Relative poverty, Materialism and Value
System Changing Among Chinese

Prepared by: Huang Shengxi
Sociology BA
Social Policy and Equal Opportunity Policies specialization
Professor of Thesis Writing Seminar
Dr. Andrew Ryder
# Table of Contents

1. **INTRODUCTION** ................................................................. 4

2. **LITERATURE REVIEW** ...................................................... 7
   
   2.1 **THE CONFUCIAN VALUE SYSTEM** ................................................. 7
   2.2 **THE CONNOTATION OF CONFUCIAN VIEWPOINTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BENEFIT BEFORE THE**
       **QIN DYNASTY** ........................................................................... 7
   2.3 **CHINESE ETHICAL THOUGHT AND PATERNALISM** ................................. 9
   2.4 **MARX** ...................................................................................... 10
   2.5 **COMMODITY FETISHISM** .......................................................... 11
   2.6 **MAMMONISM AND MONEY WORSHIP** ........................................ 13
   2.7 **MATERIALISM** ......................................................................... 16
   2.8 **RELATIVE POVERTY AND RELATIVE DEPRIVATION** ......................... 19

3. **METHODOLOGY** ................................................................. 22
   
   3.1 **ETHICS** .................................................................................. 22
   3.2 **RESEARCH METHODS** ............................................................ 24

4. **FINDINGS** ................................................................................. 26
   
   4.1 **BACKGROUND** ....................................................................... 26
   4.2 **RELATIVE DEPRIVATION** ........................................................ 26
   4.3 **ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE CONCEPT** ......................................... 26
   4.4 **MATERIALISM** ....................................................................... 27
   4.5 **IMPACT OF MATERIALISM** ...................................................... 28
1. Introduction

In the latter half of the twentieth century, there was a growing momentum for social justice as reflected in the welfare systems being developed as well as a drive for the minimum incomes and standards of living in most countries (Nye, 2008). Nowadays, it has become a booming trend to ensure the development of economy and the money-oriented nature of the materialism is undoubtedly an essential element of the society in most cities of the world. The large sections of the population, particularly in developed countries, are getting out of absolute poverty. Herein, China, as a developing country, is a typical representative nation. “China has lifted more people out of poverty than anywhere in the world.” (Stuart, 2015). However, in contemporary China, an increasing number of people are still trapped in relative poverty (Qiang, 1996).

Comparing the property to others or making a better living place is a necessary goal in the daily life of Chinese. In 1960, the ‘New China’ was established, and this transformation has broken the seclusion of China from the outside countries. Consequently, western values have been spread into every Chinese's life (Wang Yali, 2013). The rapid development of new technology, the arrival of the information age, as well as the spread of multinationals across the globe have accelerated these processes. Therefore, with exported products and business methods, the economic value of western countries, particularly the United States, has great influence on the world. The U.S mass culture has had a great influence on the world's mainstream culture for a long time, being instrumental in the spread of neoliberalism. The mass culture of the U.S originated from the industrial age. In essence, it is a consumption culture (Zhanling, 2013), embodying the structural requirement of the consumption-centered society. Therefore, Western scholars generally believe that the consumption of mass culture should not simply stay in the material sense and should be the so-called fashion behind the life style and value concept. Since China's entry into the World Trade Organization, China, as the largest emerging economy in the world, is influenced by not only the western market economy, but the western popular cultural values as well.
The western mass culture has not only shown a new cultural way to the Chinese people, but also brought about great impacts on the traditional Chinese values (Wang Yali, 2013). The traditional Chinese culture featured by "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, integrity" pays great attention to the moral and personal self-cultivation and contempt for external interests. "The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain." (Legge, 1901) As an obvious expression of righteousness, it ignores the benefits in the conflict between the benefit and the meaning of "die to achieve virtue." The western values fully affirm the positive effect of interest on people in terms of "the pursuit of personal interests as the natural rights of man." In fact, it is a human instinct to chase fame and interest. This value lies "in the market economic performance for the pursuit of money, and the pursuit of profit." Thereby, the significant criteria to measure a person's success is rights, status and wealth.

The difference of values is fundamentally ascribed to different economic and political developments as the external reflection of productivity. Since the reform and opening-up for many years, the Chinese economy, despite its great development, is still at the primary stage of socialism and its ownership structure embodies a variety of coexisting economic components as well as distribution methods. It is well known that the "economic base determines the superstructure;" (Chandler, 2000) social existence determines the society consciousness; the complexity of various economic components coexist; and the diversity of distribution leads to the change of people's values. The imbalance of social and economic development, the widening gap between urban and rural areas, as well as the economic development have brought about environmental pollution, energy exhaustion, corruption, social stratification, severe employment problems and so on. Traditional social relations are confronted with severe challenges, and the impact of western values makes the conflicts of values that represent different interests intensify, thus causing the changes of people's values.
To provide context to the research question, this thesis intends to discuss the literature review in the society and the individual value systems from ancient time, and then introduces the materialism and commodity fetishism by Marx. Furthermore, mammies is also included. The concepts of absolute poverty and relative poverty as defined by Peter Townsend are a key part of this discussion. The thesis also figures out how the Chinese views towards prosperity and material conditions have changed from the historical aspect and have had great impacts on people's value system. Thus, this thesis considers whether the levels of contentedness have increased or fallen since China started to embrace economic growth and modernization. To illustrate this thesis which deals with relative poverty and excessive consumption and to determine whether they are linked to the social problems, this thesis seeks to figure out whether excessive materialism is making people more self-centred and selfish. Furthermore, I firmly believe that relative poverty influences social cohesion, and may conversely increase social conflict.

The causes of relative poverty are diverse. Thus, the contributing process can be listed. In fact, different parts of China have different economic situations. For historical reasons, western values have come to China on account of globalization. The opening of China's economic borders, the interaction with the wider world and the adoption of certain enterprise models are reflected in the considerable economic growth and liberalization of China. Furthermore, media is a significant factor changing people’s values as well as encouraging consumerism and materialism. The group influence should be mentioned as well. In a psychological aspect, people easily get the effect and feel deprived in groups. Furthermore, this paper contrasts the present views with the Confucian thought, Marxism thought and other influential types of thoughts in the Chinese history. Nevertheless, this study figures out whether Materialism leads to a loss of a sense of community cohesion and solidarity. Furthermore, the interview is devoted to thinking more about solidarity and community cohesion. These are some significant points being discussed in this thesis.
The research questions of this thesis are therefore threefold: How does relative poverty effect China? Are there debates on the dangers of materialism and mammonism? Is materialism undermining Communism and Chinese identity? Is Confucius philosophy too paternalistic to lead and guide the Chinese? How are the society’s value system and individual system influenced by the above-mentioned factors? The topics researched are also included.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Confucian Value System

The Confucian theory, created by Confucius, is the most essential ideological tradition in the Chinese culture. "If the Chinese traditional culture is as a continuous history, then, this mainstream undoubtedly is Confucianism." (Guoliang, 2014) After more than thousands of years of development, the Confucian culture has exerted a far-reaching and lasting influence on people's basic spirit. The core values of Confucianism are the basis of the whole Confucianism ideology. Confucius attaches great importance to benevolence and propriety, and the Confucian value is constructed though benevolence as a core value.

Benevolence is the most significant core value concept of Confucianism. Confucius praised the ceremony and music culture, realizing the basis of the ritual, and finding that "benevolence" is the inner spiritual basis of the ritual. Then Confucius established the benevolence study.

2.2 The Connotation of Confucian Viewpoints of Righteousness and Benefit before the Qin Dynasty

The Spring and Autumn Period (771 to 476 BC) was the period of great social changes from the slave society to the feudal society in ancient China. Social turmoil took place so violently that the contradictions among all classes, different interest groups or individuals and families were unprecedented. It is a prominent social problem that how to understand the ethical principles and material interests of private economy.
Meanwhile, the contradiction between individual interests and the overall interest became severe during the social, economic, political and cultural transformations. The Confucian School established by Confucius opened the first precedent of “the discrimination of righteousness and the benefit” (Zhaoxiu, 2010) during the pre-Qin period (prior to 221 BC) in China. Their values of righteousness and benefit matched the social, political, economic and cultural conditions of this period.

The representative figures of the Pre-Qin Confucianism, including Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi, elevated “righteousness” to their fundamental ethical norms. And it is the basic principle that Confucians should handle interpersonal relations. Confucius attached great importance to "righteousness" (Zhaoxiu, 2010) as well as summed up the value and significance of "righteousness" (Zhaoxiu, 2010). Furthermore, he extended the meaning of “righteousness” to all aspects of philosophy, politics and education as well as regarded “righteousness” as the foundation for people to live with their own right.

From the perspective of value and ethics, righteousness refers to moral norms and requirements. Benefit refers to material interest. The relationship between morality and interest means the relationship between morality and interest, or the relationship between spiritual pursuit and material life (Zeying, 2003). Since morality is ultimately a reflection of economics and righteousness that essentially represents the interests of the entire society, the relationship between righteousness and benefits is also the relationship between the public welfare and self-interest, which is an unavoidable basic issue in life and one of the core issues in the history of Chinese ethics and ideology (Zeying, 2006). The answer changes with the development of the times. With the passage of time, righteousness and public interest are important, and should have universal meanings. In a sense, the relationship between righteousness and interest is also a special, objective, and necessary social relationship.

Righteousness is in an opposite way. After all, righteousness and benefits represent two relatively independent yet different value orientations. In fact, they are a community of contradictions. The moral ideal and the moral realm they seek are different from each other. “Righteousness is not profitable, and benefits are not righteous.” (Guojun, 1994)
Confucian’s righteousness and benefit views occupy a very vital place and have significant function in the ideological and moral system of his administration. The value orientation of virtue and the morality of “not being tempted by riches” (Zhaoxiu, 2010) are the basic principles guiding the value of social morality regarding political consolidation, social stability and wealth. He believed that righteousness refers to the spiritual needs of people's rational life and benefits are the material needs of people and their satisfaction. When compared with the material value, he paid more attention to spiritual value pursuit. In his view, to be a complete moral person in the real social life, one must “think of righteousness” first. It is necessary to take “righteousness” as the criterion, and “profitability” does not follow the principle of “righteousness”. He regarded “righteousness” as the moral standard of people's thought and behavior, paying great attention to it.

2.3 Chinese ethical thought and paternalism

The ancient Chinese civilization originated from the Yellow River and the Loess Plateau. People were living near the Yellow River, which caused a tendency that the early Chinese society and culture had worship for ancestors. In other words, people took multiplying and being prosperous as the highest value of their whole life. At that time, people tended to focus on the kinship as a link between the patriarchal clan relationship, and later developed it into a set of clan-centered values tied to the hierarchy system which is referred to as a patriarchal clan system. This origin constitutes the essence of Confucian Ethics: the family-centered hierarchical order of the family is different from the relationship with other people. The family involving different levels of people must keep their rules. Like a son has a moral standard as being a son, a father has a moral standard as being a father, and his son cannot do anything against his father's will. (Jingya, 2016)

Tung Chung-Shu (179-104B.C.) synthesized the works of Confucius and Mencius to come up with a blueprint for the creation of the civil society based on the hierarchical order and moral cultivation. It is known as the ‘San Gang Wu Chang’(三纲五常). ‘San Gang’ refers to the obligations attached to three key relationships in any given society between the king and his subjects; father and son; husband and wife. It is an essentially
social stratification with the focus on paternalism. ‘Wu Chang’ speaks of the five virtues, including benevolence (Ren), righteousness (Yi), propriety (Li), wisdom (Zhi), and trust (Xin). (Yu, 2015)

Since then, the system of family ethics, represented by Confucianism, has been deeply rooted in the Chinese family and society for over 1000 years. Furthermore, since ancient times, ethics has formed paternalism which has been hotly discussed by an increasing number of people in recent years. Jingya (2016) discussed paternalism as an act conducted by an individual, an organization, or a state to restrict the freedom or autonomy of a person or group's own rights or interests. Furthermore, it can be understood as an act of confronting or ignoring a person's will as well as showing a sense of superiority. In other words, a leader (take he as a father), representing others (take them as a wife or a son), always makes a "good" decision for them, even though such a decision may violate their wishes.

Although nowadays’ China is no longer a slave society or feudal society, paternalism still exists and is alive vividly. However, with the change of the social system, the emergence of this system of things does not totally disappear. The rapid development of the society, and the influence of paternalism in family may have already been diluted. Nevertheless, it is still alive in the society.

2.4 Marx

Marxism provides the interpretation of the world, as well as theories and methods about transforming the world and constructing new worlds. Marxism also illustrates the historical destiny of the proletariat and the direction of human emancipation, revealing the general structural rules regarding the human society and development. The socialist core values based on the Marxist scientific theory show that the essential provisions of socialism/Marxism are produced by the condition of capitalist production, whose primary goal is the maximization of profit. The scientific theory created by Marx is advancing with the times yet theoretically retains a utopian vision. The Marxist theory was originated in Europe in the 19th century, and later was spread throughout the world. Marxism had a huge impact on the world, playing an important role in history. With the
founding of the Communist Party of China, Marxism has become the guiding ideology (Marx & Engels., 1957)

Marxism experienced three important historical stages from the beginning when it was introduced to China until nowadays. Zhang Yu (2015) argued that the first stage was the founding of the Communist Party of China. Progressive values formed the new China by combining Marxism with the Chinese workers' movement. With the leadership of the Communist Party of China, they overthrew the imperialist' feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism (overthrow of militarist and nationalist regime of Chiang Kai-shek). Finally, the New China was established, and Marxism was established as the dominant ideology of the Socialist New China. The second stage started from the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to China’s reform and opening-up. In this period, the socialist values dominated the Chinese mainland, due to various historical events. Unfortunately, the socialist values established by New China were not originally the socialist values espoused by Marx and Engels, but the socialist values based on the Soviet model. Eventually, it led to the Cultural Revolution, and "unprecedented catastrophe due to the planned economic model of the Soviet model value and the social leadership (Yu, 2015). In this historical and political context, the value of terms, like materialism and relative poverty in today’s China, should be taken into consideration.

2.5 Commodity Fetishism

The term "fetishism" was originally derived from Portuguese and at that time it was a sign that the Portuguese believed in the west coast Africa people who worshiped some magical spell or talisman of primitive tribes. In 1760, a French historian and linguist, Richard Deborah, firstly explained the details of fetishism from the perspective of comparative religion, which means some types of "primitive psychology" or "natural" religious activities. From the religious point of view, "religious dictionary" (p728) holds that fetishism is opposite in meaning to "worshiping religion" and refers to "the primitive people using certain objects as living creatures before they are clearly defined religion." (Ji, 2009)
The Capitalist society was greatly promoted by the Industrial Revolution, having great impact on the development of social progress. Nonetheless, with the enrichment and development of commodities, money and capital emerged, the number of liberated working-class people was reduced through exploitation in the capitalist system as factory workers. Workers were increasingly restrained and enslaved by the things which they created and a human society was trapped in a society ruled by fetishism in which materialism became a religion (Engels, 1844).

Marx applied the abstract methods to criticize fetishism, revealed the good illusion of these in the capitalist society, established a scientific historical phenomenology and laid a solid foundation of the fetishism theory in the prominent position of the Marxist philosophy.

China's reform has already gone through four decades, and the socialist market economy has made great achievements. In fact, market economy has nothing to do with social nature, yet socialist countries still need to develop market economy. Particularly, at present, China needs to develop and improve productivity through a market economy in the primary stage of socialism.

Like commodity fetishism, the socialist market economy cannot escape the enslavement of currency fetishism, since "the riddle of currency fetishism is the riddle of commodity fetishism, but it becomes obvious, dazzling." (Marx, 2004) The currency is a special and universal general equivalent of goods. Commodity exchange began to emerge from the early stage of human society development, and its emergence and development reflected the progress and advancement of productivity. At the beginning, social relationship relied on people’s interaction yet later people started to depend on objects. Yuan Jianchun explained (2013) that this process also reflects the gradual move towards the freedom and independence of the process. Nonetheless, it is not an easy force for human and society to take a better way. Only if the productive forces are highly developed and the production of materials is accumulated to a certain extent, it may go well. Thus, during the process, there are many unreasonable and inhuman phenomena. Alienation and fetishism are the stages that the human society cannot avoid. (Xiaojiang, 2013) As long as the purpose of human production and labor is exchanged, it must bring
fetishism. As Marx pointed out, “when labor products are produced as commodities, then they will relate with the fetishism.” (Xiaojiang, 2013) Thus, commodity fetishism and currency fetishism will inevitably appear in the society with an exchange value, and then commodity fetishism and currency fetishism will be produced in the socialist market economy.

China is a socialist country and the basic economic system is the public ownership as the main body of multiple-ownership economy has achieved common development at the primary stage of socialism. Therefore, the state-owned economy must occupy the dominant position, and most of the capitals are owned by the state, while the people are masters of the country. Thus, capital is supposed to serve the people. There should not be a change to the status and a role of capital in China. In the socialist market, fetishism should not exist in the market. However, since the private capital of foreign capitalist enters to a socialist market continuously and China's own private capital keeps expanding, there are many possibilities for capital fetishism in a certain field. Thus, it is important to adhere to the dominant position of public ownership and play a leading role in the state-owned economy. It is important to keep a clear mind of the policy and try to prevent the large-scale expansion of private capital.

2.6 Mammonism and Money Worship

Money worship (mammonism), as the name implies, is like the primitive worship fetish, the same as the worship of gold. However, people would put money in their first value evaluation criteria. They will pay everything for getting money and they are willing to be slaves of money. It can be said that money worship is a vicious result of the development of commodity fetishism. At the stage of commodity fetishism, people dominated over their own or established relationships with others which is still in a blind state. People could not resist the domination by goods. In other words, commodity fetishism can also be considered as an inevitable trend of commercialization. When it comes to money worship, people's conscience and moral bottom line are involved. In the private ownership commodity economy, money, as a powerful "universal ruler," has gradually nurtured people's desire of money (Xiaojiang, 2013). Under these conditions, who has more money and more wealth, who will dominate life. It is easy to make
people do the things they do not want to earn money. Then they would change their attitude, even if they touch the bottom line of conscience, morals, or law. “It arouses the most despicable motives and passions of people, and by using any kinds of way to reach the achievement.” (Engels, 1844)

Regarding money worship, many scholars believe that money worship has three characteristics. First of all, humans would sacrifice themselves for money, sell personality, and even sell themselves. Secondly, people attribute themselves and others’ value to money. Thirdly, a person's personality is replaced with the characteristics of money. (Hong, 2009) (Shaohua, 2002-10) (Guoxing, 2006) In this study, money worship refers to people's worship of money and material power, regardless of social ethics, as well as unscrupulous pursuit of money and material. And these behaviors may even hurt other people's emotions.

However, Engels (2012) also pointed out that “From the first day to this, sheer greed was the driving spirit of civilization.” (Sarkis, 2012) This shows that money and desire play an essential role in the process of social civilization in the market economy, as well as promotes the constant momentum economic development. With the advent of money, money has brought countless conveniences to the exchange of goods in various sectors of the society. Nonetheless, once the double-edged sword is stained with greed, shameless, despicable demons, it will be stained with blood and evil.

Obviously, there is a close relation among the development of money worship, the historical stage of commodity economy and the role of money in people’s life. It is of certain historical inevitability. (Weiyan, 2015) After China’s reform and opening-up as well as the establishment of the market economy, China has achieved remarkable achievements that attracted worldwide attention. At the same time, many problems have also emerged due to the economic development. Among them, in the Party’s 14th National Congress, the problem of the proliferation of money-marketism has reported China’s disclosure in the development of the market economy.

“Money is not a panacea. But without it, it is absolutely unacceptable.” (Xiaojiang, 2013) An increasing number of people are convinced by this quote. In the past,
"money" was a topic that cannot be avoided in Chinese people’s daily life. The definition of an enterprise in the political economy is to offer economic and economical organizations that provide goods and services from the production and operation activities to the society. (Ghai, 1977) The enterprise is the most significant market subject. In the socialist market economy of China, earning profits is the key. However, it is essential for enterprises to consider their responsibilities and obligations in the market. After implementing market economy in China, some companies only know about profitability without thinking creditworthiness. They only care about themselves.

The media lacks responsibilities. As a multi-faceted information dissemination platform in the society, the media plays an essential value orientation role in people's social life. After the reform and opening-up, the media industry has also developed rapidly with the national economy. News, television programs, advertisements, newspapers, periodicals, magazines, and so forth all have great influences on people's lives. With the rapid development of the media industry and the intensification of competition within the industry, the viewership and click-through rate have become essential things in the media. The media seems to have forgotten their social responsibility since they have a lot of economic benefits. In recent years, there has appeared a special phenomenon about woman in China. Some Chinese women have indicated that they prefer a spouse who can excessively spend money or purchase material things for her, and some Chinese girls even use economic ability as the only criterion to find their spouse. In China, feminist matrimonialism is spread to everywhere in the society, affecting the lives of individuals, and producing negative social consequences. No matter to whom, there will be a negative impact on the overall development of women. (Haifeng, 2013)

There are different people's views on wealth after the reform and opening-up, which is the capitalist decadent aspect. Since China in the economic globalization started reform and opening-up, the trend of the process has been accelerating. Many aspects, including the economy, politics, technology, cultural communication and communication between countries, are getting closer. Due to the impacts of the planned economic system and corresponding egalitarian values, people are afraid of talking about money. With the opening of country, capitalist countries play a dominant position in the world, and their
value attitudes inevitably affect Chinese people's social life. Meanwhile, the economy of the capitalist country has developed to a comparatively developed stage’. Thus, in the capitalist economy, various phenomena of fetishism would constantly stimulate people’s view of wealth. (Yali, 2013)

Individualism, hedonism and egoism as decadent ideas of personal interest, personal enjoyment as the main purpose as well as entertainment in life continue to grow in China's private ownership economic components. An increasing number of people have begun to accept them. People's attitude towards money and wealth has been gradually distorted, no matter they are normal people or party cadres. A large part of them began to do business. Thus, the number of business in the community soared and they aimed to get rich quickly. Speculation, tax evasion, counterfeiting, and other “smart ideas” were spread fast in the society. The economic order has been destroyed and the social atmosphere has been messed up. People's expansion of money and material desires exceeds reason, and the tide of worship is gradually rising in people's distorted view of wealth. Long-term poverty is a reverse outbreak of the poor and the weak.

2.7 Materialism

The Chinese society is currently undergoing rapid transformation. With the change of social structure and the integration of economic system, people's ideas and lifestyles are also changing quickly in the process of globalization and information. The intersection of the east-west culture and confrontation has brought about dramatic changes in the contemporary values which are well reflected in the materialistic values. It can be seen that two diametrically opposed effects are colliding violently. On the one hand, society condemns materialistic extravagance and advocates sustainable development. Many people consider that it is important to voice out their “need.” On the contrary, they ask for paying more attention to "the need of restriction." On the other hand, society is encouraging people to increase consumption to stimulate the economy. Those commercial organizations make great efforts to obtain profits. These behaviors stimulate economic consumption, which has promoted the current social pursuit of fashion, wasteful spending and conspicuous consumption. In 2009, China's total consumption of luxury goods accounted for 27.5% of the world. It was the first time it
surpassed the United States and became the second country with most luxury companies in the world, following Japan. Every market targets China as a potential customer. This phenomenon is not ascribed to the large population base of China, but the large number of luxury consumers as well. It is also because there are lots of people who seem to enjoy high consumption. (Yuan, 2015)

Many scholars have probed into the connotation of materialism. At present, there are several kinds of representative definitions. The Oxford Dictionary defines materialism as being obsessed with the pursuit of material needs and desires, leading to a disregard for spiritual life, and a complete expression of interest in material life, opinion and behavior. Chan and Prendergast (Chan, 2007) defined materialism as a set of attitudes that property is a symbol of success and its possessions occupy a central place in life. Fournier and Richins (Fournier, 1991) believed that materialism regards material possession as the center of the gravity of life, and the consumption behavior is the fulfilment of life. Belk (Belk, 1985) defined materialism as the importance that consumers give to worldly possessions. From the above discussion, this paper sums up the contemporary connotation of materialism which is the pursuit of material wealth as the highest value of life. It takes physical enjoyment as the ultimate orientation of life and emphasizes on the acquisition, possession and materialism use of personal material wealth as a measure of judging all the values and standards. (Weiyan, 2015)

By the end of 2013, in a survey conducted by the French market research firm (Ipsos), also referred to as the survey of “global materialism, wealth management and family attitudes”, 71% of Chinese claimed they would measure individual success according to how much they own. (Xie T, 2013. From this, it can be seen that contemporary Chinese materialism is everywhere, even to the point of overflowing. The main performance can be reflected in three aspects: First of all, people take financial wealth as the most significant successful standard, or it may be the only standard. In real life, people judge a person's success mainly according to the material wealth (money, house, car, etc.) and achievements. The second is to take material enjoyment as the most significant part of life. In social life, people pursue the possession and enjoyment of material, organ enjoyment, and appetite. Thirdly, material wealth is a measurement of social relations.
In the materialistic era, interpersonal relationship became “the relationship between things and things.” People use materials to measure emotion, substitute pleasure for exchange, and replace care with exchange. Therefore, materialism has caused the current existence of the more serious money worship that prevails in China, whether young students or old age party and government leaders are taking part in the activities of money. In fact, lots of people are trying to pursue money and wealth despite the ethics. Materialism leads people to the infinite yearning and pursuit for money and wealth, and people are excessive in their desire and enjoyment of material life, which causes many social problems, such as moral decay and food safety.

Marx divides the development of human society into three forms: the period of emergence, as well as the development and formation of materialism. In fact, the formation of materialism is in the second stage of the social form elaborated, based on the continuous development of people's dependence on things, such as commerce, currency and exchange. Materialism is essentially a social relationship formed by the stage of human's dependence on objects, as well as the prevalence of commodity fetishism incurred by capital logic has become the dominant power of modern social development. Materialism comes into being with the development of capitalism and the fundamental power that governs the development of capitalism is “capital.” As stated by Karl Marx (2007, 834),

“Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit, just as Nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. With adequate profit, Capital is very bold. A certain 10 percent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 percent will produce eagerness; 50 percent, positive audacity; 100 percent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 percent, and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the change of its owner being hanged.”

Marxism holds that capital is a historical category under the condition that the contemporary productive forces are not very well developed, and the capital is an inevitable category of reality, inevitability and necessity. No country or society can cross the stage of the development of capital and commodity economy. It must follow the economic laws in the development of the productive forces and it is important to
make full usage of the capital and market economy to promote economic development. Therefore, it is significant to dissolve the negative effects of material.

2.8 Relative poverty and Relative deprivation

According to Karl Marx, social conflict and materialism are highly relevant to relative poverty. (Sutton, 1989) In different social classes or hierarchies, people may suffer from different relative poverties and relative deprivations. Affluent Worker was a book by Goldthorpe (1968) to describe how materialism has become an opium of the people obscuring class consciousness. (Keere, 2016)

One of the first approaches to poverty was developed by Charles Booth, who was a pioneering investigator of poverty and popularized the concept of the poverty line in the 20th century. This approach was developed by Peter Townsend, a British economist who argued that people in poverty have been deprived the rights of living in normal social life and having conventional services since they lack resources. Townsend put forward a way of measuring relative poverty which would be discussed later. Amartya Sen (1985) (Mubashshir Sarshar, 2010) argued that poverty is absolute within the capabilities and the relative poverty is just only complementary to absolute poverty. The absolute poverty cannot be replaced, which is an absolute concept of the relative poverty. These thinkers are prominent in the discussion of the literature review.

What is poverty? This issue has always been a core issue in the development of the poverty theory. From the economic perspective, poverty is usually classified into three categories, including destitution, subsistence poverty, and relative poverty. For simplicity, poverty is usually reduced into two forms which are absolute poverty and relative poverty. Judging from the study of poverty, the definition of poverty began with absolute poverty. Charles Booth was a forerunner in the poverty theory research. He went to London in the 1880s and carried out a large-scale survey of poverty. Subsequently, Seebholm Rowntree (1889) carried out some similar surveys and conducted at a bank. He pointed poverty to absolute inequality or inequality. Although the research what they were doing in poverty has attracted attention from people, even
government published the poverty alleviation policy and did not solve the problem of poverty well. (Suzanne Hall, 2014)

Townsend (1962) argued that even Britain was a relatively strong welfare state, there were still many poverty problems in the late twentieth century, which does not indicate the failure of the U. K’s poor policy. In fact, poverty is changing with social norms and habits. Poverty is a relative deprivation. Rowntree believed that families are living in poverty and their total income is not sufficient to pay for the necessities needed to survive, such as food, clothing and fuel. However, a poverty line, the minimum nutrition requirement for measuring poverty, was formed (Townsend, 1962). Nonetheless, Townsend knows the definition of a minimum nutrition standard which is a very difficult task since different people are engaged in different jobs and activities. Thus, nutrition needs are different. Based on the lack of scientific methods of measuring poverty, Townsend considered it necessary to redefine the meaning of poverty, and a new measurement method is needed. Therefore, Townsend proposed a relative deprivation square law, believing that "poverty is not just a lack of basic necessities, but lack of resources for individuals, families and social organizations to gain access to food, housing, entertainment and participation in social activities which make them inadequate for achieving an average life based on social customs or social encouragement level, which is excluded from the normal lifestyle and social activities outside of a living condition.” (Townsend, 1979)

As a developing country, China has the problems of absolute poverty and relative poverty. However, in comparison, the achievements of our country in the treatment of absolute poverty have been more prominent in recent years. Thus, the degree of absolute poverty has been greatly reduced, which does not mean that there is no problem in absolute poverty in China. On the contrary, if the developed countries and the moderately developed countries are compared in the world, the absolute poverty problem for our country is still very severe. On the other side, the relative poverty problem in China is more prominent. This is not only because relative poverty has a much larger population and proportion than absolute poverty, while the absolute
poverty governance of China has made great achievements. However, relative poverty has not been suppressed and has become increasingly severe.

As mentioned earlier, relative poverty refers to the lower living standards of some people compared with other members of the society. Hence, relative poverty reflects the distribution of property and income among the rich and poor class of the society. In recent years, China has greatly improved people’s average life. However, the income gap within the population is also widening. As a result, part of people are rich when compared with those who have not alleviated in the relative poverty, and this situation has become more and more serious. In recent years, the relative poverty problem for people living in country side has become increasingly prominent due to several reasons. First of all, as mentioned above, the relative poverty problem has become larger as the result of the widening income gap. Nowadays, in Chinese cities, especially the large urban cities, the income gap of residents are widen and it has become a common phenomenon that some people are extremely poor while some are extremely rich.
3. Methodology

3.1 Ethics

In every science involving research, certain ethical rules should be met, including social science. “Ethical Considerations can be specified as one of the most important part of the research. Dissertations many even be doomed to failure if this part is missing.” (Bryman, 2007) Since in this field, researchers work with other people, and the basic requirements connected to ethical issues are not optional. The code of the ethical issues of social science research seldom pays attention to China. On contrary, in the west, research scandals took place in the 20th century made the researchers responsible for the code of ethics. (He, 2012)

In the UK, from the late 80s to the early 90s, many academic associations stated to develop or revise the ethical statements for their members. (He, 2012) These statements revolve around how the subjects are treated and a series of questions are listed: Do participants really understand the research? Did they agree to participate? Are they respected by researchers? Are their rights protected by researchers? Did the researcher perform the duties of confidentiality and anonymity? Thus, it is essential for every sociologist to fulfil the standards outlined in the Code of Ethics under the guidance of the International Sociological Association Code of Ethics. (Committee, 2001) At first, it is crucial to protect those people or groups who are involved in the research. Secondly, it shows the direction of the proper behaviors towards participants and unprofitable principles. There are some details about international ethics standards. For instance, respondents in the research project should recognize that they voluntarily participated in the study and they can quit from the study any time without any adverse consequences by their own. Furthermore, respondents will not be harmed whether they choose to participate in this research or not.
Quantitative interviews and discussions were conducted in this study to reduce any risks for the participants and whether there were any potential risks for my participants was carefully checked. In consideration of any negative consequences which might happen, this study followed the international ethics rules and the principle of voluntary participation. It should be noted that no one was forced to take part in the research. The chosen participants were given all the information regarding the procedure of the research and the risks in connection with this in advance. Subsequently, I sent informational/consent letter to the people, in which they would have a sight overview of the topic and a general outline of the research (see appendix). When they had known all information, they should have been able to decide if they wanted to contribute or not. Since some of the prospective interviewees had many private thoughts and personal information, they had fear about whether the information was in lack or whether their identity would have come out to hurt them. Thus, anonymous principles and privacy principles for interviewers are important rules of ethics and to protect the participants’ privacy, they were informed previously. However, if they were happy to let me record the conversation, it would be really helpful for me in the analysis stage of the research (See appendix for consent form and questions).

Certain techniques should be applied during the research to ensure reflexivity. These techniques can help the researcher to develop a “habit of awareness and critical thinking” (Cassel and Symon, 2004) concerning the research itself and the participants. It is essential to critically reflect since the researcher is an active part of the process, through which knowledge is produced and the researcher’s own background should be taken into account to know how it can possibly shape this process. Some of the suggested techniques involve keeping a research diary to record the feelings of the process, listen back to the interviews and evaluate performance as interviewer. Some reflexivity is involved in the analysis.
3.2 Research Methods

According to the research topic and research goal, Desktop/literature review and qualitative interviews/interpretative methodology are chosen in this study. The first one is Desktop/literature review. A literature review defined by Aveyard (2010) is a “comprehensive study and interpretation of literature that addresses a specific topic.” It requires us to have a “preliminary review before the study.” (Reviews, 2018) As a result, case researchers will be able to critique current literature and justify in future study. Sometimes literature review is “referred to as a systematic literature review or meta-analysis, and this type is a critical survey that attempts to evaluate and interpret all available research evidence relevant to particular question.” (Glasziou, 2001) In literature review, this study lists down some key theories, giving a historical view and background of China from the pre-dynasty to modern society. Furthermore, some main concepts relating to the social background are summed up. The viewpoints from authority and the data used to make connection are found. Secondly, qualitative interviews are one of the methods used. There is one common definition of the qualitative research methods by Polkinghorne (1983) who noted that “all these methods rely on linguistic rather than numerical data and employ meaning-based rather than statistical forms of data analysis.”

Flick (2014, P. 542) claimed that, “qualitative research is interested in analyzing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images rather than number and statistics.” There are many advantages to use the qualitative research approaches. Denzin (1989) discussed the qualitative research approach, illustrating that qualitative research produces the thick detailed description of participants’ feelings, opinions, and experiences as well as interprets the meanings of their actions. This is useful to get closer to the reasons and meanings of certain social phenomena. However, it should be noted that qualitative research should not be representative. There are some limitations that are obvious. For instance, it is not generalizable to the population due to the few participants. Cumming (2011) said, “this sampling was selective and purposive, focused
on instructors with high levels of expertise in each setting.” In my qualitative research, the methodology leans towards the collection of data through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Being one of the most flexible methods, it is ideal for topics, where different levels of meaning are needed to further explore (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Using these approaches can help gain better observations and become close to the social phenomena. Even though several researchers argued that structured interviews are unnatural and restrictive, the interviewer may change his/her interpretation during the interview. To achieve a more accurate result, 10 interviewers were conducted to carry out the qualitative interview, and the participants being interviewed by the same issue had different genders and age.

All my participants were Chinese studying in Budapest. With overseas study and living experiences, they were beneficial to the survey in the comparison of the differences between China and western countries. Thus, either born in China or in Budapest, all the participants were studying in Budapest. It was easy for the interviewers to accept this topic and feel free to talk. This study adopted a convenient way of sampling to find Chinese people living in Budapest and contact with them in advance.

Last but not the least, these methods are easy to use to conduct the study and can give opportunities for the researcher to interact with the participants and gather data from more channels. In terms of the weakness, participants may not give real information to reflect their real attitude, which can cause result error. It should be noted that as this is a sensitive topic for the Chinese people and the participants may want to remain anonymized, a written questionnaire or survey was not adopted.
4. Findings

4.1 Background

In the first question, it is about the interviewee's background. The data include 5 out of 10 interviewees in the middle class, and 4 out of 10 interviewees in the upper class. There was only one person who is in the working class. 90% of interviewees had house property in their family and most of them lived close to the city center or have a big house. The majority of interviewees’ parents had higher education experience, for instance, bachelor, master and doctoral degree, while only a few participants' parents did not have high educational experience. For the interviewees, they were all studying for a bachelor’s degree.

4.2 Relative Deprivation

The question about relative deprivation revealed 8 out of 10 interviewees who claimed to have uncomfortable experiences of relative deprivation feeling in their daily life, whereas there was only one interviewee who said they had never felt relative deprivation before. She explained that she would not compare herself with someone else. Unlike their peers, she would try to buy things by herself unless she cannot afford and then she would ask her parents to pay for her. She bought things not because of jealousy of others. By contrast, she bought things only because of how much she likes those things. Most of participants claimed that they had relative deprivation which was a not a good feeling yet still had. Some said it was not easy to get rid of it. There was only one interviewee who thought that most of the time it happened not because of the material aspects but spiritual parts. He said, “when I have met people who have got a higher-level education, I would be envious.” However, the data show that most of them felt a sense of deprivation due to the material factors.

4.3 Attitudes towards the Concept

In terms of relative poverty, all of my interviewees showed a positive attitude to this concept. Nonetheless, some interviewee did not know this concept until I gave them a
definition, and they listed some reasons why they thought that it was useful. “After the analysis of the issue, it is useful and it should not be focusing on the extreme issues. They also mentioned it is important when compared with the situation in other countries. Although the country is divided, the world is globalized and closely linked. One of the interviewees said, “if there is no relative concept, it will be hard to analyze how the middle-class life is in different countries. If there is no such concept of relative poverty, it is difficult to compare the gap between the state and the country.” An interviewee who had been learning economics said that it is certainly useful as it can make people understand what the relative poverty level is in their own country and then make some changes and contribution to the country.

4.4 Materialism

The way many people reacted with a view on materialism had many different answers due to their experiences. Half of the interviewees gave a positive point of view that the rest gave negative responses. Five of the positive attitude holders mentioned the Marx’s theory, and the relationship between base and upper structure (see literature review discussion). One of the interviewees said, “materials are more important.” In her opinion, it is impossible to love unless he has materials base. The other illustrated, “money is not omnipotent, but without money you cannot achieve successes easily.” In her perspective, money and materialism are both important.

One interviewee, who studied economics, interpreted the materialism as being reasonable. On the one hand, it is important to understand the prevalence of capitalism, since the main pursuit of capitalism is material enjoyment. An increasing number of Chinese people get involved into this capitalism valuable cognition. On the other hand, China has been rapidly developing for two decades, whereas the path of socialism with Chinese characteristic is also a process of capitalization. The current Chinese mainstream media is also a matter of materialism, including social software, books and movies. Many of the pop celebrities’ pursuit refer to the material yearning, and their
followers begin to learn what products they use, what they wear and so forth. Apart from those media elements, China is in the primary stage of socialism, which is a main factor that causes materialism. Xi Jinping has highlighted in the report of the 19th National Congress that the socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. The major social contradictions have been transformed into a conflict between people’s ever-growing needs for a better life and the unbalanced development in China. This interviewer also explained the main contradiction between the growing demand and uneven distribution of people, which led the current China to aspire a materialistic society, particularly for those who lacked material property or low-level material property. It can be said that these people are the main groups in China.

The other five interviewees believed that materialism also brings about the concept of mammonism. Some of them think materialism has developed a negative attitude towards the interaction of people. It is increasing the risk to the relationships of people. Talking about any topic relative to products or money is easily accessible to the public.

4.5 Impact of Materialism

Regarding the questions about what materialism does to people, interviews have mixed views on it. The tide of opinion is now running steadily in two directions. 8 out of the 10 interviewees described two ways of materialism and what it does to people, and only two interviewees believed materialism has negative impacts on Chinese people. While the majority believed that people would benefit from materialism, materialism can promote creativity, sustainable development and economic growth. It also enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of boosting productivity. Proper materialism provides a solid foundation for healthy competition and a better life. However, they also worried about if people are dependent on materials too much or over-reliant on material, they may use products or money to measure to value the family, relationship and friendship. Furthermore, more people will focus on luxury goods to improve their happiness or satisfaction.
4.6 Levels of Materialism

Is China becoming more and more materialistic? 9 of out 10 interviewees answered yes! Some interviewees said that China has a tendency of getting materialistic, and some described China as becoming more and more materialistic. However, it has not reached such a high level. Furthermore, two interviewees gave a certain answer that China is becoming more and more materialistic. However, only one interviewer disagreed with this and gave a very different opinion. In his words, since the Chinese economy is booming, people are satisfied with their job. Thus, it becomes more important to them to improve the standard of living.

With reference to the question about commodity fetishism and Marx, all the interviewers had a good understanding of the concept. 10 out of the 10 interviewees were concerned that people are influenced by this concept. The rate of believing commodity fetishism has been on the rise in recent years. The one interviewer said it might cause tension and conflict between relationship and money. For materialistic trend, 8 out of 10 participants regarded it is not a good trend, since a lot of people have been asking many conditions for their marriage, for example, big houses, good brand cars, and high education. Since Chinese people have become more materialistic and believe in commodity fetishism, it poses a threat to pure love, which is the response from one interviewer’s point of view. This trend is not restricted to lower class people who have marriage conditions and want to change hierarchy. However, it is also evident among high class people who want to strengthen their social class position.

4.7 Desire for Change

The interview aimed to study whether the interviewees wanted to change the Chinese policy on wealth and value or keep things as they are. All of them had a positive attitude and a desirable ideal. When I widened the question about how they want to change, two
of the interviewees adopted a wait-and-see attitude, claiming that they did not have concerns about taking immediate action. Unlike the European political system, one participant claimed that it is not easy to change the Chinese politics even though there is a desirable idea rather than an achievable reality. At least, 4 out of 10 interviewees expressed a sort of way to change things. One interviewee suggested that the government should place a high priority on wealth reform, taking stringent measures to address the problem of high housing price. If it is possible, changing residential policy and house property can provide an enduring solution to the problem of wealth distribution unbalance.

4.8 Confucius

Confucius is one of the most significant historical persons in China, and his philosophy has greatly promoted paternalism in China for a long time. This study aims to figure out how the Confucius philosophy has impact on our new generation. Definitely, everyone has been influenced by Confucius yet the difference is about how deeply they have been influenced. Most of them showed that they have covered a lot of grounds in the primary class. Thus, they can indirectly learn some knowledge about Confucius. Also, a few interviewees’ parents provided them with a concept of Confucius when they were young. One interviewee, who had a comprehensive coverage of many types of knowledge, showed great interest in Confucius. This interviewee said Confucian philosophy affects the values of individuals and the entire country, since the Confucian doctrine has been deeply rooted in the Chinese history for one thousand years. The interviewee strongly recommended people to learn the concept of Confucius, since people will benefit from this great ancient philosophy. In terms of paternalism, all the participants felt it is not as strong as before. One said there were many Chinese people who had an objection or aversion to this paternalism. However, meanwhile, he thought that the inefficiency of being a people cannot be completely removed in the short term.
4.9 Ancient and Modern China

Interviewees’ perspectives on the values system between ancient China and modern China varied from person to person. The first interviewee provided a point of view. In common, regardless of old China and New China, there is a worship of Confucianism and there is a tendency toward paternalism. The difference is that since the reform and opening-up, more western ideas have entered China and these ideas have been integrated into the Chinese values. Thus, he regarded that the current Chinese values are more complex at the group level and there are also large individual differences.

4.10 Europe and China

In the last question, interviewees were encouraged to compare Europe with China, considering which country is more materialistic. All the interviewers gave the same answer that Europe is not as materialistic as China. I had already expected this answer since I have the similar experience as them. All of my interviewees have been studying in Budapest and they all took Hungary as an example. They said, “I didn’t feel people look down upon poor people or discriminate against lower class people, and many Hungarians are not so rich but they are still happy.” The other mentioned the religion and conscious consumption. Chinese people mainly considered that most expensive goods must have the best quality, and then money should be used to measure how valuable for everything. However, Europeans tend to spend money they earn and take happiness as the main criterion to measure a good life.

4.11 Links between the Interviews and Literature Review

Thus, a broad theme emerged from the interviews was that relative poverty and relative deprivation are a notable problem in China nowadays. This is relevant to the literature review where it is noted that China has problems of absolute poverty and relative poverty. The absolute poverty governance of China has made great achievements, yet
relative poverty has not been suppressed, which has become increasingly serious. As mentioned previously, relative poverty refers to the lower living standards of some people compared with other members of society. Thus, the relative poverty reflects the distribution of property and income among the rich and the poor class of the society. In recent years, China has greatly improved people’s average life, yet the income gap within the population is also widening. Thus, a part of the rich people is compared with the other part of people who has not alleviated in the relative poverty. And this situation has become more and more serious. In Chinese cities, particularly Chinese urban cities, the income gap between residents is widening. It has become a common phenomenon that some people are extremely poor while some are extremely rich. Due to these reasons, interviewees said this makes people feel depressed and some would start to develop a hatred sense towards the rich. Although the interviewees have different backgrounds, they have gender differences and most of them have felt relative deprived.

The interviews revealed that materialism, mammonism and commodity fetishism are the main trend in China, which is related to the literate review and the sections on the Marx theory, commodity fetishism, materialism and money worship. It must bring fetishism when human production and labors are exchanged (Xiaojiang, 2013) Thus, the commodity fetishism and the currency fetishism will inevitably appear in the society with exchange value, and then commodity fetishism and currency fetishism will be produced in the socialist market economy. The Chinese society has undergone a great transformation, changing the social structure and the integration of economic system. Meanwhile, people's ideas and lifestyles are also changing quickly in the process of globalization and information. An interviewee said China is in the primary stage of socialism. The major social contradictions have been transformed into a conflict between people’s ever-growing needs for a better life and the unbalanced development in China. Thus, Chinese people attempt to accumulate their wealth as much as they can, and during this process, people tend to be materialistic and mammonistic.
Many interviewees expressed the belief that China is more materialistic than Europe even though Chinese people are still influenced by the Confucian value system. This can be connected to the literature dealing with the Confucian value system and materialism since the western wealthy attitudes of China’s great economic transformation are coming. The Confucian values system is not so influential as the ancient China. The attitudes towards commodities and money are also influenced by media which increasingly bolsters materialism.

4.12 Reflexivity

In the methodology section, reflexivity is defined as a Chinese student living in Hungary. In combination of the personal characteristics, the answers given by the interviewees are analyzed.

As a Chinese student, I can say that most of the interviewees stated the same feeling as I experienced. Coming from China, I can accept different ideologies of different governments, and I have practiced my critical thinking and the ability to analyze social facts, However, I just see through all materialism processes which is happening in China, and I think many Chinese students have already realized that China’s society is not taking Confucian theory as their only moral and value standard. I have to admit that the levels of contentedness have increased since China started to embrace economic growth and modernization. However, in the recent ten years, my friends and classmates have started to complain about materialism. I also realized Chinese’s views towards prosperity and material conditions have changed from a historical aspect and have great impact on people's value system. As I remember, when I was young, my parents told me many quotes from Confucius and I believe that people from older generations are greatly influenced by the Confucian thought. From a Chinese student aspect, I also think China has an obvious trend of materialism, when I noticed my high school classmates and close friends start listing many conditions for their boyfriends or complaining why they are not as rich as someone else. Gradually, people would start to
utilize money as the only standard to evaluate people and they would strongly feel relative deprivation.

The thesis seeks to figure out whether excessive materialism is making people more self-centered and selfish. Furthermore, it is firmly believed that relative poverty has influence on social cohesion and may conversely increase social conflict. All the interviewees knew that there are tons of social problems in China, especially relevant to the research question, and they were all willing to change these problems. However, they did not know what to do or they just did not give any answer. I believe there are two reasons. First of all, they might not know how to change these issues yet provided some ideas that cannot be achieved and then they gave up. Secondly, they might think that this is a sensitive question that they chose not to answer it.
5. Conclusion

According to the finding, relative poverty is becoming prominent in China's cities and towns, since the relative poverty problem is mainly the result of widening income gap. China's cities, especially the large urban cities, has a wide income gap. It has become a common phenomenon that the rich and the poor. Therefore, the relative poverty problem is a big threat at present to China's social development, social stability as well as social cohesion. The income disparity not only causes the relative poverty problem, but also causes other social problems, such as materialism and money worship. In the Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, the production of commodity economy is the necessary condition of commodity fetishism and money worship, which makes money worship have certain historical inevitability. Subsequently, the commodity fetishism and currency fetishism are undermining the Chinese people's value system in the socialist market.

Materialism and mammonism occupy some Chinese people's thoughts, changing their attitudes towards commodities. To get the goods they want, they need to earn money and some people would not hesitate to take risks, violate national law, and abuse power. The commodity and currency fetishism covers people's real social relations, making all the human activities as the relationship between goods and money in the socialist market, and undermining the values and ethics of the Chinese people. By the time, it would turn into money worship, which makes people greedy and blind to follow the values of money. The harmfulness of money worship is embedded into the structure of people's values system. The money worship is not only harmful to people, but also unfavorable to the development of the whole society. The risk of money worship to the society is mainly shown in the following two aspects. Firstly, social problems are increasing. The education problem of young people is constantly obvious. And teenagers, as a special group with special value and view of life, are at the embryonic stage of development. In the social atmosphere of materialism, young people have gradually accepted and agreed with the values of money worship. As consequent,
individualism, hedonism and utilitarianism are rampant in the youth group. When the dominant values at school conflict with the values of money worship in the society, it must have a negative impact on the establishment of the socialist core values of the youth group. In their life, they cannot bear hardships and pursue great pleasure.

In China’s relative poverty problems, it is important to consider social distribution, since the growth of economy rising in GNP does not mean that wealth and income will automatically be equitably distributed among the population. The development experience of many countries has already shown that while the economy is growing rapidly, it is highly vulnerable to inequitable distribution and polarization of the rich and the poor, resulting in severe relative poverty problems. Thus, it is essential to adjust the income distribution structure, make the tax system more stable as well as build the social guarantee system for poverty control in our country. Under the condition of the socialist market economy, everyone is more or less impacted by commodity fetishism. However, it is important to hold a good socialist money view, gain a good understanding of the concept of commodity fetishism and avoid money worship, like the supremacy of monetary. According to the finding, socialism is essential to eliminating commodity fetishism and currency fetishism. As Chinese globalization is still in the primary stage of commodity economy, it is important to vigorously develop socialist market economy to improve the nation’s productivity and provide a better welfare state for the Chinese people.

China has an obvious materialism trend, and it is necessary to learn from the Confucius Theory. As widely known, "benefit" and "righteousness" are a pair of basic social life value category. The question of righteousness and benefit are related to the fundamental value orientation of the society. It is essential to know that a good way of the basic function from the material benefits, and then to strengthen the ideological and political education in order to make people think about money correctly, and ask them to adopt the right consumption way. Subsequently, the Chinese government can establish a
reasonable social moral value guide, construct a suitable socialist view of righteousness and benefit, as well as provide the correct value orientation for the social ethic morals. For this purpose, the government needs to strengthen the sense of responsibility of the media, when the responsibility of media is strengthened. Later, the media credibility will be improved. Base on that, the media's social public guiding role can effectively advocate the benign values and ethics. Thereby, it not only promotes the development of China's economy, but also promotes the healthy development of China.
6. Bibliography


Keere, K. D., 2016. Political distinction: searching for a structural similarity between class and politics in Flanders (Belgium). Journal EUROPEAN SOCIETIES, 23 SEP.


Legge, J., 1901. USCanenberg. [Online] Available at: https://china.usc.edu/confucius-analects-4 [23 April 2018].


Stuart, E., 2015. *China has almost wiped out urban poverty. Now it must tackle inequality*. [Online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/business/economics-


Xiaojiang, Z., 2013. The research on the root and countermeasures of the money worship flood in contemporary Chinese----Based on the Marx’s theory of fetishism. *ZHIWANG,* April, p. 11.


7. Appendix

Letter of participation/Consent

I am carrying out a research as part of a bachelor thesis at the Corvinus University of Budapest. The research pertains to the theme of perceptions of relative deprivation, materialism and value system changing among Chinese.

As part of this research I would like to interview you. I would ideally like to record the interview and cite your name. However, if you wish, I can interview you, but anonymize your name and not record the interview. You will be anonymised in the research, no one will see your name.

If you need further clarification or wish to withdraw your participation please contact me at ………………………………… number.

Regards

Shengxi Huang

Signed consent

The objectives and conditions of the research have been explained to me and
I ………………………………………………………agree to be interviewed.
I do / do not give my consent to be recorded.

I do / do not give my consent for my name to be cited.

Name: ............................................

Date: .............................................

Questions

1. What is your parents’ occupation?

Do they have a big home? Where do you live?

What is your highest level of education?

2. Have you ever felt any relative deprivation? Explain more details

3. Do you think relative poverty is a useful concept? Why?

4. What is your view on materialism and Mammonism?

5. Is China become more materialistic? Do you think China is getting more and more commodity fetishism? And do you think is it a good trend?

6. Do you want to change China’s policy on wealth or keep things as they are?

7. What do you think materialism does to people?

8. Are you influenced by Confucius? Do you think Confucius influenced your value system or Chinese value system and how it influenced. Is it still as a paternalism in China? why

9. Is Europe more materialistic? Why
10. What’s your aspect of value system between ancient china and modern china? What the differences and what is in common.

11. Do you think value system changed which influence social cohesion and solidarity in China. What do you think?