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A Journey Towards Multiculturalism: Cultural Identity Development Among Chinese International Students
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Introduction and Methodology
This qualitative, narrative research study examined the stories told by six undergraduate Chinese international students about their transitional journeys from a monocultural to multicultural identity. During the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of self, Chinese culture, and American culture. Participants were also prompted to reflect on their past experiences in China leading up to their arrival to the United States as well as those while attending the University of Dayton (UD). Findings showed evidence of progression in their cultural identity development from an understanding of their own nationality to how their American experiences have impacted their perception of self.

Understanding of Chinese Identity
When asked what Chinese identity means to them, the participants portrayed a great sense of patriotism.
- Dong shared that his father taught him to “never forget where you come from.” To Dong, being Chinese is “an identity priority” and “[he] loves being Asian. There are times when the Chinese way of thinking is more advanced than American people.”

Transitioning to U.S. Culture
Coping Mechanisms: 1) Intentional engagement with American culture and people. 2) Reflecting and making-meaning of the differences. 3) Go with the flow.
- “When [American people and I] deal with doing things in a different way due to our cultures, I am very happy to talk with them, like this is a cultural difference, like this is the way our culture will deal with it.” – Bai

Integration into U.S. Culture at UD
On-campus engagements such as student organizations, student employment, volunteerism and more.
- “I am very confident right now. I am; I can tell that I enjoy living here. I feel like there is no extra limitation on me right now.” – Dong
- “I probably fully adapted. At least I try to get to know the difference between us. At least I have a clear reason of why I couldn’t hang out with them.” – Li
- Yang involved herself in American culture because she values making the most of the study abroad experience; she tries to gather experiences she could not get in China.

Multicultural Identity
Participants’ sense of Chinese identity was impacted to different degrees.
- “I also sometimes feel whether I am a Chinese or not. I mean, I am Chinese. However, I also sometimes feel like I cannot assimilate into the Chinese society. I also cannot assimilate into American society. There is no way I can get to the perfect assimilation. I only merely adapted to the American society.” – Bai
- “... a lot of deep emotional things still happen in my mind via the Chinese system. But, in terms of everyday, since that’s my everyday life things, I process in English.” – Li

Conclusions
Regardless of the duration of stay outside of China and how much participants adapted to American culture, their perceived national identity does not waiver.
- Participants felt that they have grown into a new identity that exists in-between Chinese and American cultures, a “culture blender.”

Recommmendations
Future research on the resiliency of international students in their identity development as they engage in meaning making of Chinese and American experiences.
- Higher education administrators could provide more platforms for international students to share their stories of transition and how their experiences shaped them into who they are today.

Select References