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Study on the Identity Reconstruction of African Immigrants in *Americanah* from the Perspective of Diaspora

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Abstract

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of the most famous female writers in Nigeria. She combined her personal experience to create Americanah which tells the life experiences of Nigerians in the United States, showcasing her thoughts on identity issues of African immigrants. Since the publication of Americanah, academia has engaged in rich discussions to explore the reasons for the identity crises of the protagonist, especially from the perspectives of post-colonialism, post-colonial feminism, and transculturalism. However, these studies rarely mention the possibility of the protagonist reconstructing their hybrid identity in multiple cultural contexts. Therefore, this paper employs relevant theories of post-colonialism to explore the reasons for African immigrants' identity crises from the perspective of diaspora. Furthermore, the paper demonstrates the struggling state of African immigrants adhering to traditional culture while striving to integrate into American society by analyzing their psychological condition and social problems in the United States. Finally, the paper applies Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory to illustrate the process of identity reconstruction of African immigrants and reveals the important ways for them to realize identity reconstruction. This inspires the diaspora in contemporary globalization to unite together to participate in cross-cultural communication, overcome identity difficulties, and actively explore living space.

Keywords

African immigrants, diaspora, identity crises, identity reconstruction

1. Background

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in 1977 in a middle-class family in Nigeria and spent her early years at the university studying medicine, but she dropped out after one and a half years. She later moved to the United States and obtained both a bachelor's and a master's degrees. Adichie's writing career began in 1997 with a collection of poems named *Decision*. At the age of 25, Adichie published

the first novel *Purple Hibiscus* which won the Orange Fiction Prize and the Commonwealth Writers' Award. Three years later, her second novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* won the Orange Prize. It can be said that Adichie's works constantly focused on Nigerian identity and its influence on individuals, particularly those characters with transnational experiences. By weaving global literature, she has shifted the focus from the colonial past of Africa to a more diverse African life than the one existing in the Western imagination. This opinion can amply be supported by her third novel *Americanah* which was published in 2013 and was selected as one of The New York Times Ten Best Books. *Americanah* zooms into the lives of two generations of African immigrants who leave Nigeria to seek opportunities elsewhere and then strive to establish themselves in the new world they long for. Some people struggle with their identity and ultimately consider returning to their homeland. Some people aspire to break free from their primitive identity and fully integrate into the new culture. The three themes of racial discrimination, identity reconstruction, and cultural recognition penetrate the entire novel. Soon after its publication, the novel attracted much attention from researchers all around the world and they have studied it from various theoretical perspectives such as post-colonialism, post-colonial feminism, and transculturalism to delve into the spiritual dilemma of African immigrants.

For studies abroad, the post-colonial perspective has been the most fruitful research field. Mona Khaled Alebrahim (2019) addressed the African immigrants in terms of racial discrimination, unemployment, and financial difficulties in the United States, emphasizing the factors of otherness, displacement, and disillusion to illustrate the disappointment and plight that Africans suffered when they arrived in the United States. Chinenye Amonyeze (2017) paid attention to the survival situation of black immigrants and examined how Ifemelu, as one of the black immigrants in the United States, gave an active response to racial prejudice, the identity crisis of ethnic minority people, and the process of fostering mutual understanding. Eleanor Anne Dasi (2019) suggested that the identity crises of diasporic Africans are inextricably linked to the history of slavery, relocation, and discrimination. African immigrants must transform their identities in heterogeneous cultures and cope with identity crises. Furthermore, she also highlighted how women challenge Eurocentrism, embrace their own cultures, and use modern technologies to connect with the outside world in order to reconstruct their identities. Although the analyses above involved the issue of identity, their attention to the causes and solutions of identity dilemmas was not comprehensive.

Another prominent research area that has drawn the attention of scholars is post-colonial feminism. Erick Kipkoech (2016) focused on the experiences of female immigrants, her research also covered the challenges of migration and hybridity in both male and female post-colonial subjects. Phiri Aretha (2016) explored the life of African immigrants by comparing different living conditions between Africans and African Americans in the United States nowadays. Then she further discussed how *Americanah* challenged stereotypes of Africans and emphasized the construction of black female subjectivity. Dina Yerima (2017) analyzed how women can express themselves by choosing aesthetic standards, although imperial aesthetics still repress black female subjectivity in the post-colonial era.

When black women accept their natural skin color and body shape, they can achieve self-awareness and finally establish their identity.

The related research of trans-culturalism has formed another major research field. According to Elena Rodríguez Murphy (2017), Adichie shows how Nigerian characters balance their lives between their native country and the United States. In this sense, the transatlantic travels of the characters suggest a continuous hopping between multiple languages and cultural contexts, leading to linguistic and cultural translation. Bragg Beauty (2017) summarized "the significant work it does to highlight the cultural and political relationships between contemporary Nigeria and the United States, and the particular role that media and technology play in mediating these relationships". Although researchers have started studying from the perspective of transculturalism, few have carefully noticed how Ifemelu utilizes her blog for discourse construction.

For studies in China, there are few studies on Adichie and her works and most researchers only focused on the identity formation of the characters. Both Meng Hui and Meng Xu (2018) and Wu (2015) thoroughly analyzed the immigration experiences of Ifemelu and Obinze in Britain and the United States. However, they did not discuss how to deal with racial conflicts effectively. Zhao (2019) and Shang (2019) believed that African immigrants are in an identity dilemma and they focused on the loss of subjectivity and the way to reconstruct subjectivity, but their papers lacked description and analysis of the secondary characters. Piao and Sun (2020) investigated Ifemelu's development as a Nigerian foreign student and pointed out that Ifemelu's experience mirrors parts of Adichie's own experience. Through interaction with American mainstream culture, they explored the process of psychological maturity and the creation of identity and subjectivity, and national identity. When it comes to the single story of Africa, Shi (2010) indicated Adichie's goal of deconstructing the stereotype of Africa in Western colonial discourses, which necessitates her creating as many African stories and African characters as possible, so that Western readers can see the richness and complexity of Africa. This paper will analyze the spiritual dilemmas and identity crises faced by African immigrants from the perspective of the diaspora. It will not only provide a more comprehensive analysis of the characters but also fill the gaps in the existing research and propose solutions for African immigrants to reconstruct their identity.

2. Theoretical Basis of the Study

Diaspora studies have steadily gained prominence in post-colonial literary studies since the 1990s. The discussion of diaspora and identity by post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said, Stuart Hall, and Homi K. Bhabha offered a unique viewpoint on the interactions and collisions of various cultures in the post-colonial context.

As a Palestinian American, Edward Said felt a strong sense of regional identity and he stated that diasporic experiences involve not just physical migration but also a feeling of separation from one's native land and a lack of cultural belonging. In Said's works, the meaning of diaspora has shifted from

the external environment to the individual's mind and the rootless mental state was considered as one of the darkest fates (Said, 2000). Some of the diaspora consider the country they migrated to as their homeland, while others struggle in the cultures of both the old and new nations. This immigration situation makes the new society more diverse, leading to changes in various aspects such as religious disputes and ideological debates and constituting one of the subjective reasons for the emergence of identity crises.

Stuart Hall is a Jamaican British writer, and his diasporic experience forced him to deal with the contradictions between Caribbean black culture represented by Jamaica and European white culture represented by Britain, thus questioning his own identity. In *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, Hall analyzed diaspora identity in the context of globalization, using the example of black identity in the Caribbean. According to Hall (1990), cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. In other words, he believed that identity does indeed maintain continuity with ancestors, but due to the passage of time and spatial migration, identity can also be fragmented and is always in a dynamic process. For example, there are similarities between African black people living in other regions and black people who have never left Africa, however, changes in environment and history also present significant differences, such as differences in mother tongue, lifestyle and values. Therefore, a common cultural life or belief cannot be regarded as the essential characteristic of black identity. In this case, conflicts may arise between black communities.

Besides, Hall (1990) put forward the concept of "three Presences" namely Présence Européenne, Présence Africaine, and Présence Americaine for people who have diasporic experience to understand their true selves. Among these concepts, Présence Européenne which refers to the blind exclusivity of the white race can be employed to illustrate one of the objective reasons that leads to identity crises of African immigrants in this paper.

Homi K. Bhabha, one of the leading figures of post-colonialism, has developed several important concepts in post-colonial theory and contemporary cultural study, including hybridity, mimicry, and the third space. The hybridity he proposed in the 1980s formed the basis and was the most innovative part of his theory. Bhabha (1994) pointed out that different cultures are not mutually exclusive, but coexist on an equal basis. Therefore, weak cultures have the chance to express themselves through their own cultural differences, making the reconstruction of identity a continuous process of competition and negotiation which emerges the "third space" to eradicate the binary opposition between two different cultures and eliminate identity crises.

3. Reasons for Identity Crises of African Immigrants

In the context of globalization in the 21st century, hybridization has become a trend. America is a quintessential immigrant nation composed of diverse ethnic groups from different cultural backgrounds. Both generations of African immigrants portrayed in *Americanah* encountered ongoing conflicts with

White Americans and African Americans upon their arrival in the United States and thus fostered a complex sense of belonging and loss. This chapter presents a panoramic scene of the difficult situation of these underprivileged African immigrants to reveal the reasons for the identity crises of two generations of African immigrants.

3.1 Different Attitudes Toward African Consciousness

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu represents the first generation of African immigrants who attempted to preserve their original culture in heterogeneous cultures. The other kind is African immigrants who tended to conceal their own culture and blindly catered to American culture, as represented by Aunt Uju. Despite their different attitudes towards their African characteristics and homeland culture, both varieties of African immigrants are mired in a crisis of identity.

For African immigrants, skin color is first noticed since it serves as a visible external marker of race, carrying a profound connotation of identity. Ifemelu immigrated to the United States from Nigeria after leaving her village, rather than giving her a sense of belonging, her skin color quickly drew attention to her as a symbol of rejection, constantly reminding her of being excluded. In the novel, when Ifemelu and her new boyfriend Curt entered a restaurant, a white waitress pretended not to notice her and only paid attention to Curt. Ifemelu said that she came from a country where race was not an issue. She did not think of herself as black and she only became black when she came to America (Adichie, 2013). Similarly, in another scenario, in order to find a job, African black women usually straighten their naturally curly hair to prove their professionalism. At the suggestion of Ruth, Ifemelu straightened her hair just to successfully pass the job interview in Baltimore, but she ended up getting burned with a straight hair relaxer. This also illustrated the first dilemma faced by African immigrants in the United States, which was to construct aesthetic standards that conform to white society, just as Fanon (1986) stated that whiteness has become a symbol of justice, truth, virginity. It defines what it means to be modern and human. Blackness represents ugliness, sin, darkness and immorality. When Ifemelu eventually decided to straighten her curly hair, which often made her feel out of place, the barber congratulated her on finally having white girl hair, however, Ifemelu did not feel relaxed about it and was grieved by the loss of her natural hair. Ifemelu is a typical example of the first generation of African immigrants who grew up in Nigeria. Her childhood experiences and teenage life laid a foundation for her African lifestyle. Nigerian culture nourishes her spirit and influences every aspect of her life, making her more of an African figure unaffected by Western civilization. On the one hand, she maintains a deep emotional bond with her homeland and longs to preserve the unique imprint brought by her African identity; on the other hand, she expresses a strong desire to integrate more deeply into American society. This inner struggle and contradiction have led to difficulties and confusion in identity dilemmas.

Obviously, it can be told from Ifemelu's experience that the United States has set obstacles for African immigrants to maintain African traditions and simultaneously accept American culture. The only way for dispersed black people to integrate into America is to fully accept mainstream American culture. In

Americanah, the active acceptance of white culture by dispersed black people is vividly reflected, such as the deliberate imitation of white accents, submission to white aesthetic standards, and learning about white food culture. Unlike Ifemelu, Aunt Uju is a typical representative of the diaspora who abandoned African traditions to integrate into the United States. In order to avoid the turmoil in Nigeria, Aunt Uju left her hometown and came to the West at the suggestion of a friend. Faced with the impact of the dominant American mainstream culture, she did not have a strong self-awareness and could not make a clear choice between the two cultures but ultimately blindly accepted and obeyed American traditions. For example, Aunt Uju called herself you-joo instead of oo-joo since her American coworkers did not pronounce her name properly (Adichie, 2013). The reason why Aunt Uju changed her name pronunciation was because she realized that she was seen as the other by white Americans. When Aunt Uju spoke in front of white Americans, she always deliberately pretended to have an American accent. For another instance, when Aunt Uju was preparing to go to a hospital for a job interview, she followed the advice she had received and cut off her braids to avoid discrimination or being considered unprofessional. Ifemelu was confused about this and questioned the relationship between an individual's abilities and their external appearance. Aunt Uju, on the contrary, urged Ifemelu not to question this. As a marginalized member of American society, they should follow the established regulations of American culture if they want to be more successful in their careers.

To sum up, the first generation of African immigrants came to the United States with cultural experiences learned in their homeland. On the one hand, they followed the footsteps of local communities, seeking survival and opportunities for development in vastly different environments; on the other hand, due to the difficulty in changing their essential identities, they have long been in a state of maladaptation, discrimination, and oppression. Therefore, they felt lonely and powerless since they were both rejected by the United States and alienated from their native Nigeria.

3.2 Negative Stereotypes

Kleg Milton (1993) stated that stereotypes are detrimental because they involve generalizations and generate a variety of behaviors ranging from exclusion to violence. Ifemelu's experience in America as an African immigrant can best prove it. Cristina Tomas, who works at the International Students Office, is an example of how white people treated African immigrants based on their stereotypes. The pauses in her conversation with international students are predicated on the misconception that they cannot understand English properly due to their accented English. White people not only have such stereotypes about Africans, but also about their countries and nations. Stuart Hall (1990) believed that the French item Présence Européenne, which means European presence and represents the Western world, belongs irrevocably to the role of the dominant, thus fixed black identity according to their imagination. In *Americanah*, many Americans unconsciously believed that the West represents a developed economic level, while Africa means poverty and backwardness. During the conversation with Ifemelu, an American called Laura found that Ifemelu had decided to study in the United States due to a university strike, so Laura inadvertently drew a connection between Nigeria and the entire

Africa and believed that people there were in difficult living circumstances. Moreover, Laura once showed the audience a photo taken by a white person in Africa during a public speech. The white celebrity in the photo gently held an African baby amidst a group of African children. In Laura's words, this photo conveyed a humanitarian spirit that transcends race.

The further example provides strong evidence of the prevalent stereotypes among Westerners towards Africa. Ifemelu happened to receive an invitation to attend a party while working as a part-time nanny of Kimberley. Despite Ifemelu's concerns, she still accepted Kimberly's invitation. As expected, her unique skin color and curly hair attracted the attention of many guests and became a topic of discussion at the gathering. Besides, she accidentally overheard conversations between other guests about Africa. A couple said they were funding a local impoverished student to finish school. Two ladies talked about their collaboration on humanitarian projects that funded financial, educational, and infrastructure institutions. After Ifemelu arrived in the United States and faced such prejudice and misunderstanding, she gradually realized that Americans often had stubborn stereotypes about the African region, and in many cases, Africans were often viewed as a collective. However, this kind of opinion oversimplifies the complexities of global relationships and ignores the nuances of individual experiences within Africa. Africa is not a single, homogeneous entity, but a culturally diverse continent composed of numerous countries. More importantly, each African country has its historical background, which gives its people their unique identity.

4. The Process of Identity Reconstruction of African Immigrants

In *Americanah*, it depicts the survival of African immigrants in heterogeneous cultures. Due to the decadent and oppressive living environment on the African continent, black people have to leave their homeland and live a hard life overseas. They gradually realized that only by reconstructing identity based on their original culture and complex dual cultural backgrounds can they escape the crises of identity. Therefore, this chapter emphatically focuses on the process of the identity reconstruction of African immigrants.

4.1 The Construction of a Dynamic Blogosphere

Due to historical and practical reasons, Africa or Africans often occupy an incomplete subject position, being unable to express themselves and being shaped as the other. During her time in the United States, Ifemelu looked through various women's magazines and found only three images of black women in over two thousand pages. Certain countries often use traditional print media such as newspapers, magazines, and books as tools and means for colonial education, resulting in a blurred image of black people as silent others. It is precisely based on what is seen and felt in cross-border experiences that intellectuals like Ifemelu can firsthand experience the collusive relationship between media and power discourse, and therefore pay special attention to the dissemination function of emerging media. With the development of the Internet, social media have become crucial channels of expression for the public, especially for intellectuals or influencers. They use the populist and democratic characteristics of the

Internet to challenge the authority of traditional media and dissolve the singularity of imperial discourse (Piao & Sun, 2020). Blogs, as an emerging writing model, have been introduced into the novel by Adichie. She listed Ifemelu's blogs separately after each chapter, although they were independent of the storyline in form, their content revolved around the topic of the original text, recording Ifemelu's life perceptions and ideological changes in the United States.

To begin with, Ifemelu's blog exposed a racial issue that the American public avoided confronting and became a strong weapon for combating racism. Racism has a deep cultural foundation in the United States, with the concept of white superiority and black inferiority persisting from the slave trade era to the current day, causing significant psychological trauma to the black community. Although racial segregation in the United States has been abolished since the 1950s, the racial problems have not disappeared. In today's United States, the government has mandated that the public cannot publicly discuss race, which has resulted in public apathy toward racial issues. Most Americans, particularly white people, believe that white people are the only race that matters. With the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, African Americans' political and social status has been substantially improved, marking a historic breakthrough in the United States and also reflecting tremendous progress in racial equality. Some claim that the United States has eradicated racism, but this is all a mirage. Ifemelu's blog was dedicated to discussing this serious topic of race, and she published multiple articles exposing racial discrimination in the United States. Due to the openness and cross-temporal nature of blogs, racial issues have attracted the attention of the American public, especially more black people, awakening their consciousness and their coverage to fight for themselves.

Secondly, she encouraged black people by writing blogs, especially African immigrants to actively respond to American stereotypes, creating an ideal setting for black people to communicate with each other. Ifemelu's longing to connect with other black people reflects the awakening of cultural subjectivity and the process of identity reconstruction. She not only got new solutions to problems and the capacity to express herself through blog writing, but also utilized it to unite the black community. Over time, the blog gradually evolved into a platform for knowledge exchange, resonating with black people, and resisting white discrimination.

The most important function of blogs was that they helped many black individuals recuperate from psychological trauma. Because of her personal experiences with discrimination, Ifemelu noticed the unfavorable perceptions associated with being black in American culture. She also recognized that many black people choose to keep silent about racial problems to avoid the embarrassment that comes with having racial discussions in public.

While in the United States, Ifemelu revealed racial discrimination from a unique perspective and expanded on her criticism of the United States. After returning to Nigeria, she intended to embark on domestic travel, publishing reports on each state of Nigeria, and combining pictures and character stories. This travelogue-style writing tried to demolish imperial-era stereotypes and present a diverse

Africa in the age of globalization. All in all, blog writing has become a way for Ifemelu to continuously construct her own identity. With the help of her blog, she not only gained a stable economic income and solved the most basic survival problems, but also formed a strong inner self and gained a comprehensive and profound understanding of herself, gradually becoming an independent individual. At the same time, the blog also restored the initiative of Ifemelu's voice and changed her relatively silent state.

4.2 The Formation of a Hybrid Identity

The term "hybridity" was not extensively used or influential until Bhabha introduced it into post-colonial theory in the early 20th century. Hybridity refers to the creation of new transcultural forms in the setting of colonial contact zones. He emphasized that colonizers and colonized individuals are to some extent interdependent, and their subjectivity is built upon each other. According to Bhabha (1994), a cultural feature or identity is included not in a single culture, but in an unspoiled area generated via cultural interaction. This area that serves as a node in the interplay between two cultures, is neither totally one culture nor completely the other. This is what he called "the third space", which is the place where all cultural systems are built. Globalization is driving a large influx of people from countries and regions around the world into developed first-world countries. Today, the United States has developed into a country with diverse races and cultures. Faced with the impact of heterogeneous cultures, more and more diasporas choose to construct a new identity based on their dual cultural backgrounds to better adapt to the living environment of foreign countries. However, their attitudes towards native and foreign cultures determine whether they can successfully reconstruct their identity. Ifemelu is a model of cultural integration, representing the young generation of Nigeria with a rebellious spirit. Like Latin American immigrants in the United States, Ifemelu carries cultural duality, manifested as the ability to freely switch between the cultural backgrounds of Nigeria and the United States (Meng & Meng, 2018). The educational background of a prestigious school and years of experience in the United States shaped a new Ifemelu. She respected her mother country's culture, insisted on talking to family and friends in Igbo, and highlighted the Nigerian ethnic background with her twisted and curved hairstyle. She regretted that her compatriots did not understand how to cherish and appreciate the beauty of their talents. Due to receiving American education and settling locally, Nigerian friends regarded her as an American. Although she had passports from both countries, Ifemelu did not recognize herself as a Nigerian or an American, but instead called herself a Nigerian American, blending different values from the two countries. Ifemelu engaged in active participation in American and Nigerian society, rather than only observing it from a distance. A key factor in Ifemelu's development is the formation of hybrid identities. She can accurately deal with the relationship between the United States and Nigeria, as well as between the West and Africa.

As the first generation of African immigrants, the fundamental distinction between Aunt Uju and Ifemelu lay in the strength of their self-awareness. Ifemelu has shown no resistance to external oppression since she was in Nigeria, and Aunt Uju's obedience when facing mainstream American

culture has already shown that she was easily influenced by the outside world. Under the discourse power of the West and white people, Aunt Uju has transformed into a neither black nor white outcast, becoming a person with a white mask but black skin. For example, she purposefully altered her African accent when she was around white people; she followed a friend's advice and quickly straightened her hair to avoid the problems of being considered as an unprofessional doctor; she also promptly stopped Ifemelu from teaching her son Dike Igbo so that Dike would not be confused by two languages and finally becoming a person with American thinking pattern. However, Aunt Uju's efforts and fantasies of fully integrating into the white world were destined to fail. She eventually moved out of the white town, joined the social organization "African Doctors for Africa", and developed a wonderful relationship with a doctor from Ghana. The former Aunt Uju showed disgust towards her black identity and tried her best to break free from the constraints. Nonetheless, she showed her acceptance of her racial identity and recognition of her homeland. It can be said that she finally constructed a positive hybrid identity by regaining the roots of Africa.

If Africa was the "root" for the first generation of African immigrants like Ifemelu and Aunt Uju, then as the second generation of African immigrants, Dike is more like a seed drifting across the sea. When a seed enters land that is not suitable for its growth, it will wither due to the lack of nutrients. Although Dike had never been deeply exposed to Nigerian culture, was almost completely unaware of his African ancestry, and always explicitly expresses his dislike of Nigeria to Ifemelu because Aunt Uju always accused him of using Igbo, he can still be seen as an African American with "hybrid identity".

As Dike grew up, he became almost indistinguishable from an African American, speaking fluent English and having a slim physique. Due to a lack of companionship from his father and being influenced by his mother's strong inclination towards American culture, he did not form a correct understanding of his own identity in his growth. Therefore, he also suffered from troubles from the outside world and felt confused about his own identity. At the end of the story, Ifemelu led Dick to discover his true identity through the trip to Nigeria. After arriving in Africa, Dike achieved an understanding of the African black community and gained a new recognition of African culture. Although Dike ultimately returned to the United States, he also constructed a positive hybrid identity by regaining the roots of Africa.

With the arrival of the era of globalization, the identity of African immigrants is always evolving, and this change is characterized by hybridity rather than singularity. The blend of African and American elements shapes their identity and this is no doubt the best way for African immigrants liberated from the pain of being marginalized of the society and reconstruct their identity.

5. Conclusion

Although African literature has been neglected by academia for a long time, it provides the world with abundant mysterious imagination at the same time (Zhu & Cheng, 2022). This massive literary phenomenon, rich in inherent vitality, is gradually shedding the fog that surrounds it, becoming a

powerful force that cannot be ignored on the international literary stage.

As one of the regions with relatively large-scale dispersion phenomena, Adichie mainly starts from the reality of Africa, exploring the various difficulties faced by black people in the post-colonial era, sharply criticizing the hypocrisy of Western democracy, freedom, and equality, and pointing out that foreign colonization, which is regarded as the modernization process of Western capitalist countries, has caused "mental illnesses" that cannot be eradicated to Africa and black people. Therefore, her works have significant importance in correcting the distorted images of Africa and black people from the world's perspective.

This paper mainly analyzes the main plot of *Americanah* from the perspective of the diaspora and focuses on the identity crises and reconstruction process in the neocolonial space of two generations of African immigrants represented by the novel's characters, such as Ifemelu, Aunt Uju, and Dike. The paper first analyzes the subjective and objective reasons for the identity crises faced by African immigrants, revealing the hypocrisy of the so-called equal and free American society and the rampant racial discrimination in the West. In addition to the unfair treatment encountered in heterogeneous cultures, there are also various contradictions and misunderstandings among African groups. Therefore, the bitterness, helplessness, and courage of African immigrants under racial discrimination and cultural prejudice have been fully displayed. African immigrants has experienced a sense of loneliness and alienation, and they inevitably fell into identity dilemmas and were in a state of marginalization. Moreover, this paper provides an in-depth analysis of the different actions taken by African immigrants in the face of identity crises and proposes a way of identity reconstruction in the post-colonial era.

Firstly, African immigrants should band together and help each other. African immigrants can exchange survival strategies and strive to overcome spiritual trauma through the African community. Besides, simply adhering to African traditions to confront mainstream American society is far from enough, as it can easily lead to endless resistance among African immigrants. When a nation and its culture are perpetually divided, African immigrants ought to understand that positive changes could be made in both Africa and the United States only by persistently pursuing and reconstructing their hybrid identity.

Secondly, the depth of cultural cognition determines African immigrants' surroundings and chances of survival in a culture dominated by white people. In order to get rid of the stereotype, African immigrants should actively create newly minted African stories to break the taboo on racial issues and resist the attempt to impose the stereotype on the African continent and its people. Only then can African immigrants find a sense of belonging and build African national confidence.

To sum up, the practical inspiration of identity writing in *Americanah* lies in the fact that only by maintaining confidence in African immigrants' essential identity, strengthening unity and mutual assistance within the group, and actively adapting to new environments, can African immigrants prevent themselves from falling into the quagmire of identity crises and seek for their living space in foreign countries.

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