

Exploring the Culture of Reverence for Ancestors in the Context of the Chinese National Community Consciousness

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Abstract. This paper aims to evoke cultural and identity recognition among Taiwanese compatriots by highlighting the ideological and cultural values of the reverence for ancestors. Using literature analysis, the study examines the core connotations, national psychology, and cultural values of the reverence for ancestors culture on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. The analysis reveals that people on both sides share common historical and cultural memories and a common national psychological consciousness. However, currently, there is an alienation in identity recognition among Taiwanese youth. Therefore, leveraging the power of media dissemination can help build a sense of community between the two sides.

Keywords: Chinese National Community Consciousness, identity recognition, cultural recognition

1. Introduction

On the afternoon of March 27, 2023, Mr. Ma Ying-jeou, embarked on his long-cherished “mainland visit,” fulfilling his long-held wish to seek his roots and pay respects to his ancestors. This journey to trace his roots took him to Shuangyang Village in Cha’en Town, Xiangtan County, Hunan Province, Mr. Ma’s ancestral home. This long-delayed homecoming of over seventy years embodies the profound tradition of reverence for ancestors among the Chinese people and carries the vibrant hope of a shared future between people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. [1] On March 25, 2024, Ma Ying-jeou, accompanied by young students from Taiwan’s Dajiu Academy, revisited the mainland, adding more keywords to this journey such as “culture, nation, history, peace, development,” among others. On April 10, General Secretary Xi Jinping of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China met with Ma Ying-jeou and his group in Beijing, emphasizing that “the Chinese nation has, throughout its history, written an inseparable history across the Taiwan Strait, and engraved the fact of blood ties between compatriots on both sides.” [2]

This visit has also sparked discussions on the issue of identity recognition among the Taiwanese people. The mainland has always upheld the attitude of “two sides of the Strait are one family” towards Taiwanese compatriots. The series of activities arranged for Mr. Ma Ying-jeou’s two visits to his ancestral home reflect the familial ties, historical connections, blood relations, and cultural heritage shared between the two sides. However, recent polling data from Taiwan shows varying understandings and differences in identity recognition among different age groups in Taiwan. This necessitates an analysis considering the historical background and current environment, and through the cultural perspective of reverence for ancestors in the excellent traditional Chinese culture, to evoke cultural and identity recognition among Taiwanese compatriots. The transformation from cognitive, emotional, and cultural recognition to identity recognition and confidence in identity can be strengthened by leveraging the power of media dissemination to set agendas, engage emotionally, and culturally co-create, thus solidifying the consciousness of a shared Chinese national community on both sides of the Strait.

2. The Construction and Inheritance of the Culture of Reverence for Ancestors from the Perspective of Chinese National Community Consciousness

The culture of reverence for ancestors is a significant component of the consciousness of the Chinese national community. To a certain extent, it has promoted the formation and development of this community consciousness, enhancing the sense of identity and belonging to the Chinese nation. China, as a country built around the Han people of the Central Plains and based on an agricultural civilization, has a deeply rooted connection between people and land. Agricultural production's dependence on land and the lengthy accumulation needed for land development, along with the relatively stable cycle from planting to harvest, necessitate a fixed population on the land, creating a stable human-land relationship. Inheritance of land is the most crucial property inheritance in agrarian societies. A solid human-land relationship forms on the land, which serves as the foundation for China's family system. This relationship is further reinforced by blood ties. In the pyramidal structure of family relationships, ancestors at the top are both the source of bloodline continuity and the founders of the family enterprise. This creates a network structure linking people to the land through blood relations, forming a basic unit of Chinese society. The state and nation are built on the foundation of family units, embodying the concept of "family-nation homology." The family is the foundation of the state, the state is an expansion of the family, and the nation is an extension of the family lineage. There is a natural relationship between family and nation. According to the historical development path of population migration in China, Taiwanese society was formed by the southward migration of the Han people from the Central Plains, especially the migration of Fujian Minnan ethnic groups to Taiwan. Therefore, people on both sides of the Strait share a common historical and cultural background. Migrants to Taiwan carried strong family concepts and ancestral awareness, often returning to their ancestral homes to pay respects on special commemorative days. Over time, this family concept and ancestral awareness have evolved into a more inclusive and broad national psychology and homeland awareness. This ancestral awareness is a fundamental cultural consciousness for Taiwanese people, tracing back to their roots. It is a historical memory passed down from their forefathers, deeply ingrained and an irrefutable psychological anchor in the traditional culture of the Chinese nation.

2.1. The Coupling Relationship between the Culture of Reverence for Ancestors and the Consciousness of the Chinese National Community

The culture of reverence for ancestors, emphasizing the importance of bloodline inheritance, is a core concept of traditional Chinese culture. It is complemented by rituals and activities for worshipping heaven and ancestors. This cultural concept has played a vital role throughout the long history of the Chinese nation, reflecting people's profound feelings towards family heritage and bloodline connections. Simultaneously, it underscores respect for ancestors and traditions, thereby fostering family cohesion and social stability. The consciousness of the Chinese national community refers to the recognition and perception formed over a long historical development process of a shared destiny among the Chinese people. This consciousness emphasizes the unity and solidarity of the Chinese nation, as well as equality, mutual assistance, and common development among various ethnic groups.

It is evident that the culture of reverence for ancestors has, to a certain extent, promoted the formation and development of the consciousness of the Chinese national community. Through ancestor worship, remembering history, and similar activities, people gain a deeper understanding of their responsibilities and missions as members of the Chinese nation, thus enhancing their sense of identity and belonging. Additionally, the culture of reverence for ancestors advocates respect for tradition and the esteem for moral values. These values align with the principles of unity, harmony, and development promoted by the consciousness of the Chinese national community, further deepening the connection between the two. In summary, the culture of reverence for ancestors and the consciousness of the Chinese national community have a mutually reinforcing and complementary relationship. The former provides a rich cultural foundation and spiritual support for the latter, while the latter represents an important manifestation and elevation of the former in modern society.

2.2. The Influence and Inheritance of the Culture of Reverence for Ancestors on the National Identity Consciousness across the Taiwan Strait

National culture serves as both the identity of the nation and the spiritual homeland connecting each individual to their ancestors. The culture of reverence for ancestors emphasizes respect for ancestors and the patriarchal system, advocating for national unity and cohesion, reflecting the unity, harmony, and prosperity of families and the state. By respecting ancestors and inheriting national culture, individuals can enhance their sense of national identity and belonging, thereby valuing and safeguarding national interests. The inheritance of this national identity consciousness helps strengthen national cohesion and

centripetal force, promoting national unity and social stability. The unification of both sides of the Strait, regardless of the method adopted, ultimately must address the issue of identity recognition among the Taiwanese people. The best psychological support for this is the culture of reverence for ancestors, which carries a strong sense of ancestral roots.

Taiwanese society has inherited the fine traditions of the Chinese nation, including traditional culture, virtues, festivals, customs, and folk beliefs, all of which demonstrate the cohesion and influence of the Chinese nation, forming a convergence and integration of Chinese culture. This makes “individuals like magnetic iron filings, naturally generating an affinity and a mutual recognition of being ‘one of us’” [3]. Throughout the continuous inheritance of Chinese cultural thought and the construction of national identity, there remains a strong and enduring attraction between the mainland and Taiwan.

In fact, cultural identity in Taiwan is not merely an identification with culture but more of an auxiliary, reinforcement, or sublimation of “national identity.” The evolution of cultural identity and “national identity” has always maintained a high degree of consistency. However, some politicians in Taiwan incite the public and disregard facts, causing the cultural consciousness and Chinese awareness of the populace to become casualties of political struggles. The prolonged confrontation and separation between the two sides, along with incomplete education leading to historical discontinuity, have resulted in the younger generation’s lack of a comprehensive understanding of the state and nation. Therefore, tracing and connecting the concept of reverence for ancestors within the shared cultural psychology of the Chinese nation across the Strait is the optimal answer for clarifying the questions of “Who am I?” and “Where do I come from?” for the Taiwanese people.

3. The Value and Purpose of the Culture of Reverence for Ancestors from the Perspective of Chinese National Community Consciousness

The culture of reverence for ancestors is one of the outstanding traditional cultural views of the Chinese nation. Its core essence is the reverence for “filial piety” and “propriety,” which are symbols of the belief in the national community. In traditional Chinese society, rituals such as ancestral worship ceremonies enable the beliefs, customs, ethics, and emotions of the national community to be expressed and reinforced through collective interaction. Over long periods of historical evolution, these elements have solidified into common cultural concepts for the nation, state, and community. [4] These cultural concepts are typically manifested through specific rituals conducted in designated spaces. Participants, through sensory experiences of cultural symbols, procedures, atmospheres, and performances, form a cohesive communication system. This system conveys the symbolic meanings through mutual empathy and resonance, imparting a stable belief or value system to the participants. This, in turn, cultivates a relatively stable and enduring collective spiritual consciousness among the group or nation. For the Chinese nation, the culture of reverence for ancestors constitutes such a collective spiritual consciousness. This collective spirit effectively bridges existing differences within the group, ensuring the continuity and transmission of cultural genes embedded in traditional culture.

3.1. The Core Essence of Reverence for “Filial Piety” and “Propriety”

The people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait share common roots, with their cultural and ideological essence deeply imbued with the spirit of Chinese traditional culture. Ultimately, the culture of reverence for ancestors extends and amplifies the moral and cultural ideas of “filial piety” and “propriety.” Since the Duke of Zhou established rites, the culture of propriety has permeated every aspect of daily and social life in China. Under the influence of propriety culture, the Chinese nation has developed a gentle, humble, and respectful national character. Additionally, this culture has strengthened the cohesion and centripetal force of the Chinese national community, effectively maintaining social order and regulating interpersonal and social relationships. In the development process of Chinese rites, from family to state, sacrificial rites have played a crucial role in constructing the identity of the Chinese national community, representing one of the manifestations of the culture of reverence for ancestors. As described in the “Zhou Li • Chun Guan • Da Zong Bo,” rites are divided into auspicious rites, inauspicious rites, military rites, guest rites, and festive rites, with “auspicious rites” specifically referring to sacrificial rites. According to the “Li Ji • Ji Tong,” among the five classics of rites, none are more important than sacrifices. Initially, the sacrificial rites in Chinese culture were limited to blood relatives but later expanded to include successive emperors, sages, and teachers. [5] When the objects of sacrifice expanded from symbols of the family community to include emperors and sages, the community constructed by sacrificial rites underwent a structural transformation. This transformation extended the symbolic scope from ancestors to the national community. The structural changes signified not only worship of heaven, earth, deities, and ancestors but also cultural and national identity embedded with shared traditional values and spiritual and cultural essence. The inheritance of sacrificial culture highlights the distinct personality of Chinese culture. It is an activity containing a sense of identity, embodying the practical implementation and extension of “propriety” in real-life practices.

3.2. The Continuation of Collective Cultural Memory

The theory of “cultural memory” was proposed in the 1980s by German scholar Jan Assmann, building on French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs’ theory of “collective memory” and German art historian Aby Warburg’s concept of “image memory.” “This theory primarily explores the relationship between memory, identity, and cultural continuity, applying it to the study of early advanced cultures, thereby revealing the role of memory in the generation and development of culture. The primary issues of culture and research consideration are how societies or groups construct memories of the past to form cultural memories that have normative binding force for the group, and how these cultural memories are inherited and continue to exert influence within the group’s culture”[6]. From the perspective of Chinese national community consciousness, the culture of reverence for ancestors represents a normatively binding collective cultural memory concept formed across the Taiwan Strait. Additionally, this collective cultural memory continues to shape the identity of people on both sides of the Strait.

The culture of reverence for ancestors is preserved and passed down through traditional sacrificial practices. Every social group has its collective memory, which serves to unite and sustain the group. As stated in “Li Ji • Ji Tong”: “A filial son serves his parents in three ways: during their life by taking care of them, after their death by mourning for them, and after the mourning period by offering sacrifices to them. When alive, observe their wishes; when dead, observe their rituals. In mourning, observe their grief; in sacrifices, observe their reverence at appropriate times. Fulfilling these three ways is the conduct of a filial son”. [7]The Chinese nation has a long-standing tradition of sacrificial rites, from the state’s imperial ancestral temples to family ancestral halls, all serving to connect ancestors and roots, awakening collective memory and showcasing the cultural inheritance of “family—state—world.” Throughout history, sacrificial ceremonies have become an effective intermediary linking ethnic groups (nations), history, and memory.

Moreover, the collective historical and cultural memory formed across the Taiwan Strait is undeniable: the same ethnicity, language, customs, and ethical and moral concepts. Taiwanese society has always continued the traditions of Chinese culture, advocating the use of traditional Chinese ethical and moral concepts to regulate thoughts and behaviors. Ma Ying-jeou’s “seeking roots” sentiment not only pertains to his family but also symbolizes the nation. Through his sacrificial rituals, he can evoke the shared Chinese national memory between both sides of the Strait, extending the Chinese national spirit and strengthening the connection and identity of the Chinese national community.

3.3. Safeguarding the Shared Spiritual Home

Safeguarding the shared spiritual home of people across the Taiwan Strait is an essential aspect of the culture of reverence for ancestors. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized at the Central Ethnic Work Conference that to cement the consciousness of the Chinese national community, it is essential to guide people of all ethnic groups to firmly establish the community concept of shared weal and woe, shared honor and disgrace, shared life and death, and a shared destiny. [8]The ultimate goal of cementing the consciousness of the Chinese national community is to build a shared spiritual home for all ethnic groups. Yang Wenjong believes that a crucial way to lay a solid cultural foundation for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is to establish a shared spiritual home for all ethnic groups. [9]This shared spiritual home of the Chinese nation will be rooted in the soil of traditional Chinese cultural thoughts and concepts. For the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, culture is the best starting point to resolve conflicts and build consensus, serving as the shared ideals, values, and psychological support of the Chinese nation.

The early settlers who moved from the mainland to Taiwan were deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture, maintaining a steadfast adherence to it. Although they left their homeland, they preserved their customs, spoke their native dialects, practiced hometown traditions, and conducted themselves according to traditional Chinese cultural values. These customs are an integral part of traditional Chinese culture and played an active role in Taiwanese society at the time, thus being observed and passed down. After the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan, the cultural measures it implemented also strengthened the identification with “Chinese culture.” For instance, the “Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement” it promoted designated November 12th each year as “Chinese Culture Renaissance Day,” and published a series of annotated and translated ancient cultural classics, including the “Book of Documents,” “Book of Songs,” “Analects,” and “Records of the Grand Historian.” They also educated primary and secondary school students in values such as filial piety, respect for elders, reverence for teachers, and honor. Although these measures were essentially part of a “moral and cultural war” between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, they maintained and developed traditional Chinese culture to some extent. They also helped Taiwanese people to comprehensively understand “Chinese culture,” thereby strengthening their identification with it and indirectly safeguarding the shared spiritual home of people across the Strait. Moreover, the Taiwanese people have always harbored a sentimental attachment to their ancestral roots, a sentiment deeply ingrained in the hearts of people on both

sides of the Strait. “This sentiment will never disappear because of geographical barriers or the passage of time. This feeling manifests in Taiwan, where, as the population grows, many surnames have become large clans... In their settlements, they emulate ancestral customs, compile genealogies, retain their ancestral origins’ reputation, and uphold their heritage to remember their roots and honor their ancestral ties”. [10] Thus, safeguarding the shared cultural concepts of both sides is a core aspect of protecting the shared spiritual home of people across the Strait.

On September 12, 2023, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the “Opinions on Supporting Fujian in Exploring New Ways for Integrated Development across the Taiwan Strait and Building a Demonstration Zone for Integrated Development across the Strait,” emphasizing: “Encourage compatriots on both sides of the Strait to jointly promote Chinese culture, and promote the protection, inheritance, and innovative development of excellent Chinese traditional culture”. [11] Therefore, exploring the value of the culture of reverence for ancestors aims to strengthen the cultural identity of people across the Taiwan Strait by examining and revealing aspects of traditional Chinese culture and customs, further connecting the people of both regions with a sense of kinship and blood ties, and ensuring the continuation of the collective spiritual consciousness rooted in the culture of reverence for ancestors.

4. Identity of Taiwanese People and the Consciousness of the Chinese National Community

Taiwanese compatriots are an integral part of the Chinese nation, which has always valued the reverence for ancestors and a strong sense of ancestral roots. Family cultural activities such as compiling genealogies, building ancestral halls, establishing family rules, tracing clan origins, and connecting with relatives are essential ties that connect family members. These activities not only manifest the emotional bonds among family members but also achieve cultural identity and emotional resonance that transcend time and space between descendants and their ancestral homeland. [12] However, some Taiwanese politicians currently promote “Taiwan consciousness” and “Taiwan identity” to sever the blood and cultural ties with the mainland, causing the identity consciousness of some Taiwanese youth to become alienated and making the rise of Taiwan independence sentiments increasingly irreversible.

The issue of Taiwanese identity became a focal point of attention for both sides of the Taiwan Strait after the “Sunflower Student Movement” in 2014, prompting in-depth research by scholars from both sides. Liu Lingbin (2015) reviewed the research status of mainland scholars on the issue of Taiwanese “national identity” since the 1990s. He found that mainland scholars generally believe that the current “national identity” of Taiwanese people shows a trend of “de-Sinicization” and “Taiwanization.” Over time, the identity of Taiwanese people has shifted from “I am Chinese” to “I am Taiwanese”. [13] This trend continues to rise. According to a survey by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University in Taiwan in June 2023 on the “Trends in the Distribution of Taiwanese/Chinese Identity of Taiwanese People (June 1992 to June 2023),” 62.8% of Taiwanese people identified themselves as “Taiwanese,” 30.5% identified themselves as “both Taiwanese and Chinese,” and 2.5% identified themselves as “Chinese.” Compared to the data from 1992, the identification as “Taiwanese” increased by 45.2%, the identification as “both Taiwanese and Chinese” decreased by 15.9%, and the identification as “Chinese” decreased by 23%. [14] Li Yufeng and Wu Weixu (2017) focused on the identity of Taiwanese youth. They noted that the long-term promotion of “localization” by pro-independence political forces in Taiwan has gradually taken shape. Local life and changes in cross-strait political and economic relations influence the historical collective memory of Taiwanese youth regarding the “Chinese nation,” “Chinese culture,” and “China.” The identity and cultural nationalism stance of young students are rooted in these collective memories. [15] Especially during their teenage and adult years, when they experience “localization” education and political party alternation, feel the economic and social effects of cross-strait economic openness and the rise of the mainland, and the advent of the network society, they relatively have a stronger Taiwanese identity. [16] Thus, it is evident that the trend of “de-Sinicization and Taiwanization” in the “national identity” of Taiwanese people is deepening. In recent years, political disputes and the pandemic have further disrupted cross-strait exchanges, leading to a lack of opportunities for mutual interaction and growing estrangement among the people.

The identity of Taiwanese people is often linked to the corresponding historical periods of civic education, changes in political parties, and shifts in mainstream ideology. During the rule of Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo in Taiwan, the core governance philosophy was centered on the “de-Japanization,” “anti-communist and national recovery,” and “national spirit education” triad of Sinicization education. This was also the core principle of civic education development in Taiwan over the past forty years, with the primary goal of fostering cultural identity with the Chinese nation on Taiwanese soil, building national identity with the Chinese nation, and educating Taiwanese elementary and middle school students to be upright Chinese citizens. However, after the lifting of martial law, under the localization strategies and so-called democratization processes promoted by Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, Taiwan entered a phase of constructing a “national identity” as a sovereign independent state. This led to the prevalence of cultural “Taiwan independence” and a flourishing of

Taiwan independence culture. Consequently, historical and contemporary conditions have led to estrangement, conflicts, and opposition between compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Since Tsai Ing-wen took office, she has further strengthened the “Taiwan-centric consciousness” and “Taiwan identity,” attempting to continue detaching “Chinese identity” from Taiwan. This has significantly increased the trend of local consciousness identifying with Taiwan, especially impacting the younger generation, who increasingly replace “Chinese consciousness” and “Chinese identity” with “Taiwan consciousness” and “Taiwan identity.” On January 13, 2024, the presidential and legislative elections in Taiwan positioned Democratic Progressive Party’s Lai Ching-te as the candidate to succeed Tsai Ing-wen. During his campaign, Lai continued the governance philosophy of Tsai Ing-wen and the DPP, indicating that the “Taiwan-centric consciousness” among Taiwanese people will only be further strengthened and solidified. Under the influence of civic education and political power, the identity of Taiwanese people has been constantly alienated and reshaped, gradually deviating from the category of “Chinese.” The gap in national identity between people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait continues to widen.

5. Interaction, Identity, and Communication: Awakening the National Community Consciousness of Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait through the Respected Ancestors Cultural Perspective

Currently, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has long promoted the so-called “cultural Taiwan independence,” leading to severe alienation of identity among Taiwanese people, especially the youth. For Taiwan, the significance of elections lies not only in the routine rotation of ruling parties but also in the DPP’s continuation of comprehensive governance in Taiwan, symbolizing the trend of “green leading, blue following,” as the rise of “naturally independent” among Taiwan’s younger generation becomes increasingly irreversible. [17]The author believes that effective communication to Taiwan through domestic and international media, based on the respected ancestors’ “root” cultural perspective, can help Taiwanese people clarify their self-identity awareness of “who I am,” reshape their identity, and cultivate a correct national identity. This approach aims to promote the construction of a national community consciousness among the Chinese nation on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. It requires leveraging the power of the media, relying on interpersonal communication, group communication, and mass communication to comprehensively construct a three-dimensional national community consciousness and strengthen identity.

5.1. Agenda Setting: Promoting Various Forms of Cross-Strait Exchange, Opening Channels for Interpersonal Communication

Firstly, it is crucial to innovate and enrich the content and forms of cross-strait exchange activities, requiring the establishment of multi-level, multi-form, multi-content, and large-scale interactive exchange platforms. A satisfaction survey conducted by the YouTube channel “Zhongtian TV” on April 6, 2023, regarding Ma Ying-jeou’s cross-strait discourse showed that 84% of the people expressed “very satisfied,” and 9% indicated “satisfied.” Participating netizens commented, “This is what the people want—peaceful development and a healthy life for people on both sides of the strait.” Some also expressed gratitude for Ma Ying-jeou’s ancestral roots-seeking and peaceful exchanges, injecting hope for cross-strait peace. [18]Given the enthusiastic response to such visits, the media can seize this opportunity to set agendas, customize topics, and use platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, etc., to provide comprehensive coverage through photos and videos. During visits to significant cities, tracing the “root” cultural memories of modern history in these cities can interconnect historical, cultural, and modern stories in a thematic format for promotion and publicity. This effort aims to enhance Taiwan youth’s sense of national identity and reinforce their identity as “Chinese.”

Simultaneously, facilitating Taiwanese youth’s participatory observation and experiential exchanges in mainland China will deepen their understanding of various aspects of life and changes in the mainland. For instance, establishing cross-strait “youth elite exchanges” or “youth leader exchanges” programs can form exemplary groups with a strong sense of “One China” identity. [19]By encouraging Taiwanese youth to participate in cross-strait exchange activities, work, and live in mainland China, the goal is to eliminate biases and misunderstandings, gradually nurturing their identity as “Chinese” and members of the Chinese nation.

5.2. Emotional Interaction: Using Social Media to Bridge Cognitive and Emotional Connections among Youth Groups, Eliciting Resonance

With the rise of social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok in Taiwan, it is essential to skillfully utilize the online world to foster integrated development among the youth from both sides nurtured in the Internet age. A

notable example is the music and cultural exchange program “Voice Never Silent - Treasure Island Season,” launched by Mango TV and Hunan TV on March 16, 2023. This program uses classic Taiwanese songs as a medium to initiate musical and cultural exchanges between Taiwan and the mainland, awakening the audience’s memories of Taiwanese music. During Mr. Ma Ying-jeou’s visit to Hunan, the live connection with Hunan TV and Mango TV’s “Voice Never Silent - Treasure Island Season,” featuring a duet performance of “The Moon Represents My Heart,” sparked widespread discussion among netizens on both sides of the strait. Spokesperson Zhu Fenglian of the Taiwan Affairs Office remarked that this program has established a platform for cross-strait music and cultural exchange, awakening shared cultural memories among generations on both sides, promoting mutual understanding and spiritual resonance, guiding audiences, especially the youth, to not forget their roots, seek resonance, and demonstrate the positive and cooperative spirit of people on both sides. [20]

5.3. Cultural Co-creation: Skillfully Utilizing Symbolic and Ritual Interaction in Communication to Strengthen Cross-Strait Community Awareness

In communication, the process serves as a ritual of faith consensus, transmitting collective memories through symbolic forms to strengthen ethnic consensus within the community [21]. Effective ritualized communication, such as highlighting the Clear and Bright Festival ceremonies, can awaken the “root” cultural psyche among Taiwanese youth, reinforcing the cultural and historical memory inheritance of the national community. Through various media forms and platforms, creating a “simulated environment” subtly deepens Taiwanese people’s cognition and attitudes towards the Chinese national community, thereby driving individual aspirations and behaviors.

Moreover, emphasis should be placed on the role of symbolic communication in influencing cognition, attitudes, and behaviors, effectively utilizing visual symbols, language symbols, and non-verbal symbols. For instance, leveraging symbolic symbols such as the Yangtze River and Yellow River, iconic buildings, heroic figures, musical works, and exquisite paintings to retrospectively trace group identity in communication, mobilizing historical memories and patriotic sentiments among community members. [24] Furthermore, media should actively construct new symbolic representations of the community, creating new historical and cultural memories to facilitate the search for roots and origins among people on both sides. At the end of 2023, Youku launched a documentary series “One Flavor on Both Sides,” which comprehensively traces the culinary cultures and evolutionary contexts across the Taiwan Strait, exploring the gustatory nostalgia of the Chinese nation. [22] Centered on human stories and national spirit, the program narrates the shared culinary cultural origins between both sides, presenting “shared memories” inherited through a unique perspective, arousing cultural resonance. Traditional Chinese culture and history encapsulate the spiritual essence of the Chinese nation, and the reproduction of these new symbols continuously refines and perfects “consensus,” ultimately achieving innovation and development in the awareness of the Chinese national community.

6. Conclusion

It is crucial to fully recognize that the media can exert a powerful promoting effect in easing relations between people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. This requires adept and strategic use of media channels. Respecting and honoring ancestral cultural perspectives can propagate the “root” consciousness through media, which is the essence of excellent traditional Chinese culture, a symbol of belief for the Chinese national community, and a collective historical and cultural memory shared by people on both sides of the strait. It must be acknowledged that Taiwan compatriots are an integral part of the Chinese nation. However, currently, due to the promotion by certain politicians of “Taiwan consciousness” and “Taiwan identity,” there is an attempt to sever the roots of blood and culture from the mainland, leading to the alienation of identity among some Taiwanese youth and making the rise of Taiwan independence consciousness increasingly irreversible. This has severed the recognition of Taiwan compatriots towards the mainland, undermining the integrity of the Chinese national community. Therefore, based on historical background and current realities, an analysis of the identity status of Taiwan compatriots is necessary. It is hoped that through the ideological and cultural values of respecting and honoring ancestral cultural perspectives in excellent traditional Chinese culture, cultural and identity recognition among Taiwan compatriots can be awakened. This progression from cognition, emotions, and cultural identity to identity recognition can utilize the power of media communication to set agendas, foster emotional interactions, and co-create culture to strengthen consensus. By relying on interpersonal communication, group communication, and mass communication, a comprehensive and three-dimensional construction of cross-strait community awareness can be achieved, enhancing identity recognition and solidifying the Chinese national community awareness across the strait.

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