing authorities. Guided by the mass-line policy, administrators of the Middle School Affiliated with BNU were required to "actively consult with the people when issues come up, humbly listen to the opinions from the mass, promote bottom-up criticism" (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1953d, p. 1). At times, all BNU teachers, including the junior ones, were required to participate in the drafting of collective teaching plans. Despite some reluctance, it was maintained that this approach could help teachers

overcome their sense of inferiority, develop skeptical spirit, and hone leadership skills. A teacher allegedly reported:

At the beginning of the discussion, I could not offer any opinions, but later on I could give suggestions, which were appreciated and adopted by the administrators. I have improved a lot in the process of revising the teaching plans, and truly come to understand what is meant by ‘from the mass and to the mass’ [*cong qunzhong zhong lai, dao qunzhong zhong qu*]. (Academic Affairs Office, BNU, 1953e, p. 6)

Over the years, Mao often launched mass critical campaigns to rectify the CCP bureaucracy, as reflected in the Hundred Flowers Campaign. This bottom-up subversive approach to bureaucracy seeped into the school culture (Ying, 1955). In 1955, *People’s Education* published a letter reporting a secondary school principal. According to the letter, this principal spent almost every morning playing poker, used school money to plant roomfuls of chrysanthemums, and made family visits at his will during working days. His negligence left the school disorganized and students failing courses. Meanwhile, this principal was full of himself and would not accept criticism. Teachers and students were afraid of pointing out his problems as those who did so had been labeled by him as “having thought problem”. The letter commented that the principal’s conceit was detrimental to the revolution, as it suppressed democracy and severed his bond with the mass. The principal consequently suffered a penalty (T. Wang, 1955, p. 66).

It should be noted, though, that bottom–top rebellions were under strict surveillance and control. Once they started gaining the momentum to threaten the CCP’s leadership, they were quickly brought to a halt, as manifested in the transition from the Hundred Flowers Campaign to the Anti-Rightist Campaign. In radical campaigns, the impassioned mass frequently caused chaos that disrupted school activities. During the 1958 Educational Revolution, students were mobilized

to compile textbooks and make steel (Anonymous, 1958c; Shanghai Exhibition of Integrating Education and Productive Labor, 1958). Hastily produced at the cost of interrupting classes, the textbooks and steel turned out to be mostly useless. In class struggles, hundreds of thousands of innocent individuals were labeled as reactionary and suffered persecution by the mass. In these cases, the line between “the people” and “the enemy” was rarely made clear, and frequently arbitrarily drawn. A person could join a mass movement as part of the people, and the next day found him or herself counted as one of the enemies deserving dictatorial persecution (Smith, 2013b). The teacher population was particularly caught up in this unpredictable, constantly wavering situation, and they were recursively criticized and appeased (Department of Education, Hebei Province, 1954; Northeastern Experimental Middle School, 1954). Similar to the fate of other contradictions, people’s democratic dictatorship ended up lopsided in political struggles.

### **Chapter conclusion**

In this chapter, I had focused on China’s revolutionary objective, and explored how class and ideological struggles were used to create new citizenship identity in China’s nation-building. In schools, this objective was primarily fulfilled through ideological and political education. In Section I, I traced the gradual escalation of ideological struggle, which culminated in the prioritization of political consciousness over academic subjects during the “red and expert” debate. I further analyzed how perceived hostility, suspicion, and apathy toward the new regime called for the cultivation of faith, confidence, and devotion among students. The eager and forceful efforts to maintain legitimacy led the prevalence of binary discourses, which set the old society with the new one, and socialism with capitalism, into irreconcilable black-or-white opposition.

In Section II, I studied three popular methods of ideological and political education: criticism, role modeling, and socialist competition. While love and care were considered essential

to community-building, mutual criticism was often carried out on a regular basis to foster individual growth. In China's exemplary culture, teachers were expected to serve as role models, and through interacting with students, they transformed the class into a community of responsibility and a space of affective contagion. Given the lack of economic incentive, socialist competition – collective competition for honor – received frequent promotion. All these measures, while powerfully reorienting individuals toward the collective and the party/state, produced several negative outcomes including diffusion of responsibility, uniformity, and lack of independent thinking.

The remaining two sections addressed the spatial and temporal reconfiguration of students' social relations toward a revolutionary society. In Section III, I argued that the weakening of intimate relationships created an emotional space for the rise of a universal, egalitarian comradeship. Family in particular suffered attack because it competed with state authority and objectives. Parallel to the dissolution of intimate relationship was the creation of an imagined community comprised of the proletarians despite their physical distance from the school.

In Section IV, I took intergenerational conflicts as an entry point to the historical struggle between the old and the new. I argued that assumptions about life-time psychological development conditioned the dismissal of the older generation as passé, while the youth were generally seen to possess greater revolutionary potential. The notion "people's democratic dictatorship" permitted a form of democracy to exist in schools for a short period. Later on, in a tightened political environment, people's democratic dictatorship evolved into vicious bottom-up class struggles.

In this chapter, I focused on how means of ideological and political education tapped into students' affectivity in engendering a new socialist citizenship identity. I examined to the role of affects – such as faith, confidence, and devotion – in cementing individuals to state authority; the

production and circulation of affects – such as modesty, passion, and responsibility – in interpersonal contexts; and the utilization of affects – such as rebelliousness – to subvert existing social relations. I argued that the reconfiguration of social space, whether in spatial or temporal terms, involved not only the reallocation of economic and political power, but also a reconfiguration of affective network.

## Conclusion

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the rise of communism profoundly reshaped the world order. A new powerful member in the communist bloc, the CCP faced multiple tasks, including restoring social order after decades of wars and civil conflicts, promoting material and industrial development, and readjusting social relations toward the building of an egalitarian society. None of these tasks could be accomplished without involving a remolding of the population, which were barely equipped with adequate knowledge and skills, and remained aloof with regard to the revolution. Could the Chinese be transformed into selfless citizens that contribute to the collective without seeking personal benefits, fame, or comfort? How quickly was it possible to bring up a new generation of capable workers? How to make the new socialist members to elevate the cause of revolution above everything, even when it conflicted with existing morality and interpersonal relations? The realization of the socialist utopia was premised on the possibilities and limitations of the human subject.

China's radical break from its own cultural tradition and western-imported thoughts serves as an excellent opportunity for investigating the entanglement among politics, subjectivity, and human sciences, as called for by Eghigian and colleagues (2007). In this dissertation, I took psychology and education as two cases of human sciences, and interrogated how various possible approaches – scientific, pedagogical, and practical approaches – to the human subject was grafted onto China's socialist movement. More specifically, I explored how the human subject was conceptualized in the Chinese revolutionary imagination, as encapsulated in the new student ideal. This ideal operated on an unreserved optimistic assumption that characterized the human mind as remarkably malleable. Given a proper environment and education, a person could become utterly selfless and display versatile capacities to excel in a wide array of activities. One could achieve

all-round development at school and exhibit absolute loyalty in social and political affairs. In cases where both professional and political qualities were required, one could become a “red expert”. On a positive note, this ideal guided the education of generations of hard-working and activist youth that contributed to China’s rapid economic resuscitation, industrialization, and collectivization in the 1950s. On the other hand, pedagogical practices guided by this ideal frequently encountered frustrations and setbacks, and partly catalyzed calamities such as the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution.

My dissertation consists of three thematic chapters. In Chapter One, “Wrestling with Human Nature”, I argued that along with the shift from a child-centered pedagogy to a politics-centered pedagogy, psychology, too, was required to replace its scientific interest in how mental processes naturally occurred with a socio-political focus on how the human subject was meant to contribute to state projects. This “exteriorization” shift distinguishes socialist China’s biopolitics from the western one that, facilitated by the ascendance of the human sciences over the recent centuries, has been increasingly centered around the human subject. Exteriorization was premised on a rejection of the notion that there are immutable natural laws governing the mind – individual characteristics, mental development, learning, and so forth. Instead, it posited that the human mind possessed immense malleability, and, given a conducive environment, could release tremendous potential. Psychological science from America was purged, largely because its underlying deterministic philosophy tended to negate the possibility of human transformation. Pavlovian psychology came to China as a substitute. Its attention to the connection between neural activity and mental phenomena was seen by the radical theorists to embody the Marxist dialectics about matter and consciousness, and its conditioning method was said to promise the emergence of the new human. Chinese psychologists quickly embraced the Pavlovian approach, partly under

government pressure and partly because it provided legitimacy to their long-craved natural-scientific status. However, despite their frequent quotations of Lenin (1908) that the mind was a function of the brain as well as the reflection of the outer world, they were mostly interested in the first thesis, which, similar to American natural-scientific schools, approached the mind as a natural entity. In 1958, influenced by the faltering Sino-Soviet relation, Chinese radicals revealed the fundamental similarity between Pavlovian psychology and American schools. According to them, natural-scientific knowledge about the mind justified mental status quo and denied the need and feasibility of thought transformation. By focusing on the process instead of the content of the mind, it was detached from China's socialist movement. Rather than relying on natural-scientific laws, proposed the radical intellectuals, the new student should acquire revolutionary spirit through engaging in class struggle.

Chapter Two, "Laborizing Education", addressed how, in China's economy, individual capability was harvested through three forms of labor. First, teaching and learning constituted a form of "dutiful labor". Given China's war atrophy and low literacy rates, there was a great pressure on schools to produce graduates at an accelerated pace. Three reforms on textbook, curriculum, and teaching workload were launched to meet this demand. Second, students were frequently recruited to contribute free services on and off campus to overcome material hardship and help with numerous social reforms. I labeled these services as "free labor". Both the academic and labor requirements resulted in an excessive workload at the price of academic performance and health status. While the incessant extraction of student labor was partly attributable to central and local governance and the influence from the Soviet advisors, it found theoretical justification in a discourse about boundless human potentiality. In the second half of this chapter, I stroke at the heart of Marxist political economy by investigating the division of labor and its contradiction

with all-round education. The Chinese radical belief in the malleability of the human mind culminated in the pedagogical goal that every student should achieve all-round development, the simultaneous mastery of comprehensive academic subjects and skills required by different professions. This ideal was partly inspired by Marx's vision of future citizens of communism, and partly developed by the Soviet and Chinese radicals in efforts to bridge the gap between mental labor and manual labor. All-round education resulted in multiple problems, including the overburdening of students and the neglect of individual characteristics. There was a paradox between all-round education and employment, as no matter how many areas each student excelled in, eventually he or she could only enter one particular profession. Further, some professions remained more attractive than others in the eyes of graduates. However, Chinese radicals insisted that students possessed the potential to achieve all-round development, and that their characteristics could be readily bent to meet the needs of national projects. Thus, voices questioning all-round education were suppressed until the Hundred Flowers Campaign and De-Stalinization.

If Chapter Two was focused on labor education, Chapter Three, "Engendering Citizenship", turned the spotlight on ideological and political education, through which I investigated the remolding of students' subjective, affective, and moral spheres as a means of class struggle. If China's dual national objectives, economic development and revolution, readily converged in labor education, their antagonism found full expression during the debate concerning the notion of "red expert", an aspect of the new student ideal. In its eager pursuit of political legitimacy and of a faithful and devoted population, the CCP placed priority on ideological struggle over the acquisition of professional skills. A variety of ideological struggle activities were carried out through tapping into students' affectivity. Love and care were required to build collectivism;

modesty was a key virtue to facilitate criticism; role modeling opened up a space where a sense of responsibility and positive affects circulated; and socialist competition rested on honor instead of egoism. Ideological struggles were ultimately aimed at reconfiguring social relations. While students were educated to form solidarity with the proletarian members at a distance, their close personal ties, such as family and friendship, were accorded secondary importance. In alignment with the socialist demarcation of history into new and old, the younger generations were motivated to revolt against the authority of the older ones. The coexistence of democratic and dictatorial components, as manifested in the youth revolt, was officially sanctioned in the notion of “people’s democratic dictatorship”, although the tension between the two remained unresolved and paved the way for subsequent social movements.

My dissertation is primarily written for two groups of readers: psychologists and scholars of China studies. According to Teo’s (2017) program of “psychological humanities”, psychological research can be enriched by input from other disciplines, including history and education. My dissertation took advantage of history as a tool to rethink several key issues in the discipline of psychology, including psychologists’ assumptions about the human mind, methodology, and social commitments, that are typically taken for granted. The clash among American, Soviet, and Chinese schools of psychology was symptomatic of a conflict between two views of human nature – the natural-biological view which emphasized intrapersonal mental processes, and the radical view which highlighted individual connections to the sociopolitical milieu. Whereas western psychological experimentation instantiated a scientific approach to modernization rooted in the tradition of Enlightenment, in China, the CCP demanded psychologists to actively participate in the socialist revolution with the method of class analysis.

Further, I juxtaposed psychology with education to develop a transdisciplinary conversation on different ways of making and applying knowledge about the mind. Although psychology and education enjoyed an institutional arrangement meant to bolster their common interest in questions about the mind, they had very different fates. Between 1949 and 1959, the significance accorded to psychological science was in decline. Psychologists' knowledge about the nature and laws of the mind was seen with increased skepticism and distaste. Even in its heyday, Pavlovian psychology was reduced to a network of rhetoric that made little practical contribution other than upholding the orthodox ideology. The diminishment of psychology was caused by its natural-scientific culture. Psychologists favored experimentation to identify universal laws governing the interior of the human mind. Taking the laboratory, an instrument of scientific modernization, as their space of knowledge production, psychologists had little to offer to China's heated class struggles in the streets, factories, and farms. Even worse, psychologists' long-standing interest in the physiologically based laws of mental change, entrenched by the state-sponsored promotion of Pavlov's theory, brought conservative messages that dampened the promise of creating the new human. In contrast, education was more grounded in China's social reality, and played a more active role by linking students to various social affairs, be it employment, social service, or class struggle. Through designing curricula, delivering lectures, and interacting with students on a daily basis, educators were directly responsible for supplying graduates to China's economic and revolutionary forces. It was their duty to align students' capacities, attitudes, and interpersonal relations with China's current affairs. In 1958, the bifurcation between psychology and education became fully manifest. In this year, psychologists were demanded to substitute their laboratory experimental approach with class analysis, which had been exemplified in educators' practical ways of knowing that combined everyday observation, speculation, and Marxist doctrines.

By juxtaposing psychology and education, my dissertation joins another publication of mine on the differentiation of Pavlovianism in psychology, physiology, and medicine (Z. Gao, 2015). The transdisciplinary dialogue and comparison have proved to be more productive than the study of a single discipline.

To scholars of China studies, I presented a history of the evolution of the new student ideal that has so far remained under-explored. Departing from extant scholarly accounts of the new human ideal that follow a top-down, panoramic approach (Y. Cheng, 2009; Munro, 1971), my dissertation investigated how this ideal was constructed at local terminals of knowledge production regarding the student population. That is, instead of focusing on policy-making by high-end socialist leaders and theorists, my dissertation is more curious about how intellectuals interacted with official policies, local administrators, and students, to substantiate and enact the new student ideal. As pointed out by Becker (1996), Mao failed to modernize China because he could not grasp the scientific method and overly relied on ideology and individual will. One can attribute this problem to Mao's rural background, anti-intellectual sentiment, and headstrong character. But, to move away from a Mao-centered narrative, it should be noted that the intellectuals were familiar with modern scientific thinking. When Zhang Lingguang (1951d) accused Chiang Kai-shek of placing "much value on will and disregarded rationality, asking his fascist mobsters to follow him blindly without opening their eyes to look at the world", he was certainly aware of the danger of the willful ignorance of reality (p. 21). However, due to suspicion from the CCP, the intellectuals did not have a strong foothold to voice their doubts about Mao's radical policies. Moreover, there existed a radical wing of intellectuals, who, driven by either political passion or incentives, actively contributed to the radicalization of the new student ideal. This group aptly enacted Mao's radical policies, won support from local cadres, and quelled opponents with their mastery ideological

vacabulary. Certainly, Chinese intellectuals' varied ideologies could not be clearly divided into two wings. As shown throughout the dissertation, both BNU and *People's Education* served as sites of contestation between university administrators mostly comprised of cadres, educational theorists mindful of national politics, teachers working on campus, and students who were often encouraged to revolt against school authorities. Even among the teacher population itself, there were conflicts surrounding generationality and political commitments. Nonetheless, a continuum of political stance could be drawn, in which the radicals bore the major responsibility for the disorders and failures that occurred in the 1950s.

This dissertation's interest in local dynamics – the sharing of ideas, negotiations, and contestations that took place at the institutional level – is situated in China's grand scheme of social changes and international politics. 1949 – 1958 was the formative decade of PRC, and a period of converging political, economic, and cultural changes. Claiming to eradicate feudal and imperialist ideologies, the CCP lost no time in attacking traditional Chinese culture and American-imported educational thoughts. Soviet pedagogy received an unreserved promotion before being doubted as revisionist. Psychologists and educators jostled for ideas from various sources to substantiate the new student ideal. The exteriorization process involved not only the shift of scholarly attention from the interior to the exterior of the mind, but also the relocation of legitimate space where the mind was known and worked upon. First, the laboratory was declared to be an artificial environment that misrepresented the psyche. Second, the campus came to be seen as a restrictive space that isolated students from the revolution. Students were asked to step outside of schools, the simulation of society, to enter real socio-political life in factories and farms in order to become the new human.

This dissertation also departs from a narrow intellectual history that treats the new human

ideal as a brainchild of international communist theorists. Instead, it situates this ideal in China's social and political history to reveal how circumstantial factors contributed to its formation. I argue that the new student ideal was called upon by two demands: economic development and revolution (Tsang, 2000). On the economic side, the preceding Second World War, the ongoing Cold War, and the CCP's commitment to make China an industrialized country called for accelerated economic growth, but the limited workforce constituted a bottleneck. The pressure gravitated to the school, where students were required to learn faster, accept centralized placement, and contribute services besides meeting academic standards. The need for class struggle stemmed from the CCP's competition with its rivals for political legitimacy, an aspiration for building an egalitarian society, and Mao's overestimation of hidden counterrevolutionary force. The disruption of existent culture and social relations, such as the persecution of reactionaries, created further pressure for the CCP to regulate mass opinions. In ideological campaigns, students had three identities: as intellectuals, they were required to be proletarianized; as youths of a rebellious spirit, they were seen to be a potent force to challenge existing authorities; and, as future citizens, they were subjected to heightened ideological and political education so that, once grown up, they would guard the socialist regime. All these intersecting forces fueled the Chinese revolutionary imagination of the human subject. Beneath its rosy appearance, the new socialist student ideal was an extremely complex package of strategies to legitimize and execute China's biopolitics. In the eyes of the radical intellectuals, the human subject's physiological basis, intellectual capacities, and moral inclinations, all appeared to be amenable to external manipulation toward the fulfillment of national projects. When clashes occurred between the optimistic egalitarian social blueprint and the display of human selfishness and weakness, the CCP adeptly held the latter to be responsible. The human being was to be unshackled from its natural constraints so that it could unleash the

agentic power to bring about the promised communist future.

The making of knowledge about the human mind was deeply rooted, on the one hand, in the utopian dream of communism, and on the other, in the political, economic, and material realities in which the revolution unraveled. In Greek mythology, Daedalus was a legendary craftsman who served King Minos by constructing a labyrinth to hide Minotaur, a monster born by King Minos's wife and a bull. Upon completing the labyrinth, Daedalus and his son, Icarus, were held captive by King Minos to keep the secret. In order to escape from the labyrinth, Daedalus made two pairs of wings of feather and wax, and told Icarus that during flight, they must keep away from the sun, which would melt the wax, as well as from the sea, which would clog the feather. Overwhelmed by joy and pride when flying in the sky, Icarus soared too high, and fell into the sea with melted wings. The realization of communism in China, too, would require adroit navigation between the sky – the lofty utopia, and the sea – the abyss of reality. While conservative thinking that relied overly on reality could not get the utopian plan off the ground, radical wishful thinking that kept a blind eye to reality risked failure. The new human ideal was part of the Chinese radicals' alluring imagination.

Does the history of the 1950s China demonstrate, as maintained by many skeptical thinkers (Freud, 1927; Hölldobler & Wilson, 1994; Kemp, 2016; Mill, 1880; Panichas, 1983; Pipes, 1996, 2001), that there is an immutable human nature thwarting the advent of communism? This question leads us back to Marx's (1845) central thesis about human nature – that the essence of human being is the ensemble of social relations. As pointed out by Ollman (1977), in Marx's vision, ideal communist citizens could only come into being in a society that has already achieved communism. Since neither China nor any other country has succeeded in building a communist society, it remains impossible to conduct a direct empirical assessment of the feasibility of creating the new

human. The labyrinth-like history of the 1950s China was full of twists and pitfalls, and could not provide us a straightforward answer either. Notwithstanding all the resistance and setbacks the CCP met in bringing up the new human, it indeed rendered numerous students hard-working and politically impassioned. Looking beyond the labyrinth of history, things remain up in the air. After all, the legendary Daedalus managed to escape from his labyrinth and killed King Minos eventually. His name, Daedalus, has the meaning “tortuous”, which is the way communism used to be, and perhaps will continue to be.

This dissertation is completed in 2018, precisely 200 years after Karl Marx’s birth. With the rise and collapse of international socialism, and the development of postindustrial welfare states, the world is now very different from when Marx envisioned communism as an antidote to industrial capitalism of his time. In the new millennium, the globe has entered a series of crisis, consisting of terrorism, economic recession, the rise of ultra-rightism, the partial dissolution of the European Union, and the retreat of globalization. The crises in the capitalist world have given rise to a renewed interest in Marxism, which is at the same time met with impassioned resistance. At the 200 anniversary of Marx’s birthday, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker encouraged audience to revisit Marx’s intellectual legacy in light of the European Union’s problems. His remark incurred an avalanche of outcries, which, with little exception, invoked the tragical deaths of millions in the socialist block to discredit Marxism. The erection of a China-donated Marx statue in Trier, Marx’s hometown, became widely controversial and suffered an arsenal attempt. Apparently, these indignant critical voices ignored precisely what Juncker cautioned in his speech, that today, Marx “stands for things which he is not responsible for and which he didn’t cause, because many of the things he wrote down were redrafted into the opposite” (Stone, 2018).

Meanwhile, it should be pointed out that Marx and Engels (1845) did not prescribe a rigid blueprint of communism preclusive of new creation:

Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise. (p. 49)

Thus, there is not a “correct” version of Marxism. In this dissertation, I have specified how China’s socialism differed from Marx’s theorization, such as the precipitation of its revolution and economic development, its moral preaching, and its emphasis on the distinction between mental and physical labors. By providing a clearer understanding of Marxism’s mutation in China, my dissertation intervenes in the discussion of Marx’s historical legacy.

Over the past decade, China has been tightening its ideological regulation, including intensifying the education of Marxism in schools. In this process of transition, many issues discussed in my dissertation re-emerged. On May 2, 2018, Xi Jinping gave a speech at the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peking University, China’s leading university famed for championing the May Fourth Movement in 1919, a political movement the CCP claims to have given birth to communism in China. In this speech, Xi (2018) reiterated that the goal of China’s education is to enable all-round development in moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic aspects. He also required that Chinese universities prioritize political loyalty over scientific and technological expertise. This speech forms a sharp contrast with another Presidential speech at Peking University’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1998, which centered around the idea of “strengthening the country through science and education” [*ke jiao xing guo*] (Z. Jiang, 1998). Similar to the 1950s, intellectuals are now playing an active role in facilitating or resisting the resurgence of ideological

campaigns. Lin Jianhua, the President of Peking University, celebrated Xi's speech but downplayed its political emphasis in his own anniversary address. Unexpectedly, Lin's address provoked much controversy. He was found to have made a mis-pronunciation, and consequently published a letter in response to media pressure. In this letter, Lin apologized, but also gently complained about the amount of public attention to his mistake by reiterating a line of his address: "anxiety and casting doubts don't create value but hinder our steps to the future". This statement angered many intellectuals, including Peking University professors, for its denial of the value of critical thinking. This episode, again, reminds of the crackdown of critical thinking in the 1950s (D. Tang, 2018). Certainly, history never repeats itself in an exact way. But, as China has been resuscitating its radical ideology after three decades of economic reforms and internationalization, it is now an opportune time to revisit the history of the 1950s as discussed in my dissertation and gain some lessons.

## Glossary

### *Chinese institutes & journals & newspapers*

Academic Affairs Office 教务处  
Beijing Normal University 北京师范大学  
Department of Propaganda 宣传部  
Educational Research 教育研究  
Girls' Middle School Attached to BNU 北京  
师范大学女子附属中学  
Guangming Daily 光明日报  
Ministry of Education 教育部  
Ministry of Higher Education 高等教育部

National Institute of Educational Science 中  
央教育科学研究院  
People's Daily 人民日报  
People's Education 人民教育  
People's Education Press 人民教育出版社  
Renmin University 中国人民大学  
Youth League 共青团  
Yucai Elementary School 育才小学  
Zhengwu Yuan 政务院

### *Chinese names*

Cao Fu 曹孚  
Chen Boda 陈伯达  
Chen Duxiu 陈独秀  
Chen Heqin 陈鹤琴  
Cheng Jinwu 程今吾  
Deng Xiaoping 邓小平  
Ding Ding 丁丁  
Ding Haochuan 丁浩川  
Fan Yihao 范亦豪  
Fu Zhongsun 傅种孙  
Guo Renyuan (Zing-Yang Kuo) 郭任远  
Hu Hanjuan 胡汉娟  
Han Youhan 韩友范  
Hou Junyan 侯俊岩  
Hu Zukang 胡祖康  
Huang Qingsheng 黄庆生  
Huang Jiguang 黄继光  
Kang Sheng 康生  
Lei Yining 雷一宁  
Li Dazhao 李大钊  
Lin Handa 林汉达  
Liu Baichuan 刘百川  
Liu Shaoqi 刘少奇  
Lu Dingyi 陆定一  
Lu Shiyong 鲁世英  
Liu Yu 刘御

Liu Zeru 刘泽如  
Ma Xulun 马叙伦  
Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-Tung) 毛泽东  
Ni Zhongfang 倪中方  
Qian Junrui 钱俊瑞  
Su Qin 苏秦  
Tang Ying 唐瑛  
Tong Shuye 童书业  
Wang Huanxun 王焕勋  
Wang Jing 王静  
Wu Yanyin 吴研因  
Xu Teli 徐特立  
Yang Xiufeng 杨秀峰  
Ye Shengtao 叶圣陶  
Zeng Zhaolun 曾昭抡  
Zhang Jian 张健  
Zhang Lingguang 张凌光  
Zhang Xiruo 张奚若  
Zhang Yiyuan 张逸园  
Zhao Shuli 赵树理  
Zhou Enlai 周恩来  
Zhu De 朱德  
Zhu Zhixian 朱智贤  
Zhu Ziqing 朱自清  
Zhang Tengxiao 张腾霄  
Zhang Zhongchun 张仲纯

*Chinese terms*

Anti-Rightist Campaign 反右运动	qin mei, chong mei, kong mei 亲美、恐美、崇美
Bei Ying 背影	qin xue 勤学
cheng fen 成分	quanmian fazhan 全面发展
choushi, mieshi, bishi meidiguozhuyi 仇视、蔑视、鄙视美帝国主义	qun zhong luxian 群众路线
Common Program 共同纲领	ren 仁
da hechang 大合唱	ren ding sheng tian 人定胜天
dang xing 党性	renmin zhiyuanjun 人民志愿军
fenpei 分配	ren xing 人性
fu chuzhang 副处长	ren zheng 仁政
gexing 个性	renmin minzhu zhuanzheng 人民民主专政
gan xiang gan gan 敢想敢干	qunzhong luxian 群众路线
gongyi ke 工艺课	san hao 三好
guojia 国家	san min zhuyi 三民主义
hong yu zhuan 红与专	shengchan yundon 生产运动
Hundred Flowers Campaign 百花齐放	shi fan 师范
jiadao zhongluo 家道中落	shi fu zhi tong 失父之痛
jiao dao chu 教导处	shi quan shi mei 十全十美
jiaoyu geming 教育革命	si yu 四育
jian ai 兼爱	Shisanling Dam 十三陵水库
jiashi ke 家事课	sizhang 司长
jiefangjun 解放军	sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu 思想政治教育
jieji xing 阶级性	Sufan Movement 肃反运动
kai yeche 开夜车	suku 诉苦
ke jiao xing guo 科教兴国	tiancai jiaoyu 天才教育
kongsu 控诉	wei ren shi biao 为人师表
kong xiang 空想	wotou 窝头
kou maozi 扣帽子	xiao jiating 小家庭
laodong jiaoyu 劳动教育	xingqu xuexi 兴趣学习
lao zhuanjia 老专家	xue ji 学籍
laozuo ke 劳作课	xun xu jian jin 循序渐进
liangli xing yuanze 量力性原则	ya miao zhu zhang 揠苗助长
libai qi 礼拜七	yi ku si tian 忆苦思甜
libai tian 礼拜天	yin cai shi jiao 因材施教
May Fourth Movement 五四运动	yu yong xuezhe 御用学者
minzhu guanli 民主管理	zhen cai shi xue 真才实学
pei qian huo 赔钱货	zhengfeng 整风
	zhuguan nengdong xing 主观能动性

*Chinese expressions*

Bai shan xiao wei xian 百善孝为先  
Beijian zhe zui congming, gaogui zhe zui  
yuchun 卑贱者最聪明，高贵者最愚蠢  
Cong qunzhong zhong lai, dao qunzhong  
zhong qu 从群众中来，到群众中去  
De minxin zhe de tianxia 得民心者得天下  
Jiangshan yi gai, bingxing nan yi 江山易  
改，禀性难移  
Lao xin zhe zhi ren, lao li zhe zhi yu ren 劳  
心者治人，劳力者治于人  
Laozi shi yingxiong, erzi jiushi haohan 老子  
是英雄，儿子就是好汉  
Sangeng denghuo wugeng ji 三更灯火五更  
鸡  
Shu li hua wan sui, wen shi di jiuqian sui,  
yin ti mei bu aishi 数理化万岁，文史地九  
千岁，音体美不碍事

*Russian names*

Alsinchef A.П. 阿尔辛节夫  
Baolisuowa Л.Е. 包立索娃  
Biduhove 毕杜霍夫  
Bikrina 彼古里娜  
Bopov 波波夫  
Feidaoluowa B.H. 费道洛娃  
Ferratov 费拉托夫  
Fumin 福民  
Grinner 葛琳娜  
Kairov, Ivan Andreyevich 凯洛夫  
Korchagin, Pavel 保尔柯察金  
Kruchev 赫鲁晓夫

Si ti bu qin, wu gu bu fen 四体不勤，五谷  
不分  
Wan ban jie xia pin, wei you dushu gao 万  
般皆下品，惟有读书高  
Wan ban jie xia pin, wei you nongye gao 万  
般皆下品，惟有农业高  
Xue wei ren shi, xing wei shi fan 学为人  
师，行为世范  
Xuehao shu li hua, zoubian tianxia dou bu  
pa 学好数理化，走遍天下都不怕  
Yiba yaoshi kai yiba suo 一把钥匙开一把  
锁  
Yiri wei shi, zhongshen weifu 一日为师，  
终身为父

Lebedyev 列别杰夫  
Lenin, Vladimir 列宁  
Lysenko, Trofim 李森科  
Makarenko, Anton 玛卡连柯  
Michurin, Ivan Vladimirovich 米秋林  
Nusenbaum 努森堡姆  
Pavlov, Ivan 巴甫洛夫  
Porisov И. 波利索夫  
Sechenov, Ivan 谢切诺夫  
Skatkin, Mikhail Nikolaevich 斯卡特金  
Stalin, Joseph 斯大林  
Trivolskyov A.A. 堆列瓦斯卡雅

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