

Yang and Yin in Communication: Towards a Typology and Logic of Persuasion in China

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In contrast to the individualistically focused paradigm, this article suggests that persuasion is a relationship- and context-specific phenomenon. The article analyses how interpersonal and mass persuasion operate in Chinese daily life. It thereby argues that persuasion is indispensable in dialogical relationships between the self and other, and between the individual and society; yet at the same time it is indigent to the socio-cultural context.

Cultural patterns and approaches to persuasion

Belief in, and practice of, the power of persuasion is not new. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle eloquently discussed, in his classic work on *Rhetoric*, how the 'character of a speaker', the 'speech itself' and the 'frame of mind of the audience' constitute an effective persuasive appeal (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). He thereby identifies three canonical modes of persuasion: Ethos, Logos and Pathos. This 'Who says What to Whom' trio was further developed by the American sociologist Harold D. Lasswell (1948) into the well-known formula of persuasion: 'Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom and With What Effect'. The importance of this process-based model of persuasion has been well documented by social psychology and communication research over the past six decades.

A systematic analysis of the idea that persuasion involves a series of processes began with the work of Carl Hovland. His Yale Communication Programme set up step-by-step experiments to test the effects of different variables on the communicator, the message, the channel and the audience (Hovland, 1957; Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield, 1949; Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953). By this means, persuasion is converted from the art of rhetoric into a scientific field of social psychology. However, the critical shortcoming of the Hovland approach is its underlying

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DOI: 10.1177/0392192107087922

elementarist assumption of the nature of persuasion. It artificially sets persuasion apart from its greater whole, and breaks down the construct into its components. Current research on persuasion has been dominated, either explicitly or implicitly, by this Hovlandian approach. Much research in the field focuses mainly on how independent variables, such as source, message and recipient, impact on an individual's affective, cognitive and behavioural processes in relation to an attitude object, and how this in turn impacts on the individual's attitude towards the object (for the latest reviews, see Crano and Prislin, 2006; Petty and Wegener, 1998; Wood, 2000). In particular, the dual-mode processing models of persuasion, the heuristic-systematic model (HSM) (Chaiken, 1980; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993) and the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty et al., 1981; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) have drawn much attention. The central tenet of both HSM and ELM is that the determinants and processes of attitude change depend upon a recipient's motivation and ability to process the issue-relevant information. A substantial body of experimental research (see also Crano and Prislin, 2006; Petty and Wegener, 1998; Wood, 2000) seems to have demonstrated the fruitfulness of the Hovland approach in general, and the dual-mode processing models in particular, with respect to the understanding of persuasion.

These productive researches on persuasion have been developed by social psychologists using insights from the social cognitive approach in order to explore message-based persuasion. Persuasion in these studies is regarded as a monological psychological phenomenon in the sense that it is concerned with the flow of communication from the source to the recipient, and it therefore reduces a dialogical communication to information-processing algorithms of the individual (Craig, 1999). Persuasion, by its very nature, encompasses interdependent parties. Interdependence exists over and above the independent effects, and can be neither reduced to, nor predicted by, a mere summation of individual effects (Hsiung and Bagozzi, 2003). The individualistically focused approach of persuasion and communication may be attributed to individualism as a unique cultural product of Anglo-Saxon societies (Farr, 1991; Spence, 1985). Theoretical and empirical researches on persuasion in western culture echo its cultural logic, rules and values.

Chinese culture, on the other hand, differs in substantial ways from mainstream western culture. A harmonious interdependent relationship is the cardinal idea of Chinese culture. It is widely acknowledged that Confucianism was at the heart of traditional Chinese culture (Weber, 1951). The cosmology of *yang/yin*, originally used to explain the origin of the universe in Taoism, is the metaphysical basis of Confucianism. *Yang* and *yin* are considered as the two forces that regulate the universe. *Yang* represents masculinity, power, warmth, light, dryness and hardness; while *yin* represents femininity, passivity, cold, darkness, moisture and softness. Everything in the world carries *yang* and embraces *yin* and achieves harmony by balancing these two forces. Following this cosmology of *yang/yin*, Confucianism emphasizes a harmonious society and the appropriate arrangement of social relationships (Hwang, 1999). In contrast to the western individualistic ideology of individual rights, equality and independence, in Confucian ideology, the harmony of society is based on hierarchical and asymmetrical relations between superior and subordinate; and social life is marked by a fundamental relatedness between the self

and others, and between the individual and society. Such opposite but complementary forces as superior/subordinate, self/others and individual/society are dialogically interdependent in the process of communication and persuasion. The process of communication and persuasion, in turn, is the key to achieving harmony and to resolving conflicts in everyday interaction.

As a worldview and a way of life, Confucian ideology has transformed itself into a culture, a history and a reality (Feng, 1948; Garret, 1993; Hwang, 2001). Undoubtedly, modern Chinese history is characterized by ideological confrontation, destruction and reconstruction. The contesting ideological, political and economic systems of traditional Confucianism, orthodox Marxism and western capitalism coexist in contemporary China (Liu, 2006). Despite this complexity, communications with one another for the Chinese have aimed to develop and maintain harmonious relationships in a continuously dynamic process of mutual dependency among interactants (Chen and Starosta, 1997). In this sense, Chinese culture and its transitions offer valuable contexts for exploring alternative ways of persuasion operating in everyday communication and interaction.

Relationship as a potent message of interpersonal persuasion

Message-based persuasion research has traditionally treated persuasion as an individualistic phenomenon. It rarely conceptualizes persuasion as a dialogical phenomenon. Certain message variables, such as one-sided versus two-sided messages, affective versus cognitive appeal messages, and positively versus negatively framed arguments, have all been intensively explored (Petty and Wegener, 1998). However, the significance of the persuasion agent's relationship with the target of the persuasion, and their dialogical interdependence in the process of influence, has been largely overlooked. As an established relationship is likely to be salient in influence processes, the relationship itself, as Cialdini (2004) argues, is a potential message in a persuasive communication. There is thus a need for understanding the particularistic nature of how the relationship exerts influence on the interactive parties' attitudes and behaviours (Kelman, 2006; Orina et al., 2002). This is particularly pertinent in Chinese culture.

In contrast to the idea of the autonomous self in individualistic western culture, Chinese culture attaches a great importance to the relational self, which places a higher value on interdependence, and fosters a solid connection between the self and others (Fiske et al., 1998). For the Chinese, there would be no self without others. The self is defined in terms of one's role in the family and in society, and of one's relationship to significant others. Embedded in familial and social relationships, the self is emotionally tied to personal obligations as defined by those relationships. These relationships and obligations bind individuals to others in their lifeworld. More than a role-player prescribed in the social structure, the relational self is also an active and reflective entity (King and Bond, 1985). This entails a subtle interplay between the role and identity construction. As a consequence, an individual is expected to adjust his/her self to meet others' expectations and to support the relationships. Persuasion is grounded within interdependencies and relationships between people. Without

understanding the dynamics of social relationships in Chinese society, persuasion is like a castle in the air.

Filial piety as a persuasion device in the private sphere

It has long been recognized that family relationships in Chinese culture are considered paramount. Harmonious family relationships have always been a cornerstone of Chinese culture. Unlike the Judeo-Christian world where one's existence is attributed to a transcendent creator, in the Confucian Chinese world, one's life is solely credited to one's parents (Hwang, 1999). The parent-child relationship is thus permanent, affective and unequal. Filial piety, one of the important doctrines in Confucianism, is a powerful indigenous concept that directs the shape of relations between the self and the family. Filial piety not only connects the younger generation social-psychologically with the elder in the family, but also functions as a culturally embedded persuasive force that parents exert over their children in shaping their values, opinions, attitudes and behaviours.

For Confucianism, parents and their children, like *yang* and *yin*, are dialogical and asymmetric. A family is considered to be analogical to the human body, in which the relationship between the parents and their children is metaphorically likened to a head and foot. The up-and-down relationship between the head and foot refers to the superior and inferior positions of parents and children (Hwang, 1999). More than just the material provision and physical care given to parents, filial piety inherently favours the offspring's obedience to their parents. When asked what filial piety is, Confucius says, 'It is not being disobedient'. It is through filial piety that Confucianism endorses the unquestioned authority of the parents and the unquestioning obedience of the children (Bi and D'Agostino, 2004). Yan (1999) observes a case, in a Chinese village, where a father who could not silence his son during a family discord yelled: 'Don't forget I'm still your father!' Here the word 'father' is a metaphor for the ultimate power at home, and it functions as a persuasive agent within a family. The parents' power over their children does not mean they compel compliance under coercion; rather it resides in their mutual endorsement of filial piety. Power, as French and Raven (1959) suggest, is potential influence, and influence is a kinetic power. In contrast with consensual democratic power and dictatorial power, the power wielded in the Chinese family is a paternalistic power that springs from efforts to advance the best interests of a family.

As a persuasive device, filial piety permeates the life choices of the younger generation. They may give up their individual choices or personal goals for the sake of maintaining family harmony – for instance, most aspects of young people's marriages were traditionally subordinated to the wishes and the expectations of the parents. Parents made decisions about who their sons or daughters should marry, when they should marry and how their weddings should be celebrated. In some cases, offspring were not consulted and did not meet their future spouses until the wedding day. Acceptance of this sort of arranged marriages has been viewed as expressing filial piety. The practice of arranged marriage has nevertheless been objected to and 'a free choice marriage' has been encouraged since the early 1950s,

which theoretically reduces the power of parents to control the lives of their children. However, the majority of young people may still take their parents' advice seriously in selecting their spouses. This filial behaviour can be explained by the words of a young Chinese man: 'I can have a choice of my partner, but I don't have any choice of my parents. I can change my potential partner for marriage, but I can't change my parents' (Liu, 2002). In the same vein, having conducted intensive interviews with Chinese university students, Deutsch (2004) finds that filial piety plays a crucial role in the career decisions of the students. They carefully balance their own interests with what is acceptable to their parents. Their individual plans are also subject to parental approval. They use the word 'we' rather than 'I' to indicate that their immediate postgraduate plans are a family joint project.

Filial piety is a reciprocal affection, emphasized as a facilitator of family harmony rather than a one-way obedience. It never implies uncritical obedience towards one's parents. Kelman (2006) makes a distinction between public conformity to a position and private acceptance of the position in a persuasive communication. In Kelman's sense, filial piety ensures the public conformity but does not enact the private acceptance. If young people cannot agree with what their parents think is an inappropriate behaviour, they respect their parents and do not resist publicly. As Li (1997, cited in Hwang, 1997) observes, when reporting the experience of disagreeing with his father's appeals, a man stated that 'it is useless to argue with him; now I say "yes, yes, yes" to any of his requests, but I still do [things] my own way'. It is a subtle Chinese mode of resistance, as the challenge to paternal authority is highly dangerous, and is forbidden (Ho, 1998). Public resistance is regarded as an unfilial behaviour: it may hurt parents' feelings; offspring, in turn, are inwardly guilty.

Nevertheless, parent-child conflict, just as it exists elsewhere, is also noticeable in China. Paternalistic and reciprocal filial piety cannot prevent a Chinese family from experiencing parent-child conflict. When a conflict occurs, however, filial piety is invoked to solve the conflict. Using in-depth interviews, Yeh and Bedford (2004) identify five filial strategies, used by the Chinese to resolve conflict with their parents, namely self-sacrifice, egocentrism, reframing, escape and compromise.

Moreover, it is not rare to find that in extreme conflict situations the father may threaten to sever relationships with his son in order to obtain his submission. Given that the continuity of patrilineal descent is central to the spiritual sustenance of Chinese people (Liu, 2006); a strong fear appeal is created by threatening to sever the father-son relationship. It entails the threat of terminating a family line originating with its ancestors, and the danger of this family losing forever its place in the universe. No rupture can thus be allowed to sever this bond. The consanguinity between father and son is impossible to cut off in a biological sense, whereas the strategy of threatening to sever the relationship forms a psychosocial basis for persuasion within a family.

Guanxi as a weapon of persuasion in the public sphere

Interpersonal persuasion, outside the sphere of the immediate family, operates in Chinese society mainly through *guanxi*, another indigenous Chinese concept that

depicts the self–other relationship in a public context. *Guanxi* literally refers to relations, personal connections, or an interpersonal network. The connotation of *guanxi* changes over time. *Guanxi* was prototyped from the Chinese traditional network of lineage. It was further reconstructed under the State's planned economy as the reciprocal relations of favour exchange amongst ingroup members. With the move towards a market economy, *guanxi* becomes a delicate fibre woven into almost every aspect of social life, and is increasingly mobilized to influence others towards achieving one's desirable goals (Liu, 2007). As a sensitizing concept (Blumer, 1969), *guanxi* cannot be defined definitely. It is a consensual view that *guanxi* involves the exchanges of gifts, favours and banquets (Yang, 1994), comprises instrumental ties and expressive ties (Hwang, 1997), and is concomitant with mutual trust and feelings shared with ingroup members (Chen and Chen, 2004; Liu, 2007). What is commonly overlooked by *guanxi* theorists, however, is that beyond the exchange of gifts and favours, and beyond ingroup identity and trust, *guanxi* functions in Chinese culture as a powerful weapon of persuasion. Chinese people employ it to influence one another in public life.

Reciprocity is a key operating principle of *guanxi*. According to Gouldner (1960), reciprocity is a universal psychosocial phenomenon, basic to humanity. However, it is particularly salient in Chinese culture. At the very heart of Confucianism is the concern for reciprocity amongst social actors. The Chinese reciprocity, as Yang (1957: 291) argues, is 'marked by its long history, the high degree of consciousness of its existence, and its wide application and tremendous influence in social institutions' (cited in Chen and Chen, 2004: 317). Like *yang* and *yin*, *guanxi* partners are dialogically interdependent, and reciprocate with one another. To maintain social harmony, there are expectations of mutual obligation and indebtedness between *guanxi* partners. According to the principle of reciprocity, people who have received a favour should be grateful and return the favour whenever called upon (Hwang, 1987). Harmonious social relationships cannot be sustained without reciprocity. Moreover, this reciprocity between *guanxi* partners is socially binding and without time specification. Immediate repayment may spoil, and even discontinue, the relationship. Instead, the elongation of the time for repayment symbolizes both the closeness of *guanxi* and the willingness to continue it.

Reciprocity, as Cialdini (2001) argues, is a weapon of persuasion and influence. It acts as an invisible, binding force that requires *guanxi* partners to comply with each other's requests, often against their best judgements. The pure, tit-for-tat version of reciprocation rarely takes place. It is not the case that one party is liable to repay another party with exactly the same kind of actions it has received. Rather, *guanxi* entails that one party should feel obligated to show care for the well-being of the other. Complying with the wish, request or demand from the other is a way of fulfilling the obligation. Moreover, compliance is the act of giving 'face' to the other, which in turn not only builds up one's own social reputation but further reinforces the relationship. The term 'face work' in Goffman's (1967) terminology refers to how we, as consociates, both give and take impressions by means of our facial expressions in face-to-face interactions. 'Face work' in Chinese culture, however, is not self-oriented but places more emphasis on the nature of the relationship (Ho, 1976). Failure to give 'face' to the reciprocate other, not only threatens the 'common

good', but also seriously damages one's social reputation, bringing about a humiliating loss of 'face'. The loss of 'face' implies a condemnation of the face-losing member, puts him/her at risk of being ostracized by society, and could ultimately result in the loss of one's own *guanxi* network (Hwang, 1987). This provoking of anxiety serves as the emotional basis for the acceptance of persuasive appeals.

Guanxi also differentiates between the ingroup and the outgroup (Chen and Starosta, 1997; Liu, 2007). It does not mean, however, that interpersonal persuasion based on reciprocity would be impossible between strangers or outsiders. Rather, *guanxi* is transferable. Since each individual may be simultaneously in many different webs of *guanxi*, *guanxi* between two strangers can be established through the intermediary of a third party who shares two strangers' *guanxi* webs and saves 'face' within both parties. A third party, Yang (1994: 194) states, 'acts as a connector cable, so to speak, infusing a common current of identity into the two persons and draws them within a single circle of insideness'. In such a case, two separate circles of reciprocity are converted into an interlocking network of obligations and indebtedness. This forms the basis of establishing interpersonal persuasion between unrelated parties. In Chinese society, using a third party is a popular way of influencing the resource allocation and decisionmaking of someone in power. In daily discourse, this phenomenon is referred to as 'hunting for *guanxi*'. For instance, Zang (2003) finds that the access to cadres, a third party, is crucial for a jobseeker to influence the employment decision of an employer in a competitive labour market. In this sense, the persuasive efficacy of a single individual, when combined with *guanxi*, functions as a powerful weapon of persuasion and influence in multi-party interactions.

Propaganda as a means of mass persuasion

Propaganda, as Frederic C. Bartlett (1940) suggests, refers to the ways in which a State or a political party influences the opinion and conduct of the mass. The word 'propaganda' has a bad odour in the western democratic world, and is a distinctly dirty word associated with war and evil practices (Chapman, 2000) because of its connection to the totalitarian regime of Nazi Germany. Despite the fact that Bartlett (1940) makes an important distinction between negative denunciatory propaganda in the short-term campaigns and positive democratic propaganda in the long-term campaigns, few theorists in the West doubt the unpleasant connotations of propaganda. For Moscovici (1961/76), propaganda depicts a world of dichotomies, in which there is just one right path with respect to a particular subject-matter, and one kind of correct behaviour conforming to that. The subject-matter in question is usually portrayed in an over-simplified or even distorted manner.

The word 'propaganda' in China, however, does not convey negative connotations, but is regarded as a positive term. Propaganda is being manipulated in order to transform the official ideology into social representations (Marková, 2003). To understand this, we shall briefly examine the Chinese socio-historical context which allows propaganda to flourish. According to Confucianism, the emperor and his subject, like *yang* and *yin*, are dialogical but asymmetric. The emperor was the symbol of the 'unity of man and Heaven', and his personal position was based exclu-

sively on 'his charisma as the plenipotentiary of Heaven where his ancestors resided' (Weber, 1951: 143). The emperor was then given absolute authority over his subjects; and the subjects were obliged to have complete trust in, and absolute obedience to, the emperor. With the abolition of the monarchic system in the early 20th century, obedience to the emperor was transferred to the State. The folklore of the total submission of the self to the State was further substantiated by the Chinese Communism Party (CCP hereafter). The cultivation of State consciousness and compliance to the CCP, the Siamese twin of the State, was essential to the CCP's revolutionary scheme. The Party, as did Confucianism, denied the autonomy of the individual. It insisted that the basic unit of survival is the State rather than the independent individual. Consequently, propaganda has been extensively manipulated to promote State consciousness and loyalty to the Party on the one hand; while obedience to the State/Party is obviously key to explaining the great success of this manipulation. Harmony between the society and the individual, and between the State and its citizens, is thus achieved.

Yang and yin of the mass media: promoting the 'model' and denouncing a 'baddie'

The mass media have been a major means of spreading and reinforcing propaganda. All forms of mass media, such as newspapers, radios, televisions, films and even novels, have acted as the official organ of the Party during the period from the 1950s to the 1980s. They were not the media of communication and entertainment, but the media of monological propaganda. The sole function of the media was to influence, shape, control and determine both the functioning of minds and people's behaviour.

Promoting the 'model' is a constructive aspect of this propaganda. Bandura (1977) has developed the theory of social model-learning, according to which behavioural changes can take place even if the person is not engaged directly in a learning process but, instead, observes the behaviour of others. For Bandura, model-learning presents a direct approach to behavioural change, accompanied by a change in the person's beliefs and attitudes. Amidst unawareness of the theory, the role of a model was intensively and extensively manipulated in China to promote Marxist ideology and to legitimate the Party's policies. Diverse modelling figures, such as political heroes, war martyrs, paragon workers, exemplar soldiers and accomplished scholars, were widely promulgated in various forms of the mass media. One example of this kind was Lei Feng, a soldier in the People's Liberation Army. After Lei Feng died on duty in the early 1960s, Chairman Mao Zedong wrote a dedication: 'To learn from Lei Feng' in order to propagandize him as a national model. Lei Feng wanted nothing more than to be a small cog in the huge revolutionary machine; he became well known throughout the whole country for his hard work, selflessness and patriotism. Lei Feng's story could be read in the newspapers and popular magazines, and listened to on the radio. In addition, his lifestory was turned into a movie and a TV drama. Lei Feng became an idol to millions of Chinese people for several decades (Yue and Cheung, 2000). The purpose of the propaganda was not only to encourage the public to imitate the model's performance; it also urged citizens to develop a firm faith in Communism, unconditional loyalty to the Party,

and a complete commitment to fulfilling one's duties and obligations to the State, even to the point of sacrificing one's own life. This is how propaganda continues to be used in the present-day China.

The other side of the coin is that the mass media also stigmatized those who were negatively labelled as 'baddies'. Denouncing a 'baddie' was the destructive aspect of propaganda. As it ploughed the same furrow as the Marxist view of class division and class struggle, those who put forward any criticism of the Party and the government were labelled by the mass media as rightists or counter-revolutionaries and were stigmatized as members of the bourgeoisie. During the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957–8, these rightists and counter-revolutionaries were sent to Labour Camps for 're-education' or even put in prison. The mass media subsequently exposed these cases to the public. The significance of disseminating these stigmatized cases was twofold. First, the public was 'getting inoculated' (McGuire, 1964) against the rightists' words and 'counter-revolutionary' communications. Second, the dissemination itself aroused public fear of political persecution, and thereby dissuaded the masses from ideological deviation; this in turn reinforced the mentality of total submission and obedience to the Party.

The strategy of invoking fear conducted by the mass media is a powerful persuasive device. While in the past it was exploited for political purposes advocating communism, today the media promote behaviours that are protective against HIV/AIDS and dissuade the public from risk-related behaviours such as homosexuality, drug-taking and prostitution. China now has a rapidly spreading AIDS epidemic with an estimate of 1.2 million infected people (Lee et al., 2005), and the media stand at the forefront of fighting its spread. In order to alert the public to the 'mega-dangers' of AIDS, the Chinese mass media use fear-provoking phrases like 'horrible killer', 'super cancer' and 'disease of the century' (Xia, 2005). Such fear-based appeals are very powerful in Chinese society, because their threat is viewed not only in relation to the individual, but above all as dangerous to groups like the family. Paradoxically, such fear appeals are accompanied by the fabrication of AIDS-related stigma and discrimination. Stigma and discrimination are known not only to negatively affect all aspects of AIDS prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care, but also to facilitate the spread of the virus (Brown et al., 2003).

The slogan as a device for manipulating public beliefs and attitudes

Harold D. Lasswell (1927) pointed out that the management of collective attitudes is possible by the manipulation of significant symbols. Slogans or catchwords are nothing but such significant symbols. Slogans, as Denton (1980) suggests, are the building blocks of ideology, and an effective means of persuasion. If by promoting 'models' the mass media are effective in producing behavioural change, then the practice of using slogans aims to manipulate public beliefs and attitudes.

Slogans have been used in China mainly for ideological indoctrination. Worded in memorable terms, limited to a very few points and harping on the same string, slogans serve to shape thought, guide action, elicit collective commitment and manipulate the public mind, while at the same time they are infused with the prac-

tice of ideology and social values (King and Cushman, 1992). When they seized State power in 1949, the CCP considered traditional values to be a potential threat to its political, economic and ideological control over ordinary people (Fukuyama, 1995). It launched a series of campaigns against Confucianism on the one hand, and to promote the Marxist philosophy on the other. Slogans played a crucial role in such campaigns. For example, during the Mao Zedong era one of the best-known slogans was: 'My mother only gives me my body, but the glory of the Party shines through my heart'. The slogan, as Zhang (2005) notes, does not aim to acknowledge that the biological body is the result of reproduction, but to accentuate the privilege of the heart over the body. The heart is showered with the Party's glory, which symbolizes a total subjection of the self to the Party, through this rather ambiguous category of the heart. Moreover, the slogan suggests that the traditional value that credits one's life solely to one's parents is challenged by the revolutionary cause; and filial piety with respect to one's parents should be transformed into the loyalty to the Party. Another example of a powerful slogan is 'never forget the class struggle', which is adapted from Mao Zedong's words. The slogan was used to indoctrinate with the Marxist view of class division and class struggle. The slogan was also transformed into communist practice, and thus contributed tremendously to the abolition of private property and the establishment of public ownership.

Lu (1999) analyses slogans collected from the bi-weekly magazine *Red Flag*, the official magazine of the CCP, from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. She finds that political slogans were intended to meet the changing needs of social conditions as well as the needs of authorities to establish control. For instance, the slogan 'Mao Zedong's thought illuminates the victorious path of our Party' proclaimed Mao's omnipotence as well as his omniscience. Mao was thus worshiped as a living god, his words were regarded as the law and his 'little red book' became the Chinese Bible.

The significance of slogans continues to be appreciated in the wave of China's move towards a market economy. A popular slogan nowadays is 'building a socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics'. The slogan uses 'adjectives and specific phrases' (Marková, 2003) to clearly distinguish the Chinese market economy from the western one. It entails, on the one hand, that the rival cultural, ideological, political and economic systems of Confucianism, Marxism and capitalism all coexist in the course of social transition. On the other hand it functions as a simplification of the complex cultural, ideological, political and economic transition, and thereby it aims at uniting the masses with widely varying motives and beliefs to focus their protest on a common target (Denton, 1980).

Conclusion

Persuasion is situated at the centre of everyday communication and social interaction. Immersed in the trap of individualistic paradigm, persuasion in the mainstream social psychological literature is regarded as a monological psychological phenomenon. By analysing how persuasion operates in Chinese real-life situations, this article suggests that persuasion is a multifaceted and dialogical phenomenon.

Persuasion is actualized in different domains of social relationship, such as the relationship between the self and others, and between the individual and society; moreover, the relationship itself is a potent source of persuasion. Persuasion in Chinese culture should be defined in its own terms and examined within the context in which it is embedded. Anything less than this would lead to groundless denial of its existence.

Acknowledgements

This paper was written when the author was supported by a grant from the Humanities and Social Sciences Foundation (05JAXLX004), and by a grant from the Scientific Research Foundation for Returned Overseas Chinese Scholars, Ministry of Education, PRC.

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