

# ***Research on the Influencing Factors of Second-Generation Chinese Cognitive Construction from the Perspective of Identity***

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**Abstract:** The cognitive construction issues of second-generation Chinese immigrants have received widespread attention, but there is still a lack of analysis from the perspective of identity recognition. This article analyzes the influencing factors of cognitive construction for second-generation Chinese immigrants from the viewpoint of identity recognition. This article analyzes how the cognitive construction and social concepts of second-generation Chinese immigrants are related to language and education. Based on this, there are some suggestions in the article. First, achieve the formation of diverse concepts among the second generation of Chinese descendants through family education. Second, from an individual perspective, making a balance between Eastern and Western values to form suitable values. Finally, respecting the cultures of various countries and integrating into mainstream society. Through these analyses and recommendations, it can gain a deeper understanding of the cognitive construction problems faced by second-generation Chinese immigrants and find effective solutions to promote their identity recognition and social integration.

**Keywords:** Second-Generation Chinese immigrants, Graduation, Identity, Cognitive Construction.

## **1. Introduction**

With the globalization of the world and the deepening of educational internationalization, more and more Chinese people are choosing to immigrate abroad, and the presence of people of Chinese descent is becoming increasingly common. The growing number of this group indicates the necessity of strengthening the entire framework and conceptual development of the Chinese worldview.

At present, many studies have explored the ethnic consciousness and self-positioning cognition of Chinese immigrants. With the deepening development of people's self-awareness, people also pay more attention to this field, and research in this aspect is becoming more and more common. There aren't many studies, though, examining the variables that influence second-generation Chinese immigrants' cognitive construction and whether identity awareness has any bearing on it. There will be some cultural collisions as a result of the disparities in Western and Chinese educational theories and behavior guidance. These will make second-generation Chinese people question their Chinese identity, which will have an impact on how their worldview is formed.

Based on this, this paper studies the factors that influence the self-cognition construction of second-generation Chinese immigrants living and studying abroad, focusing on the cognitive construction problems encountered by second-generation Chinese immigrants in their identity, such as identity contradiction, concept contradiction, communication barriers, and so on. In the study of these issues, the project clarified that the identity and cognitive construction of second-generation Chinese immigrants gradually developed from a single and fixed to a multiple and mobile, but there are still inevitably one-sided cognitive constructions due to identity cognitive disorders.

The study of its influencing factors can not only deepen the understanding of the second generation of overseas Chinese about self-cognition but also help to strengthen the formation of overseas Chinese self-cognition. It can also explore the new consciousness formed by the second generation of Chinese people under the collision of Chinese and foreign cultures, and promote diversified development.

## **2. The Problems of Building Cognition**

### **2.1. Identity Conflict**

Second-generation Chinese immigrants grow up in a Western environment, receiving Western education, and friends and teachers who are all Westerners. To a certain extent, perhaps their identity recognition is closer to that of Westerners. However, research shows that most second-generation Chinese immigrants' parents--first-generation Chinese immigrants, who grew up in traditional Chinese society and have a clear and strong identification with their ethnic identity. They also teach their understanding of their Chinese identity through family education to their descendants, ensuring that they do not forget their Chinese identity [1]. Moreover, second-generation Chinese descendants carry Chinese blood physiologically, which is beyond doubt. From this perspective, the identity of second-generation Chinese immigrants should be more aligned with that of Chinese. The dual pressure from the environment and family has led to contradictions in the identity construction of second-generation Chinese immigrants. They often struggle to make a clear judgment about their identity, which can leave them feeling lonely and anxious [2]. The sense of belonging that second-generation Chinese immigrants struggle to find leaves them caught in the cracks between two worlds, unsure of where they belong. Their unique identity makes them easily prone to racial discrimination and stereotypes, which undoubtedly poses a significant blow to the cognitive development of second-generation Chinese immigrants. Therefore, the confusion and contradictions regarding identity among second-generation Chinese immigrants are one of the reasons that influence cognitive construction.

### **2.2. Conception Conflict**

In China, people pay great attention to blood relations and geographical ties. As Mr. Fei Xiaotong mentioned in his work "From the Soil", the Chinese value family even more, and relationships ripple out like the waves created by throwing a stone into a lake, expanding in layers. The West is like bundles of neatly tied firewood, existing independently [3]. The West leans more towards individualism, emphasizing personal rights and freedoms. The traditional Chinese societal values of hierarchy and Confucian thought differ from the individualism and heroism emphasized in Western society. There is a significant difference in concepts between the East and the West. Second-generation Chinese immigrants growing up in a Western environment may question and misunderstand traditional Chinese values. However, family education helps them to learn from a young age that they need to learn these traditional concepts, which leads to a simultaneous acceptance of two completely different sets of beliefs. Whether to adopt Western concepts or to embrace traditional Chinese values has become an important issue for second-generation Chinese immigrants. The clash between these two different perspectives creates contradictions that make it difficult for

them to determine which values to uphold, leaving them in a state of confusion. The differences in concepts between the East and the West, as well as the varying degrees to which second-generation Chinese Americans accept these concepts, also influence the cognitive construction of second-generation Chinese Americans.

### **2.3. Communication Barrier**

The cognitive construction of second-generation Chinese immigrants is also related to communication and language. The primary reason for the communication barriers faced by second-generation Chinese immigrants is their way of thinking. The differences in thinking styles are essentially closely related to the differences between Chinese and Western languages. Chinese characters evolved from pictographs, so when Chinese people see a character or a word, their minds can visualize the imagery that the character depicts. For example, in "Chen Yu Luo Yan" what comes to the minds of Chinese people is the scene of a fish sinking to the bottom of the water and a wild goose plummeting from the sky. Then the deeper meaning behind the idioms is the description of the beautiful people. The structure of Chinese is not rigorously arranged, which leads to a certain ambiguity in the language. As for Western languages, take the most common one, English, as an example. English consists of a rigorous grammatical structure that requires output based on strict logic. Between sentences and words, there must be correct and smooth logical connections; otherwise, it will result in awkward sentences, leading to misunderstandings in communication. The language environment for second-generation Chinese immigrants is the Western English environment, which emphasizes accuracy and logic. However, at home, parents may teach Chinese, a language that is vague, abstract, and does not prioritize precision. If one speaks English without the precise logic that is often present in Chinese, Westerners will find it very difficult to understand what the Chinese are saying. The systems and pronunciations of the two languages are quite different. Western societies generally use English, while in China, aside from a few regions that use dialects, Mandarin is predominantly spoken. When these two distinct languages are abruptly approached together, inevitably leads to communication difficulties. The learning of these two different languages leads to a divergence in the thinking patterns of second-generation Chinese immigrants, thereby affecting the construction of their cognition.

## **3. The Reasons**

### **3.1. Education Conception**

#### **3.1.1. Family Education**

In the earliest period, most Chinese immigrants to the West were low-income laborers with generally low levels of education, engaged in physical labor. They came overseas to get more job opportunities and found employment in the Western labor market. These early immigrants maintained traditional Chinese culture but struggled to integrate well into Western society due to their lower levels of education. These first-generation immigrants have a strong sense of national identity and are more aligned with traditional Chinese culture [1]. This generation of immigrants, who have a deep affection for their homeland, will place greater emphasis on the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture in family education and will inform their descendants, the second generation of Chinese immigrants, about their ethnic identity as Chinese. Children from these families will develop a strong sense of national identity and have a clearer understanding of their own identity [4]. For those immigrants who are not very attached to their homeland, their descendants will correspondingly have a weaker sense of national identity and will lead a more Westernized lifestyle [5].

### 3.1.2. School Education

In Western society, most teachers in schools are Westerners. The values they accept and endorse are more liberal and open, and they greatly focus on the experiences and growth during the process rather than the outcome. Western civilization has always been filled with a strong sense of "exploratory consciousness", and its educational system places greater emphasis on logic and reason, which has become the driving force behind their continuous exploration of the mysteries of the world. Therefore, the core of Western education lies in guiding students to think and explore the world, enhancing their individuality. Second-generation Chinese in Western schools develop their individuality more, learning to enjoy the process and explore the essence of things, rather than just blindly pursuing results. Through school education in Western society, second-generation Chinese Americans have developed essential differences from traditional Chinese students, exhibiting more unique personal characteristics and a richer array of interests and hobbies. School education for second-generation Chinese immigrants has fostered their independence and inquisitiveness, practical skills, and spirit of teamwork.

### 3.2. Cultural Collision

Second-generation Chinese immigrants in the West experience a culture that is distinctly different from traditional Chinese culture. Firstly, the social perspectives of China and the West differ. China emphasizes collective interests and values the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. In Chinese society, relationships among people are close-knit, and there is less emphasis on individual uniqueness and creativity; instead, greater importance is placed on group harmony. In Western society, there is a focus on individual development, with values centered around the individual. Emphasizing individual uniqueness highlights a person's efforts to achieve success and contribute to society. Additionally, the educational perspectives of the East and West differ. Chinese social education is primarily based on ethics and morality, with propriety and righteousness at its core, emphasizing the importance of respecting teachers and valuing moral education in schools. The current examination-oriented education assessment system has certain similarities with the ancient imperial examination system, both reflecting authority and focusing on the impartation and reinforcement of knowledge, while relatively neglecting the cultivation of practical abilities. At the same time, family education and school education complement each other but often neglect the cultivation of students' psychological growth and creativity. Western education is based on humanism, emphasizing reason and science, and valuing individual development. In Western schools, the role of teachers is often that of a consultant or advisor, and the teacher-student relationship is relatively equal. Under the influence of the ideals of freedom, democracy, human rights, and technology, Western education emphasizes the cultivation of individuality and encourages innovation and invention.

In addition, the Western education system is built on a market economy framework, granting higher education institutions considerable autonomy. In addition, the lifestyle habits of China and the West are completely different. For example, in China, people prefer to drink hot water and eat hot food, emphasizing balanced nutrition and fresh ingredients; whereas in the West, people tend to drink cold water, consume more fast food, and cook with less oil. Second-generation Chinese immigrants often experience the clash of Chinese and Western cultures due to their identity, as well as the differences between these two cultures. Due to growing up in a Western society and experiencing Western culture, while also receiving education in Chinese culture at home, the cognitive development of second-generation Chinese immigrants may be influenced by both cultures.

Due to the living environment not being a traditional Chinese society, second-generation Chinese immigrants, even though they retain a sense of identity towards China, find it difficult to thrive in Western society because they cannot receive affirmation in their daily lives [6]. As the cultural level

of Chinese immigrants rises, the education of the second-generation Chinese is becoming increasingly Westernized. They are sent to local schools to study alongside local students, gaining exposure to Western society and the Western education system. There is a segment of the Chinese diaspora that has completely abandoned Chinese culture and values, dedicating themselves wholeheartedly to learning Western ideas. These second-generation Chinese will identify more as "Banana", meaning they have legal status in China but do not identify with their Chinese identity, instead yearning for the West [7]. Due to the lack of traditional cultural education in China, they lack a sense of national identity, and their cognitive construction differs from that of traditional Chinese people.

#### 4. Discussion

Education is the key means of transmitting knowledge and culture, allowing human wisdom to be passed down and developed. Through education, individuals can acquire the necessary skills and abilities to adapt to the ever-changing social and economic environment. Education also promotes the development of critical thinking and creativity, enabling individuals to analyze problems more effectively and propose solutions. It fosters civic awareness and a sense of social responsibility, encouraging people to actively engage in social affairs and drive social progress. At the same time, education has a positive impact on an individual's mental health, enhancing self-confidence and a sense of self-efficacy. Therefore, it is essential to promote the construction of a cognitive system for the second generation of Chinese immigrants, which relies on education from various aspects.

First of all, in terms of family education, parents should help students clarify their own identity. Second-generation Chinese should recognize their identity as Chinese, maintain cultural confidence, and find a balance while receiving Western education, establishing their own cultural identity, and forming a diverse sense of identity [8]. Family education plays an important role in the cultural integration of second-generation Chinese immigrants, and their growth is inseparable from the support of family education. The first generation of Chinese immigrants needs to accurately and truthfully inform their descendants about their Chinese ethnic identity and provide proper education on ethnic awareness. The parenting style and attitude towards the culture of parents will directly influence their children's cultural identity and adaptability. Therefore, parents need to strengthen the sense of identity among second-generation Chinese immigrants, guiding and leading them to build a comprehensive cognitive system within a multicultural context.

From an individual perspective, due to the differences in values between Chinese and Western cultures, second-generation Chinese Americans need to reconcile these two sets of values. For example, harmonizing China's collectivism with Western individualism according to social environments and personal growth needs to form a value system that suits oneself. In terms of social adaptation, second-generation Chinese may face cultural adjustment issues in social interactions. At this time, they need to respect traditional culture while integrating into mainstream society and building extensive interpersonal relationships. While upholding and promoting traditional Chinese culture, it should also respect the cultures of other countries and adjust to and adapt to local cultures in different nations.

#### 5. Conclusion

This paper has argued that there are several problems with building cognitive construction for second-generation Chinese immigrants and has discussed the reasons that second-generation Chinese immigrants face many assortment difficulties in building cognitive construction. This thesis has provided a deeper insight into identity and race and it contributes to the understanding of the differences in culture, social concepts, and languages between the China and West.

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