

## Chinese changing identities in globalised world

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*The cultural map is changing in the globalised world. The quickly developing economy changes the identities of Chinese quietly. Typically, the young generation is more individualistic, the traditional kinship weakens, and the ideology on love, sex and marriage changes. Because of Chinese birth control policy, the children and young people who grow up as the only child in her or his family respect individualism more than collectivism influenced by movies of Hollywood and Western TV soap plays. What they think most is in terms of "I", not "you" or "they". Kinship in China is now much weaker in Mainland China than it was in the past. In fact, there are many empty-nest families, in which children have left home to seek success in metropolis in China and cities in Foreign Countries, and their old, sick parents are suffering in loneliness. In the Chinese countryside, a lot of young couples refuse to support their old parents. Some old parents are even driven out and suffer from hunger. Now in China, DINK marriages and sexless marriages are common in the cities. More than 400,000 Chinese people have married foreigners till 2006. In 2005, more than 70,000 Japanese men and 41,000 Korean men have married Chinese women. Rich men change girlfriends or sex partners frequently. Some even keep special, private houses where their girlfriends live apart from their wives. Thousands of workers, drawn from farms to jobs in the cities, are sexually hungry and visit illegal striptease shows frequently. The new generation of Chinese people does not even value virginity very highly. There are too many quick marriages in China now. This was especially true in the lucky wedding year of 2006. Some married quickly and divorced very soon.*

**Key words:** change, identities, individualization, kinship, love

### Introduction

Seeing from the space, our planet Earth is unique. In the universe, we, human beings are unique. As we know, the advanced technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has shortened the time of travel from one country to another and turned the earth into a global village, which was first mentioned by the Canadian scholar Marshall McLuhan. The technology not only does it, but also makes human beings to recognize that we are facing the same challenges: warmer

climate, running-out oil and other natural resources, children and young people's addiction to computer games, pollution and terrorism attacking. The world is globalized, which is not controlled by our will. In the globalization, people on the earth have developed into two directions; one group is to change, adapt themselves to it and try to live better in it, while the other group of people is against globalization, refuses to change and even turn into extremist opposition to other cultures. The

cultural map is changing in the globalized world.

In the globalization and with the help of the Internet, identities are changing quietly in many cultures. With the rapidly developing economy, it also happens in Chinese culture. What is typical is the individualization of young generation, weakening of traditional kinship, and changing ideology on love, sex and marriage.

**Research aims:** To find changing identities in Chinese culture in the globalization.

**Research objectives:** to identify the facts and statistics of new papers and other media resources for a reliable data on the changing identities.

**Research methods:** critical or discursive analysis.

## **Individualization**

### ***The new selfish group – the generation of strawberry of NEET***

Because of Chinese birth control policy, children and young people respect individualism more than collectivism, influenced by movies of Hollywood and Western TV soap plays. What they think most is in terms of “I”, not “you” or “they”. But most Americans value individualism and are responsible to society, while a lot of Chinese new individualists are irresponsible to it. They are strict with others and think others should be nice with moral standards of society while they allow themselves the disrespect these standards. They will fight with others for small interest and give up easily. When facing difficulties, they will

retreat to the cover of their families and rely on their parents. They have become a NEET generation – which means jobless youth between 15 and 34. Among them, there is a large group of young people who have graduated from college but refuse to work or accept any job training (it stands for Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

Of course, there are also quite a lot of people who take job-training classes but still cannot find jobs. But they live in luxury, and Chinese parents tend to take on the burden of taking care of them quietly, according to the Chinese tradition. They are called the Strawberry Generation, a term coined by a Taiwanese journalist and popular in China. Strawberries start out good but go rotten easily<sup>1</sup>.

People of the Strawberry Generation in Mainland China are headaches for human resource managers. They quit jobs too easily, and they are irresponsible. It is hard for them to be thoughtful and cooperate with others. They are only about themselves.

The most strawberries have been brought up in large cities such as Shanghai and Beijing. There are rarely strawberries in small cities, especially in western China or in the rural area.

### ***Serious competition and moving people***

The development of marketing and the bankruptcy of many businesses have forced people to move to new cities for their jobs. Many retired people follow their sons

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2005/09/12/2003271331>

and daughters to the different cities. They make new friends in the new cities. It is hard for them to keep the original ties with their old friends. Robert Smith's father-in-law retired from his job in Wuhan and went to live with his daughter and son-in-law in Quzhou, Zhejiang Province in China. When the father-in-law came to the new city, he had nobody to gamble with. He happened to meet several elderly and middle-aged ladies and gentlemen in a public park where they unusually get together to sing and dance because of his singing. They soon became good friends. They gather together to sing and dance, and they usually have parties. The father-in-law is busy with the activities instead of gambling. He told Robert that he had almost forgotten his old friends who only knew how to gamble, and he valued the new friendships much more. Modernization can also be positive, as the changes brought about by modernization previously mentioned have been negative ones.

### ***The various choices of the information age***

The information age has provided people with many choices. People, especially young people, have developed new cultural tastes. Korean TV shows, Japanese cartoons, Starbucks, American pop music, fast food, and computer games provide Chinese young people many new forms of entertainment. People organize new circles of friends. It is now popular in Beijing for people to get together organize through the Internet to eat out together. After eating and saying goodbye, they become strangers again.

Friendship was very stable in the past as a tradition. It was common for people to keep it in their life. But it is now also something changing in China. Some people can afford cars while their friends cannot. If they are accustomed to enjoy tourism by group driving, they should choose new friends. As enthusiasts people would spend much longer with their new friends than their old friends. After some time, the old friends will be distant. Something similar happens with fans of horseback riding, archery, skiing, and camping.

Some old customs still remain. Many people still do business, handle administrative things and settle struggles and quarrels according to relationships and not universal rules. Many people still prefer the company of people or students they are familiar with to strangers. Yet competition in the society is forcing everyone to change if they want their businesses to remain profitable or to keep their positions in administrative offices. The things that have changed and are changing in Chinese society are changing Chinese culture and are being recorded in the history of China.

Changes in productivity should certainly cause production relationships to change. This will certainly change interpersonal relationships and cause society to change. China is running quickly toward a new, modernized, informational society. Some old culture is going away, and some new culture is being produced. That does not mean that the old is bad and the new is good.

The old customs of kinship and collectivism are losing out to temporary friendships and individualism.

### ***Traditional kinship in China***

Kinship was ever the most important part of Chinese culture in Chinese thousands of history. Kinship in China is now much weaker in Mainland China than it was in the past. In fact, there are a lot of empty-nest families in which the children have left home to run after their success in metropolis in China and cities in Foreign Countries, and their old, sick parents are suffering in loneliness.

In many one-child families, the children are superior to ascending generations, which go against history belief and practice. They ride their grandpas around on the floor. The adult members of the families give children nearly everything they want. The children usually argue, shout at their parents, and reject food that is prepared for them.

In the countryside, some young couples spend the savings of their parents on their marriages or businesses. In the end, they refuse to support their parents. In a village in Shanxi Province, an old lady had to live for fifteen days with the families of each of her children according to the report of Program: the Morality in Channel 1, CCTV in 2005. Sometimes, she was even driven out or suffered from hunger. Many parents had to sue their children in court to have their children support them in their lives.

The report of La Agencia EFE, S.A. said on December 9, 2006: "A survey on 10400 old farmers in the countryside who are more than 60 in 31 provinces in China shows that 45% of the old live separately from their children, 5% face problems of food, 69% have no exchange clothes and 67% cannot afford medicine.

A daughter-in-law in a village in Hebei Province cursed her mother-in-law and pulled her hair as they walked around the village. Although Chinese identities on kinship are changing among some people, there are still many who are kind to their parents.

### ***Love, sex and marriage***

#### ***Love and marriage in China***

In China, love and marriage are celebrated in various colourful ways. Some relationships are traditional, whereas others are different from traditional norms. Still others follow the Western style. Some are so modern that even Westerners would be surprised. First-time sexual experiences for adolescent girls and boys now occur much earlier than in the past. In large cities, the average age of the girls and boys for first-time sexual experiences is seventeen, according to a survey by the Sociology Department of Renmin University of China.

The scope of sex has also gone to an extreme. Rich men change girlfriends or sex partners frequently. Some even keep special, private houses where their girlfriends live apart from their wives. Thousands of workers, drawn from farms to jobs in the cities, are sexually hungry and visit illegal striptease shows frequently. Many young male workers will follow actors and actresses from one village to another.

### ***Dink and uncertain plan to have children***

Living in a household with a double income and no kids (to be a DINK) is now very common in large cities such as Shanghai

and Beijing. The competition among co-workers in offices and corporations is so fierce that many young women in Shanghai dare not have babies. The traditional, legal, paid leave for pregnancy could cost them their hard-earned jobs. The Social Survey Institute of the Liberation Daily just reported on Dink on the Liberation Daily on Nov. 28, 2007: “2.90% of the surveyed families have no plans to have children. 7.20% have no such plans provisionally. 46.98% will plan it when they are ready.” When will they be ready? God knows. When they were asked: “Which will they choose between a child and their job?” 18.90% answered: “Job”. Among the young couples, nobody care about traditional Confucius and Mencius’ Modality or Chinese Tradition in thousand years: “Among the three offending behaviours of filial piety, having no child is worst.” (Mencius, “Lilou”). They are deciding by themselves only according to their assessment of their condition.

### ***No-sex marriages and homosexuality***

No-sex marriages, arranged through the Internet, are growing. Homosexuality is something many parents have to face. Homosexuality is so much against Chinese tradition that many parents of homosexual boys are eager to kill them. According to the authorities, there are five to ten million homosexuals in China.

### ***The marriage lawsuit of two college students***

For a long time, a student who got married while enrolled in a university or col-

lege would certainly be expelled. In 2002 and 2003, many Chinese papers and TV including CCTV reported the story of the lawsuit of two students and their school – Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications.

In October 2002, Miss Ma, a student in the school of the economy and management, Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications, suffered from abdominal pain. She called her boyfriend, Mr. Lin, a student in the school of automation at the same university. They went to the school hospital. A doctor gave her an X-ray, and he thought the cause was anor ectopic pregnancy, which could be life-threatening. The doctor arranged for her to go to a city hospital for further examination. The pregnancy was confirmed. Later, the girl and the boy confessed they had gone to a hotel and had sexual intercourse once. At first, the school administration asked the students to accept the punishment of the school: they could graduate and get their graduation certificates, but they would lose their rights to their bachelor’s degrees. The students refused to accept the punishment. They argued that the regulation said students who had “unacceptable relations” should be punished. (The terminology “unacceptable relations” is common in the regulations of schools in China. It means any sex actions among girls and boys or adults who do not marry.) They loved each other, and they did it by choice. The relationship, therefore, was righteous and acceptable.

For this defiant attitude, the school board decided to expel them. The students sued the school to reverse the decision.

Although they lost the suit and the court rejected it, the suit was widely reported by TV programs, magazines, and newspapers. It caused a fierce public argument. In 2005, the Education Ministry of the PRC issued the new version of its Regulations on the Students of Common Institutes, which went into effect on September 1 of the same year. The article expelling students who married was eliminated. This was a progress of civilization. There are still few students who marry in college, though, because few can afford the costs of a wedding, an apartment, and children.

### *Weddings*

For Chinese people, the timing of the wedding is very important. They believe a nice wedding date will ensure happy days. Even-numbered years, even-numbered months, and even-numbered days are regarded as lucky. In 2006, according to the Chinese lunar calendar, spring started twice (Chinese lunar calendar marks clearly the spring start date. Because the lunar calendars are not exact, days are added to the calendar year. Because the days are added to the calendar, there are two spring starting date and two July 7 which is Chinese Valentine date.) And there were three Valentine's Days in 2006: one Western Valentine Day and two Chinese similar days for boys and girls who are in love. The Western one is for St. Valentine on Feb. 14, while the other two are for different pairs of Chinese lovers which are on July 7<sup>th</sup>. There were two July 7<sup>th</sup> in the Chinese lunar year of 2006 because it was a leap lunar year and there were also leap months. This

happens once every hundred years. Young couples hurried to arrange weddings on these lucky dates. Some of them had only known each other for two days, but they rushed to get married. These quick marriages usually produce sad results.

Each Chinese couple, the bride and bridegroom, plan their most exciting time – their wedding. All want their special days to be perfect. Cartoon stars, elephants, and other special wedding guests are invited. Cartoon stars are acted by professional actors or actress or by their friends. Some bridegrooms really paid and arranged for elephants decorated with flowers to be presented for the wedding to give a surprise to the bride. Brides were usually very excited because they had not expected it and it is not common in Chinese wedding. Chinese couples want something unique if the two are both Chinese. But the most want a typical traditional Chinese wedding, if one of the couple is a foreigner. The traditional Chinese wedding is as following:

A Bridegroom should go to his bride's home to bring her back with a wedding sedan. The bride in a red wedding dress has her head covered with a piece of red silk or cloth, through which she cannot see. In some provinces of China, her mother will have her hand in hand and help her get on the sedan. In some provinces of China, it is the bridegroom who carries his bride to the sedan on his shoulder or in his arms. The sedan men will try their best to rock the sedan for a fun. Only the bridegroom can take away the red head cover. The time to do it should be the sweet wedding night when they will have a very special experience for the next generation.

Wedding planning companies and professional wedding hostesses and hosts do a very good business on mainland China, especially in big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjing. Many young couples even enjoy having their nude pictures taken by a photographer in a professional photo studio; however, their parents are usually against such photographs. The solution is to take two sets of wedding pictures: one set in formal wedding clothes for their parents, relatives, and friends to see, and another set of nude pictures for the couple's enjoyment. Authorities advise caution, because some photographers who lack morality may put their pictures on the Internet. But they disregard it and laugh at it.

Weddings are very expensive in China, particularly in years with many lucky days. Costs are also increasing very quickly. The year of chicken in 2005 and the year of pig in 2007 are thought to be bad luck because there is no first day of spring in these years according to the Chinese lunar calendar. The average cost for each couple in Mainland China is as much as 125,800 yuan, which is over US\$16,000. In Shanghai, a wedding will cost couples average 187,000 yuan, or about US\$23,400. The Wedding Society of Shanghai surveyed and reported that the cost for a wedding should be 192,000 yuan RMB, which is equal to 2,448,355 yuan RMB. In August 2006 the *New York Times* reported that the average U.S. wedding costs \$27,852. As we know, the price of various products and services is much cheaper in China than in the United States, so we can see the degree of luxury for a wedding in China. The couple and their parents share the

cost, which means most families save money.

Family violence and the henpecked husband

Married people live much differently in northern and southern China. In northern China, especially in the countryside, family violence is still a problem. A recent national survey showed that there is family violence, usually physical or verbal abuse of females, in one third of the 270 million families. Victims are women, and most of them do not know how to protect themselves. They are too shy to talk about violence, and they think it is a personal matter. The divorce rate in China has been increasing in the last two or three years. In Shanghai, a society for divorced people is very active. It tries to help abused women recover their confidence.

However, two-thirds of the families are special in the world. Most of them are families with women as financial controllers and heads of the family. In the families, husbands do more housework. This is common in cities, especially in metropolises such as Shanghai and Beijing. Chinese husbands are ready to do housework, such as washing, taking care of babies, grocery shopping, and cooking. The husbands in Shanghai are the role models in China. In offices and other places, it is common for a typical male Shanghainese to talk about the markets where vegetables, fish, and meat are cheapest. If you watch carefully, it is easy to find Chinese boyfriends or husbands washing underclothing of their girlfriends or wives or doing other things for their girlfriends or wives. What is most important is that women are controlling the fa-

mily budget, including the man's spending money. A Chinese woman's consciousness of equal rights is much stronger than most Westerners expect. Most ladies, especially among educated people, can expect a happy life if they marry a Chinese man.

### ***Divorce***

On the first working day after a seven-day holiday in October 2006, sixty couples got divorced in Nanjing City, the capital of Jiangsu Province. Forty percent of the people who got divorced were born at the end of the 1970s. They are the only children of their families. So, these young couples did not learn to forgive and yield. They usually quickly decided that they could not put up with each other. Although the proportion of marriage to divorce in 2006 was 4.22:1 because it was the luckiest year in one hundred years, the Chinese divorce rate had been increasing. In 2003, it increased 36.7 percent, and in 2004, it jumped 73.6 percent. It then increased only 12.6 percent in 2005. In May of 2006, people have followed their emotions in marriage, but they made rational decisions to divorce. Divorce clubs are now welcome in Shanghai and Beijing to help many people learn to forget their sad experiences and start new lives.

### ***Foreign Marriage***

In Chinese history, marriage policy was usually one of the important kingdom-wide policies of the emperor. Countless princesses went on trips to marry foreign men in the name of devotion to the motherland. Now, the foreign marriage proportion has reached 5 percent. More than 400,000 Chinese people married forei-

gners. In 2005, more than 70,000 Japanese men married Chinese women, and 41,000 Korean men married Chinese ladies. After their weddings, many girls found that marriage was not as romantic as they thought it would be.

Ms. Li Qing married a Korean farmer. Before they married, her husband's relatives asked her questions like, "Are there automobiles and color TVs in China?" They forbade her to work. Chinese girls have been brought up to value the notion of equal rights. She could not put up with the life of a housewife in Korea. In the end, Li Qing chose to divorce.

### **Conclusion**

Identities of individuals in each ethnic group are changing. Culture is changing with the development of the world. Culture consists of three parts. The first part is old-fashioned custom, which cannot fit in with modern civilization. The second part is the neutral part of culture as ceremonies, food and drink customs and religious beliefs. They are the nature of colour. There is no world without them. The third part is connected with a special mode of production, and when its destiny is to disappear, nobody can stop this despite any witch treatment used on the patient. But the point is that it is time for the international scholars of the intercultural communication to work together to draw a dynamic cultural map and keep it update the same as the genetic map. The map will keep people updated with the latest cultural information. It will be much easier for international communication, business and education which are rather important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



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2. Liberation Daily on Nov. 28, 2007.

## KINTANTI KINŲ TAPATYBĖ GLOBALĖJANČIAME PASAULYJE

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### S a n t r a u k a

Visuotiniame pasaulyje kinta kultūrinis žemėlapis. Greita ekonomikos plėtra skatina kinų kultūros pokyčius. Jaunimui būdingas individualumas, silpni giminytės ryšiai, meilės, sekso ir vedybų politikos pokyčiai. Dėl gimimų skaičiaus ribojimo Kinijoje vaikai ir jaunimas labiau linkę būti individualistai nei kolektyviški, tai skatinama ir per filmus ar televizijos serialus.

Dažniau jie galvoja apie save nei apie Jus ar Juos.

Giminystės ryšiai Kinijoje taip pat silpni, todėl šiame darbe daroma prielaida, kad būtent dėl tokių priežasčių 2006 m. labai padaugėjo santuokų su užsieniečiais. Taip pat tai atsiliepia ir vertinant požiūrį į partnerį. Kaip teigia pranešimo autorius, tai turi įtakos ir santuokai, seksualiniams santykiams.