

# Conceptualizing and Measuring Social Identity and Social Participation



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## 1 Significance of Studies on Social Identity and Social Participation

### 1.1 Significance of Studies on Social Identity

The relationship between individuals and groups/society has always been an important research subject in the fields of sociology and social psychology. The occurrence of social identity research initially promoted studies on this field in term of the concept. Studies on social identity not only help us better understand the deep interactive relations between individuals and groups/society but also provide a basis for the explanation of some social phenomena (such as social perception, attitude, attribution, prejudice, social impact, group cohesiveness, cooperative relationship, collective behavior and social mobility) (Augoustinos et al. 2006).

Social identity concerns the relationship between individuals and groups/society (self-group relationship). In the 1970s, British social psychologist Henri Tajfel initially proposed his classical definition for social identity, i.e. “people’s knowledge of their belonging to certain social groups and the importance, in terms of emotions and values, attributed to their group membership” (Tajfel 1978). Generally, social identity is comprised of the processes of social categorization, identification and comparison, and is therefore simply referred to as the CIC process of social identity. Social categorization means that in a given social context, people often classify individuals in social categories based on different conditions (for example, man/woman, young/old, Chinese/foreigner, etc.). In different contexts, people follow different standards for social categorization. There is a social cognition process known as self-categorization, which also corresponds to social categorization: in different social contexts, individuals identify with one or more than one group via

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a social classification and categorization mechanism, and agree to be governed by its/their rules, behave accordingly, and regard the boundaries of their own group(s) as those separating those on the inside from those on the outside. Self-categorization is generally considered one of the basic conditions for the formation of collective behaviors. Social identification means that, on the basis of the self-categorization process and outcome, individuals believe they share general characteristics with other community members. Social identification is based on the individual acquiring of a sense of self-identity. Social comparison refers to the evaluation made by individuals on the advantages, disadvantages, social status and reputation of a given community in comparison with other ones. People often evaluate and compare the advantages, disadvantages, social statuses and reputations of each community, and strive to incorporate a superior one, thinking they share the good characteristics of the general membership of the superior community.

The significance of studies on social identity is self-evident. In social life, everyone is included in different groups/categories simultaneously and to different extents (even though they attribute different importance, in terms of emotion and value, to their groups) and is related in different ways to these groups/categories and their members. With different social identities, people make different degrees of effort to fulfill their commitments to, remain loyal to, and realize the objectives of their groups. Therefore, it is necessary for us to conduct study of the different types/levels of social identities.

## ***1.2 Significance of Studies on Social Participation***

Social participation refers to a process in which social members participate in, intervene with and get involved in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the state and common affairs of communities in any manner and thus affect social development. Some scholars (Zhang and Yao 2009) even further defined it as “a behavioral pattern in which participants realize self-value by way of social labor or social activities in the process of social interaction”. According to these scholars, it comprises three core principles: first, social participation happens at the social level; second, social participation relates to others; third, social participation embodies the value of participants.

In a perfectly developed and stable civil society, the active participation of citizens in social affairs is of great significance. First, the social public is subjected to the management of affairs related to it, and so doing it is facilitating the development of the society instead of being taken as a tool or mean. Active and effective social participation can strengthen citizen’s public awareness and improve self-consciousness and independent space in social life. Second, social participation helps to mobilize, organize, support and promote citizen action for the solving of their development-related issues. A self-governance mechanism thus forms with communities or other action-places as carrier, enabling members to manage the public affairs of their own communities or of a given scope of activity. Citizens may perform public interest functions

previously performed by governments by patronizing various non-government public welfare organizations, which restricts and supplements governmental mechanisms. For example, social participation plays an active role in education, poverty relief, protection of women and children, environment protection, re-employment of laid-off workers, population control, and many other aspects. Third, social participation gives full play to the role of channels by which citizens gain access to wider areas of macroscopic decision-making. Fourth, social participation also plays an important role in the promotion of the reform of government agencies, the transformation of governmental functions, and the formation of new ethics system adapted to the Chinese socialist market economy.

As China is transforming from a traditional society to a modern society, a modern civil society is also taking shape and growing. In such a context, various forms of social participation are also burgeoning in China. Therefore, it is necessary for us to focus on and research the current status and future developmental trends of social participation.

## **2 Studies on Social Identity and Social Participation**

### ***2.1 Studies on Social Identity***

Actually, despite many studies of great significance on social identity, over the years the lack of relevant studies in the fields of sociology and social psychology has made itself felt. This may be related to the hyper-stability of the structure of the traditional Chinese society as well as its absence of social mobility. In some sense, such conditions result in less social identity issues because people are given no choices in terms of the group/category to which they belong, and have no possibility/chance to make any changes.

In recent years, Chinese society has witnessed dramatic changes. Different cultures and subjects proceeded to deep contacts, making modern self-identity issues more protuberant. Chinese society is experiencing this stage in the present. Correspondingly, the Chinese academia is also beginning to pay attention to studies on social identity, evidenced mainly by introductions to and comments on studies conducted by the western academia in regard to social identity and preliminary empirical studies on some classical social identity phenomena (such as national identity, organizational identity and particular group society identity) in the Chinese social life. This section preliminarily sorts out and introduces the main studies on Chinese social identity phenomena and their findings based on the corresponding relevant research data.

#### **1. Studies on national identity**

National identity refers to a social citizen's knowledge and acceptance of his/her identity as a member of the state. National identity is a complicated psychological

structural system and also an important indicator for national/social cohesion. It is generally considered that national identity changes as time and backgrounds change. National identity is also subject to many other factors of influence.

Many countries and regions all over the world have been actively engaged in the construction of a national identity for their citizens. For example, France has recently officially launched a series of “national identity” discussion activities with the purpose of promoting patriotic education among French citizens; it is hoped that the public’s “national identity” will be improved by reviewing the values of “liberty, equality, and fraternity”. In Hong Kong, China, the measurement of Hong Kong citizens’ national identity levels is still ongoing. For example, as indicated in the investigation results published by the Public Opinion Program Group of the University of Hong Kong on June 17th 2008, the identity of Hongkongers as “Chinese” has been improving and ascended to a new peak since the return of Hong Kong in 1997. The research conducted in 2010 (13 years after Hong Kong returned to the motherland) showed that the sense of national identity of more and more Hong Kong citizens had further improved.

It is generally believed that citizen national identity is more easily formed and stimulated when some major events happen in a country (such as major international sports events, diplomatic incidents, tech events and serious natural disasters). Therefore, these events are also potential important chances (or “chance experiment”) for study of national identity.

Hong Kong’s return to Chinese rule in 1997 was a golden opportunity for studying social identity and national identity. As colonial rule that had lasted more than a century drew to an end, most Hong Kong teenagers, especially natives, saw themselves as Hong Kong citizens, and not so much as Chinese. Of course, a small number of them were the exception, who thought of themselves as “Chinese citizens” or “Chinese citizens before Hong Kong citizens”.

Against that socio-historical background, a group of scholars in Hong Kong (Lam et al. 1998; Lam et al. 2003; Chiu and Kang 2003) conducted studies on the sense of regional and national identities among Hong Kong teenagers. Even though each research had its own specific objects and content, researchers still made some consistent findings therefrom: regardless of their identities as Hong Kong citizens or Chinese citizens, Hong Kong teenagers found pride in the identity they accepted by way of different social comparison strategies. Among them, teenagers accepting the identity of a Hong Kong citizen may have found pride in the comparison of Hong Kong’s wealth and modernity with that of mainland China; while those who accepted the identity of a Chinese citizen may have found pride in the comparison of their cultural values with those of foreigners.

These results also indicate that, in order to improve people’s acceptance of their community, work should be conducted on two aspects: first, the achievements and excellence of the community should be highlighted so that members feel proud of their membership; second, the objects of social comparison should be shifted so that members think their community is superior to other ones. For example, to improve the identity of Hong Kong teenagers as Chinese citizens, we could on the one hand highlight the outstanding achievements of Chinese people, and on the other hand shift

their objects of comparison to foreigners so that they engage in cultural comparisons with the people of other countries (Chiu et al. 2005).

In China, the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the success of the Shenzhou V manned spacecraft in 2003, and the Yushu earthquake in Qinghai in 2010 all belong to major state events. During these events, the national identity of the Chinese public was stimulated to its greatest extent and in different forms, especially during the Olympic Games held in Beijing in 2008, which was one of the grandest major sports and national events throughout the history of China and hailed as the “Chinese People’s Hundred-Year Dream”. Starting from the initial bidding and preparation, the Olympic Games were ardently publicized. In 2008, this publicity reached its peak. Potent national mobilization involved all citizens into this great sports event.

Many studies on the Beijing Olympic Games were conducted in this context, including the international “Influence of Olympic Games on the Social Psychology of the Citizens of Host Nations” program, cooperatively conducted by the “Social Psychology Research in Transition Period” Program Team of the Institute of Sociology of the China Academy of Social Science and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Indeed this was the most representative and fruitful study of that subject. During this research, surveys were made before and after the Beijing Olympic Games, which covered changes in terms of national identity in Beijing citizens before and after the games. This research dominantly focused on how the national identity of Chinese citizens (especially Beijing locals), residing in the center of it all, was controlled and influenced by the Olympic Games. In this research, the quota sampling method was adopted to pre-survey six communities and post-survey five communities in Beijing respectively covering 962 and 1042 persons, producing 2004 valid samples from permanent Beijing residents aged between 18 and 70 years old. Relying on questionnaire surveys, this research produced some interesting results regarding the national identity of Beijing citizens. Its major findings were:

- (1) As a whole, the national identity of Beijing citizens during the Olympic Games was kept high.
- (2) National identity may be composed of three dimensions, i.e. patriotism, world citizen consciousness, and citizen self-efficacy, which range from high to low level in respect of importance.
- (3) After the Olympic Games, public national identity levels were significantly improved. Moreover, the three dimensions of national identity all reached higher levels than before the Olympic Games. Patriotism, world citizen consciousness, citizen self-efficacy and other aspects of national identity were also greatly improved with the Olympic Games.
- (4) Some important contextual factors (including gender, age, education and employment) may also impact national identity. Interestingly, it has been found that women show stronger patriotic emotions than men; the older citizens are, the stronger their patriotic emotions are; the lower the degree of education is, the stronger patriotic emotions are; the emeritus and retired have the strongest patriotic emotions. Women show stronger world citizen consciousness than men; the

older the citizens are, the stronger their world citizen consciousness is; the higher the degree of education degree, the stronger world citizen consciousness is as a whole; the emeritus and retired have the strongest world citizen consciousness. Women show equal citizen self-efficacy to men; young citizens below 40 manifests the strongest citizen self-efficacy; education can strengthen citizen self-efficacy; students manifest the strongest citizen self-efficacy.

In general, the research found that the Olympic Games, as an important event, are not only a special social context that stimulates the public national identity, but also an important international competition guiding the public in the generation of a world citizen consciousness. Meanwhile, this research has also brought us to clearly realize that public national identity cannot be thoroughly changed (or reinforced) by one single important sports event. Above all things, public national identity and world citizen consciousness should be nurtured in daily social, economic and political life, especially with the support of public participation, in order to improve self-efficacy and form a sense of ownership.

## 2. Studies on organizational identity

Membership to an organization is an important status symbol for people. Therefore, a large portion of studies on social identity focuses on organizational identity. Studies on organizational identity are mainly concentrated in the field of organizational behavior. Compared with other fields of research, studies on this aspect are more characterized by “qualification” in the area of psychology, i.e. researchers usually conduct some exploratory studies on main dimensions as well as influential factors and their influences on organizational behaviors related to organizational identity using particular tools for measurement and large-scale sampling.

Additionally, studies on organizational identity are often intertwined with those on organizational commitment and psychological contract. In these studies, people generally regard organizational identity as an independent variable, whereas organizational commitment and psychological contract are viewed as dependent variables, and assume that the former determine the extent of the latter.

Studies on organizational identity mainly include two aspects: first, discussions on the classical characteristics of the Chinese organizational identity from the perspective of Chinese society’s unique form of social organization—the “unit system”; second, empirical studies on the organizational identity of people belonging to particular types of organizations (such as enterprises) or living through particular historical stages (such as periods of social transition period).

Generally speaking, the “unit system” form of social organization of Chinese society, in comparison with other societies, is bound to have shaped Chinese identity in a distinctively characteristic and organizational manner.

The basic view of social identity theories is that membership and category of a social group form an important part of an individual’s conception of the self. When one communicates with others, he/she belongs in fact to a group or a unit of which he/she is representative, rather than simply being an independent individual. Actually, all individuals share multiple concepts of the self. For every group or

personal relationship to which one is believed to belong, there is a corresponding social identity and personal identity.

Thus it's self-evident that everyone simultaneously meets the qualification for the membership of many communities. However, in the traditional "unit system" environment, Chinese people are, in most cases, more used to establishing their own and others' social identities in reference to a unit or an organization. When one joins a unit, he/she adapts his/her social behavior on the basis of the codes of conducts of this unit; his/her thinking mode and attitude are unconsciously influenced by the culture of this unit. As a bystander, when dealing with other individuals, he/she also sees other individuals with the stereotyped impressions of the unit he/she belongs to. Chinese people have special preferences for "units" because units are responsible for assigning jobs, arranging studies, protecting livelihood, organizing entertainment and activities, taking care of children, keeping files, and even checking birth quotas, making relevant arrangement for one's spouse, etc. More importantly, these units create a sense of belonging and safety, and feel like home for many. Therefore, in this traditional "unit system" environment, the social identity of Chinese people is mostly represented in terms of organizational (unit) identity, for which Chinese people have developed a great reliance.

Studies of Chinese people's organizational identity began recently. Most focus on employees of state-owned enterprises. The one by Wang Jun, Wang Yanbin, Liu Aiyu et al. is quite typical. Using questionnaire surveys conducted in several large and medium-scale state-owned enterprises in Hunan and Hubei, Wang et al. (2003) researched the self-identity and class status of state-owned enterprises workers and found that both in terms of comprehensive status and specific dimensions, these workers tended to identify at levels medium and below, which reflects these workers' generally low opinion of their status and relatively strong sense of deprivation. These findings are also in accord with the decline in the relative interests and the status of state-owned enterprise workers in the transformation period. Liu (2004) conducted an experimental study of internal identity differences in terms of the working class in the context of the institutional reform. In her opinion, most previous explanations of this hierarchical structure only focused on the objectivity of hierarchy, without mentioning any subjective attitude. Upon analyzing the data of the "Corporate Institutional Reform and Workers' Life" questionnaire filled by workers of four state-owned enterprises in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenyang, she found that individual class identity in the context of social transformation presented a multiple-identity pattern: the status and identity that general workers, the technical personnel and managers identified the working class differed from the objective class division. These differences in identity can be explained from the perspectives of status evaluation and expectation, differentiated positions, socialist culture construction, etc. Wang (2005a, b) also conducted an empirical study of the organizational identity of state-owned enterprise workers in the transformation period. On one hand, his research verified some assumptions of the organizational identity theory, and on another hand revealed some unique characteristics of Chinese enterprise workers in terms of organizational identity, including strong reliance but poor initiative. It would seem that the organizational identity of workers is barely related to organiza-

tional citizenship behaviors; moreover, Wang further analyzed his research results from the perspective of the “unit system”.

The aforementioned studies on organizational identity generally targeted specific corporate organizations (esp. state-owned enterprises). Studies on corporate organizational identity all stem from the focus on corporate cohesive force and culture as well as from the relation between organizational identity and performance improvement. Therefore, despite their huge amount, studies on the psychological mechanism of organizational identity still tend to be weak. In addition, the enterprise is just, in reality, one of many organization types, while the enterprise itself can also be classified into many types, which makes it difficult for research conclusions to be universal.

### 3. Studies of the social identity of specific groups

That problems related to social identity exist at all is due to the existence of different social groups/categories in society. This is also the reason for the existence of what has been termed here social classification and self-classification issues. Therefore, in studies of social identity, the study of the social identity of specific groups is of great importance.

The social identity theory emphasizes that people’s identity and identity awareness become more prominent in the process of contacting outside groups. In this regard, a change of environment gives people more opportunities to contact outside groups. Therefore, a change of environment brings about a new identity, and this is a psychological process that everyone is susceptible to experience. For many people, the notion of social identity, which they radically fail to perceive or rarely perceive when they are among their own group, is re-evoked after moving to other regions/countries and starting interacting with other groups. Thus, studying social identity from the perspective of the floating population (migrants) is a very good research perspective.

Migration refers to the movement of individuals or groups across geographical borders. This is commonly referred to as the geographical mobility of the population. In general, there are two types of migration: external migration (i.e. migration across national borders), and internal migration (i.e. migration between different regions within a country). In China, the latter is also known as a floating population. Correspondingly, studies on migration mainly involve two aspects: one is the migration between urban and rural areas in developing countries, or internal migration; the second is the international migration movement from underdeveloped or developing countries to globally developed countries such as European countries and the United States, or external migration (Li 2007).

Since the mid-1980s, the Chinese migrant population and floating population, considering their rapid growth, have received more and more attention. In the real world, we can find very rich social mobility phenomena, either in terms of cross-border mobility (such as international migration) or cross-regional mobility (such as rural migrant workers). Although international migrants and rural migrant workers are different in many ways, they have some things in common when it comes to social mobility.

However, despite outbound migration trends in China, especially emigration from some parts of the southeastern coastal areas and the northeast to Europe and other countries, the number of outbound international migrants is still very small in comparison with the large number of rural migrants. Therefore, China pays more attention to the issue of internal rural-urban migration (Li 2007).

In fact, in the process of urbanization and modernization, population movement is an inevitable phenomenon. However, there are many social shielding systems (such as the household registration system, employment policies, social welfare, the social security system, etc.) working against the huge Chinese floating population, causing groups such as the external population and the temporary resident population to suffer from multi-dimensional social exclusion. These people become the “marginal people” outside the mainstream of society, increasingly “drifting”, or even becoming “rootless” groups. Thus, in the study of the floating population, social identity and social integration have become major issues urgently needing to be explored.

In China, the size of rural migrant worker groups in cities started to increase in the late 1980s, sharply expanding after 1990 and reaching its climax in the mid-1990s. Such an influx of people to the city has caused new issues to appear both in urban and rural areas, which in turn forces migrant workers to face a change in their own role as well as to adapt to their new urban environment. In the article *Retrospection and Reflection on Studies on Rural Migrant Workers in Cities*, Zhou and Qin (2004) reviewed a large amount of study of the social identity of migrant workers. The study found that migrant workers began to identify with the society. Some, for example, participated in some collective activities organized by the local communities, established regular contacts with local people, and even joined local social organizations, etc. At the same time, their initial identity, in terms of their relation with their roots, or hometown, was also weakened (for example, they lost interest in farm work and began to disapprove rural habits and traditions). However, as rural workers leave the rural communities in which they grew up and with which they are familiar to integrate urban communities, they find it difficult to fully adapt to urban life and be accepted by urbanites, thus they belong to groups “trapped in between”. Therefore, migrant workers, in terms of their own social identities, show an “involution” trend. In other words, they are neither identified with urban communities nor with rural communities. They are only identified with their own special social groups, and thus are likely to be reduced to the identity of “vagrant”.

One interesting phenomenon is that, in the study of floating populations, most scholars pay more attention to immigrant groups at the bottom of society (such as rural migrant workers, landless farmers, and project migrants) but less to other migrants living above these groups (such as white-collar migrants and highly educated youth). Similarly, although some scholars have shown concern for the social identity of migrants, and have also preliminarily and indirectly explored the structure, status quo and influencing factors of the domestic migrant social identity, the objects of their studies remain principally domestic migrants at the bottom of society. They pay much attention to rural migrant workers in terms of social identity and urban adaptation, as well as to the new generation of rural migrant workers or young

migrant workers, yet few feel concerned about domestic migrants above that middle threshold.

Some scholars have begun to give this issue the necessary attention it deserves, some having even carried out exploratory studies on the social identity of white-collars and highly educated youths in urban floating populations. Their findings are different from those of studies concerning rural migrant workers. He found that, first, in general recently resettled rural migrants have a relatively weak sense of social identification. Second, he ranked the identification references in by strength, which are, in descending order: location, profession, culture, status and group membership. Some of this findings about how these identifications are expressed were quite interesting. There is strong tendency to identify with a particular location (for example, many would name Shanghai as the place where they want their children to end up or where they own property), and the tendency to identify themselves as “non-locals” is strong (the vast majority of rural migrants did not identify as “Shanghai people”, whereas nearly half labeled themselves as “outsiders”); overall professional identity generally stood in the middle level (people were most satisfied with, from high to low respectively, “their relationship with colleagues”, “their work autonomy”, “their relationship with their boss/superior”, “company labor conditions and facilities”, “distance between the working place and the home address”, “help for the future development”, “social prestige of the career”, and so on; it is most noteworthy that no indicator reached the highest “satisfactory” level). Cultural identity lagged behind (more than half of recently resettled rural migrants did not often invite local people home; they did not really celebrate local festivals nor treat local people in a local way; nor do they learn the local dialect). These people tend to be identified with the middle and lower levels of society, yet show a tendency to identify with the upper level (most people think of their social status as “middle” or “lower middle” class whereas few think that they belong to the “upper” or “upper middle” class). In addition, Lei Kaichun also analyzed the influence of institutional exclusion, social status and social memory on the social identity of new migrants.

In comparison with the old and new generations of rural migrant workers, highly educated young migrants possess relatively high human capital, and are more likely to enter a higher labor market. Moreover, their life experiences, values, lifestyles and behaviors are unique. The characteristics and patterns of their social identity are different from that of rural migrant workers old and young. Therefore, exploring the social identity and factors of influence affecting the highly-educated and young floating population is of great significance for us if we are to understand the living conditions and realistic needs of this group and promote their social integration.

In this context, Guo and Xing (2009) studied the social identity of the highly-educated and young floating population in Beijing, which is commonly known as the “Beijing drifters” (*beipiao*). In this study they have found that the social identity of this group is generally not high. They think of themselves more as “the others in the city” and lack a sense of belonging. This is reflected in their thinking and feelings. The majority does not think of themselves as members of the “Beijing community”, and do not feel like Beijing is home. In terms of future plans, although half of Beijing drifters choose to continue to work and live in Beijing, a large proportion

is extremely careful with each step taken. In terms of communication with Beijing residents, although there are a relatively high proportion of Beijing drifters that do engage Beijing residents in their daily lives, the depth and breadth of these contacts are relatively limited: the closer the contacts to their personal space, the lower the willingness to contact with Beijing residents. Beijing drifters' perception of their differences from Beijing residents in terms of culture and living habits is greater than that of their differences in terms of socio-economic status. In addition, this research also found that the social identity of Beijing drifters is affected by their experiences in terms of participation in community activities, interaction with the public, degree of security in Beijing, discrimination, as well as other factors.

Other scholars have also studied the social identity of other specific groups besides these floating populations. Among them, Fang Wen's study (2005) on Protestant Christians is more typical.

Fang (2005) conducted a field study on a Protestant Christian group in Beijing for over three years. With social identity theory as conceptual framework, he analyzed the social identity process of Christians in detail. In addition, based on his specific research, he also attempted to unveil the social psychological process and mechanism rooted in the group symbolic boundaries of social life, hoping to further verify and supplement the social identity theory. On this basis, he further proposed that: (1) social boundaries exist between different social groups; (2) the construction of symbolic group boundaries is cognitively based on social categorization (also known as social classification); (3) on the basis of social categorization, the distinction between my group (also known as the in-group) and the other group (also known as the out-group) is strengthened by social comparison, thus producing in-group differentiation and out-group homogeneity; (4) in terms of social actions, my group continues to represent and reproduce its own group style as well as the social representation system via group memory to further reproduce symbolic group boundaries. In the study of the social identity of specific groups, Fang Wen is one of the few researchers who have sublimated specific research in favor of theory.

The study of the social identity of specific groups reflects the social concerns of Chinese scholars and social psychologists. However, due to the different theoretical backgrounds, research methods and tools used by different scholars, it is difficult to compare the results of these different studies, which brings difficulties in terms of further synthesizing studies. Future research should also expand their scope in terms of research groups. In addition, the study and comparison of one same group from the perspectives of social classification and self-classification respectively should also be considered.

## ***2.2 Studies on Social Participation***

Extensive social participation is one of the basic characteristics of a civil society. However, the basic feature of the traditional Chinese society, i.e. "strong country and weak society", basically eliminated all traces of a civil society. As it transitions from

a traditional society to a modern one, China's civil society is just now forming and developing.

In recent years, the occurrence of many major events has promoted the growth of the Chinese civil society, especially the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, after which the civic consciousness of the Chinese people was forcefully awakened. The exploding volunteers, the spontaneous upsurge of donations from enterprises and citizens, the flooding of many non-governmental organizations to the disaster areas and their cooperation with the government in terms of rescue and post-disaster reconstruction, as well as the courage that news media and network media demonstrated in their actions to tap the truth and carry out supervision, all of these are supporting evidence. Therefore, some people think that 2008 marked the birth of China's civil society and was also the first year of voluntary action in China.

Next, we will analyze social participation in China from several aspects, including its general situation as well as community participation and Olympic participation.

### 1. General situation of social participation

In 2011, the Institute of Sociology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Social Sciences Literature Publishing House jointly issued the *2012 Blue Paper—Analysis and Prediction on China's Social Situation* in 2012. The *Blue Paper* points out that the urbanization process should be accompanied by the enhancement of citizen modernity. The important component of citizen modernity is the extensive social participation of citizens, especially institutionalized and organized social participation, achieved through citizen participation in social organizations. However, the aforementioned survey shows that although China has merged in the fast lane in terms of urbanization pace, the increase of its urban population and the expansion of its cities have yet to bring about the development of the civil society.

Among urban respondents, only 4.5% participated in folk organizations (including volunteer organizations, owners' committees, environmental organizations, etc.). In rural areas, participation was even lower (1.7%). Data also show that social groups based on kinship and geography (such as clan associations and associations) are also shrinking as original rural social structures are breaking down. For example, in urban areas, only 1.6% and 4.5% of respondents said they participated in clan associations and natives associations respectively; in rural areas, the proportion was only 2.6% and 3.6% respectively. In addition, a mere 16.5% of urban respondents gave a positive answer when asked whether they intended to join a folk organization in the future.

At the same time, this survey also unveiled new features of current social participation in China. First of all, with the popularity of higher education, alumni associations developed on the basis of relationships between students have become the first choice of many respondents for social participation. Especially in cities, 22.2% of respondents affirmed attending alumni associations, and 29.8% of respondents also said that they would continue to participate in or intended to participate in these alumni associations in the future. In addition, various fellowship organizations (such as sports and entertainment groups, Internet groups) have also become important forms of social participation. 10.8% of urban respondents affirmed join-

ing fellowship organizations, and 17.8% of respondents said they would continue to participate in or intended to join fellowship organizations in the future.

As a result, we can draw basic conclusions on current social participation in China. First of all, the current level of social participation of Chinese citizens as a whole is not high. Second, among various forms of social participation, alumni associations and social organizations are the most popular forms of social participation (especially for urban residents).

## 2. Studies of community participation

Community participation refers to the actions of community members as well as to a process during which they participate in public community affairs and activities, affect the operation of community rights, and share the results of community building. Participating in community activities is an important way for community members to form a common code of conduct, lifestyle and awareness. Community participation helps to prolong human relationships and strengthen social networks, thus enhancing people's sense of social belonging and social identity.

In *Reconstructed Public Space: Community Public Participation and Study* (2004–2006), Yang Yiyin studied community participation among urban residents in Beijing. This is a relatively normative study of recent community participation involving type of community, type of community participation, and the characteristics of the participation of different types of community residents.

### (1) Division of community type

First, on the basis of foundational facts about communities, this research categorizes Beijing communities in three types. These three types of community are the traditional Hutong community, the institutional compound community, and the new commercial-residential building community. Among these three types, the Hutong is a typical feature of the ancient capital of Beijing. After the founding of the new China in 1949, the family houses of government agencies spread around the capital, which together with the Hutong communities constituted the distinctive features of Beijing residence in the 1990s. After the 1990s, the city's high-grade commercial-residential buildings rose straight from the ground and emerged as a new form of housing.

### (2) Types of community participation (Table 1)

Community participation can be divided in two dimensions on the basis of its nature: "individual-society" and "autonomy-obedience". Both dimensions can be used to define the nature and type of participation.

### (3) Community participation characteristics

Social participation among community residents is embedded in the representations of their ideal community. Yang Yiyin's study found that the social representations of ideal communities for Beijing residents include three aspects, i.e. environment, concept, and participation. Further analysis has unveiled that there are no fundamental differences of the views and demands regarding environment between residents

**Table 1** Types of community participation

	Individual-society dimension	
Autonomy-obedience	Voluntary social services	Personal interests
	Response/obedience	Mutual assistance within the relationship network

of different types of communities, but differences related to concept and participation are significant, which reflect the psychological state of different communities. Specifically, compared to commodity building residents, residents of bungalow communities and institutional building communities have more sense of hierarchy, and their community participation is also more reflected as passive involvement, i.e. relying on top-down administrative power to a certain extent. With the continuous marketization of property management, residents of commodity buildings are witnessing the gradual fade-out of the executive-led management philosophy, which is being replaced by management concepts characterized by the spirit of public contract and group right-protection awareness. Thus the identity of these residents is connotatively more about equal rights. These residents are also more active in terms of community participation.

### 3. Studies of participation in the Olympic Games

Before and after the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, the Studies of Social Mentality in Transition Period project team of the Institute of Sociology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences conducted studies on the participation of Beijing citizens in the games.

Two months before and after the Beijing Olympic Games, questionnaire surveys were adopted to investigate households of six and five communities in Beijing, in the manner of quota sampling. The investigation focused on the degree of public involvement and participation in the Olympic Games as well as the aspects that public was interested in. How great is the impact of media and social organizations? Have the Olympic Games improve public participation? The results of this study are listed below.

#### (1) Participation types

We can divide public participation in the context of the Olympic Games in three types: attention, communication and expression, and action. Here, “attention” is a one-way process of information acquisition, and refers to low involvement; “communication and expression” is a process of information and opinion exchanges, and refers to moderate involvement; and “action” is real participation, and refers to in-depth involvement.

#### (1) Attention, or low involvement

Based on the results of investigations before and after the Beijing Olympic Games, it has been found that respondents showed great interest in all aspects of the Beijing

Olympic Games. They paid most attention to “the number of medals won by Chinese delegations” and “the opening ceremony, award ceremonies, and closing ceremony”.

They paid specific attention to three aspects: (1) matters relevant to the Olympic Games, including new technologies, cultural differences between China and foreign countries, Chinese cultural characteristics, public participation, foreign media evaluation, Chinese attitude towards foreigners, and environmental improvements during the Games; (2) competitions, including the number of medals won by Chinese delegations, the opening and closing ceremonies and awards ceremonies, the enterprising spirit of Chinese athletes, the competition process, breaking records, etc.; (3) interesting stardom stories, including anecdotes about athletes, referees and coaches from various countries, competition results of star athletes, etc.

The results show that what the public was most concerned with was the competition during the Olympic Games.

### **(2) Communication and expression, or moderate involvement**

Research has found that participation degree in all activities after the Olympic Games has increased in comparison with before the Olympic Games, which means that the activities of the Olympic Games generally do tend to involve people more. In term of participation in the Olympic Games, investigations before and after have found that, in addition to no significant differences with what was being discussed by internet users, the degree of participation of respondents in the activities organized by the media such as calling hotlines, sending text messages and offering suggestions to relevant departments, has been significantly increased in comparison with that before the Olympic Games.

### **(3) Volunteerism, or deep involvement**

Research has found that during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, many people with no volunteering experience offered their services to volunteer groups.

Before-and-after investigations compared and analyzed the participation frequency of individuals in other types of volunteer activities and found that their participation in Olympic volunteer activities positively correlated with their participation in other types of volunteer activities. That is to say, individuals who usually participated in various types of volunteer activities were more likely to become Olympic volunteers.

### **(2) Channels focusing on the Olympic Games**

People can access information in four ways: traditional media (including television, newspapers and radio), interpersonal communication (including with family members, friends, colleagues or classmates, or on general social occasions), modern media (including outdoor advertisements or community bulletin boards, the Internet, text messages), and direct acquisitions (including participation in Olympic Games activities, watching competitions on-the-spot).

Analyses have found that traditional modes of transmission are dominant in the publicity and transmission processes of major social events, among which “traditional media” are dominant, though often supplemented by “interpersonal communication”.

Before the Olympic Games, there was less participation through “modern media” and “presence on the scene”. In addition, there are differences between the effects of various media.

Studies have also found that education and age have a certain impact on information acquisition. Generally speaking, residents with a low education make significantly lower effective use of various media than those with high education (especially with regard to modern modes of transmission, including the Internet, text messages, outdoor advertising and community bulletin boards). The frequency at which modern media is used is the lowest among residents with only primary and middle school education. High school graduates employ modern media at an intermediate frequency, whereas residents with junior college or higher education most frequently use modern media.

In addition, different age groups use communication media differently. Specifically, the frequency at which modern media is used decreases significantly as age increases. The frequency at which people over 50 years old employ interpersonal communication is lower than that of young people.

### **(3) Factors of public participation—community or unit organization**

Studies have shown that public participation was the greatest in activities organized by communities and units. Around the time of the Olympic Games, people actively took part in Olympic-related activities organized by their communities and units. 63.57% of people were willing to participate in Olympic-related activities organized by their units, and 38.38% chose to “actively participate”; 69.77% of people were also willing to participate in Olympic-related activities organized by their communities, and 39.03% chose to “actively participate”. This further shows that both units and communities have an important dynamic role in gathering people to participate in major national events.

### **(4) Motivation for the public to participate in the Olympic Games**

What do the Olympic Games mean to Chinese people and what do people think of the Olympic values?

Studies have shown that what is considered most important about the Olympic Games is “witnessing important historical moments”, which scored the highest in surveys, followed by the opportunity to “show foreigners the healthy and optimistic image of Chinese people”, “witness Chinese athletes winning gold medals”, “contribute to China’s major events” and “enjoy high caliber sports events”. In addition, some people thought the Beijing Olympic Games would allow them to “cheer up for Chinese athletes on the spot”, “learn more about the culture of other countries” and “gain a very hard-won life experience”.

In conclusion, the findings of the investigations yielded valuable research results. Through these studies, it has been found that the public manifested a relatively high motivation to participate in national major events. Under the influence of mass media, interpersonal communication as well as communities or units, more and more people will experience the process from the low attention, to communication and expression, then to final behavior participation.

In this process, the key issue is the requirement of a corresponding organizational form for public participation in order to enable people to translate attention, communication, and participation into action. Thus, healthy civil society organizations should be developed in the future in order to lead public focus on major social and national events as well as combine personal concerns with national concerns. Only in this way can we enhance social cohesion and foster the spirit of social cooperation. Actually, that is a valuable asset that the Beijing Olympic Games have left for us.

#### **4. Theoretical discussions on social participation with Chinese characteristics**

It is worth mentioning that studies on social participation include preliminary theoretical discussions on the current core characteristics of Chinese social participation.

In the process of studying the participation of Beijing citizens in the Olympic Games, the Studies of Social Mentality in the Transitional Period project team conducted theoretical discussions on the characteristics of Chinese social participation.

Referring extensively to literature, their research first states that, generally speaking, there are two forms of social participation: authoritative participation and civic participation. The former mainly refers to command-based participation, which is generally more common in traditional hierarchical or authoritarian societies, while civic participation is mainly founded on personal motivations or civic responsibilities and is common in a civil society or individualist society.

However, if we consider the current situation of social participation in contemporary China, we easily realize that the above two forms of participation are not at all suitable in the analysis of the social and political situations of contemporary China. Therefore, the research proposed a third form of social participation which it terms “government-driven/mobilized participation”. Unlike the above two types, this form of participation is based on the interaction between government requirements and voluntary public involvement.

In the case of the Beijing Olympic Games, when Beijing prepared to bid for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and won the bidding, the government organized volunteer service and used the media to recruit volunteers. At the same time, the government also required various institutions to contribute to the success of the Olympic Games, treating relevant measures as political tasks. In this series of processes, the public’s action was also actively mobilized. Thus, the participation of Beijing citizens in the Olympic Games has become a typical kind of “government-driven participation”. This kind of participation is to large degree from the self-border scalability that the “lesser self” of Chinese people can be extended to the “greater self” in certain situations. Therefore, there remain differences between this concept and the connotation of public participation. This kind of relational, ethical, moral-based and authority-driven participation is rooted in the “guanxi” (relationship) mechanism that connects group relationships for Chinese people, not in the identification mechanism.

### 3 Measurements of Social Identity and Social Participation

#### 3.1 *Measurements of Social Identity*

In sociology and social psychology, a variety of tools for the measurement and investigation of social identity have been developed. Some are more classical, general and generalized; there also are a number of measurements and investigative tools developed for specific groups and for specific research purposes. Both kinds of tools have their own characteristics and functions, which we will introduce subsequently.

##### 1. **Classical measurements of social identity**

###### (1) **Twenty Statements Test (TST)**

In social psychology, the measuring technique of social identity that most frequently cited is the Twenty Statements Test (TST) developed by Kuhn and McPartland (1954). The basic assumptions of the test come from the “social ecology” perspective of Sarbin and Allen (1968) on social identity, which affirms that a person’s behaviors are rooted in his/her identity and that his/her identity similarly stems from his/her situation in society. The technique used in this test is very simple: testees are required to give twenty different answers to the question: “Who am I?” The TST only measures “facts” and “subjective affirmations” towards facts, without taking the psychological interactions between people and their groups into consideration.

###### (2) **Classical measurements of ethnic identity**

In early studies on ethnic identity, the work of Mamie Clark and Kenneth Clark of the late 1930s and the 1940s was often mentioned. Their pioneering efforts have inspired studies in the following decades and influenced several generations of clinical scientists and theorists. The method adopted by Mamie Clark and Kenneth Clark was similar to projective tests used in contemporary psychological measurement. What is meant by “projective test” is the exploration of deeper psychological motivations of examined objects through their responses to stimulus materials.

##### 2. **Specific measurements of social identity**

In specific studies on the sense of social identity, Chinese and foreign scholars have both developed their own questionnaires or measurement tools for the purpose of their own studies. These mainly involve the measurement of ethnic identity, of the recognition of immigrants and migrant workers, etc.

When it comes to measuring ethnic identity, researchers have conducted deep and systematic studies. Through theoretical reconstruction of the concept and structure of ethnic identity, researchers have compiled a number of scales in line with the relevant psychometric standards to measure ethnic identity, enriching studies on social identity. One of the widely used scales is the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) developed by Phinney (1992). This scale assesses the general sense of ethnic identity in a broad sense instead of being limited to the characteristics of

a particular ethnic group. Such a scale is more applicable to various ethnic groups. The initial scale included 14 subjects, which were used to measure ethnic identity on the basis of three aspects, namely belonging, ethnic identity achievement, and ethnic behavior. Belonging refers to one's positive attitude and sense of belonging to an ethnic group; ethnic identity achievement involves the exploration and confirmation of one's identity; and ethnic behavior refers to the activities related to the identities of ethnic members (Phinney 1992).

Roberts et al. (1999) revised the MEIM scale and simplified it, bringing it down to 12 subjects. Using adolescents as research objects, he analyzed ethnic identity on the basis of two dimensions, namely exploration and commitment. In his studies, he defines exploration as seeking information and experiences related to one's own ethnic group; whereas he defines commitment as attachment to the group and one's personal input. Based on that, Phinney et al. (2007) further simplified the MEIM into a 6-subject scale in their study of ethnic identity based on exploration and commitment as well.

These three versions of the ethnic identity scale are reliable and valid. In comparative studies on different racial and ethnic groups, the validity of measurements has also been confirmed (Avery et al. 2007; Gaines et al. 2010). At the same time, researchers have also used these scales to carry out a large number of empirical studies in which the basic psychological effects of ethnic identity has been revealed. For example, ethnic identity positively correlates to individual subjective well-being, coping capability, sense of control, self-esteem and optimism, yet negatively correlates to loneliness and depression. It also decreases the discrimination (Roberts et al. 1999; Lee 2003).

The MEIM scale is generally adopted to study the status of the identity of various ethnic groups in a broad sense. In specific studies on specific ethnic groups, researchers have carried out targeted analyses and developed specific scales in accordance with the characteristics of the studied ethnic groups and their cultural characteristics. For example, on the basis of the identity formation process, Helms and Parham (1990, 1996) developed the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (BRIAS) to measure African-Americans' attention to their membership to their own ethnic groups and their attitudes toward other ethnic groups. This scale includes 5 themes, namely pre-contact, post-contact, immersion, emergence and internalization, which occur during the formation of African-American people's identity. Correspondingly, Helms and Carter (1993) developed a White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) to measure white people's perception of their membership to their own ethnic groups and their attitudes towards other ethnic groups. This scale has 6 themes, namely contact, disintegration, reintegration, quasi-independent, immersion-emergence and autonomy, also occurring during the formation of the identity of white people.

In China, in a study of the ethnic identity of Tibetan college students, Wan and Wang (2004) formulated a questionnaire based on the formation process of identity. This questionnaire had the purpose to measure ethnic identity from three aspects, namely mainstream cultural identity, active ethnic identity, and negative ethnic identity. They have found a correlation between the ethnic identity of Tibetan students and their cultural adaptation strategies. Moreover, they have also unveiled that neg-

ative ethnic identities potentially lead to anomie, social independence and cultural separation.

In addition to ethnic identity, the identity of migration and rural migrant workers is also a hot topic in social identity research. Researchers have also developed corresponding measurement tools to specific research problems. For example, in the process of studying the social identity of floating populations, Guo (2011) compiled the *Questionnaire/Interview Outline on the Studies of Social Identity of Migrants in Beijing*. In the process of studying the social identity of new migrants in Shanghai, Lei compiled the *New Urban Immigrant Questionnaire*. The former questionnaire/interview outline, apart from an individual's basic background and family background, mainly refers to interviewees' social interaction with locals (Beijingers), their relationship with Beijing citizens, their experiences in terms of discrimination in their daily life and work, their participation in community activities, their acceptance of various titles, their "feeling of being home", mental state, etc. But Lei Kaichun's questionnaire relates mainly to the social status of respondents, including their contact with local people, the friends they frequently contact, their use of language, their familiarity with local customs, their helping behaviors, their choice of listeners, and their companions in spare time, etc.

We can see from the preceding discussions that in fact, the classical measurement methods for social identity and the identity of specific groups not only have their own characteristics and advantages, but also their own shortcomings and limitations. The first type of survey basically adopts the methods of free association and psychological projection. These methods are characterized by universal applicability (cross-crowd and cross-scene), and the problems they involve are more substantial. However, their shortcomings are that both the crowd and the questions involved are too general and lack pointedness. In the second type of survey, methodology basically consists of sociological and psychological questionnaire surveys, with the advantages that both the crowd and questions involved are relatively targeted. In this case, research questions are more specific. However, overly specific questions limit the scope of its application, which makes it difficult to conduct cross-crowd and cross-contextual inferences.

### ***3.2 Measurements of Social Participation***

In fact, classical measurements of social participation are rare. Most measurements of social participation are the corresponding measurement/survey projects compiled for respective studies. These projects are generally relatively specific and targeted, thus hardly generalizable.

In their subject study *Restudy of the Election Mentality and Participation Behavior of Beijing Voters* carried out by the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, Lei and Gao (2007) explored and researched voters. Specifically, in measuring interaction levels between voters and deputies to the NPC, they designed two primary indicators: (1) Have voters met with the last deputies to the NPC of the electoral district

in the past three years? (2) Can voters recall the proposals or the practical work the last deputies to the NPC have made or done for the voters of the electoral district? When it comes to measurement, the motivations of voters can be classified in two types: (1) voters who “hope to elect the deputies who really represent popular will”, defined as voters with positive motivations; (2) voters who “just perform a routine and exercise their own rights”, “follow the crowd, do not think” or “have to vote”, defined as voters with negative motivations. Based on these, researchers have come up with meaningful results. One of their most important conclusions is that the interaction between deputies to the NPC and voters will significantly affect the positive motivation ratio of voters.

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