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Postprint of Cultural Identity of Contemporary Chinese People

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Abstract

Cultural identity refers to people's tendentious consensus and recognition of culture, encompassing three levels: cultural form identity, cultural norm identity, and cultural value identity. The cultural identity of the Chinese people constitutes the foundation for the Chinese nation's existence and development, as well as the cultural-psychological basis for achieving great rejuvenation. The essence of cultural identity is value identity. Theoretical explanations for cultural identity primarily include the individual development perspective from developmental psychology, social identity theory from social psychology, the cultural adaptation perspective from cross-cultural psychology, and the ideology perspective from political psychology. The cultural identity of contemporary Chinese people exhibits distinct characteristics of the times, manifested as intergroup differentiation and pluralization, a resurgence of traditional Chinese cultural identity, strengthened identification with socialist core values, and the coexistence of modernity and global consciousness. From a social psychology perspective, sound self-identity among Chinese people, steadfast adherence to socialist core values, promotion of bicultural identity integration, and highlighting the identity role of "being Chinese" represent feasible pathways for the healthy development of cultural identity among contemporary Chinese people.

Full Text

Preamble

Special Issue: Psychology and Social Governance
Cultural Identity of Contemporary Chinese People

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Abstract

Cultural identity represents a consensus and recognition of culture, encompassing three hierarchical levels: cultural forms identity, cultural norms identity, and cultural values identity. Chinese cultural identity constitutes the foundation for the Chinese nation's existence and development, as well as the cultural-psychological basis for achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The essence of cultural identity is value identification. Theoretical explanations of cultural identity primarily include the individual development perspective from developmental psychology, social identity theory from social psychology, the cultural adaptation perspective from cross-cultural psychology, and the ideological perspective from political psychology. Contemporary Chinese cultural identity exhibits distinct characteristics of the times, manifested as intergroup differentiation and pluralism, a revival of traditional Chinese culture identification, strengthened identification with socialist core values, and the coexistence of modernity and global awareness. From a social psychology perspective, viable pathways for the healthy development of contemporary Chinese cultural identity include improving Chinese people's self-identity, adhering to socialist core values, promoting bicultural identity integration, and highlighting the identity role of "being Chinese."

Keywords: cultural identity, self-awareness, Chinese cultural identity, socialist core values, cultural identity integration

1. Cultural Identity and Related Theories

1.1 Culture, Identity, and Cultural Identity

There exist hundreds of definitions of culture. One classic definition is Edward B. Tylor's description: "Culture, or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" [3]. This description illustrates the complexity of culture. Culture encompasses everything bearing human traces, permeating all aspects of social life in both tangible and intangible ways, constituting the lifeblood of individuals, ethnic groups, and nations. Culture can be divided into material culture and spiritual culture, created by humans and directly influencing them. Marx regarded culture as humanity's free nature [4], viewing the essence of culture as "humanization": on one hand, culture represents the subjectivization of objects; on the other, it represents the objectivization of subjects—the result of the internalization and externalization of human essential forces [5].

In a complex and changing world, people rely on culture to distinguish "us" from "them," enabling self-confirmation and group interaction, which involves self and cultural identity. As spiritual culture, it comprises the social psychological consciousness system of knowledge, values, ideals, beliefs, and aesthetics generated through social practice. Once formed, it is collectively recognized and followed by certain groups. Without group members' recognition, compliance, and inher-

itance through psychological and behavioral identification, culture cannot form and develop.

Identity is also translated as sameness, unity, or status. Freud [6] proposed that identity refers to “the process whereby an individual becomes emotionally and psychologically identical with others, groups, or imitative figures, creating self-identity through identification projected onto others.” Erikson [7] deeply explored the relationship between identity and early individual experiences, considering identity as “a feeling of being at home with oneself, a sense of knowing where one is going, and an inner confidence of anticipated recognition from those one trusts.” Identity is ubiquitous and exerts tremendous influence on people’s lives. Giddens [8] believed identity is “the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography.” Taylor [9] considered identity as the question of “who am I,” where “how we answer this question means understanding what is most important to us.” Huntington [10] offered several perspectives on identity: individuals have identity, and so do groups; in most cases, identity is a constructed concept; individuals have multiple identities, including attributional, territorial, economic, cultural, political, social, and national; identity is self-defined but also a product of interaction between self and others. Overall, Western scholars’ research on identity concentrates on micro and macro levels. At the micro level, identity is the psychological driving force of human behavior, reinforcing people’s views of themselves; at the macro level, identity is the deep code of personal meaning, connecting individuals with the most general level of social significance [11].

Cultural identity represents people’s tendentious consensus and recognition of culture [12]. People using identical cultural symbols, upholding common cultural concepts, following shared ways of thinking and behavioral norms, and pursuing common cultural ideals constitute the basis of cultural identity. Huntington [13] believed that people of different nations often answer “who we are” with what is most meaningful to them, defining themselves through “ancestors, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions,” using symbols such as flags, crosses, crescent moons, or even head coverings to represent their cultural identity. Huntington considered cultural identity as the most meaningful thing for most people.

In stable social environments, cultural identity possesses “innate” stability, with people naturally and calmly accepting cultural norms. However, in turbulent and complex social environments—such as in the contemporary world where cultures of different nations interact and collide—cultural identity becomes a matter of choice, as original cultural identity faces challenges from pluralistic cultural values, leading to cultural identity crises. The advent of Western industrial society created the cultural subjectivity of colonial nations while causing the loss of cultural subjectivity in colonized nations, triggering the first wave of global cultural identity phenomena in modern times. The two World Wars caused numerous intellectuals to drift and disperse worldwide, highlighting issues of cultural identity and cultural identity crises [14].

Cultural identity encompasses people' s overall understanding of nature, society, and humanity itself, reflecting their worldview, values, and outlook on life, forming a complete system. Cultural identity reflects the degree to which people recognize and accept culture, thus representing a gradual internalization process from surface to depth. Based on the degree of cultural identity, three levels can be distinguished: the surface level—identity of cultural forms; the protective level—identity of cultural norms; and the core level—identity of cultural values. These three levels interact and influence each other, constituting the system of cultural identity.

1.2 Social Psychological Perspectives on Cultural Identity Theory

Cultural identity is also an important concern for social psychologists, with Social Identity Theory serving as an important foundation for studying cultural identity. Based on research using the Minimal Group Paradigm, Tajfel and colleagues [15] proposed Social Identity Theory, arguing that individuals' identification with groups forms the basis of group behavior. Social Identity Theory can explain the formation of cultural identity and its impact on individuals.

Tajfel [16] defined social identity as an individual' s recognition that he or she belongs to a specific social group, along with the emotional and value significance attached to group membership. Social identity originates from group membership, with individuals identifying with their group membership through social categorization, producing ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation. Turner and Tajfel [17] distinguished between personal identity and social identity, with personal identity referring to self-descriptions of individual specific characteristics—a unique self-reference for a person—while social identity refers to self-descriptions derived from membership in a social category. Social identity is established through processes of social categorization, social comparison, and positive distinctiveness [18]. People always strive for positive social identity, which is obtained through favorable comparisons between ingroups and outgroups. If individuals do not achieve satisfactory social identity, they will either leave the ingroup or find ways to achieve positive distinctiveness. Tajfel believed that people' s group identity consciousness strongly influences our perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, with the pursuit of social identity being the root cause of intergroup conflict and discrimination.

Social Identity Theory emphasizes the relationship between group identity and personal self-esteem. People obtain evaluative positive social identity through positive distinctiveness, which serves to satisfy individuals' need for positive self-esteem. Individuals enhance self-esteem through achieving or maintaining positive social identity, with positive self-esteem deriving from favorable comparisons between ingroups and outgroups. When social identity is threatened, individuals adopt various strategies to enhance self-esteem. If individuals are excessively enthusiastic about their own group, believing their group is superior to others, and experience intergroup differences while seeking positive social identity and self-esteem, they can easily cause intergroup prejudice and conflict [15].

Research has proven that evaluations of immigrant or minority groups, and relationships between immigrant or minority groups and other social groups, affect self-esteem, which in turn affects their identity status. Social Identity Theory also suggests that when living in cultural contexts with vastly different values and norms, individuals face great challenges in constructing and developing cultural identity due to conflicts between different groups' cultural values and norms. Therefore, how to make choices in such contexts and better achieve social adaptation becomes an urgent problem for individuals.

1.3 Individual Development Perspectives on Cultural Identity

The individual development perspective on cultural identity primarily comes from developmental psychology, where developmental psychologists have consistently focused on the psychological processes of cultural identity formation and construction in individuals. Ethnic identity belongs to specific cultural identity, and research on ethnic identity can infer corresponding cultural identity perspectives. The individual development perspective originates from Erikson's identity theory. Erikson believed that ethnic identity is a form of identity for immigrants or minority groups, holding crucial significance for self-development during adolescence. Building on identity theory, Marcia [19] proposed an ethnic identity status model for individuals based on two dimensions—behavioral exploration and emotional commitment—dividing identity into four psychological states: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement.

Both Erikson and Marcia attempted to emphasize the role of positive identity in individual development but did not explain the dynamic developmental changes in individuals' ethnic or cultural identity. Addressing this limitation, Phinney and colleagues [20] proposed a three-stage developmental change model for ethnic identity, including the unexamined stage, exploration stage, and achieved stage. Individuals in the unexamined ethnic identity stage do not understand the meaning of ethnicity, with perceptions of ethnic identity mostly derived from parents, community, or social groups. Individuals in the ethnic identity exploration stage begin to recognize their ethnic identity and actively participate in their ethnic cultural activities, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of their ethnic identity. Individuals in the ethnic identity achieved stage understand their ethnic knowledge and are more willing to accept their ethnic identity.

The development of individual cultural identity is full of diversity and uncertainty, but overall, as age increases and cognitive abilities grow, children and adolescents can achieve relatively mature levels of cultural identity. Developmental psychology research shows that individual cultural identity begins in childhood, with individuals typically exploring their ethnicity during early adolescence and forming relatively stable ethnic identity around age 17. Chinese scholars' research found that 11-year-old adolescents have the highest level of ethnic identity, which then declines, rising again at age 20 [21]; Chinese minority children's identification with their ethnic culture also gradually increases with age, with their ability to recognize ethnic culture gradually strengthening

[22].

In the orientation of individual development of cultural identity, the current research trend is to combine cultural differences with developmental processes [23]. Inspired by Ecological Systems Theory, some scholars attempt to integrate individuals' cultural identity, self, and family relationships to establish more powerful explanatory models. Against the backdrop of internationalization and informatization, today's individual developmental processes become more complex due to factors of cultural exchange, cultural conflict, and cultural adaptation, providing new research topics for developmental psychologists studying cultural identity in children and adolescents.

1.4 Cross-Cultural Psychological Perspectives on Cultural Adaptation

Cultural identity formation and development largely depend on the living environment or social situational factors individuals inhabit, with individuals forming relatively mature cultural identity states through continuous 磨合 (groping/adjustment) with their environment to achieve good cultural adaptation. This represents a relatively consistent understanding among cross-cultural psychology researchers.

The cultural adaptation perspective is the most representative theory in cross-cultural psychology for understanding cultural identity. Cultural adaptation refers to the process of cultural and psychological changes caused by sustained contact between two or more different cultural groups and their members, including both individual and group levels. Individual-level cultural adaptation refers to the process of changes in individuals' values, attitudes, and other psychological and behavioral aspects to ultimately adapt to new environments; group-level cultural adaptation mainly involves changes in social structure, economic foundation, political organization, and cultural customs [24]. Of course, psychologists are more concerned with individual-level cultural adaptation phenomena.

Cultural adaptation is also an assimilation process where people from different cultural backgrounds achieve language understanding (speaking the same language) through interaction, leading to similar values and attitudes. Traditional unidimensional models of cultural adaptation suggest that immigrants' or minority groups' adaptation to one culture leads to non-adaptation to another culture. However, later bidimensional models argue that adaptation to one's ethnic culture does not lead to non-adaptation to mainstream culture—the two are independent. The convergence and integration of two cultures produce four possible strategies and outcomes: (1) integration, adapting well to both mainstream and ethnic cultures; (2) marginalization, adapting poorly to both; (3) separation, adapting poorly to mainstream culture but well to ethnic culture; and (4) assimilation, adapting well to mainstream culture but poorly to ethnic culture [25]. The process of cultural adaptation is complex and diverse, with individuals holding different attitudes and adopting different strategies during acculturation, using different strategies at different ages and adjusting their cop-

ing strategies according to different situations. Extensive cross-cultural psychology research shows that integration is the most chosen strategy by immigrant or minority individuals and represents a good adaptation method, while marginalization is the least chosen strategy and represents a relatively poor adaptation method [25]. Immigrant or minority groups attempt various strategies to cope with environmental demands during cultural adaptation, thereby forming their own integrated cultural identity states.

1.5 Marxist Cultural Identity Perspective as Ideology

Ideology is a system of ideas and representations with unique logic and structure that dominates the spirit of an individual or social group [27]. Culture is an essential human force continuously externalized and objectified by human subjects throughout historical and social practice, representing the dialectical unity of human and object, subject and object, internalization and externalization [28]. From a functional perspective, culture can thus be divided into two types: one is culture as knowledge, and the other is culture as ideology. Taylor's definition of culture exemplifies culture as knowledge, while the Marxist dialectical unity view of culture reflects the ideological perspective on cultural identity [29].

From a value perspective, Marxist ideological culture serves as “social glue,” “successfully stabilizing society by uniting social members and providing collectively shared values and norms” [30]. In China, the glue function of Marxist ideological culture as the ruling ideology does not unify society with a single set of values but includes unity within diversity, the so-called “harmony in diversity.” Among various cultural identities currently existing in China—including Marxist culture, traditional Chinese culture, and Western foreign cultures—Marxism remains dominant. This reflects the interpretability and certainty of Marxist cultural identity in China, determined by China's historical choices, political system, and social structure.

Sinicized Marxism forms the foundational component of Chinese cultural identity. It is precisely because of the existence of Marxist ideological cultural identity that China has not experienced the ideological vacuum seen during Eastern European transformations during its modernization process. During China's social transformation period, interest differentiation and structural adjustment have led to contradictions among pluralistic cultures and crises in ideological identity. Popular culture and non-mainstream culture exert certain pressure on mainstream ideology, with secular, utilitarian, and entertainment-oriented cultural values gradually permeating. Therefore, to avoid deviations in Chinese cultural identity, we must strengthen the guidance of socialist mainstream ideology on Chinese cultural identity, because the value of mainstream ideology is the core of culture, guiding cultural innovation and development [27].

2. Characteristics of Contemporary Chinese Cultural Identity

With the development of reform, opening-up, and the market economy, contemporary China presents a pluralistic cultural ecology where mainstream and non-mainstream cultures, indigenous and foreign cultures, and advanced and backward cultures coexist. Although the broad masses of people take socialist advanced culture guided by Sinicized Marxism as their primary identification, the diversification of people's values and ideological consciousness has caused confusion, differentiation, or disorder among some social members regarding ideals, beliefs, and moral concepts. In particular, the public's life values clearly show a trend toward economic value, material money, and individualism [31]. Contemporary Chinese cultural identity thus has distinct characteristics of the times worthy of in-depth analysis and research by social psychologists.

2.1 Intergroup Differentiation and Diversity in Chinese Cultural Identity

Chinese cultural identity exhibits pluralistic characteristics. Compared with the period before reform and opening-up, cultural identity among different groups has differentiated, with differences existing between generations, social strata, and regions.

2.1.1 Generational Differences Generational differences in Chinese cultural identity exist in all aspects of social life, manifested not only in different outlooks on life, values, aesthetics, marriage, and consumption, but also in many minor life details (such as clothing styles and dietary preferences) and attitudes toward major social and political events. In slowly changing societies, generational differences often dissolve gradually and insignificantly. However, in rapidly changing Chinese society, generational differences accumulate continuously and may even trigger contradictions and conflicts [32].

A survey on mainstream value culture identification among different age groups found that among those identifying with China's mainstream value culture, the proportions were 7.7% for those under 25, 30.4% for ages 25-45, 23.8% for ages 45-60, and 8.6% for those over 60. People aged 25-60 identify more with mainstream value culture, while those under 25 show the lowest identification [33]. Numerous commentaries on life attitudes and lifestyles of Chinese born in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and even 2000s have acknowledged value differences between generations, with extensive social surveys and psychological research discovering cultural identity differences among cohorts born in different eras regarding life ideals, love, marriage and family values, work values, aesthetics, and consumption views [34-36]. For example, career outlooks show clear differences across eras: for people from the 1950s-60s, "work is life," while younger generations tend to separate work from life, with overall decreasing occupational identification and loyalty among youth [37]. Research analyzing 866 employee samples examined generational differences and within-post-80s

differences in Chinese workplace values. Results showed that Chinese employees' leisure values, extrinsic values, and intrinsic values rose steadily across generations, with the "new generation" significantly higher than the "Cultural Revolution generation," and post-90s significantly higher than post-80s within the new generation [38].

This generational difference in cultural identity is also evident in Hong Kong and Taiwan regions. Analyzing surveys related to Taiwan's "Sunflower Student Movement," Hong Kong's "Occupy Central" movement, and Taiwan's "Nine-in-One" elections, 63% of Taiwanese youth aged 20-29 opposed the "Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement," significantly higher than 49% of those aged 30-39, 38% of those aged 40-49, 38% of those aged 50-59, and 33% of those over 60. Among Hong Kong youth aged 15-24, 67.7% supported the "Occupy Central" action, also significantly higher than other age groups. Compared with other age groups, the 20-29 age group showed the highest support for Ko Wen-je at 67%. These data indicate that compared with their grandparents' and parents' generations, the younger generation in Hong Kong and Taiwan suffers more severely from the absence of "Chinese identity" in their cultural identity, showing serious generational differences [39]. Generational differences in cultural identity are deeply imprinted with the growth environments and life circumstances of different eras, closely related to each generation's psychological commonalities and consensus.

2.1.2 Social Stratification and Occupational Differences China previously mainly had two classes—workers and peasants—and two strata—intellectuals and managers. After reform and opening-up, due to diversification in social organization, employment positions, and forms, the class and stratum structure has correspondingly differentiated. Particularly with adjustments to ownership structure, workers have become widely distributed in private enterprises, state-owned enterprises, foreign enterprises, individual businesses, and other ownership forms, causing differentiation within the working class. For the numerous peasant class, differentiation since reform and opening-up has been even more severe.

While some original strata in China have differentiated, new social strata have emerged. During this differentiation process, some strata's economic and social status has improved while others have declined. Stratification has led to changes in original cultural identity, with people from different strata experiencing ideological confusion: "Who are we?" "Which stratum do we belong to?" "What social status should we have?" This class or stratum differentiation poses great difficulties and challenges for Chinese society in forming common ideals and values, causing psychological crises of varying degrees among different groups [40].

Occupation is closely related to social stratum. Surveys show that among those identifying with China's mainstream value culture by occupation, workers account for 3.4%, peasants 4.8%, students 19.9%, merchants 9.9%, and cadres

21.3% [41]. Among these proportions, cadres rank highest, followed by students, merchants, and finally peasants and workers. This indicates that China's cadres, students, and merchants constitute the main forces identifying with mainstream value culture, while workers and peasants show relatively lower identification.

2.1.3 Regional Differences As a mainstream culture, socialist core values receive varying degrees of recognition across different regions in China. Different regional groups' identification with mainstream value culture mainly occurs through occupational composition and population quality [41]. From an occupational perspective, people living and working in economically developed areas are mainly leading cadres, civil servants, students, and merchants—groups with relatively higher quality and higher identification with mainstream value culture. In remote rural areas or economically underdeveloped regions, the population mainly consists of peasants, workers, and small business owners with relatively lower cultural quality and lower identification with mainstream value culture. From an age perspective, younger groups concentrate in economically developed areas. For instance, cities like Shenzhen and Shanghai have millions of young migrants who are broad-minded, experienced, and highly receptive to new information, thus generally showing higher recognition of mainstream value culture. Regional differences in population quality are also significant, with people in economically developed areas showing higher identification with mainstream value culture. They generally surpass populations in underdeveloped areas in physical quality, psychological quality, aesthetic literacy, and labor skills, giving them certain advantages in accepting and recognizing advanced culture.

Additionally, due to special historical experiences, compatriots in Hong Kong and Taiwan also show obvious cultural differences in cultural identity. On one hand, compared with mainland Chinese, people in Hong Kong and Taiwan exhibit bicultural identity characteristics. That is, compared with mainland Chinese identity, people in Hong Kong and Taiwan have both local identities such as “Hong Konger” or “Taiwanese” and “Chinese” cultural identity, with possible priority given to Hong Kong or Taiwanese identity. On the other hand, despite similar circumstances, cultural identity differences exist between Hong Kong and Taiwan. Relative to Taiwan compatriots, Hong Kong people show relatively higher Chinese identity. For example, researchers compared Hong Kong's 2005 public opinion survey with 1997 results, finding significant changes in Hong Kong compatriots' national identity, with Hong Kong compatriots' “Chinese” identity consciousness gradually increasing after the handover [42].

2.2 Decline and Revival of Traditional Chinese Cultural Identity

Before reform and opening-up, Chinese people's cultural identity was primarily based on traditional Chinese culture. However, the “Cultural Revolution” caused a difficult-to-heal rupture between Chinese people's real lives and traditional Chinese culture, with many traditional cultures fading from Chinese life and even memory. Due to constraints from specific political and ideological

lines and lack of corresponding carriers and forms, Chinese identification with traditional culture remained at a low point for some time. After reform and opening-up, during the 1980s-90s, China experienced two cultural upsurges, reviving traditional culture to rebuild Chinese identification with traditional Chinese culture. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the upsurge of learning traditional culture has continued to heat up in civil society, with private education featuring Hanfu clothing, ancient music, and Book of Songs recitation appearing, and some universities beginning to establish “National Studies Institutes” or national studies majors. Simultaneously, the state launched the massive “Confucian Canon Compilation and Research Project” in 2004, carrying out traditional culture education throughout society and in primary and secondary schools, with news media publishing numerous books and interpretive works on traditional Chinese culture, some becoming bestsellers. Despite the utilitarian orientation of the market economy occupying many people’s value systems and continuous inflow of Western culture, Chinese identification with traditional culture has rapidly revived alongside the revival of traditional culture. Chinese people’s identification with traditional values or virtues such as “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness” and “gentleness, kindness, respect, frugality, and modesty” has generally improved.

Adolescents’ identification with traditional Chinese culture is closely related to their social representations. Zhu and Zuo [43] studied Chinese adolescents’ social representations and identification of traditional Chinese culture, obtaining 19 representative items of traditional Chinese culture social representations nominated by adolescents, covering all aspects of traditional Chinese culture. Among them, “historical figures,” “literary works,” and “historical allusions” were nominated with high frequency, while “ideological wisdom” —the essence of traditional Chinese culture—received relatively fewer nominations, indicating that traditional Chinese culture’s influence on adolescents comes from information closely related to learning and life, reflecting the impact of changing outlooks on life and values under market economy conditions on adolescents’ thinking. The study also explored central and peripheral factors in Chinese traditional culture social representations, finding central factors to be “totem symbols, characteristic foods, traditional festivals, and customs” —items that better represent “traditional Chinese culture” in adolescents’ minds; peripheral factors included “literary works, ideological wisdom, historical systems, typical objects, ancient science, moral customs, ethnic languages, classical arts, ethnic clothing, and cultural landscapes.”

2.3 Strengthened Identification with Socialist Core Values

Cultural identity is the cultural foundation for building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, we must “create a new value system based on our own cultural values that closely responds to major issues emerging in the era and China’s development, can be willingly accepted by Chinese people, has appeal and cohesion, and simultaneously reflects and absorbs the common in-

terests of all humanity” [44]. In 2006, the Sixth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee proposed the concept and content of the “socialist core value system.” In November 2012, the 18th CPC National Congress report first explicitly proposed “advocating prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony; advocating freedom, equality, justice, and rule of law; advocating patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendliness; and actively cultivating socialist core values.” In December 2013, the Party Central Committee announced the “Opinions on Cultivating and Practicing Socialist Core Values,” further clarifying the basic content and value dimensions of the 24-character socialist core values. Socialist core values contain characteristics of respecting differences, embracing diversity, and maximizing ideological consensus in Chinese society, integrating the cultural needs of different Chinese groups within the mainstream cultural framework, thereby facilitating the realization of their respective value pursuits.

Cultivating and practicing socialist core values, and enhancing people’s identification with the great motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, and the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, constitute an important measure in China’s cultural construction over the past decade. Although contemporary Chinese cultural identity has intergroup differentiation characteristics, survey research results in recent years show that Chinese people have extensive knowledge of socialist core values content, with broad consistency across different age, stratum, occupational, and regional groups, and overall identification has gradually strengthened and improved—representing a notable characteristic of contemporary Chinese cultural identity [45-49].

2.4 Modernity and Global Awareness in Chinese Cultural Identity

Modernity is also a complex concept. Giddens [50] considered modernity as shorthand for modern society or industrial civilization. In essence, modernity refers to modernization transformations occurring in the cultural domain alongside modernization of production relations and social systems. The openness of contemporary Chinese society and culture gives Chinese cultural identity certain modernity characteristics and global awareness. Reform and opening-up China is in the process of modernization integrated into globalization; Chinese people are no longer isolated from the world, and Chinese culture is in exchange and integration with foreign cultures.

Cultural identity in the context of globalization is first an open and enriching process—a continuously enriching and diversifying process [51]. Over the past 70 years, the basic direction of New China’s cultural construction has been to build a new culture that is both modern and national. In this process, Chinese culture has also applied the principle of “making foreign things serve China,” cautiously absorbing elements of Western modern culture, with corresponding modernity characteristics in Chinese cultural identity. Chinese people as a whole show curiosity and acceptance toward modern new culture, though such modernity identification also has Chinese characteristics. For instance, individualism is one of the core concepts of Western modernity, but Chinese cultural modernity in-

cludes collectivist spirit [52]. Although Chinese cultural modernity is influenced by Western culture, we are constructing modernity with Chinese characteristics.

Modernity inevitably possesses global characteristics, as one of the fundamental consequences of modernity is globalization [53]. Globalization is an indisputable fact, with capital and information flowing across borders, and ecology, environmental protection, energy, and infectious diseases becoming global concerns. American blockbusters, Chinese kung fu, Japanese anime, French cuisine, and smartphones are popular worldwide. Global awareness is a form of cultural consciousness and an important issue for cultural identity. Due to the tremendous achievements brought by reform and opening-up, contemporary Chinese cultural identity shows curiosity, tolerance, and reasonable acceptance toward foreign cultures. Scholars have observed that Chinese people eat at McDonald's differently from Americans—not leaving immediately after eating, but often bringing families or groups of friends to chat while eating, representing Chinese McDonald's culture rather than American McDonald's culture [54].

In contemporary Chinese cultural identity, economic, political, and technological globalization has brought global issues that Chinese people also pay attention to and contemplate, such as ecology, environment, energy, infectious diseases, nuclear proliferation, drug trafficking, cybersecurity, cloning technology, and space exploration. These issues are not just problems of a particular ethnicity or nation but problems for all humanity, including Chinese people. Numerous news reports and surveys show that Chinese people's attention to these issues is gradually increasing, accompanied by corresponding actions [55-57], reflecting Chinese people's global or international awareness in cultural identity.

3. Developmental Paths for Contemporary Chinese Cultural Identity

3.1 Chinese Cultural Identity Based on a Sound Self

Only as individuals can people ask questions like “Who am I? Where am I from? Where am I going?” Only individuals with sound self-awareness can accurately recognize, position, and grasp their identity, role, status, and relationships. Cultural identity is essentially a form of human identity, with the subject of cultural identity not being the state, nation, class, or community, but individuals with national, ethnic, class, and communal attributes. Therefore, only individuals with sound selves can establish appropriate cultural identity.

Contemporary Chinese cultural identity has characteristics of Chinese mainstream culture, as well as characteristics of the times and pluralism. Due to the partial contradictory and uncertain nature of the self, Chinese cultural identity contains certain value conflicts and selection confusions. While such uncertain cultural identity states are not alarming, if they persist too long, they may lead to conflicts between Chinese individuals, society, and culture, hindering the healthy development of Chinese people and Chinese society. Chinese society

remains in a process of profound transformation and development, and Chinese cultural identity will inevitably fluctuate and develop accordingly. Therefore, constructing Chinese cultural identity must place great emphasis on Chinese individuals' self-improvement.

To maintain and promote the healthy development of Chinese cultural identity, efforts must be made in both cultural and self aspects. Culturally, contemporary Chinese culture must fully respect human subjectivity and human nature, satisfying Chinese people' s diverse spiritual needs through rich and colorful forms, providing humanistic environments and space for Chinese people' s self-value realization. Regarding Chinese individuals'selves, they must recognize and accept their multiple identities and changes, maintain personal mental health and personality coordination, fully understand and accept their characteristic as "people within culture," integrate themselves into Chinese cultural practice, and become performers, inheritors, and creators of Chinese culture.

3.2 Recognizing and Firmly Establishing the Foundational Role of Core Values Identification

Undoubtedly, the core of contemporary Chinese cultural identity is identification with socialist core values. Socialist core values demonstrate the unique charm of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics, contain the common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and represent the essence of socialist advanced culture [58]. Through leading and integrating diverse cultural forms, they condense cultural consensus, embody the internal spirit and value ideals of the entire value system, and deeply influence people' s thinking patterns and behavioral norms.

With accelerated globalization and modernization, problems in contemporary Chinese cultural identity have become increasingly prominent, with cultural identity conflicts and crises needing alleviation through guidance by socially dominant core values. Cultural identity development originates from individuals' value needs and value goals. Due to diverse individual value demands, society lacks cohesion without support from social core values, and individual cultural identity also requires guidance from socially dominant core values. Socialist core values provide a relatively definite developmental direction and goals for contemporary Chinese cultural identity, enhancing Chinese people' s holistic cognition of contemporary Chinese socialist culture with Chinese characteristics, forming an appealing force in value orientation and thinking patterns for Chinese cultural identity.

The 24-character socialist core values are concise and easy to understand, establishing value goals at the national level, value orientations at the social level, and value norms at the individual citizen level. They not only provide rational interpretation of contemporary Chinese culture but also embody the harmonious unity of social needs and individual needs, social welfare and personal happiness [59]. Socialist core values reflect the value demands of cultural identity subjects,

integrating the value core of mainstream culture into the daily life practice fields of contemporary Chinese people, allowing people to experience and feel the sustaining power of Chinese cultural spirit in life practice, thereby obtaining meaning support and enabling people to construct healthy and upward cultural identity.

3.3 Promoting Chinese Cultural Identity Integration

Most countries worldwide are multi-ethnic and multicultural. Against the backdrop of globalization, population mobility is increasingly frequent, and exchanges and cooperation between different cultural groups are increasing, making bicultural phenomena more common and people possessing characteristics of two cultures more numerous [60]. Among contemporary Chinese populations, increasing numbers of Chinese people go abroad for study and work, increasing numbers of minority group members enter mainstream society to receive higher education, engage in economic activities, or settle in Han areas. Meanwhile, population flows between mainland China and Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan regions have become increasingly frequent due to Hong Kong and Macau's return and the "1992 Consensus," with Chinese cultural identity among people in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan also strengthening. Due to international exchanges and mobility between different domestic regions and occupations, there are also more bicultural Chinese individuals. How to handle the identity issues of two or even multiple cultural identities among contemporary Chinese people requires drawing on cultural integration approaches from psychology.

Psychology considers bicultural individuals as those who have been exposed to two cultures and have internalized both [61]. Bicultural individuals need to integrate two cultural norms to form a behavioral skill or cultural pattern and effectively switch between the two cultures [62]. Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) is one way bicultural individuals coordinate and understand two cultures. Empirical research shows that, at least at the individual level, the bicultural integration strategy is the most used cultural adaptation strategy by immigrants and minority groups, followed by separation, assimilation, and marginalization [63]. Benet-Martínez and colleagues [64] proposed BII theory as a framework for studying individual differences in BII. BII contains two independent psychometric components: one is cultural blendedness versus compartmentalization—the degree to which bicultural individuals perceive overlap and separation between two cultures; the other is cultural harmony versus conflict—the perception of compatibility, tension, and conflict between two cultures.

Psychology-related research finds that BII has extensive characteristics, affecting individuals' psychological adjustment, cultural frame switching, cognitive processing styles, and creativity in multicultural contexts, while also positively influencing intergroup relations. Bicultural identity integration is a relatively ideal cultural adaptation strategy at both individual and group levels and should be 借鉴 (drawn upon) to promote bicultural or multicultural identity among

contemporary Chinese people. At the individual level, it can promote Chinese people's mental health levels, improve social adaptation abilities, enhance cognitive processing abilities, and promote personal creativity [65]. At the group level, bicultural identity integration also facilitates positive interactions and intergroup relations among Chinese populations, holding significant importance for building a harmonious and stable Chinese society.

In recent years, due to changes in the political ecology, compared with before, people in Hong Kong and Taiwan, especially youth, have shown a certain decline in identification with "Chinese." An important factor is that the regional cultural identity of "Hong Konger" or "Taiwanese" among some Hong Kong and Taiwan youth has been deliberately activated and strengthened, while identification with Chinese culture has been weakened, thereby undermining individuals' cultural identity integration awareness and abilities. Promoting enhanced "Chinese" cultural identity among Hong Kong and Taiwan populations requires cultivating and stimulating bicultural or multicultural identity integration capabilities, strengthening the cultural identity of "I am Taiwanese (or Hong Konger) and also Chinese" and "Taiwanese (or Hong Kongers) are also Chinese," avoiding artificial psychological opposition between the two identities.

3.4 Highlighting "Chinese" Identity in Culture and Education

The subject of cultural identity is people, and the subject of Chinese cultural identity is naturally Chinese people. For all Chinese people to maintain and enhance cultural identity, we must not forget the subject of "Chinese people." Both subjectively and objectively, only when Chinese people identify themselves as "Chinese" can identification with Chinese culture be profound, internal, and long-lasting.

In fact, a person has multiple identities—national, ethnic, political, regional, cultural, gender, age, occupational, religious, etc.—these identities overlap in the self, drifting and transforming in social interaction contexts. "Chinese" identity is only one of individual Chinese people's identities but is the most direct identity affecting Chinese cultural identity. "Are you Chinese? Why?" "Do you want to be Chinese?" Answering these questions involves Chinese people's "Chinese" identity identification. Under normal circumstances, as members of the Chinese nation, knowing and identifying as Chinese is natural. However, psychological research shows that identifying oneself as a member of one's country or nation is not innate. Children and adolescents undergo a psychological developmental process in forming their national and ethnic identity; additionally, there exist cases where minorities experience identity separation. Therefore, enhancing all Chinese people's cultural identity, especially compatriots in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan's identification with Chinese culture, requires activating and cultivating their "Chinese" identity, enabling Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan youth to normally use and experience their "Chinese" identity in social life.

Social psychologists have analyzed the psychological components of Chinese

identity as Chinese national identity from cognitive and emotional perspectives, examining the psychological developmental process and influencing factors of Chinese children and adolescents' Chinese identity [66]. Research finds that experience interacting with foreigners, television news media reports, school education, and family discussions are the main factors influencing adolescents' and children's Chinese identity [67]. Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory also point out that positive distinctiveness can enhance ingroup identity identification. Therefore, in cultural works, news media, and educational activities, presenting and highlighting Chinese identity through authentic and reasonable situations can activate Chinese people's "Chinese" identity consciousness. The highlighting of "Chinese" identity 离不开 (cannot be separated from) comparison with other nationalities. Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory indicate that identity requires same-level comparison and confirmation of group and national identity; only when with foreigners can we realize we are Chinese. Therefore, creating scenarios for Chinese people to interact with foreigners, watching foreign films and television works, directly seeing or even communicating with foreigners, and representing and acting as the "Chinese" group can effectively activate Chinese people's "Chinese" identity. Without comparison with foreigners, students cannot truly form "Chinese" identity, because without comparison, students cannot activate the need for identity distinction [68], nor can they experience ingroup favoritism as "Chinese." This is particularly important for Hong Kong and Taiwan youth. Only when students know through textbooks, newspapers, the internet, television, and China-foreign exchange activities that people with different appearances, customs, and languages exist in other parts of the world, and that "we Chinese" sometimes need to compete or cooperate with them, will adolescent students generate and maintain their unique "Chinese" identity.

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