

The influence of Chinese Ethnic College Students' Ethnic Identity^①

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ABSTRACT:

As for the unified multi-ethnic country, there is a controversy on this issue of how to coordinate the relationship between the ethnic identity and the national identity in the modernization processing. The most typical theoretical represents are "conflict theory" and "symbiosis theory". As in China, the problem is how to guide the ethnic group' identity and their identity? With this problem, we did a comparative study between ethnic college students and non-ethnic college students in the northwest of China. In our survey, the problem is not how to "weaken" the ethnic identity, but how to guide the ethnic college students to come out from the low level of the ethnic identity and establish more positive ethnic awareness.

KEY WORDS: "conflict theory"; "symbiosis theory"; ethnic identity; guide

THEORETICAL REVIEW

As for the unified multi-ethnic country, it is an quite important problem to coordinate the relationship between the ethnic identity and the national identity in the modernization processing .But there is a controversy on this issue for a long time. The most typical theoretical represents are "conflict theory" and "symbiosis theory". "Conflict theory" worried that the over-expansion of the ethnic identity will undermine the stability and unity of the state. This theory is argued that individual ethnic identity will inevitably lead

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to ethnic conflicts, and even lead to national division, they believe it is necessary to eliminate cultural differences and weaken their ethnic identity, they advocate indiscriminate policies to strengthen the national identity. "Symbiosis theory" emphasizes that if the country includes the ethnic difference and respects the ethnic rights, all ethnic groups will make optimistic responses and valuable judgments to their ethnic status in the future in the country, thus they will voluntarily, naturally and consciously become an organic part of the country. Those researchers believe the ethnic policies can protect minorities' cultures and rights. As in China, the identity of the Chinese nation is another expression of national identity. From this point of view, the above theoretical differences are also reflected in the individual ethnic identity and the Chinese national identity. So how is the situation of the Chinese national identity?

Since the 1980s, there is a growing focus on ethnic identity under the pattern of diversity in unity of the Chinese nation, many researchers have pointed out that the trend of ethnic identity is rising in China. The enhancement of ethnic identity is directly related to education and the ethnic development, especially the influence of the education can not be ignored. They found out that ethnic college students' ethnic identity are much more clearly than other college students, their ethnic identity are much stronger than other college students too. So the problem is how to guide the ethnic students' identity and their identity? With this problem, we did a comparative study between ethnic college students and non-ethnic college students in the northwest of China. We hope the result of this research can be a clue for the direction of the Chinese ethnic education.

THE CHOICE OF RESPONDENTS AND MEASUREMENT TOOLS

1.The choice of respondents

According to the purpose of the survey, we chose three different college in the northwest of China, including the Northwest University for Nationalities, Northwest Normal University and Lanzhou University. This investigation altogether provides questionnaire 700, for an effective questionnaire returns-ratio is 94%.the sampling method is stratified sampling. Of all the respondents, there are 21 ethnic minorities which accounted for 78% and the rest of the respondents are Han. the ethnic minorities are including 9 ethnic minorities from northwest of China, represented by the Hui, Mongolian and Uighur, which accounted for 44% of the total; There are 12 ethnic minorities from the southwestern China, represented by the Zhuang, Yi, Miao and Bai, which accounted for 28% of the total, and 6% of ethnic minorities from other regions of China. All the respondents are from 28 provinces (or autonomous regions) of China.

2. Ethnic identity scale and the average measurement results.

In this paper, the use of ethnic identity scale is MEIM(Phinney,1992).The main structure of this scale is ethnic self-identification, sense of belonging, positive and negative attitudes toward one ethnic group and ethnic involvement. This scale mainly measures three aspects of ethnic identity, the ethnic cognition (for example, I am trying to get more information about the culture and history of our ethnic group); The emotional attribution (I am a member of my ethnic group) and the ethnic behavior (I participate most of the activities of my ethnic group).there are 14 projects, including 2 anti-corruption projects. In this study, the reliability of the three sub-scales were 0.74,0.79,0.64. The scale used a 4-point, from 1 (very agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), according average score M to analyze the overall ethnic identity, the rang of M is 1 to 4. the lower the score is, the stronger the ethnic identity is. In order to make the study facilitate the study, we set " $M \leq 2.00$ " that "ethnic identity is relatively strong", " $M > 2.00$ " that "ethnic identity is relatively weak." Through data processing, the ethnic identity comprehensive score (M) is 1.91.

3. Attitude Scale of Ethnic Association and Measurement Results.

The attitude scale of ethnic association mainly adopted Phinney's "other ethnic contacts of the scale (other-group orientation)"(Phinney,1992)And finally formed a single-dimensional scale of six projects, of which two items are reverse score. The reliability of the scale is 0.56. The score of this scale is 4 points, from 1 (very agree) to 4 (very disagree), by calculating the average score to reflect the comprehensive ethnic association attitudes, ethnic association attitudes comprehensive index score "1" to "4", of which "1" is the lowest points, "4" is the highest points, the lower the score, indicating that the more positive attitude of ethnic contacts are. In order to facilitate the study, we set " $M \leq 2.00$ " that "the attitude of ethnic interaction is relatively positive," " $M > 2.00$ " that "the attitude of ethnic interaction is relatively negative." By calculation, the average score of the attitudes of the respondents to other ethnic groups is 2.22.

4. Chinese national identity measurement tools and the average measurement results.

"I am the member of the Chinese nation" is one of the performance of the national identity. in this study, the national identity is reflected by the choice between "member of the Chinese nation" and "member of their own ethnic group" by the interviewees, and the measurement tools is based on questionnaire of the Research of "the ethnic identity in southwest China "(Shi Huiying, 史慧颖,2012)The questionnaire uses a nine-point scale (1-9), through a digital selection to indicate interviewees' national identity. If the number of choices is greater than "5", indicating their strong sense of identity of the Chinese

nation, the number of choices less than “5”, indicating that the sense of the Chinese nation is weak, the number of choices is “5”, indicating that “I am both a member of the Chinese nation, and also belong to my own ethnic group”, In order to make the study facilitate, we set " $M < 5.00$ " that "the Chinese national identity is relatively weak", " $M \geq 5.00$ " that "the Chinese nation is relatively strong." According to the statistics, 57% of the respondents chose the option of “5”, which indicate that most of the interviewees believe that they are both the member of their own ethnic group but also the member of the Chinese nation. By calculation, the average score of the attitudes of the respondents’ national identity is 5.27.

I am the member of my ethnic group I am the member of the Chinese nation
 1___2___3___4___5___6___7___8___9

THE INFLUENCING FACTORS OF CHINESE ETHNIC COLLEGE STUDENTS’ ETHNIC IDENTITY

1. The change of living environment become an important factor which influences the ethnic identity in the ethnic college.

The generation and composition of ethnic identity are complex, the change of individual living environment is an obvious influencing factor. In one’s all life, the cognition and performance of the individual ethnic identity will be changed while people are facing the changing life scenes. so we need some corresponding social guidance in the process of this change.

It is the family environment which is the earliest environment that affect the individual ethnic identity, due to some influence of the social prejudice, it is possible for the children to get a negative psychological characteristics such as strong sense of inferiority, reluctant to contact with other ethnic group in their family education, so if this identity can not be guided, people may have an extreme individual ethnic identity—they may think that the culture of their own ethnic group is more outstanding than others, and they might be reluctant to contact with other ethnic group. so it is quite important to get an correct view of the awareness of interaction for the children.

Living in different regions, ethnic identity can make a big difference. in general, living in the ethnic enclaves, the ethnic identity of any age paragraph will just be a kind of potential identity. When they leave their ethnic enclaves and communicate with other ethnic group, their ethnic identity can be awakened. Students in the ethnic college belong to this kind of situation. They studied in their ethnic enclaves before, and lack of direct contact and communication experience with other ethnic group, When entered to the colleges, the life scene of most college students has shift. Especial those who had been always living in the

their ethnic region. Those students who are from the long-term infiltration of their mother culture gradually transformed into a multi-cultural atmosphere, The intense cultural impact has led to some new changes to the college students, their ethnic identity will be revealed after admission. they may have a psychological adaptation period. After fully communicating with other ethnic students, they may be gradually out of the closing stage. In this sense, the earliest individual ethnic identity comes from the change of living environment. Those who lived in the multi-ethnic populated areas, their ethnic identity is relatively early. because the revealed period of ethnic identity has already passed, the impact of the change of the individual living environment is much smaller.

2. Different college affect the performance of the ethnic identity.

For the college students, in addition to the growing environment, individual psychological character, studying in different college and profession are also the most important variables. In our survey, we found that students who study in the ethnic college are much more sensitive and more attention to their ethnic identity issue than those who study in the non-ethnic college. In particular, research on the Northeast University for Nationalities shows that ethnic identity is a concern but not an absolute factor. students are not exclusive when they communicate with other ethnic group, this may because the ethnic college create the conditions and environment for different ethnic students to communicate with others. Relatively, non-ethnic college students do not consider ethnic factor when they make friends, this shows their weaker ethnic identity.

Ethnic students directly enjoy the multi-ethnic pattern of social life in ethnic institutions, it is this living environment that create the conditions for students to contact, understanding and sharing of multi-ethnic cultural value. In the campus, There are quite differences in attitudes, skills and abilities to adapt to the environment among the students from different regions, different college. And the attitude of dealing with communication barriers between different ethnic group is an important aspect of the measurement of ethnic identity. In general, it appears that students from ethnic college with strong nationalities, their abilities and skills to deal with communication barriers between different ethnic group might be stronger. But from the questionnaire analysis, all the respondents are more rational on these issues, Of course, the respondents who are from different institutions have different levels of ethnic contradictions of awareness. Northwestern University for Nationalities (NNU) is more rational and knowledgeable, and they have a more mature view of the possible contradictions and problems, while other non-national colleges have a lower level of relevant knowledge.

3. The studying of ethnic theory in ethnic college strengthen the ethnic identity.

In China, all the ethnic colleges have to make the ethnic theory curriculum as the public curriculum. the context of this curriculum including the concept of the nationality, The value of the ethnic equality ,unity and mutual assistance ,system of ethnic regional autonomy. The course of Marxist national theory is the main path of promoting national unity education in the curriculum system of high education. the main effect of the course is the spread of the general knowledge of Marxism ,at the same time ,its hidden effect is guiding the direction of the national identity of the colleges through national unity education and providing the platform to make ethnic students strengthen national unity through the exchange of mutual learning. on the basis of discussing the double effect in the national theory course in the aspect of national unity education.

The performance of the ethnic identity is associated with the specific social environment and the population of the ethnic group, as long as there are contact between different ethnic group, the ethnic identity will exist. as for the stage of the development of the ethnic identity, it requires specific analysis. therefore, it is not scientific to generally consider that the ethnic identity of a certain ethnic group is weak or strong. In fact, it is not the weak or strong ethnic identity which affect the communication on different ethnic group, but the development of their ethnic identity. in our survey, those who have learn the ethnic theory curriculum in the college, they are more capable of handing ethnic relation.

After college students enter campus life, they can accept the systematic theoretical knowledge of the ethnology and set up rational ethnic identity and healthy ethnic communication cognition. Ethnic theory courses have a set of common sense or basic knowledge system , Through the study of these theoretical knowledge, the negative effects of marginalization, loneliness and closure to ethnic college students can be gradually digestion, so to ensure that a college student in adolescence can accept and learn to share multicultural values, communicate with other ethnic group students equally, deal with the ethnic-issue problems mutually .And then they can form the concept of coexistence among the different nationalities in the inclusive differences, and in practice they can further promote ethnic unity and promote the harmonious development of the future ethnic relations.

4. Interaction affects the relationship between ethnic identity and the identity of the Chinese nation.

Through this survey, we found that the strength of ethnic identity does not directly affect the sense of identity of the Chinese nation, with a positive attitude of ethnic association respondents more rational

understanding and effective coordination the relationship between the ethnic identity and the Chinese nation identity. Those respondents with strong ethnic identity and weak Chinese national identity are reluctant to communicating with other ethnic group and have less opportunity to learn from other ethnic group .so the result is those respondents have a simple ethnic cognitive ability; Those respondents with strong ethnic identity and Chinese national identity gradually eliminate the prejudice, expand the ethnic cognitive view ,understand the different ethnic culture and communicate with other ethnic group in the process of positive association .

The important enlightenment of this conclusion is that we should not only use the "conflict theory" perspective to try to weaken the identity of individual ethnic group and strengthen the identity of the Chinese nation, also we can not use the "symbiosis theory" that let the ethnic development without any intervention. On this basis we should promote mutual trust between different ethnic interaction and common understanding, so as to promote ethnic identity and the Chinese national identity coordinated development and create the external interaction environment for ethnic students, so that different nationalities get positive external relations mentality, and then guide all ethnic groups from the closed, confrontation, indifferent ethnic identity stage gradually developed into an open, altruistic, symbiotic mutual benefit.

THE GUIDANCE OF ETHNIC COLLEGE STUDENTS' EHNIC identity

Researchers found out that ethnic identity development can be divided into six stages, bound stage, self-sealing stage, purification stage, cross-ethnic identity stage, multi-ethnic identity stage and identity of globalization stage. Such classification which is based on the western social experience can never completely adapt to the situation of the Chinese society. But this enlighten us that ethnic identity research in China should focus on the development of the ethnic identity .we need focus on the stage of the ethnic identity development of the ethnic college and whether they can go beyond the ex-stage of the ethnic identity.

In our survey, respondents have a clear ethnic identity, and they pay more attention to the ethnic development, communicate with other ethnic group equally, and have higher awareness of ethnic policies. if we divide the development of ethnic identity into three stage: bound-stage, open-stage and share-stage, we found that part of respondents have cross-ethnic identity and an open mind to contact with other ethnic students. but some of the respondents have a band ethnic identity.

In our survey, the problem is not how to “weaken” the ethnic identity, but how to guide the ethnic college students to come from the low level of the ethnic identity and establish more positive ethnic awareness. For the university students, we should make full use of the national theory of public curriculum to improve the national cognitive ability of college students; and make use of a variety of school community activities to promote interaction between different ethnic college students; also through regular school national unity and propaganda activities to strengthen national unity awareness. So that we can promote ethnic college students’ ethnic awareness from bound stage and self-sealing stage to the cross-ethnic identity stage and multi-ethnic identity stage, instead of simply “weaken” the ethnic identity.

In fact, in the modern society, it is useless to try to “control” the identity, and this also do not conform to the basic principles of modern social development. Therefore, in order to ensure the orderly development of the ethnic identity of college students, we should fully use the multi-ethnic campus and the ethnic curriculum to guide the ethnic identity of the ethnic college students.

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