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## The Shaping of Citizenship Education in a Chinese Context

**Abstract** The global flow of citizenship education in China has spurred much discussion in Chinese academic circles. This study explores the interaction between citizenship education and China's the existing political-ideological education and moral education as a space is negotiated a space in the current "ideoscape." A qualitative approach is adopted to synthesize the literature coming from China on citizenship education from an interpretive and critical perspective. The research findings suggest: (a) The territory of orthodox political-ideological education is being narrowed down as its relationship with citizenship education is configured; (b) citizenship education and moral education are represented using different images to delineate their distinctions; and (c) the introduction of "global citizenship education" includes many new topics and competencies that expands the current ideoscape. This study argues that the ongoing debates on citizenship education are deeply rooted in China's structural transformation, in which society tends to be separated from state. In negotiating its own territory, citizenship education reshapes China's ideoscape in the education field. The paper concludes by suggesting that citizenship education should make a unique contribution to facilitating young citizens in a reexamination of the values imbedded in political-ideological education and moral education with a new social consensus being reached through the communication of ideas.

**Keywords** citizenship, global citizens, ideoscape, moral education, political education, ideology

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### Introduction

Citizenship education has gained tremendous attention in China since the adoption of the Action Plan for the Development of Civic Morality<sup>1</sup> (hereafter,

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the *Action Plan*) in 2001. There are two pronounced changes in this directive. First, apart from the distinction between “the people and the Party” in the conventional political narratives, “the citizenry and government” has emerged as an important social relationship to address socio-political issues (Zhao, 2009). This discursive shift from “the people” to “the citizenry” also eliminates the old-fashioned dichotomy between “the people” and “the enemy,” often used in revolutionary times (Zhang, 2011). The second change worth noting is that moral education is moving to a prominent status, incorporated alongside of political and ideological education. The changes embedded in the *Action Plan* created a niche for Chinese academia to transform the ideology-laden political education formed during the Maoist era and legitimize the pursuit of citizenship education as a changing force to spur China’s social transitions.

A closer examination of this directive, however, suggests that the new changes are still largely a symbolic gesture (Fairbrother, 2005). Specific measures to implement citizenship education at the practical level are rarely mentioned. In this paper, I attempt to explore how citizenship education interacts with already existing political-ideological education and moral education to negotiate its meanings in the local context. My argument is largely based on a review of the literature on citizenship education from the Chinese Mainland academic circles published between 2001 and 2012. It should be noted that different stakeholders engage simultaneously in the construction of citizenship education, including the government, public media, schools, enterprises, and non-government organizations, resulting in a kaleidoscopic view. As Camicia and Zhu (2011, p. 614) recently argue, the discursive field of citizenship education is “fractured, dynamic, and context-specific.” The voices of academia are particularly central to this paper, because of their strong influence on school practices through the means of curriculum design and teacher training, public media, and even state policies. As indicated by Suri and Clarke (2009), practice and policy are interconnected in education. I view the intellectual discourse as an arena of discursive interaction—a concept borrowed from Fraser (1992)—in which different understandings and conceptions of citizenship education developed by local academics from differing standpoints interplay with each other.

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## The Theoretical Lens

A rapid rise in the amount of Chinese literatures on citizenship education occurred after the 1990s, especially after the delivery of the *Action Plan* in 2001. The reason why this directive serves as a turning point, as Edelman (1988) has argued, lies in the fact that it provides “symbolic reassurance” and conveys an impression that the issue in question is attracting concern from serious policy

makers. Between the 1980s and 1990s, scholarship in the field was rather scarce, and often carried words with some negative connotations, such as “capitalism” or “experiences in foreign countries” in the title (Li & Zhong, 2002; Luo, 2010). Yet over the recent decade, the focus of discussion has gradually moved to the question of how to localize citizenship in a Chinese context and integrate it into the current educational system (Liu, 2011). Zhao (2009) applied Arjun Appadurai’s notion of “ideoscapes” to explore how the global concept of “citizenship education” is ascribed local meanings in a Chinese context. According to Appadurai (1990, pp. 9–10), the ideoscapes are constituted by “elements of the Enlightenment world-view, which consists of a concatenation of ideas, terms, and images, including “freedom,” “welfare,” “rights,” “sovereignty,” “representation” and the master-term “democracy.” Since ideoscapes relate closely to the ideologies of state and also counter-ideologies of social movements in local circumstances, the “global flows” of these concepts may be problematic in semantic and pragmatic senses:

Semantic to the extent that words (and their lexical equivalents) require careful translation from context to context in their global movements; and pragmatic to the extent that the use of these words by political actors and their audiences may be subject to very different sets of contextual conventions that mediate their translation into public politics. (Appadurai, 1990, p. 10)

Appadurai’s analysis is insightful for the China case. The early Chinese literature on citizenship education has particularly concentrated on international experiences, mostly in “Western,” developed countries (Huang & Huang, 2009; Liu, 2011). In both the English and Chinese literature, much effort has been made to study the meanings of “citizenry” and “citizenship education.” There have been different lexical expressions with reference to citizenship education between intellectual discourse and political narratives, and also between different scholarly schools, such as “civic and moral education” (first appeared in the *Action Plan*) and “civic awareness education” (first appeared in the Report to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2007). Most Chinese writers conceive of these two concepts as a product of Western civilization and thus the discussion of citizenship education in local scholarship is often accompanied by a cultural struggle of self-identity (Zhao, 2009). Some indigenous scholars insist that the Chinese version of citizenship education should be established in a way that highlights Chinese characteristic and cultural heritage (e.g., Zhu & Feng, 2008; Tan, 2007; Liu, 2011).

Accommodating citizenship education within China’s socio-political structure poses a pressing challenge to the research agenda of socialist science scholars in China. While addressing the question of how to carry out “civic moral education”

in the school setting, *the Action Plan* in reality reinforces the importance of moral education and calls for the strengthening of moral education in the existing system from primary to tertiary levels. The most relevant paragraph focused on schooling in the directive is as follows:

The school is an important base for systematically carrying out moral education. ... We need to scientifically plan for the concrete content of moral education appropriate to age and level of study and develop standards for students' daily behavior while strengthening school discipline and character. We must emphasize the role of teachers as models and bring moral education into all aspects of schools' educational endeavors. We need to organize appropriate productive labor and societal experience activities for students, helping them to understand society and the nation, and enhance their sense of social responsibility. (The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, 2001, p. 62)

It is clearly seen from the extract above that, in spite of an explicit pronouncement on the importance of citizenship, the directive avoids the matter of how to accommodate citizenship education into the current ideoscape. This is also the case with the President's Report to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2007. Although the report calls for strengthening civic awareness education, there is no detailed illustration of this term and the existing political education system remains its massively dominant status.

The purpose of this study is to explore how the spread of citizenship education in China can negotiate a space within the current "ideoscape" through semantic and pragmatic interpretations of this new term and reinterpretation of the old local terms. Appadurai's concept of "scapes" refers to both imaginative and material worlds (Carney, 2009). The new construction of citizenship education in the Chinese context is accompanied by its institutionalization in social practice, which inevitably involves the tension of negotiating the territory with the well-established political-ideological education and moral education. Political education, ideological education, and moral education constitute three major domains in the current ideoscape in China. Li and Zhong (2002) made a comprehensive distinction between these three domains. Political education refers to education on upholding the Four Basic Principles, i.e., upholding the socialist road, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, the state policies, and laws. Ideological education indicates a cultivation of the worldview of dialectical and historical materialism and the values of socialism. Moral education refers to training in the virtues of honesty, serving the people, loving the country, and collectivism. At the practical level, political education and ideological education are closely intertwined with each other and hereafter they are referred to as

political-ideological education in the public discourse. This paper will follow this convention and put the two categories together. It should be noted that political-ideological education also includes other relevant terms such as patriotic education, education on national conditions, and spiritual civilization education, because these notions are fused into the conceptions of political and ideological education (Zhao & Fairbrother, 2010). Moral education may be perceived as having some overlap with political-ideological education. According to Fairbrother's (2013) explanation, the notion of rule by morality has turned moral education into a mechanism of governing. There has, however, been a discrepancy in the understanding of moral education between the intellectual discourse and political narratives. As a consequence, moral education is kept as a distinct category in this study.

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## A Note on Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach to synthesize the Chinese literature on citizenship education from an interpretive and critical perspective (Hammersley, 2001; Suri & Clarke, 2009). This interpretive, critically oriented synthesis situates the voices (and silence) of Chinese Mainland scholars in the social structural context and explores how their narratives are constructed and their meanings ascribed (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Suri & Clarke, 2009). As mentioned above, the literature in this field is rapidly growing in Chinese academic circles. According to Huang and Huang's (2009) statistics, the number of the academic journal papers on citizenship education rose rapidly to 1075 between 1999 and 2008, while there had only been 113 papers between 1980 and 1998. This study makes an attempt to synthesize the academic papers that focus specifically on the relationship between citizenship education, political-ideological education, and moral education. After sketching out a theoretical position and developing a research purpose, I employ Suri and Clarke's (2009) method of purposely informed selection to include the relevant literature. In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the huge amount of literature, I selected the review papers on citizenship or moral education published between the 1980s and 2011. Examples include quantitative meta-analysis (e.g., Huang & Huang, 2009; Liu, 2011) and qualitative research synthesis (e.g., Zhu & Feng, 2008; Ye & Tan, 2009; Luo, 2010).

Three themes emerge from the academic discourse on capturing discursive interactions between political-ideological education, moral education, and citizenship education in China's current ideoscape: negotiation of citizenship education with political-ideological education, reinterpretation of moral

education, and the cultivation of global citizens. The three themes are generated through an interactive process between evaluating and interpreting the narratives and the “tacit knowledge” the researcher holds derived from her experience (Hammersley, 2001, p. 549). Such a non-positivist approach particularly pursues “explanatory power” (Hammersley, 2001, p. 548), i.e., constructing an overarching, connected understanding to conceptualize the phenomenon of citizenship education in China. As such, the author acknowledges that the conceptualizations of citizenship education might differ from those of other researchers who have conducted similar research, yet applied different analytical frameworks. As Hammersley (2001) has explained, there may be far more than one relationship among different studies for a piece of synthetic research. In this sense, synthesizing is a process of applying “informed subjectivity” and “reflexivity” (Suri & Clarke, 2009, p. 408).

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## Findings

### Negotiation with Political-Ideological Education

The conventional political-ideological education was formed to cater to pre-1980s Chinese society, in which the state maintained absolute power in dominating every aspect of peoples’ lives socially, politically, economically, and culturally. In such an environment, the distinctions between public and private realms were obscured in social life. The collective expression “We,” instead of the personal concept “I” pervaded the values that students learned at school, while citizenship rights, such as privacy and freedom, caught little attention (Hou & Jiang, 2011). Zhang (2011) analyzed the pervading socio-structural factors of the time and explained the reasons why citizens were deprived of a private realm:

All social resources were centralized by the state; and political activities predominantly occupied economic, entertainment and moral fields of people’s social lives. The state nearly put the living of social members entirely under its control, and consequently individuals lost their ‘private realm.’ In their spirituality, the people lacked an awareness of individuality and citizenry. In reality, everybody lived in a collective form, and their participation in social and economic spheres and expressions of interests had to be mediated through “work units” (*danwei*) or other state apparatuses. Living in such a highly centralized environment tightly controlled by the state, individuals largely lost their self consciousness and independence. (Zhang, 2011, p. 155)

In the post-Mao era, China’s social structure has experienced a fundamental change from that described above, to one wherein citizens enjoy more freedom

due to the market economy and are undoubtedly requesting more freedom and guarantees of citizenship rights. As Yu (2011, p. 70) described, citizenship education can transform “the embarrassment” of ideological-political education, because it separates the state from society, gives more respect to individuals’ choices, and enhances students’ autonomy in terms of citizenship identity and consciousness as well as their civic *suzhi*. *Suzhi* refers to “the innate and nurtured physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, and ideological qualities of human bodies and their conduct,” according to Jacka’s (2009, p. 524) synthesis of the international research on this term. The discourse of *suzhi* appears widely in the policy rhetoric of political and social elites and also in everyday conversations in China (Kipnis, 2007). This discourse is frequently used by those in power to discredit those of lower social status, especially disadvantaged groups including ethnic minorities, women, and rural migrant workers, in addressing issues such as modernity, civility, and civilization (Jacka, 2009).

While justifying the strengthening of civic moral education, the *Action Plan* employed the term *moral suzhi* to support their case:

Education is the foundation for raising citizens’ moral quality (*suzhi*). ...We should persist in carrying out moral education among all citizens and continuously instill the ideology and moral requirements of developing socialism with Chinese characteristics in the minds of all Party members, cadres, and masses, helping them to understand what is right and what is wrong, what one can and cannot do, what must be advocated, and what should be firmly opposed. (The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, 2001, p. 62)

In contrast to the purpose of the authorities to maintain social domination, the discourse of *suzhi* is utilized by local intellectuals to justify their effort to reform the conventional political-ideological education and argue the necessity of citizenship education in China. Many writers (e.g., Liu, 2009; Tan, 2007) contend that to eliminate the deficiency in civic *suzhi* is a requirement of modernity that is vital for educational and social progress in China. Tan (2007) observed that there is a self-conflicting deficiency in the “civic *suzhi*” of Chinese citizens: Some young citizens have indifferent attitudes and lack the passion to actively engage in socialist democracy, while others exercise their civil rights by committing irrational acts that may harm the state, society, and other citizens.

Compared with citizenship education, political-ideological education suffers multiple limitations in adapting to China’s transformation in the eyes of local academics. First, political-ideological education places more emphasis upon ideology and state policies than on providing students with necessary training on the law and democracy (Yu, 2011). Students are seldom offered opportunities to engage in social activities as independent and responsible citizens (Tan, 2007).

In this context, citizenship education is only inserted sporadically in the textbooks, and the coverage is neither comprehensive nor systematic (Zhang, 2011). Students trained in the conventional approach of political-ideological education have been described as lacking “rational attitudes toward civic participation” (Tan, 2007), adequate “civic spirit,” “civic awareness,” or “public spirit” (Zhao, 2003; Sun, 2007; Zhang, 2011), or “independent character” (Li & Zhong, 2002; Wang, 2011). Second, the notion of political-ideological education was developed in a system dominated by a centrally planned economy in which social life was tightly monitored by a totalitarian government. As a result, individuals are primarily cultivated to fulfill obligations and responsibilities toward society and state, while their citizenship rights receive scarce attention (Yu, 2011). However, during the Reform Period, there is an increasing concern among teachers and scholars as to what degree state education can intervene in students’ private realms (Hou & Jiang, 2011). Third, students are limited in their political-ideological education as they lack knowledge about political systems in other countries and fail to develop an objective and comparative perspective with which to evaluate them (Zhang, 2011). This point will be discussed further later in this paper.

It can be seen from the above discussion that some attempts have been made to confine the territory of the existing political-ideological education to a much narrower space on the basis of an official rhetoric of civic *suzhi* in constructing the meaning of citizenship education. The interaction between conventional political-ideological education and citizenship education is deeply rooted in the structural change in Chinese society, i.e., the divorcement between public and private realms. According to Li and Zhong’s (2002) understanding, citizenship education is suitable for all ordinary members in society, whereas political-ideological education might be for only a small group of pioneering members, because its particular political orientations (embracing the ideologies and values of the Party in power) demand much higher political awareness. Writers such as Ye (2011) suggest that the newly emerging citizenship education should not be turned into another version of political-ideological education, in spite of an overlap in the coverage of teaching content.

### **Reinterpretation of Moral Education**

Moral education has been intermingled with political-ideological education throughout the communist regime. Though downplayed prior to the 1980s, moral education increasingly plays an important role in the political narrative and at school levels under the new state legitimacy of rule by morality (Fairbrother,



2013). Ye and Tan's (2009) review of the literature on moral education indicates that it was primarily construed as a mediating mechanism for transmitting social-ideological and moral norms to the personal virtues of individuals, and its core values ought to contain Communism, patriotism, internationalism, and collectivism. This kind of understanding was especially active in the 1980s. Tan (2000) observed that "a broad sense" of moral education is being constructed by the state in the post-Mao times, denoting that moral education is understood not simply as a cultivation of virtues and morality, but also contains education in political knowledge, orthodox ideology, patriotism, and psychological health. Despite the authorities' effort to integrate moral education into their governance mechanism and propose a politically-framed conception, Chinese educational researchers also attempt to develop a more academic understanding of moral education. Influential theories in the academic field include moral education through aesthetic appreciation, and other theories based on the dialogic approach, the life-practice approach, the activity-oriented approach, the emotional approach, and the learning to care approach (Ye & Tan, 2009; Zhao & Fairbrother, 2010).

Although extensive reforms have taken place in the education and socio-economic fields since the 1980s, the "broad sense" of moral education—in Tan's (2000) terms—has seen little change in the official policy discourse. One example is the *Action Plan*, which actually inserted a "civic" component in the mosaic understanding of morality but provided little explanations of its meaning. Instead, many social issues were framed in the discourse of morality. A prominent example is as follows:

The development of our nation's civic morality continues to face numerous problems. Some sectors of society and some places have lost moral control: the boundaries between right and wrong, good and evil, beauty and ugliness are blurred; money worship, hedonism, and extreme individualism are growing; people seek rights while neglecting their duties and harm the public interest to benefit their private interests; dishonesty, cheating, and deception have become social evils; and the pursuit of personal power, corruption, and degeneration are serious phenomena. (The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, 2001, p. 57)

This extract illustrates an organic integration of moral issues ("harm the public interest to benefit their private interests," "dishonesty"), civic components ("people seek rights while neglecting their duties"), and political-ideological issues ("extreme individualism") in the construction of "civic morality." The dilemma of such a conception of morality lies in the difficulty in making judgments in China's new, market-oriented social environment that embraces virtues such as competition and personal achievement: Why are the "pursuit of

personal power,” “degeneration,” “money worship” and “hedonism” problematic? The criteria used by authorities are also ambiguous, for example how to judge what is “right and wrong, good and evil, beautiful and ugly.” Additionally, it is interesting to see that legal problems such as “cheating,” “deception,” and “corruption” are also classified into the moral category.

While interpreting the *Action Plan* issued by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, and specifying the implementation measures, the Ministry of Education goes back to the established system of moral education:

Young students are the target population of civic and moral education, and schools are an important front for systematically carrying out moral education among them. Strengthening civic and moral education is an important task for schools’ moral education work. All levels of education administration and all levels and types of schools should give priority to and strive hard for the development of young students’ morality in their educational work. (Chinese Communist Party Committee of the Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 70)

The statement above suggests that the state tends to give up the traditionally political means to tackle their identified social problems and instead relies upon the power of morality (Fairbrother, 2013). Another message that the directive conveys is that the state proposes a morality-oriented understanding of citizenship education and attempts to develop citizenship education through the established channels of moral education. Some scholars (e.g., Li & Zhong, 2002) have pointed out that it is a misunderstanding of equating citizenship education to education for civic virtues.

The political conception of moral education by the state contrasts with the discussions in the intellectual discourse. Similar to political-ideological education, the meaning of moral education is also undergoing a change because of citizenship education being introduced over the recent decades. While delineating the relationship between the two terms, two consciously fashioned “distinctions” emerge: Moral education is conceived of as being more relevant to local culture and more individual-focused, while citizenship education and even the notion of citizenship is “borrowed” from the West and appears to accommodate a modern, market-dominated society. For example, Zhu and Feng (2008, pp. 13–14) contend that moral education is derived from traditional Chinese culture and emphasizes “relations” between persons and “personal feelings” instead of laws and rules. The market economy has spurred the development of the public realm, and requires a new concept of social relations in which equality and independence serve as the basic norms (Zhu & Feng, 2008). Likewise, Ye and Tan (2009) argue that citizenship education has important implications for China because Chinese society is experiencing a transition from agricultural to industrial society, from a semi-closed to an open society, and from

an ethic-based to a law-governed society. Citizenship education and moral education may effectively complement each other, because the objective of the former is to nurture rational, independent, autonomous, and qualified citizens and the latter aims to foster the moral development and personal growth of individual citizens (Ye & Tan, 2009).

Before citizenship education captures widespread attention in China, local scholars have made attempts to disentangle the interconnection between political-ideological education and moral education in the Post-Mao era. In the process of shaping an understanding of citizenship education in a Chinese context, the meanings of moral education are re-interpreted to delineate the territorial line between citizenship education and moral education: A more “private” and “local” image of moral education is presented, while citizenship education is depicted as being more “public” and “Western,” oriented to the needs of modern society and a market economy. Accommodating citizenship education within a politically bound conception of moral education helps to alleviate the tension between a growing pluralization of value systems among citizens and the state’s reluctance to retreat from its intervention into citizens’ private realms in contemporary society.

### **Cultivation of “Global Citizens”**

The third theme that has attracted much attention in the Chinese literature is the discussion of “global citizenship education,” which is widely embraced by both educational researchers and practitioners over the recent decade (Gao, 2010; Wan, 2005; Wang, 2011). Scholars such as Banks (2008) and Davies (2006) contend that as a newly developed concept, global citizenship education should be more concerned with social justice and cultural conflict, instead of simply education that fosters students’ international awareness. The flow of this concept in the Chinese world has intrigued local scholars to reflect on the limitations of political-ideological education and moral education and expand the current ideoscape by including many up-and-coming topics borrowed from the international literature.

The accelerated popularity of global citizenship education is inseparable from the context in which China has been increasingly involved in the globalization process, and thus Chinese schools and universities have more chances to establish partnerships with their counterparts in other countries. Just as citizenship education is represented in local scholarship as being widely launched in Western developed countries, training global citizens is also depicted as a global trend and an important national aim of education in many countries (Fu, 2006; Li & Feng, 2008). Attempts in other countries include global education and multicultural education in the US, global education and international education in

Canada, intra-ethnic education in Russia, and the project of cultivating the Japanese with an international vision in Japan (Fu, 2006). Apart from introducing international experiences, Chinese academics have also made efforts to develop a framework to construct a Chinese version of global citizenship education within the local scholarship. For example, Wang (2011) suggested six dimensions: identities and self-identification, humanism and human rights, morality and duty, democracy and rule by law, peace and understanding, and environment and ecology. Wan (2005) proposed that the basic content of global citizenship education should entail the following components:

- Knowledge: Understanding self as part of the world; knowing the individual's rights and responsibilities and having a global vision;
- Competences: Critical thinking, problem solving, collaborating with others, and negotiating conflicts;
- Values and attitudes: Justice, fairness, friendship, equality, appreciating and respecting differences based on culture, gender, race, sustainable development, and cherishing the resources on the planet; and
- Action: Believing that each individual has competency in correcting unfairness and irrational issues; being willing to take actions by himself/herself to make a more just, peaceful and sustainable developing world. (Wan, 2005, p. 100)

Thanks to the new concept of global citizenship education, many topics that are seldom covered in conventional schooling practices are introduced in textbooks and classes, such as environmental issues, poverty, and multiculturalism. Competencies such as critical thinking, cooperation, and problem solving are also new additions to political-ideological education and moral education.

The notion of global citizenship education potentially poses challenges to the current norms and practices in the education field. Wang (2011) proposed that the development of Chinese citizens in the era of globalization should uphold three principles: respecting universal human values, subjecting the promotion of nationalism to democracy, and having an awareness of rights and fostering social participation. Ye (2011) holds a similar view and argues that the cultivation of national identity should be part of citizenship education and avoid a nationalistic orientation. The scholars upholding these views of global citizenship education articulate that students should be provided with chances to develop global awareness and international understanding, and prepared to engage in the pursuit of well-being for all worldwide. Moreover, a distinct characteristic of global citizenship education is grounded in one fundamental belief: An individual citizen's personal behavior has the potential to make a difference in society at both the local and global levels, and each citizen should participate with the goal of changing reality at the global level. This contrasts sharply with the

conceptions of moral education (either in political narratives or in the intellectual discourse) that emphasize the values of maintaining social order (for example, loyalty and harmony), rather than the pursuit of social change. The different values, competencies, and skills required of global citizenship education may encourage local academics to re-examine existing educational practices developed within the framework of political-ideological education and moral education. Camicia and Zhu (2011, p. 611) argue that “the discourse of nationalism expressed as national stability and safety” played a much more dominant role than globalization or cosmopolitanism in the discursive field of citizenship education in China. This paper supplements their argument, based largely on the analysis of the state directives, combined with the insights of local intellectuals. The discussion of global citizenship education raises an interesting question as to how it is incorporated into the understanding of local citizenship education in China and interacts with political-ideological and moral education.

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## Concluding Thoughts

The spread of the global concept of “citizenship education” in China has initiated by the local academic community but it then spread an internally from academia to the government, from social elites to ordinary citizens. Different stakeholders used their own points of view to represent and interpret this “borrowed” concept in the local environment. The configuration of citizenship education in a local Chinese context features two orientations. The first is that representations of citizenship education are imbedded in a discourse of the West and modernity. It is, however, interesting to note that, although the lexical concept of citizenship education has appeared to “flow” into China over recent decades, the notion it self is not new to China, as China already had decades of experience in exploring and launching citizenship education before the Communist Party took power in 1949 (Ye, 2011). More importantly, the core elements of citizenship education in the modern, Western sense, such as equality, justice, rule by law, can be also found in the Chinese traditional wisdom (Liu, 2011).

The second orientation is that citizenship education tends to be represented as a “recipe” to solve social problems. Chinese citizens are represented as “lacking civic consciousness and competency”: Under the leadership of the Party, they are incompetent to cope with the new needs of a market economy, rule by law and democratization in China’s future agenda (e.g., Li & Feng, 2008). In this narrative, the culprits for citizens’ incompetency are often seen as traditional culture and also the conventional paradigm of political-ideological education with its limitations. It is assumed that students’ increased exposure to the concepts and ideas of citizenship education and more frequent opportunities for

exercising them in the school context can improve their civic *suzhi* (or civic awareness, civic spirit, public spirit, public rationality, public character, independent character among other alternative terms) and spur China's liberalization and democratization. The link between citizenship education and social transition has yet to be carefully examined in local discussions. Despite the fact that citizenship education comprises a set of concepts different from those of political-ideological education, it has the potential to be transformed within the local context, much like the politicization of moral education by the state. According to Kerr's (2000) international comparative research, constructions of citizenship education might take "values-explicit" or "values-neutral" approaches in different nation states due to the contextual factors including historical traditions, socio-political structures, and economic systems. The variations in the approaches to citizenship education worldwide demonstrate that it cannot be taken for granted that citizenship education will serve as a panacea to correct social problems.

Will citizenship education help to transform China into a more open, modern, and liberal society? It might—but the real problem is how. As noted by Appadurai (1990), the global flows of concepts originating from the European Enlightenment may inevitably encounter problems in local circumstances. China is only one of the many countries in which the global spread of citizenship education brings challenges and uncertainties to the local environment. Lessons from the adaptation of citizenship education in other countries indicate that the constructions of citizenship education faces the danger of lacking a "clear vision" and becoming a "catch-all" for many related or even irrelevant topics (Kerr, 2000). Does the understanding of citizenship education that is taking place in China have a clear vision? This depends on the interaction between the notion of citizenship education and the existing ideologies in local environments. The findings of the research synthesis carried out in this paper seem to suggest that citizenship education is not expected to become a "catch-all" for the existing political-ideological education and moral education.

The localization of citizenship education by Chinese scholars involves a tension between universal human values (such as democracy, freedom, human rights) and the current social circumstances. On one hand, the belief that China should embrace the developing trend of citizenship education in the international arena prevails in local scholarship. For example, Zhu and Feng (2008) argue that China and "Western countries" (including liberalism-based, republicanism-based and communitarianism-based modes) share similar "tendencies" in their outlook on citizenship education. Namely, the priority is put on the cultivation of citizens' identity consciousness in their relationship to the state and society and the balance between citizens' rights and obligations. Accentuating citizens' virtues

serves as the basis of citizenship education. On the other hand, there is an imperative that China should develop her own version of citizenship education. Terms such as “socialist democracy” and “citizenship education with a Chinese characteristics” are widely used as a kind of compromise between universal human values and the demands of the Chinese context. As with other societies adapting citizenship education, China is forced to “re-examine and adjust many of their underlying cultural traditions, values and assumptions” (Kerr, 2000, p. 207).

Compared with political-ideological education and moral education, the appeal of citizenship education lies in its elimination of privileges and emphasis on citizens having equal status in all public matters. When the previously totalitarian regime experienced a structural transformation, in which society became separated from state, citizenship education quickly captured the attention of Chinese academics and the general public. The original ideoscape has also experienced a transformation and the territories of the already well-established political-ideological and moral education are being renegotiated with the arrival of citizenship education. The findings in this study indicate that the territory of the orthodox political-ideological education has been narrowed down and moral education also presents different images through configuring its relationship with citizenship education. The spread of the notion of citizenship education helps to transform the understandings of the old terms and incorporate new issues relevant to the role of global citizens. Through making space and negotiating its territory, citizenship education is reshaping China’s ideoscape in the education field.

When the close bond between state and society is fragmented as in the post-Mao era, a pluralization of value systems increasingly encounters paternalism on the part of the government (Fairbrother, 2013). There is a pressing need in China for the public sphere, which mediates between society and state and generates norms and rational processes of legitimation through communicative exchange to develop (Habermas, 1964/1974). The shaping of citizenship education should be aligned with the development of the public sphere, since both of them promote an elimination of privileges and grant citizens equal accessibility in all public matters (Habermas, 1964/1974). The local scholar Ye (2012) also contends that, the public sphere at school, embodied in the establishment of equal relationships between schools and students, autonomous student associations, and community service, is the basis of citizenship education. Undoubtedly, Chinese academics do not believe that citizenship education should be turned into another version of political-ideological and moral education. Rather, citizenship education must make a unique contribution to preparing young Chinese citizens to engage in the public sphere (Kennelly, 2006), re-examine the values transmitted in state-run schools, and form a new social consensus through the communication of ideas across different social positions.

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