

The Dilemma and Solution of College Students for Self-Realization Under the Influence of Modern Individualism

Based on the Data Analysis of Five Colleges and Universities in G Province

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Abstract—In the process of modern social transformation, various values conflict with each other, making a great impact on the college students. This paper uses questionnaires to understand how contemporary college students view Western individualistic values and what are the misunderstandings. From the theoretical misunderstanding, historical motivation, practice strategy, etc., it discusses the countermeasures for college students' self-realization dilemma.

Keywords—modern individualism; self-realization; dilemma

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the reform and opening up, Chinese society has undergone dramatic changes. Multiculturalism and diverse social trends are constantly impacting people's spiritual world. Individualism is an important force that cannot be ignored. Then, for the contemporary group of college students, in the process of pursuing the value of individual existence, how to position themselves, how to treat others, and how to deal with the relationship between self and society, are real problems they need to face. Through the research of theory and practice of this subject, this paper hopes to explore the dilemma of individualism for contemporary college students to achieve self and provide solutions to this problem.

II. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON MODERN INDIVIDUALISM AND SELF-REALIZATION AT CHINA AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Individualism is the core value of the West, and international research on modern individualism is fruitful. In the 19th century, the term individualism officially appeared. In the 1840 issue of "On American Democracy," the French political thinker Tocqueville's essay created the term "individualisme" to mean an ideology that differs from egoisme. He believes that this individualism is the product of democracy, which develops with the expansion of identity equality. Identity equality creates a large number of "individuals." These people do not owe to others and do not resort to others. They are used to thinking independently and

think that their fate is only in their own hands. Tocqueville believes that this is the root cause of individualism in a democratic or capitalist system, but not in aristocracy system. The British scholar Lukes (2001) analyzed the differences in the semantics of individualism in the semantics of each country. Dewey and Hayek (2013) use the "new and old individualism" and "true or false individualism" to express their own understanding of individualism. Daniel Bell (2007) and Giddens and others in the analysis of modernity theory emphasize the origin of modern individualism and Christianity, and analyze the development dilemma of modern individualism in the contemporary. Liberals such as Hayek and Isaiah Berlin have a positive attitude towards individualism and resolutely defend individual standards while correcting individualist theories. The communitarian Charles Taylor (2001) criticized individualism and expressed his concern about the modernity confusion caused by individualism.

In the area of self-realization research, Abraham Harold Maslow, a psychology master of humanism in the United States, focused his research on the mentally healthy individuals in the demand hierarchy theory proposed in the 1940s, especially those who called "self-realization." He tries to sum up the commonalities of those who are satisfied with life, able to reach their potential and creative. Another representative of humanistic psychology, Rogers, believes that the so-called self is the sum of all the life experiences of a person's past. If these life experiences are passively involved, or the result of the will of others, then we will feel that we are not doing ourselves. On the contrary, if these life experiences are our active participation and the result of our own choice, then whether the life experience is happy or sad, we will feel that we are doing ourselves. Social psychology mainly examines the self in the level of social relations and emphasizes the social premise that self-realization needs to be established. In the book *Struggle for Acknowledgement*, Axel Honneth emphasizes that moral self-realization needs to be based on the recognition of others from the perspective of moral psychology. The process of establishing self-relationship is also a process of self-acquisition and self-

identification and self-identification and other people's identification. Alan Bloom (2011) compares American universities with European universities and expresses the impact of American individualistic education on the self-realization of American college students. This provides a useful reference for us to analyze the impact of modern individualism on the self-realization of Chinese college students according to China's national conditions.

The study of individualism in China has undergone an ideological shift. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, before the reform and opening up, due to the special historical background, the theory of individualism was basically abandoned in China. For example, "Individualism is the resistance to progress" and "The development of individualism will lead to political reaction." At the beginning of the reform and opening up, scholars had a heated discussion on Western individualism. At this time, scholars' critique of individualism has not completely deviated from the influence of ideology, but it has begun to focus on academic research. For example, "On personal struggle", "Psychological issues on personal realization and social realization - Concurrently on the psychology of self-Implementation". With the constant changes in historical conditions, scholars have deepened their understanding of individualism by the beginning of this century. More scholars began to analyze the soil generated by individualism, the path of its formation, and the impact on China's modernization, e.g., "The debate on the concept of individualism" and "Re-examination of the individualistic approach". Of course, some scholars have already paid attention to the influence of individualism on the values of contemporary college students, but the critical path is to cut from a macro perspective. Although it expresses the impact of individualism on college students, it does not enter into a deep analysis of the impact of college students' self-realization.

Based on the research and questionnaires of the above-mentioned literatures, this paper investigates the actual influence of modern individualism on college students' self-realization from an empirical perspective, comprehensively rethinks the incentives of combing the problems, and explores ways to solve problems.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Research Object

This study used cluster sampling to investigate college students in Guangdong Province. The questionnaires were distributed mainly in five universities in Guangdong Province (Sun Yat-Sen University, South China University of Technology, Jinan University, South China Normal

University, South China Agricultural University). A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed, of which 591 were valid questionnaires with an effective rate of 90.9%. After removing the missing values from the survey sample, there were 291 male students, accounting for 49.2%, and 399 female students, accounting for 50.8%. From a professional point of view, there are 340 liberal arts students, accounting for 57.5%, and 251 science students, accounting for 42.4%. In general, the distribution of samples is relatively broad and has a strong representativeness.

B. Research Tools

This study used a self-made questionnaire as a measurement tool, using a five-point Likert Scale. The subject of the questionnaire consists of 30 questions and is divided into two parts. The first part, (No. 1-21), assessing the moral dilemma encountered by college students in self-realization, mainly around four interrelated dimensions.

(1) Self-interest and individualism (1, 2, 6, 7, 11), e.g. "I will choose to develop in a relatively developed region, because it can provide me with a lot of resources." (2) Instrumental rationality and value rationality (4, 8, 10, 14, 15), such as "the key to successful employment lies in personal ability." (3) Moral relativism and absolutism (16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21), such as "as long as most people in society think that an event or behavior is moral, and then it is moral." (4) Self-realized individual and social dimensions (3, 5, 9, 12, 13), such as "self-realization depends on others to help."

The second part (22-30) consists of 9 questions, referring to the Individualism and Collectivism Scale compiled by Triandis et al.

C. Examination of the Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

Data analysis was performed using the software SPSS20.0. The statistical methods used include: descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, analysis of variance, and so on. The questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability. The internal consistency index of the questionnaire was 0.703, indicating that the questionnaire was highly reliable. The two parts have Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.729 and 0.771, respectively, both within confidence intervals.

IV. RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

A. College Students Generally Encounter Moral Dilemmas in Self-realization

TABLE I. DESCRIPTION AND STATISTICS OF THE FIRST PART OF THE SCALE

	Egoism and individualism	Instrumental rationality and value rationality	Moral relativism and moral absolutism	Individual dimension and social dimension of self-realization	Average score of the first part of the scale
M	3.59	3.09	2.67	3.65	3.25
SD	0.89	0.95	0.97	0.92	0.96

It can be seen from "Table I" that the overall score of college students in the first part of the scale is higher than the critical value. Except for the dimensions of moral relativism and moral absolutism, the average values of all other dimensions are more than 3 points. Among them, the "self-realized individual dimension and social dimension" scored the highest, and "moral relativism and absolutism" scored the lowest. At the same time, the scores of "egoism and individualism" and "self-realized individual dimension and

social dimension" are much higher than other dimensions. It can be seen that the group of college students participating in the survey generally encounters certain moral dilemmas in self-realization, and mainly manifests themselves as individual dimensions of preference egoism, value rationality, moral absolutism and self-realization.

B. The Moral Dilemma Encountered by College Students in Self-realization Has Certain Differences

TABLE II. COMPARISON OF THE DEGREE OF MORAL DILEMMA ENCOUNTERED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT GENDERS

		Egoism and individualism	Instrumental rationality and value rationality	Moral relativism and moral absolutism	Individual dimension and social dimension of self-realization	Average score of the first part of the scale
Male	291	3.64 ± 0.90	3.10 ± 0.99	2.78 ± 0.94	3.63 ± 0.95	3.29 ± 0.95
Female	300	3.57 ± 0.88	3.08 ± 0.93	2.67 ± 0.99	3.05 ± 0.91	3.09 ± 0.93
t		88.57***	78.98***	66.00***	100.43***	83.50***

^a. Postil: *p<0.05, **p<0.01,***p<0.001

As can be seen from "Table II", there were significant differences in the dimensions of adolescents of different genders (p<0.001). Among them, female's scores in all dimensions are significantly higher than male's, indicating that males are more likely to encounter moral dilemmas than female in self-realization.

C. Cognition of College Students in Self-realization in Different Majors and Grades

It can be seen from "Table III" that, except for the dimensions of "moral relativism and moral absolutism", there is no significant difference in the dimensions of college students of different majors (p<0.001). Compared with liberal arts students, science students are more inclined to the individual dimensions of self-interest, instrumental rationality, moral absolutism and self-realization in the process of self-realization.

TABLE III. COMPARISON OF THE DEGREE OF MORAL DILEMMA ENCOUNTERED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT MAJORS

	N	Egoism and individualism	Instrumental rationality and value rationality	Moral relativism and moral absolutism	Individual dimension and social dimension of self-realization	Average score of the first part of the scale
Liberal arts	340	3.53 ± 0.99	3.05 ± 0.95	2.68 ± 0.99	3.64 ± 0.92	3.22 ± 0.96
Science	251	3.60 ± 0.88	3.16 ± 0.94	2.74 ± 0.91	3.66 ± 0.94	3.29 ± 0.92
F		0.75***	1.60***	4.16***	0.43***	1.74***

^a. Postil: *p<0.05, **p<0.01,***p<0.001

TABLE IV. COMPARISON OF THE DEGREE OF MORAL DILEMMA ENCOUNTERED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT GRADES

Grade	N	Egoism and individualism	Instrumental rationality and value rationality	Moral relativism and moral absolutism	Individual dimension and social dimension of self-realization	Average score of the first part of the scale
Freshman	165	3.56 ± 0.99	3.09 ± 0.93	2.65 ± 0.97	3.69 ± 0.95	3.25 ± 0.96
Sophomore	145	3.56 ± 0.99	3.10 ± 0.94	2.86 ± 0.99	3.64 ± 0.83	3.29 ± 0.94
Junior	154	3.53 ± 0.98	3.06 ± 0.95	2.68 ± 0.98	3.66 ± 0.86	3.23 ± 0.94
Senior	127	3.60 ± 0.92	3.20 ± 0.99	2.66 ± 0.99	3.55 ± 0.93	3.25 ± 0.98
F		3.60*	3.03*	1.76*	0.77*	2.29

^a. Postil: *p<0.05, **p<0.01,***p<0.001

It can be seen from "Table IV" that there are significant differences between the two levels of "egoism and individualism" and "moral relativism and absolutism" (p<0.05). From freshman to senior, the scores of the two dimensions have an increasing trend, indicating that college students have a tendency toward self-interest and instrumental rationality as the university experience is rich.

D. College Students Are More Inclined to Individualism in Their Values, But They Have Limited Knowledge

Attitude A was defined as "very agree" and "comparatively agreed", attitude B was defined as "unsure", attitude C was defined as "not agree" and "completely disagree". The non-parametric analysis method is then used to test the pros and cons of each sample in the second part of the scale. The results are shown in "Table V". Obviously

individualistic tendencies are questions of 22, 23, and 27, accounting for 33.3%. Obvious collectivist tendencies are

questions of 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, accounting for 55.5%. The tendency is not obvious is question 25, accounting for 11.1%.

TABLE V. COMPARISON OF THE DEGREE OF MORAL DILEMMA ENCOUNTERED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT MAJORS

	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30
Sample number of attitude A	515	551	391	171	468	291	458	272	395
Sample number of attitude B	61	32	153	221	98	189	95	181	144
Sample number of attitude C	15	8	47	199	25	111	38	138	52
Chi-Square	629.567	702.934	468.721	278.839	596.149	322.257	575.371	170.464	585.929
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp Sig	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

The sample mean of each question in the second part of the scale is plotted as a column chart. Then it can be seen that the average value is higher than 3, both for individuals with individualistic tendencies and for articles with more obvious collectivist tendencies. This tendency shows that college students have a certain tendency toward individualistic values. However, this understanding is limited, and the values of college students also have many elements of collectivist value. This duality of college students' values affects their self-realization process. (See "Fig. 1")

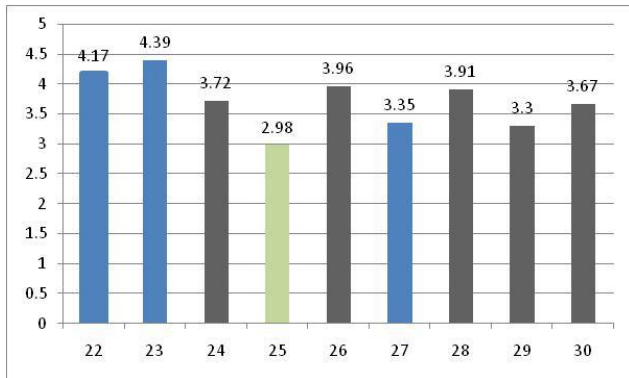


Fig. 1. Comparison of the quantized averages in the second part of the scale.

V. CONCLUSION

Influenced by Western individualism, contemporary college students face the following dilemmas: (1) Self-interest and individualism are confused. (2) Tool rationality prevails, and value rationality declines. (3) Moral relativism dominates and moral absolutism is weak. (4) Emphasize the individual dimension of self-realization and ignore the social dimension. The reasons for the above dilemmas can be analyzed from the following dimensions. First, with the changes of Chinese society, college students have deviations from the understanding of traditional collectivism and individualism. China's current society presents a situation of fragmentation between individuals and groups, causing people to pay attention to the former and ignore the latter in practice. This has affected young students' judgments on how to deal with the relationship between individuals and groups in the process of self-realization, which has led to the trend of extreme and one-sided. China needs to be examined in a

historical dimension. After the extreme collectivism baptism of the Cultural Revolution, the people of China now seem to equate collectivism with totalitarianism, and always have a certain distance from collectivism. With the transformation of Chinese society, the establishment of individual subjectivity advocated under the market economy has become the mainstream. Respecting individual individuality, safeguarding individual rights and realizing self-worth have become the consensus of people. But unfortunately, people seem to move from extreme collectivism to extreme individualism in their thoughts and actions, or as self-interest. The specific performance is profit-seeking, ignoring the other, ignoring the value of the community and the collective existence, only emphasizing "all for one", but obscuring the responsibility and obligation of "one for all", causing the rupture between individuals and groups in practice.

Second, there is insufficient education on values. Moral relativism impacts the world of students' lives. For young students, because their self-fulfillment process is destined to be influenced by the external atmosphere of the family, school and society, when the external atmosphere tends to be individualistic, they will undoubtedly agree on the value trend. But young students are in a special period of socialization. They are youthful and passionate, romantic and independent. They are good at discovering new things and absorbing new ideas. But in reality, they are easy to impulsive, emotional, and extreme, and need timely and correct guidance. For example, some students have evolved individualism into extreme self-interest in their thoughts and life practices. Some students use their classmates and friends as a means, but they rarely pay, and are eventually rejected and isolated by their classmates, thus making the process of self-realization full of twists and turns and uncertainty. Therefore, in China today, people urgently need to find a balance between individuals and groups, between themselves and others. From the current situation of China's ethics and morality, moral relativism has become the standard of dominance, and the indifference to the objectivity and universality of morality has caused a break between moral relativism and objectivism. This makes the self-realization of young students face the impact of nihilism, subjectivism, etc., and thus is in trouble. Behind the shrinking of value rationality and the confusion of moral beliefs are the relativistic values of people on the criteria of moral judgment. And relativism leads people to ambiguity and confusion in the judgment of right and wrong, good and evil in action. In

the process of self-realization, this also makes young students confused about how to locate the individual value of the self and how to realize the social value of the self.

This is a pluralistic era. The positive aspect of moral relativism is to respect the diversity and diversity of individuals, and to make people pay attention to the values and moral appeals of vulnerable groups and easily overlooked people. However, its drawbacks have become increasingly prominent, especially in China's current social transition period. The questioning and rejection of the unified standard makes people stay in the shadow of infinite and simple negation, making the value beliefs nihilistic, which further aggravates people's fear, confusion and anxiety in reality. People find that they can't find a safe place in the social tide, and they can't guarantee their independence. Correspondingly, in the world of daily life, people can't be spared, and of course they can't just go with it. They can only live with caution and worry to ensure basic survival needs and security needs. A higher level of respect and self-fulfilling needs have become a luxury.

In the course of self-realization, it was affected by moral relativism such as "all morals are relative", "value is subjective" and "morality is indifferent to right and wrong." Young people cannot correctly understand and judge their actions. As a result, they cannot build a positive moral self-view, let alone the right values. Therefore, the demand for the unity of moral objectivity and moral evaluation standards becomes inevitable. Although morality is diverse under the influence of different cultures and customs, morality is also common. As Oxford ethicist John Finnis puts it: "Human society cares about the value of human life. In all societies, self-protection is widely accepted as a suitable motivation for action. In any society, it is not allowed to kill humans without clear reason ... "[1]

Third, tracing back from the theoretical source, this puts the foundation of self-realization on the extreme individualism and egoism, and ignores the particularity of China's national conditions. Western modern individualism is suitable for the development of a capitalist society. However, in the current process of China's modernization, it is not applicable to China, which has caused the phenomenon of non-acclimatization, which has led to the tendency of extreme individualism and egoism. The emergence and development of modern individualism is related to its specific capitalist system. People must adhere to China's national conditions, base themselves on Chinese culture, absorb its positive aspects, and reduce its negative impact.

Western individualism developed on the basis of the establishment of western subjectivity in modern times. Enlightened by the Enlightenment thought, it "highly respects human dignity, everything is human-centered, especially individual values, and the individual is the purpose, not the means. It emphasizes individual will, and advocates self-control, self-control, and self-expression. And it is not subject to the interference and obstruction of foreign things, advocates self-expression and development, and realizes its own personality and potential with the greatest

possible possibility." [2] Although this kind of individualism shows a positive side for China affected by autocracy, for example, it guarantees the uniqueness and irreplaceability of individual life, the inviolability of individual freedom, and the non-negligibility of individual rights. However, the negative effects of this individualism have also become increasingly prominent. On the one hand, it enables people to confine themselves in a narrow self, which leads to individual life becoming more and more reduced to an atomic, isolated, and exclusive existence. In terms of epistemology and values, they hold a kind of shallow relativism, emphasizing that each self has the value of existence, and individuals can't challenge the values of others. These values don't matter whether they are right or wrong. Even crimes and shameful behaviors should be respected, because these are individual choices and should be respected. On the other hand, in their daily lives, they pay more attention to their own lives, which is disconnected from the entire world, leading to more and more mediocre and narrow life. As Charles Taylor puts it: "Make our lives less meaningful and less caring of others and society" [3], and thus fall into a sad state of self-respect.

Therefore, the negative consequences of modernity have turned the Enlightenment thought into an anti-Enlightenment force, and plunged into the quagmire of individualism after exaggerating the subjectivity. Especially in the current market economy of China, this individualism has evolved into egoism and materialism. People only pay attention to self-interest, and even do whatever they can for their own interests, harming others to benefit self. And young students put the foundation of self-realization above individualism. It is difficult to establish a connection between tradition and the future, nor to construct an ideal self in reality. The future becomes dim and empty, self-identification cannot be realized normally, and self-social value and self-realization become idle talks. This is neither conducive to the long-term development of the nation-state, nor to the individual's free and comprehensive development.

In the course of China's modernization, how to overcome the self-realization of individualism in the practice of daily life of college students can be considered and explored from the inside and outside.

First, from the external environment, it is necessary for the family, school, and society to go hand in hand, create a good social environment, actively cultivate awareness of recognition, and practice the education of socialist core values, which is conducive to the successful socialization of individuals and self-realization. . College students are in the forming period of outlook, philosophy and value view, and are susceptible to the impact of the external environment. Especially in today's diversified value orientations, facing the impact of consumerism, money worship, utilitarianism and other cultures, the self-realization process of young students is full of uncertainty. Leading the right values is important for a single subject, especially for young students. As General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized: "The value orientation of young people determines the value orientation of the whole society in the future" [4]. Increasing college students' correct understanding of the relationship between

the individual, self, collective, and society is a historical mission given to everyone in the modern era. As everyone knows, the fate of the individual and the state of the times are often intertwined. When the spiritual state of the times presents a harmonious and beautiful situation, the individualization and socialization of college students will also have good conditions, otherwise, it will be full of variables. The awakening and burst of individual life will require the emotional care of families, schools and peer groups. When the atmosphere of the entire society develops in a benign direction, it will provide protection for individual growth. As a member of a social group, when the germination and growth of individual rights awareness is guaranteed by the modern legal system, people will gain a sense of rules and regulations. When the individual's contribution to the community and self-recognition are recognized, the unity of the community will provide an overall guarantee for individual success. In short, college students' self-realization needs external care, proper guidance and education.

Secondly, whether college students' self-realization can be successfully implemented also depends on the individual's own knowledge and reality. First of all, college students need to objectively examine themselves cognitively, achieving neither humble nor pushy, but self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect in practice. When people use "the officialings", "rich second-generation", "poor second-generation", and "entrepreneurship second-generation" to describe young people's family status and actual living conditions, some young people start to get confused. Some people lost their ego under the glorious halo, looked down on the crowd with an arrogant attitude, treated others with a contemptuous arrogant attitude, and fell into a state of self-fictional narcissism. The other part is confused in inferiority, struggling between a full ideal self and a cruel real self, looking at the world with a humble attitude, examining themselves with a contemptuous attitude, and falling into a self-enclosing with full of remorse. When life cannot face the existence and value of self, people will not be able to correctly understand and locate themselves, and self-actualization will become idle talk. Therefore, to realize the premise of young students, they need to correctly understand and position themselves.

College students must keep the spirit of struggle, establish a progressive consciousness, transcend self, realize self, and maximize the potential of self. The course of self-realization needs to be supported by the spirit of struggle, so that the richness of individual life is constantly revealed. And this process itself is also a continuous process of self-generation, realization and transcendence. In short, young people should "release youthful passion and pursue youth ideals in their struggles" [5]. People need to experience the happiness of life existence in the continuous transcendence of self, and confirm the existence of life itself in the process of continuous self-realization. Therefore, when one regards self-actualization as an internal driving force, and regards this realization tendency as a frame of reference for life, then in the end, people can lead a good life and realize their full potential.

Third, in practice, people must have both a sense of individual responsibility and a sense of family and mission in the human community. General Secretary Xi Jinping called for "young people are the most energetic and the richest dreams. When a young person is prosperous, a country is prosperous, and when a young person is strong, a country is powerful." While realizing self, college students should actively assume social responsibilities, so that the individual's self-value and social value can be unified. One form of individual self-actualization is the manifestation of social consciousness. People are not only individual beings but also social beings. The formation of self-awareness and personality is established through the recognition of the other and the society, and the process of self-establishment is also the process of individual socialization, that is, the process of individual learning and survival training adapted to social norms. Therefore, the individualization and socialization of the subject is the same process. When the subject becomes a qualified member of society, it is also the completion of the process of self-realization by the individual.

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