
MULTICULTURAL INTERACTION AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES OF ETHNIC MINORITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Y. Chang

College of Education, Minzu University of China
Beijing, 100081

This paper's analysis is based on the narration of M, a Xinjiang-born Mongolian student. The analysis which applied domestic and foreign theories such as Acculturation Theory and Theory of Pattern of Pluralistic Unity of Chinese Ethnicities suggests that the Chinese cultural tradition of valuing harmony and the China's pattern of pluralistic unity of ethnicities is contributive for minority college students to come up to the harmonious construction of ethnic and national identities, and that the inter-ethnic cultural interaction in China affects minority college students' ethnic identity in a complex manner, and the cultural diversity interaction within an ethnic group, especially its introethnic dialectical difference, are significant to the ethnic identity construction of a minority college student.

Key words: ethnic minority college students, multicultural interaction, ethnic identity, Xinjiang-born Mongolian, narration, case study.

People in different places and different times always ask the same question: who am I? This may profoundly distinguish human beings from other creatures. Identity is closely related to this question as it is an extension of self-affirmation. Generally speaking, the concept of identity concerns people's comprehension about basic questions of life, such as who they are and the meaning of their existence, because comprehension about these questions is related to some characteristics prior to other meaning sources. There are generally two types of identities — collective identity and individual identity (self-identity). They are closely connected and are differentiated just for the sake of convenience in analysis. The individual's collective identity focuses on collectivity, relates this person to other people with shared characteristics and indicates how this person is "identical" with other people. Some scholars including Tajfel [18] proposed a social identity theory which holds that an individual's collective identity is an important part of self-identity and makes him contribute to the collective he belongs to get self-respect. Obviously, collective identity based on a series of shared objectives, values and experience can form an important foundation for social movements [7. P. 26—28]. Thus, collective identity is getting more and more attention.

Interestingly, some people think the most popular social identity in the post-nationalism times is ethnic. Ethnic group is a sub-collective who thinks they share the same ancestry and one or more of the following factors — culture, phenotype, religion, language, kinships and original hometown. Ethnic identity exists wherever an ethnic exists [4. P. 171—176, 200]. Ethnic identity is a dynamic and multi-dimensional construction, referring to the identity of an individual as a member of an ethnic group. According to social identity theory, ethnic identity includes intensity of sense of belonging an ethnic group or intensity of acknowledgement for members of the group. Ethnic identity is not only a kind of collective identity but also the core of identity of members of ethnic groups [14].

This paper mainly focuses on ethnic identity of Chinese college students of ethnic minorities. Thanks to the reform and opening up, popularization of higher education and ethnic policies, the number of college students of ethnic minorities is increasing rapidly. In 1999, there are 226.4 thousand college students of ethnic minorities in China [21]. In 2003, the number reached 697.6 thousand, accounting for 6.55% of the total. In 2004, the number reached 807.3 thousand [8]. By the end of 2008, the number reached 1.3388 million [9]. It should be seen that when a student enters college, his/her psychological condition develops further and he/she will have a better understanding on culture, ethnicity and nation. Thus, college period is an important stage for ethnic identity development. It should also be noticed that when a student of ethnic minority, especially one who lives in ethnic concentrated communities, leaves his family and community, it means he will face more people with different culture more directly and they will have more complicated and profound cultural interaction. This change will have important significance on their ethnic identity.

Intercultural interaction and ethnic identity are doubtlessly complicated phenomena and poses great challenge for research methods. Current researches in China either describe daily facts sketchily or just mechanically copy unlocalized ethnic identity measurement tools by western scholars. In order to overcome these restrictions and to show the complicated phenomena, this paper attempts to apply individual case narrative methodology. The case is a girl student M of Mongolian ethnic minority who studies in the college I work in. I chose her because she was born in Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region but not an uygur, which is the major ethnic minority in Xinjiang. Since childhood, she has experienced thorough and complicated intercultural interaction and ethnic identification. After entering college, she experienced and reflected on more complicated and profound ethnic identity. She also likes thinking and expressing herself in oral and written forms. Just before her graduation at the end of 2009, she voluntarily wrote out her experience to share with me, a cultural outsider.

I must emphasize that the most important reason I chose M as a case is that her experiences include life stories of complicated intercultural interaction nature. This kind of story is doubtlessly valuable in our understanding of the meaning of intercultural interaction and ethnic identity among college students of ethnic minorities. China's ethnic groups feature local cohabitation and long time interaction. However, existing researches mostly share a serious limitation, namely discussing ethnic identity of a certain ethnic group in an isolated manner while ignoring acculturation reality. I incline to agree that individuals construct and change ethnic identity because it is in the big social context consisting of different ethnics that individuals realize better differences between ethnics and try to understanding their ethnic characteristics [14].

Another reason for choosing M is that she is a student of Minzu University. China mainly provides higher education for college students of ethnic minorities in three ways: ethnic college, ethnic class or common class of higher education institutions [3. P. 19]. Minzu University is a higher education institution dedicated to bringing up high-level talents, namely, an ethnic college. China currently has 16 ethnic colleges including provincial higher education institutions such as Qinghai Ethnic College and higher edu-

education institutions under the direction of National Committee of Ethnic Affairs which enroll students from nationwide. Minzu University belongs to the latter category and ranks first in terms of social influence. It is established earlier than the others and is the only national key university of this category. What's more, its students are from ethnic groups all over the nation with the most comprehensive ethnic variety and culture. Although it is a comprehensive university with majors shared by many other universities, its traditional quality discipline and feature majors includes ethnology, language and literature of ethnic minorities, ethnic theory and policies, arts of ethnic minorities, ethnic education, economies of ethnic minorities as are almost unique to it. It should also be pointed out that by April 2010 the university has 15,977 full-time students including 11,271 undergraduates, 3717 applicants of master degree and doctoral degree and 476 preparatory students of ethnic minorities. Over 60% of the undergraduate students are from ethnic minorities. The university also has 843 overseas students from 44 countries. With a history of over 60 years, the university has produced over 80,000 graduates from various ethnic groups. Nearly one thousand of them become famous experts; nearly one hundred — provincial and ministerial cadres of areas of ethnic minorities; nearly one thousand — prefectural cadres and over ten thousand — county cadres and leaders of various departments. Thus, the university is known as “a cradle of talents of ethnic minorities and models of national unity” [12]. What's more, Minzu University is located in Beijing city. Although Beijing is born of historical interaction of various ethnic groups, its current dominant culture is culture of Han ethnic group. It's obvious that this university is of great value in research of intercultural interaction and ethnic identity among students of ethnic minorities.

The following part is emic discourse, namely M's life story and her reflection on it. It should be noted that the author interfered with her text in two ways. One is to add subtitles for the readers' convenience. The other is to delete irrelevant stories as the length of this paper is constrained. However, the paper tries to be faithful to the original text in terms of diction and content and keeps the order of her narrative. In order to make the readers better understand M's college life, the paper retains her story before her entering college. Some diction or words might be improper. What's more, to avoid misunderstanding between different ethnics that might be caused by the paper, ethnic belonging of students who had quarrels with M will not be revealed.

A. Pre-college life stories

I am a Mongolian girl born in Xinjiang Province. My family resides in Korla, a key city in the border zone between South and North Xinjiang. I will never forget the vast grassland, the pine forests, the sheep flock, the horses, and the Mongolian yurt, as well as the incredible deserts, Gobi, and Lop Nor. Both my parents are native Mongolians. My father was born in a farm and received education with courses taught in the Mongolian language. My mother, on the other hand, was born into a well-off family of top officials. Therefore she used Mongolian for daily communication at home, while attended schools with courses taught in Mandarin by the Han people. My father lagged far behind my mother in terms of fluency in Mandarin. However, after they got married, my father's Mandarin improved by a large margin, so did my mother's Mongolian. Nevertheless, I always sense a difference. Somehow, my parents use Mongolian to communicate with each

other; but they use Mandarin when talking with me. I always bear it in mind that it is my most beloved grandpa who taught me how to speak Mongolian... Before I attended kindergarten, I was sent to live with a Uighur family for some time. I remember I had a happy time there and even learned a little Uighur language... In my childhood, I had no idea what ethics are. I used to play with neighboring kids who are Han people, but we had not the faintest idea about the differences between us. Then one day, when we were playing on a swivel chair, some children came. One of them hit me. I got to know that they belonged to another ethnic group. Henceforth, I developed the awareness of differences between ethnic groups.

Before I could finish the kindergarten education, my parents sent me to the only Mongolian primary school in Korla at that time, in order to learn the Mongolian language. It was not really a primary school, for there was only one classroom in a shed in the corner of the yard of a Han primary school. I felt I was forced to attend it, and I had no acquaintances there. Even worse, I could only understand a small part of what was taught and said. Sometimes the teacher would speak to me in Mandarin. But she always spoke Mongolian when teaching, which was completely unintelligible to me. After wasting some days' time there, I was glad that at least I had learnt a little Mongolian before. Thanks to an examination in which I doodled away, my days at the Mongolian school came to an end.

After a while, I was enrolled in a key primary school which was a little far away from home. I got on pretty well with my classmates and felt no difference from them. At that time, my mother was studying in Beijing. So I moved to Beijing with my parents and attended Shuang Yu Shu Second Primary School. There's a time difference between my hometown and Beijing, but I adapted well soon. During the lunch time, I was entrusted to the care of an old couple. I got used to their cuisine and learned to help them do some handcraft. In the school, when my classmates asked me where I came from, I would reply "from Xinjiang", but nobody seemed to recognize the place. In this new environment, I learned much better with grades always ranking top two in the class. The head teacher was very kind to me. I spent about one-year wonderful time here. My parents often took me to visit Minzu University of China which I would be enrolled in later on.

When my mother finished her study, we went back home. I went to an ordinary primary school near our home and was sorted into B Class. The class was always in disorder, and I was often bullied by classmates. Except for the music course in which the teacher showed her fondness of me, I thought A Class was better than B Class! Soon my parents transferred me back to the key primary school which I attended in the first grade. Once in a Chinese examination, most students did a poor job while I was among the top. I did not know if I could take it as a compliment, but the teacher told the class: "How come you did so poorly when your ethnic classmate did a good job?" I thought: "It's so unfair."

After graduation from primary school, I entered a key middle school with my grades ranking the second in the class. I was in the same class with a very good Han friend. We were inseparable. We always considered ourselves somewhat special, and thus we did not get along too well with others. My classmates regarded us as "aloof" and we did accept it. Gradually I felt that my ethnic characteristic stood out more and more. Some students would ask me on purpose: "You cheekbones are so high! You are not a Han, right?" Because of my ethnic identity, few students would like to befriend me. Luckily, I had a very good friend who did not mind it at all. She often received some love letters, but I got none. I believe this was because I was not a Han girl! I felt more and more distaste for my ethnic identity. "How I wish I could be a Han girl!" Such thought often occurred to me at that time.

In high school, I always went to school and came back home alone without the company of any friend. At first, I felt very awkward. But later, I got used to it. During this period of time, study had become my top priority. Sometimes I felt lonely. I had a crush on a boy in the sophomore year, but I kept telling myself that there was an impenetrable wall between us — ethnic differences. How I wished I could get rid of my ethnic identity!

B. College life stories

Then I was enrolled into Minzu University of China, the school I always visited during my stay in Beijing when I was young. In this new environment, I could only feel helpless and solitary, which even drove me to tears. Unlike other students who soon got rid of their homesickness, I pined for my home. I spent the Military Training along with my roommates. However, our relations remained remote. Everyone had their own room. We were always observing each other. Sometimes we would tolerate, but sometimes we would burst out. Our relations were always delicate and awkward. I could not feel at home here. Most of my roommates are from Northern China; besides, a girl three years older than me was also a Mongolian. She came from Inner Mongolia. I once thought that we could become intimate since we belonged to the same ethnic group. However, we could not communicate in Mongolian language, because it has some variations in different areas, therefore we were not mutually intelligible. She believed I couldn't speak Mongolian well, while I considered her not orthodox enough, because her mother belonged to Han people. In my class, there was a girl who came from north Xinjiang. In her eyes, south Xinjiang had nothing but deserts and poverty. But I knew clearly that the city I lived and grew up in was not underdeveloped at all. It is the second largest city in Xinjiang. But I did not prove anything to her. At least I was well aware of the fact; that would be enough. Perhaps because of this divergence of opinions, we did not get along very well. I felt she always argued with me. And I refused to admit there was any similarity between us, because she was more and more close to her Uighur fellow students. Despite all that, this university still had its unique feature, that is, different ethnic groups could get to know each other, and I broadened my horizon here. When I saw the people in the same ethnic identity as myself, I would feel as if I had companions...

A Nadam Fair was held every summer in the campus. I once thought that I could make some friends there. But sadly no. I felt different again. There was a Mongolian department in the university. Students of this major came from both Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang. I wanted to associate with the students who came from the towns and counties in the same Prefecture. Their Mandarin was not as good as mine, but I didn't care. I just wanted to interact with them. However, they were not enthusiastic towards me at all, for they considered me as a Han girl. It dawned on me that some of my thoughts and feelings had already changed in the cultural conflict in this university. In my middle school, I hated my ethnic identity; but now I am rather pleased to admit it and would like to try my best to show it. Yes, the most precious thing I learned at this university is my ethnic pride. Although I haven't met a very good friend with a common goal, I am always thinking. Suddenly, I realize I have almost forgotten that the world was a diversified yet unified one. I think we should keep a harmonious relationship and communicate with each other. In this way we can work out the most valuable future. In this big family of Chinese nationality, all the members are inter-connected with each other with our fate intertwined with each other...

Music is part of my life. I participated in some performances, and went to some concerts played by university bands or rock bands. I realized that many people were music

fans like me. Moreover, in Beijing, there were a lot of musicians of the same ethnic group. Most of them had great achievements. I felt very proud of it. My greatest aspiration is to become a musician, but I don't know when I can realize this dream. I gradually understand that music can cross national boundaries...

Quite by accident, I was recruited by a company in a Recruiting Fair. My job is new to me — I should write script for softwares. The employees are not dressed in suits but casual clothes that look natural and free, exactly how young people dress. I like this ambience. My colleagues were curious about my four-character name and felt I was different from them. Fortunately, this did not bother me... The plenty of knowledge in this new area will benefit me a lot. To my excitement, my colleagues start interacting with me soon. I am not left out. Therefore I am associating with them quite well.

I am happy to go home in every holiday. My little sister has grown up. I can feel that she has no special concern for her ethnic identity. It is likely that she feel no difference. I'm not sure whether it is good for her! But I always talk to her about our ethnic pride and dignity.

My undergraduate internship took place in a teachers education College for Mongolian Ethnic Group in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. Our class went to Hohhot (the provincial capital) for internship. We spent two weeks in the college. I saw my dad's photo there... I had no idea that all the students I would be facing were from my ethnic group. When I saw how similar we were, I felt great and confident towards the students. The head teacher of the class I was sorted into was a young and proud Mongolian teacher who was said to have been to a Chinese university. I was filled with curiosity towards him. But I only met with him four or five times during the two weeks. I felt he was not enthusiastic. We had neither tacit understanding nor communication. Fortunately, I got on well with his students. They were eager to learn some new things from me. They asked me about their future and my ideal... Sometimes they would laugh at the Mongolian I spoke and would speak their Mongolian in front of me. I felt I was not part of them. To my surprise, on one night, the students and the head teacher went to my dorm and invited me to his home for tea. I went to his home with other twenty-odd people. It was crowded. Then the teacher asked his students to boil kettle, make milk tea, and serve food. I felt their sincere feelings between each other. But I heard something that made me sad. The teacher said to his students in Mongolian that they should let me see the real Mongolian customs. Indeed, they treated me as someone from another ethnic group who knew nothing at all, just like the other intern teachers... They spoke Mongolian between each other, but spoke Mandarin to me. I felt very awkward... I left there quietly. I didn't know if I was happier or more broken-hearted!

C. Reflection upon graduation.

I described my development truthfully. This is a process of socialization for me. I have always been looking for a kind of identification, but I cannot get it. I am confused, but I am still holding on to it... I live in an ever-changing world. I always make new discoveries. From my childhood, I felt how colorful the world is. The concept of ethnic group becomes clearer to me. I once wanted to be rid of my ethnic identity because it separated me from others. But now I understand more and my perspective changes. I want to show my difference, explore it, display it, develop it, and protect it. Yes, it has become part of me. We are connected forever. Perhaps I haven't experienced the mutual identification yet and always feel the distance from others. But I believe one day we will become one big family. My days at the university give me new faith, but a sense of loneliness as well. But I do

not mind it. When the door of university closed, I felt I had a sentiment attachment to it. But it is over. I'm not really satisfied. I don't know how many more people have the similar experience. I don't think it bad to have a troublesome past. On the contrary, it adds color to the scenery of life, and gives me a sense of orientation. I know clearly this is what I need. I will try to satisfy myself.

M's story suggests that ethnic identity becomes significant only in the context of two or more ethnic groups in contact with each other [17. P. 76—85]; therefore, cultural interaction affects minority college students' ethnic identity in a complex manner. Inter-ethnic interaction is indeed one of the most important factors that affect ethnic identity development, to the extent that "ethnic identity" is sometimes used as a synonym of acculturation [15]. It is because acculturation focuses on the continuous and direct contacts between individuals of several groups with various cultures, namely, culture contact [10]. The individual's perception of inter-ethnic difference in the process of acculturation develops with the growth of age. Therefore, college students' understanding of ethnic identity during cultural interaction is much more profound. According to findings of studies in cross-cultural psychology, children's initial recognition of racial or ethnic difference is based on physical features such as facial features and dressing difference; with the growth of age, the individual's basis of racial group distinction is extended gradually from external unitary matters to recognition of the ethnic group's various social features [19. P. 82].

Therefore, the individual's ethnic identity may develop and change. Based on the reflection of various modes and the reference to their similarities, Phinney [16] proposed a mode that includes three phases. This mode suggests that individuals who didn't experience ethnic identity issues in their early adolescence or even adulthood are at the first phase; they never examined ethnic identity, favor the mainstream culture, and never or seldom ponder over such issues, though it is not necessarily obligatory. At the second phase, individuals explore into their ethnicity and recognize it in themselves, which is a development to a phase of explicit awareness. At the third phase, individuals develop faithful ethnic identity and acquire achieved ethnic identity. Therefore, at the college stage of this accumulative process, they can understand and appreciate the characteristics of their own ethnic group more profoundly, namely, the ethnic identity is acquired or internalized [13]. In this study, M's experience generally supports this conclusion. However, this phenomenon may be more common among subgroup members of ethnic cultures who have remarkable characteristics but interact with other ethnic cultures frequently.

The case also indicates that domestic studies have overlooked a proposition that the cultural diversity interaction within the ethnic group makes ethnic identity more complex and difficult. In terms of ethnic identity, the individual's pressure from within the ethnic group is more than the pressure that results from the mainstream culture's negative reaction to the individual [17. P. 76—85]. Other ethnic Mongolian students also told me that they suffer from misunderstanding from their own ethnic because they can't speak Mongolian. In reality, China's ethnic groups live together over vast areas while some live in individual concentrated communities in small areas. Some ethnic minori-

ties live in their own individual concentrated communities, some live together with other ethnicities, and some others live in small concentrated communities in autonomous regions of another bigger ethnic group. This inevitably leads to cultural diversity. For example, ethnic Mongolians scatter across the nation. Besides the Inner Mongolian region, they also live in small concentrated communities in Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, Gansu, Qinghai and Liaoning. Their culture may vary in different regions. Moreover, due to regional difference, dialectal diversity and difference in language of instruction in school, the difference between subgroups within the same ethnicity becomes more complex and diversified.

More importantly, M's story indicates that language difference is one of the major factors that affect cultural interaction and ethnic identity. As a result, it is significant to treat ethnic languages squarely, especially for minority college students who live in an area dominated by a well developed language (a monolingual area). As Lev Vygotsky believes [20], man's mental process, different from animals', is a historical development mediated by culture. Man's advanced mental activity especially needs to be accomplished with the help of cultural tools. In the individual's "cultural toolkit", language is the most important tool. As a mediator, it can help children construct their own knowledge of the world and then testify, refine and reflect on it. It can also be employed in social interaction and activities. It is a living fossil of an ethnic culture. Language diversity and cultural diversity are closely connected. Humboldt believes that "our language is our history" and that a language is the voice of a nation, the spiritual and emotional embodiment of it. Every nation and every language is a type of "spiritual personality" [11. P. 370—381]. Nevertheless, the author is not an extremist of linguistic determinism — he merely intends to emphasize language's significance to identity.

According to M's narration, the individual's ethnic identity can in turn affect his cultural interaction. Berry's acculturation theory from psychological perspective suggests that during the acculturation process, besides the cultural shift in social structure, economic foundation and political organization at the group level, the mental aspect of the individuals involved also comes to acculturate, namely, the individuals' behavior, values, attitude and even identity in conversation, dressing and dining come to change [2]. He further points out that this mental change may lead to the individuals' acculturation stress. To cope with this stress, the individuals will choose and develop some kind of acculturation strategy based on cultural identity.

Berry further proposes that apart from individuals' personality, knowledge and contact level, the acculturation strategy that they adopt based on cultural identity makes much difference in cross-cultural interaction. The cultural identity here covers two aspects, namely the individual's ethnic identity within the ethnic group that he belongs to and the identity with the other culture involved in the acculturation process. It should be noted that when Berry refers to ethnic minority individual's second cultural identity, he stresses more on their preference for communicating with the mainstream culture group. This theory is limited by the dichotomy thinking and special attention should be paid when it is applied in our country. Similar to our belief of being harmonious yet differentiated, he believes that these two dimensions are independent from each other,

namely, a high level of identity with one culture does not necessarily denote low identity with others. According to the individual's different manifestation along these two dimensions, Berry distinguishes four different acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization [1]. For instance, if individuals are unlikely to maintain the original culture or communicate with other groups and lack interest in it, their strategy is marginalization. M's narration of part of her middle school experience is similar to it. Some ethnic studies found that in the same acculturation scene, individuals who adopt different strategies are substantially different in terms of mental adaptation results. For example, in some ethnic minority groups, in terms of indicators such as emotion and life satisfaction, the ranking of the four acculturation strategies is "integration" → "separation" → "assimilation" → "marginalization". Therefore, integrative attitude and strategy needs to be strengthened in inter-ethnic interaction and ethnic unity education [5].

M's story is an extreme case, but it proves that our nation's pattern of pluralistic unity of ethnicities is significant to college students' cultural identities. On one hand, her story proves that she developed sound ethnic identity despite unusual difficulties, on the other hand, she never questioned her identity as a Chinese. In China each ethnicity has its own features and identity, but also manages to live in harmony with others, because all ethnicities are connected closely together. Though the Han culture plays a clearly dominant role, in the meantime it is open to different cultures of various ethnicities, no matter which ethnic group ruled the country [6]. This history gave rise to a solid tradition in China, which is to seek harmony without uniformity in treating cultural diversity. "Harmony" means maintaining one's own feature while participating in the macro combination, while "uniformity" means loss of individual features [22]. Therefore, Chinese minority college students are able to construct harmonious ethnic identity and national identity. Their group identity is open and inclusive.

As previously mentioned, during the construction and development of her ethnic identity, M may have experienced hardships and bitterness, but she finally acquired relatively stable ethnic identity. It further suggests that ethnic identity should be treated with rationality. Firstly, M's narration proves that legitimate ethnic identity should be affirmed. Since ethnic identity is an extended self-affirmation through envisaged bloodline and origin, it is to a large extent symbolic, emotional, primordial or irrational [23. P. 356—359], and not open to arbitrary construction. Secondly, national identity and ethnic identity should be handled properly. M's narration suggests that the disadvantaged people's ethnic identity needs attention and respect, because for "those who belong to an ethnicity or culture that is in poor condition in politics, economy and media, and those who suffer serious discrimination or verbal and physical attack", their ethnic identity is extremely sensitive. If treated badly, it will be taken advantage of by those national separationists and result in serious consequences.

To sum up, M's story is inspirational and open to further interpretation. The analysis that applied domestic and foreign theories suggests that the Chinese harmony tradition and the pattern of pluralistic unity of ethnicities is contributive for minority college students to come up to harmonious ethnic identity and national identity; cultural interaction affects minority college students' ethnic identity in a complex manner as cultural diversity interaction within the ethnic group especially dialectal difference is signifi-

cant to the ethnic identity of minority college students. The individual's ethnic identity can in turn affect his attitudes, strategies and behaviors towards cultural interaction, even resulting in difficulty in adapting, with the optimal result being an integration strategy of multi-cultural identity compatibility. It's worth noting that some people claim that due to the long-term cohabitation and frequent communication of Han ethnic group and minority groups, ethnic differences are gradually fading away. This point of view is superficial. Indeed, in the last few decades, with the development of ethnic relations, minority groups have come to participate in every aspect of modern social life and share more and more similarities with Han people. According to the author's study, however, ethnic cultures are shifting but are by no means vanishing. Ethnic history of other parts of the world reveals the same conclusion — though one ethnic group's life-style is modernized and even loses its own language, yet its ethnic identity stays. It's noteworthy that an individual is able to achieve a sense of belonging in two cultures at the same time without necessarily losing his own ethnic identity [17. P. 76—85].

There is another area worth further research — globalization is pushing more ethnic groups to a similar way of development; modernized means of transportation, mass media and popular culture will make ethnic identity so intricate that different generations may defy, which further brings the younger generation mental pressure. These trends will also lead to multiple ethnic identities. For example, one can be a mother, engineer, Muslim and senator at the same time, which reflects the multiple dimensions of one's life. We should also note that this kind of multiple social identities might be potential root for conflicts. It's because most people tend to organize their lives based on one major identity, which is fairly coherent chronologically and spatially [7].

It must be also noted in the end that as the author is of Han ethnicity and was born and bred in the inland of China, he may be confined in reaching out for complete viewpoints of ethnic identity, and make over-interpretation of M's case.

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МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЕ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЕ И ИДЕНТИФИКАЦИОННЫЕ ПАТТЕРНЫ ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЕЙ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ МЕНЬШИНСТВ

Ю. Чан

Колледж образования
Китайский Национальный университет Минзу
Пекин, Китай, 100081

Статья основана на нарративе М., монгольской студентки из Синьцзянского района. Автор использует концептуальные подходы китайских и зарубежных исследователей, в частности теорию аккультурации и теорию множественной китайской идентичности. Последняя предполагает, что китайские культурные традиции стремления к гармонии и межэтнических взаимодействий помогают представителям национальных меньшинств успешно конструировать устойчивую этническую идентичность. Акцент в статье сделан на разнообразии культурных практик внутри этнических групп и их диалектическом единстве как наиболее существенных элементах для формирования этнической идентичности у представителей национальных меньшинств.

Ключевые слова: национальное меньшинство, студенты, межкультурное взаимодействие, этническая идентичность, монголка (рожденная в провинции Синьцзян), наррация, кейс-стади.