

# Family Recognition, Identity and Cultural Recognition of Spring Festival Culture among Young People in Chengdu

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## Abstract

This study analyzes how urban youth in Chengdu, China, experiences and expresses family and cultural identity through the Spring Festival, in the context of modernization, globalization, and the increasing use of technology and social media. By conducting in-depth interviews with 10 participants, the study investigates how traditional customs coexist with modern adaptations like digital celebrations. The findings reveal that although modernization has transformed certain Spring Festival practices, the festival continues to serve as a vital period for strengthening family ties and reinforcing cultural identity. The study underscores the significance of integrating modern technologies with traditional values to preserve cultural heritage while catering to the evolving lifestyles of urban youth.

## Keywords

Spring Festival, Family Identity, Cultural Identity, Chinese Traditions

## 1. Introduction

Since global internationalization leads people to increasingly embrace Western festivals, traditional festivals in their own countries are being neglected, arranging significant challenges to their sustainability as they reveal signs of decline (Ning, 2022). The fact that the Spring Festival is one of the most important traditional festivals in China mirrors its rich cultural connotations and its embodiment of core values such as family reunion, identity, and cultural inheritance. In recent years, there have been significant changes in urban young people's perception and experience of the Spring Festival, with the rapid urbanization and globalization of Chinese society. Of course, 55% of young people believe the Spring Festival holds

a secure position, and 35% think its popularity is declining, but 90% agree that Christmas will never replace the Spring Festival (Xu, 2012). It is the traditional meaning of the Spring Festival, as a cultural symbol, that is gradually intertwined with modern lifestyles, forming a complex cultural identity and family identity for urban young people.

The Spring Festival continues to play a vital role in shaping family and cultural identity in modern cities. In Chengdu, which is a modern city, the Spring Festival retains strong family and cultural symbolism, as family gatherings, ancestor worship ceremonies, and various festival activities during this time profoundly impact young people's family identity and cultural identity. As Li (2022) points out, the Spring Festival is a time for family reunions and a ritual that symbolizes identity and cultural inheritance. Even so, it is with the development of modern technology and the penetration of global culture that urban young people's understanding and participation in these traditional activities are undergoing subtle changes.

To our knowledge, previous research on the Spring Festival underlines the central role of family identity, communal rituals, and the evolving nature of the festival in contemporary society, yet each study highlights different aspects of these themes (Li, 2014; Li, 2018; O'Neill 2024; Xue et al., 2022). Lot of studies highlight the Spring Festival as a multifaceted tradition that reinforces family unity and identity through shared rituals like ancestor worship and New Year's Eve dinners, while also serving as a meta-ritual that shapes family dynamics and acts as a secular pilgrimage symbolizing collective coping with societal changes (Li, 2014; Li, 2018; Xue et al., 2022). In addition, the Spring Festival also carries the core function of cultural identity, helping the younger generation to establish connections with traditional culture through festival activities. O'Neill (2024), as an illustration, pointed out that the symbolic significance of the Spring Festival in Chinese culture, especially its association with the mythical symbol of the dragon, underlines its cultural and spiritual connotations, which continue to play a critical role among the younger generation.

Previous literature highlights both similarities and differences in young people's evolving experiences of the Spring Festival as it adapts to modern urban life. Ning (2022) underscores the impact of modernization and globalization, noting that young people not only inherit traditional festival culture but also redefine how they celebrate the Spring Festival through technology and social media. In contrast, Yang (2008) focuses on generational differences, finding that while both 20-year-olds and middle-aged Shanghai natives share similar views on home, alienation, and the importance of the Spring Festival, they differ in their attitudes toward family reunions, personal relationships, and Christmas, influenced by social development and the generation gap. Although both studies agree on the evolving role of the Spring Festival, Ning (2022) highlights the integration of new media, whereas Yang (2008) focuses on intergenerational dynamics and social influences.

While previous research has extensively examined the role of the Spring Festival

in shaping family and cultural identity, much of the focus has been on traditional practices or generational comparisons without fully exploring how urban young people navigate the evolving landscape of these rituals. The present study fills this gap by specifically focusing on how young people in Chengdu integrate traditional Spring Festival customs with modern urban lifestyles, including the role of new media and technology. This study aims to explore how urban young people in Chengdu experience and express family and cultural identity through the Spring Festival. In the context of globalization, studying the significance of the Spring Festival among urban young people helps to understand the inheritance and transformation of Chinese culture, revealing how traditional festivals are redefined in the process of modernization. Based on the above analysis, this study proposes the following questions:

RQ1: How do urban young people in Chengdu perceive and adapt traditional Spring Festival customs in the context of modernization and globalization?

RQ2: What role does social media play in the reshaping and inheritance of cultural and family identity during the Spring Festival?

RQ3: How has the commercialization and global adaptation of the Spring Festival influenced the construction of cultural identity among urban youth in Chengdu?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Spring Festival and Family Identity

The Spring Festival, as a significant part of China's cultural heritage, serves as a crucial platform for the reinforcement of family identity (Zhang, 2010). Modernization, however, has dramatically accelerated the pace of life, resulting in the fact that individuals are under pressure to perform longer hours and often prioritize professional demands over traditional practices (Ibekwe, 2021). The change of the pace of life has influenced how people engage with the Spring Festival, particularly among younger generations. For many, the festival once focusing on family-centered traditions has shifted to emphasizing leisure and relaxation, as non-traditional activities like traveling or partying with friends, which have grown increasingly popular, gradually reduce the time spent with family during this culturally significant holiday. It is modern, leisure-oriented activities that are gradually replacing the traditional family-centered focus of the Spring Festival.

Despite the many changes that the Spring Festival has undergone, its core values—family reunion and identity—remain steadfast for many families. The festival continues to offer opportunities for family members to reconnect and strengthen their sense of belonging through traditional rituals, such as the New Year's Eve dinner and ancestor worship (Li, 2018; Xue et al., 2022). Not only do these rituals serve as moments of reflection on the past and discussions about the future, but they also act as expressions of familial unity and respect for lineage. The New Year's Eve dinner as a highly ritualized feast, which symbolizes the importance of family togetherness in Chinese culture.

Nevertheless, alongside these enduring traditions, the influence of modernization on family identity is profound—particularly in rural areas where kinship practices have weakened (Qi, 2021; Yanjin et al., 2023). As living spaces become more separated and work schedules grow more demanding, which reduces face-to-face interactions, extended family gatherings during events like the Spring Festival have steadily declined in importance. Younger generations are focusing more on their nuclear families; extended kinship relations are becoming less central to family identity (Wang, 2023). This trend reflects broader shifts in societal structure, where urbanization and the demands of modern life challenge traditional values and customs. Consequently, there is an increasing shift from traditional family structures to more nuclear-focused identities.

However, despite these challenges, the construction of family identity remains closely linked to the rituals of the Spring Festival. These rituals, especially the practice of ancestor worship, stands as a potent symbol of respect towards our ancestors and a reinforcer of familial bonds. According to Li (2022), such activities serve a dual purpose: they perpetuate family traditions and reflect the ongoing interaction between individuals and their families in modern society. The transmission of these traditions from one generation to the next helps family members strengthen familial cohesion and express their identification with the family through intergenerational inheritance. Ning (2022) further highlights the role of family gatherings during the Spring Festival in shaping family identity. The celebration of this traditional festival helps to internalize cultural values into everyday life, especially for younger generations. Through participation in family gatherings and traditional rituals, young urban dwellers experience the warmth and sense of belonging that comes with family connections, fostering a deeper understanding of how family values shape their stronger identification with their familial heritage.

Despite these transformations, modernization and globalization have altered the way young people in cities experience the Spring Festival; nonetheless, the fundamental value of family identity remains unchanged, as the festival continues to be an essential time for families to come together, celebrate, and rebuild relationships, even amid the pressures of modern life. Family gatherings during this period, which serve as emotional reunions, also provide vital opportunities for reinforcing family identity, ensuring the continuation of familial bonds and traditions—as families reconnect after time apart (Xu, 2012; Zhu, 2024). While societal changes have progressed and the Spring Festival has adapted and evolved, its role in shaping and reinforcing family identity remains significant.

## 2.2. Identity and Spring Festival Rituals

Rituals, as social processes, play a vital role in reinforcing group cohesion, solidarity, and collective conscience by eliciting and transmitting collective emotions among participants (Mentel, 2022; Xygalatas et al., 2024). These shared emotional experiences foster group ties, with the transmission of emotions being a key mechanism for their social impact (Von Scheve, 2020; Stein et al., 2021). In the context

of the Spring Festival, rituals both bring people together and engage all family members in activities that strengthen family identity. Participation in these collective activities allows individuals to better understand and affirm their roles within the family and society.

One of the most notable examples of the Spring Festival ritual is the annual CCTV Spring Festival Gala (SFG), which has been broadcast since 1983. Over time, the SFG has evolved into a modern folk custom that plays a crucial role in constructing national identity in China. By embodying the event as a media ritual, the SFG fosters national identity through ritualizing and mythologizing the event, making it an integral part of the Spring Festival celebration (Gao, 2012). This media spectacle functions as a shared experience, symbolizing unity and collective identity among viewers.

Spring Festival traditions, encompassing greetings and reunion dinners, hold profound symbolic significance in Chinese culture and are key to identity construction (Xue et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2023). These rituals strengthen an individual's sense of belonging to their family, along with serving as important platforms for displaying and affirming self-identity. For instance, as the act of New Year greetings reflects intergenerational respect and reinforces the connection between family members—it also allows young people to confirm their roles in both family and societal structures through these rituals. O'Neill (2024) points out that the dragon symbolism within the Spring Festival represents core spiritual values in Chinese culture, which are essential to the identity construction process for young people.

The reunion dinner, another central Spring Festival ritual, is not merely a family gathering but a ritualized experience of consumption that binds family members and reinforces family identity through shared food and time. Xue et al. (2022) contended that the consumption ritual surrounding the New Year's Eve dinner serves as a reenactment of family history, thereby enabling individuals to solidify the link between their personal and familial identities. In modern society, young people experience a close connection between individual and family identity by engaging in these traditional practices, reaffirming their sense of belonging.

Nonetheless, the processes of modernization and globalization have gradually progressively altered the meaning of these traditional rituals. Ning (2022) notes that, among rapid societal and cultural changes, the Spring Festival has evolved to accommodate modern lifestyles, becoming a symbol of diversified identities. Young people now celebrate the Spring Festival in contemporary ways, including sharing their experiences via social media platforms, reflecting their transition from traditional to modern identities. This shift underscores how traditional culture is being redefined in contemporary society, authorizing urban youth to reinterpret their cultural identity in new and innovative ways.

### **2.3. The Inheritance and Reshaping of Spring Festival Cultural Identity**

The Spring Festival, one of China's most significant traditional festivals, is facing

challenges emanating from the confluence of modernization, consumerism, and Westernization. The festival—which once imbued with deep spiritual meaning and cultural values—has been increasingly commercialized, with its traditional customs diluted by advertising and promotional activities (Liao & Dai, 2020). This phenomenon has sparked concerns that the cultural identity tied to the Spring Festival is becoming eroded as it is packaged and sold as a tool for profit. Despite these challenges, cultural celebrations in urban areas remain vital for preserving collective memory and fostering a sense of local identity.

As a key symbol of Chinese culture, the Spring Festival has long been a significant carrier of cultural identity (Meng, 2023). Even so, with the rapid acceleration of globalization and the pervasive influence of modern technology, the ways in which urban youth maintain their cultural ties through Spring Festival activities have undergone significant transformation. There are traditional methods of celebration now being redefined and reshaped through interaction with modern social media platforms. Ning (2022) points out that, under the influence of modernization, the Spring Festival is no longer just a time for family reunions but has become a global phenomenon, particularly through social media. Young people are now participating in these cultural events digitally, demonstrating a shift in how the festival is experienced and shared.

Social media plays a critical role in both the inheritance and reshaping of Spring Festival cultural identity (Lei & Li, 2021). As young people share photos, videos, and reflections of their Spring Festival celebrations online, how they express their personal and collective cultural identities reveals their effort to maintain a connection to the festival in a modern, globalized context. Chen et al. (2024) examined how the younger generation, particularly within the Chinese community in Singapore, engages in Spring Festival activities via online platforms, presenting how they maintain their cultural identity despite geographical separation. As modern technology has enabled these celebrations to transcend physical borders, young people can bring traditional customs into a global context, thereby strengthening their cultural ties.

Additionally, the advancement of modern technology has introduced new forms and experiences to Spring Festival celebrations. No longer limited to traditional—face-to-face—gatherings, digital Spring Festival activities are now emerging. Virtual temple fairs, online reunion dinners, and digital New Year greetings are becoming common ways for young people to connect with their cultural roots (Li, 2018). For instance, Lamas-Abraria and Vilarrasa (2023) explored how Chinese communities in Barcelona celebrated the Spring Festival online during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating how modern technology can reshape cultural identity in the context of a global crisis.

While modernization and globalization present challenges to maintaining the traditional aspects of the Spring Festival, they also offer new opportunities for cultural inheritance. It is the Spring Festival, as the core of Chinese cultural identity, that continues to retain its deep cultural connotations while being reshaped and

redefined by modern influences. Through new technologies and platforms, the younger generation inherits traditional culture and imbues the Spring Festival with new, global significance.

#### 2.4. Summary for the Above Subsections of Literature Reviews

The summary of the above subsections of the literature review indicates that the Spring Festival, a cornerstone of Chinese cultural identity, plays a vital role in reinforcing family bonds and traditions, particularly through rituals like the New Year's Eve dinner and ancestor worship. Although modernization, urbanization, and global influences have transformed how the festival is celebrated—particularly among younger generations who prioritize leisure activities like traveling or socializing over traditional family gatherings—the core values of family unity and cultural identity persist, even as extended kinship ties attenuate and nuclear families become more central. It is through the festival's rituals, including media events like the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, that national identity continues to be bolstered, while modern technology, particularly social media, enables younger generations to participate in and share the celebrations digitally, reshaping cultural identity in a globalized context. The Spring Festival remains a strong symbol of cultural inheritance, adapting to modernity while retaining its deep cultural significance, despite challenges from commercialization and Western influences.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Participants

From **Table 1**, The interviewees in this study consist of ten individuals ranging in age from 22 to 30, with a mix of educational backgrounds and occupations. Seven of the interviewees are female, and three are male. Most of the participants have undergraduate education, with one holding a graduate degree and one having

**Table 1.** Basic Information of the Interviewees.

Interviewees	Age	Gender	Education	Occupation
Interviewee 01	23	Female	Undergraduate	Media
Interviewee 02	24	Male	Graduate	Design
Interviewee 03	25	Female	Undergraduate	Media
Interviewee 04	25	Female	Undergraduate	Design
Interviewee 05	23	Male	Undergraduate	Film editing
Interviewee 06	24	Female	Undergraduate	Personnel
Interviewee 07	22	Female	Undergraduate	Administration
Interviewee 08	24	Female	Undergraduate	Media
Interviewee 09	26	Male	High school	Media
Interviewee 10	30	Male	Undergraduate	Media

only completed high school. Their occupations vary, with the majority working in media-related fields, while others are employed in design, film editing, personnel, and administration. This diverse group provides insights from a range of professional and educational contexts.

### 3.2. Procedure

The procedure for this study involved collecting data through interviews with participants. The research initially approached and interviewed college students at the entrance of a local university in Chengdu to gather what their perspectives on the Spring Festival were. Subsequently, the research expanded the sample by interviewing factory workers from towns around Chengdu so that a broader understanding of their experiences and views on the festival could be gained. The data collection method, which primarily involved distributing questionnaires, was followed by in-depth, face-to-face interviews.

Each interview session lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, ensuring enough time for participants to share detailed insights into their experiences. Prior to each interview, participants provided informed consent to be recorded, approving for an accurate capture of their responses. Along with audio recordings, the researcher took detailed notes to document key points.

### 3.3. Measurement

As this study aimed to explore young people's experiences of family identity, personal identity, and cultural identity in the context of Chinese New Year culture in Chengdu, it employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions. The interviews were organized around the following core variables based on **Table 2**.

Firstly, the variable of Spring Festival cultural experience measures interviewees' understanding of Spring Festival culture and their perceptions of traditional practices. Variables included perceptions of the symbolism of the Spring Festival, types and frequency of participation in Spring Festival activities, and attitudes toward traditional practices (e.g., putting up Spring Festival couplets, setting off firecrackers, and offering sacrifices to ancestors). The purpose of this section is to understand the interviewees' identification with Chinese New Year culture and their level of participation.

Secondly, the variable of family identification measures the closeness and changes in family relationships by asking interviewees about their interactions and feelings with family members during the Spring Festival. Variables include the impact of family gatherings during the Spring Festival on family relationships, the extent to which family identity is strengthened or weakened, and interviewees' emotional reactions to family gatherings.

Thirdly, the variable of identity and cultural identity focuses on measuring the impact of the Spring Festival on interviewees' personal and cultural identity. Variables include changes in interviewees' perceptions of their personal identity

during the Spring Festival, the extent to which their sense of cultural belonging is strengthened or weakened, and the impact of the Spring Festival's modernization amid urbanization on their identity.

Fourthly, the variable of the relationship between modernization and the Spring Festival explores the impact of modern technology (e.g., short-video platforms, online Spring Festival events, etc.) on the culture of the Spring Festival. Variables include interviewees' attitudes toward technology's involvement in the Spring Festival, their feelings about the combination of traditional and modern elements, and the impact of this change on their Spring Festival experience.

These variables were explored in depth through open-ended questions to gain a comprehensive understanding of how young people in Chengdu experience and express family, identity, and cultural recognition during the Spring Festival.

**Table 2.** A table of list for variables.

Variable	Sub-variable
Spring Festival Cultural Experience	Perceptions of symbolism of the Spring Festival
	Types and frequency of participation in activities
	Attitudes toward traditional practices
Family Identification	Impact of family gatherings on family relationships
	Strengthening or weakening of family identity
	Emotional reactions to family gatherings
Personal and Cultural Identity	Changes in personal identity during the Spring Festival
	Strengthening or weakening of cultural belonging
	Impact of modernization on personal and cultural identity
Modernization and Spring Festival	Attitudes toward technology's involvement in the Spring Festival
	Feelings about the combination of traditional and modern elements
	Impact of modernization on Spring Festival experience

### 3.4. Ethical Considerations

This study accentuates informed consent, ensuring participants' rights by providing clear information about the study, guaranteeing confidentiality, and approving withdrawal at any time without consequence. The study is low-risk, culturally sensitive, and voluntary, focusing on perceptions of traditional culture, with data securely stored and used solely for academic purposes to enhance understanding of cultural identity in modern urban contexts.

## 4. Results

The results of this study provide insights into how urban young people in Chengdu perceive and engage with the Spring Festival. Based on the interviews, several key themes emerged related to family and cultural identity, as well as the impact of

modernization and globalization on traditional customs.

#### **4.1. Theme 1: Chinese New Year as a Time to Strengthen Family Ties**

As one of the most important traditional festivals in China, the Spring Festival has long played an important role in strengthening family relationships. According to the interviewees, the Spring Festival is a time for family reunion and to deepen the emotional ties between family members through a series of traditional activities.

##### **1) The symbolism and significance of the New Year's Eve dinner**

Interviewee 01 mentioned that the New Year's Eve dinner is one of the most important activities for family members during the festival. He pointed out that the process of preparing the New Year's Eve dinner is not only for the food itself, but more importantly, the atmosphere of the whole family being busy together, which makes him feel the warmth and cohesion of the family. The experience of the interviewees presents that the traditional activity of the New Year's Eve dinner has emotional and symbolic significance and is an important moment for family reunion and strengthening family ties. Not only is the New Year's Eve dinner a meal, but it also creates an intimate family atmosphere through common preparation and enjoyment, bringing family members closer together.

##### **2) Spring Festival customs promote family interaction**

In addition to the New Year's Eve dinner, other traditional activities during the Spring Festival also play a role in strengthening family ties. Interviewee 02, for example, mentioned that the Spring Festival New Year's greetings gave him more opportunities to interact with his family, and this collective activity can deepen the emotional exchanges between family members. It is the Spring Festival that has become a rare opportunity for family reunion, especially in modern life when many people are usually busy with work or studies. Activities such as New Year's greetings, sending blessings to each other, and pasting Spring Festival couplets, help relatives and friends who may be estranged to reconnect as they engage in these meaningful traditions.

##### **3) Preservation of traditional customs and family ties**

Interviewee 06 mentioned that she prepares traditional activities such as New Year's Eve dinner, staying up all night, and paying New Year's greetings with her family every year. These activities are an integral part of the Spring Festival and serve as a symbol of family ties; the interaction in these activities makes her feel that family relationships are strengthened. Interviewee 06 also mentioned that the Spring Festival is a time to resolve potential family conflicts, because at this special moment, family members will put aside their usual barriers and get closer to each other through festival rituals and interactions.

##### **4) The family function of the Spring Festival in modern society**

In the context of modernization, many family members are usually separated by work or study, and the Spring Festival has become the best time for them to reunite. Interviewee 05 specifically specified that although the Spring Festival is

short, it provides an opportunity for family members to communicate emotionally. Although this short reunion has limited effect on the long-term maintenance of family relationships, it is still an important moment for family members to re-establish intimacy.

## **4.2. Theme 2: Strengthening Cultural Identity through Participating in Spring Festival Customs**

As one of the most important traditional festivals in China, the Spring Festival inherits the core values of Chinese culture through various forms of traditional customs. Interviewees generally believe that by participating in Spring Festival customs, they can more deeply feel the continuity of culture and enhance their sense of belonging to Chinese culture.

### **1) Cultural inheritance of traditional customs**

Spring Festival customs are an important carrier of cultural inheritance. Many interviewees mentioned that participating in these customs made them deeply feel the continuity of culture. Interviewee 01 said that although the process of urbanization and modernization has changed some of the traditions of the Spring Festival, he still insists on customs such as pasting Spring Festival couplets and setting off firecrackers.

### **2) The significance of Spring Festival customs in the context of modernization**

In the context of modernization, despite the accelerated pace of life, the traditional customs of the Spring Festival are still an important way for Interviewees to strengthen their cultural identity. Interviewee 06 mentioned that Spring Festival customs such as buying New Year's goods, eating New Year's Eve dinner, and staying up late are opportunities for family members to reunite and allow her to feel the unique charm of Chinese culture. She believes that these customs contain hopes and wishes for a better life in the new year. By participating in these activities, she feels the cultural pride of being a Chinese.

### **3) The connection between cultural identity and Spring Festival rituals**

Many Interviewees mentioned that the various rituals and customs of the Spring Festival helped them strengthen their cultural identity. For example, Interviewee 03 said that the Spring Festival is a time for family reunion and an opportunity for her to express her cultural identity by participating in traditional customs. She believes that the Spring Festival is a family festival, as well as an important time to express her identity as a Chinese.

### **4) The impact of modern technology on cultural identity**

Under the influence of modern technology, the way Spring Festival customs are expressed is changing, but these changes have not weakened the cultural identity of the Interviewees. Interviewee 07 mentioned that although modern technology such as short video platforms have changed the way people participate in Spring Festival customs, he still insists that the core value of traditional culture has not been weakened. During the Spring Festival, he was still able to feel cultural identity through online New Year greetings with his family and sending red envelopes.

### **5) Intergenerational inheritance of Spring Festival rituals in cultural identity**

The Spring Festival is an excuse for individuals to express their cultural identity, and an important moment for cultural inheritance between generations. Interviewee 05 mentioned that during the Spring Festival, he would return to his hometown to worship his ancestors and eat New Year's Eve dinner with his elders. This made him feel the warmth of his family, which enabled him to further understand and inherit Chinese culture under the guidance of his elders. Through these activities, the Interviewees strengthened their cultural identity and felt that they had the responsibility to pass on these traditional customs to the next generation.

### **4.3. Theme 3: The Spring Festival Shapes Personal Identity**

The Spring Festival not only plays an important role in strengthening family and cultural identity, but it is also crucial to the shaping of personal identity. Traditional activities, family reunions and cultural rituals during the Spring Festival provide individuals with opportunities to reflect on and reaffirm their personal identity, especially in the context of modernization, urbanization and globalization. Many Interviewees found connections with their own culture and identity through the Spring Festival, which strengthened their identification with their personal identity.

#### **1) The Reshaping of Personal Identity during the Spring Festival in the Context of Modernization**

With the rapid advancement of urbanization and globalization, young people are facing modern lifestyles while reconnecting with their own culture through the traditional customs of the Spring Festival, thereby consolidating their personal identity. Interviewee 01 mentioned that in a rapidly urbanizing environment, he realized that the Spring Festival is not just a celebration of the festival, but also a time to reaffirm his identity. He felt a close connection with traditional culture by participating in various activities during the Spring Festival, which gave him a clearer understanding of his identity. Although modernization has changed many traditional lifestyles, the Spring Festival gave him the opportunity to reflect on and confirm his identity.

#### **2) The connection between identity and cultural belonging**

For many Interviewees, the Spring Festival is a time to reaffirm their identity as Chinese, and the activities and rituals during the festival strengthen their sense of cultural belonging, which in turn strengthens their personal identity. Interviewee 03 said that the Spring Festival is an excuse for reunion and an important time for her to confirm her cultural identity. There is a reaffirmation of her Chinese identity and a strengthening of her sense of cultural belonging when she participates in traditional customs such as setting off firecrackers and paying New Year's greetings.

#### **3) Strengthening the sense of belonging to family and culture through the Spring Festival**

The rituals and activities during the Spring Festival, especially the ancestor

worship rituals, helped the Interviewees to re-recognize their position in the family, thus enhancing their sense of belonging to the family and culture. Interviewee 05 mentioned that the Spring Festival is a time for family reunion and for him to reflect on his relationship with the family and culture through rituals such as ancestor worship. It was through these rituals that he felt like a member of the family and a link in the chain of cultural inheritance, which strengthened his sense of belonging to both the family and the culture.

#### **4) Strengthening of identity during the Spring Festival in the context of studying or working in a foreign country**

For young people who have left their hometowns to study or work in other places, the Spring Festival is an important excuse to return to their hometowns and regain their identity. Interviewee 10 mentioned that he usually works in other places, and celebrating with his family during the Spring Festival gave him a strong sense of belonging. This strengthened his attachment to his family, making him reaffirm his identity as a member of the family and culture. What has become an important moment for him to maintain cultural and identity connections during his life in other places is the Spring Festival.

#### **5) The identity expression of the Spring Festival on new media and social platforms**

With the advancement of modern technology, the Spring Festival not only strengthens personal identity through traditional rituals, but modern technologies such as social media have also become an important channel for young people to express their identity. Interviewee 07 mentioned that he participated in the Spring Festival celebrations through short video platforms and online red envelopes and expressed his identity in these activities. The participation of modern technology has never weakened the role of the Spring Festival in identity but provided young people with more ways to express their identity, granting them to offer their cultural identity and personal identity through online activities.

### **4.4. Theme 4: The Impact of Modernization on the Spring Festival**

With China's rapid urbanization and globalization, the experience and expression of the traditional Spring Festival among young people has also undergone profound changes. Many Interviewees revealed that although modern technology, the influence of global culture and the acceleration of urbanization have changed some of their experiences of the Spring Festival, they have not weakened the important role of the Spring Festival as a family, culture and identity. Modernization has brought new ways of celebrating the Spring Festival and affected its traditional customs, but most interviewees emphasize that the core values of the Spring Festival remain important and believe that the combination of modernity and tradition can inject new vitality into the festival.

#### **1) The impact of modern technology on Spring Festival customs**

Modern technology, especially the rise of short video platforms and social media, has brought new ways of expressing the traditional customs of the Spring

Festival. Interviewee 07 mentioned that participating in Spring Festival activities through short video platforms has become part of his Spring Festival experience. For example, online New Year greetings, sending red envelopes and sharing Spring Festival-related videos all make him feel that the Spring Festival has more forms of expression in the new era. It is modern technology that allows distant relatives and friends to celebrate the Spring Festival together in a virtual way, making up for the gap of physical distance.

### **2) Changes in traditional Spring Festival activities due to modern lifestyle**

Interviewees generally believe that the accelerated pace of modern urban life has affected their participation in some traditional Spring Festival activities. Interviewee 05 revealed that urbanization has caused many people to leave their hometowns for work or study, and the scale of family gatherings during the Spring Festival has become smaller, and some traditional Spring Festival activities have gradually faded or been simplified. He believes that the work pressure and pace of life in modern society have weakened the flavor of the Spring Festival, and the traditional sense of ritual is no longer as strong as before, but the Spring Festival is still an important time for family reunion.

### **3) Fusion of traditional and modern elements**

Although modernization has brought certain challenges to the traditional customs of the Spring Festival, the Interviewees generally believe that the combination of traditional and modern elements can inject new vitality into the Spring Festival. Interviewee 10 emphasized that although modernization has changed many ways of celebrating the Spring Festival, this fusion of tradition and modernity has made more young people interested in the Spring Festival. For instance, there have been changes in traditional face-to-face interaction due to online New Year greetings and red envelope activities, but this method is more in line with the living habits of modern people and has also enhanced young people's sense of participation in the Spring Festival.

### **4) The impact of globalization on Spring Festival culture**

Under the influence of globalization, Western festivals have gradually penetrated into the lives of young Chinese people, and some Interviewees are worried that the traditional status of the Spring Festival will be weakened. Interviewee 08 mentioned that although the trend of globalization has allowed more Western festivals to enter China's daily life, she still believes that the Spring Festival, as the most important traditional festival in China, cannot be replaced by other festivals. She revealed that although more and more young people celebrate Western festivals such as Christmas and Valentine's Day, the family reunion and cultural rituals of the Spring Festival are still unique and have profound cultural connotations and historical significance.

### **5) The future development of the Spring Festival in the context of modernization**

Although modernization has brought changes to some of the traditions of the Spring Festival, most Interviewees are optimistic about the future development of

the Spring Festival, believing that the Spring Festival can absorb modern innovative elements while maintaining its traditional core. Interviewee 06 believes that modern technology and innovation can help the Spring Festival better adapt to the needs of the younger generation, such as getting more people involved through social media and short video platforms. She emphasized that the core values of the Spring Festival's cultural heritage and family reunion will not change due to modernization, but rather the cultural influence of the Spring Festival can be enhanced through modern means.

#### **4.5. The Connections among the Above Themes**

The themes of family ties, cultural identity, personal identity, and modernization all interconnect around the celebration of the Spring Festival, revealing how traditional customs both persist and evolve in modern society. The festival serves as a time to strengthen family bonds, with rituals like the New Year's Eve dinner fostering closeness through shared activities, while Spring Festival greetings and other customs promote interaction among family members. The festival plays a vital role in reinforcing cultural identity, as participation in traditional customs allows individuals to feel connected to their Chinese heritage despite modernization. These customs, even as they adapt to modern life through technology and urbanization, continue to provide a sense of cultural pride and belonging. Furthermore, it is the Spring Festival that shapes personal identity by offering moments of reflection and connection to cultural and familial roots, especially for those studying or working abroad. Modern technology introduces new ways of celebrating, yet interviewees emphasize that the festival's core values of family and cultural inheritance, which remain strong, are invigorated by modern elements rather than diminished by them.

### **5. Discussion**

#### **5.1. Summarizing the Results**

The purpose of this study is to explore how urban young people in Chengdu experience and express family identity and cultural identity through the Spring Festival, focusing on three key influences: modernization, globalization, and the integration of new media and technology. The study reveals that urban young people in Chengdu view the Spring Festival as a time to strengthen family ties, cultural continuity, and personal identity, even amidst modernization and globalization.

In response to RQ1, urban young people in Chengdu perceive traditional Spring Festival customs as valuable for maintaining family ties and cultural heritage, but they have adapted these customs to fit modern, urban lifestyles influenced by globalization. While traditions like the New Year's Eve dinner and ancestor worship remain important, many now integrate non-traditional activities such as: traveling or socializing with friends, reflecting a shift towards more personalized celebrations. In terms of RQ2, a key factor in this adaptation is that social media provides platforms for digital engagement, while young people engage in activities

like online New Year greetings, virtual red envelopes, and sharing festival experiences through short videos. This allows young people to maintain cultural and family connections even when physically distant—blending tradition with modern technology. For RQ3, commercialization and global adaptation have influenced cultural identity construction by introducing Western festivals (such as Christmas), but young people in Chengdu still prioritize the Spring Festival as a unique and irreplaceable marker of cultural pride and family unity, presenting resilience in preserving its core values despite these external influences.

## 5.2. Comparing the Results of This Study with Other Studies

Both Xue et al. (2022) and the current study emphasize the significance of traditional rituals, such as the New Year's Eve dinner, in reinforcing family identity. While Xue et al. (2022) discuss the impact of modernization on family structures, leading to satellite families that still uphold core values like filial piety and village culture, the present study highlights how urbanization has led to more personalized celebrations among young people, incorporating modern activities into traditional customs. Both studies acknowledge modernization's influence, though Xue et al. (2022) suggest that traditional values remain central to family identity, whereas the present study demonstrates a greater adaptation of customs to modern lifestyles, with social media and technology facilitating family connections.

Yang (2008) explores generational differences, noting that younger people are more open to modern influences, while older generations retain traditional values, a finding mirrored in the present study, which displays that younger participants use modern technology to enhance their Spring Festival experience, though the core value of family reunion remains unchanged (Yang, 2008). Similarly, Yu et al. (2015) emphasize continuity and commitment over communication during meals in shaping family identity, contrasting with the present study, which highlights the emotional significance of the New Year's Eve dinner and its stronger link to cultural identity despite modernization (Yu et al., 2015). Both Edirisingha et al. (2015) and the present study examine the balance between individual and collective identities within family rituals; nevertheless, while Edirisingha et al. focus on the clash between Western values and traditional expectations, the current study finds that young people harmoniously blend traditional and modern customs, facilitated by social media (Edirisingha et al., 2015). Additionally, Sia (2012) and the present study both emphasize the symbolic significance of family rituals, though Sia focuses on the interplay between identity and consumption, whereas the present study reiterates the role of modernization in reshaping these rituals (Sia, 2012).

Overall, while all studies agree on the importance of family and cultural identity in festivals like the Spring Festival, the present study offers a unique perspective on how modernization and technology are transforming these practices among urban youth, granting them to maintain cultural continuity while adapting to modern lifestyles.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, one limitation of this study is the small sample size of 10 participants, all from Chengdu, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions of China where cultural practices and urbanization levels vary. The focus on Chengdu also presents a limitation, as the city's unique cultural and urbanization context may not capture the diversity of experiences among young people in other Chinese cities. Future research should aim to expand the sample size and include participants from different regions to better understand how modernization affects Spring Festival customs across China. Additionally, future studies could explore differences between rural and urban populations, providing a more comprehensive view of how these groups maintain family and cultural identity during the Spring Festival. Comparative studies could enrich the understanding of social transformations in China as traditional festivals evolve.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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