The Appreciation and Criticism of the Young Chinese Zhihu Netizens to ex-President Trump of the United States

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Abstract

Since former U.S. President Trump took office, Chinese state media have generally painted a negative picture of him and formed a negative public opinion. However, in Chinese social media, Trump still enjoys a high reputation and has even gained a large number of supporters, including, of course, a large number of opponents. This article explored the popular evaluation of President Trump by young Zhihu netizens through a qualitative content analysis of a post on the Zhihu website, and analyzed the reasons for the formation of the opposing evaluations by netizens. The result showed that 43% of netizens positively evaluated Trump as the great president who saved the United States, while 40% condemned Trump as "The second Hoover." From a neutral point of view, Trump is seen as a president with first-class dreams but second-class political wisdom. Further analysis revealed that for netizens with positive comments, individualism, pragmatism, dissatisfaction with the social status quo, and the influence of the mode of public opinion confrontation are the main reasons why they praise Trump. Netizens who hold a negative evaluations are strongly influenced by China's traditional political culture and official public opinion, as well as the trend of the "rise of the East and decline of the West," which led them to follow the Chinese "Meritocracy Political Model" in evaluating Trump. This study revealed the current situation of ideological and value opposition among highly educated young in China.

Keywords:, Chinese young, individualism, authoritarian personality, meritocracy political model, President Trump

1. Introduction

President Trump is truly a stupid existence who is arrogant, stubborn, ignorant and even shameless. we do not understand why the United States has chosen such a fool! (Binbin, 22 March 2020)

I hope that in China's political arena there will be more Trump-style officials who are brave to serve, who dare to take responsibility, who dare to do what others do not, and who do not care about personal gains and losses, that is the real man, a man of iron. (GJCaesar, 17 March 2020).

U.S.-China relations have continued to deteriorate since former U.S. President Donald Trump provoked a trade war with the China in 2018. Against this backdrop, Chinese state media have generally taken a negative stance toward Trump and formed a negative public opinion. State media portray him as a problem president who lacks long-term vision and consideration, a profit-hungry American supremacist, and a fickle, stubborn pragmatist (E. Huang, 2020; Lian, 2018; L. Wang, 2019; Y. Zhang, 2018). However, public opinion on social media shows that some young netizens greatly admire him and even call themselves Trump fans. He is praised for his openness, honesty, and willingness to take responsibility(H. Li, 2016; Swaine, 2016). while the others denounce him as a "political fool" and "Twitter president" and a "Dong Wang." This contradictory assessment has piqued the authors' interest. What factors have led to the emergence of such contradictory assessments among young Chinese netizens?

It is worth noting that although there are many studies on President Trump, neither Chinese nor foreign academic circles have studied the specific evaluation of him by young Chinese netizens. Therefore, the authors believe that studying online public opinion about Trump on the Internet can help us answer the above questions and reveal the current state of thinking and values of Chinese young.

The Zhihu community is a very popular social question-and-answer website (similar to the "Quora" community) that gathers intellectual elites and rational discussions and produces high-quality content (J. Li & Zheng, 2020; Peng et al., 2020). According to the Zhihu report, young users aged 20-39 account for 79% (ZhihuReport, 2021). It is considered an amalgamation of the most intellectual and critical forces among young Chinese, and their views are frequently disseminated to Weibo and WeChat (Peng et al., 2020; Ru & Hu, 2016). In the Zhihu community, there is a post on "How to fairly evaluate US President Trump". As of January 20, 2021, the post has more than 12.38 million views, making it the most viewed post in the Zhihu community on the topic of president Trump.

We conducted a qualitative content analysis to analyze this post with 12.38 million page views and answer two questions: 1) What are young Zhihu netizens' evaluation about President Trump? 2) What factors lead Zhihu netizens to make these assessments?

2. Literature Reviews

Current Thoughts and Values in Chinese Society

The ideology and values of individuals are mainly influenced by the general ideology of society, which usually includes three dimensions: Politics, Economy and Culture.

Authoritarianism is a characteristic feature of Chinese political ideology, which deliberately emphasizes respect for and adherence to authority (D. Ma & Lewis, 2020). The cult of power in Chinese society has a strong influence on young people, leading to the coexistence of hierarchies and unconscious authoritarianism (T. Li, 2014). However, pluralistic values and Western democratic ideology have had a great influence on them. From the debate between liberals and the New Left at the beginning of the 21st century to the current nationalist and cultural liberal positions of Chinese citizens, the political ideology of Chinese citizens has been polarized (X. A. Wu, 2014; G. Zhu, 2019).

With the popularization of the internet, these two ideological positions have obviously shifted to internet users. One study has shown that "left-wing" netizens tend to be psychologically authoritarian and submit to mores, authority, order and official media opinions, while "right-wing" netizens emphasize social justice and individualism and support reform and progress as well as unofficial media opinions (D. Ma & Wang, 2015; D. Ma & Zhang, 2014). Their study has also shown that liberalism has gained prestige and status through the use of the internet.

For economic ideology, pragmatism has been widely accepted as a value by the Chinese government and common people (X. Yan, 2018). Deng Xiaoping once said, "As long as cats can catch mice, it does not matter whether they are black or white (X. Yan, 2018)." In particular, China's tremendous economic success and international influence have led to greater awareness and appreciation of pragmatism. Young Chinese who have grown up under the influence of pragmatic values are considered typical pragmatists (Zhao, 2014).

In terms of cultural ideology, with the spread of the internet and the influence of multiculturalism, Chinese youth are gradually ignoring collectivism and hierarchical systems and paying more attention to social fairness, justice and openness (B. Liu, 2010; Ye, 2013). Numerous studies have shown that Chinese people in the internet age increasingly emphasize the value of individualism, especially individualism associated with personal achievement becomes very popular (Cai et al., 2018; Sun & Ryder, 2016; R. Zhang & Weng, 2019).

Chinese Authoritarian Personality

Authoritarian personalities are a common phenomenon in China. It may even be called the national character of the Chinese, which promotes a high degree of trust in government (Wright & Twitchett, 1962). Altemeye (2006) stated that everyone has an authoritarian personality, but it varies in intensity. The authoritarian personality is closely related to, but not limited to, conservatism (Altemeyer, 2006). The main characteristics of Chinese authoritarian personality are as follows: First, in terms of obedience to authority, "respect" and "obedience" are highly valued, especially "respect for superiors" is considered the most important value orientation (L. Huang & Chu, 2012); second, most Chinese people seek conformity rather than innovation in thinking and are used to following traditional values and social norms (Q. Ma, 2002); Third, traditional political culture has accustomed people to rely internally on elders in the family and externally on authority in society (Q. Ma, 2002).

Traditional Chinese Political Culture - The Common Criteria of the Chinese for Evaluating Presidents and the "Meritocracy Political Model"

Although the process of industrialization and globalization has accelerated the development of the Chinese economy, China's traditional social and political culture has still profoundly influenced the political attitudes of the Chinese people, leading to a certain historical inertia (Q. Ma, 2002). Historically, China was ruled by 443 emperors and many politicians for more than 2,000 years (Chen, 1993), forming a relatively strict and reasonable mechanism of electing and evaluating officials. It generally include three dimensions: First, the morality and behavior of presidents. In the Chinese context, the

"morality" of emperors is associated with the emperors' willingness to change, flexibility to consider the correct opinions of others, and the emperors' sympathy for the people out of benevolence (Z. Liu, 1984). In particular, the emperors' governmental performance could completely hide the impairment of morality and personality (Nie, 2006). Second, the ability of presidents to govern. The presidents' ability to govern was understood in the context of familiarity with the state operating apparatus(T. Wang, 2001),, political diligence (T. Wang, 2001), and long-term vision and thoughtfulness (Munk Dialogues, 2021). Third, the evaluation of the president's performance is mainly based on promoting the overall development of the country, including politics, economics and diplomacy(Nie, 2006) and creating positive impact on new productive relationships (Tong, 2009). These strict evaluation standards for politicians have led to the emergence of a rigorous selection model for Chinese political elites, especially after the CCP came to power.

"Meritocracy political model" refers to a rigorous 20-30 year competition to select capable leaders for top positions in the Chinese government (Bell, 2015). This competitive mechanism ensures that top politicians have excellent management skills and government experience. It must be emphasized that one of the most important characteristics of Chinese politicians is whether they have a long-term vision and pattern (Bell, 2015). The main shortcomings of the "Meritocracy political model" are, first, that it can easily lead to dictatorship, and second, that it lacks a supportive system to limit the power of ordinary officials, which can easily lead to bureaucracy (Fan, 2013).

Public Opinion Trend in China in Recent Years: The "Rise in the East and Decline in the West"

The "rise in the East and decline in the West" refers to the fact that China is rising while the Western world is declining (DW, 2021). Since the beginning of the 21st century, with the great success of the Chinese economy, confidence in the Chinese government has also skyrocketed. In the past decade, the Chinese government has deliberately made "national advantage" part of the nation's great rejuvenation to boost China's national self-confidence. In doing so, the Chinese government's official propaganda deliberately emphasizes the superiority of China's political system and the rigidity and over-programming of Western democracies (Chinadragonvideo, 2019).In the field of science and technology, China's achievements in applied science and technology are highlighted, while Western achievements in basic science are downplayed. Moreover, these popular discourses of "rise in the East and decline in the West" involving Chinese scholars have played an important role on the Internet. For example, on Bilibili, a video website for young Chinese, videos of academics giving speeches about the superiority of China's political model of " over Western democratic electoral systems are very popular. The number of views of these videos is high, reaching 18 million in 2021 alone(GuanVideo, 2020a; Jin & Liu, 2010; Lv, 2020; Ma, 2019). In general, the "rise in the East and decline in the West" trend in public opinion and the strategy of national rejuvenation implemented by the Chinese government in the past decade have had a profound and absolute impact on some young people in China. In the eyes of young Chinese, the United States and European countries have low levels of governance, political incompetence, social polarization and serious internal hostility (E. Li, 2021).

The Status Quo of China's Media Landscape and the Confrontation of Public Opinion

In China's public opinion system, the official media and the social media are not separate from each other, but are strongly intertwined. To a certain extent, the Chinese government not only tolerates online discussion of public affairs, but actively encourages it (Stockmann & Luo, 2017). The reason for this is, on the one hand, better monitoring of public opinion and, on the other hand, that public opinion in the information society has long been created by the frequent interactions between social media users and official media, it cannot be prevented (Stockmann & Luo, 2017). The realm of public opinion on the internet has long become a key area of official and non-governmental communication in China. There are not only trustworthy opinions, but also many extreme and offensive views. As scholars have expressed, "the growing public voice has deconstructed and reconstructed the official voice since the advent of social media platforms"(Li.lingling, 2015).Some scholars have noted that the official Chinese media is frequently questioned and even mocked by public opinion on the Chinese internet (Li.lingling, 2015; Wei, 2012). For example, on 9 February 2014, China's CCTV reported on the programme " Repeatedly banned Dongguan 'Porn trend'" to condemn the porn industry in Dongguan(a Chinese city near Shenzhen). Unexpectedly, opinion leaders among netizens as well as some media professionals are basically critical of the CCTV reports(Li.lingling, 2015). Many studies show that the two spheres of public opinion in China compete with each other, but the official media have not won (Farkas & Neumayer, 2018; Li.lingling, 2015; Y. Wang & Mark, 2013).

3. Methodology

Sampling

The post on Zhihu "How to fairly evaluate US President Trump?" was chosen as sample resources. As of January 20, 2021, the post has received 1,314 responses and over 12.38 million views.

In qualitative research, researchers are often asked to collect saturated data and continue collecting and analyzing until no new information is available (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldaña, 2013). However, in this study, this rule did not fully

apply because one of the goals of this study was to examine popular comments about President Trump from netizens on Zhihu. Previous studies have shown that the more likes or followers an opinion receives on social media, the greater the influence of the communication (De Vries et al., 2012; L. Liu, 2018). To this end, researchers adhere to two principles when selecting samples: First, the samples must have a high number of likes, and second, the saturation of these samples must be considered.

Based on the above considerations, responses with more than 10 likes (Like) to that post   were collected as research data at the beginning of this study. A total of 374 responses and the corresponding 840 comments were collected. Then, combined with data saturation, the collected data finally amount to 81 responses and the corresponding 246 comments. The average word count for each responses was 1753 Chinese characters, which were analytical responses rather than simple comments.

After sampling, demographic analysis showed that the percentage of 30-39 year olds was 26%, while the percentage of 20-29 year olds was 74% of the 81 respondents. Meanwhile, it showed that 33 of them have a bachelor's degree, 41 have a master's degree, and 7 have a doctorate degree. Besides, most of them work in consulting, investment, retail, internet, technology and cultural media and other industries, and 22 of them are in management or entrepreneurship.

It is worth noting that, unlike the traditional mechanism for forming opinion leaders, the popularity of opinions on Zhihu is determined by the number of likes from netizens; the more likes an opinion receives, the more opportunities it is pinned. in other words, the opinions of respondents in this study that receive many likes represent not only the respondent's own opinion, but also the general attitude of all Internet users who like the answer.

Coding and Analysis

The study method employed in this study is qualitative content analysis, which understands large amounts of data by reducing the raw information, then identifying important themes, and finally extracting meaning from the data to create logical chains of evidence (Schreier, 2012). The most common classification strategy used in qualitative data analysis is coding. A disadvantage of using meaning as a unit of analysis is that coding can become too subjective. For this reason, this study used two coders for coding and cross-checking, as well as enlisted the help of third parties to limit subjectivity.

During the coding process of this study, the coders noticed that most of the netizens' opinions have an obvious praising or criticizing attitude, which makes the coding theme easy to identify. For this reason, coding themes are divided into positive, negative, and neutral evaluations. The positive rating includes the following subthemes: Crisis sense and pragmatic mind, strong will and iconoclastic mind, reform and innovation spirit, and maverick personality. The sub-themes of negative evaluation are: Lack of foresight and consideration, lack of crisis management ability, interest-driven mindset, "anti-intellectual" thinking, and privilege thinking. The neutral evaluation, it is mainly a combination of positive and negative evaluation. Therefore, there is no need to develop subthemes. The specific coding and analysis procedures are listed in the following table.

Table 1. Coding procedures, Analysis procedures and Rules for this study

Procedures:

1. Two coders first read all the data independently two times to get an overall impression .

2. Then discuss and determine the coding themes and subthemes

3. Each response is considered as a coding unit and the core meaning is extracted from each coding unit. Two coders independently completed the meaning extraction of 81 coding units.

4. Two coders cross-check every core meaning to ensure that they are basically consistent. In the case of major discrepancies, ask a third person for help.

5.Classify the 81 extracted core information according to the coding subthemes.

6.Merge and refine the core information under each coding subtopic to obtain the subthemes coding result.

7. Merged and organized the results of the coding subthemes to get the coding themes' results, and calculate the total number of likes each coding themes received.

Rules:

a.   Each response from the dataset is a coding unit.

b.   Core information from a coding unit is classified as only one coding theme. If a coding unit contains multiple coding themes (e.g., both positive and negative ratings), it is determined based on the content ratio of the different ratings. For example, if more than 50% of the content of a coding unit is positively rated, it is classified as "positively evaluation" and vice versa. A coding unit is classified as "neutral" if the positive and negative ratings are approximately equal.

The purpose of this study was to examine the popular evaluation of Trump by the Zhihu netizens. Accordingly, the author believes that the most effective method is to examine the netizens' attitude by the number of likes for each evaluation theme. Therefore, the number of likes in each coding theme becomes a reference value for evaluating netizens' attitude. According to the coding, these responses and their corresponding comments received a total of 85,278 likes. The highest number of likes is 15,009 and the lowest is 10. The coding results are shown in the following table:

Table 2. The Coding Results of the Comments on President Trump

Coding themes(subthemes)	Number of Samples	Obtained likes	Proportion (N=85,278 likes)	Core evaluation viewpoints
Positive comments (crisis sense and pragmatic mind, strong will and iconoclastic mind, reform and innovation spirit, and maverick personality)	35	36,392	43%	He is the fourth greatest president to slow down the decline of the US.
Negative comments (lack of long-vision and consideration, lack of crisis management ability, profit-oriented consciousness, "Anti-intellectual" thinking and privilege mind)	30	33,957	40%	He is the second Hoover to accelerate the decline of the US
Neutral comments	16	14,929	17%	He is the President with first-rate dreams but second-rate political wisdom.

4. Results

Positive Evaluation: The Fourth Greatest President of the U.S.

The positive views received 36,392 likes, a 43% share. Among these positive views, Trump is ranked as the fourth greatest president in the history of the United States. Netizens appreciate his pragmatism values, his strong will in the face of adversity, as well as his spirit of reform and innovation and his maverick personality.

Trump's sense of crisis and pragmatism address America's most pressing problems

Among the positive comments, Trump's crisis awareness and pragmatism were greeted with great enthusiasm by young Chinese netizens. The commentaries mainly emphasized the dangerous period of U.S. national strength after years of exhaustion and the serious polarization of the U.S. between the elites and the masses, which has led to serious domestic contradictions. Therefore, they praised Trump's isolationist strategy such as quantitative easing, reduction of foreign

policy, withdrawal from many international organizations and trade war with China, etc. Netizens see it as an innovative and pragmatic strategy to effectively resolve the internal conflicts in the United States.

Catfish, the American Dream and Perseverance in Adversity

Young Zhihu netizens expressed great sympathy for Trump's political experience. Many netizens said traditional political circles expressed great disdain, disgust, hostility and disapproval over his "arrival" because Trump suddenly burst into American politics like a "catfish" or an uninvited guest. In such a difficult political environment, however, Trump did not back down, but continued to adhere to the strategy of "making America great again." In particular, his governing strategy of focusing on the interests of the middle and lower classes of the United States rather than the interests of the elites earned him much applause. His spirit deserves sympathy and admiration. They highlighted the fate of two well-known reformers in China to pay tribute to Trump's tenacity, reforming spirit and unprecedented sense of historical responsibility.

Shang Yang's reform of the Qin Dynasty (more than two thousand years ago) caused him to be "torn apart" by five horses, and Wang Anshi's reform (more than one thousand years ago) caused him to be dismissed twice. Consequently, death in the depression ensued. The historical events showed that once reformers challenged established social rules and order, all types of resistance will be prompted, including some events that turned into bloodshed and cruel death. **(GJCaesar)**

Trump's Reform and Innovation Spirit and Maverick Personality

In the eyes of netizens, Trump's spirit of reform and innovation is reflected in the following two aspects: 1) Governing strategy, they praise Trump for implementing some governing strategies that are completely different from those of traditional politicians, which has resulted in the Trump administration giving the United States the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years and the longest economic growth in a four-year term. 2) Governing style: netizens praised him for the gradual implementation of his campaign promises after taking office. Rather than being inconsistent in words and actions like traditional politicians. And his Twitter governance is an innovative and people-friendly move.

He bypassed the control of the mainstream media and chose the most direct route from top to bottom (from the highest level of government to the lowest level of society) to spread his thoughts. I admire his ability to turn disadvantages into advantages and his idea that all people are equal. **(Niulanshan jushi)**

In addition to his reforms, innovations and perseverance, his straightforwardness and non-hypocrisy are often mentioned by young netizens. They praise him for not being as slick as a traditional politician, but expressing his opinions openly and truthfully. In short, the governing style and the governing successes that result from the advantages of Trump's characteristics are the main reason for his positive rating by netizens.

Negative Evaluation: "The Second Hoover"

Negative views received a total of 33,957 likes, a 37% share. The views indicated that President Trump, like Hoover, is a president who mishandled the crisis, plunged the United States into a major crisis, and brought down the international credibility of the United States.

Lack of Long-Term Vision and Consideration

One of the most popular negative comments emphasized Trump's lack of long-term vision and consideration, which has led to an accelerated decline in the U.S. international image. First, Trump has only stated that the whole world 'benefits' from the United States, but he has ignored U.S. obligations and responsibilities to play the role of global hegemony. Second, Trump has been labeled as the main culprit for both the U.S.-Europe trade war and the U.S.-China trade war. These trade wars have dealt a fatal blow to the United States, which is highly dependent on global trade. Third, Trump's "America First" policy has undermined U.S. political credibility and led to its decline on the world stage.

Lack of Crisis Management Abilities

Trump's lack of crisis management skills is another important aspect that has led to negative reviews. Netizens pointed out that during Trump's presidency, the COVID -19 epidemic in the United States spiraled out of control due to his lack of crisis management skills. This outlier continued to impact U.S. economic development and the social security system, leading to a series of crises. Specifically, they stated that the COVID -19 crisis triggered a crisis of social instability and led to rising unemployment and an economic crisis in the United States, and the out-of-control epidemic led to a hegemonic crisis of the United States in the world

It is worth noting that many netizens have emphasized that the crisis of the U.S. epidemic is not solely due to Trump. The U.S. democratic electoral system may bear some responsibility, as electoral rules force the president to adapt to the short-sightedness of ordinary people and abandon his long-term vision and consideration as a politician. The following response received 3684 likes.

"Different political systems have their advantages and disadvantages. In the authoritarian system of the East, the people

have only indirect influence on politicians, allowing them to make relatively independent decisions without too much interference from the public. However, In the democratic system, the people's votes can directly determine the political sustainability of politicians, which is likely to lead politicians to abandon some long-term, broad strategic agreements for short-term electoral gains." **(Yun Shijun)**

Transactional Thinking, "Anti-Intellectual" Thinking and A Sense of Privilege

Negative critiques suggest that weaknesses in Trump's character, such as interests first, anti-intellectual thinking, and a strong sense of privilege, have led him to make a variety of decisions that lack long-term vision and consideration. First, his transactional thinking has led the United States to alienate itself from its values-based allies and ultimately lose its international credibility. Second, Trump's "anti-intellectual" thinking and his "populist" and "scapegoating" style have led to the delays, confusion, and failure of the U.S. government under his leadership to respond to the epidemic. Third, a sense of privilege tempted him to act recklessly when he was in power, without regard for the country's credibility.

Overall, the results of the negative reviews show that the views of young netizens are very similar to those of the state media. They all emphasize that he lacks a long-term vision and consideration, and that he is a profit-hungry American supremacist.

Neutral evaluation: A President with First-Rate Dreams but Second-Rate Political Wisdom

The neutral rating received 14,929 likes, which is a 17% share. This includes mainly positive and negative ratings in roughly equal proportions. These views suggest that the U.S. economy has indeed grown during Trump's tenure, the unemployment rate has declined, and illegal immigration problems have been gradually resolved. However, long-standing U.S. international political credibility has been destabilized and the global political and economic system established by the United States has faltered. Second, the neutral evaluation highlighted that he has attracted public attention through his performance personality and that he worships power and prefers to control everything, including his will over others. All in all, Trump is a contradiction: his merits make him a good businessman, but his shortcomings make it impossible for him to be an outstanding president. He is considered a president with first-rate dreams and enthusiasm, but second-rate political wisdom.

5. Discussion

As the descriptive results showed, netizens' evaluations are mainly focused on the two themes of praise and criticism, and only 17% of them are neutral. This means that the public opinion of the majority of Zhihu netizens about Trump is in a state of opposition. This prompted us to discuss the following: What causes netizens to make positive evaluations? And what caused the netizens' negative evaluations?

Reasons for Positive Evaluations

From the netizens' positive comments about Trump, it can be surmised that the pursuit of individualism may be an important reason for the positive evaluations. Today's young people have grown up in the Internet age and have long been familiar with Western ideas and practices. In particular, some of them have reached higher levels of education and even have Western studying and life experience, which makes them more receptive to the value of equality among people, as well as free competition, equal opportunity, individual rights, etc. (Triandis, 1995).In addition, China is an increasingly competitive and unpredictable society, people live in a state of insecurity because there is no relatively effective national social security system, and wealth inequality and social inequality seriously affect people's well-being (F. Liu, 2011; Y. Yan, 2009). This situation leads them to strive for personal success and the full realization of their own value, and they seek high investment, high intensity, high income, high cost and high return (H. Zhu & Yu, 2020).

Moreover, one observer pointed out that individualism in China today is not only full of self-confidence and the unique power of national prosperity, but also involves deep personal anxieties and insecurities (Tao, 2020). In this context, Trump's legendary experience from businessman to president, as well as his strong will and spirit of reform and innovation, deeply inspire Chinese youth who strive for personal values and personal success. They see in Trump great achievements of "equal opportunity," "free competition," and individualism, and Trump is seen as a beacon of individualism.

Second, Trump's maverick character corresponds to the desire of young people to develop a free personality. This is because Confucianism, which is prevalent in Asian societies, emphasizes the following values: authority, hierarchy, avoiding direct conflict, saving "face," etc. These values encourage people not to easily express their uniqueness or excellence, but to try to remain ordinary and mediocre (Huntington, 1993). These values not only lead most people to be forced to suppress their personalities and hobbies in order to fit into society (Han, 2017), but also lead Chinese politicians to carefully maintain their image of aristocracy and authority. Against this background, Trump's sincere and honest personality and image of an open and transparent politician are refreshing to young people.

Third, the recognition of pragmatist values is an important factor in triggering positive evaluations. As mentioned in the

literature review, the value of pragmatism in China is highly recognized by both officials and the public. It is essentially a success-oriented ethic (Xie, 2021). It evaluates motives and means based solely on successful effects (outcomes) and uses actual benefits as the basis for ethics. This eventually led to the adoption of a social psychology in China that reveres success and power; in other words, any price can be sacrificed for success (Shen, 2007). Under the influence of these values, the Chinese highly recognize Trump's governing style and achievements because he discovered and solved the current pressing problems of the United States in a timely manner.

Fourth, the dissatisfaction of some young people with the status quo of Chinese society may have contributed to these positive comments. In this study, netizens called for more Trump-like officials in China. This appeal contains two meanings: First, young people agree with Trump's distribution method, which focuses on the interests of the middle and lower classes. As the gap between the rich and the poor in China is currently too wide and the social class is deeply divided, this has aroused the resentment of young people who long for a fair and equitable distribution of benefits (Q. Wu, 2014; Ye, 2013). It is worth noting that demographics have shown that the Zhihu netizens in this study may be vested interests due to their high level of education and social status. However, the authors believe that the more educated they are, the more they care about the fairness and justice of the whole group in society. Based on this, Trump's preference for distributing the interests to ordinary people rather than those of the elite class is more in line with the psychological expectations of Zhihu netizens for qualified politicians. Second, such appeals indicated that young people's dissatisfaction with the rigidity of China's current civil service, which tends toward formalism and a lax work style due to the lack of effective control over officials in the "political model of meritocracy" (Fan, 2013). In this context, Trump's down-to-earth working style is a very clear advantage.

Fifth, confrontation with official public opinion may have led to positive comments. The literature review mentions that public opinion on the Internet has been a kind of deconstruction and confrontation with official public opinion since the day it was created (Li.lingling, 2015). In China, the image of Trump in state media is almost exclusively negative. Therefore, based on the confrontation psychology, young people naturally want to praise Trump. Moreover, we found that even if the content of the official media is true and objective, this overwhelming tendency to report negatively can still lead to resentment among netizens. This is because people with liberal tendencies are used to viewing China's state media as "a government propaganda tool designed to control people's minds" (Farkas & Neumayer, 2018; Li.lingling, 2015).

Reasons for Negative Evaluations

From the descriptive results, it appears that the influence of traditional political culture may have played an important role in the formation of negative evaluations. As pointed out in the literature review, although the influence of traditional Chinese political culture has decreased with industrialization, the millennia-long entrenchment of authoritarian culture, especially the authoritarian personality in the Chinese subconscious, has led most people in China to still believe that a good president must have rich political experience, long-term vision, and the ability to consider the overall situation. In this context, Trump's surprise victory in the presidential election and the subsequent revelation of the enormous shortcomings of the lack of political wisdom and governing experience has led these young people to conclude that Trump is not a qualified president at all. It is worth mentioning that these young people are undoubtedly also influenced by Western liberal and democratic values, and they too pursue individualism and personal success, but the profound influence of traditional political culture, especially authoritarian personality and authoritarian culture, has unconsciously influenced their evaluation criteria for politicians.

Second, the influence of state media on public opinion has led to these negative evaluations. In China, the state media has an unprecedented influence on public opinion and has transferred this influence to social media. Although there are many voices against official public opinion on the Chinese Internet, about nearly half of the people still trust the state media (Farkas & Neumayer, 2018). This is because official reports about Trump generally stick to the facts, despite their exaggerations. In this case, it is normal for those netizens who have a more authoritarian personality (more conservative) or who are strongly influenced by traditional political culture to follow or agree with the official rhetoric.

Third, China's current trend in public opinion of " rise in the East and decline in the West " has played an important role. For nearly a decade, Chinese youth have been influenced by the concept of national rejuvenation, and their views of Western countries and Western capitalist models have turned negative, while support for China and socialism with Chinese characteristics has increased significantly (E. Li, 2021). In the economic domain, for example, young people are strongly influenced by Stiglitz's view that "the neoliberal economic model is dying without effective adjustment" (GuanVideo, 2020b). In the cultural domain, they argue that extreme Western individualism is accelerating the fragmentation of American society (Freymann & Wong, 2021). In the political sphere, public opinion generally emphasizes that the Western democratic system has one major flaw, namely that it is too procedural. Under the influence of this public opinion, combined with some facts about President Trump: such as personal shortcomings and short-sighted governmental strategies, Trump is seen as an unqualified president by these Zhihu netizens.

6. Conclusion

This article conducted qualitative content analysis to examine young netizens' popular comments on Zhihu about Trump and explore the reasons for these different comments. The results show that 43% of views praised Trump's sense of crisis and pragmatic values, his strong will, his spirit of reform and innovation, and his idiosyncratic personality, and saw Trump as the great president who will save America. 40% of views condemned Trump as "the second Hoover." They criticized his lack of vision and consideration, his lack of crisis management skills, as well as his interests-oriented thinking, anti-intellectualism, and sense of privilege that accelerate the decline of the United States. Only 17% of views consider Trump a president with first-rate dreams but second-rate political wisdom.

Further analysis revealed that for netizens with positive comments, individualism, pragmatism, dissatisfaction with the social status quo, and the influence of the mode of public opinion confrontation are the main reasons why they praise Trump. In particular, they see Trump as having made great achievements in the areas of "equal opportunity," "free competition," and individualism and Trump was seen as a role model for their pursuit of personal values. Netizens who hold a negative opinion are strongly influenced by China's traditional political culture and official public opinion, as well as the trend of the "rise of the East and decline of the West," which leads them to follow the Chinese "Meritocracy Political Model" in evaluating Trump.

The above findings suggest that the ideology and values of most highly educated groups do not provide a relatively neutral and unbiased assessment of controversial issues based on their profound knowledge and capacity for deep thinking. Instead, their opinions often reflect opposing ideologies and value orientations. This is consistent with previous studies by scholar. Ye Li (2013) said that the ideological values of most highly educated Chinese youth are often diametrically opposed. This is still true 10 years later.

Limitations of the study include the limitation of sample data and the opinions of young Chinese netizens from single websites, which means that the generality of the study cannot be applied to all young Chinese netizens. However, although not all young Chinese netizens were invited to express their opinions, it is clear that the selected response illustrates the views of young Chinese netizens and their opinions on Trump.

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