

Research on the Path of Red Gene Inheritance and Development among Generation Z College Students in Jiangsu Province

Liu Shiqiang, Wang Jijian, Zhu Bingjie

[**Abstract**] Generation Z youths have more obvious network characteristics compared with other generations due to their living conditions accompanied by the network since their childhood. Their growing backgrounds lead to the existence of memory breaks for red culture. Starting from the generation and development of red gene, this paper analyzes and summarizes that the basic connotation of red gene in each era expresses the same core values. It analyzes the key issues of 3,972 questionnaires from Generation Z college students in Jiangsu Province, and summarizes the practices of Jiangsu Province in red gene inheritance from three aspects: enrich educational content, optimize educational carriers and innovate in educational methods.

[**Key words**] Generation Z; red gene; ideological and political education

[**About the author**] Liu Shiqiang (1991—), male, counselor and lecturer in School of Physical Education, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, master. Research interests: ideological and political education for college students, construction of the Communist Party of China and the Communist Youth League. Wang Jijian (1982—), male, director of Student Affairs Office and associate professor in School of Physical Education, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, master. Research interests: ideological and political education for college students, innovation and entrepreneurship education. Zhu Bingjie (1991—), male, secretary of Youth League Committee and lecturer in Academy of Fine Arts, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, master. Research interests: ideological and political education for college students, innovation and entrepreneurship education.

[**Fund**] This paper is the phased result of the general project of philosophy and social science research in Jiangsu colleges and universities in 2023, entitled “Research on the Path of Red Gene Inheritance and Development among Generation Z College Students in Jiangsu Province” (Project number: 2023SJSZ0239); the phased result of the key project of Nanjing Social Science Fund, entitled “Research on the Path to Improve the Effectiveness of Online Ideological and Political Education for College Students under the Perspective of Online Education in the New Era” (Project number: WT2403).

[**DOI**] <https://doi.org/10.62662/kxwxy0204005>

[**Website**] www.oacj.net

“Inheriting red gene” and “letting red gene be passed down from generation to generation” are repeatedly emphasized by General Secretary Xi Jinping, who has made a series of important speeches about the inheritance of red gene since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). In the process of leading the Chinese people’s revolution, construction and reform, the CPC has formed its own spiritual genealogy, which constitutes the spiritual core of red gene. Colleges and universities, as the main position of fostering virtue through education, bear the historical responsibility of passing down red gene from generation to generation. Inheriting red gene is an important part of the ideological and political education of colleges and universities to ensure that young college students always keep in mind how the country came to be, and always firmly follow the instruction and guidance of the Party.

Many experts and scholars have conducted relevant research on the inheritance of red gene. For example: Liang Yinxiang (2015) analyzed the red gene, educational value and realization path contained in red scripts from the perspective of red scripts, and realized the function of ideological and political education of red scripts from three aspects of campus culture, off-campus practice and cyberspace. This is the first paper related to red gene found in CNKI. Yu Jiulin et al. (2018) started from the connotation of red gene, arguing that red gene includes

the gene of the Party's fine conduct, the gene of leadership art and the gene of revolutionary traditions, and that embedding red gene in youth groups is the core task of ideological and political education for the youth. Deng Yanjun (2020) analyzed the inherent coupling relationship between the transmission of red gene inheritance and the implementation of fostering virtue through education, and constructed a synergistic path of theoretical teaching, publicity leadership, and practice education to implement the transmission of red gene inheritance in the process of fostering virtue through education.

For current college students (graduate students excluded), the vast majority were born after 1995. According to the time period of their birth, college students of this generation are Generation Z youths. They have witnessed the golden decade of China's development, but have a broken memory of red culture due to their growth backgrounds. As the original citizens of the digital Internet era, while enjoying the efficiency and convenience of Internet, they are vulnerable to the influence of Internet technology and the negative information it carries. For Generation Z college students, the intervention and use of Internet make them have more obvious generational characteristics than other generations. Internet poses certain challenges to their identity, judgment and choice upon value.

In 1993, Jiangsu Province took the lead in proposing the development goal of implementing education modernization. As of 2022, the number of higher education institutions in Jiangsu Province reached 168, which ranked first in China, and the total number of undergraduate and junior college students ranked fourth in China. Jiangsu's higher education is a flag for the whole country and provides reference for other provinces. Based on the above considerations, this paper takes Generation Z college students in Jiangsu Province as an example, studies the current situation of Generation Z college students in the inheritance of red gene, and analyzes the experiences and practices of Jiangsu Province's colleges and universities in the inheritance of red gene, in order to deeply grasp the development path of the inheritance of red gene.

1 Generation and development of red gene

It is a common practice in the humanity and social sciences to study the phenomenon of human social development with the help of biological categories, such as the political ecology mentioned in the field of politics. Similarly, the term "red gene" is evolved from the intersection of biological "gene" in the field of ideology and politics. "Red" symbolizes passion and blood. Revolutionaries need to have passion, and revolution must be accompanied by bloodshed and sacrifice. In this case, "red" is a symbol of revolution, and "red gene" is a product of revolution.

1.1 Generation and development

In modern times, China was in the midst of internal and external troubles, with patriots actively seeking ways to save the country. Although various national salvation programs were proved to be effective to some extent, they could not change the historical situation of the oppressed people. After the outbreak of the Russian Revolution of 1917, Marxism was introduced into China. Early Chinese Marxists and Communists combined the basic principles of Marxism with the concrete reality of China. The Communists represented by Mao Zedong creatively put forward the Chinese revolutionary road of "besieging cities by villages and seizing power with armed forces". The CPC led the masses of all ethnic groups in the long struggle against foreign invaders, feudal landlords, Kuomintang reactionary armed forces, compradors, etc., and created a large amount of material and spiritual red culture. In *Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China*, Comrade Mao Zedong mentioned that "if the national revolutionary situation is moving forward, the long-term existence of small red areas is not only beyond any doubt, but also inevitably serves as a force among many forces for the attainment of national political power". From this, it can be seen that red gene is accompanied by the Chinese revolution. With the advancement of the Chinese revolution, construction and reform, red gene is constantly being inherited, developed and innovated.

1.2 Epochal features

Red gene is the Party's fine tradition passed down from generation to generation. The inheritance of red gene must adhere to the organic combination of inheritance and innovation. Each period of the CPC's development has

its own unique characteristics and distinctive epochal features. During the period of the New Democratic Revolution, a common feature of the 16 Chinese spirits formed is the courage to sacrifice. During the period of socialist revolution and construction, the CPC led the masses of all ethnic groups to set off the vigorous socialist construction. The War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea, the Counterattack in Self-defense on the Sino-Indian Border, and the Counterattack in Self-defense on the Sino-Vietnamese Border favorably safeguarded the security and sovereignty of China. A common characteristic of the 12 spirits of this period is dedication. During the new period of reform and opening up and socialist construction, the CPC dared to take the lead, led the people to implement reform and opening up, and wrote a new chapter for the development of the cause with a pioneering and innovative attitude. As China's socialism enters a new era, the CPC has been resolving unprecedented contradictions and difficulties in the process of development with new courage and greater perseverance, always placing the people in a more prominent place, and striving to put into practice the people-centered development concept.

1.3 Basic connotation

The rich red material heritage, which is visible and tangible, records the arduous process of the CPC's leadership of the Chinese people in their struggle, while red cultural heritage and red spiritual resources, which are invisible and play a decisive role, are the spiritual kernel behind it. Cultural factors that play the decisive role are the fine tradition which differentiates the CPC from any other political parties, and is passed down from generation to generation in the ideological theory, spiritual morality and practice, as well as the genetic code of the CPC's unceasing growth. At the same time, we should also notice that the explicit red material resources and invisible red cultural resources are dialectically unified and exist at the same time, and are an organically linked whole that cannot be separated. The CPC has combined the basic principles of Marxism with the concrete reality of China and with the excellent traditional Chinese culture, which is a process of creating China's unique red gene. This is a process of originality, inheritance and innovation, requiring us to look back at history, pay attention to the present and create the future in the process of red gene inheritance.

The basic connotation of red gene is not static, but continues to develop and evolve with the development of the times. In general, it is consistent from the overall point of view, and the core values expressed in each era are the same, i. e., the revolutionary spirit of not being afraid of sacrifices, the spirit of hard work, the spirit of innovation in keeping pace with the times, the spirit of seeking truth from facts and the spirit of simplicity of being loyal to the people.

2 Current situation of red gene inheritance among Generation Z college students

At present, the Party and the country attach great importance to promoting the normalization and lasting effect of the learning and education of the Party's history. The purpose is to carry forward the glorious tradition and fine conduct of the Party, so that red gene can be passed down from generation to generation among the young people. Generation Z youths are living in a peaceful era, enjoying a superior material life since their birth. How to make contemporary young people that lack experiential perception better understand red gene and the Party's fine traditions formed during China's long revolution, reform and construction, and actively devote themselves to the great practice of Chinese-style modernization, is what ideological and political educators in colleges and universities should focus on.

In order to understand the current situation of red gene inheritance among Generation Z college students in Jiangsu Province, a questionnaire was designed and distributed through SoJump. College student groups in 83 colleges and universities in 13 prefectural-level cities in Jiangsu Province were involved. The questionnaire was distributed from October to December, 2023. 4,597 online questionnaires were distributed and recovered, with 625 invalid questionnaires excluded, there are 3,972 valid questionnaires. The validity rate of the questionnaire is 86.4%. Invalid questionnaires are mainly caused by the mismatch between the school name and the location, the inconsistency between the level to which the school belongs and the actual situation, and the short time to complete the questionnaire.

2.1 Descriptive analysis of the questionnaire

In this questionnaire survey, a total of 30 questions are involved, including 7 questions on students' basic information and 23 questions related to red gene inheritance. Among the valid 3,972 questionnaires, male students account for 33.03% and female students account for 66.97%; for the item of political appearance, CPC members (including probationary CPC members) account for 3.27% (130 students), members of the Communist Youth League account for 55.54%, masses account for 41.11%, and members of other democratic parties account for 0.08% (3 students); there are 178 students from double first-class undergraduate colleges and universities (accounting for 4.48%), 1,351 students from ordinary public undergraduate colleges and universities (accounting for 34.01%), 1,940 students from ordinary private undergraduate colleges and universities (accounting for 48.84%), 76 students from vocational undergraduate colleges and universities (accounting for 1.91%), and 427 students from higher vocational (specialized) colleges and universities (accounting for 10.75%); by the region, there are 1,458 students from southern Jiangsu (accounting for 36.7%), 388 students from northern Jiangsu (accounting for 9.8%), and 2,126 students from central Jiangsu (accounting for 53.5%); by the grade of the surveyed students, freshmen account for 41.82% (1661 students), which is the highest percentage among all the grades, sophomores and juniors account for 25.15% and 22.18%, and seniors account for 10.5% of the total number of students. The majors involve 12 disciplines, with the largest number of engineering students participating in the survey, accounting for 17.17%, and the smallest number of philosophy students participating in the survey, accounting for 0.48%.

2.2 Analysis of key questions

Among the 23 questions related to red gene inheritance, several key questions are selected for analysis to understand red gene inheritance and ideological and political education of university students in Jiangsu Province.

"Question 8. What kind of relationship do you think red resource, red culture and red gene have?" Students who are fairly clear about the relationship between the three is more than 50%, students who think they are the same or are not completely clear is more than 18%, and students who are not quite clear about the relationship between the three is close to 30%. The relationship between red resource, red culture and red gene is dialectical unity, i.e., red resource and red culture contain red gene factors; red resource and red culture are the external expression of red gene; and red gene cannot be separated from red resource and red culture. The three can be transformed into each other under certain conditions.

"Question 21. What score do you think can be assigned to the degree of integration between red gene inheritance and professional practice in your school?" The full score of the question is 10. According to their schools' actual situation and their own participation, students assigned scores. The average score is 6.45 and the median score is 6 points, indicating that most of the students acknowledge the educational activities of integrating red education with professional practice carried out by their schools. If we take option A of voluntary participation of "Question 15. How do you receive red-theme education?" as a categorical statistical precondition, it can be found that the average score of Question 21 is 7.02, which has improved significantly.

"Question 26. Do you think there is space for the integration of red gene in your professional practice?" 71% of the students think there is some space, and 24.42% of the students think there is a lot of space. It can be seen that the process of integrating red gene inheritance with professional practice in colleges and universities in Jiangsu Province needs to be strengthened to further meet students' expectations and needs.

"Question 30. What do you think are the ways to realize red gene inheritance? (multiple choices)" This question is cross-analyzed with students' grades. It can be seen from the results that the proportion of "social practice" option is the highest in all grades, with more than 80% of the students choosing it, and the proportion decreases with the increase of grades. Social practice, red culture publicity and classroom education are three main ways to inherit red gene. The proportion of freshmen in the "other" option is significantly higher than that of other grades, indicating that freshmen are full of novelty and are more willing to try new things when they first enter the universities.

3 Path of red gene inheritance and development among college students

Red gene, along with the progress of society, continues to derive and develop. Young college students should always keep in mind how the country came to be, and cannot weaken but should strengthen the red gene inside them. Colleges and universities should explore the coupling path of ideological and political education and professional development, enabling ideological and political education and educational ideology and politics to develop towards the same direction. Red gene education is an important part of ideological and political education for college students, with a high degree of similarity in educational content, carriers and methods, and is an effective part of ideological and political education for college students in colleges and universities.

3.1 Enrich educational content to make red resources “alive”

Red cultural resources are the important content and theoretical source of ideological and political education, and provide rich and vivid cases for ideological and political education. Ideological and political educators in colleges and universities should integrate effective resources, and integrate red resources into ideological and political education in colleges and universities, to enrich educational content, and use revolutionary deeds, characters and practices to stimulate students’ sense of mission in the times, so that ideological and political education can have the strength, warmth and depth, and red resources can be truly “alive”.

With the development of society, the connotation of red gene is also changing all the time. Generation Z has experienced the flood in 1998, SARS in 2003, COVID-19, poverty alleviation, etc. Chinese spirits, deriving from these, such as the spirit of flood resistance, the spirit of resistance to SARS, the spirit of resistance to pandemic, the spirit of poverty alleviation, etc., accompany the growth of Generation Z group, and nourish Generation Z college students. During the critical period of the strategic overall situation of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, we are facing increasing risks and challenges. Combined with the development achievements of China and Jiangsu, we should guide students to look at the problems with dialectical thinking, and use realistic cases around them to tell them the truth contained, to clear up the fog of students’ thinking, eliminate negative interference, and constantly enhance their ambition, integrity, and confidence.

3.2 Optimize educational carriers to make red culture “popular”

From the results of the survey, more than 52% of the students think that red gene inheritance activities carried out by the schools are not rich enough or the richness is average, and nearly 52% of the students think that the atmosphere of the red culture around them is not strong. The proportion of red gene inheritance activities carried out in the form of artistic performances/competitions, flag-raising speeches and essays is only about 18%, and students’ needs for the red culture are far from being fulfilled.

Jiangsu Province has a wealth of patriotic education places, which provide convenient conditions for students to receive ideological and political education. While using school resources, the educational role of patriotic education bases should also be brought into play to realize the unity of history and the times. To realize the innovative development of patriotic education bases and revolutionary education venues, on the one hand, relevant departments should optimize the way and means of exhibition and display, enhancing the sense of visiting experience, and on the other hand, college students’ ingenuity should be brought into play. As an educational and practical link to which colleges and universities are paying more and more attention, innovation and entrepreneurship education can fully mobilize students’ enthusiasm to carry out red cultural and innovative activities, promoting the result transformation of red scientific research and red scientific innovation, and creating a strong red cultural atmosphere.

3.3 Innovate in education methods to make red gene “pass down”

Through the survey, it is found that 83.2% of the students believe that the school should strengthen red education. However, colleges and universities carry out red-related education mainly through thematic activities of the Party and the League, as well as thematic lectures, and the richness and effectiveness of the activities need to be improved. The questionnaire shows that students have the highest degree of recognition towards red gene inheritance through social practices, and indirectly reveals that students prefer to accept the inculcation of red

culture by personal participation and field experience.

In the context of promoting “three-wide education”, giving full play to the nurturing functions of aesthetics and physical education is a major tool for colleges and universities to carry out the ideological and political education for college students. Colleges and universities have created a number of historical stage dramas, plays and situation dramas combining education and artistry with the Party history and school history. For example, teachers and students from Southeast University have created 10 historical dramas including “Nanchang Uprising”, “Zhao Yiman”, “Chongqing Negotiation” and “Climbing”; and teachers and students from Nanjing Xiaozhuang University have created situation dramas including “Tao Xingzhi” and “Love All over the World”. In college student art exhibition activities organized by Jiangsu Province every three years, there would always emerge a large number of excellent original art works which embody the companion of the Party, meet the requirements of the times, and live up to the people’s expectations, reflecting the noble aesthetic pursuit and good spiritual outlook of college students in Jiangsu Province.

4 Conclusion

“Extraordinary feats are often made possible by extraordinary people.” The 19th CPC National Congress puts forward the major proposition of “fostering a new generation of young people to shoulder the mission of realizing national rejuvenation”. Colleges and universities must be more proactive in front of this glorious task, and continuously enrich the socialist elements of education, and highlight the political attributes of education in the cultivation of talents, ensuring that the Party’s career will be succeeded by new generations.

References:

- [1] Ouyang Xuemei. “Passing down Our Revolutionary Traditions and Heritage from Generation to Generation”—Studying Xi Jinping’s Remarks on Carrying Forward Our Revolutionary Traditions and Heritage[J]. Literature of Chinese Communist Party, 2024(1): 3-10.
- [2] Tang Luyao, Xu Shanshan. Realistic Logic and Innovative Path of Red Gene Inheritance among College Students in the New Era [J/OL]. Heilongjiang Education (Research and Evaluation of Higher Education), 2024-12-2.
- [3] Liang Yinxian. Red Scripts: Red Gene, Education Value and Realization Path[J]. Studies on Deng Xiaoping Theory, 2015(2): 15-17.
- [4] Yu Jiulin, Ou Ying. The Value and Realizing Route of Red Gene in Belief Construction in Youth Group[J]. Journal of Jinggangshan University (Social Sciences), 2019, 40(2): 46-50.
- [5] Deng Yanjun. The Study on the Correlation Coupling Between Learning Red Genes and Implementing Moral Education[J]. Journal of University of South China (Social Science Edition), 2020, 21(5): 37-42.
- [6] He Shaohui. The Formative Background and Group Characteristics of Generation Z Youths[J]. China Youth Study, 2022(8): 14-20.
- [7] Li Na. Study on the Path of Integrating Red Gene into Ideological and Political Education for College Students in Colleges and Universities[D]. Mianyang: Southwest University of Science and Technology, 2021.
- [8] Liu Shouying. The Unique Path of Chinese Modernization[J]. Economic Perspectives, 2021(7): 12-21.
- [9] Lu Jianfang. On Mao Zedong’s Theory on the Road of Democratic Revolution with Chinese Characteristics [D]. Wuhan: Central China Normal University, 2004.
- [10] Zhang Zheng, Liu Yutan. Cross-media Narration of “Red Gene” in the Panorama Gallery[J]. Jiangxi Social Sciences, 2021, 41(6): 96-103, 255.
- [11] Jia Wenshan. China’s Exploration of Comprehensively Enhancing International Discourse Power[J]. People’s Tribune, 2021(29): 14-19.
- [12] Zhang Ting. Research on the Integration of Red Genes into College’s Ideological and Political Education [J]. Journal of Jiangsu Shipping College, 2021, 20(4): 87-90.