

# Study on the Interaction Between College Students' Cultural Literacy and "Bottom-Line Thinking"\*

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**Abstract**—To improve college students' cultural literacy, the importance should be attached to the strategies and methods. Bottom-line thinking, as a scientific thinking method and practical philosophy, plays an important role in the cultivation of college students' cultural literacy. On the theoretical basis of research on the interaction between cultural literacy and bottom-line thinking of college students, this article takes "cultural literacy is the main carrier of the cultural connotation of bottom-line thinking", "the necessity for applying bottom-line thinking to improve college students' cultural literacy" and "the practical patch for applying bottom-line thinking to improve college students' cultural literacy" as the clues, combs the improvement of college students' cultural literacy deeply and makes clear the bottom line of education in colleges and universities.

**Keywords:** college students, cultural literacy, bottom-line thinking

## I. INTRODUCTION

College students' cultural literacy refers to the internal quality, temperament, and accomplishment of university students cultivated through the continuous dissemination and environmental influence of outstanding human cultural achievements. College students are treated as the mainstay of the future society; their basic points and views on culture, cultural literacy level and the degree of cultural identity are more related to the rise and fall of culture and the strength of a country. At the Nineteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it is pointed out that when young people are prosperous, the country is prosperous, and when young people are strong, the country is strong. If the younger generation has ideals, skills, and responsibilities, the country will be promising and the nation will be hopeful. Therefore, cultivating college students' cultural literacy is a matter of the times and an inevitable requirement for the construction of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics.

In a multicultural context, the level of cultural literacy and the degree of cultural identity are related to the strength of a

country and its degree of immunity against external threats. Contemporary college students will inevitably be affected by the exchange and conflict of different cultures. In order to ensure the security of Chinese culture, inherit and develop the advanced socialist culture with Chinese characteristics, it is necessary to strengthen the education of Chinese outstanding traditional culture and adhere to the cultural bottom line.

Liu Li and Chen Zhenggui (2017) pointed out that globalization weakened the identity of some college students with the nation and state, and affected the formation of college students' national values oriented to national interests. Wu Haijiang and Bao Weijie (2017) investigated the status quo of college students' recognition of outstanding traditional culture in the multicultural context, and proposed to establish a multi-dimensional excellent traditional cultural education platform, innovate patriotic education discourse content, and enhance the cultural confidence of college students. Yu Anlong (2017) pointed out that maintaining the security of Chinese state ideology requires making good use of bottom-line thinking. If the bottom line can not be maintained, it will bring catastrophic and devastating consequences. Wang Zhiqiang and Wei Xinyuan (2016) proposed that bottom-line thinking is the result of high concentration of many aspects of traditional culture, demonstrated the intelligence level of the whole society, and explored the modern value of bottom-line thinking. Shen Qun (2016) believed that to improve the effectiveness of moral education, both leaders and teachers must maintain the bottom-line thinking. Only by defining the bottom line can we set more reasonable moral education goals and educate students with purpose.

Existing researches have mostly explored college students' cultural literacy and bottom-line thinking from different perspectives. At present, scholars use bottom-line thinking to explore from the perspectives of party construction, ecological governance, and diplomatic relations. In terms of research content, the researches on the practical application of the spiritual essence of bottom-line thinking to the cultivation of college students' cultural literacy are insufficient in quantity and depth; the in-depth combing on bottom-line thinking from cultural perspective is not enough; and the cultural, historical, philosophical and psychological bases are not provided. It is necessary to improve our cognition on the connotation of bottom-line thinking for the purpose of playing greater role in practice.

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This article investigates college students' cultural literacy at the level of bottom-line thinking, which is helpful to explore the effectiveness of the cultivation of socialist core values and helps to ensure the bottom line for healthy growth of college students. This research responds to the actual needs of society, and puts forward corresponding suggestions for solving the problems in current cultivation of college students' cultural literacy such as insufficient implementation, not that good method and manner and weak practicability to drive the progress from advocating a macro policy to its specific implementation and promote the effective development of college students' cultural literacy.

## II. THE THEORETICAL BASIS

Marxist philosophy believes that the development of a thing from quantitative change to qualitative change requires a certain amount of accumulation till breaking through a critical value, causing change in nature of a thing and generation of new a thing. What the bottom line reflects is precisely this critical value. Once the bottom line is breached, new contradictions will occur and even bring irreparable losses or errors. Bottom-line thinking is a systematic philosophical thinking. It not only considers where and what the bottom line is, and what harm would be brought if the bottom line is breached, but also let us thinks about how we should keep the bottom line, stay away from the bottom line, prevent problems before they occur, and take the initiative in the uncertain future once contradictions are transformed and how to predict crisis and transform it, finding a breakthrough and new opportunity. It can be seen that the bottom-line thinking both embodies the theory of contradiction and adheres to the doctrine that everything has two aspects, and also upholds the concept of development. It is the practical application of Marxist philosophy in the field of thinking.

After the comprehensive implementation of the reform and opening-up policy, China's higher education has developed rapidly and gradually transformed university education from elite to the masses; the dimensions of college students' thinking have become richer, their values become more diverse, and their horizons for thinking about issues become broader. But, those progresses cannot become an excuse to abandon Chinese excellent traditional culture. If a country or nation does not have excellent traditional culture for cohesion and guidance, it will surely lead to a situation that each acts (in) his own way. If a country or nation regards excellent traditional culture as a child's play and that bottom line can be broken and crossed at will, it will inevitably lead to confusion in people's thinking and mind twist. Facing this situation, we should not let matters slide, stand by, or associate with an evil person, but adhere to the bottom line in the process of cultivating college students' cultural literacy and learn to use bottom-line thinking.

## III. CULTURAL LITERACY IS THE MAIN CARRIER OF THE CULTURAL CONNOTATION OF BOTTOM-LINE THINKING

First of all, the saying that "people are attached to one's native land and unwilling to leave it" as implied in China's farming civilization for thousands of years provides intrinsic

psychological needs for bottom-line thinking. Since ancient times, the agricultural production mode in the Yellow River Basin has provided a stable living environment for our ancestors. People work at sunrise and go home at sunset, and work in accordance with the laws of nature all year round. "No pains, no gains" shaped into the simple and pragmatic character of Chinese nation. People gathered together with blood as the link, forming a lifestyle of pursuing stability which has been inherited from generation to generation and formed a national psychology of seeking for stability rather than change. And this kind of national psychology of seeking stability rather than change has prompted the Chinese people to think and analyze the saying that "people are attached to one's native land and unwilling to leave it" and affected the way of thinking and value choice of Chinese people. Bottom-line thinking is formed in the way that Chinese traditional culture focuses on reality and persists in practical exploration of the human world. It further deepens Chinese traditional culture of "seeking stability" into the deep level of national psychology. The vast majority of Chinese people are willing to settle down. The underlying psychological need is a sense of bottom-line security. Everything is done on the premise of keeping the bottom line to avoid occurring new situations and changes in uncontrollable state.

Second, the premise of consciousness and awareness of bottom-line thinking is a consciousness of anxiety generated in the psychological state of seeking stability rather than change. As is known to all, bottom-line thinking is a back-looking way of thinking. It is to carefully analyze the actual situation, making clear the worst results that can be accepted by yourself, and on this basis establish a bottom line, value the negative influence factors, prevent potential risks, alarm at the bottom line, think about risk when in stable state, do not relax and focus on long-term thinking. Awareness of anxiety is the cognitive premise of bottom-line thinking. Anxiety is a concern for reality and life. Specifically, there are anxieties about the future of the country and fate of the nation, about how difficult the people's livelihood is, and about life. These anxieties indicate that traditional Chinese culture is a non-religious, secular culture that encourages people to go into the society and apply experience to practice, "establish virtues, make contributions, and set up speeches" and face the society and life. Under the influence of anxiety consciousness, deep anxiety about possible instability may be generated; and at the same time, this anxiety may generate a sense of insecurity. People take this precaution and will put it into practice, strive to do a good precaution in advance, look at the overall situation, nip evil in the bud, and actively take measures to keep the bottom line, to avoid any situation that may affect stability.

Third, the source of motivation for bottom-line thinking is the pragmatic self-improvement character of the Chinese people since ancient times. The essence of pragmatic spirit lies in our agricultural civilization. We concern the output in the ground, the weather, and the mathematical method for measuring the land and calculating the population. Bottom-line thinking recognizes the objective existence of risks. In the face of risks, we must actively guard against and relieve

risks. This objectively promotes the exertion of people's subjective initiative and the improvement of self-awareness. People's estimates and judgments on risks or crises will accordingly urge them to actively take precautionary measures within their own capabilities. Bottom-line thinking takes pragmatism as its internal motivation, follows objective laws, establishes a basic bottom line, and strives to prepare for guarding against the risks identified in advance, and to take the initiative to the situation development.

#### IV. THE NECESSITY FOR APPLYING BOTTOM-LINE THINKING TO IMPROVE COLLEGE STUDENTS' CULTURAL LITERACY

In recent years, the lifestyles and values advocated in western countries have entered colleges and universities in China and profoundly affected the lives of college students. Some people only see the superiority of Western culture, blindly worship foreign culture and deny themselves, cannot see the valuable aspects in Chinese traditional culture such as "human-oriented", "pursuing peace and moderation", and "constantly striving to become stronger". Now, many scholars have recognized the limitations brought about by Western industrial civilization and scientific and technological rationality, and believe that contemporary college students can maintain their independent cultural identity and status against the background of Western culture's expanding only if they have good traditional Chinese cultural literacy. Culture is the root of the inheritance and development of a country and nation. If it is lost, the spiritual lifeline of the country or nation will be cut off.

In this context, it is very necessary to apply the philosophical thought of bottom-line thinking to the cultivation of college students' cultural literacy. Only by taking the guiding principle of Marxist philosophy as our bottom-line principle can we ensure that socialist ideology is stable in aspects of theoretical foundation, framework of the times, and core value. Further, it is also necessary to help college students to establish the bottom line of morality, the bottom line required by law, continuously improve their literacy and make them able to consciously use bottom-line thinking to guide actions in their own practice. At the same time, it is also necessary to help students establish a learning bottom line, cultivate students' learning interest, and make full use of various offline and online resources to actively conduct inquiry learning, as well as guide college students to recognize the significance of personal learning for social development, help them to scientifically plan the construction of knowledge and ability systems in college careers, and establish an awareness of lifelong learning and sustainable development.

#### V. THE PRACTICAL PATCH FOR APPLYING BOTTOM-LINE THINKING TO IMPROVING COLLEGE STUDENTS' CULTURAL LITERACY

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the traditional cultural literacy of college students has repeatedly declined.

An important reason for this phenomenon is the lack of detailed standards for operable cultural literacy education. We urgently need to use bottom-line thinking to set a practical bottom line for college students' cultural literacy. At the same time, conducting education and guidance on this basis can ensure students' cultural literacy level reaching the basic bottom line; then, gradually rising the standard for the bottom line step by step is possible to gradually improve their overall cultural literacy level and further benefit the entire society. For leaders, only after making clear the bottom line can they set more reasonable cultural literacy training goals; for managers, only after making clear the bottom line can they carry out effective supervision; for teachers, only after making clear the bottom line can they educate students in a targeted manner, adhere to professional bottom-line thinking, and improve the quality of education; for students, only after making clear the bottom line can they keep their own cultural literacy qualified. The Chinese nation has fully realized that if we want to maintain our cultural identity and status in a global context where cultural diversity is shrinking and strong cultures are expanding, the only way is to first recognize and revive the long-history cultural traditions and treat the construction of our national culture as a spiritual project with a long way to go. This is the cultural bottom line that we must adhere to. For this purpose, it is needed to establish a cultural bottom line thinking as well as adhere to the moral bottom-line thinking, pursue noble moral sentiments, adhere to the legal bottom-line thinking, help the construction of the rule of law in China, and insist on using cultural bottom line to strengthen the education and guidance of college students' cultural values, so that they can establish a correct cultural aesthetics and value orientation in a wide range of cultural choices, stay away from vulgar and inferior culture, pursue noble and excellent culture, and consciously promote the orthodox mainstream culture.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Under the guidance of the universal truth of Marxism and in the principle of socialism, we need to keep an open mind and a compatible attitude, make scientific analysis and careful selection of the constituent elements and structural forms of ancient and modern Chinese and foreign cultural systems, carry forward the subject consciousness of Chinese nation based on the actual needs for modern construction of Chinese socialism, make dialectical synthesis, create a highly developed socialist new Chinese culture that both has national characteristics and fully reflects the spirit of the times. This synthesis is not a principle-less compromise, but be dialectical. This should be taken as the bottom line for educating people in colleges and universities. In the great cause of building a socialist culture with Chinese characteristics, it is important to promote the subject consciousness and spirit of Chinese nation. Colleges and universities must pay more attention to bottom-line moral education, do not take saints as the standard, and not particularly emphasize transcendent moral education while ignoring the basic moral bottom line and eventually leading to breach of moral bottom line. We should strengthen

cultural confidence and promote the prosperity of socialist culture in accordance with the requirements of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which means that we must be down-to-earth and strive to cultivate college students to keep the basic moral bottom line and become qualified citizens. While providing bottom-line moral education, colleges and universities should carry out transcendental moral education in accordance with the actual situation and guide college students to learn the positive and healthy factors in Chinese cultural tradition. Therefore, establishing a cultural theoretical system guided by the general principles of Marxism and fully absorbing and accommodating the results of modern cultural theory and methodology researches is the basic project for building a socialist culture with Chinese characteristics and the bottom line of cultural education for college students.

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