Although the increasing diversification of views among intellectuals in the early 1980s can partly be attributed to changing ways of representing views in the press, growing differences in the background of intellectuals were largely responsible for clashes of views in the academic community. These clashes were partly expressed in the great difference in attitudes towards policy-making in the social sciences. One explanation for these varying attitudes is related to the growing proportion of scholars in the 1980s with tertiary education at government posts and the Party, especially in high-level jobs. By 1985, 62 percent of the members of Leading Groups in government at the provincial and ministerial levels had enjoyed at least some tertiary education. *The People’s Daily* reported that the increase for 1982–1985 among high ranks was about 45 percent. In the Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth CCP Central Committees (1977, 1982, and 1987, respectively), the proportion of college-educated members comprised 23 percent, 32 percent, and 67 percent.\(^1\) The increased proportion of educated workers in government gradually led to an overall greater interest in and support for Party reforms and the structure of society. At the same time, this trend caused further disquietude among orthodox thinkers, especially among the older generations, and provoked fierce reactions.

Without attaching too much value to the age factor in explaining political attitudes towards academic scholarship, generational experiences of intellectuals have without doubt contributed to the ways intellectuals reacted to the post-1978 reforms. ‘Generation’ here refers to commonly acknowledged important historical events that have had formative influence on the social character of individuals in a certain age group, especially in adolescence.\(^2\) The largely uneducated generation of the founding revolutionaries, the ‘Old Guard’, or ‘Long March’ generation, who

---

1 White III & Li Cheng (1988, 54).
2 For a discussion of the generational concept and its relevance to the Deng-generation, see Cherrington (1997).
were by now over the age of seventy (born around 1915), had been used to a system in which individuals were expected to mould their thinking and behaviour according to instructions received from the Party leadership. The ideal of the Yan’an model, based on ideological unity forged by Party discipline, and still alive among the elders, in the 1980s clashed with the growing diversity of societal ideals and the plurality of interests among younger generations. Leaders in their sixties, many of whom have enjoyed foreign education, are generally more flexible in their attitude toward adjusting Marxist theory to modern needs. In solving problems of modernizing socialism, however, like their elders, they look for solutions in the field of morality and institutional leadership.

Leaders born after 1935, who lived their adult life under the PRC and often enjoyed a technical education, inclined toward pragmatic support for modernization and a revision of Marxism, and seemed to be more eager to accept loosely defined versions of Marxist national ideology. This ‘pessimistic generation’, brought up under high expectations and acceptance of Communist Party authority, is thought to have been disappointed by the initial results of communism and its treatment of intellectuals. They were succeeded by the ‘political generation’ brought up under the Cultural Revolution. This so-called ‘lost generation’ of Red Guards (weihihongbing 卫红兵) was encouraged to eradicate the ‘subversive elements’ of socialism. The activism of this poorly educated generation ended in disillusionment, which is thought to account for their (generally) more open attitude to ‘Western’ forms of organizing society. It tended not to have many qualms about shaping society on the basis of modern scientific insights. This generation is often associated with both political radicalism and ‘Western liberalism’ but, among them, there are many that eschew any political activism.

It has been the younger ‘reform generation’ that had fewest scruples about going out onto the streets to demonstrate in pursuit of their ideals. After the Cultural Revolution and the death of Mao and Zhou Enlai, they experienced the beginning of a ‘new age’ of reform and expectations. They chose to put their money on education in the hope of climbing the ladder of social mobility. The delay of desired socio-economic advantages and political influence in the reconstruction of China may account for a great deal of the growing frustration in the latter half of the 1980s with the pace of the reforms among this ‘unscarred generation’. Looking to

---

4 Cf. Xiao Ping (E1986, 160).