DISSERTATION PRESENTATION • MA CHINESE & HISTORY

Constructing the Socialist Child in China (1949–1966)

Education, Youth Organisations, and Children's Media in the Early Mao Era

Author: **Aalish Watts**

STRUCTURE

Presentation Overview

01

Research Thesis & Methodological Framework

State-mandated citizenship construction, age as a power vector, and discourse analysis.

02

Chapter 1: Maoist Education & Ideology

Curriculum monopolies, shift from maternal to class love, and labor integration.

03

Chapter 2: The Young Pioneers

Institutionalising childhood through political rituals, red scarf symbolism, and songs.

04

Chapter 3: Children's Media (Little Friends) & Model Heroes

Visual indoctrination in print media and pedagogical paradigms of perfection.

RESEARCH FOCUS & THESIS

The State-Mandated Construction of the New Citizen

CENTRAL QUESTION

How did the People's Republic of China construct an "ideal" socialist child during the early Mao era (1949–1966)?

Total Malleability

Rejection of innate human nature in favor of environment-driven transformation.

Public Vanguard

Shift from filial family loyalty to state-centered revolutionary purpose.

METHODOLOGICAL LENS

Methodology: Age as Power Vector, Discourse Analysis & Socialist Re

Age as Power Vector

Chronological age used as a social key for state bureaucratisation and youth control.

Discourse Analysis

Examination of *People's Daily*, PEP textbooks, and Young Pioneer directives.

Socialist Realism

Analysis of children's literature as a direct tool of social engineering.

CHAPTER ONE

Maoist Education & Systemic Partification

Curriculum Monopoly

People's Education Press (PEP) established single-source political indoctrination.

Education Serving Politics

Knowledge subordinated to ideological fervour and revolutionary continuity.

Soviet Alignment

Early curricula adapted Soviet models to structure a world of "Two Camps."



IDEOLOGICAL SHIFT

"Maternal Love" versus "Class Love"

TRADITIONAL SENTIMENT

Maternal Love (母爱)

Denounced in 1963 as petty-bourgeois sentimentality that neglected ideological training.

Focus: Biological wellbeing & individual comfort.

SOCIALIST IMPERATIVE

Class Love (阶级爱)

Demanded teachers and parents forge children into staunch, unyielding revolutionary fighters.

Focus: Ideological purity & class struggle loyalty.

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

Binary Worldview & The "Unrusting Screw"



Pedagogy of Hate

Binary worldview contrasting socialist light with imperialist enemy aggression.

Labor Integration

Mandatory productive work reforming intellectual tendencies into proletarian habit.

Lei Feng Paradigm

Children urged to become "screws that never rust" for the state locomotive.

CHAPTER TWO

The Young Pioneers: Institutionalising Childhood

1.9M

Members in 1949

100M

Members by 1966

Democratic Centralism

Hierarchical squad structure turning classrooms into political discipline units.

Peer Socialisation

Classmates enforcing conformity through peer review and entrance voting.

SENSORY INDOCTRINATION

Sacred Symbols, Oaths & Melodies

The Sacred Red Scarf

Represented a corner of the national flag stained by martyrs' blood.

Performative Slogan

"Be prepared to strive for communism!" — Response: *"Always prepared!"*

Militaristic Songs

March rhythms embedding state purpose directly into sensory daily habit.



CHAPTER THREE • APPENDIX FOCUS

Translating Ideology: *Little Friends* (小朋友)



Transforming "Small Paradise"

Shifted from pre-1949 bourgeois leisure into an explicit socialist vanguard publication.

Visual Pre-Literacy Indoctrination

Utilised full-color illustrated narratives to instruct children before formal reading age.

Evolving Production Mandates

Shifted focus from 1950s studious pupils to Great Leap Forward hero agricultural producers.

STATE BLUEPRINTS

The Pedagogy of Perfection: Model Profiles

Xu Guiying

Exemplary pioneer embodying total devotion to collective classroom labor.

Liu Wenxue

Militant child martyr killed defending communal crops from landlord theft.

Xiaoping

Reported own grandmother for stealing crop produce, showing state priority.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Tensions Between Ideological State Ideal & Reality

The Official Ideal

Completely disciplined, hyper-politicised revolutionary successors dedicated entirely to Party quotas.

Lived Realities & Limits

Unsupervised free time, street peddling, gambling, and dry propaganda content causing official anxiety.

CONCLUSION

The Legacy of the Constructed Socialist Child

- **Totalising Apparatus:** Unified education, Pioneers, and media into an all-encompassing state machine.
- **Generational Impact:** Forged the psychological and ideological foundation for the Red Guard generation.
- **Future Research:** Essential need to bridge official state archives with oral histories and personal memoirs.

Thank you

Author: Aalish Watts –
wattsaalish@gmail.com