

Preface

This book is written at a time of mounting official interest in citizenship education, increasing dynamics between state and society, and growing citizenship awareness and practice in society in contemporary China. Taking into account the state factor and placing the focus on society, the book investigates the meaning of the Chinese term *gongmin*—equivalent to ‘citizen’—in nonofficial media discourses and in university students’ and migrant workers’ perceptions in Guangdong Province. The meaning of the term is examined through the analytical lens of Western citizenship conception theoretically constructed with three dimensions: the extent dimension about identity, the content dimension about rights and responsibilities, and the depth dimension about participation. By laying out the complex details of how the meaning of the term resembles and deviates in and between collective social discourses and individual citizens’ understandings with reference to state discourses, the book makes clear that there is discrepancy in the meaning of *gongmin* between state and society and that the meaning varies in society in contemporary China.

This is a study cutting across topics of Chinese citizenship, East–West citizenship and citizenship education. Drawing upon the empirical findings, the book considers the potentials and limits of the term *gongmin* for citizenship practice in society and the implications for state–society relation in contemporary China. Furthermore, by connecting and comparing citizenship conceptions in East and West, the book serves as an intercultural communication and search for the possibility of common ground for Eastern and Western citizenship conceptions. Beginning with the official interest in citizenship education, the book suggests at the end improvements for Chinese citizenship education to develop inclusive, active and justice-oriented citizenship going below and beyond nation-state.

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Society

An Empirical Study through Western Lens

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