

The “teacher” and martial arts: A psychobiographical analysis of Jack Ma as a business change agent

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Abstract

Objective: Scholars have conducted in-depth research on social change agents, but there are few collaborative studies in this realm between sociology and psychology. From the perspective of psychobiography, this before study uses Jung's Analytical Psychology as a theoretical framework to explore Jack Ma's influence on business change, thereby revealing the deep motivation behind Jack Ma's sudden retirement and choice to be a teacher.

Method: This study has collected primary and secondary data about Jack Ma. QSR Nvivo 11.0 was used to encode the text based on video transcription, and then the data were analyzed. This study refers to the key factors of growth and follows the primary indicators of psychological saliency to sort out the data and find out what has special psychological significance, and then conducts three coding processes.

Results: This study found that the teacher complex and the martial arts complex are the breakthrough points to understand the business innovator Jack Ma.

Conclusion: Jack Ma shapes the image of ordinary teachers through his image management strategy, conceals his deep internal martial arts complex, and balances the displayed martial arts personality mask. He has achieved great success in business innovator, while drawing on his internal personality conflicts to his advantage.

KEYWORDS

changer, Jack Ma, martial arts complex, persona, psychobiography, teacher complex

1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many scholars have studied social change deeply. However, there has been less comprehensive research that combines sociology and psychology (Silbereisen & Tomasik, 2010). Additionally, although social change is often studied from a sociological and social psychological perspective, a perspective that targets personality is rarely applied. De la Sablonnière (2017) hoped to bring together sociology, where social change is central, and psychology, where rigorous scientific methods allow

us to study the psychological processes of individuals living in changing social contexts.

Psychobiography has made remarkable progress in recent years (Mayer et al., 2021; Mayer & Kovary, 2019); it is an approach that can transform a person's life experience into a vivid and profound story, and therefore can affect the lives of others (McAdams, 1988, p. 2). It is characterized by taking the individual as the unit of analysis, paying more attention to the uniqueness and causes of individual life and focusing on analyzing the deep psychological motivation of the subjects' behavior (Guo, 2016).

This study will combine the macro social vision and micro psychological vision, explore the social impact of extraordinary characters on social change from the perspective of psychobiography, and understand the psychological process of individuals becoming changers in the constantly changing social environment.

In 2019, the magazine *Foreign Policy* named its top 10 global thinkers of the last decade. The founder of Alibaba Group, Jack Ma, was the only Chinese personality and top entrepreneur selected for the list, with the magazine writing, “Very few people can claim that they have changed [an] entire society, but Jack Ma has done it.”

Jack Ma is a third-generation entrepreneur since China's reform and opening up. As a social change agent, Jack Ma operates Alibaba Group by carrying out a “humanized management” approach; he insists the key to management is to “grasp the authenticity of human nature” (Liu, 2010). At present, Alibaba effectively uses expansion of the business dynamic feedback loop and open innovation¹ culture to control open innovation costs in open innovation dynamics for 20 years (Yun et al., 2020). Alibaba has had great influence on and promoted innovation in shopping and payment methods in China. E-commerce has had extensive influence on traditional retailing, logistics, economy, environment and urban planning, changing the landscapes of cities and villages (Fang, 2020), Job opportunities and higher profits brought by the digital marketplace are bridging the income gap between urban and rural areas and improving the quality of life of local residents. E-commerce has introduced a new way of shopping and a new kind of urban life (Fang, 2020). The popularization of the mobile payment system of Alipay has enabled China to realize the virtualization and facilitation of payment methods. The popularization of online shopping site Taobao has promoted the rapid development of China's logistics and service industries. Moreover, it solves the employment problem of more Chinese people. The business sector has an increasing presence in social change efforts (Long, 2018). In these changes, Jack Ma's foresight and creativity not only promoted organizational structure change in the enterprise but also changed the development of the entire e-commerce industry.

However, in his most successful years, Jack Ma suddenly announced his retirement and chose to become a rural teacher in 2019, which is puzzling. In terms of wealth, he is only the richest man in Asia, and there remains a big gap between him and the richest man in the world. In global terms, the wealth they created, their influence on the world, and their contributions to social progress have not yet reached the level of “*DuGuQiuBai*”.² Many contemporary successful entrepreneurs older than Ma, such as Ren Zhengfei (76 years old) and Bill Gates (65 years old), still stick to their positions, while Jack Ma

chose to retire at the peak of his life (55 years old). More importantly, Jack Ma chose to be an ordinary rural teacher after retirement, returned to his old business. As a successful business change agent, Jack Ma's choice is puzzling. This manuscript is intended to clarify Ma's unexpected decision using psycho-biographical methods.

1.1 | Brief biography of Jack Ma

Jack Ma was born on September 10, 1964, in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province in eastern China. His grandfather served as a *Baochang*³ during the Second Sino-Japanese War, and, after liberation, he was classified into the “five black categories”.⁴ Jack Ma began to learn English at the age of 12 and became a guide offering free tours for foreigners by the West Lake. In 1982, he failed in his first college entrance examination, achieving only one point in mathematics (the full score is 150). He then did odd jobs, such as working as a waiter, secretary, and porter and delivering books and magazines to a periodical office. In 1984, despite strong opposition from his family, Jack Ma participated in the college entrance examination for the third time. He scored 89 points in mathematics, though his total points were five below the undergraduate admission requirement. However, due to insufficient enrollment in the university's English major course and his excellent abilities in English, Jack Ma was admitted as an exception. After entering university, Jack Ma became a good student with excellent character and academic achievements. He was elected as president of the university's student union and served as the president of the Hangzhou Student Federation. He graduated from the university's Department of Foreign Languages in 1988 and kept his promise to its director, working as an English and international trade lecturer at Hangzhou Institute of Electronic Technology. In 1995, he first came into contact with the Internet in Seattle, USA. After returning home, he immediately resigned from Hangzhou Institute of Electronic Technology and founded China's earliest internet website, The Chinese Yellow Pages. Later, he worked in the China International Electronic Commerce Center; however, due to extensive constraints, he resigned and returned to Hangzhou to found Alibaba Group in 1999. In 2003, eBay entered China's C2C⁵ market. Jack Ma founded Taobao on May 10 of that year to fight for a share the C2C market with eBay. The next year, he founded the third-party online payment platform, Alipay. In November 2007, Alibaba.com was listed on the main board of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, and in July 2010, Alibaba Group launched a partnership system to preserve its mission, vision, and values. In May 2013, Jack Ma resigned from his post as CEO of Alibaba Group, although he continued to

serve as chairman of the board of directors. The company was officially listed on the New York Stock Exchange on September 19, 2014. In September 2019, Jack Ma stepped down from his duties as chairman of Alibaba's board of directors but continued to serve as a member of this board.

Adopting a mission of “make business no longer difficult,” Alibaba has, since its foundation, overcome all the challenges in its way. From an initial small team of only 18 people, it has grown into an enterprise with international influence and has had a great impact on the development of Chinese society. Alipay, Taobao, and Ant Financial Services Group have greatly facilitated the ease of daily life, while also subverting the traditional Chinese lifestyle and the concept of consumption. Alibaba determined to help small and medium-sized enterprises and create a platform for entrepreneurs to compete with large enterprises, creating huge employment opportunities. (The total number of employees as of June 30, 2021, was 254,702.) As the company's main founder, Jack Ma has become renowned and been awarded numerous honors: He was rated as the Business Leader of the Year in 2000, became China's richest man in 2017, and was awarded *Forbes's* lifetime achievement award in 2019 (Zhang, 2014, p. 1). Premier Wen Jiabao declared that Jack Ma is a person with “ideals” and an “unyielding soul (Luo, 2013).” *People's Daily* (Wang et al., 2015), *Guangming Daily* (Feng & Lui, 2017; Yuang, 2015), and other influential news media in China scrambled to report on Jack Ma and spoke highly of him. Jack Ma created the myth of China's e-commerce industry, and is worshipped by young people as the “Godfather of Entrepreneurship” and “Father of E-commerce.”

1.2 | Martial arts

Martial arts are a unique cultural phenomenon in China, comprising a complex blend of historical records, literary imagination, and public psychology. They have emerged, formed, and developed throughout the process of Chinese history and are interrelated with Confucianism, Taoism, Mohism, Legalism, and military strategies, with a style of their own. They feature in legends and stories, precipitated in the deep layer of public psychology, and have always played a lasting and profound role in people's social life (Guo, 2019).

The martial arts spirit is a culture composed of many personal, social, and historical factors. They are an important part of Chinese traditional culture and have a long historical origin and rich cultural connotations: Their popularity has never been interrupted in Chinese history and continues to this day (Gu, 2019). Martial arts have an important impact on people's personality construction, such as their expression of their aspirations and

feelings and their reflection of the self (Li & Wei, 2009). Some scholars have summarized the martial arts spirit into various aspects: valuing friendship and faith; valuing righteousness over profit; having a strong will and being unswerving; being different from others; paying debts of gratitude and revenge with pleasure; being gentle, loving, and acting on behalf of heaven; and being chivalrous knights who should struggle for their country and its people (Wu, 2014). The Chinese martial arts complex comes from the desire for fairness, justice, freedom, and happiness and from the never-ending pursuit of the ideal personality, love, and society. The qualities of justice, kindness, and integrity embodied in martial arts also coincide with the value pursuit and spiritual sustenance of contemporary people (Tang, 2019). However, martial arts are also a double-edged sword for the Chinese since they involve deviating from the mainstream and confronting the government.

The influence of martial arts is undoubtedly huge and positive, and it is also extremely charismatic as a discipline and practice (Wang & Chen, 2005, p. 230). Historically, swordsmen were separated from the social system. They enjoyed the pleasure of doing whatever they wanted, and in order to enrich and strengthen this spiritual enjoyment, they established a tall, heroic image in front of the rescued or the general public. They do not hesitate to maintain the sense of mystery obtained by keeping a psychological and behavioral distance from outsiders (Wang & Chen, 2005, p. 232). Although swordsmen are free from the regime, they have not given up their pursuit of power. The big and small gangs and the entire JiangHu in the martial arts novels are intertwined with the power system outside the regime. In Louis Cha's⁶ martial arts world, power is a force to be reckoned with. The pursuit of The (metaphorical) arena of power is focused on two occasions: martial arts conferences, and the competition for treasures such as martial arts secrets, divine knives, and so on (Li, 2008). As a result, martial arts has become an important channel for people to gain power and honor through forces outside the system. In modern times, people also meet their spiritual needs by watching martial arts works.

1.3 | Jung's theory

This study explores how Jack Ma transforms between martial arts and teacher identities. It is appropriate to use Jung's theory after explain this dynamic. Jung's theory of analytic psychology was part of early psychoanalytic theory, and Jung understood “libido” as a universal life force, not just sexually as Freud understood it. Jung renamed “libido” as “psychological energy,” and at the same time, divided the unconscious into the “collective

unconscious” and the “individual unconscious,” on the basis of Freud. He thought that the three levels of “mind” were consciousness, individual unconsciousness, and collective unconsciousness (Schultz, 1981). Consciousness, which includes perception, memory, and so on, is the conduit for keeping in touch with the reality that enables the individual to adapt to his environment. The individual unconscious is composed of all impulses and desires, vague perceptions, and countless other experiences, and it manifests itself in the form of so-called “complexes”. Complexes are core patterns of emotions, memories, perceptions, and desires organized around a common theme (such as power or status) in an individual’s subconscious (Schultz & Schultz, 2009). The collective unconscious is the spiritual remnant of human evolutionary development, an experience accumulated as a result of repeated experiences over many generations. Jung called the innate tendencies in the collective unconscious “archetypes”: imprints of a significant or frequently repeated situation in the long history of human beings. It is the thinking and feeling of our unknown ancestors; the historical accumulation of the way they experienced life and the world (Jung, 1966). Jung believed that archetypes are particularly associated with vital human experiences like life and death, or with particular stages of life (such as adolescence) and responses to extremely dangerous situations. He proposed four main archetypes: Persona, Anima, Animus, and Shadow (Schultz, 1981). Anima is the image of a woman in every man’s heart and the female element in a man’s heart. Animus refers to the masculine side of a woman—that is, the male component of the woman’s mind. Shadows are a central part of the unconscious, the dark, unconscious side of human nature, including all passions and desires.

A persona is an individual’s way of dealing with or adapting their values to the world. For example, each occupation or profession is associated with a specific persona. It’s easy to study these now, because pictures of public figures appear in the press so frequently. Certain behaviors are imposed on certain types of professionals by social circumstances, and they strive to meet these expectations. At the cost of identifying with their personas—the professor identified with his teaching material, the tenor identified with his voice—an individual may live entirely within the context of their public biography. People might exaggerate a bit to say that a persona is actually not “who you are,” but “who you and others think you are.” In any case, there’s clearly the temptation to be what you seem to be, because personas often get you fame and fortune (Jung, 2018, p. 104).

Carl Jung’s Analytical Psychology mostly adopts the methods of clinical analysis and subjective speculation, and some of his theories are mysterious and lack strict

logic and scientific basis. These limitations cannot be ignored. However, Analytical Psychology has had a great influence on the field of psychology, including art and religion, and has deep roots in traditional Chinese culture (Jung, 1984). Jung gained a lot of inspiration in the process of studying the *I-Ching*; he said: “I see the movement of polar opposites in everything, and from the concept of polar opposites I derive my psychic energy. The concept of psychic energy, I maintain, contains polar opposite movements. This is exactly the same as that of physical energy” (Jung, 1934). Here, Jung expresses the influence of Chinese dialectical thinking (I-Ching) on him. Dialectical thinking is a window to understand the Chinese people. This study intends to use Jung’s psychological theory to explain Jack Ma’s incomprehensible aspects.

1.4 | Social change agents

“Positive social change” refers to involvement in activities that locally and globally improve the lives of individuals and communities. A social change agent can include anyone who gives, advocates or volunteers (Lertzman, 2014). Positive change agents not only tolerate challenges and disruptions of the status quo but also encourage them, by continually clarifying their higher purpose and by helping others do the same. Positive change agents tend to engage in transformational rather than transactional leadership behaviors. Not only do they recognize the existing routines and norms of the organization, they also awaken the deeper motivations and higher needs of others (Bass, 1998; Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders display purpose and conviction, articulate compelling possibilities for a new and better future, and encourage others to think outside the box (Bass, 2008). Quinn and Cameron (2019) suggest five dimensions to understand the roles of change agents. First, the change target has shifted from changing others to changing oneself. Second, the change focus has moved from comfort-centered to purpose-centered. Third, change expectations have differed from externally directed to internally directed. Fourth, change relationships have changed from self focused to other focused. Fifth and finally, change learning has transformed from closed and internally oriented to open and externally oriented.

1.5 | Impression management

Jack Ma used different identities (martial arts, teachers, businessmen) on different occasions and created different images. Such behavior can be explained using an impression management strategy. Impression management refers to the process by which a person influences other

people's impression of them through certain methods, so that those impressions conform to that person's own expectations. Proper impression management is the lubricant of interpersonal communication, which can make the communication go smoothly (Jin, 2010, p. 130). In his book "Self-Expression in Everyday Life," Goffman proposes that "impression management is like drama," and he believes that the interest of one party in an interaction is to control the behavior of others, so that the other party can make decisions based on their understanding of their own behavior—a response that matches one's own expectations (Goffman, 1949).

Situational identity theory also considers impression management as an aspect of social interaction. Alexander and Lauderdale (1977) argues that, all other things being equal, a person will act to create the most socially desirable situated identity for himself or herself.

2 | RESEARCH METHODS

In 1910, Freud established psychobiography by publishing *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (Freud, 1931). In 1982, W. Runyan's *Life History and Psychobiography: Exploration in Theory and Method* was published as the first academic monograph in this field, which opened a new journey for the development of psychobiography (Runyan, 1982). In 2005, W. Schultz and others jointly compiled the book *Handbook of Psychobiography*, which marked the a milestone in contemporary psychobiography (Schultz & Lawrence, 2017).

For a special case such as that of Jack Ma, psychobiography is well-suited for to show his uniqueness in-depth. To analyze the relevant text data more deeply and comprehensively, this study also encoded and arranged interview text with QSR NVivo 11.0 (N11). The software uses imported Jack Ma's Chinese interview texts to edit, code, and count frequencies. This allowed us to render the non-numerical and unstructured data into a more structured and theoretical form, which is conducive to the establishment of logical relations and theories (Liu & Li, 2017; Zhang & Yang, 2018). Therefore, psychobiography was considered a suitable approach to answer this study's research question.

Existing domain-specific and domain-general registries make it possible for researchers in any discipline to pre-register their research. A variety of practical strategies are available to make the best possible use of preregistration in circumstances that fall short of the ideal application, such as when the data are preexisting (Nosek et al., 2018). Preregistration is a useful solution that help us maintain clarity between prediction and postdiction and preserve

accurate calibration of evidence. It also helped us sort out the ideas and feasibility of the research design.

A good psychobiographical study requires repeated return to the data, and the steps and results of psychobiographical research often need to be continuously adjusted according to the appearance of the data. Therefore, some of the steps we designed in the preregistration have been greatly changed in the subsequent research process. This also makes pre-registration less instructive to us than quantitative studies.

2.1 | Data collection

Considering ethical issues, the sources of data on Jack Ma mainly include biographies and commercial public materials, such as audio-visual media, e-commerce website databases, and officially published books. Specifically, the first-hand materials analyzed mainly included Jack Ma's own audio-visual materials, his public speeches, and interviews with him. The second-hand materials included various published books, biographies, newspaper and magazine articles, and audio-visual media.

2.2 | Selection and arrangement of data

The materials we collected about Jack Ma mainly include 230 audio-visual media documents (Jack Ma's own public speeches and interviews with relevant figures), 10 books (business, biography), and 51 original speeches.

First, we built six Excel documents and recorded the subject (e.g., Hangzhou Normal University speech), time of occurrence (e.g., 20,180,513), and video duration. We renamed the corresponding video material with the time of occurrence for easy checking. Second, we merged the six Excel documents, deleted the duplicates after sorting, and deleted the corresponding video originals. Finally, further strict screening is carried out, and the videos with repetitive content or distortion or those unhelpful to this research were eliminated. The screened video materials were 78, basically consisting of Jack Ma's personal speeches and interviews.

In order to facilitate the research, in the next phase—the transcription phase, we found 51 original speeches corresponding to the videos. If there is no video of the original speech, a Word document is created for text transcription, and the time point of the corresponding content in the video is marked. For example: "I am the second child in the family, my elder brother is well taken care of by my parents, my younger sister is the youngest, and I am in the middle, no one cares much about me, but I think my parents care a lot about me, and I also

think they love me more a little” (02:36). A video corresponds to a Word document, and the naming format is: occurrence time + duration + researcher name (e.g., 2019021335xiexia).

While transcribing, we created a corresponding Excel list to record the key features of each source material: serial number, time, title, subject, contribution rate, remarks. The naming format is: investigator name + completion time (e.g., xiexia20210302). After the transcription work is completed, we refer to the method of text analysis of narrative interviews, watch the video repeatedly, and analyze the corresponding text, while paying attention to the tone, demeanor, pause, repetition, etc., of the characters' speech. Any thoughts and questions generated during the viewing process are recorded in the book at any time, and relevant materials can be found for further verification.

What follows is the theoretical basis for data encoding and analysis. According to psychobiography, all life experiences that have important explanatory meaning are composed of events. Among many life events, researchers may ignore some that are considered insignificant and regard others as key, important, interpretive, and core. In the research, the selection of events depends on whether these events have impacts on the shaping of the subject's personality and forming its core components. Deciding which events are irrelevant and which events are of great significance to the individual is based on the understanding of the subject (Shu & Wang, 2012). Therefore, in terms of data selection and processing, this study refers to the “key factors of growth” macroscopically and follows the “primary indicators of psychological saliency” microscopically to sort the data and determine what has had obvious psychological significance (Alexander, 1990; Schultz, 2005; Zheng, 2013).

Zheng (2013) proposed a new criterion for screening data: key factors of growth. The standard includes three aspects. (1) *Early experience*. This mainly refers to an individual's early parent-child relationships, family environment, and early education. Early experience here refers specifically to experience before the age of 11 or 12. Most psychologists agree that early experiences can have an important impact on adult personality and behavior. (2) *Body self*. After an individual enters puberty, the individual becomes very concerned about their appearance and physical condition, such as height, fatness, thinness, beauty, ugliness, strength, etc. Understanding one's own body and the comparison with others' bodies will have a great impact on one's psychology and behavior. (3) *Role model*. Subjects may have role models at different stages of their lives. These role models include significant others, idols or heroes of worship (hero worship), and object of identification.

Based on the above principles, this study carried out three-level coding of the analysis data. The details are as follows.

2.2.1 | Open coding (primary coding)

Firstly, according to different contexts and semantics, this research disassembles text data into different parts or nodes according to meaningful units (words, part or all of sentences); Secondly, with reference to the “basic index of psychological salience” (Alexander, 1990), the text data are searched for standard meaning units, and these disassembled nodes are classified into categories, so that each node can belong to a certain Initial concepts (i.e., primary coding nodes), these nodes are the most basic units of analysis (Flick, 2007). The 78 video transcriptions obtained 181 primary coding nodes, and the primary coding was completed. Due to space limitations and research topics, only the node distribution related to this research topic is presented here, see Table 1.

2.2.2 | Axial and selective coding

NVivo11 software was used to analyze the data, mainly for axial coding (secondary coding) and selective coding (tertiary coding). Based on the coding system established by the open coding, the researchers used NVivo to refine, adjust, and classify each node obtained in the open coding around the core problem and merged the parts with similar meanings. Since the nodes extracted in the open coding comprised a list of units with different meanings, axial coding was used to gather together the concept categories (open coding nodes) named by the open coding to get subthemes. Then, following the dimension and the attribute, we compare the subthemes obtained, so that the themes are related to each other. The open coding in this study was completed with the help of salience indicators, but the open coding nodes obtained had no connection or significance with each other, so it was necessary to compare the open coding nodes for axial coding.

This process was mainly conducted through the methods of synonyms, horizontal comparison, and vertical comparison (see Table 2). For example, through similar comparisons, the researcher found in the initial coding six open-ended codes “Unique naming style,” “Maverick,” “Appreciate oneself,” “Different from others,” “Be oneself,” and “I am the best.” The coding nodes all show that Jack Ma's work and thinking way are different, and they have the same data. Therefore, these six coding nodes are grouped under the same sub-theme, “Maverick”; It is found that in the initial coding, the three open coding

TABLE 1 Distribution of the salient index of primary coding nodes^a

Primary indicators of psychological saliency	Primary coding node	Reference points
1. Frequency	Louis Cha	5
	Maverick	4
	Be oneself	30
	Create	5
	Break	19
	Honesty and credit	50
	Sense of mission	91
	I am the best	8
	Exaggerated influence	8
	Challenge the system	17
	Ambition	6
	Adventure challenge	20
	Government system	14
	Deny fame and wealth	21
	Emphasize the ordinary	12
	Change oneself	11
	Denial of business identity	12
	Identity as a teacher	67
	Unhappy childhood	6
	“Fight against landlords ^b ”	8
English (Horizons)	3	
Ancestral inheritance	2	
Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism	3	
2. Primacy (mentioned for the first time on different occasions)	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	2
	Unhappy childhood	6
	Different from others	1
	Family background	1
	Foreign friends	3
3. Emphasis	Emphasize the ordinary	12
	Identity as a teacher	22
	Appreciate oneself/himself	2
4. Isolation	Bravery and righteousness	1
	Teacher identity	1
5. Uniqueness	Unique naming style	3
	Different from others	1
	Teacher identity	1
	Birth order	2
6. Incompletion	Return to teacher identity (after a decade of entrepreneurship)	5
7. Error, distortion, omission (inconsistent with the facts)	Do not overstep government affairs	3
	Do not discuss policy	1
	Exaggerated influence	8
8. Negation	Deny fame and wealth	16
	Denial of business identity	12
	Deny overstepping government	6

^aThere were duplicate nodes in different convex dominance indicators. For example, the “teacher identity” node also corresponds to the frequency and primary indicators of psychological saliency. Therefore, the primary coding nodes and reference points in Table 1 are the results after integration (from the same sources).

^bLandlords are a negative image in the Chinese cultural context.

TABLE 2 Distribution of spindle coding nodes of teacher and martial arts complex

Serial number	Open coding node	Reference points	Axial coding (subtheme)
1	Unique naming style	3	Maverick
2	Maverick	4	
3	Appreciate oneself	2	
4	Different from others	1	
5	Be oneself	30	
6	I am the best	8	
7	Create	5	Innovation
8	Break	19	
9	Honesty and credit	50	Fairness and justice
10	Bravery and righteousness	1	
11	Sense of mission	91	
12	Government system	14	Challenging the system
13	Exaggerated influence	8	
14	Challenge the system	17	
15	Ambition	6	
16	Adventure challenge	20	
17	Deny fame and wealth	21	Identity selection
18	Emphasize the ordinary	12	
19	Change oneself	11	
20	Denial of business identity	12	
21	Identity as a teacher	67	
22	Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism	3	
23	Louis Cha	5	
24	Unhappy childhood	6	Early Experiences
25	“Fight against landlords”	8	
26	Birth order	2	
27	First mention of family Background	1	
28	English (Horizons)	3	
29	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	2	Role model
30	Foreign friends	3	
31	Ancestral inheritance	2	
	Total	437	

nodes of “Honesty and credit,” “Bravery and righteousness,” and “Sense of mission” and the two open coding nodes of “Break” and “Create” have differences in data, so the former is classified and focused of sub-theme “Fairness and justice”, the latter is classified under another sub-theme “Innovation”; the researcher made a vertical comparison of Jack Ma’s data in chronological order, and a horizontal comparison of the data of the same period, and found that the five open-ended coding nodes of “Unhappy childhood,” “Fight against landlords,” “Birth order,” “First mention of family background,” and “English (horizons)” belong to Jack Ma’s early experiences, so they are classified

as sub-topics of “Early experiences.” Other sub-themes (axial codes) are also derived in this way.

Selective coding (tertiary coding) refers to the selection of a “core category” after a systematic analysis of all discovered concept categories. At this stage, the analysis continues to focus on those nodes related to the core category. The core category must be repeatedly shown to be dominant in comparison with other genera, capable of encompassing the greatest number of research findings within a more general theoretical category (Chen, 1999). Selective coding deals with primary-coded data at a more abstract level, with the aim of aggregating

discovered secondary themes and illustrating primary themes by linking these themes (Flick, 2007; Li et al., 2015). Researchers need to weigh multiple important themes at the same time and finally generate several primary themes and their associated sub-themes and use coding paradigms—causal conditions, phenomena, contexts, intermediate effects, interaction strategies, and outcomes, etc. to develop the characteristics and dimensions of primary categories (Fu et al., 2020) so as to create connections between primary categories (see Table 3). In the process of searching for the “core category,” we chose to go back to the data again. By sorting out the timeline of Jack Ma’s data, we found that the two identities, “Martial Arts” and “Teacher,” appeared most frequently and always ran through the various stages of Jack Ma’s life, and the sub-themes extracted from the main axis codes also fit well with the qualities of these two identities. Therefore, the two primary themes of “Martial Arts Complex” and “Teacher Complex” conform to the standard of “core category.”

2.3 | Reliability and validity test

In qualitative research, reliability cannot be viewed as the degree to which multiple repetitions of data collection will yield the same results (Flick, 2007). The reliability of qualitative research can instead be divided into internal reliability and external reliability (Wang, 1990). This study demonstrated reliability in two ways: First, training coders. All six researchers have experience in psychobiographical research, have received systematic training in humanistic psychology, and are proficient in the use of QSR Nvivo 11.0 software. Among the team members of this research, Shu Yueyu and Zhang Jiyuan have PhD degrees in psychology, and have both engaged in psychobiographical research for more than ten years. They are currently full-time teachers at the Institute of Psychobiography, School of Psychology, Northwest Normal University, China. Xie Xia and other members are all graduate students of the Institute and have received good training in psychobiographical methods. The research team is neutral to the subjects and has no connection with Jack Ma and his company. This research did not receive funding from any institution. Second, we improved the reliability of data analysis by checking whether the themes at all levels extracted by the coding could be used to analyze all textual data under the respective theme. For example, if the subtheme of “Maverick” is analyzed in a certain text, then we determined whether the data texts under this theme could support it well.

This study mainly improved validity through participant testing. In order to avoid excessive interpretation of

the data and subjectivity of text analysis, the six researchers acted as testers for each other, feeding back the coding results to the original data to test the descriptive and analytical validity of the data. If the feedback was inconsistent with the research results or the opinions of each feedback person were different, the researcher would return to the original data and adjust the coding results until the feedback results in all aspects were relatively consistent. If there was a sufficient basis for the generation of research results, the research results would continue to be retained. Regardless of whether revised or not, full explanations were given to the examiners based on relevant psychological theories and research norms, with a view to reaching a consensus. Ultimately, examiners helped improve the validity of research results from different perspectives and levels (Fu et al., 2020).

2.4 | Ethical considerations and research limitations

Psychobiography subjects are non-anonymous public figures or historical figures which determines that psychobiography must have more ethical considerations than group characteristics research in psychology and other case studies. For psychobiographical subjects still living or only recently deceased, the researcher will be challenged with finding a balance between objective reporting and plausible psychological interpretation, and respect for the subject and surviving family and close acquaintances (Elms, 2007).

There is a provision in the APA (, 2002) ethical codes that permits exemption from the usual informed consent process when the research would not likely cause any distress or harm to the individual and when archival research is used, and where report results would not place the participant in any legal risk or damage his/her financial standing (Ponterotto, 2013). Naturally, psychobiographers are free to pursue their craft on recently deceased and still-living public figures (Ponterotto & Reynolds, 2017). All data used for analysis in this study were either voluntarily disclosed or acquiesced in disclosure by the subjects (Second-hand information comes from the biography of Jack Ma from authoritative publishing houses.). Thus, reporting this information poses minimal risk of criminal or civil liability brought against the subject (Ponterotto, 2013). In addition, all the researchers had received professional and systematic training in psychobiography research. This study seeks to avoid biased practices in collecting and explaining life stories. The study aims to enhance readers’ understanding of Jack Ma, especially his impact on social change in China. It strives minimize any potential harm while still yielding an accurate analysis.

TABLE 3 Primary and secondary topics formed by selective coding

Selective coding (primary theme)	Axial coding (subtheme)	Connotation of relationship (The original material)
Martial arts complex	Maverick	Six dimensions: Unique naming style, Maverick, Appreciate oneself, Different from others, Be oneself, I am the best. The company is named “Alibaba,” the research institute is named “Dharma Temple”; “One thing that is different from others is the point of view of the problem”; “Look at your weakness with an appreciative eye”; “I have one thing that is different from others, that is, everyone says it is good, I will wait for a while. Wait, think about why it is good, everyone says it is bad, I will think about why it is bad”; “Always be yourself, because being yourself, no matter how ugly or good”; “My dad said that I am not as good as him, but the final result is that my father is worse than my grandfather, and I am better than my grandfather and father”
	Innovate	Two dimensions: create and break. “I finally realized a truth, you can create what you do not have”; “so I think this is what we think of constructive destruction”; “In fact, any new thing requires many attempts and practice to produce”
	Challenge the system	Five dimensions: Government system, Exaggerated influence, Challenge the system, Ambition, Adventure challenge. “It’s not wrong for those stupid companies to focus on their relationship with the government, which is really important, but they cannot be completely relied on”; “The competition between countries in the future will not depend on the competitiveness of enterprises, but the competitiveness of online merchants”; “The bank does not change, we change the bank... We are not very interested in the jobs of private enterprises, but we are very interested in state-owned enterprises”; “We will influence the future of China, and we will change the future world”; “My personality likes to challenge and change, my dad wanted me to focus on one thing since I was a child, but I never focused on it”
	Early Experiences	Five dimensions: Unhappy childhood, Fight against landlords, Birth order, First mention of family Background, English (horizons). “At that time, because of my poor background, I did not want to be the object of my classmates’ ridicule, so I had a conflict with my classmates, and as a result, I had four stitches on my head”; “I insist on learning English by the West Lake every day for nine consecutive years, no matter what the wind, rain, snow, no matter what, I will go to the West Lake to practice English every day”; “What makes me stand here today is because I had an unfortunate childhood ... the second child in the family, no one cares too much about what happens to me”; “If we still pursue our own interests, we will definitely be eliminated by society, and the people will definitely rise up to fight against landlords”
Teacher complex	Role model	Three dimensions: <i>Forrest Gump</i> , Foreign friends, Ancestral inheritance. “Different people influenced me at different stages, Louis Cha definitely influenced me, and <i>Forrest Gump</i> in the movie <i>Forrest Gump</i> also influenced me”; “A very remote town in Australia, everyone knows that I went to see a friend, more than 20 years ago, I studied English by the West Lake and met a friend”; “Before I went to Australia, I was taught that China is the happiest and richest country in the world, and we need to liberate all mankind. Yes, then when I arrived in Australia, I found that others could liberate us”; “My dad used to say I was confused, and I said have you ever been confused? My grandfather was also confused before, but they forgot their confusion, my grandfather said my dad is not as good as him, and my dad said that I am not as good as him, but the final result is that my dad is worse than my grandfather, and I am better than my grandfather and dad”
	Fairness and justice	Three dimensions: Honesty and credit, Bravery and righteousness, Sense of mission. “To be an excellent entrepreneur, you must have one important thing, that is integrity”; “I saw five or six big men stealing manhole covers. I stepped on the ground with one foot and the other on the pedal of the bicycle, ready to run away at any time, and then pointed at the other party and shouted: ‘You bring me back!’”; “Alibaba’s mission is to make the world easy to do business”
	Identity selection	Seven dimensions: Deny fame and wealth; Emphasize the ordinary; Change oneself; Denial of business identity; Identity as a teacher; Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism; Louis Cha. “I did not start a business to make money”; “All of us are the same, but very ordinary”; “No one can change the world, we change ourselves”; “What we want to do is an enterprise, not a business”; “I am now a CEO, but I am actually a teacher”; “The whole Chinese culture is different, the three philosophies of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism: Confucianism pays attention to people changing their behavior, To adapt to this society; Taoism teaches that people change their behavior and adapt to the laws of heaven and earth; Buddhist thought requires us, changes our behavior to adapt to the development of the inner world”; “If you want to like Louis Cha’s novels, you must have a romantic spirit”

We acknowledge that this research has three limitations. First, this is a single case study, an analysis of the life history data of a selected public figure. Through descriptive analysis, research provides insights that are specific to just one person. Second, we ensured the validity of the study to a certain extent through the participant test, but we did not invite people from other relevant backgrounds to participate in the coding other than the team members, and the data analysis may have subjective bias. Third, we did not find more information on the details of Jack Ma's childhood, nor did we conduct face-to-face interviews.

3 | INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

After three-level coding, we extracted two major themes of Jack Ma's psychological life: teacher complex and martial arts complex. These two themes, which were encoded and gradually summarized from his first-hand information, are the key to understanding why Jack Ma chose to retire and become a teacher again (From Jack Ma's farewell speech.).

Looking back at Jack Ma's life, we find that he is particularly persistent in the identities of "Martial Arts" and "Teacher." On the one hand, as a successful entrepreneur, Jack Ma has always emphasized his identity as a teacher, weakening or even denying that he is a businessman. He asked others to call himself "Teacher Ma" and unexpectedly chose to be a village teacher after retirement (From Jack Ma's farewell speech.). On the other hand, he extended his persistent martial arts dream and obsession with Louis Cha's novels to the cultural level of the company and let them infiltrate his business plan. Although there are many studies on Jack Ma and Alibaba (e.g., Ji, 2015; Yun et al., 2020; Zhi, 2006), none of them have paid attention to the issue of Jack Ma's multiple identities.

3.1 | The martial arts complex

From the perspective of martial arts culture, its advocates do not necessarily have to be good at martial arts but should manifest advocacy for them and for a "chivalrous spirit" (Zhang & Zhao, 2017). Therefore, martial arts advocates do not necessarily have "martial arts" (*gongfu* in Chinese) abilities but have a "chivalrous spirit." According to the data, compared with "chivalry spirit," Jack Ma's advocacy of "martial arts" is more of an advocacy of personal heroism. He mostly aimed at venting his dissatisfaction with the social system. Deep down, Jack Ma is a complete rebel. Next, we will try to prove this by describing his related behavior. He expanded his personal ambition into a sense of social responsibility, and the martial arts (corporate mission)

complex, with a strong sense of social justice, is simply his persona. Jack Ma's martial arts complex slowly developed into a persona, and, finally, his repressed nature was gradually revealed due to his self-expansion. In the below paragraph, the research is analyzed from three perspectives: the formation of Jack Ma's martial arts complex, the performance of his persona, and his self-expansion.

3.1.1 | The formation of martial arts complex

Jack Ma's childhood humiliation experience is the main source of his martial arts complex. According to the results shown in Tables 2 and 3, role models, early experiences, and the influence of traditional culture were important conditions that contributed to the formation of Jack Ma's martial arts complex. Chinese people have a martial arts dream, and Jack Ma is no exception. He loved reading martial arts novels from childhood because, in the world of chivalry and justice, he could walk the *Jiang Hu* (江湖)⁷ with his sword and pay debts of gratitude and revenge with pleasure. Jack Ma also brought the chivalry of the martial arts world to real life and has been "healing hearts" since childhood. He feels the need to stand up in cases of injustice: If someone bullied or annoyed him, no matter how strong the other person was, Jack Ma would immediately rush to compete with them. Consequently, Jack Ma was not only injured many times but also often punished at school and scolded by his parents; however, he refused to repent. From these childhood experiences, we can see that Jack Ma was rebellious, stubborn, unconcerned about safety, and extremely aggressive. So why was Jack Ma more susceptible to the influence of martial arts novels than others? This may be closely related to his origins:

When Jack Ma was a child, people cared about their family background. Unfortunately, Jack Ma's grandfather was a *Baochang* in his early years. Later, he was classified into the five black categories. Jack Ma and his family were bullied. Once, Jack Ma's grandfather resisted a little when he couldn't bear it and was scolded by the bully: "You are only allowed to be obedient, not to talk or move!" In Jack Ma's primary school textbook, there was exactly the same sentence. When he was learning the text, Jack Ma hoped that the teacher would never speak the sentence aloud, but the teacher finally did. When that happened, a naughty boy turned his head and made a grimace at Jack Ma because he had witnessed the scene when Jack Ma's grandfather was

being reprimanded at Jack Ma's house. Other children had also heard about it. When they saw the boy making faces at Jack Ma, they all covered their mouths and laughed. Young Jack Ma, who had a sensitive heart and strong self-esteem, felt very angry about the strange looks from his classmates. He grabbed the Chinese textbook on the table and smashed it against his "provoking" male classmate. The male classmate was unwilling to show weakness; he threw his schoolbag at Jack Ma and smashed a bloody hole in Jack Ma's head. (Zhang, 2014, p. 2)

From the perspective of psychobiography, this experience was a prototypical scene for Jack Ma. Jack Ma's childhood experience conforms to the following points highlighted by Schultz (2005): (1) Vividness, specificity, and emotional intensity. This scene made Jack Ma feel ashamed, and his classmates' ridicule made him angry, and he fought hard because of it. (2) Interpenetration. In the 2015 Davos Forum, Jack Ma said in an interview with Charlie Rose:

I was born in 1964, during the Cultural Revolution. My grandfather was a small landlord, so he was not considered a good man after liberation. So I have known the hardships of life since I was a child.

This scene was deeply engraved in Jack Ma's memory; thus, even when he later succeeded in his career, he still frequently recalled his childhood and lamented the difficulties of the world. The anger in his heart aroused Jack Ma's martial arts complex and accompanied him throughout his entrepreneurial career. (3) Developmental crisis. This event happened at school age (6–12 years old), and its impact gave Jack Ma, who was not good at learning, an inferiority complex. At that time, he did not deal with this mental development task well. (4) Family conflict. Jack Ma, who was not bound by his parents, had a carefree childhood. The occurrence of this incident meant Jack Ma suddenly had a grudge against his formerly kind classmates; however, his grandfather was the culprit of this humiliation, and the psychological "father–son conflict" was intensified.

This childhood memory was a prototypical scene for Jack Ma because it seriously affected his future life trajectory and character formation through the profound emotional experience. The scene of seeing his grandfather escorted away in childhood was deeply imprinted in Jack Ma's mind; his carefree childhood ended, followed by gossip, exclusion,

and ridicule from the people around him. In this situation, the legend of martial arts provided Jack Ma with romantic spiritual power: He resisted by force and hoped to use peerless martial arts to fight back against his opponents. Later, Jack Ma, who suffered failures and setbacks, also longed to become a great "knight" with peerless Kung Fu abilities, defeat his opponents, and rebel against everything that shamed him, failed him, and hindered his success. In this way, the prototypical scenes of childhood humiliation planted the seeds for the formation of Jack Ma's martial arts complex.

Jack Ma not only loves to read books, he is also easily influenced by the characters in them, which affects his identification with martial arts to some extent:

Destiny changed because of an accidental opportunity. Once, when Jack Ma came to Zhejiang Dancers Association to copy documents for the chairman of the association, he accidentally read Lu Yao's *Life*. The appearance of this book lit a beacon for the confused Jack Ma at the time. The protagonist of the novel Gao Jialin's persistent pursuit of ideals shocked Jack Ma. He was convinced by the spirit of the protagonist and determined to fight for his ideals. (Zhang, 2014, p. 6)

Jack Ma carefully prepared for the second college entrance examination, but still failed. Facing the advice of people around him, Jack Ma also thought about giving up, but another experience inspired him:

At that time, a TV drama *Volleyball Female General* imported from Japan was very popular. The protagonist Kojika Jyun in the play inspired a whole generation with the spirit of never giving up. Jack Ma also likes Kojika Jyun very much. From Kojika Jyun, Jack Ma once again draws strength and prepares for the third college entrance examination despite the opposition of his family. (Zhang, 2014, p. 7)

Louis Cha also really influenced Jack Ma. Louis Cha's novels are a common memory in China of an era and a generation's youth. In the 1980s and 1990s, many students spent their extracurricular time on martial arts novels (Dai, 2018). Martial arts novels emerged in mainland China, and Jack Ma was just at the stage of childhood and adolescence. Martial arts novels became important companions to Jack Ma's generation. Jack Ma did not directly talk about the influence of martial arts novels on him, but he repeatedly mentioned the influence of Louis Cha on himself:

In 2006, Jack Ma was interviewed at the graduation ceremony of Hangzhou Normal College. The host asked: “Who is the person who has influenced you the most so far?” Jack Ma replied: “I think I have been influenced by many people. At different stages of my life, I have influenced by different people. Louis Cha must have influenced me, and the simple Forrest Gump in *Forrest Gump* also influenced me, as well as my parents, teachers, and the words of Li Ka-shing a few days ago that resonated very much in my heart. In this world, no one person can really influence you, the important thing is that you can find various opportunities from everyone, and then continue to learn, which in turn affects others.”

Here Jack Ma mentioned that Louis Cha had had a great influence on him, and that he believed that after learning from others, he would in turn influence others. Jack Ma directly acknowledged Louis Cha's influence on him. This may mean that Jack Ma felt power and resistance in Louis Cha's novels. As he grew up, he transformed martial arts power into inner motivation, and gradually externalized his power to others through personal efforts. Chinese people have a strong martial arts complex, and martial arts is a dream in the hearts of Chinese people. Jack Ma's martial arts complex is also his spiritual sustenance.

The formation of complexes is related to the archetypes in the collective unconscious, and each complex has its own corresponding archetypes. In Chinese history, although historians no longer wrote biographies of chivalrous swordsmen after the Eastern Han Dynasty, the image of martial arts remained in literature and was gradually accumulated into cultural archetypes in the minds of the Chinese people (Lv, 2006). As such, the Chinese people's deep-rooted martial arts archetypes created enough environmental space for the formation of Jack Ma's martial arts complex. At the same time, under the influence of this cultural archetype, Jack Ma, who was ignored by his parents from childhood (ranked second in the family) and loved martial arts novels, developed a competitive character, which encouraged him to do what he wanted despite reality. The “nuclear element” of a complex mainly comprises two components: “The first is the factor determined by experience and has a causal relationship with the environment; the second is the factors inherent in personal character and determined by personal intention” (Jung, 1971). Therefore, the formation of a complex is not only affected by external factors (including family, relevant parties, and the environment) but also generated

from the individual's internal ways of thinking and behavior, which are inherent to them (Liu, 2008). Childhood humiliation was the fuse and decisive factor for Jack Ma to form his martial arts complex. Facing provocation by his peers, Jack Ma, whose self-esteem was frustrated, seemed to have no other way to vent his anger except to rush out and fight. Through “martial arts” resistance, Jack Ma suppressed the arrogance of his classmates and recovered his self-esteem to gain the courage to resist and struggle. In this way, Jack Ma was eager to develop peerless martial arts skills and obtained self-esteem and self-confidence through resistance. The fertile soil of the martial arts cultural environment, the martial arts character formed from childhood, and the martial arts experience of childhood combined to form Jack Ma's martial arts complex.

A complex is an autonomous structure with its own drive. Complexes are often the source of human inspiration and drives, which are essential for great artists to achieve brilliant achievements (Jung et al., 2014). Although Jack Ma is not an artist, the positive effect of his martial arts complex was reflected when he founded Alibaba. In the interview of the Forum program, the host talked to Jack Ma why did he name website Alibaba. Jack Ma said:

If you want to do such an e-commerce website, do import and export trade, and do domestic trade, it must be global. The Internet must also be global, and I will give it a global name. Yes. One day I was on a business trip in San Francisco, and I found the name Alibaba on the street very interesting, and then I thought about it. Suddenly a waitress came over with coffee, and I asked her: Do you know this Alibaba? She said Of course I got it. What did I mean, she said open sesame. I found it very interesting to hear what she said. Then I found more than 60 people on the street, people from all countries, and everyone I asked if you know Alibaba? They all know and could tell the story of “open sesame.” And in English words, ranking A is always in the front. And when they hear the name Alibaba, many people will laugh: strange, how can there be such a strange thing. At this point, you save your advertising costs.

The story of Alibaba and the Forty Thieves touched Jack Ma. How can one discover the treasure of life's dreams and achieve true wealth? Jack Ma had his own idea and named his business after Alibaba. In the story, Alibaba distributes the property of the robbers to the poor. In the process of

founding Alibaba, Jack Ma reduced prices so that ordinary people could enjoy a more affordable and convenient experience. Jack Ma's purpose is to bring real benefits to the common people. This is also one of the important reasons for Alibaba's potential to become bigger and stronger. Jack Ma is very business-minded, and the name "Alibaba" is both well known and attractive. From the beginning of his business, Jack Ma's goal was globalization, and the name of the company reflects his inner needs to a certain extent. In the arena, heroes both have strength and formulate and guard the rules. In the business world, Jack Ma wanted to be the maker and guardian of the rules.

3.1.2 | The performance of the persona

For Jack Ma, before starting his own business, the martial arts complex was buried deep in his heart and was unconscious. However, based on the accumulation of "prototypes" of Chinese martial arts culture, Jack Ma's martial arts complex gradually became prominent and was displayed as a personality mask.

Jack Ma, who did so well in college, used his professional talents to gain a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem, and his strong impulse in martial arts was temporarily suppressed. But Jack Ma is an idealist, and he would not stop chasing ideals for the sake of a realistic and stable life. In his years as a university teacher, Jack Ma was named one of the top ten outstanding young teachers in Hangzhou in 1995 with his excellent work ability, but he was not satisfied with this, and it caused him to resign later.

Jack Ma's ambition seems to have been difficult to fully realize on campus. An accident strengthened his determination to resign. When Jack Ma was thinking about resigning from the teaching position, he was quite hesitant. One day, Jack Ma met the dean of the department on campus when he was off work. The dean was riding a bicycle with freshly bought vegetables hanging from the handlebars. He stopped Jack Ma, enjoining him to do his promising job as an English teacher. Jack Ma said, "I looked at him and suddenly realized that if I continue to stay in school, his present is my 'future'!" So Jack Ma quickly resigned. This is one of Jack Ma's responses to why he resigned. The seemingly minor reasons for resignation actually reveal the true needs of Jack Ma's heart. Living an ordinary life like the dean of the department is not Jack Ma's personal pursuit or source of self-worth realization. He is a man who is unwilling to be lonely, unwilling to be unknown, and unwilling to be poor. And the image of the popular hero is exactly in line with the life role that Jack Ma pursues - the metaphor of the star that attracts everyone's attention. Judging from the experience of resigning

from the teaching position, the future of the teaching profession was far from Jack Ma's pursuit: teachers are too ordinary (it is difficult for them to obtain high-profile and high-return opportunities like stars). The appeal and creativity of martial arts is exactly what Jack Ma was pursuing at that time, and when he resigned from the teaching position, his attitude was resolute. Obviously, the prototype of the swordsman has played a role in Ma Yun's heart.

The quantity of archetypes is as extensive as the different types of prototypical scenes in life. These experiences are deeply engraved in our psychological structure due to constant repetition (Hall et al., 1987, p. 48). As a form, archetypes only appear when they are supported by concrete and perceptible images. This form is inherited from our original ancestors, rather than the specific content of an experience (Qiu, 2020).

In 2007, Jack Ma said on the TV program *Win in China*: "Louis Cha is my idol and my good friend. What is *The Smiling Proud Wanderer*? In this book, you have to laugh, you have to have a heart; you have to be proud, and you have to be strong."

In Jack Ma's view, if you want to gain a foothold in society, you must have both mind and strength. After resigning, Jack Ma needs strength, a platform and an opportunity to realize his inner ambition. Once he entered university, Jack Ma needed to be the best student, the student union president, then the best teacher. This ambition is key to his encounter with the dean on the bicycle and his recognition that he would not realize more lofty goals for himself if he remained in the teaching profession. In contrast, entering the business world would align his heroic martial arts persona with his day-to-day endeavors.

However, after his resignation, Jack Ma realized that although the teaching profession is not lucrative, it has special significance in the hearts of Chinese people, especially in Chinese traditions: The traditional Chinese memorial tablet is named *Tian Di Jun Qin Shi* (天地君亲师).⁸ Conversely, although businessmen are usually richer than teachers, the Chinese have, since ancient times, looked down upon them and regarded them as unrealistic and the embodiment of opportunism and venality. After Jack Ma toiled in the business world, he gradually felt the value of the teacher status he had rushed to leave behind in his early years, paving the way for his later "teacher complex."

However, for Jack Ma, who fought fiercely in the business world, martial arts seemed to be more practical. Nevertheless, what was really useful to Jack Ma was not the spirit of martial arts but the persona that martial arts presented. This persona ensures that one can live in harmony with people, even those one does not like, and achieve one's personal goals. Jung also labeled it the "conformity archetype" due to its obedience to society (Hall et al., 1987, p. 48). In this way, persona has

a positive side: It is a necessary archetype for personal survival. It ensures basically positive interpersonal relationships and generous material rewards and can help a person achieve their personal goals and aspirations. In essence, it is the basis of social and public life (Ma, 2007). Influenced by the cultural environment, Jack Ma formed the core of his persona—the martial arts complex. As per Table 2, Jack Ma presented to the people a martial arts persona that innovated, was a maverick, and challenged the system. As a result, he was rewarded with a brilliant career, the awe of the public, and social respect. A prototype is a dynamic entity rather than a static one (Saunders & Skar, 2001), and Jack Ma's persona has always existed in different forms. When Jack Ma used martial arts as his persona, he integrated his martial arts complex into the corporate culture, where every employee has a “nickname” from a martial arts novel. For example, Jack Ma claimed himself as Feng Qingyang (风清扬),⁹ and Zhang Yong (Alibaba Group's chief operating officer) was named Xiao Yaozi (逍遥子).¹⁰ Jack Ma called his office “Peach Blossom Island” (桃花岛)¹¹ and the company's conference room “Guangming Top” (光明顶).¹² Later, when he achieved significant success in his career, Jack Ma established Dharma Temple and Arhat Hall. Those who are unaware may think that these places are at the entrance of Shaolin Temple; in fact, they are two top scientific research institutions.

As one of the representative archetypes, persona comes from the guidance of social expectations and requirements on the one hand, while also being influenced by personal social goals, aspirations, and ideals on the other. The former includes society's requirements regarding the standard of “what kind of person to grow up into,” the “code of conduct,” and believing in “a clear proposition about the essence of reality.” The latter includes individual social ambition (Fan & Wang, 2011). Martial arts, as Jack Ma's persona, is precisely in his transformation of personal ambitions into social missions.

At the beginning of his business, Jack Ma tried his best to create an image of a hero with a sense of responsibility, and courage. Alibaba's mission at the beginning of its founding was to “make business no longer difficult.” Jack Ma's epiphany about Alibaba's mission was inspired by President William J. Clinton:

When meeting Clinton for the first time, Jack Ma asked a question: “As a pioneer in today's world, what does the United States rely on to promote the country's progress?” Clinton told him, “It's about a sense of purpose, a sense of purpose that moves the world forward.” Jack Ma thinks of this: “100 years ago, when General Electric was established, the mission

was to ‘make the world light up’; 80 years ago, when Disney was established, the mission was to ‘make the world happy’. What is Alibaba's mission, which is to ‘make business no longer difficult’. Thanks to the internet, we may be able to do this with our own ingenuity and wisdom. (Zhang & Wang, 2015)

Although Jack Ma's sense of mission for his enterprise comes from the inspiration of successful cases, it also coincides with the swordsman's feelings about home and country. Louis Cha's works not only create a world full of miraculous martial arts and love and hatred for readers but also show strong family and country feeling with the help of the words and deeds, emotions and life choices of the martial arts characters (Guo, 2020). Jack Ma regards his company's mission as determining the fate of the world's online business, just as swordsman regards the peace of JiangHu as his personal mission. Jack Ma would talk in public about this mission on any business occasion and used the themes of a sense of mission, social responsibility, and feelings of responsibility for the family and country 91 times, especially at the online business conference:

Our mission at Alibaba is: “make business no longer difficult.” Everything we do is based on this goal, and we will not do anything that goes against this sense of mission. (Second Internet Business Conference)

Everyone in this world, especially us men, wants to be responsible to society, to our families, to our descendants, to our customers, our employees, and our colleagues. How do we make our best efforts when everyone encounters difficulties ... (The 5th Internet Business Conference)

The Internet Business Conference, co-organized by Alibaba Group, China Electronic Commerce Association and Hangzhou Municipal People's Government, was first held in 2004. Over the years, the internet business group, accompanied by the Internet Business Conference, has emerged and survived. Jack Ma's business changes were slowly realized through some big decisions and small activities. Whether participating in economic TV programs or attending high-level business summits, Jack Ma will promote his business ideas:

Entrepreneurs and businessmen will improve society [in the same way as] artists, architects, musicians, and politicians. This is the future social era we want. (Jack Ma, Zhejiang

satellite television's *Walking with Excellence* program)

Today, looking for opportunities in the market should be transformed into solving problems for society. In the process of human development, in fact, we have never thought of doing anything for the earth. (Jack Ma, APEC Summit)

Jack Ma not only regards a sense of social responsibility as the lifelong mission of the enterprise but also calls on all entrepreneurs to have this sense of social responsibility themselves. He notes that the purpose of life is to create happiness for others and help others out of difficulties. At the same time, he believes that entrepreneurs have a great responsibility for the survival and development of Chinese society and even the whole world. In every small aspect, Jack Ma has gradually shaped his martial arts image and spirit, and by presenting his martial arts persona, has vigorously promoted his justice-oriented side. His thoughts of fairness and justice have won the support and trust of business partners, employees, and customers.

3.1.3 | Self-expansion

Schopenhauer called the persona the “false self” (Jung, 1970, p. 192). When a person's persona is appropriate, on the one hand, it can establish their image when facing the outside world; on the other hand, it can also cover their true nature (Fan & Wang, 2011). If a person is excessively keen on and indulges in the role he plays, and if they identify themselves only with the role they play, other aspects of their personality will be rejected. The person dominated by the persona will gradually become different from their own nature and live in a tense state of division due to sharp opposition and conflict between the over-developed persona and other parts of their extremely underdeveloped personality. When a person's self is deeply identified with the persona or they even assume themselves as the persona, this situation is called “inflation.” This person may be arrogant because they have succeeded in a role and may often attempt to impose this role on others, requiring them to act in corresponding supporting roles. Jack Ma won the following and love of the business community and the public through his martial arts persona of a fearless spirit in pursuit of fairness, sacrificing himself and helping others in the interests of the country and the public, and his sense of justice and responsibility. However, in this situation, Jack Ma tried his best to suppress his truest side, and the real essence he attempted to conceal has gradually become prominent.

As shown in Tables 1–3, Jack Ma became arrogant and independent, relentlessly advocated innovation, and challenged the system as a consequence of the negative impact of his persona, and, thereafter, became the victim of this inflated persona.

Jack Ma's former assistant Chen Wei recounted many reminiscent descriptions of Jack Ma's martial arts dreams:

Ma's office displays many swords, including two prop swords presented [to him] by the famous martial arts director Zhang Jizhong. These swords are carried with him and moved to wherever he works. They used to be in Alibaba's office, and later in Taobao's office. Sometimes, he even wandered around the company with a shining sword. In this regard, I often joke that Ma is a member of the *Jiang Hu*: “The tools of survival are always with you.”

One weekend, we went hiking on Tianzhu Mountain in Hangzhou. Ma said, “I have read every martial arts book written by Louis Cha more than once, and my dream is to become a master of martial arts. For example,” Ma picked up a stick under a big tree while talking, “as soon as I work, this stick will become so strong that it can penetrate the tree with a flick of the hand. As soon as I finish, it will be as soft as before, and both ends will droop from the trunk. People who pass by will not be able to see how the stick got through the trunk. Alas, it would be great if I was outstanding at kung fu, like Feng Qingyang.”

Another time, we had tea with English classmates, and Ma once again told us a dream: He swaggered through the market in the modern Hangzhou, everyone else was in suits and leather shoes, and he wore white silk clothes, a pair of sunglasses, and his hair was shiny. The fly would break his leg when it stopped (An exaggerated way of describing hair as smooth.). His dress is out of line with the surroundings, and the side also stood too high over the head of his female bodyguards. As soon as he stretched out his left hand, a bodyguard immediately handed over a big pie, and he took two bites and threw it back. As soon as he stretched out his right hand, another bodyguard immediately handed over a cigar and lit it. When he flicked the ash, the bodyguard held it with his hand. After taking a

few puffs, he extinguished the cigar on the female bodyguard's hand with a burst of smoke. The female bodyguard's face remained expressionless. She clapped her hands, and no scars were left after the incident. The people around them were dumbfounded, with various expressions. (Chen, 2011, p. 27)

However, as Xu (2007, p. 2) noted, "The heroes mentioned here are not necessarily positive heroes. We refer to a special person: He stands in a pivotal and vital position, so that certain achievements in history are all due to him." Chivalrous people, a special group, have lofty aspirations and are not concerned for their families or themselves. Consequently, society has great expectations of them; therefore, the effectiveness and broadness of their emotions are not comparable with those of ordinary people. When the persistent pursuit is too much and the tendency is too clear, their emotional disposal will escape from the normal edge, and they will fall into destructive, evil ways (Wang & Chen, 2005, p. 107). On the one hand, they promised themselves to be chivalrous, despised life and death, valued righteousness, enjoyed gratitude and hatred, and upheld an upstanding and noble character. They show the world their recognition of individual identity and an evaluation of the group to which they belong. On the other hand, they are free from the constraints of general moral laws and even local rules and folk customs, and their arrogance and stubbornness often constitute an infringement on other people or society as a whole (p. 64). This is evident in the ways in which Jack Ma described his martial arts dream: "No one who passes by can understand," "Swaggering through the street," "His dress and the surrounding misfits," "Extinguishing the cigar on the female bodyguard's hand," "The people around them were dumbfounded, with various expressions." Jack Ma's idea of martial arts differs from the righteous martial arts of traditional culture. What he pursues is masterful martial arts skills to gain attention in order to demonstrate his uniqueness. His description of his martial arts complex does not involve helping anyone but is ultimately anti-social in nature. This is the real projection of his inner world, which naturally affected Alibaba's future.

With the growth of Alibaba, Jack Ma's personal global influence was also in full swing. He was not afraid to get close to leaders such as Park Geun-hye, Vladimir Putin, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump. He developed the illusion of omnipotence, gradually losing himself in the world of martial arts and forgetting his status in real society. He tried to ascertain and solve the world's problems with the power of one person and one company and asked the world's entrepreneurs to join his camp and be supporters of his ideas.

At the 2nd Bund Financial Summit 2020, on the eve of Ant Financial's listing, Jack Ma said:

Good innovation is not afraid of regulation, but it is afraid of outdated regulation—we can't manage airports the way we manage train stations, and we can't manage the future the way we did yesterday. Real Internet finance must have rich data, must be based on risk control technology under rich big data, and must have a credit system based on big data.

He made no secret of his financial ambitions, criticized the policy system, tried to create a new financial system, and always emphasized at the conference that "it will be wrong again and again" and "wrong to the end." These actions showed Jack Ma's arrogance, and how he could not help revealing his ambitions.

Ma also established Hupan University and advocated that it adheres to the principles of public welfare, non-profit activity, the bottom line, and bettering society. However, the university's lecturers were all senior executives from Alibaba, and the lectures were all based on Alibaba and the company's story. Though the institution was described as a "university," it tried to free itself from the need for authorization and the constraints of the education authorities. "Hupan's Four Goals" (湖畔四为)—"Establish a value system for the market, pave the way for businessmen, inherit the spirit of reform and opening up, and create a peaceful foundation for the new economy"—may also be empty words. How can an informal school, established to achieve a personal goal, take on this important task? It would appear that Ma's real purpose was to continue to expand his influence in business, culture, and politics through this "university."

Jack Ma's various performances reveal that he is adept at exaggerating social problems. He reflects the image of a responsible and chivalrous person that cares about the world and the fate of its people by promoting his own and the enterprise's sense of social responsibility. However, due to his unquenchable resentment and resistance, the arrogant, high-profile, and complacent Jack Ma became the victim of an inflated persona.

3.2 | Teachers: Impression management strategies

This study argues that Jack Ma's teacher complex is not a real "complex" but rather constitutes his impression management strategy. According to Jung's Persona Identity Theory, the teacher is Jack Ma's value concept for adapting

to the world and the way he uses to deal with the world. Jack Ma not only recognizes the influence and value of the identity of a teacher, but also uses this identity to deal with the stereotype of businessmen in traditional Chinese culture. Tables 2 and 3 show that Jack Ma vigorously denied his identity as a businessman and established and promoted an image of a fair and just ordinary teacher who was not obsessed with fame and fortune. The reason he was “attached” to the professional role of a teacher was not his love for the teaching profession but due to the status of teachers in traditional Chinese culture and his own six years of teaching experience.

Since ancient times, teachers have played a very important role in the development of human civilization and cultural evolution. “Respecting teachers and valuing education” has always been a positive social trend that is actively advocated in China (Shao, 2006). In ancient China, the tradition of respecting teachers was formed very early, giving teachers a high social status. Exploring the development trajectory of the status of teachers from a historical perspective shows that this social status has undergone an evolution process from sublime to inferior, and from inferior back to sublime (Tang, 2011). Nowadays, with the implementation of China's strategy to rejuvenate the country through science and education and the establishment of the priority development status of education, the attitude of respecting teachers and valuing education is becoming increasingly strong. Consequently, teachers' political, economic, and social status and professional reputation have been greatly improved (Shao, 2006).

As can be seen from Table 1, Jack Ma promoted his status as a teacher 67 times. His six-year teaching career was of great significance to him, to the extent that even as a businessman, he still requested that people around him called him “Teacher Ma.” The reason why Jack Ma's teacher complex is not entirely in Jung's sense, but has an element of impression management, is his strategy of impression management in the form of a persona. There are several reasons:

First, Jack Ma's persistent promotion of his identity as a teacher is a result of neither the accumulation of early experience nor the influence of the living environment but, rather, of his emotional nostalgia for his first career. He “identified” with being a teacher and was grateful for the six years of teaching experience. However, the teaching profession was not Jack Ma's lifelong pursuit, otherwise, he would not have chosen to resign and switch to a business career. However, as abovementioned, Jack Ma resigned from his teaching job because he could not stand the poverty and mediocrity of teachers, and being a businessman could bring him honor and wealth. Nevertheless, when he became

an entrepreneur, he found that being a teacher could meet his spiritual needs in a way that being a businessman could not. Therefore, he tried to find a compromise between the two identities: retaining the benefits of being a businessman and maintaining the image of a teacher to gain the respect of his subordinates and society. The key point is that businessmen pursue their own interests and teachers pursue justice. Jack Ma tried to make money freely as a “righteous man” but preferred to chase the best of both worlds. Preaching that he had a “teacher complex” was a kind of impression management strategy for Jack Ma, which did not “identify” with his cognition and behavior.

Second, Ma employed impression management to downplay his status as a business person. The idea that Jack Ma finds most frustrating is that business persons are mercenary:

The most hated sentence—businessmen are like this. In China, businessmen are mercenary, and businessmen are villains. (the 6th Internet Business Conference, in 2006)

A few days ago, I was with a very respected entrepreneur, discussing a question: why is the businessman always ranked last? If you put profit first, you will never be in the front. If you want to be in the front, the online business must put morality first.

The “teacher” identity is exactly the contrary of that of a businessman. Teachers are synonymous with integrity and are highly respected. As a businessman, this identity is a huge calling card and a strategy of impression management for Jack Ma. He is well aware of the image of businessmen in the minds of the public; thus, he avoids the stereotype of this identity and caters to the public's imagination with the image of an ordinary and dedicated teacher. He not only redefines his own public image but also shapes a grand corporate image for Alibaba, portraying that it does not aim for fame and fortune and considers global development as its responsibility.

Jack Ma built the business world into a social one, not for fame and fortune, and shaped his own social behavior model with the selfless identity of a teacher. The vitality of business and the selflessness of teachers are perfectly combined.

Third, Jack Ma required that his employees called him Teacher Ma, aiming to weaken the characteristics of his identity and reduce the distance between himself and his employees, which is conducive to team building.

This is a very clever corporate culture management strategy. Jack Ma is sought after because he has given hope to many people who have ideals that cannot be realized and who are temporarily living at the edge of society. He stimulates their confidence and encourages them to persist.

Fourth, the need for successful business thinking and decision-making. For Jack Ma, a teacher is not only a simple title, but also a kind of encouragement and alert: Do not let the values of businessmen blind your thinking and vision.

I started my business not to make money, but to give myself more experience to teach students in the future. I learned a lot while teaching, and I love teaching. But I think about the rapid development of China's economy. After 20 years, will I still be able to continue to teach from the podium? (2006 Hangzhou Normal University Opening Ceremony)

According to Jack Ma's words, he started his own business to teach others more business skills. In addition, he has always emphasized his view of money:

I came out of school not to make money. Of course, making money is not a bad thing. I can confidently say that entrepreneurs must make money, but I really didn't come out to make money.

Those who really make money take money lightly. If money is on your mind, no one can make a career big.

If a person always wants to make money, his mind is money, his eyes are US dollars, his eyes are Hong Kong dollars, and he is talking about RMB (Chinese currency). No one wants to make friends with you.

Jack Ma jumped out of the trap of being a businessman, looked down on his own interests, and looked at problems from the perspective of public customers in order to make business decisions that were more suitable for the public. This is also an important reason why the nascent Taobao could defeat the extremely powerful eBay. It is important to note that eBay charges its merchants listing and transaction fees. However, Jack Ma did not choose to fight a price war; instead, he proposed Taobao's "three years for free" strategy and killed eBay

in one blow. Only by stepping out of the businessman identity, considering what his customers wanted, and examining problems from the standpoint of users and service targets, can satisfactory services be provided to customers.

However, Jack Ma not only downplayed but also emphasized his status as a businessman:

I have participated in the construction of Alibaba for 14 years. I am glad that I am a businessman. Today, human beings have entered the business society, but it is a pity. Businessmen in this world have not received the respect they deserve. Businessmen are no longer mercenary in this era. We are doing our best to improve this society. (Jack Ma's resignation as Ali CEO speech)

He switches between the two identities freely, which is good for him to run his own business empire.

3.3 | Challenging the system

Jack Ma was initially a preacher of the "new commercial civilization," thereafter challenging the "system" due to his uncontrollable ambition and inflated persona. This was mainly reflected in his views on the education system and his departure from the system as a result of his persona.

3.3.1 | Education system reform

Since there have been humans, there has been education, and with education, there have been teachers. Teaching is one of the oldest professions in China, and the title of "teacher" is generally given in two situations. The first is the definition of teachers within the modern system: They are trained by specialized teacher training institutions or taught in relatively stable schools (Wang, 2010). The second is in the case of an honorific title recognizing social ethics. There is a saying in the *Analects of Confucius*: "When three men meet, the one who is anxious to learn can always learn something from the other two" (三人行必有我师) (Yang, 2006). If a person surpasses us in a certain aspect and generates our awe, we will reverently call them a "teacher." Therefore, to become a teacher, one must either follow the route of becoming a professional teacher within a system recognized by the country or be respected as a teacher due to one's excellent qualities. However, Jack Ma's teacher identity does not fit either of the above

situations. Although he has six years of teaching experience, he has long been out of the education system. At the same time, he proactively asked people around him and even company employees to call him “Teacher Ma,” rather than others voluntarily respecting him. Han Yu, a famous thinker and philosopher in the Tang Dynasty, said, “The teacher is an identity that teaches principles and academics and explains difficult problems” (师者, 传道受业解惑也) (Han, 2005). However, while Jack Ma calls himself a teacher, he is not fulfilling his duties as a teacher. Instead, he achieves his goals with the convenience of this identity. According to Mencius, a famous thinker and educator in China, “The taboo in getting along with others is to like being their teacher” (Wan, 2013). Jack Ma is this way: He likes to tell others about his entrepreneurial experience and even founded “Hupan University” for this purpose; however, this led to problems. As ordered by the Ministry of Education, Hupan University was renamed “Hupan Innovation and Research Center,” and as a result, Jack Ma, as its principal, was caught in a storm of negative public opinion.

Jack Ma also advocates education reform; however, his main goal is to use the identity of a teacher to achieve what he wants. The teaching profession that Jack Ma believes in and the educational reform that he advocates are very different from the educational concepts of Chinese tradition and even modern society:

The industry change that I am most worried about in the future is education. If we continue to apply today's teaching methods, patterns, and courses to educate these children, then these children will not be able to find jobs in 30 years.

What is a teacher? The answer is that if my learning ability and knowledge are not enough, I will integrate all my knowledge and attain [the necessary] knowledge to teach you the skills.

It took six years to go from hating being a teacher to loving it. At that time, I thought that if I went out to start a business and succeeded, I would take the experience of success and failure back to school to teach it. I believe I can teach better than every other professor.

Jack Ma believes that education should be based on teaching for employment and entrepreneurial experience, which is too utilitarian and extreme. In Jack Ma's opinion, the knowledge he received in school that helped him most was

the English language, yet his excellent abilities in English were the result of his own hard work. Twice he failed to enter middle school, and three times he failed the college entrance examination, finally entering university as an exceptional case. As such, it can be said that Jack Ma was not particularly favored by the Chinese education system. Thus, he advocates breaking away from the idea of re-creation; rather, since the existing system made things difficult for him, Jack Ma believes that he should “overthrow” this system and create a new system that can help him achieve his personal goals. Consequently, Jack Ma made a series of investments in education by supporting rural education, establishing Hupan University, founding Alibaba Business School of Hangzhou Normal University, and so on. However, as mentioned in the above analysis of the inflation of his persona, Jack Ma's investments in education were an attempt to solve an early complex and cultivate talented people to serve his business empire.

3.3.2 | Outside the system

Martial arts followers are not so much a special group as a social group with a special temperament (Wang & Chen, 2005, p. 7). Martial arts are not a specialized profession, nor can their pursuit form a stable social group or class. There are people of different strata in the group, and the identities of their followers are complicated. It is a community formed by the voluntary combination of common interests, feelings, and goals (Gu, 2019). Chinese “chivalrous knights” differ from Western “knights” in that they have no hierarchy; everyone is equal, and each knight is loyal to the people he esteems. Moreover, their position is unrelated to religion (Lui, 1991, p. 194). Chivalrous knights are not bound by any laws and are on the margins of society (the so-called “*Jiang Hu*”). With his martial arts persona and his chivalrous knight identity, behavior, and thoughts, Jack Ma has always been on the fringes of society. The image of Ling Huchong, the protagonist in Jack Ma's favorite martial arts novel *The Smiling Proud Wanderer* is a new personality image. He is very rebellious, unruly, open-minded, bold, and unrestrained; at the same time, he likes to make jokes. Feng Qingyang is a mysterious and fascinating character in this novel, as elegant as the wind and flying like clouds. He is a top martial arts master in seclusion. He saw that Ling Huchong was a sincere and generous person just like himself, and he passed his martial arts skills onto him. Louis Cha wrote many works; however, Jack Ma's favorite is *The Smiling Proud Wanderer*, and he also loves Feng Qingyang, who does not actually appear much in the book. It can be seen that the personality and other aspects of this character impacted Jack Ma, encouraging him to continue to use his

capabilities to challenge government authority. In 2017, Jack Ma starred in the film *Gong Shou Dao*, clarifying his rebellion against the government. In the film, Master Ma (played by Jack Ma) visits the Huashan faction one day, imagining himself as a master of martial arts at the gate, defeating many martial arts masters one by one. Finally, he wins the book of supreme martial arts secrets. However, when he opens his eyes, he returns to reality and is confronted by the group of policemen. He then realizes that the place he went to was not the Huashan faction but the Huashan police station, as the sign reading “Police Station” was blocked by leaves and Master Ma had not seen them (Jiangsu Internet Radio and Television, 2018, February 10). *Gong Shou Dao* evolved from Tai Chi, which involves push and pull, attack and defense. However, between Jack Ma and the government, who attacks and who defends? In the last scene, the policeman who was wounded by Jack Ma makes this dynamic and the film’s intentions self-evident.

In 2015, not only did Alibaba not reflect on its issues with counterfeit and sub-standard goods but, instead, it challenged the State Administration of Industry and Commerce (SAIC), introducing a precedent for the Chinese business community (Wu, 2015). Jack Ma resisted the system for a long time. His path to higher education was repeatedly hindered, and he was unable to get any government support when he started his business. All kinds of failures made him hate the system, which is emphasized by the idea of breaking and recreating that he advocated:

I said that if the bank does not change, we change the bank. I firmly believe in that point.

Besides the China Banking Regulatory Commission, who are the banks afraid of? With Alipay, they began to worry, and Alipay kept them awake. We are not really interested in how much money we make, but we want to do something that makes those who are in positions [of power] but do nothing feel uncomfortable. We have no interest in taking the jobs of private enterprises, but we are extremely interested in taking the jobs of state-owned enterprises.

Elephants can’t step on ants, as long as they are good at hiding.

It’s not wrong for those stupid companies to pay attention to government relations. Government relations are really important, but they can’t be completely relied upon.

Don’t do business with them, and only respect them.

If entrepreneurs want to listen to economists’ and the government’s ideas about the future economy, half of their companies will go bankrupt. The government must return to a market economy, and the leading force of the market economy is people and entrepreneurship.

In these speeches, Jack Ma tried to use the market to change policy; however, he oversimplified the problem. Without the help and guidance of policy, the market has no power to intervene: Only policy and authority that positively guide the market can provide it with strong support. Did Jack Ma hope that all powers, including the government, would withdraw from the “*Jiang Hu*” of the market under the influence of market power and that he would become a knight to govern the whole world? Did he want to use the power of the market to influence politics as a businessman? It seems that this implies an overinflated “self,” but it is true. Although Jack Ma is a successful entrepreneur, he is not recognized by the state due to his inflated persona. On November 3, 2020, the Shanghai Stock Exchange announced that Ant Financial Services Group had suspended its listing. Thereafter, on April 10, 2021, the State Administration for Market Regulation imposed a fine of ¥18.228 billion on Alibaba Group in accordance with the Anti-Monopoly Law. The preacher of the new commercial civilization, Jack Ma, fell on the altar as a result. Both the group’s success and failure were due to the same person. Without the protection and support of the government and society, what social value could Jack Ma and Alibaba have? Without such support, the company’s sentiment of responsibility for family and country and sense of social responsibility could no longer exist. Jack Ma wanted to resist the system through the power of just one person and one company. It’s like ants arrogantly want to shake a big tree.

4 | CONCLUSION

Jack Ma’s two different complexes, as outlined in this paper, are a good reflection of the dialectical thinking mode in Chinese traditional wisdom. The *I-Ching* says: “Therefore in (the system of) the Yi there is the Grand Terminus, which produced the two elementary Forms. Those two Forms produced the Four emblematic Symbols, which again produced the eight Trigrams. The eight trigrams served to determine the good and evil (issues of events), and from this determination was produced the (successful prosecution of the) great business

(of life).” This means that all things and phenomena in the vast universe contain both yin and yang sides. They are both opposed to each other and interdependent. This is the general law of the material world, the program and origin of many things, and the origin of the creation and destruction of things. This also explains the possibility that two diametrically opposed complexes can exist in Ma Yun at the same time.

Jack Ma wants to stand out, but he does not want to be the object of criticism by many people. As Jack Ma said at the World Internet Business Conference in 2017: “If we still pursue our own interests, we will definitely be eliminated by society, and the people will definitely rise up against us (fighting landlords).” Jack Ma mentioned the situation of fighting landlords, which shows that the influence of the archetypal situation on him is not insignificant. The childhood experience not only allowed Jack Ma to experience resistance and strength, but also made him understand the importance of rules. The *Tao Te Ching* says: “If everything detracts from it, it will be increased, and if it is increased, it will be detracted” (Wang, 2011). Jack Ma, who is familiar with the *Tao Te Ching*, will not fail to understand the truth, and even when he read it, he suddenly said excitedly: “Oh! I am reading Lao Tzu, obviously Lao Tzu is reading me, and he has read the deepest part of my heart.” This book teaches Jack Ma to cultivate himself and behave himself, change to and guides him to face the world, the environment and himself.

With the continuous growth of Alibaba's influence, what Jack Ma tried to hide was finally exposed. However, later, challenging the system caused his persona to become extremely inflated, thus losing society's support and causing him to gradually step out of the system. Jack Ma, who advocates the idea of moderate relaxation and moderate balance, also realized the serious consequences of self-inflation (outside the system), so he decided to retire at his peak. This decision was a wise move made by Jack Ma after weighing the pros and cons, because he did not want to be a landlord who was criticized more than fame and fortune.

According to the results of the analysis, the reason why Jack Ma became such a successful business change agent is that he is good at turning setbacks into motivation, resolving inner dissatisfaction and resentment through practical actions, and achieving his goals. Through his persona, Jack Ma only revealed his just character and the ways in which he benefited the public, while deeply concealing his own selfish desires and interests, and created an image of a selfless hero who is dedicated to his country and its people. Meanwhile, Jack Ma also succeeded in establishing the image of a rural teacher who is indifferent to fame and fortune and who pursues his dreams and returns to a novel mediocrity, by constantly promoting his

insistence on returning to the teaching profession and never forgetting why he started.

Therefore, one of the reasons why Jack Ma is successful is that he is good at impression management. Through the transformation of his identity, Jack Ma changed the public's view of him and the direction of public opinion, at the same time changing his own thinking mode. This helped him gain more support, trust, and pursuit from the public and to make business decisions that were in line with the public's interests. Consequently, under Jack Ma's leadership, Alibaba ultimately received significant support from the government and society.

This has been conducive to Jack Ma's great commercial success. That is to say, Jack Ma revealed his deep-rooted martial arts complex through the display of a martial arts persona, and achieved great commercial success in the process, becoming a business change agent. Jack Ma has implemented powerful social changes in different countries and regions and different social classes by innovating business models and creating mobile payments. Not only did he achieve his goals, he also called on others to have higher needs, helping and encouraging others to achieve their goals. Jack Ma has proven himself to be an extraordinary agent of social change.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Shu Yueyu and Xie Xia. *Data curation:* Xie Xia. *Formal analysis:* Xie Xia, Zhang Xinyu, Li Wucheng, Xiao Yang, Liao Shuyi, Wang Zeyu and Wei Runzhi. *Funding acquisition:* The project is not supported by any funds. *Project administration:* Shu Yueyu. *Resources:* Shu Yueyu and Xie Xia. *Software:* Xie Xia, Zhang Xinyu, Li Wucheng, Xiao Yang, Liao Shuyi, Zhang Jiyuan and Wei Runzhi. *Visualization:* Xie Xia. *Writing—original draft:* Xie Xia. *Writing—review and editing:* Xie Xia and Shu Yueyu.

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ETHICS APPROVAL

The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, Northwestern Normal University.

ENDNOTES

¹ In open innovation, the traditional closed innovation model of enterprises is opened up, and external innovation capabilities are introduced.

² This idea derives from Louis Cha's novel *Legends of the Condor Heroes*. The character's lifelong desire for others to defeat him was never met, and he finally died of extreme de-

pression. The story is used as a metaphor for a person who is exceptionally good in a certain field, and no one can reach his level.

³ A *Baochang* is a manager of the old social management system and has a negative image in Chinese film and television dramas.

⁴ In the 1960s, the Chinese government classified five “black” types of people: landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, and rightists.

⁵ Consumer to Consumer: Professional term for e-commerce. Refers to e-commerce between individuals.

⁶ Louis Cha (1924–2018), a contemporary martial arts novelist and social activist. Created 15 martial arts novels.

⁷ An alluvial underworld of hucksters and heroes beyond the reach of the imperial government.

⁸ This is the object of Chinese Confucian sacrifices. It conveys the traditional value orientation of respecting heaven and one's ancestors, filial piety to one's elders, being loyal to the emperor and patriotism, and respecting teachers and education.

⁹ The characters in Louis Cha's martial arts novel *The Smiling Proud Wanderer* have unparalleled martial arts skills. Feng Qingyang passed his sword skills onto Linghu Chong (the protagonist), making him an outstanding martial arts master. Feng Qingyang not only has this status as a master but also displays the same mentality as Jack Ma in believing that he is the most powerful.

¹⁰ Xiao Yaozi is the head of the Xiaoyao faction in Louis Cha's martial arts novel *The Semi-gods and Semi-devils*. He disappeared for a long time in the JiangHu after creating the magical skill of immortality. He only leaves a reverie for the world: After the big event is done, leave it unhurriedly to hide the credit and reputation.

¹¹ Peach Blossom Island is a beautifully landscaped place in Louis Cha's novel *Legends of the Condor Heroes* where the skilled live in seclusion. This shows that Jack Ma regards himself as skilled.

¹² Guangming Top is the base of the Ming religion in Louis Cha's novel *Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber*. Later, it was besieged by six famous sects. Decent people regarded followers of the Ming religion as monsters and ghosts, which was irreconcilable with their beliefs. This shows that Jack Ma has a perverse personality and a unique style of doing things.

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