

Shanghai and The China Dream

The China Dream is everywhere in Shanghai. Down the sides of streets, tucked into bushes, adorning massive billboards on the sides of highways, and plastered on the walls of subway stations. The images of traditional Chinese art paired with traditional Chinese values are ubiquitous across the major areas of the city. The China Dream campaign's propaganda is so prevalent in Shanghai that it begs the question of how the campaign has affected the lives of Shanghai citizens. The goal of this paper is not to define the China Dream. Through face to face interviews, examination of the propaganda and its placement throughout Shanghai, as well as scholarly research including both primary and secondary sources, this paper explains Shanghai residents' reception and interpretation of the campaign. The residents had not consciously processed their opinion of the campaign, but through the interview process they constructed their own conception and placed themselves within the framework of the campaign. Despite denying much knowledge of the campaign, when asked to explain what they did know their conception closely lined up with the official campaign rhetoric.

Literature Review:

Much of the existing literature concerning the China Dream examines the potential economic and political impact the campaign might have both domestically and internationally. While articles published from within China, such as Qing Heng Jian's article "On China Dream," and Wang and Guo's article "A Contrastive Analysis of American Dream and China Dream," largely spout the party line and spell out a glorious rejuvenation for the Chinese nation should the people follow the leadership of President Xi and the CCP, scholars abroad such as London

School of Economics professor William Callahan, who's written the book *China Dreams: 20 Visions of the Future* and the article "Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History," have discussed the economic impact, the new and changing face of China's international relations, and the social forces at play surrounding the China Dream campaign.

Wang and Guo's article "A Contrastive Analysis of American Dream and China Dream" provides an optimistic and nationalistic view of the China Dream, and seeks to "unearth the differences between [the] American Dream and [the] China Dream." This article parrots the party line, and is clearly influenced by academic censorship common in China, using rhetoric such as "[The China Dream] continuously pushes the country forward," and is "deeply engrave[d] in the people's heart." In the same vein, Qing's article "On China Dream" addresses the Chinese public in trying to sort out how best to realize the individual's China dream. Qing calls for people to realistically work towards achieving their dream instead of day dreaming, and to unify in pursuit of achieving the national dream.

The literature concerning the China Dream in relation to understanding and predicting China's domestic and international political strategies are the most numerous among China Dream literature. Sting Stenslie and Chen Gang's chapter "Xi Jinping's Grand Strategy: From Vision to Implementation," within their book *China In the Era of Xi Jinping* examines the "grand strategy" presented by President Xi at the Eighteenth Party Congress during the beginning of his first five year term (117). They argue that Xi has and will "formulate his own vision" under the China Dream, Asia-Pacific Dream, and One Belt, One Road initiatives, but that he will experience "significant structural obstacles" such as external resistance and weak domestic institutions (118). Grant Rhode's "The China Dream: Great Power Thinking & Strategic Posture

in the Post-American Era” gives a brief overview of China’s China Dream approach to international relations by examining Liu Mingfu’s *On China* (2011), which sets up what Liu thinks will be China’s “martial rise” to be more powerful than the United States, which he thinks gained power through a “cheap rise,” “coming late to both world wars, but concluding those wars with the victor’s share of the spoils,” (146). Most importantly Rhode says that Liu advocates for China to practice “democracy abroad and hegemony at home,” (146).

In his two articles, “The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context,” and “Not Rising, But Rejuvenating: The ‘Chinese Dream’” Zheng Wang argues that the use of the word “rejuvenation” is key to understanding the true nature of the China Dream. He makes it clear that neither the Chinese government nor people consider this to be China’s “rise” to power, but a return to a previously attained and inherently deserved place as a global superpower. He states that “the Chinese feel a strong sense of chosenness,” and that by using the rhetoric of national humiliation in conjunction with the goal of rejuvenation Xi will “mobilize the Chinese populace to support their... reform,” (1, 2). Finally, for literature relating to China’s politics, Zheng Shiping concludes in his article, “Rising Confidence Behind the ‘Chinese Dream,’” that China’s current international confidence stems from how well it’s “been performing in absolute terms,” and “relative to its neighboring countries,” despite scoring poorly on various key indicators of well being (1).

Michael X.Y. Feng discusses the domestic influence of the campaign’s policies and how, through them, the Chinese government is attempting to influence its citizens to adhere to a “socialist way of Chinese characteristics,” (163). He examines these characteristics, such as

“civility, harmony, freedom,” and their place in China’s attempt to “gain high economic efficiency [and] sustainable productivity,” (163).

From an economic standpoint, David A. Owen discusses the impact of China’s rapid development on domestic political interest within China in his article, “The Impact of Economic Development on Political Interest Across Social Classes in China: Turning the Chinese Dream into a Chinese Reality?” By examining modernization theory in regards to China’s current economic situation Owen investigates the link between China’s working class and the “regime concession-demanding process,” and the claim that, “both classes are politically apathetic... and do not engage the regime for change,” (1).

William Callahan has written extensively on the changing international face of China and the various possibilities for its future. In his book *China Dream: 20 Visions of the Future*, he addresses the role of dissidents and citizen intellectuals within China and the effect they have on policy and China’s international reputation. Going on to discuss what he calls the “China Model,” which he defines as a “unique combination of authoritarian state + free market,” (67), he examines where China’s economic model might lead them, and the various cosmopolitan, fundamentalist, and racist dreams therein. Finally, Callahan examines the American Dream and its relation to Chinese exceptionalism, which is the topic of another of his papers, “Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History.” In this article Callahan examines the switch of global power from West to East which the world is currently experiencing, and looks to historical precedents as a way of understanding.

History of the China Dream:

Following in the footsteps of China's modern leaders, Chinese General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, President of the People's Republic of China, and the Chairman of China's Central Military Commission Xi Jinping announced at the beginning of his first five year term his national slogan— "China Dream 中国梦." Starting with Chairman Mao's movement to implement and realize the success of a socialist and communist state, through Deng Xiaoping's opening and reform 改革开放 movement in 1978, Jiang Zemin's Three Represents 三个代表, to Hu Jintao's "Harmonious Society 和谐社会," China's leaders have utilized the language of rejuvenation to motivate their people and provide a source of legitimacy for the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) one-party rule. As Zheng Wang posits in his article, "The Chinese Dream: Concept And Context," by juxtaposing the trauma of national humiliation at the hands of Western powers and the Japanese with China's long, glorious history, its age-old belief of its country's rightful place at the top of the global hierarchy, and the rhetoric of rejuvenation, Xi Jinping and his party create for themselves a source of legitimacy. It was Mao and the formation of the Communist Party that drew China from the depths of the "century of humiliation," and therefore it is the Communist Party that has the legitimacy to rejuvenate China to her former glory.

"Xi's China Dream narrative is like old wine in a new bottle with the dream's name replacing Jiang [Zemin] and Hu's [Jintao] national rejuvenation, Deng's invigoration of China, and Mao's realization of socialism and communism," Wang explains in "The Chinese Dream: Concept And Context"(7). However, unlike his predecessors, Xi is trying to convince the

Chinese public not just to follow the CCP and sacrifice for the realization of the “Dream” for the good of the country, but that, “the Dream [is] also for each individual Chinese,” (Wang 8).

As reported by the Chinese Xinhua News Agency 新华社, Xi stated that the goal of the China Dream campaign is “to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” (Wang 1). Xi promised in conjunction with the campaign that should he and the CCP be followed dutifully by the Chinese people, China will have overcome the poverty, pollution, corruption, and ethnic strife that bedevils society today,” and become a fully developed nation by 2049, which will be the 100th anniversary of the PRC. (Carlson 4).

The China Dream is almost impossible to define. It defies its American counterpart’s simplicity of the white picket fence, two point five children, and a dog. The rhetoric is purposefully and frustratingly nebulous. So vague is the campaign, in fact, that it could possibly be defined by this very attribute. Employing one word phrases invoking traditional Chinese values, the propaganda leaves room for each citizen to develop his or her own interpretation. On a policy level, anything that could be construed as working towards “realiz[ing] the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” could fall under the China Dream.

The term “复兴,” meaning rejuvenation, has been used closely with the campaign. The specific use of this phrase is important. The Dream rhetoric states that China is not rising, but rather she is rejuvenating, and working to regain her former glory and rightful place at the center of the world. There is a sense of entitlement in the campaign even as Xi calls for people to make sacrifices in order to achieve the “Dream.”

Methodology:

Data was gathered from sixteen participants through in-person interviews in Shanghai, China. The demographics range from age twenty one to eighty one, and include a roughly equal number of male and female participants.

I entered each interview keeping in mind that I did not want to lead the subject's answers, and tried my best to allow the subject to speak with as little of my guidance as possible. I began always with the question, "have you heard of the China Dream," and then requested that they define it. While my questions varied from interview to interview as our conversations developed, the questions I always made sure to ask were these previous two, as well as, "Do you think the campaign will affect change within Shanghai," "Do you think the goals of the campaign will be achieved by President Xi's 2049 deadline," "Do you think the campaign has anything to do with 'rejuvenation'," "What is your dream for China," and finally, "What is your personal dream?"

Approximately half of the subjects allowed me to record them, but during all interview processes I took notes which I later transcribed into password-protected documents. Every subject has been assigned a pseudonym. A few subjects, such as Li Fen and De Lun, expressed significant anxiety about the protection of their anonymity and the sensitivity of the subject matter. Other subjects, such as Cui Fen and Hua Fang, said they didn't find the subject matter sensitive in the slightest, and that they wouldn't mind if I used their real names.

A fascinating development I observed throughout the course of my interviews was the way the subjects would frequently begin by saying they'd never heard of the campaign, or had heard only little of it and knew no specifics. However, as the interviews progressed, it became obvious that either they knew more than they claimed to, or through only the briefest of my

descriptions they could pick out the main threads of the campaign, which might lend itself to the theory that their own personal interpretations of the phrase China Dream line up with the official definition. Subjects such as Bo Hai, Li Fen, Chun Hua, and others seemed almost to be constructing a meaning for themselves as they talked, consciously formulating their own dream for both themselves and their country, and placing it in the broader framework of the China Dream. It's odd, but by asking them to speak about the China Dream as a campaign, an ideological concept, and a personal vision, I found myself complicit in spreading awareness of the China Dream.

History of Propaganda:

In his book *Art and Propaganda In the Twentieth Century*, Toby Clark gives a brief history of the connotations and usages of propaganda. “The word ‘propaganda,’” he begins, “has a sinister ring, suggesting strategies of manipulative persuasion, intimation and deception,” (7). The negative connotations attached to the word “propaganda” during the rise of totalitarian states and wars that shaped the twentieth century. While the Oxford English Dictionary now defines propaganda as, “chiefly derogatory information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view,” Clark states that the original use of “propaganda” was neutral, to “describe the systematic propagation of beliefs, values, or practices (8).

China, as Clark states, sought to ensure that art would not remain a function of “high-class status,” as it might, “[alienate] working-class audiences for whom... a painting in a museum may be viewed as an inherently hostile object in an elitist environment,” (60). To

counter this situation, China, following in the footsteps of Soviet Russia, merged “fine arts with mass culture,” by using “mass-reproduction of paintings and sculptures in films, posters, postcards, advertisements, and magazines,” which “confer a sense of common ownership over the image,” (60-61). “Communism is said to provide an objective and scientific understanding of the world,” Clark says, and therefore the word “propaganda” has, theoretically, in China, avoided the negative connotation it’s accrued in the West, as, under Communist rule, “little distinction is made between propaganda and education,” (74.)

Through my interviews I have concluded that, whether due to organic and local thought or Western, capitalist influences, the word “propaganda” has gained a negative connotation among Chinese citizens, at the very least in Shanghai. Many of my interviewees expressed an inherent distrust or disinterest in the campaign simply because it was a government run propaganda campaign. They seem to have cynically accepted that any change in Chinese society will find genesis in government action and policy, not among the people. Therefore, propaganda can only be meant to steer the people along the party line.

Propaganda:

I observed four common types of China Dream propaganda during my time in Shanghai: signs shaped like Chinese fans, signs shaped like bamboo scrolls, banners hanging off street posts, and the occasional sign off to the side of the road touting a public service announcement. Each type displayed its main message, an image, and a smaller line stating the city district that had sponsored the propaganda.

I found many more fan signs than any other type of propaganda. The signs displayed virtues such as justice 公正, honesty 诚信, patriotism 爱国, and rule of law 法治, in addition to a

smaller saying placed underneath. For example, honesty 诚信 came attached to the famous idiom “一言九鼎，重于泰山 One word worth nine sacred tripods (words of enormous weight), heavier than Mt. Tai (extremely serious matter).” The tripod mentioned is a tripod cauldron, or “ding 鼎,” which by the Shang Dynasty had come to symbolize the authority and power of the ruling dynasty. Another sign, touting the virtue amity 友善 was adjoined by “推己及人，善心善行 Put oneself in the place of another, benevolence and good actions.” Photo 2 is an example of this type of propaganda. I found these fans in both Hunan and Jing’an districts.

The bamboo scroll signs displayed longer sayings, such as “中国人爱万物 The Chinese Love All Things Under Heaven,” which was accompanied by a photo of a sculpture of an elderly Chinese man surrounded by and feeding a variety of animals. Each bamboo scroll said, “讲文明树新风 Be civilized and cultivate new customs,” in large red script down the left side, which was made to look like the bamboo scroll was furled. Across the top in smaller, red letters was written on each, “讲文明树新风 公益广告 Speak civilization, Cultivate new custom, Public service advertisement.” And then, smaller still in black script, “中国精神，中国形象，中国文化，中国表达 Chinese Spirit, Chinese Image, Chinese Culture, Chinese Expression.” Other examples of scrolls include “中国少年，仁人爱物 China’s Youth Care for Other People and Are Kind to Animals,” which was accompanied by a sculpture of a young boy playing with a chicken, and “荡起梦想，我有力量 Let my dreams fly and I have strength,” which was accompanied by a colorful cartoon of two young children in traditional dress dancing with streamers. These bamboo scroll posters were found in Huangpu and Hunan districts.

I only ever observed the posters hanging from street poles within Jing'an district, and while I saw them more than once there were only two that seemed to be repeated. The left side of each pole was the same each time: “中国梦，生成美- 修身行, Beautiful Shanghai, cultivate one's moral character.” The right side stated the source of the propaganda, “静安精神建设 Jing'an district spiritual civilization construction committee,” and then presented the main message. The first one was, “文明静安，遵守 新七不文明我先行 Civilized Jing'an, Comply with the new seven, Civilized I will go ahead of the rest.” The second was, “宠物不扰邻 Pets don't harass neighbors.” While the fans and bamboo scrolls had employed lots of red, beige, and black, the posters had a baby blue background, reminiscent of a sky, with what looked like pink cherry blossom petals drifting downwards. The script was black.

Finally, the public service announcements. Example photo 1 was taken two blocks away from the Bund, and was tucked into an embankment of bushes down a quiet street. It stated at the top the source of the announcement, “黄浦区创建文明城区 The Huangpu District Creates a Civilized Metropolitan District,” and then below the goal to, “共筑中国梦 Together Construct the Chinese Dream,” in big, happy red characters. Underneath this was stated, “同创文明城 Work Together to Create a Civilized City.”

It is worth noting the propaganda at the Oriental Pearl, Shanghai's most popular tourist destination aside from the Bund. While there are no fans, bamboo scrolls, or posters, across the electronic board in view of everyone waiting to board the elevators up there scrolls every few minutes a list of the traditional values that can be found on the fan propaganda. “文明，和谐，自由，平等，公正，法治，爱国，诚信，友善,” it blinked in red, “Civilization, harmony,

freedom, equality, rule by law, patriotism, sincerity, amity.” These are all key words of the campaign and its propaganda, meant to encourage the population to follow them as moral codes of conduct.



Photo 1

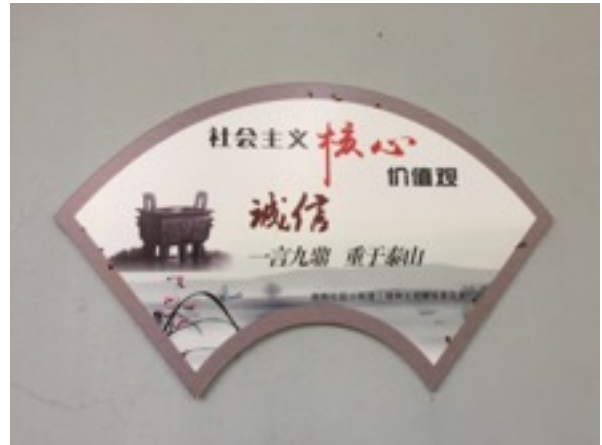


Photo 2

Interviews:

While each interview subject expressed an individual and nuanced opinion on the campaign, its goals, and their own personal interpretation, there were overarching links among the interviews. The concern over living standards within Shanghai was also a common theme, as were the soaring housing prices and desire for home ownership. The majority of subjects expressed the belief that the campaign will result in a national rejuvenation.

With the notable exception of Meng Yao, who, despite expressing nationalist beliefs, denied espousing any form of nationalism, the vast majority of participants expressed either nationalist or anti-imperialist sentiments.

Most interviewees claimed that they had very rarely seen the propaganda, and had almost no understanding of the particulars of the campaign. Despite this, each was able to pick out the

basic strands of the campaign and form their own opinion, as well as fit themselves and their individual dream into the greater tapestry of the campaign.

Name	Approximate Age	Career	Date Interviewed
Meng Yao	28	Businessman	6 July 2016
Li Ling	25	Worker	10 June 2016
Huang	81	Retired	1 July 2016
Chang Ying	23	Assistant Pastor	10 June 2016
Jia	40	Professor	12 June 2016
Li Fen	35	Teacher	10 June 2016
De Lun	35	Pastor	10 June 2016
Dai Yu	22	Student	20 June 2016
Hui Zhong	25	Worker	10 June 2016
Bo Hai	22	Student	14 June 2016
Chun Hua	44	Philanthropist	3 July 2016
Lan	28	Businesswoman	1 July 2016
Hua Feng	20	Student	6 July 2016
Mei Xiu	60	Retired	1 July 2016
Cui Fen	40	Businesswoman	6 July 2016

1. Cynics

The interviewees who remained cynical of the campaign were Meng Yao, Li Ling, and Huang. Meng Yao was by far the most cynical, and the most contradictory as he made nationalistic statements followed by claims that, should he and other be financially able, they'd leave China in a heartbeat. He railed against the campaign, saying that anyone who believed in it must be "poor and uneducated," and refused to categorize his own dream as belonging to the larger patchwork of the China Dream. Li Ling, at the beginning simply wasn't interested in talking about the campaign, though she did perk up. She expressed dismay at the current state of the country and the level of economic disparity that marks China's domestic economy. Huang,

while he expressed exactly the party line, made it clear to me that, at the age of 81, he's learned not to speak out against the party. These cynical subjects expressed a lack of faith in the efficacy of the government and the campaign, and/or made it clear that they did not feel safe criticizing the party line.

Meng Yao:

I met Meng Yao after interviewing Cui Fen, because he works for her and she, being a very helpful person, invited me to her office to collect further interviews. Meng Yao seemed very confused as to why he was being asked to speak to an American, and seemed reluctant to be drawn away from his work, but he quickly became interested in my questions. He declined to be recorded.

Meng Yao expressed a decided negativity towards the campaign because he "feels that it is propaganda," and he doesn't like the way the government uses propaganda. He thinks the campaign is based quite blatantly off the American Dream.

Meng Yao is pessimistically surprised that so many younger people vocally support the campaign on the internet. He was born in 1987, and says that his generation hates the campaign, and thinks that such propaganda is fake, and he doesn't understand how current university students, who have significantly increased access to media, can still "become so enthusiastic," and "too extreme about patriotism," and could "fall for" the propaganda's messages. Along this same vein, Meng Yao feels that anyone who supports the presidential propaganda campaigns must be less educated, and from lower classes of Chinese society because "poor people are more easy to inspire."

When I brought up the keyword “复兴,” Meng Yao brushed it aside, but then proceeded to explain it to me. After Mao “created the PRC,” he created the phrase “中华民族复兴,” or the rejuvenation of the Chinese people. However, while the phrase “中华民族” does translate to “the Chinese nation.” Meng Yao explained to me that “中华民族” is tied intimately with the idea that China, in the past few centuries, has been invaded and humiliated by Western powers, and that it is now time to rise up anew. In the case of China, he said he can truly look back to a time when China was thriving and aspire to achieve that same greatness through traditional values, and socialism with Chinese characteristics. It seems to me, no matter how Meng Yao claimed to hold the campaign in disdain, so long as he believes this view he’s in line with the campaign’s rhetoric.

I inquired as to what affect he thought the campaign had or could take within Shanghai, and he responded pessimistically by stating that because Shanghai is one of the most international cities and therefore the residents are more practical, they “just don’t care.” If it doesn’t affect their lives or their work, he said, then “you can just keep talking” and it will effectively go into one ear and out of the other. There’s always some sort of campaign, he finished. “It’s nothing new.”

Meng Yao defines the China Dream as opportunity, and that it isn’t President Xi’s dream, but the people’s collective dreams. His evidence for this opinion is based on the less than pure socialist nature of China’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” saying that, “even if they say they are socialist, [China is] very wild and ha[s] a lot of freedom in business,” referencing the shocking lack of regulations, and subjective nature with which regulations are

applied. He thinks that this is the reason the people are “forced” to stay in China. “If you’re not an expert” in one’s field, Meng Yao says, “then you can’t go to a western country.” He thinks that most people “like him,” meaning successful business people, achieve a “middle class level” of economic success in China, but he also thinks that the middle class in Western countries are happier, whereas the Chinese aren’t satisfied. He himself is not satisfied with his current position and opportunities, which is why he wishes so strongly to move to America, despite admitting that things are always getting better in China. “The Chinese dream makes them stay,” he said, “but it’s not Xi’s dream.”

Li Ling:

I interview Li Ling along with Li Fen, Hui Zhong, De Lun, and Chang Ying in a small two bedroom apartment. She seemed slightly disinterested, and mostly to be allowing herself to be interviewed for the sake of my connection to Li Fen. However, during the interview she expressed an increased interest, as many of my interview subjects have. She declined to be recorded.

Li Ling had heard of it, but gave only a vague description of what she thought the campaign could be. She stated that it was a, “vision described by the government to reach prosperity, to make the country more prosperous,” and added of her own accord that she’d forgotten the complete definition. When asked what the government’s stance on what the campaign is supposed to embody and achieve, she thought that the government considers China to be a third world country. Despite this, Li Ling said that in the thirty years since Deng Xiaoping instituted his economic opening and reform policies, China has been steadily evolving from a third world country to a developed nation-state. “This has helped some Chinese people become

rich,” Li Ling said, and then, referencing the goals of the China Dream campaign, continued on to say that it was now time that everyone becomes rich, and that Chinese people should share a common wealth, and a nationally comprehensive well-being. This speaks to me a sense of disquiet in regards to the massive economic inequity.

She says she’s definitely seen the campaign all over the place, from the “big wall posters” to advertisements on television, and sometimes even on WeChat articles. However, she couldn’t quite remember any of the content, which lends itself to the complete ambiguity of the campaign. She considers China to be in a much-needed period of rejuvenation, which is taking place, in her opinion, though quite a list of government actions: anti-corruption campaigns, selecting capable people for government positions, and letting these same capable people take the lead, as well as more government attention directed towards aiding smaller companies, knowing the challenges they face as a government, increased communication with foreign countries, which leads to the importation of better technology and ideas from abroad. This pragmatic and anti-corruption form of government is very much what President Xi Jinping is known for. In fact, it can be argued that much of his rise to power was a result of his “Mr. Clean” image, stemming from the sweeping and extremely effective anti-corruption campaigns he ran during his time as the party chief in Shanghai. In addition, he has approached his premiership with a remarkably pragmatic nature, as he has all of his government positions.

Li Ling’s own China Dream for China is to improve the environment, to have a richer life, and better living conditions. Perhaps it was the language difference, but at first she didn’t seem to understand that, when I asked what her own dream was, I meant her personally. In later interviews I learned to clearly differentiate the two questions. Perhaps it is because of the

emphasis the government and campaign has put on the shared nature of individual and national “dreams.” Her personal dream includes having a happy family, a big house to share with them, and her own career, including a “team working with her.” Finally, and she cited her religion for this wish, she wanted to help those in need.

Li Ling doesn’t think that the China Dream campaign is something farmers or other less economically involved occupations think about, but “smart business people, company leaders, financial experts, they will all pay close attention to the direction of government policy. Because to do business successfully you must stand side by side with policy makers, and you must really understand the policy. You must be able to smell it. Keeping pace with policy will ensure business success. There are many people who study campaigns and slogans carefully.”

Huang:

I interviewed Huang over dinner with his family, and his niece very kindly translated his Shanghainese. He seemed very amused by my line of questioning, and despite his daughter and grandchildren assuring me that he wouldn’t know anything because he’s very old (81!), he most certainly did.

Huang knew exactly what I was talking about. He laughed and told me that whenever the government want to do something, or enact a policy, they’ll call it the China Dream. He spends much of his days watching Chinese television news and entertainment programs, so he hears China Dream mentioned several times a day by newscasters and entertainment program hosts alike. He thinks if the country can achieve the dream then of course it’s a good thing. When I asked him to define China Dream he simply said that for different people it has a different

meaning, and that everyone has their own goals in life to achieve. Despite further prompting and rephrasing of the question, I couldn't pull anything more of a definition from him until later.

He was the first interviewee to believe that this campaign has nothing to do with “复兴,” or rejuvenation. He thinks that this campaign is just President's Xi's personal dream, and that every president has had a dream. The campaign's use of “China Dream” is not, in his opinion, related to the people's use of “China Dream.”

I finally managed to pull a definition other than “everyone has different goals and dreams” from Huang when I asked him what he thought President Xi's personal dream was. He responded that he thought it was to make the country better, stronger, in all aspects. He believes that yes, the campaign will have any affect, and maybe one year will be better than another.

Personally, at the age of 81, Huang's dream is have good health and a happy retirement. For the country, he echoed his sentiments about President's Xi's dream for China: better and stronger. He added on, “越多越好,” or “the more, the better.”

After I had completed the interview, he called his grandson over to tell him that in China you can't write anything negative. When my friend imparted this to me, I wasn't sure what meaning was meant to be imparted to me, though it was clear by the gentleman's pointed look that I was supposed to glean something. Whether it was a warning not to write anything negative, or trying to tell me that he'd held back from saying something negative, I'm not sure I'll ever figure out.

2. Realists

The interviewees in this group expressed a balance approach between a newfound appreciation and understanding of the campaign and a prominent lack of belief in their own

political agency. The same phenomenon that was observed in the vast majority of the interview subjects occurred, and many of these “realists” processed and came to a previously unattained understanding of the campaign and what their place in it could be. Just the same, these subjects expressed concern over the stability of their livelihoods, the soaring house prices, environmental degradation, the need for educational reform, and their lack of political agency.

Chang Ying:

Chang Ying had heard of the campaign, and said she had heard it mentioned on television during the most-viewed yearly television event, the New Years (春节) Gala. Her understanding of the campaign was highly influenced by her rural hometown, which she says was one of the first areas to experience policies enacted for the purpose of economic rejuvenation. She said that the campaign involved building a “new countryside,” including new roads and walls, and helping those who live in the countryside. She said that the campaign had resulted in making things “more convenient” for farmers, and had granted both farmers and elderly people an increased pension. Therefore, Chang Ying views the China Dream campaign to be a very positive thing. Within Shanghai, she’s seen the campaign propaganda a variety of places, including on a wall downtown, in the subway, in the Pudong 浦东 area of Shanghai, along the Bund, and she remembers specifically giant posters of the “chubby little girl” and the phrase, “My dream, China Dream 我的梦，中国梦.” This main slogan might help explain the need for me to distinguish the questions regarding individual dreams and personal dreams for the nation.

When prompted to explain her understanding of the campaign in a more general sense, Chang Ying thought that the purpose of it was to make the country stronger, more internationally renowned, and more important, as well as to increase living standards within China itself. Chang Ying's dream for the country is quite extensive. She cited to me her desire for young people to be able to afford a house, for elderly people to be able to enjoy life after retirement, for everyone to have access to good medical services without having to worry about the expense, as well as improved food safety regulations, air quality, and employment rate. Even in addition to this, she mentioned an “adjustment in education,” which I believe means education reform, an emphasis on teaching children traditional Chinese values, for China to avoid “blindly imitating foreign countries,” but staying open minded, and the Chinese people gaining a deeper understanding of their considerable history so that they may learn from it. All in all, Chang Ying’s dream for herself and her country is expansive.

She thinks that the China Dream campaign has everything to do with the economic and social rejuvenation of China, and that this rejuvenation has already taken a large affect. “Look at our lives,” she said with a slightly awestruck expression, “already so much better than the past, especially in the past ten years.” Looking to the future, she believes that by the time China reaches Xi’s chosen date of 2049 many things will have changed. However, one aspect she fears will have only grown worse is the air pollution rampant in China. Chang Ying explained to me that her brother, who still lives in the village she’s from, suffers badly from the air pollution created by the mines miles away from their home. Her niece plays soccer every day for two hours in the smog, and it worries Chang Ying badly, and not without valid reason. She, leaning forward, told me that people in her village are dying— they are contracting strange skin diseases,

and rates of cancer have sky rocketed. Changing the subject, she conceded that education had gotten much better in her village and the villages surrounding it. Chang Ying believes that the China Dream campaign has the potential to unify China, and to motivate the people towards a common goal of internal economic rejuvenation.

Chang Ying's parents think the campaign is a good thing, either despite or because of her brother just having lost his job. He wants to educate his daughters and pay for a house, and she and her family seem to think the China Dream campaign policies will help him achieve these goals. Chang Ying finished by stating that the Chinese people are easy to rule, and are easily satisfied. "We just want a stable life. We want food to eat and a good education."

Jia:

Jia is a professor at a university in Shanghai. She had only spoken Chinese to me for the entire afternoon, but spoke English for the interview.

Jia said that she found China Dream to be a "beautiful word," because it allows everyone to add a new, personal, meaning. "Culturally, economically, politically— the government doesn't care about your interpretation." Along this vein, in the future the phrase will have even more meaning, as the government can add meanings along with the populace. Jia made the point that, if you pay attention to Chinese society, it's easy to make the connections between government ideology and ordinary life. She also brought up the point that China Dream has a history that stretches back far before the current campaign- it is far from a new phrase. The phrase has been discussed and debated by intellectuals and politicians for decades. However, Jia was of the opinion that China Dream is a sensitive topic, and she was the first interviewee who could explain to me why exactly this was. Her explanation was that people, intellectuals

especially, have added “constitutional politics” to the phrase, which was not what the government had wanted. Besides the inherent political nature of a campaign run by the government, Xi’s government hadn’t wanted to imbue the campaign with a constitutional nature. This was not supposed to be a campaign that sparked a change in government policy— it was supposed to inspire the people to follow the government line for their personal good and the good for the country.

I inquired as to whether Jia considered China to be experiencing a rejuvenation. She replied that she thought that, economically and culturally, yes, but not politically. She cites the influx of Western people into China as one reason for the economic and cultural rejuvenation of the country, as well as global institutions such as the Confucius Institute. Jia presented an idea that I had never previously encountered. She stated that China Dream is a nationality, which echoed Meng Yao’s opinion. Confused, I asked her to explain. She stated that China Dream has a “huge connection” with history, and no matter one’s political status within China, everyone accepts it. Everyone wants China as a nation to become stronger, and more prosperous. When I inquired whether she thought that the employment of the campaign would promote unity within China, Jia took to the idea, and agreed that perhaps it would to some extent, and that it might make people stronger, and more “together.” She is, “puzzled by the reality of China today,” and thinks that Xi Jinping raised this saying because he wanted to unify China. However, she also thinks that people, especially in Shanghai, want to lead individual lives, and don’t want unity because, considering China’s recent history, they are afraid that more unity, especially as enforced by the government, will reduce their freedom.

This led me to question Jia whether the phrase “China Dream” itself is strictly or inherently political. She responded by saying that in newspapers and media it’s strictly political because they’re required to follow and promote the party line, but to the individual it’s not a political phrase. China Dream is an all inclusive phrase with many facets. In fact, people often make fun of it, saying that of course they want President Xi’s dream to come true, but “it’s just a dream, and how can dreams come true? Does he want us to sleep more?”

Jia is of the opinion that not much will change. She believes that the campaign may achieve something, but she doesn’t know or care to guess how much, or what it will affect. She really hopes that the country will gain global perspective, and thinks that every person has this dream.

As for her personal dream, Jia wants to live with less economic and social pressure. She really emphasized the burden of the pressure the denizens of Shanghai feel, and that this pressure makes it so they can’t enjoy their lives.

Both Li Fen and Jia referred to the family, the country, and the government being inescapably intertwined. On this matter, Clark said in regards to authoritarian governments, “A head has power over the limbs, so the government has power over the people. But the government and people are organically bonded together and thus the state is fused with the nation. The body of the state is pure, purged of internal diseases and immune to external contaminations,” (71).

Li Fen:

In a small apartment shared by one couple and a young woman who works with them in Putuo, Shanghai I sat with Li Fen on the couch. She seems very glad to speak to me, but

cautious, especially since her husband has warned her not to share her real name, and has asked her many times to ask me about what sort of personal information will be included in the interview and paper.

The first question I asked Li Fen, unsurprisingly, was if she had heard of the campaign. She replied, “of course, yes. Of course.” She harkened back to Hu Jintao’s “harmonious society” slogan by saying, “I’m not quite sure what it is about, but I guess it’s about building a harmonious society... stepping towards the next phase of communism... But now our society is still in the first phase of the ‘elementary’ stage of the communism ideal.... So I have never paid attention to what the Chinese Dream is about, but I can kind of guess what it is about.”

Li Fen’s Christian faith is integral in her dream for China. “Because I’m a Christian, and I’m very compassionate about the development of Christian energy in China. So you can say a big part of my China Dream is to see the day when Christian believers as well as Catholic, believers of other religions, can freely chose what they want to believe, and they can form churches, form fellowships, form religious groups legally. Because now in China only the three self-churches are legal. Only the big churches recognized by the government are legal. While those much smaller ones, those family scale groups, are actually illegal. Because you are not allowed to participate, or to organize any religious practice, service, outside of an official church building. So my dream for my people is mainly about that religious aspect. More religious freedom. And less brainwashing from the school education.”

Li Fen thinks that China is experiencing both social and economic rejuvenation, and that the campaign is very much focused on encouraging this rejuvenation. “Because we have been developing very rapidly in the past 30 years. No war. And everyone is focused on economic

development,” Li Fen cited as her reasons for this belief, “and many things are being restored. We now enjoy a higher international status. So, if we don’t get involved in another war, if we can keep this pace, I believe more things will be restored, will be rebuilt.”

As an extension of this, I asked Li Fen if she thought that the campaign would lead to an increase in personal freedom. There is a small range of freedom in China, and freedom always has limits. These limits can be expanded or shrunk, but there are always limits. Speech, she says, will be censored until the internet is no longer censored, and she believes the internet within China will always be censored. In Li Fen’s words, they have, “the power and the right to mute too much noise.” Li Fen went on to explain that, in the past, when a smaller government within China who didn’t place bans on freedom of speech, they were considered to be weak. These restrictions on speech and expression “enhance short term strength,” according to Li Fen, but, perhaps, she thinks, weaken the government’s chances at consolidation of long-term power.

Li Fen, for all her pessimism about the future of personal freedom with China, is surprisingly optimistic and grateful in regards to President Xi’s efforts, through the China Dream campaign, to energize and rejuvenate the country. She considers the campaign to be a genuine effort. By setting goals, even relatively abstract ones, Xi is aiding in motivating his country forwards. Li Fen pointed out to me that the destiny of the CCP and the destiny of the country, at this point and in the foreseeable future, are intertwined. “China Dream is a good thing!” Li Fen exclaimed, almost as if it were the first time she had consciously had this thought. It will bring people together, she went on to say, but considered the fact that the charm of the campaign is greatly covered by the fact that it is being advertised through political propaganda. She doesn’t think people spend time thinking about political propaganda, even though China Dream is a

“good goal.” This leads to the assumption that, should the China Dream ideology be presented by an institutional other than the government, people might be more receptive, and spend more time and effort consciously working towards the goals.

Li Fen brought up without prompting her idea that the government should control housing prices. Her argument was that, as stability was her core tenet of the China Dream, and she believed this was the same for other citizens of Shanghai, the government should control housing prices to promote stability. Currently, housing prices in Shanghai are inordinately high. Li Fen was very concerned with the idea that people shouldn't have to work so hard to just to own an apartment. She emphasized how difficult and stressful it was for the citizens of Shanghai to pay rent for even a small apartment, let alone own a home.

Li Fen thinks that the “Dream” of the common Shanghainese is the ability “to pay for a house, a car, their children’s education, and still be able to save money, “to do fun things,” and “things they want to do,” such as travel. This is what Li Fen refers to as, “a healthy life.” She made a point of emphasizing that this accumulation of wealth should be used to “improve themselves.” She believes that people should invest in themselves, not in the stock market. This sort of stability is what Li Fen believes is the common dream within China’s family based society, and owning a house is the concrete base for this stability.

However, Li Fen’s personal China Dream is not that of home-ownership, or centered around family. She explained to me that both her and her husband’s parents are very open-minded and liberal, and have encouraged them to follow their own dreams instead of being tied down to the goals of home, children, and family. Li Fen’s dream is centered around helping others, and making others happy. To do this, she wants to continue investing in herself. She

wants to do this largely through spreading her religion and encouraging “spiritual wisdom”, in which she finds great comfort, happiness, and strength, and also wants to continue “improving herself” through books, travel, and other personal experience. She believes that the smarter and more experienced she becomes, the more people she can help, and make happy. By knowing God more deeply, she explained, she could know the world more deeply, and help more people.

De Lun:

De Lun was anxious, and as the full-time pastor of a small family church, he has every reason to be worried about the local and provincial governments finding out about his church. While he agreed to be interviewed, and willingly signed the consent form, it seemed very much like he was allowing himself to be interviewed as a favor to his wife.

De Lun knows of the China Dream campaign, and thinks he’s seen the propaganda once or twice. I inquired as to the purpose of the campaign. He responded that people need a goal for themselves and the country, as a “life without purpose is empty.” People need hope. He considers Xi Jinping’s China Dream to be one of a prosperous China, a China with an improved standard of living, increased unity of the country, and the rejuvenation of the nation by becoming globally influential, specifically in international relations, and receiving respect from other countries—most specifically from America. Along this vein, De Lun thinks President Xi wants “to be able to say no to America,” as this would fortify the political status of the CCP.

De Lun’s own dream for China was expressed in a plethora of vague platitudes, such as “liberty, freedom, democracy, freedom of speech,” which echoes the virtues listed on the propaganda.

De Lun believes that the national rejuvenation of China will take the path of political reform. Because, De Lun stated, without political reform further economic development will be hindered. In addition, a lack of equality and a fair judicial system will hinder societal development. Therefore, China will achieve rejuvenation, according to De Lun, through a change in laws and political liberalization, as well as an increased emphasis on education and creativity.

He believes that Xi's dream may or may not develop unity within China. He says the "dream" itself is a good thing, but if it's not achieved or there's no obvious evidence of it being achieved, then Xi and his faction will be in trouble, and their credibility will be shaken. De Lun doesn't think that people pay much attention to the propaganda or the campaign, because they haven't experienced any tangible benefits as a result of the campaign. "People need to feel that they're becoming richer," De Lun said, "but they look around and ask 'who has become rich?'"

Dai Yu:

I met with Dai Yu for dinner near her university. She's a good friend, and we chatted for a while before beginning the interview. I've always known her to be a bit cynical, but very amusing. She didn't disappoint. She always manages an uninterested detachment while having a strong opinion on important matters. She declined to be recorded.

Like the other interviewees, Dai Yu couldn't immediately name where she'd seen it, or even what she'd seen. "I think I've seen it," she replied, "but not very often." She went on to say it was all very vague, both her memories of the propaganda, as well as the words on them. Besides thinking she may hear the campaign spoken of on the radio in a taxi from time to time, the only distinct impression she could impart was having seen a billboard on a wall as she passed by on a bus. The words China Dream were written very big, "so everyone can see them," along

with a few “contents of the Chinese Dream,” meaning the traditional virtues, but couldn’t remember the specific words. She did remember that, at the time, it had seemed “kind of dumb” to her. She explained that China has long had a tradition of writing key words the government wants people to keep in mind on the wall for every passerby to see. She considers this practice old fashioned, and it reminds her of twenty years ago when, “we were not so developed.”

She professes to not really understand what the China Dream is, or what the government says it is, and laughed before saying that she doesn’t think the government knows either. When asked what she would say it was if she had to guess, she replied that it would be to achieve sustained and better economic development, to improve on the environment and rampant pollution that plagues China, and to address some of the “serious social problems,” like improving medical care, the educational system, and poverty levels. She went on to say, when asked whether she believed that the China Dream campaign was a genuine effort on behalf of the government to improve the country, that is *was* a genuine effort, if a less than efficacious one, and that the goal for the China Dream was ultimately to improve the standard of living for everyone, “from all walks of life.” She concluded that the China Dream campaign would probably help the people of Shanghai to some degree, but can’t speak to the degree of this improvement.

Dai Yu stated that part of the China Dream includes the desire on the part of the government to increase individual freedom in order to increase personal potential, thus improving the efficiency and growth of China’s economy. As a college student, she says she’s already experienced a significant change in message from the government in this regard. The government and school officials have been encouraging students on her campus to create start-

ups, to be more creative. The value of creativity has become a common theme on campus. However, it must be kept in mind that the call to be “creative” is a direct effort on behalf of the Party, which inherently undermines the idea of personal initiative. The call for creativity finds genesis in the government’s desire to spur economic initiative among citizens.

When asked about the effect of the “China Dream” campaign on Shanghai specifically, Dai Yu stated that she believes Shanghai, out of all of China, will be most affected by the campaign. This is because Shanghai is the “most international city within China,” and so has the most opportunities of any city in China. She gave the example that, “all trendy things start here,” meaning fashion trends, electronic trends, and so forth.

I inquired whether Dai Yu thought that China and Shanghai were experiencing a period of rejuvenation. She responded with a quick yes, and cited once again the international nature of the city. Because Shanghai is an international, integrated city, and because of easy and increased access to the internet, the citizens of Shanghai are exposed and have access to plenty of information and ideas from all over the world. This results in the citizens becoming more globally aware, and more conscious of what they really want to do. In fifty years Dai Yu believes part of the China Dream campaign will have been achieved within Shanghai, but because its very nature is so abstract and nebulous, the entire “dream” can never be achieved— “there is always something waiting to be improved,” Dai Yu finished thoughtfully, “China is developing exponentially.”

Dai Yu’s personal dream in regards to the campaign is to have the opportunity, freedom, and right to pursue what she wants to do. In addition, because she’s a student herself, she has “wishes for the younger generation on education matters.” She hopes that education in China

will improve, and hopes that she can join in changing and helping the system to improve so that the next generation of students will have more and better opportunities. Ultimately, she wishes that they can see the world for themselves.

Her dream for herself is to escape the limitations that the bias within society in regards to marriage, home-ownership, and pregnancy places on her. She wishes to not be defined by what path she chooses in life. Instead, she wants to continue “unlocking [her] potential.”

For the country, she holds the dream that one day they’ll stop talking “vividly or jealously of America and the European continent.” “Oh look,” she said with a hint of sarcasm, “they’re so rich, they have so much freedom, the moment they’re born they’re superior to us.” She doesn’t mean this to mean any sort of inherent superiority, but references the privileges that those born in America and Europe are granted from birth. The western world hears so much about China’s rapid economic development, and as a result often forgets that most of the Chinese population is poor- very poor. It is only now that China has begun to develop a middle class, and even this middle class would be considered, in terms of wealth, poor if they were in America or Europe. Dai Yu expressed the wish for China to catch up economically and socially to its western counterparts, so they can, “be proud next to America and Europe.” She insisted that China could and would achieve this through economic development, and an improved education system, and that these changes needed to find genesis in government policy and action.

Dai Yu said that the government had always been a group of people who treated the populace of China like fools, and always tried to hide truths. However, now more people have access to the plethora available on the internet, and the government has begun attempts at transparency. She hopes that this will result in more personal freedom.

Hui Zhong:

I interviewed Hui Zhong in the same small apartment I interviewed Li Fen and the rest of the church group. He waited patiently as I interviewed Li Ling, and when his turn came he was eager to take a seat across from me and get the interview started. He was remarkably well informed, and seemed amused as he recited the party line. This is clearly a topic he'd considered before.

Hui Zhong assured quickly that he did know the China Dream campaign, and he's seen the propaganda posters around. When asked to define what the campaign was, he responded confidently that it was a "political vision proposed by President Xi Jin Ping at the eighteenth national conference," that is proposed to be achieved by the year 2049. Officially, the campaign is supposed to achieve national rejuvenation, but in reality, according to Hui Zhong, it's supposed to "surpass current living conditions," and that in a general sense, the campaign will be accomplished when all people in China enjoy a much richer life. However, as Hui Zhong went on to explain, China Dream means different things to different people. Every individual has a different explanation and understanding of the phrase, and as such, the phrase is continually expanding.

On the topic of national rejuvenation, Hui Zhong stated with what I quickly came to understand was his trademark clarity and intelligence, that the pre-condition of national rejuvenation is that the country is at a low point. He explained that China has suffered a lot in the time since World War II, and that as the last century was one of war, China had lost large swaths of territory, and a large section of the population to war, famine, and conflict. "We need to recover," he said as he finished explaining these pre-conditions. In an interestingly nationalistic

stance, he argued that while he knows China can't expand its territory now, the Chinese people needs to protect what they have, work to accumulate wealth, and improve their level of knowledge on a national scale. "This is the foundation of rejuvenation." I couldn't tell if he was speaking of his own dream for the nation, or still extrapolating on the goals of the China Dream campaign. Most likely the two hold remarkable similarities. Whomever's goals he was discussing, Hui Zhong said that the goal was to make China "special" again, to re-establish China's core values, "those values that make our nation different," through a continuation of "good traditions." He is of the opinion that the Chinese people applying these traditions and values to work, life, and education would be a huge success.

And yet, Hui Zhong doesn't hold much faith in the efficacy of the China Dream campaign. He thinks that, with the campaign or without, by the year 2049 China will have a higher standard of living, and will have improved over all. "I'm not a nationalist," he professed, and explained that, because China is ruled by a single party system, any improvements that could potentially be made are restricted, or limited, and he doesn't see how much they can improve from now. "People need a goal" to look forward to, he asserted, and therefore every leader, "no matter who he is," must depict a goal. Therefore, the China Dream campaign will "definitely" help to unite the Chinese people by giving them a common goal to work towards. Despite this opinion, he doesn't think that people give much consideration to the campaign. "Because it is a political campaign, people don't spend lots of time talking about it," he expressed, which I found to be a common thread of opinion among interviewees. Even so, he thinks that everyone is working hard to achieve it. "As long as you have a goal, and you're working for it, then you're working for your own China Dream. It can be big, it can be small."

Hui Zhong's personal goal for himself and his country can be summed up by a dramatic increase in personal freedom. He wants the religious freedom to attend his own church, and to be able to evangelize. He wants more space for his children and the next generation to develop, and less societal pressure from both his family and the conservative factions of the CCP. He wants the Chinese people to have more opportunity to discover themselves and to do what they're truly interested in.

Bo Hai:

I interviewed Bo Hai in a coffee shop in the Shanghai suburbs, on an old shopping street surrounded by traditional buildings full of boutiques, small cafés, tourist shops with trinkets. As the day gets older, a night market begins to set up. Bo Hai is a college student, and has spent many years in the United States.

As always, I began by asking if Bo Hai had heard of the China Dream, though I used the Chinese phrase 中国梦. He responded by saying that he has, but he's "not super familiar with it," though because his younger brother "used to have homework about 'China Dream', [he] did some research about it." Despite his research, he still doesn't profess to understand much about it because "the language is so political and [he didn't] want to waste [his] time understanding it." I inquired as to why it would be a waste of time to understand the campaign, given that it has the potential to influence government policy. Bo Hai responded to this by explaining that the points of the campaign are "pretty abstract," and so he doesn't "really care as much." This brought to mind once again that the campaign might be intentionally abstract for the purpose of allowing each citizen to form their own definition and dream, and so that any government action could potentially fall underneath the label of the China Dream campaign. Bo Hai was of the opinion

that the vagueness of the campaign served the purpose of allowing “different people” to have “different interpretations.”

Bo Hai posited that the government defines the campaign as an effort to “over all make Shanghai, or China in general, a better place, especially make the people care for each other, and make the city more civilized.” The idea of Chinese people viewing China as something of a “third world,” and “undeveloped” country surprised me. I inquired what he meant when Bo Hai said that the government would want Shanghai to become more civilized. He responded with examples of the messiness of traffic, and said in relation to subways, taxis, and private cars, “the transportation is messed up. Like it’s not very well regulated... For example, taxis, so many cars on the street, and they kind of cut into the roads, and that will make the transportation pretty messy. And the subway, too. People pushing each other, and shoveling into the subway, so I guess that’s also the point. So even though the words are kind of abstract, people definitely have their own thoughts about it.”

Despite Bo Hai’s understanding that the campaign employs a purposeful vagueness, he thinks that the campaign might indeed tangibly achieve its goals. “For example,” he started on the topic of encouraging people to consider and follow the campaign line, “in my brother’s school the teachers make parents and children do research about China Dream, so I think that was a way... [to] make people in Shanghai think about [the China Dream...] And also by advertising China Dream on the street, in the subway, or in the elevators, people definitely will think about it.” Curious about what Bo Hai considered both the state’s and the people’s goals to be, I asked him if the propaganda would work towards encouraging the realization of both, and what exactly those goals would be. He gave only a cursory answer, responding that when people

see the propaganda for the first time they view them, “from a national level,” and if they decide to consider the messages more deeply, they might “think about themselves, [and] make it very personal, very detailed.

On the topic of rejuvenation, Bo Hai began with stating that many Chinese people are nationalistic, and wish to return their country to the same level of power it had achieved in the past. “So when they think about China in the past, they will think that China is a powerful country, but for the past centuries it’s [more] like... [a] developing country? So I think, at this point, a lot of Chinese people, including the government, they think about how to make the nation stronger, and [want to make the country] stronger both economically, or socially. So I think China Dream has that purpose.” Bo Hai defined “socially” as improving overall welfare, increasing care for the geriatric population, and enacting educational reform.

I pressed forward on the topic of nationalism and asked whether he thought that the campaign would cause people in Shanghai to become more nationalistic, and if he thought that the campaign would promote unity among Chinese citizens. He thought yes. “...Two years ago when I saw the posters... it include[d] some traditional Chinese sayings, like proverbs, that definitely make people think about the past of the nation and make them nationalistic. And it also, I think it also rejuvenates the virtues of past China.” The idea of rejuvenation in the face of centuries of turmoil and colonization has clearly made a prominent impression on the minds of the Chinese people. He listed many of the same traditional virtues as before, such as caring for the elderly, as well as being respectful to parents and teachers.

In regards to Xi’s 2049 goal, Bo Hai was reasonably ambivalent, but thinks that through the enacting of new policies addressed towards major reform of problem areas like the

educational system, medical care, the goals might be achieved. Bo Hai was clear that the people have been voicing concerns about these problem areas for years, but because of both the political and social systems, change cannot find genesis among the people. However, given that the people know of these problems, Bo Hai assumes rationally that the government must know too, and thus, the two can work towards common goals. “It seems to me like people, since people complain about some of the problems, and the government from the other way also advertise those points, seems like there’ll be, at some point they will achieve their common goals.” He elaborated, saying, “I think they definitely have some common purpose, because the government words are too abstract, as I said before. I think perhaps its how people interpret it. If people think all of China Dream is focusing on particular problems, they are kind of on the way to achieving it.” However, while he thinks it’s possible, Bo Hai isn’t as optimistic as this. Again, he brought up the educational system. “It’s not an easy problem to fix because the education system in China has been set that way for the past several decades. If just by advertising it can, if just by advertising it can improve it ,then it will not be a big problem. So I think that perhaps 50 years can work it out, but in the near future, I don’t think it’ll work.” He says that change relies entirely on the efficacy of the government. The people, “have complained for so many years, so many decades, it’s totally up to the government to fix it.”

To complete the interview I asked Bo Hai simply to define “China Dream.” He responded by saying that this is a turning point for China, “from a developing country to a developed country.” He considers the country’s “Dream” to be more developed, and more civilized. He also thinks that all parts of China should make an effort to be more inclusive of people from other parts of China. “And also for me I feel like ‘China Dream’ is bilateral expectation. It includes

what people expect from the government, and also what the government expects from the people. 'Cause most of the time when the government is advertising something about these, it means it wants people to be more civilized... but with a systematic problem only the government has the power to fix it. So that's how people expect the government to do something for them. To make it a better society."

Bo Hai's personal Dream isn't something he says he's often considered. He hopes for a better atmosphere for entrepreneurs in China, and for the environment to be cleaned up. He says that, "each time after I came back from the States back to China I will have some coughing, and that's mostly due to the air pollution. And, also, China doesn't have tap water which is as clean as other countries." As a native Shanghai citizen, he wishes for housing prices to lower, or become regulated, as, "We have a lot of young people who try to start their new lives in Shanghai. So I would just speak of Shanghai here, and they can't really afford a good housing. So when I envision my future in Shanghai, I would hope I have a house kind of, that is kind of convenient to both where I work and where I live... And also, there is so much pressure about housing, and... The price which you can get a house is so high, it doesn't really match what you get for your wage, so that's very unfair. And so that's the China Dream for young people in general. And I guess... Because there's one child policy decades ago, that means that there are a lot single children who have to think about caring for their parents, when their parents get older, so that also gives them a lot pressure just in terms of providing a good life for their parents, for their old parents."

True believers

The interview subjects I have labeled as “true believers” are those who expressed faith in the efficacy of the government and campaign, faith in their place within the fabric of the China Dream, and faith in the Chinese people. There is an optimism in these interviews not found in the rest. Even if they had not experienced much of the campaign, as Cui Fen had not, these subjects also experienced the process of deconstructing the campaign for themselves during the process of the interview.

Chun Hua:

I spoke with Chun Hua in her office, in Puxi, Shanghai. She’s a business woman, but due to her strong Buddhist faith, she focuses her work on charity and bringing balance to other’s lives.

Chun Hua described China as, “a baby, growing up fast,” and, as in every person’s growth process, “it’s important for kids to define their future.” She considers China to be a unique country that’s developed remarkably quickly in the past thirty years. I asked her what she considered the country’s dream to be, and she replied astutely that it depends on the individual, but in the grand scheme of things it relies on what they want to be, what they can feasibly be, what they’ve “already got,” and critically, if it’s suitable for the inherent character of their country. Related back to the importance of the individual dream, Chun Hua stated that, “all persons’ behavior and dream,” coalesces into the total China Dream. As for the campaign specifically, Chun Hua doesn’t spend much time paying attention to it. When I asked her to define the campaign, she replied that, generally speaking, it is President Xi displaying open mindedness and “letting more people having opportunity to create,” so that the Chinese people

can “join in making change,” as well as developing policies and guidelines for “leading us in each aspect,” referring to both economic and social initiatives. She believes that Xi wants each individual to have their own dream.

Chun Hua’s seen the propaganda, and said that she’d seen from “advertising,” and, surprisingly, property development. “It’s not something solid,” Chun Hua said in reference to the China Dream phrase’s common use in advertisements, “it’s just a concept.”

On the topic of the keyword phrase “复兴,” Chun Hua said she’s heard the word used in relation to the campaign. This rejuvenation, to Chun Hua, has everything to do with “wise men” in Chinese history, like Confucius, who “left a lot of good culture, which is a good method to lead us.” This is a personal take on a common refrain I’ve heard in relation to the rejuvenation of China. This rejuvenation isn’t a new and unique phase in Chinese history, it’s an awakening and resurrection of the traditional value and practices that many Chinese think of as the determining factor in China’s inherent greatness and historical success.

Chun Hua thinks that by the time President Xi’s chosen date of 2049 arrives that China will have achieved international soft power. Chun Hua thinks that China needs use this time to focus on internal change, “not just change to the surface,” and to foster internal wisdom and balance. I asked her about the China Dream campaign’s affect on Shanghai, and she replied that because Shanghai is China’s most international and modern city it experiences change much more quickly than other cities. She cited Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Once a city has achieved “basic satisfaction,” then it can develop the “bigger stuff,” and therefore Shanghai can “move much faster in this field.”

Chun Hua's own dream for both China and herself is not so much to be powerful, or to "dream so big," but to think of herself as a piece of the total China Dream. In this way, she wants to keep making progress, both economically and socially, and to bring about a greater balance spiritually and materially. This is because "this is how our ancient ancestors were." Chun Hua wants to influence the people surrounding her to bring greater balance to their lives. Much like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Chun Hua stated that, in the past, Chinese people could only work for living, but now they can truly contribute and make progress by following their ancestors' wisdom to make a career. She thinks that once this sort of influence expands, and everyone thinks this way, then China can and will achieve soft power. In a gentle sort of form of Chinese exceptionalism, she also dreams for this wisdom to expand to the entire world, complete with the Chinese philosophy she holds so dear.

Lan:

Lan is a young working woman, recently broken up with an over-controlling boyfriend. She studied for a masters degree at Cambridge.

She said that China Dream is a phrase that Xi Jinping uses to encourage Chinese people to unify and make the country better. She can already see the affect of the campaign within Shanghai. The example she provided was the free trade zone in Puxi, Shanghai, and said that this was a huge example of the financial aspect of the Chinese Dream. I asked her about any social influence the campaign might or might not hold, and she thought that, through the campaign, the "power of spirit" is something that the Chinese are deeply in need of. The "spirit" she referenced is the Chinese word "精神," or jīngshen, meaning "vigor, vitality, drive," or jīngshén. It's hard to explain the exact meaning of "精神," but it's generally a mixture of spirit, energy, and vitality of

the heart and mind. Lan thinks that the Chinese are badly in need of a revitalization of their 精神, it's needed for the continued economic and social rejuvenation of China, and she believes that the China Dream campaign is inspiring it in people.

The next question I asked was what the government's official stance on the campaign was. Lan said she couldn't remember clearly, but it was something along the lines of, "the Chinese people need to wake up now, we need to wake the dragon, that we have slept for too long." She agreed that it was part of the "renewing," or rejuvenation of China. "Firstly," she began, "it is to encourage people. The government puts policies in place to achieve goals." I inquired after these policies, wanting to know if she actually knew any specifics. She listed that the government has done a lot to protect elderly people's rights by starting to pay people over sixty five (which is the mandatory retirement age in China) a pension so that they can hopefully live comfortably, and mentioned again the free trade zone.

Lan echoed Huang's statement that China Dream has different meanings to different people. Her personal dream is to work hard to make more money so she can take care of her family, and so she can live a better life, and she'd like to get married. At age 28, she's considered fairly old for remaining unmarried.

As for Xi's given 2049 date for achieving the goals of "China Dream," Lan thinks it's hard to say. She thinks that Shanghai is a really good example, and might even be the best part of China, but much of China is still very poor. For example, she stated that, even if Beijing and Shanghai are doing really well, that doesn't mean Western China is, and that many Chinese people are still suffering. "Only if people all over China live a better life, then we'll have achieved it." Lan mentioned that she thought the government needs to fix "basic problems," like

building more hospitals, improving schools and education, improving medical care, creating job opportunities, and cleaning up the environment.

I asked if she thought that the campaign might help unify people in China, and she was of the strong opinion that it would, because China Dream is talked about so frequently in school, everyone in this youngest generation is being raised on the concept. Lan said that the children are taught, “you are Chinese, you should be proud, you have the responsibility to achieve the Chinese Dream for the country.” Along this vein, she thinks that the campaign will inspire nationalism in today’s youth, but not in those who have already graduated from the school system. Lan said she believes in the Dream no matter whether the government runs a campaign or not, because she is Chinese. In other words, she is in the palm of the party’s hand in regards to following the directives of the campaign.

Before President Xi, Lan said, the leaders of China only wanted to make the country stable, and wanted to avoid crisis at all cost, and keep the situation “the same as before.” She seemed proud and very approving when speaking of how Xi had wanted to make change from inside the party by enacting anti-corruption campaigns and jailing many corrupt politicians. She explained that for decades the Chinese people have called for an end to political corruption but had been ignored, but Xi actually changed the system from within and imprisoned those who were corrupt. For Lan, because the government wants the Chinese people to fight together to benefit the country, she wants the government in turn to do more. “People need to see that the government has actually made progress,” before they respond in turn.

Hua Feng:

Hua Feng is a student at one of Shanghai's universities, about twenty years old, from Wuhan, China.

Hua Feng had most definitely heard of the campaign, and she defined it as "when Xi Jinping became president," he created China Dream to achieve the target of increasing the average wealth within China. As Li Fen mentioned, Hua Feng also thinks that socialism is the primary stage of development, and that the government and people of China wanted to achieve a higher level of development within the next several decades.

When I interviewed Hua Feng, her home province, Wuhan, had just been hit by a series of deadly and destructive floods. This very much influenced her responses to the the goals of continued economic development in China in relation to the campaign. She thinks that China needs to continue the same rate of economic development for the sake of being able to face disasters, like the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, and the current 2016 floods in Wuhan, safely and with full preparation.

In regards to President Xi's 2049 end date, Hua Feng thinks that the goals will be achieved. She feels safe in China, far away from all the wars and attacks terrorizing the world at large these days, and she feels like China's "special economic system" functions well. Going back to her concern for her home province and town, she stated that she's always thought when China is faced with a disaster the Chinese army can get to the affected area quickly, and can prevent casualties. She stated that, with a remarkable positivity and nationalism, the Chinese are united and brave, as a people.

Hua Feng also believes that Chinese society is becoming more democratic. She heard through her roommate that her local government had even put potential bills to be passed up online for the citizenry to review. As for the potential unifying effects of the campaign, Hua Feng believes that China may find a modicum of unity, but she doesn't know in which ways. She did employ a key word of both past and present political campaigns when she said she believes that the campaign will make Chinese society more harmonious.

Her personal dream is to finish her studies successfully, and find a good job. For China she wishes that the country could be much stronger and "hold a peaceful situation." She also wishes that her country would unify more successfully, because currently the different cultures and nationalities within China frequently clash.

Mei Xiu:

I interviewed Mei Xiu along with Huang and Lan, and she seemed rather bashful, claiming she didn't know anything about it. She is a sharply dressed woman in her sixties, quiet, but very friendly. Once again her daughter translated. I didn't bother recording because it was going to be translated anyways, and the restaurant was noisy. At first, Mei Xiu denied that she knew anything about the China Dream campaign, and hadn't heard of it, but after a few questions, and a picture of one of the propaganda posters, she revised to say that she had, "of course," heard the phrase mentioned almost everyday on television news, but only knew that it was related to President Xi. She then even amended that to say that they mention the phrase constantly in the news, and in songs.

Her personal dream is to "exercise and travel abroad," in her retirement. For the country she dreams that it will become, "bigger, stronger," and stated, "a better country, better people."

She thinks the government feels the same, and that if the country is stable, then the people are also stable. As for the topic of rejuvenation, she found it hard to describe. She thinks that the China Dream can make the country better, and can make individual families better both morally, and in relation to living standards. She thinks that the campaign has already had a positive affect on Shanghai, through the free trade zone in Puxi, and the massive amounts of development.

Cui Fen:

I met Cui Fen for lunch at a delicious Sichuan restaurant, and it became apparent at the first question that it would be a quick interview.

When I asked Cui Fen if she had heard of the China Dream campaign, she responded, “is that a program or something?” With that, I was immediately certain that this interview wasn’t going to last long. Still, I wanted to find out everything she had heard, even if she hadn’t realized it was connected to the campaign. Cui Fen told me that she doesn’t watch television, and doesn’t follow many public movements, because she finds it all silly. She even said she had only ever heard the phrase from me— not in relation to the campaign, or by itself. Given the ubiquitous nature of the propaganda within Shanghai, this is to be taken with a grain of salt.

On the topic of the dreams of the people of China, Cui Fen spoke from her position as a successful businesswoman. She considers the dream of businesspeople in China to be respected by other Asian countries. She feels that currently she, and people like her, are not respected simply due to their Chinese nationality. For both herself, her colleagues, and her country, she wants more international respect.

Cui Fen believes that China needs a focal point— A shared goal, a connection that bonds people, like a religion does. She thinks that people are too selfish “about their own little dreams.”

She also believes that, if the government can truly help, then she doesn't at all mind the propaganda. If the CCP can achieve these goals, then she doesn't mind their one-party control.

Cui Fen's personal dream is to be so rich she doesn't have to work! She laughed, knowing this dream is impossible, but she didn't provide another dream.

Conclusion:

The China Dream campaign employs traditional and socialist Chinese values to create a rhetoric of national rejuvenation that leaves room for personal interpretation. This allows citizens, such as those interviewed here, to formulate their individual Dreams and place them within the larger framework of the national campaign. This promotes unity, patriotism, and occasionally a newfound sense of political agency. While the interview subjects presented here had their own grievances and concerns for their country as well as claimed to have little to no knowledge of the campaign, by and large they expressed solidarity with the party line and held an optimistic view for the successful achievement of its goals.

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