

## **"Ideological Work" as Conflict Management: A Dialectical Approach in Chinese Communication Campaigns**

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### **Abstract**

Similar to the concept of conflict management, "ideological work" or *Si Xiang Gong Zou*,<sup>1</sup> is such a common term that permeates deeply in the life experiences of mainland Chinese. Under the guidance of "Mao Tse-Tung thought," conducting ideological work has been a long-time practice with the Chinese in handling contradictions (conflicts) amongst the people. Central to their practice of "doing ideological work," however, is the Chinese dialectical approach towards conflict management. This essay, by tracing the origin and analyzing in depth the applications of "ideological work" in Chinese communication campaigns, exposes the intrinsic mechanism of the approach in the Chinese social milieu.

"Contradiction and struggle are universal and absolute, but the methods of resolving contradictions, that is, the forms of struggle, differ according to the differences in the nature of the contradictions." -- Mao, 1965, p. 344.

The universality and absoluteness of contradiction in the universe as captured by Mao Tse-tung in the above quote seems to have somehow predicted that, in its struggle of socialist construction and modernization, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is to confront many contradictions. However, based upon his knowledge of and experiences with the Chinese, Mao (1968) succinctly categorized the PRC's contradictions into two major types: "those between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people themselves" (pp. 68). While he firmly held that the contradictions between "us and the enemy" are antagonistic in nature, he trusted that the contradictions amongst the people are fundamentally non-antagonistic. Therefore, he spared no effort in advocating what he believed to be the correct method of resolving contradictions within the ranks of the people. He then called this method, "the democratic method, the method of discussion, of criticism, of persuasion and education" (Mao, 1968, pp. 52).<sup>2</sup> In the PRC, this method of "correct handling of contradictions among the people," particularly as a conflict management strategy practiced in Chinese public communication campaigns, is widely known as doing "ideological work" among the masses.

The Chinese use of the term "ideological work," or *Si Xiang Gong Zou* can be traced back to at least, their early revolutionary days when the phrase was primarily circulated within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its Red Army (Mao, 1967; Snow, 1937). As the revolution gained ground and progressed rapidly in the country, this notion quickly caught on with others in the country; it was then broadly spread all over and used by people from all walks of life. The founding of the PRC in 1949 further promoted the use of this term; swiftly, "ideological work" becomes a popular concept pervasively applied to the Chinese's day-to-day struggle of socialist construction and its current strive for modernization.

To the ordinary Chinese, the term, *Si Xiang Gong Zou* is an integral part of their daily vernacular. For instance, if a child wants to get a toy, he or she then may talk his or her parents into buying it. The child's talking in this case is often referred to by his or her parents as "doing ideological work on us" for the obvious purposes of obtaining the toy. However, for Chinese politicians or revolutionary cadres, "ideological work" is more often alternately used with the phrase "ideological and political work" or *Si Xiang Zhen Zhi Gong Zuo* (Xia *et al.*, 1983). Mao (1968) himself, for example, basically used both terms synonymously while referring to the phenomena of criticizing, persuading, and educating Chinese citizens in the PRC.

Consequently, in the PRC, engaging in or being a part of ideological work becomes such a common experience for the Chinese that the term is not noticeable to them any more. It is simply a part of a Chinese's normal life. Take, for instance, ordinary citizens' experiences of it in national campaigns; numerous campaigns in which ideological work was central were launched in the country since its founding in 1949 (Bishop, 1989; Yu, 1964). Ideological work was done in the early days of the PRC (the 1950s) in campaigns such as "the land reform," "agricultural cooperativization," "industrial and agricultural leap forwards," etc.<sup>3</sup> In the 1960s, ideological work was conducted for purposes of heightening the masses' socialist and revolutionary consciousness in campaigns like "socialist education" and "great cultural revolution." Ideological work has been continuously performed in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s in many different campaigns with various purposes. In short, as a way of life, willingly or involuntarily participating in ideological work for the PRC Chinese is a constant social exercise rich in communicative interactions directed toward conflict management.<sup>4</sup> This is especially true in communication campaigns where contradictions between the interests of the collective and that of the individual are most salient. Nevertheless, surprisingly little has been done in communication research to study this meaningful human interaction extensively practiced by one fifth of the world's population. A careful investigation into the phenomenon is clearly needed before an informed understanding of the Chinese's approach toward conflict management can be obtained.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the PRC Chinese practice of conducting ideological work as an approach to managing collective-individual conflicts in communication campaigns. Selected communication campaigns run by the Chinese will serve as cases for analysis because of (1) the saliency of collective-individual conflicts in these campaigns, and (2) the richness of ideological work performed under such circumstances. By focusing on ideological work in these situations, we hope to explicate the Chinese concept of *Si Xiang Gong Zou* (ideological work) as a strategy in communication campaigns aiming at managing conflicts between individuals and the collective. We strive to present informative details of how ideological work is performed in Chinese communication campaigns and, through further analyses, to expose the intrinsic

mechanism underlying the processes of conducting ideological work in Chinese campaign settings. In the following, we attempt to understand the PRC Chinese approach to managing conflicts by first capturing the significance of "ideological work" in their campaigns followed by describing the processes of ideological work, and interpreting the meanings of their experiences. In the end, we draw a tentative conclusion and render some implications of this study.

### **Ideological Work: The Chinese Approach to Handling Collective-individual Conflicts**

In the Chinese language, the phrase *Mao Dun* (see Appendix for the Chinese) is considered a covering-all term for both contradictions and conflicts. Although *Chong Tu* is sometimes adopted to indicate a conflict, it often carries a connotation of direct physical clashes as a resultant outcome derived from some kind of *Mao Dun*. For example, a factory worker's quarrel with a manager is properly referred to as *Chong Tu* which is viewed as a direct confrontation attributable to a conflict (contradiction) between the worker's self interests and that of the manager's. The latter, a conflict, is more appropriately termed as a *Mao Dun* between the two parties involved. In other words, while *Chong Tu* frequently refers to more general, abstract, and conceptual ideas of a conflicting situation, *Chong Tu* is most often applied to concrete, specific and contextualized manifestations of a conflict.

### **The Origins and Perceptions of "Mao Dun"**

The character *Mao* in Chinese denotes a spear and the character *Dun*, a shield. According to Chinese legend (Wei, 1978), the phrase *Mao Dun* comes from a famous story of an ancient weapon seller who claimed that his spear was the sharpest in the whole world which could pierce through any shield; he then put down his spear and raised his shield and continued by claiming that his shield was the toughest in the whole world that it could shield any spear. At that moment, a person in the audience asked, "Dear Sir, what happens if you put your spear against your shield?" The weapon seller could not answer the question and was embarrassed. He then quickly packed up and left the scene. Such is said to be the origin of the Chinese term for contradiction/conflict: *Mao Dun*. Further, the Chinese term *Chu Li Mao Dun*, means handling or managing contradictions/conflicts. Consider, for example, Mao's (1965) article *Guan Yu Zhen Quie Chu Li Ren Min Nuei Bu Mao Dun Di Weng Ti* was translated by experts as "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People." The phrase "handling of contradictions" is therefore employed in this paper as an equivalent to the Western notion of "managing/resolving conflicts."

Interestingly, similar to Westerners' skeptical perceptions of conflicts (Fitzpatrick, 1988; Himes, 1980; Hocker & Wilmot, 1991), the Chinese perception of contradiction is generally negative as well. As demonstrated in the above legend of *Mao Dun*, one does not normally wish to contradict oneself. However, dialectical scholars in the West, eschewing from all negative connotations attached to the term in its common usage, believe contradictions in the form of conflicts are basically tensions created by opposing forces in motion (Baxter, 1990; Riegel, 1975; Williams, 1989). As such, contradictions are inherent in the universe as well as in human social life. Mao (1965), obviously sharing this view regarding contradictions, pointed out, "There is nothing that does not contain contradiction; without contradiction nothing would exist" (pp. 316).

He explained: "The universality or absoluteness of contradiction has a twofold meaning. One is that contradiction exists in the process of development of all things, and the other is that in the process of development of each thing a movement of opposites exists from beginning to end" (Mao, 1965, pp. 316). These contradictions, in the daily life of the mainland Chinese, include those between the self and other, between public and private, and between the individual and the collective. Of concern to this paper are the contradictions between the individual and the collective, i.e., between the specific interest of a person and that of a larger group (the country) as manifested in campaigns in which "ideological work" is being performed as a strategy for handling the conflicts.

### **Conflict Between the Individual and the Collective**

Although people from Eastern cultures are often labeled as having a collective orientation who frequently subordinate their self interests to the goals of the collective (Hofstede, 1984), in reality individuals in the PRC are as equally reluctant to yield to the collective, which naturally gives rise to individual-collective conflicts. Given the social and political system in the PRC (a central government under one ruling political party), while the notion "individual" usually refers to a person as independent from others in a large group, the collective is represented by larger groups of people such as the CCP, agencies of the central government, institutions and organizations such as universities, factories, or others like a neighborhood, a community, and an association. On its revolutionary road to socialist construction and modernization, Chinese in the PRC have been constantly dealing with contradictions (conflicts) between the interests of the individuals and those of the collective.

Usually, if leaders in the Chinese government perceive the existence of a collective-individual contradiction, campaigns aiming at resolving the conflicts among the people are the most likely result (Liu, 1981). Most relevant to this paper is the fact that these conflicts are often being managed or "handled" by relying upon the application of "ideological work" in the campaign setting. Consider, in the early days of the PRC, nationwide agricultural reform brought to bear the contradictions between individual farmers and the collective whose purpose was to organize the farmers for macro-cooperative farming known as "Cooperativization" (Cell, 1977). At the time, some farmers were reluctant to hand to the collective cooperation their land, farming tools and other related properties which they had just received as a fruit of liberation. This contradiction between the reluctant individual farmers and the imminent goal of the collective was found to be among the people and was of non-antagonistic nature. Therefore, a campaign was initiated by the government with "ideological work" as the key strategy implemented in the campaign by activists and cadres representing the collective. The purpose of the campaign was to persuade the reluctant farmers to join in the collective for Agricultural Cooperativization.

Another more recent case to illustrate the application of ideological work as the key in handling individual-collective conflicts in China is the Chinese's family planning campaign (Wang, 1989). Due to the rapid growth of China's oversized population, there has been an off-and-on family planning campaign in which individuals desiring for more children in their families are in direct conflict with the collective's (the government) goal of population control. The contradiction however is one among the people, and of non-antagonistic nature. Thus, the government advocated and urged its representatives to apply persuasion, education, criticism and

self-criticism as a fundamental strategy in operating the campaign. In his case study, Wang (1989) found that conducting ideological work for their targets was the primary task in the hands of members of the family planning groups (FPG, agents and activists directly responsible for running the campaign) who, in face-to-face interactive situations, gain target couples' compliance to the campaign's policy.

### **The Transformation of Contradictory Opposites**

Typically, in campaigns where an individual's interest is in conflict with that of the collective, the Chinese tend to perceive it as a temporary contradictory condition of opposites in motion. The contradictory opposites in the situation can eventually be united and transformed if proper ideological work has been performed (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Mao, 1965, 1968). For example, in the situation of the family planning campaign (Wang, 1989), the opposing forces in motion are the individual couples who desire more than one child and the workers of the FPGs who represent the government to carry out the policy of "one child per family." The collective's goal is to control the growth of the country's population so that everyone in the country will, supposedly, in the end benefit from a controlled population; whereas the individual's interest is to have more children so that certain personal values or beliefs are gratified as immediate gains. The collective's goal and the individual's interests in the campaign were seemingly in irreconcilable conflict with each other. However, in the minds of the family planning workers, this individual-collective contradiction was transformable, because, through proper ideological work, the individual would come to recognize that realization of the collective's goal would entail benefits for him or her as an individual in the long run. Thus, he or she was to willingly forsaken personal immediate gains in favor of the collective's goal achievement. The temporary tension between the two opposites in the campaign can thus be changed via the functions of the individual as the internal factor for change and that of the collective as the external factor.

Although the contradictory opposites are bound to change while in motion, the direction of this change may be either positive or negative, that is, the individuals' complying with or deviating from the campaign's policy of "one child per family" in the family planning campaign. According to Wang (1989), the FPG campaign workers understood well that their job in the campaign was to strengthen the external forces that would pull the individual toward compliance, yet, they also clearly comprehended the possibility for their targets to deviate. As a consequence of this perception, FPG members frequently attribute their failed cases to the prevalence of the individual's inclination to deviate from the campaign's policy. In their eyes, effective ideological work however was the key to managing this conflicting situation between the individual and the collective. To them, only via proper ideological work can contradictory tension between the two opposing forces in this situ be alleviated and, thus, a positive change solicited.

### **Quantity and Quality: The Praxis of Performing Ideological Work**

#### **The Persuader and the Persuadee**

In the PRC, as stated above, although ideological work is done at all levels with people from all walks of life, in a campaign, it is normally performed in a superior-subordinate circumstance with most often the carriers of ideological work being the superiors (the persuaders) and the bearers of the performances being the subordinates (the persuadees). This is so because, at a superficial level, the individuals in a campaign are thought to be the minority (the powerless and,

hence, the subordinate), while the collective is perceived to represent the interests of the great majority (the powerful and, thus, the superior). What is more important is perhaps the superior-subordinate situation corresponds perfectly well to the collective-individual standing in a conflict under the Chinese campaign context. Together, the collective (the superior, the persuader) and the individual (the subordinate, the persuadee) form the opposite of a particular unit of contradiction. Those carriers of ideological work (activists in a communication campaign) often represent the collective, be it a school, village, town, community, institution, association, government agency, or other forms of a group, whereas those who are the bearers of ideological performances are usually individuals representing in most cases just themselves. In the family planning campaign, for example, individuals who chose not to comply with the campaign policy became the bearers of the FPGs' ideological work, and they also marked themselves as the "individual" in contradiction with the "collective" (represented by the FPGs). The "individual," in this particular contradiction, took the subordinate position as a persuadee while the "collective" assumed the superior status as a persuader in the process of performing ideological work.

### **The Principles and Procedures of Ideological Work**

Xia, Liu, Feng, & Zhang (1983), in their exploration of the principles undergirding the Chinese practice of doing ideological work, outlined five important components in the performance of effective ideological work: (1) understanding influential factors, (2) analyzing processual levels of the work, (3) mastering feelings, reasons and exemplary behaviors, (4) employing knowledge or expertise, and (5) changing social norms for the group. Specifically, Xia *et al.* (1983) found that, in order to effectively perform ideological work, carriers in the process must first understand all influential factors that would facilitate an individual to change. These factors may include the individual's fundamental values, beliefs and attitudes, and his or her circumstantial factors such as career advancement, relationships with others, and matters related with family. Then, the carriers must analyze the processual levels of their ideological work with the bearer. At this stage, it is important for carriers to consider the cumulative effect of their work on the bearer and, therefore, increase the intensity and frequency of their work accordingly. Carriers of ideological work should discuss matters with the bearers with proper feelings, persuade them with reasons, educate them with knowledge, teach them the needed skills for desired behaviors, and guide them with exemplary conduct.

The Chinese seem to be well acquainted with these procedures of performing ideological work in campaigns. Wang (1989), for instance, reported that ideological work performed in the family planning campaign by members of the FPGs often started with "background search of the targets," in which representatives of the collective tried to first understand the influential factors surrounding their targets including the individual's desire for a male child, his or her yielding to social, familial, or peer pressure, etc. The FPGs then proceeded with personal visits to their targets to discuss issues like the timing of the first baby. If necessary, significant others of the targets were called upon to join the FPGs' visits to persuade the targets to change. The most important element in this process was the FPGs' repetition of their campaigning procedures, for the FPGs would visit the target families in a continuous manner until signs for change began to appear. In their face-to-face interactions with the targets, as observed by Wang (1989), the FPG members usually persuaded them to comply with the policy of the campaign by appealing to the

targets' sentiments to the country, the people, the government, the CCP, or any other types of collectives related to the individual.

### **Ideological Work Performances**

As noted by Liu (1981), in running a public communication campaign the Chinese emphasized heavily on the training of campaign "activists or volunteers." These campaign runners (representatives of the collective) were often selected by using the criteria of being "red" or "expert," with the former referring to their political reliability and the latter to their special knowledge or skills for a particular campaign. On other occasions techniques such as "recollection and comparison," in which campaign participants were gathered to openly present facts relating to the benefits of a campaign were also used (Huang, 1967). Moreover, personal examples were used and group pressure was created for campaigns. For instance, Chen (1970) reported that in the birth control campaign of 1956-58 the Chinese government presented both positive models for campaign participants to emulate and negative models for them to avoid.

Liu (1981) also pointed out that the persuaded often became persuaders in a campaign situation. He indicated that women with large families were asked to stand nearby local exhibits of birth control to demonstrate the disadvantages of having more children. There are many reports of using group pressure in Chinese campaigns to urge the individuals to change. For instance, Liu (1981) observed that group meeting is such a means used in birth control campaigns. Individuals were often compelled to make public pledges of commitments to limiting the number of births in their own families in the presence of other group members.

To the Chinese, doing ideological work appears to be a patterned task with considerable flexibility in its process. It is flexible because the campaign situations vary from one to another; it is patterned since the general process of performing ideological work basically remains the same in most campaigns. For carriers of ideological work, the purpose is to manage the conflicts by motivating the individuals to change, which requires them to have some knowledge of their targets in the campaign. Through diligent and often repeated ideological work (reflecting both the quality and quantity aspects of their campaign work), campaign activists were frequently able to solicit compliance from the targets. These campaign agents, as Wang (1989) pointed out, were more often perceived by their campaign targets as respectful, credible, and altruistic individuals who chose to make a contribution to their country and its people by involving themselves in managing and resolving contradictions among people. To them, performing ideological work in the campaign means contributing their own knowledge and efforts to the common good of their community, which Wang (1989) termed as "a community approach" to the running of information campaigns.

### **Ideological Work as Conflict Management: Understanding the Chinese's Approach**

The above analyses show the PRC Chinese's practice of conducting "ideological work" in communication campaigns was used as a strategy for managing conflicts between the "individual" and the "collective." Doing ideological work in this context means persuading the "individual" to change his or her mind and, eventually, to resolve or transform the contradiction between the parties involved. Conducting ideological work in the campaigns entails working on the minds, thoughts and hearts of those who represent the "individual." In fact, the Chinese character *Si*

*Xiang* literally means "minding and thinking" and *Gong Zuo* means "work." Hence, the Chinese concept *Si Xiang Gong Zuo*, or ideological work is tantamount to "persuasive mind-work."

### **The Chinese's Dialectical Perspective**

To understand the Chinese experiences of participating in ideological work in campaigns requires an understanding of the dialectics underlying their practices. As an approach to managing conflicts among the people, the Chinese ideological work is basically performed from a dialectical perspective advocated and promoted by Mao Tse-tung whose thoughts were heavily influenced by Marxist materialistic dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Thus, to understand the dynamics of the Chinese ideological work in the campaigns as an approach to conflict management, an understanding of the Chinese dialectical perspective becomes necessary.

The Chinese's dialectical perspective has its historical roots in Taoism (Cheng, 1981). The essence of Chinese Taoism is captured in Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu who advocated "simplicistic naturalism" (Ch'en, 1977; Fung, 1933; Lau, 1963; Lin, 1949). According to Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, the universe consists of a unity of opposing forces represented by the two archetypal bipolar elements of *Yin* and *Yang* in constant motion and ceaseless changes. The way of the universe is represented by *Tao* which "gives birth to unity, unity gives birth to duality, duality gives birth to trinity, and trinity gives birth to all things. All things are wrapped by *yin* and contain *yang*, and their pulsing *ch'i* marry" (Cheng, 1981, p. 144.). *Ch'i* (*Qi*), which brings forth changes to the universe, is the interplay between the constant motion of the *Yin* and the *Yang*. Thus, changes in the universe are possible via movements of the dynamic *Qi* between *Yin* and *Yang*.

Mao (1965) crystallized Lao Tzu's and Chuang Tzu's viewpoints indicating that the driving forces for social changes were no other than the revolutionary forces represented by the great masses in China. Thus, the proactive way to produce a social change is to manipulate the *Qi* between the opposing forces of the collective (the *Yang*) and the individual (the *Yin*). The question is: Can the *Qi* be effectively manipulated? To seek for a possible answer, we turn to the Chinese social historical fertile soil for the seed of "ideological work."

### **Ideological Work as a Dialectical Approach**

The practice of performing ideological work as a guide for desired behavior in China is not new. The origin of performing ideological work is evidenced in the writings of Sun Tzu, a Chinese military strategist who authored the classic, "The Art of War" (*Sun Zi Bin Fa*), in approximately 400-320 B. C. (Griffith, 1963). Sun Tzu taught that the most important thing of all in war is to win it without fighting for the victory. He said:

For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill...Thus, those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without battle. They capture his cities without assaulting them and overthrow his state without protracted operations. Your aim must be to take All-under-Heaven intact. Thus your troops are not worn out and your gains will be complete.

This is the art of offensive strategy (Griffith, 1963, pp. 77-79).

Because of his belief of winning the war without fighting the battles, Sun Tzu is regarded as "the first proponent of psychological warfare" (Griffith, 1963, pp. 54).



Sun Tzu pointed out that the first priority for an army general is not to attack the enemy by force, but to attack the morale of the enemy with strategy; in preparing for battles, the foremost task for the general is not to have weapons gathered, but to have the morale of his own soldiers raised up. This strategy of working on the mind and heart has been frequently practiced by Mao Tse-tung in China's revolutionary war which led Mao and his army to march from victory to victory. In the revolutionary years, Mao (1965) translated Sun Tzu's strategy for practical applications in his army and Party by calling it "doing ideological political work" for members of the revolutionary forces. After the founding of the PRC, under Mao's advocacy and promotion, the practice of doing ideological work was substantially widened and deepened in the country's revolutionary struggles of socialist construction and modernization. Dialectically, if Mao perceived the Chinese revolutionary forces as the collective *Qi* in bringing forth changes to China, he perhaps considered "doing ideological work" as the most effective means for the task of manipulating the dynamic forces of change between the *Yin* and *Yang*, namely, the *Qi*.

How did Mao actualize the concrete procedures of performing ideological work for the Chinese in PRC? Scholars suggest that the success of Maoism in the PRC is due to Mao's skillful and strategic application of the principles of Marxism to the Chinese revolution (Cell, 1977; Liu, 1992). In regard to the practice of doing ideological work, this means Mao applied the laws of Marx's materialist dialectics to the praxis of conducting ideological work. Thus conducting ideological work in campaigns is a practice undergirded by laws of materialist dialectics that hold three elements: (1) the identity of a given contradiction unites the opposites, (2) contradictory opposites transform into each other in given conditions, and (3) quantity of struggle promotes quality change in a contradiction. Mao (1967) claimed:

In given conditions having and not having, acquiring and losing, are interconnected; there is identity of the two sides. ... All contradictory things are interconnected; not only do they coexist in a single entity in given conditions, but in other given conditions, they also transform themselves into each other. This is the full meaning of the identity of opposites (Vol.1, pp. 339-340).

Specifically, the collective-individual contradictions found in the Chinese communication campaigns are identical opposites. To have more or less children in a family, for example, is interconnected; this pair of opposites coexist in the single entity of population growth in China. The two identical opposites are then transformable, that is, the contradiction between the collective and the individual can be resolved with either the individual transforming (i.e., giving up the interest of having more than one child in the family) into the collective, or vice versa (i.e., the collective losing grounds to deviant cases). The possibility of this change is determined by the quantity of struggle within the contradiction itself. Contextually, in the Chinese campaigns, the qualitative change of the opposites in the contradiction is made possible by the quantity of the struggles of the opposites. For example, in the family planning campaign, the FPGs' repeated interactions with their targets constitute the quantity of the struggles of the opposites. As eggs are hatched only when they receive adequate amount of heat, individual targets in the family planning campaign will change only when quantity of the FPG's ideological work reaches a sufficient level. Dialectically, we must understand that only eggs are hatchable though, not stones; likewise, only individuals who possess the quality and characteristics for changing (e.g., their favorable

predisposition toward the policy of family planning campaigns) are transformable by motions of the opposing forces in the contradiction.

### Conclusion

In its struggle of socialist construction and modernization, conducting ideological work has become a significant social practice aiming at resolving conflicts among the Chinese people in the PRC. In fact, it has been utilized in numerous Chinese communication campaigns as a strategy for persuading and mobilizing the masses (Cell, 1977) for purposes of achieving objectives of the collective, that is, the goals of the country as defined by its government. This paper investigates the Chinese practice of doing ideological work as a unique approach toward conflict management and resolution in communication campaigns.

The practice of conducting ideological work in communication campaigns has its historical roots. Mao Tse-tung believed in the non-antagonistic nature of contradictions among the Chinese people and, thus, enthusiastically advocated a wide application of "ideological work" to situations of domestic conflicts. Mao's idea of using the method of persuasion, education, discussion and criticism to deal with contradiction among the people has formed the critical hard core of what is known as doing ideological work for the masses in the PRC. Inspired and drawing heavily on Marx's materialistic dialectics, Mao believed that the development of the universe is a resultant outcome of contradicting opposing forces in motion. Therefore, he concluded that the human society would only progress under dialectical tensions resulted from contradictory social forces (Mao, 1968). To Mao, the absoluteness and universality of contradiction seem to have predetermined that socialist China must correctly handle the conflicts among its people via the use of the ideological work.

Besides the influence of Marxist dialectics, Mao's perception of contradictions and method of persuasion, education, and criticism was also affected by Sun Tzu and Taoism. "Doing ideological work" as a proactive strategy of working on the individual's mind as a guidance and motive responsible for the individual's behavior is largely based on Sun Tzu's thoughts. The idea of manipulating the *Qi* between the opposing forces of *Yin* and *Yang* has originated from Taoism.

In sum, as a strategy of handling internal contradictions within the Chinese society, "doing ideological work" is fundamentally a dialectical method practiced by the Chinese for purposes of persuading, educating and, above all, gaining compliance from the masses. To the Chinese, this method is a common life experience shared particularly in public communication campaigns where conflicts between the interests of the individual and the goals of the collective are most salient. The Chinese way of conducting ideological work as conflict management/resolution in communication campaigns is fundamentally a dialectical interactive process aiming at altering the vehemence and magnitude of opposing forces in motion with patterned performances of much flexibility.

While this paper provides informative details leading to an in-depth understanding of the Chinese "ideological work" in communication campaigns, the existing asymmetric status of the persuaders (representatives of the collective) and persuadees (individuals representing themselves) in the Chinese context calls for further research. It would be helpful for future studies to unpack the issues of legitimacy and power of the campaign participants in order to gain knowledge of the nature and dynamics of Chinese persuasion and compliance-gaining process. In addition, the

amount of individual and collective conflicts revealed in these Chinese campaigns seem to suggest that, when individuals are permitted to deviate from the expectations of the collective, the claim that the Chinese are "collectively oriented" becomes questionable and merits reconsideration.

## Notes

(1) The Chinese system of character romanization, *Pin Yin*, is adopted for this writing, except where historical usage in English demands a different form (e.g., Mao Tse-tung, Lao Tzu). Also, corresponding Chinese characters to *Pin Yin* employed in the text are listed alphabetically in Appendix A: Chinese Terms and Expressions Used in the Text.

(2) Although Western scholars diversely differ on Mao's definition and practice of persuasion and education in China (Bennett, 1976; Skinner & Winckler, 1969), campaign researchers (Bishop, 1989; Bennett, 1976; Cell, 1977; Liu, 1981; Teiwes, 1971) appear to be in agreement that Mao's method is more similar to the Western notion of "persuasion." For instance, after comparing the Chinese practice with that of the Russians, Teiwes (1971) concluded: "In both systems persuasive and coercive measures have been intertwined but the Chinese have been more subtle in combining the two methods and have shown a much greater willingness to rely on persuasive techniques" (pp. 16).

Mao (1967) himself, on the other hand, tried to distinguish his conception of persuasion and coercion/compulsion:

"The people's state protects the people. Only when the people have such a state can they educate and remold themselves by democratic methods on a country-wide scale, with everyone taking part ... Here, the method we employ is democratic, the method of persuasion, not of compulsion. ... As for the members of the reactionary classes and individual reactionaries, so long as they do not rebel, sabotage or create trouble after their political power has been overthrown, land and work will be given to them as well in order to allow them to live and remold themselves through labour into new people. If they are not willing to work, the people's state will compel them to work. ... This, too, may be called a 'policy of benevolence' if you like, but it is imposed by us on the members of the enemy classes and cannot be mentioned in the same breath with the work of self-education which we carry on within the ranks of the revolutionary people" (Vol. 4, pp.418-419).

It seems that Mao encouraged the application of compulsion/coercion while dealing with antagonistic contradictions between "us and the enemy," but persuasion and education to non-antagonistic contradictions among the ranks of his "revolutionary people."

(3) Yu (1967) categorized Chinese campaigns into three general types: economic, ideological and struggle campaigns. Primarily due to the Chinese social political systems of a central government under one ruling Party, all campaigns in China inevitably carry with them some kind of political undertone. According to Yu (1967), while economic and ideological campaigns were operated for purposes of resolving non-antagonistic contradictions among the people, struggle

campaigns were designed to deal with antagonistic contradictions between the people and their enemy.

(4) Basically because of the political undertone of campaigns in China, individuals were often obligated (involuntarily) to participate regardless of their predisposition toward a given campaign. However, so long as the campaign was launched for purposes of handling non-antagonistic contradictions among the people, individuals often had the choice to deviate from the expectations of the collective. Therefore, they were able to form the opposites in a given unit of contradiction, that is, the conflicting parties against the will of the collective in a campaign situation.

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Appendix. Chinese terms and expressions used in the text

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