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REMOTE ACCULTURATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: NEGOTIATION OF WESTERN VALUES BY ASIAN CHINESE ADOLESCENTS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA WITHIN A CONFUCIAN SYSTEM.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research aims at investigating the process of Remote Acculturation (RA) as the Chinese adolescents experience it via social media. The paper was aimed on the adoption, adaptation, and assimilation of Western cultural values into a Confucian collective culture, which add to a wider comprehension of digital culture and the cultural transformation of digital age. The research is a semi-structured interview with 20 teenagers aged between 16-18 years in the urban cities of China employing reflexive thematic analysis to determine how RA is happening through natural mechanisms. The results show that adolescents selectively internalize the culture, which frequently reorganizes the Western ideals which are in terms of autonomy, emotion openness, and gender equality into culturally based perspectives. As socio-technical systems that operate on the emotional appeal, participatory content, and algorithmic personalisation, social media platforms work to amplify RA by making passive exposure a reflective identity work. Rather than a unidirectional process, RA emerges as hybrid, emotionally mediated, and shaped by local cultural scripts. The study proposes a culturally contextualized RA framework and highlights implications for cross-cultural youth research, digital literacy education, and youth media policy in East Asian societies.

KEYWORDS: Digital Culture, Socio-technical Systems, Algorithmic Personalization, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Digital Literacy, Remote Acculturation, Social Media, Confucian Values, Cultural Hybridization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence nowadays is a globalized experience in the digital age. The processes of identity formation, which had previously been considered as limited by the culture, are becoming more and more dependent on the transnational media flows and as well as digital interaction. This shift has led to the emergence of the so-called Remote Acculturation (RA), meaning the learning of values, attitudes and behavioural patterns of other cultures through indirect exposure, in particular, through digital and media channels, instead of direct migration (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). Adolescents have been the frontier of this change due to their profound involvement with social media and popular culture in the world.

In the Western and Latin American situations, an increasing amount of empirical evidence suggests that the process of RA is able to produce a considerable change in the cultural orientations, especially in adolescents. Indicatively, researchers in Jamaica (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012) and South Africa (Ferguson, 2016) found that teenagers who regularly consume United States media texts tend to embrace more individualistic values and liberal gender roles and practices (although they may never have moved) to the United States. These results indicate that intercultural interaction has a significant potential to transform the cultural identities, way of life and value systems.

Nevertheless, there is still a major gap in the existing literature not much is available regarding the way in which the process of cross-cultural contact occurs in East Asian societies, in particular, in China, where cultural traditions, collective beliefs, and social norms are based on the Confucian ideology and contrast with the individualism and expressive freedom advocated by the Western media. Here, Confucian values are not static traditions but represent a vital part of China's intangible cultural heritage that is currently being renegotiated in digital environments. The cultural scripts of the Chinese society are focused on filial piety and respect to authority, on harmony in the group, and these are in very sharp contrast to the individualism and expressive freedom of action that the Western media content prides itself on promoting. Although China is becoming more and more global, there is still no in-depth study of the processes by which Chinese teenagers receive, decode, and possibly internalize foreign cultural values through cross-cultural contact.

The deficiency of research is especially immense within the context of the extent of digital connectivity

in China. In this context, social media should be viewed not merely as communication tools, but as the technological infrastructure of digital culture that reshapes how cultural values are transmitted. By 2024, over 1.1 billion people in China will use the internet, and accessing it over mobile is almost universal among adolescents (China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), 2024). Such platforms as Douyin (TikTok), Xiaohongshu, and Bilibili have become the primary means of spreading Western cultural discourse into the areas of fashion, interpersonal relations, gender identity, and style of life (Cui et al., 2025). Young people in such a place are constantly receiving global value systems, which are often represented by very interactive and personalized streams of content (Zhang, 2024). Nonetheless, there is a dearth in theoretical explanations on how such exposure causes the young people, in this context of the Chinese culture, to internalize or reject the foreign cultural elements.

Moreover, the specificity of the Chinese culture, which is defined by the dominance of collectivism on the principles of Confucianism, high-context communication traditions, and the presence of strict intergenerational norms, is both an obstacle to and an opening to selective cultural uptake (Dong & Zhang, 2024). Though Western norms can be attractive to the adolescents who want to gain independence and demonstrate their personal identity, the collectivism of Chinese culture can moderate or alter the manner in which the cultural contact takes place. This movement suggests that cultural contact cannot be explained without a close consideration of the cultural context within which it takes place. The available studies on cultural contact are, however, predominantly based on individualistic cultures and do not provide models that can represent collectivist cultures like those found in China.

A second gap that is critical is related to the position of social media as the main cultural representation medium. The previous studies were conducted on traditional media like TV and music (Ferguson et al., 2016), and the modern youths are exposed to extremely interactive and algorithm-based platforms that not only spread foreign values but also promote active engagement, the creation of content, and social responses (Swart, 2021). Such mechanisms stand a high probability of increasing the cultural reception process, although they have hardly been studied in the literature of interest, especially in non-Western societies.

This paper fills these gaps by exploring the ways that Chinese teens receive the culture again and the role of the local culture in the process of reception,

interpretation, and eventual internalization of the Western cultural values using social media. The study based on the views of teenagers belonging to the Chinese cultural context is supposed to localize and generalize theories of cultural re-reception. With a culturally sensitive attitude, it clarifies the processes by which global cultural flows are interacting with local norms profoundly held, hence contributing to the complexity that is now needed in a discipline that is now permeated with Western-centric models.

Finally, this research aims to go beyond broad-banded suppositions on the global adoption of culture and to develop a context and fine-grained perception of distant acculturation. By doing so, it enhances the creation of the culturally sensitive frameworks of the RA and introduces new opportunities to conduct cross-cultural research of youth in the East Asian societies subjected to the rapid digital transformation process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Digital Culture in Society and Cultural Heritage*

Contemporary discussions on digital culture emphasize that technology is not culturally neutral. Instead, digital platforms actively shape the preservation and transformation of intangible cultural heritage (H. Wang & Yuan, 2023). This in the case of China would entail the engagement of the interaction of traditional Confucian value systems with the affordance of new technology-mediated identity construction (Z. Wang, 2023; Xian et al., 2021).

2.2. *RA and Global Youth Culture*

As a part of the theoretical development of cross-cultural psychology, RA, as a type of the media-mediated acculturation, has gained significant theoretical importance helping to explain how people assimilate other, non-native cultural values, behavioural patterns, and identity orientations not by moving to other countries but by being exposed to the media (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). This phenomenon is especially important among adolescents, who are often exposed to global cultural flows via music, television, and, especially, social media. Empirical research has found that RA is common among non-migrant populations, especially in the Global South. For example, Ferguson and colleagues have found that Jamaican adolescents who are exposed to United States media tend to show stronger identification with American values and lifestyle preferences, which in turn impacts their

family relationships and sense of cultural belonging (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). Similar conclusions have been reported within research that was conducted in Zambia (Ferguson et al., 2016), and thus, it can be concluded that cultural identity is cross-contextual in nature and produces tangible social and cultural consequences.

Despite this, there is still a strong geographical imbalance in the study of cultural identity, and empirical investigations in East Asia, and China in particular, are extremely scarce. Existing research has mainly examined postcolonial, Global South, or diasporic communities in historical contexts of Western cultural influence. China, on the other hand, is a completely different cultural-political setting, where Confucian beliefs, powerful state ideological control, and deeply rooted hierarchical social structures prevail. In a Confucian collectivist society, the absence of research in the field of cultural contact is a significant gap, especially in light of the fast-growing media consumption of Chinese adolescents, coupled with their increased frequency of exposure to Western cultures.

2.3. *Cultural Context to Acculturation: Collectivism and Confucian Values*

Culture is not a neutral background in the RA process - it is an active filter that influences the reception, interpretation and internalization of the foreign cultural content. Hofstede (2011) defines Chinese society as very collectivist, valuing group harmony, filial piety, and deference to hierarchical authority. As a core component of China's intangible cultural heritage, these values provide the foundational script against which digital acculturation occurs (Y. Wang, 2023; Yan et al., 2025). These values are in stark contrast to the individualism, egalitarianism, and expressive autonomy that are usually advocated in Western media (Wong, 2022). Consequently, RA in China is likely to present itself in forms that are filtered, resisted, or hybridized, rather than in its full form.

Yet, a lot of existing RA literature under-theorizes the importance of the cultural context and often assumes that global media is received similarly by adolescents of different cultures. This ignores the fact that value internalizations are culturally contingent. In collectivist cultures such as China, the process of adopting foreign values may cause internal dissonance or social friction, particularly when these values conflict with the dominant familial and societal expectations (Li & Li, 2024). Ferguson and colleagues (2016) themselves acknowledged that future studies of RA must address differences in

cultural context, particularly in cultures where Westernization may be seen as a threat to traditional norms. However, such studies are still scarce.

Furthermore, recent research into cultural hybridization has argued for the notion that acculturation does not take place in a vacuum, but is negotiated in existing cultural logics (Kraidy, 2006). In East Asia, concepts such as “selective acculturation” or “value layering” have been applied to describe the adoption of foreign cultural scripts in partial, strategic, and culturally adaptive ways by youth (Park & Kim, 2023). These frameworks call for cultural sensitivity in RA research - instead of considering value adoption a linear or homogenous process.

2.4. Social Media as a Mediated Space of the Modern RA

The original framework of RA was formulated in the early 2010s, focused on the role of traditional mass media such as television, music, and film as a means of cultural transmission (Ferguson and Bornstein, 2012). Since then, however, a significant shift has occurred in the media landscape. Platforms like Douyin (TikTok), Xiaohongshu, WeChat, Instagram, and YouTube have become the main medium for adolescents to access the world's cultural content. These platforms are not simply tools for passive consumption, but interactive spaces for users to curate, produce, and share cultural narratives.

Despite this, the research on cultural transmission has not yet sufficiently adapted its analytical frameworks to take account of the features of the participatory and algorithmically driven nature of social media, especially in non-Western societies. The interactive design of these platforms, via algorithmic mechanisms of amplification (Cinelli et al., 2021), leads to a greater visibility of culturally specific content and may accelerate the process of acculturation.

For example, Chinese adolescents are not passive receivers of the values of the West; in fact, they interact with, remake, and even challenge these values through content creation and peer interaction.

Furthermore, social media supports a transnational interaction that is asynchronous, so the cultural reproduction is now not limited to the consumption of United States media only. Chinese adolescents nowadays follow influencers from Korea, Japan, Europe, and North America, and the value systems they are exposed to have diversified from the traditional United States-centred paradigm (Gao et al., 2023). Yet, the ways in which these forms of cultural contact influence the value systems of

adolescents in a Confucian cultural context have not raised enough scholarly interest.

Recent studies have started to address the emotional and cognitive aspects of young people's media engagement and propose that identity construction occurs at more than just the behavioral level while offering young people's reflexive processes (Gong et al., 2021). Being exposed to foreign media, Chinese teenagers start to even think about such issues as personal liberty, gender role, and life decisions. However, there is still a lack of systematic qualitative research that looks at the way Chinese adolescents interpret the foreign cultural values that are conveyed through social media and how such exposure leads to broader transformations in cultural identity.

Combined, even though the RA concept has been implemented as a helpful phenomenon in the analysis of cross-cultural relationships, it has not been developed to achieve this goal in the context of the East Asian collectivism. The Chinese example provides particularly good opportunities to investigate the mechanisms of RA and a society with a high level of cultural endurance, where informational control is concentrated and where the Confucian family responsibilities are established. Also, the involvement of interactive social media dynamics where the features of such media are quite distinct compared to the traditional mass media has been not accounted to the full extent in the study of RA. This has gaps that limit our comprehension of how cultural values are negotiated in the modern non-Western societies.

This research countermeasures these limitations in three aspects first, it finds out the manifestations of RA among Chinese adolescents, second, it analyzes the role Confucian cultural norms played in the process of RA and third, it identifies the role of social media in the process of RA. By doing the same, the paper will target the localization of the framework of RA as a foundation to the establishment of indigenous theory based on adolescent acculturation and expansion of sociological studies regarding youth media use in the context of globalization.

3. METHODS

3.1. Research Design

The study is a qualitative research that takes an interpretivist design to study how Chinese adolescents make meaning out of RA by using social media.

This is a method of exploring lived experiences in a thorough way significantly above the statistical patterns. Semi-structured interviews were adopted

to record data because of a few studies conducted on the same in China. This approach would provide them with thematic focus without depriving them of adequate flexibility to discover complicated, culturally discreet meanings in the conversation.

3.2. Sampling Strategy

Purposive or good accommodation brought us 20 participants (16-18) in the major cities in China including the cities of Chengdu and Shanghai, and there was a good socio-economic representation in high-connectivity urban environments. Inclusion criteria were aimed at the central period of identity formation in adolescence and immersion in the digital. In particular, the participants had to take an active use of local or international social media platforms.

This criterion was used to conceptualize these platforms in a socio-technical manner so that the informants were exposed enough to the algorithmic and participatory processes behind cultural negotiation. Also, familiarity with Western cultural products (e.g., influencers, values of the lifestyle) was to be self-reported to ensure that a sample is relevant to the study of non-migrant acculturation processes.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured conversations lasting 45 to 60 hours, conducted in Mandarin, either in a private school environment or via a Tencent Meeting, were used to collect data. Dynamic questioning was used to get simple cultural nuances without imposing firm philosophical systems in the interview protocol, which focused on adolescents' perceptions of RA and social media relationships.

Following Braun and Clarke's 2019 (2019) reflexive thematic analysis, transcripts were processed using NVivo 14. Moving from the original coding of ethnic identity and psychological responses to the effective construction of explanatory themes, this iterative six-phase process gave way to the researcher's choice over quiet theme emergence.

Following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) standards, methodological trustworthiness was established. Dependability and generalisation were addressed through part checking with five individuals and peer review, while a thick description of the modern perspective and an audit trail addressed this. Reflexive journaling even aided in traversing the author's intercultural positionality.

IRB approval was given for the review, which strictly adhered to small social norms. Youth and guardians gave informed consent, with nicknames and encrypted files backup protecting security.

4. FINDINGS

Chinese adolescents practice RA as a strong and internal process of mental and worth change, according to the dataset's first important finding. According to the interviews, **three subthemes are identified in this section** (1) Cognitive Reorientation and Emotional Restructuring, (2) Identity Experimentation and Value Realignment, and (3) Informal and Non-Institutionalised Cultural Learning.

According to a large number of individuals (Informant 20, Informant 18, Informant 14, Informant 7), RA changed inner belief systems, especially those related to mental health, freedom, gender roles, and school conversation. Through repeated exposure to Western media material, these changes did not come effortlessly from inside.

For example, Informant 20 explained the difference that listening to foreign podcasts about mental health **made to their perception of showing emotion**

" I listened to a lot of international podcasts about mental health. I was led to believe that taking and observing emotions is critical. I started speaking to my companions about stress, but I no more consider seeing a doctor to be discriminatory. That also has a Western element..." (R20)

This demonstrates a fundamental change in Western lifestyle-driven stories that confront Chinese prejudices of risk. This type of RA avoids proper speech and physically nestles itself, creating a fresh personality that requires more internal and self-disclosure care.

In the same way, Informant R18 linked RA to the development of new types of private freedom

" I believe Western society introduces the notion of having options. You don't always have to do what your parents wanted you to, just like in a marriage or a career. Europeans taught me that" your life is your unique" and that's what I did." (R18)

Contrary to the Confucian ideal of household dependence and structured decision-making, this observation points to an adolescent's acceptance of collectivist cultural values. These specialized discoveries demonstrate how RA can be used to reconsider inherited life processes.

Additionally, RA makes room for what Kroger (2006) calls "identity work." Informants had begun recreating their sense of self in terms of sex, organisation, and voice more than just picking up new actions. The concept of gender equality, according to one student, Informant 14, had the biggest effect on me because of her conversation with a female advertising material. There are a lot of

international films about ladies breaking prejudices “I’ve seen. I was able to observe that girls may be effective as well, not just the silent, subordinate type.”

Her speech challenges normal notions of female subservience in China. Through selective internalization of empowering scripts, RA becomes a source of symbolic resistance to cultural hierarchies.

Another example is Informant 7, **whose expression of a newfound confidence in academic settings after viewing footage of Western classrooms**

“I used to be scared to ask questions in a class, but then I saw videos of foreign classrooms where students were super active in discussions. So I tried speaking up once in my own class - and it felt great.” (R07)

Rather than modeling passivity, in this case, RA motivates assertion and participation and contributes to a change in educational engagement norms. The adolescent shifts from being a silent-compliant to an active-inquirer, suggesting RA’s potential to reform performance scripts in institutional contexts.

Another cluster of respondents (informant 1, informant 3, informant 6, informant 12, informant 16) focused on the awareness that RA is not the same as the traditional mode of learning, such as textbooks or schooling.

It is instead described as immersive, emotional, and often unconscious. As noted by informant 3, RA “is not taught by teachers. It just happens - when you’re watching, liking, or crying over a video,” adding that “sometimes you don’t even see that you’ve changed. This kind of cultural acquisition takes place through everyday passive consumption of videos, images, discussions, and emotional stories experienced on the internet. As informant 12 remarked, “No, a tells you’ this is American culture, you only get it over time”, informant 12 attributed “this to a greater sense of authenticity and individual relevance in comparison to syllabus-based instruction. More appropriate than manuals, in my opinion. You experience it”.

This teaching method is decentralised and emotional, and it is driven by personal frequency more than institutional discrimination. This is a signal that RA is a base-up cultural acquisition that is driven by company and personal relationships.

How does social media promote RA in Chinese kids? was the next research topic that served as the starting place for this research. Four big thematic clusters emerged from the substantial amount of interview data, which collectively reveal the strong

roles that social media plays as a cultural conduit: content features, social features, personal affordances, and modern functions. These results demonstrate that RA is a multidimensional, effective operation made possible by media ecology, people like themselves, emotionally compelling stories, and algorithmic personalization.

Informant reaffirmed the scattered structure of social media as a major contributor to RA, which is characterised by little, widespread, and emotively available content. Unlike traditional forms of cultural education, which require formal instruction or sustained attention, adolescents characterized social media as providing “low-barrier,” spontaneous, and often unconscious social cultural learning.

Informant 17 put it very well

“Weibo only accepts 140 characters in a post. But I can acquire a new bit of historical knowledge through those 140 characters. If I’m interested, I’ll use Xiaohongshu and Zhihu to do more in-depth research on the topic. A key principle for doing that is, I realized that many quotes that we thought were anti-women were actually misinterpreted over time.” (R17)

This quote is a good example of how little content can stimulate inquiry and turn your chance encounters into a moment of cultural re-interpretation. Similarly, **Informant 18 had explained**

“When waiting for friends or in breaks between classes, I can open up social media such as Kuaishou or Douyin to relax. I can turn it on and off at any given time without having any effect on anything.” (R18)

These remarks support my confirmation that fragmented access promotes constant but casual cultural exposure. The learning is incremental and embedded into the daily routine, reducing cognitive resistance and reinforcing gradual acculturation.

Beyond format, adolescents characterized grassroots influencers as being important mediators for the transmission of cultural values. These non-celebrity creators serve as emotional bridges between Western values and Chinese life.

One informant, Informant 4, for instance, said, “You can be vulnerable, but you can’t give up on yourself. Seeing that picture actually helped me because I had failed an important interview at the time.”

Meanwhile, Informant 7 said, “You do n’t have to burn yourself out to be worthy, in the same vein. In my mind, that word “turned on a switch”.

These influencers serve as models for alternate lifestyles and mental self-fulfilment, values that

conflict with Chinese myths of sacrifice and stoicism. Their assimilation increases as a result of their approachability and integrity.

The cultural reconfiguration that social media allows is another important issue. Websites provide adolescents with counter-narratives to Confucian hierarchies and normative causality through the use of fly-cultural narrative and participatory engagement.

Informant 1 recalled

"That episode really hit me... It said once you're an adult, you should have the right to decide whether or not to hold a close relationship with your parents...I began to feel that I was being torn between two systems of culture." (R01)

Informant 3 spoke of a personal change "I used to think the college entrance exam was the only way out, but now...I think more in terms of 'Who am I?' rather than just 'What should I do?' "

Such reflections illustrate how social media helps adolescents to question the dominant norms. Importantly, some of them also described renewed appreciation of traditional values, filtered through a more autonomous lens.

Informant 10 explained "I wouldn't say that I've become disconnected from Chinese culture...Actually, parts of Chinese philosophy are what really captivates me. I love the idea of 'universal love and non-aggression'" from Mozi.

RA is, in this context, not about rejection of one's culture, but reinterpretation and re-inhabitation of culture. Adolescents become active negotiators of hybridity and not passive cultural consumers.

Social media is also an important factor in mediating emotions. Participants often identified emotional resonance, rather than factual learning, as the most powerful stimulus to cultural internalization.

Informant 6 reflected "Online, it's okay to say 'I'm sad today.' But my dad always says, 'Don't be so sensitive.' It is different, like my feelings matter."

Informant 15 added "I will often write down quotes that strike me and reread them later on... It makes me feel more grounded."

Others had found affirmation in peer response. Informant 10 shared "I've been posting my thoughts about American pop culture, and if I get likes or comments from girls my age, it makes me feel seen."

These "micro- statements" were deemed to be really true. Even simple markets in the post area, according to Informant 18, made them feel "acknowledged and heard".

This psychologically healthy atmosphere allows for RA to develop without confrontation thanks to

asynchronous interaction, individual archiving, and semi-personal sharing. Youth were not always trying to challenge their kids, but rather to express their emotions in the dark virtual world.

Finally, the social public's technical advantages, especially techniques and collaborative features, played a major role in feeding RA. Heavy thematic continuums were often created using individualised recommendations.

Due to Informant 5 "I watch a lot of academic videos, including traverse- social apps and lectures from Harvard University. We call it 'caring for your account', the engine learns what helps you grow." This demonstrates how analytic feedback systems and social media style deliberately influence the development of novel cultural norms and personal growth paths.

Through an analytic surprise, some have discovered emotional immersion. "I started searching at films of people songwriting", said informant 20, "And therefore, I freely wrote the lyrics. One participant, for instance, stated, They are still on my phone, I haven't posted them yet".

Even non-creative users described emotional attachment to curated themes. Informant 9 told us how sports vlogs led to inspirational American content "That range from the coach, that you're not worse than anyone else, actually hit me."

Internalisation was supported by cooperation. Informant 1 responded, "I tried to do a blog, I used a lot of emotions like 'mental health' and 'personal progress.'"

Informant 7 even mentioned a collaborative coding project with another foreigner, while Informant 14 loved Reddit threads for their layering debate style.

In each case, the adolescent wasn't an indifferent consumer but an active co-author of the meaning of the culture. The interactive, personal, and immersive nature of social media makes RA continuous, changing, and based on individual agency.

Across all of the subthemes, it is clear that the unique infrastructure of social media (its fragmentary nature, participatory model, algorithmic personalization, and emotional resonance) together makes social media conducive to RA among Chinese adolescents. These processes enable them to explore and absorb, and reconfigure Western cultural values in relation to their own changing identities.

Social media, therefore, is not only a platform for consumption but also a hybrid cultural habitat for reflection, emotional negotiation, and identity experimentation.

5. CONCLUSION

This research paper will address a major gap in the Western-oriented RA as it attempts to investigate the role of social media in the process of foreign cultural value acquisition by Chinese adolescent people, and how it becomes refracted and remodeled within a Confucian collectivist cultural framework. By so doing, the paper pushes the theoretical limits of RA and obtains an empirically based and culturally sensitive interpretation, which is getting into stark contrast with current models created in individualist or postcolonial contexts.

Compared to the passivity of cultural imitation, the findings show that the cultural remaking by the Chinese adolescents is a dynamically, reflexively and emotionally embedded practice. As was typical of the participants, they claimed that when they were exposed to western cultural values like autonomy, emotional expression, gender equality, and critical thinking, they did not accept them in wholesale but instead utilized them as the means of negotiating and experimenting their identities. The values were selectively absorbed, and were usually performed in a manner that would coexist with the Confucian norms, re-interpreted or impliedly conflicted with them.

Mediating between the aspects of contextual and hybridization process is the main theoretical contribution of the given work, which re-conceptualizes the process of cultural remaking. Coming in the wake of previous studies that have concentrated on the influence of the western media in enhancing the identities of foreign teenagers, this study shows that even though the Chinese youth are not forced to internalize cultural scripts through them, they are rather subjected to processes of value selection, reconstruction, and layering. The emotional appeal and personal relevance, as opposed to ideological affinity, turns out to be the main agents of cultural redone. The adolescents, by the mere use of social media, not only know the Western culture, but also share it by experience and interaction.

The enabling role in this process is played by social media. Its technical platform of algorithmic personalization, participatory culture, and modularized content not only broadens the range of worldwide value system but also provides teenagers with the mean to engage and interact on their conditions. Respondents elaborated their cultural knowledge to be discontinuous and therefore accretorial, and improvised but very personalized. They put an unusual focus on the role of grassroots opinion leaders and peer relationships, which convert foreign cultural content into lived experience

emotionally engaged. Such an arrangement makes social media not only a cultural transmission medium but also a co-create space, a cultural re-imagination space.

More importantly, the traditional Chinese values have also managed to persist in the cultural reconstruction process, which is also indicated in the findings. They did not need to reject or completely abandon Confucian norms but focused on them again, took a critical viewpoint, and decided to preserve, redefine, or substitute certain aspects. In most instances, remaking created a persuasive motivational force on the adolescents to rethink cultural scripts with respect to family, academic success, and social demands and thus the remaking process either reaffirmed traditional values or created a novel hybrid identities. It is speculated that Confucian collectivism is not a fixed impediment to acculturation but a movable structure that creates the outlines of contemporary remaking of culture in China.

On a theoretical level, the present study suggests the application of a localized and culturally based RA framework and incorporation of three dimensions into it cultural specificity, affective salience, and technological mediation. This paradigm criticizes the traditional ways of comprehending acculturation as a progressive process or a universal process and highlights the importance of understanding RA in culturally constructed systems of meaning. It also reconstructs the use of social media during the adolescent as an arena of not only entertainment but also a primary site of cultural contact, adolescent self-negotiation and self-construction. The findings illuminate the emergence of hybrid identities within a global digital culture, raising important questions about the ethics of technological innovation where global and local values intersect in digital spaces.

It has several implications of the study. To scholars, it highlights the need to consider RA research extending beyond the Global South and diasporic settings and using the East Asian collectivistic societies as examples that have unique analytical opportunities. To educationalists and policy makers, the results imply that exposure to foreign cultural information among teenager by using social media is transformative and constructive as long as it is interpreted in the context of the overall cultural scripts, which influence the development of young people. Lastly, to the international youth research, the given study leads to the de-Westernization of theoretical and conceptual perspectives, as well as promotes localized studies of how globally diverse youths adopt, resist, and

differentiate global cultural flows.

Collectively, this research confirms the fact that RA is not a culturally neutral process but one that is strongly influenced by socio-cultural environment that exists. To Chinese teens, caught between the migration of digitalization, the social media serves as a connecting mechanism between the systems of transnational values, as well as a reflection of culture and gives Chinese teens an opportunity to imagine, oppose, and redefine their own cultural identities. Integration of the Western world, Confucian practices, as well as digitalism is not merely a factor of globalization but also a major arena of exploring the cultures of new generation of China.

5.1. Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations warrant consideration. First, the focus on 20 urban adolescents restricts generalizability to rural or semi-urban contexts where digital access and cultural conservatism differ. Second, reliance on self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias regarding sensitive family dynamics. Third, while emphasizing social media's enabling role, the study did not systematically

analyze the specific content ecologies or algorithmic logics of platforms like Douyin, leaving the precise technological mechanisms of cultural filtering partially explored. Finally, the cross-sectional design captures only a snapshot of a dynamic process, precluding analysis of long-term developmental trajectories.

Future research should address these gaps through longitudinal and mixed-methods designs to map the cumulative evolution of RA. Comparative studies across diverse Chinese regions and other East Asian Confucian societies are also needed to test the transferability of these findings. Theoretically, frameworks must move beyond Western-centric models to integrate indigenous concepts such as Zhongyong (doctrine of the mean) and Ren(benevolence) when interpreting value reconciliation. Practically, educators should prioritize cultivating critical interpretive agency rather than defensive censorship. Therefore, implications for educational science and technology are significant, particularly in fostering digital literacy that empowers youth to navigate the intersection of digital technologies and cultural heritage.

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