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ARTICLE

The Space of Chinese Sociologists and Their Opinions on the Localisation/Sinicisation of Chinese Social Sciences

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Abstract

Since the mid-1920s, Chinese sociologists have explored different paths toward the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences. While sociologists and social experts are now more broadly invited by the Chinese government to develop "social sciences with Chinese characteristics" and an "autonomous system of knowledge" to "tell beautiful stories about China", vigorous academic debates are ongoing. Based on the International Chinese Sociologists Value survey, our article explores the possible structural homology between the position of Chinese sociologists and their position taking on the localisation debate by using geometrical data analysis. It demonstrates and explains its non-existence and showcases how Chinese sociologists capitalise on different sources of knowledge and silently limit the politicisation of their craft.

Keywords

China, Sociologists, Localisation, Structural Homology, Eigensinn

INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of sociology to China, Chinese sociologists have perceived the discipline as a means of modernising their nation, with the aim of making it as powerful and wealthy as Western powers. More precisely, as pointed out by Aurore Merle in 2007, early 20th-century Chinese social scientists and intellectuals wanted to "transform Chinese society in order to 'save the country' and build a modern nation in the face of the threat from Western powers" (Merle 2007: 31). Scientists in general and social scientists in particular were expected to play a crucial role in this process by bringing their applied expertise to political leaders. Prominent intellectuals, such as Chen Duxiu, one of the founding fathers of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), spoke of two gentlemen named "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science" (Chen 1919), who were expected to cure China of the darkness in its politics, morality, academic scholarship, and thought (Fan 2022; Gu 2001).

Simultaneously, the pursuit of scientific modernisation in the nation through the acquisition of scientific knowledge and development has consistently raised concerns about preserving Chinese identities and culture. Chen Duxiu stated the following: "If we support Mr. Democracy, we must oppose Confucianism, rites, chastity, old morality, and old politics. If we support Mr. Science, we must oppose old arts and old religion" (Schmalzer 2022). However, most Chinese experts and scientists in

the early 20th century sought to harmonise Western modernity with Chinese traditions in governing society and advancing science. Notably, Liang Qichao, a prominent education reformer and intellectual and one of the early advocates of the development of sociology, which was referred to as the study of groups (*qunxue*), championed this perspective (Chen 2018: 10).

Within this specific political context, Chinese sociologists during the 1930s contemplated how to adopt advanced methods, theories, and knowledge from the West while adapting these theories to "Chinese circumstances" and preserving the Chinese intellectual heritage (Zheng and Wang 2009: 27). For instance, Sun Benwen, one of the most eminent sociologists of the 1920s, articulated the following (Li and Cao 2013: 3):

> Using methods imported from the United States and Europe and starting with the theoretical intricacies of European and American scientists to develop a distinctly Chinese ideology and societal system, then following this with a practical analysis based on the realities of the entire country and amalgamating it all to establish a sinicised sociology, is a task of utmost urgency.

The notion of developing a sociology with local (*bentu*)[1] or sinicised (*zhongguohua*) characteristics re-surfaced shortly after 1978 when the CCP lifted the ban on sociology[2] and entrusted Fei Xiaotong with re-establishing the discipline (Li 2015). As was the case in Taiwan and Hong Jong, in Mainland China, the localisation/sinicisation debate experienced various periods of blooming and fading, while the attempts to localise/sinicise the social sciences were continuously renewed. For instance, in the late 1980s, some authors advocated for a localised social sciences to conform to Marxism and Mao Zedong's thought, while others began to pay attention to the localisation/sinicisation attempts made in the US and Taiwan, which criticised modernity and positivism (Chen 2022).

At the beginning of the 21st century, the number of sociologists exploring this path became so significant that the definition of the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences remains highly ambiguous (Xie 2021; Xie and Roulleau Berger 2017). This ambiguity ranges from Zheng Hangsheng's attempt to amalgamate Chinese and Western theories while accentuating *Chinese characteristics*

1 In this article, we translate the term bentuhua as localisation. While we argue that sociologists have proposed different definitions of localisation, their common idea is to adapt or develop methods and concepts that better depict Chinese society and its transformation. The term localisation was already used (including by the same scholars) in the 1920s together with the term sinicisation (zhongguohua). Therefore, they are relatively equivalent. Nevertheless, sinicisation has a more nationalistic connotation. It relies on the assumption that the long-lasting civilisation formed by Chinese society is too unique to be captured through the concepts of other civilisations. Compared with the concept of localisation, it relies on a stronger assumption: the homogeneity of Chinese culture and civilisation over centuries and across territories.

2 The ban on sociology during the period 1952–1978 was quite unique compared to other so-called socialist countries. As explained by Lu (2021: 175–187), several important sociologists from the Republican period were consulted over the land reform movement (1950) during the first year of the regime after receiving ideological training. In short, sociologists were asked about how to classify the peasants into landlords, rich peasants, and poor peasants and how to redistribute the land to the poor peasants. Sociologists then contributed to the ethnic minority classification work in which they were asked to conform to Stalinist principles and Marxist ideology. Considering the Soviet grand brother model, Chinese leaders reformed higher education in 1952. They favoured engineering and applied sciences, closing several law departments and banning sociology. Sociology was initially considered a bourgeois science in both countries. However, the discipline was revived under strict political control in the Soviet Union in the context of de-Stalinisation, starting from 1956 (Weinberg 2024). In China (Lu 2021: 175–187), Fei Xiatong, Chen Da, Wu Jingchao, Wu Wencao, Lei Haojing, Sun Wenben, and Yuan Fang carefully began to revive the discipline in 1956. However, their attempt did not survive the anti-rightist campaign. This political campaign followed the Hundred Flowers Campaign during which citizens were invited to advise the government and the Party. In every working unit, Party secretaries had to find a pre-established proportion of rightists (i.e., enemies of the regime). Western-educated intellectuals particularly suffered from this political campaign lasting from 1957 to approximately 1959. For instance, Fei Xiaotong was purged and considered a major rightist.

(Zheng and Wang 2009) to Zhai Xuewei's and Jing Tiankui's essentialist and culturalist efforts to reconstruct Chinese sociological theories based on ancient Chinese philosophers' concepts and values (Zhai 2001; Jing 2022). Jing Tiankui's project can be seen as the most radical because it deviated from localisation (which implicitly conveys the idea that something is imported) to create a native sociology entirely without foreign influence. At times, the endeavour to localise/sinicise sociology seems to resemble an academic carnival (Bayard 2010).

While Chinese sociologists held varying opinions regarding the necessity for and approach to the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences, the then CCP general secretary, Xi Jinping, tasked them with further exploring this path (Froissart 2018). Experts in the social sciences are not only expected to develop concepts and methods for a deeper understanding of the sociohistorical transformations in society but are also encouraged to create a discursive system capable of challenging Western ideological dominance (Yan and Cao 2017: 267).

In this context, recent years have witnessed particularly contentious debates in Chinese sociological journals (Fan 2024), with some advocating for the localisation/sinicisation of the social sciences (Zhou 2020; He 2020) and at times aligning with the views of the top leaders (Li 2021; Hong 2022). Meanwhile, sociologists such as Xie Yu (2018) have characterised the localisation of the social sciences as a *pseudo debate*.

In response to this fervour for localisation/sinicisation, other sociologists, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu (1988), have begun to investigate a potential structural analogy between positions in the field of sociology and positions taken in this debate. According to Li Junpeng et al., (2022), those supporting the localisation/sinicisation of the social sciences are purportedly marked by "positive academic and political" capital, while "different combinations of academic and political capital result in different positions on indigenisation". In other words, according to their perspective, individuals fall into categories such as "radical indigenists", "moderate indigenists", "moderate universalists", or "radical universalists", depending on the extent and structure of their academic and political capital.

The present article revisits the question of the potential structural homology between sociologists' positions in the field and their stances on the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences through an analysis of a representative survey of 167 Chinese sociologists. This survey enables us to collect opinions from Chinese sociologists on this debate and construct their positions in the academic space through a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), utilising various distinguishing characteristics, including the academic positions of sociologists, their recent publications, areas of specialisation, research grants, and other indicators related to *academic capital*.

Ultimately, this examination of the academic space of Chinese sociologists concludes that there is an absence of structural homology, even in an approximate sense. Indeed, the majority of Chinese sociologists consider the development of indigenous theories to be compatible with the utilisation of sociological theories originating in Western countries. They largely adopt a pragmatic perspective that echoes Deng Xiaoping's assertion: "It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, so long as it catches the mice" (Deng 1962 [1989]: 305). We elaborate on how this viewpoint may be influenced by the fact that Chinese sociologists, whether or not partially trained abroad, extensively read and utilise both Western and Chinese sociological texts, thus building their legitimacy through publications that draw from various theoretical traditions.

Beyond this consensus, those who regard the localisation/sinicisation of the social sciences as a pseudo debate occupy slightly different positions in the academic space. More specifically, we argue

that those who perceive the localisation/sinicisation as a pseudo debate possess a large amount of international academic capital, while those who wish to combat Western hegemony through the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences appear to be dominated on both sides (i.e., by both those who possess national academic capital and those who possess international academic capital).

In conclusion, our paper explains why there is limited enthusiasm among Chinese sociologists for embracing the localisation/sinicisation project as defined by the Chinese leadership. Using Alf Lüdkte's concept of *Eigensinn* (Lindenberg and Lüdtke 2020; Rowell 2015), we elucidate why so few Chinese sociologists view the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences as crucial and necessary for challenging Western hegemony.

THE PERCEPTION OF CHINESE SOCIOLOGY'S ORIGINS AND IDEAL DEVELOPMENT: A QUESTION OF ACADEMIC TRAJECTORY

Since 1979, Chinese sociologists have displayed a heightened reflexivity regarding the history and development of their discipline. Concerning the history of the discipline, scholars diverge in identifying the origins of Chinese sociology, assigning different weights to various schools of thought. For instance, Zheng Hangsheng and Li Yinsheng's book *History of Chinese Sociology* (Zheng and Li 2000), originally published by the Higher Education Press and now re-published by the Marxist Editing House for Textbooks (*Ma gongcheng jiaocai*); dedicated an entire chapter of its first volume on "Chinese Sociology before 1949" to the development of the Marxist sociology school.

In contrast, Fei Xiaotong, a highly influential scholar who was responsible for re-establishing sociology after 1979 and who presented himself as being influenced by Bronislaw Malinovsky in his early career, did not mention the existence of such a school of thought in his 1994 article published in *Sociological Studies* (*Shehuixue Yanjiu*) (Fei 1994). According to Fei, the Yanjing school of thought and Sun Benwen played more prominent roles in the development of the discipline by writing textbooks in Chinese starting from 1931, a time when all the available sociological books were written in English. As Fei stated, when the sinicisation of social sciences began in the 1930s, Marxism's influence in sociological departments "was pretty limited because of the political situation of that time" (Fei 1994: 6). In other words, unlike Yan Ming's well-substantiated research, Fei Xiaotong underlined the influence of Western sociologists, including British-located and American scholars who came to China (e.g., Robert E. Park). In the view of Fei and Yan, the birth of Chinese sociology appeared to be, at least at the beginning, the result of a quite common process of internationalisation (Sapiro 2023), which preceded its institutionalisation as an academic discipline and subsequent indigenisation. This claim contrasts sharply with Zheng and Li's (2000) *History*, which strongly emphasised localisation and Marxism, as if the Western influence was just a detail of the history of the discipline from which Chinese sociologists were immediately emancipated.

Jing Tiankui (Jing 2022) somehow went even further in silencing the importance of foreign influences on the birth of sociology. While most specialists have identified Yan Fu and Liang Qichao, who were strongly inspired by Spencer's social Darwinism and pioneers of Chinese sociology in China (Chen 2018), Jing found the origin of sociology in ancient Chinese philosophers and scholars such as Xunzi (Jing 2022: 6). Paraphrasing Bourdieu, this contrast in the way of presenting the history of the discipline suggests a symbolic struggle to determine the legitimate origins of sociology and, by extension, to justify one's theoretical opinion in the academic field (Bourdieu 2014).

Indeed, sociologists have identified various origins of the discipline and celebrated these very differently depending on how they have made their own intellectual careers and positions in the academic

space. More specifically, Fei Xiaotong, a sociologist trained by Bronislaw Malinowski, a prominent anthropologist from the London School of Economics and Political Science, emphasised the strong international character of the first age of Chinese sociology. Zheng, a professor at the People's University of China who trained as a philosopher before the Cultural Revolution when Marxism became the principal philosophical *doxa*, emphasised the influence of Marxist scholars. Finally, Jing, who enrolled at university in 1967 during the Cultural Revolution (just one year after becoming a Party member) and completed his training after the Cultural Revolution, advocated for a supposedly long tradition of Chinese sociological studies, while building his own reputation for developing indigenous Chinese sociological concepts inspired by Chinese philosophy.

These quite different discourses on the origins of Chinese sociology invite us to take some precautions regarding possible symbolic struggles in the academic space and to adopt a more empirical stance in analysing the debate on the localisation of social sciences in China. Indeed, Jing Tiankui's case suggests that *academic trajectory*, which can be defined as an individual's succession of training places, theories explored, fieldwork, and accumulated distinctions and positions, should all be taken into consideration in determining a scholar's opinion on the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences.

BEYOND LI JUNPENG AND COLLEAGUES' SHORTCOMINGS

Li Junpeng et al., (2022) were the first to investigate the relationship between a Chinese sociologists' academic trajectory, political stance, and position taking on the localisation/sinicisation debate. Their study was based on a panel of 32 prominent sociologists, almost all of whom had a professorial position or equivalent (e.g., researcher) and had expressed their opinions in academic papers published in the last two decades. They divided this group of sociologists into four different groups, namely "radical indigenists", "moderate indigenists", "moderate universalists", and "radical universalists", based on the opinions expressed by these sociologists. More precisely, the first criterion of division "stands out: whether a sociologist agrees that Western theories can be directly applied to Chinese society" (Li et al., 2022: 58). This criterion helped them distinguish between indigenists who "believe that Western theories cannot be directly applied to China and that all of those theories must be indigenised" and universalists who "see no point in making a distinction between Western and indigenous theories and have no problem with applying mainstream theories originating in the West".

To refine their distinctions between scholars, Li et al., (2022) used a second criterion based on how sociologists view the possibility of comparing China with other societies. According to Li et al., (2022: 58), moderate indigenists differ from radical indigenists because they are "open to the comparison between Chinese and Western societies". In a similar way, they distinguish moderate universalists by their propensity to "analyse the uniqueness of Chinese society through rigorous research and to compare it with Western societies".

At this point, their methodology is quite transparent but immediately problematic. Xie Yu, who performed many comparisons between China, East Asian Countries, and the US in terms of marriage and fertility (Raymo et al., 2015), is classified as a radical universalist. Li Peilin (2021) and Li Youmei (2023), who both followed Xi Jinping's call to establish a new *discursive system* challenging the West, are classified together with Zheng Hangsheng, who stood for a more moderate and less politically cleaved opinion, advocating the development of local theories without completely neglecting

so-called Western theories. Finally, Xie Lizhong, who defended the usefulness of non-Western sociologies, is classified as a moderate universalist, although he could also be viewed as a moderate indigenist (Xie 2021).

In addition to the unrepresentativeness of their sample and the classification issues, the paper by Li et al., (2022) contains methodological shortcomings. While the authors suggest a Bourdieusian structural homology, stating that "different positions in a field are associated with different ideas" (Li et al., 2022: 62), they never use the *objectivisation tools* Bourdieu repeatedly employed to assess the existence of such homologies (Lebaron 2009). More specifically, they do not adapt the model applied, for example, to the study of German sociologists (Schmidt-Wellenburg and Schmitz 2022), in which data are collected systematically *before* constructing an academic space through a correspondence analysis or related method and *before* investigating how opinions on localisation are located in this space.

This shortcoming is quite surprising given the abundant literature explaining how Bourdieu viewed social spaces and fields as *relational* and as intimately bounded with the systematic use of correspondence analysis and related methods, such as MCA, also named geometric data analysis in the literature (Lebaron 2009; Rouanet, Ackermann, and Le Roux 2000). Bourdieu himself stated as follows in the preface of the German edition of the *Craft of Sociology*:

> I use Correspondence Analysis very much, because I think that it is essentially a relational procedure whose philosophy fully expresses what in my view constitutes social reality. It is a procedure that 'thinks' in relations, as I try to do with the concept of field (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron 1991: xiii).

As Le Roux and Rouanet (2010: viii) explained, MCA enables a relational form of reasoning in so far as its object is:

> ...to display geometrically the rows and columns of the data table—where rows represent individuals and columns the categories of the variables—in a low-dimensional space, so that proximity in the space indicates similarity of categories and of individuals.

Moreover, it enables the re-construction of groups of ideal-type characteristics in a population (for the space of the categories of the variables) and groups of individuals sharing relatively homogenous characteristics (for the space of individuals), before inquiring how these ideal-types characteristics correlate with other properties that are not used to construct the space. Such methods have already been used to explore the power structures and symbolic divisions in the field of American sociology (Warczok and Beyer 2021) and to explore the affinities between social science disciplines, position taking toward non-academic institutions, and interests and research subjects among Danish social scientists (Kropp 2013). In the case of Chinese sociologists, it would thus be necessary to construct the space of Chinese sociologists before inquiring how their positions align with their opinions on the localisation debate and before eventually making conclusions regarding the existence of a structural homology, that is, an alignment between positions and opinions.

Given these shortcomings, the present paper aims at using appropriate data, methodology, and concepts to reinvestigate the question of a possible structural analogy between positions taken in the sinicisation debate and positions in the academic space. Regarding the data and methodology, as explained in more detail in the next section, we present a survey of a representative sample of the

population of Chinese sociologists working in Project 211 and Project 985 universities,[3] which correspond to the elite universities identified by the Chinese Ministry of Education (Qingnian, Duanhong, and Hong 2011). These universities are particularly important given that they receive more economic support from the central authorities, and they were generally among the first universities to establish a sociology department. For instance, the People's University of China belongs to the 39 Chinese universities that have had the mission of becoming "first-rate universities of international advanced level" since 1998.[4] Its department of sociology was established in autumn 1987, and in 1989, there were only 10 departments of sociology in Chinese universities (Wang 1989). Regarding Project 211, this was initiated in 1995 to prepare Chinese universities to overcome the challenges of the 21st century. The selection was less strict since 116 universities and departments had been awarded the label by 2008, including less renowned universities, such as the Tibet university. In addition, many 211 universities, including Shehezi University, do not have a sociology department and are not recorded in international rankings, even in the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities, which includes more Chinese universities from Mainland China.

In addition, our sample includes sociologists working in the national or local branch of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), which played a key role in the re-establishment of the discipline in 1979 and is more committed than universities to producing policy reports, such as the Analysis and Projections for the Chinese Society (Boucher 2013).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In terms of our conceptualisation, we draw our inspiration from the seminal work of Pierre Bourdieu (1988) on the academic field, while refining his concepts because of the specificities of our *object of research*. For instance, we do not use the term *field* in this research because the sociohistorical configuration analysed by Bourdieu is too different from the one we investigate. As Bourdieu (1993: 72) explained, a field exists in the sense of "specific stakes and interests, which are irreducible to the stakes and interests specific to other fields (you can't make a philosopher compete for the prizes that interest a geographer)". Moreover, a field shapes the structure of the relations between social agents who at least agree with the idea that the game is worth being played. Consequently, a field exists insofar as it enjoys a *relative autonomy* from other fields. In addition, a field may be considered as a space that is not polarised with respect to a single end (or *nomos*, to reuse Bourdieu's word), as is the case for the social space.

Given these definitions, we consider that Chinese sociology does not form a field; rather it forms a *bi-nomos space* (i.e., a space in which social agents are equipped with two sets of principle of vision and division that determine what is sayable and thinkable). Indeed, since the discipline was re-established in 1979, the CCP has used its monopoly of symbolic violence and rational–legal means to subordinate sociologists. For instance, during the national meeting for the planning of philosophy and social sciences organised in March 1979 (*Chinese Sociology Statistical Yearbook: 1979–1989* [1989]: 9), attendees were asked to "carry out the work of sociological research" according to the "ideological principles of Marxism–Leninism and Mao Zedong's thought" and to "contribute to the

3 These two projects relate to specific announcements by the Ministry of Higher Education. Both announcements detail the objectives of these universities, provide them with additional resources, and contain a list of the universities enrolled in the two projects. Therefore, "211 universities" correspond to the universities benefiting from Project 211, while "985 universities" refer to the universities benefiting from Project 985. Some universities are both 985 and 211 universities.

4 Nine universities benefited from Project 985 in 1998, and the list of 985 universities was enlarged in 2004.

Chinese socialist modernisation". Put differently, Chinese sociologists had to adhere to the ideological principles of the regime and to serve the regime's ends to be tolerated and supported as scientists producing knowledge about society.

While the importance and political control of scientific production and producers have varied from one political period to another, this rational–legal subordination of scientific activities to political power has not since disappeared. According to Article 3 of the statute of the Chinese Sociological Association, the association's vocation still adheres to the "guidance of Marxism–Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the 'Three Represents,'[5] the Scientific Outlook on Development,[6] and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era". According to the same article, the association's mission is to establish the "Four Consciousnesses", strengthen the "Four Self-Confidences", and achieve the "Two Safeguards", while ultimately helping "to build a prosperous, strong, democratic, civilised, harmonious, and beautiful modern socialist society".

Therefore, Chinese sociologists have a double mission. They must not only produce knowledge but also adhere and contribute to the ideological and societal goals determined by political leaders, without having the legal and practical independence to define their own profession. The space of sociologists is so intertwined with the space of power that political outputs, such as reports considered by political authorities to be deserving of study by the cadres (*pishi* in Chinese), are considered in academic evaluations as equivalent to publications in high-ranked peer-reviewed journals. In Bourdieusian terms, this means that political capital (Bourdieu 1993: 126) can be converted into academic capital and vice versa, as *contributions* to science can, in certain cases, lead to political responsibilities or honours.[7]

In addition to these conceptual considerations, our study differs from Bourdieu's work by offering a new conceptualisation of the states and sources of academic capital. In his earliest research on the *scientific field*, Bourdieu extensively used the term *scientific capital* (Bourdieu 1976). He pointed out that scientific capital depends on the possession of "rare scholarly titles", although he was not as precise as in his studies of the different forms of cultural capital, in which he came to objectivise, measure, and conceptualise the different *states* of scientific capital. Moreover, since 1976, when Bourdieu's article was published, the ways in which social scientists are evaluated, classified, and distinguished have changed tremendously, especially in China (Tian, Su, and Ru 2016; Yaisawarng

5 This doctrine is the legacy of Jiang Zemin, general secretary of the CCP from 1989 to 2002. It stipulates that the CCP leads the advancement of the productive force (i.e., leads the workers), coordinates China's advancement in science, technology, and culture (i.e., leads the intellectuals), and represents the fundamental interests of the Chinese people (i.e., leads politically for the interest of the majority).

6 This doctrine is the legacy of Hu Jintao, general secretary of the CCP from 2002 to 2012. It emphasises the importance of sustainable development, rebalancing coastal and inland province development, and promoting the material and spiritual development of the people.

7 For instance, Hong Dayong, a professor at the People's University of China, was designated as head of the Propaganda Bureau in 2024. Li Peilin, the former head of the sociology department at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, was nominated as an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2012. As an alternate member of the Central Committee, he belonged to the most influential political advisors in China, debating the future implementation of policy and laws before they were decided by the Politburo and then ratified by the National People's Congress. This function led him to accompany the members of the Central Committee on several occasions, including diplomatic visits.

and Ng 2014; Beyer and Schmitz 2023; Tian and Lu 2017; Han and Li 2018; Xu, Rose, and Oancea 2021).

While Bourdieu (1991: 7) distinguished between various forms of scientific capital, such as the statutory authority one scientist inherits from their affiliation with a more or less renowned institution, we conceptualised the different forms of academic capital according to the peculiarities of 21st-century Chinese sociologists who are embedded in a structure of highly hierarchised and hierarchising institutions, which provides the possibility of securing reputation and status through national or transnational *achievements* (mainly grants and publications in peer-reviewed journals).

The academic capital of Chinese sociologists depends on the following aspects:

1. The statutory state: This refers to honourific titles, responsibilities, and positions in institutions that signal long-lasting expertise in the domain. A high level of statutory academic capital means that scholars belong to a group of elite sociologists who control the careers, publications, and grants of newcomers. Typically, this form of capital includes aspects such as academic titles (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, etc.); whether people work for a 211 or 985 institution or another kind of institution whose prestige is unequal; whether people are on the boards of prestigious academic journals; whether they are experts who review research proposals for the national grant foundation. Sociologists who have a large amount of academic capital in its statutory form have generally previously accumulated other forms of academic capital and somehow control the opportunities to distribute academic capital (e.g., through the power of nomination and selection).

2. The objectivised state: This refers to achievements quantified by departments and universities to assess the productivity of their faculty members. From interviews with Chinese sociologists, we came to understand the critical importance of this form of capital for obtaining tenure and promotion. It principally relates to the accumulation of national research grants, publications in peer-reviewed journals, and to a lesser extent the publication of books and book chapters.

3. The pedagogical state: This consists of the pedagogical duties and achievements required of sociologists. For instance, sociologists more equipped in pedagogical academic capital are asked to teach and supervise postgraduate students and to possess the certification required to supervise PhD students, and they generally enjoy a lower teaching load. This form of capital is sometimes converted into objectivised academic capital, as some researchers reported publishing research based on empirical material collected by their students. This capital is regarded as less important for tenure and promotion, as pedagogical skills (often mismeasured by student evaluations of teaching performance [Langbein 2008]) are sometimes not considered or only marginally considered (i.e., the academic only needs to avoid being among the 25% of lowest-rated teachers to be considered qualified for tenure).

4. The socialised state: This relates to the people and institutions through which sociologists can obtain human, economic, and collaborative support, enabling them to capitalise more efficiently from other forms of academic capital. This state of capital is the hardest to measure, but it can be approximated through sociologists' affiliations with various professional associations and interest groups in academia.

Given our pre-existing knowledge of the evaluation system in sociology departments and the debates between international and national scientific products and producers, it was necessary to distinguish the sources of academic capital. As previously explained by Zhang Letian (2008), Chinese sociologists trained in China and abroad do not have the same intellectual resources to make a career in the field, do not necessarily research the same topics, and can be more or less advantaged in their career advancement depending on how their departments value international and national publications in peer-reviewed journals.

In addition, the distinction between national and international sources of academic capital has been identified as structuring the positions and position taking in other national academic fields, reflecting the increasingly globalised nature of national academic fields (Heilbron 2014). For instance, Schmidt-Wellenburg (2024: 86) noted that French economists working in France and known for heterodox positions had a lower volume of capital and symbolic capital compared to French economists who had graduated or worked abroad. In another study of German sociologists, Schmidt-Wellenburg and Schmitz (2022: 115) demonstrated that the conflict between sociologists using quantitative methods (inspired by natural sciences) and sociologists using qualitative methods (inspired by the human sciences tradition; *Geisteswissenschaften*) was intimately bound to international academic capital for the former (publication in English) and national academic capital for the latter.

Therefore, for the Chinese sociologists, it was particularly important to capture whether they were publishing in journals included in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and/or the Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI). For the same reason, we asked them if they had experience of working abroad and if they had obtained their PhD degree in or outside Mainland China.

With these conceptual and methodological considerations in mind, the reader can better understand the data and methods presented in the next section.

DATA AND METHODS

Data from the International Chinese Sociology Value Survey

The first step of this investigation required the design of an ad hoc and representative survey: the International Chinese Sociology Value Survey. This strategy was preferred to a full sample because we observed that several faculty members working in 211 universities did not have webpages through which we could find their email addresses; thus, they were possibly less likely to participate in our survey because of their subordinate status.

The first section of the survey entitled Academic Career contained 17 questions, principally requesting the sociologists' positions, working units, areas of expertise, pedagogical duties, research grant achievements, board memberships, and involvement as experts for the national research grant foundation. It thus principally captured the statutory state of academic capital. The second section contained 20 questions measuring the objectivised state of academic capital, principally the number and types of publications accomplished in the three years preceding the study.[8] The third section was shorter, containing only eight questions relating to affiliations with national and international professional associations. It captured academic capital in its socialised state. The fourth part, which was most relevant to the current paper, contained six questions exploring the intellectual references of

8 The importance of the objectivised state of academic capital for tenure and promotion, together with the necessity of identifying the transnational or national nature of such capital, invited us to generate more questions regarding this aspect.

the sociologists (sociologists with whom they were familiar and sociologists who inspired their research), and the sociologists' opinions toward the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences. The possible answers to the question "What is your opinion on the localisation of social sciences?" were as follows: "The localisation of sociology is an urgent affair; it will help improve the level of Chinese sociology and challenge Western academic hegemony"; "The localisation of sociology can eventually provide some help but will not prevent the use of Western theories to explain Chinese society"; "The localisation of sociology is a pseudo proposition because most of the concepts and methods in social sciences are common"; "I do not have a clear opinion"; and "Other; please be precise".

After the design of the survey, we elaborated a strategy to obtain a representative sample of Chinese sociologists working in Mainland China. The population surveyed in Mainland China consisted of two subpopulations: 1) full-time sociologists working in a college of social sciences or an independently established sociology department at a Project 985 or Project 211 university (we named this population the "university sample"); and 2) full-time researchers working at the China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) or one of its local branches (we named this subpopulation the "CASS sample").

For the sociologists in the university sample, a research assistant first created a list of 938 sociologists from 41 universities. This list was relatively exhaustive since there were 43 universities with independent schools of social sciences or sociology departments (22 for Project 985 universities and 21 for Project 211 universities) at the time of the survey.[9] The information contained in this list included names, genders, research areas, and emails. From this initial list, we used random sampling to select 375 sociologists working in 20 different universities, selecting 25% of the overall population. By doing so, we made sure that sociologists working in less prestigious universities would be equally invited to complete the survey. We then invited these sociologists to complete the online survey in December 2021, and we sent a reminder in February 2022.

For the CASS sample, the sampling process was partially different from that of the university sample. This was because the website construction of provincial-level social science academies is lagging far behind that of universities, and they are less likely to provide faculty members' contact details and profiles. After careful consideration, we selected 12 sociological research institutes from 31 provincial social science academies based on geographic location: southeast, northwest, and central. The overall sample size comprised 187 people (including 82 people from the national CASS located in Beijing). For the CASS sample, we applied the same sampling principles and procedures as for the university sample, selecting 25% of the overall population (83 people).

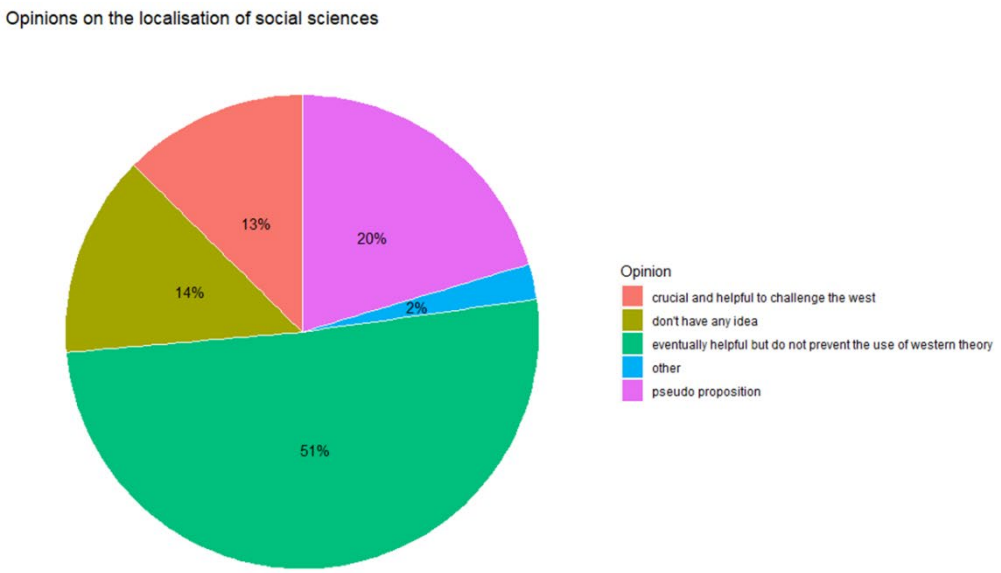
Finally, the effective response rate was 36.8% (n = 138) for the university sample and 34.94% (n = 29) for the CASS sample. Compared to similar surveys conducted overseas, the survey response rate was fairly standard (Shih and Fan 2008). We finally obtained a sample of 167 respondents, corresponding to approximately 15% of the entire population of sociologists, albeit highly representative of institutional divisions and hierarchy.

Overview of the opinions on the localisation of social sciences

9 We could not open the websites of the sociology departments at Suzhou University and Xinjiang University. Therefore, these two universities were excluded from our sample.

Thanks to this survey, we obtained an initial idea of how the Chinese sociologists rely on so-called Chinese and Western theories, as well as their opinions on the localisation/sinicisation debates.

Figure 1: Distribution of opinions on the localisation of social sciences Source: ICVS data



As can be seen from the pie chart, more than half the sociologists support the idea that localisation could eventually be useful but does not prevent the use of Western theories and methods. In other words, a relative consensus exists on this debate, while polarised opinions (i.e., "pseudo proposition" and "crucial and helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony") are relatively rare. More precisely, those having a polarised opinion represent only one third of the respondents, and the sociologists not having any idea (or perhaps not daring to communicate their opinions) outnumber the sociologists declaring the localisation of social sciences as crucial and as enabling Chinese sociologists to challenge Western academic hegemony.

Table 1: Number of Chinese sociologists with whom the sociologists declare familiarity (max. 5).

			Number of Chinese sociologists with whom the sociologists declare familiarity			
			0	1	2 or more	Total
Place where the sociologists obtained their highest diploma	Mainland China	Frequency	24	31	60	115
		Row %	20.9%	27.0%	52.2%	100.0%
	Other locations	Frequency	17	25	10	52
		Row %	32.7%	48.1%	19.2%	100.0%

Cramer's V = 0.31, chi-square = 16.073, p-value = 0.006.

These results are not surprising given that the majority of Chinese sociologists who had obtained their highest diploma abroad mention being familiar with at least one of the five Chinese authors

proposed (Fei Xiaotong, Zheng Hangsheng, Lin Nan, Yuan Fang, and Lu Xueyi), while Chinese sociologists who had obtained their highest diploma in Mainland China are also very familiar with Western sociologists.

Table 2: Number of foreign sociologists with whom the sociologists declare familiarity (max. 16)

			Number of foreign sociologists with whom the sociologists declare familiarity						
			0	1	2	3	4	5 or more	Total
Place where the sociologists obtained their highest diploma	Mainland China	frequency	3	13	15	21	11	52	115
		row %	2.6%	11.3%	13.0%	18.3%	9.6%	45.2%	100.0%
	Other locations	frequency	0	7	7	11	6	21	52
		row %	0.0%	13.5%	13.5%	21.2%	11.5%	40.4%	100.0%

Cramer's V = 0.061, chi-square = 12.12, p-value = 0.85

In Table 1, the results for Cramer's V suggest that sociologists who graduated abroad are less familiar with Chinese sociologists, while less than one-third are entirely unfamiliar with the proposed Chinese sociologists. Regarding the familiarity with Western sociologists reported in Table 2, there is no statistical difference between sociologists depending on where they obtained their highest diploma, as the majority are familiar with four or more foreign authors in the list.

To conclude this brief overview, both foreign sociologists and Chinese sociologists belong to the mental universe of Chinese sociologists, and those only familiar with Chinese sociologists are rather rare (1.7% of the entire population). Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that Chinese sociologists who partly draw on foreign authors in their research generally advocate for the addition of their sociological theories and methods.

Construction of the space of sociologists

While these preliminary results tend to suggest that the opinions are not necessarily very polarised, MCA is still necessary to construct the space of sociologists before inquiring into a possible structural analogy between positions in the academic space and opinions on localisation. To do this, a set of 28 active variables was used. The list of variables and their modalities can be found in the appendix.

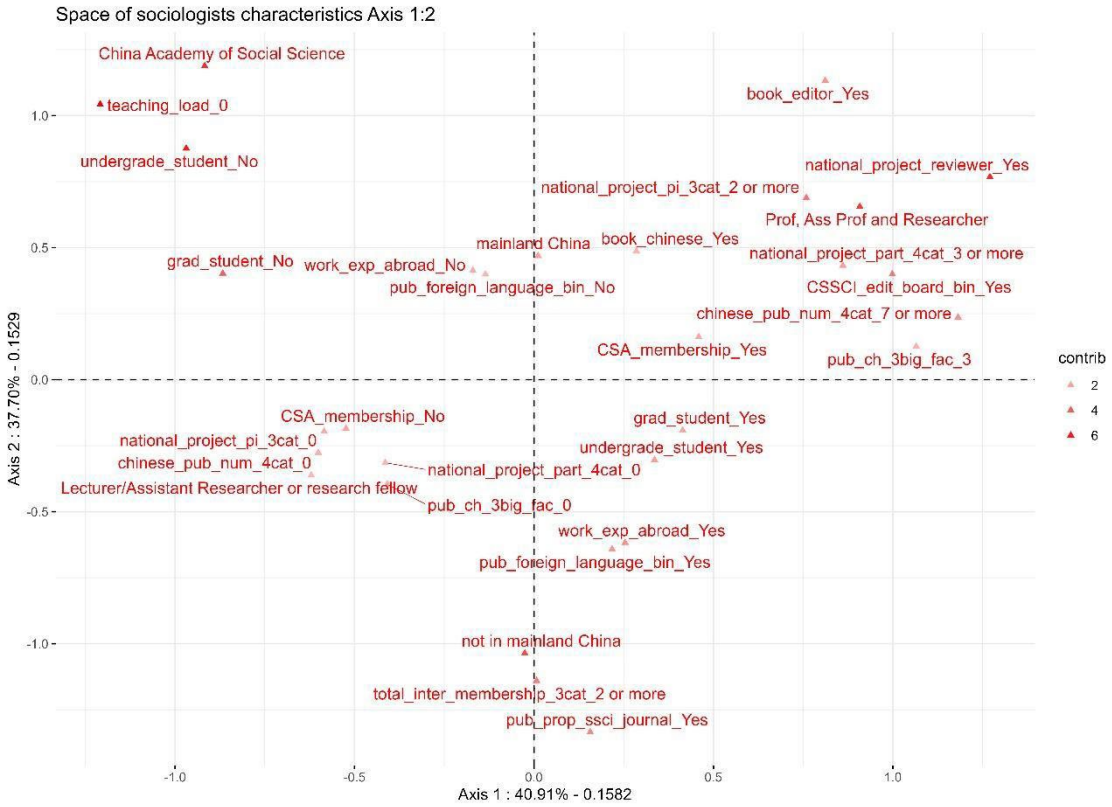
Interestingly, the space of sociologists is more differentiated in terms of the volume and structure of academic capital. The three first axes contribute to explaining 87.70% of the variance between individuals (Benzecri's modified rate). The first dimension contributes to 41.42% of the variance, the second dimension contributes to 37.70%, while the third dimension contributes more marginally to 8.58%.

To this extent, the survey adequately captures major differences between the scholars and between their different characteristics. A representation of the space of modalities is helpful in further understanding the principles of differentiation of the space.

Table 3: Axes and measurement of the explained inertia

Axis	Eigenvalue	Rate	Cumulative rate	Modified rate	Cumulated modified rate
1	0.1582	9.73	9.73	41.42%	41.42%
2	0.1529	9.40	19.14	37.71%	79.13%
3	0.0947	5.83	24.97	8.58%	87.70%
4	0.0736	4.52	29.49	3.10%	90.81%

Figure 2: Space of the sociologists' characteristics—Axis 1–2 (30 most contributing modalities)

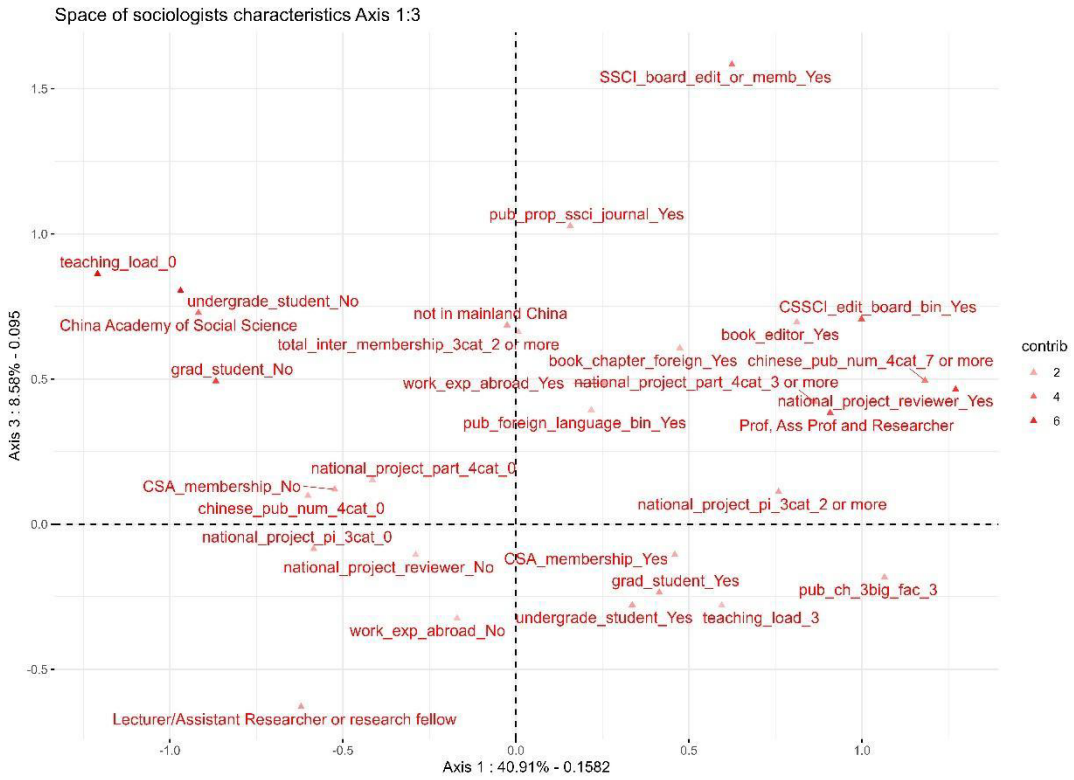


Considering the variables and modalities contributing to the inertia on Axis 1 (also reported in detail in the appendix[10]), it seems that this axis separates the gatekeepers (on the right) who control the means of production of national academic capital from the most junior scholars (on the left). Indeed, the individuals on the right possess more prominent academic capital in its statutory state ("professor, associate professor, or researcher", "national project reviewer", "Chinese SSCI board member", and "national project expert") and benefit from this status in term of teaching (lower teaching load and postgraduate student teaching and supervision). Moreover, the sociologists on the right side of

10 In the appendix, we provide the position of each modality on the three first axis of inertia together with their contribution. Other measures, such as cos2 and eta2, p-value of eta2, and v-test, were considered in our analysis to qualify each axis.

Axis 1 generally have more national academic capital, as they are more likely to have published in all three of the most-prestigious Chinese sociology journals published in the mainland and are more likely to be members of the Chinese Sociological Association. They are also more likely to have published 10 or more CSSI articles in the past three years. To sum up, this axis divides young scholars from older prominent scholars who forge their legitimacy by publishing in Chinese journals while gaining control of national academic capital.

Figure 3: Space of the sociologists' characteristics—Axis 1–3 (30 most contributing modalities)



Axis 2 differentiates those who possess international academic capital from those who are more oriented toward the production of official reports. Indeed, among the variables that contribute to the upper part of Axis 2, we find "having a working experience abroad", "published in proposed SSCI journal", "published in SSCI journals in the past three years", and "PhD obtained: not in Mainland China". The lower part of Axis 2 is characterised by "blue book chapter",[11] "Chinese Academy of Social Sciences", "no teaching load", and "book editor", which correspond to the profile of CASS researchers who have no teaching duties but are asked to publish public (i.e., chapters in "blue books") and confidential reports (*neibu baogao*) on ongoing reforms. In terms of contribution to inertia, this aspect is almost as distinctive as academic capital in its statutory state (mainly retrieved on Axis 1).

The volume of capital is illustrated by Axis 3. Sociologists located on the upper part of Axis 3 are better equipped in terms of not only international academic capital but also national academic capital. For instance, the variable "SSCI editorial board member or editor" particularly contributes to

11 Blue books are a series of books edited by the CASS. They can be considered as the public version of the reports on ongoing policies and topics that are highly regarded by the political leadership.

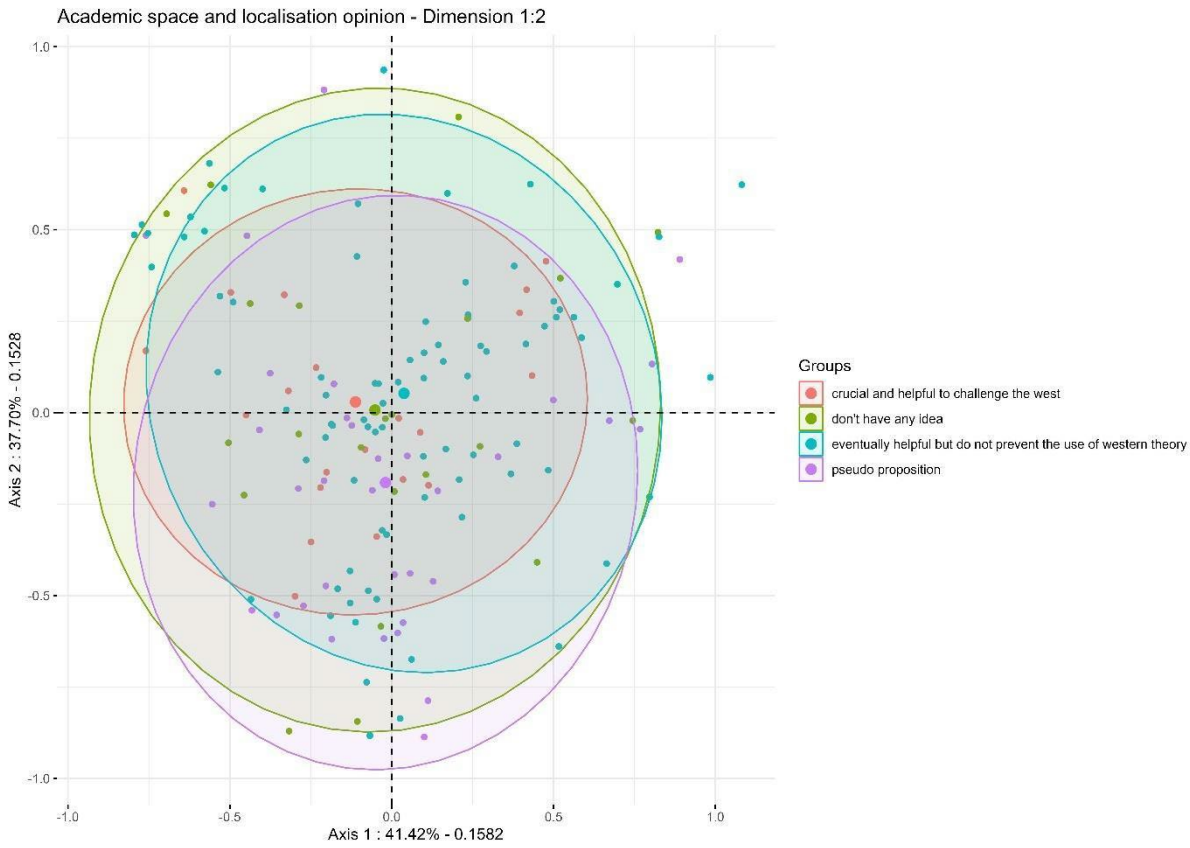
the inertia on this axis. Meanwhile, other aspects, such as "national project expert", "CSSI editorial board member", and "participated in only one national project", also contribute heavily to Axis 3, albeit to a lesser extent. Therefore, Axis 3 may separate those who have a double strategy of accumulation of academic capital (international and national) from those who are leaning more toward one of the two sources.

Since the properties of the academic space have been made clear, we can investigate in the next section how sociologists' opinions on the localisation of social sciences are distributed in this space. Moreover, we shed light on the absence of structural homology, while explaining why some of the polarising opinions, such as "localisation is a pseudo proposition" and "crucial and helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony", are still tendentially associated with specific characteristics and positions in the space.

DEBUNKING THE PRE-SUPPOSED STRUCTURAL HOMOLOGY

To gain an idea of the distribution of the different opinions in the space of sociologists, we first mapped the different groups of respondents and underlined the occupied areas by drawing confidence ellipses for each group.

Figure 4: Projections of opinions on the localisation on the space of sociologists—Axis 1–2



The ellipses contain 85% of the sociologists, who agree on one of the proposed answers with the exception of the modality "Other; please be precise" (only four respondents). As visualised, the area covered by the ellipses on the first axis (left to right) seems similar. However, the coordinates of the

barycentre of each group on Axis 1 are close to the origin. This suggests that the different opinions do not depend on Axis 1, which separates the prominent older scholars (professors or researchers) who are well equipped in national capital from the young scholars who have no major achievements (publications in the most prestigious Chinese sociological journals, national grants, etc.) and no responsibilities (e.g., being a board member of a CSSCI journal).

To further confirm the absence of an association between academic capital in its statutory form and attitudes toward the localisation of social sciences, we conducted the typicality test recommended by Le Roux; Biénaise and Durand (2019) and the Wilcoxon rank test, which fitted the nonparametric nature of the distribution of individuals along Axis 1. Given the value of the aka eta-squared of the "localisation opinion" variable on Dimension 1 (3.8%), the results of the typicality test,[12] and the results of the Wilcoxon Rank test (all being nonsignificant for all opinions), a remarkable absence of difference on this axis is noted. In other words, the positions of gatekeeper and marginal contributors are not correlated with an affinity for a particular opinion.

On the contrary, Axis 2, which reflects the opposition between international academic capital and CASS researchers who have no teaching duties and produce reports for public institutions, is associated to a limited extent with opinions on localisation. To return to the ellipses of confidence shown in the previous graph, those assimilating the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences to a "pseudo debate" are more likely to be in the lower part of the graph, especially when compared to those replying that localisation/sinicisation is "eventually helpful but does not prevent the use of Western theories" and those responding that localisation/sinicisation is "crucial and helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony". From a statistical point of view, the opinions taken together are poorly correlated with Dimension 2, as the aka eta-squared is only 5.8%. Nonetheless, the p-value of the typicality test of the modality "pseudo proposition" (0.0034) and the p-value of the Wilcoxon rank test, which compared the individuals responding "pseudo proposition" with those responding "eventually helpful but does not prevent the use of Western theories" and those responding "crucial and helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony" (0.009 and 0.002), confirm that those who are better equipped in academic capital originating from international sources are more likely to consider the localisation/sinicisation of social sciences as a pseudo debate.

For instance, half the sociologists considering localisation/sinicisation as a pseudo debate had published an SSCI-indexed article over the past three years, while this proportion was only 36.4% for the other attitudes. Additionally, 14.7% of sociologists considering localisation/sinicisation as a pseudo debate are board members or editors of at least one SSCI journal. This proportion shrinks to 5.9% for those who consider localisation as potentially helpful but not preventing them from using Western theories and methods and to 0% for those who declare localisation/sinicisation as crucial and helpful in challenging Western hegemony.

Finally, it appears that international association memberships are strongly correlated with opinions on the localisation debate. Indeed, 59% of sociologists considering localisation/sinicisation as a pseudo debate have at least one international or foreign national association membership compared to only 40.6% of those expressing one of the other attitudes. More interestingly, none of the scholars considering localisation/sinicisation as crucial and helpful in challenging Western hegemony are members of the International Sociological Association, and only one is a member of the American

12 More precisely, on Axis 1, the results are as follows: p = 0.17 for the "crucial and helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony", p = 0.50 for "don't have any idea", p = 0.21 for "eventually helpful but does not prevent the use of Western theory", and p = 0.75 for "pseudo proposition".

Sociological Association. In short, everything happens as if the accumulation of international academic capital is functioning to strongly defend the universality of the methods and concepts invented by Western sociologists. Conversely, the sociologists dissociating themselves the most from the international space of knowledge production are more prone to perceive localisation/sinicisation as an academic and political tool to challenge the West.

The relationship between international academic capital (Axis 2) and other attitudes is slightly more challenging to interpret. Among those who declare "not having any idea", we find a group of five individuals who graduated abroad, have at least one international membership, and have published in an SCCI-indexed journal during the past three years. It remains possible that these relatively young individuals, who are equipped in international academic capital, are unfamiliar with the ongoing debates or answered "not having any idea" to avoid mentioning a potentially divisive opinion given the political nature of the debate.

Another subgroup of sociologists who declare that they have no opinion is composed of six individuals located in the bottom-right part of the graph, which means that they are not gatekeepers and are poor in international academic capital. These marginalised scholars may continue their academic journeys without paying much attention to the ongoing debates, having not truly considered this matter. In short, the heterogeneity of the "having no idea" position possibly arises from the fact that these sociologists are choosing the same pre-coded answer, while not necessarily having the exact same reason to select it.

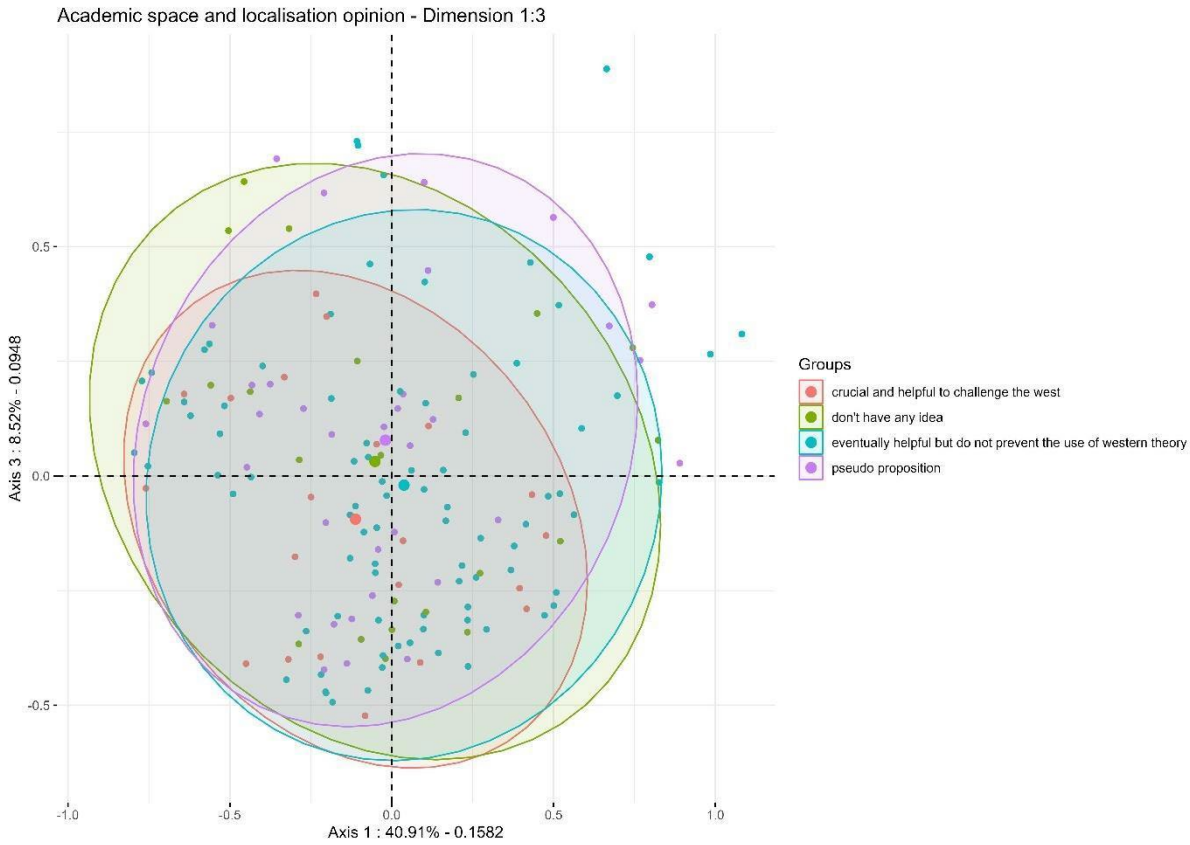
The extremely heterogeneous position (characterised by the large square sum of the distance between the individuals composing that group) of sociologists declaring that localisation/sinicisation is "eventually helpful but does not prevent the use of Western theories and methods" can be related to their academic trajectories. As explained earlier, those sociologists who trained in China are nevertheless familiar with European and American sociology, while most sociologists who obtained their PhD outside Mainland China became familiar with authors such as Fei Xiaotong during their bachelor's degree. Therefore, Chinese and Western authors and theories are employed in combination or alternatively by most of the sociologists whatever their position in the space. They all have an objective interest in continuing to draw on this multi-polar world of intellectual references.

Chinese sociologists are also the depositaries of an intellectual tradition beginning with Liang Qichao, which aims to combine "Western modernity" with "Chinese specificities". This encourages the sociologists to play the role of knowledge brokers between the different societies that they have to know to be regarded as true intellectuals. Put differently, the *doxa* among the sociologists is no different from the doxa among Chinese intellectuals: the desirable state of science and society arises from a synthesis of Chinese traditions and Western modernity.

At this point, our investigation clearly demonstrates that the position of gatekeepers versus newcomers is not associated with a particular opinion, while the origin of academic capital (national vs. international) only correlates with the attitudes categorised as "pseudo debate" and "crucial and helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony". Investigation of the position of individuals on Axis 3, which is more related to the global volume of academic capital, further establishes the absence of

structural homology, while helping to better understand how the polarising opinions relate to positions in the space.

Figure 5:Projection of opinions on the localisation debate on the space of sociologists—Axis 1–3.



In Figure 5, the barycentre of the ellipses corresponding to "pseudo proposition" is positioned marginally higher than the barycentre of the ellipses corresponding to "eventually helpful and does not prevent the use of Western theories" and "crucial and helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony". Since the upper part of Axis 3 corresponds to the volume of academic capital (with the modalities "being an editor of an SSCI journal", "being a board member of an SSCI journal", and "being an expert for the national social science grant foundation" greatly contributing to the explained inertia), we may temporarily assume that those having a larger volume of academic capital (by accumulating both national and international academic capital) are more likely to perceive localisation/sinicisation as a pseudo debate. However, neither the Wilcoxon rank test (p-value = 0.051) nor the typicality test (p-value = 0.074) validate this hypothesis with great certainty.

Moreover, these results must be considered cautiously because of the modalities that contribute greatly to Axis 3. Indeed, modalities such as "being a member of an SSCI journal editorial board" and to a lesser extent "contribution to a book chapter written in a foreign language" are related to international academic capital. In other words, on Axis 3, the position of sociologists considering localisation as a pseudo debate is partly due to their accumulated international academic capital.

Because other important modalities relating to national academic capital are in play (principal investigator of three or more projects and participating in four or more projects led by other scholars), further inspection of the most crucial aspects of national academic capital is necessary. Therefore,

we conducted additional bi-variate analyses to examine the most crucial aspects of national academic capital. In this regard, the most relevant variable is "in how many of the three main Chinese sociology journals did the sociologist ever publish?" These journals—*Shehuixue yanjiu* (Sociological Research), *Shehui* (Society), and *Shehui Xue Pinglun* (Sociological Debates)—are more valued in Chinese sociologists' evaluations for continuous appointments and promotions. For instance, in most of the departments using the tenure system, a publication in one of these three journals in the last five to six years is deemed necessary to obtain tenure (this can be replaced by a publication in an SSCI journal in Q1). Put differently, more than any other aspect, publication in these journals indicates the possession of national academic capital and can be exchanged for academic capital in its statutory form.

Interestingly, only 42.9% of scholars who find localisation to be "helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony" have ever published in one of these three journals. This proportion reaches 47.1% for those who consider localisation as a pseudo debate and who are more likely to publish in SSCI journals. Meanwhile, this proportion is 75.9% for those who respond "eventually helpful but does not prevent the use of Western theory". In other words, the sociologists who respond "helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony" lack the most important resource to secure their careers, especially if we compare them to those who advocate for a fusion of so-called Western and Chinese knowledge.

Table 4: Number of national grants as principal investigator obtained during the career vs. opinion on the localisation of social sciences.

			Number of national grants as principal investigator obtained during the career			
			0	1	2 or more	Total
Opinion on localisation	Crucial and helpful in challenging Western academic hegemony	frequency	10	9	2	21
		row %	47.6%	42.9%	9.5%	100.0%
	Pseudo proposition	frequency	15	15	4	85
		row %	44.1%	44.1%	11.8%	100.0%
	Eventually helpful but does not prevent the use of Western theory	frequency	24	36	25	
		row %	28.2%	42.4%	29.4%	
	Do not have any idea	frequency	7	10	6	23
		row %	30.4%	43.5%	26.1%	100.0%
	Other	frequency	1	1	2	4
		row %	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Cramer's V = 0.171, chi-square = 9.784

To complete the analysis of national academic capital in its objectivised state, we performed another analysis of the number of national grants obtained over the sociologists' entire careers. Once again, we considered this aspect because national grants are deemed necessary for tenure and promotion in the most prestigious sociology departments, while a provincial-level research grant can be sufficient in less prestigious ones.

While the overall correlation is not exceptionally strong here (Cramer's V being below 0.2 and the chi-square not being relevant given the low frequencies in certain cells), there are still significant local deviations (measured thanks to the local PEM).[13] For instance, those declaring that localisation is "eventually helpful but does not prevent the use of Western theory" and those "not having any idea" are over-represented in the category "two or more national grants". Once again, the sociologists willing to consider localisation as a means to challenge Western hegemony appear in a particularly weak position in terms of national academic capital. Nearly half have never secured a national grant, as is the case for those considering localisation as a pseudo debate.

To sum up, this demonstrates that those who want to develop localisation to challenge the West are generally dominated on both sides. They are dominated by those who support the addition of national and Western methods and who publish in top Chinese journals and are more likely to obtain two or more national research grants (and less likely to have never obtained such a grant). They are also outperformed by those who disregard localisation and have accumulated more international academic capital. To this extent, the willingness to support localisation to challenge the West can be viewed as a heterodox opinion, arising from a dominated position in the space and led by a practical interest in changing the rules of the game of academic recognition.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In their research, Li et al., (2022) concluded that the localisation of social sciences correlates with a high amount of political and academic capital. However, their results may well be biased due to the sociologists selected in their study and the absence of adequate empirical inquiry.

Our results based on a representative sample of the population of Chinese sociologists invite a completely different conclusion. While the present article does not address the question of political capital, we demonstrate that sociologists willing to support the localisation of social sciences to challenge the West generally lack international academic capital compared to those combating localisation. Moreover, they have accumulated less national academic capital in its objectivised state compared to those advocating for the development of localisation alongside the use of Western theories. To use Bourdieu's term, it seems that supporting localisation to challenge Western hegemony is more of a subversive strategy that is employed by dominated sociologists.

Nonetheless, it can be acknowledged that this strategy may have been adopted by some influential sociologists, such as Li Peilin and Li Youmei, who have in common being trained in France (which is not very profitable, as highly valued SSCI publications suppose the mastery of English) and being highly committed to their administrative and political duties (to the point that some sociologists compared them to eunuchs during informal discussions). For these two scholars, their position (which is both political and academic) might encourage them to be more responsive to the demands of the political leadership.

Despite the elective affinity between sociologists who are *dominated on both sides* and the willingness to challenge Western hegemony, it should be recalled that there is no one-to-one correspondence between position in the space and attitude toward localisation. Indeed, Chinese sociologists generally rely on both theories and consider the development of indigenous theories to be compatible

13 An analysis in terms of the odds ratio, complemented by the Fisher test, would have led to the same interpretation. PEM stands for Percentage of Maximum Deviation.

with the utilisation of Western sociological theories and methods. Put differently, there is no structural homology between the volume and structure of academic capital: on the one hand, there is a consensus; on the other hand, there are certain polarised attitudes that are more correlated with positions in the academic space. In Bourdieu's words, such a phenomenon might be named a limited *field effect*. However, it cannot be named as such in the present configuration. In China, sociologists co-survive in a bi-nomos space rather than in a field. Indeed, they are not embedded in a field because a field supposes a high degree of autonomy (Bourdieu 1993; Duval 2022: 76) and polarisation toward a single goal: the production of scientific knowledge. This perspective is not absent from China, but it is combined with the goal of producing knowledge that helps the leaders govern society. To this extent, in Weber's footsteps, it is safer to describe the distribution of the polarising opinions on the localisation debate as resulting from an *elective affinity*.

The impossibility of organising Chinese sociology as a field may partly explain why most Chinese sociologists tend to favour a compromise in the localisation debate, while others have no opinion (or do not dare to formulate it). In such a configuration, sociologists might develop the tendency to seek compromise or, to use a boxing metaphor, to prefer the stick jab to the power jab. This consensual strategy probably explains why a prominent sociologist such as Li Lulu, professor at the People's University of China, has declared that the localisation problem no longer exists since this question has become purely academic and sociologists are solely concerned with the production of knowledge (Zhou 2021: 323).

More importantly, most Chinese sociologists, especially the most prominent, would lose a lot of their academic legitimacy if they solely relied on theories, methods, and concepts invented by Chinese sociologists. As we demonstrated in our preliminary analysis, Chinese sociologists rely heavily on theories invented in other countries. Even those trained in China are familiar with classical sociological thinkers such as Weber, Durkheim, and Marx, who form the inevitable trident of authors taught in classical sociological theory courses. Chinese sociologists entirely trained in China are also extensively familiar with Bourdieu and other major Western contemporary sociologists. Conversely, Chinese sociologists who obtained their PhD abroad do not throw away Fei Xiaotong's and other Chinese sociologists' books after crossing the Chinese border. While they advocate less for familiarity with Chinese authors, these authors are still part of their intellectual world and background, especially after these returnees are further socialised through colleagues who completed their training entirely in China.

What seems even more interesting to us is the unwillingness of Chinese sociologists to adopt the views of political leaders enjoining them to transform the social sciences into a discursive weapon to challenge the West and defend the *Chinese model*.[14] Only 12.6% of sociologists adopt the idea that localisation is a crucial tool for challenging Western hegemony, although this idea has been established as a national goal. This undoubtedly suggests a strong willingness to see the space as more

14 The China model, sometimes named the China experience or China's development model in Xi Jinping's thought, is presented by the political leadership as a model of rapid economic development that considers the interests of the people. According to the propaganda, this model leads to "common prosperity", "harmonises the relationship between nature and humans while proceeding to modernisation", and relies on the harmonisation and unification of the Chinese people. More importantly, this model is achieved thanks to the leadership of the CCP and following the principles of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In short, it is presented as a model of development forged thanks to experimentation led by the CCP and avoiding the problems inherent in neoliberal societies, such as poverty, division, and the destruction of the environment.

governed by academic considerations and as involving a silent rebellion against the politicisation of social sciences.

This phenomenon has been named *Eigensinn* by Alf Ludtke (Lindenberg and Lüdtke 2020). More precisely, Lüdkte's concept conveys the idea that politically dominated social agents, who can hardly express discontent or organise collectively in a public manner, still adopt self-affirmation strategies to put at a distance political injunctions or hierarchical demands. This concept partly derives from (but cannot be reduced to) its literal meaning in the German language: "stubbornness" and "obstinacy". In the case of Chinese sociologists, *Eigensinn* takes the form of reclaiming the definition of the craft of sociologists, as well as being a discrete refusal to play the role of an ideological standard bearer.

This phenomenon is, of course, not specific to Chinese sociologists or, more broadly, to Chinese experts. Indeed, academic colleagues and parents' organisations in Florida, USA, are currently implementing work-around strategies to circumvent Ron DeSantis's Stop Woke Act, which deters them from explaining the history of racial inequality in the US and how sexual orientation is socially constructed and stigmatised.[15] While their resistance to De Santis's ideology and law is still sometimes organised through nongovernmental associations, the dissolution of some of some of these organisations may lead to less publicly assumed positions and a certain form of "obedient autonomy" (Evasdottir 2004), which has been practiced for years by Chinese experts.

Therefore, the silent but obstinate reluctance of Chinese experts to contribute to the creation of an ideologically grounded discursive system in, and thanks to science, can be regarded as a more common form of response to the authoritarian empowerment of experts, which offers, unfortunately for social scientists, many occasions for documentation (Blois 2021; Hager 1949; Mobius 2021; Zaslavsky 1977; Yan and Cao 2017; Hao and Guo 2016).

Despite the large existing literature on this matter, the present research not only provides information about the situation of Chinese sociologists but also offers some refined conceptual tools to construct and investigate the relation between positions and opinions in the academic space. More precisely, it demonstrates the necessity of distinguishing different forms of academic capital and conceptualising them according to the peculiarities of the sociohistorical configuration that is under scrutiny. Moreover, as the Chinese case demonstrates, there is not always structural homology between positions and opinions; instead, there is sometimes an elective affinity between certain forms or origins of capital and opinions. Such crucial nuances could not become apparent and intelligible if we were not able to enhance Bourdieu's "intellectual machine" (Bourdieu 2023: 113), as he himself wished, by proposing a refined definition of the different forms of academic capital that is suited to our sociohistorical configuration. To continue to improve such an "intellectual machine" and to understand why structural homologies are not always observed, it would also be necessary to investigate more microscopic aspects of the careers of social agents. In our case, Chinese sociologists possibly partly inherit their opinions on localisation from their PhD supervisors, who can play the role of an "intellectual master" and guardian angel.[16] Moreover, the network of interpersonal relations,

15 See the following website: These small acts of defiance are helping Floridians fight Ron DeSantis' oppressive policies (fastcompany.com).

16 Among the sociologists we interviewed, one mentioned a PhD supervisor supporting his former student to buy an apartment. Another consulted his former PhD supervisor about life partner choices. Many others mentioned still working with their former PhD supervisors or people from their PhD supervisors' groups (shimen in Chinese) more than one decade after graduation. These anecdotes invite us to consider how the strong and long-lasting intellectual ties between supervisors

which is potentially a network for the exchange of ideas and favours, may invite sociologists to reconsider their opinions about the localisation of social sciences. Finally, to paraphrase Passeron (2009: 23–35), an academic journey is also made up of the contingent dynamics of events and bifurcations that make social agents' opinions not totally reducible to a structural homology between their positions and opinions.

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and students extend beyond the professional sphere and may also play a role in sociologists' opinions on the localisation of the social sciences.

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APPENDIX

Table A1: Active Variables MCA first three dimensions (contr. ≥ 2,1 % in italic)

Variables	**n and (%)**	**Dim 1**	**Dim 2**	**Dim 3**	**contr. dim 1**	**contr. dim 2**	**contr. dim 3**
Statutory state of the academic capital							
Type of academic institution employed (institution_3cat)							
211 university (not 985)	39 (23.4%)	0,04	-0,25	-0,47	0,01	0,41	*2,27*
985 project	99 (59.3%)	0,25	-0,25	-0,03	0,99	1	0,02
China Academy of Social Sciences (local or national)	29 (17.4%)	-0,92	1,19	0,73	*3,85*	*6,69*	*4,05*
Job position (Job_position)							
Assistant Researcher/Assistant professor	85 (50.9%)	-0,28	-0,24	0,02	1,07	0,78	0,01
Prof, Ass Prof and Researcher	49 (29.3%)	0,91	0,66	0,38	*6,37*	*3,44*	1,9
Lecturer/Assistant Researcher or research fellow	33 (19.8%)	-0,62	-0,36	-0,63	2,01	0,71	*3,44*
Reviewer National Social Sciences Foundation (national_project_reviewer)							
Yes	31 (18.6%)	-0,29	-0,17	-0,11	*2,01*	0,71	*3,44*
No	136 (81.4%)	1,27	0,77	0,46	1,8	0,68	0,4
CSSCI editorial board member (CSSCI_edit_board_bin)							
Yes	32 (19.2%)	1	0,4	0,71	*5,03*	0,83	*4,21*
No	135 (80.8%)	-0,24	-0,09	-0,17	1,19	0,2	1
SSCI editorial board member or editor (SSCI_edit_or_board)							
Yes	13 (7.8%)	0,62	-0,24	1,58	0,8	0,12	*8,59*
No	154 (92.2%)	-0,05	0,02	-0,13	0,07	0,01	0,72
Working experience abroad (work_exp_abroad)							
Yes	67 (40.1%)	0,25	-0,62	0,48	0,68	*4,17*	*4,14*
No	100 (59.9%)	-0,17	0,41	-0,32	0,46	*2,8*	2,77
Experience as Postdoc (Post_doc)							
Yes	44 (26.3%)	0	-0,12	0,13	0	0,1	0,19
No	123 (73.7%)	0	0,04	-0,05	0	0,04	0,07
Place of highest diploma (high_diploma_place_bin)							
In mainland China	115 (68.9%)	0,01	0,47	-0,31	0	*4,12*	*2,91*
Not In Mainland China	52 (31.1%)	-0,03	-1,04	0,69	0,01	*9,12*	*6,43*
Objectivised state of the academic capital							
Participation in national project of other PI (national_project_part_4cat)							

0	66 (39.5%)	-0,41	-0,31	0,15	1,79	1,07	0,4
1	44 (26.3)	-0,02	0,03	-0,48	0	0,01	*2,67*
2	29 (17.4%)	0,15	0,26	-0,03	0,1	0,31	0,01
3 or more	28 (16.8%)	0,86	0,43	0,42	*3,27*	0,85	1,32
Number of national project led (national_project_pi_3cat)							
0	57 (34.1%)	-0,58	-0,2	-0,09	*3,07*	0,36	0,11
1	71 (42.5%)	0,05	-0,22	0,01	0,03	0,57	0
2 or more	39 (23.4%)	0,76	0,69	0,11	*3,54*	*3,02*	0,13
Published books in Chinese (book_chinese)							
Yes	56 (33.5%)	0,29	0,49	0,03	0,72	*2,17*	0,01
No	111 (66.5%)	-0,14	-0,25	-0,02	0,36	1,1	0,01
Published chapter in blue book collection (blue_book_chapter)							
Yes	31 (18.6%)	-0,22	0,67	0,23	0,25	*2,24*	0,43
No	136 (81.4%)	0,05	-0,15	-0,05	0,06	0,51	0,1
Book editor (chinese book)							
Yes	15 (9.0%)	0,81	1,13	0,7	1,56	*3,14*	1,92
No	152 (91.0%)	-0,08	-0,11	-0,07	0,15	0,31	0,19
Published in listed SSCI journals (pub_prop_ssci_journal)							
Yes	19 (11.4%)	0,16	-1,33	1,03	0,07	*5,53*	*5,28*
No	148 (88.6%)	-0,02	0,17	-0,13	0,01	0,71	0,68
Published in foreign language (pub_foreign_language_bin)							
Yes	64 (38.3%)	0,16	-1,33	1,03	0,48	*4,31*	*2,6*
No	103 (61.7%)	-0,14	0,4	-0,24	0,3	*2,68*	1,62
Published a book chapter in foreign language (book_chapter_foreign)							
Yes	27 (16.2%)	0,22	-0,64	0,39	0,96	0,95	*2,62*
No	140 (83.6%)	-0,14	0,4	-0,24	0,18	0,18	0,5
Number of CSSCI articles (chinese_pub_num_4cat)							
0	45 (26.9%)	-0,6	-0,28	0,1	*2,56*	0,56	0,11
1	22 (13.2%)	-0,13	-0,21	-0,17	0,06	0,16	0,16
2	31 (18.6%)	-0,22	-0,02	-0,39	0,25	0	1,21
3	26 (15.6%)	-0,1	0,3	0,16	0,04	0,37	0,17
4 to 6	22 (13.2%)	0,67	0,24	-0,15	1,57	0,2	0,13
7 or more	21 (12.6%)	1,18	0,24	0,49	*4,63*	0,19	1,35

Publications in 3 dominant journals Chinese sociology (pub_ch_3bigfac)							
0 (didn't publish in any of them)	71 (42.5%)	-0,41	-0,4	0	1,87	1,82	0
1 (published in one of them)	46 (27.5%)	-0,06	0,27	0,18	0,03	0,54	0,39
2 (published in two of them)	33 (19.8%)	0,42	0,41	-0,16	0,92	0,92	0,23
3 (published in the three journals)	17 (10.2%)	1,07	0,13	-0,18	*3,04*	0,04	0,15
Pedagogical state of the academic capital							
Annual Teaching load (teaching_load)							
No course	32 (19.2%)	-1,21	1,04	0,86	*7,38*	*5,68*	*6,26*
1 course	26 (15.6%)	-0,23	-0,33	0,14	0,23	0,48	0,13
2 courses	53 (31.7%)	0,34	-0,08	-0,31	0,96	0,06	1,32
3 courses	32 (19.2%)	0,6	-0,11	-0,28	1,79	0,06	0,66
4 or more	24 (14.4%)	0,32	-0,7	-0,24	0,4	1,94	0,37
Teaching to undergraduate students (undergraduate_students)							
Yes	124 (74.3%)	0,34	-0,3	-0,28	*2,21*	1,87	*2,54*
No	43 (25.7%)	-0,97	0,88	0,8	*6,37*	*5,39*	*7,32*
Teaching to postgraduate students (grad_students)							
Yes	113 (67.7%)	0,41	-0,19	-0,24	*3,06*	0,68	1,65
No	54 (32.3%)	-0,87	0,4	0,49	*6,4*	1,43	*3,45*
Socialised state of the academic capital							
Member Chinese Sociological Association (CSA_membership)							
Yes	89 (53.3%)	0,46	0,16	-0,1	*2,96*	0,38	0,26
No	78 (46.7%)	-0,52	-0,18	0,12	*3,38*	0,43	0,29
Number memberships other national or international associations (total_inter_membership_4cat)							
0	93 (55.7%)	-0,12	0,38	-0,18	0,21	*2,24*	0,79
1	45 (26.9%)	0,24	-0,06	-0,06	0,42	0,03	0,04
2 or more	29 (17.4%)	0,01	-1,14	0,66	0	*6,16*	*3,35*
Collaboration with NGO for research (collaboration_ngo)							
Yes	25 (15.0%)	0,15	-0,19	0,53	0,09	0,15	1,85
No	142 (85.0%)	-0,03	0,03	-0,09	0,02	0,03	0,33

Table A2: Passive variables

Other variables - not active	**N and (%)**
Employed research methods (research method)	
Qualitative	79 (47.3%)
Quantitative	49 (29.3%)
Mixed methods	39 (23.4%)
Opinion on the improvement of chinese sociology (chinese_soc_improv)	
fundamental research credit	6 (3.6%)
Localisation of social sciences	23 (13.8%)
professional standards	22 (13.1%)
researcher autonomy	75 (44.9%)
secure career	39 (23.4%)
Other	2 (1.2%)
Opinion on the localisation (localisation)	
crucial and helpful to challenge the west	21 (12.6%)
eventually helpful but do not prevent the use of western theory	85 (50.9%)
pseudo proposition	34 (20.4%)
Don't have any idea	23 (13.8%)
Other	4 (2.4%)

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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