

# Research on the Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Ethnic Minority College Students on Campus from an Acculturation Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

With the improvement of China's social economy and education levels, the proportion of ethnic minority college students is continuously increasing. Their cross-cultural adaptation process in university environments is critical, as it pertains to students' personal growth, national unity, and social harmony. This paper, drawing from acculturation theory, analyzes the factors influencing the campus acculturation process of ethnic minority college students and explores strategies to enhance campus integration. The aim is to provide references for improving educational management for ethnic minority college students.

## KEYWORDS

Acculturation Theory; Cross-Cultural Adaptation; Ethnic Minority College Students; Ideological and Political Education.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the number of ethnic minority college students in China has been steadily growing. According to public data from 2020, the proportion of ethnic minority college students among undergraduate and junior college students reached 10%, up from 8.16% in 2015[1]. The mixed and conflicting cultural landscape within universities highlights the focus on the educational management of ethnic minority college students' growth and development, which has become a key point and challenge in current higher education ideological and political work. Acculturation research, initiated in the 1930s, refers to the phenomenon where direct contact between different cultural groups leads to changes in the original cultural patterns. Acculturation theory posits that cultural contact is the prerequisite for acculturation, with cultural integration and exclusion as its outcomes, and this process is dynamic[2]. In university environments, the cross-cultural adaptation process of ethnic minority college students, involving adjustments in individual psychology, social behavior, and values, is particularly significant for campus cultural integration and national unity. This paper primarily discusses the features and manifestations of cultural identity and campus integration among ethnic minority college students from an "acculturation" perspective, proposing new directions for enhancing educational management.

## **2. "ACCULTURATION" THEORY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY COLLEGE STUDENTS ON CAMPUS**

Under the "acculturation" theoretical framework, cultural contact is the precondition for acculturation, while cultural integration and exclusion are the results. This process is dynamic. Based on existing research, acculturation is not an isolated event but a process where one culture acquires elements from another culture to adapt to new living conditions[3]. The campus integration process of ethnic minority college students, characterized by interethnic exchanges, is essentially a cross-cultural adaptation process. In cross-cultural studies, individuals and groups are two levels of acculturation. Group acculturation externally manifests as changes in social structure, economic foundations, and political organizations, whereas individual acculturation is reflected in changes in personal behavior, value beliefs, and attitudes[4]. During cross-cultural adaptation, individuals generally go through stages such as euphoria, culture shock, abnormality, and adaptation[5]. In universities, the organization and attractiveness of groups provide a certain degree of tolerance and acceptance for individual acculturation; thus, studying individual acculturation is crucial for understanding group acculturation. This is particularly instructive for researching the cross-cultural adaptation issues of ethnic minority college students from various regions.

According to Berry's proposed "AISM" acculturation strategy, in the context of minority cultural groups and individuals interacting with mainstream cultures, the selected "acculturation" approaches mainly include: assimilation mode, where groups or individuals are unwilling to identify with their original culture but actively interact with the dominant culture; integration mode, where groups or individuals maintain their original culture while pursuing daily interaction with the dominant culture; separation mode, where groups or individuals focus on maintaining their original culture while avoiding interaction with the dominant culture; and marginalization mode, where groups or individuals neither identify with their original culture nor interact with the dominant culture[6].

The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China explicitly proposed the concept of "strengthening the sense of community for the Chinese nation," which is significant for maintaining national unity, enhancing ethnic solidarity, coalescing spiritual strength, and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation[7]. For ethnic minority college students integrating into campus, the "integration mode" is a more scientific choice. University educators, while understanding and respecting the cultural backgrounds of students from different ethnicities, guide them to integrate as part of a larger cultural network while preserving a certain degree of integrity in their original culture. This promotes the coexistence and symbiosis of diverse cultures, assisting students in smoothly overcoming discomfort caused by other cultures during the adaptation phase, shaping and developing a new self in a new environment, and achieving the all-around development of all students.

## **3. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Taking ethnic minority college students from a language-focused university as an example, based on surveys and interviews with 124 ethnic minority college students and routine educational management situations, factors affecting the campus integration of ethnic minority college students, according to acculturation theory, include characteristics of ethnic minority college students, differences between ethnic cultures and campus culture, and the campus cultural atmosphere. In university settings, Han students constitute the majority group. Ethnic minority college students, influenced by historical, political, economic, and ecological factors specific to ethnic regions, have cultural differences with Han students. These students possess unique traits in campus integration, such as language, diet, psychology, behavior habits, and value orientations, all of which may impact their campus adaptation.

### **3.1. Characteristics of Ethnic Minority College Students**

Compared to the Han nationality, ethnic minority college students exhibit distinct traits: they have a strong drive for advancement, thirst for knowledge, and sense of responsibility, but are prone to adopting a broad range of attitudes, sometimes lacking necessary sensitivity and discernment towards negative ideologies and cultures. They can easily become emotionally agitated under the influence of negative and erroneous ideological discourses, which can be detrimental to their personal development. They have a strong sense of ethnic self-esteem, yearning for recognition, understanding, and respect, but conflicts may arise due to differences. The self-awareness of ethnic minority college students is simple and honest, desiring to spread and exchange their ethnic cultures and gain recognition from other ethnicities. Misunderstandings and conflicts between ethnicities may arise when there are discrepancies in cultural understanding due to improper handling, which is detrimental to ethnic unity. They possess virtues such as honesty, trustworthiness, enthusiasm, and exuberance, with outgoing personalities but relatively impulsive tendencies. In educational practice, some ethnic minority college students have relatively poor emotional self-control abilities. When criticized or misunderstood by others, they may act impulsively, causing conflicts and opposition among students. If accumulated over time, this can lead to misunderstandings between ethnic cultures. They have independent thinking and a spirit of exploration, but their thoughts can be volatile, with a certain degree of blindness. Ethnic minority college students have broad minds and strong self-care abilities. Some students, influenced by traditional folk ideas of their own ethnicities, may experience cognitive limitations and emotional polarization.

### **3.2. Differences between Ethnic Cultures and Campus Culture**

In the process of campus integration, the characteristics of ethnic minority college students manifest notable differences in lifestyle preferences, community environment, and emotional attitudes compared to Han students. Regarding lifestyle preferences, ethnic minority college students can seek common ground while reserving differences, often adopting an integrated cultural integration strategy. Faced with differences in community environment, ethnic minority college students generate a predominantly positive psychological construct, often adopting an assimilation cultural integration strategy. However, when faced with more stable differences in emotional attitudes, ethnic minority college students often adopt either an integrated or a separation cultural integration strategy. The primary reason for choosing a separation cultural integration strategy is due to poor Chinese language proficiency.

### **3.3. Campus Cultural Atmosphere**

The case study university respects multiculturalism and is committed to strengthening the sense of community for the Chinese nation, aiming to cultivate global-minded individuals who can uphold the position of the entire nation in international exchanges while maintaining an open-minded attitude. The campus integration of ethnic minority college students is a complex dynamic process. From the perspective of acculturation theory, cross-cultural adaptation typically involves multiple stages. Based on long-term tracking and research, ethnic minority college students exhibit a coexisting paradoxical state of "inferiority and confidence," "desire for attention and rejection of special treatment," and "closed independence and open exchange." For instance, most students indicate that they receive care from teachers and classmates, and the school respects ethnic dietary practices and languages. However, these become "issues" that affect their campus integration, as they wish to be seen as "ordinary individuals." Ethnic minority student groups often demonstrate strong internal cohesion. While the school encourages the display of ethnic characteristics, excessive emphasis on ethnic characteristics can create distance in interactions with other students.

## **4. STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING THE CAMPUS INTEGRATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY COLLEGE STUDENTS**

### **4.1. Establishing a Student Information Survey and Understanding Mechanism**

Mastering detailed information about ethnic minority college students serves as a reliable foundation for grasping their characteristics and the fundamental basis for accurately formulating and timely adjusting relevant mechanisms and systems. To deeply understand the lives, studies, exchanges, and practices of ethnic minority college students on campus, attention should be paid to understanding the unique needs, interests, abilities, and learning styles of each student. In conducting surveys, first, ensure that all information collection activities adhere to uniform quality standards and privacy protection principles. Secondly, leverage modern technological tools such as questionnaires and information systems, while also utilizing the role of heart-to-heart talks, dormitory visits, and joint practices in ideological and political activities. Thirdly, strengthen training for teachers, administrators, and parents to learn about ethnic culture while enhancing their ability to interpret and utilize data information. Fourthly, reinforce home-school cooperation. Home-school communication plays an irreplaceable role in enhancing educators' understanding of the cultural backgrounds of ethnic minority college students, promoting students' comprehensive growth, and social adaptation. Encourage parents to participate in sharing student information, fostering a good atmosphere of shared education between home and school. By comprehensively assessing differences with Han students, promptly identify problems in educational management services and take targeted measures such as classified guidance and specialized services to address them.

### **4.2. Innovating Educational Activity Carriers**

Firstly, through systematically planning and implementing extracurricular activities encompassing culture, sports, science and technology, and art, the aim is to create a vibrant and positive educational ecology that fosters the all-around development of ethnic minority college students. Given that university campuses offer students more autonomous time than other educational settings, carefully designing and executing extracurricular programs can effectively capitalize on this advantage, creating a comprehensive platform that combines knowledge expansion with leisure and entertainment. This not only stimulates and showcases the unique talents of ethnic minority college students in the arts, greatly enriching their college experiences, but also significantly enhances their self-management capabilities, stimulates their participation in university affairs, and drives their deeper integration into the campus community. Secondly, by implementing a strategy combining personalized guidance with group education, efforts are made to enhance the motivation, direction, and support for ethnic minority college students, fostering their confidence and nurturing their intrinsic drive for excellence. Specifically, in the case of the school implementing one-on-one academic mentoring, small-group tutoring for specialized courses, and other one-on-one service models, customized counseling and support tailored to each student's unique background and individual needs are provided. This not only helps address specific issues they may encounter in academics, psychology, or social adaptation, but also contributes to enhancing their sense of self-efficacy—the belief in their ability to overcome difficulties and achieve goals. Thirdly, optimize the cadre team of ethnic minority students to accelerate the adaptation process of ethnic minority college students into the mainstream student community on campus[8]. Select and nurture representatives and influential figures among ethnic minority students, giving priority to their cultivation in the recruitment of student cadres, establishment of role models, and development of party and League members. Build bridges of communication between ethnic minority students, students of different ethnicities, and teachers, highlighting peer influence.

### 4.3. Highlighting the Role of Professional Practice in Education

For the guidance and education of ethnic minority college students, ideological and political education remains the core task. Ideological and political courses, as foundational education, transform the theories and policies of socialism with Chinese characteristics into teaching content to help college students establish correct ideological concepts and strive to create an atmosphere conducive to the sense of community for the Chinese nation. Professional course ideology and politics are not only a means of imparting professional knowledge but also an important avenue for promoting cultural identity, value shaping, and the all-around development of students. Compared to traditional ideological and political courses, they have advantages such as permeation and integration, contextualization and practicality, stimulation of student autonomy, and continuity and systematicness. They should promote the cross-cultural adaptation of ethnic minority college students in terms of cultural integration and identity education, psychological adjustment and social support, and professional and career development planning. Incorporate elements of ethnic minority cultures into professional courses, using case teaching and cultural exchange activities to enhance students' pride in their own ethnic cultures while promoting understanding and respect for the diversity of Chinese culture. Emphasize the cooperative interaction among students of different ethnicities in teaching activities to assist students in coping with pressures arising from cultural conflicts in their learning practices. Guide students to set personal development as their goal, understand the unique value of their cultural backgrounds in their careers, build confidence, and strengthen the initiative in open exchanges. Additionally, the role of professional practice in education should be emphasized, enabling students to deepen the effects of cultural exchange in the process of applying knowledge, teamwork, and skill development. For example, the case school focuses on practical education in tourism-related majors, leading students to learn at red education bases, guiding them to participate in creative planning competitions for red tourism, organizing red tour guide simulation contests, and tapping into the red elements in tourism professional practices to foster students' core socialist values and strengthen education on the sense of community for the Chinese nation.

Leveraging the Role of Online Platforms in Education Online platforms, as a new field and arena for ideological and political education in the new era, not only serve as important channels for ethnic minority college students to access information and acquire knowledge, but also facilitate their emotional exchanges, campus integration, and personal development, effectively assisting them in overcoming the challenges of cross-cultural adaptation. According to research findings by scholar Li Juan, social media exposure has played a very positive role in the social integration of ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, groups with higher levels of education and rich experience in internet usage tend to possess better social media literacy, with overall positive trends in cultural adaptation strategies and the sense of community for the Chinese nation[9]. In the educational practices of the case school, online communication platforms are established to encourage ethnic minority students to share their original cultures, promote cross-cultural dialogue and exchange, provide high-quality online course resources, and strengthen interpretations of policies and systems, answers to questions and confusions, mental health consulting services, and career planning and employment guidance. In the provision of educational management services, correct ideological concepts are guided. As network technology advances, online platforms have created unprecedented opportunities for individual development and social participation patterns, transforming social relationships and social structures from quantitative changes to qualitative changes. Universities need to combine their students' characteristics, analyze different ethnic cultures, and study the social psychological mechanism of cultural identity in the network platform environment, formulating network platform acculturation strategies aimed at building a sense of community for the Chinese nation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The acculturation process involving intercultural exchanges among ethnic groups is bidirectional. In the cross-cultural adaptation of ethnic minority college students on campus, although the changes they face are greater than those encountered by Han students on campus, it is still essential to pay attention to the objective need for bilateral adaptation. To promote more ethnic minority college students to adopt the "integration model" in the process of campus integration, on the one hand, ethnic minority college students need to actively adapt to the new cultural patterns on campus. On the other hand, the campus needs to establish a corresponding safeguarding mechanism. In assisting ethnic minority college students with cross-cultural adaptation on campus, strengthening teacher-student communication, reinforcing student self-management, utilizing various teaching resources, and leveraging educational channels are specific approaches. More importantly, the acculturation of ethnic minority college students is a dynamic process. Regarding the causes of acculturation, focus should be placed on the impact of changes in time and space environments and cross-cultural contexts. Concerning the manifestations of the acculturation process, focus should be directed at the historical and internal influences of groups on individuals, while also paying attention to changes in individual behavior, value beliefs, and attitudes. Regarding the results of acculturation, particular attention should be given to the cultural identity and campus integration level of ethnic minority college students.

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