

The Identity Dilemma among Inter-Generational Immigrants

-- Take the United States in the 21st Century as an Example

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Abstract: For the United States, immigration has rapidly diversified its ethnic composition. With the arrival of people from different regions with different cultural origins and religious beliefs, some social problems have arisen while constantly exploring new living Spaces. Therefore, in order to solve the problem of the social identity of American immigrants and the identity dilemma between generations of immigrants, this paper adopts the literature research method and finds that from the initial “entry verification” to “voucher entry”, either way, will bring the experience of belonging to American immigrants. Differences and even contradictions between groups caused by racial differences and cultural barriers are everywhere in society, and even new immigrants will produce huge contradictions due to differences in identity and cultural identity. Only by grasping their own identity and sticking to their own “Tao” in mother culture and immigrant culture can they avoid the end of duckweed in chaotic times.

Keywords: the United States, inter-generational migration, identity, cultural identity

1. Introduction

Regional integration and multiple nationalities have led to the uncertainty and vulnerability of immigrants' social identities. As a sizeable immigrant country, the United States is an indispensable factor in formulating immigration policies, whether based on the human rights market or sovereignty.

Under different immigration policies, immigrant groups naturally have different behavior habits and characteristics. The research of many predecessors laid the foundation for these fields. However, different policies not only caused the difference in the behavior of the two generations of immigrants, but also made the two generations of immigrants appear to have different cultural characteristics.

Of course, immigrants from the same place and periods may fall into different difficulties for some reason, and there will be certain friction between generations of immigrants. At some point, discrimination between generations of immigrants was even worse than discrimination against immigrants by indigenous people. In the eyes of native Americans, the flood of immigrants has challenged the nation's identity structure. Moreover, as the structure of identity has changed, the legitimacy and effectiveness of some policies have also been compromised.

Therefore, this research tries to understand the causes of these dilemmas, understand how the identity of immigrants and new immigrants is formed and distinguished, and hope to provide feasible

solutions to the dilemma of cultural conflict between immigrants and new immigrants.

2. The Causes of American Immigrant Identity Problems

As a country of immigrants, the United States attaches great importance to immigration. In particular, since the beginning of the 21st century, whether it is the last Trump administration or the current Biden administration, the formulation of regulations on immigration issues has always changed in large numbers (According to statistics, in his first 100 days in office, Biden issued a total of 94 immigration executive orders, which far exceeded Trump's 100 days of New Deal immigration executive orders.) [1]. The identity of immigrants is not only a process of natural migration, but also a process, just like the process of "born" rights like native Americans when foreign ethnic groups obtain citizenship rights. In order to accept the baptism of naturalization from the native of the immigrant country in a short period of time, it is necessary to rebuild their identity as original citizens of the immigrant country in strict accordance with the test of the audit process, so as to promote immigrants to obtain "born" qualifications like Americans. Therefore, in the process of obtaining this qualification, a generation of immigrants had to accept the test of naturalization in their native countries, and in the process of naturalization, there naturally appeared the deviation of ethnic identity.

As an old immigrant country, citizenship rights in the United States could have played a role in strengthening integration [2]. This right is at least legally recognized. However, in the process of social development, the problems encountered in legal rights are more complex and changeable. The so-called mainstream of society is constantly being reshaped by immigration, and it is also a good target when society is torn apart and looking for a scapegoat for internal political conflict. This is despite the fact that many scholars have presented numerous data in their papers to prove that there is no positive correlation between immigration and crime rates [3]. Moreover, many immigrants still do jobs that Americans do not want to do [4]. Therefore, there is no positive correlation between the problem of employment shortage and immigration. However, the anxiety caused by the overall socio-economic downturn and the decline in the quality of life needs an outlet, and the anti-immigrant voice is intensified.

Furthermore, the Trump administration has introduced more policies to reduce immigration. The Biden administration welcomed immigrants in order to "reflect American values [5]. The short, sharp policy shift certainly had an impact on locals. The birth problem of illegal immigrants not only causes a cultural identity crisis but also brings great social troubles to the proposition of The Times that human rights are higher than sovereignty. This is followed by large-scale illegal immigration from neighboring countries that takes advantage of reproductive capacity, dragging down the productivity of entire countries. Immigration is not the original sin, but disagreeing with your mainstream values and still being loyal to your home country is the original sin, and assimilation at the heart of immigration becomes a cultural issue. The rise of anti-immigration and the far right is not surprising, as the combination of a sharp rise in immigration as a share of the population and rising domestic tensions has led politicians to use the rise of populism to seek external enemies to divert attention.

3. The Difference Between the Plight of First-generation Immigrants and Second-generation Immigrants

Ethnic identity (The term ethnic group is used to describe the result of cultural contact between two groups, or the inclusion of a small group into a larger society.) [6] is the cognitive and emotional attachment of ethnic members to their own ethnic belonging, the key of which lies in self-ascription and ascription by others [7]. That is the individual's distinction between our race and his race. Once you recognize the characteristics that distinguish you from others, you will inevitably fall into an identity dilemma.

Different from the natural tortuous confrontation between the culture of the immigrant mother and the immigrant country, for the second generation of immigrants born and raised in the United States, the dilemma of dual culture has frequently appeared in daily social and political life since their values have not been formed. Their parents are the first generation of immigrants who grew up in their native land and are deeply influenced by their mother's culture. In order to avoid their children being lost in the mainstream white culture, they hope their children can abide by the traditions and concepts of their mother's culture. However, due to long-term disconnection with the mother culture, the culture passed down only by the historical memory of the previous generation has long been unrecognizable or even decayed and is completely unable to be compatible with the mainstream culture in daily contact. Therefore, compared with the first-generation immigrants, the second-generation immigrants, who have lived in the current country since childhood, are more influenced by the current country's environment and culture, so their sense of identity as citizens of the current country is also higher than that of the first-generation immigrants.

The trade-off is to reduce the likelihood of discrimination and isolation in order to become "one of our own" with people of the same cultural background. The second generation of immigrants chose to be assimilated into the mainstream culture and became Americans with American cultural characteristics. Friendships are often thought to be linked to cultural identity (This refers to national identity and national identity). While adolescents' racial identity is influenced by their peers of the same race (such as their own skin color), their national identity is influenced by their peers in the larger local environment. Due to the lack of memory of the mother culture, there was a strict boundary between the two cultures from the beginning. At the early stage, with vague identification, they could not touch the mother culture that matched their identity, and were excluded as "others" by the mainstream society of the United States [8]. Being the "other" of the group that is discriminated against and evaluated as low value in society will not only cause certain psychological distress to individuals in the group, but also affect their sense of identity. According to current research on migration, the link is twofold [9], Some people will feel isolated from the general community because of discrimination, and more identify with their ethnic background. Immigrants are deeply troubled by the perception that they do not belong to any group. Immigrants who lack recognition lack a sense of belonging, and it is inevitable that they will be anxious. When faced with the ensuing cultural and political issues, the existing understanding will be shaken. On the other hand, some people will hate their ethnic background because of discrimination, deny their cultural background and try to integrate into the local environment. These people are often driven by identity, and once they use this identity, they wear colored glasses, and gain a sense of belonging, uniqueness and status while filtering some information to affect the perception of the world, which leads to incomprehensible cynicism and even political and cultural discrimination.

The xenophobic discrimination that a generation of immigrants receives when they arrive in their new country comes not so much from the real decent natives as from the previous generation of immigrants to the city [10]. This group tends to overemphasize their connection to the city. They show off everything they have gained since arriving in the new city and compare it with the newcomers. There is no curiosity about an independent individual, only the other party as their own brush of existence tools. Although the concept of trans-nationalism is specifically inculcated, the closeness of the diaspora to indigenous peoples and the international status of the home country also influence identity. The main influence on identity is language. Therefore, in order to show that they fit in, they often prefer to communicate in a non-native language [11]. People always seek approval [12], and the search for identity often leads to egotism. In the pursuit of identity, not only will they look for identity, but they will also pursue projection. The incomplete and dis-identified reality will prompt people to seek a projection of the future, but as long as the projection exists, immigrants will

have a sense of unreality and place their expectations in the field of thinking, just like the pendulum is fluctuating, and they will not be able to find relief from this identification dilemma.

4. The Impact of Distinct Cultural Boundaries on Immigrant Identity

Moreover, most identity dilemmas cannot escape the idea that civilization is seen as an “entity”. The first attribute of “entity” is Extension [13]. In other words, immigrants draw a physical boundary between the culture of the mother and the culture of the country of immigration. Just as a man wants to identify himself, he must establish an “other” in opposition to himself. Huntington believes that “unless we hate people who are not of our ethnicity, we cannot love them.” [14] In other words, to love my civilization, one must hate the civilization that is not mine. This one-sided way of dividing civilization is obviously no longer suitable for the diversified development of modern society. However, other issues arising in the immigration process are more likely to be used as a raft of party and government disputes than the problem of the civilizational division of immigrants.

In addition to the above problems, the emergence of the ghetto problem has also greatly stimulated the nerves of native Americans. “ghetto” [15] has emerged because some groups who emigrate in search of a better quality of life remain confined to their native communities. They willingly accept the onslaught of language, culture and even national feeling from their home countries. This emotional and cultural link creates a separate ethnic group in the city. This is not so much the result of the conflict between foreign culture and native American culture, but the refuge of immigrants’ own culture. Immigrants enjoy leisure and self-reliance in the community protected by their mother’s cultural atmosphere, and their life is obviously disconnected from the mainstream society in the United States. They have independent social structures, political organizations influenced by religious beliefs, independent commercial systems, and specialized ethnic schools. Ethnic groups in the “ghetto”(A group of people in a society who share a culture, especially one who shares a language and can pass it on without reservation.) [16] deviate from the path of adaptation to other countries to pursue the lifestyle of the original ethnic group, which is regarded as the continuation of the mother culture. In the eyes of native Americans, these faithless immigrants are not fully assimilated.

This lifestyle of immigrants has stimulated the conservative sentiments of native Americans, and people have doubts about the “loyalty” of foreign ethnic groups. As the ideological beliefs and cultural roots of immigrants are increasingly different from those of native people, people find that these immigrants are different from them in many aspects, and the awareness of ethnic estrangement is becoming more and more intense. The national identity of a country mainly includes two aspects: the common historical experience and the common culture produced on the basis of this experience; The second is a commitment to shared political values and ideals [17]. In the minds of native Americans, the requirement of “homogeneity” is extremely harsh - whether they agree with the liberal political principles and political ideals of the United States has become the main symbol of immigrant groups’ certification of American citizenship. In this sense, American identity is based less on ethnic identity and less on the aforementioned shared historical experience and Anglo-Saxon cultural traditions than on “a commitment to the principles of American liberalism and the American political system” [18]. Therefore, in order to unite and even control immigrants with different identity backgrounds, the United States has put more emphasis on institutional and ideological identification. The definition of freedom is also more attuned to the feelings of native Americans.

The Americanization movement broke up the deep-rooted national culture of various immigrant groups, and the languages of various ethnic groups were almost destroyed. In the long run, immigrant groups had to take the initiative to change under the pressure of forced assimilation, so the old national identity gradually faded. Identity is an attribute that every natural person has. The need for a normal life makes immigrants’ need for a new identity more and more urgent. Tajfel’s concept of “social identity” [19] indicates that identity is an individual’s internal experience of self-cognition and

emotional attitude, which is not only an expression of self-cognition and emotional expression, but also a cognitive and emotional expression of self-positioning and role in social environment. Identity is not fixed; it changes with time, social circumstances, and individual experiences. That is to say, the individual can recognize that he belongs to a particular social group, and at the same time, recognize the emotional and value meaning that being a member of the group brings to him (A social group is defined as consisting of more than two people who first identify and evaluate themselves in the same way, and second, who have the same definition of who they are and what attributes they have. Finally, they followed the same pattern of interactions with non-group members.) [20]. By identifying more strongly with certain groups than others, one makes those groups more central and accessible to one's heart. However, a person's situation will make identification with some groups more important than others. Because from the moment you set foot on any piece of land other than your hometown, you are searching for the confirmation of your own identity in the cycle of identification and rejection. In the change of the new society, the immigrants who are loyal to their mothers become the "swingers" between the two cultures temporarily and finally have to fall into the dilemma of seeking a new identity.

In the process of first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants seeking identity, their social roles in occupations and communities and the cognitive and emotional attitudes of social members will have an impact on individual identity. For example, a generation of immigrants is older, so when they start to contact social assimilation after the maturity of life values, they will be accompanied by individual understanding, so that in the process of seeking identity, they will be mixed with the guidance of their mother culture. The second-generation immigrants are influenced by the cultural environment, values, customs and traditions of the immigrant country since their birth. Cultural factors are one of the bases for the formation and development of individual identity. Different cultural environments, values, traditions, historical events and social changes will have an impact on the formation and development of individual identity. For example, the generation that lived through war and revolution tends to have a strong national and ethnic identity, while the generation that lived through the market economy and globalization is more focused on the plurality and free choice of individual identities. Therefore, the first and second generations of immigrants start with different levels of connection to their immigrant culture and naturally diverge over time.

Of course, any culture develops in dynamic change, and naturally so do the attributes of identity that are shaped by culture [21]. Although today's second-generation immigrants have long regarded the United States as the source of their national identity, under the influence of racism and xenophobia, it is still difficult for American immigrants to completely complete the Americanization of identity and the peaceful coexistence of various races.

5. Conclusions

Although the United States often describes itself as a "melting pot of nationalities", the xenophobia and racial discrimination that have emerged since the founding of the United States have had a profound impact on the formulation of American immigration policies. The large-scale immigration invasion not only changed the demographic composition of the United States, but also greatly stimulated the contradictions between immigrants of different races and between native people and immigrants. The exclusion of religions and the incompatibility of mainstream and foreign cultures greatly stimulated the nerves of exclusionists and gave rise to nationalist ideas based on racial superiority.

Looking back at the development of immigration from the beginning of the 21st century to the present, it is found that with the changes in immigration policies and the development of social conditions, the sense of identity and sense of following the home culture of immigrants of all ethnic groups in the United States has been declining in the general trend, and they have lost the absolute

inheritance of the native culture. At the same time, because the classes of immigrants are very different, the cultural identity of different classes of immigrants is also different. Class includes one's social status and knowledge. Without sufficient social status to carry the consequences of identity dilemmas and a lack of cultural inclusion and understanding, it is difficult not to fall into narrow national scenarios.

The creation of the universe and human life are above all else [22]. Therefore, in the process of seeking recognition, the "human" side is more important. This kind of "identification" of the life world (identification of people's livelihood, identification of human ethics) is obviously more inclusive and has a more solid foundation than the "identification" of the idea world (identification of doctrine, identification of ideological system). Whether the immigrant nation can accept the idea of dividing the immigrant nation according to culture rather than blood, determines the openness of the immigrant country to the immigrant nation. Therefore, when facing identity, it is more relaxed, which is conducive to better integration of immigrants into the new environment. This is because native peoples understand their civilization as a complex system of factors that can constantly generate new meanings and create new values, so they do not have fear and hostility toward new factors.

In fact, in the United States, where the degree of diversity is extremely developed, the centripetal force required for the formation of cultural whirlpools is far greater than the will of each nation to pursue independence [23]. The multi-culture, which is formed in response to the pluralistic society, expects symbiosis rather than division. Therefore, the desire for "harmonious coexistence" or "harmony and symbiosis" in this social environment has become a compromise way for immigrants to stand firm between the mother culture and the culture of the immigrant country. To transform into action is to actively accept the progressiveness of other cultures, transform the excellent elements of other cultures into a new quality of self-culture and adhere to the principle of peaceful coexistence of different cultures. Of course, there are also immigrants who choose to stick to their mother culture or accept the culture of the immigrant country completely, but the former can only last for a short time, and the latter can not be fully achieved in a short time. From this point of view, "seeking common ground while shelving differences" and "harmonious coexistence" are the only ways to reduce conflicts. Respect for each other's cultural background, values and customs is the foundation of effective communication. Be aware of the differences between different cultures and embrace "different cultures" with respect and tolerance. Both sides may need to make compromises and show flexibility in order to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. Respecting the needs and interests of both parties is crucial, particularly in a diverse society that values immigration. Striving for a win-win outcome is the best approach to ensure a positive and sustainable solution.

When multi-nationalities communicate and collide in a vast region, there will inevitably be some cultural contests between different nationalities. Due to the influence of social environment and ethnic composition, a specific national culture may occupy the right to speak within a specific time limit and become the prevailing mainstream culture. The control of the mainstream culture makes the identity of immigrants more difficult. Reduce or even eliminate the impact of social changes on immigrants, change stereotypes induced by racism, and prevent the immigrant mother culture from becoming a mere formality and becoming an unnecessary cultural imprint left in the yellowed text. These practices are obviously more conducive to the realization of immigrants' identity and national identity in the United States, so that native Americans can experience the existence and value of immigrants, so as to promote the permanent vitality of social development. In the future, how native Americans build an identity in line with the historical trend on the basis of respecting the immigrant mother culture will become a more important place to pay attention to.

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