

Being a Mongolian student in an 'enclosed-wall': An Exploration of Social Identity Construction of the Mongolian Students in Minzu Universities of China

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For my families

Abstract

Countries with domestic ethnic diversity confront many similar educational challenges: on one side, there is a need to address equalities in the public education system, thus ensuring that minority groups are able to access opportunities in education which engage their own cultures and languages; on the other side, it is apparent that equality is extremely complex and minority students across the world still confront obstacles in access to the full range of opportunities enjoyed by dominant social groups. In the context of China, the dual education system (*Putong education system* and *Minzu education system*) aims to address such challenges. Whilst these two systems run in parallel on an equal basis, they also implicitly segregate the ethnic minorities they are designed to serve.

In order to explore the impact of the Minzu education system on minority students' experiences, perceptions, and opportunities in China, this research sets the focus on minority students in higher education, specifically, the Mongolian students studying in the Minzu universities in China. 'Social identity' is used as the conceptual lens to explore the perceptions of Mongolian students and their experiences in the Minzu universities. Particularly, three aspects of social identity are focused upon: ethnic identity, learning identity and how these aspects of social identity are negotiated within the institutional context of Minzu universities. In order to investigate this, a total of 31 semi-structured interviews with Mongolian students were carried out in two Minzu universities.

The major findings of the study suggest that the metaphor of an 'enclosed-wall' reflects the impact of the Minzu higher education system. More specifically, Mongolian identity and learning identity as two aspects of social identity are being constructed within the 'enclosed-wall' and this is manifested in two ways: the ethnic identity of Mongolian students becomes stronger within the Minzu

university but there is also a sense of segregation from others; there is a positive learning identity in Mongolian students but the disadvantages are meanwhile embedded in the learning identity. The disadvantages are reflected such as their vulnerable basis in English or Chinese language to compete in the employment market and the Mongolian language medium majors which they engage lack affirmation and applicability in the wider society.

‘Enclosed-wall’ is not necessarily of negative connotations. Sustaining the education of Mongolian students in an ‘enclosed’ system offers valuable opportunities in terms of preserving the heritage of cultural and language diversity and engaging them in the learning process. However, when the ‘enclosed-wall’ is examined in the wider context where the challenges from labour market and global HE competitiveness become intense, it seems that the effects of the ‘enclosed-wall’ would pose barriers for Mongolian students to succeed outside the ‘wall’. Thus, the social identity construction of Mongolian students can illuminate the contradictions between the protection and development of opportunities for ethnic minorities in higher education and the continuance of their segregation and their experiences of disadvantages in education and the wider society.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my original work, except explicit attribution is made. None of this thesis has been previously submitted for any other award.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lu Wang". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke for the 'u' in 'Lu' and a similar one for the 'a' in 'Wang'.

Wang Lu 王露

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Glossary of Terms

Terms

Minzu

Definitions

China has nationally-designated 56 Minzu groups. Minzu denotes the ethnic composition of the population in China. Sometimes, Minzu is translated as ‘nationality’ in English publications, particularly when it relates to the translated works of the Soviet Union’s former leader Josef Stalin.

Dual education system:

*Minzu versus Putong
education*

The dual education system is contextualised under the scheme of the public education system established in the People’s Republic of China after 1949. It also relates to the context of *Minzu* in China. More specifically, the dual education system comprises the *Minzu education system* and the *Putong education system* running in parallel throughout pre-school education level to higher education level. The dual education system is supported respectively by the laws, governmental regulation, funding, construction of schools and relevant policies from central to local level. Special emphasis is put on the language used as the medium of teaching at Minzu schools in different regions.

Min-kao-Min (MKM)

Min-kao-Min refers to the minority students who receive their education in Minzu schools from basic education stage, using the minority language as the major medium for learning. MKM students are basically bilingual, but they perform better when engaging with their native minority language. MKM students are allowed to sit in Gaokao (*higher education entrance exam*) by using their native minority language, except for the exam subjects of ‘Chinese language’ and ‘foreign language’.

Min-kao-Han (MKH)

Min-kao-Han generally refers to the minority students who are educated in the Putong/Han schools from basic education stage, using Chinese language as the only medium to receive education. MKH minority students mainly use the Chinese language to sit in Gaokao.

*Mengshou major and
Hanshou major*

Mengshou major and Hanshou major are two types of study programmes available at Minzu

universities. Setting up two types of study programmes serves the needs of Mongolian students with different language conditions. More specifically, Mengshou major refers to the courses and programmes offered using the Mongolian language as the medium of teaching. Hanshou major, in contrast, is offered by using the Chinese language as the medium of teaching. Moreover, Mengshou and Hanshou majors are set considerably different entrance requirements in Gaokao. As shown in the Gaokao statistics in IMAR in 2015, Mengshou majors have much lower entrance requirements (293) compared to the Hanshou majors (464) out of the total score of 750.

Yukeban

Yukeban is a programme consisting of one to two years of undergraduate study available in Minzu universities. It aims to compensate the Chinese language and academic basis of minority students preparing to study Hanshou majors as their further undergraduate study.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

'Rather than assuming a unified Mongolian identity, we need to look at how people identify themselves as Mongolian and how identities are negotiated, contingent upon the historical, cultural, political and economic circumstances in which they emerge' (Bilik, 1998, p. 65)

This study contributes to a growing awareness of ethnic minority students' experiences in higher education. These studies raise subjects such as access choices and opportunities (Reay, Davies, David and Ball, 2001; Teng and Ma, 2005), negative and discriminative university experiences (McNairy, 1996, Redfern, 2016), stereotypes (McClelland and Auster, 1990; Lewis, Chesler and Forman, 2000), low academic attainment (Richardson, 2008), and the struggle to represent minority cultural recognition in the context of universities (Zhao, 2007). Many studies take place in the context of those predominately white universities (Wilkins, 2014; Hannon et al., 2016). As McMillan (2006, p.11) noted, studies exploring minority students' higher education experiences utilise a number of themes including those of language, ethnicity, culture, social class and learning or educational background: *'these broad themes straddle a range of disciplines and research directions, some overlapping, others diverging'*. Despite this, there are very few studies looking at minority students' higher education experiences by using one specific lens: social identity.

The central aim of this study is to use social identity as a conceptual lens in order to explore Mongolian students' perceptions of self whilst studying at the Minzu universities in China. As Shipton (2005, p.5) noted, higher education enables students to become aware of their sense of *'being'* in a complex world. An understanding of *'being'* makes sense of how students *'construed and constructed their lives'* (Ibid, p.2). It prompts this study to use social identity as a tool to discover how Mongolian students perceive who they are, and how they experience and make sense of their personal, learning and social experiences by

studying at Minzu Universities in China.

By achieving the aim, this study is significant in terms of:

- (1) an understanding of the connection between Mongolian students' perceptions of self with their status as minority group members in China and their role as university students studying in Minzu universities preparing for life in the Han-dominated society.
- (2) developing a conceptual framework which shows how social identity is employed in a specific higher education context: Minzu Universities in China. Minzu universities have particular missions, goals, characteristics and history which distinguishes them from other universities. By revealing Mongolian students' social identity, this study contributes to an understanding of the role of Minzu universities for minority students and their location in the market, higher education system and society in China.

In this chapter, I will introduce the background to the study. I will also address the research questions and their rationale in the following and outline the structure of the thesis in the end.

1.1 Background to the study

1.1.1 China: a multi-Minzu context

After 1949 when the People's Republic of China was established, the government launched the Minzu recognition campaign. Throughout the 1950s to the end of the 1980s, the Minzu recognition campaign underwent three stages and created 56 designated ethnic groups (State Council of P.R.C, 2005). The term '*Minzu*', meaning ethnic, indicates the ethnic composition of the population of contemporary China. The 56 Minzu groups comprise one majority Han and 55

minority Minzu groups. The 55 minority Minzu groups reflect the multiplicity of languages and cultures of China. For example, apart from Hui and Manchu who use *Hanyu* as their native language (Mackerras, 2003), more than 120 minority languages or local dialects are used by diverse minority groups (Chen and Wang 2013)

Due to Minzu encompassing both the Han majority and minority, it is understood as a discourse which refers to ‘*weaving diversity into unity*’ (Zhao, 2010a, p.4). Even though Minzu addresses the diverse ethnic groups representing distinctive forms of languages, cultures, customs, religions and life-styles of their own, the use of the term *Minzu* celebrates a spirit of national unity by configuring various Minzu groups into a united Chinese nationality. The co-existence of multi-Minzu and their mutual integration profoundly influenced the formation of the Chinese national identity. As Zhang (1997) explained, multiple aspects of identity are constructed by a Chinese people who can simultaneously identify themselves as a Chinese and a Han/minority. However, *Minzu* also intensifies the ethnic categorization of self of Chinese people, particularly those who are identified as the minority Minzu (Bulag, 2010). *Minzu*, instead of ethnic, is used in this thesis to indicate such distinctive meaning.

The 55 minority Minzu groups constitute a fraction of the total population of China. In 2010, the population of the combined minority groups only accounted for 8.49% of the total population, numbering approximately 110 million (National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 2011). There is also diversity within the 55 minority Minzu groups. According to the census of 2010, the five minority Minzu with the largest populations are, namely, Zhuang (1.27%), Hui (0.79%), Manchu (0.78%), Uyghur (0.76%) and Miao (0.71%). The least-populated Minzu groups are Hezhe (0.0004%) and Luoba (0.0003%).

Even though the Minzu groups form a very small part of the total population,

they are distributed massively throughout the Chinese territory. In spite of a small number of minorities living in the eastern and coastal regions, a great number of minority populations reside in the autonomous regions of northern and western China. The vast area comprising five Minzu autonomous regions (*Inner Mongolia, Guangxi Zhuang, Xinjiang Uyghur, Ningxia Hui* and *Tibet*) is of military and strategic importance due to its frontier locations and abundant natural resources (Kayongo-Male and Lee, 2004). However, the slow social and economic development of these areas constrains the opportunities and lives of minority people. Education, including higher education, is crucial for minorities to become upwardly mobile and create opportunities for themselves in the Han-dominated society.

1.1.2 Mongolian students

Globally, Mongolian is a transnational ethnicity developing its histories in a wider context. The *Republic of Mongolia* is a sovereign country located in the northern area of Asia. The Mongolians have also shared borders with, or have had connections to, Russia, Tibet, Japan and China for many years. These facets form Mongolian not only as a social/ethnic category, but much more like a 'society' (Bulag, 2010, p.262). There is a considerable Mongolian population in China, comprising 0.45% of the total population, and numbering approximately 6300000 (NBS, 2011). During the first stage of the Minzu recognition campaign (1949--1954), Mongolians are designated as one of minority Minzu groups who have '*always been distinguished*' because of history, culture, language and religious distinctiveness and territorial association (State Ethnic Affairs Commission, n.d.). The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (set up in May, 1947) is also the first example of Minzu autonomy policy which has great significance for the Chinese government in its handling of Minzu relations (Chen, 2009). The Mongolian Minzu people live predominantly in China's Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. Some also live in Xinjiang, Liaoning, Gansu, Qinghai and other provinces (SEAC, n.d.).

Ethnic identity is specific (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2011), therefore this study focuses on only one group of minority students. The Mongolian students selected for interview are undergraduates at the Minzu universities and have Mongolian Minzu as their ethnic background. However, the Mongolian students selected in this study are not a homogenous group. They are distinguished from each other by their personal and educational background, such as the region they come from, the language (*Chinese or different Mongolian dialects*) used as the medium for learning from pre-university toward university level, the major engaged at the Minzu universities and so on. These factors differentiate Mongolian students as distinctive individuals and reveal the profiles of social identity for each student.

1.1.3 Minzu universities of China

One reason that higher education experiences rapid change and diversifies its types and system is to accommodate different national and societal circumstances and satisfy students with various needs (Barnett, 2004). Minzu universities are the creation of the national and societal circumstances of China as a multi-ethnic nation. As the universities particularly '*provided for ethnic minority groups*' (Qumu, 2006, translated by Zhu, 2010, p.15), Minzu universities accommodate the needs of minority Minzu students: the disciplines and pedagogy system are designed using ethnic, cultural and linguistic knowledge from minority Minzu groups; a series of preferential policies are implemented to facilitate minority students accessing into Minzu universities. The first Minzu university was established in 1951 in response to initiatives of fostering a group of minority political activists, cadres, specialised talents who are familiar with the minority languages and cultures in order to carry out the administrative, political and military work as well as the liaison with minority locals (Clothey, 2005). Until 2009, there were a total of 15 Minzu universities connected as a group but located in different regions of China.

Minzu universities are only taken as an '*institutional context*' of this study which takes into account the social and cultural features of each university and how '*varied features at each institution play themselves out in relation to each other*' (Leibowitz et al., 2015, p.328). The reason to take Minzu universities as the context is because it has significant implications for minority students, including Mongolian students, who moved to the higher level in the Minzu education system. The dual educational system (*Minzu versus Putong*) is differentiated as two parallel systems running throughout the pre-education level to higher education level supported by the governmental, policy, funding and local implementations. Minority students who attend Minzu education system are more sensitive to their own ethnicity by using minority-language as the medium for learning, textbooks, teaching materials and the minority teachers/staff (Ma, 2006, 2007, 2013). The example of Minzu universities as a specific higher education context is useful in exploring the social identity of Mongolian students. In addition, it sheds light on the identity negotiation between preserving distinctive ethnic identity and integrating into the Han majority society.

However, recent trends show that fewer and fewer Mongolian students attend Minzu schools at primary and secondary educational level (Jin, 2000). This number has dropped dramatically from 73.3% and 66.8% in the 1980s (Ibid, p.49) to roughly 28% and 27% in 2014¹. When Minzu schools at the lower level of the Minzu education system become less attractive, Minzu universities at the higher level seem to be increasingly marginalised.

1.1.4 Social Identity and its link to minority students in higher education

The major focus of this study is on people; the Mongolian students studying at Minzu universities in particular. Social identity is used as a conceptual lens to explore the perceptions of self of Mongolian students studying at the Minzu

¹ The statistics in 2014 are cited from Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Bureau of Statistics (2014)

universities. Social identity is a useful tool to study the complexity and multiplicity of people's perceptions of self in an increasingly globalised and inter-connected age (Jenkins, 2004). The frequent interactions within social, cultural, economic and political domains change the appearance of the modern society and contribute to an intertwining of different ethnics, cultures, languages, values and lifestyles. Social identity is no longer singular but becomes increasingly complex, in flux, unstable and subject to a framework of interactions between diverse ethnicity and cultures (Jensen, 2003).

Higher education is an important social space where students from different backgrounds interact with each other, thus exercising the construction of social identity. In this study, ethnic identity and learning identity are targeted as two aspects of social identity being explored. Due to higher education serving not only the economic but also the political needs for nation-state coalition, it might generate a conflict within a minority student's construction of social identity (Clothey, 2005). More specifically, it shows a conflict between preserving the distinctive ethnic identity with learning identity of minority students and the process of absorbing the culture of the majority or national value reflected in the universities (Ibid). Higher education is crucial to determine which aspects of students' social identity are '*valued*' or '*sanctioned*', as Banks (2009a) said in the following:

'Schools, colleges, and universities were important targets of ethnic revitalization movements because they reflected and reinforced mainstream society and culture in their ethos, curriculum, and the languages and cultures they valued and sanctioned' (Ibid, p.1)

Therefore, '*what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is evaluated*' regarding the minority histories, languages and cultures represented in the universities would impact the retention of ethnic identity of minority students (Postiglione, 1999, p.16). On the other side, higher education provides an effective pathway to promote upward social mobility and enhance the economic status of students

from minority or socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Shiner and Modood, 2002). Whilst learning the culture of the majority in the university would bring minority students further opportunities, their ethnic identity would be challenged, even '*turned against*', in order to pursue individual advantages (Zhao, 2010a, p.5). Social identity is a useful tool in probing such complexity by looking at how minority students perceive themselves and negotiate multiple aspects of the perceptions of self interactively in the context of the university.

1.2 Research questions and their rationale

The aim of the study is to explore Mongolian students' perceptions of self, conceptualised in social identity, through using their personal, learning and social experiences at the Minzu universities. The main research question is:

Main Research Question

How are the social identities of Mongolian students constructed at China's Minzu universities?

As Tajfel (1981, p.255) defined, social identity refers to '*part of an individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership*'. It reveals the importance of social identity in showing how a person identifies themselves as belonging to a social membership. Ethnicity is '*large scale social category membership*' (Turner, 1982, p.22), and in this sense ethnic identity constitutes a significant aspect of one's social identity indicating the identification of self belonging to a certain ethnic category. As one of 55 national designated minority Minzu groups, ethnic identity as a Mongolian minority is perceived as an important element of this study and gives rise to the first subsidiary question:

1. How do Mongolian students perceive the construction of their ethnic identity?

Social identity relates to how people perceive themselves being positioned in particular social roles (Jenkins, 1996). As May, Modood and Squires (2004, p.8) said '*ethnic identities are not pure or static but change in new circumstances or by sharing social space with other heritages and influences*'. Ethnic identity is dynamic and subject to the interactions with the social roles recognised upon any new conditions. Transition into higher education indicates an emerging way toward the formation of the social role as a university learner (Merrill, 2015). A second question seeks to examine how Mongolian students perceive their role as a university student by engaging the learning experience at the Minzu universities:

2. How do Mongolian students perceive the construction of their learning identity?

This question implies a constructive state of Mongolian students moving from different educational background (*Min-kao-Min or Min-kao-Han*) into Minzu universities by engaging different major of study. The learning identity of Mongolian students, although not limited to, links to a professional view of themselves after graduation.

The construction of social identity is context-dependent and context-specific. As Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p.34) said, '*identities, created and recreated in interactions between people in a given context, and lived experiences on self*': the construction of identity inspires not only an internalised process but also is '*externalised*' to perceive the supportive or constrained elements embedded in the contextual factors available around us (Ibid, p.37). Therefore, the discussion of social identity construction needs to be linked to the negotiation and

identification of certain elements within the institutional context of Minzu universities. Certain elements are taken into account from those links to the ethnic and learning identity of Mongolian students, such as the multicultural context of the university, the discipline structure and relevant pedagogical activities, and mission statement or aims of the university. This leads to the final question:

3. How is the construction of social identity negotiated under the institutional context of Minzu universities of China?

These questions offer a guide throughout the thesis, including the design of a conceptual framework, data collection and analysis. However, the data does not provide straight answers for each question.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The final section of this chapter offers a brief overview of the structure of the thesis:

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter of the thesis.

In Chapter 2, I will offer contextual explanations on the background of this study which are essential for the reader to follow the thesis, including:

(i) China as a multi-Minzu nation, (ii) Mongolian as one of the Minzu groups, (iii) Minzu education as a unique system for minority students, (iv) Min-kao-Min and Min-kao-Han minority students categorised by attending a different education system and (v) an explanation of Minzu Universities.

In Chapter 3, I will present the conceptual framework and organise the theoretical analysis of the main concept of the thesis, *social identity*, bringing into it the discussion of two dimensions: ethnic and learning identity. The

relationship between ethnic identity and learning identity with social identity is unpacked with a critical view; this shows how social identity is conceived. Using university as the institutional context, relevant studies are explored, which identify institutional elements and demonstrate how the construction of a student's social identity interacts with the institutional context. In order to provide an in-depth understanding of social identity and its links to minority students in higher education, relevant concepts such as the ethnic identification model, learning as community of practice and habitus are brought into the discussion, but they are of secondary importance compared to the analysis of social identity. This chapter ends with a review of literature on minority students in higher education across three countries: USA, UK and China. This provides a cross-cultural view of social identity.

In Chapter 4, the research design and methodology of this study are explained. The rationale of the research design is built upon an overall thinking of the methodology, including the philosophic stance of the methodology used in this study, the methodological choices, and the focus on specific methods and techniques engaged in the study. Piloting, data collection in the main study and data analysis are explained in this chapter. This chapter ends with an explanation of ethics relevant to the study.

Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 are the data presentation chapters of the thesis but with distinctive focuses of their own. Specifically these are:

Chapter 5 deals with the *context* of two case Minzu universities by using the documents data collected in the main study. Section 5.1 concentrates on Minzu University A. Section 5.2 concentrates on Minzu University B. In this chapter, a brief introduction of each case Minzu university is followed by three aspects of institutional information: the mission claimed by the university, a cultural context and the disciplinary structure of the university. The data presented in this chapter

offers an overview of the social-cultural context of each Minzu university which helps to answer SRQ3. It also offers the demographic and pedagogical context which helps to answer SRQ1 and SRQ2.

Chapter 6 offers individual profiles of the study's four Mongolian students by using the interview data. If Chapter 5 sets the focus on the context, this chapter focuses on individual students. Factors such as the Minzu university attended, gender, major of study and pre-university backgrounds are considered so that each profile gives a view of each student's distinctive social identity. Each profile includes their perception of self as a Mongolian, learning experience recalled, perception of the Minzu university they are studying in and researcher's impression of each Mongolian student. This chapter offers information to answer SRQ1 and SRQ2 and shows an evolving sense of ethnic identity and learning identity being constructed. This includes not only their university experiences but also a connection to their personal, familial, growing-up experiences and pre-university educational background, demonstrating how social identity construction is continually evolving.

Chapter 7 offers a thick, in-depth and interpretive-based presentation of the interview data. It is organised by the themes emerging from the Mongolian students interviewed from two Minzu universities. More specifically, there are three sections in this chapter which are entitled '*Cultural, language and Mongolian identity*', '*Learning identity explored*' and '*The influence of Minzu universities on Mongolian students' social identity construction*'. There are various elements unpacked in this chapter, such as Mongolian students' perceptions of self as a Mongolian and their interpretations of the culture and language in representation of Mongolian ethnic; ethnic boundaries perceived by Mongolian students amongst each other and which factors contribute to sustain the boundary; perceptions of self whilst studying relating to Mongolian language and culture and the value and emotional significance attached to learning;

perceptions of institutional culture and characteristics of the Minzu university and how such perception influences their university life and perceptions of self. These elements are important to answer the MRQ and SRQs.

In Chapter 8, a synthesis discussion is uncovered, using both the theoretical and empirical data of the study. This chapter teases out the major conclusion of the study that the construction of Minzu universities as part of the differentiated educational system running at higher education level creates its own set of contradictions. The metaphor of the 'enclosed-wall' indicates the complexities of social identity construction of Mongolian students. An 'enclosed-wall' of Minzu universities is built due to the impetus to address ethnic equality in higher education and simultaneously deconstructed because of the challenges from the labour market and global higher education competitiveness. The chapter ends with some implications regarding how the system of Minzu universities works against itself.

Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter, offering a summary of the main text and conclusion of thesis, the limitations, the contribution, and the implications of the study.

Chapter 2 ‘Minzu’ and Education for Minorities in China’s Context

‘The myths retold about the various ‘selves’ and ‘others’ in contemporary China are extraordinarily complex. They are not entirely the result of state intervention, nor are they entirely separate from the intervention’ (Blum, 1992, p.277)

This chapter provides context regarding some of the concepts raised by the study, such as ‘Minzu’, ‘Mongolian’, ‘dual education system’, ‘Min-kao-Min and Min-kao-Han students’ and the ‘Minzu universities’. These concepts are interlinked and mutually assisted. Understanding the connotation of ‘Minzu’ helps to appreciate how Mongolian is constructed as one of the 56 Minzu; to understand ‘Minzu’ paves the way for an understanding of how a dual education system (*Minzu versus Putong education system*) is differentiated; to understand the dual education system makes it clear about how minority students are channeled into two categories of Min-kao-Min and Min-kao-Han in the creation of a dual educational system. This contextual information facilitates the understanding of Minzu universities which are situated at the highest level of the Minzu education system.

It should be noted that the explanation of these concepts is versatile. This study does not offer definite answers. The purpose in presenting the following information is to facilitate the understanding of Mongolian students’ social identity under the context of Minzu universities. Therefore, how ‘Minzu’ and ‘Mongolian’ contribute to a distinctive meaning for one’s social identity and how the meaning of ‘Minzu’ reflected in the structure of the educational system (*including Minzu universities*) fit this purpose are at the core of this chapter.

2.1 The context of ‘Minzu’: an interplay between diversity and unity

China, a vast country with a huge population, has always struggled to unite the nation as a whole. A struggle between keeping the geographically, culturally and linguistically diverse groups as a united nation exists not only in China but also

in other counties; as evidenced by terminology such as race, nationality, ethnicity in English, *Volk* in German, Nationalite in French or Minzu in Chinese: the evolution of these terms reflects an interplay between ethnic diversity and national unity (Mackerras, 2003).

In the history of China, the term ‘Minzu’ was initially invoked to highlight its meaning in terms of nationalism. Liang Qichao, a reformist founder in the modern history of China during the late 19th century (Zhao, 2010a), put forward the term Chinese Minzu (*Zhonghua Minzu*) to denote a sense of Chinese nationality and serve the building of a modern nationhood of China. During that time, China was experiencing severe social crisis under the ruling of Qing regime. A follower of the reformists, Sun Yat-Sen, put forward a slogan called ‘*expelling the barbarian Manchu, restoring China, establishing a republic, and equalise landownership*’ (*Quchu dalu, hui fu zhonghua, chuangli minguo, pinjun diquan*) (Zhang, 1997, p. PE76). This slogan best exemplifies the meaning of Minzu during that time, which was to mobilise the miserable masses to unite together and overthrow the empire of the feudal Qing (Dikötter, 1994). Internally, Minzu aimed to topple the feudal regime and establish a democratic government; externally, Minzu meant to restore China as an independent nationality to fight against western invasion. Gladney (1994) evaluated this slogan and said:

‘Although he (Sun Yat-Sun) certainly did not invent the idea [...] Sun effectively found a symbolic metaphorical opposition to the Manchu and all ‘foreigners’ against whom the vast majority of peoples in China would easily rally’ (Ibid, p.98)

As Gladney (1994) reviewed, Minzu at this time is significant in terms of its role in rallying the Chinese people in the name of nationality, independence and democracy, regardless of the fact that a majority of them came from different cultural, regional and linguistic communities in China.

If a united nationality is highlighted in the meaning of Minzu at the beginning,

the later development of this term is elaborated on to accentuate the diversity within ethnic groups. This is the inner categorization within Minzu. During the Republican period (1912-1949), 'Minzu' was divided into five categories which are Mongolian, Tibetan, Hui, Manchu and Han, which was known as the *Wu Zu Gong He* (Ma, 2013). As Ma (2013, p.8-9) explained, '*Wu Zu Gong He*' refers to the '*joining of the homelands of Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui (Muslims) and Tibetan into one country, joining the various groups of Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan into one nation, and it is called national unification*'. The categorization of five ethnic categories (*or five Minzu*), is indicative of a negotiation between unity and diversity for the first time: five Minzu are distinctive from each other but all configured within one '*homeland*', one '*country*' and the goal for this is for *national unification*'.

Even though China underwent a significant transformation of their political forces and leadership from the 1930s to the 1950s, the idea of configuring diversity within the framework of unity to handle relations among various ethnic groups remained. This is seen as the Minzu recognition campaign (*Minzu shibie*) launched in the 1950s after the People's Republic of China was established (Gladney, 1994; Zhang, 1997; Ma, 2000, 2013). A different approach adopted in comparing it to the previous 'five categories' agenda recognised the fact that the newly established China massively referenced the Soviet Union's model in setting up its governmental leadership and administration system. Minzu, during that time named as a nationality, was under the study from Joself Stalin's nationality theory (Bulag, 2010). Due to political coalition and a similar domestic ethnic/nationality context between China and the Soviet Union, the Minzu recognition campaign followed Stalin's defition of nationality in identifying and classifying ethnic groups: those who possess a stable community, consolidated by a shared language, a shared territory/land, the economic interlinkage and the shared mentality and psychological traits constitute a nationality (Stalin, 1913). The Minzu recognition campaign was carried out involving more than 700 scholars and govenmental officals visiting remote areas of China and numerous

original tribes, groups and people (Ma, 2000).

The categorization of Minzu during the Minzu recognition campaign is an ongoing and long-term process; within the process, the pattern of Minzu and the underpinning ideas to support such a pattern are gradually formed and improved. There are three stages throughout Minzu Recognition Campaign (SEAC, n.d.). In the first stage (1949-1954), a total of 38 Minzu groups were recognised, including some of the long standing Minzu groups which gained the status of a distinctive Minzu group before the establishment of the P.R.C, such as Mongolian, Tibetan and Uyghur. In the second stage (1954-1964), the number of Minzu was increased from 38 to 53. The major work during this stage was in classifying some of the self-reporting minority groups (*more than 400*) into the recognised 53 Minzu groups. In the third stage (1965-1982), three more Minzu groups were recognised, raising the total to 56. Until the 1990s, these 56 Minzu groups were identified and settled as comprising 55 minority Minzu and 1 Han Minzu as the majority. Even though more than 12 million people claimed for resumption or alteration of their Minzu status after 1982 (Mackerras, 2003), the 55+1 pattern of the Minzu has not changed since.

The Minzu recognition campaign is significant in terms of its results in creating the Minzu pattern in China as '55+1': Han constitutes a singular component amongst all the Minzu groups and the 55 minorities are clustered at another end. Compared to the previous 'five categories', the Minzu recognition campaign retains the Han but the branches of minorities are increased to 55. Minzu, in this sense expanded its scope and coverage regarding ethnic distinctions. However, unity has always been an concern even though these ethnic distinctions were emphasised during the Minzu recognition campaign. Identifying diverse languages, cultures, traditions and social and economic patterns of different ethnic groups were meanwhile accompanied by the pursuit of the Chinese government to find out how such diversity could be outlined in an integrated

pluralism, or ‘weaving diversity into unity’ (Zhao, 2010a, p.4). Fei Xiaotong, one of the founders of Chinese Minzu theories, put forward the theory of Plurality and Unity in the Configuration of the Chinese Nationality (*Zhonghua Minzu duoyuan yiti geju lilun*) which gained support in both academic (Postiglione, 2009) and governmental voices (Communist Party of China News Net, 2008). Fei (1989) explained this idea in 1988 Turner lecture in Hong Kong as follows:

‘The phrase ‘Chinese nationality’ refers to the 1.1 billion people living within the territory of China and holding a sense of identity as Chinese. It includes more than 50 units of ‘Minzu’ groups. Despite all being addressed as ‘Minzu’, they are certainly sustained at different levels [...] The Chinese nationality is an organic wholeness formulating through a thousand years of history [...] and is continuously shaped in the course of ethnic interactions, division, hybridizing and integration, finally reaching a form of multifaceted unity of I am in yours and you are in mine’ (Fei, 1989, p.1)

The usefulness of Fei’s theory in handling Minzu relations in China is that it offered a practical suggestion for the Chinese government in explaining the relationship between ‘nation’ and ‘ethnic’ in the context of co-existence of multi-ethnic: Han is extracted as the ‘*core for cohesion*’ to unite different Minzu groups as a unified nation and in this sense the 56 Minzu are a totality rather than isolated units (CPC news net, 2008). An example is vividly shown in Picture 2.1. In this poster, two Zhuang minority children who are distinguished by their traditional minority costume wear a *Honglingjin* (a red scarf, indicating their status as junior members of the Communist Party) on their neck and hold a book printed in both the Chinese language and the created written script of their minority language. Whether it is the *Honglingjin* or the Chinese-printed book, this poster is symbolic of an ideal which demonstrates how minorities can be configured within a unified ideology (*Communist*) and language (*Chinese*).

Picture 2.1 Poster for creating and revising minority written languages



The poster was used when central government propagandised the works of creating and revising written scripts of ethnic minority languages (Chenmodemaque, 2014)

2.2 The context of minority Minzu: essentialising Han and treating minorities as the subsidiaries

Essentialising Han has its roots in China's long history. Gladney (1994) concluded that essentialising Han is a bilateral process aiming at privileging Han as a dominated ethnic/Minzu group: Han is portrayed on one end as the unmarked homogenous group representing a higher form of civilised life-style; at another end are the minorities who are special, different, colourful and the '*living fossil*' who shall follow the Han as the subsidiaries. In order to unite the nation, minorities who are diverse, different and special from Han need to be given more attention.

The emerging notion of China as a state during the Qin dynasty (221-207 BC) was accompanied by the superiority of Huaxia (*preliminary form of Han*) to absorb the surrounding non-Han communities, who were widely regarded as

peripheral and barbaric, into the civilised central kingdom (Dudley and Jing, 1987; Postiglione, 2008). Over time, different non-Han communities established regimes of their own so that the idea of privileging Han was transformed due to larger social agendas. In Republican China, Han was again cited as the essence of Chinese nationality, even becoming the main body assimilating other minority groups. Kayongo-Male and Lee (2004) noted that the 'five categories' (*Wu Zu Gong He*) were implemented by the Chiang Kai-shek government with an assimilative tendency; the five ethnic categories were not equal in position: Han were the major component of Chinese nationality, the rest as the branches or subsidiaries of Han.

After the People's Republic of China was established, the Minzu recognition campaign was mobilised in the name of categorising ethnic groups, but essentially this is about categorising the minorities. Han was excluded from the recognition campaign and is not classified in any analysis of Minzu during that time (Blum, 2002). Han was essentialised as a taken-for-granted majority and the minorities are identified, researched and classified in detail during the recognition campaign. However, in contemporary society, defining minorities has always been a challenge in the political, legal and cultural framework globally. Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso (2000) made an attempt to summarise several shared traits of minorities in a multi-ethnic context: minorities can be the migrants, indigenous inhabitants or groups of people who are (a) less in number compared to rest/majority population (b) possess distinctive culture, language and religion and (c) might be disadvantaged in power or not in the dominant position in society. The latter one, a focus about power and hierarchy, seems to be more significant in respect of minority-related topics. Compared to the social majority group, minorities are not merely fewer in number in terms of population size but also the 'minority' in the power relationship and in terms of resources and economic development. That's why the majority group is sometimes interchangeable with the term socially-dominated group.

Han is the majority group in China, and is also largest in population among all Minzu groups. According to the sixth national census in 2010, the Han's population numbered 1,225,932,641, which constituted 91.51% of the total national population (NBS, 2011). The population of the 55 minority Minzu combined is 113,792,211, only occupies 8.49% of the total national population (Ibid). The minority population has grown steadily over past decades: during the periods of 1964—1982, 1982—1990, 1990—2000 and 2000-2010, the proportion increased from 5.8% to 6.7%, 8.01%, 8.41% and 8.49% respectively (SEAC, n.d.). However, it can be seen from these statistics that Han continues to be the dominant force in the total national population, even though the growth percentage of Han (5.74%) is slower than the minorities (6.92 %) compared to a decade ago (NBS, 2011).

Minority Minzu groups are diverse in terms of different languages, cultures, and life-styles. Concerning such diversities, the central government has specially implemented a series of preferential policies for the minority population, such as exercising flexibility over the 'one child policy' (Wang, 1998; National health and family planning commission, 2009), and implementing Minzu autonomous regions (*Minzu quyu zizhi*) so that respective minority Minzu groups are able to govern themselves and regulate their own internal social, economic, educational and other relevant affairs (Constitution of the P.R.C, 2004, Article 4). There are 5 larger Minzu autonomous regions, which are Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Xinjiang Uighur, Guangxi Zhuang and Ningxia Hui in addition to 30 autonomous prefectures and 120 autonomous counties (Central People's Government, 2005). However, even though the minority population in these autonomous areas is nearly 71%, Han still constitutes the majority of the population in these areas. Table 2.1 shows how Han is essentialised as the majority even in the respective minority areas. The table shows that the Han population has increased remarkably in areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang over past decades. Inner Mongolia also has a considerable Han population, but this number dropped

continuously from 1982 to 2000. These numbers reflect the government's intention to promote an ethnic mix, chiefly by injecting Han into the minority-concentrated regions (McMillen, 1981). Introducing Han is also considered '*an important symbol and vehicle of the Communist Party of China's efforts to control and integrate the strategic and traditionally non-Han borderlands*' (Ibid, p.65)

Table 2.1 Population of Han in five Minzu Autonomous Regions

Unit: %

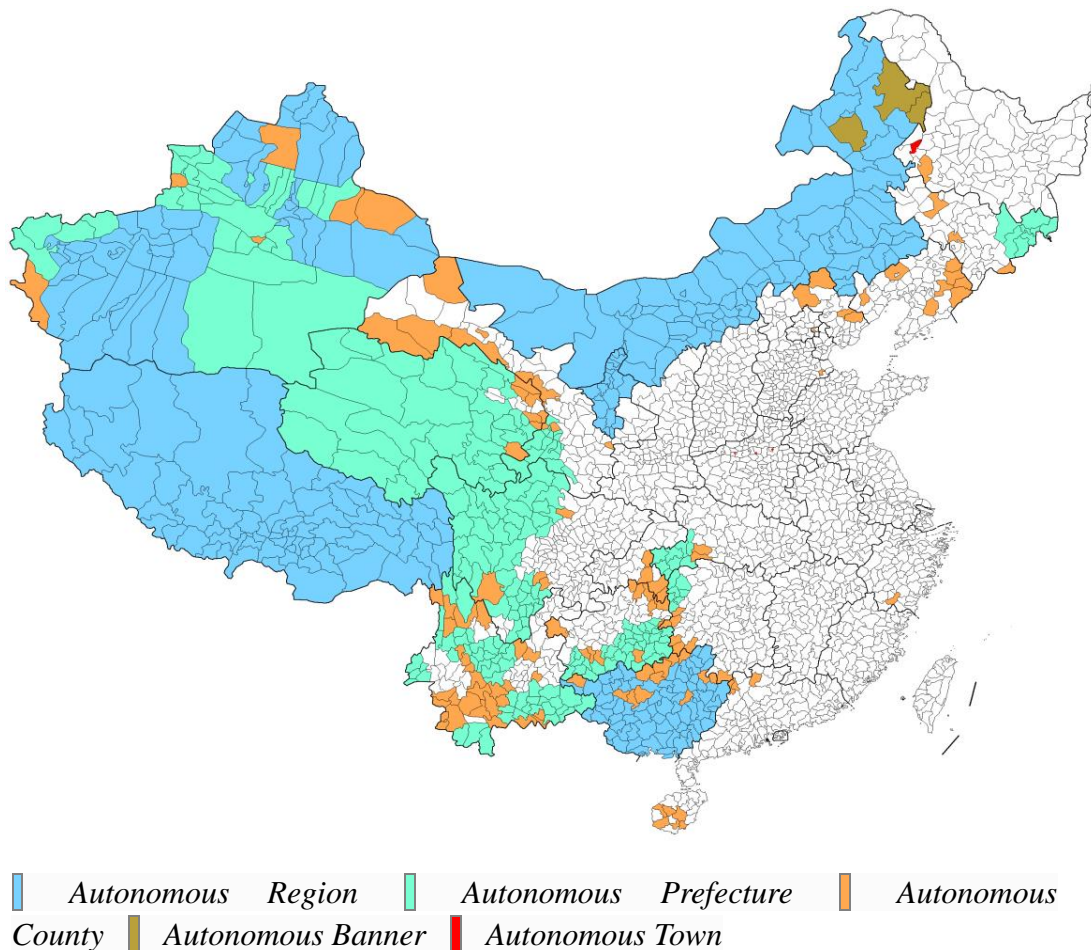
Areas	1953	1964	1982	1990	2000	2010
<i>Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region</i>	85.6	87.0	84.5	81.6	77.2	79.6
<i>Tibet Autonomous Region</i>	0.0	2.9	4.9	3.7	2.9	8.2
<i>Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region</i>	6.9	31.9	40.4	37.6	39.2	40.1
<i>Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region</i>	-	69.2	68.1	66.7	65.4	64.6
<i>Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region</i>	62.1	58.9	61.7	60.9	61.6	62.8

Sourced from Ma (2006, p.7); statistics in 2010 are sourced from NBS (2011)

In addition to population, Han dominates in terms of territory. Picture 2.2 displays the divisions regarding minority autonomous areas and the Han-predominated areas (Wikipedia, 2011). It shows that different levels of Minzu autonomous areas (*including regions, prefectures, counties and banners*) are primarily concentrated in western and northern China; the eastern and coastal areas are dominated by the Han population or only a small amount of the minority population (Cherng, Hannum and Lu, 2013). The division between the western and eastern regions illustrates the disparity of economic and social developments. The western regions, comprising hillsides, pastoral or mountainous areas lag significantly behind the eastern and coastal regions in term of economic development; nearly 40% of the western regions are recorded as national poverty countries (Ibid). The income per capi

ta GDP in Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin reaches more than \$15,000, but this figure was \$3148 in Tibet in 2014 (NBS, 2015). Therefore, the geographical division reflects the economic and social gap or even class differentiations between the Han (*more developed eastern region*) and the minorities (*less developed western region*) (Hasmath, 2011). The interdependency is manifest in the unequal power relations and the disparity in resources distribution (Ibid). Compared to the Han, this affects the minorities in the western-concentrated autonomous regions to a much greater degree in regard to their living environments and social and economic benefits.

Picture 2.2 Minzu autonomous areas versus Han-dominated areas



Considering China both past and present, an understanding of Chinese minorities cannot ignore the background of Han as the majority in the Minzu pattern: Han is not only privileged as the majority of the population; it also dominates in terms of ideology, power, values, and resources (Bilik, 1998).

2.3 Mongolian as one of minority Minzu: a fragmented and inconsistent identity

Identifying oneself as belonging to either of the ethnic groups is not entirely a self-ascribed process (Barth, 1969) in China: it is heavily subject to national and political initiatives. The 55+1 pattern of Minzu offers a chance for the Chinese minorities to register their status as one of the Minzu groups (*or the unclassified Minzu*) in the national registration system. Such registration, however, reflects a rigid control on the identification of a person's ethnicity: this identification is accepted by the state. In other words, the ethnic identity of Chinese minorities is a negotiated result by both the state and individuals, just as Bulag (2010, p.262) noted that the '*established ethnic groups and the state are engaged in ongoing processes of social and political negotiation mediated on the basis of relations power and hierarchy*'.

The Mongolian people in China are classified in the first-stage of the Minzu recognition campaign as one of the 55 minority Minzu. According to the fifth national census, the number of Mongolian Minzu living within the P.R.C is 5.8 million (NBS, 2001). They are scattered around regions such as Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Gansu, Qinghai and Hebei. However, the Mongolians in China have witnessed a turbulent and fragmented history of their own and experienced a fragmented and complex sense of Mongolian identity: this feeling is locked into both their past and the present; the local, the national and the transnational. In contrast to the Mongolians from the *Republic of Mongolia* who obtain a unified Mongol identity due to the homogeneous population or other effects of cohesion (Bulag, 2004), the Mongolian Minzu in Inner Mongolia present complex perceptions of Mongolian ethnicity.

In the past, Mongolians have developed their history and legacy in a wider context (Prawdin, 2006). The Mongolians own their cultural roots as the nomadic

tribes originating on the steppes along the upper areas of Onon, Kerulen and Tula rivers (*which are also called the 'three-river' areas*) (Wang and Shen, 1996). An understanding of Mongolian culture and history is important in explaining why and how they have developed their shared mentality, traits and particular life-styles. Unlike the culture bred in the agricultural central kingdom, the Mongolians are culturally unique due to their nomadic features: hunting and livestock quality being crucial to their existence; having a strong aggressive desire for conquering and expansion; being more changeable in population and tribe size due to wars and conflicts between different tribes and severe living conditions (Chen, 2004). These cultural roots significantly differentiate the Mongolians from other Minzu groups, particularly the agricultural-bred Han.

Mongolia's glorious past is a proud indication of the identity of Mongolian ethnicity. As one of the minority regimes in Chinese history, Mongolian has established the dynasty of 'Yuan' which literally means the origin to signify a regime of conquering (Langlois, 1981). Amongst all the glorious fabrics of the past, Genghis Khan has transcended space and time, becoming a spiritual symbol of Mongolian identity (Bilik, 1998; Sabloff, 2001). Genghis Khan united all of the Mongolian communities, entitled the Great Khan of all Mongols and establishing the Empire of the Mongol between 1189 and 1206 (Prawdin, 2006). During the peak of the Mongol Empire, Genghis Khan owned the largest conquered territory under '*one-man's rule*' (Sabloff, 2001, p.94) a territory equivalent in area to that of Africa (Khan and Yapp, 2003).

However, Mongolia's glorious history is inconsistent due to a transformation in social agendas. When the Mongol empire started to decline and the Mongolian people were expelled to their original land (Sneath, 2000) a sense of pride was consumed and the feeling of loss began (Zhao, 2010b). The feeling of losing the empire is accentuated by the struggles between the Mongols and other regimes and powers, such as their subjugation under the Manchu Qing regime (Heuschert,

1998), or as part the scramble between Japan and Russia during the second Opium War (Brown, 2004). Particularly during the 1910s to 1920s, the Mongolians, once a united community, started to split up: the northern part was set up as a 'People's Republic' with the support of Soviet Russia, the southern part staying within China with an increasing influx of Han settlers and immigrants (Han, 2011). Inner Mongolia was the first established autonomous region in May 1947, which '*become a model*' to be applied to other minority Minzu by the Communist regime as a form of territorial association (Bulag, 2010, p.263)

The split of Mongolian as a transnational and transregional ethnicity impacted the identity of the Mongolian people profoundly (Bulag, 2004) with a resurgence of Mongolian nationalism emerging since the 1980s (Hao, 2002). Just as Ryan (2013) has commented that the resurgence of Confucianism can be traced back to the past achievements of the Chinese people, the resurgence of Mongolian nationalism echoes the glorious history and legacy of the Mongolian people. When they confronted a massive influx of Han settlers who changed the demographic composition and landscape of Inner Mongolia, the Mongolian people felt that their political-economic status had deteriorated (Hao, 2002). Another reason for the resurgence of Mongolian nationalism is because, against the backdrop of accelerated urbanization and modernisation (*such as the massive change of the names of local regions in Inner Mongolia from 'Meng' or 'Qi' into 'City' and 'Municipality'*, see Bulag, 2002), the traditional lifestyles of Mongolians in Inner Mongolia were changed. Many Mongolian people saw this as a threat to their spirit of '*Mongolness*', exhibited in subsequent rebellious struggles (Bulag, 2003, p.753).

This fragmented and inconsistent identity is also exhibited as a deep unease and anxiety among Mongolian people who recognise a rapid loss of the pure Mongolians holding the origins of their ethnicity, such as those who speak the

Mongolian language and retain the traditional pastoral and herding life (Bulag, 2003). Moreover, the modern identity of a Mongolian Minzu is subject to the designated Minzu autonomous mechanism created by the P.R.C regime (Sautman, 1999a). The designated Minzu autonomous mechanism is facilitated by the policies which allow Mongolian people to practice their own culture, language and customs in the autonomous regions but meanwhile controversially allow the penetration of Han settlers into the autonomous areas who have accelerated the industrial and modernising pace, thus changing the face of the autonomy (Hao, 2002). Compared to other autonomous regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet, Mongolian people in Inner Mongolia seem to be treated less sensitively with regard to maintaining their distinctive ethnic identity and language (Bilik, 1998).

Zhang (1997) has commented that the Chinese minorities are able to develop their identity as an interlocked entity on three levels: Chinese identity (*based on the real or imagined common ancestor*), national identity (*as a Chinese citizen*) and ethnic/minority identity (*as a Chinese minority*). However, there are difficulties in applying this to Mongolian people in Inner Mongolia, as Bilik (1998) commented that the Mongolian people in China negotiate their identity in conflicting ways: in a historical context, they imagine their ancestors to be the Mongol empire, the dominant regime which exercised subjection over China. Consequently, they do not identify themselves as victims of subjection. Their national identity and ethnic identity are complicated by ethnic links with the *Republic of Mongolia*, a sovereign regime which acts as a symbol of Mongolian ethnicity. This presents a conflict, as Chinese people view Mongolians as the minority ethnic; for the outer Mongolian, Mongolians in China are 'Chinesized' Mongolians (Bulag, 2011). This has always been a place for struggle and negotiation, or just as Bulag (2004, p.85) articulated '*Mongols aspire not only to maintain an ethnic and political entity but also to live as normal citizens of the Chinese state*'.

2.4 Differentiations within the educational system: the categories of Min-kao-Min and Min-kao-Han students

2.4.1 The differentiation within the educational system

To understand the educational system in China one must approach it from a cultural perspective and atmosphere (Ryan, 2013). Minzu is a part of the culture which seeks a balance between ethnic diversity and national and political unity. Chinese government forces strongly shape the connotation, composition and the culture of Minzu in China, thereby shaping the education of Minzu profoundly. For example, before 1949, there were very few state educational institutes in the minority areas. Lofstedt (1987, p.333) noted that there were no formal schools in Tibet before 1951, not even a public primary school. The education of minorities took place primarily in the religious institutions (Mackerras, 1999). Until 1949, the education of minorities changed from religious education to secular education. The emphasis of educational provision for minorities driven by the governmental objectives was gradually shifted to support of the Communist leadership, the socialist system and the love of country (Ibid).

After the 1950s, the Minzu recognition campaign settled on the 55+1 Minzu pattern which profoundly impacts aspects of work relating to minorities, including education for minorities. As the Chinese nationality is differentiated as a dual cohort of minorities and Han, so education also makes a distinction between minorities and the Han. Ma (2013) described this as a dual educational system: Minzu versus Putong. Both Minzu and Putong education are encapsulated in the centralised, national educational system (Cherng, Hannum and Lu, 2013). Minzu education refers to the state education provided for the minority Minzu covering different types of schools and educational levels (Central Institute of Ethnic Administrators, 2010c). Language is the anchor in distinguishing Minzu education from Putong education (Ma, 2006, 2007, 2013): minority students receive Minzu education by using local minority language as

the medium of learning at local Minzu schools. The teachers in Minzu schools are mostly from the local minorities who can use minority language to carry out instructions. The content of courses in Minzu schools synthesises certain areas of minority language, cultures, history and geography. Minority students attending Minzu schools are aided by a set of preferential policies to access into higher education. In contrast, Putong education runs more generally by using Mandarin as the language of instruction at schools and is open to both the minority and Han students (Ma, 2013). Until now, there were more than 10 thousand Minzu schools, using 29 minority languages as the medium of instruction for students from different minority groups (Ouyang, 2013).

The differentiation in the dual educational system is a response to the Minzu pattern in China: to balance the needs between political stability while integrating minority students within a whole educational structure (Ma, 2006). Even though the population within the 55 minority Minzu is relatively less in number, their autonomous areas occupy more than 60% of national territory (SEAC, n.d.). Most of the autonomous areas are located in the frontier or broader regions and possess abundant natural, farm, mineral, timber, and coal resources: all these contribute to their crucial strategic and military importance to China (Hawkins, 1978). Education serves significantly in the cultivation of minds and social stability. Minority people living in these critical regions are entitled to equal rights with respect to language, religion, customs and particularly the rights to implement the education fit to them so as to maintain political stability (Ma, 2013).

However, minority students are not constrained to Minzu schools; they are distributed freely in different provinces and regions, as well as in various types of schools at different levels. Some of them take minority language education but others take Chinese language education with Han students: it is hard to draw a definite conclusion regarding what is Minzu education. Gu (1998, p.1099) tried

to define Minzu education as '*a generic term, referring to all levels and types of educational provisions for the minority people*'. This definition broadens the meaning of Minzu education to include not merely that which is offered through Minzu education but also the Putong education undertaken by the minority students. This definition was also referenced as a basis to carry out the state statistical data collection and analysis relating to education for minorities. For example, according to the 2010 national census, the number of students from 55 minority Minzu represented in all types of schools was 21.1 million, constituting 7.15% at pre-school education level, 10.54% at primary education level, 9.42% at Junior high school level, 7.55 % at senior high school level, 7.70% in senior vocational schools, and 6.76% in undergraduate, regular HEIs (Ministry of Education, 2010). All of these statistics show the government's intention to integrate the minority students into a united and holistic educational system, rather than as an isolated cohort.

To address Minzu education as a distinctive 'system' different from Putong education is to recognise that there is dovetailed support from interlinked elements including the law, the governmental organs, the policy, the funding and the construction of Minzu schools in local autonomous regions. For example, the Constitution of P.R.C (2004, Article 4), the Law of Minzu Regional Autonomy (2001, Article 36, 37) and the Law of Education (1995, Article 10, 12) have specifically addressed the importance in coordinating Minzu education for minorities. In terms of governmental organs, the bureau of Minzu education (*Minzu jiaoyu si*) is affiliated under the Ministry of Education and the bureau of Education and Science affiliated under the State Ethnic Affairs Commission (*Guojia Minzu shiwu weiyuanhui*) both of which are in charge of different but specific works in terms of regulating Minzu education (MoE homepage; SEAC homepage). Apart from the bureaus at central level, there are accorded divisions established at the provincial and regional level to regulate Minzu education for the locals (Postiglione, 2009). What is more, the funding going to Minzu

education exceeded 10 billion RMB (*approximate 1038,300,000 GBP*) during the 11th Five-Year Plan² (2006-2010) (MoE, 2011a). The boarding schools, living subsidies, improved facilities, technology-enhanced media, equipment and construction are all reliant on these funding projects and more than 2 million minority students benefiting from this (Wu, 2012). All these reflect a governmental and political intention to aid the diverse Minzu groups in developing their education differently from Han.

Ryan, Kang, Mitchell and Erickson (2009) noted that new curriculum reform launched in China put forward new requirements with regards to teaching materials & textbooks, teaching methods, teacher's qualifications and so on: Minzu education was characterised by such reform as well. In pace with the comprehensive upgrading of national curriculum and textbooks, minority language-medium textbooks and materials are translated and upgraded accordingly (MoE, 2004, No.5). However, Ma (2007, p.19) has estimated that it is a huge task to take on the specialised personnel required '*to introduce the vocabulary of modern science so that it fits properly into the languages of several dozen large and small minority groups*'. The challenge is not only about translating the knowledge but also to find a proper way to link together the purposes of the new curriculum reform with ethnic diversity. Another specific area of reform lies in cultivating the qualified bilingual teachers who are able to carry out bilingual (*minority and Chinese*) instruction at Minzu schools. A national directive (MoE, 2011b, No.7) was issued regarding the training of bilingual teachers which detailed the aims, arrangement, funding and institutes; the training of bilingual teachers focuses on specified disciplines, education techniques and skills, leadership and management of Minzu schools (Ibid).

² Five-Year Plan refers to the national economic and social developmental plan designed and initiated in each five years since 1950s. Until 2015, there are a total of 12 Five-Year Plan carried out (source from CCP News website, n.d.).

In practice, however, the differentiation within the educational system is complex. There are no ‘one-model-fits-all’; different minority regions have their own specific situations, thus Minzu education is characterised and localised according to specific circumstances (Feng and Sunuodula, 2009). Dr Uradyn E Bulag, a scholar in anthropology from Cambridge University, was once a Mongolian student attending Minzu education from Inner Mongolia in China. He recalled his life history moving from rural to urban areas in Inner Mongolia and noted that, even though Minzu education in Inner Mongolia centred on the Mongolian Minzu, there are vast differences within the region. Some areas only have Mongolian schools with no Han schools; Han students can only take Mongolian education, with the result that their Mongolian language is even better than their Han language. Some regions only have Han schools with no Mongolian schools. His own sister had to move to the Han schools to receive her education, where she experienced harsh discrimination (Bulag, 2011). Even though Bulag’s case was extreme, his story illuminates how the differentiation within the dual system might generate a split of identity of Mongolian students.

2.4.2 The categories of Min-kao-Min and Min-kao-Han students

The distinction between Min-kao-Min (*MKM*) and Min-kao-Han (*MKH*) minority students results from the differentiation within the educational system. More specifically, the categories of MKM and MKH have more to do with minority students’ access into higher education.

Initially, MKM and MKH are two terms applied in Xinjiang, a typical minority (*Uyghur*) autonomous region implementing differentiated education for local minorities and Han (Taynen, 2006). In Xinjiang, there are more than 45 minority Minzu groups and 6 minority languages are used as the medium of education at different local Minzu schools (Ouyang, 2013). MKM generally refers to the minority students receiving Minzu education (*or using minority language as the major medium of education*) since basic education stage. MKH, relatively, refers

to the minority students attending Putong education and using Chinese as the major medium of learning (Taynen, 2006). By linking to their access into higher education, MKM and MKH are applied broadly upon different minority Minzu groups and are distinctive in the following ways:

- MKM students use their particular minority language to sit *Gaokao* (*the higher education entrance examination*) but not the exam subjects of Chinese language and foreign language (CIEA, 2010a). MKM students are mostly bilingual but they perform better when using their more familiar native minority language, rather than Chinese (Clothey, 2005). Currently, there are six minority languages designated as the languages used for Gaokao for minority students, which are ‘*Tibetan, Uyghur, Mongolian, Korean, Kazak and Kirgiz*’ (Hasmath, 2011, p.1847).
- MKH students, similar to Han students, use Chinese to sit Gaokao. MKH students are more flexible than MKM students in applying for the majors available in higher education, due to their higher proficiency in the Chinese language (CIEA, 2010b). In exceptional cases, minority students from Minzu schools but receiving Type IV bilingual education are also clustered into MKH category. Type IV bilingual education is adopted by certain Minzu schools which offer a majority of the curricula in Chinese with one specific curriculum added to teach minority language (Dai, Teng, Guan and Dong, 1997). By receiving Type IV bilingual education at Minzu schools MKH students are destined to maximise their Chinese language ability and meanwhile maintain a certain level of minority language ability (Ibid). This type of Minzu school can be found in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, enrolling minority students from Mongolia, Uyghur and Kazak (Ibid).

One of the driving forces in maintaining and moving the categories of MKM and MKH takes the form of a set of carefully designed preferential policies for

minority students' higher education access (Sautman, 1999b). Since 2015, a large set of preferential policies regarding HE access were abolished but those policies benefiting minority students from remote, frontier, mountainous and pastoral regions remained (MoE, 2014, No.17). These policies highlighted the importance of safeguarding the minority student's HE access opportunities. Facilitated by different types of preferential policies, both MKM and MKH are able to access into different types of HEIs and different areas of majors and courses through varied approaches and aid. For example, the preferential policy of the *lowered admission requirements* (or *bonus points*) was set up since the 1950s. This policy helps minority students whose Gaokao performance does not match the admission benchmark set by the universities and they can be preferentially enrolled if they achieve the same entrance scores as Han students (Sautman, 1999b). Under certain circumstances, a maximum of 80 points can be added for MKM students (MoE, 2003, No.2).

In 2014, Inner Mongolia set the minimum admission benchmark for MKM Mongolian students (*from liberal arts backgrounds in high school*) at 367. This is 100 points lower than their Putong counterparts, whose minimum benchmark was set as high as 525 (Inner Mongolia Admission & Exam Infor-Net, 2014). However, even though the benchmarks are significantly reduced, MKM students' options for majors and universities are restricted. Due to their linguistic barriers, MKM students can choose only those universities containing the majors offered through accorded minority languages (CIEA, 2010a). Minzu universities are one such option.

Yukeban is another preferential solution for minority students in accessing HE. It helps prepare minority students prior to their engaging in further level of studies at the university. The goal of Yukeban is to enhance minority students' academic basis and Chinese language skills (CIEA, 2010d). Until 2010, more than 140 HEIs provided Yukeban with more than 6000 minority students (Ibid). Aside

from Yukeban, Inland high schools also gather minority students from the rural, remote and economically-backward regions to study in the developed cities (CIEA, 2010e). In addition to Tibetan and Uyghur students, Daur and Tuwa Mongolian students are given priority in recruitment into inland high schools (Central People's Government, 2013)

2.5 Basic situations about Minzu universities in China

In general, minority students are able to select three types of HEIs in China: firstly, the regular universities; secondly, there are the colleges and universities established in the Minzu autonomous regions; the third option is the Minzu universities (Zhao, 2007). Minzu universities are located in a wider context of HE provision for minority students but are distinguished from the rest due to their particular history, mission and characteristics.

Even though Minzu universities are the creation of the Communist regime established after 1949, the first HEI for minorities was recorded long before that. Lu (2013) noted that the first HEI for minorities is the Manchu-Mongol Higher Institute (*Manmeng gaodeng xuetang*) established by Qing regime in 1908. During the republican period, the Manchu-Mongol Higher Institute evolved as a Mongol-Tibet school (*Mengzang xuexiao*) and Mongol-Tibet classes (*Mengzang ban*) as two centrally-regulated institutes (Ibid). It can be seen from the names of these institutes that Manchu, Mongol and Tibetan formed the major ethnic composition of students. It was also linked to the 'five categories' of ethnicity during that time when Manchu, Mongol and Tibetan were identified as being the major constituents of the minority groups.

After 1949, when the identification and designation of minorities were gradually expanded, HEI entitlement for minorities changed focus to include not only the Manchu, Mongol and Tibet but also all 'Minzu'. This is the historical context under which Minzu universities were created: these were HEIs designated for

‘Minzu’ specifically to carry out studies relating to nationality (Chen, Liu and Li, 2013). As Wang (2002) indicated, there were four Minzu universities (*Universities for Nationalities*) established during the 1950s, including the Central Academy for Nationalities (*located in Beijing, acting as a hub for the rest of the Minzu universities*) and three branch Minzu universities, located respectively in the Central-South, South-West and North-West regions of China. Through transplanting and localising the Soviet model, Chinese higher education was at that time subject to a highly centralised and detailed-planned system: *‘higher education faculties and students were assigned to specific institutions, each focusing on one area, creating a planned workforce to serve the planned economy’* (Wu, 2013, p.29). The ‘one area’ these Minzu universities was anchored in related to minority culture, language, history, politics, economic and other relevancy to the minorities (Chen, Liu and Li, 2013).

Another significant feature of the establishment of Minzu universities was that they are ideologically and politically heavy institutes. This is in response to the ‘redness’ and ‘expertise’ (*you hong you zhuan*) paradigms promoted in higher education under that context (Du, 2014, p.2). As Du (2014) explained, ‘Redness’ denotes that higher education shall unify and educate the broad masses with a sense of authoritative allegiance to the political leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the ultimate persistence of the socialist road. ‘Expertise’ refers to higher education serving the needs of national construction and economic growth so that different types of HEIs shall have their own strength and characteristics. The establishment of Minzu universities embodied both ‘redness’ and ‘expertise’, but with the emphasis more on the ‘Redness’. For the sake of socialist revolution, Chairman Mao once instructed that *‘without a great number of Communist cadres from the minorities, the socialist revolution shall not succeed’* (Liang, 2001, p.1). Minzu universities put primary emphasis on ‘revolution and communism’ (Du, 2014, p.3) by prioritising its goal of fostering and training minority cadres and political activists and leaderships (Clothey,

2005). Some minority students at Minzu universities were already in positions of leadership in their minority community and were re-trained in the Minzu universities: this included not only minorities but also some Han cadres (Wang, 2002).

Since the 1980s, the priority of Minzu universities was tacitly transformed from *Redness* to accommodate the needs for *'expertise'* under the context of Chinese higher education reform fitting to wider agendas, such as economic transformation (Mok and Lo, 2007) and building links between HE, research and production so as to benefit students' employment (Yang, 2000). The priorities were changed from cultivating minority cadres and leadership into a wider terrain, including the fostering of senior specialised talents contributing to the economic development of the minority local areas and regions (Li and Liu, 2011). Globally, the trend for Minzu universities was to start looking at, and seeking relevance with, the market and industrial needs. High-level minority talents were needed, not only to take charge of regulative and management positions in the government, but also to contribute to every aspect of work with in respect of economic, technological and industrial development in the minority areas (Ibid). Seen from this perspective, Minzu universities were reformed in their nature from political training institutes into comprehensive-featured universities (SEAC, 2009).

At the current time, Chinese Minzu Universities are *'provided for ethnic minority groups, serve development in regions where ethnic minority groups reside, and include some professional curricula and programs designed to correspond with the demands of minority traditional culture and their development'* (Qumu, 2006, translated by Zhu, 2010, p.15). A total of 15 Minzu universities were established as a network linking to each other (CIEA, 2010f). List 2.1 gives an overview of all Minzu universities. However, it needs to be noted that there are differentiations within all 15 Minzu universities. Firstly, they are under different

levels of regulation: 6 of them are under a central level of regulation by the State Ethnic Affairs Committee and 9 are under local province/autonomous government regulation. Secondly, only one of the Minzu universities was supported as ‘211’ and ‘985’³ (Minzu University of China webpage) and the rest of Minzu universities are locally supported.

List 2.1 Basic contexts of 15 Minzu universities in China

Centrally regulated Minzu universities:

1. Minzu University of China (Beijing)
2. South-Central University for Nationalities (Wuhan, Hubei province)
3. Southwest University for Nationalities (Chengdu, Sichuan province),
4. Northwest University for Nationalities (Lanzhou, Gansu province)
5. Beifang University of Nationalities (Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region)
6. Dalian Nationalities University (Dalian, Liaoning Province)

Local government regulated Minzu universities:

1. Inner Mongolian University for the nationalities (Tongliao, Inner Mongolia)
2. Hohhot Academy for the Nationalities (Hohhot, Inner Mongolia)
3. Guangxi University for Nationalities (Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Regions),
4. Yunnan University of Nationalities (Kunming, Yunnan Province)
5. Hubei Minzu University (Enshi, Hubei Province)
6. Guizhou Minzu University (Guiyang, Guizhou province)
7. Qinghai University for Nationalities (Xining, Qinghai province)
8. Tibet University for Nationalities (Xianyang, Shanxi province)
9. Sichuan University for Nationalities (Kangding, Sichuan Province).

Sourced from CIEA (2010f)

In conclusion, this chapter offers the contextual information explaining the notion of ‘Minzu’ contextualised in a historical and contemporary agenda of China which aspires to national unification by configuring the culturally, linguistically, regionally and ethnic diverse groups into a united Chinese nationality. Mongolian people living in China experienced a complex and inconsistent identity of themselves due to the fact that they were fragmented from a unified empire, a united Mongolian ethnicity into a separate ethnic group

³ ‘211’ and ‘985’ projects were ceased in 2016, and instead, these two projects combining the relevant funding and structural arrangements were subsumed within ‘Two World-Class’ (Shuang Yi Liu) project (State Council of P.R.C, 2015, No.64).

in China. In accordance with the Minzu pattern in China, education for minorities is differentiated as well. Minzu education and Putong education are both open for minority students but are subject to the different priorities, purposes and activities carried out in each educational system. Min-kao-Min and Min-kao-Han minority students are categorised by their differentiation within the educational system and such categorization is further complicated by the preferential policies designated to facilitate minority students' access into HE. Minzu universities, located in the highest level of Minzu education, present the context to show how ethnic diversity is negotiated with national unity at higher education level.

Chapter 3 ‘Social identity’ - multiplicity and uncertainty: The Theoretical Context of Social Identity among Minority Students in Higher Education

3.1 Linking to a multi-Minzu context in China: diversified identities

In reviewing the multi-Minzu and the differentiated educational system in China, it reflects the rapidly changing cultural, political and national landscape of Chinese society. The changing social and economic patterns in recent decades in China have intensified the frequent interactions between different ethnics, cultures, languages, values and lifestyles; minority people have exhibited differences in their demands for the ‘*recipes*’ of identities (Campbell, 1992, p.47). Some minority people demand the retention of a distinctively diverse ethnic identity and others demand a Hanness identity by using education as a method of pursuing economic benefits (Bulag, 2003). The Chinese minorities’ quest for identity has become increasingly complex, uncertain, multi-faceted and contested. This was explicitly explained by Kayongo-Male and Lee (2004, p.298) in the following quotation:

‘In China, the question is perhaps not singularity versus multiplicity, but the extent to which individuals live in environments where multiple identities are limited or constrained versus environments where individuals are free to manipulate and add to their identity repertoire’

The above quotation indicates, again, that the recognition of *who am I* is not entirely determined by the self-endorsed opinions of Chinese minorities. Rather, it closely intertwines with the political and economic forces engaged in a larger context. A contextual and social view needs to be taken in order to explore identity.

The diverse identities of Chinese minorities are employed in the theoretical context of social identity which engages a contextual and societal lens (Wickham, 2016). Social identity is a useful lens with which to examine the complexities of

people's self perceptions in a larger environment which is constituted, accomplished, and negotiated by diverse factors and needs (Stets and Burke, 2003). In this sense, social identity fits the aims of this study, which are to look at how Mongolian students perceive themselves while negotiating between different roles at different levels - as a Mongolian minority, as a university learner and as a minority student searching for a future in a Han-dominated society by studying at Minzu universities. Social identity is selected as an underpinning concept as it provides an insight into the complexities of Mongolian students' self perception while interacting with the system and the contextual factors played out in the Minzu universities and in Chinese society as a whole.

This chapter examines the studies and literature in chronology and breadth which are relevant to addressing such complexities. More specifically, social identity is conceptualised in two dimensions (*ethnic and learning*) in detail and placed in the context of the minority student's higher education experiences globally. It is the purpose of this chapter to explain how such conceptualisation of social identity is relevant in answering the main research question and each sub research question. This will be unpacked gradually in the following sections.

3.2 The history and definition of social identity

3.2.1 The history of identity studies: from singularity to multiplicity

Identity is a difficult concept to define in modern sociology. Generally, it is used widely and sometimes interchangeably with regard to one's sense of self - a set of ideas, acts and emotions which are specific to a person (Bamberg, 2011). One of the reasons that *identity* generates a great deal of ambiguity in its meaning and usage is because different schools of thought, disciplinary areas and scholars have placed different emphasis on, and angles to step into, 'self' or 'identity' studies. In this section, the focus is to tease out a theoretical line alongside 'identity' studies. As Campbell (1992, p.51) commented, a focus on identity

studies is the '*starting point*' in enabling a researcher to extend social identity theory which is sensitive to its social contexts rather than psychologists' traditions. To this end, this section will steer a path toward the sociological insight which will make it possible to highlight the Mongolian student's social identity construction within contextually, socially and historically specific conditions rather than as a purely cognitive or mental process.

Initially, it was thought that identity is coherent, stable and situated in the centre of one's mentality. The linguistic root of identity is '*idem*' which indicates a state of continuity from birth to death, and retains identical self-representation over time and space (Gleason, 1983; Lawler, 2008). Identity is situated in the centre to organise the totality of a person so that one can retain sameness. The search for an answer to the question of '*who I am*' - which later evolved as the studies of identity - can be found as early as in Aristotle (*five basic senses to know who I am*), Descartes (*'I think; therefore I am'*), Locke (*unity of self in bond with one's memory of past*) (Brown, 1998). The common factor in their search for '*who I am*', the relationship between one's mind and body, seems to be that a person holds a solid but abstract core in themselves. Such a '*core*' is in the centre to determine the uniqueness and particular existence of a person (Hall, 1992, p.282).

Studies of identity were massively promoted in the area of psychology. In this context it is worth mentioning <*The Principles of Psychology*> by William James (1890) who extended the focus on *self* from a purely spiritual level to the empirical or social level. According to James (1890), there are three types of self; '*the material self*', '*the spiritual self*' and '*the social self*', but particularly the '*social self*', which is explained as follows:

'A man's social self is the recognition which he gets from his mates. We are not only gregarious animals, liking to be in sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favourably, by our kind' (Ibid,

What William James highlighted as the crucial part of ones' social-self lies in the interactions with others, or with '*our kind*'. What James has noted is proof of how social-self, later evolved as the concept of social identity, highlights the social component where society is full of human interactions and individuals are interdependent and structurally bonded in such a society. The social-self moves away from the attention of self as a core and centre to determine who a person is; it should bond with a group and associate with those of '*our kind*'. The interaction with others and how they see '*me*' becomes more powerful and meaningful than the basic need for human existence.

It is also shown in other identity studies by psychologists such as Freud (*identification*), Jung (*public self*) and Erickson (*identity development stage*) that identity is recognised in the arrangement of different hierarchies and levels, complex in nature and constructive in progress - identity is not simply a product of one's mental activity but is complex and situational under different conditions, stages, and stimulations. For example, Jung noted that a person is able to exhibit a public self in society whereby the real self is hidden (Mischel and Morf, 2003). Erikson's work centres more on how identity is constructed in different stages of development and culture and how society plays a role in identity formation. As Erikson (1968) contended, identity development is a life-long process but adolescence and early adulthood is important in identity formation. Identity provides a secure sense of self to retain sameness and continuity, so as to make choices in life. Initially, identity is formed with uncertainty. Until a relatively firm identity is arrived at, any kind of significant life encounters, intimate relationships, social relations and roles can impact on identity development. This idea has great significance for this study, which takes higher education as a crucial life stage when Mongolian students can explore a wider range of possibilities in constructing identity.

It can be seen from the above that identity studies in traditional psychology also focus on the ‘social dimension’. However, they merely scratch the surface in espousing how identity is formed and developed in social interactions. Therefore it is not enough to trace back how social identity theory is developed. We should look at interactionalist viewpoints regarding identity studies, just as Lawler (2008, p.8) noted:

‘Without you I’m nothing: without a nexus of others, none of us could be ‘who we are’

An interactionalist’s view of identity is useful to this study in looking at how Mongolian students are interactive in their relations with others, showing the extent to which social identity might be multiple or even contradicted in the context of different social relations. Both Cooley (2011) and Mead (1925) have argued on the significance of others’ reflection and evaluations in informing one’s perceptions of self. Cooley (2011) suggested that the concept of self stems from a looking glass process; when others become the *mirror*, one can reflect one’s worth and qualities through others’ evaluation of self. Mead (1925) tried to offset Cooley’s theory by putting forward the idea of generalised others; as Mead believed, one can perceive who one is by processing the generalised evaluations conveyed by others, particularly those from the close or significant relationships. These ideas shed light on this study in respect of how Mongolian students perceive the construction of social identity through interactions with others, or in Jenkins (2004, p.5)’s term ‘*a game of playing the vis-à-vis*’: people’s sense of self incorporates their ideas and understanding of self, of others and others’ understanding of self and of others. A person’s perceptions of self are not static but are constantly in a state of construction: ‘*it isn’t just there, it’s not a thing, it must always be established*’ (Ibid, p.4). *Construction* indicates a state of mobility and fluidity when new life experiences and encounters occur, and a person can perceive themselves differently in light of these new conditions. As Jenkins (2004, p.5) further contended, one’s identity, or identities, can be ‘*singular and plural—it is never a final or settled matter*’.

A significant turning point in studying identity away from the singular and essentialist viewpoint is observed by Goffman (1956). By dealing with one's day-to-day demands and challenges, Goffman (1956, p.9) used dramatic metaphors to argue that one can present multiple '*social roles...attached to given statuses*' so that self/identity involves '*one or more parts*'; others become the *audience*; the specific situation, setting and context that one acts within is the *stage*. The self can perform differently on behalf of the *audience* on a *stage*. They can choose to amplify or hinder the presentation of self as appropriate to the *audience* and *scene* so as to manipulate the presentation of self in order to let others be impressed by *who they are* in a certain way (Elliott, 2014). Each sense of *presenting* is meaningful and functional for a person to deal with the '*referents*' (*role-expectations*) emerging in the ongoing interactions with others (Waksler, 1989, p.3).

What is more, Goffman (1956, p.66) had the sensitivity to see that the presentation of identity is soaked in the specificity of time, space and situation:

'The impression and understanding fostered by the performance will then tend, as it were, to saturate the region and time span, so that any individual located in this space-time manifold will be in a position to observe the performance and be guided by the definition of the situation which the performance fosters'

This is significant for this study in showing that identity can be differentiated and presented in various ways in accordance with specific conditions, contexts and time-spans. By studying the social identity of Mongolian students, their presentation of self is saturated in the space (*Minzu universities*), conditions (*academic system, choices and social interactions*) as well as time-span (*transition from MKM/MKH to university time*). The presenting of self under different conditions might be contradictory if the referents from all these elements contain contradictions in nature. It also generates a view on the

methodology regarding the role of researcher (*as the audience*) who might impose certain referents as well: whether Mongolian students '*intentionally or unintentionally express himself, and the others will in turn have to be impressed in some way by him*' (Goffman, 1956, p.2).

In the post-socialised view, identity is significantly featured as fragmented, multiple, fluid and uncertain in nature. As Hall (1992) contended, identity is no longer single, unified and integral and is not centralised: it is neither the centre of one's internal sphere nor the centre of structure because of an increasingly mobilised and fragmented society. Hall (1992) has pointed out the reason for this: identity has no stable basis in the modern society where the scenario is increasingly fragmented and pluralised. So many factors can deconstruct the basis for a certain and singular identity (Woodward, 2000): social/political transformation, modern technology, and the mobility of people and resources across regional/national/transnational boundaries can all mark out the uncertainty of identity. People experience multiple senses of reality and are much freer in terms of choices and lifestyles; as a consequence, identity becomes more context-dependent and more diverse in nature (Gergen, 2000).

Bauman (1996) is the key figure in discussing the uncertainty of identity. As Bauman (1996) noted, identity closely relates to one's choices, and identity itself is a matter of choice. Identity is no longer anchored by a permanent goal; people are able to adopt a set of flexible strategies, what Bauman (1996, p.26-31) defined as '*stroller*', '*vagabond*' and '*player*', to choose identity without any everlasting commitments to any of them.

However, Bauman is criticised by such as Jenkins (1996) who is sceptical about the idea that identity can be freely chosen. Identity, as Jenkins (1996) noted, is fundamentally a social product rather than an individual endeavour; it is deeply rooted in one's social experiences and social membership. As Jenkins (1996)

demonstrated, the class categorization which marks out one's identity is less easily changed than Bauman (1996) suggested. Particularly, social identity, as Jenkins (1996) pointed out is embedded in the process of integrating oneself into certain social groups; when boundaries amongst social groups are not easily permeated, there is great difficulty in choosing or changing social identity according to one's own will (Ibid).

As can be seen from above, although identity can claim to be increasingly uncertain, contextual-based and in multiplicity, there are particular conditions under which identity is closely embedded within certain categorizations and therefore cannot be freely chosen (*such as Jenkin's notion of class*). The next section will review Tajfel's tradition of social identity theory which gives a broad view of how social categorization is important to form one's social identity.

3.2.2 Tajfel's tradition of social identity theory: exploring the '*complexities of human social behaviour*'

By looking at the biographical note of Henry Tajfel (1919-1982), one of the most prominent scholars in the field of social identity, one can discover why he was interested in promoting social identity as a conceptual tool with which to study themes such as prejudice, discrimination, contradictions and intergroup conflicts (Hogg, 2005). As a Polish Jew who once served in the French Army, Tajfel was taken prisoner by the Nazis (Campbell, 1992). After the war, Tajfel participated in the efforts to reunite the camp children with their families who were imprisoned by the Nazis. The personal and academic experiences motivated Tajfel to study the '*complexities of human social behaviour*' (Tajfel, 1981, p.2). In Tajfel's view, the social realities of prejudice, conflict and contradictions cannot be fully explained by a study of individuals, but rather, '*the social conditions in which people live largely determine their beliefs and the extent to which they are shared*' (Ibid, p.34). Tajfel's contribution is to promote studies of identity with a *social* lens. This helps establish whether it is the same for a person

to see themselves as an individual or as a member of a group in order to make sense of their values, perceptions, emotional significance and behaviours (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Using a *social* lens, social identity is significant in putting individuals in the context of groups, relationships, a set of networks which are organised, structured and bonded by interactions; a view of how people are linked to each other in terms of knowing the '*relationships of similarities or differences*' (Jenkins, 2004, p.5). Social identity is the perception of self based upon '*who's who*' (Ibid, p.5).

Social identity sets the conceptual framework by getting an angle on how people perceive themselves as part of a group, in social relations and in a specific context. Mongolian students, based on this framework, are put into the domain as part of the Mongolian ethnic group, interacting academically and socially with other students from diverse Minzu backgrounds in Minzu universities. However, Mongolian students are studied on an individual basis: each individual Mongolian's case is unique with regard to their perceptions of social identity construction. This makes the exploration of each individual Mongolian student's social identity a '*personal*' story which may not be the same or be applied to one another. Linking to the conceptual frame of social identity, it generates confusion between social identity and other identity concepts which have more individual and personal focuses, such as personal identity: how do both concepts differ, link and make sense to this study? In answering this question, one can better understand the conceptual distinctiveness of social identity.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) made the *interpersonal and intergroup continuum* (later revised by Turner and Onorato (1999) as *self-perception continuum*) which detailed the relationship between personal identity and social identity. Situated at one end of the continuum, social identity is used to distinguish individuals or groups of individuals by '*their respective memberships of various social groups or categories*' (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, p.34). It deals with how we identify

ourselves on a group-level—the ‘*group*’ can be concrete, imaged, abstract, or even ambiguous; therefore social identity is conceived in a range of different forms (Ellemers, Spears and Doosje, 2002, p.164). At the other end, personal identity is largely derived from ‘*interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics*’ which are least affected by the social groups to which they belong (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, p.34). Linking to this study, the focus is not only on Mongolian students as individuals but also how they as individuals relate to their backgrounds as part of the Mongolian ethnic group (*one of the MKM/MKH students studying in Minzu universities, one of the Mengshou/Hanshou major students*), and how such experiences link to their perceptions of self. From this sense, either personal or social identity is fundamentally ‘*social*’, as Jenkins (1996, p.19) noted, that both ‘*can be understood as similar...routinely related to - or, better perhaps, entangled with - the other so that the processes by which they are produced, reproduced and changed are analogous; and that both are intrinsically social*’.

3.2.2.1 Operating social identity: the definition of social identity

This section will explain how the ethnic and learning dimension of social identity operates by analysing the definition and theory of social identity based on Tajfel’s tradition.

On the way to theorise the social identity concept, Tajfel carried out a series of experiments studying human social behaviours and group-level behaviours, such as the cognitive aspects of prejudice (Tajfel, 1969) and the effects of minimum intergroup discrimination (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy and Flament, 1971). Particularly, his study of minimum intergroup discrimination embellished on his previous study showing how competition is necessary for intergroup conflict. As Tajfel et al. (1971) found out, the minimum condition can be only that individuals are clustered into two groups with no interaction and shared history. A minimum condition can nurture one’s social identity.

Even though social identity studies arose from a series of social psychological studies of intergroup behaviours, Tajfel's works do not define social identity as a purely psychological term. More importantly, social identity depends on social context and takes into account the influence of social structure upon one's sense of self (Reicher, Spears and Haslam, 2010). An initial motivation for Tajfel and Turner to develop Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) derived from witnessing the social movements centred on race, gender and sexuality through the 1960s to the 1970s. Against this backdrop, social identity was developed in an effort to explain group-level behaviours (Ibid).

Tajfel brought together a number of his previous studies in *Human Groups and Social Categories* (1981) and defined social identity as follows:

'Part of an individual's self-concept is derived from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel, 1981, p.255)

According to Tajfel, social groups and categories are '*a system of orientation which helps to create and define the individual's place in society*' (Ibid, p.255). Two levels of meaning are revealed in the definition of social identity: firstly, social identity refers to how people define themselves by the social group or category to which they belong. Specifically, the social group or category is based on '*large-scale social category membership*' by referring to such as '*nationality, class, political affiliation, religion and so on*' (Tajfel, 1978a, p.427; Turner, 1982, p.22). The identification of self based on large-scale categorization forms the basis of a crowd, a group, a race or even a nation (Turner, 1982). To identify self based on large-scale social categorization is not to reduce a person's individuality (Reicher, Spears and Haslam, 2010). In fact, such large-scale categorization can be both social and individual such as '*I am a woman, I am a Scot or whatever – I speak in a fundamental way to who I am in the world*' (Ibid, p.51). This first level

of meaning acts as a basis for this study to focus on the *ethnic* dimension of Mongolian students' social identity. Using *Mongolian* as an ethnic/Minzu categorization illustrates the extent to which it can be a basis for Mongolian students to perceive the construction of social identity.

Secondly, as Tajfel (1981) commented, social identity allows people to define distinctive positions of self in society. It means that social identity is orientated to the particular social roles in which people are situated: '*the character and the role [our emphasis] that an individual derives for himself as an occupant of a particular social position*' (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p. 65). Sometimes, such social roles derive from one's membership of a certain occupation, or their role in that occupation (Stet and Burke, 2003). Social identity, in this sense, not only allows people to perceive who they are through the social roles in which they are situated; it also imparts the norms and desirable forms of behaviours appropriate to that social role (Sindic and Condor, 2014). Linking to this study, Mongolian students characterise themselves in the particular social role as a university learner through studying at Minzu universities. The role as a university learner links to their perceptions of the meaning, value, and attitudes of learning by engaging different languages and majors of studies in Minzu universities and the kinds of behaviours consistent with their role-expectations. This study will focus on the learning dimension of Mongolian students' social identity whilst studying at a Minzu University. The contextual elements in Minzu universities, particularly the pedagogical activities, discipline structure, and cultural/ethnic atmosphere are also taken into account.

There were some other studies which support the development of social identity into *ethnic* and *learning* dimensions. For example, Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, and Ethier (1995)'s research sorted 64 social identities into 5 specified types, namely, personal relationship (*e.g. child/parents*); vocations/avocations (*e.g. university student/professor*), political affiliations (*e.g. Democratic or Communist*); ethnic/religious groups (*e.g. Chinese or British*); and stigmatised groups (*e.g.*

alcoholic, criminal). From these categories, *ethnic* and *learning/vocational* identity subsumes social identity. Powell (2011) employed the social identity approach in studying a social-economic marginalised *ethnic* group (*Black urban hip-pop culture*) in a white-hegemonic context. In the higher education arena, Levin, Walker, Haberler and Jackson-Boothby (2013) used the social identity approach to study how a minority faculty constructs ethnic identity and professional identity in the context of a community college. Linking to this study, social identity is used as a conceptual lens to study those relating to ethnicity, cultural/linguistic dominance, learning and social roles in a HE context. This is what Wickham (2016, p.423) called to '*add some breadth to the 'social' in social identity*' - to investigate how structural and contextual factors and identity are mutually interrogated. This study aims to contribute to that.

3.2.2.2 Operating social identity: some theoretical starting points to plan the research

In this study, social identity is used as a conceptual lens to explore Mongolian students' perceptions of self in the context of Minzu universities. This section aims to use social identity to act as several theoretical starting points, presenting a way in which social identity can be implemented in the plan of research, particularly in light of the empirical investigation.

Feitosa, Salas and Salazar (2012, p.531) put forward a figure which is instructive in operating social identity in account of empirical implementation. As shown in Figure 3.1, Feitosa, Salas and Salazar (2012) outlined three criteria underpinning social identity: '*categorization*', '*sense of belonging*' and '*positive attitudes*'.

Categorization

A leading question raised by using social identity as a lens deals with how people identify themselves as belonging to different social groups; they identified themselves as belonging to what is categorised as the '*in-group*'; this, meanwhile,

incorporates a process which serves to exclude themselves from other related groups or categories (*'out-groups'*). Facilitated by categorization, distinctions between *'us'* and *'them'* are made which subsume an *'individual's own group and the out-groups'* (Tajfel, 1981, p.254). Social identity deals with people's perception of themselves in terms of *'we rather than I'*, to see *'us as different from, and better than them'* (Reicher, Haslam, Spears and Reynold, 2012, p.351).

Sense of belonging

Furthermore, social identity is stronger than an expression of *'who I am'* and is strongly associated to the value and emotional significance attached to the in-group membership. In this sense, social identity is powerful in enabling people to feel that they could *'love, hate, kill or even die'* for the group (Reicher, Spears and Haslam, 2010, p.52). This is how the criteria of a *'sense of belonging'* plays a part in one's construction of social identity. Regarding the sense of belonging, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2011, p.3) noted that it is *'the need to maintain feelings of closeness to and acceptance by other people'*. By recognising oneself as part of the *in-group*, a sense of belonging defines one's social identity on account of the fact that *'one's self-concept is comprised of self-descriptions in terms of the defining characteristics of social groups to which one belongs'* (Campbell, 1992, p.17). It means that, when a person feels close to their in-group, how their in-group is defined, evaluated and treated will have a profound impact on how they feel themselves being defined, evaluated and treated.

Positive attitude

Due to the needs of individuals to maintain and enhance a sense of positive self-image (Brown, 2000), *'positive attitude'* plays a role in letting people favour one's own group, group members and group characteristics, as opposed to the *out-groups*. It means that social identity is constructed not in an isolated manner but always interactively and comparatively to other groups (*out-groups*). Turner (1982) explained that, through intergroup comparing, the in-group to which

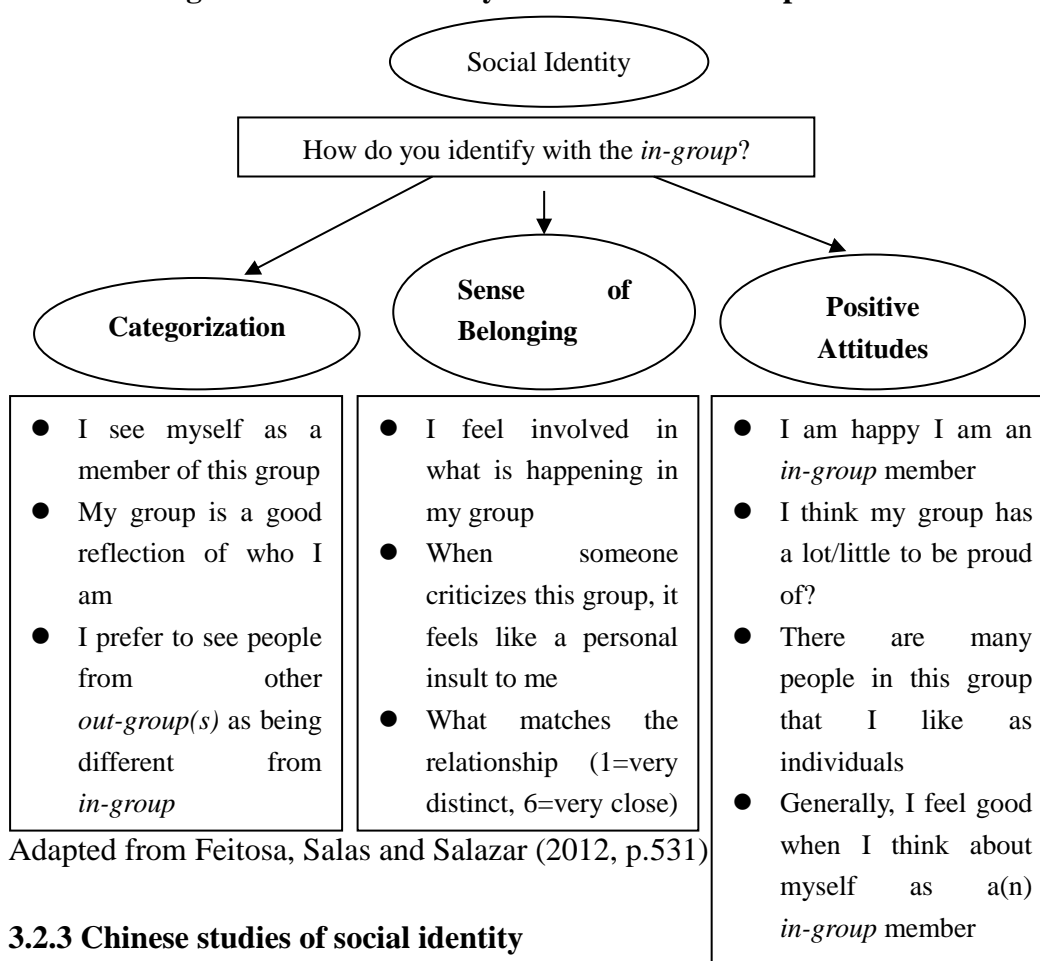
individuals belong has a need to be evaluated positively and the out-group, by contrast, is evaluated negatively. Positive distinctiveness contributes to maintaining a positive evaluation of the in-group so that the in-group is favourably distinguished from the out-group. Under such conditions a satisfied or '*positive social identity*' is achieved (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, p.40).

However, in certain cases when some social groups (*minority, marginalised or of a less affluent social class*) have, over a period of time, experienced suppression or discrimination, any intergroup comparison might result in that out-group appearing superior to the in-group; therefore social identity is consequently unsatisfied or even in a crisis. Under such conditions, Tajfel (1981, p.256) commented that individuals might adopt strategies such as '*leaving*' the group (*individual mobility*) or reinterpreting the criteria of intergroup comparison and changing the social situations so that the negative evaluation of the in-group can be readjusted (*social creativity*). The later strategy is illuminative in applying social identity in the social context where the disadvantaged social groups, such as '*women in sexist systems, black people in racist systems*', can make a change to the group status so as to enhance the prestige of social identity (Reicher, Haslam, Spears and Reynold, 2012, p.352). Social identity in this way is not about '*discrimination*' but about the '*resistance to discrimination*' (Reicher, Spears and Haslam, 2010, p.54).

Above is the backdrop under which social identity can be used in light of empirical implementation. There are sample items listed in Figure 3.1 under each criterion. Linking to this study, how Mongolian students perceive the construction of social identity corresponds with these sample items. For example, how do Mongolian students see themselves as a member of the Mongolian ethnic (**categorization**)?; how do Mongolian students perceive the differences between MKM and MKH? (**in-group versus out-group**)?; do Mongolian students feel themselves as belonging to the university community and associate themselves

closely to what is happening within the university (**sense of belonging**)?; how do Mongolian students feel when they think of themselves as a student by studying the Mengshou major at the Minzu university? Do they feel a very/not very proud in engaging the major/course of studies relating to Mongolian history, language and culture in Minzu universities (**positive attitudes**)? These questions are considered further in the methodological stage of this study.

Figure 3.1 Social identity dimensions and sample items



3.2.3 Chinese studies of social identity

Even though this study is built on a conceptual framework of social identity drawn mostly from English/western traditions of ideas and theories, it is necessary to look at how social identity is translated and applied in Chinese studies. By doing this, the meaning of social identity can be clarified in a Chinese theoretical context as well as remaining relevant to Chinese Minzu and Minzu higher education studies.

There is a burgeoning area of study concentrating on aspects of the regional, social and national identity of the people in Hong Kong after the transition of sovereignty in 1997 (Liang, 1998). Moreover, due to the fact that mainland China has experienced a dramatic social and economic transformation over recent decades and numerous social problems and contradictions have arisen, such as the divisions between urban versus rural and the distinctions between regional/ethnic versus national identities (Shi, 2010). Social identity, which can be utilised in addressing social conflicts, prejudice and discrimination, has been applied in numerous studies; social identity theory is also widely introduced in different discipline areas (see in Teng and Zhang, 1997, Wang, C. G., 2010 and Xiao, 2015).

In general, social identity is translated in Chinese studies in the following instances:

1. Social identity as '*Shehui Rentong*' and identity is translated as '*Rentong*'. '*Rentong*', here, refers to that a person regards him/herself as the same with one another. This is the most widely adopted translation and used across a variety of studies, such as Zhang and Zuo (2006), Shi (2010), Wang, C. G. (2010) and Xiao (2015)
2. Social identity as '*Shehui Shenfen*' (*literally similar to 'social status'*), such as from Jin (2001) and Xin and Xin (2012)
3. Social identity as '*Shehui Tongyixing*' (*literally similar to 'social consistency/uniformity'*), such as from Fu (2001), An and Wang (2007)
4. Social identity as '*Shehui Renke*' (*literally similar to 'social approval/acceptance'*), such as Zhao, J (2010)

It can be seen from these different types of translation that, apart from point 1, points 2, 3 and 4 generate some confusion in the understanding of social identity. Social identity is distorted or confused with concepts such as social status, social

uniformity and social approval or acceptance. In another case, it lacks a clear conceptual distinction between social identity and other relevant concepts, such as ethnic identity and national identity (such as in Ma, 2014). Furthermore, very little attention has been given to applying social identity to the field of Minzu higher education.

3.3 Ethnic dimension of social identity

This section attempts to conceptualise the ethnic dimension of social identity. Ethnic identity is relevant to this dimension and will help to address SRQ1. What is more, this study focuses on students with a Mongolian ethnic background; therefore focusing on the '*ethnic*' fabric will facilitate a full understanding of the Mongolian student's perceptions of self. In order to do so, this section has drawn together some concepts, such as ethnicity, culture and language, which are necessarily associated, to underpin the concept of ethnic identity.

More specifically, social identity deals with how individuals identify themselves in the context of large-scale social categorization, such as ethnicity and nationality (Tajfel, 1981). To this end, ethnic identity is a key component in the conceptual framework of the study. It generates aspects such as the extent to which Mongolian students associate themselves with the social memberships attached to the Mongolian ethnic and the bearing on such as inclusion versus exclusion, cultural elements, language as significant representations of one's ethnic identity and values and the emotional significance to Mongolian ethnic.

3.3.1 How culture, identity and ethnicity intersect?

There are various ways to clarify ethnic identity. This section aims to clarify it from a *cultural* perspective. More specifically, it seeks to advocate how culture, ethnicity and identity interest help to uncover the ethnic identity used in this study: ethnic identity cannot be detached from a particular cultural perspective; culture helps to create the distinctive meaning of ethnic identity and marks out

the boundary between different ethnic groups. Linked to this study, understanding how Mongolian students understand the cultural features and characteristics of Mongolian is crucial in exploring how they understand the distinctiveness of Mongolian as an ethnic group, thus shedding light on their perceptions of *Mongolness* in self.

3.3.1.1 Culture and identity

In order to engage a cultural perspective to look at ethnic identity, it is necessary to explore the possible relationship between culture and identity. Hall (1992, p.278) made an attempt to define culture as *‘diverse configurations of institutionalised meanings, recipes, and material objects that may be differently drawn on by various factors’*. According to Hall (1992), culture can be configured as various forms driven by different factors and in this sense culture can be interpreted through different dimensions. Fischer (2009, p.29) reviewed the definitions of culture and concluded that culture can be defined by two features: (a) culture is highlighted by its nature as a *‘shared’* meaning amongst a group of people; this is also how culture distinguishes one group of people from another (b) the transmitting of culture is through *‘learning’* rather than being genetically conferred; culture shall be understood as acquired from the socialisation process, and within such a process the communication of *‘key symbols, ideas, knowledge, and values’* is passed from one generation to another. According to Fischer (2009), culture can be passed down over generations and gradually becomes a distinctive marker shared by those within a certain group to distinguish them from other groups. From this, one can see how a distinctive ethnic identity is both culturally and linguistically *‘coded’*, as Bullock, Trombley and Lawrie (1999, p.413) explained:

‘In developing their identities, people draw upon culturally available resources in their immediate social networks and in society as a whole. The process of identity construction is therefore one upon which the contradictions and dispositions of the surrounding sociocultural environment have a

Therefore, culture can be a basis for identity construction. The cultural characteristics can be the '*markers, signals or symbols*' of one's identity and certain cultural elements would be prominent in the expression of one's identity (Bader, 2001, p.261). By drawing upon the culturally available resources in the surrounding environment, identity is constructed by a process of '*re-linking*' as Suárez-Krabbe (2012, p.338) noted: constructing identity is a way to re-link to a set of manners and customs, ways of dressing and eating - these are what '*culture*' is thought to be.

A significant bridge between culture and identity is in the use of the term *cultural identity* in many fields. As Ennaji (2005) commented, cultural identity and social identity are merged in a way, because they both cut across many fields such as language, nationality, ethnicity, religion or social class. What might slightly distinguish social identity from cultural identity lies in two facets: (a) the theorisation of social identity and cultural identity is developed from different perspectives. Cultural identity stems from the focus on how indigenous and tribal peoples defend their '*culture or way of life*' from being conquered or assimilated (Wade, 1999, p.4). Social identity is derived from an interest in the complexities of human behaviours regarding categorization and prejudice; (b) social identity concentrates on studying how individuals identify themselves as belonging to a particular social group (or groups). Cultural identity centres on how individuals identify themselves as belonging to a particular culture (Ennaji, 2005); culture has a slightly different meaning to the social group.

Conversely, it is also interesting to note how culture and identity are distinguishable from one another. In considering this, two competing arguments emerge. Suárez-Krabbe (2012, p.338) contended that culture and identity are different because '*culture changes, but identity does not*'. It means that constructing one's identity establishes a relationship with the world in a

culturally different way but this would not change the fact of ‘*who is who*’. Bader (2001) contended *vis-à-vis* that identity might change rapidly and dramatically when influenced by the complexity of the modern world but culture can stay relatively stable over time and space.

3.3.1.2 Culture and ethnicity

Culture is closely linked to the notion of ethnicity. Barth (1969) has commended that culture creates the boundary-- ‘*social exclusion and incorporation*’—between ethnicities. Within the boundary, a distinctive ethnicity is bred:

‘each group developing its cultural and social form in relative isolation, mainly in response to local ecologic factors, through a history of adaptation by invention and selective borrowing. This history has produced a world of separate peoples, each with their culture and each organised in a society with can legitimately be isolated for description as an isolated itself’ (Barth, 1969, p.11)

In a sense, ethnicity is formed around the categorization of human groups as ‘*culturally distinctive*’ entities, thus culture and ethnicity have rings on each other (Eriksen, 1996, p.28). Ethnicity can be represented through cultural expressions such as customs, religious festivals, food preferences, language, community relations and so forth (Ibid). That’s why culture is frequently used as the analytical angle to study different ethnic/cultural groups (Baumann, 1996). Through reviving the cultural expressions (*such as a revival of an ethnic holiday*), it raises the recognition and prominence of the ethnicity (Sharaby, 2011). On the other side, Kearney (2014, p.600) proposed a framework to discuss how ethnicity can be ‘*wounded*’ as a result of the conflicts arising from cultural contacts. What Kearney (2014) noted seems to suggest that ‘*culture*’ can be a factor in the inter-ethnic conflicts that might follow - particularly the conflicts drawn from incompatible cultures.

Both culture and ethnicity are socially-constructed, rather than biologically-given.

Horowitz (1985, p.41) defined ethnicity as an umbrella term which '*embraces differences identified by colour, language, religion, or some other attributes of common origin*'. As Horowitz (1985, p.52) noted, a common origin or a shared '*birth and blood*' of an ethnicity is a myth; ethnicity is conditional, evolving and under certain conditions generates conflict when vital interests are competing. Fenton (1999, p.7) echoed this and noted that ethnicity is fundamentally a culturally and socially-constructed phenomenon: '*ethnicity constitutes a socially grounded, a culturally elaborated and a socially constructed phenomenon*'. According to Fenton (1999), social and cultural constructedness is inherent to ethnicity.

This study uses ethnic identity, rather than *racial* identity, because promoting the use of *ethnicity* instead of *race* sheds light on a cultural viewpoint. Mackerras (2003, p.3) pointed out that '*ethnicity [...] is preferable, since it lacks the judgmental overtones of 'race' and implies more cultural than biological concerns*'. *Race*, accentuating a linkage between one's identity with hereditary natures/characteristics and a fixed categorization between social groups upon visible physical differences (*such as the distinguishing of human groups into three races based upon the skin colour*), is increasingly contested due to the fact that blending and interaction amongst the population is far more effective in modern society than before (Fenton, 1999).

However, the function of culture can be weakened when ethnicity is expressed on a symbolic basis. As Anagnostou (2009, p.95) noted, for countries with an immigrant past, descendants of immigrant individuals can express their ethnicity as a choice and ascribe meaning to that choice; ethnicity is therefore symbolically expressive rather than acting as an '*instrumental function in people's lives*' - ethnicity can be an expression of their imaginary link to an ancestor or for the purposes of social networking; ethnic identity is '*situational and changeable*' and becomes salient under certain circumstances (Nagel, 1994,

p.154). For example, a person may present themselves strongly as an ethnic during family or community events and festivals but may choose to hide such presentation in professional circumstances. Even though one's ethnicity can still be culturally-expressed (*such as participating in ethnic festivals*), it is no longer culturally functional in serving the purpose of determining the primary patterns of one's life (*such as one's occupation, marriage or social links*) (Ibid). The idea of how ethnicity functions more as a symbolic expression than a determinant in one's patterns of life is a significant one for this study: to what extent does the ethnicity of Mongolian mean to Mongolian students as a symbol of identity or as a meaningful way of living?

3.3.1.3 Clarifying ethnic identity

By '*clarify*', Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p.32) meant to '*explain the specific manner in which the term 'identity' can be employed in a particular theoretical context*'. As mentioned previously, ethnicity implies a sense of the categorization of people into distinctive groups with a cultural focus; ethnic identity is interpreted based on the understanding of ethnicity but is interpreted differently by '*the users of ethnicity, observers of ethnicity, or analysts of ethnicity*' (Royce, 1982, p.1). More specifically, it shows how people might draw on their own epistemological positions to understand and interpret ethnic identity even for certain ethnicity. Linking to this study, Mongolian ethnicity might have different meaning, forms and representation for the researcher (*who studies Mongolian identity*) and the Mongolian students (*the owner of a particular sense of Mongolian identity*): this is the difference between the *insiders and outsiders*' vision of ethnic identity as well (Premdas, 2011, p.813).

For the purpose of ethnic identity study, Phinney and Ong (2007) noted that there are certain components constituting ethnic identity: firstly, ethnic identity derives from a sense of self-identification as member of a particular ethnic group; it refers to how people label themselves as one of the ethnic group by, for example,

an open-question or checklist. Secondly, a relatively stable, mature, or '*achieved*' ethnic identity will undergo a process of exploration (Ibid, p.272); exploration enables one to seek information, experience and knowledge relevant to one's ethnicity in order to understand one's ethnicity. Phinney and Ong (2007, p.272) listed such endeavours as '*talking to people, learning cultural practices, and attending cultural events*'. This indicates an exploratory process involving referencing and learning the knowledge, history and tradition of one's ethnicity (Phinney, 2000). When new experiences, information and knowledge is loaded, ethnic identity is ready to be updated or changed. Thirdly, ethnic identity is embodied by looking at ethnic behaviours in a broader sense; behaviours such as '*speaking the language, eating the food, and associating with members of a group*' (Ibid).

The components from Phinney and Ong (2007) are illuminating in studying the Mongolian identity of Mongolian students by looking at the aspects such as (a) how they identify/label themselves as a Mongolian; (b) what kinds of significant life events and encounters matter for their perceptions of self as a Mongolian; and (c) how they perceive Mongolian as a culturally distinctive ethnicity compared to other Minzu groups.

However, this study is built on the conceptual framework of social identity. Ethnic identity is taken as one dimension of social identity, and this is supported by Barth (1969, p.13) who concluded that an ethnic group is much more like a '*social organisation*' rather than a descriptive list of cultural features; ethnic identity refers to how people identify themselves as group members in accordance with certain ethnic categories; such categories '*provide an organisational vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems*' (Ibid, p.14). Furthermore, Phinney and Ong (2007) commented that ethnic identity subsumes ones' social identity, thus fitting the meaning and theory of social identity developed by Tajfel. Ethnic identity

also deals with the distinction between the *in-group* and *out-group* and talks about how *we (rather than I)* are different from *they*: '*ethnic identity is an identity at both individual and collective levels*' (Hou, 2013, p.472). Ethnic identity shares principles such as a sense of belonging and a positive distinctiveness of social identity (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2011, p.8-10). Ethnic identity is specific in terms of the principles of '*belonging and attachment*' (a sense of maintaining closeness with one's own ethnic group), '*distinctiveness*' (culturally different from other ethnic group) and '*continuing*' (ethnic identity can provide a sense of connection and transcendence over time and situation) (Ibid).

Even though culture closely associates ethnicity and creates the boundary in order to sustain the ethnic distinctions, Barth (1969) noted that individuals may find that important social relations and connections always *cross* such boundaries and ethnic identity is not subject to a single form of culture/race/language. Fishman (2010, p.xxviii) gave an example of this and said '*ethnic Chinese in Laos and Cambodia, as distinct from 'real' Chinese in nearby China*'. It means that the ethnic identity of a person is fluid, not restricted by boundaries, and is subject to the surrounding socio-cultural context. It echoes the context of this study that the Mongolian in China is able to develop the Mongolian identity in association with different forms of socio-cultural referents, such as the Chinese nationality, Han-majority, Mongolian as minority Minzu or a cross-border ethnicity. Minzu universities can even be the micro socio-cultural context where Mongolian students' identity is not referenced by a single form of culture or language but is sustained in or across different forms of boundaries, such as multi-Minzu students, Mongolian students' clique, MKM/MKH groups of Mongolian students and so forth.

By looking at whether ethnic identity is an authentic or symbolic reflection of one's perceptions of self, Barth (1969) commented on the self-ascribed nature of

ethnic identity. As Barth (1969, p.15) said, '*if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, they are willing to be treated and let their own behaviour be interpreted and judged as A's and not as B's*'. This is an interesting quotation because it informs this study of the ways that Mongolian students can ascribe themselves as either of the Minzu groups, but also shows how their interpretation of the meaning of such ascription is crucial to their perceptions of self: when they say they perceive themselves as a *Mongolian*, it means that they are willing to be treated as a *Mongolian* even though they might lack the cultural or linguistic characteristics which would identify them as Mongolian.

3.3.2 Ethnic identity construction: four possible consequences

This section explores how the ethnic minority group interacts with the socially-dominant or majority group, thus reflecting the power relationship between them. This links to this study in the sense that Mongolian identity is not static or fixed but is able to be constructed upon a constant interaction with Han as the majority group in Minzu universities and in Chinese society. It also illustrates how education can act as a context as well as an approach, resulting in different consequences for ethnic identity construction.

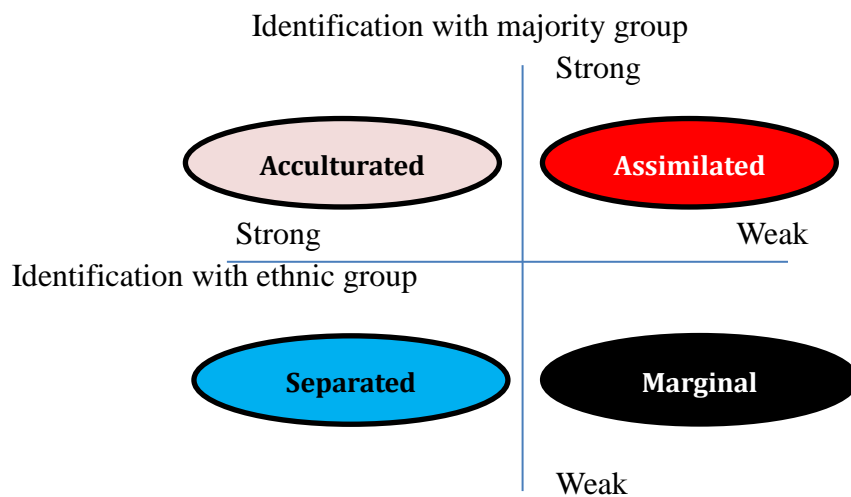
Eriksen (1996) pointed out that ethnicity exists as a sense of hierarchy: certain ethnic groups exist at a higher level in the hierarchy; those lower status ethnic groups are disadvantaged, or treated as '*inferior*' compared to others (Ibid, p.28). Schermerhorn (1996) commented that the distinction between majority versus minority does not necessarily correspond to population size; power is an important element. As Schermerhorn (1996) concluded, the majority, or the dominant group, can be a coalition of small group of social elites who powerfully control the access, allocation of resources, rules for distribution and opportunities for mobility in the society. When social interaction occurs between those from the majority/dominant and minority groups, the ethnic identity of people from both groups might be conflicted, accommodated, assimilated or reconciled

(Banks, 2009b).

There are many studies which develop models attempting to explain how ethnic identity is constructed when cultures from unequal power groups meet; one such model is the acculturation model (Berry, Trimble and Olmedo, 1986; Berry, 2003). One contribution of the acculturation model is to overturn a fixed assimilative idea (that minority culture is destined to be assimilated by the majority culture) by offering a cultural cooperative perspective to study the immigrant phenomenon. For example, Berry (2003) articulated that the immigrants (representing the minority culture) do not entirely abandon their ethnic identity but instead change the representation of ethnic identity in order to adapt to the host society (representing the dominating culture). The acculturative performances are presented on an individual level (such as changing the way of speaking, dressing or life-style), an internal level (such as an adaptive strategy for mental wellbeing) and a sociocultural level (such as manifesting social skills to deal with specific matters during daily interactive actions) (Ibid).

Based on the acculturation model, Phinney (1990, 2000, 2003) developed a model exhibiting four possible consequences of minority identity in contrast to the identification of a majority group. This model applies to the immigration phenomenon but also has relevance for a culturally diverse society, particularly when applied to those who are members of minority groups (Phinney, 2000). As shown in Figure 3.2:

Figure 3.2 Degree of identification with minority and majority group



Adapted from Phinney (1990, p.502)

As a minority identity it is possible to become (a) **acculturated** when identification with both one's ethnic/minority group and the majority/host group remains strong; in this domain, the ethnic identity engages both the '*retention of [...] the ethnic, or original culture*' and '*adaption to [...] a dominant, host or 'new' culture*' (Phinney, 2003, p.63). Sadao (2003, p.399)'s study applied the acculturated trend to study minority faculties in HE and argued that this is a preferred way to perform bicultural skills which are '*successful in switching between two cultures as required by the situation or institution*'; (b) **assimilated** when identification with the majority/host group triumphs over identification with the ethnic/minority group; assimilated identity indicates a loss of one's original culture; (c) **separated** when identification is only with one's ethnic/original group; this indicates a sense of disconnection or separation from the host society; and (d) **marginalised** when one identifies with neither of the groups. One might be marginalised by both the host society as well as one's ethnic community.

Linking to this study, the four consequences of the acculturation model can shed light on the Mongolian identity of Mongolian students. The MKH students in particular can be either acculturated (*if they perform bi-culturally or bilingually*

when moving between different worlds from Minzu schools to a Hanshou major in the Minzu university), or assimilated (if they lose their origins of Mongolian language and identify themselves much more as a Han); MKM students might exhibit a certain degree of separated identity (*resistance to the Han or Chinese in order to safeguard Mongolian pureness*) or marginalised identity (*neither a Chinese nor a whole Mongolian*). The possible consequences of Mongolian identity reflect the strong impact of education and learning as a shaping force. Minzu universities provide the context within which different degrees of minority/Mongolian identity can be constructed depending on how minority/Mongolian culture and language are valued or constrained.

However, the pitfall of this model lies in its simplification of the identification process by offering only two dimensions (*majority or minority groups*). Field (1994) proposed that ethnic identity is developed multi-dimensionally and identification is supposed to lie in a continuum rather than a quadrant. Feng (2005) also summarised that acculturation is extremely hard to realise unless two cultures share high levels of commonality and mutual acceptance; identification with two cultures should start at a very young age in order for a person to achieve ac-culturally (Ibid).

On the other hand, ethnic identity is complicated by social class and other factors. As Horowitz (1985, p.21-24) noted, when the distinction of social class and ethnicity is coincident (*'ranked groups'*), ethnic identity is simultaneously subordinated in a hierarchy where social mobility, economic and social status tend to be cumulatively restricted. However, in practice, ethnic identity is mostly *'unranked'* which means that ethnic groups are in parallel to each other but within each group there exists internal stratification alongside the lines of social class or other factors. This fits into the Minzu context in China where various minority Minzu groups are clustered on one side as distinctive ethnic units. Within each Minzu group, people exhibit different degrees of identification with

their ethnicity because of other factors such as their personal background, education, economic and social status, cultural and language habits and so on. This allows this study to look within one ethnic/Minzu group.

3.3.3 How language represents ethnic identity?

There is a sense that language is crucial in determining the extent to which we perceive the world. Language constructs a sense of '*reality*' within which we live, as Spier, Hallowell and Newman (1941, p.57) contended, language is the medium through which we express ourselves, the social actions as well as the objective world. By using language, '*one comes by, or acquires, the definitions or meanings of other parties in society*' (Reynolds, 1993, p.58).

This section gives a view of how language constitutes a crucial aspect in the representation of ethnic identity by linking to its relation with culture, ethnicity and identity. Language is given significant focus in this study because it intertwines with other aspects of Mongolian students' experiences, such as which language they use as the medium of learning, the medium to sit an entrance exam to higher education, and the choices of majors in the Minzu universities. Language is also important in Mongolian students' social interactions, thus playing a part in their perceptions of self as a Mongolian.

3.3.3.1 Language as the criterion to distinguish ethnicity/Minzu

Linking to a Minzu context in China, different Minzu groups were designated in the *Minzu Recognition Campaign*, based on Stalin's criteria; '*the shared language*' is an important criterion to distinguish Minzu groups (Stalin, 1913). An important point here is that language has the characteristic to be *shared* by an ethnic group (*or groups*) and acts as the carrier of culture which, in turn, becomes part of the heritage of an ethnicity (Liebkind, 2010). Language as the heritage, or the '*mother tongue*', is consolidated as the cornerstone of '*mentalities*' and '*characters*' shared by a certain ethnicity (Carli et al., 2003,

p.868). On the other hand, the ability to retain proficiency in a heritage language contributes to a better perception of self as a member of ethnic group, but this necessarily links to culture as an umbrella (Brown, 2009). Therefore, the following will discuss the role of language in culture, and how language becomes an matter in distinguishing ethnicity and representing a distinctive ethnic identity.

Language is important in conceptualising culture and ethnicity. Zulueta (1995, p.179) made an interesting analogy that '*language is to culture what DNA is to genetics*', how language codes, interprets, bears and transmits culture shape the form of culture's past, present and future. Fishman (2010) commented that the term 'ethnic' in the English language system has an inherent assumption of inferiority. As Fishman (2010. p.xxvi) exemplified, '*ethnicity retains something of this associated negativity today [...] ethnic studies in various departments give eloquent testimony to the fact that the term may eventually be headed toward full ethnolinguistic recovery and rehabilitation*'. Ethnicity, therefore, is in a semantical sense referring to '*minority contextualisation*' (Fishman, 2010, p.xxviii): the minority ethnic in combination with the language of ethnicity is labelled as damaged or exotic, needing to be studied from a specific viewpoint which differs from the studies of the majority.

Language has a close relationship with identity:

'whether a language die out or thrive, whether people become fully proficient or not in another language, whether people accommodate their speech style to someone who speak a different language [...] has a matter to social identity dynamics' (Hogg, 2003, p.474)

Language itself is studied as a socially-structured phenomenon through which specific configurations of meanings are shaped and expressed as the source of identity (Riley, 2007). The identity of a *worker*, for example, is conceptualised on a linguistic basis according to occupation, but might generate different social, cultural and political implications. Particularly in light of the post-structural view,

identity is the product of *discourse* - the evolving nature of language in relation to power, social structure and the production of knowledge (Weedon, 2006). Due to that discourse legitimising the power relationship and consequently determining the social locations people exist within, identity seems to be determined less by the objective references and more on how people talk, so as to make sense of the meaning of *self* (Ibid). In other words, identity is constituted by '*the play of language*' (Layder, 1994, p.97).

When ethnic identity is represented by its cultural expressions, language can be a theme in ethnic identity as well. Giles (1977, p.307) clarified the relationship between ethnic identity and language as follows:

'Ingroup speech [...] can serve as a symbol of ethnic identity and cultural solidarity; language is often the major embodiment of this ethnicity. It is used for reminding the group about its cultural heritage, for transmitting group feelings, and for excluding members of the outgroup from its internal transactions'

Giles (1977) implied that language as the symbol of ethnic identity acts to mark out the distinction between in-group and out-group, which links to social identity theory. Jaspal and Cinnirella (2011) also commented that language is a significant cultural component which determines the crucial aspects of *in-group* inclusion and the criteria is the possession of '*knowledge of the heritage language*' (Ibid, p.14). Gudykunst and Schmidt (1987) analysed in detail the relationship between language and ethnic identity and commented that the principles from SIT such as *positive distinctiveness* or *individual mobility* can explain language as the representation of ethnic identity: if ethnic identity matters for individuals, they will strive for positive distinctiveness not only for *in-group* membership but also for the feature and distinctiveness of ethnic language; if ethnic identity is unsatisfied, ethnic language might be abandoned and replaced by learning the socially-dominated language in order to settle upon a satisfied ethnic identity. All these contribute to how language can represent

one's ethnic identity: by looking at one's attitudes and actions upon the ethnic language, their ethnic identity is shed light on.

3.3.3.2 Language for the majority and minority ethnics: an uneven power relationship

For the socially, economically and politically marginalised or subordinated ethnic minority groups and indigenous people, Nettle and Romaine (2000) estimated that they account for less than 4% of the world's population, but own more than 60% of the total number of world languages. Most of these minority languages are in danger and might disappear in the near future (Ibid). The reason for this is that the languages belonging to those from the minority and majority groups are sustained in different levels of recognition, utility and value. This reflects an uneven power relationship between different languages.

Languages, as a historical and natural phenomenon, do not create *subordinated* positions for themselves; the uneven power relationships are given by the people who use them (Carli et al., 2003). The hierarchy of languages is created based on a sense of social evaluation (*based on different degrees of instrumentality and associated capital of different languages*) and those linked with a higher degree of power are evaluated as more '*prestigious*' or '*dominant*'; other languages are deemed as '*stigmatised*' (Ibid, p.866). May (2012) explained that the social mainstream language is corroborated by its pervasive users or usage in social communications, such as those in the governmental, educational and public media sphere. The domination of certain language(s) seems to be closely tied to the discourse on power and instrumentality, such as which language is validated for the purpose of modernisation and globalisation (Ibid).

Even though minority languages are underpowered, underestimated or even downplayed, these languages are of crucial significance for the minority groups. Horowitz (1985, p.175) described this as a sense of '*apprehension about being*

dominated’; the linguistic minority groups exhibit anxiety that their languages may be dominated when threats are posed by other groups. That’s why the revitalisation of minority language is always imbued in such as civil rights movements, a spirit of rising nationalism, or the language rights movements across the world (Nieto, 2009). When they sense that their rights to use and maintain their native language are suppressed or ignored, they will take counter measures (Romaine, 2009). Bulag (2003) gave an example of the revitalisation of the Mongolian language in Inner Mongolia of China: the revival of the Mongolian language was launched by Mongolians (including assimilated or half-assimilated Mongolians) in different names, such as anti-Chinese settler colonization, Mongolian independency/autonomy, Mongolian equalization with Han, or as a response to blaming economic backwardness on Chinese language dominance. Ma (2006) also commented that language is often imagined as a sign of the fate of an ethnic group; losing the language might indicate the dying out of the culture and distinctive identity of such ethnic groups. On an individual level, an ethnic language represents the ‘*authenticity*’ of one’s ethnic identity; losing or abandoning one’s own ethnic language seems to be the ‘*betrayal*’ of one’s own ethnicity (Liebkind, 2010, p.24).

Linking to education for the minorities, the power struggle between majority and minority languages is reflected in the implementation of bilingual/multilingual education. In theory and practice, bilingual language is studied intensively and has developed varied modes, such as a contested relationship between the *transitional mode* and *maintenance mode* (García, 2008); to achieve different purposes for *monolingualism/social homogeneity* or *bilingualism/social multiculturalism* (Baker, 2001); and is conceptualised within different frameworks such as the *colonial features*, *immigrants* and *domestic modes* (Alidou, 2009). However, the myth of bilingualism indicates that bilingual education may not achieve its *bi-cultural aims*; the ability to perform bilingually does not indicate competence in cross-cultural understanding (Grosjean, 2010).

Linking to the context of China, bilingual education may not automatically create an integrated identity, such as an integrated ethnic/minority identity with national Chinese identity/Han identity.

More specifically, bilingual education is intensively introduced in China as a basic form to educate minority students in Minzu schools. Bilingual education is implemented in different ways for different minority Minzu groups and guided by specific language policies (Feng and Sunuodula, 2009). A more detailed analysis of language education and policy for different Minzu groups is shown in the cases such as Tibetan (Johnson and Chhetri, 2002), Korean (Gao, 2010), Mongolian (Ojijed, 2010), Xinjiang Uyghur and Zhuang (Feng and Sunuodula, 2009). All of these case studies reflect the dilemmas, contradictions, complexities and uneven power relationships resulting from the use of the Chinese language as the dominant language in educating minority students. These cases also reaffirm the argument that, by using different languages as the medium of education, minority students' ethnic identity construction can be inconsistent or separated by reconciling the powers from different languages and cultures. The next section will discuss how such reconciling serves the purpose of minority students' academic success. It helps this chapter to more intimately link social identity with education.

3.4 Ethnic identity and education: *being as a minority and success as a minority in the educational context?*

Minority students in China, by attending a different educational system, different types of schools by engaging a different language as the medium of learning, are differentiated as MKM or MKH. The category of MKM and MKH is contextualised broadly according to the distinction Ogbu (1992, 1995, 2003) made between two statuses of ethnicity: *the involuntary minorities* and *voluntary minorities*. Broadly speaking, *the involuntary minorities* are those who were enslaved, conquered or colonised by the dominant social group and thus

involuntarily integrated into their society; *the voluntary minorities voluntarily* brought themselves into the society with the belief that this would bring well-being and greater opportunities (Ogbu, 1995). Both MKM and MKH students choose different types of schooling on a *voluntary* basis. The MKH students, for instance, attend the Putong education system in the belief that learning the Chinese language and socially dominant values would bring them greater opportunities to integrate into Chinese society. MKH students, even though choosing the Minzu education voluntarily, might experience a certain element of involuntary integration into the Chinese/Han dominated society.

Specifically, Ogbu (1995, p.195) used the term '*cultural frame of reference*' (which refers to the accepted way to act within the culture, including '*the attitudes, beliefs, preferences, practices and symbols considered appropriate for members of the culture*') to explain the different academic achievements of students with different ethnic status. Linking to the category of MKM and MKH students, their academic performances might be explained by the reasons they choose in attending a different educational system and how they bring with them the attitudes, goals, beliefs and preferences of learning by attending different types of schools. As Ogbu (1995) noted, culture and language as a frame of reference for the voluntary minorities might be different, but non-oppositional to the dominant social culture and language. Therefore, they positively engage school practices by learning the dominant social culture and language, viewing this endeavour as an addition to their own culture and as a necessary tool for social mobility. This is very similar to Zhao (2010a) who commented that minority students choosing to attend the Putong schools seek to associate themselves with the Chinese language and obtain capital so as to gain economic benefit and social mobility.

In contrast, the involuntary minorities (*Ogbu's example is the African Americans*) see themselves as culturally oppositional to the social dominated group. Because

of the experiences of being discriminated and stigmatised, engaging the social dominated culture and language at schools would be a painful change, ridding them of their ethnic identity and, as Ogbu (1995, p.200) illustrated, '*replacing black behaviour and speech*'. They refuse to align themselves with the schools' expectations, both in an academic and behavioural context, because they fear being labelled as '*acting white*' which would alienate them from their peers, family and community (Ogbu, 1992, p.10). A similar example is found in Clothey (2005, p.403) who mentioned that the Uyghur MKH students at Minzu universities are alienated from MKM students because they are acting '*practically Han*'.

On the other side, how schools' practices, coupled with its curriculums, programs, and learning context, are designed and delivered to the minority students so that they can go beyond cultural boundaries to ascribe academic success to their own ethnicity matters to minority students' construction of ethnic identity (Ogbu and Simons, 1998). Banks (2009b) noted that there are two approaches in achieving '*cultural cooperation*' (also see in Paulston, 1992, p.16) between a minority and socially-dominated culture in a school context: '*content integration*' (logical infusion of minority cultural content into the curriculum of learning) and '*knowledge construction*' (critical thinking of what and how knowledge is constructed.). The goal for this is that minority students have the opportunity to obtain '*academic credentials, professional skills, and appropriate language to participate in the technology and economic domains*' without giving up their own ethnicity (Ogbu, 1995, p.191). There should be a balance between *being as a minority* and *success as a minority*, as Ogbu (1992, p.9) explained:

'they believe that the learning will help them succeed in school and later the labour market [...] they do not give up their own cultural beliefs and practices [...] and may even strive to play the classroom game by the rules and try to overcome all kinds of schooling difficulties because they believe so strongly that there will be a payoff later' (Ogbu, 1992, p.9)

Therefore, as Ogbu (1992) believed, to integrate the ethnic/minority cultural frame of reference into a school's practices would help minority students alter their perceptions and attitudes for learning because, when ethnic/minority status is no longer a barrier for academic success, they can associate their ethnic identity as an positive attribute in their learning experience. Under these conditions, ethnic identity and learning identity are not oppositional but find a way to be mutually supportive. This point helps this study explore the extent to which the Mongolian cultural frame of reference is incorporated into the Han/Chinese dominated culture and what sorts of institutional elements are reflected within the context of Minzu universities. More importantly, how Mongolian students perceive their Mongolian identity plays a role in how their learning experiences contribute to the construction of their learning identity. The next section discusses how social identity can be put into the context of HE and how learning identity as a university learner emerges.

3.5 Putting social identity in the context of Higher Education

Higher education, in a sense, is written according to the philosophy that it plays a role in *socialising* its users regardless of the fact that the function of socialisation is debateable in terms of either '*civilising*' or '*alienating*' those who participate (Rorty, 1999, p.114). Learning in HE makes students, as Jarvis (2009, p.25) commented, '*experience social situations, the perceived content of which is then [...] integrated into individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person*'. Jarvis's (2009) use of the term '*biography*' seems to shed light on how learning can break down a prescribed identity and leads to the '*changing person*' - or a constructive sense of identity - as the possible consequence.

Identity aligns with one's individuality but higher education amplifies a societal dimension to construct the identity of self through integrating the moral, cultural and political norms of the society into one's individuality (Rorty, 1999). From

this point, higher education helps to construct the *social identity* of self; the perception of self is gained through social interactions with peers and teachers and the social norms are informed by the educational context (Wortham, 2006). A study from Kaufman and Feldman (2004) illustrates how students are impacted by their peer group in identity construction in a HE context; what kind of person they are (particularly the appraisal of their learning attitudes) and who they are going to be on graduation is strongly influenced and confirmed by others.

By putting social identity in the context of HE, this section attempts to conceptualise social identity in a learning context. Wharton and Horrocks (2015, p.1) commented that the role of HE is to '*ensure students are equipped to be lifelong critical and reflective learners who possess the knowledge, attitudes and skills to ensure this*'. Learning is one of the primary demands on students studying in the university. Learning identity is relevant as one of the dimensions of social identity constructed by university students and will help to address SRQ2 and SR3 in this study. As Tinker, Buzwell and Leitch (2012, p.2) explained, social identity refers to how individuals identify themselves in relation to the social roles specific to '*particular contexts, situations, or roles*'. The aim of this study is to explore how Mongolian students perceive themselves as university learners. The learning identity of Mongolian students is located in their specific social role as a *university learner* in the specific context of Minzu universities.

Ethnic identity and learning identity as components of social identity are distinguishable from each other in certain ways. Ethnic identity can be inborn (*such as one's ethnicity and nationality*) but learning identity is certainly socially-acquired. By engaging learning experiences in HE, learning creates the *biography* of self which can veer from the predetermined path of class, gender or ethnicity (Bathmaker, 2010). When ethnic identity means *being* a member of an ethnic group, learning identity implies a gradual process in *becoming* a member

of a community. It is not possible to construct learning identity without a process of *becoming*, therefore as Falsafi and Coll (2011, p.19) explained, the nature of learning identity is like a '*mediator*' - mediating between a learning process towards an achieved identity as a member of the community. On the other hand, the Mongolian students in this study gain their learning experiences across different majors, different languages, and Mongolian-related cultural knowledge in Minzu universities. Their learning identity seems to interact with their Mongolian identity in certain ways. The connections between Mongolian identity and learning identity for Mongolian students will therefore be explored in this study.

3.5.1 Learning identity as a university learner

As Coll and Falsafi (2010, p.218) noted, '*learning how to learn requires learning to be a learner*'. Learning identity is linked to the particular role of a *learner*. Through the process of learning - '*attribution of meaning and sense making*' - a person can gradually construct the attitudes, styles and perceptions of self as a learner (Ibid, p.211). Merrill (2015, p.1868)'s study illustrated how a university student gradually develops self-identity as a university learner through '*commitment for knowledge and engagement with the institution [...] identifying herself as a student and developing a learner identity*'. Linking to this study, learning identity indicates that each individual (*Mongolian student*) is distinctive in terms of their attitudes, styles and perceptions of learning. Each individual owns their learning identity as a specific, ongoing and unfinished process (Falsafi and Coll, 2011). Learning identity is a process of '*becoming*', rather than a ready-made product, referring to '*who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity*' (Wenger, 1998, p.215).

The '*ongoing*' nature of learning identity requires an examination not only of current ongoing experience but also past experience and where it would lead to. Linking to this study, the educational backgrounds of Mongolian students as

either MKM or MKH are important in shedding light on their ongoing learning experiences - their choice of university, of the courses/majors (*Yukeban or undergraduate majors*) and language used as medium of learning are linked, which has implications for Mongolian students' perceptions of self as a university learner. In this way, learning identity is conceptualised by linking to ideas such as the transition of identity as an independent learner, as a discipline-based learner, and as a learner with a professional outlook.

3.5.1.1 Transition of identity as an independent learner

Mongolian students with MKM or MKH backgrounds display different cultural, linguistic and educational characteristics on moving to a Minzu university. This echoes Maftoon, Sarem and Hamidi (2012, p.1165) who concluded that *'every learner comes to class with a different linguistic background as well as a specific identity which is culturally bound'*. Students arrive at university carrying with them with a specific identity, but such identity is subject to a process of transition. This study focuses on the cohort of traditional-access and undergraduate students who share the features of a youth, minority ethnic background and conducting full-time study at the university. For these students, university provides them with a smooth a transition of identity from adolescence to a young adult (Adams, Ryan and Keating, 2000). Gallacher, Crossan, Field and Merrill (2002, p.501) use the term *'status passages'* to indicate the transition of social roles when crucial incidents, events and relationships act as *'turning points'* in changing a person's identity and self-perceptions. Studying at the university might be a significant turning point for university students in gaining a renewed perception of self, a transition of identity as a university learner as Merrill (2015, p.1869) commented that, it provides students *'a social space [...] a safe space for the working out and reconstructing of identities'*. If referencing Ericson's identity development principles, university is a *'moratorium'* during which time students are exposed to a wide range of possibilities and diversity leading to significant life commitments, such as career decisions, relationships, social and political ideas,

even a '*philosophy of life*' (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin, 2002, p.334). The challenges, the uncertainties, the diversity and the opportunities that university students experience in the university open to a way through which they shall look at themselves differently:

'All students will experience the transition into higher education in different ways, for almost all students it will entail significant life changes. Such changes and discontinuity can pose threats to their sense of who they are'
(Jackson, 2003, p.342)

The transition of learning identity as a university learner results from an adaptation to the new learning demands and learning styles in the university (Maunder et al., 2013). Their initial learning experiences might generate a certain level of identity anxiety because, as Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009, p.1112) argued, the positive learning experiences achieved previously do not offset the feelings of '*self-doubt*' encountered in handling the unfamiliarity associated with the new environment. Linking to students with a minority ethnic background, a study from Wilkins (2014) showed that minority racial students confront more obstacles to integration in their transition from high school to college; their previous identity strategy to achieve social integration is not applicable in the university context; the '*cool*' '*masculinity*'—or '*not standing out*'—identity strategy engaged by the minority racial students in high school resulted in a limited set of stereotypical behaviours: '*their peers did now allow them to be anything but the cool black friend*' (Ibid, p.186).

Learning at the university helps students become *independent learners*. According to DfEE (1997), independency is driven by the national initiative for an economic, socially and politically self-reliant nation. It is also responding to the rapid development of knowledge and skills, in which only the independent learner can update themselves, in order to handle changing practices (Ibid). However, Leathwood (2006) critically reviewed the meaning of *independent learner* and broke down the myth about independency: it is not about learning

alone; it is about enhancing the collaboration with interdependent entities, including support from experienced teachers, rethinking of the curriculum, lecturing and workshops for students.

More importantly, Leathwood (2006) noted that the meaning of *independent learner* needs to consider the cross-cultural application, particularly in the non-western paradigm. In China, the advocacy of an independent spirit applied in education was found at the beginning of the 20th century by introducing Dewey's educational philosophy. During this period school education was reformed from *the old* toward a focus on the social life, practicality and the mass population (Lu and Chi, 2007). Afterwards, the connotation of independency in education changed due to the larger social and political transformation. Marxist perspectives were disseminated to explain independency of common people through education and were closely linked to '*the needs of working people's liberation*' (Ibid, p.16). In the context of this study, Mongolian students becoming *independent learners* at a Minzu university raises the concerns of how they liberate their ideas and perceptions in order to perceive the meaning of learning so that they can shed light on themselves as an ethnic Mongolian and also as a Mongolian as one of the Chinese Minzu. More specifically, the concept of the Mongolian student as an *independent learner* prompts this study to reflect on the extent to which they are independent from authorities and from doctrine, becoming critical and reflective of their new knowledge; and in doing so, seeing themselves and the system differently. Whether they have the *belief* (Kolb and Kolb, 2009) in themselves that allows them to learn and are sufficiently confident and self-motivated to actively seek information in order to promote a reflective perception of self is an important factor in students' construction of learning identity.

3.5.1.2 The discipline-based learner

Social identity is specific to membership of a particular social group. Learning

identity is specific to the membership and affiliated to a context, or what Wenger (1998) called a *community of practice*. According to Wenger (1998), learning is a socially-constituted endeavour which requires a community of practice relying upon the engagement, joint construction and the members' shared range of activities. Wenger (1998)'s notion of identity construction depends on a process of learning which demands that the knowledge acquired is necessary and adequate to be able to practice in the specific community/context. Linking to the social identity concept, *community* implies a form of *in-group*. Learning identity, in particular, refers to how individuals possess the knowledge of the membership so as to practice in the community (*in-group*), therefore enabling them to become part of the community.

Mongolian students in this study engage different areas of disciplines and majors of study in the Minzu universities. Some engage Chinese language medium majors and others Mongolian language medium majors (*such as Mongolian language, Mongolian medicine studies*). Different areas of learning constitute a community of learning through which groups of Mongolian students share similar language, aims and goals. Moreover, the differences include not only the language used as the medium but also the knowledge, discipline-based structure of course design and a proposed career in accord with the different communities; No matter which major they study, they are preparing to become a member of the community, and learning in the university is a process which equips them with appropriate and adequate knowledge so as to practice in a specific and distinctive academic/professional community. By engaging different areas of discipline in the university, Mongolian students make the choice to associate themselves with the membership of different areas of knowledge of different communities. Such choice is not only the choice of learning (*what major to study*), but also a choice of identity (*which career they would like to engage*).

The positive distinctiveness principle of social identity indicates that, when the

in-group is favoured over the *out-group*, individuals have a positive sense of feeling and gain confidence by associating with the *in-group*. It also implies that the positive learning identity of university students derives from the fact that the community/discipline/major of study they choose is viewed more favourably than others. More specifically, university students are likely to be '*self-motivated to increase their engagement with environments commensurate with their learning identities in a positive reinforcing loop*' (Tinker, Buzwell and Leitch, 2012, p.2). The more one identifies with a community/discipline/major of study, the more one perceives oneself as a capable learner and attributes confidence and a positive sense of feeling to one's learning identity (Kolb and Kolb, 2009). Linking to this study, Mongolian students might positively associate their learning experiences with their Mongolian ethnic background: they are learning how to make a contribution to the Mongolian ethnic in terms of cultural and linguistic preservation and development. As Cross and Quinn (2002, p.60) said, positive learning identity shows the new potential of self as a game changer and innovator, '*destroying the myth about what they can't change about themselves*'. Studying Mongolian-related majors generates the possibility of empowering the Mongolian ethnic as a whole.

Social identity highlights the *value and emotional significance* attached to the membership of a social group; a sense of *value* is crucial for learning identity as well. In the context of HE, *value* perceived by students is linked to such concepts as the '*enduring usefulness of the degree*' (Kandiko and Mawer, 2013, p.22). However, apart from such a consumerist viewpoint, the *value-added effect* also links to how university students manage positive attitudes, engagement and the level of satisfaction of their university experiences (Zhao and Kuh, 2004). The value of learning is perceived as demonstrating how HE experience initiates the empowerment of self so as to '*develop our potential as rounded human beings*' (DfEE,1997, p.6). In other words, learning helps a person to effectively handle the uncertainty of the world; to construct a capable identity so as to deal with the

complexity of the world. Especially for the MKM Mongolian students - most of whom study Mongolian language medium majors - how they attribute the meaning and value of knowledge (*mostly related to Mongolian elements*) of learning is of great significance to their social identity construction as a whole - the perception of self as a Mongolian and how learning contributes to or complicates such a perception.

3.5.1.3 Learning identity links to a professional outlook of university students

Discipline-based learning forms a vision for university students regarding their future occupations and professions. The research from Lehmann (2014) gave an example of the importance of a professional/career outlook to a group of working-class students; their aim of joining the social sphere as '*professional middle-class knowledge workers*' not only motivates their learning at the university but is also the reason they attend HE (Ibid, p.11). A wider implication is that students are exposed to new and diversified ideas while at university; their professional outlook can be transformed. As Lehmann (2014, p.12) further noted, working class students might possess the professional outlook to become '*lawyers or doctors*' when they enter HE, but eventually this is revised in favour of the pursuit of relevant work anchored in the field of academia; this is because university is where they feel being '*protected*' for a favoured transformation of self - combining the needs of both learning and professional pursuit.

Wharton and Horrocks (2015) noted that students' learning motivation at university is strongly influenced by their expectations of employment; however, a gap may exist between what students perceived and what the university has delivered. Students favour practical sessions in the design of models, curriculum and course programs through which they feel that they can get practical help for their future career (Ibid). Donnison and Marshman (2013) build a link between the professional outlook of learning identity and the curriculum design strategy;

the steps are *'firstly consider the type of learner or future professional you are trying to enable and then select the curriculum design approach that is going to facilitate that goal'* (Ibid, p.64). As Donnison and Marshman (2013) compared, there are two approaches to the design of the curriculum model: the outcome-driven approach and the process-driven approach; outcome-driven curriculums are driven by a perception of what it *'should be like'* in a professional field, but this is less useful in achieving a flexible, innovative and self-reflective sense of identity compared to the process-driven approach (Ibid, p.63). Linking to this study, a look at the Mongolian student's perceptions of the different types of curriculum and design of courses offered in the Minzu universities are necessary to reveal their perceptions of learning identity construction. It is also helpful to look at how Mongolian students' perceptions of proposed professional identity after graduation might link, either consistently or inconsistently, to their perceptions of learning identity constructed at the university.

3.5.2 Negotiated social identity in the institutional context of university

As Kasworm (2010, p.157) commented, identity construction engages *'individual's biography, purposeful investment and current life roles, but it also is co-constructed in relation to institutional and its subcultural ethos and actions'*. Institutional context is an important factor in an individual's identity construction, as Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p.34) noted that *'identities, created and recreated in interactions between people in a given context, and lived experiences on self'*. Identity is not merely an internalised process but is also *'externalised'* to encompass various contextual factors (Ibid, p.37). In a higher education context, different institutions accommodate and configure the academic practices and activities within their own boundary and imprint with their own characteristics (Mathieson, 2012). This applies particularly to Minzu universities, which are significantly different from other Putong universities in terms of their mission, goals, characteristics, systems, ethos and values. It is very

revealing to see the extent to which the Mongolian student's social identity construction is negotiated in an institutional context.

The research from Reay, Davies, David and Ball (2001) and Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) presented a group of students from different racial/ethnic minority backgrounds, their choices of HE and choices of courses, showing how the learning identity of students is formed in different institutional contexts: there is an interplay between students and the institutions which they choose and attend, and consequently the identity of both (*university and students*) are mutually shaped. According to Reay, Davies, David and Ball (2001), students from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds go to different universities; students with minority backgrounds are over-represented in the *new* universities and '*class tendencies are compounded by race*' (Ibid, p.871). In Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009), four different case universities exhibit different features which make sense of the meaning of academic learner when applied to students studying differently; learning identity indicates a sense of a strong, independent and responsible learner at a Southern university (*more prestigious*) of whom learning constitutes the majority of their time and effort; it can also be a minor part of one's overall social identity at the Northern university (*less prestigious*) and being committed or enthusiastic to learning can be a source of shame in front of one's peers. Linking to this study, minority students and Minzu universities might mutually assist and shape the status and prestige of each other: they are recognised as interdependent, and each takes on the particular identity of the other, such as the identity of students from Minzu university and the minority students' constituted university.

University staff and faculty members represent part of the institutional context. Sadao (2003), Levin et al. (2013) and Lehmann (2014) mentioned the role model effect on students from disadvantaged backgrounds (*racial minority and working-class*). The faculties who share similar social and ethnic backgrounds

are the '*insider to the system who can provide direction and assurance*' and this is helpful in students' learning and engagement in the university community (Sadao, 2003, p.415). The faculties and staff who share a similar ethnic background as a Mongolian might generate a role model effect for Mongolian students as well.

Habitus is frequently used to inquire into the relationship between the dominated and dominating power operating in an educational context and how students might be affected by such a relationship (Reay, 1995a, 1995b; Merrill, 2015). In Reay (1995b), habitus is used to raise questions about students' adaptation to the context of schooling: to what extent do students feel themselves adapting in this context? Linking to this study, habitus can be linked with the social identity work of Mongolian students. When Mongolian students move to Minzu universities, their *old* habitus might not be adaptive in the *new* world; this requires work from an unconscious level in the form of an explicit sense of '*self-questioning*' (Reay, 2004, p.437). It generates the identity work because it opens up the possibility of '*new facets of self*' - the new facets of identity (Ibid). Lehmann (2014, p.11)'s study revealed the transformation achieved by of a group of working-class students by studying in HE: '*they not only spoke about gaining new knowledge, but also about growing personally, changing their outlook on life [...] and developing new dispositions and tastes about a range of issues, from food to politics and their future careers*'. Even though these transformations indicate how habitus is renewed, it also reveals the replacing of a repertoire of embodied elements which can significantly represent one's social identity. The change of identity is also a change of choices, life-styles and mind-set.

By looking at the context of the Minzu university through its history, missions, goals, pedagogical and curriculum, each Minzu university has its own *habitus* as well (Reay, David and Ball, 2001). Such habitus is linked to the wider socio-economic and cultural context in China, through which Minzu universities

are legitimated by a particular set of characteristics, status, culture and value. What Mongolian students bring with them from their previous personal, familial and educational backgrounds makes them '*behave in a certain way in certain circumstances*' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.77). Whether they are the MKM or MKH, sinicized or half-sinicized Mongolian students, they exhibit the collective sense of disposition of that particular group. In particular, a Minzu university maintaining a Minzu-order (*Han is prioritised and minorities are exotic and subsidiary*) as part of its habitus makes it possible to explore whether Mongolian students (*or a group/groups of Mongolian students*) own the '*correct*' habitus (Thomas, 2002, p.433), in line with the institutional habitus of Minzu universities. It opens the way to look at the ways in which different groups of Mongolian students feel themselves adaptive to Minzu universities, showing a negotiation of identity construction between students within that context.

3.5.3 Learning in higher education: contexts for learners from ethnic minority groups

Even though cultural and ethnic diversity becomes a shared phenomenon across different countries, it might be interpreted differently under different contexts. Unlike the designated ethnicity (*Minzu*) in China's context, the ethnic plurality in the U.S.A or U.K largely derives from complex historical facets, such as European explorers' settlement in the distant lands; the diversity of Indigenous people or nationalities originating from the land; the trade of slave from Africa; or large amounts of immigrants and refugees around the world settling in these nations to pursue a new life (Banks, 2009b). Social identity, in this sense, is understood differently in conjunction with social, cultural, political and national distinctiveness (Feitosa, Salas and Salazar, 2012).

This section gives an overview of minority students in higher education from different contexts. The contexts of the U.S.A and U.K. are presented due to the fact that these two countries differ from China in terms of historical agendas and

ethnic compositions. The information about minority students' access into higher education, statistical support, policy agendas, institutional climates and wider social context are considered, which help form a picture of what happened in other countries, so achieving a broad and comparative understanding of minority students in Chinese universities.

3.5.3.1 Minority students in HE in the context of the U.S.A.

The United States of America is historically framed through centuries of struggle for freedom, fairness and equality for the minorities (*such as Native Americans fighting against virtual extermination and the oppressed black slaves striving for freedom*), which shapes the ethnic, racial and cultural diversity in American society (Glazer and Moynihan, 1996). The ideal of '*pluralism*', argued by Nieto (2009, p.79) is '*the need for them to live together with common ideas and in the best interests of the public good*'. This ideal is practiced in the educational arena in order to '*improve educational outcomes for students marginalized by society because of social and cultural differences*' (Ibid, p.79). Specifically, the quest for equality in education has its roots as far back as the late 19th century in the endeavours of the African American people, and revealed in the works of many African American scholars, such as W.E.B. Du Bois. Written in Du Bois's 1897 <Striving of the Negro People>, African American people exhibited a '*twoness*' sense of self warring in one body—on one side, the perception of self as an American let them seek to believe that everyone is born equal; on the other side, reality pulls them back to their daily experiences where racism practiced on black people is frequently seen in society (Bruce, 1992).

Regarding higher education, certain types of institutions - Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) - were established with the intention to serve the African American communities. They performed multifaceted functions: '*providing not only education, but also social, political, and religious leadership for the African American community*' (Allen and Jewell, 2002, p.242). As Allen

and Jewell (2002, p.242) summarised, three primary goals were addressed in HBCUs during their establishment: '*(a) the education of Black youth, (b) the training of teachers, and (c) the continuation of the 'missionary tradition' by educated Blacks*'. However, the continuation of HBCUs did not fully meet the African American people's demands for higher education. Due to the disruptive and violent resistance in the South, segregation in higher education was rife. As Van Patten (2000) pointed out, African American students were predominately involved in the HBCUs and were not able to attend the majority institutions because of their vulnerable status in the secondary level of education. In contrast, the majority institutions were dominated by the mainstream academic life, which was made up by those from the white, male upper-class (Jewell, 2000). HBCUs became increasingly isolated.

In 1954, the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme court decision was issued to cease racial segregation in higher education, and '*the principle of 'separate but equal' was unconstitutional*' (Roebuck and Murty, 1993, p.667). According to Roebuck and Murty (1993), a significant event occurred in 1965 when the Higher Education Act was passed. This greatly enhanced the equal rights of African American and socially-disadvantaged people to gain the opportunity to pursue higher education. The legislation includes a variety of political and financial aids, which increased minority students' enrolment into colleges and universities, including an expansion in the enrolment of African American students in predominately white colleges and universities. Karabel (2005) also showed that three top universities (Harvard, Yale and Princeton) were profoundly impacted through the civil rights movements. Minority students' intake was greatly increased; they were granted places in enrolment committees and took part in policy decisions, which fulfilled the tasks of these prestigious universities in maintaining the legitimacy of a fair system in American society (Ibid). Currently, HBCUs still remain in the American educational system. As defined by the Higher Education Act 1965 (US DoE, n.d.):

'any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation'

As stated in White House Initiatives on HBCUs (US DoE, n.d.), the goal of the development of HBCUs is to de-emphasise the racial/ethnic composition of students and faculties in favour of increasing its intellectual and scientific purposes for research, innovation and serving the country. However, as Roebuck and Murty (1993) argued, HBCUs struggled financially, particularly those without state support. Meanwhile, the retention of a dual system in higher education (*HBCUs versus predominately White institutions*) was potentially maintaining racial segregation and educational inequality in American society; it was merely being transformed in a more implicit way (Ibid).

The most notable policy support for the minorities' admission into higher education in America is the affirmative action programme. According to Bowen and Bok (1998), the affirmative action programme was initiated in the 1960s and aimed to provide equal opportunity in education and employment for socially disadvantaged groups. In terms of higher education, affirmative action is applied as the preferential treatment of enrolment, particularly for African and Hispanic students. The contribution of the affirmative action program, as Allen et al., (2002, p.442) articulated, is that *'affirmative action...changed the 'face' of this nation by tearing down the barriers that systematically blocked the access and prevented the full participation of Blacks, people of colour, and women to the U.S. opportunity structure'*. The rate of enrolment of students from minority backgrounds steadily increased and gained a wide range of support from varying social institutions (Bowen and Bok, 1998; also see in American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). They supported affirmative action for the following

reasons: the affirmative action programme is more than a preferential enrolment policy -it advocates a culturally and ethnically diverse atmosphere in the university. People from disadvantaged social backgrounds benefit from affirmative action in acquiring education, better employment, success and higher socio-economic status, which ultimately promotes the equality and inclusiveness of American society and combats the racial, social and economic aspects of oppression.

However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, racial tension between minority and white students resurfaced. It was linked to an anti-affirmative action movement in this period, predominately expressed by the white students in their resentment and hostility about affirmative action (Lewis, Chesler and Forman, 2000). The states of Texas and California suspended the application of affirmative action in university admissions in 1996 and 1998. The result was a huge decline in minority student admissions to colleges and universities in these two states. A drop of nearly 10% in applications and 20% in admissions to the University of Texas after 1996 (Dickson, 2006), and a fall from 50% to 23% in admissions of African and Hispanic students to UC Berkeley in California (Card and Krueger, 2005). In a wider context, the disparity in enrolment between white and ethnic minority students still remains, regardless of the efforts of the affirmative action programme. Over the past 20 years, the number of African and Hispanic students enrolling on 2 or 4-year higher education courses has remained lower than their white counterparts, even at their respective peaks (65% African American students in contrast to 70% White students in 2010, and 66% Hispanic students in contrast to 67% White students in 2013) (National Center on Education Statistics, 2017). Meanwhile, the community colleges play a crucial role in enrolling minority students. According to the NCES Enrolment survey in 2002 (Bailey, Jenkins and Leinbach, 2005, p.13-14), over half of all Hispanic undergraduate students were enrolled in community college, leaving only 8% of Hispanic students represented in the four-year public institutions. The same applies to African students, who were over-represented in the community

colleges and under-represented in the four-year public institutions.

Therefore, more debate revolves around the practices and results of affirmative action. For example, Thomas (1990, p.112) argued that affirmative action is an *'artificial, transitional intervention'*. Sacks and Thiel (1996) contended that affirmative action was skewed in favour of minorities from the middle and upper classes, and hurt the interests of poor white students. Lewis, Chesler and Forman (2000) showed that affirmative action accentuates racial discrimination on campus. Bacchi (2004) proposed that affirmative action is constructed upon a policy of preferential treatment toward race which potentially abuses its legitimacy and impact: race becomes a factor in promoting segregation and differentiation instead of a genuinely equal and fair system. A rethinking of the use of term affirmative action is needed in order to challenge the dominant framework: affirmative action should be used to aid the *socially-disadvantaged*, rather than as the solution to the problem of race relations (Ibid).

Moving into HE is also an indication of identity transition, but this has different meanings for the groups of white and minority black students, particularly those studying in the predominantly white universities. The campus experiences of students of colour still demonstrated a level of inequality, discrimination, differential treatment, even racial harassment and offensiveness, in the predominantly white institutions. According to Wilkins (2014, p.185), minority black students graduating into a predominantly white college would face more challenges, weakened academic support, stereotypical images during social interactions, and, compared to their white counterparts, a less smooth path to *'perform adult-like roles consistent with school success'*. McClelland and Auster (1990, p.613) argued that *'stereotyping'*, *'lack of support by faculty and staff'* and *'segregated social life'* are experienced by African students, leading to a sense of *'sociocultural alienation'* on campus. Comparing the experience of African American students in the HBCUs and predominately white institutions, Allen

(1992) reported that the African students perform at a lower level academically, have an inferior campus experience, and experience a sense of discrimination and a lack of institutional involvement in the predominantly white institutions. Lewis, Chesler and Forman (2000, p.77-79) identified two types of stereotyping: *'academic stereotyping'* and *"behavioural stereotyping"*: minority students are targeted by white counterparts as academically incompetent, and their intergroup behaviours are constrained by certain culturally based explanations, using such stereotypical contexts as *'poverty'* and *'urban life'*. McNairy (1996, p.8) identified several institutional factors contributing to the negative campus experience, such as *'institutions' traditions of not welcoming students of colour because of an indifferent and periodically, hostile atmosphere'* and *'few or no social activities where students of colour feel welcome'*.

Ethnic minority students have also taken defensive measures to help increase their self-esteem and counter the negative experiences on campus. For example, Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso (2000, p.70) noted that the African students are creating *'academic and social counter-spaces'* with the function to *'serve as sites where negative notions of people of colour can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained'*. This illustrates how minority students can create a small clique, based on a sense of forming an in-group, within the institutional context. This generates the social identity work of ethnic minority students.

3.5.3.2 Minority students in HE in the context of the U.K.

In contrast to the U.S.A, the situation of minority groups in the UK was very slow in being addressed. After the Second World War, a wave of immigration from the former colonial lands swelled the labour market of the White Anglo-Saxon majority society (Tomlinson, 2009). The infusion of a culturally and ethnically diverse population generates debate surrounding *multiculturalism*, but the term can be interpreted differently (Race, 2015). According to Tomlinson

(2009): on one side, there is a conservative view on multiculturalism from certain governmental and political quarters, such as the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality in 2007, who saw multiculturalism as a factor in accentuating cultural differences, leading to separateness rather than a cohesive and united British society; on the other hand, it is also imperative that Britain is seen as a society with ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, and that a discourse on *diversity*, *equality* and *inclusiveness* is encouraged in policy documents and mission statement across various institutions and social organizations, including higher education.

At policy level, the Swann Report (1985), or '*Education for All*', has significantly addressed the need for education to serve ethnic diversity (Swann, B. M. S., 1985). As Race (2015, p.25) evaluated, the Swann Report (1985) significantly contributed to shifting the attention of multicultural education from the people (such as '*migrants, minority children and parents*') to the '*education system*', therefore addressing the importance of a culturally-diverse framework for education as well as for the whole society. In the area of HE, two reports significantly increased opportunities for students with disadvantaged backgrounds to enter university: the *Anderson report* initiated the financial aid for students earning a fulltime place at the university; the *Robbins Report* stated the principles for the expansion of universities and recommended that they should provide places for all those who are qualified to benefit from higher education (Blackburn and Jarman, 1993). As Reay, Davies, David and Ball (2001, p.856) indicated, student entry into HE rose by approximately 150% by the end of the 1980s, including a rise in the numbers of ethnic minority students. However, race relations in a wider social context throughout the 1980s were not peaceful, and several violent conflicts and race riots were recorded in major cities (see examples in Tomlinson, 2009, p.123).

In the 1990s, the first Gulf War brought even more immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers to Britain, with the 1991 census being the first to include a question on '*ethnic origin*', asking people for a subjective identification of their native country and ethnic affiliation. This served to provide the initial records with the '*ethnic origins*' of applicants and entrants into higher education (Osler, 1999). In 1991, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) published data showing that ethnic minority young people (aged 16-24) had a higher proportion staying in full-time education than the white majority population (Skellington and Morris, 1996, p.187). Modood (1993, p.169) criticised the statistics from the LFS in 1991, claiming they drew '*overly optimistic conclusions*', but still pointed out that some ethnic minority students (*e.g. UK Chinese, Indian and African students*) were far from being '*under-represented*' in both Universities and Polytechnics/colleges during the pre-1992 period. According to Modood (1993)'s calculation, taking the ethnic minorities (*mainly Asian and Afro-Caribbean*) as a whole, they were better represented in the Universities in comparison to population size (42%) and even better in terms of applications to Polytechnics and Public Sector Colleges (96%), far outweighing the representation of white students in relation to their overall population. After 1992, the distinction within binary sectors was abolished due to the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. However, it was widely accepted that Polytechnics and Public Sector Colleges made a contribution in widening participation for diverse kinds of students, including the students from ethnic minority backgrounds (Tight, 2014).

The new Labour government was elected in 1997 and initiated a turning point in the presentation of *race* and *ethnicity* in education: the citizenship status of minorities was valued and a modern British identity encouraged in order to respect cultural diversity (Tomlinson, 2009). Significantly, consistent with the principles of widening participation initiated by the Labour government, there emerged a need to promote students' participation into higher education through multiple access, including those from non-traditional routes (*e.g. those not from*

'A-level' access) and against this background there was a rise in the numbers of ethnic minority students entering higher education institutions with vocational qualifications (Richardson, 2008). For example, in 2000, a higher proportion of ethnic minority groups entered HEIs with General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications compared to White students (22% *as opposed to 13%*); meanwhile they were less represented proportionately in 'A' Level entry (57%) in comparison to white students (68%) (Bhattacharyya, Ison and Blair, 2003, p.28). More recently, the numbers of ethnic minorities as full-time first degree students has steadily increased, constituting 16.3% in 2001/02 and rising to 23.6% in 2012/13 (HESA, 2003; 2014). The initial participation rate for English domiciled first-time entrants to HE courses by ethnic groups reached 56% in 2001/02, surpassing the goal of 50% participation in higher education set by the Labour government (Connor et al., 2004, p.43).

However, a higher level of representation was not reflected in the quality of educational attainment by ethnic minorities in higher education. As discussed above, a higher proportion of ethnic minority students entered higher education through non-traditional pathways, resulting in variations in distribution into different levels of institutions and different classes of degree awarded. One significant example of this is illustrated in the way that ethnic minority students and white students are structurally sorted into *old* and *new* sectors of HEIs. According to Richardson (2008, p.43), nearly 62% of African students and 49% of Asian students were allocated to the *new* universities during 2004-2005, and they were even less successful in being awarded good degrees in these universities (e.g. 33% of African students versus 59% white students obtained good degrees). *New* universities, therefore, as Shiner and Modood (2002, p.227) argued, have a greater commitment to widening the '*ethnic basis of participation in higher education*'. This is even worse when looking at the admission of ethnic minorities to *Oxbridge*. A recent report showed that ethnic minority students

constitute 11.1% of total students at Oxford and 10.5% at Cambridge (Race for Opportunity, 2010).

When looking at how ethnicity can become a factor impacting on minority students' university experiences, a study by McManus et al. (1995, p.496) found that a '*European surname*' increased an applicant's chance of success, '*implying direct discrimination rather than disadvantage secondary to other possible differences between white and non-white applicants*'. Shiner and Modood (2002) discussed the links between education, ethnicity and social stratification. Despite a great increase in intake numbers from within ethnic minority communities, they are largely filtered into *new* universities, whereupon they are locked out of opportunities to be recruited by top companies, and other "*high-status, high-paying, City firms*" (Ibid, p.228). Phillips, Law and Turney (2005) also argued that racism is still identified as a major factor affecting minority students' university engagement and positive experiences: racism leads to doubts about the academic competency of minority students, their interactions with other students, and faculties' attitudes toward racial equality programs. Moreover, if ethnicity as a minority is contextualised by a working-class background, the effect is compounded (Reay, Davies, David and Ball, 2001). In another sense, the inequality generated and experienced between students from different social classes can also shed light on those from the ethnic minority and white majority cohorts

3.5.4 Studies on minority university students in Chinese literature

There are numerous studies focusing on minority students' experiences in HE in Chinese literature, and these studies focus predominantly on either the *access* (such as preferential treatment and equal access) or *persistence* (such as university experiences, interactions and adaptation to the life at the university) of minority students in HE. Some of these studies explore aspects of the ethnic identity/national identity of minority university students (Teng and Zhang, 1997),

but very few of them focus on their social identity.

Regarding *access*, there are a number of studies analysing the pros and cons of the preferential policies aiding Chinese minority students' access into HE. Due to the fact that ethnic minorities are seen as suffering from the handicap of social, economic and educational backwardness, it is often cited in a series of policies to help minority students get access into higher education with lower entrance requirements (Teng and Ma, 2005). Wang (2003) and Jin and Wang (2007) examined the historical evolution of preferential policies aiding ethnic minorities' access to higher education since the 1950s. Moreover, several studies probe the specified programmes implementing these preferential policies, such as inland high-school programs (*Neigaoban*) (Yan, 2005), preparatory classes of Yukeban (Zhang and Ouyang, 2008), the added bonus on Gaokao scores (*Gaokao jiafen*) (Yang, 2010), and the programme of training high-calibre personnel for ethnic minorities (*Shaoshu minzu gaocengci gudan rencai jihua*) (Zhu and Xiang, 2013).

As with the USA's affirmative action policy, these preferential policies have divided opinion in Chinese studies: Yang (2010) contended that the preferential policy is consistent with the principles of the Constitution of the P.R.C. Despite this, the preferential policy appears, on the surface, to be an assertion of uneven treatment in favour of the minorities; this takes into account the reality of Chinese society, in which a social and economic divide exists between the minorities and the Han communities. Ao (2010) contended that preferential treatments contributed to an increase in minority student enrolment at both undergraduate and postgraduate level; this aligns with the aim of cultivating high-level minority talent. On the other hand, the cons of the preferential policies focus on its skewed implementations. For example, Zhang and Ouyang (2008) indicated that Yukeban in some regions charge high tuition fees, a policy which favours minority students from more affluent families. This highlights the complex nature of the composition of minority students; they are not a

homogenous entity; rather they are differentiated by other factors such as social class. Moreover, after 1997 when Chinese higher education implemented a charging system in response to market forces, the economic burden impacted on minority students from less-developed and less-affluent backgrounds; they have a greater burden to bear when entering higher education (Zhou and Zhou, 2013).

Regarding *persistence*, it is referenced in the Chinese studies by using the example of ‘cultural adaptation’ (*Wenhua shiying*) to study minority students’ university experiences. This addresses the themes of both adaptation and adjustment to the new university environment in which they confront unfamiliarity regarding culture, language, customs, living conditions and so forth (Wang, 2011). Some studies concentrate on the degrees of adaptation, adjustment strategies and the well-being of minority students. For example, Li and Qian (2010) noted that different degrees of cultural adaptation greatly impact upon the satisfaction of campus life of minority students, particularly with regard to social interactions and academic achievements. There are studies of minority students in the Putong university which focus on depression and anxiety (Zhou, Mao, Yang and Wang, 2007), unsatisfactory academic achievements (Sun and Tan, 2011), problems in dealing with interpersonal relationships (Huang and Yu, 2009) and other psychological barriers faced by minority students (see in Lv, Wang and Fu, 2010).

A number of studies also focus on the ideological education of minority students because, as Wang (2008, p.495) noted, ‘*minority students in the colleges are precious human resources, their ideological and political education is related not only to the training of a future workforce, but also the country’s long term stability [...] the significance is very far-reaching*’. The focus is the importance of, and priority in, implementing the ideological and political education of minority students (Bai and Wang, 2013); ideological and political education for specific minority students, such as Uighur students (Niyaz, 2013) and Tibetan students (Pang and Long, 2012); the content of ideological and political

education (see Deng, 2005), linking minority students' characteristics with ideological education's methods and strategies (Xue, 2014), implementing ideological education in both Minzu universities (Yu and Li, 2003) and Putong universities (Li, Wang and Hu, 2014).

3.6 Including social identity in this study: a proposed conceptual framework

This chapter aims to outline the conceptual components relating to social identity, minority students and higher education which are relevant in addressing the research questions of this study. An attempt is made in this section to outline a proposed conceptual framework which supports this study by linking together different theoretical components raised in this chapter. The explanation of this framework involves the social identity construction of minority students against the backdrop of university as a *context*. The consideration of ethnicity and learning as two dimensions of minority students' social identity construction is included.

To summarise, this chapter begins with a link to China's multi-Minzu context. The changing social and economic landscape in China generates various demands on the identities of Chinese minorities. The identity of Chinese minorities becomes increasingly complex and multi-layered and shaped by the larger context of political and economic forces. Social identity is a useful lens with which to study the multiplicity and complexity of Chinese minorities' identity. Through adopting social identity, this chapter then identifies the conceptual components which are keys to social identity and this study. These concepts include a theoretical line of identity studies moving away from the 'certain', 'single', 'fixed' core of a person to a concept of identity which is increasingly 'uncertain', 'multiple' and 'fluid' in modern society. Tajfel's tradition of social identity theory explores '*the complexity of human behaviours*'. Ethnic identity as a part of social identity and its relationship to culture, ethnicity and language constitutes a focus of discussion in this section as well. Ethnic

identity construction and the uneven power relationship played out between the minority versus majority culture and language. Social identity as the central concept of this study is put in a HE context; the learning identity of university students in relation to their social role as a *university learner* is conceptualised. How the institutional context of the university matters for the social identity construction of students is discussed, and *habitus* is used to facilitate this point. Minority students in higher education in the context of the U.S.A and U.K. are also discussed, giving an overview of what happened in other countries in order to help the understanding of minority students in Chinese universities with comparable and critical referents. All these conceptual components and their relationships to each other are shown in Figure 3.3 on the following page.

Figure 3.3 will be explained in more detail linking to this study. Mongolian students (*Mongolian students*) lie in the centre of the figure, which indicates that the aim of this study is on Mongolian students' perceptions of self at different levels (*as a Mongolian ethnic, a MKM/MKH, and a university learner*). Social identity is a useful tool with which to probe the complexities of people's perceptions of self at various levels, since it is revealing not only on an individual level but also on a group and social level. One reason for this is because social identity is constituted by the identity work of individuals, whose personalities, attitudes, preferences, values and behaviours can all be packed to mark the distinctiveness of one person against another. It also prioritises the *social* dimension on identity work, that which shows how a person is identified by others, by their social connections, their social positions and roles attributed in a system constituted by diverse factors and needs. Social identity is complex, multi-layered, fluid and transformative; it has never been a fixed notion. Social identity cannot be '*wholly fixed. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self*' (Giddens, 1991, p.54). Therefore, social identity can be a lens to explore an individual's perceptions of self in the context of their relationship to others.

From the starting point of Mongolian students' perceptions of self, each case Minzu university is taken as a **context** and situated in the top section of Figure 3.3. This defines the range of this study: Mongolian students studying at Minzu universities. Certain institutional elements are identified, such as the history of the university, institutional characteristics, mission statement, and pedagogical/discipline structure; these elements reflect a particular cultural context, or *institutional habitus*, of each case Minzu university and link to China's multi-Minzu context; whether there is a Minzu-order (*Han is prioritised and minorities are exotic and subsidiary*) being maintained in the context of the Minzu university and whether such institutional habitus would impact on the learning and social experiences of Mongolian students studying within.

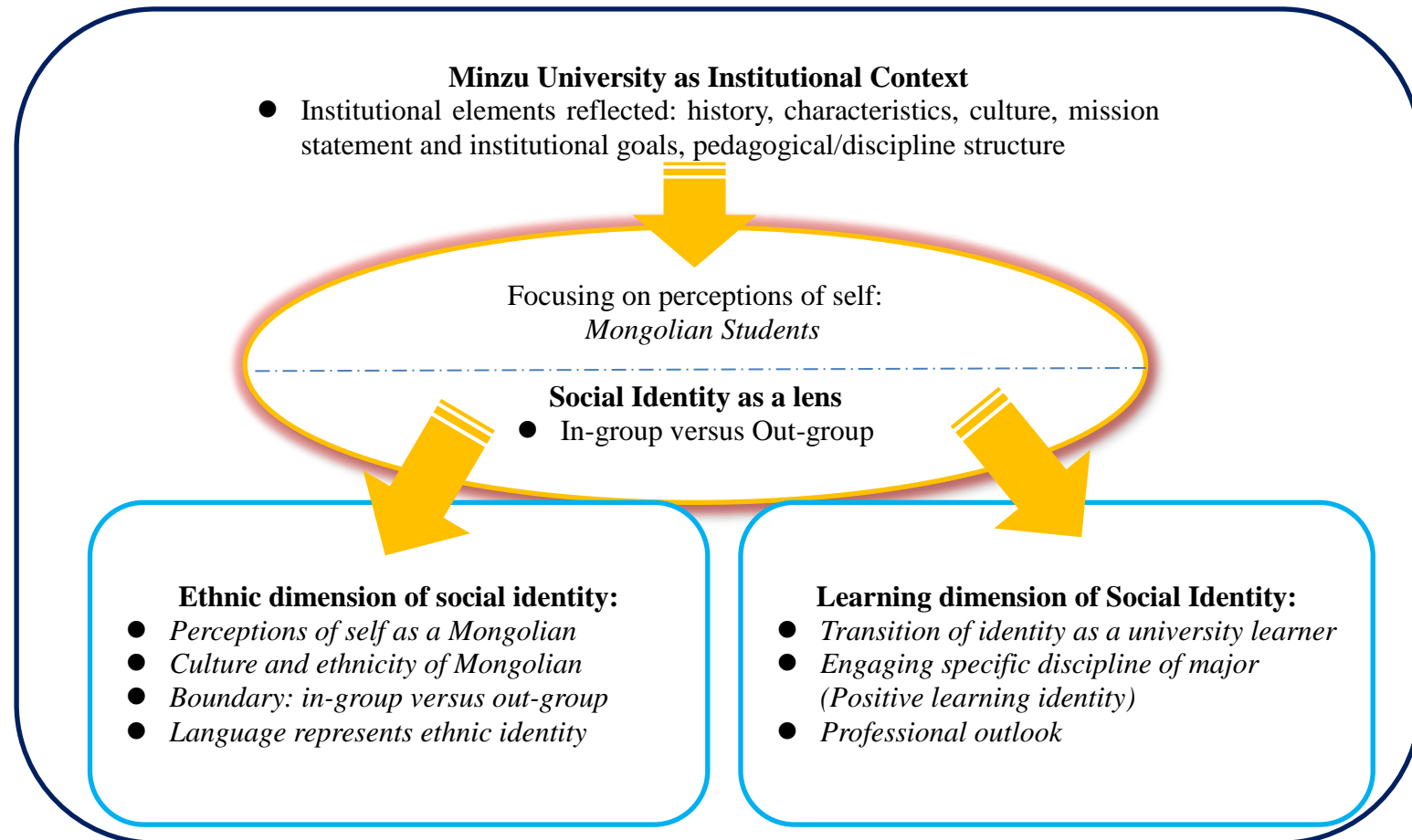
In the bottom part of the figure, two dimensions of social identity are focused on. **Ethnic identity**, shown at the bottom left, is useful in exploring Mongolian students' perceptions of self as a Mongolian ethnic. It includes the sample lists such as the Mongolian student's perceptions of Mongolian as a distinctive **ethnic** group owning a particular **culture** and how they associate themselves with the ethnic and cultural distinctiveness of Mongolian. Mongolian identity construction can be a means of exploring Mongolian students' perspectives of Mongolian in contrast to Han as the majority in society. Moreover, ethnic identity as an aspect of one's social identity is significant when the *in-group* and *out-group* are categorised; what is the *in-group* of Mongolian students?; how is such an *in-group* constituted and structured and who are validated within the *in-group*?; these questions shed light upon Mongolian students' perceptions of ethnic identity construction. Language, as an indicator of *in-group* membership and the representation of one's ethnic identity, also constitutes part of the exploration.

Learning identity, situated at the bottom right of Figure 3.3, is useful in exploring Mongolian students' perceptions of self as a university learner studying in Minzu universities. Learning identity indicates an ongoing and unfinished state, therefore Mongolian students' learning identity construction links to their past, present and future. Each Mongolian student brings with them a particular learning identity when entering a Minzu university, which can be either an MKM, MKH or Inland-high school identity. Their change of identity as a Minzu university learner incorporates different ways and approaches, such as through Yukeban (*one-year preparatory class*), Hanshou (*Chinese language medium major*) or Mengshou (*Mongolian language medium major*). The design of these various courses and majors at Minzu universities reflect different emphasis and goals in terms of language, learning context, content and structure of knowledge. Mongolian students engaging a **specific discipline of major** are offered a specific set curriculum. Their perceptions of different curriculum, learning through different languages, indicates the extent to which they develop a **positive learning identity**: whether they have the *belief* in self that they have the ability to learn and are confident, self-motivated, and actively seeking information in pursuit of their learning goals. As final year Mongolian students have been selected for this study, Mongolian students' job-seeking experiences are explored in order to look at their professional prospects after graduation. This is helpful in establishing whether the positive learning identity constructed at the Minzu universities is consistent with, or alien to, a wider employment market. A link with Mongolian students' professional options ends the continuity of learning identity constructed at Minzu universities.

Mongolian students' perceptions of their social identity construction also link to the extent to which they feel themselves adapting to the context of the Minzu university: whether the Minzu university system is biased in favor of a certain group of students (*Han versus Mongolian*), or a certain group of Mongolian students (*MKM versus MKH*). This makes it possible to look at the particular role

of Minzu universities in educating minority students at the highest level of the Minzu education system (*as part of the differentiated educational system*). This conceptual framework helps this study explore Mongolian students' perceptions of self as negotiated between Mongolian versus Han and Chinese-dominated language and culture versus Mongolian language and culture. It also gives a view on whether Minzu universities are reproducing the Minzu-order in China (*taking Han as the majority and essential and minorities as the exotic and subsidiary*) or trying to create a new order.

Figure 3.3 A proposed conceptual framework



Chapter 4 Research Design

The research design responds to a rationale through which the researcher locates themselves in the empirical world and connects them to a particular set of data being generated, analysed and interpreted (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This chapter explains how this study employs the process of inquiry, connecting me as a researcher to specific people and sites - Mongolian students studying in Minzu universities. In this chapter, the research design is explained through the following aspects: the researcher's personal background; the philosophical stance chosen for this study; how the methodology is used in this study; how the pilot study is carried out to refine the research design; and how data is initiated in the main study. This chapter ends with ethics which need to be discussed.

4.1 The role of the researcher

For each research component, there exists an interactive interrogation between three parties: *'the researcher, the participants, and the context that they inhabit'* (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p.274). This reflects the social identity of myself as the *researcher* and the *context* of myself as someone who grew up in a multicultural, multi-Minzu environment.

My social identity can be briefly introduced as Chinese nationality, Mongolian ethnicity, and female researcher.

I was born into an ethnically-mixed family. My mother's family is Mongolian and my father's Han. When I was a little girl, most of my time was spent with my mother's family, particularly, my bilingual grandpa, whose fluency in Chinese and Mongolian impacted on me greatly. In my grandpa's words, in his generation, *'the Mongolians who master bilingualism are the far-sighted men because this would gain them a promising job and prospect'*. I think this is the family philosophy which guided my mother through her education: she was sent to the

Han school, and used the Chinese language to complete all her education, including higher education.

I would say the example of my family is only a small one in the context of those families which have Mongolian roots in China, but it also sheds light on a common phenomenon: the Chinese language dominates and is favoured as cultural capital in the family in order for descendants to excel. Unsurprisingly, I was sent to a Han primary school and followed the Putong education system route into higher education. Due to the complete immersion in a pure-Han school environment, the contacts between me and all things Mongolian-related gradually diminished. I lost the chance to become Sino-Mongol bilingual in schools - because I only used, and was fluent in, the Chinese language.

However, the love of one's cultural/ethnic heritage is so strong. It makes me wonder whether there still a part of me (or my *identity* as I later found out) which relates to the Mongolian; but why? This seems to be a complex identity question. All of these questions evolved into academic interests after I went to the Minzu University of China to study for my masters. It made me pay more attention to the Mongolians (*students, friends and schoolmates*) who I encountered. I found out that *we* - even though we are all classed as Mongolian - are so different from each other. These differences transcend personal traits and link to a larger topic: how the different types of school which we attend affect us in terms of our language, preferences, life styles, interactions and so on. I luckily became bilingual in Chinese and English, which granted me the chance to pursue a PhD at the University of Hull, England. However, this seems to be less possible for some of my Mongolian friends who go to the Minzu schools because of their lack of fluency in English.

That is my life story as a researcher and it explains why I am interested in exploring the social identity of Mongolian students in Minzu universities. My

personal background encourages me to think about where I should locate myself in this study and how I should deal with my relationship with the participants. Broadly speaking, this links to the question of being as an '*insider or outsider*' in the study (Mullings, 1999; Cousin, 2010). In terms of being an *insider*, it means that '*researchers who study a group to whom they belong have an advantage, because they are able to use their knowledge of the group to gain more intimate insights into their opinions*' (Mullings, 1999, p.340).

However, in practice, being an *insider or outsider* becomes tricky. I am somehow *inside* the world of the Mongolian students who share similar backgrounds with me, particularly those Min-kao-Han Mongolian students, but *outside* in terms of my knowledge of the Mongolian students from a Min-kao-Min background. On the other hand, as Chavez (2008) noted, the role of a researcher being accepted by the participants is slightly different from the *positionality* as insider or outsider. As the study proceeded, I realised that my position as an *insider* helped add subjectivity to the study, making for a more feasible way of approaching the participants, rather than keeping myself as a passive observer. Subjectivity is valued in the qualitative paradigm (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It means that those sharing my own histories, values, insights, assumptions and perspectives are brought into the study in some way, thus making the research a '*subjective*' process (Ibid, p.36). I was reminded that, as the researcher, I am not independent from my study; I am the embodiment of one of the tools that I deployed, coupled with the other methods that I used to carry out this study.

Lastly, social research should, ethically, echo the voices of a wider audience, such as those outside the academic community (British Educational Research Association, 2011, Item 50-51). By studying figures and news items, I found that this study corresponds to the educational reality of Mongolians in China. From 1980 to 2013, the number of Minzu schools (*e.g. primary schools*) in Inner Mongolia decreased from 4387 to 338, and the Minzu secondary schools

decreased from 501 to 177 (Jin, 2000, p.49; Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Bureau of Education, 2014). Within 30 years, the number of Minzu schools has decreased dramatically. This is even more astonishing when considering Mongolian students who use the Mongolian language to receive education (*e.g. 73.3% in the 1980s, falling to roughly 2.71% in 2013 at primary education level*) (IMAR Bureau of Education, 2014). According to several news reports, Mongolian Minzu education concerns some because of its enforcement of schools' rearrangement policy (*Chedian bingxiao*), trilingual education, under-developed schools' conditions, less qualified teachers and so on. Minzu education seems to be less attractive and attracts fewer and fewer families and students. There must be reasons for these phenomena. This study therefore feels obliged to listen to the voices of Mongolian students from both Minzu and Putong educational backgrounds, and link the exploration of social identity of Mongolian students in HE to a wider picture.

4.2 What is the research philosophical stance of this study?

Why does the research claim the philosophical stance it takes and why does this matter? Apart from the influence of the researcher's background, the approach used by the researcher in obtaining the *knowledge* used in the research is important. There are various ways in which the knowledge can be acquired, and it is debateable whether that knowledge is highly objective or more constructive (Opie, 2004). The examination of this knowledge and the methods with which it is pursued will help ensure this study is grounded in both an epistemological and a methodological sense.

There is a choice to be made between the paradigms of *quantitative* or *qualitative* in order to pursue knowledge (Robson, 2011). There are various assumptions underpinning both the quantitative and qualitative paradigm in terms of the nature of knowledge. Specifically, when we approach this *knowledge* on the basis of understanding '*human beings in social situations*', a qualitative-based

paradigm would be helpful (Ibid, p.17). The qualitative paradigm responds to an understanding of the empirical nature of reality - a reality which requires that we use our '*senses*' as a tool, including those which rely on our perceptions, observations and experiences in order to understand humans in the social world (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2008, p.6).

One of the underpinnings of the qualitative paradigm is highlighted as '*social constructivism*'. As presented in Lincoln and Guba (2003, p.258-259), social constructivism can be defined as a philosophical stance which argues that reality is relative, thus the body of knowledge used to address this reality can be subjective. More specifically, social constructivism argues that reality can be multiple and each of these realities is specifically constructed. The knowledge exists in each reality in its own right and the methodology used in the acquisition of each set of knowledge is rationalised by a dialectical, interpretative and meaning-making process.

This study holds social constructivism as its philosophical research stance, and its relevant assumptions regarding the ontology, epistemology, inquiry aim and methodology fit its purpose (*see Table 4.1*). Social constructivism helps to focus on individuals - '*how individuals construct and make sense of their world*' (Robson, 2011, p.24). This study sets out to focus on Mongolian students regarding their construction of social identity as an individual and specific endeavour. Moreover, social constructivism trusts in the capacity for language (*or other subjectively-based sources such as narratives, life-stories, conversation or dialogue*) as being not only a way to gain the knowledge residing in each sense of the reality, but also to constitute a being in such reality, just as Schwandt (2003, p.307) said that '*language is understood as a range of activities in which we express and realize a certain way of being in the world*'. Linking to this study, language is not only the medium through which one's social identity can be expressed and understood; it also constructs individuals' social identity. What

individuals say and how they talk about themselves reveals their social identity in a certain way, therefore social identity is subjectively-sourced rather than being an objective matter. The methodology designed needs to consider how to better acquire the subjectively-sourced (*such as languages, narratives, life-stories, conversation or dialogue*) materials from the participants.

Table 4.1 How social constructivism fits to this study

	<i>Social Constructivism</i>	<i>Fits to this study</i>
Ontological Stance	Relativism—specific constructed realities	It makes sense to explain <i>social identity</i> as ‘reality’ based on individuals’ construct. Each specific reality/social identity is constructed by Mongolian students on an individual basis.
Epistemological Stance	Subjective; created findings	The ‘knowledge’ of each specific reality is sourced from subjectively-situated materials, such as languages, narratives, life-stories, conversation or dialogue.
Inquiry Aim	Understanding	The aim of inquiry is to <i>understand</i> what and how social identity is constructed by individual Mongolian students, rather than to verify, testify or predict whether social identity is a real matter or not.
Methodology	Dialogic; Dialectical	To employ the methodology can help acquire the ‘knowledge’ which is subjectively-situated. The methodology can be chosen from those dialogic approaches, such as interviews and life-story telling by participants.

Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (2003, p.256-257)

4.3 What methodology is engaged in this study?

What is the criterion used to make the methodological choice within the jungle of the social constructivism paradigm? For this study, the design of the methodology corresponds to answering research questions (O’Leary, 2004). This study asks one Main Research Question (MRQ). Three Sub Research Questions (SRQs) are born out of the MRQ. Table 4.2 depicts an overview of the MRQ and SRQs followed by the design of the methodology which aims to address them. The methodologies designed to answer each question are not shown in isolation but are interlinked with each other:

Table 4.2 Design of methodology used in the study

Main Research Question	Sub Research Questions	Source of Data and the Methodology being engaged	Facilitated by
How are the social identities of Mongolian students constructed at China’s Minzu universities?	SRQ1: <u>How do Mongolian students perceive the construction of their ethnic identity ?</u>	Data mainly sourced from individual Mongolian students’ personal accounts of <i>self</i> as being a ‘Mongolian’, being surrounded by aspects such as culture, customs, language, preferences and social interactions. Also, the institutional context of the Minzu university is considered to locate the personal accounts of individual Mongolian students. Methodology is influenced by narrative-informed approach.	<i>Interviews. Documents analysis. Research diaries.</i>
	SRQ2: <u>How do Mongolian students perceive the construction of</u>	Data sourced from two parts: (a) The personal accounts of individual Mongolian students about their learning experiences at the Minzu university are	

	<p><u>their learning identity?</u></p>	<p>collected, and are located in the pedagogical context of the Minzu university. A record of their accounts about the transition of learning into the Minzu university is collected.</p> <p>(b) Documents such as the pedagogical documents of the university, program documents including language used as the medium of instruction for respective courses/majors are incorporated to address this question.</p> <p>Methodology is influenced by the narrative-informed approach, and facilitated by documents analysis.</p>	
	<p>SRQ3: <u>How is the construction of social identity negotiated under the institutional context of Minzu universities of China?</u></p>	<p>Data sourced from two parts of data:</p> <p>(a) The personal accounts of individual Mongolian students about their overall experiences at the Minzu university are collected, including their impressions of the university's environment and perceptions of the institutional culture and characteristics.</p> <p>(b) To best address this question, a focus on the collection of institutional data of the Minzu university, including the documents which give rise to information such as the history, mission statement, program documents of the</p>	

		<p>university, is centred. The documentary data is used to locate the personal accounts from individual Mongolian students.</p> <p>Methodology is influenced by the narrative-informed approach, and facilitated by document analysis.</p>	
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Social identity is a key word highlighted in the research questions. As used in the conceptual framework in Chapter 3, social identity refers to individuals' perceptions of self and of their social roles at interlocked levels, by making sense of their personal stories and life experiences. In this sense, the narrative-informed approach helps to explore identity of self, as Bathmaker (2010) said:

'Narrative research is therefore seen as providing opportunities and spaces for research participants as well as researchers [...] encouraging and allowing people to tell their narratives to us as researchers allows participants to negotiate their identities and to make meaning of their experience' (Ibid, p.6)

The link between exploring identity by using a narrative-informed approach is also seen in Bamberg (2011) and Holmegaard, Madsen and Ulriksen (2014). As they have shown, individuals are able to impose order on the story about self through restoring, making sense of and linking those previous life encounters to the present and the future. Within such a process, identity is narratively constructed. Matthews and Ross (2010) explained that reflecting a human's experience can be chaotic and complex in nature. Narrative-style data helps to organise it in a meaningful and constructed way. The researcher becomes '*the listener, the reader and the viewer*' through entering an individual's lived experiences (Bathmaker, 2010, p.6). Therefore, narrative-style data can be both the means by which one's identity is constructed and the access through which others understand how identity is constructed.

Even though this study is influenced by a narrative-informed approach, the methodology designed is not labelled as a *narrative inquiry approach*. Shacklock and Thorp (2005) explained that a narrative inquiry approach requires a *loose* schedule of dialogue or storytelling by the participants; unstructured interviews unfold the themes of the narratives over time. However, this study collects the data in the main study by means of *semi-structured interviews*, facilitated by *document analysis* and *research diaries* (see section 4.5 in more detail). Instead of choosing a wholly-unstructured interview schedule, a semi-structured interview approach is adopted in the main study, utilising the findings from the piloting. Questions and prompts are used to direct the Mongolian students' narratives. An '*interruptive*' style of interview gathers more details and enables '*a return to the topic from the side track*' (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.268).

4.4 The piloting initiated in this study

Piloting is initiated in this study as a useful way to resolve the uncertainties prior to the main data collection (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). It deals with such as whether the rationale of the interview schedule can answer research questions?; What kinds of barriers and challenges can be anticipated before the main data collection?; What is the sampling of Mongolian students and the selection of research sites? In the following, a brief description of the piloting, themes emerging from the piloting and how the findings of piloting influence the main study are shown.

4.4.1 Description of the piloting

I gained the ethical approval from the Faculty of Education, University of Hull, on 09/10/2014 (see Appendix VIII). This began the process of piloting and the main field work. Choosing a site for piloting needs to consider how it parallels to the Minzu universities in terms of institutional context (*minority-related*) and pedagogical programs (*offering both MKM and MKH programs*). Its student

body should contain Mongolian students from different backgrounds. Taking these factors into account, the piloting took place in University M - a local Mongolian university in eastern part of Inner Mongolia.

I spent roughly three weeks (12/10/2014 - 31/10/2014) in University M for piloting (a *detailed record of daily field work is shown in Appendix I*). Six participants were selected for interviews, including three Mongolian students and three university senior managers (*brief profiles of the six participants in the piloting are seen in Appendix II*). Two of the Mongolian students interviewed in the piloting engage the same major of *History* but on different courses; one of them engaged the Chinese language medium course (*Hanshou History*) and another engage the Mongolian language medium course (*Hanshou History*). The third Mongolian student entered University M as an MKM but moved to the Hanshou major of *Accounting* after one year of Yukeban. The three Mongolian students interviewed in the piloting represent different programs of study, educational backgrounds, use of language for learning and social networking and therefore help to pilot the dimensions set out for the main study.

Three university managers were interviewed because they are closely involved with the administrative work at the university, especially the regulation of Mengshou (*Mongolian language medium*) programmes. Two of them have extensive experience of working with Mongolian students as their mentors. Interestingly, they were all once the MKM students using the Mongolian language as the medium for their HE study. Despite the interviews with university teachers, staff and managers not constituting the data used in this study, they are still instructive for me in gaining a more comprehensive view of the context of the university, and the systems of Mengshou/Hanshou programmes. They helped inspire an *insider* perspective in looking at Mongolian students studying at the university.

In summary, piloting helps the main data collection in two ways: firstly, several points emerged in the piloting interviews and helped to improve the interview schedule in the main data collection which followed. Secondly, research diaries are kept during the piloting. These diaries contain information such as the researcher's reflective accounts, any unexpected events which may have occurred during the process, the field work plans and some visual images (*An example of the research diary in the main study is shown in the Appendix V*). Relevant documents are collected in order to aid understanding of the context and programs running in University M.

4.4.2 Analysing the data in piloting: coding and themes

The interview schedule for piloting is developed based on the conceptual framework and methodology initiated before the field work. In piloting, the main interview questions are open-ended, encouraging a narrative-style conversation, such as *'can you tell me something about yourself?'*, *'did anything significant happen to you when you look at your university life?'*, or *'imagine I know nothing about this university; how would you introduce it to me?'* Therefore, much narrative-style data was generated. An additional question in piloting asked *'how do you understand social identity (shehui rentong)?'* This informs the researcher of how successfully the academic language of *social identity* converts into the interview language in the main study.

The first step was to transcribe the piloting interviews manually and convert them into the Nvivo software format. As Saldaña (2013, p.61) noted, the *'coding'* strategy is versatile and includes notes based on the paradigm or theoretical approach, those formed in an emergent conceptual framework or those based on the methodological needs. The *coding* strategy for this study is initiated in piloting by echoing the conceptual framework which was developed beforehand, coupled with information emerging alongside the interview transcripts and field notes. A total of 35 nodes emerged in the piloting and they are catalogued in a

layered order, comprising categories and sub-categories. These 35 nodes are contained within eight categories, which are:

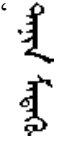
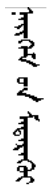
- Ethnic Root of Self
- Language
- Social Interaction and Friendship
- Formal Learning
- Ethnic Issues in Learning
- Significant Life Events
- Interpretation of the University Context
- Linking to a wider context

Each category contains various nodes and multiple pieces of interview data. For example, some nodes are catalogued based on the conceptual framework of the study, such as '*language*' as an important representation of one's ethnic identity. Other nodes emerge, such as '*ethnic issues in learning*', which gives an insight into the link between ethnic identity and learning identity.

The points generated from the coding of data in piloting is summarised in the following:

Point 1: Social Identity gains multiple interpretations: multi-cultural understanding

There were multiple interpretations of *social identity* across the participants. Participant 6 explained that social identity is understood as a sense of perception '*regarding self as identifying with something*'. This is in parallel to how social identity is conceptually defined in this study. However, participant 1 said that social identity is much more like '*a kind of acceptance, a common value, and mostly importantly a way of attaining respect in society*'. Participant 2 also viewed social identity from the angle of '*social experience*'. Moreover, when I asked whether there is an equivalent expression of *social identity* in Mongolian

language, participant 4 translated *social identity* as “” and construction similar to “”.

It seems that the concept of *social identity* has different meanings for different participants, and some of the explanations bear no relation to how it is theoretically understood.

Point 2: Separation perceived between the MKM and MKH Mongolian students

Participant 1 and 2 study the same major (*History*) but from different programmes (*participant 1 is from the Mengshou and participant 2 is from the Hanshou*). There is a sense of separation between these two classes, even though they are all affiliated under the same faculty. This separation is significant in terms of the students’ interaction, activities being organised and even the teacher’s attitude toward each class. As participant 1 said, ‘*we barely interact; we have a different curriculum schedule, different activities, and we are assigned different tutors (fudaoyuan) for class.*’ Participant 2 commented that the ‘*Mengshou class do not like to mix with us; they were more closed and united*’. This suggests the sense of a boundary between the MKM and MKH Mongolian students and it prompts the study to explore this further in the main data collection.

Point 3: Social Identity is equivalent to one’s ‘language’ identity

Participant 3 mentioned how language is important in distinguishing Mongolian students from different educational backgrounds. It appears from this student’s point of view that language is a barrier for him in adapting to the Hanshou class: ‘*my feeling is that the Mongolian students from MKM would find it extra difficult to keep pace with the Hanshou class. The major barrier is language*’. Later, participant 3 explained that language is also an indicator of Mongolians from different regions because ‘*even though we are Mongolian, our dialects are*

different from each other, just like in Chinese'. This illustrated the need for the main data collection to place emphasis on language in exploring social identity.

Point 4: Yukeban as an important transitional experience for MKM Mongolian students

Yukeban is a one year preparation course for Mongolian students with an MKM background to gain access to a Chinese language medium major during undergraduate study. Participant 4 noted that Yukeban is an important opportunity for many Mongolian students to get a broad sense of the selection of courses/majors in the university. This is from years of working experience in the university: *'if it is a Mengsheng (MKM) who transfers to the Hanshou class through Yukeban, the requirement is relaxed. As long as they have a will to engage in whatever major they want, we will find a way to let them achieve'*. As an example, participant 3 is an MKM Mongolian student who transferred to a Hanshou major (*Accounting*) through Yukeban. He cited Yukeban as a *'significant transition'* toward his undergraduate studies.

Point 5: Ethnicity reflected in Mongolian students' learning experience

Participant 3 noted that learning has always related to one's ethnic background. As she said: *'at least, if I failed a course, I think this is embarrassing not for me, but for Mongolians. I would have this kind of feeling'*. Also, the interview with participant 4 revealed that MKM students would be treated preferentially in terms of learning requirements, with, for example, their required credits for diploma being lower than other students. This example leads to an exploration of how ethnic identity might combine with learning identity when contextualised in Mongolian students' learning experience.

Point 6: Cultural diversity is treasured in universities which are minority-characterised

Participant 3 talked about how he values university M for its diversity: *'when we*

say Inner Mongolian, it comes across in many lyrics that this is our homeland. This is the place where we have lived for centuries. That's why we must have our own university, to let us speak our language, to learn our culture. If a university like ours in Inner Mongolia changes into purely Hanshou, then over time the Mongolian will vanish'. This highlights elements reflected in the university context which are significant to Mongolian students.

4.4.3 Responding to the main study

There are several themes raised through piloting which help to refine methodology in the main study and shed light on aspects of work to be considered, such as:

Theme 1: Participants selected from Mongolian students in their final year

The Mongolian students participating in the main study are selected from those in their final year of undergraduate study. This is because, as it emerged from the piloting, students who completed their university studies are more likely to have a constructive narrative sense of their university experience, especially the *significant events or people* which affected them. These *significant life events and people* might be important as turning points in the social identity construction of Mongolian students.

Theme 2: Be careful to use the academic language of 'social identity' or 'identity'

The piloting data revealed that the term '*social identity*', or '*identity*', can be seen as ambiguous when used in the interview process. It is too theoretical to be fully understood and may result in misunderstanding on the part of the participants. Therefore, in the main data collection, interview questions about 'social identity' or 'identity' are erased. It also prompts the researcher to cautiously reiterate the meaning of 'social identity' throughout the study, especially when the literature or data is used in a multi-linguistic context.

Theme 3: Pay attention to Yukeban as a transitional experience for Mongolian students

It emerged from the piloting that Yukeban as a kind of transitional stage for some Mongolian students is significant to their overall university experience. Yukeban experiences seem to constitute a sense of *Yukeban identity* as part of students' learning identity. This section of questions is added to the interview plan.

Theme 4: A dialectical perspective to explore Mongolian students' perceptions of social identity: seeing things from another side

There are some examples which raise the importance of a dialectical perspective in collecting data: regarding social interaction and friendship, a focus needs to be put on not only the ethnic distinctions between Mongolian students and non-Mongolians, but also how social interaction differs within the Mongolian students; regarding language as a hallmark of one's ethnic identity. A focus needs to be put on not only how Mongolian language itself is an indicator, but also how the differentiations within the Mongolian language can make a difference. Therefore, the interview in the main study contains a question about one's hometown/family language environment.

Theme 5: Language resonates with multiple factors

From the piloting it became clear that language is important in exploring Mongolian students' ethnic identity. It is also a node that ethnicity, including the use of different languages, might under certain circumstances interlink with Mongolian students' learning experiences. Therefore, language is paid attention to throughout the interviews.

Theme 6: Challenges to be anticipated: interview techniques and recording

Chinese, as the interview language, is not the native language for some Mongolian students. It raises concerns about communication and understanding

between the researcher and participants. In order to compensate for this, the structure of the interview questions was revised so that Mongolian students can follow them easily and express themselves fully. Also, there occurred a slip in recording during the interview with participant 4. This prompted the decision to have a spare tape recorder on stand-by during the main data collection interviews in the event of any future slips.

Based on the above, the interview schedule for the main data collection was revised as a semi-structured schedule (*see Appendix III*). The narrative-informed approach was re-directed to a semi-structured interview mode because of the nodes and themes generated from piloting. Prompts are used in the main study only when the participants did not cover the areas noted (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

4.5 How data is initiated in the main study

Following the completion of piloting, this study moved on to data collection for the main study. The following presents the focuses on seven aspects of the work: the selection of research sites, the targeting of interview participants, the collection of documents and research diaries, transcription, data analysis and some translation issues.

4.5.1 Focus on the sites: locating two Minzu Universities

This study focuses on Mongolian students studying at a particular type of higher education institution - the Minzu Universities. Therefore, research sites were selected from 15 Minzu Universities (*See List 2.1*). Two Minzu universities were selected as the research sites for this study. They are given the pseudonyms of **Minzu University A** and **Minzu University B**, for the purposes of anonymity. The selection of these two Minzu universities is justified in terms of administrative and demographical reasons, and also for practical considerations:

Minzu University A and Minzu University B represent two distinct types of Minzu Universities: Local versus Central. Minzu University A is a local Minzu University in Inner Mongolia which exhibits strong characteristics combining both the Mongolian culture and local circumstances. Minzu University B is a centrally-administrated university and located in a big city. University B is slightly higher ranked than University A. Both universities exhibit distinctive characteristics and give a useful insight into the different institutional contexts of Minzu Universities set out in the research questions.

The demographic of Minzu University A and Minzu University B consists of students with varied ethnic backgrounds, including Mongolian students from different regions. Minzu University A has a considerable number of undergraduate students from Inner Mongolia, with a proportion of nearly 86%. Including Mongolian students as the mainstay, the number of minority students accounts for nearly 52% of total student numbers at undergraduate level. The same applies to Minzu University B, with 54% of students coming from minority Minzu backgrounds. Therefore, both Minzu universities exhibit diversity within the student body and provide a context for the ethnically-mixed social interactions of Mongolian students. It is useful in exploring the dimension of ethnic identity in Mongolian students set out in the research question.

Minzu University A and Minzu University B run a variety of pedagogical programmes available for both MKM and MKH students. As stated in the teaching programmes from both Minzu universities, there are more than 25 Mengshou (*Mongolian language medium*) majors available in University A and 14 Minshou (*Minority language medium*) majors available in University B, across different disciplines. This includes the relevant programmes for both MKM and MKH Mongolian students. Yukeban is also available in both Minzu universities. This helps in exploring the dimension of learning identity set out in the research question.

In addition to the above, the practical issue in terms of getting access to the university is appropriately considered. The researcher has personal links with the key persons (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998a, p.75) at these two Minzu Universities which facilitate '*easily access*' to the research sites (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2008, p.261).

4.5.2 Focus on the people: targeting the interview participants

The sampling of interview participants in the main study uses purposive sampling. This means that the identification of potential participants is based on '*a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be obtained from other sources*' (Maxwell, 2013, p.97). More specifically, the *particular persons* targeted in the main study are selected from a group of Mongolian students from two cohorts - the *Min-kao-Min* and the *Min-kao-Han* Mongolian students. In this sense, purposive sampling differs slightly from the targeting of concrete person/persons, but is applied as a '*selection criteria to define the population for study*' (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003, p.97)

The '*snow-ball*' technique aids purposive sampling for this study (O'Leary, 2004, p.110); it means that the potential participants are nominated or recommended to this study through links from previous participants or key persons. It sheds light on the social network built by Mongolian students in each case Minzu University. The researcher is connected to such a network. The researcher sets out explicit criteria for *snow-ball* recommendations as follows:

Firstly, Min-kao-Min Mongolian students whose pre-university educational background is from the Minzu education system and use the Mongolian language as the medium of learning in school (*including bilingual and trilingual schools*). They study Mengshou (*Mongolian language medium*) majors at the Minzu

University across different disciplines.

Secondly, Min-kao-Han Mongolian students whose pre-university educational background is from the Putong education system, using the Chinese language as the medium for learning in school. They study Hanshou (*Chinese language medium*) majors at the Minzu university across different disciplines.

Thirdly, all the participants are sampled from those in their final/fourth year of undergraduate study. In addition, Mongolian students with Yukeban experience are asked to recommend other Yukeban students they knew.

A total of 31 participants were interviewed through semi-structured interviews on a one-to-one basis as part of the main data collection. Each interview lasted from a minimum one hour to a maximum two hours. An overview of the profile information of each participant is listed in Appendix IV. Of the 31 participants, 20 come from Minzu University A and 11 from Minzu University B. 22 participants have an MKM background and five an MKH background. 5 students had Yukeban experience. 2 came from bilingual schools in Xinjiang. 1 came from a trilingual school in Inner Mongolia. 1 came from an Inland high school. Each participant is given a pseudonym for the purposes of anonymity.

4.5.3 Focus on the document: the documents collected

As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006, p.280) noted, the documentary data reveals the ‘*non-living materials*’ of the social world. By linking to the educational practices, Fitzgerald (2007, p.278) argued that the documents from schools, colleges and universities provide the evidence which can narrate the details of public professional lives and form the ‘*voices*’ from inside. The institution is able to present themselves through the production of documents which imply the cultures and values attached to them (Ibid). As shown in the methodology designed for this study (Table 4.2), answering SRQ2 and SRQ3 is facilitated by

document analysis. This is because, with regard to exploring how Mongolian students live within the university and how their social identity construction is negotiated within the context of Minzu universities, the documentary data regarding university history, mission/goals, pedagogical activities, disciplinary structure, and its other constituent elements are, by necessity, associated.

There are several types of institutional documentation to be collected, as Fitzgerald (2007) listed, such as speeches from important persons; official websites' information; statistics; governmental reports; policy documents; institutional documents such as school rolls, strategic plans; institutional statements; maps; photographs; posters; pamphlets; newsletters and other agendas. In this study, these documents are collected after piloting. In the main data collection, documents are collected from both policy documents and institutional documents from the two case Minzu universities.

The policy documents provide information about Chinese higher education and Minzu education, including the introduction of Chinese Minzu, statistics, the disciplinary structure of Chinese higher education, annual reports, project reports, conference reports, national/regional directives and so forth. These documents strengthened the arguments of this study at policy level, including the educational system, preferential policies and minority students' educational cultivation in great detail. These sections of the documents are shown in detail in Chapter 2, and a list of these documents is shown in Appendix I.

The institutional documents collected from the two case Minzu universities, include items such as the university's introduction, historical documents, programme documents (*including disciplinary information*), Yukeban, the university yearbook which outlines their working plan, the mission statement, students' enrolment brochures and other statistical documents. These documents enhanced this study by giving an understanding of the institutional context of the

two Minzu universities, including their institutional characteristics, development, missions, disciplinary and pedagogic activities. A list of documents collected in the two case Minzu universities is shown in Appendix I, and are analysed in detail in Chapter 5.

Most policy documents are accessed from government websites (e.g. MoE, SEAC) or the university's homepage. Some documents are collected from key persons or libraries at the case universities, such as the historical documents and the universities' yearbooks.

4.5.4 Focus on the research diaries: how research diaries are recorded?

The research diaries play a significant role in this study because they help to keep up-to-date with not only the institutional environment of the university and the profiles of the interview participants, but also as a reflexive process for the researcher (Nadin and Cassell, 2006). Even though this study does not employ *participant observation* as part of the methodology, it still informs the way the research diaries are kept. More importantly, they are called a '*research diary*' rather than '*research notes*' because they record the ideas, strategies, reflections or anything occurring during field work (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998b, p.107). Reading through the research diaries gives a view of how study progressed and what the researcher witnessed, sensed and experienced in the research field. An example of the research diary for one day in Minzu University B is shown in Appendix V.

4.5.5 Focus on data processing: transcription

As opposed to the piloting data which was transcribed and analysed simultaneously with the piloting work, the transcription and analysis of data in the main study was carried out after the completion of the data collection. Transcription was carried out solely by the researcher, taking approximately 1-2 hours a day and using *Express scribe transcription* software, from January 2015

to July 2015.

Ethically, the transcription takes into account the extent to which the researcher is able to fully demonstrate '*the respect for the participants in representing their worldviews and thoughts*' (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, p.213). Regarding the transcription techniques, Oliver, Serovich and Mason (2005, p.1273) explained two modes of transcription: *the 'naturalism' mode* requires the transcription to be as full and as detailed as possible; the '*denaturalise transcript*' mode requires that elements of the speech such as stutters, pauses and nonverbal features are omitted. The transcriptions in this study sit somewhere between these two modes. Due to the fact that this study does not focus on linguistic analysis, the transcription of each interview concentrates on what the participants said, rather than the manner in which they said it (*naturalism transcription always applies to conversational analysis but this study does not*). Elements of speech such as pauses (*indicated as '(.)' in this study*), emphasis of speech (*indicated as ' _ '*), and best guess (*a participants' utterance followed by the researcher's interpretations in brackets*) are kept in the transcription in order to vividly represent Mongolian students' thoughts, ideas, feelings and perceptions of themselves and lives in the Minzu universities. An example of an interview transcription is shown in Appendix VI.

4.5.6 Focus on the analysis: how data is analysed

The data generated in the main study is from multiple sources, comprising interviews with Mongolian students, documents and the research diaries. Appendix I takes a look at the catalogue of data according to type, source and time. A new project was set up in Nvivo software to store the data collected from the main study, thus distinguishing it from the piloting data.

Data analysis kept pace with the transcribing process so that an increasing number of nodes emerged which were continually reorganised. Data analysis is

subject to a process of *coding* by repeatedly reading the transcriptions. Due to the fact that the transcriptions are presented in Chinese, the initial analysis of data is carried out in Chinese. Influenced by the piloting, the *coding* of data in the main study applies a coding strategy utilising both the theory-generated nodes and the empirical nodes (Saldaña, 2013). It means that, even though the coding process takes an intuitive approach in reading the transcriptions, an exploratory analysis of the data closely links with the theoretical frameworks developed in this study (*a development of the conceptual framework shown in Figure 3.3*).

More specifically, there were three rounds in the coding of data:

In the first round of coding, all interview transcripts were imported into the Nvivo software. A total of 96 free nodes emerged under five categories, which are '*perception of self as a Mongolian*', '*language*', '*learning experience*', '*interpretation of the university context*' and '*linking to wider context*'.

In the second round of coding, all 96 nodes and their attached data were reviewed and reorganised. Some nodes were merged into a larger topic, such as the node of '*Mongolian students' attitudes towards Han students*' is subsumed into the node of '*boundary*'. Some nodes were broken down into more specific sub-categories and reorganised. For example, nodes such as '*Chinese*' under the category of '*language*' were broken down into three sub-categories - '*mastering Chinese*', '*Sino-Mongolian bilingual talents*' and '*resistance to the Chinese language*'.

In the third round of coding, a total of 87 nodes were reorganised into a layered structure. They were clustered into several sub-categories underpinning four headings which group the nodes. The four headings are '*Cultural, language and Mongolian identity*', '*Individual profiles of four*', '*Learning identity explored*', and '*Social identity and institutional context*'.

A total of 87 nodes are developed based on three rounds of data coding. A list of 87 nodes is presented in Appendix VII. By looking at these nodes, they reflect not only the theoretical items indicated in Figure 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 regarding the operation of social identity theory, but also new ideas and viewpoints emerging from the data. For example, the nodes such as '*perceptions of different language*' and '*ethnic boundary*' are in line with the conceptual framework in Figure 3.3. '*A sense of belonging*' is the data which echoes Figure 3.2. Aside from these, other nodes are newly explored from within the data, such as '*language in formal learning*' and '*learning's influences on perceptions of Mongolian*'. By doing this, the research questions of this study would be answered by both the application of a conceptual framework and building up the empirical data.

4.5.7 Translation as a methodological concern of this study

As this study engages cross-cultural and inter-linguistic domains, the sources and types of data (*including the interview data, Chinese literature, policies and other relevant documents*) require translation as a methodological tool, with the resulting translated texts presented throughout the study. Translation is carried out at the data presentation stage, rather than data analysis stage. This is because using Chinese as the language for data analysis ensures that the text and content can be comprehensively understood prior to translation. The original meaning would not then be distorted, just as Nord (2005) said:

'Most writers on translation theory agree that before embarking upon any translation the translator should analyse the text comprehensively, since this appears to be the only way of ensuring that the source text (ST) has been wholly and correctly understood' (Nord, 2005, p.1)

Since the data was analysed mainly in Chinese and then translated for the purposes of data presentation, it raises the question of which pieces of data were translated for presentation and which were not. Regarding the translated texts

which were sourced from relevant Chinese literature, policy and documents, they were chosen because they are closely linked to the context of this study and the conceptual framework developed, therefore addressing the research questions more efficiently. An example of this is seen in Chapter 2 where the text from Fei (1989) about the theory of *Plurality and Unity in the Configuration of the Chinese Nationality* (*Zhonghua Minzu Duoyuan yiti geju lilun*) was translated and presented in order to provide the background to Minzu relationships between Han and the minorities. The translated texts sourced from relevant policy documents such as ‘preferential enrolment of MKM students’ (MoE, 2003, No.2) were selected to provide the background to minority students from the Minzu education system and their access into HE. List 2.1 was a translation of the information sourced from the government website which provided the background to the basic situations of all Minzu universities in China, including their names, geographical locations and regulatory systems. These texts were not selected and translated randomly, but were chosen because of their relevance in answering this study’s research questions.

The texts presented in Chapter 5 were translated from documents collected from the two case Minzu universities in order to answer SRQ 3. According to the conceptual framework (*Figure 3.3*), the institutional contexts of two case Minzu universities were analysed through certain institutional elements, such as the background and history of the university, its mission/aims statements, iconic or other images exhibiting the university features, and relevant pedagogical/discipline information. All the relevant information was translated for presentation in Chapter 5 in order to give a sense of the context, or the institutional habitus, reflected in the two case universities. It also links with the data presented in Chapter 7, which questions whether the institutional habitus of the two case universities aligns with, or is alienated from, the interests of Mongolian students. This might have an impact on their social identity construction.

The interview transcripts were also translated. Four interview transcripts were entirely translated from Chinese into English as examples for supervision discussion (*see one example from Appendix VI*). These four interview transcripts were also used to profile the four Mongolian students presented in Chapter 6. Even though only four interview transcripts were entirely translated, all the interview transcripts were analysed in detail. During the data analysis, quotations from interview data were catalogued under different nodes and themes and were selected to be translated and presented throughout Chapter 7 in order to highlight different arguments and points. When considering the presentation of the translated spoken texts from Mongolian students, Marshall and Rossman (2016, p.210-211) reminds us that '*a translation is accurate and captures the subtle meanings of the original language*'⁴. In order to highlight such *subtle* differences, certain quotations were presented as *Pinyin* (*official romanization system for Mandarin Chinese*), followed, in brackets, by its meaning in English. An example of such is from Qian who mentioned '*Mengshou Erebn Xian*'. This was shown as *Pinyin* in the chapter with a subsequent explanation, meaning second-tier enrolment for MKM students into HE.

4.6 Ethics

The final section discusses some important ethical concerns raised in this study. The ethical sensitivities required by this study take into account the people, the context and the process used in collecting, maintaining and dealing with the data in order to adhere to ethnical principles.

⁴Not only the spoken texts, but also certain phrases, terms or key words were kept in their original language in this study, such as 'Minzu', 'Minzu education system' and 'Putong education system'. Even though these terms occur in several other studies using different translations, such as '*bilingual minority education system*' to parallel the Minzu education system (Feng, 2005, p.546) or '*regular study program*' to indicate the Putong education system (Zhao, 2007, p.30). This is a reminder of the subtle difference between its original meaning and the translated meaning.

4.6.1 Ethics surrounding the voluntary informed consent principle

The first and foremost ethical concern in social science research surrounds ‘*voluntary informed consent*’ (BERA Code of Ethics, 2011). As stated in the BERA Code of Ethics (2011, Item 10-11), voluntary informed consent requires the researcher to fully ensure all participants understand and agree to their participation, and are fully informed of the purpose and the process of the study including ‘*how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported*’. In responding to this, the researcher applied for consent approval, drafted the consent form and submitted it to the ethical committee of the Faculty of Education, UoH. In the application, a statement of research aims, research questions, methodology design, a letter for participants (*in both Chinese and English*), and the written consent form for interviews (*in both Chinese and English*) are addressed. The application was revised several times based on comments from the researchers’ supervisors, and permission was granted from the FoE ethical committee prior to the piloting, carried out in China.

Voluntary informed consent was implemented on an interview-by-interview basis through the following procedure: firstly, the potential participant was contacted through text message or Webchat. They were then asked whether they would be interested in meeting me in person so that more information could be provided. The *letter for participants* and *interview protocol* were then sent to them upon request. Secondly, those agreeing to meet me in person were given an explanation regarding the purpose, the voluntary and free participation, the possible use of the results, and the confidentiality and anonymity of any personal information used in the study. Thirdly, those agreeing to proceed received a request to use a recorder during interviews. Upon agreement, a written consent form was signed by the participants.

During field work, a period of time was spent approaching potential participants in the proper manner and waiting for their responses, rather than pressurising them to participate. This included waiting for responses to meet, negotiation of time for interview (*some students were busy with courses or internship*), and the time to build contacts and look for more participants. Certain events occurring during contact with potential participants, and the handling of these events, highlighted the importance of the ethical commitment of this study. For example, after the interview with Jier from Minzu University B, I was introduced to two of her friends studying in different departments. They agreed to meet me in person, but failed to turn up to at the agreed time and place. Later, Jier texted, explaining that the two students decided not to see me as they were too '*shy*'. In this case, I felt that it was ethically right for students to voluntarily participate, so I did not approach them. Another example is from Qian from Minzu University A, who asked for more information about the researcher prior to agreeing to be interviewed. In his case, a more detailed description of the researcher and the purpose of the study was provided. He then felt sufficiently reassured and informed to agree to participate in the study.

4.6.2 Ethics surrounding cross-cultural sensitivity

The second ethical concern is about cross-cultural sensitivity. With regard to this, two questions are referred to: (a) how is the researcher's subjectivity incorporated into the study when the researcher is a cross-cultural subject in the presence of the participants? (b) What sorts of barriers and challenges might affect the ethics of the study in terms of the relationships built with the participants? In the following, these two questions are addressed.

As noted in section 4.1, the Mongolian background shared between the researcher and the participants can be an advantage in aiding the *insider* stance, due to the sharing of cultural, ethnic and even educational experiences (Liamputtong, 2008). However, the *insider* stance faces an ethical challenge as

the study can be biased due to the researcher becoming '*too close to the culture to ask essential questions*' (Ibid, p.8). Framing the study within a fixed pattern of methodology runs the risk of the data being generated and analysed to fit predicted outcomes. In order to avoid this, this study aims to expand the participants to include those *outside* the researcher's own background, such as the MKM Mongolian students. The study does not attempt to *predict* the findings, rather the findings emerge alongside the data being collected and analysed.

On the other hand, with some Mongolian students *outside* the background of the researcher, it raises another ethical challenge with regard to cross-cultural understanding. It concerns such as asking questions in a culturally sensitive and relevant manner (Dunbar, Rodriguez and Parker, 2001), meaning that the interview questions shall not mislead or trigger implicit discrimination for the participants (Ibid). Great care was taken when asking questions about MKM students' perceptions of self as a Mongolian, because it seems to be a sensitive topic relating to their self-esteem. In these circumstances, it becomes an ethical obligation for the researcher to avoid taking a judgemental stance when Mongolian students talk about their perceptions of their own ethnicity or other Minzu groups.

Lastly, the power relationship between the researcher and the participants raises an ethical concern. As a study carried out by Villenas (1996) investigated the Latino community, she was deemed a '*privileged ethnographer from an elite university background*' even though she herself is Hispanic with excellent Spanish language skills (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, p.129). In this study, the power relationship between the researcher and the participants involves a distinction between the central (*a PhD researcher from a UK higher education background*) and the peripheral (*a minority undergraduate student from a Chinese Minzu university*). Particularly as the interview is carried out in Chinese, the participants' confidence might be said to suffer. In order to address this, this

study follows a ‘*reflexive examination*’ approach by asking several ethical questions (see Table 4.3). Trying to answer these questions raises awareness of the ethical challenge regarding power relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Table 4.3 Reflexive ethical questions and how this study responds to them

<i>Reflexive Ethical Questions:</i>	<i>My Answering:</i>
<i>What is my power relationship with the people I am researching?</i>	I am in a position to learn from the experiences of Mongolian students. I will give power to the participants to let them be the host of their stories.
<i>Am I researching ‘with’ or ‘on’ people?</i>	I am interested in studying both ‘with’ people and ‘on’ people, which means that I will participate in the world of the Mongolian students to gain insights into their stories but also try to keep reflexive to see what is beyond the scope.
<i>What is my emotional investment in this research?</i>	As a Mongolian student myself, I am interested in understanding those Mongolian students, who share similar personal backgrounds to me, studying at Minzu universities in China. I am also interested in understanding what Minzu university brings or means to them and how they experience those universities, under which their social identities are constructed. This is a research journey incorporating both academic pursuit and self-interest.

Adapted from the reflexive ethical questions of Cousin (2010, p.11)

4.6.3 Ethics surrounding the sensitivity of identity study

Any study exploring an individual’s identity will reveal their personal state to a certain extent (*including their life experiences, perceptions, feelings, emotions and inner state of self*). With regard to this, exploring one’s identity requires the participants to ‘*expose*’ themselves to the researcher or the readership of the

study (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.271). When the stories about self/identity are being taken by the researcher, a major ethical challenge arises concerning the participants' feeling of vulnerability (Ibid). In response to this, this study pays serious attention to confidentiality and anonymity. The aim of this is to build a '*trusting relationship*' between the researcher and the participants, encouraging trust on the part of the participants and enabling them to talk freely to the researcher (Liamputtong, 2008, p.5). Prior to each interview, confidentiality was strongly emphasised in a statement given to the participants. When dealing with the data, the two Minzu universities and each individual participant were given pseudonyms so as to avoid identification. Also, the participants from each Minzu university were deliberately chosen across different disciplines and faculties to avoid them being easily targeted.

A final ethical concern is about the storage of data. After each interview was recorded (*using two recorders*), the data was electronically transferred to a file on my personal computer. This electronic data can only be accessed with a password set by myself. With regard to data analysis, it was processed using Nvivo software installed on my personal computer. This ensures that the data relating to this study cannot be accessed by anyone other than myself.

This chapter gives an explanation of how this study is designed, including a description of the researchers' role, the philosophical stance of the study, the methodology designed, the pilot study, the data collection initiated in the main study, the analysis of data and translation as a methodological concern. This completes a line from the epistemological and methodological thinking toward the empirical generating of the data in the study. Moreover, the methodology underpins which data can be collected and how it is interpreted. Thus it determines the strength as well as the limitations of the study. The subjects raised in this chapter, such as those concerning translation, would have an explicit impact on the following work. It serves to remind the researcher to think about

methodology, not as a separate issue, but as having a critical role throughout this study.

In the next three chapters, the document data and research diaries from the institutional context are presented in Chapter 5, individual profile data from interviews is presented in Chapter 6, and an overall presentation of interview data is presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5 Institutional contexts: the cases of two Minzu universities

As shown in the conceptual exploration in Chapter 3 (section 3.5.2), schools and universities as social institutions own their particular *habitus* and such habitus is formed and shaped upon a larger social system and power relationship. In other words, the extent to which the *habitus* of a university reproduces a larger social order tells a story about the *fitting* or *unfitting* of students studying within the institution.

In this study, looking at how the two case Minzu universities reflect their characteristics or dispositions (*habitus*) will give context to the social identity construction of Mongolian students. In other words, whether the Minzu universities value minorities' culture and language and multi-ethnic legacy or merely reproduce a larger Minzu-order (*such as essentialising Han and treating minorities as subsidiaries*) will determine Mongolian students' perceptions of self as a minority. This chapter explores the contexts of two case Minzu universities and the extent to which they exhibit, embody and reflect the disposition of *Minzu*, *Mongolian* or a power relationship between the *Han Chinese versus minorities* in order to contextualise Mongolian students' perceptions of self when studying there. In this sense, the social identity construction of Mongolian students is not viewed as an isolated matter but contextualised within a university background.

This chapter presents the documentary data collected from the main study relating to the institutional contexts of two case Minzu universities. Briefly, the chapter consists of two parts; Chapter 5.1 centres on Minzu University A and Chapter 5.2 focuses on Minzu University B. Both Minzu universities are introduced with the following three aspects: the mission, the cultural context and an analysis of the disciplinary structure of the university.

5.1 The institutional context of Minzu University A

5.1.1 A brief introduction to Minzu University A

Minzu University A is located in an urban area within the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR), a demographically, culturally and ethnically-mixed environment. The urban area in which Minzu University A is located experiences a constant interaction between the Mongolian and Han population, thus the Mongolian culture, language and people are strongly impacted by the Han and it is deemed an area which is highly Han-cised (*Hanhuade*). One result of this is the production of a particular type of Mongolian culture - the Horqin Mongolian - an amalgam of Mongolian nomadic culture with Han Confucianism and agricultural cultures (Geriletu and Chen, 2013). The Horqin Mongolian culture is also reflected in the branding of Minzu University A. The representations of Horqin Mongolian culture are frequently seen in a variety of facilities in the university. For example, the Horqin Culture Research Institute (*Keerqin Wenhua Yanjiusuo*) and Horqin Intangible Cultural Heritage Research Centre (*Keerqin Feiwuzhi Wenhua Yichan Yanjiu Zhongxin*) were set up as the key institutes of the university (Minzu University A webpage). The university library owns a collection room which exhibits Horqin relics and folk artefacts (Yearbook of Minzu University A, 2013, p.181-182). After 2010, Minzu University A launched a scheme called 'Horqin scholar', awarded to academics who have made excellent contributions to Mongolian studies and funded Mongolian-relevant research projects.

Apart from the Horqin Mongolian culture being reflected in its branding and symbols, Minzu University A, as a local government regulated university, serves the educational needs of minority students from Inner Mongolia. According to the university statistics, 85.3% of the total, full-time undergraduate student body came from Inner Mongolia in 2013. Nearly 52% of undergraduate students are the minorities and Mongolian is the mainstay. More than 1300 Mongolian

students were enrolled in different Mengshou (*Mongolian language medium*) study programmes, accounting for 25.8% of total undergraduate student admissions in 2013. Yukeban is also available at the university (Yearbook of Minzu University A, 2013, p.97). All of these figures help characterise Minzu University A as a Mongolian-featured university with localised (*Horqin*) regional characteristics.

5.1.2 Mission

This section illustrates the mission of Minzu University A. As Velcoff and Ferrari (2006) noted, the mission statement sets out a vision of the strategy, purpose and rationale of the university. It constitutes a significant element of the institutional context, through which it helps focus the priority, interests and characteristics of the university (Ibid). Therefore, the mission is a lens through which to investigate the context of Minzu University A.

It is suggested in the <Report on the Recovery and Development of Minzu Education Suggestions> (1980) that the development of higher education in minority regions should start by addressing local realities. More specifically, to meet the needs of '*local reality*' HEIs in minority regions should satisfy the criteria of '*local favoured*' and '*ethnic characteristics*' (Chen, 2004). In terms of Inner Mongolia, higher education development is given a general mission as follows:

'Establishing universities and a variety of institutes in Inner Mongolia aimed to afford the prosperity and development of ethnic cultures in the local region, and training minority intellectuals to revive ethnic knowledge and scientific research' (Wulanfu's Speech on the Opening Ceremony of Inner Mongolia University October 14th 1957).

According to this general mission, the '*local favoured*' criterion requires that the HEIs should commit to training comprehensive talents, especially ethnic and scientific personnel, so that the development in local regions would be better

served. Moreover, the '*ethnic characteristics*' criterion requests that higher education shall provide for the minorities, especially the Mongolian as the mainstay in Inner Mongolia, so that the preservation and development of Mongolian culture would be assured (Autonomous Government of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Forward the <Report on the Recovery and Development of Minzu Education Suggestions>,1980).

There are 13 state sponsored universities in Inner Mongolia, each owning a particular mission according to the criteria of '*local favoured*' and '*ethnic characteristics*' (Chen, 2004). In terms of Minzu University A, meeting '*local favoured*' and '*ethnic characteristics*' criteria requires them to undertake missions which match the goals of preserving and developing Horqin Mongolian culture, which is the local ethnic and cultural heritage (Our University and the municipality government signed a comprehensive strategic cooperation agreement, 2013). Specifically, the mission statement of Minzu University A is found in the document of <2012 Annual Summary of Minzu University A> in the following two aspects:

● *Mission One:*

Talents' Training Mission: Minzu University A commits to training a comprehensive range of talents, including senior specialised talents engaged in all walks of life in Inner Mongolia. Particularly, Minzu University A is devoted to promoting teacher education and Mongolian studies. All graduates are expected to contribute to the political, economic and cultural progression of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.

● *Mission Two:*

Cultural Heritage Mission: Concerning the academic strengths, Minzu University A is dedicated to promoting studies on Mongolian Medicine, Mongolian Pharmacy and Mongolian Studies. Moreover, Minzu University A is

assigned with the particular task of researching, preserving, promoting and aiding in the prospering of Horqin Mongolian heritages, including the Horqin (*Tu*) language and other historical and cultural elements.

From these two missions, it is clear that that Minzu University A sets its mission to satisfy the needs of '*local favoured*' and '*ethnic characteristics*' in certain ways. The Horqin Mongolian culture ('*local favoured*'), with the Mongolian Minzu as the mainstay ('*ethnic characteristics*'), shall be reflected in its campus environment, student body and disciplinary structure.

5.1.3 A cultural context of Minzu University A

Minzu University A exhibits strong features in terms of combining multicultural symbols. This can be observed from the campus environment. When I started my observation of the campus, the first thing which caught my attention was the front gate, on which was carved the name of the university in both Chinese and Mongolian. Through walking around campus, both Mongolian and Chinese cultural and linguistic representations are found on most of the buildings and campus facilities, such as the library, teaching buildings, posters and statues. For example, the statues of Mongolian icons Genghis Khan and the Balazhuer (*the founder of Mongolian medicine*) stand in front of different teaching buildings, both featuring Mongolian and Chinese inscriptions.

Another illustration of the multicultural nature of the university is the design of the university logo. As explained in the Brochure of Minzu University A (2006, p.5), the university logo is designed in a circular shape, symbolising the '*harmony and unity*' of students and teachers from various Minzu groups. It was also explained that the pattern of the logo is designed to '*indicate the reconciling of ethnicity, nationality and internationality*' with three languages displayed on it (*Mongolian, Chinese and English*).

In addition to the campus facilities and buildings, multicultural features are represented in the campus radio broadcasts. The campus radio broadcasts in three languages (*Chinese, Mongolian and English*) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at noon from 11:30-12:30am and afternoons from 6:30-7:30pm. The programme at noon broadcasts weekly campus news such as recent visiting guests, students' activities or the university's research achievements. The afternoon programmes were relatively abundant. Generally, the Mongolian, English and Chinese programmes were arranged respectively in three days and the content for each day's programme was different. For example, the Mongolian programme had a *Minzu* emphasis, such as Mongolian songs, history or customs. The English programme covered Hollywood movies, world music or English poetry and literature. The scope of the Chinese programme was more extensive, covering such topics as campus news, sport or entertainment news (*see Table 5.1*).

Table 5.1 Campus radio broadcast on a weekly basis (MUA)

	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
11:30 -12:30 AM	Weekly Campus News (Chinese and Mongolian)		
6:30-7:30 PM	The Glamour of Minzu (Mongolian)	Music Fan (English)	Magic Weekend (Chinese)

Adopted from the Research Diary from 17 to 21 November 2014

The table above shows that three languages (*Mongolian, Chinese and English*) are arranged for different purposes. Each language is categorised to broadcast the fixed content, such as Mongolian for broadcasting Minzu/Mongolian-related content. English is used reporting on worldwide pop music or entertainment news. The Chinese language dominates most of the broadcasting time and covers a wide range of content.

5.1.4 Disciplinary Structure

The disciplinary structure gives the pedagogical context of Minzu University A, where both MKM and MKH students are able to choose a variety of majors and

programmes (*including Yukeban*) at the university. It sheds light on how the learning identity of Mongolian students is constructed against the backdrop of the university where different majors own a foundation, and a particular content of learning and language is used as the medium. It also exhibits the priority of Minzu University A in focusing on certain areas of discipline and areas of study which highlights the tradition, legacy and features of the university.

In the context of the university's history, it is necessary to examine its disciplinary structure. Minzu University A is the result of a merger of three vocational colleges in the early 2000s, each having a distinctive disciplinary emphasis. As noted in a university document, these three combined colleges were, respectively, a teacher-training college, a health-care and medical college, and a pastoral college. The three areas of study in these colleges were also prioritised in helping develop higher education in Inner Mongolian at that time (*the teacher education, the health and medical education and the agricultural and pastoral education*) in order to serve the needs of local construction.

The merger of these three colleges greatly enhanced the foundation of Minzu University A in terms of its disciplinary structure. Particularly, *normal/teacher education* and *medical and pharmacy studies* as two strongly supported disciplines of the university (Yearbook of Minzu University A, 2013, p.105-108). A great number of majors are set up in these two areas and, many of them available in Mengshou (*Mongolian language medium*) and offered to the MKM Mongolian students. The Mengshou majors for teacher education are distributed among 15 fields, including majors such as *Ideological and Political Education, Mathematics, Physics, Pre-school Education, Fine Arts, Chinese Minority Language and Literature, History* and so on (The Schedule of Teacher Education Majors of Minzu University A, 2014).

The first Mengshou major founded in Minzu University A was *Mongolian-Han Bilingual* in 1989. Currently, the number of Mengshou majors has increased to

26 out of the total 63 undergraduate programmes available at the university (Yearbook of Minzu University A, 2013, p.91-93). Majors such as *Mongolian Medicine* or *Mongolian Pharmacy Studies* or *Minority Language and Literature Studies* are taught exclusively as Mengshou. Other Mengshou majors such as *Ideological and Political education*, *Pre-school Education* or *Law* are offered as both Mengshou and Hanshou, taking in students with different educational and language backgrounds. Certain Mengshou majors are offered not only at undergraduate level but also as post-graduate courses. For example, courses such as *Mongolian Medical and Pharmacy Studies* were upgraded to doctoral programmes and assigned by the Ministry of Education to fulfil ‘*special needs for doctoral training of the nation*’.

Table 5.2 compiles the disciplinary statistics of Minzu University A. It shows that the university sets its priority as developing disciplines in the area of *Engineering and Science*. This is in contrast to Minzu University B (*to be discussed in section 5.2*). Why should two Minzu Universities place an emphasis on different priorities in the development of their respective disciplinary structures? The reason may be linked to the historical and social context of Inner Mongolia. After the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), education for Mongolians in Inner Mongolia was restored, guided by the policy of ‘*two primaries and one public*’ (*Liangzhu yigong*) (Hu, 1999, p.17). Generally, this policy emphasised that the development of education should extend to those pastoral or semi-pastoral Mongolian communities and should consider applied sciences, including mathematics, medical science, engineering and livestock husbandry. Opening courses in these areas was seen as helping to restore local social and economic development, and eliminating social backwardness. This tradition remains in Minzu University A, which also established a name for itself in terms of its contribution to linking the Mongolian tradition with a modernised, science-based academic culture.

Table 5.2 Disciplinary statistics of Minzu University A at undergraduate level

<i>Disciplinary Catalogues</i>	<i>Fields</i>	<i>Number of disciplines</i>	<i>Total Number of discipline subsume each catalogue</i>	<i>Percentage of discipline in each catalogue</i>
Liberal Arts and Social Science	Economic	2	25	39.7%
	Law Science	3		
	Education	6		
	Literature	13		
	History	1		
Engineering and Science	Engineering	8	38	60.3%
	Science	11		
	Management	3		
	Medical Science	7		
	Agriculture	9		
<i>Total</i>	10		63	100%

Adapted from the Yearbook of Minzu University A (2013, p.91-93)

In summing up, the information in the table taken in context helps make sense of the learning experiences of both MKM and MKH students in this study. The Mengshou majors are a specific set of disciplines offered in Minzu universities. However, whether Mongolian students study a Mengshou or a Hanshou major, this information helps in understanding how they perceive the position of the major they study in the structure of the university (*such as whether it is a Mongolian-related major or an advantaged major supported in the university*), which in turn gives them a sense of their own position as learners at the university.

5.1.5 A summary of the context of Minzu University A

This chapter gives a contextual profile of Minzu University A by presenting the information about university students' demographic statistics, the mission, a depiction of campus elements and activity (*radio broadcasting*) and the disciplinary structure. There are several features shown in the context of Minzu

University A:

Even though Minzu University A is open to students with a variety of Minzu backgrounds (*such as Han, Mongolian, or other local minorities*), it still presents itself as a Mongolian-featured university serving the needs of those who aspire to use Mongolian language as a medium for learning in higher education. The '*local favoured*' and '*ethnic characteristics*' seem to complement each other in the case of Minzu University A. The local favoured aspect helps the Mongolian ethnic, culture and language to flourish and aids in cultivating Mongolian talent in science and technology, thus contributing to the economic and social construction of the local regions in Inner Mongolia. More than half of the student body are recruited from the local minorities and nearly 41.3% of undergraduate majors are offered as Mengshou, covering different fields of study. These show that Minzu University A has a specific group of students to serve and a specific goal of education for them.

On the other side, as a localised Minzu university in Inner Mongolia, Minzu University A's distinctiveness lies not only in its Mongolian cultural features but also in its Horqin Mongolian culture. Mongolian culture predominates in Inner Mongolia but Minzu University A seems to stand alone in highlighting its Horqin characteristics. Over time, Horqin culture generated an atmosphere which mixed elements of Han and Mongolian in the region where Minzu University A is located. Therefore, Minzu University A displays features which highlight the Mongolian students' integration with other Minzu students, particularly the Han. For example, a considerable number of University A's students (48%) are Han and a large proportion of majors, programmes and courses are offered as Hanshou (*Chinese-language medium*). Certain arrangements of Mengshou majors, such as *Mongolian-Han Bilingual* or *Chinese Language and Literature Studies*, show collaboration between Mongolian and Han. Mongolian students use their native language to study Chinese culture, language and literature. All of

these elements give an ethnically-mixed social and learning context, whereby Mongolian students perceive themselves as Mongolian by referencing their interactions and sharing social and learning spaces with other Minzu students, particularly the Han.

Another feature which has emerged is shown in the representation of different languages on campus. For example, the three languages featured in the university logo symbolise, respectively, ethnicity (*Mongolian language*), nationality (*Chinese language*) and internationality (*English language*). Amongst all of these, the Chinese language dominates in most spheres of the university, such as the campus radio broadcasts, the massive provision of Hanshou majors, the posters, commentary of campus architecture and even the road signs. The English language is displayed the least. The Mongolian language is shown occasionally and expediently in situations where it is necessary, such as in the buildings where Mengshou majors and Mongolian students gather (*an example of this is seen in the building belonging to the Faculty of Mongolian Medicine and Pharmaceutical Studies*).

On the other side, Minzu University A still considers its role is to act as a link between Mongolian culture and tradition and Chinese society and the wider global community. Minzu University A is in liaison with universities globally, including those from the U.S.A, Mongolia, Korea and Japan (Yearbook of Minzu University A, 2003, p.129-131). The Department of Mongolian Medicine and Pharmaceutical Studies, in particular, is regarded as being at the front line in connecting the Mongolian-root of the university with advanced medical science from around the world.

5.2 The institutional context of Minzu University B

5.2.1 A brief introduction of Minzu University B

In contrast to the the Mongolian population concentrated in the region of Minzu University A, Minzu University B is located in a big city which boasts a diverse population featuring a comprehensive representation of minority groups in China. The city in question is notable for having a large minority population receiving tertiary education because of a well-developed HEI network. Minzu University B is situated in such a network, sharing prominent resources with some of the city's more prestigious universities.

Founded in the 1950s, Minzu University B is one of the longest established Minzu universities in China. Until now, Minzu University B was noted for its significant contribution to the cultivation of high-level intellectuals, officials, minority-work specialists and ethnologists from minority Minzu backgrounds. It was recognised as the '*birthplace of minority high-level talents of China*'. It is one of the centrally-regulated universities and is supported as one of the key universities bearing a *Minzu* feature (Minzu University B webpage). Similar to Minzu University A, Minzu University B has an ethnically-mixed student body. Nearly 54% of its total student population are from diverse minority Minzu groups, from different parts of minority autonomous regions and provinces in China. Minzu University B is open to minority students with different educational backgrounds, such as those from Inland high school, Minzu schools and Putong schools.

5.2.2 Mission

Three missions of Minzu University B were clearly stated in a history document issued in 1950s. As shown in this document, those three missions laid the foundation and provided the justification for the establishment of a Minzu University:

Mission One:

To train the minority leadership and cadres from middle and senior levels, who commit to the implementation of a Minzu regional autonomy, and to be devoted to political, economic and cultural construction of ethnic minority areas.

Mission Two:

To carry out study and research on Chinese minorities, including their languages, writings, history and social and economic situations, and to be devoted to maintaining the cream of ethnic cultural and historical heritage, and introduce them to the wider population.

Mission Three:

To lead and organize the work of translating and editing materials relevant to ethnic minority groups in China

'Minority cadre training' and *'study on minorities'* are two major focuses of the three missions, which outline the major characteristic of Minzu University B as devoting to *Minzu*, including Minzu students, Minzu studies and Minzu higher education. From these earlier missions, Minzu University B was strongly politically motivated (*cultivating minority political leadership, cadres and activities*).

After 50 years of development, Minzu University B adjusted its missions in response to the changing social and economic agendas. A significant change in the university's missions is that the cultivation of minority students is less politically-activated, focusing more on research areas and studying minority and minority-relevancy. The majors and programmes offered in the university are intensively specialised. According to a speech delivered by the principal of the

university in 2009, Minzu University B now sets a mission to establish itself as a ‘*world-class, research-centred Minzu university*’. And by achieving this mission, the university will expand its remit to a point whereby specific types of ‘*Minzu talents*’ (*Shaoshu minzu rencai*) can emerge. By moving away from the political, Minzu University B seems to give itself a mission to pursue research excellence and boost its prestige whilst in competition with universities both nationally and globally.

5.2.3 A cultural context of Minzu University B

The observation of the campus environment of Minzu University B started at the front gate. Interestingly, the name carved on the gate is also bilingual, but is displayed in English and Chinese. Wandering around the campus, numerous posters and banners gave information on lectures, seminars and other activities. Compared to University A, the multicultural symbols exhibited by Minzu University B covers more than merely Mongolian and Han - there is comprehensive coverage of different Minzu groups, and with an international aspect. For example, a great number of seminars and lectures by international scholars were advertised; students were wearing different minority costumes (*such as Hui and Uighur*) and spoke different languages; campus activities were categorised as Minzu performances which showcased different minority Minzu’s performances.

The multicultural feature of Minzu University B is also reflected in the university motto, which is explained as ‘*diversity in unity*’ (University webpage). As explained by a predecessor who developed this motto, ‘*diversity*’ refers to the divergences existing among different Minzu and its bearing on varied cultures and languages; ‘*unity*’ refers to the convergence of different Minzu in line with the goal of national unity. ‘*Diversity*’ and ‘*unity*’ is understood as a dialectical relationship where diversity is consumed in unity and unity is composed by diversity.

Campus radio at Minzu University B was broadcast in two languages (*Chinese and English*) from Monday to Friday noon from 12:00-12:30am and afternoon from 6:30-7:30pm. There were no minority language programmes. The programme at noon was based on weekly campus news and daily news on Chinese current affairs. All news at noon time was broadcast in Chinese only. The afternoon programmes were relatively abundant. During the week of observation, there was only one Minzu-related programme, which was entitled ‘*Portraying Minzu*’. The content concerned the change in the artistic portrayal of minorities from the early 1950s to the present day. The rest of the programmes covered entrainment, university life, sports news and English literature. Only the English literature programme, entitled ‘*English Kisses Soul*’, was broadcast in English on Thursday (see *Table 5.3*).

Table 5.3 Campus radio broadcast on a weekly basis (MUB)

	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
12:00-12:30 AM	Weekly Campus News (Chinese) Daily News on Chinese Current Affairs (Chinese)				
6:30-7:30 PM	Portraying Minzu (Chinese)	Dialogue: University Life (Chinese)	Starry Movie Night (Chinese)	English Kisses Soul (English)	Glamorous Weekend (Chinese)

Adopted from the Research Diary from 15 to 19 December 2014

As shown, Chinese is the dominant language used in broadcasting on campus. The reason behind this might be that Minzu University B consists of minority students from a variety of Minzu groups. Therefore it is not possible to pick out any single minority language as the language used to broadcast to the whole campus. In such a scenario, Chinese becomes the *Lingua franca*, a kind of official language legitimated by university broadcasting.

5.2.4 Disciplinary Structure

As with Minzu University A, the disciplinary structure of Minzu University B gives a contextual view of how Mongolian students construct their learning identity against a backdrop of the university setting out its priority and tradition to develop certain areas of discipline over others.

Table 5.4 compiles the disciplinary statistics of Minzu University B. It shows that Minzu University B sets its priority to develop disciplines in the area of *Liberal Arts and Social Science*. This is in contrast to Minzu University A, where *Engineering and Science* are the priority disciplines.

Table 5.4 Disciplinary statistics of Minzu University B at undergraduate level

<i>Disciplinary Catalogues</i>	<i>Fields</i>	<i>Number of disciplines</i>	<i>Total Number of discipline subsume each catalogue</i>	<i>Percentage of discipline in each catalogue</i>
Liberal Arts and Social Science	Philosophy	2	33	60%
	Economic	4		
	Law Science	4		
	Education	2		
	Literature	9		
	Arts	9		
	History	3		
Engineering and Science	Engineering,	5	22	40%
	Management	8		
	Science	9		
<i>Total</i>	10	55		100%

Adapted from the Yearbook of B Minzu University (2010, p.516-519)

The reason Minzu University B formed a structure of disciplines prioritising the areas of social science links to the establishment and history of the university. The establishment of Minzu University B was given the missions to train the minority leadership and cadres and carry out studies on Chinese minorities. According to a university document, the first two courses of study available at

the university were *Military and Political Training* and *Tibetan and Mongolian Language*. The disciplines surrounding minority language studies in particular became the legacy inherited by Minzu University B. Aside from this, a major event occurred which underpinned the tradition of the university's disciplines. During this time, there were a series of reorganisations of departments across some of the city's more prestigious universities, whereby most of the departments teaching language studies, ethno-studies and sociology were relocated into Minzu University B along with the a group of renewed scholars, and academies were transferred to the university as well. This all helped to develop a particular academic focus and discipline priority at Minzu University B, concentrated in the area of social science, particularly those relating to subjects such as minority language studies and ethno-sociology. By looking at the design of majors in the university, it shows that Minzu University B developed a disciplinary structure by assembling many different areas of disciplines under the umbrella of 'Minzu'. For example, *Ethnology*, as a first-tier discipline, brings together a comprehensive range of disciplines, including *Chinese Minority Arts*, *Chinese Minority History*, *Chinese Minority Economics*, *Marxist Ethnic Theory and Policy* and *Ethnology Principles*; these disciplines are included within the scope of *Ethnology* and come under the heading of second-tier disciplines at Minzu University B.

Linked to the pedagogical context for MKM students, there are certain numbers of minority-language-medium (*Minshou*) majors available in the university including Mongolian, Tibetan, Kazakh, Korean and Uyghur language medium majors. In Minzu University A, a specific *Mengshou* uses Mongolian as a medium to stretch to a specific area, such as *Mengshou Mathematics* or *Mengshou Preschool education*. In Minzu University B, *Minshou* majors are studied purely by those in minority languages studies, such as *Mongolian/Tibetan/Korean Language and Literature Studies*. With the exception of *Tibetan Language Studies*, where certain students are not required to use the

Tibetan language as their learning medium, the remaining Minshou majors predominately take in minority students with an appropriate language basis and educational background.

5.2.5 A summary of the context of Minzu University B

There are several features shown in the context of Minzu University B:

The demographic statistics of Minzu University B show that no single minority Minzu constitutes the majority of the total student number. The Mongolian feature is not as obviously represented in Minzu University B as in Minzu University A. As the statistics show, the largest number of students from one single Minzu group is Han. Han is still the *majority* in the *minority* renowned Minzu University B. On the other hand, however, if all students from minority Minzu backgrounds are added together it is evident that this *minority* in total (54% of the total student number) outnumbers the Han students. Through observing the campus, it appears that a lot of the activities, performances, languages, dress, diet, radio broadcasts and other cultural symbols from any single minority group is not overwhelming compared to the Han. The cultural representations from different minority groups signify the '*diversity*' component of the unified Minzu culture reflected on campus. In other words, diversity leads to unity. In this sense, labelling University B as *Minzu* is, in some way, justified: the university can be branded Minzu where Minzu equates to a structural coalition of '55+1'; the '1' should not stand apart from the '55' and the '55' can be a counterpart to '1' only when the '55' are added together.

Minzu University B revised its mission over the years, mirroring the reform and development of the Chinese higher education system and society in general. Initially, Minzu University B was akin to a political training institute which focused on cultivating minority leadership and political activities. This was in response to the needs of '*red*' over '*expertise*' (see section 2.5). During that time,

the political mission of training '*minority leadership and cadres*' was the first priority, where the academic mission of either '*studying on minorities*' or '*translating the minority materials and languages*' were secondary or third. However, '*studying minorities*' is still a legacy inherited by Minzu University B and became increasingly important in its development. Minzu University B owns more than 60% of the disciplines in the areas of humanity and social science, thanks to the dominance of advantaged resources, particularly in areas such as ethno-studies and minority language studies. In pace with the reorganisation of faculties, departments (*and scholars in the area of ethnology, sociology and language studies being relocated to Minzu University B*), it led to a profound enhancement of these disciplines which were being developed at the university. The initiative of reallocation of resources seems to highlight a government intention to create Minzu University B as a place of strategic importance in the '*studies on minorities*'. Currently, a great number of national key disciplines relating to minorities/Minzu are found in Minzu university B, such as Minzu regional political studies, Minzu economic studies, Minzu education, and minority Minzu traditional medical studies.

To exhibit itself as an *internationally-oriented* university, Minzu University B displayed its name in the front gate of the university in both Chinese and English. As a university document explained, the English translation of the university's name was changed from *University for Nationalities* to *Minzu University* with the Chinese Pinyin *Minzu* replacing *ethnic* or *nationality*. The reason for this may be due to the fact that the Minzu pattern is a special product created out of the particular social, historical and political context of China. To handle the Minzu relations, China needs to move towards a more specifically Chinese stance rather than copying western models, be they Soviet or multi-ethnic countries like the U.S.A. To adopt a proper English name, Minzu University B chooses a more localised term 'Minzu' to highlight the multi-ethnic specificity in Chinese society. In this way, Minzu University B is given a mission to make a contribution to

maintaining, developing and studying such specificity and provide HE particularly for the Chinese Minzu groups, including both Han and minorities.

On the other hand, it seems to reflect the government's intention to portray Minzu University B as showcasing how minority issues are handled in the HE domain. Minzu University B is not an exception but is part of a wider community in this sense. More recently, Minzu University B re-announced its mission as pursuing *world-class* and *research-centred* goals, mirroring an overall trend in Chinese higher education whereby certain groups of universities are supported and constructed to compete in a global HE market. The *world-class* goal of Minzu University B has an explicit and specific priority, which is to compete in the global HE market as a specifically-designed university famous for its 'Minzu' branding. Its mission is stated as a *world-class, Minzu university* rather than a *world-class university*. However, Minzu University is not an *exotic* providing only for minorities; it is part of society as a whole, competes in a global world, promotes modern science and has excellent students with high-level academic achievements. Therefore it becomes more and more *Putong* in certain ways, just like other Chinese universities pursuing *world-class* goals.

5.3 The comparison of the contexts of two case Minzu Universities

Comparing the two case Minzu Universities, they share convergences and divergence in many ways.

Firstly, both Minzu Universities are located in a city/urban region where the minority population mixes with the Han population. For Minzu University B, in particular, the minority population is not as significant as it is where Minzu University A is located. It gives a sense that both Minzu universities are enclosed within a *wall*, within which Minzu or Mongolian elements can be expressed, displayed, represented and negotiated as significant cultural representations, but outside the wall minority elements need to be consciously reversed so as not to

appear at odds with a wider, mainstream society.

Secondly, Minzu University B seems to rank higher than Minzu University A in terms of its prestige, allocation of resources and administration-level. It gives a sense that Minzu University B seems to create an atmosphere where the Mongolian students studying there are offered more opportunities, chances, and have more frequent exchanges with prominent resources available in or around the university. In this sense, Minzu University B seems to be more advantaged than A even though they both claim to serve the educational needs of disadvantaged minority students. Minzu, in this sense, does not denote a sense of equality as it was created for but suggests an uneven balance for those minority students whose Minzu universities are not on an equal footing.

Thirdly, Han dominates within the context of both Minzu Universities. The Chinese language dominates in the different forms of campus cultural elements and representations, such as the name on the front gate, the campus radio station, the architecture, statues, road signs, posters and so forth. Even though both Minzu Universities have a larger proportion of minority students' in the total student number (*Minzu University A at 52% and B at 54%*), this proportion takes into account all minority students collectively. As has been said, Han is still the *majority* in these minority-renowned Minzu Universities compared to any minority Minzu group. In both Minzu universities, Hanshou (*Chinese language medium*) majors and study programmes are also in the *majority*, and this narrows down the choices for MKM students.

Fourthly, both Minzu universities have taken on a responsibility to connect the minority (*Mongolian*) culture and students with a wider community. Both Minzu universities participate in collaboration and partnership with universities in different countries, Minzu University B playing the larger role. Minzu University B adjusted itself to pursue the goal of becoming a *world-class-level Minzu*

university which illustrates its intention to compete on a larger stage. Although Minzu University A is not as significant as B in this respect, it also demonstrated its intention to carry forward certain advantaged disciplines (*such as Mongolian Medicine Studies*), using this as an opportunity to link the traditional Mongolian heritage to a modernised, science-based frontier.

A major divergence between the two Minzu Universities lies in their different paths of development, missions, disciplinary structures, traditions and priorities. This might be because two Minzu universities were designed, established and developed under different historical and social conditions and different levels of need for minority HE. Minzu University A was established to cater for two different levels of need (the ‘*local-favoured*’ and ‘*ethnic characteristics*’) enabling it to practice in a more generalised environment (*Mongolian-Han bilingualism, covering both Social Science and Science but prioritising Science*). In contrast, Minzu University B is more diversified: it opens its doors to a more diverse group of minority students, offering diversified programmes of study covering a wide range of disciplines and languages. Hence, if both Minzu universities were to label themselves as multicultural ‘Minzu’, Minzu University B would to be a *comprehensive* university in contrast to Minzu University A which is similar to a *specified-oriented* university serving Mongolian students as a mainstay and local needs in Inner Mongolia.

It is hard to draw the conclusion that both Minzu universities maintain a Minzu-order which mirrors a wider society where Han is favoured and the minorities are treated as alien. Despite Han permeating deeply into the universities’ institutional structures, Mongolian/minority culture, languages and features are still strongly represented in students’ lives, pedagogical activities and campus arrangements in both universities. It is sufficient to say, the minority/Mongolian is not treated as alien in the context of both universities. However, it also seems to me that Mongolian and Han are isolated from each

other in the university and each grouping of them (*including the faculty and students*) constitutes a strong and connected community for their own. As in the use of different languages for different purposes, Mongolian and Han intermingle occasionally in certain circumstances in the university, but underneath they do not share too much with each other. As can be seen in the data presented in chapters, it seems that Mongolian and Han are treated as alien to each other in the context of both Minzu universities.

Chapter 6 Individual Profiles of Four Mongolian Students

This chapter presents individual profiles of the four Mongolian students involved in this study. The individual profiles of each student constitute essential data which focuses on the *people* involved in the research and gives the reader an impression of how they see themselves in the context of social identity construction. Despite having more data to choose from, the stories from these four are representative in probing the diversity of the composition of Mongolian students. It means that the Mongolian students who are brought up in different familial, regional backgrounds and schooling contexts are distinguishable from each other in terms of their perceptions of self and in their developing awareness of choices. During this process, the researcher is prompted by Waller (2006) to pay close attention not to '*fragment the individual stories*' and try to '*maintain their 'wholeness' and to demonstrate the complexity of their lives and experience*' (p.99). It means that each profile being presented illustrates the particular life story of each person, and through the story of each person the complexity regarding social identity construction can be highlighted.

Each profile is an anonymized portrait - a pseudonym is presented in each profile. Each profile is presented using the same section headings. The headings are as follows:

1. Information about Personal Background
2. Perception of Self as Mongolian
3. Learning Experience recalled
4. Impression of the Minzu University
5. Researcher's Impression

The reason why these particular Mongolian students were selected out of a total of 31 participants for profile is because each represents a distinctiveness regarding their familial/regional backgrounds, educational experiences

(MKM/MKH), gender, university access, particular learning experiences at different case Minzu universities and different languages used for learning. For example, Ater was a male MKM student coming from Xinjiang province, studying the major of *Minority Language and Literature Studies* in Minzu University B; Wu was a female student coming from Inner Mongolia to study in a Hanshou (*Chinese language medium*) major at Minzu University B; Lee is a male MKH student coming from Inner Mongolia studying at Minzu University B; Qian from Minzu University A underwent extreme difficulties because of engaging a Chinese-language major after progressing through Yukeban. By looking at each case profile, the reader will have a sense of how different factors, including different regional and educational backgrounds, language proficiency, gender, and learning experiences at the university, are interlinked as a package resulting in the particularity of social identity construction in each case.

6.1 Participant One: Ater

6.1.1 Information about personal background

Ater is male Mongolian student aged 25 from Bozhou in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. He is in his final year at Minzu University B, studying the undergraduate major of *Minority Language and Literature Studies*. This major is a Mengshou-Mongolian language medium course. Ater comes from a township which is a multi-ethnic community, comprising minorities such as Uyghur, Kazak and Mongolian. As he described, his family is a ‘*typical Mongolian family*’ and both his parents are Mongolian pastoral people who can barely speak the Chinese language.

6.1.2 Perception of self as Mongolian

The hometown Ater comes from is a Mongolian autonomous township in Xinjiang. As he describes it, the Mongolian population ranks fourth in his hometown, where the Han and Uyghur are the two most popularised Minzu

groups. '*Multi ethnic mix*' is the most salient characteristic he would assign to his environment while growing up. Ater says the multi-ethnic characteristic has a great impact regarding his perception of self as a Mongolian. Ater seems to understand Mongolian through referencing to other Minzu groups. As he recalls, there are many Mongolian cultural traditions and celebrations hosted in his hometown, such as the '*Naadam*' and '*Ovoo-will*'. The Mongolian people in his hometown are accustomed to integrating Kazak and Uyghur elements in their daily life. Their dietary habits, for example are not only Mongolian-styled but also strongly informed by Uyghur diet traditions.

Only after leaving his hometown and living outside the Xinjiang did Ater start to reflect on how he perceived himself as a Mongolian who differed from those in Inner Mongolia. He says he realised that his Mongolian accent is peculiar, which is '*in mix with Uyghur and Kazak accents*', but that such an accent is not odd in his hometown where every Mongolian speaks in this way. He also prefers music, dress or other preferences which are informed by Uyghur features. Ater seems to believe that the growing-up environment is decisive to one's perceptions of self as belonging to a Minzu group. As a boy growing up in Xinjiang, Mongolian was the '*minority within the minorities*'. He described the Mongolians coming from his hometown as owning the '*softest tongue*' in speaking a lot of different languages, which also confirms Ater's view that Mongolian is a Minzu group who are good at adapting, accommodating, fitting into a multi-Minzu coexisting environment, or in his words, Mongolians '*do not seal themselves up*'.

6.1.3 Learning experience recalled

Ater completing his compulsory education at a local Minzu school in Bozhou Xinjiang, he later went to Inner Mongolia for high school study. The reason for his transfer to Inner Mongolia is '*because the quality of Mongolian language medium education is much better in Inner Mongolian compared to Xinjiang, and this is widely acknowledged*'. As Ater recalls, Chinese literacy instruction in his

primary school started at Grade 3 but Chinese is taught at a very basic level. Until junior school, his Chinese language basis was still very poor. After attending Minzu high school in Inner Mongolia, he feels that teachers value Mongolian students. This is very different to his previous learning experiences where '*Mongolian education did not receive equivalent attention compared with Uyghur or Kazak education*'.

After completing high school study in Inner Mongolia, Ater went back to Xinjiang to attend Gaokao (*HE entrance exam*). That is because, as Ater explains, applicants from Xinjiang are offered greater preferential treatment in Gaokao, particularly MKM students. Ater said that his Mongolian language capability is preserved and reinforced over years of education at the Minzu schools, whether in Xinjiang or Inner Mongolia. He appraises himself as being in the 'A' level to '*master Mongolian as a language for daily use*'. Relatively, those MKH Mongolian students in the 'C' level sustain themselves at a basic level of '*knowing Mongolian, but not using it*'. It seems to Ater that the different levels of Mongolian language capacity can highlight the differences between MKM and MKH Mongolian students, also showing how learning under different educational backgrounds contributes to one's perceptions of self with regard to inherited ethnic and language.

6.1.4 Impression of the Minzu university

Minzu University B offers a number of preferential treatments for Min-kao-Min students from Xinjiang, including Mongolian students as part of the group. Ranked in the top 5 applicants accessing into Minzu University B from his region, Ater successfully enrolled in the major of *Minority Language and Literature Studies*. By studying this major, Ater feels proud and satisfied to be part of the university and thinks highly of it. In his words, Minzu University B is the best for him: '*it is like the Tsinghua University for me*'. It needs to clarify that Tsinghua University is a prestige university in mainland China.

Ater's pride in being able to study at Minzu University B derives from the prestige of the university. He acknowledges that MKM students face a lot of barriers in terms of HE access and are limited in their choices for majors to study. However, the prestige of Minzu University B can compensate for this. Minzu University B, in his view, is a university which values ethnic diversity. Therefore, he is able to practice his preferred cultural representations on campus. For example, he can organise the Zulu festival (*Mongolian religious festival*) or other Mongolian-related events and activities which gather together other Mongolian students. Through these activities, Ater achieves self-committed goals in uniting the Mongolian students as a network within the university.

6.1.5 Researcher's impression of Ater

My impression of Ater is that he seems to be one who can compromise in a place where a lot of different cultures, languages, and understandings of different Minzu groups exist. Ater said that he does not speak fluent Chinese but it is my feeling that he articulated clearly, coherently and fluently in Chinese during the interview. He also exhibits a complex perception of self as a Mongolian in combining strong influences from such as his Uyghur accent or Kazak preferences. Ater is a student whose extraordinary Gaokao performance gained him access to Minzu University B, and this derives from his strategic route in moving between Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang for his previous education. This also explains why Ater shows himself to be a complex entity in combining different Minzu elements within himself - he is a multi-cultural Mongolian.

On the other hand, as a Mongolian, Ater treasures his inherent Mongol-ness. He explained at length about what he has done, or should do, in making a contribution to the Mongolian ethnic while at university. Regardless of the Mongolian-related activities he organised, or his other relevant observations, Ater exhibits a profile which displays great passion and deep feelings for the

Mongolian ethnic. Ater's feelings for the Mongolian ethnic are also shared by many MKM Mongolian students in this study.

6.2 Participant Two: Wu

6.2.1 Information about personal background

Wu is a female Mongolian student aged 22 from a township in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China. She is in her final year at Minzu University B, studying the undergraduate major of *Administrative Management (Public Administration)*. This major is a Hanshou (*Chinese language*) medium course. Wu is the only child in her family. Even though she was born in the *one-child policy* generation, Wu explained that a lot of Mongolian families have more children. Many of her school friends have siblings. Both of Wu's parents are high school teachers. Wu's father, in particular, was a college graduate, which is a rarity in someone from his background. He was assigned a job as maths teacher at a local Minzu high school. Wu and her parents used to live in the neighbourhood which belongs to the schools' assigned dormitory. She grew up in this neighbourhood surrounded by her parents' colleagues' families. She says this was a peaceful community in which to grow up. Her childhood friends all came from a similar familial and educational background: they all went to the same Minzu school and from Mongolian intellectual families.

6.2.2 Perception of self as Mongolian

Both of Wu's parents work in a local Minzu school, using the Mongolian language to teach different subjects. Wu's mother teaches the Mongolian language as a subject. As Wu recalls, she had a very standard Mongolian language instruction from her mother. Apart from her family, the neighbourhood she grew up in is a '*sheer Mongolian environment*' as she describes. This nurtures her perception of self as a Mongolian in a naturally-born way.

However, the '*sheer Mongolian environment*' is not deliberately constructed or maintained. In fact, she does not intentionally think about the question of whether she is a Mongolian. To be a Mongolian and speaking the Mongolian language is a natural and innate feeling. Moreover, Wu describes the township where she grew up as being akin to '*a kind of transitional zone, between the urban area and the pastoral area*'. Therefore, the Mongolian people in her hometown are neither fully Han-assimilated nor rural pastoral Mongolians. Due to this, it seems that Wu classifies herself as a Mongolian from either a Han-assimilated Mongolian or '*pure pastoral Mongolian*' background.

6.2.3 Learning experience recalled

After finishing primary school, Wu and her parents moved downtown to look for a better junior school for Wu. One important reason, as Wu says, is that her parents wanted to enhance her Chinese language ability so that she would not be disadvantaged because of the language background. During that time, Chinese seems to be a foreign language for her. As Wu says, '*this is the first time I get the sense of two different languages: the Mongolian and the Chinese*'. From then on, she started to consolidate her Chinese language ability.

Wu went to one of the best Mongolian Minzu high schools in the downtown area. Due to the two hour journey from school to home, she applied for boarding at school and went back home twice a year during vacation. This was a tough time for her to endure, but it all proved worthwhile because attending a good high school gave her a promising chance of going to a good university. Wu recalls that, even though the high school she attended is a Minzu school, it is still a competitive one. A lot of Mongolian students with Minzu educational backgrounds strive so hard to go to this school. Those academically high-achieving Mongolian students would be gathered in an experimental class in the school, and she was one of them. Chinese language instruction was the experimental class' strength but, by contrast, English language instruction was

neglected. Wu performed extraordinarily well in Gaokao and was ranked at the top of her class. Comparing the choices between Minzu University B and another prestige university in Inner Mongolia, Wu finally chose Minzu University B.

6.2.4 Impression of the Minzu university

As a Min-kao-Min applicant in Gaokao, Wu was not able to choose a Chinese language medium major directly unless she undertook a one year preparatory course in Yukeban. She applied for the Yukeban in Minzu University B. Wu's impression of the university was formed since her Yukeban year, and this was the initial step for Wu in understanding the people and the context of the university. Wu says the students in her Yukeban class come from different parts of China, many of them from different minority groups. In Yukeban, she formed friendships with students from diverse Minzu backgrounds. Wu says Yukeban is crucial for her because this is an important transition; not only because Yukeban linked her to a wider university community but also prepared her for the Hanshou major which, as she describes, is a '*complete Chinese language environment*'. It seems that Yukeban played a significant role for Wu in constructing her overall social identity and making sense of her subsequent university experiences.

Wu says the difficulties she experienced in attempting to adapt to the Hanshou major after Yukeban mainly fall into the academic category. She can clearly recognise the gap between herself and her classmates, who received Chinese language education throughout. Even though she works diligently, the gap as she describes it '*is not easy to catch up in one or two days*'. She also needs to deal with the learning stress emotionally when she falls from '*a top*' in high school to '*a middle*' in the university. That's why she appreciates the buffer she gains in the Yukeban. Wu is keen to attend Mongolian-related activities on campus. She also participates in much of optional curricula in the university which is Mongolian-related. As she said, this is particularly necessary since she does not

study a Mongolian-related major. Trying to associate herself with Mongolian-related activities is a ‘*voluntary will*’, through which Wu is able to ‘*get something back of myself, of my own existence, as a Mongolian*’.

6.2.5 Researcher’s impression of Wu

It occurs to me that Wu talked frequently about *people* in the university. Whether they are the students with ‘*diverse Minzu backgrounds*’ in Yukeban or the classmates she compares herself with in the Hanshou class, it seems to me that through the observation and understanding of *people* in Minzu University B Wu gets a sense of feeling of who she is and what characteristics the university has.

Another impression of Wu is that she seems to highlight the different environments she transited through. *Transition* is a key word for Wu regarding her learning experiences under different contexts. This is seen as the initial transition from primary school to junior school, whereupon she gained her awareness of language differences between Mongolian and Chinese; the transition from junior school to high school, during which time she lived far away from home while striving to achieve good academic performances; the transition from high school to Yukeban is a transition of identity as a Minzu university student; the transition from Yukeban into a Hanshou major is a transition from ‘*a top*’ to ‘*a middle*’ in a Chinese language learning environment. Each course of transition creates new challenges for Wu to adapt to. Language interestingly plays a significant part as both a course and a result throughout these transition processes.

6.3 Participant Three: Lee

6.3.1 Information about personal background

Lee is a male Mongolian student aged 22 from a city in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China. He is in his final year at Minzu University B,

studying the undergraduate major of '*Social Work*' (*Public Administration*). This major is a Chinese language medium course. Lee has an older brother, his father is Mongolian and his mother Han. As Lee says, his father's family once lived in a semi-farming and semi-pastoral area and later moved to the city. After settling in the city, his father's family started to integrate Han's living traditions. Lee's father has become practically a Han, marrying a Han woman and can barely speak the Mongolian language. But Lee's father still registered himself in Hukou (*the national registration system*) as a Mongolian Minzu. Lee explained that this is to take advantage of the preferential treatments for Mongolian people in Inner Mongolia: '*if you have a Mongolian descendant, your family is able to be allocated an extra acre of land*'. Lee, following his father, is also registered in *Hukou* as a Mongolian Minzu, despite the fact that he himself grew up in a city and attended Han schools exclusively before university.

6.3.2 Perception of self as Mongolian

Lee has a complex perception of self by linking to the Mongolian ethnic. On one hand, he says that he had '*a quarter of blood belonging to Mongolian*'. As Lee sees it, in his family only his grandmother is an authentic Mongolian. He thinks his father has already been Han-cised. His Mongolian-featured name was given by his grandmother, who wished to use it as a '*reminder*' of the family's Mongolian roots. However, his name aside, *Mongolian* is not an intimate term to Lee. In Lee's words, *Mongolian* appears to be intimate only in terms of a feeling of hometown. He grew up in the city which he described as basically a '*Han environment*'. He feels that Mongolian and Han in his growing up experiences are not '*dramatically different*': '*Mongolian and Han share a lot in common actually, and become more and more identical in some way*'. However, Lee still seems to shy away from labelling himself as a '*Mongolian*'. In fact, he thinks he is '*much closer to Han*'.

6.3.3 Learning experience recalled

Lee explained that his Mongolian school friends generally acted as Han in their language and behaviour. Nearly *'80% of my classmates are in the same situation as me'*. In explaining the *'same situation'*, Lee means those Mongolian children who grow up in a family with Mongolian traditions but were sent to a Putong school to receive education. This seems to give a snapshot of the massive Putong educational culture dominating many Mongolian families in cities in Inner Mongolia.

Lee's family also had a strategic plan for their childrens' education. There are two children in Lee's family: Lee's older brother was sent to a Mongolian Minzu School and Lee to a Putong school. Lee and his older brother were designated and destined to take different paths for their education. It was also a kind of game for a Mongolian family to let their children engage different schooling, with the reasoning that if one fails in one type of education another might succeed. Once the choice is made, it is hard for them to transfer from a Minzu school to a Han school and vice-versa. For Lee's brother, it is hard to transfer to the Han school because *'You won't catch up yourself in a Han school. Because your language habits, your thinking ways, all of these have already been fixed in the Mongolian learning environment'*. By attending Putong education up to Minzu university, Lee's educational background consolidates a sense of self as being more inclined to be Han than Mongolian.

6.3.4 Impression of the Minzu university

Lee has a delicate understanding of the motto of Minzu University B (*'diversity in unity'*). He understands that Minzu University B owns a small campus area where students can easily run into another; this creates opportunities for inclusion and cohesion rather than forming any kind of separation. The reason he explains the university motto in this way might derive from some of his

frustrating experiences of being excluded by Mongolian students' cliques in the university. He has no chance to get into the circle of a group of 'authentic' Mongolians because of his incapacity in the Mongolian language and his Han schooling background. In his words, *'it is not for you to say whether or not you are a Mongolian [...] if the people surrounding you say that you are not [a Mongolian], then gradually you would accept that you are not [a Mongolian]'*.

Lee also has a sense that Minzu University B is special to its students and to the society, and therefore should not be regulated in the same way as other universities. 'Cautiousness' is necessary in handling students' affairs in the university because minor friction between students might evolve into a kind of 'Minzu conflict' which can have adverse consequences for both students and the university.

6.3.5 Researcher's impression of Lee

It seems to me that in many ways 'Mongol-ness' is hard to find in Lee, but 'Mongol-ness' certainly plays a significant role in his perceptions of self. Lee has a mixed feeling of himself in respect of his families' Mongolian tradition and it is also a mixed feeling for me to say that Lee is either a more Han-cised or Mongolian-cised person. On the one hand, Lee does not come across as Mongolian compared to many other Mongolian students in this study; he does not 'sound like' a Mongolian at all when he speaks Chinese fluently with no accent, dressed with no Mongolian features. He also says that the Mongolian traditions are fading in his family and his educational background makes him closer to Han than Mongolian.

On the other hand, Lee seems to be trapped at a crossroads where he is identified by others as neither entirely Han nor entirely Mongolian. His typical Mongolian name reminds himself and others constantly that he carries a Mongolian heritage. But it is hard for him to form real friendships with those authentic Mongolians in

the university who see him as a Han.

6.4 Participant Four: Qian

6.4.1 Information about personal background

Qian is a male Mongolian student aged 26 from a village in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China. He is in his final year at Minzu University A, studying the undergraduate major of *Mechanical Design, Manufacturing and Automation*. This major is a Chinese language medium course. Qian comes from an ethnically-mixed family: his father is Mongolian and his mother is Han.

6.4.2 Perception of self as Mongolian

Despite Qian's mother being Han, Qian has strong feelings for the Mongolians. It seems to Qian that he has a strong sense of distinction between what is Mongolian and what is Han. In his views, Mongolian and Han are '*incompatible*' to each other; such incompatibility is concrete, day-to-day, sometimes intense and '*rootedness*'. It seems that Qian got this sense of feeling because of his family background and learning experiences at Minzu University A.

Qian grew up in a family where father is Mongolian and his mother Han. As an only child, Qian says that he had intense experience of how his parents were incompatible in sharing ideas and a way of life. For example, Qian's mother regards learning the Mongolian language as useless, but his father has encouraged Qian to learn it; Qian's mother was opposed to sending Qian to a Mongolian Minzu school but his father insisted he attend one. Even during the festivals, '*Han eat mooncake but the Mongolians do not eat mooncakes*'. The experiences of growing up in an ethnically incompatible family such as this have deeply affected Qian in his perception of himself as a Mongolian.

After transiting into the Hanshou major of '*Mechanical design, manufacturing*

and automation', Qian became the only Mongolian student in his class. As the only Mongolian, Qian has had long-term unpleasant experiences in his university life. He says that *'discriminations are everywhere', 'even no one wants to sit beside me'* in the class. This is a kind of overwhelming discrimination shadowing Qian which also makes his perceptions of self as a Mongolian to be vulnerable and uptight. He seems to defend strongly, even violently, his status as the only Mongolian in the class, or in his words, to define his *'Mongolian dignity'*. As Qian says, he is very sensitive to what others say about the Mongolians. He can easily and frequently become involved in *'friction with Han students, and much of these are incidental things but gradually heap up to a big fight'*.

6.4.3 Learning experience recalled

Qian recalls a lot of families in his village choosing to send their children to a local Minzu school because *'this is a good quality Mongolian school and even the nearest Han school is still far away from the village'*. Qian achieved decent academic performances in high school and was enrolled at Minzu University A. He aspired to study a major relating to mechanical operations, which is also where his hobbies and interests lie. However, there were no mechanical or engineering oriented majors available in Mengshou (*the Mongolian language medium*) in the university; they are mostly Hanshou. Qian, as a matter of strategical choice, went to Yukeban for one year and finally graduated to a mechanical major.

However, as Qian recalls, choosing this Hanshou major was an ordeal for him. He uses some key words to summarise his years of learning experiences as *'decline in scores, contradictions, getting lost, entanglement'*. He says that studying a Hanshou mechanical major requires well-developed Chinese language ability as a basis (*to understand the academic jargon*), and then it necessitates solid high school knowledge in math, physics and science. However, either his Chinese language ability or high school basis are way too weak for success in

this major. He cannot keep pace with the teacher, follow the class or understand most of the content in books. He therefore fails a lot of curricula. Compared to his classmates who are Han and from Putong schools, Qian feels that they have *'huge gaps, like worlds apart where one is in heaven and one is on earth'*.

Qian mentioned that he won't choose this major if he is given another chance to go to university. Interestingly, Qian says that he would choose a *Mengshou* major instead, to get himself more intimate with learning by using the Mongolian language. In his words, *'sometimes I really think about going over my university time again, I really love to pay for that. If I could, I would absolutely choose a Mengshou major, to make me happy all the time, and enjoy the best of my university'*.

6.4.4 Impression of the Minzu university

Qian's impression of Minzu University A cannot be separated from his turbulent and unpleasant learning experiences there. He mentioned frequently that he feels like fighting alone against a whole system, or in his words *'I am the only sacrifice'*. As an only *'sacrifice'* in a *Hanshou* class, he blames the university, the teachers and staff for not doing a good job to *'protect or support'* him when he really needs their help. He mentioned that once he had written letters to a university administrator and hoped that someone could help him to set a new pass-line for him to attend exams due to his circumstances. He mentioned such details in the letter and hoped this would generate a level of attention from the university management level. However, apart from one Mongolian teaching director, no concrete responses were received. He feels that his problems were still left unresolved.

Qian says that when the university encourages students to learn independently that should not mean that some students, particularly those like him who come from a Minzu educational background to a *Hanshou* major, should be left behind

and *'live or perish by ourselves'*. One important solution is that a Minzu university in Inner Mongolia has to be run by a person who shares similar educational experiences with most Mongolian students. Only in this situation would this leader *'care, be concerned and do things to help the Mongolian students - otherwise he won't understand what is really going on for us'*.

6.4.5 Researcher's impression of Qian

My impression of Qian that he occupies a grey area which seems to be a blind spot for a lot of people who fail to recognise, care or be concerned. In Minzu University A, there were groups of Mongolian students, Han students, Hanshou students, Mengshou students, or students with other backgrounds and needs for learning. When they become a group, they empower themselves to ask for help or make a change to the situation which works the best for them. Qian indeed mentioned in his interview that a lot of Mongolian students do not feel comfortable or fit into a Hanshou major when they get moved into it, and then they arrange to move to another Mengshou major instead. However, this did not happen to Qian. As the only Mongolian student in this competitive engineering major, Qian is very unique and his voice is too weak to be heard.

It is also my impression that Minzu university should pay extra attention to caring for a special group of Mongolian students like Qian who transit into a completely strange Han learning environment, both academically and mentally. In Qian's words, *'when Gaokao allows us to be able to study in a university with lowered entrance requirements, now it is not supposed to lift that line, to demand us to perform a score as good as others [like Han students]. Or otherwise, this is the denial of the Gaokao, the denial of the Gaokao system'*. Qian is a Mongolian student with a critical mind. He says that another reason he insists on trying a Hanshou mechanical major, which is not a common choice for many MKM students, is that he wants to challenge himself: *'Mongolian education always has some flaws and I want to challenge myself to see what it feels like to live in a*

Han learning environment'. When Qian used his himself as an example to test the disparity between the two educational systems, it is significant that what he initially wants to try turns out to be what he eventually resents.

6.5 A summary of the profiles of four Mongolian students

These four Mongolian students were selected for profiling because the life stories from each of them delicately reflect a synergy of different factors contributing to the construction of social identity for each one. These factors, such as familial/regional backgrounds, educational choices, HE access, different majors engaged, and language used as the medium to receive education, are interdependent, mutually-affected and act on each of the Mongolian students to construct social identity in distinctive ways. Some aspects emerge by looking at these four profiles:

Firstly, it seems to show that the impacts from familial background are crucial for these Mongolian students to have a crude perception of self as a Mongolian. They all grew up in a family with at least one of their parents as a Mongolian and this plants a seed in understanding what is Mongolian and how they relate to the Mongolian Minzu. For example, Wu comes from a Mongolian intellectual family and grew up in the neighbourhood where '*Mongolian*' is a naturally-surrounding culture and atmosphere. To be a Mongolian seems to be a kind of spontaneous thought for Wu; she does not take it as a deliberate idea to doubt it. Lee comes from an ethnic intermarried family. Lee's family is watering down the Mongolian feature as a result of living in transition between pastoral and the urban life. From Lee's father onwards, the family's Mongol-ness begins to gradually change its appearance and nature. That may explain why Lee regards his grandma as the only genuine Mongolian in the family. Even Lee's typical Mongolian name becomes symbolic.

Secondly, it seems to me that each Mongolian student delicately orchestrated their perceptions of self as a Mongolian with the Mongolian culture and linguistic atmosphere in the region. To a certain extent, how they exhibit a kind of understanding of Mongolian mirrors how the larger social environment configures and demonstrates the Mongolian ethnic in certain regions. For example, Lee says that Mongolian is equivalent to a feeling of 'hometown' for him. Ater grew up in Bozhou from Xinjiang where Mongolian is ring-fenced by other dominating Minzu groups, such as Han and Uyghur. His Mongolian identity has a certain degree of integration of multi-ethnic characteristics; these experiences also give Ater a unique understanding of Mongolian compared to those from Inner Mongolia. In Ater's eyes, Mongolians are more easily-integrating, fitting in and accommodating with a foreign and strange cultural environment. Their understandings of the Mongolian ethnic would influence their own behaviour as Mongolian.

Thirdly, by linking to their past learning experiences, all four place a certain degree of importance on their strategic plan for educational choices before entering Minzu university. In other words, their pre-university experiences laid significant foundations for their social identity construction. For example, Ater chose to receive high school education in Inner Mongolia because '*Mongolian education is more valued compared to Xinjiang*'; he came back to Xinjiang to attend Gaokao because Xinjiang implements more preferential treatment for minority students compared to Inner Mongolia. Wu's parents, as Minzu School teachers, were particularly concerned about her education. Her family moved home in order to get Wu into a good high school and therefore into a good university for HE. It is interesting to note that Wu's parents, as Mongolian Minzu schoolteachers, do not allow Wu to continue to engage with Mongolian, but encouraged her to choose a Hanshou major at university. This may be because they want her to integrate more easily into mainstream society. Lee's family developed a strategic plan of education for their two children; Lee's brother was

sent to a Mongolian school while Lee went to a Han school. In fact, many Mongolian students talk about this phenomenon in my study. For a Mongolian family, two options for education for two children are more like a compromise and an acknowledgement of two systems and cultural traditions. The choice of *Minzu* school helps retain the identity and characteristics of Mongolian whilst the choice of Han school makes for better integration into the Han-dominated society.

Fourthly, the four Mongolian students were enrolled into different Minzu universities through different accesses, such as MKM, MKH or Yukeban. Their feelings for the university are different and such feelings seem to correspond with their feelings for themselves. For example, as one of the top five Mongolian MKM students from his region to enter into Minzu University B, Ater is among those elite and extraordinary Mongolian students in the university. Therefore, he seems to demonstrate a kind of Mongolian elite student characteristic in his ways of thinking, behaving and ideas: he is more reflective and puts it into action with the purpose of spreading the Mongolian culture. By studying a Mongolian-related major, Ater gives the feeling that he is more passionate and confident. Learning experiences at Minzu University B give him the confidence so that he can better preserve and carry forward his Mongol-ness. For Wu, studying at Minzu University B seems to be a turning point; not only in the way she turned from a purely Mongolian-educated student into a Hanshou majoring student but also in the way she turned from a '*top*' Mongolian student into an '*middle*', an average Hanshou university student.

Finally, echoing Chapter 5, where two case Minzu universities have different levels of prestige and fame, Minzu education itself seems to reflect a stratification of quality, prestige and resources. For example, Wu attended a well-resourced Minzu high school in her region where the school set up experimental classes which brought together high-performing Mongolian

students in order to increase their chances of going to the best universities. Associating with other Minzu educational institutions such as Inland high school and Yukeban, it seems that there is an element of '*good*' and '*not good*' within the Minzu education system itself. The '*good*', well-resourced Minzu education adds value to a wide range of preferential treatments for minority students accessing into HE. Therefore, many prestigious universities like Minzu University B become the destination for those minority students who benefited from these advantages. Thus a loop of *prestige* within the Minzu education system is maintained.

However, inequalities between Minzu education and Putong education still remain and are significant and salient. This is exemplified by Qian's example. Qian's personal experiences seem to suggest that the disparities between Minzu and Putong education lie not only in the language adopted as the medium for instruction but also in the learning content and knowledge itself. Students with a Minzu educational background appear to have a weaker knowledge basis compared to their Putong counterparts. When in the situation of choosing a major to study, Mongolian students like Qian face more obstacles, less options, and need to expend more time and effort in achieving an ideal choice of major. The price of a fulfilling learning experience seems to be much higher for students like Qian. Mongolian students like Qian and Wu, despite previously being good students in school and college, cannot escape their awkwardness in the '*middle*', average or backwardness in a Han-learning environment.

In summary, the four profiles show how a combination of factors acting upon each student in terms of their distinctive construction of social identity. Minzu university seems to play a role in making it possible for each of them to construct social identity in either preferable or competing ways. For the Mongolian students whose Mongol-ness is significant to them, Minzu university offers a chance for them to continue to engage and reinforce their Mongolian identity

through learning and social networking (*such as Ater*). For those who do not share a strong sense of self as a Mongolian, Minzu university seems to make them reflect on their own characteristics as a Mongolian by interacting with other Mongolian students (*such as Lee*). For those who feel themselves to have been estranged from Mongolian culture, Minzu University seems to be a place where they struggle in attempting to defend their Mongolian identity (*such as Qian and Wu*). Minzu University is a unique context in providing them with such opportunities to reflect upon themselves.

Chapter 7 Negotiating Social Identity in a Minzu University Context: Presentation of the Interview Data

In this chapter, the data presented concerns the way in which Mongolian students negotiate social identity within the context of their perceptions of self as a Mongolian, as a university learner and the perceptions of the cultures and characteristics of each case Minzu university. To be more specific, there are three sections in each chapter which answer the three sub research questions of this study. This chapter concerns the social identity of Mongolian students in terms of the composition of both their ethnic/Mongolian identity and learning identity; Minzu University provides a particular context relating to both learning (*such as the role-expectations assigned by the university and a climate for learning*) and social spheres (*such as students' organisations, shared social settings, interactions and ethnic-mix friendships*). The ways in which Mongolian students negotiate a position of self within the perceived learning and social settings of the university and whether their perceptions of self as a 'Mongolian' and as a 'university learner' fit their perceptions of the culture reflected in the university might impact on their social identity construction.

Each Mongolian student is given a pseudonym. The comments from each Mongolian student are followed by a line reference in order to locate the data in each person's background. More specifically, the reference information contains their name, gender, pre-university educational backgrounds (*Min-kao-Min, Min-kao-Han, bilingual school or in-land high school*), from Minzu University A (MUA) or Minzu University B (MUB), whether or not they took Yukeban, the major they engage in the Minzu university and whether this major is a Mongolian-language-medium major (*Menshou*), Chinese-language-medium major (*Hanshou*) or Mongolian-Han bilingual. More specifically, the data presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 which gives profile information on each case Minzu university and selected individual Mongolian students helps place the

data in this chapter into the institutional and individual contexts.

Within the data presented in this chapter there is a sense that when Mongolian students talked about their perceptions surrounding Mongolian cultures, languages, learning experiences, impressions of the Minzu universities and other relevant subjects, they were talking discursively. One reason is because their perceptions of self within cultural, language or learning domains are profoundly intertwined with their discursive life experiences, where the analysis of life experiences can be chaotic and complex (Matthews and Ross, 2010). The conceptual framework of this study helps to sort out such chaos and complexity and shape it in a constructive and systematic way. The operation of social identity in three dimensions (*ethnic, learning and contextualised in the institutional background*) make it possible to present data which reflects the aims and argument behind this study.

7.1 Culture, language and Mongolian identity

This section focuses on how Mongolian students perceive the construction of their Mongolian identity, interlinking with the themes of culture, language and ethnicity. Interview data presented in this section aims to answer particularly the SRQ1. Specifically, Section 7.1.1 provides data regarding how Mongolian students perceive themselves as a Mongolian and what it means for them to be a Mongolian. The data in this section resonates with the principles of social identity theory (see Chapter 3.2.2.2), such as the *sense of belonging* and *positive attitudes*; there are also sections of data explaining how Mongolian students feel themselves being treated *exotically* in the eyes of others. Data presented in section 7.1.2 is concerned with the ways in which Mongolian students experience the Mongolian cultural traditions, life-styles, religions, rituals, preferences, arts, dress and even dietary habits. This data vividly depict the ways in which *Mongolian* as a distinctive ethnic and cultural form of reference is embedded in Mongolian students' lives. By expressing how they experience these embodied

cultural forms of reference, *Mongolian* becomes a sense of lived, concrete and day-to-day *being*.

Section 7.1.3 helps answer questions not only about in-group (*we*) and out-group (*they*) distinctions, but also why such distinctions are drawn. It seems to me that the concept of the *in-group* is important for Mongolian students in this study as they saw this as a reason to *stay together*, as a kind of defensive strategy to defend treated as an exotic and being discriminated against. The *in-group* (or who are *we*) can be either extensive or small-ranged. The *in-group* can refer to either MKM or MKH, either the entire ethnic Mongolian group or only small sections of Mongolian students from a certain region. There were no fixed protocols to define the distinctions between *us* and *them*. Therefore, the construction of Mongolian identity is diversified amongst all Mongolian students. There is no a '*unified*' Mongolian identity applied to all.

7.1.1 Perceptions of self as a Mongolian

Data concerning the meaning of *being* as a Mongolian is disclosed discursively by Mongolian students, and takes the form of a kind of innate and spontaneous feeling of self. However, it seems to me that when they talk about *being as a Mongolian*, it becomes a strength, a symbol of pride for them. Mongolian identity is symbolised as a harbour where they feel safe, a sense of belonging and positive identifications of self. Such feelings are sometimes expressed intensely. They share a *strong* sense of being as a Mongolian.

7.1.1.1 A sense of belongingness

As Barth (1969) argued, one's sense of ethnicity is essentially a self-ascribed perception. The meanings ascribed to one's ethnicity are crucial in understanding what it means to an ethnic-self. In this study, Mongolian students talked about *Mongolian* as an innate feeling of belonging; a kind of emergent and spontaneous feeling. Ala outlined this in the following way:

I grew up in the pastoral area which is a very traditional Mongolian living environment. My parents did not bother to instil anything about Mongolian in me on purpose; I have that sense of consciousness as naturally as being born (Ala, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

Wu echoed this point by saying:

To acknowledge myself as a Mongolian is an innate understanding. It is very natural, like something that is associated with me since I was born (Wu, female, MKM, MUB, Yukeban, majoring 'Public Administration', Hanshou)

To Jie, this naturally-born sense of belonging to the Mongolian ethnic shines like a 'reminder' now and then, reminding him of the Mongol-ness in himself:

The blood flowing in my body reminds me in every moment that I am a Mongolian. Every one of us should shoulder the responsibility to cherish the cultural heritage and language of our Mongolians. This is the responsibility of the Mongolians, and is also the best proof to live as a Mongolian. We cannot abandon such essence as a Mongolian (Jie, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mongolian Pharmacy Studies', Mengshou)

Jie's thoughts on the 'essence' or 'best proof' indicate a kind of philosophy about *being* in this complex world: what a Mongolian person should be like and how to justify that *being*. To Jie, *being* as a Mongolian bears an inherent responsibility which is about inheriting Mongolian culture and language heritage. Ater shared this idea by outlining that the embodiment of *being* as a Mongolian means one has 'emotional ties' with the Mongolian. In other words, Mongolians are supposed to be those who genuinely care for and are concerned about the future and fate of Mongolian as an ethnic group. In Ater's words:

The one who has real emotional ties with our Mongolian; the one who is sincerely concerned about our Mongolian, of our future and destiny; even though you cannot speak Mongolian at all, as long as you possess such a Mongolian heart, you are a Mongolian for sure (Ater, male, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

It is an interesting point, according to Ater, that *being* as a Mongolian can transcend genealogical or linguistic constraints. It is unnecessary to be linguistically-coded for *being* as a Mongolian but an innate and sincere concern for the Mongolian ethnic does seem to be required. The data seems to reveal discursive ideas of how Mongolian students ascribe meanings to what it means to be a Mongolian.

7.1.1.2 ‘Pride’ to be a Mongolian

Mongolian appears to indicate a sense of pride for many Mongolian students in this study. It earns them an honoured feeling and high self-esteem. Quyun described this in the following:

I am very proud to be born as a Mongolian [...] When I walked in the crowd, I would think like this: I am not an ordinary individual, no I am not, I should be more independent than them. That is because I am a Mongolian (Quyun, female, MKM, MUB, majoring ‘Mongolian language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

It seems to Quyun that *being* as a Mongolian is something unusual for her. To perceive herself as a Mongolian makes Quyun see herself as someone different, not ‘ordinary’. Hechu talked about how the feeling of being as an ‘honoured’ Mongolian derives from the Mongolians’ great ancestors and history:

As a Mongolian myself, I am sincerely honoured. I am the descendent of Genghis Khan. Even though the history has long passed, even though I can’t see Genghis Khan by myself, the spirit of Genghis Khan is shining and always encouraging me whenever I encountered hardship. It is a feeling which comes from inside and it would always encourage me (Hechu, female, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring ‘English’, Hanshou)

It seems to me that when Hechu referenced ‘*descendent of Genghis Khan*’, she also looked back upon the Mongolian ethnic’s glorious history. In this sense, a current sense of ‘*pride*’ finds its roots within a glorious Mongolian past. This is particularly helpful for many Mongolian students because they might feel that

the ‘pride’ of being a Mongolian is less persuasive when Mongolian is only a minority and border-inhabited Minzu group in current times.

Some other Mongolian students would ascribe the feelings of pride to the virtues that they regard the Mongolian people as possessing. For example, Lawa described the Mongolians as:

We Mongolians have openness and inclusive characteristics. We are neither narrow-minded nor closed (Lawa, female, trilingual school, MUA, majoring ‘Han Language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

Jie said similarly:

The Mongolians in my hometown have retained the valuable virtues which belong to the Mongolians, such as kindness, honesty, hospitality and these characteristics had a great impact on myself to develop my own character (Jie, male, MKM, MUA, majoring ‘Mongolian Pharmacy Studies’, Mengshou)

For Jie, these virtues he perceived belonging to the Mongolian ethnic are significant enough to ‘impact’ upon himself in develop his own character. It seems to me that these virtues and characteristics, such as ‘kindness’, ‘openness’ or ‘hospitality’, also endow them with a sense of positive identification of self; it makes a strong argument for them to be proud of themselves as one of the Mongolians.

7.1.1.3 The uniqueness to be a Mongolian

Ethnic identity can be particularly relevant to a person when it displays significant distinctions against other ethnic groups (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2011). This says something about the uniqueness of ethnic identity. Many Mongolian students talked about how they sense such uniqueness as a Mongolian, and how such uniqueness makes them feel so special as to stand out from a crowd. Ater described this as follows:

We (the Mongolians) talk, even walk with our characteristics. You know, many of the characteristics cannot be described. It is much more like a kind of feeling and natural link (Ater, male, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

It seems to Ater that a Mongolian's uniqueness can be identified, recognised or told by only those who are part of the group. Lee also shared an idea about such uniqueness:

The Mongolians have some features, and sometimes you will instantly recognise them without talking to them at all (Lee, male, MKH, MUB, Yukeban, majoring 'Public Administration', Hanshou)

Neither Ater nor Lee gave further explanation regarding how such uniqueness is created and what reasons contribute to that; it still seems to make sense to me that when Mongolian students perceive themselves as a member of the Mongolian ethnic, their cohesion is coded by a kind of tacit attraction. Uniqueness belonging to the Mongolian can be something that they share with each other; something that they use to recognise one another, and do not share with outsiders.

This uniqueness in being a Mongolian is also explained by Ala in a way that he felt the Mongolians should claim the the sense of belonging only to themselves, and commit to only one group of Mongolians. It exhibits a strong sense of being as a Mongolian, stronger than other kinds of identifications of self, including what he called a sense of '*national consciousness*' as a Chinese national:

Firstly, which comes the first, the national consciousness or ethnic consciousness? [...] if we take the Mongolian as a whole for consideration, we can see that half of the population are scattered in the countries other than the country of Mongolia [...] It is a fact that we [Mongolians] are discursive and scattered in different countries, around the world. If following this way of thinking, we should be a one. The stance is that the ethnic consciousness comes before the

national consciousness (Ala, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

Ala made a further point regarding his belief that '*ethnic consciousness comes before national consciousnesses*'. He took '*Genghis Khan*' as an example by saying that Genghis Khan is shared exclusively by the Mongolians as an ancestor and spiritual symbol; therefore it makes no sense to pose the question as to which country *Genghis Khan* should belong to. As Ala said:

We always have this idea that the Genghis Khan should never be involved in the discussion of 'nationality'. The outer Mongolians would think that the Genghis Khan is not Chinese. He is undoubtedly a Mongolian. That is because we always deem him as our great ancestor, and our great leader (Ala, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

What Ala said also shed light on a complex interplay between their perceptions of their so-called sense of *national identity* and *ethnic identity*. Being a Mongolian living in China does not necessarily refer to being a Mongolian-ethnic Chinese.

Considering all of the above, it seems to me that Mongolian students have different explanations regarding how they perceive Mongolian as a *unique* ethnic group and how they sense themselves as one of the Mongolian ethnic members sharing such *uniqueness*. The uniqueness of Mongolian is very powerful and even sometimes transcends the boundaries of '*national consciousness*'. The data in this section also makes sense in linking to the in-group versus out-group distinctions derived from social identity theory. An in-group is comprised of a high level of exclusiveness within the in-groupers; they use some tacit codes to maintain such exclusiveness and make it difficult, setting the bar high, in a bid to avoid out-groupers to permeating into it.

7.1.1.4 Mongolian identity as exotic

By recognising the distinctions between an *in-grouper* and an *out-grouper*, some Mongolian students have the feeling that they were viewed exotically by those who they consider to be the *out-groupers*. This is a feeling which occurs in day-to-day life, and can be quite clearly perceived in their social interactions with those from other Minzu backgrounds. Ler once had a boyfriend who is a Han. She said she once was imagined ‘*exotically*’ by her boyfriend’s mother:

When my boyfriend introduced me to his mother on the phone and said: she is a Mongolian. His mother, who we haven’t met before, said: Oh, a Mongolian girl, I believe she must be exotically beautiful like a minority! (Ler, female, Inland-high school, MUB, majoring ‘Education’, Hanshou)

A similar experience occurred to Dao. Dao likes wearing a Mongolian robe (*Menggu pao*) which is a kind of traditional Mongolian dress. Dao felt that she might look ‘*exotic*’ by wearing a Mongolian robe in her day-to-day life. As she said:

I like my Mongolian robe. I like it very, very much. However, every time when I am wearing a Mongolian robe, I can feel that everyone is looking at me, and it made me feel that I am weird. Therefore, I only wear that 1-2 times a year. Ever though there are still a lot of people complimenting me on my costume being beautiful, it still feels uncomfortable to be stared at when I go out wearing the Mongolian robe (Dao, female, MKM, MUA, majoring ‘Ideology and Political Education’, Mengshou)

It seems to me that Mongolian students can sense a certain element of being treated as an ‘*exotic*’, or as foreign, by those who are the *out-groupers*. This seems to become inevitable because they live in the social and learning space of a Minzu university where interactions with different kinds of *out-groupers* are everywhere. The feelings of being treated ‘*exotically*’ might also give an explanation as to why Mongolian students place such value in maintaining an exclusive group; they are too ‘*proud*’, feeling too ‘*unique*’ as themselves, to

willingly accept that they are taken as an exotic by others.

7.1.2 Culture and language in representation of Mongolian identity

Schermerhorn (1996, p.17) mentioned that the cultural elements which fragment ethnicity can be identified as '*language or dialect forms, religious affiliations, common ancestry and memories of a shared historical past etc*'. Culture, language and ethnicity closely link with each other; ethnicity is commonly understood through a cultural and language context. To a certain extent, *Mongolian* seems to indicate an abstract, overarching and all-consuming culture for many Mongolian students. However, by expressing how they experience numerous vivid Mongolian cultural elements embedded in their life, *Mongolian* becomes embodied and alive for them; *Mongolian* becomes a way of life and living.

7.1.2.1 Cultural expressions of Mongolian identity

Through depicting Mongolian-related cultures, traditions, rituals, festivals, customs, dress, dietary habits, religions and other aspects of living and life-styles, Mongolian students presented a picture of what *Mongolian* means to them through these cultural-related expressions. Through these expressions, it makes sense to see how they perceive themselves as Mongolians by practicing these cultural elements in their life experiences. For example, Lawa gave a visualisation, depicting of how Mongolian people worship the 'Obo' in her hometown:

Do you know how an Obo is stacked up? In my hometown, everyone is holding a stone with sincere heart. They put the stone together and soon the Obo would be piled up. So, every stone carries a wish and best hope for the Mongolians. People would gather around the Obo, praying and sometimes there would have Chanting Lama. Above the Obo people would be put a blue Hada on behalf of pure friendship (Lawa, female, trilingual school, MUA, majoring 'Han Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Ater also depicted how Mongolian people celebrate the ‘Na-dam’ or ‘Ovoo-will’ in his hometown, Xinjiang:

We call ‘Na-dam’ as ‘Ovoo-will’ in Xinjiang. It lasts for several months, from March to November. During the event, every family would take their own sacrifices for worship. We would also host the horse racing activities. Every family would bring their own horses for competition and win prizes. In addition, we would also have men’s wrestling, and the exhibition of Mongolian embroideries, paintings and handcrafts (Ater, male, MKM, MUB, majoring ‘Minority Language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

No matter it is called the ‘Obo’, ‘Na-dam’ or ‘Ovoo-will’, it seems to me that these are the divine tokens of the Mongolian people in Lawa and Ater’s hometown traditions. For them, holding a sacred worship toward the cultural symbols like ‘Obo’ and ‘Ovoo-will’ is what they perceive a Mongolian is supposed to be like. To worship and respect their shared spiritual beliefs is what makes them part of the *Mongolian*.

There are many other forms of *cultural expression* covering many aspects of Mongolians students’ daily life. Such as in Ater’s expressions of the dietary habits of the Mongolian:

Many Mongolians from eastern part of Inner Mongolia only eat pork, and they think the mutton smells with unsavoury odour. However, how can you call yourself a Mongolian if you don’t eat mutton? (Ater, male, MKM, MUB, majoring ‘Minority Language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

For Ater, it is particularly enlightening that the cultural habit of ‘*eating mutton*’ is so important in associating to whether one can ‘*call yourself a Mongolian*’.

Hua gave a *cultural expression* relating to Mongolians’ religion on Shamanism and the wisdom or ‘awe’ of Mongolian people to live on the steppe:

I think probably realising the importance of ‘balance’

between the human and nature is the most important factor. The Mongolians regard themselves as part of nature and the ecological environment. They regard themselves as a natural being akin to a single tree, a single piece of wood or a single blade of grass on the steppe. They keep the awe in their heart in confronting the natural environment. It is a sense of fear toward nature, despite utilising the nature meanwhile, but in the name of fear. Such as Shamanism, it is interpreted as 'psychic' in modern language. It [Shamanism] believed that all things are spiritual, and Shamen are the mediums who are able to communicate with these spiritual creatures. Through communication with the universe and the creations ('Tiandi Wanwu'), the Mongolians are able to reach a kind of knowledge beyond a human being's ability range (Hua, male, MKH, MUB, majoring 'Ecology', Hanshou)

The above conveyed a sense of understanding from Hua regarding the heritage and the philosophy of *balance* between nature and the Mongolian ethnic which is required in order to live in a harsh steppe environment. To Hua, cultural heritage is crucial for the Mongolians to pass down to the generations; this is what they live up for and cannot detach from; otherwise they will not survive. To live according to these kinds of inherited life wisdoms makes him a Mongolian with 'awe' in heart.

Tana gave a *cultural expression* relating to Mongolians' artistic performances such as traditional Mongolian 'songs' and 'vignettes':

Some people might say that our songs and vignettes cannot be understood and these belong to your Mongolians only because of the language barrier or whatsoever. Conversely, when we listen to the Han's comedy, or Peking opera, we don't fancy those as well. I don't mean that I cannot accept that at all. What I mean is that I don't appreciate these forms of arts from the bottom of my heart (Tana, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

A true sense of 'fancying' or to 'appreciating' Mongolians' performing arts makes Tana regard herself as a true Mongolian. It seems to me that a kind of

heartfelt affection for the Mongolian's performing arts, or from *'the bottom of her heart'*, is how she commits herself to her Mongolian identity.

Wu and Tana gave a *cultural expression* relating to Mongolians' apparel, accessories and dressing styles. Wu said:

Many people might think that the Mongolian is very impolite to wear a hat on several occasions. However, in fact this is just the way that the Mongolian is showing their respect to others (Wu, female, MKM, MUB, Yukeban, majoring 'Public Administration', Hanshou)

Tana said that she would choose a Mongolian robe as her wedding costume instead of choosing a *'popular'* with *'Han costume'*:

Even though it is popular right now to wear both the Mongolian costume and Han costume (at the wedding), in my wedding, I would definitely choose the Mongolian costume only. Our (Mongolian) wedding costume is beautiful enough, and why would we need to wear any other costume? (Tana, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Their dress styles are a kind of literal representation of their identity in daily life. Through reading and interpreting the dressing styles of Mongolians, Wu and Tana show their sense of understanding of what Mongolian means to them. These dressing choices are integrated into their representations of Mongolian identity in significant ways, such as showing *'respect'* by wearing a hat for Wu, or dressing as a Mongolian for Tana at important occasions such as her wedding.

Lastly, Sang gave a different type of *cultural expression* to depict how he understands the life-styles of one of his roommates - an Uyghur boy. Sang said:

Uyghurs like to stay firmly together, and they prefer to live with their own ethnic. Another reason I think is their dietary habits. We are different from him. Therefore, sometimes when we buy something to eat, I am not sure whether I should let him to try it or not. Especially in such a small area of the

dorm, it is inevitable to have frictions with each other when personal privacy is violated. It would be troublesome if the ethnic taboos are accidentally violated as well (Sang, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

In this quotation, Sang used many forms of *cultural expressions* to describe his 'Uyghur' roommate, including his dietary habits or that the Uyghur students are likely to '*stay firmly together*'. It seems to me that Sang used these different forms of *cultural expressions* to make a reference to the cultures from other minorities, and consequently to reflect upon himself as a Mongolian. These *cultural expressions* are important in making him sensitive to such as avoiding the cultural '*taboos*' which may be triggered when different cultural forms of life meet and interact.

7.1.2.2 Language in representation of Mongolian identity

Language is an important form of cultural transmission through which identities are constructed (Phinney, Romero, Nava and Huang, 2001). As Giles (1977) contended, language is the major embodiment of one's ethnic identity, and thus is used as a reminder of the cultural heritage of the group. Linked to this section, data surrounding language appears frequently. Language seems to be an indicator for Mongolian students to recognise ethnic distinctions. For Eruhan, for instance, speaking '*Mongolian at home*' makes her feel much more like a '*Mongolian more than a Chinese*'. Two different languages give her a sense of the difference between two groups (*Mongolian versus Chinese*):

When I was a child, I thought myself as a Mongolian more than a Chinese. I think the Mongolians are the same people with those outer Mongolians. We speak Mongolians at home, with our parents, but we speak Chinese outside. So I think we are different from them (Eruhan, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Preschool Education', Mengshou)

Mongolian students possess different levels of proficiency in the Mongolian language, which also signifies different states of identification of self as a

Mongolian. For Sang, he seems to have a confused identity (*neither Chinese nor full Mongolian*) because he is ‘*superficial*’ in both his Chinese and Mongolian language proficiency:

I don't consider myself in a full sense as a Mongolian because of attending bilingual school from a young age. My Mongolian is not fluent than Chinese, but my Chinese is only superficial ('Ban diao zi'). I knew too little and too shallow about the Mongolians (Sang, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

Language is, therefore, an important theme in revealing Mongolian students' perceptions of self. It seems that Mongolian students' varied perceptions based on three language domains (*Mongolian, Chinese, and English*) demonstrate a dynamic regarding how different languages contribute to different aspects of social identity construction. The contradictions between different languages also demonstrate the contradictions between different aspects of social identity among Mongolian students.

7.1.2.2.1 The Mongolian language: signposting Mongolian identity

Being able to speak the language of Mongolian makes one perceive oneself as clearly Mongolian. It acts as a signpost toward Mongolian identity, and the link is explicit. As Tana said:

We speak Mongolian, so we are Mongolian (Tana, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

On the other side, being unable to speak the Mongolian language makes it difficult and challenging, even ‘*ashamed*’, in identifying oneself as Mongolian. This is explained by Yi, who was educated in a Han school environment:

When I say: 'I am a Mongolian but I can't speak the Mongolian language.' Whenever I say like this, I feel particularly ashamed for myself (Yi, female, MKH, MUA,

The reason the Mongolian language acts as a signpost to Mongolian identity, either as a kind of language ability or a sense of language habit, is because many Mongolian students use it spontaneously on many occasions. The Mongolian language blends into their day-to-day life naturally. Ater gave an explanation of this as follows,

We MKM students have a very strong sense of using Mongolian in our daily life. Whenever we met each other, we use Mongolian all the time. Although we can speak Chinese, Mongolian is always the first choice. That is different with MKH. They are accustomed to using Chinese all the time (Ater, male, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

According to Ater, it is always their '*first choice*' with no deliberate intent. Lawa supported this by saying that speaking the Mongolian language among friends comes naturally. Communicating in languages other than Mongolian would be '*weird*':

I think if it is only me and some of my close friends, we are definitely speaking Mongolian. It is very weird if we speak another language, and no one would do that because it is just weird (Lawa, female, trilingual school, MUA, majoring 'Han Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

What Ater and Lawa said is particularly interesting because it seems that different language habits (*whether or not to use the Mongolian language in day-to-day life, in social interactions*) can indicate a subtle difference between two cohorts of Mongolian students: MKM and MKH. Different language habits help to act as a signifier of the diversified MKM or MKH identity.

Another explicit link between Mongolian language and Mongolian identity is shown by the data which reveals that many Mongolian students are concerned for the future of the Mongolian language and see it as a sign of the future of the

Mongolian ethnic. Qian mentioned this by saying like ‘*our language is about to vanish, then I think our Mongolian is pretty done*’:

I was reading a passage back in high school which was about the Mongolian language. It said the Mongolian language might disappear by the end of the century. Now the problem which the Mongolians confront is that less and less people learn the Mongolian language, and thus less and less of the people are able to speak the Mongolian language. If what is predicted in that passage is true and our language is about to vanish, then I think our Mongolian is pretty done! (Qian, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring ‘Engineering’, Hanshou)

Naqi studies the Mengshou major of ‘*Han Language and Literature Studies*’. By using the *Mongolian language* as a medium to learn the *Chinese language*, she took language issues quite seriously and personally. She said that the diminishing of the Mongolian language means the Mongolian ethnic will ‘*no longer exist*’:

I was thinking whether it is true that our language is about to die out? If there would be one day (Mongolian language is diminished), then I think our Mongolian ethnic will no longer exist (Naqi, female, MKM, MUA, majoring ‘Han Language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

Therefore, it seems to me that the Mongolian language not only represents the Mongolian identity of Mongolian students, it also represents a diversified Mongolian identity through such as different states of proficiency of the Mongolian language, different language habits in daily usage, or different attitudes and emotions toward the future of the Mongolian language. The ways in which to use the Mongolian language becomes a choice for Mongolian students in terms of whether to highlight or conceal a salient or latent Mongolian identity.

7.1.2.2.2 The dominant Chinese language

Despite the Mongolian language being significant for Mongolian students in representing their Mongolian identity in different ways, much of the data in this study indicates that the Chinese language dominates in their learning experiences

and social life. Sometimes, learning, speaking and using Chinese is massive in their learning and social experiences, thus going against their perceptions of self as a Mongolian. The domination of the Chinese language seems to be a kind of crime against the construction of an ideal Mongolian identity. For example, Dagula mentioned that the learning of Chinese starts to dominate the education of Mongolian students at a young age:

We learnt Chinese since we were children. I think most of the Mongolian students who have attended schools can speak some degree of Chinese anyway (Dagula, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Wu also commented that mastering Chinese was taken 'seriously' while at school for Mongolian students like her:

We all know that Chinese is pretty important, so all of our class would pay high attention during the Chinese language class [...] everyone would take learning Chinese seriously (Wu, female, MKM, MUB, Yukeban, majoring 'Public Administration', Hanshou)

To master Chinese as well as their mother tongue dominates many aspects of Mongolian students' learning achievements, school performances and even the evaluation of their success. The point is not about being able to speak or use the Chinese language but to 'skilfully' master it, to keep their Chinese language ability up-to-date. That is the only way that a Mongolian student can be 'outstanding' among his or her peers:

For us, speaking Chinese is not a difficult thing. The difficult thing for us is how to perform the Chinese language well, at a proficient level. If you are able to skilfully perform the Chinese language and meanwhile speak the Mongolian language at a proficient level, then you would be outstanding compared to those monolingual persons (Quyun, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Mongolian language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

What Quyun explained above makes sense in understanding why some

Mongolian students will feel that they are struggling when they cannot live up to a 'high-level' of Chinese language proficiency. For example, Qian commented:

Compared to your Hansheng, my Chinese language is only at the high school level. When I use Chinese, it is only at the basic level of general communication. My Chinese is not sufficient grammatically or in terms of other academic works. I am not, and would never be, like thinking as a Han or talking as a Han (Qian, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Engineering', Hanshou)

Lacking the capability to speak the Chinese language proficiently may also cause difficulties in communication. Eruhan further mentioned that Chinese is a major barrier to her achieving academic success. This leads to her experiencing a sense of academic inferiority compared to the Hanshou students:

For example, when I communicate with others, even though I have many ideas which I want to express, I find it is very difficult for me to express fully what I mean to say. Especially compared to Hanshou (Han language taught) students, they can learn more, they can read more, they can understand more than us. We are weak in Chinese, and that's why we learn less and perform more poorly than them (Eruhan, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Preschool Education', Mengshou)

It is very difficult for them to set a goal of 'thinking as a Han' or 'talking as a Han', because Chinese will always be their second language. It seems to me that lacking the capability to skilfully speak the Chinese language makes Mongolian students like Jian and Eruhan less confident in their learning performances. As Eruhan said, they are 'weak' in the Chinese language; this would become a disadvantage for them in either fully expressing their ideas or achieving good learning performances.

The domination of the Chinese language in Mongolian students' learning experiences can make them feel exhausted; the need to master one more language is regarded as a 'burden':

One more language for Mengsheng, this is not an advantage, this is actually a burden (Bai, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Preschool Education', Mengshou)

Therefore, they might 'resist' the learning of one more language other than the Mongolian language:

I think Mongolian students tend to resist Chinese, or languages other than Mongolian, including English. We have a very deep emotional attachment to the Mongolian language and this cannot be ignored (Jie, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mongolian Pharmacy Studies', Mengshou)

For those Mongolian students who feel that mastering Chinese becomes a 'burden', the fact that they live in a Chinese language-dominated environment and society makes it very difficult to rid themselves of this feeling. The domination of the Chinese language poses the threat of marginalising those who tend to 'resist' it. For the Mongolian students in this study in particular, the Chinese language symbolises something much more than a sense of identification. It equates to chances, opportunities, academic success and a smooth integration into wider society.

7.1.2.2.3 Disadvantaged English language ability

China launched their reform and opening policy in the early 1980s, and since then innovations have taken place in the educational system to mobilise modernisation and internationalisation agendas. Great importance is attached to international languages in school education, particularly English. However, according to a study from Feng and Sunuodula (2009), the provision of English language education is implemented on a nationwide basis; minority students, however, are 'implicitly excluded' from the promotion of English language education (Ibid, p.689). The data in this section clearly resonates against this background. Many Mongolian students mentioned that their English language is basically the 'bare basics'. For example, Hechu described her experiences of taking English as a major of study which, at the start, was very tough for her:

My English is literally the bare basics. When I started my first year in English major study (at the university), I literally couldn't keep up with the courses and I couldn't understand what the teacher taught at all (Hechu, female, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'English', Hanshou)

Much of the data in this study explains why Mongolian students are so vulnerable in their English language ability. For example, Eruhan explained that, over years of education at Minzu schools up to Minzu university, the English language provision was unstructured and inconsistent:

When we started to learn English, we started from the basic English characters like A.B.C. When we were at secondary school, we started again from the basic A.B.C. Now when we are in the university, the English we learned still starts from A.B.C (Eruhan, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Preschool Education', Mengshou)

Wu consolidated this point by saying:

We started by learning 26 phonetic characters in English in junior school and studied the same content in high school. We always stagnated in the foundation stage and never moved forward (Wu, female, MKM, MUB, Yukeban, majoring 'Public Administration', Hanshou)

While learning the Chinese language was taken 'seriously', Jie commented that English language learning attracted less interest from his classmates in Minzu high school; no one put effort into learning English in class:

The reasons that Mongolian students cannot study English well are mostly our own problems. The problems lie in our attitudes. In my high school, the English class is the class for fun. Basically, no one really cares about learning English (Jie, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mongolian Pharmacy Studies', Mengshou)

It seems that Mongolian students lack the motivation to learn the English language sufficiently well. This happened even after they went to the Minzu university. The university set very low requirements for them, enabling the

students to pass English language tests (College English Test-Level 3/4) easily:

*We only need to pass an internal standard which is roughly
200 points (Eruhan, female, MKM, MUA, majoring
'Preschool Education', Mengshou)*

It seems to me that the vulnerability in English language for Mongolian students may be a result of the domination of the Chinese language. Chinese is taken 'seriously' by the Mongolian students, their families, at the Minzu schools and in *Gaokao* and the result of this is that the learning of English is structurally edged out. The segregation of Mongolian students from a wider global community is implicitly managed by the Minzu education system. When a Minzu university sets an 'internal standard' for Mongolian students to pass the English tests, it also decreases the motivation of Mongolian students to learn English with goodwill. The lack of English language skills might further disadvantage and marginalise Mongolian students in this increasingly globalised world.

7.1.3 Mongolian as a sense of segregated identity

Much of the data explains how Mongolian students draw a distinction between the in-group and out-group. Maintaining the distinction between the in-groupers ('we') and out-groupers ('they') makes sense in constructing social identity. It needs to be made clear that those who are regarded by Mongolian students as 'they' are not necessarily confined to the Han student community, or non-Mongolian minorities; 'they' can also include certain Mongolian students. Drawing from this section of data, one can begin to understand how Mongolian students tend to segregate themselves from those who are regarded as 'they'. To maintain a strong sense of Mongolian identity renders a strong sense of separation of themselves from the others, from the other groups, from any others who are culturally, linguistically, educationally or even regionally different from them.

7.1.3.1 Keep an exclusive clique to exclude others

Forming friendships within an exclusive social setting is important in terms of ethnic identity formation, as this would provide Mongolian students with a group of people who are able to reinforce positive images of themselves when their Mongolian identity is questioned. This is to establish Mongolian identity 'socially'. There is much data concerning the ways in which Mongolian students tend to form and maintain in-group friendships with Mongolians only. They tend to maintain this as a kind of 'clique' comprising those from similar backgrounds (*ethnic, educational or regional*). They use a lot of 'we' to indicate the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others. For example, Ala explained that the 'clique' he belongs to is a small group of MKM Mongolian students from the Xinjiang autonomous region:

We are a small clique here. That is because, in each year, only very small numbers of MKM Mongolian students would be enrolled into Minda (Minzu university) from Xinjiang (Ala, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

For Elima, her close friendship is maintained within a small clique comprising 'basically all the Mongolians'. As Elima said:

My close friends are basically all Mongolian, and few of them are Han. The reason is because they (Han students) are out of reach. Typically I spend most of my time with my roommates and we do things together all the time, like go to classes, self-studying, or go shopping. All my roommates are my classmates as well (Elima, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Preschool Education', Mengshou)

Jie also commented that his dorm is exclusive in the sense that 'all of us are Mongolian boys':

In my dorm, all of us are Mongolian boys and they have a sort of slothful personality. They do not take the matter of study seriously. Because of this (kind of accommodation atmosphere), some changes have taken place on myself and

my attitudes as well. I become less patient and lack endurance for a lot of things. I especially become less motivated in learning (Jie, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mongolian Pharmacy Studies', Mengshou)

In contrast to western universities, where students are freer to choose the type and mix of their accommodation, Mongolian students were mostly assigned and allocated their accommodation by the university. According to Elima and Jie, it seems to me that one important reason that Mongolian students become more exclusive in their friendship and social networks is because they were deliberately segregated from Han students in arrangements such as accommodation and classes. For Elima, all her close interactions were with her roommates and all her roommates come from the same Mengshou (*Mongolian language medium*) class. For Jie, the enforcement of an accommodation policy requiring him to live only with Mongolian boys has affected his personality and learning attitudes. It occurs to me that it is not only about Mongolian students' personal intentions to exclude Han students from their social network, but also about the university making deliberate arrangements to segregate Mongolian students within a separate system (such as a separate *Mengshou* class and a separate accommodation). In this way Han students are 'out of reach'.

Some data reveals details concerning the intentions of some Mongolian students to purposely exclude Han students as their intimate friends. Tana express this strongly in the following:

I think in my entire life I won't make any intimate friends with Han, because they are in my eyes very cunning. If I am too close to them, I think I might be deceived (Tana, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Just like Tana, who has experiences of strong adverse reactions to Han, it is my feeling from the data that 'Han' or 'Hansheng' (*Han students*) are collectively placed in opposition to many of the Mongolian students in this study. When they

talk of the exclusion of others, the ‘others’ they are either explicitly or implicitly referring to are Han students. This does not happen to any other non-Han and non-Mongolian Minzu students. For example, Tibetan students are treated more intimately by the Mongolian students. An example of this is from Jier:

For the Tibetans, they would firstly find a Tibetan girl for a relationship. However, if they cannot find a Tibetan, they might opt for a Mongolian girl as the second choice. Except for Tibetan and Mongolian, they won't consider any other Minzu groups (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

A sense of exclusion can also apply to Mongolian students themselves. Lee, as an MKH student, had one such experience, being ‘excluded’ by other Mongolian students. As he described it:

Afterwards I introduced myself and said: my name is Lee. I think at that time they felt pretty close to me. And then one of them talked to me in the Mongolian language. Of course I didn't understand. And then, he asked me again in Chinese and said: can you speak the Mongolian language? I said I can't. In that moment, I captured a sense of disappointment from them. Even though they didn't say anything, I can still feel that they have already excluded me from them (Lee, male, MKH, MUB, Yukeban, majoring 'Public Administration', Hanshou)

Again, whether or not proficiency in the Mongolian language becomes a factor for some Mongolian students in deciding who should be ‘excluded’ from a certain clique, Lee, even though he goes by a typical Mongolian name, considers this example to be symbolic not only for himself but for other Mongolian students.

7.1.3.2 Authentic Mongolians versus divergent Mongolians

This section of data sees Mongolian students use the word ‘authentic’ (‘chunzhengde’) to convey their ideas about the differences embedded within the seemingly homogenous Mongolian student body in the Minzu universities.

Apparently, not all Mongolian students are regarded as the same; there are divergences within. The data also reveals that the distinction between authentic and divergent Mongolian students seems to be shared by both sides. Some elements of the Mongolian student population perceive themselves as the *authentic* ones. Meanwhile, other Mongolian students recognise and accept their *'un-authenticity'*. The data in this section gives an overview of what kinds of protocols or criteria Mongolian students use in making their judgements on Mongolian authenticity. Drawing upon these criteria, Mongolian students segregate themselves, either intentionally or unintentionally, to belong to different in-groups.

Tana deemed herself an authentic Mongolian, ascribing such authenticity to the region where she came from:

We western Mongolians are much more authentic ('Chunzheng'), and our language and culture preserve the most original features of the Mongolian (Tana, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

It seems from Tana that she deemed herself an authentic Mongolian because she came from an environment (*Western Inner Mongolia*) where Mongolian culture and language are preserved more tacitly compared to other areas. In comparison, those from Eastern Inner Mongolia (*such as the 'Horqin' areas, see Chapter 5*) might be less authentic due to their frequent mixing with the Han areas and Han people. Lawa, who came from the eastern part of Inner Mongolia, shared this idea and deemed herself less authentic compared to those western Mongolians:

The Mongolians from western parts are the most original blood of the Mongolians, and they are the descendants of the Golden family (Genghis Khan's immediate family). They speak the standard Mongolian language better than us (as eastern Mongolians). They (Mongolians from western parts) are not very willing to talk to us, even sometimes show contempt for us, but I still aspire to talk to them (Lawa, female, trilingual school, MUA, majoring 'Han Language

It seems to me that determining Mongolian authenticity has less to do with their respective regions of origin. It is more about whether Mongolian students were born, raised and educated in an environment where *Mongolian* is treasured, well-preserved, and appreciated in a wider social climate. It also seems to me that, when Lawa stated the western Mongolians have '*original blood*' and thus are more attractive, it is not the western Mongolians themselves who attract Lawa. It is an aspiration to Mongolian origins, pure Mongolian culture or the '*standard*' Mongolian language which she finds attractive.

Educational backgrounds can be another significant criteria contributing to the distinction between authentic and divergent Mongolians. In the eyes of MKM Mongolian students, the MKH are considered a divergent group. For example, Jier described this group of Mongolian students at the Minzu university as follows:

Many Mongolian students in Minda (Minzu University), basically many of them come from Inner Mongolia and cannot be distinguished as Mongolian at all. They don't look Mongolian and they do not speak Mongolian language at all (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Spending their formative years in education in Han schools made a lot of Mongolian students lose their features, language ability and other aspects which would identify them as Mongolian, and are thus noticeably 'unauthentic'. This is accepted by a MKH Mongolian student, Hua:

I felt that I am not an authentic (Mongolian) because I cannot speak Mongolian. When you are incapable of speaking Mongolian, you will always be considered as an 'outsider', outside the group of those authentic Mongols. No one would really accept that (as a Mongolian), even myself (Hua, male, MKH, MUB, majoring 'Ecology', Hanshou)

Jier and Hua's comments link closely to language, but also strongly allude to an overall differentiated education system. When Mongolian students are differentiated into different kinds of schooling and use a different language as the medium for learning, they are potentially differentiated as diversified Mongolians and have a diversified Mongolian identity. The question of Mongolian *authenticity* is the creation of differentiated education system; it is something which is judged mostly by the MKM Mongolian students. Sometimes they felt that Mongolian authenticity is challenged by the preferential policies offered to Mongolian students in *Gaokao*. More specifically, it was these preferential treatments which they felt caused a large number of unauthentic Mongolian students to appear in the Minzu university:

Now there are less and less of the authentic Mongolian students, and many of them are just like you (me, the researcher). Basically they choose to be a Mongolian only because of the added points on Gaokao, and there are a lot of students like that (Qian, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Engineering', Hanshou)

No matter whether they use the criteria of '*speaking standard Mongolian language*', '*western Mongolian origins*' or the preferential policies, they tend to segregate themselves distinctively from the rest, taking this as a way of maintaining a strong sense of being as a Mongolian. It seems to me that Mongolian students, particularly the MKM Mongolian students, tend to sustain the idea of an *in-group* comprising only those who are just like them. The *in-group* might be small in number, but it is significant for some Mongolian students in preventing themselves from being assimilated by the Han, or being alienated from their Mongolian origins.

7.1.3.3 Segregating themselves as a defensive strategy against discrimination

This section presents the data which attempts to explain why Mongolian students hold a strong sense of themselves as a Mongolian and try to defend their Mongolian identity by adopting a segregation strategy. One reason for this is

because Mongolian students have experienced wide-ranging and profound discrimination, both within the university and in the wider social sphere, in addition to being subject to bias and stereotyping.

Many Mongolian students gave details of the different kinds of discrimination that they experienced as a Mongolian, both in their university and public life. They described the discrimination as sometimes being rude and hurtful. For example, Dagula mentioned that the Mongolians were called ‘bastards’ in front of her:

During the time when western Mongolia suffered riots, a Han student in my dorm described the western Mongolians, right in front of my face, as ‘Mongolian bastards (Menggu danzi)’! (Dagula, female, MKM, MUA, majoring ‘Minority Language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

The Mongolian language is described in discriminatory fashion as the ‘language for birds’:

Only because they can’t understand it, the Hansheng say our language is the language for birds (niaoyu) (Dagula, female, MKM, MUA, majoring ‘Minority Language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

The Mongolian language is also translated ridiculously, which insults their feelings:

In Chinese, it means that this room is the relaxing lounge, but in Mongolians it says toilets (Dagula, female, MKM, MUA, majoring ‘Minority Language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

Mongolian students are looked down upon as a group of ‘low-academic’ representatives in the university:

Mengsheng is the representative of low-academic achievements. If the university hosts any kinds of knowledge contest, it must be the Hansheng who are selected for the

contest. If it is the sports competition or artistic performances, then it is the turn for Mengsheng to be considered (Elima, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Preschool Education', Mengshou)

It seems from Elima's words that Mongolian students are not only discriminated against as a group of poorly-performing students academically, but also stereotyped as only good at 'sports competition' or 'artistic performances'. This is very similar to how African American students were discriminated against as intellectually inferior but physically developed.

The discrimination comes not only from Han students but also certain teachers in the university who look down on them. Naqi shared an experience relating to this:

A Mengsheng was murmuring in class in Mongolian. The teacher became very angry and harshly criticised all Mengsheng in front of the whole class. The teacher said: 'Mengsheng, you all listen up, no more Mongolian language is allowed in my class! The Mongolian language is fading, and is about to be eliminated eventually by society, and so are you. Everything about Mongolians is slowly degrading, but look at yourself, what are you doing? You Mengsheng are capable of nothing, except having fun and playing around' (Naqi, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Han Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

As Naqi described, the discriminatory comments from the teacher were mixed with the contempt and bias which prompted her to accuse Mongolian students of being capable of nothing except 'playing around'. Mongolian students, particularly the Mongolian boys, are stereotyped as a group of violent, troublesome and physically-aggressive students in the eyes of Han students and teachers:

If two Han students get into a fight, everyone would say that it is alright. By contrast, if Mengsheng get into a fight, everyone would say: 'oh, you see, Mengsheng are fighting again (Naqi, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Han Language

What is presented above reveals the different kinds of discrimination, stereotyping, even insults and contempt that Mongolian students have experienced personally. This kind of discrimination against Mongolians or Mongolian students has a profound impact on their construction of social identity. Because being *Mongolian* is so important for them as a symbol of hometown, family traditions, cultural roots, self-esteem, pride or a sense of belonging, they tend to develop defensive strategies to protect their Mongolian identity; in this way their Mongolian dignity is defended. '*Segregating themselves*' can be one such strategy. Through intentionally or unintentionally segregating themselves from other students (*particularly the Han students*), Mongolian students feel safe and experience a sense of belonging through being surrounded by those who they regard as in-groupers, or as the '*we*'.

7.1.4 A brief summary

This section has presented data which raise many discussions surrounding culture, language and Mongolian identity. These have included Mongolian students' varied perceptions of what it means to be a Mongolian. How they relate to different kinds of Mongolian cultural representations, including distinctive Mongolian traditions, customs, rituals, religion, preferences or other relevant life-style choices. How different languages contribute to different aspects of Mongolian identity construction. And how Mongolian students tend to maintain varied forms of exclusive cliques so as to segregate themselves from the out-groupers, and how such endeavours contribute to defending and protecting their ideal Mongolian identity construction.

7.2 Learning identity explored

This section will present data centred on the theme of *learning identity*. In exploring the learning identity construction of Mongolian students one must consider the concept of how Mongolian students become aware of their role as a *university learner*, particularly in the pedagogical and disciplinary context of Minzu universities. The data presented in this section aims to answer SRQ2 in particular. It contains a wealth of detailed information, including how Mongolian students perceive their role as a learner through interactions across different learning contexts (such as *a Hanshou major, Mengshou major, Yukeban*). How Mongolian students speak about the process of choosing a university, their current sense of self as a learner and their future goals in the context of the wider job market. The Mongolian students' learning identities are not created exclusively in the Minzu University; they are closely related to their pre-university educational experiences and language backgrounds. In fact, Mongolian students' perceptions of self as a *learner* have already been well-established to a certain extent prior to their access into Minzu university, but are also subject to a process of re-shaping, re-occurring, and re-negotiation based on the particular learning context which Minzu universities provide for them.

7.2.1 Learning identity constructed at pre-entry stage: a choice or a compromise?

In thinking about the '*role*', the identity as a university learner, it is important to be aware of the fact that the pre-entry stage is significant for many Mongolian students in this study, particularly in respect of the decisions, choices and perceptions regarding whether, why and how to apply to Minzu university for HE. In a sense, to make a decision to apply for Minzu university indicates a particular starting point for the subsequent construction of a particular learning identity.

Nearly all the Mongolian students in this study were enrolled into two case

Minzu universities through *Gaokao* (HE entrance exam) but differences exist in their diversified educational backgrounds, language backgrounds or regional variations (*students coming from different regions were set different entry scores*). Making the decision to apply for Minzu university for HE is meaningful, and even has special significance for some Mongolian students. For example, Tana told me that choosing Minzu University A is like a '*family tradition*'; she is following this tradition:

Minzu University A has a kind of fate bond with my family especially; nearly half of my family are graduates of this university. When my elder brother got back home every semester, he would talk a lot about the interesting things happened in the university and I kind of know it since I was very young. As a child, you know, I have no concept about 'university'. But as long as I know I shall go for higher education, Minzu University A is my only one choice (Tana, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Tana seems to have had a perception of self as a Minzu university student since she was young. Minzu University A as a locally-renowned Mongolian-featured university seems to have a special connection with her families' Mongolian roots.

For other Mongolian students, the choice to apply to Minzu university is more likely to be a compromise between their *Gaokao* performances, preferential treatments for them as minority candidates and a kind of corollary as MKM students. Compared to applying to a *Putong* university, Minzu universities provide low requirements for access with more options of majors and courses for minority students. For example, Gele mentioned that her *Gaokao* performance makes it impossible for her to apply to the medical studies if this is a case in a *Putong* university:

My Gaokao score is only a little bit higher than the Mengsheng entrance requirement (Mengshou Luqu Xian). However, generally speaking, the medical schools require a very high Gaokao score and mine has no chance of getting

me into the western or clinical schools (Gele, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mongolian Pharmacy Studies', Mengshou)

These kinds of preferential treatments for minority students, including Mongolian students, are also shown as economic considerations. Jier noted that she is able to study tuition-free by choosing Minzu University B:

After my father passed away, I have to consider the economic factors regarding my choice of university. I have two younger sisters in my family, and my mother is the only one to work and support all of us; I found out that it charges no tuition fees as long as we choose the major of Mongolian language studies. It only charges accommodation fees. Therefore, I came here (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

The data in this study indicates that some Mongolian students coming from well-resourced educational backgrounds see Minzu university as a compromised choice. They evaluate Minzu university by comparing it to other Putong universities. As Lawa said, it is neither the bad university nor a better university:

I feel that I don't belong here because I come from a trilingual school. I feel that I am out of tune with other students [...] Honestly, I am not at the same level as them. I have been depressed for a long time. I know myself and I understand my ability, and it deserves a better university. But eventually, I came here. This is a joke of fate. I look down upon this university, and feel hurt inside (Lawa, female, trilingual school, MUA, majoring 'Han Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Ler also comes from a well-resourced educational background (*inland high school*) and, like Lawa, feels that she deserves a better university than Minzu university:

It can't be said that the Minzu University B is not a good university. It is only that, when we considered applying for universities, inland high school did not deem students as minority candidates. We are good in Chinese. We use Chinese to take exams. Compared to Hansheng, we are not bad. We are confident enough to think about even top

universities, not just limiting ourselves to the Minzu universities (Ler, female, Inland-high school, MUB, majoring 'Education', Hanshou)

Both Lawa and Ler had positive images of self as a learner in their previous trilingual school and inland high school. They believed that they can opt for a university which would be a good fit for their own values and aspirations. As they said, Minzu universities do not appear to be a good match. It appears to me that regardless of whether trilingual school or inland high schools are exclusively arranged for minority students, many minority students took these advanced educational resources as a springboard to integrate themselves into a Han-dominated HE system and wider society. In this sense, Minzu universities are only for those minority students who are poor and disadvantaged in Gaokao performances and Chinese language abilities.

If the *compromise* means, for students like Lawa and Ler, that they have no choice other than to transit to Minzu universities due to their unsatisfactory Gaokao scores, *compromise* can mean something else for many MKM students in this study. To them, they have to compromise by going to Minzu universities because they were constrained by their language and educational backgrounds to the extent that only a limited number of HEIs can offer them suitable *Mengshou* (*Mongolian-language-medium*) majors and courses. Amongst these HEIs, Minzu universities are the good ones. This was explained by Ala; as he said, only '10' universities are suitable for students like him:

We can only choose from those universities which provide the Mengshou majors and such universities are only roughly 10 in number. In addition to the Minzu University B which is better, the others include Xinjiang Normal university, Northwest Minzu University and Inner Mongolia University and so on (Ala, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

Again, it seems to me that Mongolian students in Minzu universities are not a

homogenous group; they differ significantly from each other due to the different routes they take in their own choices for Minzu universities; they bring differing expectations with them in choosing Minzu universities; some have an active interest (*such as Tana and Gele*) and some passively compromise (*such as those who have no better choice but Minzu universities*). This puts into context the diversified starting points for different Mongolian students in re-negotiating their learning identity in their subsequent years at university.

7.2.2 What does it mean for the learning of Mongolian students at the university?

As Kolb and Kolb (2009) explained, learning identity indicates a perception of self as a capable learner with an attitude (*believing oneself to be capable of learning*), a commitment (*committing to learning*) and the endeavour (*action for learning*). For the Mongolian students in this study, the question of how they perceive themselves as a learner begins from the time when they begin to recognise what it means for them to learn at a university, which in turn has an effect on their commitment to learning. In negotiating learning identity, the process of moving into the study of a discipline/profession-based curriculum is also a process of discovering how they change the way in which they see themselves as a '*university learner*'. As Qian noted:

I do not have a clear idea in my mind about what my major is about and what I am supposed to learn at the university until I start my professional curricula studies (Qian, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Engineering', Hanshou)

According to Qian, it seems to me that to recognise oneself as a capable learner at the university works in parallel with the construction of the learning identity as a sense of professional-oriented awareness of self. This acts as a form of professional foundation of self on which to build upon. Their learning experiences at Minzu universities provided them with a relatively systematic and integrated knowledge base, enabling them to become aware of what they are

learning for and how this prepares them for their future profession, as Eruhan explained:

I once thought that pre-school education, oh, it is like a nanny-training course and is about coaxing the babies. But after studying the professional curricula, my mind was changing and I knew that this is not easy. There are so many theories and so much professional knowledge, which I can't understand at all at first. It is much harder than nanny training because it is more specialised (Eruhan, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Preschool Education', Mengshou)

Within the process of learning, which in Eruhan's case is the study of a professional curriculum, learning identity is gradually constructed based on the understanding that learning at the university is not superficial, and is not taken for granted. It requires consistent effort and commitment.

Dai shared a similar story with Eruhan by stating how she got an understanding of what it means to study the particular major she engaged, and how committing to this role 'makes sense of what I learned':

The teacher (in Mongolian surgery class) once told us a story about her colleague who has many years of surgery practice and is an experienced doctor. One time, when this doctor was in an operation, the patient is detected with no breath and blood pressure, but the doctor kept doing CPR for almost half an hour, and finally the patient came back to life. The doctor rescued him. At this time, I think I understand why my family want me to study this major (Mongolian Pharmacy). Becoming a doctor is a hard job but it is meaningful. To be a doctor means to be responsible for life, and it makes sense of what I learned, it becomes meaningful to me when it means making a contribution to real life (Dai, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mongolian Pharmacy Studies', Mengshou)

Jie studied the same major with Dai, and he feels that learning at the university will put him in a position which qualifies him to give families medical advice:

What I learned has gained me a lot of practical help. I can't be sure how good my Mongolian pharmacist knowledge is,

but at least I know some basics so that I can give my families the guidance of choosing medicines and treatment if they feel physically uncomfortable (Jie, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mongolian Pharmacy Studies', Mengshou)

Both Dai and Jie, they seem to associate worth with learning. For Dai, learning at the university means he can 'make a contribution to real life' and to Jie it means she can 'give my families guidance in choosing medicines'. It seems to me that when learning becomes something worthwhile and meaningful, it might contribute to a positive attitude for learning, thus enhancing learning identity construction.

In de-contextualising the Minzu (*Mongolian*) background of each Mongolian student in this study, it becomes apparent that learning at the university can be a life-changing endeavour, just as it is for many others. What has emerged is that the Mongolian students in this study, just like any group of working-class students in an elite university, change the way they perceive themselves and feel that they have become a different person and want to be perceived differently by others. This understanding of a *change* of self is what they believed the university brought to them, and reflects a restructuring of identity. As Feng said:

I am really glad that I insist on continuing and did not quit. I am not the kind of person who can quit easily, especially as my parents do not find it easy to support me in higher education. Compared to my fellows back in the village, they have been far away from me, from my life. Whenever I came back to village, I see that their life is surrounded by children, by work, so different from mine. We have less and less to share with each other. I think I am luckier because I experience more possibilities. This is what university brings to me. The valuable lesson that I learned (in the university) is how it changes the way I look at myself. I find a new-self here (Feng, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Economic Studies', Hanshou)

As illustrated above, learning identity is constructed based on distinctive learning experiences for each person. However, committing to learning at the university

also gives them a chance to perceive self differently, not the same as before, and create a '*new-self*'.

7.2.3 A smooth transition of learning identity as a Mongolian learner

In thinking about '*smooth*', it mainly means a subtle merging of Mongolian students' ethnic identity, language and cultural backgrounds with their learning experiences at the Minzu universities. Mongolian students, particularly the MKM, show this continuity in terms of their relationship with the knowledge, their ethnic background and their learning identity as a learner at the university. Their learning process seems to be built not only upon their Mongolian identity but also the extension of their Mongolian identity. By studying different majors associated to Mongolian, they perceive a sense of belonging to their Mongolian identity.

7.2.3.1 Min-kao-Min students' learning experiences: a sense of belonging to Mongolian identity

Much of the data in this section presents positive images of many MKM Mongolian students regarding their ability to build a bridge between their learning identity and their Mongolian identity. What they are learning is not contrary to, but compatible with, their previous and current sense of self as a Mongolian and as a capable '*learner*'. Mongolian identity is strengthened, consolidated and deepened over the course of the learning process. On the other hand, their Mongolian identity is significant in learning the Mongolian/Minzu-related culture, language, and knowledge of Mongolian students as a major. They sense that what they are learning is meaningful, and is removed from what they are familiar with; by learning they are not betraying their Mongol roots.

Some MKM Mongolian students were studying science at high school and began to engage the major of Mongolian-studies at Minzu university. For them, a

transition from science to social science, especially the learning of Mongolian-related knowledge, is a return to Mongolian identity. Bai has a straightforward description of this feeling when he studied a curriculum of Mongolian history:

I felt that what is written is the history of our own, the history of our own Minzu. When I learned about the wartime of Genghis Khan with his troops, I am really proud to be as a Mongol. When I learned about the decay of the Mongol empire, I can feel myself in a down mood. These emotions are very real, as if I went through this period of history by myself (Bai, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Preschool Education', Mengshou)

For Mongolian students studying Mongolian-language study majors, especially, being a Mongolian becomes more *real*. The learning experience at Minzu university is a continuation of Mongolian identity. Quyun thought that she began to better understand the significance of self as a Mongolian while studying at Minzu university:

I studied science subjects previously (in high school), but I am a Mongolian myself and have had a relationship with the Mongolian language for more than 20 years, it is time to know it more. What I knew about the Mongolian language was very shallow previously. That's why I think this major is quite valuable to me because I can gain a lot of knowledge about Mongolian through studying it (Quyun, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Mongolian language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Temuer noted the significance of Minzu university lies in the fact that it bears a responsibility to cultivate the 'younger generations' of the Mongolian ethnic. There is no better place than Minzu University as a platform where Mongolian young people are able to associate themselves with the Mongolian, with '*our Minzu, our history and ancestry*', through learning at the university:

The Mongolian students in the university are mostly the ones my age, or even younger than me who were born after the 1990s. The Mongolians from younger generations knew very

little about our origins and history. Therefore, I think it is necessary to arrange such curriculum about Mongolian history, to provide a chance for the young people to understand more about our Minzu, our history and ancestors (Temuer, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Ideology and Political Education', Mengshou)

For other Mongolian students, the learning experiences at Minzu university help them deepen their Mongolian identity: a deeper understanding of Mongolian as an ethnic group. Mongolian-related knowledge is acquired comprehensively, systemically, specifically and is elaborated in detail. Ala gave a comment relating to this point:

In high school, the history about Mongolian that I learned is limited. This is very different compared to in Minzu university. At the university, I am more clear about how the history of Mongolian is as a whole picture, and is consistent, I know about its past and context. The materials about Mongolian history which I am able to read here are systematic (Ala, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

For Ater, learning professional knowledge about Mongolian history and religion helps him appropriately and accurately restore Mongolian religious traditions upon which he can carry out relevant campus activities:

When I studied Tibetan buddhist history, it gave me the knowledge of the sacred implication of the Zulu festival. When I organise the Zulu festival activities, I want to make it more sacred, and try to represent the religious spirit of the festival. I can host the activities in depth and with originality, aspects such as the lightning ceremony and the ritual chanting and so forth are all restored. So, (Tibetan buddhist history) gave me many inspirations and it solves practical confusions, especially when I try to find the Buddhist roots of the Zulu festival (Ater, male, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Just as both Ater and Ala said, what they learned of Mongolian-related knowledge and history based on their major of study is also a review of their

Mongol-ness. This learning contributes to representing the ‘originality’ of their Mongolian identity.

Learning knowledge is important for many Mongolian students in better understanding themselves as a ‘Mongolian’. It also means that a better understanding of self as a Mongolian can mirror the ‘ignorance of myself’ when faced with the enormous Mongolian legacy:

We might know more (about the Mongolian) compared to others, but it is still not enough. Instead, just because I study this major (Mongolian language and literature studies), I find out that the mysterious cultures of the Mongolian are so enormous. They are too heavy and need to be explored further. It is a process of learning which shed light on the ignorance of myself (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring ‘Minority Language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

Minfer also commented that four years is not long enough to study ‘Mongolian’. *Mongolian* is an extensive and enormous life-long study and studying it in the university is like ‘a butterfly dapping the water’ (*qingting dianshui*):

My overall feeling is like a butterfly dapping the water. The expertise in this area (Mongolian studies) is very complex, but what we studied at undergraduate level is only on the surface. It only touches its skin (Minfer, male, MKM, MUB, majoring ‘Minority Language and Literature Studies’, Mengshou)

Minfer further commented that the major of *Mongolian Language and Literature Studies* seems to lack distinguishing features. Compared to other *Mengshou* majors which have specific orientations (e.g. *Mongolian Translation*), they were disadvantaged because they haven’t fostered any ‘specialised strengths’:

Our major involves a very broad area of expertise. It is much more like the introduction to Mongolian studies, basically containing every aspect but with no depth. In contrast to some Mengshou majors available in (universities in) Inner Mongolia, the division of the Mengshou majors are very specific, such as Mengshou Journalism, or Mongolian studies

with history orientation, Mongolian translation, every major has a specific orientation. Compared to them, we have neither obvious advantages nor particular specialised strengths (Minfer, male, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Despite the fact that learning within university time is too short to learn and comprehend everything about the enormous 'Mongolian' culture, it is still important in rendering a sense of belonging for many Mongolian students so that their Mongolian identity and learning identity are mutually assisted and constructed. This is noted by Ala who once wanted to work in the 'university' and carry out academic work surrounding Mongolian studies as a career aspiration. It seems that his aspirations of the 'dream' job mirrored his aspirations for the continuation of his Mongolian identity:

A teacher [...] once said to us, which is quite inspiring, that: 'for those of you doing literature studies, you need to know that this is based on economic foundations. If you imagine that your stomach is famished every day, how would you come to pay attention to whether the world is materialistic or full of consciousness?' I used to be very naive as I thought about being a scholar and doing research at the university; this would be the dream job for me. But now, I would think about, just like the teacher said, who is going to pay you for your dream? Unless you are free from economic burden, being an ideal scholar is not as easy as I thought (Ala, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

The above quotation echoes Lehmann (2014)'s study concerning how a group of working-class students pursued jobs in the academic community as a way of maintaining and continuing their desired habitus. Echoing Ala's example, it seems that Minzu university is a place where he feels he is protected and supported to be 'who he is', 'who he wants to be' and 'who he wants to be treated as'. In his words, working as a Mongolian 'scholar' and doing research is an 'ideal' image of self, even though this is not easy to achieve. It makes sense to me that seeking to establish a bridge in terms of their perception of self as a

'*Mongolian*' and as a university learner is what matters for them, and is also what they consider as success, an '*ideal*' image of self in both the academic setting of the university and in life.

7.2.3.2 The role of learning identity in promoting modern representations of Mongol-ness

Research from Yang (2014) talked about how Tibetan students in HE aspire to create, control and promote a new, fastidiously modernised image of Tibet based on their own endeavours. Data in this study resonates with this point with regard to how Mongolian students perceive themselves as the initiators in changing people's perceptions of *Mongolian* as a backward and neglected minority ethnic. Creating a '*modern*' representation of Mongolian is partly why their learning in HE matters. It empowers them to be the ones who are entitled to engage in discourse, to be knowledge-equipped and to be reflective of how Mongolian as a minority ethnic group can be properly known, promoted and linked to a wider community.

Gele, an MKM student studying Mongolian medicine, talked about how she hoped to make a contribution to promoting the '*standardisation*' of Mongolian medicine research. In her view, '*standardisation*' seems to represent an effective attempt to modernise and '*internationalise*' Mongolian medicines for a wider audience:

What I wished is to make a slight contribution to the promotion of Mongolian medicine by means of promoting international standardisation. Up until now, it has been more traditional and relied on empirical knowledge. What Mongolian medicine has to do is proceed toward international standardisation so that its medical value can be accepted by more and more people (Gele, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mongolian Pharmacy Studies', Mengshou)

In Gele's words, learning this major makes her think about how Mongolian

medicine, as a part of the cultural legacy of Mongolian, can be ‘*accepted by more and more people*’. Other Mongolian students also mentioned this point while connecting it to their own professional backgrounds. To create and control a ‘*modern*’, non-backward representation of Mongolian means that Mongolian, including its language and other cultural elements, can be reached out to and understood by a wider range of people. In this way, studying the major of Mongolian language and using the Mongolian language as the medium of learning does not indicate that they are dislocated in the context of learning for modernity. They are, just like everyone else who learns in HE, exploring and reflecting ‘*knowledge*’. Elima gave an example linked to this point:

When we studied ‘Permanent Object’ (Keti yonghengxing) from Piaget, it was explained in Chinese and very theoretical. And then the teacher would interpret this term in Mongolian thus: ‘permanent object indicates the phenomenon that, when an object is placed in front of children and then is taken away, the children are able to recognise that the object still exists even though it cannot be found right now’ (Elima, female, MKM, MUA, majoring ‘Preschool Education’, Mengshou)

This seems to show that Mongolian students like Elima try to engage themselves in a context of modernity for learning. As with the Chinese language, the Mongolian language itself can be a medium through which many varieties of up-to-date knowledge, theories, skills, and ideas from different contexts can be transmitted and interpreted. Consequently, they themselves become the bridge through whom a sense of Mongol-ness modernity is transmitted and promoted to more and more Mongolian people, just as Bai explained:

We are the Mengshou, and, quite possibly, our future careers will be in pre-school education. Therefore, Mongolian culture would be taught by us to Mongolian young children from the very start, and we are the enlighteners for them about Mongolian. Therefore, we are bound to learn well [...] I want to be a good teacher for our next generation, and not let them forget that they are the Mongolians (Bai, male, MKM, MUA, majoring ‘Preschool Education’, Mengshou)

Many MKH Mongolian students outlined their ideas regarding the major they engaged in Minzu university and gave an indication of how modern science is enhanced with a Mongolian angle or '*ethnic perspective*', such as Hua explained:

My understanding might be shallow but I think Ethno-Ecology could emphasise the study of the ecological environment from an ethnic perspective. Compared to traditional ecology, ethnic-ecology has a broader scope (Hua, male, MKH, MUB, majoring 'Ecology', Hanshou)

Another MKH student Yan made a similar comment to Hua and explained that the major of '*Sociology*' is powerfully imprinted with a Minzu feature in Minzu University B. Studying an ethno-oriented '*Sociology*' enables her to strongly identify with her Mongolian Minzu status:

There are so many universities offering 'Sociology' nationwide, but I think our course (at Minzu University B) is the most distinguished one. We have strong characteristic, which is the ethno-studies perspective. You see our faculty is called 'the Faculty of Ethnology and Sociology', thus the Sociology in our faculty cannot be separated from Ethnology. Ethno-studies is not only a feature but also an advantage (Yan, female, MKH, MUB, majoring 'Sociology', Hanshou)

It seems to me that when Mongolian students try to create, control and promote a '*modern Mongol-ness*', learning at Minzu university becomes crucial in achieving this goal. Learning within the scope of modern science, whether it is '*Education*', '*Medicine studies*', '*Ecology*' or '*Sociology*', through a particular lens of '*Minzu*' or '*Mongolian*' is a way of promoting a representation of modern Mongol-ness. It also gives an insight into what '*modern Mongol-ness*' means for Mongolian students; it seems to mean that they are empowered to use the Mongolian language as the medium, using Minzu university as the platform, to link their knowledge to a wider world so that '*Mongolian*' can be represented as a powerful modern influence in the context of knowledge, research, communication and development.

7.2.4 Fragmented and inconsistent identity: from Yukeban to *Hanshou* major

Due to the limited provision of *Mengshou* majors in Minzu universities, many MKM Mongolian students are forced to consider options from the *Hanshou* (*Chinese language medium*) majors on offer. Sometimes, *choice* is a luxury for these students because they might need to spend more time and put in more effort in order to achieve satisfactory results from the major they choose. In preparation for learning in the *Hanshou* major, most MKM students need to go through one year in *Yukeban*. For these students, they transit frequently across different learning contexts (*from previous Minzu schooling backgrounds to Yukeban, from Yukeban to a Hanshou major*), use different languages for learning, and must satisfy a diverse range of learning requirements. Their learning experiences therefore become fragmented and incoherent throughout their course of study. As a result, their construction of learning identity can be more complex, turbulent and difficult. In the process, they may find that their learning identity is inconsistent, even contradictory to their previous perceptions of self as a capable learner, as a '*well performing*' Mongolian student.

For most of the MKM students, learning in *Yukeban* gives them fragmented learning experiences by dislocating them from their previous language and schooling background. The links with their previous learning experiences, including the content of learning and language, are loosened and disjointed. Even though the Chinese language is taught in Minzu high schools, nearly all the Mongolian students who went through *Yukeban* in this study described *Yukeban* as a kind of training class which had the aim of intensifying and immersing them in a pure Chinese language learning environment:

Most curricula are quite basic ones, similar to our high school curricula. But the difference is that the curricula in Yukeban are predominately taught in the Chinese language and the curricula in our high school are offered mostly in the

Mongolian language. That is the biggest difference (Feng, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Economic Studies', Hanshou)

Chinese language instruction only increased the difficulty in Yukeban. This is far removed from their previous level of Chinese language learning at Minzu school:

Chinese (learning) in Yukeban is harder than what we learned in high school, is much more difficult. In high school, we analysed the passages that are written in modern Chinese text. But in Yukeban, we learned the ancient Chinese texts and poems from the Tang & Song dynasties and tried to translate them into modern Chinese (Wu, female, MKM, MUB, Yukeban, majoring 'Public Administration', Hanshou)

The Chinese language became the only legitimate language promoted for learning and communication in Yukeban:

Owing to the fact that our class (in Yukeban) comprises Mengsheng only, we are naturally communicate with each other by using the Mongolian language. But the teacher is reluctant to support us, and even persuaded us to speak and communicate by using only Chinese. No teachers would teach in class by using Mongolian. They always said that if we can practice Chinese more, this would be good for our own sake (Hechu, female, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'English', Hanshou)

However, the repetition in learning high school courses and the over-emphasis on the Chinese language make some Mongolian students feel that it is a 'waste' of their time to study in Yukeban, as Qian said:

For Hansheng, they won't consider wasting one more year in Yukeban. That is because Yukeban is basically a matter of wasting time, at least it works like this for me. I learn nothing valuable here (in Yukeban) (Qian, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Engineering', Hanshou)

However, the choice of Yukeban is inevitable. For some MKM, they are willing to 'waste' one more year in Yukeban in order to opt for a Hanshou major. This is particularly the case for Hechu who engages the major of *English*. Due to the fact

that most of the MKM Mongolian students are not strong in the English language, Hechu considered to opt for the Hanshou *English* major so that she can be a favoured 'scarce' as a trilingual Mongolian in future:

You know most Mengsheng would not choose English as the major for study, and there are many reasons for this. Our English basis is poor. But that teacher (English teacher in Yukeban) encouraged me a lot and said: Put effort into studying English! Since you can speak Mongolian and Chinese, if you can master English as well, you would be a trilingual talent. The trilingual is very rare in society and you must be favoured. At last, there are 4 students in Yukeban choosing English as the major for studying, including me (Hechu, female, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'English', Hanshou)

It seems to me that Yukeban was like an islet of learning at the beginning of their university time for the Mongolian students in this study. They do not see it as a continuation of their previous Minzu schools' learning experience, nor do they perceive themselves as setting off with an entire new identity as a Minzu university student. Somehow, Yukeban seems to create a sense of a *peripheral* learning identity for many Mongolian students; they do not belong to the group of Mengshou Mongolian students in the university nor are they Han students. Feng gave an example relating to this point:

During that time, Yukeban was allocated another site for classroom teaching and other activities. We can seldom participate in the main campus of the university. Even though Yukeban belongs to the university, we don't have the feeling that we are on campus. I see my friends who have interesting courses and activities, but what we have is the old stuff which has been taught in high school. It did not look like what is supposed to be taught in the university (Feng, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Economic Studies', Hanshou)

As Feng explained, the *peripheral* identity constructed in Yukeban reflects a disconnection with the university community. Yukeban, as a kind of preparation course, does not constitute an undergraduate level of study. It was allocated a

separate class, accommodation and social interaction environment. Mongolian students by studying at Yukeban seem to perceive themselves as neither a high school student nor a university learner. Feng gave another example relating to this point:

In the beginning of Yukeban, we were all requested to attend the freshmen gala with the first year undergraduate students. Afterwards, when I was in my first year undergraduate, I was a 'freshmen' again, sitting with the new batch of freshmen to attend the gala (Feng, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Economic Studies', Hanshou)

As Feng said, he had two 'freshman' experiences, firstly by attending the Yukeban and secondly by transiting into undergraduate Hanshou study. Being a 'freshman' twice at Minzu university, it seems to me that Yukeban potentially acts as a cut-off to reset MKM's previous learning and language habits. Mongolian students can renew their perceptions of self as a learner, their language habits thus becoming those of a 'freshman' again by studying in the Hanshou major.

Transiting into a Hanshou major after the completion of Yukeban seems to indicate a reallocation of self to an alien, foreign and unfamiliar learning environment for many Mongolian students in this study, as Wu said:

It is a totally strange environment, everything is unfamiliar, the friendship, the roommates, the teachers and everything. Language, particularly, is a big challenge. You have to adapt to an entirely Chinese language environment (Wu, female, MKM, MUB, Yukeban, majoring 'Public Administration', Hanshou)

Many Mongolian students commented that there are many aspects which render themselves incompatible in a Hanshou class. The difficulties in learning constitute the most significant reason. The change in their learning and language habits is extremely difficult:

Because I always have to be a Mengshou student, and it is really difficult to keep myself updated with the class here [...] most of the time I can't fully express what I think, and it is hard, not least because my personality is shy. My classmates are all Hansheng and they can speak so fast and fluently, but this is impossible for me. The teacher seems to pay more attention to me because I am different from them. When the teacher asks me to answer questions in class, I feel uncomfortable if my answers are different from my classmates. It is generally a kind of feeling of being unfitted to the climate (Feng, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Economic Studies', Hanshou)

Qian gave another example illustrating how he felt it extremely difficult to keep pace with the teacher and class in learning in the Hanshou:

It becomes harder and harder afterwards, especially after we started the professional curricula. For example, we have a technical term 'quenching' (Cui Huo). I have not even seen these Chinese characters before, let alone know the meaning of them! I look it up, I baidu it, and use the phone-dictionary to search [...] during the time it takes to search for the meaning of these (characters), the teacher has already moved on to next chapter (Qian, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Engineering', Hanshou)

Just as Qian said, much of the learning content, professional jargon and words is taken for granted by his Han classmates but is 'very unfamiliar' to him. To Feng and Qian, it seems that constructing a positive learning identity can be quite challenging, particularly when they felt unconfident, uncertain and doubt for themselves as a capable learner, considering themselves as someone who cannot 'keep pace' or who is 'unfitted to the climate'. Wu similarly commented that it is challenging for an MKM Mongolian student to adjust themselves to 'catch up' in a Hanshou learning environment in the 'short-term':

I think the gap between those from the Mongolian schools (MKM) and those from the Han schools (MKH) is huge, and it is not easy to catch up in one or two days. If a Mengsheng intended to succeed in Hanshou major, he/she must make more effort than others (Wu, female, MKM, MUB, Yukeban,

Wu mentioned the 'gap' which seems to me to refer not only to the gap between two cohorts of students (*MKM versus MKH*) but also the gap between the differentiated educational systems. The inconsistent, fragmented learning identity being constructed throughout the process seems to represent an obstacle for many MKM Mongolian students trying to bridge the gap between two educational systems in order to maximise the opportunities for securing their future.

7.2.5 Constuction of learning identity compromised by ideological courses and Chinese domination

Even though Minzu universities have safeguarded themselves by providing more options, chances, resources and Minzu/Mongolian-featured learning contexts for Mongolian students, an ideologically-imposed design of courses and the domination of the Chinese language can still play a role in interfering with Mongolian students' learning identity construction. These mainly reflect the enforcement upon the university and institutional endeavours and how Mongolian students respond to the impact of this interference. Mongolian students tend to either resist or conform to these interferences. It shows different types of learning identity being constructed.

7.2.5.1 Ideologically-imposed identity: enforcements of ideological and political education

Minzu universities offer numerous ideologically and politically heavy curricula and courses for students to attend. These curricula are mostly compulsory and take various forms such as military theories, moral cultivation and legal basis, Marxism philosophic theories, essentials of Mao's thoughts, and the Minzu theories and Minzu policies. Sometimes, these types of ideological and political courses are allocated excessive teaching hours. It turns out that some professional

curricula were tightened in order to make time for these ideological and political curricula:

It used to have 72 teaching hours allocated to the (professional) curriculum of 'the history of Mongolian modern literatures'. However, this curriculum was compressed to only 36 teaching hours. The extra teaching hours were allocated to the ideological and political curricula (Ater, male, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

As part of the intention to offer these ideological and political curricula, students including Mongolian students at Minzu universities, a sense of 'Minzu solidarity' is expected to be fostered by learning the relevant content. As Jier explained:

Minzu solidarity is an important ideological emphasis throughout the curriculum, absolutely. It appears frequently in the final exam of this curriculum with varied questions such as 'how to consolidate Minzu solidarity' or like 'what is the role of Minzu solidarity regarding using Marxism to solve Minzu problems?' (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

However, it seems to go against the intention of the design of these courses that these ideological and political curricula are the 'least popular' amongst the Mongolian students. For some Mongolian students, they saw these courses as a burden and tend to resist the imposing of the ideological and political education in the design of courses because what is conveyed about 'patriotism' or 'Minzu solidarity' in these courses can be 'farfetched' with regard to their Mongolian identity. Temuer gave an explanation relating to this point:

Since the start of these kinds of (ideological and political) curricula, to be frank, I think the most important intention is to foster patriotism of students. But for us Mongolians, our patriotic mind is inseparable from our Minzu heart. Only if he/she loves his/her Minzu, then it comes to the love for the country. If one does not love his Minzu, then talking of love for the country is hypocritical. But you can see, what has been written in the history book? The history about Yuan dynasty is extremely rare, probably only two or three pages

[...] Why our Mongolians look so faintly in this country's history, if we are one part of this country? If we talk about a patriotic mind based on this point, it sounds farfetched (Temuer, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Ideology and Political Education', Mengshou)

In other words, the ideologically-imposed identity is not a result of learning but a result of *imposing*. From the university's perspective, it seems that a sense of 'patriotism' to the country or maintaining 'Minzu solidarity' as a minority is expected, and acts in underpinning an ideal learning identity constructed by Mongolian students. These are compulsory courses and play a large role in the overall design of courses and curricula. However, from some Mongolian students' perspectives, an ideological-conforming and patriotic mind are not convincing if it goes against their Mongolian identity. This reflects a delicate relationship between Mongolian identity and learning identity.

7.2.5.2 Linguistically-imposed identity: Chinese language interferences in Mengshou majors

Mengshou majors are what most MKM Mongolian students in this study opt for, and these are ideally an entire Mongolian language learning environment, including class instruction, textbooks, exams and other relevant pedagogical arrangements. However, data in this study shows that many Mongolian language medium materials are inadequate, in short supply and sometimes out of date. This is partly because most of the updated knowledge and materials are available in the Chinese language, and were not converted into the Mongolian-version to be used in class. The Chinese language can still dominate the provision of Mengshou majors in many ways. For example, Gele noted that one of the professional curricula was taught practically as a Chinese-Mongolian translation class due to the lack of Mongolian textbooks:

We have 35 students in the class and we are categorised into 7 groups so that there are 5 in each group. Each group is in charge of translating one chapter (of the content). The group

which I was in is to translate the chapter called 'Religion and Marriage' [...] We don't do literal translation. What we do is to pick out some points to translate. And then, each group would select one representative to explain what this chapter is about to the whole class (Liang, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Ethnology', Mengshou)

A similar example occurred in the major of Mengshou *Mathematics* from Rigen:

In our area, most of the applicable textbooks are compiled in Chinese. The Mongolian language resources are not so plentiful, particularly the applicable ones (Rigen, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mathematics', Mengshou)

Hechu criticised the storage of Mongolian language medium books, in that they are 'out of date and less useful for referencing' in the library:

If you go to the library, many of the publications in Mongolian are from the 80s or 90s, and some books are even older. These books are out of date and less useful for referencing (Hechu, female, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'English', Hanshou)

Except for the books stored in the library which are mostly out of date, Dagula explained that the distribution of Mongolian language medium textbooks at the beginning of each semester is always delayed. Thus, teachers have to re-use textbooks passed down from last semester in order to carry out classes. Dagula explains:

It is very sad that these (Mongolian language medium) textbooks are always distributed incompletely at the beginning. Sometimes, one month has passed but there are still no books available for us and we don't know the reason. We need to wait for the books but the classes have to proceed, so teachers would re-use the old books from the previous semester to teach (Dagula, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Yi gave an explanation regarding why the Mongolian language medium materials are less popular and neglected in provision and circulation, both in the university and in a wider society:

The publishers print books on the basis of interest, so only those books for which there is a large demand will be promoted for publishing. The Mongolian language medium textbooks are not popular in the market because less people buy them, so it is natural that no publisher would think about publishing them in large amounts (Yi, female, MKH, MUA, majoring 'Public Administration', Hanshou)

According to Yi, it seems to me that the Chinese language interfering with *Mengshou* majors mirrors a larger picture where Mongolian students who study at Minzu schools and afterward engage a *Mengshou* major at Minzu universities become less and less in number. The *Mengshou* majors coupled with the MKM Mongolian students who engage these majors are the *minorities* within the minority. In Minzu University A, only around 26% of Mongolian students study a *Mengshou* major, and this is much less in Minzu University B. The inadequate provision of learning materials for *Mengshou* majors can be a disadvantage for these MKM students. They are not only disadvantaged in terms of lagging behind as knowledge is constantly updated but also in their future employment, as Rigen explained:

It is not good for us if we are going to Minzu schools to teach (maths). How can we ensure better Mengshou Maths teaching (in future) if we are not prepared now in our university learning? (Rigen, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mathematics', Mengshou)

As Rigen said, they are not well '*prepared*' in university learning and can be practically underqualified if, for example, they want to be a Mongolian language medium teacher working in a Minzu school. The interference from Chinese domination in *Mengshou* majors acts in contradiction to their aspirations, and even their Mongolian identity, in some way.

7.2.6 A disadvantaged learning identity: the challenges from the future

Minzu universities have an arrangement of sorting MKM and MKH students into two different pedagogical arrangements under one major: a *Mengshou* class in

parallel with a Hanshou class. Many Mongolian students from Mengshou class noted that, despite studying the same major as a Hanshou class, they are learning relatively less, have lower exam pass requirements, and the learning content is less difficult. Rigen, from Mengshou *Mathmatics*, described the difference:

The Mengshou class has lowered requiremenst and difficulty of learning compared to the Hanshou class [...] the consequence of this is that we and Hanshou are significantly differentiated. The Hanshou class is working very hard to deal with those difficult proofing subjects but, in contrast, what we do is only something as simple as integral and derivation (Rigen, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Mathematics', Mengshou)

The interview from Rigen seems to reflect a problem which has become apparent in Minzu University A where MKM/Mengshou Mongolian students are structurally disadvantaged due to their language differences. In her words Mengshou students are significantly '*differentiated*' compared to the Hanshou students and such differentiation can turn into a disadvantage for them in the job market.

Quyun from Minzu University B also shared her ideas about how MKM Mongolian students are disadvantaged in a wider range of opportunities due to language background:

These universities (Peking University or Beijing Language and Culture University) are less interested in recruiting Mengshou (MKM) Mongolian students for postgraduate study because our Chinese is not good enough [...] I mean if you cannot impress the examiner with very fluent and proficient Chinese language skills, you are sure to be refused (Quyun, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Mongolian language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

'*Learn less than them*' can be a strong excuse for excluding the MKM Mongolian students from many opportunities; they might be regarded as lacking the appropriate competitiveness, which becomes a disadvantage in the learning

identity constructed. There is much data in this study indicating how Mongolian students, with varied learning and language backgrounds, experience discrimination in the job market (*due to their approaching graduation, many of them talked about their job-seeking experiences*). A disadvantaged learning identity is a huge challenge for them in realising success and self-aspiration.

Many Mongolian students shared their experiences of being discriminated against in the job market as a Mongolian student, as Jier noted:

After the interview, I knew that there was no way I could compete with those Han candidates, because their Chinese is far better than mine! The employer told me that my Chinese was not fluent and I lacked the ability to perform well in writing in Chinese, which is what he took as a priority when considering someone for the position. He seemed to care only about one's Chinese ability, and had no interest in any others. You know, after so many years of studying in the Mongolian language, I am kind of feeling discouraged that my strong suit is useless (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

A similar story is from Quyun:

I joined a free career-counselling service today. The advisor told me that my major has no practical value. In fact, no one cares about the Mongolian language at all, except for a minor degree of curiosity! Everyone else might only be curious about how their names can be translated into Mongolian, but that is it. Also, I was told that if I apply for jobs in the SEAC (State Ethnic Affairs Committee), nearly 70% of the staff working there are Han (Quyun, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Mongolian language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

For both Jier and Quyun, the Mongolian language which is their '*strong suit*', the major they have been studying for many years, seems useless in the eyes of potential employers. The failure to impress in the job market seems to render a sense of self-doubt, which also casts doubts on the learning identity being constructed whilst studying at Minzu universities.

Another example of this disadvantaged learning identity shows itself in the way Mongolian students feel that they are not treated equally even for those jobs which require Mongolian language proficiency as a prerequisite:

As I heard, the Ministry of Foreign affairs recruits only those Han who are able to perform bilingual translation (Mongolian and Chinese). They seldom consider recruiting us (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

A similar comment is from Sang:

I know that the Peking University and Beijing Foreign studies University have all opened Mongolian language majors, and are different from us (Minzu University B). They recruited Hansheng who have zero basis in the Mongolian language, and prepare them to work for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after graduation (Sang, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

What Jier and Sang noted implicitly implicates a struggle between their Mongolian identity and learning identity. They seem to feel that it is not only their learning background, but also their ethnic background as a Mongolian which has put them on an unequal footing with other Han students in the competition for certain jobs.

The disadvantaged learning identity also shows itself in the way Mongolian students feel that their employment and future opportunities can only be realised in a 'narrow circle', just as Minfer said:

It is indeed a narrow circle for employment ('jiuye mian zhai'). For us (majors in Mongolian language studies), we can only find ourselves valued in equivalent jobs in Inner Mongolia. It is really difficult for us to fit into the wider sphere (Minfer, male, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Jier also spoke about the rare employment chances for those who specialise in the Mongolian language:

Basically, only a very few occupations in society need Mongolian language ability. The scope for application is narrow. If you go to find a job in Inner Mongolia, there might be higher chances, but if Mongolian language is the only advantage for you, then it would be very difficult to find a job I think (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

What Minfer mentioned about the '*narrow circle*' and Jier's comments about the '*scope for application is narrow*' reveals their perceptions of the applicability of what they learned and how their learning at Minzu university is judged, assessed and utilised restrictively in the job market and in wider society. As they said, the value of what they learned is '*difficult to fit into a wider sphere*'. It also exhibits where they regard the disadvantages of learning identity lay.

7.2.7 A brief summary

This section has presented the data which raises the discussion surrounding Mongolian students' perceptions of self as a learner studying at Minzu universities. The learning identity of Mongolian students is constructed in continuity, showing a link with their previous educational background and is subject to a process of re-shaping when they transit across different learning, disciplinary and pedagogical contexts in Minzu universities. Positive learning experiences are closely associated with those Mongolian students who have made a link to their Mongolian ethnic, cultural and language backgrounds. However, the heterogeneous nature of Mongolian students studying in Minzu universities also give a view that the interlacing between Mongolian identity and learning identity is not an easy process, particularly when Mongolian identity can be questioned when Mongolian students enter the job market.

7.3 The influence of Minzu universities on Mongolian students' social identity construction

SRQ3 of this study aims to explore the social identity construction of Mongolian students contextualised in the Minzu universities, and therefore this is an important section. This section presents the data depicting the way in which Mongolian students negotiate social identity within the context of their perceptions of the culture and characteristics of Minzu universities. It appears that the ways in which they experience the culture within each institution impact the extent to which they perceive the relationship between *self* and the *university*. There are many discussions raised in the following section surrounding this point, including Mongolian students' views of the multiculturalism reflected in the university, the varied campus activities and relevant social interactions. Data presented in this section will shed light upon the ways in which Mongolian students manage to position themselves within the learning and social settings of Minzu universities.

7.3.1 Desirable social identity: a place of feeling '*protected*'

Numerous Mongolian students interviewed have positive evaluations and perceptions of their social life and learning experiences at both case Minzu universities. It seems that the Minzu universities give them a sense of '*protection*', and within this context they are able to control the desirable representations of self. For most, Minzu universities support them in feeling sufficiently confident of self to be a Mongolian/minority, and not being discriminated against or alienated. For example, Bai said as follows:

No matter what you say, I think it is still a place to protect you. Because outside this place, the Mongolian students would suffer disadvantages, suffer discrimination (Bai, male, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Preschool Education', Mengshou)

Jier commented similarly by saying:

In the Minzu University B, who are the minorities, who have the power of discourse (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

It appears that minority students, including a number of Mongolian students, acknowledge the significance of Minzu universities as institutions which serve minority students in particular. An affirmative image of Minzu universities where Mongolian students feel safe to stay is that in which they identify this as a 'university belonging to the minorities', just as Sang said, as follows. 'Minorities' refer to not only the students' composition, or a university brand, but actually become a sense of atmosphere reinforced in Minzu universities. This is a sense of atmosphere which attaches importance to protecting, maintaining and developing minority-related legacies:

Peking University is very famous, but it is not suitable to take charge of the studies which our university specialises in. Minda is a university which belongs to the minorities. The work being carried out in this university, the studies about minority language, minority culture and the heritage we protect are not the jobs of others. We are doing the jobs for our own sake, about our own (Sang, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

A sense of a minority-related cultural atmosphere is also experienced by Mongolian students in the composition of diverse Minzu groups, cultures and languages represented by both students and teachers. To a certain extent, diversity in culture and Minzu groups becomes a shared understanding and characteristic associated with Minzu universities. This is a place where people with different backgrounds meet:

If we were to talk of the distinctive characteristic of Minzu university, I think it is the people. The people are the most distinctive ones. If you extend your vision to view the country as a whole, where can you find out a second university which has so many Minzu groups? That is the reason. Everyone is unique. That is what makes our university so diverse and special (Wu, female, MKM, MUB, Yukeban, majoring 'Public

Many Mongolian students have positively identified themselves as *learners*, which seems be another effect of the atmosphere of Minzu universities. It seems that Mongolian students own the *right* habitus which enables them to fit into the learning environment of Minzu universities. A smooth transition from their previous learning and language backgrounds into Minzu universities renders the context as one which is taken for granted; Jier commented relating to this point:

Compared to my high school classmates who study in other universities, they are not attach it with the same importance. I don't feel it in the same way as them. When they tell me they have lost interest in studying. They have no passion for the future. They don't want to study anymore, I feel pity for them because they are lonely in that environment. But I don't feel so (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Another specific context lies in the social interactions of Mongolian students. For Ler, comparing her past experiences in Inland high school and the present experiences at Minzu universities, she felt such a sense of belonging at the university because she is not '*lonely*' and not a '*special existence*'. Exhibiting self as a Mongolian is supported and tolerated in her social interactions in the university;

In high school I was in a peripheral position in the class. My classmates are all Uighurs and that's why I appreciate what Minzu University B gives me. I am not lonely anymore. I met so many Mongolians in the university and this is very different from my high school environment. I am no longer a special existence (Ler, female, Inland-high school, MUB, majoring 'Education', Hanshou)

It appears that Ler felt herself being supported in the Mongolian student community at the university where she found those who she belongs with. This is a subtle reinforcement of the *in-group* identification.

The positive experiences of Mongolian students within the cultural context of Minzu universities appear to be associated with the ways in which they can 'exhibit their own ethnicity openly'. Minzu university can 'tolerate' the exhibition of diversity, therefore Mongolian identity is not suppressed but can be expressed through different channels, as Minfer commented:

Minda (Minzu university) does not pay lip service to promoting Minzu cohesion. Through their actual activities, everyone can perform themselves openly and exhibit their own ethnic. From this point, I bet Minda is more culturally tolerant compared to others. It has an open mind regarding exhibiting the multi-ethnic (Minfer, male, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

Another example is from Sang who showed that the strong influence of Minzu universities in *tolerating* diversity can make an impact on Mongolian students' identifications toward others, or the other minority Minzu. This appears to be a positive construction of Mongolian identity. A more open, communicative and tolerated attitude with which to treat culturally different customs, people and groups:

I used to wonder why the Tibetans eat raw meats. I cannot understand this and was quite resistant. This is a very weird diet because it is very primitive and unhealthy. But after I came here and knew some very good Tibetan friends, I found out the reason behind this. No matter what, every Minzu group has developed their own diet for a reason. It might be because of their history or living environment - so they adapt their eating habits to the environment. I think the important lesson I learned is that I shouldn't just focus on the phenomenon and be blind to the reason laying behind it. I shouldn't just judge them because of my own preferences. Rather, I should think 'why?'. Maybe if I still can't understand, I should avoid judging them as wrong (Sang, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

The large intake of minority students in Minzu universities helped to establish a

reputation for these institutions concerning multi-cultural, multi-language and multi-ethnic co-existing and celebration; it acts as a form of hub, celebrating minority-related activities and festivals of minority students, including Mongolian students from all different places. Just as Ala says in the following, Minzu university gave them a place, a *'rightful reason'*, to gather together:

Minority students from Xinjiang, not only the Mongolians, but also the Uyghur and Kazak - no matter where they studied in the city, as long as our university organised the celebrations and activities, they would all assemble here. Minda gives us a rightful reason to assemble [...] More and more minority students engage and the reputation of our university becomes bigger and bigger (Ala, male, bilingual school, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mongolian-Han Bilingual)

It seems to me that the *'rightful reason'* should be understood as a strength of Minzu universities, where gathering a majority of minority students to celebrate their own cultural festivals is acceptable and not treated as exotic in this context. It is normal to represent yourself, speak and behave as a minority in Minzu universities. When negotiating social identity within both the learning and social settings of Minzu universities, Mongolian students are able to safeguard a desirable Mongolian identity and learning identity construction; they are not *lonely* or *peripheral* in either of their roles in the context of Minzu universities.

7.3.2 Social identity constructed in complexity: a context of subtle differentiation and segregation

Some Mongolian students interviewed were aware of a subtle differentiation of students from different groups and backgrounds imposed by the university. As Dao pointed out, the attitudes from some of the university staff towards the Mongolian students have suggested that the construction of an ideal image of Mongolian studentship is implicitly imposed by the university on those who are *'compliant'*:

Sometimes we can hear the staff saying things like 'the Han students are more compliant compared to Mongolian students'. These kinds of words make us feel we are being treated unequally (Dao, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Ideology and Political Education', Mengshou)

This is a sense of role-expectations assigned to Mongolian students when they attempt to negotiate their position in the university. Particularly in Minzu University B, there is an influential student association called '*Minzu elites*' which is authorised by the university and which subtly differentiates between minority students, including Mongolian students, within this context. The experiences of Mongolian students who were selected, assessed and remained in the '*Minzu elites*' radically reflect how Minzu university defines a language of desirable minority students. or an '*elite*'. Quyun was one of the few Mongolian students who have been selected as a member of '*Minzu elites*' for over two years. As she described:

I am kind of like an old member in the association. It practices a very strict rule for recruiting, considering only those who were recommended by each department, with a maximum of 5, and these students are normally a student cadre or from the students union, so it is very competitive. And knowing that I was selected as a member I felt real pride. I even sometimes think that I obtained some superior feelings compared to others because there are numerous students who apply for this (Quyun, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Mongolian language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

In Quyun's words, she acknowledges that becoming a member of the '*Minzu elites*' gave her a feeling of being '*superior*' to others in the university. Her previous role as one of the students '*cadres*' was considered to be important in her selection, as Quyun said:

The leader always said like 'you are the façade of Minda, so show me some spirit!' whenever the university needs us to be present at big events, to host ceremonial team or to be a conference volunteer, we are on call at any time. We attended classes about etiquette knowledge and it is the time to show

us (Quyun, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Mongolian language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

By highlighting the word of '*façade*', it seems to me that Mongolian students and other minority students within the '*Minzu elites*' were seen as one part of the integral components contributing to the portrayal of Minzu university to the public, a portrayal which depicts Minzu university as a place where students from different ethnic backgrounds are integrated and united. This is in line with the motto of the university which is to consume diversity into unity. When minority students were selected from those who have been a '*cadre*' or students' leader, it implicitly practices a hierarchy imposed by the university to divide minority students into different categories: the minority students as '*cadres*' are supposed to be the ones who are more compliant to the university's intentions, thus are mainstreamed by the university to encourage their involvement in the context and system.

Many Mongolian students valued the context of Minzu universities which gave them opportunities to exhibit their ethnicity, diversity and language/cultural representations. However, this was only allowed within a boundary of permission. A notion of boundary is important to understand the extent to which Mongolian students are allowed to represent and participate in Mongolian-related activities. They are subtly *segregated* from the boundary beyond. Dao's comment relates to this point:

There was a time when Inner Mongolia was in turmoil and experienced major incidents. Many Mongolians in our university are segregated. The tutor supervised the class every day. Policeman stood in front of the gate of the campus and checked IDs of people who wanted to enter or go out (Dao, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Ideology and Political Education', Mengshou)

It appears to me from Dao that the boundary is enclosed within the campus area of the university. Within the university campus, Mongolian students' cultural

representations can be overseen and are under surveillance:

If it is very sensitive information about Minzu disruption, then it would be strictly prohibited. One of my friends once forwarded a message online which is about Minzu disruption. He was immediately looked up by the security agency. This kind of information is strictly controlled (Dao, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Ideology and Political Education', Mengshou)

Yan also shared her story about how she was banned from being interviewed by two random journalists who appeared on the university campus:

One time I came across an interview on campus by two people, one of them held the camera and another held the microphone. They came to me and asked if I was interested in being interviewed. I accepted because I thought it would be fun. They asked me several questions, which were very casual, like how many years had I studied in the university? Questions like that. And suddenly, three campus security staff appeared and they interrupted the interview immediately. The security took all of us to the office and took my student card. Then two journalists were got rid of. I totally freaked out and they asked me to call the dean of my class. I told them that I didn't say anything. They asked me to repeat the questions which the journalists asked me and I repeated. Then they gave me a warning and let me go (Yan, female, MKH, MUB, majoring 'Sociology', Hanshou)

What Yan said is another illustration of how Mongolian students are strictly overseen in terms of their behaviour and words within the boundary of the university, and as a result they were subtly segregated from communicating with the *outside* without warrant.

Not all kinds of minority-related events and activities are advocated and encouraged in the university; it appears that Minzu universities have a certain kind of preference for some while restricting other kinds of cultural representations. For example, Dao mentioned that Mongolian students are neither '*banned*' nor '*advocated*' to attend large Mongolian commemorations:

It is not to say that the university bans us to attend, but we are not advocated either. For big events, it would be controlled certainly. Such as the commemoration of great ancestor Genghis Khan (Dao, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Ideology and Political Education', Mengshou)

Jier also said that any kind of massive minority student gathering which has the potential for an outbreak of riots would be controlled by the university:

There are a lot of students who gather to light a candle and pray for the lost lives. But it didn't last long. Soon the dean of each class arrived to take their own students back. The security came soon and asked us to go back to dorms (Jier, female, MKM, MUB, majoring 'Minority Language and Literature Studies', Mengshou)

On the other hand, such notions of subtle segregation are extremely complex and dynamic. The aim is not to segregate the Mongolian students within Minzu universities and cut off their connections with society as a whole. Minzu universities are not minority-segregated universities as minority students, including Mongolian students, are expected and encouraged to break down the Minzu boundaries and try to understand each other so that 'diversity' can be properly consumed. There is some data from the interviews which illustrates Mongolian students' ideas in relation to this. For example, Qian mentioned that Minzu University A should not be transformed as a 'Mongolian University'; that is because integrating students from different ethnic backgrounds to study together is a 'progression for both sides':

I think this idea (transforming Minzu uni into Mongolian uni) is too radical and very difficult to implement. Mongolian students and Han students study together. I think this is a progression for both sides. It is for cultural-exchange. That's also why I thought about studying a Hanshou major first. To be honest, Mongolian students can learn a lot from Han students. If we are only surrounded by each other, if we only contact the Mongolian students from our own group, it would blind the eyes. We can hardly reach any progression (Qian, male, MKM, MUA, Yukeban, majoring 'Engineering', Hanshou)

Dao also stated that Minzu university should be reserved and maintain its culture of encouraging interaction amongst different Minzu students:

If the university is only for Mongolian students and everyone seen every day is Mongolian, then I bet the Mongolian students would be much more irritated in their Mongolian consciousness. But this is the radical consciousness, the unhealthy consciousness, because the Mongolian students have already ignited their Mongolian consciousness too much sometimes (Dao, female, MKM, MUA, majoring 'Ideology and Political Education', Mengshou)

It appears from Dao that the range of ways in which Mongolian students forming their friendships and engaging other kinds of social interactions are quite exclusive, or 'segregated' themselves in some ways. This is because of a shared strong Mongolian identity. Maintaining the culture and structure of Minzu university appears to be one way in which Mongolian students can get rid of the 'unhealthy', or extreme Mongolian identity construction, and manage a continuity of engagements in and beyond the Minzu university.

7.3.2 A brief summary

This section has presented the data which raises the role of Minzu universities in shaping Mongolian students' social identity construction. These have included the influences from Minzu universities from two sides: on one side, Mongolian students are able to construct a desirable social identity as the perceived institutional culture reinforces their engagement and involvement in an ethnically diverse context. Many Mongolian students have reported that, as a Mongolian minority, they felt they fitted into the climate of Minzu universities and lost their preoccupations of feeling peripheral or being alienated. On the other hand, it is also reflected through Mongolian students' perceptions that the institution exercises surveillance of their cultural representations. The flexibility of exhibiting self as a minority should conform to the identity-expectations imposed by the university. The Minzu universities have particular preferences for

encouraging some while controlling other aspects of minority cultural representations in shaping Mongolian students' social identity construction.

7.4 A summary of negotiating social identity in the context of Minzu universities

This chapter has presented the interview data of this study and many themes are raised and addressed. These have included Mongolian students negotiating the construction of social identity within three domains: ethnic identity, learning identity and their perceptions within the context of Minzu universities. The majority of Mongolian students interviewed had greater insights into their own ethnicity, learning and particular understandings of Minzu universities and there was evidence to show that to construct social identity in the university necessitates the continuation of their previous social identity. As a summary, the following points have emerged from this chapter:

Firstly, the Mongolian students interviewed in this study come from different educational routes with varied regional and language backgrounds; *Mongolian* is a shared name for all of them in terms of outsiders, but they regarded each other with significant divisions. Educational backgrounds, language and the regions where they came from appear to be the triggers for Mongolian students to form different social relationships; in bonding with the ones who are seen as one of the *in-group*', Mongolian identity is reinforced in a different but certain way. Different groups of Mongolian students rarely interact with each other, nor do they interact closely with Han students.

Secondly, entering Minzu university through different educational routes, Mongolian students are also differentiated as different groups by choosing different courses and majors of study. Minzu university appears to be the place which provides two parallel learning contexts for Mongolian students with different educational needs: one is for the Mongolian student who aspires to a

seamless link with their previous learning background and thus get into the *Mengshou* majors; another is for the Mongolian student who aspires to a wider range of options for learning, thus transiting through Yukeban into the Hanshou majors. As a result, the choice of different contexts of learning at Minzu university leads to different experiences of Mongolian students in constructing their learning identity. For the Mongolian students in a Mengshou context, they appear to experience greater levels of continuity and confidence in their learning identity, but are more vulnerable when entering the job market. For the Mongolian students in a Hanshou context, re-establishing a positive learning identity is a turbulent and fragmented process, but they seem to gain more advantages compared to the Mengshou.

Lastly, the context of Minzu universities is the synergy of multiple factors, including the image it has created for itself in response to national Minzu initiatives and a locale within the dynamics and interactions amongst students with varied minority backgrounds. Minzu university presents itself to minority students in a certain way, but the point is how students response to this portrayal. It appears that Minzu universities are commonly conceptualised by Mongolian students as a shared, multi-cultural environment. Within such a context, they are positioned as sharing one part of the multicultural scenario, and thus are able to exhibit their ethnicity without feeling themselves to be an *exotic*. On the other hand, Mongolian students appear to experience a '*valid, good and right*' image of minority studentship imposed by the university (Davies, 2001, p.248). Within this context, Minzu university shapes a desired social identity construction of Mongolian students upon its preferences and intentions.

The next chapter will present a more detailed analysis of the findings drawn out from the institutional contexts, individual profiles and data presented in this chapter.

Chapter 8 Conclusions: The Complexities and Contradictions of Social Identity Construction within Minzu Universities of China

'Every human being, no matter how 'ignorant' or submerged in the culture of silence he may be, is capable of looking critically at his world...he can gradually perceive his personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it' (Freire ,1972, p.12)

In the preceding chapters this study has outlined a particular framework of China in relation to the notion of *Minzu* operating in a HE context and how Mongolian students as one of the Minzu groups perceive themselves by studying at Minzu universities. This chapter will bring out the main ideas and identify some of the study's key findings.

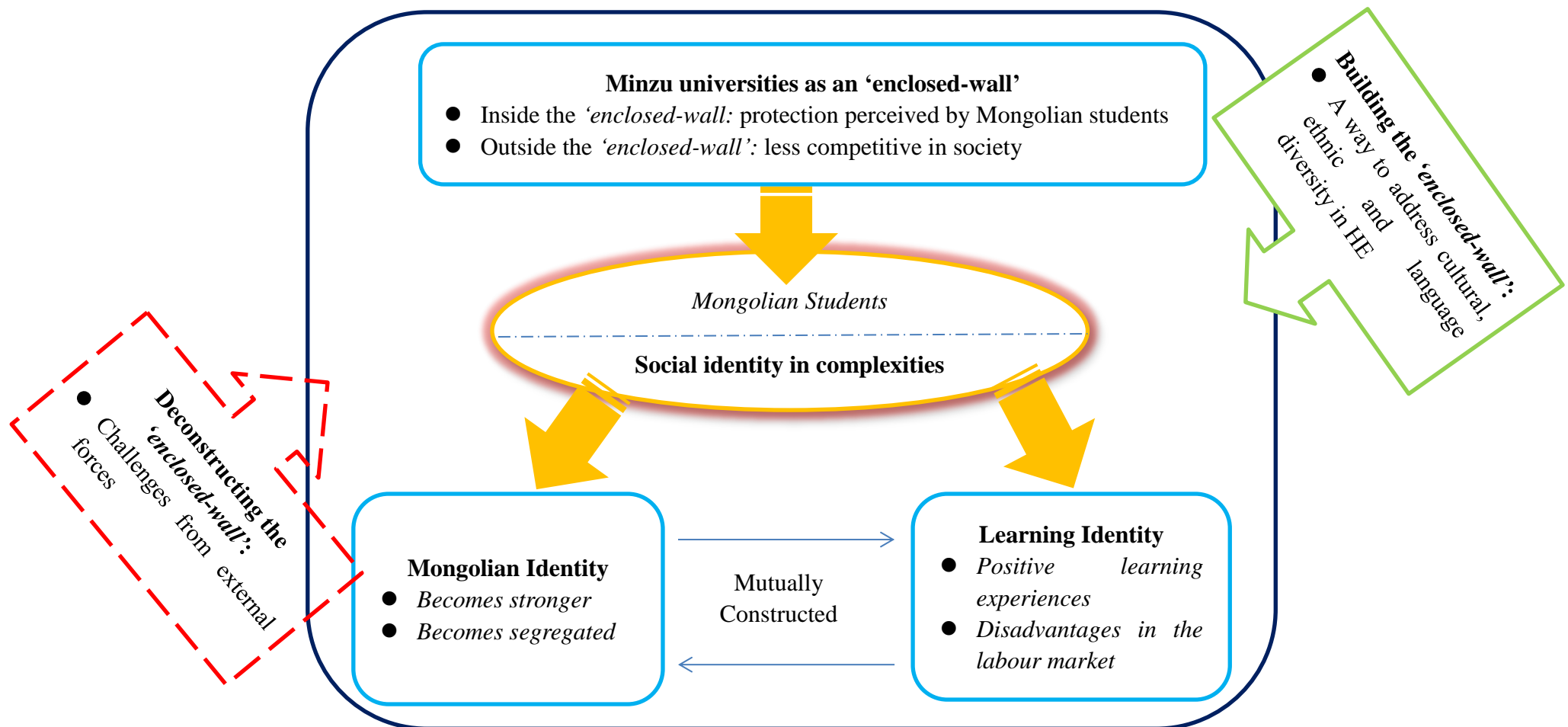
Briefly, this chapter suggests that the construction of Minzu universities as part of the differentiated educational system running at HE level creates its own set of contradictions. Mongolian students and both the ethnic and learning dimensions of social identity are used as examples to illustrate such contradictions. There are inconsistencies and inherent contradictions reflected in each aspect of the social identity constructed by Mongolian students.

A more specified Mongolian identity is constructed within Minzu universities, but Mongolian students also become segregated because of a strong sense of being a Mongolian. The construction of a desired Mongolian identity, maintaining the Mongol-ness in self, runs contrary to the idea of integration into a larger community in and beyond the university. Regarding learning identity construction, some Mongolian students have a positive learning identity as a result of the smooth transition and seamless link with their personal cultural, ethnic and educational backgrounds, but such learning identity is challenged in the labour market. For the Mongolian students who transit from their previous Minzu educational background into Yukeban and a Hanshou

(*Chinese-language-medium-taught*) major, learning identity is constructed as fragmented, inconsistent and contrary to their perceptions of self as a Mongolian. In a larger Han/Chinese-dominated social context, Minzu universities manifest an '*enclosed-wall*' effect, which refers to the fact that they provide a protective context to address ethnic diversity, within which Mongolian students are able to negotiate desired positions of self, both personally and in learning. However, outside the '*enclosed-wall*', Minzu universities (*and coupled with the differentiated Minzu education system*) there exists a lack of proper links with a wider society so that Mongolian students are disadvantaged by becoming less competitive and more segregated within society as a whole. This result contradicts the intention of the design of Minzu universities which is to enhance minority students' integration into a wider society.

The following will give more detail to the discussion surrounding this conclusion. Figure 8.1 illustrates the complexity of social identity construction of Mongolian students in Minzu universities in China.

- **Figure 8.1 Social identity constructed in complexities within the context of Minzu universities of China**



8.1 Building the ‘*enclosed-wall*’: a way to address ethnic diversity in higher education

The metaphor ‘*enclosed-wall*’ was initially put forward by Ma (2013, p.15) in explaining the Han versus minorities dual structure covering different aspects in Chinese society. As Ma (2013) explained, the emergence of a dual structure in dealing with ethnic minority education in Chinese society resulted in segmentation between the Han majorities as the mainstream and ethnic minorities on the other side. Minority education is likely dealt with within an ‘*enclosed-wall*’ with barely any mutual communication and learning between the two sides. Applied to the educational arena, a differentiated educational system (*Minzu versus Putong*) is an example of such a dual structure. However, the consequences of building an ‘*enclosed-wall*’ are not merely adverse. In this section, I shall discuss how Minzu universities act as an ‘*enclosed-wall*’ and explain its advantages with regard to addressing ethnic diversity in the Chinese higher education system. Within such a context, Mongolian students are offered a sense of protection in constructing their Mongolian identity and learning identity in preferable ways.

8.1.1 Maintaining a strong sense of being a Mongolian and the role of Minzu universities in shaping Mongolian identity

One of the conclusions drawn from this study is that Mongolian students are able to maintain and construct a strong sense of *being* as a Mongolian at Minzu universities. As the data says, being a Mongolian indicates the ‘*essence*’ of Mongolian students. When they try to define themselves, many Mongolian students will bring their Mongolian ethnic status to the forefront. Being a Mongolian is what they are rooted in and are ‘*proud*’ of. It appears that when Mongolian students talked frequently about different kinds of Mongolian cultural elements (*such as the ‘Obo’, ‘Na-dam’ or Mongolian robe*), they spoke of them in natural and spontaneous ways. These Mongolian cultural elements, including the Mongolian language, are native to them, and thus become a way of life and living. The way that they construct and consolidate their Mongolian identity is reflected through practising these naturally-occurring cultural elements and

language in their daily life at the Minzu universities (*such as dressing like a Mongolian, keeping to traditional dietary habits and using the Mongolian language frequently for communication, learning or social-networking*). Therefore, even though many of the Mongolian students are rooted in 'Mongol-ness' which itself derives from their familial, language and educational backgrounds, Minzu universities offer them the opportunity to commit to *being* a Mongolian. They also support them in giving a sense of belonging, uniqueness and positive distinction in *being* and *representing* themselves as a Mongolian in university life.

The role of Minzu universities in shaping a strong sense of Mongolian identity constructed by Mongolian students is illustrated by the following points:

Firstly, it appears from the data that Mongolian students' perceptions of self in Minzu universities are located within an understanding that the specific nature of Minzu universities as an ethnic and cultural diversity site gives them a sense of 'protection'. Mongolian students sense that they share their particular multi-ethnic representations in Minzu universities in order to represent their own ethnic/Mongolian characteristics. A perception of the contextual feature of Minzu universities as tolerating ethnic and cultural diversity and respecting minority students is significant in contributing to the perception of 'protection' because Mongolian students feel that it is possible to show and gain a way of expressing themselves in line with his or her own cultural backgrounds without feeling that they are treated as an *exotic*. They were 'protected' from being treated as an *exotic*, something which distinguished Minzu universities from other institutions, or from wider society. As mentioned above, a cultural way of life and being is very important in constructing a strong sense of Mongolian identity. The data from those such as Ater and Sang indicated that Minzu universities act as a form of 'hub' in the city in terms of organising and celebrating a variety of Mongolian/minority related cultural and religious festivals for minority students. Their comments echo the idea that Mongolian students are able to live in a cultural way by integrating their own minority cultural backgrounds into their normal life at Minzu universities.

To a certain extent, serving ethnic diversity becomes one of the features and traditions being reflected in Minzu universities, and this can be traced back to the design and establishment of Minzu universities. Initially, Minzu universities were given a particular mission, which was '*to study and research Chinese minorities, including their languages, writing scripts, history, social and economic situations...and introduce them to a wider range*'. This was written in the document '*Pilot directive to establish Central Academy for Nationalities*' (SEAC, 2004) issued in 1950. Based on this, Minzu universities were set the priority of studying, preserving and maintaining diverse ethnic minority-related language and cultural legacies into its system and context.

Secondly, ethnic diversity is also reflected in Minzu universities through Mongolian students' admissions and compositions. Minzu universities are supported by government at either central or provincial level through policies which are designed to meet the educational needs of students with diverse Minzu status and educational backgrounds. This helps establish the reputation of Minzu universities as '*cradles*' of minority talents. No other universities in the Chinese HE system are comparable to Minzu universities in terms of their representation of an ethnically and culturally diversified student body. Mongolian students, by accessing into Minzu universities with different routes, regions and educational backgrounds, are able to form a '*clique*' of friendships (*student interviewee Ala noted that a small clique of Mongolian students arrived from Xinjiang every year*) or a social network of their own with those sharing the same ethnicity and background. In this respect, Mongolian students perceive that they were protected from being '*lonely*' (*Ler's example*) in Minzu universities. Just as Ler mentioned, she can find companionship and forge lasting friendships in Minzu universities without feeling that she is alienated because of her Mongolian ethnic background. It also contributes to consolidating a strong sense of Mongolian identity by associating with those who are perceived as the in-groupers.

Thirdly, the role of Minzu universities in shaping a strong sense of Mongolian identity among Mongolian students is also affected by the Mongolian students' behaviours and activities. In other words, this study shows that when Mongolian students experience the ethnic and cultural diversity of Minzu universities, they

also play a role in shaping such culture. An example from Jier states that '*who are the minorities, who have the power of discourse*' in the Minzu universities, which appears to illustrate that Mongolian/minority students perceive themselves as constituting a significant part of the culture of Minzu universities, helping to deconstruct the imposition of Han domination in the context of these institutions. Another example comes from Sang, who noted how he perceived a change in himself in terms of an evolving sense of understanding of those who are ethnically and culturally different from himself. His feelings echoed the actions of Mongolian students in their everyday lives at university (*such as the encounters, interactions and activities involving each individual Mongolian student with those from diverse backgrounds*). This data reflects the power of agency over structure. A particular institutional feature of the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic in Minzu universities is dynamically defined and interpreted by the students it accommodates. Therefore, Mongolian students build a strong sense of Mongolian identity as a result of their own endeavours and power of will. They have affected an atmosphere at Minzu universities which facilitates the goal of building a strong sense of self as Mongolian.

8.1.2 Gaining positive learning identity and the role of Minzu universities in shaping learning identity

This study also concludes that Mongolian students have positive learning experiences at Minzu universities, upon which they are able to construct a positive learning identity. As the data indicates, choosing to study at a Minzu university is a significant life decision for many of the Mongolian students in this study. Those students accessing into Minzu universities with a MKM background have experienced a particularly smooth transition from their previous educational and language backgrounds into the new HE context. Since they enrolled into a Mengshou (*Mongolian language medium*) major at Minzu universities, they have found that their learning identity constructed as a Minzu university learner conforms to their previous learning identity. Many of the *Mengshou* majors available at Minzu universities include subjects such as '*Mongolian Language and Literature Studies*' which not only use Mongolian language as the medium of education but also study the knowledge, culture and language of the Mongolian ethnic. Therefore, Mongolian students are able to achieve good academic

performances built on elements which they are familiar with, including language habits, learning habits or knowledge basis. The data in this study suggests that the study of these Mengshou majors is perceived by Mongolian students not merely in terms of who they were before, but as a continuation of their previous educational and language conditions. Mongolian students have confidence in themselves as capable learners. A positive learning identity is realised through personally-constructed knowledge and internal value, just as Quyun noted that she has an inner sense of feeling and motivation to study Mongolian in good will because *'being a Mongolian for 20 more years, it is time to know it more'*.

The role of Minzu universities in shaping a positive learning identity construction by Mongolian students is contributed to by the following factors:

Firstly, this positive learning identity construction stems from as a sense of *'protection'* perceived by Mongolian students in terms of their choice of Minzu universities. Regardless of such varied language and educational backgrounds as MKM, MKH, inland high school, or bilingual/trilingual schools, Mongolian students are able to construct a positive sense of self by accessing into the different arrangements of courses and majors at Minzu universities. Much of the data in this study revealed how Mongolian students perceive such *'protection'* being manifested in the learning domain, such as protection from tuition burdens (*Jier's example*), protecting them by choosing an ideal major with lowered admission requirements (*Gele's example*) or through Yukeban transition (*Wu and Qian's example*), protecting them from intense competition with Han students in Gaokao (*Sang's example*), and protecting them by choosing a variety of Mengshou majors using the Mongolian language. A sense of *'protection'* manifests itself in the way Mongolian students are able to construct a positive learning identity without being placed at a disadvantage to Han students due to their particular language and educational conditions.

Secondly, many Mongolian students explained that MKM students have a considerably narrower set of options in their access to higher education, but that Minzu universities compensate for these disadvantages. Minzu universities are the *'better'* option compared to other Putong universities as they do not hold to

traditional methods of student admission. The availability of a wider range of Mengshou majors in Minzu universities is rarely seen in other Putong universities, therefore studying these Mengshou majors act as a connection to Mongolian students' personal ethnic background and conditions. Learning with a basis of familiar cultural frames of reference (Ogbu, 1995) leads to good academic achievements and confidence in learning, thus enabling Mongolian students to construct a positive learning identity.

Thirdly, a positive learning identity has a strong association with Mongolian students' strong sense of Mongolian identity. This is as a result of Minzu universities supporting Mongolian students' maintenance of a strong *being* of self as Mongolian. Committing to learning, to the role as a *Mengshou* student, aligned to Mongolian students' commitments of self as Mongolian. For many MKM Mongolian students in this study, the process of learning involves espousing Mongolian ethnicity in an advanced way and *'taking responsibility for what one does not understand, working to see the big picture, realising that knowledge evolves, and viewing learning as an ongoing process'* (Baxter Magolda, 2003, p.231). A good example of this is shown by Ala, who explained how his knowledge of the Mongolian ethnic's history and status quo have been profoundly evolved and how he is concerned with looking at Mongolian in a larger sense - not only as an ethnic in Inner Mongolia, in Xinjiang or in China but as being part of an interconnected world community. In this sense, a positive learning identity and Mongolian identity is mutually assisted and supported.

8.2 Deconstructing the enclosed-wall: challenges from external forces

In this section, I shall discuss how Minzu universities, as the *'enclosed-wall'*, can have the potential to segregate Mongolian students and how such segregation becomes a disadvantage for them in and beyond the university. The construction of Mongolian identity and learning identity are used as examples in illustrating this.

8.2.1 Becoming segregated and the role of Minzu universities in shaping Mongolian identity

Data in this study revealed that Mongolian students have a strong sense of classifying students into different groups and maintaining an exclusive group formed by those who they regard as 'we', or as one of the in-groupers. This is because of a strong sense of Mongolian identity among some Mongolian students who feel that maintaining an exclusive group or, in their words a '*clique*' in a social and friendship sense, helps to maintain and safeguard their Mongolian identity. Ethnicity is an important criterion in distinguishing students as belonging to either the in-group or the out-group. Han students, as the most significant *out-groupers* are traditionally segregated by Mongolian students in many ways, which is frequently shown in the data. For example, Elima noted that Han students are commonly '*out-of-reach*' for Mongolian students' in their learning or other aspects of university life, which is part of the reason the institutional arrangements of the university put Mongolian and Han students into different classes (*Mengshou versus Hanshou*), accommodation or other kinds of student organisations. A sense of segregation is also a deliberate choice of Mongolian students. For example, Tana noted that Mongolian students can feel themselves being widely discriminated against and stereotyped by Han students, and they do not care for the character of Han students in general. Compared to Han students, other minority-Minzu students (*such as Jier's example of Tibetan students or Ater's example of Kazak students*) are less resistant to Mongolian students in the university but are still not Mongolian and thus are considered less favourably for close friendships.

However, data in this study also revealed that Mongolian students perceive that they are not a homogenous group in Minzu universities. They are diversified due to regional variations and differences in educational backgrounds, access routes and language conditions. Data in this study indicates that the distinctions between *in-group* and *out-group* can happen among Mongolian students themselves. Mongolian students who perceive themselves as belonging to different groups are active in segregating themselves from other groups of Mongolian students. An example of this is shown such as Tana and Lawa who

described the distinctions between ‘*authentic*’ and divergent Mongolians in the Minzu universities. Specifically, the MKM Mongolian students or Mongolian students from the western region of Inner Mongolia regarded themselves as the authentic Mongolians and segregated themselves from the rest because they viewed themselves as possessing tacit Mongolian features, traditions and language. These groups of Mongolian students are also concerned more about the exclusion or inclusion of who are the more *authentic* Mongolians, thus holding a more sterling Mongolian identity. The self-perceived authentic Mongolian students tend to stay together in Minzu universities, sharing close learning and social spaces, but also show less evidence of integration with other groups, thus becoming more segregated from the Hansheng (*Han students*) or those deemed as ‘*unauthentic*’ Mongolians.

One of the conclusions to be drawn from this study is that Mongolian identity becomes stronger, with the result that some Mongolian students become segregated from the rest. However, to segregate themselves within a closed clique, group and social network can potentially block the transmitting of information from the outside. Thus, Mongolian students are hindered to a certain extent from the acquisition of the social capital required to engage in the job market and a wider community.

The role of Minzu universities in shaping a segregated Mongolian identity constructed by Mongolian students is illustrated by the following points:

Firstly, recruiting Mongolian students through different accesses (*such as MKM, MKH or bilingual*) and sorting them into different pedagogical, majors and courses (*such as Yukeban, Mengshou, Hanshou*) in Minzu universities is derived from the intention of better serving the varying educational and language needs of a diverse body of Mongolian students. However, such arrangements can potentially create labels for Mongolian students. Categories such as *MKM, MKH, Mengshou* and *Hanshou* can become labels for these students and are carried with them to be recognised by others in Minzu universities. These labels are the creation of the Minzu university system but effectively create the impetus for the Mongolian students themselves to construct their learning identity. Mongolian

students' perceptions of self were consolidated when they were enrolled into Minzu universities through different accesses of MKM or MKH or arranged into different categories as a Mengshou or Hanshou student. The strong sense of Mongolian identity held by some Mongolian students renders those studying Chinese language medium majors, particularly the MKH or Hanshou Mongolians as lacking the authenticity or *Mongol-ness* they see in themselves. Based upon this, segregation does not only occur based on ethnic distinction but also within Mongolian students themselves.

Secondly, much of the data in this study revealed Mongolian students' perceptions of the gap in learning and knowledge basis between themselves and those educated throughout in a Han/Chinese context. Many Mongolian students, such as Wu, noted that such a gap '*cannot be compensated in a short-run*'. To a certain extent, providing Mongolian students with preferential treatments for access and lowered exam/learning requirements is implemented in Minzu universities as a way to bridge the gap between Mongolian students and Han students. However, the data in this study indicates that such arrangements also result in Mongolian students being discriminated against and stereotyped as a group of students who are academically inferior and incapable of learning, particularly when such discrimination and stereotyping is combined with their status as a *Mongolian*. Such discrimination is perceived as being projected not only by Han students but also the teachers and staff in the Minzu universities. It appears that a Mengsheng (*Mongolian student*) bears a stigma in terms of learning achievements. In order to defend their dignity and strong sense of Mongolian identity, Mongolian students tend to segregate themselves from others and enclose themselves within a clique of learning for appraisal.

Thirdly, much of the data in this study indicates that Minzu universities carry out a strict policy of overseeing minority/Mongolian students' activities on campus. For example, Dao shared her experiences of Mongolian students being strictly supervised in terms of their words and behaviour within the campus when turmoil occurred in the city. Yan also shared her experiences of how she was banned from being interviewed by random media in the university. It appears from the data that the strict surveillance on Mongolian students' words and

behaviour also potentially enclosed the Mongolian students within a 'wall' of information and cuts off communication with those outside the 'wall'. Mongolian students seem to be *enclosed* under the surveillance of Minzu universities in terms of their representations of self as a *minority*. It was also apparent that Minzu universities used this strict surveillance of Mongolian students on campus to prevent external forces from influencing their role in shaping the preferred minority representations of its students.

8.2.2 A disadvantaged and vulnerable learning identity and the role of Minzu universities in shaping learning identity

Transiting into Minzu universities can be a turning point for many Mongolian students with regard to the construction of their learning identity. It is either a smooth continuation of their previous educational and language backgrounds or a fragmented and inconsistent learning experience under a strange and unfamiliar learning context. There is much data in this study which indicates that Yukeban (*the preparatory courses offered to students with an MKM background*) exhibits a differentiated mechanism. Through Yukeban, learning experiences are fragmented and Mongolian students are set on different learning paths by entering into a pure Chinese learning and social interactive environment at Minzu universities. Those who complete Yukeban and study a Hanshou major afterward may find they are the only Mongolian student (*the example of Qian*) in their class. It is very difficult for them to construct a positive learning identity in this new context, and Feng described his fragmented experiences in the Hanshou class thus: *'it is generally a kind of feeling of which I am unfitted to the climate'*.

Therefore, one of the conclusions drawn from the data is that the transition of learning identity from a Minzu educational background into a Hanshou/Chinese language medium major in Minzu universities engenders a sense of vulnerability and inconsistency of learning identity among Mongolian students. For many of them, no matter how well they performed in their previous learning experiences, the perceptions of self as a capable learner and their confidence for learning can be challenged in the new context. Due to language barriers and the experience of peer pressure in the new context, their perceptions of self can fall from those of a good student into a *'middle-level'* or less well-performing student. It makes their

learning identity become vulnerable.

Another conclusion to be drawn from the data is that the learning identity constructed by Mongolian students in Minzu universities can be a disadvantage to them in the context of the labour market. The data in this study reveals Mongolian students' extensive perceptions of how they were discriminated against in the labour market because of their lack of English language ability, non-proficient Chinese language ability, a minority language major background, or even their ethnic background as a Mongolian. This manifests itself in the challenges from external forces to deconstruct the protection offered within the 'enclosed-wall' of Minzu universities. Beyond the 'enclosed-wall' of Minzu universities, Mongolian students felt that they were less able to compete with Han students in the labour market.

The role of Minzu universities in shaping a disadvantaged learning identity constructed by Mongolian students is contributed to by the following aspects:

Firstly, Minzu universities, historically a political training institute for minorities, have preserved minority language education in social sciences as one of its traditional disciplines. Even though Minzu universities were largely converted into comprehensive universities, a large number of liberal arts subjects and majors are maintained. Therefore, most of the majors and courses available in Minzu universities fall within the liberal arts category. The documentary data in this study shows that the majority of Mengshou majors available in both case Minzu universities are in the areas of social science and liberal arts. Even certain Mengshou majors such as *Mathematics* are not classed as applied science but are more fundamental and theoretically-based. These Mengshou majors fall considerably short in terms of their connections with applied science subjects such as '*Medicine and Dentist, Law, Computer Science, Business studies...like traditional professional occupations or that develop the skills needed to be successfully self-employed*' (Boliver, 2015, p.250). Lacking a connection with the applied sciences generates concern for their practicality in the market, or the value of '*knowledge service*' as Barnett (2004, p.63) contended. When studying these majors leads to a lack of competitiveness in the job market, it can become a

disadvantage for Mongolian students who seek to be competitively employed. Learning identity, as Mengshou or MKM, is a disadvantage for Mongolian students because what they are learning and their learning background are lacking in affirmation and practicability in the job market.

Secondly, the synergy of Minzu universities with the differentiated educational system results in their learning identity becoming a disadvantage for Mongolian students in the labour market. When Mongolian students' requirements for admission and learning at Minzu universities were lowered, their motivation and capability to compete with Han students in a wider society was potentially decreased at the same time. An example of this is reflected in the data concerning the vulnerable basis of English language ability for most of the Mongolian students in this study. Mongolian students such as Eruhan, Wu and Hechu have commented that they did not receive consistent English education during their years at Minzu school: *'my English is literally the bare basics'* (an excerpt from Hechu). However, having only the *'bare'* basics of English language is not compensated for in Minzu universities but is increasingly weakened. For example, Eruhan said that *'in the university, the English we learned still starts from A.B.C'* and that the Mongolian students' requirements to pass the College-English-Test with an *'internal standard'* are much lower. It appears that Minzu universities do not make up for the weakness of Mongolian students in terms of their educational background, and therefore hinder any enhancement of their employment competitiveness.

Thirdly, the interference of the Chinese language in the Mengshou pedagogies can also become a disadvantage in the learning identity constructed by Mongolian students. Some data in this study indicates that Mongolian students such as Rigen are concerned that they are not well prepared for Mongolian-language-medium professions when they graduate. Rigen said *'how can we ensure that we improve our Mengshou Maths teaching (in future) if we are not prepared now in university learning?'* This indicates that the disadvantaged learning identity perceived by Mongolian students is not only reflected as a lack of competitiveness with Han students but also the incapability in utilising Mongolian language medium professions in wider society.

8.3 How the system of Minzu universities works against itself: some implications

There seems to be a delicate balance in either building or deconstructing such an *'enclosed-wall'*. It also reflects a complex and delicate relationship between cultural diversity and national unity. If overly emphasising cultural diversity within the context of Minzu universities, Mongolian students might accentuate their ethnic identity, potentially leading to an ethnic split. If cultural diversity is overly weakened, moving toward assimilation could be a problem. This reflects many of the contradictions which work against the Minzu university system. In the following, I will explain how Minzu universities coupled with its synergy with the differentiated educational system have contradicted its intentions and purpose of design. An overall argument is presented echoing the one raised at the start of this chapter, and will act as the ending to this chapter.

Firstly, a contradiction is reflected in the aims and practices with regard to the balance between cultural diversity and national unity. Minzu universities are designated with the aim of enhancing the unity of minority students, and in this way ethnic diversity can be properly configured in a framework of unity. This aim is reflected in many aspects of the data in this study. For example, the motto of Minzu University B is *'diversity into unity'*. In addition, an emphasis on ideologically and politically-heavy curriculums in the design of pedagogical activities in both Minzu universities also reflects an intention of enhancing minority students' perceptions of national value. However, this study found that Mongolian students have accentuated their Mongolian identity in the Minzu universities, but meanwhile their perceptions of *'national consciousness'* (an excerpt from Ala) is weakened. This exhibits a major contradiction within which ethnic diversity becomes more predominant amongst students with different ethnic backgrounds (particularly between the Mongolian versus Han) whereby a sense of unity is reduced.

Secondly, a contradiction is reflected with regard to its intention to integrate minority/Mongolian students into a wider society while it actually disadvantages and potentially segregates them. A differentiated educational system between the

Minzu versus Putong is designated, with one of the aims being to satisfy the educational and language needs of diversified minority students. Both *Minzu* and *Putong* education are accessible for minorities such as Mongolian students in this study, but attending Minzu schools offer them a chance to engage education in their own cultural and language conditions without converting to a Han environment. This is to increase educational opportunities and options for Mongolian students. Meanwhile, due to the gap in educational resources and quality between two systems, Mongolian students attending Minzu schools are provided with many preferential treatments in terms of their access and learning evaluations in higher education. However, this study found that many Mongolian students who accessed into Minzu universities with MKM/Minzu school backgrounds are greatly disadvantaged in many ways. In competing with Han students in the labour market, many Mongolian students in this study perceive that they belong to a group who are not needed by the job market and this will, to a certain extent, segregate Mongolian students from extensively participating and integrating into social affairs. In this sense, the practices in Minzu universities exhibit a contradiction with its intention of integrating minority students into wider social agendas. The system of Minzu universities does not effectively reduce the gap between two educational systems and the gap existing between two cohorts of students attending different types of schools but practically consolidated such a gap.

Thirdly, a contradiction is reflected in the paradox of language. This study found that the design of two types of majors (*Mengshou versus Hanshou*) in both Minzu universities is essentially a distinction in language, rather than in discipline or knowledge. Language becomes a critical factor in labelling Mongolian students who are included in different pedagogical programmes. Language is also critically important in evaluating, even determining, Mongolian students' achievements, opportunities and positive learning experiences. In order to overcome language barriers, many Mongolian students in this study have struggled in their learning experiences at Minzu universities, including those who tried to fit into a Hanshou class or make up for their English languages weakness. This appears to contradict the will of Minzu universities which '*traditionally stood for the highest realisation of human being*' (Barnett, 2011, p.154). When

language triumphs over many other aspects of value and merit in learning to recognise and evaluate Mongolian students, the legitimacy of the Minzu university system is challenged.

Finally, the design of Minzu universities becomes a significant part of the brand and showcasing of China in its representation of its ethnic, cultural and language diversity. However, the 15 Minzu universities appear to exist as a unique group in the Chinese HE system. An example of this is reflected in the ranking system, whereby the 15 Minzu universities rarely compete at the same level as their *Putong* counterparts. Specifically, only one of the 15 Minzu universities remained in the ranking system as one of the previous '985' project universities. The rest of them are absent in league tables such as the '985' or '211' project. Moreover, the only 985-supported Minzu university is ranked lower in status than other 985 universities in the ranking system for consecutive years (See QS University Rankings: Asian, 2013-2016; see also in Academic Ranking of World Universities from SJTU, 2003-2016).

Therefore, even though Minzu universities are mobilised to build their distinctive mission, type and profile, they are still ranked collectively as lower in status, thus becoming structurally and strategically disadvantaged in the process. This acts in contradiction to the perceived role of Minzu universities in representing the ethnic and cultural diversity of China in society and to the world. The collectively lowered status of these universities might render their function as a showcase of ethnic diversity in higher education as mere tokenism. When Minzu universities are stratified in the lower tiers, minority students studying there would inevitably be tagged as lower in status and would be disadvantaged further in the labour market. When Minzu universities do not have a higher social awareness of the labour market, its slogan of representing ethnic diversity proves inadequate in attracting the rational choices of minority students and families.

8.4 A brief summary

This chapter has presented a synthesis discussion of the major conclusions and arguments drawn out from this study. A major conclusion of this study is that the system of Minzu universities displays many contradictory aspects. Social identity

is used as the example to illustrate such contradictions wherein both the ethnic and learning identity of Mongolian students is constructed contradictorily in two different ways. More specifically, Mongolian identity becomes stronger and Mongolian students become more segregated because of a strong sense of being as Mongolian. A positive learning identity for some Mongolian students runs contrary to the disadvantages embedded within such a learning identity in terms of the labour market. Learning identity for many other Mongolian students also refers to their inconsistent and fragmented learning experiences when moving across different learning contexts at Minzu universities. Minzu universities, coupled with their purpose of design, history, discipline structure, missions and many other contextual elements, are perceived by Mongolian students as an *'enclosed-wall'*. On one hand, such an *'enclosed-wall'* offers them a sense of protection to construct and safeguard desired social identity, both personally and in the learning domain. On the other hand, this *'enclosed-wall'* can be deconstructed due to external factors such as the labour market and Mongolian students can become increasingly isolated and segregated in terms of participating and integrating on a wider social scale. The end of this chapter draws out some implications regarding how the system of Minzu universities works against itself in terms of balancing ethnic diversity and national unity in a wider Minzu context in China.

Chapter 9 Coda

The study has now come to the concluding stage. This chapter will provide a summary of the main text of the study with the concluding statements. A statement about the limitations of the work, the contribution of the study and the implications of the study will be presented.

9.1 A summary of the main text of the study

The study begins by providing the contextual information about Minzu, Mongolian Minzu, Minzu education system and information about Chinese Minzu universities in *Chapter 2*. Minzu has a different connotation to our understanding of minority/migration in a western context as it refers to a combination of both minority and majority celebrating a sense of ethnic unification. The Minzu education system is not segregated, but has the effect of differentiating minority students to a certain extent. The two types of Mongolian students are Min-kao-Min and Min-kao-Han, and reflecting such differentiation and language is a significant factor in signifying the difference between them. *Chapter 2* also provides information on the circumstances of China's 15 Minzu universities.

Chapter 3 provides a review of the concepts, theories and related studies linked with this study. Social identity operates in two dimensions, ethnic and learning, and is put into the context of HE. Minority students' experiences in HE in the different national contexts of the U.S.A, U.K. and China are presented. An argument drawn from this chapter is seen in Figure 3.3, a proposed conceptual framework within which social identity is used as a theoretical lens and operates in two dimensions to explore minority students' perceptions of self while interacting with the institutional elements of their universities. The methodology is unpacked in *Chapter 4*. A presentation of how the methodology is designed for this study in order to carry out data collection and data analysis is shown. The narrative-informed interview is used as an approach to construct identity studies because it explores ongoing, consistent and self-organised stories about self. Rather than choosing the wholly-unstructured interview, this study uses the

semi-structured interview technique based on the theoretical background of the study and the themes emerging from piloting.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 incorporate the data collected in the study. More specifically, *Chapter 5* deals with the documentary data, which gives a brief introduction to the institutional context of two case Minzu universities. It shows that both Minzu universities highlight multi-cultural elements within the institutional context, such as the campus facilities or campus radio broadcasts. Focusing on the 'studies on minorities' is a significant feature reflected in the discipline structure of both Minzu universities. In Minzu University A, the Mongolian language is used as either the major's subject (e.g. *Mongolian language and literature studies*), the major's medium (e.g. *Mengshou*) or the specialised areas of study (e.g. *Mongolian medicine and pharmacy studies*). In Minzu University B, disciplines within the area of liberal arts and social science are comprehensively prioritised, with studies such as ethno-sociology being the key supported disciplines of the university. Both Minzu universities claim a mission in terms of fostering high-level specialised and skilled minority students, so as to support the economic and social development of minority regions. *Chapter 6* presents four individual profiles of Mongolian students in the study. The profiling of each person uses interview data which records their perceptions and comments and recalls their personal and learning experiences before and during study at Minzu universities. Each profile exhibits a combination of different factors, including the familial/regional contexts, educational backgrounds, language conditions, and the way their experience at Minzu universities contributes to the particular social identity constructed for each person.

Chapter 7 gives a description of interview data based on the emergent themes, organised by the Nvivo analysis used in the study. Three major themes are outlined in *Chapter 7* surrounding Mongolian identity construction, learning identity explored and the role of Minzu universities in shaping social identity construction. These three themes specifically answer the three SRQs of this study. Through the data revealed in this chapter, it emerges that there is no singular and unified form of social identity construction which can be applied to all minority

students. Social identity, including both the ethnic and learning dimensions, can differ significantly among Mongolian students. *Chapter 8* draws out the synthesised discussion which gives rise to the conclusion of the whole thesis, which will be detailed in the following section. Chapter 9 will be the summary.

9.2 A summary of the conclusion of the study

The major conclusion of the thesis is that the construction of Minzu universities as part of the differentiated educational system running at HE level displays contradictions. The '*enclosed-wall*' works as a metaphor to indicate the context of Minzu universities. Either building or deconstructing the '*enclosed-wall*' of Minzu universities demonstrates two sides of the social identity construction of Mongolian students, with Minzu universities playing a significant role in shaping each side of social identity construction. This study concludes that Minzu universities, as the '*enclosed-wall*', demonstrate an effect of segregating Mongolian students from the wider community. With an intensified and stronger Mongolian identity being constructed, Mongolian students are less and less active in their engagements and integration outside the '*wall*' of Minzu universities. More specifically, there are also disadvantages embedded in the learning identity, even allowing for the fact that many Mongolian students' learning identities are shown to be positive. These disadvantages mainly manifest themselves in the Mongolian students' perceptions of themselves as being underestimated, downplayed and even discriminated against in the labour market as a result of their personal and learning backgrounds in Minzu universities.

On the other hand, the connotations of the '*enclosed-wall*' are not entirely negative. Sustaining the education of Mongolian students in an '*enclosed*' system is extremely valuable because it provides the educational opportunities for Mongolian students to use their own language and culture as part of the learning process. In this sense, the Mongolian identity and learning identity of Mongolian students are closely linked. A positive learning identity is constructed relying on a familiar cultural and ethnic frame of reference. Also, Mongolian students perceive themselves as being '*protected*' within the context of Minzu university in order to maintain their ethnic identity as a Mongolian and the positive learning

identity as a university student. All of these factors contribute to addressing the agenda of ethnic, cultural and language diversity within China's HE system. However, if we apply the concept of the '*enclosed-wall*' to a wider community, we can see that the challenges from the labour market and global higher education competitiveness tend to deconstruct the '*enclosed-wall*'. The social identity construction of Mongolian students is negotiated not only within the context of the institution but also within a wider social and global context, where they find that they face challenges and barriers to success outside the '*wall*'. Thus, the process of social identity construction of Mongolian students illustrates the complex dynamic between the protection and division of Mongolian students within a wider community, and it is this dynamic to which the '*enclosed-wall*' metaphor refers.

9.3 The limitations of the study

All studies have limitations, and this one is no exception. One such limitation is its focus on Mongolian students in China's Minzu universities. The samples selected are taken only from those who studied in these universities. Even though some data in this study uncovers Mongolian students' recollections of their friends' experiences in other institutions, the Mongolian students studying in those non-Minzu/Putong universities are not included in this study. It has been suggested that future research could extend its scope to include Mongolian students in a wider HE system, and it would be interesting to see how Mongolian students perceive the construction of their social identity in the context of these non-Minzu universities.

Another limitation concerns the challenges of carrying out a study which involves dense issues of intercultural communication and understanding. This study frequently crosses multiple areas of culture and language, including English, Chinese and Mongolian. Even I, as a researcher, consider my social identity to be multi-cultural. The meaning of certain terms (*such as mission statement, motto*) is not easily transplanted into a cross-cultural/national context. Also, the proposed conceptual framework of this study is built upon English studies of social identity theory but sometimes social identity is translated and applied dramatically

different fashion in a Chinese context, as shown in both the literature and the data. This reflects the challenge to retain the consistency of the study in terms of the intercultural understanding in the research design, data collection and the bridging of theory with the data.

9.4 The contribution of the study

The contribution of the study is twofold:

(1) This study contributes to the theoretical thought in studies relating to minority students' experiences in higher education. It does this in two ways:

- by offering an interpretation of the ethnic and learning dimensions of social identity and providing a bridge between these two dimensions when looking at minority students' university experience.
- by contributing to an understanding of the extent to which the context of HE can play a role in the social identity construction of minority students. Certain elements which constitute the institutional context, such as language, activities, campus culture and environment are the media through which social identity construction is negotiated.

(2) This study contributes to an understanding of a particular type of HEI in China - Minzu universities. It offers empirical data which references both the personal and learning experiences of Mongolian students studying there. Its context can be found in the converging factors of the Minzu perspective in Chinese society, a differentiated educational system, Chinese higher education and minority students. Being situated at the centre of such a convergence, this study contributes to an understanding of the particular role, mission and position of Minzu Universities and how Minzu universities can better address minority students' integration into a wider society.

9.5 The implications of the study

When reading this study, the reader may be able to draw his or her own conclusions. In terms of the researcher's stance, some points emerged which have implications for the policy and practices of Minzu universities and higher education at a global level.

The policies which focus on promoting Chinese Minzu education are growing and becoming more diversified. In fact, the practice of Chinese Minzu education is strongly policy-informed and policy-driven. In this context, the policies regarding Minzu education should be carefully designed and have built into them the facility to deliver a swift response to how they impact the practices. Among all the policies concentrating on Minzu education, a series of preferential policies appears to be most influential to the *people*—the minority students. However, this study suggests that the preferential policies seem to have become more and more like a *walking stick*. It helps people to walk, but there is also the risk of becoming too reliant on it and being unable to walk without it. Without the preferential policies, minority students seem to be highly vulnerable and less likely to maximise their opportunities in higher education. This brings into question the nature of the preferential policies to a certain extent - do they genuinely benefit minority students or do they work to their disadvantage?

Another implication of this study is that Minzu university, as the highest level of the Minzu education system, should function as an efficient medium for minority students to move from their previous educational background toward open opportunities which they can subsequently take advantage of in wider society. In order to do so, the Minzu university should break down the '*enclosed-wall*' to a certain extent. This also links to a rethinking of the distinctive mission of Minzu universities: how Minzu universities can deliver something which distinguishes them from the rest/non-Minzu universities? Apparently, the answer to this question is not as simple as stating that it should highlight the features of multi-Minzu/multiculturalism; this might be seen as merely superficial tokenism. Again, Minzu universities are not universities for minorities. Both Han and minority students are included. Therefore, Minzu university should be a *university* first and a Minzu-characterised university second. Another point that needs addressing concerns Minzu universities not only celebrating the features of Minzu but also thinking about how they can better serve and sustain the feature of *Minzu* for itself. It is suggested that Minzu universities have a rethink of their discipline structure in order to provide a wider range of courses and disciplines in response to market needs. More effort is needed to re-shape Minzu universities

so that they can have greater interaction and a more meaningful dialogue with wider society.

Linking to a wider view, this study generates an argument regarding whether there is a conflict between addressing multiculturalism and global higher education rankings. On the one hand, multiculturalism has spread globally as a response to increasingly intensified globalisation. It values the spirit of diversity, not only in the student body but in culture as a whole, which is reflected in the institutional context of higher education with its agenda of social equality. However, when higher education is increasingly obsessed with the pursuit of higher global rankings, it seems that multiculturalism is weakened. A recent U.K. study found that ethnic minority students are less likely to be admitted into Russell group universities, which are recognised as having decent positions in the global rankings (Boliver, 2015). The multicultural policy was also cunningly revised in these elite universities: the university need to display an ethnically-mixed student representation in response to the need for diversity resulted in the rejection of some qualified minority students at the expense of enrolling other students from certain minority backgrounds (Ibid). In the U.S.A., the historically black HE institutions or other minority community institutions have played a significant role regarding the intake and the education of minority students at HE level. However, these minority-centred universities lag behind other predominately white universities in the domestic ranking system (Curtin and Gasman, 2003); this has echoes of China's Minzu universities. All of this leads to a rethinking of higher education in the global sphere: does the institution or the educational system itself play a part in the ethnic inequality played out to the disadvantage of ethnic minority students? The answer to this is complex, but surely it serves to open a dialogue regarding how the system can be better revised for the long term benefit of minority students.

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**Appendix I: Records of field work on daily basis and
documents collected for this study**

Piloting Study at University M (12 October 2014 – 31 October 2014)

Date	Types	Interviews/transcripts	Documents collected	Research diary
12 th		No interview is carried out today; preparation for the next day's work; a dinner with contact person		
13 th		Interview Mongolian student (1): a girl who study <i>History</i> in Mengshou; in her final year; specifically ask her to snowball another student from the parallel Hanshou class	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultation about the newly added bachelor's degree awarding (<i>Guanyu xinzeng xueshi xuwei shouyu zhuan ye de qingshi</i>) (No. 2014) (including the information of faculties, total number of undergraduate majors covering 10 discipline fields) 2. Implementation plan on curriculum credits (<i>Xuefenzhi shishi fangan</i>) (including ratio between the compulsory and optional credits; requirements of total credits in terms of different discipline/majors; calculation of credits and the corresponded pedagogical arrangements) 3. The brief introduction of University M (<i>Xuexiao gaikuang</i>) 4. The work plan for educational administration office in 2014 (<i>Jiaowuchu 2014niandu gongzuo jihua</i>) 5. Statistics on ethnic composition of students at undergraduate level in University M (<i>M daxue benkesheng minzu chengfen bili tongji</i>) 6. Statistics of Mengshou students' enrolment and employment upon different majors in University M (<i>Mengguayu shouke xuesheng fen zhuanye zhaosheng jiuye qingkuang tongji biao</i>) (Year 	
14 th		Transcribing the interview with Mongolian Student (1)		
15 th		None		: campus observation
16 th		Staff (1): deputy director working in the educational administration office; takes charge of the administration of Mengshou majors and Yukeban; expertise in Mengshou HE; bilingual himself, once was a MKM and graduated from Minzu university		
17 th		Staff (2): deputy dean in the department of <i>Mongolian Language Studies</i> ; rich experience by working as the mentor of Mongolian students in the department		: reflections on the interviews with two staff
18 th		Transcribing the interviews with Staff (1) and Staff (2)		
19 th				
20 th				: transcribing




		2012, 2013)	is tough!
21 st	Mongolian student (2): was introduced by (1); a girl from <i>History</i> Hanshou class; fluently in Chinese; can understand very little Mongolian (<i>for the purpose of social networking and student's union work</i>) but basically is weak in Mongolian; friendship with (1).	7. Undergraduate teaching quality report 2013 (2013niandu benke jiaoxue zhiliang baogao)	
22 nd	Mongolian student (3): a girl from <i>Accounting</i> in Hanshou class; in her third year; Yukeban transition		
23 rd	Transcribing the interviews with Mongolian students (2) and (3)		
24 th			
25 th	<i>Take a break</i>		
26 th			
27 th	Staff (3): director of Chancellor's office (<i>very busy</i>); very interesting personal life story about being as a Mongolian student once studying at one of the top Chinese universities and then transferred to a local university in Inner Mongolia because he cannot keep pace in the top university		 : reflections on staff (3)
28 th	Transcribing the interview with Staff (3)		
29 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Summary of piloting work: interview schedule redeveloped; interview questions improved; reflections on documents and research diaries (<i>campus radio broadcasting, student's campus activities, and observe if there were any Mongolian students' specifically-orientated unions/organisations</i>)● Arrival to Beijing	 : summary of piloting work	
30 th			



31 st	<i>Take a break: a trip with C and D to Tianjin Normal University</i>
November 1 st	<i>Staying in Beijing:</i> Preliminary trial on analysis in Nvivo of piloting Data: <i>coding</i> is initiated Coding on transcripts of Mongolian student (1) and Staff (1) Coding on transcripts of Mongolian student (2) and Staff (2) Coding on transcripts of Mongolian student (3) and Staff (3) ● 35 nodes emerged which were categorized into 8 themes ● Catalogue of documents and themes emerged
2 nd	
3 rd	
4 th	
5 th	
6 th	● 35 nodes emerged which were categorized into 8 themes ● Catalogue of documents and themes emerged
7 th	
8 th	<i>Take a break</i>
9 th	


Field work at Minzu University A (10 November 2014 – 28 November 2014)

<div>Types</div>	Interviews/transcripts	Documents/files collected	Research diary
Date			
10 th	Departure to Minzu University A		: Sets out a Journey
11 th			
12 th	Preparation for next day's work; meeting with Professor Wu and his families; a walk around the city; informal chat with Professor Wu about his knowledge of the university, of the city's tradition and legacy and his ideas of the education for Mongolian in China		
13 th	Interview with Eruhan: introduced by the link with the education department in the university; ' <i>star on the stage</i> '; popular profile	1. Agreement of Joint Construction by State Ethnic Affairs Committee and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (<i>Guojia minwei yu neimenggu zizhiqu xieyi gongjian A Minzu Daxue</i>), 2009 2. Autonomous Government of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Forward the <Report on the Recovery and Development of Minzu Education Suggestions> (<i>Neimenggu zizhiqu renmin zhengfu pizhuan jiaoyuju guanyu huifu he fazhan minzu jiaoyu de jidian yijian de baogao de tongzhi</i>) (1980). No. 174. Issued by Autonomous Government of IMAR (<i>Neimenggu zizhiqu renmin zhengfu</i>) 3. Brochure of Minzu University A (<i>A minzu daxue</i>) (2006), issued by Department of Publicity (<i>A minzu daxue xuanchuanbu</i>) 4. Compilation on Anniversary Exhibitions of Minzu University A: 1958-2008 (<i>A minzu daxue xiaoqing jijie: 1958-2008</i>) (2008), edited by of Department of Publicity (<i>A minzu daxue xuanchuanbu</i>)	
14 th	Interview with Elima: the classmate of Eruhan		
15 th	<i>Take a break</i>		
16 th			
17 th	Interview with Geng: a friend of Eruhan and Elima; a student cadre in the Hanshou class; explaining why Mongolian student are academically vulnerable Interview with Bai: male Mongolian student; classmate of Elima and Eruhan; fluncy in Chinese as a Mengshou; actively in helping the faculty staff		A week of observation of campus radio broadcasting (Day 1)
18 th	Interview with Dao: introduced by	5. Conference Report on Inner Mongolia Autonomous	campus radio





	<p>the link from Professor Wu; strong sense of self as a Mongolian; ‘a leader’ for her fellow Mongolian students in the class; learning Japanese for Post-graduate exam</p> <p>Interview with Hechu: hard-working; learning English as a ‘mission impossible’; as a Mongolian, you need to study really hard to compete with others; discriminative experiences</p>	<p>Region Promoting Ethnic language and Ethnic Education (<i>Neimenggu zizhi qu minzu yuwen ji minzu jiaoyu huiyi youguan minzu jiaoyu de baogao</i>) (1962). No.57, issued by Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Department of Education (<i>Neimenggu zizhi qu jiaoyuting</i>)</p> <p>6. Curricula Schedule of Han language and Literature Studies Major (<i>Hanyuyan wenxue zhuan ye kecheng shezhi</i>) (2011-2015), provided by Mongolian Student, non-public access data</p> <p>7. Enrolling Schedule in 2014 (<i>2014nian A minzu daxue fengsheng fen zhuanye zhaosheng jihua</i>)</p> <p>8. Horqin Scholar Scheme (<i>A minzu daxue keerqin xuezhe shishifangan</i>)(2013), issued by Office of the Chancellor (<i>A minzu daxue xiaozhang bangongshi</i>)</p> <p>9. Introduction of the School of Mongolian Medicine and Mongolian Pharmacy (<i>Mengyiyao xueyuan</i>), Faculty of Mongolia Studies (<i>Mengguxue xueyuan</i>), from the Yearbook of Minzu University A in 2013, p.67-70, p.33-36</p> <p>10. Lists of Key Disciplines (<i>A minzu daxue zhongdian xueke yilanbiao</i>), from the Yearbook of Minzu University in 2013, p.105-108</p> <p>11. Notice of the Consent of the Merge of <i>Three Institutes</i> into Minzu University A (<i>Guanyu tongyi 3 suo xueyuan hebing zujian A minzu daxue de tongzhi</i>)(2000). No.120, issued by Ministry of Education of the PRC</p> <p>12. Our University and the City Government signed a Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Agreement</p>	<p>broadcasting (Day 2)</p>
19 th	Interview with Liang: a girl who seems to be resisting to Han		campus radio broadcasting (Day 3)
20 th	<p>Interview with Lawa: previously study in the elite trilingual school and this makes her feel unfitted to the university; a <i>talent</i> for different kinds of competitions in the university</p> <p>Interview with Tana: a friend of Lawa; western Mongolian with <i>pure</i> Mongolian language accent and this was envied by Lawa; think highly of her experiences within the ‘Happy Qiaqia’ (<i>Mongolian students’</i></p>		✍ campus radio broadcasting (Day 4)



	comedy union) and, as she described, it make her feel 'home' and gained 'sisterhood'	(Woxiao yu shi zhengfu qianshu quanmian zhanlue hezuo xieyi), from the Yearbook of the Minzu University A 2013 (<i>A minzu daxue nianjian 2013</i>), p. 7-8	
21 st	Interview with Naqi: studying Han language and literatures which used to be a <i>shame</i> for herself in front of her Mongolian friends; encouraged by her father as an advantage for futhur employment and integration into the society Interview with Dagula who talked about the future of Mongolia Minzu	13. Public System of the University—Library (<i>Xuexiao gonggong tixi—tushuguan</i>), from the Yearbook of Minzu University A 2013 (<i>A minzu daxue nianjian 2013</i>), p. 181-182 14. Program on Doctoral Training of the Mongolian Medicine Studies to Fulfil National Special Needs (<i>Guojia teshu xuqiu mengyaoxue boshi rencai peiyang xiangmu</i>) (2012). No.40, issued by Academic Affairs Committee of the State Council of the PRC 15. Report on Current Issues of Ethnic Normal Education (<i>Guanyu dangqian minzu shifan jiaoyu jige wenti de baogao</i>) (1962), No.200, issued by Department of Education of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (<i>Neimenggu zizhi qu jiaoyuting</i>)	 campus radio broadcasting (Day 5)
22 nd	Take a break		
23 rd			
24 th	Interview with Orm: many notes about how Mongolians are experiencing wide range of discriminations Interview with Jie: study a prestige major in the university; a choice out of family's will; mentioned about the impact of dormitory (<i>a kind of social network/clique</i>)	16. Students' Enrolment (<i>Zhaosheng qingkuang</i>), from the Yearbook of Minzu University A 2013 (<i>A minzu daxue nianjian 2013</i>), p. 97 17. Students' Ethnic Composition Statistics in 2013 (<i>A minzu daxue 2013nian zaixiaosheng minzu chengfen tongji</i>) 18. The Curricula of the Yukeban (2013-2014), provided by Yukeban Students in Minzu University A, non-public access data	
25 th	Interview with Dai: visualise the possible outlets and prospects of Mongolian students in the job	19. The History of Minzu University A (1958-2000) (<i>Xiaoqing teiji: a minzu shifan xueyuan de lishi huifu</i>), edited by the Editorial Office of Minzu University A	




	<p>market in relation to her major</p> <p>Interview with Gele: creating and controlling the <i>Mongol-ness</i> modernised representation through her ideas about ‘<i>standardisation</i>’ as internationalisation</p>	<p>20. The Schedule of Teacher Education Majors (2014) (<i>Shifanlei zhuan ye jiaoxue dagang</i>), issued by the Office of educational administration (<i>Jiaowuchu</i>)</p> <p>21. Undergraduate Majors Settings (<i>Benke Zhuanye Shezhi</i>), from the Yearbook of Minzu University A 2013 (<i>A minzu daxue nianjian 2013</i>), p. 91-93</p> <p>22. Undergraduate Disciplines Construction (<i>A minzu daxue benke zhuan ye jianshe</i>), from the Yearbook of Minzu University A in 2013, p.91-93</p>	
26 th	<p>Interview with Yi: <i>regret</i> about going to a Han school to study for herself and won’t sent her children to a Han school</p> <p>Interview with Temuer: Mongolian students’ leadership; how Mongolian students can make an impact in the university; get rid of the stereotype</p>	<p>23. Wulanfu’s Speech on the Opening Ceremony of Inner Mongolia University October 14th 1957 (<i>Wulanfu yu 1957nian 10yue 14ri zai neimenggu daxue jianxiao dianli shangde jianghua</i>)</p> <p>24. 2010 Inner Mongolia Higher Education Entrance Examination Registration Statistics (<i>2010 neimenggu zizhi qu gaokao baoming qingkuang tongji</i>), from Inner Mongolia Education and Entrance Examination Information Center (<i>Neimenggu jiaoyu zhaosheng kaoshi xinxi zhongxin</i>): http://www.nm.zsks.cn/ (accessed 12 March 2017)</p>	
27 th	<p>Interview with Feng: how going for HE changed himself into a ‘<i>new-person</i>’</p> <p>Interview with Rigen: how can you be a good Mengshou math teacher without being well-prepared in the university learning?</p>	<p>25. 2012 Annual Summery (<i>A minzu daxue 2012 niandu gongzuo zongjie</i>) (2013), issued by Office of Chancellor (<i>A minzu daxue xiaozhang bangongshi</i>)</p>	
28 th	<p>Interview with Qian: extremely difficult for him to study in a Hanshou class; Mongolian students</p>		



	<p>are left-behind from the beginning and this should be raised as an issue by the university</p> <p>Meeting with Professor X.H.: showing the Mongolian language textbooks they are using for instruction; an '<i>enclosed</i>' circle of utility of the materials which also results the limited provision of these kinds of materials; few of them can compile the textbook; generally lack of the interests and practices input in this field; needs support from national, funding and policy level</p>		
29 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Summary of the work in Minzu University A: a tight and breathless schedule ● <i>Back to home for a break</i> 		
30 th			


Field work at Minzu University B (8 December 2014 – 26 December 2014)


Date \ Types	Interviews/transcripts	Documents/files collected	Research diary
8 th	Arrival to Minzu University B; preparing for the work in next day; have a dinner with a friend of mine who is a master student in the university; he introduces <i>Minfer</i> to me who is a key person to snowball		
9 th	Interview with Minfer	University webpage materials:	
10 th	Interview with Jier: Jier mentioned about the free tuition fee of the major she studied; she associated herself frequently with her friends who study in other universities in the city and she thought she was <i>lucky</i> to be here Interview with Quyun: Quyun once had an experience of working as an overseas Confucius Institute member; also she is a member of the Minzu elite association of the university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Admission and Employment of Minzu University B (<i>Zhaosheng yu jiu ye</i>) -History of Minzu University B (<i>Xuexiao yange</i>) -Renowned Scholars of Minzu University B (<i>Xueshu mingliu</i>) -University Motto (<i>Minda xiaoxun</i>) -Departments and Faculties (<i>Yuanxi shezhi</i>) -Yukeban (<i>Xueyuan gaikuang</i>), from Department of Yukeban -One-Year Yukeban Students' Training Plan and Two-Year Yukeban Students' Training Plan (<i>Rencai peiyang</i>), from Department of Yukeban -Courses Construction (<i>Kecheng jianshe</i>), from Department of Yukeban -Korean Language and Literature Department (<i>Chaoxian yuyan wenxue xi</i>) -College for Tibetan Studies at the Minzu University B (<i>Zangxue yanjiuyuan</i>) -Department of Mongolian Language and Literature 	
11 th	Interview with Ater: Ater had a very strong sense of commitment for the Mongolian ethnic; he has a eager to do something, to make an impact, but it is also what concerns him that Mongolian is not <i>united</i> like other Minzu groups (<i>such as Korean students</i>) in the university; Mongolian is not the <i>mainstream</i> in the university		

12 th	A planned interview with Jier's friend but eventually they did not show up. Interviews were cancelled. Jier said they were too 'shy'. It is my feeling that Jer's friends wish to approach to me and talk to me about their experiences, but in the last minute they did not show up. An illumination for ethical issue of this study	Department (<i>Menggu yuyan wenxue xi</i>) -Law School (<i>Fa xueyuan</i>) -School of Literature and Journalism (<i>Wenxue yu xinwen chuanbo xueyuan</i>) -School of Information Engineering (<i>Xinxi gongcheng xueyuan</i>) -School of Management (<i>Guanli xueyuan</i>) -School of Economics (<i>Jingji xueyuan</i>) -Key Discipline of Minzu University B (<i>Zhongdian xueke</i>)	
13 th	Take a break	Other Documents Collected 1. Adopted 'Minzu' in Universities' English name: It's a confident attempt (<i>B minzu daxue genggai yingwen xiaoming: yicheng minzu geng zixin</i>), from Campus Newspaper in November 2013, sponsored by Minzu University B Communist Youth League (<i>Minzu daxue tuanwei</i>)	
14 th			
15 th	Interview with Ala: Ala comes from Xinjiang; sometimes, he is conservative to talk to me about something. An interesting note is about national consciousness as he mentioned		 Starting a week of observing the campus radio broadcasting (Day 1)

16 th	Interview with Sang: another Xinjiang Mongolian student; hard-working and well academically-performed; <i>'becoming a Mongolian academia'</i> and this shows resonance with <i>habitus</i>	2. Admissions Guide in 2014 (<i>B minzu daxue 2014nian zhaosheng jianzhang</i>), Article 7, 9, 14, 20-25 3. Compilation on Anniversary Exhibitions of Minzu University B: 1951-2011 (<i>B minzu daxue xiaoqing zhanlan ziliao huibian</i>) (2011), edited by Editorial Office 4. Degree Granting and Talents' Training Disciplines Catalogue (<i>Xuewei shouyu he rencai peiyang xueke mulu</i>) (2011), jointly issued by Ministry of Education of the PRC and Academy Degrees Committee of the State Council, Educational Science Publishing House	 Campus radio broadcasting (Day 2)
17 th	Meeting with Professor C, D and T: they are very busy so none of the interviews are formal. However, I still gained a lot of useful information. For example, Professor C noted about ethnic identity is divided upon region or <i>'regionalised ethnic identity'</i> ; Professor D clarified MKM and MKH to me and explained the reason of poor academic performances of minority students; Professor T corrected me about a misunderstanding of social identity	5. Introduction of the National level Key Discipline of Chinese Minority Language and Literatures (<i>Zhongdianxueke: zhongguo shaoshu minzu yuyan wenxue</i>), from School of Chinese Ethnic Minority Languages and Literatures Brochure (<i>Zhongguo shaoshu minzu yuyan wenxue xueyuan jianjie</i>) 6. Introduction of Minzu University B (<i>Xuexiao jianjie</i>) (2006) 7. Introduction of the National-level Key Discipline of Ethnology (<i>Zhongdianxueke: minzu xue</i>), from School of Ethnology and Sociology Brochure (<i>Minzu xue yu shehui xueyuan jianjie</i>)	 Campus radio broadcasting (Day 3)
18 th	Interview with Wu: a Mongolian girl from Inner Mongolia; Yukeban transition	8. List of the National-Level Key Disciplines in Undergraduate Level (<i>Yu guojiaji zhongdian xueke</i>)	 Campus radio broadcasting (Day 4)

19 th	<p>Interview with Lee: MKH; he talked something very interesting about the conflicts and frictions between the Mongolian and Han students; it is hard to him to find a <i>right side of ally</i> in these conflicts</p> <p>After the interview, I took a very thorough walk around the campus; the next day is the weekend so I think it would be good to walk around</p>	<p><i>xiangpipei de benke zhuan ye yilanbiao</i>), from the Yearbook in 2010, p.520</p> <p>9. Minzu University B Undergraduate Disciplines Statistics (<i>B Minzu daxue benke zhuan ye xue ke men lei tongjibiao</i>), from the Yearbook of Minzu University B in 2010, p.516-519</p> <p>10. Minister Yuan Guiren's Speech on the Fourth Session of the Eleventh CPPCC Meeting (<i>Yuanguiren buzhang zai quanguo zhengxie shiyijie sici huiyi shangde jianghua</i>), 2011</p> <p>11. Protocol on Key Construction of Minzu University B (<i>Guanyu zhongdian gongjian B minzu daxue de xieyi</i>) (2002), jointly issued by State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the PRC, Ministry of Education of the PRC and Municipal Government</p> <p>12. Periodicals on Minzu University B: 1955-1984 (<i>B minzu xue yuan yuankan: 1955-1984</i>), edited by Editorial Office</p> <p>13. Periodicals on Minzu University B: 1974-1993 (<i>B minzu xue yuan: 1974-1993</i>), edited by Editorial Office</p> <p>14. Practice and Exploration: Minzu Elite Talents' Training in Minzu University B (<i>B minzu daxue minzu jingying rencai peiyang de shijian yuyu tansuo</i>) (2008), edited based on conference speech delivered by Chancellor</p> <p>15. Report on the Recovery and Development of Minzu Education Suggestions (<i>Guanyu hui fu he fazhan</i></p>	<p> Campus radio broadcasting (Day 5)</p>
20 th	Take a break		
21 st			
22 nd	<p>Interview with Yan: MKH; hardly can see any <i>Mongol-ness</i> in her as she is entirely Han-cised; once studied in the Minzu university affiliated high school (<i>this is one of the top high schools in the nation and students have a very high enrolment rate to top universities</i>)</p>		
23 rd	<p>Interview with Hua: MKH; study in Geography; very insightful ideas regarding what he learned through the major and how it is inherently embedded with Minzu and ethnic features</p>		
24 th	<p>Meeting with Professor S: very short conversation but professor S is the key</p>		

	person through whom I gained a lot of useful materials, documents and books about Minzu education	<i>minzu jiaoyu de jidian yijian de baogao</i>) (1980), edited by Ministry of Education of the PRC	
25 th	Interview with Ler: she came to me with a friend of her but another girl is not a student in Minzu university; she comes from the renowned inland high-school; very interesting comments about how she struggled in the inland high school and how these unpleasant experiences impact her perceptions of Minzu university	16. Report on the Recovery and Development of Minzu Education Suggestions (<i>Guanyu huifu he fazhan minzu jiaoyu de jidian yijian de baogao</i>). No. 27, issued by the Ministry of Education 17. Regulations on Setting up the Undergraduate Majors in Higher Education Institutions (<i>Putong gaodeng xuexiao benke zhuanke shezhi guanli guiding</i>)(2012), issued by Ministry of Education of the PRC 18. Regional Variation of Factual Intake of Undergraduate Students in 2010 (<i>B minzu daxue 2013nian ge sheng,shi,qu shiji luqu renshu biao</i>), from the Yearbook in 2010, p.315-322 19. Selected Papers on Ethnic Education from several Provinces, Municipalities, and Ethnic Autonomous Regions: 1977-1990 (<i>Sheng, shi, zizhiqu shaoshuminzu jiaoyu gongzuo xuanbian,1977-1990</i>) (1995), issued by National Education Committee of the PRC, Sichuan Minzu Press 20. Students' Ethnic Composition Statistics in 2010 (<i>B minzu daxue 2010nian zaixiaosheng minzu chengfen tongjibiao</i>) 21. Students' Admission Statistics in 2010 (<i>B minzu daxue 2010nian luqu renshu tongji</i>) 22. The Undergraduate Training Schedule of 'Mongolian Language and Literature Studies' (2011), provided by Mongolian student, non-public access Data	

		<p>23. The Curricula of the Yukeban (2013-2014), provided by Yukeban Student, non-public access data</p> <p>24. 2010-2020 Minzu University B '985' Project Construction General Plan (<i>B minzu daxue 2010-2020 nian '985' gongcheng jianshe zongti guihua</i>)</p>	
26 th	<p>● Summary of the work in both Minzu universities: A total of 56 documents and files collected A total of 31 student interviews in the main study and 3 in the piloting; several small, discursive talking with the teachers and staff members in the main study and piloting</p>		

Appendix II: Profiles of participants in the pilot study

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Discipline (Program engaged)</i>	<i>Year of Study</i>	<i>Pre-university Background</i>
1	Female	History (Mengshou)	Year 4	MKM
2	Female	History (Hanshou)	Year 4	MKH
3	Female	Accounting (Hanshou)	Year 3	MKM
<i>University Senior Manager</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Affiliated to</i>	<i>Position</i>	
4	Male	Educational administration office	Deputy Director	
5	Female	Department of Mongolian language and literature studies	Deputy Dean	
6	Male	Chancellor's office	Director	

Appendix III: Interview schedule in the main study

- Can you tell me something about your personal background?
(能给我讲讲你的成长经历么?)
Prompts (to be raised as appropriate):
 - *The hometown that come from?
(*来自哪里?)
 - *Family/parental ethnic background (e.g. language environment)
(*介绍一下你的家庭情况, 例如, 家里人的语言使用情况?)
- Tell me about your feelings of self as a *Mongolian (or not)*?
(你是如何看待自己作为一名‘蒙古人’这样的身份的? 或者说你并不觉得自己是一名‘蒙古人’?)
Prompts (to be raised as appropriate):
 - *Why?
(*能和我讲讲, 为什么你会有这样的想法么?)
 - *Interpretations of the meanings to be as a Mongolian (or not)?
(*当提到作为一名‘蒙古人’, 你认为这究竟意味着什么?)
 - *Mongolian Language
(*你认为讲蒙语和作为一名‘蒙古人’之间有怎样的关系?)
 - *Cultural Characteristics
(*你认为‘蒙古人’都有哪些文化上的特点, 个性?)
 - *Personal preferences (e.g. customs, diet, dressing)
(*你认为‘蒙古人’都有哪些偏好? 比如在习俗, 饮食或穿着方面))
- Tell me how you choose to come to this Minzu university for study?
(能和我讲讲, 当初为什么选择来到民族大学学习?)
Prompts (to be raised as appropriate)
 - *Linking to pre-university background
(*和大学之前的教育经历相关?)
 - *Yukeban, if attended?
(*你曾经参加过预科班么?)
- Tell me why you choose to study this major?
(能和我讲讲, 为什么你选择学习这个专业?)
Prompts (to be raised as appropriate):
 - *Mengshou or Hanshou?
(*是蒙授专业还是汉授专业?)
 - *Interpretation of what the major is about?
(*我对你的这个专业不太了解, 能给我介绍一下你所学的这个专业是关于什么的么?)
 - *What language is used in the learning?
(*你平时都是使用什么语言开展学习活动的?)
 - *What language is used in respective curriculum?
(*不同的课程, 所使用的语言也是不同的么?)
 - *Most favourite/least favourite curriculum, and why?

(*有没有自己最喜欢的一门课、或者最不喜欢的一门课？为什么呢？)

- What do you see the learning of this major has brings to you?
(在你看来，在大学所学习的这个专业为你带来了什么？)

Prompts (to be raised as appropriate):

*Significant value

(*对你来讲，学习这个专业对你有重要的价值么？)

*Linking to the future after graduation

(*你认为你所学习的这个专业，同你的未来的就业有怎样的关联？)

- How do you think of the life in Minzu University?
(你觉得大学生活怎么样？)

Prompts (to be raised as appropriate)

* Do you feel yourself adapt to the university life? Or not? Why?

(* 你觉得你适应这几年的大学生活么？或者感觉自己很不适应？为什么？)

* Do you have anything significant (e.g events, people) occurred to you when you look at your university time?

(*当你回顾在大学这几年的生活，有没有发生过一些对于你来讲是意义非凡，印象深刻的事或者某些人？)

*Interactions and friendship with the Mongolian

(*你的朋友都是蒙古族么？)

*Interactions and friendship with the non-Mongolian (e.g. Han)

(*你的朋友有来自其它民族的么？比如汉族)

* institutional characteristics

(*你认为这所大学都有哪些特色？)

*Campus activities impressed

(*有没有参加过一些校园的活动，让你印象深刻的？)

*Exciting/happy memories

(*有没有那些让你感到愉快，幸福的回忆？)

*Sorrows/annoy experiences

(*有没有那些让你感到悲伤，甚至愤怒的回忆？)

- Do you have anything that you would like to add on or talk about?
(对于这次访谈，你还有什么其它想要补充的么？)

Appendix IV: An overview of profiles for participants in the main study

<i>31 participants</i>		<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Pre-University</i>	<i>Major</i>
Minzu University A	Elima	Female	21	MKM	Preschool Education (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Eruhan	Female	23	MKM	Preschool Education (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Bai	Male	26	MKM	Preschool Education (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Dagula	Female	21	MKM	Minority Language and Literature Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Dai	Female	23	MKM	Mongolian Pharmacy Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Feng	Male	26	MKM	Yukeban/ Economic Studies (<i>Hanshou</i>)
	Gele	Female	22	MKM	Mongolian Pharmacy Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Geng	Female	23	MKH	Preschool Education (<i>Hanshou</i>)
	Hechu	Female	23	MKM	Yukeban/ English (<i>Hanshou</i>)
	Dao	Female	23	MKM	Ideology and Political Education (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Qian	Male	24	MKM	Yukeban/ Mechanical design , manufacturing and automation (<i>Hanshou</i>)
	Jie	Male	22	MKM	Mongolian Pharmacy Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Liang	Female	21	MKM	Ethnology (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Rigen	Female	22	MKM	Mathematics (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Naqi	Female	24	MKM	Han Language and Literature Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Temuer	Male	23	MKM	Ideology and Political Education (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Orm	Female	22	MKM	Han Language and Literature Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Tana	Female	24	MKM	Minority Language and Literature Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)

	Lawa	Female	24	Trilingual school	Han Language and Literature Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Yi	Female	23	MKH	Public Administration (<i>Hanshou</i>)
Minzu University B	Ala	Male	25	Bilingual School	Minority Language and Literature Studies (<i>Meng-Han Bilingual</i>)
	Ater	Male	25	MKM	Minority Language and Literature Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Hua	Male	22	MKH	Ecology (<i>Hanshou</i>)
	Jier	Female	21	MKM	Minority Language and Literature Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Lee	Male	23	MKH	Yukeban/ Public Administration (<i>Hanshou</i>)
	Minfer	Male	22	MKM	Minority Language and Literature Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Quyun	Female	21	MKM	Mongolian language and Literature Studies (<i>Mengshou</i>)
	Yan	Female	22	MKH	Sociology (<i>Hanshou</i>)
	Sang	Male	25	Bilingual School	Minority Language and Literature Studies (<i>Meng-Han Bilingual</i>))
	Wu	Female	21	MKM	Yukeban/ Public Administration (<i>Hanshou</i>)
	Ler	Female	21	Inland High School	Education (<i>Hanshou</i>)

Appendix V: An example of research diary in the main study

Date: 2014.12.19 周五 晴(有点雾)
Recorder: Lu Wang

1. 外校的朋友没有来 (☹) (7:00am - 9:00am)
今天上午7:00点, 我从住处出来, 走到了民大西门, 天气不是很好。昨天的访谈中的蒙文学院的几个学生给我介绍了几位他们的朋友来加我的访谈。这位朋友是首都大和北大的, 他们听说一位美国博士在做关于蒙古族的调研, 都觉得特别高兴, 就要来和我来聊一聊他们自己的认识, 算是为自己的民族做贡献。
可是, 当我提前来到理工楼的cafe, 等他们的时候, 而给我打了个电话说, 因为临时有事, 一位朋友要临时去考民大附中的面试, 所以来不了, 而另一位朋友, 因为听说我是单独来, 不好意思, 也不来了。我觉得他们的话也许会对我的论文有帮助, 就再次邀请了一下那位同学, 让他不要害羞, 不要紧张, 也可以让西陪着他, 可以结果还是一样, 他就没有来。

2. 关于访谈 (9:30am - 11:00am)
今天我访谈了一位在民大的思想政治与管理专业/公共管理专业访谈的学生。我们的访谈地点还是在理工楼的cafe。9:30时, 这位男孩准时的露面了。他的穿着有些~~奇怪~~, 带着很深的帽子, 穿着宽松的牛仔裤, 给人一种小小的, 萌萌的感觉, 他们和我来, 主动的给我握了一下手, 对我说:
B: 您就是L的姐姐吧? ~~我是B。~~
L: 你好, 听你准时! 想喝点什么?
我们进行了一些这样的聊天, 因为我从他的穿着打扮中, 并没有看到有特别明显的那类蒙古族男孩的打扮, 所以我猜他就是从MHH上来的学生。他身上的那类中都有气质, 让我觉得和以前调研的很多MHH的蒙古族男孩很不一样。
后来, 我给他点了咖啡, 简单的聊了一些关于ice-breaking的问题, 比如他和他的介绍人L的关系, 我们就正式开始了interview。我们的全部的interview的内容在录音中有所呈现。之后我进行了检查。
录音设备: ✓
录音是否完整: ✓
是否有必要追加第二遍的访谈: ? 待议

3. 12:00am - 2:00pm
中午在学校的食堂吃饭 ①

“做这个课题的人很多，少不在这问题这样，你要做出新意，光要借助你的平台，去讲一个不同的故事……在我看来，认同就是认为自己相同，这才认同，当然辨异也是认同的一部分”

听了之后，我和这位老师一起来到教育学院，见了其他几位老师。

[illegible]

提供了一些周末の活動の提案

2014 11/21 午	2014 / 12 / 20
7:00 纽约工作同学, 打破碗(叫校) 有些敏感, 但不影响	计划是 1. 计划 1-2 位同学 最后是 Yukeban 的 Z 若时间冲突, 则调整
9:30-11:00 一位从 KH, 男同学 思政管理、	2. 中和和 C 老师考察
12:00-12:30 校园广播 (中)	3. 总结, 去图书馆找资料 寻找以前翻译员有没有过 一破口读者
12:00-2:00 清真食堂吃饭	4. 计划不再多了。 再联系?
2:00-3:00 FIC 老师开会	5. 总结, 再约 <u>学生</u>
3:00-4:00 见阿生, 并约第二天 的两位同学	
6:00-7:30 校园广播(晚)	

校园广播
周一~周五
总结一下:

Appendix VI: An example of interview transcripts

Interview: Qian

Date: November 28th, 2014

Place of Interview: Horqin Hotel, Ground Floor

Duration: 01:16:57

Q. 在你眼中，你是如何认识蒙古族的这个民族的？

In your opinions, how do you perceive Mongolian as an ethnic group?

A. 我觉得就是社会对于一个人、一个集体的承认、认可、认同，当然包括很多吧，比如教育，风俗，文化，信仰，历史。对于民族教育来说，少数民族学生毕业走上社会一般不怎么被认同，首先有很多原因，能力、语言、沟通等等原因，社会是不问一个人出处的，对于企业来说它所承认的只有能力，它看重的是一个人能不能给一个企业带来盈利带来价值，所以民族生就业相对处于竞争的弱势。2014年教育部统计，全国最难就业专业中，内蒙古地区最难就业专业大多为蒙授专业，比如，蒙古语、新闻学(蒙授)，计算机科学与技术(蒙授)等等，社会的需求虽然是有限的，但是也间接体现出社会对于民族教育的认同，当然还有其他的复杂原因。

I think it relates to many aspects. For a person, it (ethnic status) refers to the recognition of you and the recognition of your group, including in the areas of education, customs, culture, beliefs and history. For Minzu education, minority students are generally not properly recognised. This derives from many reasons, like ability, language, communication and so on. In this society, it doesn't matter what is your origin but how your ability is evaluated, whether or not you can prove that you are worthy, and from this sense minority students are disadvantaged in the employment competition. There was an educational census in 2014 which showed that the most difficult employment majors in Inner Mongolia are the Mengshou majors, such as Mongolian language studies, journalism, computer science and technology. Even though the demand is limited which is part of the reason, it also indirectly reflects the social recognition of Minzu education, of course, there are other complex reasons.

Q. 你是有过特别关注这个的方面么，蒙生的就业前景，机遇什么的？

So you have a particular interest in this area, right? About the employment prospects and opportunities of Mongolian students?

A. 我前两天给教育部写了一封信。

I sent a letter to the Ministry of Education two days ago.

Q. 你都写的是，写的内容是啥？

What is the content of the letter?

A. 就是近1个月的事。

Something happened in last month.

Q. 主要的主题是啥?

Yes, what is the subject?

A. 就是最近 10 多天吧, 写的, 其实我也挺愿意谈这方面的, 我有许多老师都是蒙古族老师, 我有一个预科的老师, 她是教我们英语, 预科英语, 她以前也写过就是预科方面, 就是教学这方面的就是那个, 算是论文吧, 然后我有个老师, 她是我们大学教育学院院长, 以前也教过我, 教过我教育学, 我选过这个选修, 她也是中国人民大学的博士, 和那个厦大的, 所以说这一方面我也是了解一点吧。那我就说正事吧, 我给教育部写信, 我就是挺有感受的吧。一般的蒙生转到汉授专业, 特别少, 因为他根本, 跟汉生, 根本就跟不上。第一就是因为我们的学习, 以前高中的教育程度和汉生就是, 一个天, 一个地, 就是差别特别大。然后, 其实这个学习差别, 不是关键, 我觉得在大学, 最主要的是, 生活, 语言, 我现在感触特别深, 就是我自己转到汉授班, 就是一个班就我一个人, 反正有时候感觉就是特别孤零零的, 但是对我来说, 虽然说挺独立的吧, 还是挺难受。有时候吧, 一个班级很大, 桌子也很多, 但是有时候, 你坐在这, 有时候, 一拍桌子, 其它人就不坐了, 就是这种情况, 你知道吧, 真的太伤人了。我现在我跟你讲, 要跟以前, 大一的时候, 我肯定当时要难受很多很多天。但是现在我已经淡定了, 习惯了, 眼不见心不烦, 爱怎么样怎么样吧。反正我想, 我现在特别想快点毕业, 真的, 各种各样的。我的爷爷奶奶, 也快退休了, 我现在我真是, 如果他们再年轻一点, 也许我大学重走一次, 真的, 我愿意付出这个代价, 我一定会选一个用自己民族语学习的专业。我不愿意让自己, 心情不好, 会生病的, 你知道么? 心情不好, 你看我现在, 我高中的时候脸特别干净。现在我给你讲, 我到了大学之后, 我生过一次病, 吃那种中药, 面面的。

(I wrote the letter) around 10 days ago. In fact, I am quite willing to talk about this. I have many teachers who are the Mongolians. One of them is an English teacher from Yukeban who once wrote a paper about Yukeban education. Another of them is the dean of the faculty and graduated from Renmin University. I choose his class as an optional course for credits. So (because of many of my teachers are Mongolian) I have some more understandings about this subject. Okay, back to the topic, the letter I wrote to the Ministry of Education derives from my personal experiences. In general, there are very rare Mongolian students choosing to transfer to Hanshou major. The reason for this is simple: we cannot keep up with Han students. The first is the gap in high school education. There are huge gaps, like worlds apart where one is in heaven and one is on earth. Then, in fact, the gap in learning is not the key. I think, in the university, the most important thing is how to live your life. This is what I feel particularly deep now. When I got transferred to the Hanshou class, I am the only one and I feel so lonely. Even though I regard myself having independent personality, it still feels tough. It is a big classroom and there are a lot of desks in the classroom. Sometimes, you sit there then no one wants to sit beside you. You are the only one in that row. You know, just like this and it is really hurtful. When I tell you this now, I am kind of getting over it. If this happened in the past like when I was a freshman, I certainly would suffer for many days. Whatever, I think, I am about to graduate soon. My families, my grandparents, they would retire soon as well. Sometimes I think, if they are younger, maybe I would go back to my college life once, really, I am willing to pay the price. I would absolutely choose a major which uses my native language to study. I do not want to let myself, feel bad, you know? I even got sick (because of pressure), and have to take medicines.

Q. 你的汉语讲的这么好，也会有这种孤零零的感觉？

I have this feeling that your Chinese language is pretty well. How do you have this feeling of 'being lonely'?

A. 其实你不知道，各民族之间，它就有那种隔阂，因为民族和民族之间，它根本不是一天两天产生这种隔阂的，它是历史遗留下来的隔阂，比如说那个中秋节吧，中秋节啊，汉人过，你们汉人一般都吃月饼，我们一般都不吃月饼。

You know, there exists estrangement between different Minzu groups. It is not a day or two for this kind of estrangements being created, it is a historical creation. For example, the Mid-Autumn Festival is a Han festival. The Hans like you eat mooncake but the Mongolians do not eat mooncakes.

Q. 我也是蒙古族啊。

I am a Mongolian as well.

A. 啊。

Ah.

Q. 但是我是那种，怎么说呢？

But, how to say, I am the.....

A. 我知道，不会讲蒙语那种对吧？

Yeah, I know what you mean, you are the type who cannot speak Mongolian language, right?

Q. 对。

Yes.

A. 我知道，你这种的现在特别多，我觉得你现在还写这个论文，蒙古族的博士论文，我感觉挺开心的，因为我觉得现在蒙古人啊，现在缺少的就是，虽然你没学过蒙语，但是你内心应该有蒙古这种概念。

I know, there are many Mongolians just like you. To tell you the truth I feel very happy that you took this as the topic of your PhD research. Many Mongolians now are lack of an inner connection of themselves with the Mongolian, regardless that you are capable in the language or not.

Q. 你是说蒙古族情结？

What do you mean of the 'inner connection' with the Mongolian?

A. 对，蒙古族情结，但是许多人就是丢弃了，根本就没有这种民族的这种思想。现在我说那种会讲蒙语真正的蒙生越来越少了，大部分都是你这种的。基本上来讲，就是为了高考加分，有很多一大批蒙生都是这样的情况。

Yeah, the inner connection and many of the Mongolians have lost it. They don't have this kind of idea (to identify themselves as a Mongolian). Now there are less and less of the authentic Mongolian students, and many of them are just like you (me, the researcher). Basically they choose to be a Mongolian only because of the added points on Gaokao, and

there are a lot of students like that.

Q. 但是我觉得如果单说语言的话, 很难说一下子看出来谁是蒙古族, 谁是汉族人, 你的汉语真的挺好的, 我就看不出来。

But I think language is not the only indicator to tell who is a Mongolian and who is a Han. Your Chinese is really well, I cannot tell the difference.

A. 我是汉语说的挺好吧, 但确实也是不行, 汉语成绩一直和你们汉生相比差的太多了, 我的汉语水平就相当于你们高中水平, 真的, 是讲的挺好的沟通啥的没问题, 但是我们就是学习方面根本不行, 语法方面根本运用不了, 运用不好, 只能说, 会讲会表达, 但是没办法像你们那样的一种表达, 那种思考方式。我高中我们一个班, 说汉语的都不太好, 都这样的, 我和J (另一个访谈对象) 都这样的。

Compared to your Hansheng, my Chinese language is only at the high school level. When I use Chinese, it is only at the basic level of general communication. My Chinese is not sufficient grammatically or in terms of other academic works. I am not, and would never be, like thinking as a Han or talking as a Han. Many of my classmates in high school are just like my situation. Chinese language is not that fluent, like me and J (another interview participant of this study).

Q. 你和J 以前是同学?

So you and J are school mates before?

A. 我们高中都是一个班的。

We studied in the same class.

Q. 我觉得你讲的很有意思, 对我有很多启发。其实我有一些问题, 首先, 我想了解一下你在预科学习的经历, 当时你为啥想选民大的预科呢?

I think what you told me is really interesting, very inspiring. Actually I have many questions but before that I want you to tell me something about your experiences in Yukeban. So why do you choose Yukeban?

A. 每个人我觉得, 其实来到大学前对大学并不了解。我现在可以说, 对大学里的各个专业每个专业就业怎么样, 了解特别深, 比任何一个同学, 一个大学生了解都要多, 以前真的是不了解, 我一开始来到大学之前, 有学生会的接待新生的, 我一开始并不知道, 把他们当老师了, 然后他们给我们办手续, 我就叫他们老师, 那时候想想也挺二的, 那时候也想学预科, 当时我是我个人, 我比较喜欢选预科, 我那时候就是用汉语怎么说呢? 就是没想到。

Just like everyone else, I bet no one really knows what university is about until they come into this. But now I can say that I know a lot about the university and the majors, such as what is the employment prospect of different majors. I think I know it better than many other university students. I used to be quite silly. I remembered when I just arrived in the university; there was a receptionist to welcome the new students. I didn't know at the beginning that he is a student as well and call him teacher. Really stupid, so that's why I choose Yukeban (because of this naive personality), I thought I would like studying in Yukeban but I didn't expect what is coming up.

Q. 分数?

Is there any reason that you choose Yukeban because of your performances in Gaokao?

A. 对分数也有关系, 高中好多同学都报预科。

The (Gaokao) score is also a factor. Many of my high school classmates apply to Yukeban (because of their Gaokao scores).

Q. 预科可以缓解一年再选专业吧?

Yukeban can also give you one more year before applying for any major, right?

A. 可以缓, 但是我当时其实还不知道可以缓 1 年。

Yeah, it does. But actually I didn't know about this when I apply for Yukeban.

Q. 预科和报考其它专业比, 分数是不是高一点?

Compared to the application of other majors, does Yukeban set a higher entrance requirement?

A. 低, 你正好说反了, 预科就是特别低。

In opposite, lower, much lowered.

Q. 那很多人报预科, 预科线还低, 那预科班怎么筛选招谁不招谁呢?

If Yukeban was set a much lowered entrance requirement, then how to make the decision with regard to recruiting some while rejecting others when there are tons of minority students apply for it?

A. 你想错了, 当时很多人, 对于汉生来说, 对于有头脑的学生来说, 对于汉生来说, 他们并不愿意把时间和金钱浪费在预科这, 预科根本就是浪费时间, 对我来说, 预科就是浪费时间, 浪费金钱, 根本学不到任何东西, 但是我觉得吧, 预科一年就是缓冲一年, 也有些好处。

You are wrong. Han students, to me, they are quite clear. For Hansheng, they won't consider wasting one more year in Yukeban. That is because Yukeban is basically a matter of wasting time, at least it works like this for me. I learn nothing valuable here (in Yukeban). But on the other side, Yukeban also owns its advantage.

Q. 预科还要交学费, 很高么?

Do you need to pay tuition fee by attending Yukeban?

A. 其实学费不多, 学费 5 年, 加上预科, 我们是 2800, 读预科 3400。

Not too much. In combine with the undergraduate years of study, the total fee is 3400 for 5 years. Without Yukeban, it would be 2800.

Q. 预科那一年是 2800, 然后比如说你现在转到现在的汉授专业, 就是 3400?

Do you mean that the fee charged for Yukeban is 2800. And when you transferred to the Hanshou major, the fee is increased to 3400?

A. 不是, 就是预科第一年学费多少, 大学以后 4 年, 5 年, 也全按预科的学费, 但是

就学费根本没有差别，就是浪费了1年时间，一般的人，就别说我，我反正是，如果让我再选一个，我肯定不会选预科，浪费1年时间。

No, what I mean is that the annual fee charged in the following undergraduate years of study remains the same with the amount charged in Yukeban. But I think the tuition fee does not make too much difference, it is all about the time. We waste one more year in Yukeban. That is the point.

Q. 那你觉得举办预科的目的是啥？

In your opinion, what do you think of the purpose to set up the Yukeban course?

A. 其实我觉得国家对于这方面的政策还是有瑕疵，否则我也不会给教育部写信，我觉得吧，它这个目的，出发点是好的，它就是想，预科一年就是用汉语授课，全部汉语授课，我们学习的知识相当于你们高中的知识，而且开的公共课也是，就是为了缩短我们和汉授学生的差距，中国各个大学几乎都有预科，人大，清华，北大都有预科，师大，还有内蒙古各个大学都有预科，全中国有200多所大学都开预科了。I think, in the policy level, the implementation of Yukeban has many flaws, or otherwise I won't write a letter to the Ministry of Education. In my opinion, I think it is for a good cause. Yukeban aims to take Chinese language as the only medium of teaching. What we learn in Yukeban is basically the content from high school curricula. I think the reason behind all these is to shorten the gap between us with Han students. Nearly all the Chinese universities have Yukeban being set up, such as in Renmin, Tsinghua, Peking, as well as many universities in Inner Mongolia. Nearly 200 universities throughout the country own a Yukeban inside.

Q. 你刚才讲到你在预科之后转到汉授专业，感觉有点跟不上？

You just mentioned that you feel like a laggard in the Hanshou major after you finish your Yukeban study?

A. 哎呀，你说跟不上，那肯定是跟不上的。我跟你说我们蒙生高考你知道多少分么？

Yeah for sure, I just cannot keep up. Do you know how much Gaokao scores are needed for Mongolian students to admit HE?

Q. 300多？

Around 300 points?

A. 我有材料，一会把图片给你，还有预科的课程表，都给你，你看下就知道了。我们今年蒙生预科，蒙授二本线是211分，理科啊。

I have a material relating to this and also a curricula schedule of the Yukeban. I can give you these materials and then you would find out what I mean. You see, for this year, the minimum entrance requirement of Mengshou Erebn Xian (second-tier enrolment for MKM students into HE) is 211, and this is for science student.

Q. 211分。

211 as the minimum entrance line.

A. 对！你想想，汉授多少，这差距几乎就是太大了

Yes! You see! Compared to (those who admit) Hanshou, the gap is huge!

Q. 200 多分.

The gap is almost around 200 points.

A. 所以你看我们学习差了多少!

So can you have a sense about how huge the gap is between us (MKM versus Hanshou)?

Q. 但是有点人会说, 汉授学生会说, 分数低多好啊, 我们很辛苦要考很高的分数才能大学, 你们不用那么高就可以上大学了。

But you know, some Hanshou students might say like this: 'it is so good for those MKM Mongolian students to have a much lowered entrance requirement. For us, we need to work very hard and perform very well to go to the same university with them'.

A. 但是你不知道, 如果一个国家对少数民族没有一个好的政策, 根本没办法激励少数民族教育, 现在我们蒙古族教育啊, 普遍的一个问题是啥呢? 就是学习蒙语的人越来越少, 就是我们高中的时候, 我们老师跟我们做过一个材料, 我们高中净做题呢, 我们高中阅读题几乎全是关于民族语啊, 就是蒙古语啊可能在本世纪末消失了, 基本消失了。我们现在的主要问题就是, 会蒙语的越来越少了。如果那个文章里说的就是真的话, 我觉得到时候蒙古这个民族也就基本完了。从我们那个内蒙古的蒙古文和蒙古国的蒙古文不一样就能看出来, 他们都和我们都已经分化了现在, 这个你知道么?

However, if the country does not have a good policy for ethnic minorities, there is no way to motivate the development of the education for the minorities. The thing is, just like for our Mongolian education, a real problem is that there is less and less of the Mongolian people learn in Mongolian language. I was reading a passage back in high school which was about the Mongolian language. It said the Mongolian language might disappear by the end of the century. Now the problem which the Mongolians confront is that less and less people learn the Mongolian language, and thus less and less of the people are able to speak the Mongolian language. If what is predicted in that passage is true and our language is about to vanish, then I think our Mongolian is pretty done! You can also have an idea about this by comparing with the outer Mongolians. The Mongolian language for them is divergent from us. We are differentiated, do you know?

Q. 知道一点, 你接着说, 外蒙是新蒙文。

Yes, I hear a little about this, continue, I know that outer Mongolians use neo-Mongolian language.

A. 我们内蒙古的蒙文, 我们学的蒙古文, 是古蒙语, 就是成吉思汗那时候用的, 元代用的蒙文, 但是蒙古国人用的是现代蒙文。

Mongolian language used in Inner Mongolia (of China) is a kind of ancient Mongolian language, this is what we learn. It is the Mongolian language created and used back to Genghis Khan-era and in the Yuan dynasty. But the outer Mongolians use the modernised Mongolian language.

Q. 与时俱进?

So is that a kind of the progression of language with the time?

A. 与时俱进, 我觉得不是好事, 我不赞同。

Advancing with the time, but I think this is not a good thing. I do not agree.

Q. 你是觉得这种新蒙文不好? 还是内蒙的传统蒙文不好?

Do you mean that you are not supportive of this kind of modernised Mongolian language?

It is no better than the traditional Mongolian language (which is used in Inner Mongolia)?

A. 这个只代表我个人观点啊, 我觉得吧, 还是觉得用就是我们现在这个古蒙语比较好, 但是我觉得他们都是为了发展, 所以他们改良蒙文了。你知道蒙古文的那个 Word 你知道么, 就是 2000 几年之前, 蒙文就是不能在电脑上用, 但是后来开发出来了。现在在内蒙古地区, 就是蒙语的 word, 一方面就是特别少, 我觉得外蒙文吧, 就为了和国际接轨。

This is only my personal point of view. I prefer the traditional Mongolian language. But I also understand the reason why Mongolian language are reformed and modernised (in Outer Mongolia). It is for a need of development. Do you know that the Mongolian language typing system in the WORD on computer was actually developed around year 2000? Before that, the Mongolian language cannot be typed on computer. In Inner Mongolia, the typing system of Mongolian language is not popular. That's what I mean by a 'need for development'. The modernised Mongolian language (used in Outer Mongolia) is much more advantaged in this way to link with an international community.

Q. 新蒙文在写的上面是不是和俄罗斯文字很相似?

I remembered the modernised Mongolian language is quite similar to Russian written text, right?

A. 像英文, 横着写, 我们现在蒙语是竖着写的。

It looks more like English, I think, with horizontal layout. The traditional Mongolian language is vertical.

Q. 新旧蒙文, 你能看懂新蒙文么?

Can you read the modernised Mongolian language?

A. 看不懂, 但是说都一样, 语言都相通, 就是文字不一样。

No I cannot read. But I can speak. The spoken language is the same. Only the written texts are different.

Q. 好的, 聊了这么多关于蒙语的内容。我现在想要问一些关于你现在所学的专业的相关的问题? 你所学的专业是?

Fair enough. We have talked a lot about the Mongolian language. Now I want to ask you some questions about your learning of the major in the university. Can you tell me the title of your major please?

A. 机械设计制造及其自动化专业。

Mechanical design, manufacturing and automation

Q. 刚开始学这个专业挺好奇?

Are you excited about the major that you are going to study?

A. 其实我是从开始学专业课开始,也是大概知道我们这个专业是关于什么的,我在大学这几年到底应该学些什么东西。也算不上好奇吧,就是有了这种概念。

I do not have a clear idea in my mind about what my major is about and what I am supposed to learn at the university until I start my professional curricula studies.

Q. 我本科学校也有这个专业,很难吧?

In my undergraduate university, we also have this major. Is it very difficult to learn?

A. 哎,我现在这个专业,真的说是有点后悔,特别难。

Yeah, it is extremely difficult and I feel regret to choose this major.

Q. 特别难?

Extremely difficult?

A. 特别难,尤其对于我这种蒙生。

Extremely difficult, particularly for a Mongolian student like me.

Q. 你们班就你一个蒙生么,就是你这种从预科过去的蒙生?

Are you the only case as a Mongolian student transferred through Yukeban into this major?

A. 就我一个蒙生,就是说考试的时候适当的降低一点。理由是啥呢?我有我的理由,既然高考那么低把我们招进来了,你到大学了,就不应该一下子把要求提高,一下子就把我们提到跟汉生一个档次,如果你这么做,我觉得你这就是在。

It is only me. I really wish that passing the exams can be easier for me. I have my justifications. When Gaokao allows us to be able to study in a university with lowered entrance requirements, now it is not supposed to lift that line, to demand us to perform a score as good as others (like Han students). I think this is really

Q. 招进来,不对你负责?

Irresponsible?

A. 可以这么说,嗯,就是对我们高考的一种否认!

Yes, er., or otherwise, this is the denial of the Gaokao, the denial of the Gaokao system.

Q. 对高考成绩的一种否认?

The denial of the Gaokao?

A. 民大和别的大学不一样,比如说和内蒙古科技大学比,我有同学在内蒙古科技大学,他们那个也是蒙生,但是他们班,ta 在他们班的蒙生比我要好过,我再这么说吧,我在我们班就一个蒙生,但是他们在他们班有 10 多个蒙生,一个班 40 多个人,10 多个蒙生,你知道他们及格线多少?

MUA is very different compares to, such as the Inner Mongolia University of Science and

Technology. I had a friend in that university who is a Mongolian as well. He told me that the Mongolian students have a better life (compares to me) in that university. I am the only one (Mongolian student) in my class but 10 out of 40 students are the Mongolian students in his (my friend's) class. Do you know what the pass-line in his class is?

Q. 多少?

No?

A. 45 分.专业考试课及格分数线, 45 分。你知道我们多少么? 60, 我就特别不明白, 我跟学校校长, 我都跟他们, 就是教务处长, 就是专门负责教育的, 和他专门说过, 我觉得吧, 这真是, 教育处长吧, 他是个汉族人, 其实我觉得教育方面, 不应该选一个汉族的教育处长, 尤其是民族大学, 他是根本就不负责任, 我去反映问题的时候, 我先去找的教务处的副处长, 教务处的副处长是个蒙古族, 我跟他一说, 他说这个情况确实, 但是我做不了主, 我需要向上面反映问题, 他反映问题, 他让我写个材料, 写个大概情况, 我给写了, 他说我把这个材料给领导呈上去, 给他看看, 然后就没有消息了。我等了 15 天, 因为反映说行政单位他们, 做一个批复或者反馈之类的, 是 15 个工作日么。然后我现在, 我自己也是学习法律, 辅修法学。

45 points, and this is for them to pass the professional curricula. Do you know what our dividing line is? 60 points. I really don't understand about this. I even talk to the university leader and the director from educational administration office. They take charge of primarily the educational affairs in the university. I talked to them and hope (they can help me solve this problem by setting a lowered passing line for me). But the director, he is a Han. I always have a concern that Minzu universities should never appoint a Han as the director to take charge of educational affairs. He won't care and won't take responsibility. It is his deputy, the deputy of the department, helped me and responded to me. The deputy is a Mongolian. He said he has no right to make the decision but told me what I need to do. He asked me to fill out a file explaining my situation and he would hand in my file to his senior leaders. I wait for 15 working days for responses. I also study the laws, as my second degree, the laws.

Q. 辅修法律, 为啥呢?

Why do you study the laws?

A. 我觉得我真正喜欢的是法律, 现在就在学这个。其实我也了解了一下你的大学, 你们大学吧, 在全英国来说也是挺好的

I think I really like studying the laws. I actually searched your university (before I met you). Hull University appears to be a good university in UK.

Q. 一般吧, 我觉得, 不算特别好, 还算是, 以前挺厉害的。

Well I think it is in the average level. It used to be very good.

A. 有个首相, 议员从这毕业的

One of the prime ministry was graduated from your university.

Q. 我们学校出了一个液晶。

And also our university created liquid crystal.

A. 对, 这个我知道, 是你们学校出的。

Yes, I know this. (Liquid crystal) is created in your university as well.

Q. 你很厉害啊, 这么短时间都了解了这些信息。

You are good, really good. How did you get so much information in such a short time?

A. 我还行把, 也许是学习法律的, 看什么问题都比较严谨, 维护自己的权益是对的。其实我也想知道你一个问题, 你为什么想来 MUA? 做这个访谈?

Perhaps learning the laws helped me to be rigorous to see things through. It is a rightful thing to safeguard your rightful interest. Actually, I have a question for you. Why do you choose MUA to do the interviews?

Q. 因为我的研究课题就是关于民族大学。

My study has a particular focus and interest in Minzu universities.

A. 那你可以在 MUB。

Then MUB might be a better choice。

Q. 对那也是我的一个研究对象, 我要去三所大学, 然后这所学校是其中一个。

Yes, MUB is another research site for me. I would visit three universities and your university is one of them.

A. 那你在民大这访谈了多少人了?

How many students have you interviewed in our university?

Q. 11,12 个左右, 很多了。

Around 11, 12, I guess, a lot.

A. 他们说的都是什么情况?

What kind of things did they tell you?

Q. 很多有意思的事情, 有一个女孩她和我说过的故事和你挺相似的。

Many interesting things, and there was a girl who told me her story which is very similar to yours.

A. 什么专业的?

What is her major?

Q. 她是少数民族语言文学。

Chinese minority language and literature studies.

A. 就是专门研究蒙古文的, 我知道了。你刚才问我的问题是啥来着?

Yes, I know it, a major to study particularly the Mongolian language. Can you repeat your question again?

Q. 我想了解一下你在本科阶段的学习, 有哪些让你印象深刻的故事? 好的不好的都可

以说。

I want to know something about your learning experiences in your undergraduate level of study. Is there anything which impressed you the most during this time, no matter they are the good or bad memories?

A. 我预科完了之后，我们班大概有 60 人左右，我学习那时候全班前 4,5 名的成绩。

By the time when I finished Yukeban, I ranked in the top 4th or 5th place in my class. We have around 60 students.

Q. 预科毕业考试的时候？

You mean in the final exam of Yukeban?

A. 对，我当时（预科毕业排名考试）第 4，我特别开心，其实我个人的出发点就是，我跟蒙文学习了已经 10 多年了，我觉得蒙古族我们在民族里就是学习，有许多缺点，我只想吧眼光放宽一点，我当时特别憧憬，我想试一试，我想在汉生里学习是什么感觉？我特别憧憬。

Yes, I ranked in the top 4th place (in that exam). I felt sincerely happy for myself. A starting point is that I thought I have been studied in a Mongolian educational environment for over 10 years. Mongolian education always has some flaws and I want to challenge myself to see what it feels like to study in a Han environment. I particularly looked forward to that.

Q. 想挑战一下自己？

You want to challenge yourself?

A. 而且我从小就对机械这一块感兴趣，自己组装拆一些电器什么的，本来考大学就想说的报一个类似的专业，但是当时蒙授这一块没有，只有汉授有。然后想预科之后选这个。不过那时候确实也有点冲昏了头脑，但是现在想想其实学什么专业都一样。当时我是学习挺好，数学我们班考第一，英语第一，汉语文第 5,6。

I always have my interests and hobbies in mechanical operations. I sometimes would assumable or demolish some electrical applicants for interests. My original thought was to apply for a major in mechanical studies but there were no mechanical or engineering oriented majors available in Mengshou in the university. They are mostly Hanshou. At that time, I think I am a bit dazzled. It is now I know that it makes no difference to choose any kinds of a major to study. But during that time (in Yukeban), I thought I am good at learning. I am particularly good at Math and English of which I always be the No.1 in my class. Except Chinese language of which I was like in the 5th or 6th place in my class.

Q. 你是数学第一，英语第一，就是汉语不太好，对吧？

So you are like the top one in the course of Math and English in Yukeban, right? You said you are not very good at Chinese?

A. 汉语你发现了么？我虽然说的好的，但是语法什么的不行。就是汉语基础也不行，当时汉语基础都相当于你初中的知识啊，初一吧也就是，对我来说也是学的特别吃力。

Yes, Chinese. I bet you have noticed that my Chinese language is weak in grammar, even though I can speak it fluently. My Chinese language owns a weak basis. During that time (in Yukeban), I would say my Chinese language basis is only equivalent to your level at

junior school. It (mastering Chinese language) is particularly difficult for me.

Q. 汉语基础是预科里的一门课么？都是啥内容呢？

Is Chinese language provided as one of the courses in Yukeban? What is the content of this course?

A. 就是造词造句，语法，什么比喻啦，修辞，各种修辞。我们当时蒙生都觉得学习氛围不好，你知道吧，特别不好。我觉得蒙古族现在有点衰落的原因，也是源于我们自身吧。没有那种上进心，真是没有上进心。他们一个班级，爱学习的没有几个，屈指可数的，60 个人，用手指头就数过来了，学习不行。不是学习不行，他们就是态度方面不行，主要是态度决定一切么。

It is all about grammar, like wording, phrasing, and metaphor and rhetoric knowledge. Mongolian students (in the class) like me shared this kind of feeling that it is not created a strong atmosphere for learning, you know? It is really not a good environment for learning. I think this is a part of the reason explaining why the whole Mongolians are declining, it is our own fault. We don't have a strong motivations (to study hard), really don't. In the whole class with roughly 60 students, only a few of them would be diligent on learning. We are negative in the attitude of learning, and sometimes attitude matters the most.

Q. 你所说的态度不信，是指不爱学习，不上课，逃课？

What do you mean by being negative in attitude? Do you mean such as skipping classes?

A. 不是，就是没有你们汉生那种吃苦的精神吧。其实蒙生吧，我觉得原因么我觉得教育，还是教育的本身存在问题。国家今年不是新出台了，新规定了，它说民族教育就要从最基层抓起，最低开始抓起，也就是从学前班，1 年级，2 年级开始抓起。它是从今年才开始做的。我觉得这么做非常有必要。因为我们那个学习差距，不是一天两天，不是一年两年，10 几年累积起来的。

Not necessarily. What I mean is that we (Mongolian students) are lack of a commitment for learning which your Han students have. It is, again, blamed to the education, or the inherent problems embedded in the education. This year the state has issued new policies to stipulate that Minzu education should be enhanced from the very basic level. It means from the pre-school level, or the 1st or 2nd grade in elementary schools. This work is only initiated from this year and I think it (relating to enhancing basic level of Minzu education) is very necessary. Because the learning gap (between Han and Mongolian students) is widened not in 1 or 2 days, not in 1 or 2 years, it is an accumulation of the problems for more than 10 years.

Q. 很有意思，其实你刚才说到了一个‘你们汉生’，如果最一开始不说我是蒙古族，学生们对我是一种感觉。

Really interesting. It catches my attention that you are using ‘Your Han students’. It seems to me that many Mongolian students I interviewed would automatically cluster me into Han catalogue, if I don't make it clear at the front.

A. 排斥？

Do you have a feeling of being resisted by them?

Q. 也不完全是排斥, 然后我说我是蒙古族, 他们会有些变化, 好像说你是蒙古族的一员。

Not entirely resisting, I would say. If I told them that I am a Mongolian, I can feel that they would have a subtle conversion in their tones. It is like I become a part of their group.

A. 你说的非常对, 我非常同意你的观点。我这个感受特别深, 确实有这种情况, 我们真的是非常爱民族, 民族情结非常重。这也说明我们爱民族是一件好事情。但是我们这种爱民族吧。我觉得更多的应该体现在学习方面, 教育方面, 对吧, 就是我们现在的情况就是。

What you said is very true and I totally agree with what you have said. I share the same feeling with you, profoundly. This is indeed the true situation. We (Mongolians) really love our Minzu and we have a strong feeling for our Minzu. I think, on one hand, it is a good thing that we love our Minzu. But on the other hand, I hope that this kind of feeling can be transplanted into the areas of learning, in education, right?

Q. 你觉得, 你先说, 不好意思打断你了, 你先说。

Yeah, go ahead, sorry to interrupt.

A. 我们现在这个蒙生学习, 他没有上进心原因是啥呢? 我个人觉得我们高考, 你几乎就可以考一点, 你就可以上大学, 就可以上本科, 所以导致我们来到大学以后, 就是一种懒散, 那种没有积极性。你说国家的政策也非常好, 大学的政策也特别好, 几乎我们蒙生的及格线都特别低, 大概一半都是 40 多分, 有的甚至 30 多分, 这是少数情况, 所以导致了蒙生的学习, 上进心没有, 但是我就是这种情况, 但是我记得吧, 要是我们蒙生要是好好学习的话, 蒙语, 汉语, 英语, 都特别容易学习, 就是我以前预科的一个老师就专门写过一个学术的期刊论文, 而且还得过国家的奖, 她写的就是关于英语语法用蒙语教授, 大概这样的, 你知道么, 就是我们蒙古语的语法和英语的语法一样的, 你知道么? 就是谓语宾语倒置的。

When I try to find out the reason why Mongolian students are generally less motivated for learning, it occurs to me that Gaokao is an important factor. Even though we (Mongolian students) perform really poor in Gaokao, we still are able to go to a university for HE. It results that we would be really slothful in learning after we entered into the university, with no aims and enthusiasm. The HE policies for minority students own its positive side which is that we are preferentially treated for admission. Nearly all the pass-lines for Mongolian students are dramatically lowered, with such as 30 or even 40 points. So we are generally lack of the motivation, at least this is the case for myself. However, it is still very true to me that Mongolian students have the potential to perform well in learning if we mean to do it well. We can master multiple languages, such as Mongolian, Chinese and English. I remembered a teacher from Yukeban who once wrote a journal article discussing the advantages to use Mongolian language as the medium for Mongolian students to learn English language, something like this, and this article has won a national prize. Do you know that the grammar of English and Mongolian language has many similarities? Such as in both languages the predicate and the object are inverted.

Q. 和日语是一样的?

Similar to the Japanese?

A. 和日语一样，和英语也一样，就是和汉语不一样。谓语宾语是反着的。比如说我吃饭，蒙语就是我们饭吃，汉语就是我们吃饭。

Yes, similar to the Japanese as well as English. Only differ from (the grammar in) Chinese. For example, in Mongolian, when I say 'I eat something', it is like 'something I eat'. But in Chinese, it is like 'I eat something'.

Q. 英语，蒙语，汉语，都是用语言天赋的，也有其他的同学跟我提起过说蒙古族是一个很有语言天赋的民族。

English, Mongolian, Chinese, mastering multiple languages requires natural talent. Have you ever heard someone else, or other Mongolian students, who mentioned the same point with you by saying that Mongolian is a Minzu with language talent?

A. 对，确实是教育这种背景，这种情况，我觉得这是对我们来说是一件好事，我觉得教育成就了我们的语言能力，是我们自己放纵了自己。今年教育部大概十月份吧就是出台了一个文件就是说么，民族教育要抓的紧一点，认真抓一点。

Yes, I think it is a credit contributing to our educational background. The (Minzu) education helps us to be the master of language. It is only us who indulge ourselves. The Ministry of Education has issued a paper in October this year which is about that Minzu education needs to be harnessed tightly and treated more seriously.

Q. 你认为就是说，所谓‘认真抓一点，抓的紧一点’是指什么意思？

How do you understand 'harnessed tightly and treated more seriously'?

A. 就是教育质量上去。

I think it means that the quality of education needs to be improved.

Q. 不要那么低的分数？

Such as not setting such an lowered admission line?

A. 也不仅仅是分数，就是从一开始，从最初就把这个教育抓起来，就像我们那时候，比如说我们蒙生吧，我们蒙生没有自习，初中没有自习，小学也没有，但是一般汉生都有，而且周六日都有辅导班，各种辅导班，但是我们都没有。

It is not only about the admission line. It is supposed to be that, from the very start, Minzu education is harnessed tightly. For example, back to the time when I was in Minzu school, we have no self-studying requirements at schools, neither in the primary nor the junior schools. But Han students are all disciplined to do self-studying. They (Han students) also have different kinds of remedial classes on weekends, but we have none.

Q. 如果让你形容你在离开预科班进入汉授专业学习，给你留下印象最深刻的事情是什么？

When you left Yukeban and transferred into the Hanshou major, do you have any particularly significant life events?

A. 预科班后吧，大一，因为大一一般不开设这些专业课，到大二才开始开设专业课，还有专业名词，然后越往后吧，越困难，特别是开始学专业课，比如说我们机械这个专业，有个淬火，别说意思了，反正一开始我是连字都不认识，我当时说我

用手机，百度查。

After Yukeban, it is then the first year (in the Hanshou). We do not need to take any professional-oriented curricula in the first year and these are available since the second year. It becomes harder and harder afterwards, especially after we started the professional curricula. For example, we have a technical term 'quenching' (Cui Huo). I have not even seen these Chinese characters before, let alone know the meaning of them! I look it up, I baidu it, and use the phone-dictionary to search the meaning of it.

Q. 你是从蒙语查成汉语，还是？

Do you mean to look it up from Mongolian into Chinese?

A. 蒙语我们也是没学过，蒙语也没涉及过，这个字根本就不认识。但是汉生就认识，一说他就明白了。我根本就不明白，我是真不明白。我还得问同学这个字念啥，上百度查，看它各种意思

I never came across this term in Mongolian, I have never learned it in Mongolian, and therefore it turns to be completely blank to me. But the Han students knew it instantly. I really do not know what it means. I have to ask my classmates about the meaning of this term, and searched in Baidu about its varied interpretations.

Q. 这种经历很多么？

Does this kind of events happen a lot to you?

A. 还有就是老师授课的时候吧，接受吧，反应有点慢。现在也是。

This mainly happened in the time when teaching is carried out. My reflections are slower than others. It is the same today that it always was.

Q. 那你觉得当你遇到这样的问题，比如不会，你身边的老师或者老师有没有给你特别的？

Were you getting any specific help from such as the teachers, when you felt that it is difficult to keep pace with the class?

A. 没有，没有。

No, No.

Q. 关照不够？

So there is no any particular helps for you?

A. 确实，民族这方面，也许对于民大来说，蒙生太多了，关照根本关照不过来。

No. I think this might because that there are too many Mongolian students (just like my situations) in MUA. It is impossible to take care all of us.

Q. 你在课上的时候，有没有过老师特别点你，让你来回答？

Have you ever being appointed by the teacher in the class to answer some questions (so that you would be noticed by the teacher whether or not you keep pace with the rest students)?

- A. 没有，他们一般都，要是蒙古族老师，他们会特殊照顾你一下，但是汉生老师没有这种情况，很少，几乎没有。

No, not in the case if this is a Han teacher. It would be extremely rare. However, if it was a Mongolian teacher then it would be different. They would give some extra attentions on us.

- Q. 但是你是你们班唯一一个蒙生啊？

But you are the only one Mongolian student in your class, right?

- A. 唯一一个，但是你看我长的像蒙古人么？你长的像是蒙古人么？不像吧。给老师第一感觉，他根本不会问你这种 2 的问题，这个班级谁是蒙族，举手？他不可能这么问，现在大学也都是非常独立，自主的。各种事情你都要靠自己，学习也要靠自己，一节课 200,300 块钱，讲完行了，谁管你啊。这是这个情况，学习吧，确实是特别大的问题。我这么给你举个例子吧，其实还是生活上，问题非常大。我学这个专业，算是民大数一数二的专业，除了蒙医之外，就是这个了。但是蒙生太少了。很多蒙生来了，最多超不过 1 个月，最少的 2,3 天，1,2 个星期，就要求转专业了，因为 ta 坚持不了。我听说是有的是学习跟不上，有的说是生活，民族习俗，还有那种汉授，汉生，你们汉生特别独立你知道么？做各种事情都自己来，非常独立。但是蒙生一般都是群居，你知道吧。说的直白点就是这样，许多都一起。

I am the only one, and that is true. However, do I look like a Mongolian solely from my appearance? Do you think you look at a Mongolian? No, right? This is how we give the first impression to the teacher. They won't ask the silly questions like 'which of you are the Mongolians, please raise your hand'. They won't ask question like this. Nowadays everyone is encouraged to be independent to study in the university, to be responsible for only yourself. It is your own business to take care of your study and everything. (For these teachers), they also only care about their own business and earn like 200, 300 RMB for teaching a class. When they finish the teaching of a class, it is all done at their part of job. That is why learning in this (Hanshou) major becomes so troublesome. Let me give you another example. It is about my personal life as well. The major which I choose to study is one of the best majors offered in the university. I think it is the best one in addition to the major of Mongolian medicine studies. However, the problem is there are too few of Mongolian students to study in this major. Even that there would be a number of them (Mongolian students) choose this major at initial, they would quit eventually after like 1 months, or even 1-2 weeks, 2-3 days. They would ask to transfer to a different major of study because they cannot fit in. It is not only about fitting into the learning environment but also the social interactions. It is about life, about customs. We are very different from Han students. You guys are independent from each other. You like doing things by your own. But we (Mongolian students) always stay together, you know? We are always being together and that's my point.

- Q. 大家一起。

Staying together like a group.

- A. 大家一起，对，也就是侧面反映我们挺团结的，蒙生一般做各种事情都一起。

Yes, we always stay together. This partly reflects a fact that we are very united. Mongolian students always do things together.

Q. 你刚才说学习一方面，生活是一方面。

As you said, this is about the life which is different from learning experiences.

A. 其实对我来说，其实最大的还是生活，我都跟你直白点说，我来到汉生班，摩擦真是特别多，打架，我跟你说，也打了好多次了。

Actually, I think it is my life which makes me feel stressful the most. To be frankly, I have been involved in tons of frictions, or even fights, in the Hanshou class, for many many times.

Q. 都是因为什么样的事情会打架？

What is the reason do you think causing these fights or frictions?

A. 都是生活中的小事情，微不足道的小事情，其实这些小事情是如积月累的，积累出来的，其实 1,2 天根本没这种情况，确实就是民族语言不相通，第二个就是生活习惯，第三个就是学习，你说这三个方面，一起向一个人过来攻击，你根本没法应付。我就跟你直说，我来到这，我挂科，我确实挂科。我从大二下学期开始，大二上学期之前，没挂过科，大二下学期因为和同学闹矛盾，打架了，和班级宿舍的。

Many of these are incidental things. But when the incidental things accumulate to a certain extent, a big incident can happen. This won't happen in 1 or 2 days. (Firstly, the reasons lie in) the difference in language; secondly, the difference in living habits and customs; and thirdly, the gap in learning. Combining these three aspects of reasons, it is impossible for any individuals to handle properly. Let me tell you something, I have failed a lot of curricula in this (Hanshou) since the second semester in my second year and the reason for this is because of a constant friction and tension with my classmates, with my dorm mates. Before that, I never fail any curricula.

Q. 你能讲的再具体一点么？

Can you be more specific?

A. 生活中的小事情，我只能这么说。就是一开始可能就是一些言语上的小摩擦，然后这些小事慢慢就变打架了。

These are very incidental things, I can only say it like this. At the beginning, it is the friction with Han students, and much of these are incidental things but gradually heap up into a big fight.

Q. 举个例子么？

Can you give me an example?

A. 恩，怎么说呢，就是捍卫我作为蒙古人的尊严吧

Er, how to say, I think I just try to defend my Mongolian dignity.

Q. 你觉得是主要是你的问题，还是他们的问题？

Who should take principal responsible for these frictions, do you think?

A. 都有问题，你比如说新疆，西藏，你看问题都有，根本不是个体，是许许多多。以

前，蒙生和汉生之间经常打架，高中也经常打架，几乎每天一次打架。

We both have faults. Just like (those incidents) in Xinjiang and Tibet, it is always on both sides and it is never any individuals' fault. I remembered that in my high school, Mongolian students and Han students fight frequently with each other, nearly once a day.

Q. 打架是因为啥？互相看不顺眼？

Why do they frequently fight with each other? Just dislike each other?

A. 也许是一个眼神，也许是一个手势，也许是一个就是摩擦，就是这种情况。

Maybe it is just because of an eye contact, or a gesture, just like this.

Q. 你也是这样情况打架的么？

Is this the same in your case?

A. 比这个要，没这么敏感吧。

I am not that sensitive.

Q. 其实我很理解你这种心情，因为你在这种环境里，只有你一个人。

I think I can understand how you feel from what you say. You are the only one (Mongolian student) in that environment.

A. 就像你，你在英国那种环境里，受欺负了，你就只能忍让，有时候没法忍让了，忍无可忍了，就得爆发出来。我有时候，我曾经，我抑郁过，你知道吧，整个大二下学期我都抑郁了，我有过轻生的想法，我跟我们老师说，我们学院的书记，和我关系非常好，他经常和我说，这学期学习怎么样啊，来就跟我说，我们学院的书记他就是个少数民族，他是鄂温克的吧好像，反正就是个少数民族，他就非常同情我。他就经常跟我说，他非常理解我。但是就是学校，我就不明白，这个教务处长，专门负责教育的是个汉族，我就非常非常生气。他根本不了解，根本没有这种情结，根本不在乎我们。真的，我觉得一个民族大学管教务的必须是个少数民族，否则他根本就不了解不知道到底是啥情况。

Imagine that if you are bullied in UK, you must feel very helpless and you can do nothing but to bear it, right? Sometimes your temper would just break down if you feel yourself unable to bear any of these. When I was in my second year, I am really depressed. I even thought about suicide. I talked to a leader from my department whom I have good relationship with. He is from another minority Minzu, I guess he is a Erwenk. He always asked me about how everything is going on with my study. He shows sympathy to me and I think he can understand my situation. I just don't know why the university is appointed a Han director to regulate the educational affairs. Sometimes I felt very angry about this. He won't care, be concerned and do things to help the Mongolian students. He has to be a minority or otherwise he won't understand what is really going on for us.

Q. 你希望学校给予你一种什么样的帮助呢？

Can you elaborate specifically of what kinds of help that you wish the university can provide to you?

A. 我不需要他们什么帮助，我只希望他们能认真的对待事实。

I don't need any specific help. I just wish that they can take the fact seriously.

Q. 什么事实?

What fact?

A. 不要否认高考, 我们那么低分数进来, 把我们放进来之后就不管我们了。

Do not deny Gaokao. Do not deny the fact that we (Mongolian students) are admitted into the university with a lowered entrance requirement. Do not ignore us after the admission and let us drift with no aims.

Q. 对。

Yeah.

A. 它这个本来就存在错误。其实我想给中央反映一下, 我有他们号, 什么联系方式, 我都有。但是我想我还是个学生, 我这么做吧, 首先对我来说, 我现在是学生, 影响也不好, 不想把事情整大。其实我现在努力学习。

I really think this is a serious problem (to ignore the actual situation of Mongolian students' academic basis) and I want to reflect this problem to the central level. I have their contact information. But I also have concerns that this would bring negative reputation of our university. I am only a student. I don't want to be a trouble maker. What I want is to do my own business as a student.

Q. 你上大学之前你自认为你是个什么样的学生?

How would you define yourself as a student back to high school?

A. 我这么跟你说, 我初中学习特别好。到了高中之后有点自负了。

Actually, I perform quite well in study during my junior education. I started to be a little bit of conceited since high school.

Q. 你都是在民族学校上的么?

Have you receive your throughout education in Minzu schools?

A. 从我小学到高中, 全是蒙语, 全是民族学校。

I attended the Minzu schools, using Mongolian language to study, from primary to high school education level.

Q. 后来上了预科, 对吧, 就像你讲的, 预科的学习也是不错。

Then you went to Yukeban, right? As you said earlier, you perform quite well in Yukeban as well.

A. 因为我以前学习底子就特别好, 就是数学特别好。

Because my academic basis is solid, particularly in Math.

Q. 那我有个问题, 你在以前是个佼佼者, 好学生的身份, 然后你现在忽然间转到了汉授的这个专业之后, 一下子就, 那种落差, 对吧? 可能一般人很难接受。

It occurs to me of a question. As you said, you used to be a well-performed student in

learning before, or you perceived yourself as a 'good student'. After then, as you have transferred to the Hanshou major to study, it appears to be also a tough transition (of learning experiences). It seems to create a gap in your perceptions of self, right? It must be a very tough experience for anyone to handle properly.

- A. 一般人根本就接受不了，我是蒙授里的佼佼者，是汉授班里的后进生。我在汉授班专业的这几年里，我就没有了奖学金，助学金，国家的奖学金，各种的奖学金，各种优等待遇。但是我当初就是想学一个我想学的专业。我这些都跟学校领导反映了，他们就一句话：你愿意转汉授专业。他们就是不负责任的态度么。当初我们转专业，我们蒙生，预科转专业，都是学校有这个指标。它设立指标了，只要你成绩够了，你想转你可以转，但是我们转了之后，它并没有把学校这个教育的政策，它并不完善，它并不周详，它这种不负责任的态度。也许是民大，其它大学我并不了解，当时我转专业的，我们的预科老师，她就是说你去学那个专业，机械设计制造这个专业吧，这个专业好，就业好。在民大算是好专业了，你自己也有帮助吧。我当时就转了，虽然当时对这个专业也没啥了解，但是我当时挺开心的，真的挺开心的。后来我来到汉生班，先是学习压力，后来又演变成了生活压力，其实就是生活上的冲突吧，根本不是一点，越积累越多，越来越重。

It is very tough for anyone to handle. I used to be a good student in the Mengshou environment but became a laggard in the Hanshou environment. During my years of studying at the Hanshou major, I was in no way to compete for all kinds of scholarships, grants, or a lot of preferential treatments. These are the pay of price for my yearning to study in this major. The university leaders whom I have talked to also say something like this: it is your personal choice to transfer to the Hanshou major. It is easy for them to say like this but it sounds irresponsible. I mean Yukeban is a program set up for Mongolian students who want to choose a Hanshou major afterward and I think it is also a duty of the university to perfect the system to run this program. What I said might only reflect an individual case of our university and I am not clear of what happened in other universities. Anyway, I was suggested by one of my Yukeban teachers to choose the Hanshou major of Mechanical and engineering because it has a promising employment prospect and also it is a good one amongst all the Hanshou majors in the university. At the beginning, I am really happy for myself, really happy. However, afterward, the pressure becomes intense, both personally and in learning. It comes first of the pressure in learning and then turns into the pressure in life, and I think the pressures in life constitute a major problem for me. I feel myself become stressful more and more in each day.

- Q. 其实你描述了很多很多你感受到的这种生活上的压力，矛盾，你能再想一想有没有哪一件具体的事情让你感觉特别难受？

You mentioned a lot about the pressures in life, the stresses, and the contradictions. Can you elaborate more specifically or any specific events which make you feel really upset?

- A. 其实我这么跟你说吧，民族和民族之间，确实有隔阂，就是说我来到汉生班了之后，他们一开始并不知道我是蒙生，蒙古人。

Actually, let me tell you this, there indeed exists the estrangement between Minzu and Minzu. After I transferred into the Hanshou class, they didn't know that I am a Mongolian student, I am a Mongolian.

Q. 他们会说一些不好的话?

So did they say anything bad to you?

A. 他们有时候会说蒙族怎么怎么样,我当时特别生气,我当时特别忍,到后来相互了解,一个班级人就那么多,相互了解后来就知道了。比如说,有一个汉族同学,关系挺好,一起吃饭,一起上课,一起下课,后来他突然有一天知道,然后说,你是蒙族啊,第二天的态度几乎就是360度大转弯,180度大转弯。

Sometimes they would say something bad about the Mongolian, or whatever, and I am really angry about that. I can do nothing but to bear it. There is only certain number of students in the class and everyone would know eventually (that I am a Mongolian). For example, I once had a close friend, we really have a good relationship before, and he is a Han. We always hang out together like being together to eat, to attend sessions, and suddenly he became so distant from me. He knew that I am a Mongolian anyway and his changed his attitude for me dramatically, like 360 degree, 180 degree.

Q. 为什么会有这么明显的态度上的变化?

What do you think is the reason that he changed his attitude dramatically?

A. 对他们来说,蒙古人是野蛮,鲁莽,就是头脑简单那种的,对他们来说就是这种感觉,不讲理。其实我想说,一个人并不能代表所有人,一个人并不能代表一个民族,就有的时候,超级课表你知道么?我有时候玩超级课表,那个上面都是匿名的么,都是发泄各种心情,特别是有些汉生。

To them (Han students), Mongolian means nothing but brutal, reckless and simple-minded. I think this is the sense of feeling that Mongolian has gave to them, (Mongolians) are unreasonable. But what I want to say is that a person cannot represent all, a person cannot represent the whole Mongolian ethnic. We have a kind of popular app called 'super class', do you know it? I sometimes play that app which is an anonymous platform and I can see that a lot of students cannot control temper and write something reckless on that app, particularly some Han students.

Q. 那是什么?学校的贴吧?

What is that, is that a sort of universities' electrical bulletin?

A. 就是一种不显示姓名,只显示性别那种的,有时候就说一些,非常激进的话,用法学来说,就是煽动民族歧视那种的。其实这个事吧,就是一个人的事,他就偏偏带上'蒙古人'怎么怎么样,他不说你们汉人,就煽动蒙古人,它总是带有蒙古人,蒙古人,蒙古人,蒙古人。

It is a kind of app to enable you to leave messages showing none of your names but only your gender. Sometimes you can find very extreme messages left on that, if I shall put it in a legal paradigm, these messages are illegal because these can trigger ethnic extremist and discriminations. Each piece of messages like such actually is only about some specific things associating to some specific individuals, but they always put 'your Mongolians...your Mongolians...your Mongolians...your Mongolians' at the front (so to make it sounds like it is a fault blaming to your whole ethnic).

Q. 你看过的最让你气愤的言论是什么样的?

Can you tell me one of the messages you saw which makes you really angry?

- A. 它就说蒙古人吧，那种话吧，真是特别难听吧。如果要面对面的话，肯定就有冲突了，因为在帖子上说，有时候闹的特别严重，就说你把你专业，性别，班级说出来，就这样。他们用这种说话，闹得真的特别，我就觉得，所有的民族啊，我其实我觉得吧，我现在就是个体，我觉得吧，民族和民族之间的冲突，几乎全积累到我身上了，我就是个牺牲品，在我们班级里来说，没人管我，没人给我照顾，帮助，都没有，学校不管，领导，说句实话，学校领导他们也不办事啊，到月份了，拿钱就行了，他们也必要那样太叫板。

It is all about the insulting speeches to the Mongolians, really insulting. If it is the confrontation face to face, I bet it must turn into a serious fight. Sometimes, when the speeches really cross the line, then someone would call for a duel to let them post their really names, majors of study, gender and department. It really looks bad. I have this feeling that, as the only one (Mongolian in my class), I am powerless to be stuck in this kind of Minzu frictions and conflicts. I am the only sacrifice. No one in my class really cares for me. No one can give me protect or support, neither the leaders from the university nor those from the department. These leaders are irresponsible. They only care about their own businesses. By the end of the month, they just took their salaries and it's done, they won't spare any more attentions on me.

- Q. 你说你是一个牺牲品？你能在进一步解释一下这句话么？

When you say that you are the only 'sacrifice', can you elaborate more on that?

- A. 我觉得国家还是应该有更好的政策，来刺激这个民族教育。我觉得蒙生学习的这个上进心，学校更应该支持，比如说，我们考研究生吧，我们少数民族语文，国家有一个计划，少数民族高级人才骨干培养计划，简称是少骨计划，这个计划它也不是专门针对少数民族，也算是一种认可吧。国家现在一般都是 300 分考研，报考这个计划，只要 249 分，250 分以上就可以了，我觉得这是国家对我们的一种帮助，培养少数民族骨干人才。但是在大学这个阶段，它并没有做到，把我们仍到汉生的班级里，爱怎么办怎么办，自生自灭。等到了考研的时候，考研又把你的层次放低了，大学又把你拉高了。高考又把你降低了，这简直就是玩人呢么，我觉得这其实就是教育的一种不负责任。

I think our country should still improve to have better policies to stimulate Minzu education, to stipulate Mongolian students' motivations for learning. For example, with regard to the entrance exam for postgraduate education, we have a national policy called 'minority high-calibre talents enhancing program'. This program is specifically provided for minority students for their entrance of postgraduate level of study. I think this is an example with regard to the better policies. Normally the entrance line for postgraduate education is around 300 points. But you only need to perform around 249, 250 points if you are enclosed within this program. I think this is a kind of practical help for us, to cultivate the high-calibre talents from minority groups. But at the stage of university education, the help is not successful. We still need to go to Hanshou and struggle in a helpless land, to live or perish by ourselves. We are lowered the requirements in Gaokao but are lifted in the undergraduate stage; we are lifted in the undergraduate stage but dramatically lowered the requirements when it terms to the postgraduate entrance. I think it is skimpily to play us around, very irresponsible to educate in such way.

Q. 我想问你一个问题，你感觉你在大一，大二，大三这三年，自己有没有对自己认识的一种变化？

Can I ask you a question? Do you have a clear sense in your mind regarding how you have changed the perceptions of yourself in specifically three different undergraduate stages: the first year, the second year and the third year?

A. 有变化，我老了很多。知道为什么老么？我长了很多疙瘩，这里代表心脏么，这里代表各种器官，有时候特别闹心。我有同学说我，身体 20 多岁，心里老了，没有以前那么活泼了，我确实在汉生班，我确实压力挺多，天天生活在一个被歧视的环境里谁谁受得了？我曾经有段时间抑郁了。我们学校有心里辅导站，我就找我们的老师，经常找老师。她就辅导我，她教我难受的时候手上放个皮筋。我有时候真的特别特别难受。学习从高中突然掉到谷底，就比如说清华北大，每年跳楼，他们都是原因都是因为那个学习压力，学习落差对吧。每年都有跳楼的。

Yeah, a lot, I am getting older. Do you know why? I got a lot of pimple, here, it represents problems from heart, here, it represents the problems from a variety of organs. The feeling really sucks. One of my friends told me that even though I am only 20 years old on physical level, but I am getting old in my soul. I am no longer lively. I am stressful a lot in the Hanshou environment. How can you be happy when discriminations are everywhere? I have been depressed for sometimes. Our university has a psychological counselling station and I went there for help. A teacher works there offering me a consoling session. She let me to hold a rubber band whenever I am really uncomfortable. I really feel uncomfortable from time to time, particularly when I fell down from the top into a laggard of my study. If you look at Tsinghua or Peking University, many of the suicidal students might all because of their pressures in learning, dropping from the top ones into the bottom ones.

Q. 以前很优秀，忽然到了一个都是很优秀的人的环境里，接受不了那种落差。

Being as a top student in before and cannot get used to an environment consisting of all the top students. It is really hard to deal with such psychological gap.

A. 对，都是优秀的人，其实学习吧，对教育来说，应该相对因材施教。

Yes, all are excellent, particularly in learning. So I think it is wise that education for different students should be individualised.

Q. 孔子讲过因材施教。

This is a wisdom inherited from the Confucius.

A. 对，我觉得对于民族教育这方面，就应该因材施教。因为我们这个学习吧，学习确实有差距

Yes, with regard to Minzu education, individualised education should be particularly promoted. You have to accept that the gap in learning truly exists (between Mongolian and Han students).

Q. 你刚才讲的例子，‘淬火’？

Just like the example you just told me about the technical term ‘quenching’, right?

A. 对，那个字。还有淬火，就是把这个铁放到水里，它就变的好了，钢性，耐磨度就变好了。这个淬火吧，三点水加个卒，当时我真不认识，后来我一查，终于知道啥叫淬火了。而且还是多音字呢，更麻烦呢，我就查查这个是啥意思，那个啥意思，等你想这个问题的时候，你想这个淬火，这个淬字，老师已经讲到下一个环节了。尤其对于我们理科生来说，堂堂课你都不能落下，你落一节，后面就跟不上了。

Yes, that is an example, 'quenching'. It means to put the iron into the water and it becomes good in steel's quality and its wearing resistance becomes stonger. The character 'quenching' is totally a stranger to me. After I checked it, I knew what it means. It is also a character with multiple tones, very complex. During the time it takes to search for the meaning of these (characters), the teacher has already moved on to next chapter. Especially for us who study the science, you have to keep pace with every single session. If you left behind in one of the sessions, you would lose yourself for the rest of the class.

Q. 那是从什么时候你开始觉得这个差距变得特别大的，很多时候跟不上课堂的讲解？

Can you recall when exactly did you feel that it is very difficult to keep pace with the whole class because that you feel that the gap is increasing?

A. 是从大二下学期。其实也光是学习这些专业的，但是如果光是学习的，也可以接受，但是生活，学习，双重的这种压力，根本没法解决。别说我挂科了，我一下子就挂科，之前我从来没挂科了，那学期我真的连打了三次架，而且都是和一个宿舍的。Since the second semester in my second year which is also the time we started to engage the professional curricula. If it is only about learning, I think it is okay. The really issue is the combination of the pressure from learning and life, a doubled pressure, and this is what I cannot handle. I failed my curricula which is impossible to me in before. I got involved in fighting for three times and all are with my dorm mates.

Q. 你和你们宿舍的？

The ones in your dorm?

A. 我和我们宿舍的，我也想说换宿舍，后来想不行，换宿舍了更不行了。我还是个体。

With my dorm mates. I want to change to a different dorm but then I thought I cannot do like this. It doesn't solve fundamental problems by changing the accommodation; I am still alone by myself.

Q. 你们宿舍几个人

How many people are there in your dorm?

A. 6个.

Six.

Q. 你是只是和一个人关系不好，还是？

So are you just not getting along with one of the them, or?

A. 三个，三个关系其实这种情况不是我一个人造成的。我问过许多我高中同学，他们现在都在大学呢，各个大学都有，他们和汉生之间就是，蒙汉矛盾都存在，根本无

法融合，很多情况下这种问题不是一天两天的，是根上就不同你懂吧。并不是我一个个案。

With three of them. But I think I should not take all the blames, it is not caused only by myself. I talked with many of my friends from high school about this and they all agreed that the contradictions between the Mongolian students and Han students are commonly seen, almost in every university. Mongolian and Han are incompatible to each other, such incompatibility is concrete, day-to-day, sometimes intense and rootedness. I am not a distinctive case.

Q. 你在宿舍里的矛盾，有没有因为民族习惯方面的差异所产生的摩擦？

Do you think the differences in ethnic habits are the reason generating the frictions and contradictions between you with your dorm mates?

A. 有，确实有，比如说，谈论一些比较敏感的话题，比如说蒙古人怎么样啊，这样的。

Yes, it does. It is a sensitive topic (about ethnic habits), such as how Mongolians are, ah, so.

Q. 他们不会忌讳着你谈论这些么？

Are they just talked about these things frankly and openly in front of you?

A. 一开始并不忌讳，但是到后来，因为有些话，产生了些矛盾，或者是战争，或者说是个人的战争，或者是集体的战争，他们就不说了。但是虽然你嘴上不说，但是心里非常明白，比如说说我刚才说那个超级课表里有一个下课铃，没有名字，只有男生和女生，可以发各种心情。

At the beginning, they are quite conservative to talk these things openly in front of me. But later it became more and more unscrupulously and caused the war between me with a group, with a community. After the war, they would restrain themselves a bit and won't say things like this. However, even though you do not say anything face to face, I am very clear that there are contradictions underneath. Just like the example I mentioned to you earlier about the app of 'super class'. No one appears on that with real names. You can only see their identity as a 'female/male' with their personal comments.

Q. 你说，假设没有民族大学，或者是民族大学变成了蒙古族大学，只招蒙古族学生，不招汉生学生，情况会不会有好转？

What is your opinion if, hypothetically, the Minzu universities are altered as Mongolian universities which enrol only Mongolian students with no Han students' enrolment. Do you think this can make the situation better?

A. 你这个问题，一个内蒙古大学校长，他提过这个想法。但是这个想法有点极端，而且实施起来太难，各种阻力太多。其实我觉得蒙汉之间一起学习，这是一种进步，对双方都有好处的，也是一种文化的交流吧。我当时我转到汉生班，我就是这种态度，我就觉得，我们现在蒙族同学，和汉族同学在一起，能学到很多汉族同学的东西。但是如果只是蒙族同学在一起，只是自己民族在一起的，很多时候视野就被蒙蔽了，这样很难谈得上进步。

This idea was once proposed by a principal for a university in Inner Mongolia. I think this

idea (transforming Minzu uni into Mongolian uni) is too radical and very difficult to implement. Mongolian students and Han students study together; I think this is a progression for both sides. It is for cultural-exchange. That's also why I thought about studying a Hanshou major first. To be honest, Mongolian students can learn a lot from Han students. If we are only surrounded by each other, if we only contact the Mongolian students from our own group, it would blind the eyes. We can hardly reach any progression.

- Q. 其实我想给你分享一些我的一些想法和建议,也许这个和访谈没有太多的关联,属于题外话。我听了你的故事,我很佩服你,因为你当时有勇气做一个从小在蒙授背景下学习的学生,然后转去汉授班学习这个专业,你想挑战自己也好,或者说怎样也好,你选择去这个班级学习,我就是很佩服你的,你这个想法,你對自己很有勇气,而且你这种尝试,对于整个蒙古族学生提高教育质量,是个很好的尝试。因为你去新的环境,你想去和他们交流沟通,你想知道到底怎么样。现在你马上快毕业了,即将步入人生新的阶段,你在这个过程中,你遇到了很多的困难,艰难,问题,可以说有一大半不是你的原因,是这个体制,这个环境造成的,它不是你的问题,但是虽然说你现在很艰难,你一定要相信一句话,苦尽甘来。你现在所吃的这些苦,不是你身边那些同龄人吃的那种苦,他们也许很轻松自在,但是你现在受到的磨难是有回报的。你现在这些感受,如果能够把它很好的熬过去,等你大学毕业的时候,你到了一个新的环境,这些经历,经验,不同文化之间的磨合,交流,在你身上就会变成一个谁也比不了的财富,苦难这种东西,你不要把它看成是一种负担。你现在身在这个环境里,你看你周围都是这些东西,你好像跳不出来了,但是终于有一天,等你走到更远的时候,回头去想大学这几年的经历,绝对是财富多过于苦难的。What I am going to say might not be a part of the interview question. I just want to share you with some of my personal ideas and suggestions. By listening to your stories, I am deeply touched and I sincerely admire you. You are a courageous person to challenge yourself to study in Hanshou major even though you receive throughout your education in Mongolian environment. I really admire your courage to do this, to make an endeavour to attempt. I think what you have been practiced by yourself is not worthless but is an illumination regarding how to improve the education for Mongolian students as a whole. Well done for your attempt because you have guts to experience the new, to communicate, so to know exactly what it is about. Now it is a time for you to finish the old and are about to enter into a new stage your life. Even though during the whole process, you suffered a lot of hardships and problems, I knew that it is not all your fault. It should be the fault of the system, of the environment. I knew you suffered a lot, but believe me, every cloud has a silver line. You have much more abundant life experiences compared to your fellows. They might live comfortably, but what you have experienced would be rewarded eventually. When all these things passed after your graduation, it is suffice to say that all these experiences, these difficult times, would turn into a treasure for you in a new environment that no one else can compare. Sometimes, burden is not a bad thing. It might make you feel breathless now but when the day comes and you look back, you would find out that what you are rewarded is much more than what you have suffered.

- A. 你这个话,我的老师也跟我说过,真的,就是我预科那个英语老师,当时我学习特别好,非常认真,她对我非常好,她就是说我这个班级里,我最看重就是你,当着那么多同学面,我当时真的特别感动,可以说我是热泪盈眶啊,想偷偷的哭。

One of my Yukeban teachers also told me something just like you said. I used to be well-performed in learning and she was really good to me. She said, in front of the whole class, you are one of my favourite students. Whenever I recalled of what she said, I almost burst into tears.

Q. 你遇到了一个很鼓励你的好老师。

It must be a good teacher who encourages you.

A. 对，少骨这个计划，好多人都不知道，也是这个老师她告诉我的。上学期我问老师我说要考中国政法大学法学的研究生，（她说）你考这个少骨计划，你就直接裸考都能考上。我当时就说，不可能吧，我没那个能力，然后我说，我现在压力特别大，不想学了，想退学，真想退学啊，然后那个老师说你要好好学习，我非常看重你，她让我坚持。我当时说，我真的特别，特别感动，一定要坚持下来。我现在特别希望，真的，各方面都能友好，我不希望煽动民族仇恨，民族歧视。因为这么说吧，我妈是汉族，但是我爸是纯蒙族。因为许多人并不认可蒙汉联姻，但是我觉得这根本不是，这个问题吧，蒙古人越来越少了，联姻也是逼不得已。这种情况我也挺理解的，我现在挺理解的。

Yes, few of people knew about the high-calibre program and I was told about this by this teacher. She encouraged me to apply for the postgraduate course of Laws in China University of Political Science and Law. She is so confident about me and said that I can pass the entrance exam even without any preparations. It's me who is not confident and said, no, it is impossible, I am not capable enough to do that. And I told her that I am under so much pressure now and I want to quit my education, I really am. But my teacher encourages me to insist on my education. She thought highly about me. I am sincerely, sincerely touched by her trust and encouragement. Now, I wish nothing but a peaceful life. I don't want to be the one who cause Minzu hatred or Minzu discrimination. Let me tell you another thing. My mother is a Han but my father is an authentic Mongolian. A lot of people don't support inter-ethnic marriage between Mongolian and Han. But I thought it (inter-ethnic marriage) does not matter the most. Nowadays, Mongolians become less and less in number hence inter-ethnic marriage becomes inevitable. I really understand this situation, I really understand.

Q. 你爸你妈在家里交流起来有困难么？

Did your father and mother have any difficulties in communication at home?

A. 肯定都是汉语啊，因为我妈啊。其实也是有挺多矛盾的，经常生气。自从我长大了之后，因为我的存在，我爸妈还有我们家各种亲戚啥的，都因为我都关系变好了。

Definitely they would use Chinese language to communicate because of my mother. But actually there were many conflicts and they always piss off on each other. But I think I am a mitigator of the relationships, not only for my parents but also the relatives on their both sides.

Q. 你妈妈是汉族，你爸爸是蒙族，你从小选择上民族学校，而不是汉族学校？

So you mother is a Han and your father is a Mongolian, right? Why do you choose Minzu school rather than a Putong school to receive education?

- A. 其实我妈并不同意我学习蒙语, 因为觉得学蒙语没多大用, 而且在蒙语学校也没有前途, 但是我爸爸非常同意。其实这个你应该注意一下, 这个片面反映了一个问题, 就是蒙古语现在并不让很多人接受, 这也是语言面向, 面临消失的一个趋势, 一个原因, 在我们家也是一种体现吧, 在我身上, 确实。

My mother is against me to study in Mongolian schools. She thought Mongolian language is useless and also attending a Minzu school would constrain my future opportunities but my father is very supportive. I think this is an interesting point which you should pay attention to. The story from me, from my family, can also reflect a problem which is that Mongolian language is not accepted by many people. I think this is also a reason why the language faces a trend of disappearance.

- Q. 当时你母亲不想让你上民族学校, 你父亲想让你上, 最后还是听从你父亲的建议了吧?

You mother is against to send you to Minzu school but you father supports to send you to a Minzu school. So eventually you follow your father's suggestion, right?

- A. 其实当时是没有办法, 首先是因为当时我要是学汉语特别难, 我要是去别的旗县, 别的汉授的学校。

I have no other options. Firstly is because learning in Chinese is really difficult for me and I have to go to another county for (a Han) school.

- Q. 你的老家是哪的?

Where is your hometown?

- A. 内蒙古, CF 的

CF County, Inner Mongolia.

- Q. 你那没有好的汉授学校么?

So there were no good quality Putong schools in your hometown?

- A. 有啊, 有汉授学校啊, 但是它是离家比较远。我以前上的那个蒙古族学校还是教学质量更方面还是不错的。就是我们那个村子, 他们都是学习蒙语, 所以一般都是送去这个学校去学习, 因为的确教学质量还是不错的, 那我肯定也是学蒙语, 受周围环境的影响。

This is a good quality Mongolian school and even the nearest Han school is still far away from the village. And also in my village, (a lot of children) attend the Minzu school and study in Mongolian language. I am affected by the surrounding environment.

- Q. 好的, 访谈进行到现在, 也差不多 1 个多小时了, 我想最后再问你一个问题。如果你让你过去几年, 每年用两个关键字来形容的话, 分别是什么样的。

Okay, now our interview has lasted for almost 1 hour. I would like to ask you some final questions. If you can describe the past years of you with two keywords respectively, what would be that?

- A. 大一开心。那时候成绩挺好, 没什么差距。那时候开心, 激动。

'Happy' would be a proper keyword to summarise my first year of study, I am happy because I perform good in learning, has no gap with others, happy and excited.

Q. 现在呢?

What about now?

A. 成绩下滑, 矛盾, 迷茫, 纠结。有时候我甚至想, 真的, 重念一回大学, 但是要回到蒙授专业, 我就要从头开始, 重新认识朋友, 重新学习, 我愿意付出这个代价, 每天开开心心的是吧, 好好享受大学生活。但是我现在唯一能做的, 也是唯一有基础的就是法学吧, 思考这个研究生吧。

Contradictions, getting lost, entanglement. Sometimes I really think about going over my university time again, I really love to pay for that. If I could, I would absolutely choose a Mengshou major, to be happy all the time, and enjoy the best of my university life. But the only thing I can do now is to make a good preparation for postgraduate entrance exam for the course of Laws.

Q. 我觉得我能理解为什么你会感到迷茫, 纠结, 就好像你刚才一直说的, 那些来自生活方面的, 来自交往方面的困惑和压力, 来自你的同伴同学, 你的舍友方面的。

I think I can understand why you feel 'getting lost and entangled', just as what you have said earlier, it is because of the pressure and confusions from life, from social interactions with your classmates, with your dorm mates.

A. 其实他们是以一个汉人的思想来思考, 确实对我有点意见, 我有时候并不合群, 没法合群啊。跟他们没法和的来, 没啥共同语言。挺排斥吧, 挺排斥的, 确实挺排斥的。真的, 就是各种小事。你可以想到的这些, 你可以想到的。我给你介绍一下我老师吧, 她是专门研究少数民族学生预科的教学的。她了解一些这方面的可以告诉你多一点。

In fact, they always think in everything with a Han-styled mindset. I am not gregarious into the climate. But how can I do that, we don't have common language. So that's why they resist me, resisting, really resisting because of all different kinds of incidental things. I think you can imagine that. If this is necessary, I can introduce you to my Yukeban teacher and she is an expert in Yukeban education. She can tell you more about this.

Q. 好的, 非常感谢你接受我的访谈, 你所讲的所有内容对我很有启发, 很有帮助, 你还有什么问题想问我的么?

Alright, thank you very much to be my interviewee. What you have told me is extremely inspiring and really helpful. Do you have any other questions for me?

A. 我吧, 特别希望你的论文, 能在社会, 一个国家, 或者整个世界能有影响。对我来说, 这也是一个好事。

I, er, I really wish that your thesis can make an impact in the society, for our country or even in this world. This would be good news for me as well.

Q. 好的, 谢谢你, 借你的鼓励, 我一定会努力写好我的论文。

Okay, thank you, and thank you for your encouragement. I would do my best to create a good quality thesis.

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Is Minzu University a better university for you (更好的大学在哪里)

3

5

Minority or Mongolian students associations(蒙生的学生社团)

8

10

Minzu elite project (民族英才计划)

1

7

Perceived institutional culture (民族大学的校园文化)

21

28

A multi-cultural community (多元文化之地)

7

12

Interpretation of the university motto

1

3

A widened horizon (开拓视野的平台)

1

3

Fulfill Mongolian students' needs and goals

3

6

Is minority Minzu a group of special (我是特殊的存在么?)

2

5

Strict discipline and regulation(政治的敏感性, 严密的纪律性)

5

7

Speak and act cautiously(谨言慎行)

1

4

Taking care of minority or Mongolian students(蒙生得到额外的关照)

4

10

Some suggestions for my university (这些方面将来有待改进)

5

8

LW

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Appendix VIII: Ethical procedures for research and teaching

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**ETHICAL PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING
IN THE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

PERMISSION TO PROCEED WITH RESEARCH: ETHICAL APPROVAL

Reference Number: 13/14-13

Name: Lu Wang

Student No: 201301465

Programme of Study: PhD Education

Research Area/Title: An exploration of social identity construction of Mongolian students in Minzu universities of China

Image Permission Form N/A

Name of Supervisor: Catherine Montgomery

Date Approved by Supervisor: 09/10/2014

Date Approved by Ethics Committee: 09/10/2014

