

**Proposed Harvard Center Shanghai Symposium:
*Education and the Development of Civic Consciousness in China***

A central conclusion of the May 2013 Harvard China Fund symposium on “Civil Society and Governance” is that Chinese civil society will not be able to sustain its positive trend without the further development of 公民意識 (civic consciousness) among ordinary citizens. The symposium proposed herein aims specifically to address this problem.

Analyzing major studies of Chinese citizens’ demands against the state, one finds that they have usually been for the satisfaction of *concrete particularistic* interests, rather than for the protection of *abstract universalistic* human or civil rights. Witness, for example, the very concrete civic claims made by hungry rural farmers in Dali Yang’s *Calamity and Reform in China*, by profit-minded lobbyists in Scott Kennedy’s *The Business of Lobbying in China*, by public goods-demanding villagers in Lily Tsai’s *Accountability Without Democracy*, by unpaid urban workers in Ching-Kwan Lee’s *Against the Law*, by public benefits-seeking “floaters” in Dorothy Solinger’s *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China*, and by self-interested urbanites in Shi Tianjian’s *Political Participation in Beijing*. Since the publication of these dissertations, the vast majority of public demonstrations in the Mainland – whether protesting land seizures, unpaid salaries, chemical factories “in my backyard,” or Japanese territorial claims – have continued to focus on concrete, urgently felt, ingroup- or ethno-centric interests, rather than abstract, generalized principles. All of this reinforces the impression that a principal barrier to the Chinese people’s entry into the global democratic community beyond this “conventional” level of civic *engagement* is, as with all societies, the level of principled civic *consciousness, especially among China’s youth and young adults in a time of cultural evolution*. From this angle, it seems clear that two important obstacles to a self-governing, self-reflective, and self-correcting Chinese civil society are a capacity for *cultural awareness* and a pedagogical method of *cognitive development to promote it*. Therefore the source of the solution must therefore include *educational reform*.

This 1.5-day symposium will directly address this problem by bringing together experts in civic education, cognitive, developmental, and cultural psychology with experts on China’s civil society, political institutions, and educational reforms. The question before this group – which will gather leading researchers from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the West – is at once simple and complex: *What educational reforms are needed to prepare China’s citizens for principled, democratic, and global citizenship?*

Symposium organization will be based in ongoing civic education activities at HGSE (including the Civic and Moral Education Initiative, the Youth and Participatory Politics Network, the New Civics Early Career Scholars Program) The symposium will be led by Profs. Robert Selman and Helen Haste, the two Co-Principal Investigators on a current two year Harvard China Fund project, Young People and Civic Engagement in a Changing Society (7/12011-6/30/2013). Haste and Selman have also recruited five doctoral students with an interest in youth civic engagement and consciousness in China as part of their new (7/12-6-16) Spencer Foundation Early Career Scholars in the “New Civic” grant to HGSE. Other members of this new training grant include Profesors Meira Levinson, and Howard Gardner. Andrew Scott Conning, an advanced doctoral student whose research focuses on the topic of the Symposium, will serve as Coordinator. If invited to submit a formal proposal, we will reach out to potential collaborators from FAS, HKS, and HLS, and from among our growing networks across Greater China. Our team will seek funding from HGSE and other sources to supplement the resources provided by the Harvard China Fund. We thus include a budget that exceeds the maximum provided for by the grant.

In addition to the many students at HGSE, at both the doctoral and masters level, with a strong interest in this project, we hope to welcome a large number of China-based alumni of HGSE and other Harvard schools to this symposium, and to combine the symposium with a HGSE alumni reception that will introduce many of our alumni to the Harvard Center in Shanghai and help

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strengthen the School's growing Chinese alumni community.

The symposium aims to produce a coherent, compelling, and authoritative set of answers to this question and to disseminate it as broadly as possible, via a bilingual symposium website and online volume of conference proceedings. To support the goal of shaping the conversation about civic development in China, we will arrange for participation by public opinion leaders in the Mainland media and blogging communities.