



**Panel's title : An Interdisciplinary Dialogue on Orienting Youth in Contemporary China:  
From Institutional to Individual Socialization**

**Titre du panel : Dialogue interdisciplinaire sur la fabrication de la jeunesse en Chine  
contemporaine : des dispositions institutionnels à la socialisation individuelle**

Coordinator (Affiliation, University...) : Siyu LI (Clergé -CMH)

Language : Français & English

Topics : socialisation en Chine (sociologie, science politique et anthropologie)

**Panel presentation :**

The socialization of youth is a crucial question in every society that influences a country's future. Having been through tremendous social changes over the past three decades, China faces challenges in the transmission of value systems, behavioral norms and social roles from older to younger generations (Grbich, 1990). As a period of transition between adolescence and adulthood, youth reflects the accumulation of primary socialization in family and secondary socialization in schools (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Different socializing institutions (Meyer, 1977), especially educational institutions, serve as the frame of the first life choices of individual youth actors: higher education, political stance, profession and lifestyle. Meanwhile, socializing institutions promote their own ideologies among young people, through which different subjectivities are produced in the power relationships between social groups.

The panel attempts to answer this question: "How do institutions in such a changing society manage to frame the socialization processes and differentiate individuals by orienting them to different paths?" Presenters from different disciplines – political science, sociology and anthropology – approach this question from different perspectives and research methods. From the political science point of view, Liu and Doyon demonstrate how experiences in elite universities, as a student or as a student counselor, could be benefic to succeed in a political career.. From the sociological point of view, Li and Fang show how public and private actors in secondary education prepare students to develop specific competence (academic or artistic) while managing institutional constraints. Finally, Zeng examines, from the anthropological point of view, how reading the Confucian canon constitutes an alternative education and allows the transmission of not only the traditional knowledge but also the relationship with the saint.

**Résumé du panel :**

La socialisation des jeunes est une question cruciale dans toutes les sociétés. Etant donné les transformations majeures qu'a connu la société chinoise depuis une trentaine d'années, elle fait désormais face à de sérieux défis pour ce qui est de la transmission des systèmes de valeur, des normes de comportement, et de la distribution des statuts sociaux à la jeune génération. En tant que période de transition entre l'adolescence et l'adulte, la jeunesse est le moment d'une superposition de la socialisation primaire familiale et de la socialisation secondaire scolaire. Les différentes institutions socialisatrices, surtout éducatives, encadrent les premiers choix de vie en fonction des dispositions acquises : les choix de l'éducation supérieure, les choix de carrière et de style de vie. Le processus n'est point neutre, les institutions socialisatrices reflètent l'idéologie des groupes sociaux et contribuent au recrutement de nouveaux membres pour ces derniers.

Le présent panel essaie de répondre à la question suivante : comment les institutions, au sein d'une société en pleine transformation, encadre la socialisation des jeunes et les orientent vers différentes trajectoires ? Les communicants du panel aborderont cette question depuis un point de vue interdisciplinaire et via des méthodes variées. Depuis l'angle de la science politique, Liu et Doyon



montreront comment les expériences dans les universités d'élite, en tant qu'étudiants ou en tant que tuteurs universitaires, peuvent être bénéfiques pour réussir une carrière politique. D'un point de vue sociologique, Li et Fang s'interrogeront sur les manières par lesquelles les acteurs privés ou publics dans l'éducation secondaire préparent les élèves tout en gérant les contraintes institutionnelles. Finalement, Zeng discutera en tant qu'anthropologue, comment la lecture des canons confucéens constitue une éducation alternative qui permet de transmettre à la jeune génération non seulement le savoir traditionnel, mais aussi un rapport avec le sacré.

**Key words :** Socialization, Chinese education, cultivation, recruitment, pathway orientation, alternative education, cultural capital, legitimation, institutionalization, culture, China

### **Participants :**

1) Siyu LI (Clerse (Université de Lille)- ETT-CMH (ENS)– Chinese Academy of Social Sciences)

**Communication's title :** . The making of hierarchy: the preparation of National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) and the socialization of rankings in China

**Language :** English

### **Presentation :**

Considering the population involved (9.6 million in 2016), the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) in China is the biggest high-stakes standardized test in the world and it's the main path for Chinese students to enter universities. How the preparation of such a competitive and meaningful examination shape student's subjectivities? The study shows how repeating exams and rankings help students to prepare academically and mentally. As the center of different apparatus interrelating and constructing the social and physical environments for interactions in schools, multiple rankings help students to 1) rationalize cutoff lines and categorizations produced by them; 2) choose and interpret the different and complex meaning of rankings; 3) prepare aspirations and professional projects according to categorizations established on academic results. We argue that the dispositions to manipulate social meaning produced by rankings and to accept the decisive effects of instable academic performances are two main fruits of socializing process during the preparation. Meanwhile, they are the pillar of the NCEE institution, legitimating its necessity and efficiency. The data are drawn on a total of 12 months ethnographic work in two high schools with different academic performances in Beijing, and 99 interviews with students, teachers and parents.

2) Hanzhang LIU & Yuhua Wang (Columbia University & Harvard University)

**Communication's title :** Working for the Autocrat: Elite University Network and Career Choice in China

**Language :** English



**Presentation :**

How does an authoritarian regime like China attract talent to work for the government and hence strengthen its state capacity? We argue that the Chinese regime, by adopting recruitment strategies that create certain cliques or informal networks within the government, incentivize capable individuals within the same network to choose politics as their career, thus generating a steady supply of desirable candidates for political selection. We test our theory by examining college students' career choice in China. Given that the higher education recruitment in China, the National College Entrance Examination, is an open system where universities admit students based on arbitrary cutoff scores, we exploit a discontinuity in the probability of attending elite universities around the cutoff scores and analyze students' career preference as a result of attending elite universities. Analyzing two waves of college student surveys, we demonstrate strong evidence that the experience of attending an elite university has a positive causal effect on students' preference for a career in government. We further explore possible mechanisms, focusing on the socialization of students on campus. We find that attending an elite university does not make students' political attitudes different from others, but it instills a perception of strong alumni network in government, which in turn encourages these students to work for the government, as they believe they can take advantage of these networks to better advance their career in politics.

3) Jérôme Doyon (CERI (Science Po Paris))

**Communication's title :** From Campus Politics to State politics: mentorship and risk-taking in Chinese Elite Universities

**Language :** English :

**Presentation :**

Becoming a student counselor is a very popular position among young college graduate in contemporary China. In a configuration of high unemployment among young graduates, competition is fierce to obtain these positions which provide a decent salary and job security. In addition, competitive positions are sometimes used as political springboards. While the majority of student counselors pursue a career in higher education, the ones who choose a political career have a strong advantage compared to officials who would have taken the civil service exam after graduation. Focusing on the socialization of student counselors and their various personal backgrounds, I unveil the mechanisms which push some of them to take the risk of a political career. Based on in-depth interviews with counselors of four different universities, based in Beijing and Nanjing, and on biographical data I show that there is a clear difference between the ones who fully persevere in a politically committed path and the ones who do not take the risk of leaving a comfortable position on campus. Beyond the fact that some are simply disillusioned by their first experience outside campus, I show that personal relations, the university they come from and gender are determining factors.

4) Jun FANG (Northwestern University)

**Communication's title :** Constrained Creativity: Cultivating the Morality and Creativity of Chinese Art Students

**Language :** English :



**Presentation :**

The paradox of creativity education in China is that creative human capital is the key to the next stage of economic development but is also seen by the government as a potential threat to its authoritarian regime. This paper shows how individual and collective actors practice creativity and reconcile this paradox within the system. In particular, it examines the micro-processes of how profit-seeking prep schools resolve institutional contradictions in training students to pass the Art Test for university art programs. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and 30 in-depth interviews in two art test prep schools in Beijing, the paper shows prep schools play a role of “HR” in the Art Test system through teaching students 1) creative practices with *cognition constraints* and *variability constraints* that are produced through repetitive training and standardization of art, and 2) moral doctrines that emphasize effort, responsibility and self-actualization. Constrained creativity is a social role that art students learn to perform in small groups by bridging creativity and morality. It is also the outcome of group action responding to institutional contradictions, which, in turn, makes art a pathway for students with poor academic performance to educational success.

5) Yukun ZENG (Universtiy of Chicago)

**Communication's title :** Becoming Saint: Temporality and Alternativity of the Socialization of Dujing Movement

**Language :** English :

**Presentation :**

Dujing, literarily reading (Confucian) canons, is a nationally developed but constantly controversial alternative educational movement in China. What renders both its development and controversy is the Dujing's particular pedagogy: reading repetitively and intensively, without interpretation or encouragement for understanding the texts, which is claimed to be following China's traditional way of teaching. The common criticism and suspicion of Dujing doubt its adaptability to modern society, namely doubt its capacity to successfully socialize youth according to the usual criteria of education: grade, entrance to college, career development, and et cetera. In contrast to these immediate judgments, this paper is based on a month of immersive ethnography in a Dujing camp. Rather than treating reading as merely a transparent knowledge transmission and socialization as merely a life process transforming the liminal youth to meet social criteria, this paper notices 1) the socio-hermeneutic (Glaeser 2014) nature of reading, namely its inevitable relatedness to other readers and the temporal contour of the life-world surrounding reading, 2) the society to be socialized to could be a social imaginary that normatively and teleologically orients "the making of youth". Analytically, this paper argues that Dujing's pedagogy entails a specific teleological-repetitive social chronotope (Bakhtin 1981, Agha 2007) that underpins Dujing youth's socialization. The same chronotope also formulates the alternativity of Dujing youth's future as well as the alternativity of Dujing education in the sociocultural field of education in China.



6) Yves RUSSELL (CECMC (EHES))

**Communication's title :** History teaching in China: How to set boundaries for teachers' speech  
**Titre de la communication :** Cadrer la parole enseignante en Chine : l'exemple de l'enseignement de l'histoire

**Language :** Français

**Presentation :**

History teaching, often combined with geography and civic education, is considered crucial to build and transmit common values and common imagination, foundations of a supposed "national identity". In an authoritarian country, like People's Republic of China, it's essential that the curriculum produced within political and educative institutions is well transmitted at the school level. However, even within this authoritarian state, transmission is less guaranteed than expected (A. Jones, 2007). Our communication will highlight how Chinese state do its best to transmit the prescriptive curriculum to school classes through normative, pedagogical and material frameworks. Based on a field research and numerous interviews, our demonstration will reveal the little room history teachers have to interpret the content of history programs, but on the contrary that the space they have is dedicated to pedagogical innovation in order to transmit well the programs. We will insist on the junior secondary school exam (*zhongkao*, 中考), on which limited research has been done. We will show that school exams have the important function to "actualize" programs in keeping them in line with the political present: in Xi Jinping era, exams' questions often make reference to the "Chinese dream" and the "Great rejuvenation of the Chinese people". The exams give the opportunity to actualize year after year the interpretation of historical events faster than history textbooks, which are renewed less frequently. In a country where exams remain central, the practice of history teaching is then "disciplined" much more surely than by a more oppressive control.

**Résumé :**

L'enseignement de l'histoire, associé à celui de la géographie et de l'éducation civique, est considéré comme essentiel dans la construction et la transmission de valeurs et d'imaginaire communs, socle d'une présumée « identité nationale ». Dans un pays autoritaire comme la République populaire de Chine, il est essentiel que le curriculum produit au sein des instances politiques et éducatives nationales soit bien transmis au niveau local de l'école. Pourtant, même au sein de cet État autoritaire, la transmission est moins assurée qu'on ne pourrait s'y attendre (A. Jones, 2007). L'objet de notre propos sera de montrer quels sont les cadres normatifs, pédagogiques et matériels qui permettent à l'État chinois d'assurer au mieux la transmission du curriculum prescrit jusque dans les classes. A partir d'une recherche sur le terrain et de nombreux entretiens, nous montrerons que l'espace de liberté accordé aux professeurs laisse peu de marge à l'interprétation des contenus des programmes d'histoire, mais promeut au contraire l'innovation dans la manière de transmettre ces contenus. On s'attardera sur un objet très peu étudié que sont les contenus des examens de fin de collège (*zhongkao*, 中考). Les examens permettent d'actualiser les programmes d'histoire en les inscrivant dans un présent politique : les références au « rêve chinois » et à « la renaissance du peuple chinois » parsèment les questions posées aux élèves, et permettent d'actualiser année après année l'interprétation des événements historiques, au contraire des manuels scolaires, renouvelés moins fréquemment. Dans un pays où la place de l'examen est centrale, cela permet de canaliser l'enseignement en classe plus sûrement que par toute autre forme de contrôle oppressif.