

Identity Construction and Cultural Adaptation Among Chinese American College Students: A Survey-Based Analysis

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The problem of overseas Chinese identity is a hot spot in the field of overseas Chinese research in recent years. It reflects the Chinese's cognition, emotion, and behavior of ethnic characteristics. This paper takes Chinese college students with American nationality as the research object, visiting universities in North Carolina and California as visiting scholars and doctoral students, and summarizes and analyzes the identity characteristics of contemporary Chinese American college students and puts forward corresponding suggestions through in-depth interviews with 46 Chinese American college students and 12 Chinese families.

Keywords: Chinese American college students, identity characteristic, cultural adaptation

The issue of identity among Chinese American college students has emerged as an important topic in the humanities and social sciences in recent years, yet empirical research on Chinese American youth and college students remains insufficient. This article attempts to explore the identity issues of Chinese American college students through case studies at universities in North Carolina and California in the United States.

Literature Reviews

In transnational migration research, the identity research of immigrants and their descendants has a long history. The first question new immigrants face when moving abroad is "Who am I?" Stuart Hall (2000, p. 211) points out: Who am I? The "real me" is formed in relation to a variety of different narratives. Moving from one's native country to a new one, new immigrants must navigate issues such as adapting to life and cultural conflicts, while their descendants may face confusion over "Who am I really?" making their identity issues even more complex. The process of migration inevitably involves various life setbacks and the ensuing cultural shock syndrome, and even descendants born in the new land may feel like "foreigners" due to issues such as skin color. Humans always live within a "web of meanings" they weave themselves (Geertz, 1999, p. 6), and "identity" can be said to be an important part of this "web of meanings". Identity, or the sense of belonging of an individual or a group, is also a standard for judging whether an ethnicity has been assimilated by the culture of the country of residence. "Identity" answers the question "Who am I", including both material and spiritual levels of identity, and is an individual's self-cognition and emotional belonging.

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Theories relevant to immigrant identity include multiple identities and plural epistemology, the politics' cultural identity theories, the psychology's cultural adaptation theories, the sociology's community theory, and the anthropology's trans-nationalism theories. In today's world, where globalization accelerates the development of frequent transnational population movements, international migrants face increasingly diverse and dynamic identity issues.

Multiple Identities Theory and Plural Epistemology are early theories relevant to the identity issues of immigrant descendants. Among these, the "Multiple Identities Theory" proposed by Singaporean scholar Wang Gengwu has had a significant impact. He believes that the identity of the Chinese is a multiple identity, including ethnicity identity, class identity, historical identity, and cultural identity (Wang, 1986), and that multiculturalism considers assimilation during the migration process as not inevitable, as many descendants of immigrants retain their ethnicity's racial and cultural identity after several generations. However, both theories fail to recognize the fact that many immigrants are culturally assimilated, nor do they acknowledge the changes in immigrants' identities across different life stages and generations.

Chinese American historian Linghu Ping (2007) has proposed the "Cultural Community" Theory, which posits that "cultural communities", distinct from traditional Chinatowns, have no explicit territorial boundaries but are centered around Chinese schools, Chinese-speaking churches, and Chinese community organizations, forming a special kind of society. In summary, the Chinese community theory primarily rests on two facts: First, Chinese Americans typically settle in suburban, predominantly white middle-class communities; second, economically, they are mostly integrated into the local mainstream society, employed by mainstream society companies, enrolled in mainstream society schools, with their social activities largely focused on Chinese cultural community gatherings. This theory views the cultural community as formed by the cohesive force of Chinese culture, primarily aimed at promoting Chinese culture. It elaborates on the function of Chinese culture in maintaining the cultural and ethnic identities of Chinese communities dispersed among mainstream groups, signaling the rise of the minority group's political and economic status in the United States.

In the realm of immigration and ethnic identity, cultural identity theory has also attracted considerable attention from scholars. Huntington (2005, p. 1) pointed out that for the United States to avoid division and decline, it must vigorously defend and promote the fundamental characteristic of Anglo-Protestant culture, to avert a cultural identity crisis. Samuel Huntington analyzed the immense challenges to national identity construction in the United States posed by immigration, ethnic identity, and the rise of transnational forces, affirming the importance of identity for a nation and its ethnicity. Stuart Hall, in *Cultural Identity and Migration*, suggests that the cultural identity of immigrant groups should be constructed from two perspectives: one through the "shared culture" of common history and ancestors to build cultural identity; the other through the identity transformation of "becoming" and "being", adjusting the affiliation of culture between the past and the future. Thus, "cultural identity", like other historical phenomena, is constantly transforming (Hall, 2015). This research considers the cultural identity of Chinese college students as a significant factor in examining their identity, subsequently exploring the relationship between the cultural cognition of Chinese college students and their identity through analysis.

Another new paradigm theory in the study of immigrant identity since the 1980s is the "Cultural Adaptation Theory", which belongs to the domain of cross-cultural psychological academic research. Cultural adaptation refers to the process where immigrants from different cultural groups, upon continuous and ongoing contact with the mainstream society and culture, experience cultural and psychological changes, either unilaterally or

bilaterally (Lee, 2008, p. 14). John Berry's model, proposed in 1990, is among the most renowned in the study of cultural adaptation models. He categorized cultural adaptation into four distinct patterns: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. In the process of researching cultural adaptation models, Berry highlighted the dual challenges immigrants must navigate in terms of cultural identity: One is the attitude of immigrants towards the culture of their country of residence, indicating their engagement with and participation in the mainstream society culture of the settling country; the other is the attitude of immigrants towards the culture of their ancestral country, i.e., maintaining their identity with their ancestral country's culture. This article draws upon Berry's cultural adaptation model, exploring the identity status of Chinese American college students through case observations and interviews.

Previous literature has conducted relatively extensive research on the identity of overseas Chinese, particularly since the 1990s, with numerous scholars elucidating and analyzing the basic concepts and theories of overseas Chinese identity, mainly focusing on the Chinese of Southeast Asia as their research objects. Scholars have reached a consensus on the shift in Chinese identity after World War II, specifically, from the notion of "falling leaves return to their roots" to "falling seeds grow where they land". Liu Yanling (2015), using Chinese youth students at the University of California as case studies, employed empirical methods to analyze their dual cultural identity, suggesting that their approach to identity is instrumental, selective, and characterized by complex and individual variations. Zhang Yongguang (2019), starting from the "Cultural Community Theory", believes that Chinese schools play a pivotal role in the constructing the local Chinese cultural community, serving as the optimal location for Chinese youth ethnic identity and the center for the construction of the cultural community. The aforementioned scholars' research on Chinese or Chinese youth primarily revolves around this group's cultural adaptation and living conditions in the United States, a culturally different space. This paper intends to selectively draw upon both domestic and international academic theories on Chinese American identity issues, focusing on Chinese college students in North Carolina and California as research objects. It aims to conduct an in-depth theoretical analysis of the identity issues of Chinese American college students from various dimensions, utilizing interviews as a method to obtain firsthand empirical source data, thereby enriching academia's research on Chinese American college students.

Research Method

This paper primarily employs field investigations and in-depth interviews as research methods. Both authors, as visiting scholar and Ph.D. candidate, have studied in North Carolina and California, states known for their numerous educational institutions with many Chinese college students on their campuses. Our field investigation was mainly conducted through the following methods: first, by directly participating in undergraduate and graduate classroom teaching activities at universities. During these periods, they frequently dined with Chinese professors and Chinese college students, simultaneously conducting relevant interviews and investigations; second, by making as many local Chinese acquaintances as possible. In cities like Asheville and Raleigh in North Carolina, Los Angeles, and Santa Cruz in California, through Chinese gatherings, friend introductions, and home visits, they aimed to establish a broad network of social interactions, searching for research subjects that met the standards. On this basis, they established contacts with a large group of Chinese immigrant descendants or new immigrants, timely interviewing them about when and how they immigrated to the United States, and whether Chinese culture was valued in their family education; third, during their studies, we participated in several Chinese college student associations. Through involvement, they conducted interviews on relevant identity issues

within Chinese families. By field observation and in-depth interview methods, they ultimately gathered data from 46 Chinese college students and 12 Chinese families, with each interview lasting between half an hour to an hour.

Current Status of Identity Among Contemporary Chinese American College Students

As a minority ethnicity in the United States, Chinese, like other ethnicity, inevitably face various issues throughout their existence and development process. How exactly do Chinese youth and college students live in the United States? Have they been assimilated? How do they view their own identity? Do they adapt to the local culture? Have they ever experienced racial discrimination during their time living and studying in the United States? What is the situation of learning Chinese in family education?

Current Status of Self-Identity

Immigrants' reflections on their self-identity indicate their sense of belonging to a particular group. How do Chinese college students living in the United States perceive their own identity? Do they consider themselves Americans or Chinese? Here, we look at Chinese college students W, H, and P to hear what they have to say.

W: I immigrated to the United States with my parents as investment immigrants in September 2015. At that time, I was in high school and now I am attending a private university in California. Previously, my parents owned their own company in China, and after immigrating, they invested in a local farm. Although I have acquired United States citizenship, I still consider myself psychologically Chinese. (Author interview on January 8, 2023, at a private university in California)

H: My parents stayed in the United States after obtaining their PhDs in 1995. I am a junior at a state university, born in the United States, so I should be considered American. After graduation, my first consideration is to find a job and settle in the United States. (Author interview on April 15, 2023, at a university in Los Angeles)

P: In the 1930s, my great-grandfather immigrated to the United States from Guangdong. I do not speak Mandarin but can speak Cantonese and English. I have almost no relatives or friends in China; I definitely consider myself American! Many of my relatives and friends are in the United States, but most are still Chinese. (Author interview on January 10, 2024, at a state university in California)

Table 1

Psychological Identity of Chinese American College Students

| | Believe they are Chinese | Believe they are Americans | World citizens | Unclear |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|---------|
| Chinese college students | 5 | 36 | 2 | 3 |

Through investigation, interviews, and observation, we believe that the second and third generations of Chinese American college students with American citizenship identify themselves as “Americans”. Although the vast majority are of Chinese descent and have been influenced by both Chinese and United States cultural patterns from a young age, their thinking and behaviors are significantly different from their Chinese ancestors. They do not have the complete “Chinese” awareness like the first generation but are more deeply influenced by United States thoughts and culture, with the “American” identity awareness internalized in their thinking from a young age. However, Chinese college students who have recently immigrated to the United States and become citizens still identify with a Chinese identity. Unlike native-born Chinese college students, their departure from their homeland to change their living space means forcibly detaching from their previous growth history to face a new culture, system, and value space, requiring time to adapt and adjust. A few students consider themselves neither Chinese nor American but rather global citizens or are unclear whether they are Chinese or Americans.

Cultural Adaptation Characteristics

Another issue that immigrants face is cultural adaptation. Cultural adaptation is the process of establishing new cultural patterns among immigrants. Cultural adaptation is closely related to identity, and establishing good cultural adaptation is key to resolving identity confusion issues. Below are the interview records of Chinese college students G and W regarding cultural adaptation issues.

G: I was born and raised in the United States and generally prefer and adapt well to United States culture. United States culture values the individual development of children, has a relaxed learning environment, and families are more open and free. However, my parents are from China and have high academic expectations for me, requiring me to attend various training classes and learn Chinese after school. Regarding spending habits, I like to spend money, whereas they prefer to save. My parents also often interfere with whom I associate, and we frequently experience cross-cultural conflicts at home. (Author interview on November 20, 2023, at a college campus in North Carolina)

W: As a junior, although I have not been an immigrant for long, my parents are very strict with me, especially concerned about my dating and friendships. We Chinese are generally conservative about love and sexuality, while Americans are more open. My parents are worried that I will be negatively influenced by the open culture of the United States, so they are very concerned about this aspect. (Author interview on February 18, 2023, at a college campus in Raleigh, North Carolina)

Table 2

Chinese American College Students Cultural Identity Investigation Statistics

| | Overall identity with and adaptation to Chinese culture | Overall identity with and adaptation to United States culture | Identity with both Chinese and United States cultures |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| Chinese college students | 5 | 26 | 15 |

The investigation results show: Native-born Chinese American college students are less adapted to Chinese culture, exhibiting moderate identity, while they adapt better to United States culture, showing higher identity levels. A minority, influenced by their parents, identify with both United States and Chinese cultures. Recent immigrant Chinese college students recognize and highly identify with Chinese culture, with most still not fully adapting to or accepting United States culture, showing lower identity levels. A small portion accept both cultures. Of course, this higher cultural identity with Chinese culture among new immigrant college students is primarily evident at the cognitive and emotional levels. Although they have been in the United States for a short time and obtained United States citizenship, psychologically, they still consider themselves Chinese, showing lower behavioral identity with United States culture. Native-born Chinese college students, however, view their identity as Americans, which influences their psychological cognition and emotional cognition, gradually identifying and accepting United States culture, becoming typical “bananas”. However, Chinese American scholar Ose Hum Lee in the book *Chinese in the United States* argues that Chinese in an alien cultural environment have not changed their ethnicity cultural identity, even if they possess American citizenship. Their ethnic emotional and cultural affiliations are hard to change, remaining Chinese. They are “marginal people”, floating in an alien cultural space, caught between two cultures, two countries, subjected to dual or multiple cultural impacts, easily experiencing anxiety in identity. Chinese college students also face these social struggles, exhibiting evident cross-cultural conflicts in education, consumption, and social interactions. Although Chinese college students inevitably encounter collisions between Chinese and American cultures as they grow, as their minds mature and during their identity formation period, they begin to serve as cultural mediators between the two cultures, leading the transition from opposition to integration between Chinese and American cultures.

Bilingual Learning Situation

Identity and cultural adaptation reflect individuals' attitudes toward their ethnic or cultural group, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects, with language education often considered a powerful tool for developing or transitioning identity. The following interview investigation covers language identity-related content for Chinese college students P and Z:

P: I am a second-generation immigrant. Because we primarily use English during class hours, my parents require us to speak Chinese at home, and I must write a few Chinese characters after school. However, I do not use Chinese much when interacting with friends, only during gatherings with Chinese friends, yet my parents require me to learn Chinese. (Author interview on August 10, 2023, at a college campus in Los Angeles)

Z: As a third-generation Chinese born in the United States, I cannot speak or understand Mandarin. At home, we sometimes speak Cantonese, and I cannot write Chinese characters. (Author interview on February 18, 2023, at a college campus in Raleigh)

We interviewed a Chinese couple in Raleigh who immigrated to the United States from Taiwan in the 1990s. Their daughter was born and raised in the United States and works in Los Angeles after graduating from college. During their phone conversations, we noticed their interesting method of communication; the mother spoke only Mandarin, occasionally mixing in a few English words, while the daughter spoke only English but could understand Chinese (Author interview on July 20, 2023, at a Chinese farm in Raleigh).

Table 3

Bilingual Investigation Statistics for Chinese American College Students

| | Only speaks English, neither understands nor writes Chinese | Speaks both English and Chinese, but cannot write Chinese | Proficient in both languages |
|--------------------------|---|---|------------------------------|
| Chinese college students | 5 | 31 | 10 |

Our findings show that the primary home language of new Chinese American immigrants is generally Mandarin, but with each succeeding generation, the home language tends to be replaced by English, and the degree of “Americanization” in cultural aspects also increases. Many second-generation Chinese college students have a strong desire to learn Chinese well, but the actual situation is that their usage of Chinese in daily life is not high. Many Chinese only use Chinese at home or during gatherings with Chinese friends, and most can speak but not write Chinese. Many native-born Chinese also attend Chinese schools in their spare time to learn Chinese. We observed that some Chinese families require their children to self-study Chinese after school, and some require their children to take online Chinese courses.

Generally, those who are proficient in both languages are mostly new immigrant Chinese college students who have completed elementary and secondary education in China and a few native-born Chinese college students who place a high value on learning Chinese. For most native-born Chinese college students, their identity with and mastery of English are higher than that of Chinese, primarily because English is their first language and the language used in school. Most respondents' English abilities are fully capable of meeting daily life and educational requirements, while their mastery of Chinese is insufficient, with relatively higher speaking skills but inability to write or only able to write a few Chinese characters; a few speak only English and do not understand Chinese at all. We learned that every public school in the United States has dedicated language teachers who provide free English tutoring for new immigrant children until they are fully proficient. Under the influence of American education, Chinese children not only master English proficiently but also quickly undergo a shift in cultural identity, beginning to accept American culture and its values. However, simultaneously,

Chinese parents maintain their children's emotional connection to their homeland through Chinese schools or self-study of Chinese, strengthening their children's ethnic awareness (Li, 2015).

Analysis of Identity Characteristics of Chinese American College Students

Why do Chinese youth in the United States struggle to find a sense of belonging? The root cause lies in the identity confusion they experience during their developmental process.

Psychological Manifestation: Confusion and Bewilderment

As a minority ethnic group, Chinese not only face immense survival pressures in daily life but also experience various psychological discomforts. Most Chinese in America achieve stable income and respectable social status through diligence and intelligence, gradually integrating into the mainstream American society. However, it is certain that many still suffer from anxiety due to psychological adaptation issues. In Chinese American immigrant families, there is a significant divergence in thought and cultural perspectives between the older and newer generations. Many parents integrate Confucian traditional educational values, such as filial piety and self-discipline, into their family education, hoping to blend these traditional Chinese educational values into their American family practices. However, children in Chinese American families typically receive education from American schools, which inculcates distinctly American cultural values as they grow. This educational outcome directly leads to severe cross-cultural conflicts, disrupting inter-generational relationships within Chinese immigrant families and adversely affecting the development of the children.

Below are interviews with recent immigrant college student Q and third-generation Chinese college student Z:

Q: Five years ago, I migrated from Qingdao to the United States with my family. I truly feel the cultural differences here, and I often compare the pros and cons of the two cultures. Although I have American citizenship, I still feel like a Chinese. I feel a kinship when I see fellow Chinese, and hearing someone speak Chinese makes me feel especially close. Psychologically, I definitely find it easier to embrace Chinese culture. (Author interview on February 25, 2023, at a college campus in Los Angeles)

Z: I am a second-generation immigrant, born in the United States. By the principle of birthplace, I consider myself American. However, my white classmates still see me as Chinese. I think I am the same as them, that I am American, but they do not see me that way. Sometimes, I am confused about whether I am Chinese or American. (Author interview on January 23, 2024, at a college campus in Asheville, North Carolina)

The investigation shows that recent Chinese immigrant college students, though American in identity, often lack a sense of belonging and continue to live in a Chinese lifestyle. In contrast, US-born Chinese college students, although Americanized in their way of life, are still labeled as "Chinese" by whites and struggle to find their place within Chinese circles. Navigating between Chinese and American cultural boundaries places their identity in an awkward position, with the question "Who am I really?" being difficult to resolve.

Compared to their compatriots back home, Chinese living overseas are immersed in an environment of cultural differences and conflicts, experiencing rapid cultural changes and overlaps, which make them particularly sensitive to their own identity affiliations and psychological identity. Their identity situation is also considerably complex. Chinese college students often find themselves confused and lost when facing these issues.

Cultural Expression as Dual Identity

As Chinese in their countries of residence gain political status and economic conditions improve, it inevitably fundamentally fosters a shift in their identity orientations (Zhang, 2015). Although living in the United States, they still place great importance on Chinese cultural customs and cannot sever the deep historical ties with

their homeland, maintaining Chinese traditions in family diet and daily routines, making it difficult to fully integrate into mainstream American society (Li, 2012). Thus, they tend to identify with their Chinese identity in terms of ethnic identity. However, living in the United States, many Chinese college students often compare and select between Chinese and American cultures, constructing their dual cultural identity. Below are relevant interview records from field investigations:

Our family, since my grandfather's immigration to the United States, always celebrates major Chinese festivals and participates in large Chinese gatherings such as the Spring Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival. We mostly eat Chinese food at home. However, I do not like drinking hot water; our home has an ice maker, and I prefer drinking ice water. I also enjoy Chinese tea culture and often use Kung Fu tea sets at home. (Author interview on February 28, 2023, at a college campus in Asheville, North Carolina)

After my parents settled in the United States post-graduation, I was born here and prefer the relaxed basic education of public schools in the United States. The facilities are good, homework is minimal, teachers generally encourage rather than criticize, and there is a greater respect for students. However, my parents value education highly and still send me to many training classes after school. (Author interview on January 20, 2024, at a college campus in Los Angeles)

I came to the United States during high school as a relative immigrant and am now a senior in college. I generally like the culture in the United States; interpersonal relationships here are simple, valuing freedom and individuality, with little interference in your life by others. However, when returning to China, I find the adjustment difficult as friends and relatives ask many questions and the interpersonal relationships are complex. Yet, I do not like the American diet and prefer the rich variety of Chinese cuisines and snacks. (Author interview on May 22, 2023, at a college campus in Raleigh, North Carolina)

We interviewed a Chinese college student whose father, a Chinese professor, immigrated from mainland China to the United States in the early 1990s. Though they have lived in the United States for many years and are actively involved in politics, participating in elections both as candidates and voters, their household maintains Chinese dietary habits and living customs (The author conducted multiple interviews with the professor from January to June 2023, with the location being a university in Asheville). Additionally, Christianity has significantly influenced the cultural cognition of Chinese college students and their families. In the United States, where religious culture is more developed, Christians constitute the highest proportion among the religious Chinese. Churches serve not only as religious venues but also as crucial locales for acquiring ethnic belonging and cultural identity, as well as spaces for social interactions (Yang, 1999). Newly arrived Chinese or college students in the United States often attend church activities to avoid loneliness and establish social networks. After some time, some choose to join Christianity and get baptized.

Growing up amidst the clash and blend of Chinese and American cultures, the vast majority of domestically born Chinese college students are more accepting and identify with the language and culture of the United States. They cannot accept being from another country outside the United States. In contrast, Chinese college students who have recently immigrated tend to compare the merits of both cultures and select what they deem superior; on the other hand, influenced by their surroundings, some domestically born Chinese college students are reluctant to face their Chinese identity. This group of students generally does not speak or speaks very little Chinese, yet their English proficiency is very fluent. However, their lack of knowledge and understanding of Chinese traditional culture and the contradictions in their ethnic identity cognition also cause them inner conflict. Their identities are deeply influenced by English school education and church activities, gradually diminishing the impact of Chinese culture on Chinese American society. First-generation Chinese are aware of using Chinese as the family language, but by the second and third generations, English has replaced Chinese as the main communication language in some families, even completely replacing Chinese. The lifestyle styles of mainstream

society become dominant, relegating Chinese traditional culture and ethical concepts to a secondary position or disappearing altogether.

Trend Analysis and Policy Suggestions

Chinese American college students are an indispensable minority in the United States, contributing to the development of its multiculturalism. They also serve as carriers of Sino-American cultural exchanges, spreading Chinese civilization in unique ways and acting as bridges in Sino-American cultural communication. Thus, both Chinese and American cultures are crucial for them.

“Language is the soul of ethnicity”. Chinese education plays a vital role in promoting the identity of Chinese college students and the propagation of Chinese culture. Apart from traditional Chinese history, culture, and customs, possessing fluency in Chinese is a common cultural characteristic that symbolizes the Chinese identity. Language carries culture and is simultaneously an important tool for spreading culture. Chinese serves as a sign of ethnic identity, connecting Chinese worldwide and realizing their borderless Chinese identity. Through learning Chinese, Chinese access and reconnect with Chinese culture, re-establishing the nearly severed ethnic identity of domestically born descendants. As more Chinese children engage in Chinese language education and traditional culture, their emotional connection to their ethnic identity intensifies. Simultaneously, China’s rise not only provides opportunities for Chinese Americans but also highlights the utilitarian value of the Chinese language. In interviews, one student mentioned that speaking Chinese means more choices and opportunities in the future. In other words, speaking Chinese not only signifies ethnic identity but also adds an economic value layer.

Besides, to promote the identity of Chinese college students, China needs to actively invite Chinese college students to visit China for family reunions, initiate university exchanges, and root-seeking trips, encouraging them to frequently revisit; enrich the bi-directional implementation of visiting scholar programs, research, project work, and various summer camps, cultural and art exhibitions; beyond language-based projects such as Confucius Institutes, place greater emphasis on the integration and permeation of community-based Chinese culture, valuing organizations of Chinese college students to enhance ethnic psychological cognition.

The vitality of Chinese culture lies in its openness and integration. Chinese culture should further assimilate excellent elements from other ethnic cultures to promote a grand integration of cultures, advance the renewal and upgrading of Chinese culture, thereby helping to bridge the vast chasm of cultural differences between China and other countries, reducing cultural conflicts, including encouraging intermarriage; emphasize the promotion of Chinese history, traditional culture, and value concepts, spreading Chinese traditional cultural values and ethical notions, particularly the contemporary Chinese democratic and freedom ideas to the West; maintain openness while firmly grounding and dedicating efforts towards building a modernized socialist country.

The Chinese government needs to reevaluate the refusal to recognize dual nationality under new historical conditions and current needs. This dual nationality policy is crucial for broadly attracting the world’s finest talents for our use. Chinese have a special status and convenient conditions in this respect, and the college student group is the most vibrant, representing the future of the world. As China’s economy rapidly develops and its international status continues to rise, narrowing the income gap with developed countries, a significant portion of Chinese American graduates begin considering careers in China. They commonly acknowledge that China’s rapid economic development may also offer opportunities to them. Having acquired advanced concepts and technology in the US and with international study or work experience, they have a distinct advantage in China’s opportunities or entrepreneurship, representing a clear pull factor.

We also interviewed a Chinese college student who, after obtaining a Bachelor of Medicine in the US, pursued a Master's in Traditional Chinese Medicine at a university in San Francisco. She mentioned considering continuing her studies in China for a Doctorate in Traditional Chinese Medicine after graduation (Author interview on May 20, 2023, at a college campus in Los Angeles). We encountered a Chinese who grew up in Los Angeles and chose to teach at a university in Guangzhou after graduation. After living there for several years, he shared that compared to the US, major cities in China are more developed, and the income does not fall short of the US (Author interview on October 8, 2023, at a college campus in Guangzhou). This long-term direct interest consideration motivates many Chinese college students to choose to develop their careers in China. In recent decades, the Chinese ethnicity has developed new self-confidence and has stimulated a sense of cultural identity and pride within the ethnic group. The discourse of multiculturalism in the United States and the continuously strengthening concept of "Chineseness" powerfully anchor the identity of Chinese Americans to their ancestral lands (Louie, 2001).

Cultural identity has a more pronounced impact on the career choices of Chinese college students. Research indicates that immigrant college students, during their studies abroad, often experience significant cultural differences between the East and West, and the unique interpersonal methods, traditional Chinese medicine, and customs of Chinese culture may attract these students back to China after their studies. While individuals differ in their ability to adapt across cultures, living within the culture of their ancestral country feels more natural and easier to adapt to. In the current context of China's reform and opening-up and the multicultural backdrop of the United States, Chinese Americans can identify with their U.S. citizenship within the political community of the United States and also find their cultural belonging within the Chinese ethnic community. As China's international status rises and awareness of Chinese ethnicity strengthens, their attitudes towards China and Chinese culture are subtly changing. When China becomes an important cultural source for the cultural identity construction of Chinese youth, they begin to accept and integrate into the homeland culture where they can gain a sense of belonging. Between the two cultures of China and America, they gradually form a new cognition of their identity: Not only are we Americans, but we are also Chinese living in the United States.

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