

Cultivation of Socialist Core Values among University Students in the New Media Era: Opportunities, Challenges, and Path Innovation

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Abstract

The profound development of the new media environment has exerted a significant impact on the cultivation of socialist core values among college students. Based on a systematic analysis of the technological characteristics and communication dynamics of new media, this paper conducts an in-depth examination of the contemporary opportunities and practical challenges in values cultivation from three dimensions: cognition, emotion, and practice. It innovatively proposes a three-dimensional cultivation framework centered on "theoretical internalization—media convergence—practical externalization," aiming to construct a values education system adapted to the new media context, thereby enhancing the contemporary relevance, effectiveness, and appeal of socialist core values cultivation.

Keywords

New media; Socialist Core Values; university students; Values education; Path innovation.

1. Introduction

Socialist Core Values represent the concentrated embodiment of contemporary Chinese spirit and embody the common value pursuit of all people. The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China explicitly stated the need to "extensively practice Socialist Core Values" and "integrate them into legal development, social progress, and daily life"[1]. This important statement has pointed out the direction and set higher requirements for the cultivation of socialist core values in the new era.

As the primary front for fostering virtue and nurturing talent, universities shoulder the vital mission of cultivating a new generation capable of undertaking the great task of national rejuvenation. Currently, university students have grown up in the internet era, and their ways of thinking, behavioral habits, and values are deeply influenced by the new media environment. According to the latest data from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), the scale of university student internet users in China has reached 32 million, with an internet penetration rate of 100% and an average daily online time exceeding six hours[2]. This deeply internet-integrated lifestyle and learning style bring unprecedented opportunities as well as severe challenges to values cultivation.

The rapid development of new media technology has not only changed the way information is disseminated but also reshaped patterns of interpersonal communication and social interaction. As communication scholar Marshall McLuhan said, "The medium is the message." The new media environment is profoundly influencing university students' cognitive styles, emotional

experiences, and behavioral habits. Under this context, exploring innovative approaches for new media to empower values education has become a critical mission that urgently needs to be addressed in the ideological and political work of higher education institutions [3]. This paper aims to systematically analyze the opportunities and challenges faced in cultivating Socialist Core Values among university students in the new media environment and propose actionable practical paths to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for enhancing the contemporary relevance and effectiveness of values education.

2. Conceptual Definition and Environmental Characteristics of New Media

2.1. Connotation and Nature of New Media

New media refers to new media forms developed based on digital technology, network technology, and mobile communication technology, as opposed to traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television. Wired magazine defined it as "communications for all, by all," [4] revealing the essential characteristic of new media—the universalization of communication subjects and the bidirectional interactivity of communication methods.

Professor Peng Lan of Renmin University of China pointed out that the essence of new media is "a form of media evolution based on digital technology with interactive communication at its core" [5]. Its key feature lies in empowering ordinary users with the ability to speak and connect, breaking the one-way and monopolistic nature of information dissemination in the traditional media era. Lev Manovich further explained in *The Language of New Media* that new media is "cultural objects made with computers," transforming information from static printed text into dynamic digital content that can be modified and mixed for dissemination at any time [6].

From a technological perspective, new media has three iconic characteristics: First, universal participation, where ordinary users can independently create and disseminate content through platforms like Douyin and Weibo. Second, instant interactivity, such as real-time feedback mechanisms like likes and comments on WeChat moments and bullet comments in live streams. Third, content integration, achieving organic integration of text, images, audio, video, and other forms.

2.2. Core Characteristics of the New Media Environment

2.2.1. High-Speed and Massive Information Dissemination

New media has broken the spatiotemporal constraints of traditional media, enabling instant production and rapid dissemination of information. During the 2023 OpenAI conference, 2.1 million related tweets were generated on global social media platforms within 48 hours (averaging 24 per second), along with 780,000 short video analyses and over 9,000 in-depth articles [7]. The scale and speed of such information production and dissemination are unimaginable in the traditional media era.

2.2.2. Interactive and Community-Based Communication Method

New media platforms achieve personalized content distribution through algorithm recommendation mechanisms, transforming users from passive receivers to active creators. Numerous online communities based on shared interests, values, and needs have emerged, forming diversified online communities. For example, "learning communities" formed on platforms like Bilibili create new learning spaces through interactive sharing.

2.2.3. Virtualized and Diversified Experiential Expression

Users interact through virtual identities, blurring the boundaries between reality and virtuality to some extent. Meanwhile, new media integrates multiple media forms, creating immersive communication experiences. For instance, the application of VR/AR technology enables abstract values to be presented in a concrete manner.

These three characteristics collectively form the basic landscape of the new media environment, profoundly changing university students' information reception methods, social interaction patterns, and value formation mechanisms.

3. Dual Impact of New Media on Values Cultivation

3.1. Opportunities and Advantages

3.1.1. Expanded Participation and Interaction Methods in Values Education

In the new media environment, university students are no longer passive recipients of information. Instead, they can actively participate in the dissemination and discussion of Socialist Core Values through various platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and short videos. They can share insights, exchange views, and even initiate topics, forming real-time interactions of "one-to-one," "one-to-many," and "many-to-many." This open and equal participation method not only promotes a deeper understanding of the connotations of values but also expands the reach and influence of dissemination. For example, a "Socialist Core Values Micro-Video Competition" launched by a university received over 1,200 student works through new media platforms, with total views exceeding 5 million, effectively enhancing the participation and dissemination effectiveness of values education[8]. This interactive and participatory educational approach significantly increases the appeal and impact of values education.

3.1.2. Improved Timeliness and Efficiency of Values Education

New media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and live streams feature real-time communication, allowing information to be released, feedback received, and disseminated instantly. With these platforms, teachers and students can quickly access the latest policy interpretations, typical cases, and social dynamics related to Socialist Core Values, maintaining the contemporaneity and continuity of educational content. During the pandemic, universities carried out theme education on the "spirit of combating the pandemic" through new media platforms, disseminating touching stories from the frontline in a timely manner, enabling students to immediately perceive the value concepts of "national unity and shared destiny". This immediate and efficient learning method helps students deepen their understanding during dynamic processes and proactively translate it into practical actions.

3.1.3. Enhanced Penetration and Coverage of Values Education

The mobility and portability of new media allow values education to break through spatiotemporal limitations, achieving all-weather and omnidirectional coverage. Through new media platforms, values education content can accurately reach every student, achieving personalized dissemination and targeted guidance. Surveys show that over 80% of university students acquire news information and values through new media platforms[9]. This pervasive educational approach effectively compensates for the limitations of traditional classroom teaching, creating an integrated online-offline educational ecosystem.

3.2. Challenges and Dilemmas

3.2.1. Cognitive Dilemma: Information Fragmentation and Weakened Value Judgment

Information overload on new media, with its mixed quality and abundance of false and vulgar content, leads to the distortion or even dissolution of core values. The infiltration of Western ideologies and the dissemination of diverse social trends further challenge the yet-to-be-consolidated value systems of college students. Due to limited political literacy and social experience, students lack the ability to discern deliberately disseminated harmful information, easily falling into cognitive confusion. Relevant studies indicate that over 60% of university students have felt confused and lost when faced with massive information[10]. Particularly during major public events, the interplay of various viewpoints increases the difficulty of value

judgment. Helping students distinguish right from wrong in complex information environments and enhancing their political discernment has become a key challenge in values education.

3.2.2. Emotional Dilemma: Blurred Subjectivity and Utilitarian Values

The decentralized nature of new media has weakened the authority of mainstream values, leading to issues such as inflated self-awareness and utilitarian value pursuits among some college students. For instance, certain students participate in Party and youth league activities with pragmatic motives—some even join the Party primarily to enhance employment prospects, reflecting a blurring of value convictions and an instrumentalization tendency. A study by Zhang Ming et al. found that 34.5% of college students admitted considering Party membership as a means to "gain competitive advantages in job hunting" [11]. The persistent impact of diverse information has also made it difficult for some students to establish stable value frameworks, leaving them in a state of value disorientation. This utilitarian tendency severely undermines the internalization and practice of socialist core values.

3.2.3. Practical Dilemma: Disconnection Between Virtual Behavior and Real-World Norms

Virtual space weakens real-world behavioral constraints, causing three issues: First, anonymity leads to diluted responsibility awareness. For instance, in the Chengdu Metro false accusation incident, some netizens abused online rights, deviating from the principle of "integrity[12]". Second, addiction to virtual socializing affects real emotional connections. For example, about 45% of university students engage in social interactions through games for over two hours daily, somewhat crowding out the maintenance of real interpersonal relationships[13]. Third, some students endorse the "shortcut culture of internet celebrity." A 2023 survey showed that approximately 32% of university students agreed that "being an internet celebrity equals success," which deviates from the core values of "dedication" and "hard work"[14]. This disconnection between virtual and real behavior not only affects individual value practice but also impacts the value ecology of the entire society.

4. Path Innovation for Values Cultivation in the New Media Era

Based on value identification theory, participatory culture, and situational learning theory, this paper proposes the following three-dimensional cultivation path:

4.1. Strengthen the Main Channel of Ideological and Political Education to Promote Theoretical Internalization

Ideological and political courses are the core path for values cultivation and must enhance their effectiveness through dual innovation in content and form. In terms of content, they should closely integrate with national development strategies, technological achievements, and social practices, incorporating value goals such as "prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony" into vivid narratives. For example, by recounting great practices of the new era like the aerospace spirit and poverty alleviation, abstract theories can be embodied into relatable and perceptible stories, achieving a shift from theoretical preaching to emotional resonance. In terms of form, micro-lectures, MOOCs, short videos, interactive H5, and other new media formats should be actively adopted to break through the spatiotemporal limitations of classrooms. A university-developed "Socialist Core Values VR Experience Course" used virtual reality technology to allow students to "personally" experience red history, effectively enhancing the appeal and impact of teaching[15]. Additionally, the application of smart teaching tools such as "Superstar Learning Tong" and "Rain Classroom" has enabled real-time interaction and instant feedback, significantly enhancing students' sense of participation and gain.

In terms of faculty development, training on new media literacy for teachers should be strengthened, encouraging them to become online "famous teachers". By opening personal

WeChat public accounts and Bilibili channels, they can use internet language to interpret theoretical hotspots, extending ideological and political education from the classroom to students' online living spaces. The "Ideological and Political Course Live Stream" hosted by a professor from the university's School of Marxism has attracted over 1 million cumulative views, which has significantly expanded the reach and influence of values education[16].

4.2. Construct a Converged Media Communication Matrix for Immersive and Interactive Cultivation

New media is not only a tool, but also a new field for cultivating values. The school should systematically build a communication matrix of multiple platforms such as WeChat official account, Tiktok, and B station to achieve differentiated content output and mass communication. Firstly, we need to create immersive experience projects. By developing VR/AR technology applications, such as the virtual practice of "Revisiting the Long March" and campus AR guidance, students can experience the connotation of values in an immersive way. The "Integrity AR Experience Hall" developed by a certain university allows students to understand the integrity stories behind campus buildings by scanning them, making values education more vivid and vivid[17]. Secondly, it aims to stimulate user generated content (UGC). By holding micro film, animation, photography and other creative competitions on the theme of socialist core values, students are encouraged to become creators and disseminators of content. The "Values Theme Short Video Challenge" held by a certain university has received more than 2000 student works, with a total online dissemination of over 10 million times, effectively stimulating students' enthusiasm for participation[18]. Again, we need to strengthen the operation of interactive communities. Establish interest based online communities, organize activities such as "online book clubs," "hot debate competitions," and "live interviews with role models," to create a good atmosphere for peer education and group interaction. The "Values Learning Community" established by a certain university holds weekly thematic discussions with over 5000 students participating, forming a good learning community[19].

4.3. Expand Practice Paths Integrating Virtual and Real to Promote Value Behavior Externalization

Practice is a key link in the internalization of values. The "online initiation–offline practice–online sharing" cycle model should be actively promoted, using new media to expand the influence and participation of practical activities. On the one hand, online civilization volunteer services should be carried out. University student online civilization volunteer teams should be formed to conduct public opinion guidance, rumor refutation, and positive energy dissemination. A university's online civilization volunteer team handled over 200 online rumors and released more than 5,000 positive energy messages, effectively purifying cyberspace[20]. On the other hand, virtual practice forms should be innovated. By developing simulation decision-making applications and operating campus integrity platforms, students can experience value connotations in contexts. A "National Governance Simulator" developed by a university allowed students to understand the values of "harmony" and "rule of law" through virtual decision-making, involving over 3,000 students[21]. At the same time, we need to strengthen the role of role models in leading. Deeply explore and select campus role models who practice socialist core values, and promote them through new media in a three-dimensional and storytelling manner. The "Campus Star" new media promotion campaign launched by a certain university has pushed more than 100 exemplary stories, with a total online reading volume of over 5 million, effectively stimulating students' emotional resonance and behavioral imitation[22].

5. Conclusion

The education of values in the era of new media is a systematic project that requires the construction of a large pattern of collaborative education among schools, society, and families. Universities should proactively adapt to the characteristics and laws of the new media environment, innovate educational concepts and methods, and enhance the sense of the times and effectiveness of values education. Firstly, we must adhere to the unity of dominance and subjectivity. We should not only give full play to the leading role of teachers, but also respect the subject status of students, and stimulate their initiative and creativity. By creating diverse educational scenarios and practical platforms, guide students to experience, identify, and practice through participation, identification, and practice. Secondly, we must adhere to the unity of theory and practice. We need to strengthen theoretical indoctrination, clarify the scientific connotation and contemporary significance of socialist core values, and enhance practical education by creating authentic educational contexts and guiding students to deepen their understanding and enhance their identification through practice. Finally, we must adhere to the unity of unity and diversity. We must adhere to the unified leadership of socialist core values while respecting individual differences, adopt a hierarchical and classified educational method, and meet the growth needs and development expectations of different students. Only in this way can we truly establish a cultivation mechanism that integrates cognition, emotion, and behavior, achieve deep internalization and conscious practice of socialist core values, and cultivate a new generation of people who shoulder the great responsibility of national rejuvenation.

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