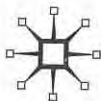


Chinese Modernity and the
Individual Psyche

Edited by
Andrew B. Kipnis

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Chapter One

Introduction: Chinese Modernity and the Individual Psyche

Andrew B. Kipnis

The topics of modernity and individualism have a long and rich history in Western social theory. Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Michel Foucault, Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck, Zygmunt Bauman, and Nikolas Rose have all written at length about them. Needless to say, what constitutes modernity, individualism, individuation, and the individual psyche are multifaceted and contested matters; more controversial still are the links between what is referred to by these signs, that is, whether contemporary processes of what is often called individualization are best depicted as arising in capitalism and the Protestant reformation (Weber 1992; 1978), industrialization and nation building (Durkheim 1960; 1973; 1979; 1992), urbanization (Simmel 1971), wage labor and capitalist alienation (Marx and Engels 1886), neoliberalism (Rose 1996), second-order or reflexive modernity (Giddens 1991), second modernity or risk society (Beck et al. 1994), liquid modernity (Bauman 2000), or discipline and punishment (Foucault 1979). Summaries and syntheses of theories regarding individualism and individuation are almost as common as original writings on the topic itself, and I could not possibly attempt another one here.¹ Rather, by citing the diversity of social theorists who have written about this topic, I want to begin by pointing out that something about the structure of feeling surrounding the individual in modern societies has engendered reflection from a broad range of social theorists.

Such reflection is growing among anthropologists observing the rapid industrialization, marketization, urbanization, and social change taking place in contemporary China. Yunxiang Yan's recent book (2009), *The Individualization of Chinese Society*, reprints a series of his essays that depict ordinary Chinese breaking away from the social constraints of the Maoist era. They marry without

the blessings of their parents, consume to please themselves, and migrate around the country without approval from the heads of their collectives or work units. In the language of social theorists like Giddens, these people can be said to become disembedded from local social structures. Yan frames these changes in comparison with the “individualization thesis” of theorists like Beck, Bauman and Giddens (see also, Yan 2010b). These theorists attempt to differentiate contemporary patterns of individuation from those that took place under the earlier modernity described by Durkheim, Marx, and Weber by claiming the importance of “second modernity” or “liquid modernity” and heightened degrees of reflexivity and recognition of risk. As Yan rightly points out, there are many differences between the individualization described by the theorists of second modernity and that which he observed in China.²

First of all, over the past two decades, while Europe was experiencing a rolling back of the welfare state, China was experiencing a breaking of the tight institutional structures that curtailed individual freedoms during much of the Maoist era. Those who draw parallels between the rollback of the welfare state in Europe and the dismantling of state-owned enterprises in China neglect the fact that in China, under Mao, 90 percent of the people lived in rural areas where there were no state-owned enterprises or welfare benefits and limited economic security. The rigid combination of the household registration system and the planned economy prevented most Chinese citizens from obtaining goods and services outside of their home districts, physically preventing most forms of travel and making it easy for local political leaders to dominate all aspects of the lives of those living within their jurisdiction (especially for the vast majority of rural inhabitants). This system also intensified the control parents had over their children, as finding a job on the rural commune or in the local labor market often required the help of parents. Yan points out that during the evolution away from this system, the issuing of national identity cards, so easily analyzable as a structure of state control (cf. Dutton 1998: 94–99), actually constituted a form of liberation, as the identity cards enabled their holders to legally travel throughout the country without the permission of anyone else. National identity cards constitute a form of individuated identity that is not controlled by the leader of one’s collective farm, work unit (*danwei*), street committee, or household head. The possibility of (individually-determined) physical mobility, the rise of national labor markets for migrant laborers, and the increasing education of youth relative to their parents have also empowered youth

in relation to their elders, especially in rural areas. If the rollback of the welfare state in Europe was a stick that forced citizens to accept greater risk and greater individual responsibility for their economic well-being, in China the demise of the planned economy, at least for young people of rural origins, has been a rollback of the systems of control that used to permeate their lives.

While Yan’s discussion illuminates the social processes through which individuals were cut loose from the political and social controls of Mao-era institutions, he is less precise about the newer forms of social control and socialization that this so-called liberation of the individual has entailed. While he points out the importance of the coercive aspects of Beck’s individuation thesis (individuals face no choice other than individuating themselves, see especially Yan 2010a), and while he mentions both the fact of individuals being reembedded in society through their need to rely on social connections to find jobs, and the fact that much of the so-called individualism emerging in China seems like a species of conformity, he does not specify the mechanisms by which so much conformity and reembedding emerge. Because he uses the newer theorists of second-order modernization as his point of departure, he misses some of the insights that theorists of first-order modernization (Marx, Weber, and especially Durkheim and Foucault) might have provided, that is, the relationship of concern about the individual to industrialization, urbanization, labor markets, nation building, and religious tradition.

A second work of interest is the *Privatizing China* volume, edited by Li Zhang and Aihwa Ong (2008). Like Yan, Ong and Zhang (2008) see an emergence of the individual during the post-Mao era, but see this individual as caught between the neoliberal logic of entrepreneurs competing in the capitalist marketplace and the sovereignty of the socialist state. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led state tries to “keep its distance” when it can, but is always ready to step in and impose limits on individual expression when necessary. Ong and Zhang argue against those liberal theorists who see political liberalization (which might be termed the empowerment of individuals as political actors) as an inevitable outcome of economic liberalization and argue that strategies of economic liberalization and “governing from a distance” can be used by authoritarian governments to maintain their power. The essays in Zhang and Ong’s volume are necessarily more diverse than those of Yan, but, taken as a whole, their emphasis on the mechanisms by which the Communist Party maintains control, while enabling various forms of individual

distinction to emerge, supplement Yan's focus on the disembedding of the individual from the institutional binds that existed under Maoist rule.

A third multiauthored volume, titled *Deep China*, also stresses the contrast between entrepreneurial freedoms and political un-freedom. This contradiction, Kleinman et al. (2011) argue, leads to a particular form of the divided self in which sufferings and opinions that are too politically sensitive to express must be repressed or held in a deeply private space in order to allow the entrepreneurial self to succeed. The vast majority of good jobs in China today—those in health care, education, management, banks, state-owned enterprises, utilities, and the vast and sprawling bureaucracy itself—are located in places where giving voice to forms of political expression that the CCP dislikes would lead to career suicide. Kleinman et al. use the image of an owl with one eye open and one eye shut as a metaphor for this divided self. The open eye takes in all that is necessary to get ahead in everyday life while the shut eye protects the privacy of an inner self that feels and senses things that, for reasons of political caution, it should not and cannot express.

The essays collected here build on insights from these volumes but take a somewhat different perspective. First of all, we adopt a multifaceted approach to the concept of “modernity.” This term is often criticized because political elites use it ideologically to disparage everything and anything that is opposed by the developmental states they administer. If, for example, agricultural officials see a certain form of farming as inefficient, they will mock it as outmoded “tradition” and urge farmers to adopt more “modern” methods. What exactly is “modern” thus lies in the eye of the beholder and involves judgments about what will or should have a future rather than what merely exists in the present. While certainly agreeing with critiques of rigid, ideological, and linear forms of modernization theory, we retain the term modernity for two reasons. First, we self-consciously make our own judgments about which social forces and practices are important in the present and are likely to have an impact on China's future. We call the constellation of the forces and practices that we judge to be important for China's future “Chinese modernity.” Second, in making these judgments about what is important, we want to be sure not to ignore those social processes that were analyzed by the classic social theorists of Western “modernization” and that are unrolling in China today at an historically unprecedented pace and scale—that is to say industrialization, urbanization, and nation-building.

Western theorists who build their theories through an examination of European and North American societies since the 1970s pronounce the importance of framing contemporary individuation in a “high” or “liquid” modernity that comes after a first-order modernity. In so doing, they imply a particular historical metanarrative that is in many respects inappropriate for China. They suggest that first comes industrialization, urbanization, and nation-building; only afterwards comes globalization, the Internet, time-space compression, postindustrial societies, heightened reflexivity, the dismantling of the welfare state, neoliberalism, and so on. In contemporary China, to a greater extent than in Europe or North America, these social processes can be seen as developing simultaneously rather than sequentially, and it is not hard to argue that it is the social changes named by the classic social theorists that have been most consequential. For a rural population embedded in face-to-face, kinship-based social relations, the shift to the anonymity of the city and national labor markets, as well as the alienation of industrial labor, can be shocking. Moreover, the rapid and psychologically shocking geographic, social, and economic social mobility that can accompany any form of social change must be seen as a powerful consequence of both first-order and second-order modernities.³

As a consequence of this emphasis, the social theorists we engage with differ to those emphasized in previous volumes. Durkheim, Simmel, Marx, and the Foucault of *Discipline and Punish* figure much more heavily in our imagination than Bauman, Beck, governmentality theory, or Giddens. Ling-Yun Tang, for example, focuses on the resonances of Simmel's theories of art and alienation and Adorno's critique of mass culture within the contemporary Chinese art scene; Andrew Kipnis examines the relevance of Foucault's analyses of normalization and Durkheim's discussions of nation-building to the educational subjectification of Chinese children; Wanning Sun refers to the works of Marx, Simmel, and Raymond Williams to illuminate themes of alienation in the poetry of migrant workers.

For us, however, the complexity of Chinese modernity is not simply a matter of what European theorists have seen as first-order and second-order modernity. As Alexander Woodside (2006) has argued, the sources of any modernity are multiple and stretch beyond industrialism and capitalism. Two further sources of Chinese modernity can be called China's “premodern modernity” and China's socialist modernity. By China's premodern modernity, we refer to two equally important facts. First, people in China, like those anywhere, have cultural traditions (certainly not unchanging, but

continually reinvented and reappropriated in ever evolving social contexts) to deal with the entanglements of individual bodies with families and societies—methods of dealing with sickness or death, with child-rearing, sexual desire, and so on. Practitioners of various forms of what today are considered religion, superstition, or even (in the case of various forms of Chinese medicine, qigong, or martial arts training) science, consciously reinvent these practices in relation to earlier forms. Despite the moves of some social theorists to ignore these practices or to dismiss them as outdated cultural relics (perhaps in reaction to the efforts of certain nationalist intellectuals in China to reify them as a cultural essence), these practices remain important resources for training, calming, and cultivating individual psyches.

Second, imperial China was a state society long before it was an industrial society. While the size of the state has grown drastically with the onset of modernity (Duara 1988), the arts of statecraft, including those relevant to the governing of the individual psyche, have a long history in China. While hardly unchanging, these arts are often drawn upon in the present. Popular practices of resisting these methods (such as relying on personal connections to bypass the imperatives of state bureaucracies (see Yang 1994)) also have a long history. This history makes our imagination of China very different to scholars who investigate parts of the world where “the state” only arrives with Western imperialism and insipient industrialization. Alexander Woodside (2006) powerfully presents the modernity of the examination system, the bureaucracy and the modes of governing the population that existed in “premodern” China, Korea, and Vietnam. He stresses the importance placed on “modern” notions like transparency, poverty alleviation, and the identification of talent within the imperial bureaucracies as well as the way certain debates among imperial bureaucrats had a strikingly “modern” tone. Many methods of governing the individual psyche in contemporary China are consciously identified with this tradition.

Socialism is another source of Chinese modernity. In contemporary China, the socialism of Maoist China, as it drew on the socialisms of Marx, Lenin, Stalin, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere, is simultaneously a target of a politically motivated nostalgia, a source of dreams and plans about creating a utopian future and the time during which many of the contemporary institutions of governing the Chinese population were first established. The household registration system (Wang 2005), the ethnic classification system (Mullaney 2011), the Leninist party-state (Perry 2007), and the

propaganda apparatus (Brady 2012) were all developed then as were the practices by which the Party reaches out to diverse sectors of society (see, for example, Thornton 2012; U 2012) and the systemizing of local forms of policy experimentation (Heilmann 2008). The birth control policy emerged on the cusp of the reform era and was designed during a period when ideas about social and economic planning were particularly powerful (Greenhalgh 2008).

All of these practices and institutions remain important today. The household registration system, which assigns certain employment, housing, education, health, and welfare rights according to the locality where a given individual is registered, continues to make migrant laborers second class citizens in the districts where they work. The birth control policy has sped the rate of demographic transition in China, making one child families (in urban areas) and one and two child families (in most rural areas) commonplace. The ethnic identities recognized during the ethnic classification project of the 1950s have been embraced by the vast majority of Chinese citizens, including those who rebel against the rule of the Han ethnic majority. Most importantly, memories of socialist ideals and rhetoric continue to inform the manner in which people think about the individual psyche.

Our complex vision of Chinese modernity allows us to bring a strong sense of irony to the topic of individualism and modernity. We see no simple linear relation between modernity and individuality whereby humans become more and more individualized as their societies become more and more modern. Rather the “individualization” of modernity must be seen as a myth, or a structure of feeling, or a problematic. The liberation of the individual is simultaneously her or his enslavement to wider social forces; differentiation is often accompanied by conformity, and estrangement or alienation by freedom. Premodern people were individuals as well and modern people remain socially constructed. In short, we see the “rise” of individualism as more of a psychological problematic than an absolute social fact. The attention paid to the individual psyche by governments, by educational and medical institutions, and by factories may increase and people may feel increasingly alienated, liberated, lonely, isolated, and free, but that does not mean that human beings have become social isolates. The political, social, and collective projects of cultivating and subjugating the individual are more powerful than ever. By placing the phrase “individual psyche” at the center of our efforts and emphasizing the psychological dimensions of contemporary Chinese individualism, we mean to highlight this irony. By using this term, however, we do not imply that our methods or foci

are purely psychological. The individual psyche has never been and never will be a domain governed solely by socially isolated individuals. It is the site of conflicts between numerous contradictory discourses, emotions, and urges, a site where the social contradictions of Chinese modernity manifest themselves as particular structures of feeling, and a target of the governing actions of a wide range of social actors. While some of the chapters in this book do focus on particular people and their psyches, others are devoted to the social forces that constrain the psyche. Above all, it is the relation between “Chinese modernity” and “the individual psyche” that is our topic.

To explicate our dislike of the term “individualism” another way, we see some form of tension between “the individual” and “society” as a form of human universal. Human psyches are inevitably related to particular human bodies at the same time that they form in reaction to the social relationships, discourses, and tensions in which they are immersed. To relate terms like individuation or individualism to any sort of modernity is thus misleading in that it implies that tension between individuals and their social environment is in itself something that only recently came about. What changes are the particular social relationships, discourses, and tensions that constitute the social environment and, consequently, the structures of the individual psyche that are immersed therein.⁴

Problematics of the individual psyche extend into all realms of social life and this volume consequently touches on a diverse array of topics. We have organized the chapters into three thematic sections: the first is titled *Creative Expressions and Senses of Self* and examines artistic reflections on alienation, freedom, loneliness, and isolation; the second is titled *Female Gender and the Relational Psyche*; and the third is titled *Governing the Individual Psyche*. Each of these sections speaks directly to the impossibility of individuation and individualism. The artists analyzed in the first section explore and critique the alienating aspects of Chinese modernity. The chapters of this section demonstrate how various forms of individuality are haunted by specters of their own inadequacy. The section on feminine gender places the tensions between relationality and individualism at the very center of its focus. As a general topic, gender speaks directly to the impossibility of any form of self-sufficient individual. To be gendered is to be partial and divided; the gendered psyche is torn by social and sexual desire and the gendered family member is immersed in social, economic, and psychological relationships of mutual dependency. In the third section, the very idea of governing the individual psyche likewise points to the impossibility

of individualism. If a person’s psyche is being governed by others, how can “individualism” exist? The three sections overlap as several of the essays could have easily fit into more than one section. The essay by Vanessa Fong and her collaborators, for example, can be read as an examination of the manner in which urban mothers govern their daughters while that of Zhiying Ma is quite sensitive to the gendered experiences of schizophrenia patients.

The section on artistic reflection can be read as an extended essay on the powers of industrialized factory work, urbanization, and marketization to alienate people from socially meaningful forms of existence. In this section, Ling-Yun Tang explores the emergence of images of isolated individuals in the work of the generation of Chinese artists born during the 1970s. She emphasizes how their artistic works construct an image of the individual psyche that is overwhelmed by forces beyond his or her control. Emily Wilcox examines how the forces of marketization unleashed during the reform era cause dancers to associate individualized performance with selling out and collective performance with meaningful work. Wanning Sun relates tropes of homelessness in the works of migrant worker poets to the many forms of alienation in their lives.

In contemporary China, as in most times and places, the female psyche in particular is viewed as a site of relationality and the three chapters in the second section explore how female gender roles impact individual psyches. Vanessa Fong and her collaborators focus on how mothers govern and imagine independence for their toddler age daughters and how the place of independence in the mothers’ imaginations and actions is contradicted by the future gender roles they imagine for their daughters. Harriet Evans examines the relationships between grown urban daughters and their mothers and suggests that their concern for relational intimacy in their relationships is in fact a product of the reform era. Hyeon Jung Lee examines the causes of suicide among rural women during the reform era. She concludes that for many married rural women, Chinese modernity has created oppressive, suffocating familial relations and that the pressures of these relationships lead some to suicide.

The third section begins with Delia Lin’s essay on shame as a mechanism of governing the individual psyche. She examines how shame was imagined as a governing mechanism in the Confucian tradition and how this tradition manifests itself in the governing strategies of contemporary social workers, policemen, and parents. Next is Andrew Kipnis’s essay on the private educational sector. He emphasizes that despite the potentially individualized attention

that students in this sector receive, privatized education results in more forceful regimes of homogenization and normalization. The advertising used by businesses in this sector aggressively invokes the hierarchies of social class that result from these regimes of homogenization and normalization. Finally Zhiying Ma's chapter discusses the treatment of schizophrenia in a psychiatric hospital in southern China. She examines how psychiatric doctors attempt to pharmaceuticalize their patients as asocial beings and how this treatment in fact erases the distinctive (individual) characteristics of the patients.

The sense of irony contained in these essays allows us to emphasize the historical reversals that a more linear understanding of Chinese modernity might miss. Two of the authors demonstrate the importance of powerful and ongoing Chinese traditions of governing the individual psyche. Delia Lin argues that a Confucian tradition of governing through shame remains powerful in contemporary China, while Zhiying Ma describes how modern, Western psychiatry erases rather than enhances the individual agency of patients by pharmaceuticalizing their ailments. In resisting this pharmaceuticalization, Chinese patients often turn to traditional Chinese medicine and religion to regain a more socially based sense of personal agency. Harriet Evans demonstrates how the rampant commercialization of the reform era is associated with a rising emphasis on intimate relationality (rather than individualism) among urban mothers and daughters. Emily Wilcox argues that institutional, subjective, and affective elements of the Maoist era remain important in the assertions of selfhood and the search for professional meaningfulness by Chinese dancers today. For all of these authors, it is not the arrival of a Western, capitalist modernity alone that explains the structures of feeling around the individual psyche in contemporary China. Legacies of China's premodern and socialist modernity remain important and China's capitalist modernity leads not only to individuation.

Further, the sense of reversal extends to criticizing the implicit linearity of some of the classic Western theories of modernity as well. In exploring patterns of female suicide in rural China, Hyeon Jung Lee notes how these patterns diverge from the typical social science imagination of suicide in the West. But this divergence arises only because of the reliance of contemporary social science on Durkheim's assertion that modern suicide was a result of social anomie and that anomic suicides have been more closely associated with men than women. Durkheim purposefully ignored more traditional forms of suicide and thus, far from being anomalous, patterns of suicide in rural China today have many lessons for how social scientists

might revise received knowledge about the historical relationship of suicide to modernity in the West as well.

The essays here also display a great sensitivity to China's vast social diversity. Not everyone in China is affected by modernity in the same way and manners of thinking and experiencing the individual psyche vary widely. For example, though both the artists discussed by Ling-Yun Tang and the dancers examined by Emily Wilcox develop critiques of individuation, the artists embrace their individualized modes of production much less hesitantly than the dancers. Here, perhaps, the greater importance of international markets for artists than dancers is relevant. While Wilcox and Tang examine the commercial artistic production of highly talented cultural elites, Wanning Sun examines the artistic production of migrant workers who receive little if any compensation for their efforts. Their artistry is more a matter of self-therapy and self-expression than a marketized mode of cultural expression. While Harriet Evans examines mother-daughter relationships among elite urban women, Vanessa Fong and her collaborators compare a relatively wealthy urban mother with a relatively poor one and Hyeon Jung Lee explores the experiences of downtrodden rural mothers. While Andrew Kipnis explores governing institutions aimed at the broad masses of town and small city dwellers, Delia Lin explores governing attitudes toward the most disadvantaged—a run-away, abused, motherless boy and a physically handicapped man. Zhiying Ma examines the experiences of a surprisingly diverse array of schizophrenia patients at one of the most elite and expensive psychiatric hospitals in China. While no single volume can capture all of China's vast social diversity, the papers collected here show how Chinese modernity affects modes of thinking about and acting upon the individual psyches of a diverse range of actors.

Let me end this introduction with one example of the importance of recognizing the blending of first-order and second-order modernities and Chinese and global institutions in the analysis of contemporary Chinese individuality. One of Durkheim's focal concerns in his study of European modernization was the simultaneous breakdown of local solidarities, rise of individual differences within local arenas of social interaction, and rise of national-level institutions and solidarities (1956; 1960; 1973; 1979; 1992). These nation-wide institutions included both the forms of law and professional associations that provided the basis for economic contracts between individuals and the educational institutions that produced national citizens able to read, write, and speak the national language. Foucault's

discussions of the educational processes of examination, normalization, and discipline likewise stress the simultaneously individuating and homogenizing effects of these processes (1979). China is now undergoing the most massive nation-building project the world has ever seen. Education is only one aspect of this nation-building, but it is the one with which I am most familiar. As the average number of years of education has expanded from less than six to nearly 15 over the reform-era, young Chinese adults across the country have discovered that they share not just a common spoken and written language, but also similar experiences in educational institutions and similar methods for approaching math problems, science experiments, foreign language learning, and literary interpretation. These similarities facilitate the production and consumption of nation-wide forms of media and popular culture and the formation of nation-wide public spheres in which Chinese citizens, imagined as individuated persons, engage in interactions with other citizens whom they previously did not know.

Many have debated the extent to which the Internet in China is subject to political control and the degree to which it serves as a platform for individual and dissident expression, but few have noted the extent to which the Chinese Internet is a truly national sphere of public interaction that is undergirded by both the material forms of nation building that have created a regulated, interlinked network of personal computers and the educational nation-building that has created an educated public, literate in the same language, exposed to the same versions of history, literature, science, and politics, and familiar with the dynamics of censorship, public expression, and means of resisting censorship specific to China (Kipnis 2012). It does not surprise me in the least that Google's troubles in establishing itself in China are not just political, but also involve the difficulty of that company adapting to the specific ways in which Chinese Internet users expect to interface with the net. The place of the national among Chinese Internet users was further brought home to me by the recent research of Pál Nyíri et al. (2010) on the pro-China student protestors who defended the "sacred flame" of the Olympic torch from pro-Tibetan protestors around the world. Nyíri et al. show how these protestors were performing their individually embodied and personally styled patriotism primarily for a Chinese public that is constituted (around the world and in China) by the Chinese Internet. The actions of these protestors in Paris, Canberra, London, and San Francisco were captured in photos, blogs, videos, and reportage that were re-presented on the net, in

simplified Chinese characters, for an audience that grew up and had their primary and secondary education in the People's Republic of China (PRC). In short, the construction and performance of individual identities in protests and on the web is done for a relatively recently constructed PRC national public sphere.

In addition to nation-building, the authors of the essays in this book find many other avenues, to date relatively unexplored, to analyze the individual psyche in China. How do the massive forms of mobility—physical, social, and economic—relate to feelings of anomie in contemporary China? How does this mobility intersect with the alienation of industrial production, urban living, and capitalist exploitation to create feelings of solitude? How do long-standing Chinese traditions of self-cultivation, medical intervention in mental illness, and, indeed, nation-building, contribute to contemporary Chinese processes of individuation? While there is no doubt that the past 30 years of reform in the PRC can be seen as collapsing together the industrialization, nation-building, and urbanization of first-order modernization with the liquid modernity, reflexivity, and neoliberalism of second-order modernity, too much attention has been paid to the latter at the expense of the former. The essays in this issue begin to correct this imbalance while leaving considerable room for future explorations of the relationships between Chinese modernity and the individual psyche. In so doing, they also provide new ways for comparative understandings of the relationships among individuation and modernity. By emphasizing that individuation is a problematic rather than an absolute social fact, they focus on the simultaneous restructuring of the ways in which humans are recreated as social beings and distinguished as individuals under various configurations of modernity. They give full play to the space for historical reversal and circularity among various forms of individuation and subjectification, allow for a less linear reading of the classic literature on modernity and thus a reinterpretation of the classic processes of individuation and modernity in Western societies as well.

Notes

1. Some such syntheses include Lukes (1973), Shanahan (1992), Gurevich (1995), Beck et al. (1994), and Howard (2007).
2. Another volume close to Yan's in its emphasis and theoretical underpinnings is edited by Hansen and Svarerud (2010).

3. More recently, theorists who begin from the notion of a second modernity or reflexive modernity have begun to address this question with the notion of an East Asian pattern of “compressed” modernity. I would emphasize that only in China has breakneck industrialization and the rise of the Internet occurred simultaneously. See Alpermann (2011), Beck and Grande (2010), and Han and Shim (2010) for theoretical discussions of this topic.
4. This position is rather common in anthropology. See, for example Englund and Leach (2000). See Sangren (2000) for a psychoanalytic examination of some of the tensions between individuals and their social settings under “premodern” forms of Chinese patriarchy.

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Part I

Creative Expression and Senses of Self

Chapter Nine

Private Lessons and National Formations: National Hierarchy and the Individual Psyche in the Marketing of Chinese Educational Programs

Andrew B. Kipnis

In Zouping, the rapidly urbanizing, rural county where I have been conducting research for over two decades, there has recently been a rather sudden increase in the number of private educational businesses. Though a few services had been available since the late 1990s, the number of businesses mushroomed after 2008, when the Shandong provincial educational bureau banned mandatory weekend and after school study halls at junior middle and senior middle schools. These bans spurred on an industry that had been slowly expanding anyway, prompting many national chains to open branches in the rapidly growing county seat, many individuals to open their own tutoring businesses, and some medium-size companies to open branches in towns outside the county seat.

Businesses offering educational services cater to children aged 2–19, with the range of services varying with the school level. For two to five year olds, there are a wide range of private preschools. For primary-school-aged students, the range of services is most extensive and includes private tutoring in the main school subjects (math, language, English, and science), summer study camps in the main subjects, group oral English classes, dance lessons in a variety of styles, calligraphy classes, musical instrument lessons (especially in piano and keyboard, but many other instruments as well), painting lessons, computing classes, essay-writing classes, swimming classes, and Taekwondo classes. Most of the classes are on offer in a variety of time slots, including weekends, after school, evenings, and during school holiday periods. For junior and senior middle-school

students, private classes follow the school curriculum more closely, but include art, music, and dance lessons for students who plan on taking the university entrance exam in one of those specialized subjects, as well as numerous individual tutoring and vacation period group classes in the standard subjects required for the science and humanities university entrance exams.

Such a proliferation of private educational services might be viewed as an exercise in individuation from many perspectives. First, the public business of educating children is partially privatizing, pushing formerly public decisions into the purview of the individualized households. Second, this privatization has in part been justified in the language of teaching the students how to govern themselves. In the recent past, rural Shandong public schools absolutely monopolized their students' time. At middle schools and even some primary schools there were mandatory weekend and evening study halls, and the schools themselves also often organized summer holiday programs that were widely attended. The 2008 crack-down described above, as well as earlier bans on primary school weekend classes and school organized summer study camps, were justified with arguments that children should learn how to manage their own time rather than having it managed by teachers and that the students needed more free time to develop their imaginations. Though the fact that private businesses have stepped in to govern the children instead of state collectivities has made the proposition that the children are learning how to better govern themselves somewhat questionable (Kipnis 2011), the decision to govern the child in these ways can at least be said to have been shifted from the state to the household. The reform might also be described as individuating because private tutors can give more individuated instruction than public schools and, finally, because the great variety of classes on offer suggests the flourishing of a wide variety of individualized student interests, or, the opening up of a world of possibilities in which individual students can try out various activities in the hope of discovering their "true selves."

In my research on these services, however, I found that the manner in which they subjectified the students into an integrated hierarchy of a larger social regime, especially at the imaginary level, paralleled these individuating effects. These reembedding processes reverberate with Foucauldian themes of normalization (Foucault 1979) and both Durkheimian (Durkheim 1960; 1973) and more recent (Anderson [1983]1991; Kipnis 2012; Weber 1976) accounts of nation-building. As Foucault points out,

normalization is simultaneously homogenizing and individuating in that students are differentiated by the extent to which they internalize the same norms. Examinations are perhaps the central technique of educational normalization, and the Chinese university entrance exam is perhaps the most effective example of this process in the world today. The size of the nation of students who not only speak and read the same language, but also take standardized approaches to math problems, essay writing, scientific experimentation, artistic expression, and historical knowledge is rapidly expanding.

Just as important as the widespread processes of standardization and normalization described by Foucault and Durkheim, however, is a particular imagination of social hierarchy that both echoes the official processes of normalization and partially nullifies some of the potentially liberal, individuating effects of educational privatization. In this imaginary, the social world is constituted in singular, hierarchical terms. Just as an examination suggests a singular social hierarchy, in which every individual, depending on his or her score, has a particular rank and place, so does this imaginary posit a single, overarching, hierarchical social world. Such an imaginary works against liberal ideologies, in which individuals who study and master different skills and knowledges are considered to be equals who enter into voluntary transactions with one another on a consensual basis. In Zouping during the late-2000s, regardless of whether they studied dance, science, swimming, art, or English, children were often imagined as competing for their place in a singular social hierarchy.

In the rest of this paper, I focus on the marketing of educational services as a way of illuminating this social imaginary. When attempting to sell educational services, marketers reach out to the social fears and desires of the parents who pay for these services. Unfortunately, my research into the marketing of these programs is a bit uneven. In 2005 and 2006 I did a fairly extensive household survey of the consumption of these programs by primary school-aged students in Zouping, and in 2007 I observed the programs on offer in two other counties and found them to be quite similar. In July of 2009, I returned to see the explosion of new activities, but was only able to collect marketing materials and conduct brief interviews with program teachers and administrators. Nevertheless, I can combine the data from the two periods to make a few general observations. Brief return trips in 2010–12 revealed few changes.

Marketing Educational Services

Overall, the types of educational services marketed in rural Shandong can be broken into two broad categories. The first are those that directly link to success on the university entrance exams in sciences and humanities. These include private tutors to help with core exam subjects like math, language, English, physics, and chemistry, private senior middle and junior middle schools that prepare students for these exams, and summer study camps designed to help children improve their levels in these subjects. No explanation is needed for why students should consume these services. Consequently, marketing materials focus on why a particular provider of these services is best. The second type of educational services do not directly relate to the major university entrance exam pathways (though sometimes they do link to university programs), and include music, dance, art, calligraphy, sport, and oral English classes, as well as early childhood education programs. Advertising for these services generally includes some explanation of why the particular service in question should be consumed in addition to reasons why the provider in question is excellent.

In these latter cases, marketers use one or more of three tightly related logics to explain why children should participate in a particular activity. First, the activity can be described as one that lays down a “foundation” (*jichu*) for the child’s educational future. Computing skills, dance, calligraphy, math Olympics, English, and Chinese literature were all described in these terms. Second, the activity can be described as one that “generalizes” to improvements in other areas of a child’s life. The *Xiaowen* keyboard and piano teaching school (part of a nationwide chain), for example, claimed that their instruction improved children’s listening ability, fostered their intelligence and capacity for emotionally experiencing art and music of all types, and developed their potential for creative expression. A dance program claimed to “educate the whole person by teaching dance” (*jiaowu yuren*). The notion of generalized improvement is also implicit in the common use of the word *suzhi* in such marketing. As I have argued elsewhere (2006; 2007), this term implies the existence of an overall, form of human Quality that combines intellectual aptitude, morally incorruptibility, and physically fitness. I call this “Quality” (with a capital Q) to distinguish it from more mundane conceptions of quality. If an activity improves the child’s *suzhi*, then the specific skills learned “generalize” into a broad form of ability or Quality. Third, the activity may be said to enhance the child’s hidden “potential” or

latent ability (*qianneng*). The implications of the notions of “foundation,” “generalizability,” and “potential” overlap. The term *suzhi* itself links notions of “potential” to those of a “general” competence (Lin 2009). Improving one’s *suzhi* always implies increasing one’s potential for yet further improvement in a variety of specialized directions. The links among the three terms were also the basis for the naming of the “Eastern Pyramid Preschool,” (Plate 9.1) which described itself as a center for “enhancing children’s latent abilities.” The image of the pyramid suggests the importance of a broad “foundation” for building an edifice that eventually produces a “potential” of immense height. Whichever of these particular concepts is used, the gist is that the particular skills learned will somehow have beneficial effects on all areas of the child’s life, becoming valuable for his or her future no matter what that child does. The notion of a generalizable form of Quality suggests that students who study different activities, knowledges, or skills may all be compared with and ranked against one another in a singular hierarchy.

The marketing thus implies a hierarchical social world by suggesting that the training promoted will enable the child to move up the social ladder. The place of a class imaginary in the marketing can be seen in many ways. First, the children pictured in ads



Plate 9.1 Preschool Entrance. The sign reads: “Eastern Pyramid: School for Training Children’s Latent Abilities.” Photo by author.

for educational services are always attractive, well-groomed, and well-dressed. Second, the activities that are most easily marketed are those that link to upper-class positions in either imaginings of traditional Chinese culture (as is the case with calligraphy, Chinese literature, and traditional Chinese musical instruments like the *erhu* or *guzheng*) or in imaginations of a modern, foreign upper-classness, as in the case of dance (often ballet), English, computers, or piano lessons. It is noteworthy that as late as 2007, in Shandong county towns, the only private music lessons in non-Chinese instruments were for the piano (imagined as the most expensive and upper-class instrument), and the only form of dance that was taught privately to children was ballet. The imagined links of these cultural forms to an upper-class world made them marketable as forms of training that could easily improve *suzhi*.

Since 2008, there have emerged a few private classes offered in seemingly less refined Western activities like guitar, street (break) dancing (*jiewu*), and Latin dancing. However, as of 2011, the number of children involved in these activities was still much lower than those studying keyboard (piano) or ballet and traditional Chinese dance. Moreover, in the context of the music and variety shows broadcast on Chinese television, guitars, break dancing, hip-hop, and rock music are presented in a manner that associates their Westernness with upper-class, urban Chinese youth rather than anti-aspirational, working-class egalitarian culture. The manner in which these activities are taught (in the rural [county-seat] classes that I observed) further reproduces a status-seeking emphasis on learning standardized movements and memorizing scales and songs rather than free-form, anti-authoritarian improvisation. The ethos of the instruction as whole is one of rote learning upper-class forms.

This imagination of class also seemed to inform the types of activities that were absent or rare among the activities offered to children. Thus, while many people (adults and youth) played basketball and ping-pong and some adults participated in collective dance activities, parents did not pay to have their children learn such activities. These activities seemed to elicit imaginative links to a “mass” culture rather than an elite culture. As such, while not necessarily disparaged, these activities were not imagined to provide a basis for improving the overall social position of the child in an imagined national or international social hierarchy.

The relative lack of sports programs of all types was especially striking to me, as athletic activities dominate the market for after-school and summer programs where I live in Australia. In

Shandong, most sport that children participated in was either organized by their schools or spontaneously organized by the children themselves. Parents, in general, saw sport as something that was only worth pursuing for the exceptionally talented few, who were selected by the state sporting academies, and not as something for which there would be a general market. Two types of sports programs (swimming and Taekwondo (*taiquandao*)) have sprung up in Zouping since 2008, but the numbers of children participating are quite low. In 2009, brief interviews with teachers of these programs suggested that perhaps 50 children (of both genders and all ages) enrolled in Taekwondo classes, and 100–120 in swimming classes. In comparison, administrators in three local summertime English programs in Zouping informed me of more than 1,500 students and I noted advertisements for many more English classes in addition to those three, but no other swimming or Taekwondo classes.

The marketing of the swimming and Taekwondo classes took pains to link these activities to upper-class imaginings. The swimming took place at a new (the first and still (as of 2011) only 4 star establishment in Zouping) hotel/apartment complex that was partially finished in July 2009. The complex had a swimming pool, some tennis courts, a golf driving range and was completing a small, three-hole pitch and putt golf course. It had tried unsuccessfully to offer summertime children’s lessons in golf and tennis, but had successfully started the summer swimming classes. These classes were marketed as a “leisure” (*xiuxian*) activity that help build a “healthy physique” (*jiankang tige*), while offering a chance to cool down in the summer. All of these themes link to local imaginings of an upper-class westernness. As the recent success of gyms (in most Chinese urban areas including this county seat) and hunky male models (in stylish, Chinese men’s magazines) suggest, a muscular male physique now signifies Western leisure more than lower-class laboring (Song and Lee 2010). The Taekwondo marketing likewise suggested that a healthy physique would result from the training. In addition, their marketing materials stated that Taekwondo increased self-reliance, self-confidence, and traditional Chinese self-cultivation (*xiuyang*). Thus Taekwondo linked to imaginings of both a traditional Chinese upper-class and a Western one.

The marketing of sports programs for children in Australia exhibits both similarities and differences to the cases of Taekwondo and swimming in Shandong. Australian marketers suggest that team sports teach general psychological and social skills (teamwork, leadership, etc.) that are valuable to children even if they never go on to

be professional athletes, while individual (as well as team) sports teach children the importance of discipline and goal setting. Thus, as in China, the specific activities are said to develop potential abilities in ways that generalize easily to other aspects of life and the concept of discipline arises in both places. But very often marketing for Australian sports program only emphasizes the capacity of certain programs to teach excellence in a particular sport, or sometimes sports in general (i.e., suggesting that the athletic skills learned in a particular program will make the child a better athlete in whatever sport the child eventually pursues). Such marketing makes sport an end in itself, and thus separates excellence in sport from a ranked position in an overall social hierarchy. In addition, the marketing of the social virtues of teamwork and leadership are completely absent from the Chinese context. I would speculate that Chinese parents are interested primarily in activities that result in individual differentiation of the child, and that “teamwork” and “leadership” are thought of as interactive phenomena that arise out of social situations rather than skills that can be embodied by individual children. At a more basic level, childhood in Shandong is dominated by the shadow of the impending university entrance exam, an exam that strictly allocates social prestige on the basis of individually tested skills and for which abilities in “teamwork” and “leadership” are useless.

Perhaps it is not surprising that recently poor, birth control abiding, rural parents in a rapidly developing but unequal society are focused on issues of class differentiation, or that their senses of class relate to the sorts of individually embodied grace and academic and artistic elegance that they did not have the opportunity to embody themselves when they were children. Most of the activities that are now marketed for children require resources that were completely unavailable for rural Shandong parents just a decade ago. New economic resources (especially large when calculated at the level of what is available per child in this age of overwhelmingly one and two child households) open up new consumptive possibilities. The newness of these activities grants them an aura of mystery. Might they actually have the effects that the marketers claim? As new fields of consumptive possibility open up, no one wants to be left behind. Moreover, as the effects of these activities are outside the experience of the parents themselves, parents are much more likely to follow social fads and fevers in their spending choices.

Perhaps the most widespread fad of all is the feverish desire of parents to send their children to university. As university tuition has risen and job possibilities for university graduates have

declined, this fever well exceeds simple economic rationality. Elsewhere, I have written a book attempting to explain the social, economic, political, and cultural origins of this fever (2011), and here only wish to mention its relation to imaginations of class: regardless of its actual economic effects, university attendance has become the ultimate symbol of embodied upper-classness. It speaks of intelligence, proper upbringing, moral uprightness, and political power all at once in a manner that is both informed by and informs imaginations of *suzhi*. As a consequence there is no need to explain why parents should care about the university entrance exam scores of their children and programs designed to enhance these scores dominate the market for paid educational activities in rural Shandong.

Almost all programs for students at the middle school level (and the majority of programs for primary school students) link to university admittance. They either focus on core academic subjects like math, Chinese, English, and science, or structure their curriculums around the exams for university entrance in specialized courses in music, art, physical education, and dance. In comparison to after-school and vacation activities for primary school children in non-exam subjects, the businesses offering exam-related subjects are able to charge higher fees, attract greater numbers of students and establish programs that occupy greater percentages of the students' time (lasting all day for summer programs, all evening for after school programs, and in the case of private secondary schools, actually taking over the entire secondary curriculum). Marketing for such programs (including private schools and public schools wishing to attract out-of-district children who pay large fees) revolves around the ability of a given program to lead the children to high exam scores, as well as claims of high teacher quality, strategic curriculums, and superior management.

The former of these claims seems fairly self-explanatory. Senior middle schools, at least until 2008, put up billboards describing the percentage of students who scored above certain cutoff lines (the minimum entrance scores for different tiers of university), displayed individual pictures of all the children of a given year who secured university admittance, and ran press releases about students who gained admittance to particularly prestigious universities or who won scholarships. Parents clearly see university admittance as the primary goal of senior middle school and even junior middle school. But what about the other marketing claims? Do not the exam scores speak for themselves?

Let me begin with teacher quality. One way of culturally contextualizing this claim is to relate it to a view of education in which teachers educate by acting as models for the students. The famous saying “act as a person exemplary enough to be a teacher” (*weiren shibiao*) captures some of this presumption. Teachers teach not so much by providing individual attention to students, but by acting as a model of perfection that the children can imitate. The more perfect the model, the more impressive the outcomes of the students’ imitative efforts will be. The importance of modeling in teaching was brought out to me by the lack of concern Shandong parents demonstrated for the problem of class size. In fact, many Shandong parents told me that it was good if their child was in a large class. Large class size indicated that many parents had maneuvered to have their child placed in the class of a particular teacher and, thus, that the teacher was of high quality. Given that the teacher taught more by modeling perfection than providing individual attention to the students, the class size itself was not a negative.

Next are the claims of superior curriculum and management systems. The language for these claims invoked four major themes—strictness, regularization (*guifanhua*), scientific design, and linking to the international (*yu guoji jiegui*). The themes can be tied together in a single narrative in the following way:

There is a single best way of teaching (a given subject) that most teachers don’t understand. This method of teaching was either: (1) first discovered by advanced, western educators with whom we are now linking up, or (2) developed through the miraculous techniques of advanced science, or (3) (and more rarely) understood by ancient Chinese masters but lost to most in the present. We have discovered this method and use rigid (military?) management techniques to ensure that all of our teachers regularly, uniformly, and strictly adhere to this method.

Such a narrative is well-suited to the reality of university entrance in China, where there is a single exam that determines entrance to university for each subject, a situation that makes the ability to teach to the single exam paramount (and especially the ability to anticipate what questions will be posed on the exam and, for the more subjective portions of the exam, like drawings, essays, or dance performances, what the examiners will be looking for). The claims of a miraculous teaching method further play on parents’ own lack of experience in educational endeavors while the use of metaphors of strictness appeal to parents’ desire for a disciplined environment and their well-justified

fears that without strict discipline their children will not succeed in the competitive pursuit of university admittance.

While there are undoubtedly egalitarian discourses circulating in China alongside the hierarchical vision depicted here, the social and political impetuses behind this hierarchical vision are powerful. The university entrance exam itself provides a model of a hierarchy in which everyone may be ranked on a scale with differences as small as a single point. But more importantly, the importance of this exam within Chinese society results from a crucial sort of political compromise in which there is not democracy but there is opportunity for social mobility through exam-centric meritocracy. The opportunities for elite nepotism are thus limited more than they would be otherwise. In addition, authoritarian mechanisms of Party-state government reinforce (and are reinforced by) this hierarchical vision. Hierarchies within the Party itself are strictly enforced and minutely calibrated and the power and leadership of the Party over society are promoted as sacred political ideals.

What might Children Want from these Services?

So far, I have been discussing the marketing of educational programs in Shandong as if they were solely matters between the entrepreneurs who offer the services and the parents who pay for them. Certainly the marketers target parental concerns. But might the children have a different voice in the matter? While I did speak to children during household interviews and observe them in classroom settings, I could not detect a distinctive children’s voice on these issues. Within individual households there could be differences—some children realized that they were not likely to succeed in school and desired to give up trying before their parents were willing to accept reality and relinquish hope of their child reaching university. I also came across children who wished to focus on humanities while their parents thought they should be preparing for the sciences exam. But despite such individual cases, children often gave voice to desires that seemed remarkably similar to those of their parents. More careful research would certainly yield more examples of distinctive children’s voices, as many divergent voices undoubtedly circulate through the mouths and psyches of children. While not denying the existence of such multi-vocality, here I would like to explore some of the reasons for the similarities.

By the time children reach junior middle school, they are fully aware of the emphasis on university entrance exam success that pervades the system. Attending university is never presented as something that is appropriate only for those who enjoy studying a particular subject; rather it is presented as the ultimate measure of human worth and a meritocratic determiner of social status. What one studies is a matter of strategizing for university entrance exam success rather than following individualized tastes. Consequently, while in Shandong in 2007, for example, over 10,000 students sat the special exam for entrance to university level art programs, few in the art education business thought that any of these students had a particular interest in art. Rather these students were ones whose test results did not suggest future success on the university entrance exam (students are tested so regularly in junior and senior middle school that all know their relative placing) and who were thus told that their only hope for attending university was to try to beef up their drawing skills. As one of the art teachers Lily Chumley interviewed put it, "Hardly anyone studies painting because they like it; basically everyone is here because their grades are too low" (Chumley 2009). The fact that these decisions reflect strategies to attend university rather than personal desires means that students focus on the external environment of exam possibilities rather than the inner structure of their own desires. As teachers are likely to understand this environment better than the students, students are perhaps more likely to follow adult advice than might otherwise be the case.

Another factor in students concurring with parents and teachers in the high priority given to university entrance is the manner in which the ethics of filiality is taught in Shandong schools. Teachers regularly remind students of the sacrifices their parents have made for them and especially the sacrifices parents are willing to make in order to enable their children to attend university. The morality of filial piety requires children to repay these sacrifices and teachers suggest that the best way of doing so is to sacrifice non-academic desires and focus on studying hard. Such lessons are even explicitly contained in the textbooks that students memorize. For example, one of the Tang dynasty poems all Shandong sixth grade students memorized in 2006 was titled *Youzi Yin*.¹ It depicts an old mother sewing clothes for her son by candlelight so that he can spend all of his time studying and become an official in a faraway place. Students are taught to memorize the poem so that they can read it aloud with feeling, to imagine the sacrifices that their own parents make on

behalf of their education, and to write essays about how they might repay their own debt to their parents.

Charles Stafford (1995) describes how textbook examples of filial piety in Taiwan during the late 1990s likewise emphasized parents sacrificing so that their children may study. As in *Youzi Yin*, the predominate gendered pattern of these examples involved "textbook mothers" sacrificing for their sons' academic success (Stafford 1995: 70). But Stafford suggests that in Taiwan, such examples implied sacrifice by the family for the nation. In contemporary Shandong, parents, teachers, and students alike understand this sacrifice as a matter of familial self-interest rather than as a sacrifice by the family for the nation. In Shandong, educational success is above all a familial success. In sum, the dynamics of filial sacrifice in rural Shandong require children to participate in their parents' dreams of children who attend university, and state schools are all too happy to encourage this dynamic.

Conclusion

Spending on education in Shandong is caught up in aspirational dreams of generational social mobility for parents, filial piety for children, and, at least in official discourse, national strength for all. Educational discourse portrays class differentials in an extremely hierarchical manner, with justifiably differentiated income potentials, moral rectitude, intellectual ability, and even physical health depicted as the linked outcomes of proper Quality (*suzhi*) raising educational activities. The desires stirred by such discourse take university admittance, preferably in the academic realms defined by the university entrance exams in sciences and the humanities, as the primary object of desire. Of secondary value is university admittance in specialized programs like those in arts, sports, music, dance, etc. For younger students especially, short-term instruction programs in activities that do not directly link to university admittance can be desired if the activities are imagined to enhance the child's Quality.

As is literally the case with University Entrance Exams, this Quality is imagined as if it were measurable on a universal, or at least nationwide, scale. The imaginary existence of a singular scale, in turn, helps to justify a large degree of nationwide standardization in what is taught to children despite a seemingly bewildering range of activities on offer in even a small city like Zouping. In the face

of all of this standardization, then, what is place of individualism, individuality, and the individual psyche?

First of all, it can be pointed out that standardization or homogenization can require more rather than less attention be paid to each individual's psyche. While the use of exemplary models can be considered a relatively inexpensive and non-individualized method of instruction, this method can easily be complemented with individualized attention as to how to lessen a given student's distance from an exemplary norm. In short, private instructors can examine a student's individual psyche in order to help the student reduce his or her individuality.

Second, and perhaps even more importantly, the creation and imagination of a single standardized national or even global hierarchy enables the disembedding of the individual from more local social structures (Durkheim 1956; 1960; 1973; 1979; 1992). The well-standardized student can leave his or her home and family and attend university in a different city or nation and, if he or she does well enough, supposedly even find employment without too much help from local relations. If successful in finding employment, then perhaps even finding a spouse and purchasing a home are possible, though research shows that family support can remain important in all of these life-defining adventures. In a very real sense, the standardization of national labor markets is a way of opening these markets to disembedded individuals who need no personal connection to the employer.

The forms of class differentiation that educational normalization entails suggest a third dynamic of individuation. Recent research about migrant workers in Shenzhen (Chang 2009) as well as my own casual interviewing of migrant workers in Zouping suggests that as migrant laborers become more educated, they become less satisfied with factory work and more likely to constantly search out new jobs. This constant search for new employment is often isolating. Workers move around the country when making their searches, often losing contact with whatever friends they have made in their previous jobs. The constant moving and searching makes young migrant workers feel both lonely and self-reliant. This form of individuation in part stems from the dissatisfaction of comparing work experience to ambitions nurtured in the educational system. A young woman who worked as a head waitress in a nationwide chain of restaurants, for example, told me that she burned with ambition to open her own restaurant. She had come from a rural village in a distant part of Shandong, graduated from a third tier university (and thus completed 19 years of schooling, including the standard three years of preschool), but

was unable to find work in the field she had studied. She hoped to gain promotion from head waitress to assistant manager by being willing to move anywhere in the country where the chain had an opening. In fact, she had already moved to stores in three different cities to become a head waitress. Each move had cost her friendships and, in one case, a boyfriend, but she said, "even though I feel lonely, now I know that I have to rely on myself (*kao ziji*), no one else can help me. I'm too ambitious to just be a waitress. Is that what I went to university for?" In short, education feeds ambitions to move up a class-based hierarchy, which, for those without family connections, requires ever more disembedding mobility.

In any case, as perhaps is true everywhere, complete individualism can only be a myth or a narcissistic fantasy. Humans are social creatures who both depend on others to survive and grow and who define their own identities and place in the world in relation to others. Feelings of being self-reliant as well as conscious attempts to differentiate oneself from the majority of people (the "masses") are doubtlessly important reactions to the hierarchical and homogenizing social forces explored in this paper (Bao 2002). Yet, while aspects of interdependence can be masked by both ideologies and institutional routines, while loneliness and isolation can be felt, and while various structures of social embedding can be dismantled, social interdependence never ends. Processes of individuation are thus always framed by new patterns of social interdependence. In the case of the private educational services of Zouping, the individuating effects are matched by forms homogenization and class differentiation that are similar to what has happened in many other parts of the world, yet unprecedented in terms of their scale and scope.

Note

1. The poem and accompanying didactic material may be found in the year six first semester literature textbook used in Shandong in 2005–06 (Yuwen (Language): Book 11. Shandong: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe (People's Education Press) 2005, 77–81).

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Chapter Ten

Psychiatric Subjectivity and Cultural Resistance: Experience and Explanations of Schizophrenia in Contemporary China

Zhiying Ma¹

It was a busy weekday afternoon in a schizophrenia ward of a renowned psychiatric hospital in Southern China. After visiting their loved ones in the muggy and noisy dayroom, many families stopped by at the air-conditioned office outside of the iron-barred ward and discussed the patients' conditions with the doctors. Among them was Mrs. Liang, a middle-aged newspaper vendor with tanned skin, in a faded T-shirt and shorts, carrying a soup bottle in which she had brought her daughter medicinal soup. Her 19-year-old daughter, Hua, was diagnosed with undifferentiated schizophrenia and had been hospitalized for two months. Mrs. Liang stood in front of Dr. Feng, a young graduate from one of China's top medical schools, and loudly announced her decision to take her daughter out of the hospital to consult some Chinese Medicine practitioners she had found in her hometown. Warned by Dr. Feng that she would have to take responsibility for all the consequences, especially her daughter's potential relapse, she repeated: "I went to check it out in the countryside. Some people did get well after taking Chinese Medicine." Then she changed the topic from medicine to the power of "thinking" by telling a story of a former inpatient who made his way to the hospital through thinking, but also cured himself by thinking. Dr. Feng argued impatiently: "I told you what Hua has is not depression. Don't presume that she can cure it just by thinking." Mrs. Liang replied:

But it's true. The man lived here for several months. In his town there is another woman who's also depressive (youyu). She used to strip

Contributors

Xinyin Chen, Professor, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, USA.

Huihua Deng, Professor, Research Center for Learning Science, Southeast University, China.

Harriet Evans, Professor, Chinese Cultural Studies, University of Westminster, UK.

Vanessa L. Fong, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, USA.

Sung won Kim, Doctoral Candidate, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, USA.

Andrew B. Kipnis, Senior Fellow, Department of Anthropology, School of Culture, History & Language, The Australian National University, Australia.

Hyeon Jung Lee, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Seoul National University, Korea.

Delia Q. Lin, Lecturer, Centre for Asian Studies, School of Social Sciences, The University of Adelaide, Australia.

Zuhong Lu, Professor and Director, Research Center for Learning Science, Southeast University, China.

Zhiying Ma, Joint PhD Student, Departments of Comparative Human Development and Anthropology, University of Chicago, USA.

Wanning Sun, Professor of Media Studies, China Research Centre, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

Ling-Yun Tang, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

Niobe Way, Professor of Applied Psychology, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, New York University, USA.

Emily E. Wilcox, Visiting Assistant Professor of Chinese Studies, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, USA.

Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Professor and Academic Dean, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, USA.

Cong Zhang, Doctoral Candidate, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, USA.

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