

The notion of Chinese character being a hereditary entity that cannot be changed by any outer circumstances is a complex belief characteristic of any Chinese community both living in mainland China and in any foreign country. It is a primary factor that subconsciously prevents first generation Chinese immigrants from teaching their children Chinese language as their mother tongue and from imposing on them Chinese family traditions and rules that would apply in their home country. It is the character and its distinctive features that cause their deliberate enclosure in "ghettoes" of China Towns, forming Chinese Diasporas that prevent the immigrant parents from assimilating with their new societies. As a consequence, the second generation immigrants become double marginalised and the immigrant communities are troubled by two major contradicting forces: all Chinese immigrant parents face the problem of reconciliation with the cultural assimilation of their children and all children feel the generation gap between themselves and their conservative parents. In every Chinese community today there are thus two elements in continuous tension: the openness towards the outside world, the desire to borrow the good things and, by integrating them with ancient Chinese tradition, to enrich themselves as a result of this fusion (children) and the notion of independence from the outside world, cultural integrity and completeness without any outside sources (parents). This tension has raised a new, fundamental question: How much of the surrounding mass culture can a Chinese first or second generation immigrant absorb without completely giving up the Chinese tradition?