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# Generations Apart: Cultural Revolution Memory and China's Post-80's Generation on the Chinese Internet

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GENERATIONS APART: CULTURAL REVOLUTION MEMORY AND CHINA'S

POST-80'S GENERATION ON THE CHINESE INTERNET

A Thesis Presented

by

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ABSTRACT


GENERATIONS APART: CULTURAL REVOLUTION MEMORY AND CHINA'S

POST-80'S GENERATION ON THE CHINESE INTERNET



June 2013

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Directed by Professor Weili Ye

This thesis examines how the memory of the Cultural Revolution is used on the

Chinese internet by China's post-80's generation and the Chinese Communist Party to

describe and highlight examples of social instability. These comparisons are

representative of the broad historical narrative written by the Party which forms the basis

of how China's younger generations learn about and internalize the Cultural Revolution.

This study analyzes how the memory of the Cultural Revolution is held by China's post-

80's generation as viewed through the lens of the Chinese Internet. Specifically, this

research engages with the intended purposes of the post-80's generation for invoking

memories of the Cultural Revolution on the Chinese Internet. This revival and re-

characterization of the Cultural Revolution's social memory holds complex meanings for

how China's post-1980's generation defines the Cultural Revolution.

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INTRODUCTION

After viewing a video that was shared throughout Chinese social media websites,

Chinese writer Li Chengpeng took to his blog to vent his frustrations. The video, which

has since been censored from the Chinese Internet, depicted an angry mob in Xi'an,

China engaged in smashing a Japanese-made Toyota Corolla.[1] The car's owner, a 51-

year-old Chinese man named Li Jianli, could be heard in the video pronouncing his

support over China's claims to the island and his anti-Japanese stance. But that wasn't

enough for one unidentified protester, who proceeded to take a U-shaped metal lock and

repeatedly beat the car owner's head encircled by the crowd of onlookers. Li's wife

rushed over to his slumped body to stop the blood pouring from his head while onlookers

took photos. The attack left the right side of Li Jianli's body paralyzed.

Li Chengpeng used the social networking power of his blog to share the story and

seek justice for Li Jianli. His blog, which has over six million followers, makes Li one of

the most popular online personalities on Chinese social media. Li posted an image of the

man who beat Li Jianli, writing for readers to "remember this face; it is the guy

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[1] The smashing of Japanese cars was seen as an act of protest against Japan's recent claims to a contested
island chain, known in Chinese as the Diaoyu Islands. Similar acts occurred throughout Chinese cities in
September 2012, accompanied by state-approved protests and boycotts or Japanese products and retailers.

who…beat the Xi'an Japanese car owner Li Jianli."[2] Taking into account similar stories which peppered Chinese news and the anti-Japanese fervor overtaking Chinese youth, Li summarized that "the most frightening thing was not the violence, but the violence being called natural and just. The Cultural Revolution was just like this."[3]

Comparing recent violence against the memory of the Cultural Revolution is a new trend on Chinese social media. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Cultural Revolution), a social and political movement, took place in China between 1966 and 1976. Social upheaval and political factions during this period led to the Chinese Communist Party (the Party) since branding the decade one of extreme turmoil. On the Chinese Internet, an influx in the invocation of the Cultural Revolution by China's post-1980's generation is used to call to denounce violent acts such as the car smashing. Turning to Chinese social media, these youth compare current events to negative and often violent aspects of the Cultural Revolution in order to highlight current ills of Chinese society. In most instances, events are related back to the Cultural Revolution as a means to deter society from returning to a period of social and political chaos.

The growth of the internet in China has granted Chinese citizens a new outlet for having their voices heard. Chinese youth in particular log onto the web and speak out against corruption, build movements such as the anti-Japanese car smashings, and rally against environmental issues. Netizens, or internet users, are able to take advantage of internet anonymity to raise issues that could never been raised offline due to poorly defined anti-subversion laws often used to prosecute individuals exercising their right to

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[2] Li Chengpeng (李承鹏), Weibo.com Blog, September 26, 2012, Accessed September 27, 2012, http://weibo.com/1189591617/yDE7hhg7k.
[3] Li Chengpeng, Weibo.com Blog.

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assembly under the Constitution of the People's Republic of China.[4] With over 500 million users accessing the Chinese internet, it has become a place of political participation. More importantly, the internet has become a virtual community for China's post-80's generation, as they account for nearly two-thirds of those who log online.

These communities of web forums and microblogs provide a window into the social issues important to youth in China. In these locations, social memory of the Cultural Revolution is both discussed and reflected upon, specifically to comment upon the severity of current events and social issues in China. This study will analyze discussion on the modern internet as a lens to show how China's post-80's generation regards the history of the Cultural Revolution. A severe gap in historical knowledge is present among this generation compounded by the Party's obscuration of historical fact, and after four decades memory of the Cultural Revolution is primarily used on Chinese social media to describe violent behaviors to highlight areas of current instability in Chinese society. The post-80's generation uses its violent memory to progressively move society forward, while concurrently using its memory as a label to denounce societal violence. As netizens use the Cultural Revolution as a metaphor to describe areas of social instability, the Party uses the invocation of Cultural Revolution memory to glaze over the decade as a period of social turmoil that could repeat itself should China adopt a multi-party system. This thesis will show that these uses of memory are a result of the Party's strict censorship of Cultural Revolution-relation publications and a purposely broad writing of the state's official history of the decade.

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[4] Derived from the term, "internet citizens." A user who is active in the internet community. In Chinese, 网民 (wangmin).

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The methods used for this research will be unique in the sense that online sourcing will play an integral part of this thesis' primary research. Sources from the internet will include opinion pieces by prominent Chinese bloggers, snippets of social commentary from online editorial e-magazines, and a survey of viral posting on Chinese social media.[5] These hot topics will include heavily shared images and messages, as well as tweets and mentions of the Cultural Revolution in making connections or describing current events on social media. Because of the fragility of internet sourcing, where a link or image is present one day but can be deleted the next, it has become routine to print-screen all tweets and content and placing them into an archival database. All of the sourcing will remain true to its original online web address, and a digital imaged copy of the source will be preserved along with the research.[6]

The social media primary sources which accompany this study will aim to highlight the various ways that the Cultural Revolution remains an active topic among Chinese netizens. This study will answer how the Cultural Revolution is being brought up in social contexts on the internet by documenting netizen discussions. In posting about the Cultural Revolution, social media users in China are providing a glimpse into how the memory of that decade reverberates with China's post-80's generation, and how that memory sets itself against the official Party narrative which is provided to youth through educational indoctrination.

To gauge what well-respected and conspicuous voices are saying about the Cultural Revolution on the internet, this study will document the writings and comments

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[5] Viral refers to something that becomes popular through the process of Internet sharing through social media, instant messaging, and email.
[6] References to internet web sites (URLs) were accurate at the time of writing. The author is not responsible for URLs that may have expired or changed since publishing.

of popular Chinese bloggers. These bloggers have a large following of readers on their blogs and microblog accounts, giving worth to their voice as many of their opinions and comments are shared across the Chinese social media sphere. The blog posts by these prominent bloggers initiates a larger discussion in the comments section, which often spawns its own set of opinions. Blogs and social media posts are an important aspect of this research because of the social memory that is being called upon on the internet, and how that is created against the backdrop of the official history as constructed by the Party.

Forerunning research on netizen youth seeks to examine the context of online social movements and political activism such as the Human Flesh Search, an internet phenomenon which will be discussed in detail in chapter three. This study endeavors to anchor discussion on the Chinese Internet in a historical context, a discipline largely disconnected from scholarship on internet studies. This work distinguishes how scholars understand the Cultural Revolution in the modern era, and how the memory of this period is kept alive and reconstructed by China's post-80's youth through the internet. Furthermore this study adds historiographical conversation on the larger social and cultural movements in China, and how the internet plays into the memory of social and cultural movements as time passes.

The significance of this research is multi-faceted. Due in part to the Chinese Internet's homogeneous make-up, chatter on the Chinese web remains largely absent from western media and Chinese netizens and their behavior remain largely unknown to westerners. This research broadens scholarly understanding of not just Chinese history, but how the internet can be used as an interdisciplinary approach to conducting historical inquiry. Barriers such as language and censorship are two main factors for this

inaccessibility. Furthermore, many western media outlets lack the background knowledge to place such events into a larger and often historical context, making experimentation on the Chinese Internet and the internet distilling websites mentioned above very dangerous. Therefore this research introduces events and their significance on the Chinese Internet to a western audience, removing the invisible barrier that exists.

In order to place Chinese youth into the context of their actions on social media, chapter two will profile China's post-80's generation, or those who were born after the Cultural Revolution from 1980 onward. China's post-80's generation is unique in their command of the Internet and in this study China's post-80's generation will be set against the backdrop of the Internet and how they utilize the web to disseminate the social history of the Cultural Revolution. These generations of youth in China have also fallen susceptible to the Party's broad narrative of defining the events of the Cultural Revolution. Academics in China are concerned that this generation refuses to contradict the official Party line when it comes to recounting Chinese history. In chapter two, this study will anchor the online comments pertaining to the Cultural Revolution with the state's efforts to portray the Cultural Revolution in a broad history to Chinese youth, particularly through watered down educational standards shaping the way these generations speak about the Cultural Revolution.

In chapter three the demographics of the Chinese Internet will be examined. In order to lay the context for this Cultural Revolution revival on the Chinese Internet, it is necessary to set the scene of who primarily uses the Chinese Internet and for what purposes. As this study will show, Communist Party officials "attach great importance to social conditions and public opinion as reflected on the [Chinese] Internet, which has

become a bridge facilitating direct communication between the government and the public."[7] The Party uses the internet to gauge social sentiment as well as a means to supervise both the people and Party cadres, and the internet is merely a technological evolution in a broad history of state-controlled monitoring

Chapter four will analyze recent recollections and invocations of the Cultural Revolution through Chinese current events, Party warnings, and netizen reflections. The post-80's generation on the internet, drawing from the state's history prescribed to them, speak about the Cultural Revolution in terms of the Party's narrative of the chaos and turmoil and fail to comprehend the personal driving factors at work behind the Party's broad narrative. Netizens are subscribing to the Party's constructed history of the Cultural Revolution at the expense of the personal narratives of those who lived through it.

Blogger Li Chengpeng took to the internet to share the upsetting story of Li Jianli and used his influence on cyberspace to get his followers to discuss the memory of the Cultural Revolution. Li was born in 1968 during the early years of the Cultural Revolution. Growing up in the 1970s, Li would not have experienced the unrestrained destruction and violence dealt by the Red Guards. Yet this has not stopped him from commenting on the violence of the car smashing in September 2012, making the statement "the Cultural Revolution was just like this." Li's followers on his blog are younger than he, born to the post-80's generation. Lacking their own personal memories, it is very likely that their knowledge of the period is heavily influenced by the Party's history and the standards taught to them in school. But that doesn't stop them from

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[7] Guobin Yang, "Technology and Its Contents: Issues in the Study of the Chinese Internet," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70 (2011): 1043-1050.

drawing connections between such violence as the anti-Japanese car smashings and that

of the Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution.

CHAPTER 2

CHINA'S POST-80'S GENERATION AND THE OFFICIAL NARRATIVE

The Cultural Revolution is often depicted as a negative political movement of mass hysteria that led to a tremendous loss of culture, ideals, and life. The movement saw Mao Zedong, founding father of the People's Republic of China and governing Chairman of the Communist Party of China, elevated to god-like status. However, leading Chinese modern historian Jonathan Spence argues that the Cultural Revolution defies simple classification. Instead various forces fed into one another to create a paralyzing political climate.

In this chapter, the history of the Cultural Revolution will be provided to lay the foundation for this study. Within this historical lens, the framework for the officially constructed history of the Cultural Revolution by the Party under Deng Xiaoping will be analyzed to show that in the early 1980's, Party leaders sought to distance themselves from the failed politics of Mao. What will be brought to light is a gap existing between the official history of the Party and that retold through personal memoirs and literature. . China's post-80's generation will be profiled against the backdrop of this ideology shift at the turn of the decade. Further analysis will be given to how the Party stifled research and scholarship on the subject also beginning in the post-Cultural Revolution period.

Finally, this study will show how the history of the Cultural Revolution is taught among China's post-1980s generation, and how that history prescribes to the Party's line.

2.1 The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution is often depicted as a negative political movement of mass hysteria that led to a tremendous loss of culture, ideals, and life. The movement saw Mao Zedong, founding father of the People's Republic of China and governing Chairman of the Communist Party of China, elevated to god-like status. However, leading Chinese modern historian Jonathan Spence argues that the Cultural Revolution defies simple classification. Instead various forces fed into one another to create a paralyzing political climate.

Twentieth-century China is defined as having a tense political climate. After overthrowing the Manchu-ruled Qing Imperial Dynasty in 1911, Nationalists under Dr. Sun Yat-sen established the Republic of China.[8] As the Nationalists struggled to rid China of warlord factions and a growing Japanese presence on the mainland, varying political forces established themselves, of which the Party came into existence.[9] Chinese Communists fought to reshape China through a system characterized by state ownership over the economy. Since the inception of the Communist Party of China, the Communists struggled for legitimacy as the government of China against the Nationalists, ultimately

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[8] The Kuomintang, or the Chinese Nationalist Party, was one of the dominant political parties on the Chinese mainland. The party remains one of the main political factors of the Republic of China, Taiwan.
[9] The Party was officially established after the First Party Congress on July 1, 1921. Chinese Communism is based itself off Marxism-Leninism, a Communist ideology following the theories of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. Such ideology includes socialism, or a system characterized by state ownership over the economy.

driving them out and founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.[10]

Under the leadership of Chairman Mao, the People's Republic remained heavily guarded

from the western world. Mao and the Communists quickly implemented Communist land

reform, moving from a landlord ownership system to a distribution system.

Mao's socialist ideology soon began to deter from its Marxist-Leninist roots to

become later known as Maoism, or Mao Zedong Thought. Mao Zedong Thought differed

from its origin due to its agrarian focus and the emphasis of power which Mao placed

upon the peasant class.[11] Mao Zedong Thought heavily influenced Communist policies

from 1950-1976. The Great Leap Forward (1957-1960) was a disastrous economic plan

that caused the largest famine in Chinese history.[12] As a result of its failure, Mao's

influence began to wane. As Party cadres begin to overshadow the Chairman, Mao

sought a means to reenter the spotlight, which resulted in the Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution saw Mao reach the apex of his political power in China.

For the Cultural Revolution, Mao sought a political campaign that would strengthen

socialism throughout China and continue his ideology of constant class conflict, or the

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[10] Prior to World War II, the Nationalists who possessed a larger and better trained force than the Communists. After small-scale campaigns, the two dominant political parties halted the civil war to turn their attention to the invading Japanese who had established a stronghold in Manchuria. After the Japanese surrendered, the Nationalists and Communists engaged in a full-scale civil war. The Nationalists, weakened from the war with Japan and the successful spread of Communist ideology among peasants, faced defeat on the mainland, retreating to the island of Taiwan.

[11] This emphasis was placed upon the peasantry in response to China's large agrarian culture and small-scale urban workforce. Maoism was abandoned following the Cultural Revolution due to its counter-productivity to economic growth and the social order, best exemplified through two political movements spearheaded by Mao: the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

[12] During this period, China underwent widespread collectivization in rural areas. In order to increase steel production, Mao urged peasants to melt down their metal and iron wares. Men were moved from farming to smelt down pots, pans, and agricultural equipment. What resulted was the production of pig iron, of little economic worth, at the expense of tending to agriculture, causing widespread famine. Like the Cultural Revolution, writer Murong Xuecun notes that "research about the famine cannot be published, schools do not teach it, newspapers may not carry any reports about it and archives covering it remain closed to the public." Frank Dikotter's book, *Mao's Great Famine* estimates at least 45 million deaths.

struggles between classes for equality in society. Mao argued that the socialist revolution was losing impetus due to a lumbering bureaucracy and Party conservatism, declaring bureaucrats of "taking the capitalist road" and diverging from the socialist path dependent on the peasantry. This mixed with the personal ambitions of various Party leaders, such as Vice Premier Lin Biao who wanted to increase the role of the army into politics, and those who opposed Mao's policies, such as Vice Chairman Liu Shaoqi.[13]

In the summer of 1966, the political factionalism reached a climax. On August 8, the Central Committee of the Party passed the "Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (also known as the Sixteen Points). This defined the movement as "a great revolution that touches people to their very souls and constitutes a new stage in the development of the socialist revolution in our country, a stage which is both broader and deeper."[14] With its passing, Mao sought to eradicate bourgeois elements within society through the establishment of a people's dictatorship and the elimination of the Four Olds. The Four Olds, referencing old customs, old habits, old culture, old thinking, were things defined as anti-proletariat "fostered by the exploiting classes" which "poisoned the minds of the people for thousands of years."[15] Mao urged the masses to destroy the Four Olds and replace them with new habits and thinking in order to move China further from its traditional roots and into a new era. As a result, Chinese Red Guards destroyed works of classical Chinese literature, cultural relics, and desecrated Chinese temples and personal homes.

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[13] Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, (Norton, 1990), 603.
[14] Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, "Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," August 8, 1966.
[15] Li Gucheng, *A Glossary of Political Terms of The People's Republic of China*, (Chinese University Press), 427.

Red Guard factions led the campaign to destroy the Four Olds throughout China primarily during 1966-1967. Red Guards, a military-like force made up of Chinese youth, heeded Mao's ideology as exemplified by their use of carrying around and quoting from *Quotations from Chairman Mao*.[16] This saw the promotion of Mao to a god-like status, specifically among youth. During this period, schools and universities shut down and Red Guards were left unaccountable due to their paramilitary status. Left to imply their own terms to the campaign based off Mao's ideology, Red Guards became eager to prove their revolutionary zeal and attacked any who tried to stunt their influence. As such, Red Guards targeted intellectuals as holding "reactionary" modes of thinking, with many enduring humiliating experiences of being paraded through the streets and forced to wear dunce caps in front of large crowds.[17] Violence soon grew exponentially, with intellectuals and those with a class status listed as one of the "seven categories of black elements" being beaten to death.[18] Youth turned against their neighbors, teachers, Party cadres, and in some cases, their own relatives. Red Guard factions competed for power in local neighborhoods, striving to prove who best exemplified Mao Zedong Thought.

In his memoir, *Gang of One: Memoirs of a Red Guard*, author Fan Shen tells of his experiences throughout the decade. Shen actively became a Red Guard and felt pride in his role until he participated in the ransacking and torture of a local family. Shen

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[16] The book, *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, better known in the west as the "Little Red Book," is an anthology of selected statements, speeches, and writings of Chairman Mao. Copies of the book were heavily distributed in the early years of the Cultural Revolution, and carried by Red Guards throughout Chinese cities. *Quotations from Chairman Mao* is also prominent in propaganda posters and images from the early 1960s.
[17] Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 606.
[18] The "seven categories of black elements" were landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, rightists, capitalist roaders, and reactionary academic authorities. Anyone falling into this category, or with ancestors or relatives who fell into the category, were persecuted.

recalls his experience reading wall posters, in which Red Guards, confused with whom they should be targeting, turned on competing factions:

> At first, most posters were serious debates among various Red Guard 'fighting teams,' … but they could not agree on who were the great enemies that the Great Leader wanted them to expose. Oddly they seemed to find the hidden enemies in other Red Guard teams, and they seemed to hate each other so much that they called each other 'guards of capitalist dogs' and wanted to chop their opponents with 'ten thousand knives.' In those days, nobody saw the ridiculousness of the fight among Red Guard factions.[19]

His account of Red Guard competition in his neighborhood speaks to the chaos of the early years of the Cultural Revolution. Years later in the early 1970s, Shen recalls the personal afflictions those who were denounced or struggled against faced. While working at the East Wind Aircraft Factory, Shen's co-worker was arrested on charges of child corruption for allegedly teaching several teenagers "bourgeois" songs. After being arrested his co-worker, nicknamed "Singer," was dragged to a stage in front of the entire factory workforce and denounced. Shen recalls the experience, writing, "Looking at my friend's face, I could see the fear he must be experiencing: the fear of total loneliness, of being completely forsaken, of being condemned by everyone he knew, spit upon and shunned by the entire society."[20] As will be shown in chapter two, such experiences, crucial to the public memory of the Cultural Revolution, remain absent from the official narrative.

The power of the Red Guards began to wane in 1968. In December of that year, Mao began the Down to the Countryside Movement which lasted for the next decade.

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[19] Fan Shen, *Gang of One*, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 11-12.
[20] Ibid, 156.

The Movement sent youth from urban cities into rural farming and mountain villages to learn from the workers and peasants, and to combat urban bourgeois thinking. Youth during this time forewent formal education and many lost their chance at higher education as a result of moving into China's rural areas, causing many to refer to this generation as the "lost generation." Known as the "sent-down youth" of China, many remained in rural areas until after Mao's death in 1976.[21]

China's isolation from the western world during the Mao years marked extreme tension between China and western nations due to China's communist influence over the Southeast Asian region. Due to its isolation, few westerners experienced China during the tumultuous years of the Cultural Revolution. Knowledge of this period in the west is heavily influenced by literary memoirs produced by the generation who came of age during the Cultural Revolution. While Cultural Revolution memory flourishes in western contexts, through these memoirs and university seminars, few non-scholars are aware of the absence of Cultural Revolution memory within China, and the implications this holds for its post-80's youth. This study becomes extremely poignant to showcase the implications of Cultural Revolution revivalism on the internet, and how China's post-80's generation subscribes to the Party's official narrative. As such, it is important that the legacy and social memory of the Cultural Revolution be studied and shared among western scholarly audiences.

In the book, *Growing Up in the People's Republic of China*, authors Ye Weili and Ma Xiaodong reflect upon their experiences growing up during the Cultural Revolution.

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[21] Sent down youth in Chinese, 知识青年 (zhishi qingnian), meaning "educated youth," commonly referred to as "zhiqing."

Set as a conversation between the two women, Ye argues that the experiences encountered during the Cultural Revolution created her generation. Youth during the period "entered adulthood, an especially impressionable stage in people's lives, at precisely the time when political and social order was turned upside down," and this generation underwent some of the most severe trials and tribulations.[22] Violence was pervasive during the early years of the Cultural Revolution, and many youth acting as Red Guards committed or witnessed extreme acts of torture. As a result, the Cultural Revolution has become a highly sensitive topic in China, and a great silence falls over the actions of former Red Guards. This works to create the Cultural Revolution as a taboo topic of discussion in China, allowing the Party to hold up its own narration of events which this study will prove has led to current youth using its memory to call to attention social turmoil.

As a scholar of history, Ye admits to being troubled by the sweeping historical negation of the Cultural Revolution by the Party in the decades since, arguing that such actions are working to "bleach memories of our parents, and even us."[23] Ye fears that the personal experiences of the Cultural Revolution generation are beginning to disappear in the public's memory. Chinese youth, she argues, "see their country's history beginning with the launching of the economic reform in the late 1970s; everything prior is prehistory and makes little sense. Sadly, a country known for its thousands of years of continuous history now is suffering from a broken sense of history."[24] Negation of the Cultural Revolution is perceived as a wrong turn in the Party's path. In essence this has

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[22] Ye Weili and Ma Xiaodong, *Growing Up in the People's Republic*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 2.
[23] Ibid, 7.
[24] Ibid, 7.

worked to create a historic roadblock at the end of the Cultural Revolution; a road block which says to youth that all that came before were merely bumps along the way to the prosperous reform period from the 1980s onward. As such, the Party effectively created a sense among youth that any social acts resembling the Cultural Revolution will deter prosperity and endanger society.

The memory of the Cultural Revolution cannot be simply placed into categories such as personal memory, social memory, or official history. Many social and cultural factors shape the memories of this decade, and as this study will show, the memories of the Cultural Revolution have begun to take on different meanings to different generations. The memory of those who lived during the Cultural Revolution is kept alive through memoirs written by those who came of age from 1966-1976. These memoirs, while prevalent in the west, are more often than not banned in China. As a result, these personal histories of the Cultural Revolution remain absent from the state history, which was officially drawn up in 1981 after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

2.2 "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party"

As China began a slow recovery from the failed politics of Mao during the Cultural Revolution, the Party's new leaders needed a means to reassure the people of their right to rule. Deng Xiaoping, Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee and de facto leader of China from 1977 until his retirement from politics in 1992, sought to bring order out of chaos. As such, the Party wrote an official state narrative of the events of the Cultural Revolution, reestablishing the Party's proud history against the social bumps

caused by the Cultural Revolution. In totalitarian regimes the world over, history has been a tool aiding ruling powers in obtaining legitimacy, and the ruling parties within these states have "ceaselessly sought to dominate and manipulate public and private memory."[25] The role of history takes on a similar role in the People's Republic of China. Mao and his cadres worked to control the messages imparted in history; to bend those messages in favor of official policy lines. The Communists sough to "extirpate any manifestation of dissent or opposition that might be hidden in historical allegory…the historians, in short, were to serve as handmaidens to the Party propagandists."[26] It is important to understand how the Party represents the Cultural Revolution in its official narrative, and how that narrative has been presented to the people and shaped the social memory among succeeding generations.

After the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, the Party sought to move forward and distance itself from the events of 1966-1976, and the revolutionary fervor created by Mao and lasting until his death in 1976. In order to preserve the Party's legitimacy after a period seen as chaos, a narrative of the decade was drawn up to clarify the Cultural Revolution's role within Party history. The result was the 1981 "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China." Drafted under the guidance of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee and of its Secretariat, Marxist philosopher and prior Vice President of the Party's Propaganda Department Hu Qiaomu served as the principal leader of the Resolution's drafting board. Deng Xiaoping and Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang

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[25] Harvey J. Kaye, *Why Do Ruling Classes Fear History?*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 14.
[26] Jonathan Unger, *Using the Past to Serve the Present: Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China*, (New York, 1993), 2-3.

presided over the entirety of the work, giving their opinions and input. The Resolution was adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on June 27, 1981. Its adoption marked an important shift from the end of the Mao era to the beginning of the reform era under Deng Xiaoping.

The Resolution went through numerous drafts and Party members spent over a year revising and discussing the document[27]. As the Chinese people began to pick up the pieces and reassess their lives after the end of the Cultural Revolution, they began to wonder how the state would move address the past decade as it preceded to move forward. Deng began to stress for urgency in producing a final product, highlighting the fact that the document was eagerly being awaited by individuals both domestically and abroad. Speaking with his drafting group on April 7, 1981, Deng urged the document's completion:

> Some comrades have said that perhaps we shouldn't be in such a rush to write this resolution. But that's wrong because people are waiting for it. In China, people both inside and outside the Party are waiting. If we don't come out with something, there can be no unity of views on major issues. The world is waiting, too. People are watching events in China with some doubts about its stability and unity. And one of their doubts is about whether we can produce this document, and if so, when. So we can't take any longer because further delay will be unfavorable.[28]

Deng made known the necessity for the Committee to produce a united explanation of "major issues," including the Cultural Revolution in order to placate outside sources doubting the stability and unity of the Party. As a result, in his remarks on successive drafts of the Resolution leading up to June 1981, Deng Xiaoping stresses the need for the

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[27] Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975-1982),* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984).
[28] Ibid, 288.

section devoted to the Cultural Revolution to be "written in broad outline."[29] This was to

be the first time that the Cultural Revolution was to be officially discussed and negated

by the Communist Party, and Deng sought succinct writing to present a clear official

narrative. Previous drafts which were presented to him were found to be "over-

extended."[30]

In the Resolution's final release, the Cultural Revolution was denounced as a state

disaster that lasted from 1966 to 1976. However, due to Deng's requirements of brevity,

specific details of how the period affected average citizens remained absent. These

personal details continue to remain absent from the Party's history and shape how

China's post-80's generation learn about and perceive the Cultural Revolution. The

Resolution effectively places a label on the Cultural Revolution, denouncing it as a

mistake and running loose from socialist policy and "Chinese reality," an effort on the

Party's behalf to place blame on the failures of the decade. The Resolution reads that

"history has shown that the 'cultural revolution,' initiated by a leader laboring under a

misapprehension and capitalized on by counter-revolutionary cliques, led to domestic

turmoil and brought catastrophe to the Party, the state and the whole people."[31]

In order to protect the socialist ideology granting legitimization to the ruling

Communist government, the Resolution makes sure to note that "the history of the

'cultural revolution' has proved that Comrade Mao Zedong's principal theses for

initiating this revolution conformed neither to Marxism, Leninism nor to Chinese

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[29] Ibid, 46.
[30] Ibid, 46.
[31] Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, "Resolution on certain questions in the history of our party since the founding of the People's Republic of China," June 27, 1981, Accessed from Chinese Communism Subject Archive.

reality."[32] In this line, the government ensures that the disaster of the Cultural Revolution does not leave too deep a scar upon the face of China's sole-ruling Party and the ideology it founded itself on. While the bulk of the Resolution seeks to place the blame on Mao's "gross mistakes," the document cautions that "if we judge his activities as a whole, his contributions to the Chinese revolution far outweigh his mistakes," ensuring that Mao's legacy as a hero of the Communist Party remained intact. [33]

With the blame planted on Mao but insuring that his legacy to the Party remained intact, the Party used the resolution to call to memory the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution ensuring that "the kind of chaotic situation that obtained in the 'cultural revolution' must never be allowed to happen again in any sphere."[34] The document goes on to note that revolutionary zeal behind that decade did not constitute as progress:

> Practice has shown that the 'cultural revolution' did not in fact constitute a revolution or social progress in any sense, nor could it possibly have done so. It was we and not the enemy at all who were thrown into disorder by the 'cultural revolution.' Therefore, from beginning to end, it did not turn 'great disorder under heaven' into 'great order under heaven,' nor could it conceivably have done so.[35]

With this statement, the Resolution negates the very purpose of the Cultural Revolution, insinuating that the very foundations of the movement, such as the campaign to destroy the Four Olds, granting power to Red Guard factions, and promoting constant class struggle, had no purpose being instated. Throughout the resolution the Party places labels on the Cultural Revolution such as 'disorder,' 'chaos,' and 'mistake,' shaping the legacy

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[32] Central Committee, "Resolution on certain questions."
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

of this decade in the Party's official history. However this paragraph alone explicitly repudiates the purposes of the Cultural Revolution.

Within the document the Cultural Revolution is broken down into three distinct political periods: the release of the May 16 Notification by Mao in 1966 to the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969, the Ninth Party Congress to the Tenth Party Congress of the Communist Party in August 1973, and the Tenth Party Congress to the arrest of the Gang of Four in October 1976.[36] Throughout these three periods, the blame is placed upon failed political actions and overarching struggles between national Party leaders led primarily by "Comrade Mao." Mao's allegations attributing capitalist-roaders of being within the Party, a driving force of Mao Zedong Thought, "plunged the nation into turmoil."[37] What remains absent from this state-approved history is any mention of the people's actions throughout China, the struggles they faced, and the turmoil caused at the local level.

While calling out the Cultural Revolution as a political disaster, Deng knew he could not openly negate it, for this would trivialize the actions of Mao who was seen as the standard bearer of Marxism-Leninism to China and played a crucial role in the founding of the People's Republic. Instead the Resolution was carefully crafted to highlight the mistakes made by Mao in his later years, while upholding his earlier contributions to the Party. These mistakes, the Resolution explains, were able to be righted through reform, further legitimizing the Party's rule. Deng himself had an important role to play in moving the nation away from the Cultural Revolution. Like

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

many intellectuals, Deng was purged and placed under house arrest while Mao led a nation-wide campaign to criticize Deng and his right-leaning stance. For Deng to be rehabilitated and seeking a clarification of the decade's history created a partnership among intellectuals and citizens who suffered at the hands of their peers.

Finally, the Resolution marked the end of the policies of constant class struggle characterized by Mao Zedong Thought, bringing in a new period of reform brought about by the leadership of Deng. By placing the blame upon political figures rather than the Party itself, the Communists were able to walk away from the newly revised history revitalized and unscathed. What had been a dangerous obstacle instead watered down the Cultural Revolution as being a relatively short period of turmoil set against an otherwise glorious and revolutionary history of the People's Republic. As such, the Resolution has become symbolic of this shift from the Mao period to the era of reform; a shift that the post-80's generation believes divides Chinese society. It remains as a Party-built wall hailing the topic as closed for reflection and future discussion, affecting the Cultural Revolution's memory among China's post-80's generation.


2.3 China's Post-80's Generation


The decade following the Cultural Revolution saw immense reform and economic growth, at the hands of moving in the opposite direction from the newly re-written history of the Party. As Chinese society grew out of the ashes, children born into China's post-Cultural Revolution generations have been greatly shaped by the nation's opening

up, sweeping economic reforms, and the technological advances of the internet, setting themselves apart from the generations which came before.

Chinese born from 1980-1989, known in China as the "balinghou" were the first generation born under the one-child policy, which was implemented in 1979. The one-child policy aimed to alleviate social and economic stress upon Chinese society due to Mao's belief that population growth granted power to the nation.[38] Scholars have argued that the primarily single-child families in urban China mean that "China's younger generation, in its search for identity and belonging, is compelled to reach out to its peer members outside of the family more so than any other earlier generations."[39] While 'balinghou' initially referred to those born within the period of 1980-1989, it has come to represent all young people born after 1980, also known collectively as the reform-era generation.[40] For the purposes of this study, the term 'youth' will be defined as anyone born from 1980-2000, currently averaging in age between fifteen and thirty. These generations grew up in the internet age and with the Cultural Revolution firmly placed within the Party's history.

Older generations of Chinese, parents, educators, and Party leaders, have shared concern over the raising of the post-80's generation. Members of this group have been criticized by these groups as being westernized, online gaming addicts, self-centered, dependent, and spoiled.[41] Most of these stereotypes are a result of the one-child policy

[38] Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 684.
[39] Guobin Yang, "The Internet as Cultural Form: Technology and the Human Condition in China," *Knowledge, Technology, and Policy* 22 (2009): 113.
[40] Moving forward, this study will refer to those born after 1980 as part of the post-80's generation.
[41] Liu Fengshui, *Urban Youth in China: Modernity, the Internet and the Self*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 141.

which places each child under the watchful eyes of a set of parents and two sets of grandparents, and also sees these family figures placing high expectations onto the child.

In *Urban Youth in China: Modernity, the Internet and Self*, author Liu Fengshui explores the collective identity work behind www.80end.com, a website specifically built for China's eighties generation. Founded in 2006, the website has a daily average publication rate of over one thousand new message threads.[42] The website's mission is to actively combat the stereotypes revolving around the post-80's generation, by celebrating the contributions of those within the generation to Chinese society, as well as providing mutual enjoyment and communication. In short, the website aims to create a living online museum of the post-80's experience. Through his research online, Liu found that the post-80's generation works hard to set itself apart from all others, working against the stereotypes which Chinese society has placed upon it.

Liu's research on 80end.com uncovered a feeling of resentment coming forth from those born between 1980-1989. Faced with new opportunities and wealth, Liu commented that those on the website felt frustration and a feeling of being lost. Seeing themselves as the "sacrificed generation," many on the website felt they served as unwitting social experiments in China's modernization: the first to grow up in the market economy, the first to fall under the one-child policy, and the first to shoulder the burden of filial duty, or the duty of a child to care for his parents.[43] However this sentiment is at odds with those felt by those who grew up during the Cultural Revolution, whose teenage years were truly lost, spent performing manual labor in China's rural areas.

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[42] Liu Fengshui, *Urban Youth in China*, 143.
[43] Ibid, 153.

The parents of China's post-80's generation, born between 1950 and 1965, grew up during the Cultural Revolution, into a world that was completely different from the China of the reform era. Many who came of age during the Cultural Revolution decade left education behind to embrace the revolutionary fervor transforming China. Youth during this time spent their teenage years away from their family performing grueling work alongside China's workers and peasants. They were raised to believe in Maoism and hold true the revolutionary spirit. But then they emerged from the 1970s into the reform era of the 1980s, which brought a storm of social change and an identity crisis for a whole generation.

Suddenly these young adults who had been shaped by Maoism and the constant revolution were told that everything the Party had drilled into them had been a mistake, compounded with such events as the passing of the Resolution of 1981. The revolutionary activities of their youth were negated. Values deemed as 'counter-revolutionary' were hoisted back into society. As a result of having their youthful experiences dictated to them, as well as facing extreme political and educational competition after leaving the countryside, this generation who came of age during the Cultural Revolution has been known to refer to themselves as the "lost generation," a term which is also used among those born in the 1980s, as shown by Liu's experiences on 80end.com.

For the website's second birthday, 80end.com posted a message declaring that "the balinghou have turned from a group of children full of willfulness into the central force in Chinese society that is willing to shoulder the responsibilities of social and

national development."[44] And one means for this generation to move into this role is through the internet. The internet provides a means for Chinese youth to have their voices heard against their "junior status in a society characterized by a patriarchal power hierarchy."[45] The post-80's generation in China has embraced the internet, making up the largest demographic of Chinese netizens.

One prominent Chinese blogger has been referred to as the unofficial voice of his generation. Born in 1982, Han Han has gathered over eleven million followers on his Sina Weibo microblogging account and published five books. In 2009 Time Magazine named Han Han among the most influential in the world. His popularity is attributed to his provocative writing reflecting the anxieties of China's post-80's generation. And Han Han's educational background defies the traditional expectations, as he dropped out of high school and met and was later met with success.

Han Han's most recent book, *This Generation: Dispatches from China's Most Popular Literary Star (and Race Car Driver)*, is a collection of his work and blog entries on varying topics spanning from 2006. In this book, Han Han establishes his credence as the unofficial voice of his generation, granting explanations to negative labels placed upon China's post-80's generation. Han Han writes that society at large labels his generation as being self-oriented and apolitical. He comments that being self-oriented is "actually not a bad thing" and that it is a direct consequence of the one-child policy.[46] Throughout his negation of labels placed upon his generation, Han Han places blame for the supposed stereotypes on policies and actions instituted by China's previous

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[44] Ibid, 149.
[45] Ibid, 142.
[46] Han Han, *This Generation: Dispatches from China's Most Popular Literary Star (and Race Car Driver)*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 1-2.

generations. These policies, such as the one-child policy, have affected the attitude and experiences of his generation, at the expense of their control.

Speaking to his generation's label of not caring about politics, Han Han writes that belief off as a "ridiculous argument:"

> In the current environment, politics isn't something one can afford to care about. Those people in the past, they simply found themselves cared about by politics whether they liked it or not, and the roles they played were just that of small fry, hapless victims swept around in the political currents of the day. Being a victim is no decent topic of conversation, any more than being raped has a place in a proper range of sexual experiences. The era where one can care about politics has yet to arrive.[47]

Within this context, Han Han belittles generations which came before him as having been puppets of Party politics. His comment of prior generations swept up in the political currents of the day, descriptive of the Mao years, represents his view, and that of his generation's, that older Chinese were complacent and lacking any control in the political realm. Han Han ends his statement with the comment that "the era where one can care about politics has yet to arrive," signifying that Communist rule in China, with its history of victimizing its people, is not everlasting.

Han Han continues his attack on previous generations in China, "happily noting" that his generation has significantly improved standards of conduct, such as not littering, spitting, or cutting in line. These positive habits, he continues, were "gradually established by those born after the Cultural Revolution. It's our elders' glorious tradition that we have to thank for those vices and anti-social behaviors."[48] His tone and word choice throughout this and the following paragraph portrays a clear contempt for those

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[47] Ibid, 2.
[48] Ibid, 2-3.

who came before him. And as the unofficial voice of his generation, clearly emblemized by his book's title, it is assumed that his sentiments represents that of China's post-80's generation.

Since Han Han's rise to popularity on the Chinese Internet, he has met with fierce criticism from China's established literary world, and as a result he was involved in several controversies over the legitimacy of his writing. Some of his blog posts have also fallen under government censorship, permanently removed from cyberspace. All of these setbacks have been described as a remnant of the Cultural Revolution by Han Han, further commenting that "there's no tradition for debate. People think if your position is different, they should try to destroy you."[49] In his work, Han Han successfully drives a wedge between his generation and those which came prior, reiterating the generational wall that formed in Chinese society marked by the end of the Cultural Revolution.

Another defining quality of the post-80's generation is their strong sense of nationalism. Instances of inflamed nationalism among Chinese youth in recent years include efforts to boycott French designer products after protests marred the French leg of the 2008 Olympic torch relay, the creation of an anti-CNN website after an American cable news anchor called Chinese officials "a bunch of goons and thugs," and vigorous stances against Tibetan autonomy. This nationalism is distinct from the Communist Party in China, as Liu discerned based off one netizen's post at 80end.com: "Loving the country and loving the Party are two different things. I'd like to give one illustration. The country is over 5,000 years old now. However, the current government is only several

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[49] Duncan Hewitt, "Han Han: World's Most Popular Blogger," Newsweek Magazine, October 12, 2012.

decades old."[50] While nationalist sentiments are found throughout Chinese society, inflamed beliefs on the autonomy of Chinese territories and defending China's image against western audiences are two instances of nationalism heavily characterized by the online commentaries of Chinese youth.

Speaking of America in his book *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Extraordinary Events in the American Experience*, Arthur G. Neal writes that the most recent generations are "notorious in their disregard for the long reach of their historical past…There is a sense of comfort in putting bad times behind us and thinking positively about both the present and the future."[51] The same can be attributed to the current generation of youth living in China. Such examples will arise in chapter four in which case netizens have taken it upon themselves to call for the arrests of all who committed wrongful acts during the period.

Neal explains why it is important for younger generations to remember a traumatic history, even though they have not experienced it. He says, "When a trauma becomes national in scope, however, both the needs of individuals and the needs of the social system must be addressed. At the level of the social system, there is a need to give some form of enduring recognition to traumatic events."[52] However, as will become apparent, the needs of the Cultural Revolution generation are not presented in the state's official narrative. In fact, the trauma of the people is completely absent from that narrative. And due to state restrictions on scholarship attributed to the period, the messages of the Cultural Revolution generation are not being passed on. These messages

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[50] Liu Fengshui, *Urban Youth in China*, 175.
[51] Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Extraordinary Events in the American Experience*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 206.
[52] Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*, 206.

are important, as they help the nation minimize such problems in the future while preparing future generations for the challenges ahead. However, one must question how equipped China's post-80's generation is for the challenges as long as the history presented by the Party is incomplete and one-sided.

2.4 Cultural Revolution Literature

The Party's historiography and subsequent education within China's school systems are limited to the broad and politicized narrative of the Cultural Revolution. As such, there remains a large gap in how the events of that decade were experienced within society, including the motivations which drew citizens into the discourse. With the Communist Party holding complete control over publication, education, and the media, social memory is shared through state-controlled education and propaganda. What has worked to fill this gap is the literary genre of scar literature by intellectuals who suffered and those who came of age during the Cultural Revolution.[53]

In his dissertation titled "Cultural Revolution and Collective Memory: the Case of Five Intellectuals," Hari Venkatesan draws upon the work of French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who argued that "Collective frameworks are the instruments used by collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society." According to Venkatesan, these predominate thoughts of the society are determined in terms of

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[53] Scar literature, in Chinese, 伤痕文学. Scar literature is thought to be named after Lu Xinhua's story "Scar" published in 1978.

sociocultural history and present concerns. In the context of social memory of the

Cultural Revolution, predominant thoughts are influenced by the Resolution of 1981, and

Venkatesan argues that "Even in case of those who retain personal memories of the

Cultural Revolution, the larger historical context within which their experiences are to be

situated is inevitably 'outsourced' and thus subject to mediation."[54] These aspects

attribute the Cultural Revolution generation being hailed as the "lost generation" because

even within their own history, their personal experiences remain lost and unsubstantiated.

Within literature published by intellectuals who lived through the Cultural

Revolution, events of importance differ greatly from the Resolution of 1981. As the Party

experienced power struggles, intellectuals faced the campaign to destroy four olds, house

raids, struggle sessions, and in some cases detention. While these experiences remain

absent from the Party's official Resolution, their importance is invaluable, for they

"complement the official narrative by offering readers a narrative of how the Cultural

Revolution was experienced by one of its main victims: the intellectuals."[55] Personal

narratives are crucial for understanding the on the ground turmoil wrought by Mao's

campaigns to exterminate bourgeois elements, deeply fleshing out the broad and brief

official narrative. Dissatisfaction with present assessments of the Cultural Revolution is

quoted as reasons motivating the authors of many scar literature memoirs to make a

record of their personal experiences.[56] These memoirs and personal experiences explain

the motivations driving individuals to act as they did, combating ignorance in the official

narrative towards the factors which drove the events of the Cultural Revolution.

[54] Venkatesan, Hari, "Cultural Revolution and Collective Memory: The Case of Five Intellectuals," PhD diss., National University of Singapore, 2005, 13.
[55] Ibid, 165.
[56] Ibid, 214.

Within his study, Venkatesan looks at two semi-official narratives of the Cultural Revolution which can be found in mainland China. The first text, *The Decade of Great Chaos*, was written in 1989 by Wang Nianyi, a Professor of Communist Party history at the PLA University of National Defense in China. Venkatesan considers that Wang's narrative, while exhaustive, remains an account of major political events that took place during the Cultural Revolution.[57] What remains absent in Wang's account is how the Cultural Revolution affected society, providing little detail on the ordeal of intellectuals, the factors and people responsible, and what galvanized people to Mao's call. Wang's narrative instead concludes that Mao intended to create a new society through the Cultural Revolution after harboring misgivings as to the direction China was headed.[58] *The Decade of Great Chaos* follows the Resolution of 1981 as its central framework.

Another work which Venkatesan analyzed was Jin Chunming's *A Draft History of the Great Cultural Revolution* published in 1995. Jin, a researcher in the Central Party School of China, created a narrative which like the Resolution is broad in scope. Venkatesan notes that while Jin talks about the ordeals of Chinese people and makes references to the arbitrary arrests and harsh treatment faced by many, he does not dwell upon them in detail. Much like Wang's account, specific details are left missing as to how the revolution was conducted by Red Guards and what drove people to deal out harsh treatments and arrests to intellectuals.[59] In short both of these semi-narratives

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[57] The text: Wang Nianyi 王年一, *Da Dongluan de Shi Nian* 大动乱的十年 (The Decade of Great Chaos), (Henan: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1989). From Venkatesan, "Cultural Revolution and Collective Memory," 44.

[58] Venkatesan, "Cultural Revolution and Collective Memory," 45.

[59] The text: Jin Chunming 金春明, *Wenhua Da Geming Shi Gao* "文化大革命"史稿 (A Draft History of the Great Cultural Revolution), (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1995). From Venkatesan, "Cultural Revolution and Collective Memory," 46.

which have been made available to the Chinese people, the history written falls short of delivering the driving forces and agencies of individuals during the Cultural Revolution, remaining largely sanitized.

Inevitably, such a gap between official and semi-officials historical narratives created a discourse between the Party's account of the Cultural Revolution and the personal memories of those who experienced it. This discourse in turn began to form between those who held personal memories of the decade and subsequent generations who heavily rely on the Party's narrative to ascertain what occurred from 1966 to 1976. For those in the post-80s generations, who have no personal memory of the Cultural Revolution, their social memory and knowledge of the period comes from the sources available which shed light on the topic, including schooling, personal studying of the period, and verbal recollections from those who experienced the Cultural Revolution first-hand. The strongest voice from these sources remains what the Party has presented as the official history taught through compulsory education. Such education occurs at a period where children are highly impressionable and lack the ability to challenge the subject matter presented, thus indoctrinating China's youth to the Party's history pertaining to the Cultural Revolution.

2.5 Publication Restrictions and Education

In the People's Republic of China, history textbooks and educational curriculum standards published by the Ministry of Education strictly adhere to the historical narrative

as presented by the Resolution of 1981. The Content Standards listed under the Junior Middle School's "History and Society" Curriculum Standards contain objectives of the course and suggested activities. With reference to the Cultural Revolution, under suggested activities it is mentioned that "Where possible students must be encouraged to conduct surveys, visits, interviews etc. to understand the value of first-hand resources. However, with regard to major events such as the socialist transformation or 'Cultural Revolution,' the teacher must provide guidance and explanation."[60] Therefore it can be extrapolated that current youth in China are not encouraged to learn about the Cultural Revolution through firsthand accounts by engaging with family or community members or by reading literary memoirs. From this content standard, it is evident that teachers are not to encourage students to seek alternate recollections or views of these sensitive historical subjects. Through this academic standard, the teacher becomes the Party's mouthpiece in teaching the history as presented by the official Resolution of 1981.

For the history course presented to Senior Middle Schools (grades 10-12), the curriculum is unsurprisingly simplistic. The outline reads:

> The 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' that started in 1966 was an internal chaos caused by the erroneous leadership and its exploitation by counter-revolutionary groups that brought upon a great calamity on the Party, country and people of all nationalities. The broad masses of cadres, Party members and people struggled to contain the 'Cultural Revolution.' Lin Biao and Jiang Qing's counterrevolutionary groups were smashed. The 'Cultural Revolution' ended in 1976.

In addition to being presented as simplistic, this historical overview does not delve into the effects of the decade on intellectuals, nor does it invite independent research or

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[60] Venkatesan, "Cultural Revolution and Collective Memory," 55.

knowledge into the subject on behalf of the students. Furthermore Mao's influence during this period is diminished and he remains in his role of founder of the People's Republic. Instead a broad and political narrative heavily influenced by the Resolution of 1981 is presented.

What are missing from the narrative presented to the post-1980s generation are the motivations behind the Cultural Revolution's history, and the driving forces that caused the nation's people to act as the Party describes as a state of "chaos" and "turmoil." Instead what remains presented by the Party's narrative is a misstep in political actions that resulted in turmoil and chaos, a belief that this study will later prove continues to be presented as the leading social narrative of the Cultural Revolution as shown through the Chinese Internet.

Chinese writer Murong Xuecun fears that this lack of historical education is having negative consequences on the minds of China's post-80's generation. Murong writes that, "the young generation only believes official pronouncements; some even think contradicting the official line is heretical. They do not bother to check the details."[61] He continues to note that this generation suffers from an "inability-to-accept-facts" syndrome," believing what they want to with the inability to believe facts that contradict or oppose their own views and what has been taught to them. His belief is not surprising considering China's academic standards on glossing over any missteps taken by the Party throughout modern history. The post-80's generation is not taught to question the Party's history or seek alternate sources of knowledge. Instead they take the official Party line at face value and consider outside sources of information biased.

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[61] Murong Xuecun, "Let Them Eat Grass," *Foreign Policy*, January 2, 2013.

Murong's comments come after a Gansu official took to his blog on April 26, 2012 to defend Mao's image against "people spreading slander" about millions who died in rural areas due to the Great Leap Forward. His post brought in thousands of frenzied comments from young netizens, many who agreed that the famine did not occur, or was not as extreme as scholars outside China note.[62] Netizens left comments such as "if there was no rice, why didn't they eat meat?" and "if so many people starved to death, where are the mass graves."[63] Comments such as these highlight the historical ignorance and lack of educational background of the post-80's generation. This online discussion showcases a lack of critical thinking fostered by a political system which obscures any knowledge that contradicts its official narrative.

Scholarly work on the subject remains limited in mainland China and has been in place since the late 1980's. In 1988 a regulation was issued stating "from now on and for quite some time, publishing firms should not plan the publication of dictionaries or other handbooks about the 'Great Cultural Revolution." It went on to say that "under normal circumstances, one should not plan to publish titles specifically researching the 'Great Cultural Revolution' or specifically telling the history of the 'Great Cultural Revolution.'"[64] From this directive it is clear that a large roadblock lies in the way for scholars and researchers in presenting new data or research into the Cultural Revolution. At the same time, younger generations have only the official Party line to learn about the

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[62] This ignorance is even produced from Chinese scholars. Associate Professor at the China University of Political Science and Law, Wu Danhong, joined in the online discussion writing that he went and verified that between the years 1959-1961 in his hometown, people ate tree bark and many were so hungry they thought of suicide. However he finishes by saying that while many suffered from diseases, no one died.
[63] Murong, "Let Them Eat Grass."
[64] Michael Schoenhals, *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not a Dinner Party*, M.E. Sharpe, 1996, 310.

Cultural Revolution, as scholarly work aiming to debate or discuss the events of that decade remain purposefully absent.

In his study, Venkatesan notes a banned history text that questions the motivations behind the Cultural Revolution, and in presenting the piece, notes how it threatens the Party's official narrative. The text, *History of the Decade of the Cultural Revolution*, was never openly released in China.[65] In the preface, author Gao Gao stressed the necessity for historical research into the period, writing that "a nation that is unable to learn lessons from calamities is a nation that has no future….There is a necessity to strengthen socialist democracy and the building up of a legal system. Through a reform of the political system, a highly democratic socialist political system should be setup. It is only in this way that upheavals such as the Cultural Revolution can be prevented effectively."[66] Calling out the Party's dangerously condensed history of the Cultural Revolution, Gao Gao challenges the Party's legitimacy by voicing a necessity for political reform as a means to prevent future upheavals. While this study will later show in chapter four how Party officials and Chinese web users today are turning to the internet to voice misgivings that another period of turmoil such as the Cultural Revolution could be imminent, this is not occurring at the hands of political reform. On the contrary, the Party stresses a strengthening of the Communist's power of rule in order to protect against future chaos.

In a subsequent interview, authors Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi challenge the Party's legitimacy by arguing that the overly simplistic negation of the Cultural Revolution at the

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[65] The text: Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi 高皋和严家其, *Wenge Shi Nian Shi* 文化大革十年史 (History of the Decade of Cultural Revolution), (Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin Chubanshe, 1988). From Venkatesan, "Cultural Revolution and Collective Memory," 51.
[66] Venkatesan, "Cultural Revolution and Collective Memory," 52.

hands of Deng "hinders democratization" in China. The authors claim that further research into the Cultural Revolution "could reveal that while the Cultural Revolution seemed like an era of unprecedented democracy, it was yet another case of masses being manipulated by the regime."[67] With authors vocally challenging the Party's narrative of the Cultural Revolution, it is not surprising that the text remains banned in China. The Party in turn sees works such as this as counter-narratives threatening the solidarity of the state and the forward-movement of society.

The drafting which went into the Resolution of 1981 proves that the social and historical narrative of the Cultural Revolution has been heavily constructed to benefit the needs of the Party. The Central Committee of the Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping laid out the events of the decade in broad terms, highlighting personal faults rather than political failures, as to protect the legitimacy of the Party. What remained absent from the official history were the voices of the people, an element that has since been made available through personal memoirs and scar literature though discouraged from study in China's public school academic standards. These emotional works seek to bridge the gap that's missing between the Party's politicized history and the actions, emotions, and agencies of the people.

Finally, the Resolution of 1981 heavily influenced what youth have been taught about the Cultural Revolution through the public school system. This education, or lack thereof, is one that is overly simplistic and again lacking the personal histories that could be made readily available to students. These educational standards discourage students from independent learning about the period, just as the Communist Party continues to

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[67]Ibid, 53.

limit research and publications on the mainland. In short, the Communist Party has worked to create a history of the Cultural Revolution that is meant to induce fear and uncertainty, by presenting China's younger generations with an overly simplified explanation of how social upheaval can be caused. This leads to the use and misuse of the memory of the Cultural Revolution in China's post-80's generation, as demonstrated best through the modern internet.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHINESE INTERNET AS A SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES

The Chinese Internet is unlike any other international internet network, becoming accessible to the public in 1994. The Chinese government employs strict network monitoring controls which heavily limit public access to international websites, making the internet largely homogeneous. In his article "A Chinese Internet? History, Practice, and Globalization," China scholar Guobin Yang argues that the internet in China has become domesticated, or localized, to such a degree that it is "necessary to talk about the Chinese Internet, as opposed to the Internet in China."[68] Yang continues that "localized" in terms of the Chinese Internet does not mean that the network is not global, but that even within its global features the Chinese Internet has "assumed distinctly Chinese characteristics."[69] Chinese netizens rely largely on these domestic websites for consumption of media, entertainment, news, and social interaction. And the Chinese Internet is also a place of consumption and discussion of historical periods which have become taboo to discuss offline, such as the Cultural Revolution.

At present the Chinese Internet contains the most netizens of any other nation of the world, with more netizens than the total population of the United States. As such, the

[68] Guobin Yang, "A Chinese Internet? History, Practice, and Globalization," *Chinese Journal of Communication* 5 (2012): 49.
[69] Yang, "A Chinese Internet?" 49.

Chinese Internet has evolved into a powerful tool used by netizens for citizen action and has strengthened political efficacy. It is the size of the China's netizen population that has created a system of checks and balances on the Chinese Internet; a system which monitors citizens and government officials alike, an echo of Chinese historical culture. It is this system which has caused researchers to draw comparisons between Chinese netizens and Red Guards, a term that this study will later show has dangerous connotations.

The power behind the Chinese Internet will be discussed in order to investigate the environment and the netizens who utilize the web to propagate a social memory of the Cultural Revolution. First, web statistics will be analyzed to determine who is logging into Chinese cyberspace, and for what purposes. After showing the larger number of post-80's youth who dominate the Chinese Internet, this research will discuss how web these users have taken control of the Chinese Internet in order to increase their political efficacy. Chinese have taken this technology and created their own built-environment using it to advocate for various rights and causes. The online phenomena Human Flesh Search will be linked to internet surveillance and supervision of the people, by the people. This online movement has caused some China watchers to draw dangerous similarities between netizens and Red Guards, leaving some researchers to refer to Chinese web users as "cyber mobs" and "Red Guards 2.0." As the power of the internet grows, references have been made between the evolution of communication on the internet from wall posters of the Mao years to modern web forums. Analysis will be given to this evolution as a link between the two periods. Finally, the modern internet will be grounded in

historical precedence, as encouragement of citizen monitoring is rooted in both Chinese imperial history and the Cultural Revolution.

3.1 The Chinese Internet

Every year the China Internet Network and Information Center (CNNIC) releases its "Statistical Report on Internet Development in China." The CNNIC is the principal agency responsible for internet affairs hosted under the Ministry of Information Industry.[70] The Statistical Report collects vital demographics of who is logging into the Chinese Internet, from where, and what their main activities are online. It also documents trends in the overall growth of the Chinese Internet and mobile communication networks. The CNNIC collects its data by surveying permanent residents aged six or above through fixed phone lines, either at home, at a dormitory, or by use of a cellular phone.[71] The content of the survey includes "whether interviewees surf the internet, their background, the internet access behavior of Internet users, online depth and online experience, etc."[72] A subsequent online survey which gathered detailed information on the use of typical internet applications was placed on the CNNIC website and shared with the public through online government and entertainment portals.[73] The CNNIC hails the extensiveness of the phone survey, using telecom data in China to account for 94.2% of

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[70] The agency is responsible for compiling network data used to improve and evolve upon the internet in China. Other responsibilities include domain name registration, database cataloguing, and malware production.
[71] China Internet Network and Information Center (CNNIC), "Statistical Report on Internet Development in China," January 2012, 7.
[72] Ibid, 8.
[73] Ibid, 9.

the population having access to a phone, claiming "the hypothesis underpinning this survey is that the number of Internet users un-covered by any phone is negligible."[74] Therefore the agency claims this method presents the most accurate image of Chinese internet use.

In its twenty-ninth report released in January 2012, the CNNIC reported an increase in Chinese Internet users of 55.8 million for a total of over 513 million, out of China's population of 1.4 billion. The data also reported an increase in the internet penetration rate of 4%, bringing the rate up to 38.3%.[75] This growth in the number of Chinese citizens logging into the internet has been growing steady throughout the past decade. China is the nation with the most internet users, with only a third of its population regularly accessing the internet, and is steadily outpacing its opponents. China's internet penetration rate of 38.3% is above the global average of 30.2%, and there is much development underway to increase internet activity among rural areas.[76] The internet in China is increasingly becoming more accessible to netizens at home, enabling Chinese to spend more time online and use the internet for increased purposes such as online shopping, social interaction, and a means of entertainment. The alternative to logging in at home is through visiting a cyber café, which tailors services to patrons interested in online gaming. In 2011 the number of netizens logging in at cyber-cafes dropped 7.8%, signifying that internet access is becoming increasingly more common within Chinese homes, and that more users are logging in at home than at cyber-cafes.

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[74] Ibid, 9.
[75] Internet penetration rate details the percentage of a nation's population which has access to the internet. In China, nearly 39% of the nation's 1.3 billion citizens has regular access to the internet. Ibid, 4.
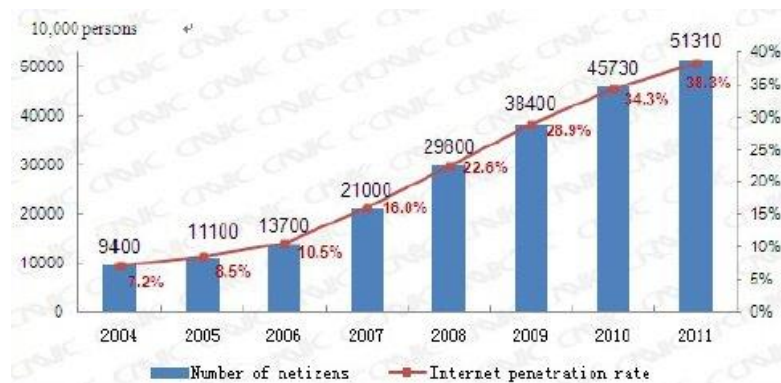[76] Ibid, 17.

**Figure 1:** Growth of China's Internet Population (2004-2011).[77]

Among China's netizen population, students make up the largest swath of netizen demographics. In its January 2012 report, the CNNIC reported a rise in the number of high school students utilizing the internet from 32.8% to 35.7%, with students of all ages overall making up 30.2% of the Chinese Internet's population.[78] Of the percentage of students logging on, nearly 70% are students in junior and senior high school, and 21% are college students. Furthermore, youth aged ten to thirty comprise over 82% of China's netizens, with 73.5% of these netizens logging in from urban areas within China. While China's post-80's generation make up the largest portion of China's netizens, a severe education gap remains on the Chinese Internet. This education gap among netizens is widespread, with the CNNIC reporting in 2012 that only 11.5% of Chinese internet users held a university degree or higher.[79] These demographics help to profile the average Chinese netizen as being in their late high school or early college years, certainly part of China's post-80s generation. Looking at figure two below, this becomes evident as over 82% of those who log onto the web are within that age range.

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[77] Ibid, 13.
[78] Ibid, 22.
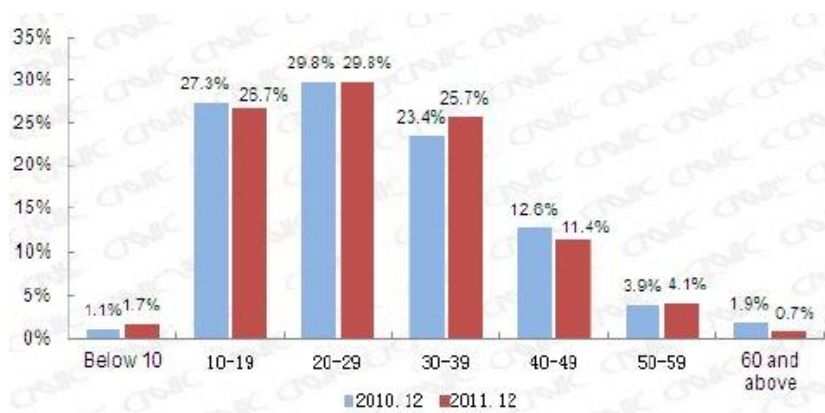[79] "2012 China Internet White Paper."

**Figure 2:** Age structure of internet users (Dec. 2010-2011).[80]

Examining the CNNIC's January 2012 report also indicates how the average

Chinese netizen spends their time online. Over 80% of netizens use the internet for

instant messaging, and 63.2% use the internet to access video games and connect with

other gamers throughout China and the world.[81] In 2011, the amount of digitally

published blogs and personal spaces increased by 24 million to 319 million.[82] These

blogs are active hubs which netizens use to share news, activities, and opinions. Many of

these blogs are linked to micro-blogging websites such as Twitter or Sina Weibo. Social

media includes websites which allow for social interaction among large groups of people,

with accessible and widespread publishing privileges. Microblogs allow users to post

thoughts and commentary within a limited span of characters. Blogs differ from

microblogs, allowing users to post content without any character limit. Each medium

allows users to follow and share content with one another, while also allowing users to

design their profiles to create a personal space within the online community.

Micro-blogging websites are active communities for the sharing of both domestic

and international news and information. The ability for users to comment on and share

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[80] CNNIC, "Statistical Report," January 2012, 21.
[81] Ibid, 33.
[82] Ibid, 41.

posts by other netizens makes these social hubs extremely import to both researchers and government officials in gauging public sentiment in China. It is within these communities that this research draws most of its analysis of how the Cultural Revolution's memory resonates with China's post-80's generation. In 2011, the CNNIC reported that the amount of micro-blog accounts in China rose 296% to 250 million users. Similarly, accounts on Chinese social networking websites also rose to 244 million users.[83] This steep jump is attributed both to increased web accessibility, and to the popularity of social media services released from social media giant Sina. From these statistics, it becomes evident that nearly half of all Chinese netizens log into the internet to use micro-blogging and social networking services.

Recently the Chinese Internet has seen a divide amongst its web population between two groups: the baifumei, literally meaning the "good-looking and rich," and the grassroots web users. In the 2012 China Internet White Paper, Gongtao Zhang, a senior analyst at IDG-Accel in Guangzhou discusses how these two terms have become popular ways of describing divergent groups of Chinese Internet users.[84] In his article, "Internet Users: The Gap Between Baifumei and Grassroots," Zhang defines baifumei as urban elite, largely educated, internet-savvy professionals, the grassroots label applies to China's growing population of novice, uneducated internet users.[85] Zhang argues that the

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[83] Ibid, 42.

[84] IDG-Accel is a leading investment team in China, among the first to introduce foreign venture capital investment into China in the early 1990's. IDG-Accel offers glimpses into some unique aspects of the Chinese Internet with the hope that an aggregate view can gradually be developed if one knows more specific differences in culture, regulations, demographics, competitions, and behavior for both the companies and the users. For more information, visit http://www.idgvc.com/en/.

[85] "2012 China Internet White Paper," IDG-Accel, October 1, 2012, accessed December 1, 2012, http://www.idgvc.com/en/show/470.html.

formation of these two groups, or the "digital gap" that has grown between them, corresponds to the imbalance present in Chinese society and educational system.

This digital gap exists mainly between the urban centers of East China and the rural countryside of Midwest China. Urban cities and large towns have an average internet penetration rate of 54.6%, while the rate in rural areas is only 20.7%.[86] Rural Chinese attribute the lack of access to and education about information technology as the main obstacle for accessing the internet. Lack of access to education about the internet and technological advances is one of the main obstacles in the development of the internet into rural areas. In a 2011 poll, 57.8% of respondents categorizing themselves as rural non-users of the internet attributed "computer/internet illiteracy" as their primary reason for not logging online.[87] This stark divide in the Chinese Internet's demographic proves that accessing the internet in China remains a largely urban activity, profiling the average internet user as from China's post-80's generation logging in from an urban area.

3.2 Internet Control

Regardless of the level of control and monitoring stigmatizing the Chinese Internet, netizens are able to appropriate the web for their own purposes. In his article "The Curious Case of Jia Junpeng," Guobin Yang discusses how an enigmatic online posting became a popular location for netizens and Chinese youth to express their

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[86] "2012 China Internet White Paper."
[87] Ibid.

frustrations about a delayed launch of a popular online game.[88] Using an enigmatic social media post calling for a boy named "Jia Junpeng" to return home as a case study, Yang analyzes the levels of control netizens have in an otherwise controlled society. Similarly, China's forerunning social media and blogging platforms, such as Sina and RenRenWang depend on user-created content to stimulate discussion, participation, and traffic.[89]

This digitally-built environment works to expand the political efficacy of netizens. Examining Sina Weibo, the Chinese micro-blogging service equivalent to Twitter, it becomes apparent that netizens who use the service are enjoying new opportunities for communication never before found in China. While some urban users of Weibo are finding themselves required to register to the micro-blogging service using their real names, for the most part Weibo users retain a large degree of anonymity while using the service.[90] This anonymity equates to less fear of their content falling under the eye of government censors and being deleted or offending their followers who hold differing opinions.[91] Weibo also allows users to comment on tweets and shared tweets, encouraging user interaction in a way which is absent from Twitter. In this sense, netizens gain confidence that they have the ability to discuss current events and share their political viewpoints, creating an active web community comprised mainly of young

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[88] Guobin Yang, "The Curious Case of Jia Junpeng, or the Power of Symbolic Appropriation in Chinese Cyberspace," *China Behind the Headline* by the China Beat, 2009.

[89] Sina is a large online portal which hosts popular blogging services, including Sina Weibo, a microblogging service similar to Twitter. RenRenWang is the Chinese equivalent to Facebook.com.

[90] Since 2012, the Party has mandated that popular social networking websites, such as Sina Weibo, hold users accountable for registering with their real identities. Using verification methods to compare registered usernames to a netizen's state-issued ID, this real-name verification system has rolled out in some of China's most populous cities.

[91] Michael Chan, Xuan Wu, Yinqi Hao, Rui Xi, Tian Jin, "Microblogging, Online Expression, and Political Efficacy Among Young Chinese Citizens: The Moderating Role of Information and Entertainment Needs in the Use of Weibo," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 15 (2012): 346.

Chinese who freely share their opinions and social commentary through these social media platform.

Appropriations of internet forums reflect social sentiments, and often depict a sense of alienation and isolation in contemporary life. In the case of the Jia Junpeng posting, it "became an occasion for expressing their frustration" and discussion soon veered off the topic of the video game's delayed release to angered sentiments over government corruption and consumer dissatisfaction.[92] Yang believes Chinese cyberspace has its own "zones of indifference," where state power does not penetrate and obstruct netizen expression and content.[93] It is within these zones, or online communities, that netizens are able to freely vent their frustrations and become critical of their environment. On one hand, the Chinese Internet is heavily monitored by the Chinese central government. Individual networking accounts can be censored and entire networks can be shut down by small control centers. However, many of these zones of indifference are of little concern to state monitoring.

As in the Jia Junpeng case, gaming forums often attract little monitoring attention, and topics rarely center on Chinese current affairs. Yang argues, and rightfully so, that it is within these topics of indifference, or "everyday-life issues that do not touch on the state's central nerve systems," that people begin to make a difference.[94] In many cases, calls for social advocacy and justice are masked within gaming forums. In other instances, language is masked using codified terminology and slang to bypass government censors. And finally, in some cases, netizens seek to improve issues of social morality which pose

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[92] Yang, "The Curious Case of Jia Junpeng."
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

no threat to the state, shown no better than through the grass roots power of Human Flesh Search.

Human Flesh Search (HFS) is a recent phenomenon on the Chinese internet which involves collaborative online behavior conducted by netizens.[95] Leading HFS scholars Yu-Hui Tao and Chian-Hsueng Chao of the National University of Kaoshiung, Taiwan define HFS as "an act of searching information about individuals or any subjects through the online collaboration of multiple users."[96] Chao describes the typical timeline of actions related to HFS collaboration:

> A search of this kind often starts with an open query for information about any topics, and a query can be initiated out of any motives, such as pure curiosity about a celebrity's private information, or to track down a potential interest. However, for the majority of high-profile search cases, especially in China, these searches have turned to aggressive, vicious manhunts. Often times, subjects of searches were perceived to be wrongdoers and the searches brought unwanted publicity to the sought, sometimes leading to public humiliation both online and in real life. On one hand, the practices have been accused of privacy violation and defamation by victims, concerned intellectuals and sympathetic citizens. On the other hand, it has also been supported and applauded by others as a form of citizen empowerment and civil participation.[97]

Essentially, Chinese netizens organize through the collective power behind popular web forums, entertainment websites, and microblogs to quickly find obscure information and identify seemingly anonymous internet personalities who attract the ire of netizens. Targets that attract netizen attention are those at the center of issues that drive at the heart

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[95] From the Chinese 人肉搜索, literally "Human Flesh Search Engine." While this is the phenomena's colloquial term, a more comprehensive name might be "human-powered" search. Instances of such internet vigilantism remain absent on western internet networks. HFS equivalents have been researched in South Korea and Taiwan.

[96] Yu-Hui Tao and Chian-Hsueng Chao, "Analysis of Human Flesh Search in the Taiwanese Context," *IEEE Computer Society* (2011): 187.

[97] Chian-Hsueng Chao, "Reconceptualizing the Mechanism of Internet Human Flesh Search: A Review of the Literature." *IEEE Computer Society* (2011): 650.

of China's social and moral issues, including corrupt officials, nationalized current events, and moral standards of Chinese society. Through clever investigative work, netizens track down an individual's identity with the goal of bringing about "justice," often causing the individual in question to be fired, shamed, or punished offline.[98] This personal information is shared online and commented upon by thousands of netizens, denouncing the target while commenting on the larger social issue the HFS case speaks to.

The term was first coined in 2001 to describe a search engine-based website that used human collaboration to uncover information rather than machines or computer-based search processes.[99] However, its use became widespread after 2006 when a video of an anonymous woman crushing a kitten with her shoe was posted to a Chinese website. The woman became dubbed the "Kitten Killer of Hangzhou."[100] Chinese web users quickly discerned the woman's identity and used this information to harass the woman and garner media attention, prompting government involvement, and ultimately leading to the woman's job termination.

HFS as a movement has gathered the attention of western media and scholars both domestically and internationally. Those who document the search argue that it holds both positive and negative qualities. Its attributes include massive participation and fast turnaround, voluntary and diverse contributors, progressive and interconnected search methods, and having profound impacts on Chinese social commentary. Netizens hold a power of checks that is otherwise absent in offline society. Previous HFS instances hold the benefits of truth revelation and news sharing, fighting against illegal and unethical

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[98] For more on HFS cases, visit the HFS Research Blog at http://humanfleshsearchengine.blogspot.com/.
[99] Vincent Capone, "The Human Flesh Search Engine: Democracy, Censorship, and Political Participation in Twenty-First Century China," BA thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2010, 2.
[100] Ibid, 1-2.

behavior such as corruption, and promoting the internet as the leading source of media and consumption.[101] Drawbacks include privacy invasion, low information quality, and in some instances, violence.

Tao believes there is a need for increased HFS research, especially as instances of this massive online collaboration continue to grow in Asian countries such as China and Taiwan. Tao believes "any country or region with a significant number of HFS incidents should have more HFS research written in English to provide a wider access of HFS development and research for the international community."[102] As the field of online collaboration studies grows, phenomena such as HFS attracts the attention of numerous fields of study, including sociology, psychology, legal studies, and computer science. However, current historical research is absent from HFS studies, and this study will place HFS as a movement into a historical and political context.

3.3 Virtual Wall Posters

Western media pundits and China-watchers alike have referred to HFS and the netizens behind it as "internet vigilantes" and "Red Guards 2.0," which will be further analyzed in chapter four. Other scholars relate the power of Chinese web forums and social media to an evolution in communication techniques, also with roots moving through the Cultural Revolution. Guobin Yang, associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication and Department of Sociology, is

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[101] Tao and Chao, "Analysis of Human Flesh Search," 187.
[102] Ibid, 189.

the forerunner of placing trends of the Chinese Internet into historical context. Yang has completed one book and numerous articles which delve into the Chinese Internet, its make-up, and various online trends. His book, *The Power of the Internet in China* lays the foundation of this study.[103] Throughout his work Yang compares online blackboard systems (BBS), a type of web forum, with big-character posters, or large, wall-mounted posters which acted as a means of propaganda, communication, and protest most notably during the Mao years.[104] Used in many western nations as a tool for educational purposes, BBS in China is an online place of social interaction. Often compared to as wall posters by netizens, BBS postings have become a "prime space for producing contentious and critical discourse in China."[105] Much like wall posters have been a form of expressing dissent and protest, the dynamics of BBS and social media on the Chinese Internet, as shown through instances of HFS, hold tremendous power.

Wall posters have evolved as a form of communication from the time of Mao to the internet age. Yang's article, "Media, Power, and Protest in China: From the Cultural Revolution to the Internet" is a strong piece for noting this evolution.[106] During the Cultural Revolution, wall posters were put up along heavily frequented gathering spots, mass debates arose between Red Guard groups, and protesting was a public performance.[107] Wall posters were posted in central locations and attracted crowds of viewers, providing materials for discussion and debate. The Red Guards were established

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[103] Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
[104] Big-character posters (大字报), also known as wall posters.
[105] Yang, "The Internet as Cultural Form," 111.
[106] Guobin Yang and Craig Calhoun, "Media, Power, and Protest in China: From the Cultural Revolution to the Internet," *Harvard Asia Pacific Review* 9 (2008): 9-13.
[107] Yang and Calhoun, "Media, Power, and Protest in China," 10.

at Qinghua University middle school after the group posted a wall poster announcing its identity with members signing it as "Red Guards."[108] Urban university campuses were the site of many protests and wall posters adorned the courtyards during the early years of the Cultural Revolution, and similarly, today urban university students make up the bulk of China's netizen population.

Internet postings and microblog posts are virtual wall posters. Yang argues that like wall posters, "they are mostly produced by individuals, posted in public spaces, and express personal views."[109] But unlike wall posters, BBS postings are less constrained by time and space than putting up wall posters. Dissemination is also wider and faster. BBS postings online also hold a scale of interaction that is unmatched by the offline physical spaces which wall posters might occupy. It is these new virtual wall posters which powers internet trends such as HFS. Through microblogs, BBS, and instant messaging services, young netizens are sharing their grievances and rallying behind one another to find other netizens who share common ideals and social beliefs.

While HFS is not a political movement, the Chinese government is not immune to exposure by it. Numerous HFS have been conducted to uncover corrupt officials, spreading their stories across cyberspace and making their names synonymous with the netizen-deemed wrongful actions they committed. The most infamous of cases involved Zhou Jiugeng, a state official in Nanjing. Photos of Zhou wearing an expensive watch and smoking foreign cigarettes began to gather attention on the Chinese Internet. Netizens questioned how someone on Zhou's salary could afford such luxury items. After

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[108] Ibid, 10.
[109] Ibid, 10.

his name appeared in over 4,600 blog posts, the Jiangning district government began an official investigation into his assets, ultimately leading to his termination.[110] Due to a lag in Chinese law to keep up with the digital age, there are no reprecussions against netizens for invasion of privacy.

It can be argued that this citizen-controlled power over Chinese officials is a dangerous product of the digital age. The cyber surveillance at work behind HFS has led some to call the internet a "power equalizer."[111] While western media applaud Chinese activist-netizens, they assume such actions are soon to fall prey to government censors and that the Communist Party will strengthen its network control.[112] What these western media stories fail to report on is that HFS and the work of Chinese netizens has been embraced by the Communist Party in China and state media. While HFS against corrupt officials often results in said official's termination, there is no threat made against the Communist Party's central authority. As is often the case, HFS corruption cases target low-level officials in regional posts, acting as a system of checks for local-level governments. Central government figures and Communist Party leaders remain absent in human flesh corruption searches. In fact, the central government emerges as the victor from HFS activity, as its figureheads heed the call of netizens by investigating and, more often than not, terminating officials who fall prey to HFS. The internet acts as a safety valve for netizens to release steam while avoiding protests. In the end, the central

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[110] Capone, "The Human Flesh Search Engine," 19.
[111] Xiaoyan Pan, "Hunt by the Crowd: An Exploratory Qualitative Analysis on Cyber Surveillance in China," *Global Media Journal* 9 (2010): 3.
[112] Tom Downey, "China's Cyberpose," *The New York Times*, March 3, 2010, Accessed October 15, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/07/magazine/07Human-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

government retains its legitimacy while supporting citizen empowerment and allowing increased transparency.

One of the main themes underpinning HFS is the power of anonymity on the internet and the different ways which anonymity both aids and hurts those involved. On one side of the issue are the netizens who frequent these online discussion forums, sharing news stories and gossip concerning individuals whom they deem to be morally improper. These netizens perform the investigative work that empowers HFS, discerning the target's identity, and sharing the story to make the individual notorious. These netizens are anonymous, using usernames and web handles that often times do not require personal verification.

On the other side of HFS you have the individuals who are being exposed by netizens, such as the Kitten Killer of Hangzhou or Zhou Jiugeng. These individuals become notorious throughout the Chinese internet community overnight, and their personal information is uncovered and displayed for all to see, which has begun to lead to offline attacks and harassment, with netizens check the moral authority of said individuals. In one HFS against Lobsang Gendun, a Tibetan wrongly accused as being a protester of the Olympic torch relay in Paris, France. Due to his activity working alongside Free Tibet organizations, his home address, phone number, as well as satellite images of his neighborhood and house were posted to a Chinese forum resulting in threatening phone calls at all hours of the night.[113] Cases such as this portray the recent shift of online actions and harassment moving offline, and some netizens have made note between such behaviors of those targeted and persecuted during the Cultural Revolution.

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[113] Capone, "The Human Flesh Search Engine," 37-39.

For those who were persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, a dichotomy existed between those who were targeted and the masses who denounced them. And similar to HFS, there were very few repercussions for those who instigated violence during the Cultural Revolution by means of China's legal system.

Leading Chinese director Chen Kaige recently released his new film "Caught in the Web" which depicts the negative aspects of privacy invasion associated with HFS. In an interview with the New York Times, Chen confessed that his personal memories of living through the Cultural Revolution inspired the filmography. Chen recalled working with young revolutionaries against his father in the 1960s, and envisioned Chinese netizens used in his film adopting the mentality of the young revolutionaries of the 1960s.[114] Chen admits to having mixed feelings to netizens and HFS in China, being quoted as saying, "On the one hand, I've seen the positive side. On the other hand, can you abuse the freedom of speech to attack people? Are you going to play a role like a judge? Because that reminds me of the Cultural Revolution."[115]

Chen isn't the only intellectual making references between HFS and the Cultural Revolution. HFS has become a phrase that encompasses the overwhelming power that the Chinese internet and its 550 million netizens hold, a power that is shaped from their ability to use the internet as a means for research and connectivity, and the internet's ability to quickly gather groups. The internet in turn becomes a platform of empowerment; a medium for releasing anger over social injustices that go unnoticed offline and by the

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[114] Clare Pennington, "China, Framed by the Cinema and the Web," *The New York Times*, September 14, 2012.
[115] Ibid.

Communist government. However, many questions remain as to how far this power will go.

3.4 Historical Precedence

The concept of group censorship and watchdog mentality is not new to digital China. Community vigilantism had been practiced in Imperial China since the Song Dynasty (960-1279) as a means of extending the power of the local governments down to a level of direct contact with subjects. This vigilante system, known as baojia, was first introduced by Wang Anshi, the Vice Chief Councilor in charge of administration during the Song dynasty.[116] In 1069, Wang presented his New Policies, with the longest lasting policy being the baojia system, a plan which organized households into groups of tens (bao) and hundreds (jia) for collection responsibility to maintain order and report crimes.[117] The baojia system created a mutual surveillance and protection web that relied on community members to maintain local law and order. All parties within each baojia were responsible with overseeing the moral conduct and behaviors of those within the community. In addition to sustaining community safety, each baojia was also responsible for supplying the government with armed militiamen.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the formality of the baojia disappeared, with local officials given the choice of continuing with this monitoring system.[118] In 1644 under the Machu Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Price Regent Dorgon set out to establish an

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[116] F.W. Mote, *Imperial China 900-1800*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 138-139.
[117] Ibid, 140.
[118] Ibid, 753.

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empire-wide monitoring system modeled on baojia.[119] In 1740, the baojia system merged

with the lijia tax and census collecting system, ultimately strengthening the baojia's

effectiveness. The structure of each baojia differed from the system established by Wang

Anshi. The Qing baojia consisted of 10 families forming a jia and ten jias forming a bao.

Each bao was overseen by an elected chief. This merger "extended the functions of the

police system, giving the baojia a better surveillance mechanism. Each group of ten

neighboring families was to be held mutually responsible for misdemeanors and crimes

committed by all its members and for reporting the presence of strangers and all persons

who committed improper deeds."[120] The system began as an effective means of

monitoring local communities but began to deteriorate by the mid-nineteenth century. In

*Village Governance in North China, 1875-1936*, author Ju Dongzu writes that by this

period the system "on the whole was ineffective" and merely remained as a

"formality."[121]

     While monitoring fellow citizens through the internet has its roots in the social

structure of policies dating back from imperial times, the roots of citizen monitoring over

the government began in the years preceding the Cultural Revolution. In 1956, ten years

before the onset of the Cultural Revolution, Liu Shaoqi delivered a report to the Eighth

National Congress of the Communist Party. At the time of the report, Liu served as the

First Vice Chairman of the Communist Party of China. During the Cultural Revolution

Liu was branded a traitor by Mao and was expelled from the Party. In his report titled,

"The Political Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China," Liu

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[119] Ibid, 918.
[120] Ibid, 919.
[121] Huaiyin Li, *Village Governance in North China, 1875-1936*, (Stanford University Press, 2005), 42-3.

addressed the need for "vigorous self-criticism" within the Party. This criticism was to "rely on supervision by the masses of the working people as whole."[122] Liu stressed that all criticisms and exposures from below must be encouraged and supported in order to strengthen the Party. The masses were granted a checking power to hold over Party cadres as a balance of power. Liu also noted that anyone within the Party who aimed to suppress the people or seek revenge on the critics would be duly punished.

This need for Party supervision by the masses was reiterated in 1957 by an editorial in the People's Daily a leading newspaper noted for being the Party's mouthpiece which was widely read during the Mao years. In the piece, an excerpt from a report delivered at a meeting of cadres in Xi'an, it is noted that a system from the bottom, or the supervision by the masses over the Party, should be expanded. By heeding this call, the Party would in turn become better informed and more prudent, and avoid one-sided approaches to solving societal problems. Within the editorial, the People's Daily made clear the consequences at stake for not heeding the people's supervision over the Party:

> In China who is in a vulnerable position to make big mistakes? None other than the Chinese Communist Party. When it makes such mistakes, the effects are most widespread, so the Party should be particularly careful...If we do not accept supervision or work to expand democracy within the Party and the state, we shall surely cut ourselves off from the masses and make big mistakes.[123]

With this editorial, the Party stressed the need to rely on the masses and place supervisory powers onto them in order to strengthen the Party and combat corruption and on-sided thinking. By granting the masses supervisory powers, the Party aroused their initiative and encouraged the people to have a stake in the Party's future.

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[122] Liu Shaoqi. "The Political Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China." September 15, 1956.
[123] People's Daily. "The Communist Party Must Accept Supervision." April 8, 1957.

Highly reminiscent of the Mao years, the People's Daily recently threw its support and encouragement behind the checks and balancing of power behind netizens in fighting corruption. In September 2012 the newspaper turned to its Sina Weibo account, posting:[124]

> Only by exposing public power under the sun can we effectively restrict public power; only by enabling everyone to become a supervisor of the government can corruption find nowhere to hide. When the occasional cases of online anti-corruption evolve to become a powerful method of supervision, when the 'accidental' becomes the 'normal,' online anti-corruption [movements] can act as an institutional power.[125]

The People's Daily, used this tweet to urge online corruption monitoring by netizens. Instead of calling for an end to government corruption or the creation of a government bureau aimed at curbing a problem that has been plaguing China for decades, the People's Daily is instead encouraging netizens to call out and monitor corruption. This tweet is reminiscent of the above piece published by the People's Daily prior to the Cultural Revolution in which the Party encouraged the people to monitor local officials in order to strength power and solidify the core central leadership.

The Chinese Communist Party does not abide by an official monitoring system by its citizens as the baojia system established during the years of Imperial China, nor has the Party mandated an all-out call for a system of checks as it did in the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution. However it is evident through the People's Daily's tweet supporting citizens corruption monitoring and the government's record of listening to the

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[124] Weibo User: People's Daily (人民日报), Translated by Tea Leaf Nation.
[125] Translated from: "让权力在阳光下运行，才有可能将权力关进牢笼；让权力在最广大公众的目光中接受监督，才会让贪污腐败无所遁形。当一桩桩偶发的网络反腐日益演化为有效的反腐形式，"意外"将变为"常态"，网络反腐也才能从"民意分量"走向"制度力量."

will of the people and punishing corrupt officials exposed through HFS, that the

Communist Party supports netizen participation. As Tao writes,

> Participation and collaboration by users play a vital role in the HFS process. On one hand, HFS practices, which are considered a manifestation of citizen empowerment and civil participation, are supported and applauded by other countries. On the other, a majority of high-profile HFS cases in China have become aggressive and vicious, arousing research interest on the involved legal, privacy, and social issues.[126]

This online participation becomes a double-edged sword for China, where netizens are

able to actively combat corruption and have a voice within the Party, but the threat of

chaos remains as China's legal system is not keeping up with the privacy and social

concerns such movements hold.

Analyzing the web statistics from the Chinese Internet and determining the

internet's makeup allows this research to note the large population of post-80s youth and

students utilizing the internet for various purposes. As this study will show in the follow

chapter, this generation is taking to the Chinese web to comment and reconstruct the

social memory of the Cultural Revolution. This chapter made note of the historical

evolutions that have led to the characterization of Chinese cyberspace. Web forums and

BBS are modern equivalents of wall posters, while citizen monitoring over one another

and over Party members and government officials is not a new trait unique to the growing

democracy allowed through the Chinese Internet. Instead monitoring systems have been

encouraged by the Chinese government in various forms for generations as a means to

strengthen a government which serves over the largest population of people on the planet.

Many Chinese youth are calling on these anti-corruption movements to open war against

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[126] Tao and Chao, "Analysis of Human Flesh Search," 187.

bad elements within the Party, openly calling for the persecution of corrupt officials. Because of this tone which the movement is taking, it is clear that online anti-corruption efforts are not long-term solutions. Without legal backing, there is no barometer to measure when the cyber "witch hunts," as western media has referred to them, have gone too far. As more and more officials fall victim to the watchful eyes of netizens, online discussion of the Cultural Revolution grows more prevalent.

CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL REVOLUTION ONLINE SOCIAL MEMORY

While television and film cannot accurately provide the memories absent from the younger generations' education system, neither can government institutions and museums. When the Beijing National Museum reopened in 2011 after a four-year makeover, curators devoted only a single photo and three lines of text to the decade-long Cultural Revolution.[127] With such silence of the period coming out of Beijing's leading historical institution, it is not surprising that social memory of the Cultural Revolution continues to rely heavily on 'bottom-up' means. It remains evident that China's younger generations do not have the access to accurate memories of the Cultural Revolution. Relying on bottom-up personal memories discouraged from pursuit in China's academic standards, youth turn to the Chines Internet to disseminate and reflect on the legacy of the Cultural Revolution.

The internet becomes the post-80's generation's bottom-up means for disseminating the history of the Cultural Revolution. This chapter will highlight netizen comments to grant a voice to Chinese web users and determine how the Party's official narrative has constructed the social memory of the Cultural Revolution among China's

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[127] Julie Makinen, "China Museum Builder Lets History Speak," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 2012, Accessed November 7, 2012, http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-china-museums-20121108,0,7603457.story.

post-80's generation. Among the younger generations, the Cultural Revolution signifies a fear of chaos that permeates this chapter of the Party's history. The government utilizes this fear of upheaval and chaos as will be shown through remarks from China's Premier Wen who warned against another relapse of Cultural Revolution behavior. Throughout these instances, netizen comments from social media are provided proving that the government's constructed social history continues to reign supreme. Finally, this chapter concludes by analyzing how western scholars and media pundits of internet studies view this discourse on the Chinese Internet, and how online movements such as HFS have led to some referring to Chinese web users as "Internet Red Guards."

4.1 A "Dark Chapter" vs. Nostalgia

The internet is a crucial tool for spreading social memory in the digital age. Chinese microbloggers are frequently grappling with reexamining the social memory of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the territorial history of Tibet and Taiwan, and the Cultural Revolution. At present, nearly 64% of Chinese netizens using social media blogs and microblogs are less than 35 years old, and have thus no personal experience of the Cultural Revolution.[128] Yet the internet is the main location for Chinese students and youth to both obtain and discuss social and political information, including discussion of the Cultural Revolution. In his study titled "China's Social Memory in a Digitalized World-Assessing the Country's Narratives in Blogs," Junhua Zhang, a professor of

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[128] Junhua Zhang, "China's Social Memory in a Digitalized World-Assessing the Country's Narratives in Blogs," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25 (2012): 282.

political science at the Shanghai Jiao Tong University, examined the different ways in which social narratives are presented to Chinese netizens.

Zhang's study aimed to prove that "a tiny part of the narratives emerging on the Internet in China, primarily as non-mainstream media in a 'bottom-up' form," actually work to "enhance a social memory created firstly through official media in a 'top-down' way."[129] Through his study, he focused on the impact of bloggers and social media users on the process of constituting a social memory primarily for young generations on China's controlled internet. In the context of his study, Zhang defines social memory as:

> The totality of social experiences of a big social group, be it a nation or a generation. Social memory is embodied in a society's personal or vicarious beliefs about the past. These beliefs are shaped mostly through adopting intergenerational narratives. From the point of view of political science, social memory is the base of political behavior and thinking of social groups, because memory of the past is reflected in the view of today's world, the vision of the future and the respective values system.[130]

The social memory of the Cultural Revolution lives on within those who came of age during the Cultural Revolution in numerous ways. Some who experienced the Cultural Revolution wrote scar literature memoirs to share their memories with future generations. Others became activists and used their experiences during the decade to advocate for social issues throughout China and the world.[131] For those of China's digital generation, social memory of the Cultural Revolution is embodied by the Party's top-down history. In order for the post-80's generation to receive an accurate description of the Cultural Revolution, the bottom-up memoirs, scholarship, and experiences must be made available.

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[129] Zhang, "China's Social Memory," 276.
[130] Ibid, 278.
[131] See Guobin Yang's The Routinization of Liminality: The Persistence of Activism Among China's Red Guard Generation.

Since China's reform and emergence into the global sphere, the Communist Party has worked to follow a strict "memory policy" by choosing what should be memorized and what should be forgotten, especially when it concerns what Zhang calls the "dark chapters" in the modern history of the Chinese Communist Party.[132] Based on feedback from interviews conducted in 2010, Zhang argues that discussion of "dark chapters" within the history and competence of the Party remains one of the foremost topics not for discussion in any formal media outlet.[133] As chapter two discussed, the ruling Communist Party made it clear through official documentation how the Cultural Revolution was to be remembered by the nation, while at the same time placing restrictions on independent research and scholarly work seeking to elaborate on the events of that decade. This block placed over what can and cannot be remembered indeed places the Cultural Revolution into a "dark chapter" of the nation's history within the minds of its people.

Zhang's study concluded that the Party's memory policies are working effectively on the Chinese Internet. Blogging and social media remains to be a location for self-expression concerning political and social affairs. Through the acceptance of official social "memory policy," adopting "reformist" or neutral stances, most "Chinese bloggers do not appear to be utilizing this new medium to seriously challenge their government's versions of narratives."[134] At the same time the government's cultural and propaganda outlets work to portray this period of history in a rather specific light through media and entertainment. While entertainment portrayals of the Cultural Revolution aim to invoke nostalgia for those who lived through the decade, China's post-80's generation perpetuate

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[132] Ibid, 283-4.
[133] Ibid, 287.
[134] Li Zeng. "The Past Revisited: Popular Memory of the Cultural Revolution in Contemporary China." PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2008, 295.

the Party's narrative. Netizens reinforce the Party's line that the Cultural Revolution was a period of "chaos" that cannot be repeated, and as such should not be commemorated.

The post-80's generation does not challenge the Party's narrative because this constructed memory was taught to them in school. The social memory of the Cultural Revolution as prescribed by the Party is one of planned socialization in a top-down manner through propaganda, school textbooks, approved scholarly work, and museums. And entertainment representations of the period have also greatly influenced younger generations through television, film, and photographic collections. The 2006 serial drama *Romantic Life*, is a thirty-six episode television series portraying the love and friendship among several young people from 1968 to 1998. Within the series is a storyline portraying the main characters living through the Cultural Revolution. The drama, which caters to a young audience of viewers, depicts the Cultural Revolution nostalgically as a period of simpler times.

According to an online survey, 83.7% of 1614 votes found the drama to be "very interesting." Within an online discussion, netizens left comments such as, "I'm so in love with that period," "I wish I could have grown up in that period," "The zhiqing's [sent-down youth's] lives were not bad at all."[135] These comments reveal the lack of knowledge and understanding behind this era of Chinese history among younger generations. The film is absent of the tumultuous political atmosphere of the decade, and the tense social climate it created. This lack of knowledge, most likely a result of the absence of Cultural Revolution reflection and study in Chinese public schools, mixed with the film's romanticized depiction of events, calls to attention the danger of nostalgia

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[135] Li, "The Past Revisited," 254.

consumer culture. In order to counteract this watered-down and inaccurate perception of the decade, China's post-80's generation requires access to the memoirs and scholarship censored in China.

4.2 Cultural Revolution Memory and the Government

Ruling parties often use social memory to bring the past into present consciousness, mobilizing it for decisions about the future. This is true of the Communist Party in China. In an effort to solidify the Communist Party's legitimacy on the eve of its ninetieth anniversary, Xinhua News Agency, the official press agency for the People's Republic of China, released a statement denouncing any calls for multi-party reform in China. Released on July 8th, 2011, the statement played upon citizens' fears of the Party's recollections of the disastrous decade, commenting that a multi-party political system would unleash chaos equal to that of the Cultural Revolution. "If China imitates the West's multi-party parliamentary democratic system," the report read, then "it could repeat the chaotic and turbulent history of the 'Cultural Revolution' when factions sprung up everywhere."[136] This is the first example of the Party using memories of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution as a deterrent for democratic reform or multi-party opposition within China. With this statement, Xinhua successfully created the impression that having a multiple party system in China will negatively impact society.

Using the memory of the Cultural Revolution to invoke uncertainty occurred again on March 14, 2012. China's Premier Wen Jiabao, a well-respected and heavily-

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[136] ChinaElectionsBlog.net, "Multi-party China 'Will Bring Chaos'," July 8, 2011, Accessed October 2, 2012, http://chinaelectionsblog.net/?p=16799.

admired official by netizens, spoke at a press conference following the Fifth Session of the 11th National People's Congress.[137] The outgoing Premier highlighted his plea for political reform by making reference to the Cultural Revolution. Making front page headlines across Asia, including the Hong Kong newspaper Ta Kung Pao, Guangzhou's New Express, and the news home page of immensely popular news portal QQ.com, the Premier's remarks were as follows:

> We must press ahead with both economic reform and political structural reform, especially reform in the leadership system of our party and country. Reform has reached a critical stage. Without successful political structural reform, it is impossible for us to fully institute economic structural reform and the gains we have made in this area may be lost. The new problems that have cropped up in China's society will not be fundamentally resolved, and such historical tragedies as the Cultural Revolution may happen again.[138]

Premier Wen did not specify which reforms should be implemented, but he did stress that such reforms had to be "gradual and orderly" and conform with "national circumstances."[139] The Party has used the label of the Cultural Revolution and the chaos which it caused to attack political opponents and supporters of multi-party rule. It remains unclear why the label of the Cultural Revolution was used by Premier Wen, but its ability to garner large amounts of attention speaks for itself.

By invoking the Cultural Revolution, Premier Wen successfully brought its memory back into the public discourse and the people's attention. His broad statement left the people wondering what he meant, which in turn produced large-scale discussion

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[137] Premier Wen became a beloved figure among netizens in 2008 after he went to the Sichuan Earthquake disaster area hours after the event. In 2009 Wen participated in a public web chat and garnered support over his views on increased transparency.

[138] Sina News, "Premier Wen Jiabao Press Conference, March 14, 2012," Accessed September 10, 2012, http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2012-03-14/135324114339_2.shtml.

[139] Sina News, "Premier Wen Jiabao Press Conference."

in both domestic and international media, as well as by Chinese netizens on the internet. By reviving the memory of the Cultural Revolution, Premier Wen alludes to an area of Chinese history and a specific context which escapes young Chinese. As such, his comments caused young people to turn to the Chinese Internet and social media to discuss the Cultural Revolution. His remarks mirror that of Xinhua, playing upon the fears of instituting large-scale political reform by suggesting the political chaos caused by factions at odds during the Cultural Revolution. Each press statement used the violent-connotation of the Cultural Revolution as evidence that the nation must steer the course; that is to maintain a one-party system controlled solely by the Communist Party. Premier Wen's remarks turn the memory of the Cultural Revolution into an all-or-nothing scenario: should political turmoil occur, all that has been built by the Party will be lost.

Premier Wen's remarks also act as a deterrent against the Cultural Revolution-era revivalism of Chongqing party leader Bo Xilai (2007-2012). Bo, a popular Party member who had been groomed for national leadership, was accused of trying to revitalize a "red culture movement" in Chongqing in summer 2008. The case against Bo is still evolving as he awaits trial, and many facts remain unclear as information is hidden by the Party. The Party accused Bo of urging people to learn and sing "red songs" and created a movement to bring urban students down to the countryside. In this sense, Bo and the Chongqing government were targeted as trying to bring the Cultural Revolution back into the people's consciousness by playing upon nostalgia of Communist ideology reminiscent of the Mao years. However these supposed reforms didn't anticipate that these folksongs of a bygone era failed to resonate with youth.

The Party also accused Chongqing officials under Bo of working to bring urban students into the countryside for both work and education, a move nearly parallel to Mao's Down to the Countryside Movement.[140] During the Cultural Revolution, Mao sent urban youth to work alongside farmers and workers in rural areas in order to both educate the youth and remove any bourgeois thinking. These sent-down youth came of age in these rural and mountainous areas, and their experiences heavily impacted their social and political outlook, as evidenced through scar literature written primarily by Chinese who had been sent-down youth. In Chongqing, the local government planned to send urban youth into the countryside for a month-long community service plan. Supporters said the plan would bridge a growing gap between village and city, while critics argued it held unpleasant echoes of the Cultural Revolution.[141] Because of the creation of these policies, and other Party-deemed egregious offenses, the Party expelled Bo in March 2012.

After Bo was removed from the Party, netizens took to Chinese social media to express their weariness of what many felt was Cultural Revolution rhetoric. One Weibo user tweeting under the handle 'Little Fei Fernando' wrote that, "the wording is the same as during the Cultural Revolution, and the techniques are exactly the same," comparing the Party rhetoric behind Bo's downfall with that of the Cultural Revolution.[142] This similarity was felt among numerous netizens which prompted weariness that leftist elements were at large amongst Chinese officials. Leftists are defined in China as those

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[140] In Chinese, 上山下乡运动.

[141] Tania Branigan, "China to send urban students into the countryside to work," *The Guardian*, November 12, 2010, Accessed November 7, 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/12/china-urban-students-countryside-work.

[142] Weibo, User: 小费同学 Fernando, September 25, 2012, Accessed September 26, 2012, http://weibo.com/u/1642465684.

who are critical of capitalist reforms within China and support Mao-style socialist

policies. Leftist rhetoric in the public's conscious has been on the rise in recent years due

in thanks to Chinese social media, where old Maoist propaganda posters have been re-

commissioned with slogans denouncing the Japanese over a heated island dispute.

While many facts remain missing as to the validity and reasoning behind the

above campaigns, this study uses the events of Bo's fall from power at the hands of the

Party to showcase how the youth have turned to the Internet to specifically draw

comparisons between the events at question and the Cultural Revolution. After the

heavily publicized downfall of Bo, Weibo user Song Xirong's tweet attracted the

attention of many netizens with her comment: "if we let such a person [Bo] into power,

returning to the era of the Cultural Revolution is not really far off."[143] Bo's widely

publicized fall from grace reminded some netizens of the sensationalized trial of the

Gang of Four which signaled the end of the Cultural Revolution. Some web users

commented that Bo's fall was just another example of court politics, which aims to show

that the "Cultural Revolution could return at any time."[144] Through these responses, it is

evident that the Party's efforts to associate the Cultural Revolution with fear and

uncertainty has worked among the younger internet generation.

The heavily publicized and covered tribulations of Bo Xilai's downfall mixed

with Wen Jiabao's weariness in overarching political reform for fear of invoking another

Cultural Revolution-style period of chaos portrays the danger and fear which the central

government wants the people to associate with the Cultural Revolution. The Communist

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[143] Weibo, User: 宋希荣, September 25, 2012, Accessed September 26, 2012, http://weibo.com/u/1422589193.
[144] Weibo, User: 无码的视界, September 25, 2012, Accessed September 26, 2012, http://weibo.com/u/1060391093.

Party aims to remind citizens of a China in which Mao asked for political participation, and in return he received a nation-wide riot. A time when divergent political factions existed and turmoil ensued. In September 2012, after the resurgence of Party rhetoric following the downfall of Bo Xilai, nationwide anti-Japanese protests plunged China into a brief period of violence and chaos, which netizens compared to that of the Cultural Revolution.

4.3 Cultural Revolution Memory and the Internet

The Diaoyu Islands Dispute, which gained momentum in China in September 2012, saw unprecedented anti-Japanese protests and movements in China both online and offline. The incident began on September 11, 2012 after Japan nationalized the disputed islands. The Chinese Foreign Ministry denounced the action, claiming the long-disputed islands as part of Chinese territory. What grew in China was open hostility towards the Japanese and a general boycott of Japanese-made products, which saw organized protests and disorganized chaotic instances of Japanese-made car smashings between September 15-18. Car smashings occurred through China in most major cities, and nearly all depictions through Chinese social media and western news sources depicted youth, particularly college-aged Chinese, at the forefront of the riots. Instances of these car smashings and protests grew violent and news spread quickly through Chinese social media where netizens and internet personalities alike took to their microblogging accounts to denounce the riots. Within many accounts, these commentators made reference to social memory of the Cultural Revolution.

Prominent Chinese blogger and social commentator Li Chengpeng took to his Weibo blog in response to a video that went viral depicting a Chinese man, later identified as Li Jianli, being beaten with a metal rod within inches of his life for owning a Japanese car. Even amidst attempts to declare his patriotism and support of China's claim to the Diaoyu Islands, the beating continued. Li Jianli narrowly escaped the mob, and remained partially paralyzed after the incident. Li Chengping, whose blog has over six million followers, is one of the most distinguished social media users in China. On his blog Li pronounced his disgust for the beating, noting fear that many youth were calling the beating "natural" and "just." He closes his entry by saying, "the Cultural Revolution was just like this."[145] Born in 1964, Li Chengping grew up in the waning years of the Cultural Revolution decade; therefore his allusion is not formed from firsthand experience.

Li's blog entry produced thousands of comments and shares, in which case many netizens commented that the act reminded them of "all the innocent victims of the Cultural Revolution."[146] Others noted similarities between the mob and the political rallies of "Mao's time."[147] And one final netizen, blogger Wang Ran remarked that the people should let the rule of law ring out, and that taking the law into their own hands is dangerous. The comment ended that, "it shows precisely that we should clean up the evil legacy of the Cultural Revolution."[148]

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[145] Li Chengpeng (李承鹏), Weibo.com Blog, September 26, 2012, Accessed September 27, 2012, http://weibo.com/1189591617/yDE7hhg7k.

[146] Weibo, User: 飞远的家雀儿, September 21, 2012, Accessed September 22, 2012, http://www.weibo.com/u/1270600551.

[147] Weibo User: 飞行的劳拉, September 15, 2012, Accessed September 22, 2012, http://www.weibo.com/laura4flying.

[148] Weibo, User: 王冉, September 15, 2012, Accessed September 24, 2012, http://weibo.com/wangran.

The Diaoyu Islands Dispute showed Chinese how easily society could revert to chaotic acts of hatred and violence towards its own citizens. While the anger was directed at the Japanese, the violence took aim at Chinese citizens, whose Japanese cars, Japanese-style restaurants, and products were wantonly burned, destroyed, and Chinese citizens were beaten. During the onset of the dispute, Chinese social media rang out with numerous references between these actions and that of the Cultural Revolution, and in particular, comparisons to the actions of Red Guards and the violence dealt. As Li Chengping wrote, he was shocked by the calls of support for such actions being heralded on Chinese social media. Beatings and car smashings were being hailed as patriotic and Chinese youth were taking to the streets to prove their patriotism. As such events occurred, Chinese social media was alive with a social memory of the Cultural Revolution which was being revived through the protests and violent acts.

This trend has worked to bring the Mao years back into the public eye as Chinese youth turn to the internet to discuss Cultural Revolution rhetoric. Old propaganda posters featuring Mao spread across Sina Weibo's microblogging platform as netizens took the posters and superimposed slogans and phrases denouncing the Japanese. Following the Diaoyu Incident, in early November 2012 Cao Xiaodong, a young AIDS activist, went missing after posting a photo of himself tearing up a picture of Mao went viral on Sina Weibo.[149] The act was meant to be a sign of protest to the then-upcoming Eighteenth National Party Congress. The photo was re-tweeted over nine hundred times prompting netizen outrage over such an act.

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[149] Liz Carter, "Chinese Web Users Ask: Should Tearing Mao's Portrait Be Allowed?" *Tea Leaf Nation*, November 2, 2012.

The memory of Mao and the Cultural Revolution came to a head between China's various generations as a result of the anti-Japanese protests of September 2012. These resurgences carry bitter memories for those who lived through periods of political turmoil under Mao such as the Cultural Revolution. But not all Chinese share the same sentiments on Mao's legacy. On September 9, 2012, the thirty-sixth anniversary of the death of Mao, a group of older men commemorated the memory of Mao under a bridge near Zijingshan People's Square in Zhengzhou, Henan province. From a video that was shared throughout Sina Weibo, another old man is depicted entering the scene and accused Mao of committing crimes to China and its people. The group of men proceeded to physically attack the man until he leaves the scene.[150] The group continues to defend Mao and denounce the old man. This episode proves to show that the memory of Chairman Mao remains a contentious issue even among members of the same generation.

This memory is even more complex between members of different generations within China. On September 18, 2012 during an anti-Japanese rally in Beijing, Maoist Professor Han Deqiang slapped an eighty-year-old man and called him a traitor to China.[151] Han is the founder of Utopia, a Maoist organization that has gathered a large following of Chinese youth. At this particular rally, Han was part of a parade of Beijing students carrying images of Chairman Mao with a banner that read "Chairman Mao, people really miss you."[152] Global Voices reported that the eighty-year-old man called out, "To pin all hopes of maintaining this country's dignity and national interests on Mao

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[150] The video has since been deleted from Sina Weibo. While it can be accessed from the Chinese equivalent of YouTube, YouKu, the author has captured the video where it is held within the collection of primary source internet material used in this study.
[151] Oiwan Lam, "China: Return of Maoists in Anti-Japan Protests Brings Anxiety," Global Voices Online, September 20, 2012.
[152] Lam, "China: Return of Maoists."

Zedong, this is not just wrong, but unattainable."[153] This prompted Han and others from his group to accost the old man, who Han alleged continued to insult Mao.

Han took to his personal website to post an entry titled, "Why did I strike this traitor?" in which he defends his actions, surmising that "if I come across this again in future rally, I would do the same thing. I broke the law; I would accept its rule. But I would never apologize."[154] A news post on Sina Weibo described the event and netizens left over 23,000 comments. While some of the comments balked at Han's actions against an elderly man, many netizens reiterated his attack against the old man.[155] One man, Zhang Hongliang, took to his Sina Weibo account to tweet, "Why can't we have the freedom to believe in Chairman Mao? And the right to defend our beliefs? How can we allow the law to give liberty to those people who insult Chairman Mao?"[156] This episode portrays a deep divide remaining between members of China's older generations and those of the post-Cultural Revolution generations. Han Deqiang was born in 1967, at the onset of the Cultural Revolution. It's unknown how his childhood affected his political beliefs, if at all. From images of the events, his followers at the parade appeared to be men and women mainly under the age of forty, many whom appeared to be of college age, showcasing that those of the post-Cultural Revolution generations hold a significantly different memory of the legacy of Mao than those who actually lived through his political rule.

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[153] Global Voices is a community of more than 700 authors and 600 translators around the world who work together to bring you reports from blogs and citizen media everywhere, with emphasis on voices that are not ordinarily heard in international mainstream media.
[154] Lam, "China: Return of Maoists."
[155] Weibo.com, News Portal, September 19, 2012, Accessed September 30, 2012, http://weibo.com/1306732297/yCzrv8MP2.
[156] Lam, "China: Return of Maoists."

This return of the Cultural Revolution rhetoric, both through the punishment incurred from the tearing of Mao's picture to the resurgence of Maoists parading about his images and slogans, portray how the memory of the Cultural Revolution continues on in China's post-80's generation. Netizens turned to social media following such events and commented on the need to eradicate the "seeds of the Cultural Revolution."[157] One Weibo user named Rou'er remarked that this type of political climate proved a "need to completely eliminate every kind of national remnant of the Cultural Revolution."[158] With the growing presence of Maoist sympathizers, it is not surprising that netizens sought to eliminate all remnants of rhetoric of the tumultuous period.

4.4 Reexamining the Cultural Revolution

Through social media, Chinese netizens have granted cyber onlookers a picture of a disambiguation of the Cultural Revolution lives on in the memory of the internet generation. Much of this social memory depicted through the internet is due in part to unofficial socialization, or the bottom-up communication through the internet which allows younger generations to reshape the memory of the Cultural Revolution through word of mouth, or in a better sense, word of online web posts. As Zhang argues in "China's Social Memory," "a person's knowledge of the past is based on numerous 'stories' or more exactly, narratives, either imparted by others, or experienced by

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[157] Weibo, User: 飞上蓝天 390, September 25, 2012, Accessed September 26, 2012, http://weibo.com/u/1191906187.
[158] Weibo, User: 若尔盖天边外, September 25, 2012, Accessed September 26, 2012, http://weibo.com/rrgmm.

himself."[159] And on Chinese social media, the grand narrative of the Cultural Revolution imparted by fellow netizens is one which coincides with the Communist Party's "official memory" of chaos and fear.

While historical debate and scholarship pertaining to the Cultural Revolution remains limited on the Chinese Internet, a rare account of crimes committed during this decade was recently released following the 2012 leadership handover of the Communist Party. The book, titled *Bloody Myth: An Account of the Cultural Revolution Massacre of 1967 in Daoxian, Hunan*, was written by Tan Hecheng in 1986. It has since been published online by the Gongshi Wang website, known in English as Common Understanding, after being banned for twenty six years.[160] Some of the most graphic stories of mass killings unleashed during this period remain in cyberspace for netizens to read, which leading Australian newspaper the Australian says will be "a document of historical importance for China."[161]

Readers may wonder as to how the book remained active in cyberspace and was not censored by the government. The answer can be found through Chinese academic Mao Yushi's blog post following the book's release on the internet, writing, "It shows why our young generation must be careful with the future or our society will suffer a great regression."[162] Amidst the Bo scandal and Premier Wen's parting warning of a future Cultural Revolution-like campaign, the Party wants China's post-80's generation

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[159] Zhang, "China's Social Memory," 279.
[160] 共识网, at http://www.21ccom.net/.
[161] Michael Sheridan, "China Lifts Veil on Mao's Mass Killings," *The Australian*, November 25, 2012.
[162] Mao Yushi, Weibo.com Blog, November 23, 2012, Accessed November 26, 2012, http://www.weibo.com/maoyushi?sudaref=www.thechinastory.org.

to associate the Cultural Revolution with regression and fear, using it as a tool of deterrence.

Nearly half a century since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the Party sought to bring the movement back into the public's consciousness with the arrest of a violent radical. In February 2013 Zhejiang province local authorities arrested a Chinese man in his eighties, identified only as Mr. Qiu for crimes committed in 1967 during the Cultural Revolution.[163] While Chinese law only permits a twenty year statute of limitations, Qiu was originally called upon the charge in nearly two decades after the crime occurred. Now, nearly four decades later, Qiu awaits trial for using a rope to kill a doctor during the height of the Cultural Revolution. Qiu claimed the local civilian directed him to kill the doctor, surnamed Hong, after the militia targeted Hong targeted as a spy.

Following this story which spread through Chinese social media, Zhang Ming, professor of political science at Renmin University, published an editorial in the China Youth Daily. In his piece, Zhang argued that Chinese society must reflect openly on the Cultural Revolution if the Chinese hope to regain a sense of humanity and dignity. Zhang uses cannibalism as a metaphor for the imminent destruction of Chinese society if it fails to properly reflect; a metaphor reminiscent of the works of Lu Xun.[164] The crux of his editorial is as follows:

> There are many people [in our country] who yearn for a repeat of the
> Cultural Revolution, for another violent convulsion. This should send

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[163] Zhang Ming (张鸣), "Without Reflection Humanity Cannot Be Recovered (没有反思就没有人性的复苏)," *China Youth Daily*, February 20, 2013.

[164] Lu Xun, one of China's most profound writers of the twentieth century used cannibalism as a metaphor in his short story, "A Madman's Diary" published in 1918. The story was read as a criticism of traditional Chinese culture, and a call for a new culture of reform.

shivers through us all. If we refuse to review and reexamine the Cultural Revolution, we might still be a society of cannibals. And if we are such a society, it doesn't matter how bright we might seem on the outside, or how fully we enjoy the fruits of civilization — we are still a den of cannibals.[165]

Zhang points out that in both the real and the virtual world, there are many, old and young, who praise and support the Cultural Revolution. As this study argues, these individuals do not truly understand the horrors of that decade, nor the driving factors which caused such horrors. Instead, those who praise it see a period of great democracy in which the masses struggled against those who weakened the Party.

Beijing-based lawyer Liu Xiaoyun spoke out against this sudden resurgence of supposed Cultural Revolution justice, questioning the government's motives in revisiting such a case nearly four decades later. Liu remarked on his microblog that, "the prime culprits of the Cultural Revolution get away scot free and decades later they chase down a minor murderer. There were so many homicides during the Cultural Revolution, to pursue one little old man is a failure of judicial justice and political wisdom."[166] Others questioned how an individual could be put on trial for crimes committed during a period where the legal system was nearly nonexistent.

The case brought out an outflow of support for Qiu's trial, with netizens drawing allusions between Qiu's case and that of Nazi war criminals.[167] Likewise, in his editorial Zhang Ming comments that the only other event in modern human history was the Nazi period in Germany. Many differences arise between the two periods, and drawing such a

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[165] Zhang, "Without Reflection."
[166] Weibo, User: Liu Xiaoyun, February 21, 2013, Accessed February 21, 2013, http://weibo.com/1840604224/zkb4e7ehM.
[167] Weibo, User: Yin Xiaogeng, February 21, 2013, Accessed February 21, 2013, http://weibo.com/2014543247/zkaOFl8q9.

similarity is dangerous to all parties involved. The Nazi genocide against non-Aryans does not remotely stand against the events of the Cultural Revolution. The Nazi period was highly planned, methodical, and documented. Nazi war crimes were orchestrated in a top-down manner, with most German citizens left in the dark concerning the atrocities occurring within their backyard.

The events in China, on the other hand, were often unplanned acts of violence which came from the bottom-up. While Mao's policies and Mao Zedong Thought galvanized much of the violence, it manifested from the people's interpretation of his ideology. To set the two periods against each other depicts the grave misinterpretation which Chinese today hold of the Cultural Revolution, dangerously misinformed about the motivations and driving factors which spurred individuals like Qiu to commit such violent acts and thus skewing its place among world history. From his Weibo account, Henan University student Ma Tongfu argued that, "every Cultural Revolution criminal should be resolutely pursued and held responsible. Murderers, instigators – not a single one should be left behind."[168] Ma's comment depicts the belief which Chinese youth have bought into that the only way for society to come to terms with the Cultural Revolution is to ensure that all those who committed crimes during that period are brought to justice; a near-impossible feat. However, Zhang argues that unlike Germany, China has had no historical commemoration or reflection of any kind for what occurred during the Cultural Revolution. This is due to the fact that scholarship and educational curricula on the

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[168] Weibo, User: Ma Tongfu, February 21, 2013, Accessed February 21, 2013, http://weibo.com/1464680374/zkaA3DzAY.

subject remains heavily censored, and in such an environment, one can only wonder if historical commemoration and reflection can even exist.

Among some social media comments on Weibo was a plea by netizens for China to allow discussion and reflection on the Cultural Revolution. In light of these netizen-deemed resurgences, some netizens feel a need to collectively acknowledge the hardships of the decade lost to the Cultural Revolution. Understanding and moving past it is the only way China can move forward. Netizens argue that if Chinese do not completely clear the history of the Cultural Revolution, there is no way that society can reform.[169] Finally, one Weibo user by the name of 'Vertigo' supported this sentiment by writing, "if we don't thoroughly reflect on the Cultural Revolution, then all the efforts we put into the development of China will be like dancing with shackles."[170]

4.5 Labeling Chinese Netizens: "Internet Red Guards"

Further perpetuating the distorted social memory of the Cultural Revolution growing on China's Internet are western media pundits and researchers who apply negative labels on Chinese netizens and internet trends, such as referring to netizens as "Red Guards 2.0." Instead of seeing netizen activity against corruption as a system of checks and balances, western audiences are seeing netizens as an unruly online mob. Aside from haphazardly demonizing the term for those who lived through the turbulent

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[169] Weibo, User: Famously-anonymous, September 25, 2012, Accessed September 26, 2012, http://weibo.com/u/alexatkate.
[170] Weibo, User: Vertigo-, September 25, 2012, Accessed September 26, 2012, http://weibo.com/u/1921559131.

years of the Cultural Revolution, placing such a label on netizens undermines the tremendous growth and democratic efforts being waged on the Chinese Internet.

The internet facilitates conversation that transcends location, economic means, and educational status. In many ways, the internet acts as a great equalizer. In China, both urban and rural citizens can log into the internet and discuss their opinions through social portals. At present there are scores of websites aimed at reading Chinese social media, showcasing the importance utilizing the internet to gauge social information. On top of these websites, online news portals such as the Atlantic and BBC World News frequently insert netizen comments and social media posts into news articles discussing social issues in China.[171] The Chinese Internet contains hundreds of millions of blogs, or websites on which an individual records opinions, information, and social commentary, mainly written by the post-80's generation. While microblogs, such as Twitter, only allocate a limited number of characters per post, the responses and shares to a prominent post can grant immense insight into its importance. By analyzing and compiling posts and data from various Chinese microblogging, blogging, and web forums, these websites act as news portals granting western audiences a view of the range of discussions and emotions on the Chinese Internet.[172]

By making accessible comments and social commentary of Chinese netizens, these websites grant weight to the issues which Chinese web users hold. While these websites excel at providing a glimpse of the social commentary present on the Chinese Internet at a given time, they lack a historical foundation in their reporting. There remains

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[171] For examples, please visit the Atlantic's China Portal (http://www.theatlantic.com/china/) or BBC World News (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/).
[172] Examples include China Media Project (http://cmp.hku.hk/), Tea Leaf Nation (http://www.tealeafnation.com/), and ChinaSmack (http://www.chinasmack.com/).

a large hole which needs to be filled of historical research behind analyzing social sentiments of the Chinese Internet. Due to the character restrictions of microblogs, where most of these China-watching websites get their information, the full historical context can be missing from a Chinese netizen's post.

Rebecca MacKinnon, co-founder of Global Voices Online, an "international network of bloggers, translators, and citizen journalists that follow, report, and summarize what is going on in the blogosphere in every corner of the world," actively follows events which transpire on the Chinese Internet.[173] After the influx of HFS cases which arose in 2008, MacKinnon began to question the direction that such social actions by netizens can lead. Through her blog, "RConversation," MacKinnon made reference to similarities between Chinese netizens and Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution. On February 27, 2009, MacKinnon posted an entry titled "From Red Guards to cyber-vigilantism to where next?" writing that:

> Like the Red Guards, the intent of today's cyber-vigilantes is idealistic; they believe in their absolute moral righteousness. Sometimes they expose corrupt and venal officials who deserve to go to jail. Other times they conduct moral witch hunts against people whose behavior may not be very admirable but what crime did they commit exactly and who is to be the judge?[174]

MacKinnon further elaborated on her allusion in an article with the New York Times titled, "China's Cyberpose."[175] MacKinnon told journalist Tom Downey that the Chinese government's contentment with allowing web users to focus on localized corruption reminds her of the Cultural Revolution, having been quoted as saying, "The idea that you

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[173] From Global Voices Online: http://globalvoicesonline.org/.
[174] Rebecca MacKinnon, "RConversation: From Red Guards to Cyber-Vigilantism to Where Next?" Accessed October 15, 2012, http://rconversation.blogs.com/rconversation/2009/02/from-red-guards- to-cyber-vigilantism-to-where-next.html.
[175] Downey, "China's Cyberpose."

manage the local bureaucracy by sicking the masses on them is actually not a democratic

tradition but a Maoist tradition."[176] Downey writes in his article that human flesh

searches have been tagged by some as "Red Guards 2.0." MacKinnon's allusions set the

stage for western media outlets to scrutinize the actions of Chinese web users while

making comparisons, while not always as straightforward as MacKinnon's, to the

Cultural Revolution. This began a media trend which aims to place labels on Chinese

netizens ranging from "cyber Red Gaurds," to "internet vigilantes," to "cyber mobs."[177]

Utilizing such labels for Chinese netizens in western media instantly places a

negative connotation on their actions. This is especially harmful for use in western media

where stories about China are frequently misrepresented. Placing labels and using

descriptions of netizen actions reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution, such as "Internet

Red Guards," is also harmful to promoting an accurate historical description and social

memory of the Cultural Revolution. Instead, these labels work in favor of promoting the

social memory of violence and chaos which the Communist Party advocates.

Guobin Yang speaks to the issue of placing labels on Chinese netizens in his

article, "Technology and Its Contents: Issues in the Study of the Chinese Internet."[178] In

his article, Yang speaks to the invention of various labels seeking to describe the

discourse on the Chinese Internet. Yang argues that while some cases involve disturbing

methods of privacy invasion, this is simply one part of the story. What remain left out are

the collective protests which happen because "Chinese netizens, frustrated with the lack

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[176] Ibid.
[177] Peter Ford, journalist with the Christian Science Monitor also referred to Chinese web users as "virtual vigilantes" in his article "China's Virtual Vigilantes: Civic Action or Cyber Mobs?" Peter Ford, "China's virtual vigilantes: Civic action or cyber mobs?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 28, 2008.
[178] Yang, "Technology and Its Contents."

of social justice and outraged by government corruption, decide to redress social ills."[179] And the most important facet is that while media pundits and government officials are creating and labeling the Chinese Internet, the voices of those being labeled are missing. This mirrors how post-80's youth turn to the internet to compare current events to the Cultural Revolution, without taking into account the opinions and voices of those who lived through that decade.

Creating labels to place upon Chinese web users' internet activities is both careless and dangerous. In modern China, social media has become an often direct link between the people and their government. As netizens seek to expose corruption through the internet, the government heeds their call and brings targeted officials to justice. And Party leaders such as President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao are turning to social media, tweeting government news and holding live web chats with the public. Placing such disproportionate labels onto Chinese netizens is ignorant of Chinese history and assumes that the social mentality of the Mao era has evolved little in the decades since his rise to power. By referring to netizens as the "digital masses" and seeking to summon images of Red Guards storming Tiananmen Square for a chance to see Mao speaks little to the evolution that Chinese society has went through in the past four decades, not to mention the tremendous growth between China's relations with the western world. Continual usage of these labels will inevitably create a skewed memory of the Cultural Revolution among western audiences as well as harm outside understanding of the drastic social changes being attributed to the Chinese Internet.

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[179] Ibid.

It is clear that there has been a recent resurgence of Cultural Revolution memory being played out on the Chinese Internet, in which cases the Party used the memory of the Cultural Revolution to their own ends. As the government turned to the media and internet to associate fear and chaos with any reform that could potentially lead to another period of multiparty rule, the Cultural Revolution became the backdrop which the chaos is set against. Similarly, the spontaneous nature of anti-Japanese protests which occurred in the fall of 2012 saw netizens turning to the internet to make broad similarities between the violence of the protests and that of the Cultural Revolution. At the same time, China's post-80's generation turned to the web to redefine the personal experiences of those who lived through the Cultural Revolution against the backdrop of the Party's constructed history. What these instances show is that the state's history of the Cultural Revolution is prescribed by China's post-80's generation. Netizens use the label of the Cultural Revolution to denounce societal violence yet lack the knowledge to realize that the two events share few similarities. At the same time, western pundits call out China's netizens as modern-day Red Guards. Each instance portrays the misinterpretation of history surrounding the Cultural Revolution, and the extent to which violence, chaos, and unruly masses have come to symbolize the decade, both in the eyes of China's younger generations, as well as through western onlookers.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

As netizens took to the internet in April 2012 to argue against the millions of lives lost during the famine resulting from the Great Leap Forward, their comments and arguments highlighted their proclivity to believing the official Party line. While netizens dismissed allegations of rural peasants dying from starvation, many wondered why they didn't simply find other sources of food to make up for China's food shortage. One netizen posed, "I really don't understand why they didn't plant vegetables and grains. They were sent down to the countryside to labor, weren't they?"[180] Such remarks are telling of the profound gaps of historic knowledge among Chinese youth.

Online communities are an influential image into the discussions, commentaries, and limitations surrounding China's post-80's generation. These communities and the discussions they hold do not exist in a vacuum. Netizens go online to exchange ideas, share opinions, and interact with one another in ways which closely relate to their offline interactions. Therefore it is concluded that the online debates into the legacy of the Cultural Revolution relate back to what youth are taught in schools and the knowledge they are exposed to.

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[180] Murong, "Let Them Eat Grass."

The Chinese Communist Party works to keep the history of its periods of political turmoil and growing pains obscured. The true facets of its history of famine, political chaos, and social violence remain absent from educational curricula and scholarly publications. The result of this has been a generation of Chinese who have grown up with a limited knowledge of policy failures. This generation outwardly believes official pronouncements and is taught the official narrative of the Party since 1949. As a result, this generation fails to think critically or fact-check the Party's history. This in turn creates a tense political atmosphere on the Chinese Internet where netizens praise the arrest of an old man for his violent act during the Cultural Revolution, brand another man a traitor for speaking against the memory of Mao.

Actions such as these create a barrier between the post-80's generation and that of their parents, compounded through the works of social commentators such as Han Han. The generation which came of age during the Cultural Revolution received a revolutionary education, taught to uphold Maoism and purge traditional elements of society. Unlike children of the reform era, those of the Mao generation experienced a lack of continuity in their lives. In the wake of the Cultural Revolution, that which had been purged was reinstated and the experiences of their youth were branded as political mistakes. To those of China's post-80's generation, this period is glossed over and committed to memory as a period of political turmoil that resulted in violence and chaos. The experiences and lives of their parents' generation are absent from the memory. As a result, a lack of historical respect stands between the two generations, where the voices of those who suffered in the past are purposefully silenced.

This generation of netizens is not been taught that mistakes are inevitable in the forward-motion of a political body. Online checks and balances mirrors the evolution of citizen monitoring endorsed by China's various government throughout the nation's imperial and Communist histories. While they turn to the Chinese Internet using it as a system of checks and balances to call out corrupt local-level officials, netizens do so at the behest of the Party. Netizens argue against a Free Tibet because the government glorified its history in the region. They smash Japanese-made cars and turn to the internet to denounce the Japanese the government told them the Japanese encroached on Chinese territory. From such actions, it's no surprise that western internet analysts refer to Chinese netizens as "cyber mobs" and "Red Guards 2.0."

The invocation of the Cultural Revolution holds different meanings for the different groups who use it. The Party uses the memory of the Cultural Revolution to legitimize its rule and argue in favor of why multi-party rule will not work in China. It reduces the complexity of the Cultural Revolution to allude to the chaos and turmoil of the decade as an inevitable consequence. This argument is easily bought by Chinese youth. Netizens use the memory of the Cultural Revolution as a metaphor to interpret events, such as the anti-Japanese protests and the accusations against Bo Xilai.

It is crucial for the Party to increase scholarly work and publication on issues relating to the Cultural Revolution within China. Such a move would allow subsequent generations to view the period with a historical lens rather than a broad political lens placed upon them by the Party. The government needs to stop bringing its memory back to attention by simply relating it to violence and chaos. To water down the decade's history simply into these themes ignores the voices and experiences of those who lived

through it. Instead of hoisting the Cultural Revolution up as a period of regression that must be avoided moving forward, youth should be granted access to its history as a lesson on the dangers of totalitarian ideology. Such action could bridge the gaps between generations in China, rather than widen them.

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