

Identity and Support for Political Communities Based on Language Choice Data in Tibet

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Tibet**

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National sentiment and identities are affective orientations of diffuse political support toward political communities. Language choice is suggested to be a reliable indicator of community identity in Tibet for theoretical, historical, and practical reasons. Tibetan, Mandarin, and English are three language choices that are used to indicate three identities and three political communities in this paper. By using the language orientations of Tibetan high school students as the indicators of their community identities, I demonstrate the patterns of identity of Tibetan students with survey data. I also use empirical evidence to test the attitudinal and demographic sources of the students' variation in their community identities. The results reconfirm that the constructivist theory of the identity construction, which includes the primordialist and circumstantialist factors, has a fairly good explanatory power regarding the community identities of students in Tibet. And policy implications are offered from the educational perspective.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The legitimacy of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule over Tibet is one of the most sensitive political issues for the People's Republic of China (PRC). Despite the claim of historical sovereignty by the CCP and China's egalitarian policies over ethnic minorities, the legitimacy of the CCP's rule of the area is still questioned. The legitimacy of rule lies in people's trust and support of the regime (Linz 1978; Lipset 1981). Voluminous research seeks to demonstrate the political support that Tibetan people have for the CCP regime. Little of it, however, is based on public opinion through empirical studies. Empirical studies are needed to explain the origins of community identity and political support in Tibet. Regarding those existing empirical studies in ethnic political support, Barrington (2002, 459) notes that they are "parochial," and that they fail to consider many aspects, such as region, language use, and religion, especially in a single model. Survey questions need to pass political censorship in Tibet and still retain validity in showing the relationship. This paper argues that language choice is a valid indicator in exploring the patterns and sources of variations in Tibetan students' community identities, which also indicate students' attitudes on supporting different political communities. The empirical analysis builds on an assumption: the identity of people is fixed in a probabilistic way rather than an irregular and unpredictable way.

I first discuss the definitions of political community and political support and introduce their position and importance in political science study. Then I numerate identity construction

theory which explain and predict political support. I justify the application of language choice as a proxy and instrument for supporting political community in Tibet. At last, I test the theory with data form Tibet.

2.0 THEORY

2.1 POLITICAL COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL SUPPORT

It is important to understand the position of national identity within the political support framework before delving into the identity research. In his classic book about political support, Dalton (2004, 24) categorizes “sense of national identity” and “national pride” as effective orientations toward political community. Easton (1965, 77-78) defines a political community as

a group of people who come together to draw up some kinds of constitution to regulate their political relationship... The particular structure of the relationship may change, the members of the system may be ranked, subdivided and rearranged politically so that the structure patterns are fundamentally altered. But as long as the members continue to evince an attachment to the overall group in which the changing interrelationships prevail... they will be supporting the existence of the same and continuing community.

Therefore, political community does not need to be a nation state within a real national boundary. It can be a cultural and political system that people attach to. The People’s Republic of China is a political community; Tibet is a political community; and English society is a political community, too. Figure 1 shows the theoretical position of national identity research within the framework of political support.

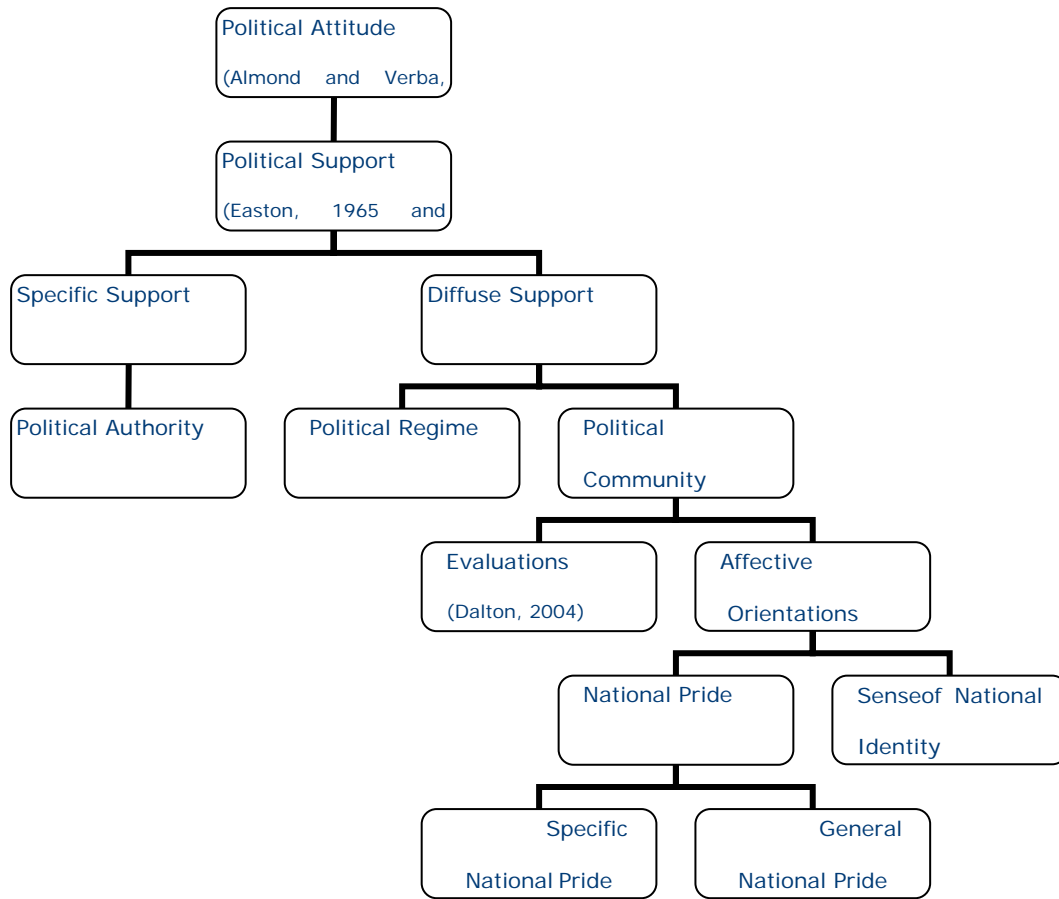


Figure 1. The position of Sense of National Identity in the Framework of Political Support

Although national identity is usually associated with the rise of the nation state, some scholars find that national identity arose earlier than nation state (Gorski 2000), and others predict that it may outlast the nation state (Evans and Kelly). It could be the case for Tibetan people, whose national feeling formed before People’s Republic of China (PRC) and extends beyond the PRC. National feelings are also multidimensional (Guillen 2001; Meyer et al. 1997), and sometimes they are mixed with a variety of non-competing loyalties (Etzioni 2001). In this paper, the concept community identities is exchangeable with the group identity and include ethnic identity, the national identity, and global identity, specifically including Tibetan identity, Chinese identity, and English identity.

The multidimensional national identity is associated with the equivalent multi-level political community. As a region with a long and complex history, Tibet does not lack multi-dimensional national feelings. For political dissidents in Tibet, Tibetan and English community is competing with the Chinese community. Some apolitical people, however, could support multiple identities without inner conflicts. National identities of Tibetan students are measured by language choices, while at the same time the political supports for different political communities are measured, too.

The research of national identity and political support is important because the negative national pride or shame may provide for destructive and aggressive political movements (Scheff and Retzinger 1991), impede constructive engagement in foreign policy (Deng 1997), and encourage ethnocentricity, militarism, and xenophobia (Bar-Tal 1997; Kelman, 1997; Skitka 2005, Smith and Jarkko, 1998; Allart 2000; Philips 1996).

2.2 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THEORIES

In order to research the cause of the variations of community identities in Tibet, it is necessary to first examine identity construction theories. As mentioned above, students have developed coexisting multidimensional identities, which, the paper argues, reflect their potential support for Tibetan, Chinese and English political communities. To find out what factors cause the various choices in identities, we need to examine the factors influencing identity construction.

Among many theories that explain the construction of identity, this paper adopts Cornell and Hartmann's Constructivist (Cornell and Hartmann 1998) theory. The theory is powerful

because it successfully combines and reconciles the most influential factors from two major schools of theory, Primordialism and Circumstantialism. The constructivist believes that identities are “not rooted in nature but are situational precipitates, products of particular events, relationships, and processes that are themselves subject to change (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 77).” The two important components of the constructivist theory are Primordialism and Circumstantialism.

As a primordialist, Harold Isaacs (1975, 38) regards ethnic identity as a “basic group identity,” which “consist of the ready-made set of endowments and identifications that every individual shares with others from the moment of birth by chance of the family into which he is born at that given time in that given place.” Isaacs concludes that eight elements contribute to the basic group identity: the history and origins of the group, nationality and group affiliations, first language, religion, culture, and geography of the birthplace (Isaac 1975; Barrington 2002, 463; Zhu 2007b, 41). These elements are regarded by primordialists as the most powerful and enduring factors, and are difficult to assimilate and change. However, the Primordialism, regarded by Cornell and Hartmann (1998), over emphasizes the deeply rooted, enduring aspects of ethnic attachments of ethnic boundaries.

Circumstantialists, on the other hand, focuses largely on the external or situational factors— patterns of political, economic, and social circumstances or relationships— that construct and give significance to ethnic boundaries and therefore give logic to ethnic identity construction(Zhu 2007, 40).These factors are more volatile than Primordialist factors. This paper focuses on the economic and education factors of the Circumstantialist, which are the most influential among Circumstantialist theories, and are easier to measure in the Tibetan case. Economic factors account for ethnic identity to meet people’s practical needs. Individuals and

groups will be loyal to their ethnic identity if it can benefit them, which is also true for other identities they did not initially belong to. Thus, identity is adjusted with changing circumstances and other interests (See Cohen 1974; Stephan and Stephan 2000; and Glazer and Moynihan 1963). The economically advantaged countries are the easier in getting loyalty and national identification from people. The educational factors, also as Circumstantialist factors, are more volatile than economic factors. They include schooling factors which shape the students' identities over time. The educational perspective offers immediate policy implications on identity construction, because its impacts are open to controls and influences of authorities. Figure 2 shows the theoretical relationship among constructivist factors. The Figure 2 also lists the indicator variables of this paper used for measure Tibetan students' identities.

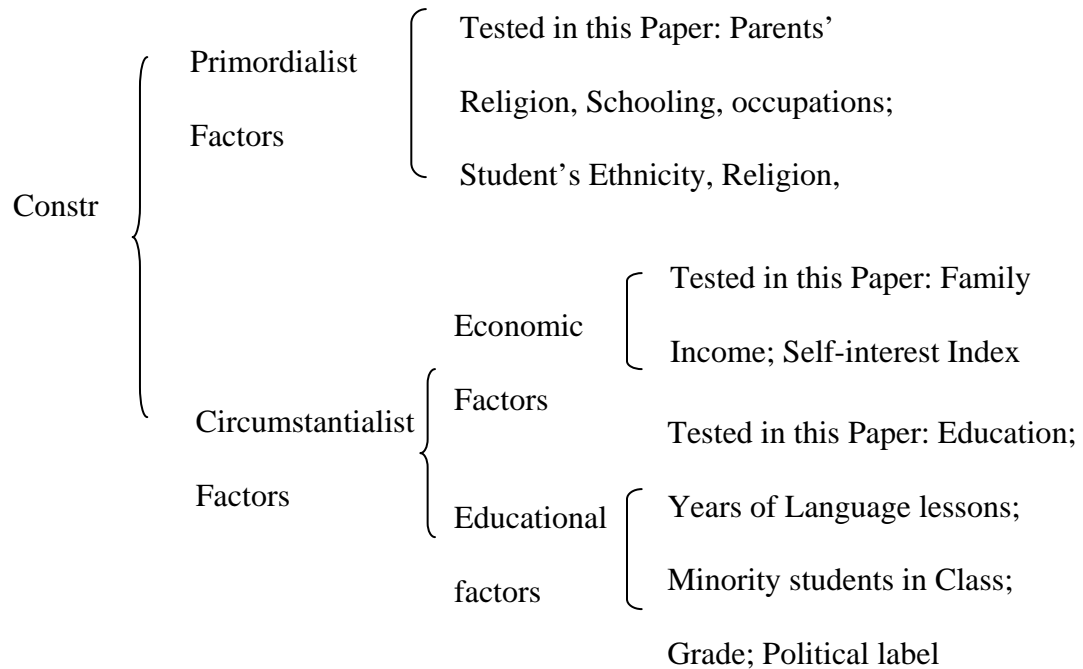


Figure 2. Relationship among Constructivist Factors

The constructivism also maintains that the importance of identity to different people varies. “Thick” identity refers to high level of binding with the group identity, while the “thin”

identity plays less of a role in individuals' social life. The constructionist view is constructive because it emphasizes both people's primordial identities and the environment's immediate influences.

Although the constructivist theory implies an ever-changing nature of the identity, the changing, I argue, is slow and predictable in a given period of time. The constructivist theory is used to find out the sources of variations in the identities among the students in Tibet. I expect to find a predictable and steady pattern of identity choices among the Tibetan students.

2.3 LANGUAGE PREFERENCES AS INDICATORS OF NATIONAL IDENTITIES

In his recent research, Barrington (2002, 465) concludes that "Language is very important in the development of group identity. It is difficult for a group to develop cohesiveness without a single language." One theoretical perspective holds that language can be either a part of ethnic group identity (Williams 1984) or a marker for ethnic or national group boundaries (Nash 1996; Laitin 2000). It helps develop ethnic identity and justify ethnic group boundaries by fulfilling both a communicative and symbolic function (Koenig 1999). A second theory holds that language is important in its own right as an identity group for individuals. Since political messages are conveyed through media and education—both of which are transmitted through a single, or at least a dominant, language—those who speak the same language will be exposed to the same ideas (Barrington 2002, 466). Though the exceptions may exist in multi-language societies, both theories agree that language orientation is an important indicator of ethnic identity. The difference is that whether language is an identity maker, which is not a major concern of this paper. This paper holds that the choice of language among Tibetan, Mandarin, and English by

Tibetan high school students is a fairly reliable indicator, if not a maker, of their ethnic identities.¹

The social reason is the second reason for this paper to choose language preference data in projecting group identity in Tibet. The social justification of language choice leads individuals to choose language consciously and carefully. Tibetans feel peer pressure and the need for self justification when choosing to use Tibetan or Mandarin. For example, there was a series of heated debates about what constitutes “Tibetan literature” since the late 1970s. Many Tibetan intellectuals refuse to acknowledge that works done by Han authors in Tibetan language, or in Chinese by Tibetan authors about Tibet, belong to “Tibetan literature.”² After years of debate, the consensus reaches only “works about Tibet written by Tibetan authors in Tibetan language had to be considered ‘Tibetan literature’” (Schiaffini 2004, 88). Schiaffini (2004, 89) reiterates this point in his work: “(in) Tibet, as well as in other parts of the post-colonial world, there is a pacific but tense coexistence between the literature produced in the native language and that written in the language of the colonizer. Native authors who write in the language of the colonial powers endless questioning by others, and feel a pressing need for self-justification.” Therefore, language choice is a conscious and controversial process to many Tibetans because they need constantly justify their choices to themselves and others by the consistent questioning of Tibetan society. Though still a few Tibetans do not settle on one language and exclude the others as suggested by “thin” identities, many Tibetans hold strong opinions to favor one language, Tibetan, Mandarin, or English in this paper.

¹ This argument is supported by numerous previous qualitative studies on the relation between national identities and language. More empirical work is needed to be done in this area, especially in countries like China which has 56 ethnics within a single nation. See Isaacs 1975, Schiaffini 2004, Upton 1999, Zhu 2007b, Kolas 1999, Barrington 2002, Gao 2006.

² See Schiaffini 2004 for the debate over decades about what constitutes genuine “Tibetan literature”.

Practically, adopting the language preference to indicate group identity is because of the difficulty of obtaining surveys in Tibet, especially surveys having questions that are related to ethnic conflicts, religious, and political issues. The political ratification and censorship do not allow political opinion survey to be conducted in Tibet. A long ratification process is needed before conducting a survey, and the surveys concerning political opinions are not likely to survive the censorship. On the other hand, the political support and ethnic identity is most important in areas like Tibet, where multiple ethnicities coexist and political opinions are not available. A circumventing measure is needed to distinguish people's political opinion without explicitly political content. A survey using language choice as indicator is useful to avoid political censorship and, at the same time, correctly to measure people's political support. Although language choice may not be a perfect indicator of group identity, it is one of the closest and most efficient gauges of Tibetan community identities under the real world constraints.

Moreover, from the perspective of empirical testing, the language as indicator is desirable because it serves as an instrument of political support. An instrument is needed in the regression test because of the endogeneity problem in the model. It is hard to tell how much the effects are Primordialist factors, for example, have on political support and how much influence political support has on Primordialist factors. The causality relationship is two way. The relationship discovered in the process could be caused by both ways of causality. An instrument that has high correlation with one-side of variable could solve the problem. Language choice as the instrument only highly correlates with supports for political identity, and it does not cause Primordialist factors to change according to theory. However, the variability explained by the factors is compromised because language choice is not a perfect proxy of support for identity choice.

Therefore, by using it as an instrument, the endogeneity problem is solved with the cost of variability explained.

2.4 A BRIEF HISTORICAL AND POLICIES BACKGROUND

Before 1951, Tibet was the society with single race and single language. Transferring to bilingual society for major cities and towns did not start until 1951, while the vast farming and pastor areas are still using the single language (Zhou 2002, 147). Since Beijing signed the “Seventeen Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet” with the Tibet government, the policy trend of Tibetan cultural and religious features four periods: pre- the 1966 Cultural Revolution, Cultural Revolution period, liberal policy during late 1970s and the 1980s, and after the 1989’s Tibetan pro-independence riot.

The principle of Chinese ethnic policy since 1951 is, similarly to those applied in Soviet Union (Zhou 2002, 148), the Marxism ethnic policies, which claim to give equalitarian status for all ethnics regardless of its strength (Xiao 2003, 37; Zhou 2002, 154; Zhou 2001, 23). China established national ethnic committee and People’s representative committee to guarantee the equality of ethnics by enacting policies. Giving equal and autonomous status to Tibet is the original spirit of the Chinese governing. Preserving and developing the Tibetan language is the guiding line for laws and policies in Tibetan language education and application. “Tibetan language is the major language, while both Tibetan and Chinese language are using” (Zhou 2002, 165) is the principle of Tibetan language education. The Marxist ethnic policy still has profound influence until now.

A decade of Cultural Revolution led to the damage of cultural and religious books and objects, as well as the prohibition on teaching Tibetan culture and language in many schools (Schiaffini 2004, 81). In many areas governmental institutions and work units used only Chinese language. Many cadres in Tibet do not speak Tibetan, which makes the communication with people very difficult. School stopped teaching Tibetan language or using it to teach. (Zhou, 2002, 158)

The General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Hu Yaobang visited Tibet in May 1980 and promised to promote Tibetan economic recovery, to develop Tibetan science, culture, and education, and to exercise national autonomy in the region. The visit marked the beginning of a new era of Chinese policies toward Tibet (Schiaffini 2004, 81-82). The reformist spirit of the Chinese government ushered in a series of regulations on religious and cultural freedom. Temples, shrines, and monasteries were rebuilt, and Tibetan classics were reprinted. The local government was given a higher degree of autonomy in dealing with religious, cultural, and educational issues. The living standard of the Tibetan people improved considerably as well, due to the liberalization of the economy and to the number of infrastructure and development projects carried out by the Chinese authorities.

The liberal atmosphere lasted for a decade until the Tibetan pro-independence riot in 1989. Since then, the Chinese government has strengthened its control over Tibetan intellectuals and Tibetan publications, which immediately lowered the previous decade of tolerance. The guiding spirit of governing Tibet didn't change. Now all the Tibetan primary and high schools, except Han classes, use Tibetan textbooks. Teachers mainly teach in Tibetan language, even in rural areas. Students start to learn Chinese language since in higher level primary schools (Zhou 2003, 158). Upton(1999, 307) observed, "Contrary to the rhetoric that often surfaces in Western and

Tibetan-exile reports about the Tibetan language curriculum in the People's Republic of China (PRC), the textbook in use do contain a fair amount of material drawn from Tibetan sources and relevant to Tibetan cultural life in the broad sense." She recognized, however, that the lessons play an important role in constructing a sense of unity with the Chinese nation among young Tibetans.

Tibetan cultural and religious development depend must less on policies than before, but more on migration, opening of economy, globalization and urbanization. These trends compromise role of Tibetan ethnic identity to some extent, at the same time provide opportunities to the development of Tibet.

2.5 LANGUAGE PREFERENCE AND GROUP IDENTITIES IN TIBET

As a sentiment, Tibetan students regard the Tibetan language as their mother language, which is an important primordialist reason for a Tibetan to hold Tibetan identity. In Schiaffini's interviews(2004, 91), Tibetan authors maintain that Tibetans are more comfortable with writing in Tibetan, feel great pride in doing so, and enjoy more popularity within the Tibetan community. Similarly, in the Tibetan classrooms in India, children learn Tibetan language and history, and participate in Tibetan cultural activities (Kolas 1999, 52 57) in order to nurture their ethnic awareness. Therefore, Primordialist reasons lead Tibetan students to stick to their most immediate Tibetan identities that strongly associate with them since their birth. Parents, as predicted by Primordialist, will be one of the most important agents to exert influences on children. The ethnic label will be a salient predictor of general ethnic identity.

Cultural background, as another important primordialist factor, further strengthens Tibetan students' ethnic identifications. The local tradition and religious practices are strong influences on students' Tibetan identity. The more years students spent in Tibet, the more students feel a part of the Tibetan community. At the same time, Han students are under the same situational influence. Since most Han students in the survey have lived in Tibet for many years, or were born there, their identities have been influenced by the Tibetan culture. With longer residence in Tibet, these Han students are more likely to identify with Tibetan culture. The hypothesis is that Tibetan students mainly identify themselves with a Tibet ethnicity.

For Han students in Tibet, cultural experience is a circumstantialist factor when it is running contrary to students' labeled identity. It is secondary but also decisive. The physical origins and parental influences of the Chinese orientation are stronger determinants than the cultural experience. The Han students in Tibet, even though they live and study in Tibet, are supposed more likely to stick to Chinese identity, while they will exhibit an overall pro-Tibet sentiment.

Consisting of about 12.5% of PRC's territory³, the Tibetan autonomous region has a GDP not as high as that of an eastern coast county of China. Chinese is economically stronger than Tibet to attract both Tibetan and Han students. The socio-economic conditions in Tibet construct a favorable hothouse for Chinese and English identity. In some Tibetan areas, Upton (1999, 311) believes, there is little demand for individuals to be literate in the Tibetan language, and there is little opportunity for the use of Tibetan in the public sphere. The opportunity Tibetan language education offers is narrower than that offered by a Chinese-language education (Wan, Wang, and Li 2002, 17; Upton 1999, 311; Zhou 2001, 26). Being able to take advantage of

³ National Bureau of Statistics of China. Visit: <http://www.stats.gov.cn/>

changes in the growing private sector also depends largely on Chinese skills, rather than Tibetan. The attraction is especially strong for students who envision going to the market to seek employment after graduating from the high school. For self-interest reasons, as a kind of circumstantialist incentives, some students would choose to focus on Chinese, and identify themselves as Chinese. Some people call this the “Sinicization” of Tibetans.

Many Tibetans developed a pro-Chinese identity, or at least a less pro-Tibetan identity. The choice of Mandarin is a way for them to rationalize and express their identity orientations. They have strong self-interested reasons to choose Chinese identity. Some Tibetans hold that the functioning of the Tibetan language is not as efficient as Mandarin. In Schiaffini’s interviews concerning the rationale to use the Chinese language by Tibetan writers, a popular Tibetan writer argues that the Tibetan language is not adequate for modern literary creation. Another Tibetan writer similarly maintains that Tibetan language is not conducive to the writing of modern literature because the Tibetan vocabulary is very limited. In contrast, many Tibetan writers also believe the versatility of the Tibetan language is adequate (Schiaffini 2004, 89-90). Schiaffini, however, regards these two authors’ limitation of Tibetan view as a pretense to be pro-Chinese.

The Open Door policy has done more than bring modern hotels to Lhasa; it has also brought a new awareness about conditions outside China, while providing the means for expressions of dissent to reach the outside world (Kolas 1999, 55). The English community, i.e. the western societies, represent a more developed and democratic political community than the Chinese one, sometimes a substitute for it to those who oppose the CCP rules. The students in Tibet are not devoid of knowledge of the western world. Tourists in Tibet from English speaking countries always, deliberately or not, make English identity appealing to the students. Both Chinese and English tend to detach Tibetan students from their own ethnic identity due to

economic reasons. English identity, however, has two weaknesses that lessen its popularity. First, English is not as practical as Chinese in Tibet. Secondly, people from western societies are genetically more remotely related to Tibetan people, while Chinese people share more physical connections and origins with Tibetans. The hypothesis is that English community has very a strong attraction to Tibetan students because of its economic and political value, but its popularity is discounted by its genetic remoteness. As a whole, economic factors in circumstantialism would encourage Tibetan to identify themselves with the economically and politically advantaged Chinese and English community.

Educational factors in Circumstantialism are important factors too. Most part of the influences from teachers, friends, and media exposure, are all circumstantial. The direction of influence depends on the content of the influences, and it is likely to steadily change students' identity over a relatively long period of time. In Tibetan high schools, teachers mainly teach in Tibetan language. Students start to learn Chinese language in higher level primary schools (Zhou 2003, 158), except some schools are featured as Chinese teaching school. The teaching in Tibetan high schools, though economically less developed in the infrastructure, has high level of state penetration, but one of its major goals is to build a strong Tibetan identity for Tibetan students. Upton(1999, 307) observed, "Contrary to the rhetoric that often surfaces in Western and Tibetan-exile reports about the Tibetan language curriculum in the People's Republic of China (PRC), the textbooks in use do contain a fair amount of material drawn from Tibetan sources and relevant to Tibetan cultural life in the broad sense." The schooling factors are not only used to increase the Tibetans' awareness of their Tibetan identity, but also used massively to construct a picture of all minor ethnic people being siblings with the Han ethnicity. Upton (1999, 309) notes that "if the construction of a unified sense of Tibetan identity is an implicit

goal of the Tibetan-language curriculum, an infinitely more explicit goal is the construction of a sense of unity with the Chinese nation.” The education of the unity between Han and Tibetan student does not necessarily reach its goal. When indigenous minorities view the education system as a way to strip them of their culture and identity without giving them equal opportunity in the wider society, the minorities may respond with resistance (Postiglione, Zhu, and Ben 2004, 199). Therefore, educational effects are hard to evaluate as a whole, but under a certain context, their roles are influential and instructive.

In the later analysis, I first introduce the dataset for testing theories. The specifications of all variables are described. The representativeness and limits of models and variables are discussed. Later I first use some descriptive graphs to show the pattern of language choices among different ethnicities and reasons of their choice. Then a ordered probit model is used to test the effects of three theories and their relative strength in predicting language choice.

3.0 DATA

This paper uses the data from the survey on language education and globalization. The survey was designed and implemented by Wenfang Tang at the University of Pittsburgh with financial support from the Freeman Foundation and the University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh. The field work was jointly conducted by Wenfang Tang and the National Sun Yat-Sen University in June 2006.

The survey asked students questions from five areas— coursework history, language abilities, language preferences and reasons, attitudes in traditions and religion, and socio-demographic background of students and parents. Students were asked to fill out the questionnaire in class. Students in seven different high schools from four different counties in Tibet were surveyed. The four counties, Lhasa, Nyingchi, Xigazê, and Shannan, represent the most populous half of Tibet. Schools in these regions were chosen to allow for variance in regional differences, so that the survey is more representative. Many answers are validated, in later tests, by previous literature, school records, and factor analyses.

There are 477 students in the survey: 377 Tibetan students, 80 Han students, and 20 students from other ethnicities, such as Hui, Menba, and Luoba. Of the students, 261 are Buddhist; 201 do not have a religion; and seven have other religions. Students range from 14 to 20 years old, and their school levels range from the first year of junior high to the third year of senior high. Two out of ten classes are mainly Han students' classes with 11 Tibetan students

appearing as minority among 73 Han students. The other eight classes are mainly Tibetan students with zero to three Han students. Females (N=263) outnumber males (N=209) in ten classes.

Since the dependent variables are ordinal values, that are 2, 1, and 0 which means most important, second most important, and least important respectively, the regression models used in this paper is ordered probit regression models. Ordered probit model is designed for regression models with ordinal dependent variables. It has different assumptions about the distribution of error terms from the logit model. Basically, the two yield similar results. All results in the models are tested by both ordered probit and ordered logit models. The probit one gives even more conservative results. Therefore, the results are robust to different modeling techniques.

Seven reasons⁴ are offered asking why students perceive their languages choices as the most important: 1. for status among peers; 2. for parents; 3. for good grades in school; 4. for better job and future career; 5. to learn history and culture; 6. for religion; 7. other. The choice of “other” offers students the opportunity to write in reasons unmentioned in the list. At this stage, I revisit their written reasons and recode many of those to the previous six. These choices reveal students’ reason to stick to a language, i.e. political communities.

As mentioned previously, reasons 1, 2, 3, and 4 reflect self-interest in favoring a language. Self interest is part of the Circumstantialist incentives for identifying with a community. The job and employment reason is especially direct and important, because according to the Circumstantialists the students are consciously or unconsciously attracted to the culture with the higher economic value. Because of this reason, Tibetan students are likely to regard Mandarin and English as the most important. Reason number five can be the pretension

⁴ The options in the survey are randomized to avoid forcing research’s judgment upon the students.

for any of the three reasons. Reason five (to learn history and culture) could target the cultural and historical value, which attracts people just as the economic value. It could also serve as an expression for preferring a language with the Primordialist reasons. Reason number six is considered a Primordialist reason, which is highly correlated with answers from the religious questions, which again proves the consistency of the answers.

The dependent variables are how important students perceive three languages, specifically, how important do they value Tibetan, Mandarin, and English. The questions ask “what is the most important language to you?” and “what is the second most important language to you?” The language a student chooses as the most important were coded as two, while the second important language were coded as 1. The unmentioned one was coded zero. The variables are supposed to be fair indicators of their group identities: Tibetan identity, Chinese identity, and English Speaking identity. In later analysis, the three concepts, language preference, identities, and political communities, are interchangeable.

The most serious problems are the small sample size and collinearity problems (See appendix for correlation matrix of all variables). The small sample size problem is exacerbated by the lack of variance within major explanatory variables. The sample lacks variance because the dependent variables, language preferences, are 3-level ordinal variables, and major explanatory variables, such as religion and ethnicity, are all dichotomous variables. Eight percent of the variability of the Tibetan language preference, for example, can be explained by the ethnicity variable alone. Many explanatory variables are divided by the ethnicity line. Religion, class choices, and family income, for example, substantially and significantly correlate with ethnicity. Therefore, the lack of variance and multicollinearity problem beset the regression tests. Some control variables that have no significant contributions whatsoever, therefore, have to be

dropped off from the model to manifest the effects of the rest variables. In defense, I would argue that the fitness of the model does not come from the inclusion of all controls. It comes, however, from the theory that these variables measure different concepts.

Independent variables are dichotomous, interval, ordinal, and continuous variables. The details of these variables are shown in the Table 1. All of them are considered as explanatory variable because the influence over language preference or identity can be always incorporated into one of the three categories and there has been numerous qualitative research about it. Variables, *parnbudd*, *parnsch*, *parnfarm*, *parngov*, *zang*, *religious*, *age*, *zangxage*, and *religious*, are constructed to measure the Primordialist influences. Two variables *faminc* and *selfrsn* are constructed to specify the Circumstantialist influences. Variables *schlevel*, *zlyear*, *hlyear*, *elyear*, *minorinzang*, *minorinhan*, *gradelev*, and *polilab* are constructed to measure educational influences. The detailed specifications are introduced in the hypotheses part.

Table 1. Summary of Variables

| Variable | Content | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max |
|------------------|--|-----|--------|-----------|-----|-----|
| <i>tibmstimp</i> | Tibetan language most (2), second most important (1) and unmentioned (0) | 469 | 0.825 | 0.877 | 0 | 2 |
| <i>hanmstimp</i> | Mandarin most, second most important and unmentioned | 476 | 1.000 | 0.748 | 0 | 2 |
| <i>engmstimp</i> | English most, second most important and unmentioned | 476 | 1.097 | 0.828 | 0 | 2 |
| <i>parnbudd</i> | Parents as Buddhist | 459 | 0.625 | 0.452 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>parnsch</i> | Total education Years for both parents | 450 | 10.182 | 7.201 | 0 | 32 |
| <i>parnfarm</i> | Parents as farmers | 464 | 0.511 | 0.469 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>parngov</i> | Parents working in the local government | 464 | 0.140 | 0.282 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>zang</i> | Dummy variable for Tibetan ethnicity | 477 | 0.832 | 0.374 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>age</i> | Age | 475 | 17.006 | 1.757 | 13 | 29 |
| <i>zangxage</i> | Interaction between Tibetan ethnicity and age | 475 | 14.122 | 6.580 | 0 | 29 |
| <i>religious</i> | Religiosity index from four questions | 472 | 3.894 | 1.556 | 1 | 10 |
| <i>faminc</i> | Family income self describe in five levels from top to bottom | 471 | 2.671 | 0.996 | 1 | 5 |
| <i>selfrsn</i> | self-interest reason index | 469 | 3.286 | 1.836 | 0 | 9 |
| <i>schlevel</i> | Years of education from first year junior high school to third year senior high school | 477 | 3.956 | 1.619 | 1 | 6 |
| <i>zlyear</i> | Years of Tibetan language lesson | 474 | 7.984 | 4.249 | 0 | 14 |
| <i>hlyear</i> | Years of Mandarin language lesson | 458 | 4.758 | 3.287 | 0 | 11 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|-----|-------|-------|---|----|
| elyear | Years of English language lesson | 472 | 4.531 | 1.308 | 1 | 11 |
| minorinzang | Students as minority in Tibetan classrooms | 477 | 0.044 | 0.205 | 0 | 1 |
| minorinhan | Students as minority in classrooms of Han students | 477 | 0.036 | 0.186 | 0 | 1 |
| polilab | Students as Youth league members or Communist Party members | 464 | 0.815 | 0.389 | 0 | 1 |
| gradelev | Self described grade placement in class | 475 | 3.518 | 1.048 | 1 | 5 |
| male | Male | 472 | 0.443 | 0.497 | 0 | 1 |

4.0 SOURCES OF VARIATIONS IN GROUP IDENTITIES

I expect two categories of factors to influence the identities of the students in Tibet as stated in the hypotheses: Primordialist, and Circumstantialist factors that includes economic and educational factors. This is in response to previous research that focuses only on one of the aspects and insists on its efficiency in explaining identity choice. I construct variables to measure the influences of three categories to the language preference in the same model. No single theory is panacea in predicting students' identities, though all of them should contribute significantly to students' identity choice according to my hypotheses. Primordialist prediction, for example, is one of the three explanations, which is neither adequate nor sufficient in explaining all incentives of language choices. Both aspects, Primordialism and Circumstantialism, together explain the language choices.

4.1 HYPOTHESIS OF PRIMORDIALIST FACTORS

The Primordialist predicts that students adhere to their ethnicities at birth that directly inherit from parents and region (birth ethnicity in short hereafter), that is Tibetan students adhere to Tibet, Han students adhere to China, few would adhere to English-Speaking society. I included these factors to explain the choice: parents Buddhists, parents' education, parents as farmers/in government, religiosity of students, ethnicity of the students, age of the students, and interaction

term of age and ethnicity. I expect all of them to predict that students orient toward their birth identities. I specify the prediction of each variable in the following paragraphs.

Family members, especially father and mother, influence children's choices of ethnic identification. Family factors exist first in time, so they play mostly primordialist roles. The expectation for parents' religion's influence is that the parents' Buddhist religion tends to cause children to identify with Tibetan identity. For parent's education level, the expectation is that the higher parents' educational levels are, the more children are likely to identify with the economically stronger Chinese and English identities. On the other hand, higher educational levels may create parents' ethnic and national feelings which inspire more ethnic loyalty. People's occupations influence their attitudes toward political systems (Almond and Verba 1963; Klingemann 1979). Occupation functions similarly to socio-economic status (SES). People with occupations of higher economic status are considered to have benefited from the current political system in general. Parents' occupations as farmers and nomads in Tibet experienced land reform and liberation from serfdom in Tibet, so they may support CCP and influence their children to support the Chinese community too. On the other hand, traditional values of the farmers and nomads may encourage children to support the Tibetan community. Parents working in local government would be expected to support Chinese identity more.

Traditional factors refer to the Tibetan traditional culture. Unlike Buddhism, which traveled to Tibet from India, Tibet tradition has a much longer history (Xiao 2003, 30) and with local origin. Students' attitudes toward traditional rituals are tested by five four-scale questions: "How much do you agree with choosing lucky day for wedding, funeral, opening, and moving?" "How much do you agree with that holding memorial ceremony for ancestors is a good tradition?" "How much do you consider Fengshui before buying a house?" and "Do you believe

in Fortune-telling and Fengshui?” These questions all provide four-scale answers for students to choose: from “No, not at all” to “Yes, absolutely.” Previous research of Tibetan undergraduates indicates a high level of the psychological attachment to traditions, though their behaviors of traditional practices are much less consistent (Wan, Wang, and Li 2002, 16). Since high school students are less critical of the outside environment, they are expected to have higher level of attachment to traditions. The hypothesis is that the more traditional a student is, the more likely he/she sticks to Tibetan identity.

The religion and religiosity are also influential cultural factors towards identity and political attitudes. According to the Primordialist view, the ethnic label is one of the strongest determinants of identity. Tibetans are expected to stick to a Tibetan identity more while Han students stick to the Chinese identity more. Also, political scientists try to find out the religion’s impact on political support. Churches can heighten political awareness and collective identities among members by generating discussions, disseminating information, and mobilizing collective actions through demonstrations, political skills, and boycotts (Norris 2002, 169). The distinction between Tibetan and non-Tibetan is a Buddhist differentiation between believers and non-believers (Kolas 1996, 53; Norbu, 1992a). Buddhism’s influence on identity is expected to play a role as important as Christianity. Monasteries in Tibet could play the same role as the churches in the political mobilization and group identity. Previous literatures do not reach consensus on Buddhism’s role in Tibetan ethnicity. While some theorists treat it as an obsolete phenomenon, Kolas (1996, 51) argues that popular expressions of the Tibetan identity rely on religious symbolism, which is used as political expressions of opposition to Chinese rule. For example, the religious expression of circumambulation has been turned into a political statement of opposition to the Chinese authority (Kolas 1999, 53). In their survey of the undergraduate Tibetan students,

however, Wan, Wang, and Li maintain (2002, 18) that complex religious and traditional rituals inhibited the students from identifying with the Tibetan ethnicity. Therefore, students who practice religious rituals tend to identify with the Tibetan ethnic group. Besides the belief and rituals, the social network of Buddhism could also help pro-independent Tibetans disseminate their beliefs.

The effect of age is hard to predict because it contains the elements of influence from all three theories. Students are expected to have more ethnic awareness when they grow older. At the same time, they are may also change their identity to the more valuable Chinese and English communities. That which force plays the major role depends on the relative strength among them. Age is also a control variable in later analysis of the influence of language lessons' duration over identity choice.

The age factor, moreover, may have different influences on different ethnicities. That is why an interaction term is useful here. While students' birth ethnicities do not vary with the time, their orientations of identity vary by the different influences from the economic notions and educations. Therefore, I interact age and Tibetan ethnicity to tell the different effects of time on different ethnicities.

Gender is assumed to be a weak Primordialist predictor. Almond and Verba (1963, 325) confirm in the six-country study that men show higher frequencies and intensities than women in practically all indices of political orientations and activities. According to their research, males are expected to be more politically active than female, and therefore more likely to identify themselves with the Primordialist identity.

4.2 HYPOTHESIS OF ECONOMIC FACTORS

The Circumstantialists predicts that people identify with communities of higher economic value. In this test, students are supposed to identify themselves with economically stronger English community, second in Chinese community, not much with Tibetan identity. Two variables are included to test the effects of the Circumstantialist factors. The effect of the theory is hard to find out in this study because the effects are expected to come from the regional economic and political strength. An ideal measure of the Circumstantialist effects is from cross-national studies using the average national pride as the dependent variable and national economic strength as the independent variable. Since this study uses person as the unit of analysis and only three communities are included, it is not applicable to include variables measuring national/regional economic development.

Therefore, I use two indicators to tell the personal reaction on circumstantial factors. First, family income is used to tell the abundance of the student's family. I assume that the family wellbeing decides the student's perception on the importance of wealth. If a student lives in a wealthy family, he or she would be used to the wealthy life and underestimate the importance of wealth. As a result, the students in wealthy families will downplay the Circumstantialist factors. They may not react or be insensitive to the circumstantial incentives. I expect that students from wealthier families tend to stick less with higher value communities, say English and Chinese communities. While the hypothesis is forth forward, the absolute level of family wealth of average Tibetan students also matters to the theory. It is reasonable to assume the wealthy Tibetan family has higher income than average inland families but less than wealthy inland families, let along wealthy English-speaking families. Therefore, they are likely to be insensitive to Tibetan and Chinese community but still crave English communities.

Self-interest is another reason to identify with the valuable community as predicted by Circumstantialist theories. People who care about self-interest most tend to identify with more valuable communities, English and Chinese community in this case. Therefore, I construct a variable to indicate the level people prompted by self-interest reason to choose community. In the survey, people are asked to select the reason they attach to a certain identity from seven reasons provided with the questionnaire. Seven reasons⁵ are 1. for status among peers; 2. for parents; 3. for good grades in school; 4. for better job and future career; 5. to learn history and culture; 6. for religion; 7. other. Reason one, two, three, and four are self-interested reasons. Students identify one or more reasons for their language preference choices. For Parents reason is considered as self-interested because the “rewarding” and “repaying” logic behind it. It is likely that students get good records in school to get benefits but ultimately do it in order to reward and repay parents’ caring. I give weight two to each self-interest reason selected at the “most important language” stage, give weight one at the “second most important language” stage. If a student, for example, chooses reason 1 and 2 at “most important language” stage, and choose reason 3 at the “second most important language” stage, I give the student $2 \times 2 + 1 \times 2 = 6$ points in the variable. I expect the variable to predict more preference of students in English and Mandarin. Therefore, the highest possible scores come from a student who selects all four self-interested reasons in both the most important and the second important reason questions. His/her score will be four most important reasons time two plus four second most important reasons time one. For those who choose no self-interest reason, they get the minimum score zero.

⁵ The options in the survey are randomized to avoid forcing research’s judgment upon the students.

4.3 HYPOTHESIS OF EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

The economic factors of the Circumstantialism predict that people identify themselves with communities that authorities and society promote. In the context of the research, students should identify themselves with Tibetan community and language which are the orientation of textbook education in Tibet. People may argue that the textbook content in Tibet is about effacing Tibetan student's local identity and replacing with Chinese identity. If effacing argument were true, schooling would have damping effect on Tibetan identities. Previous research of Tibetan education policy, however, would support the hypothesis that schooling in Tibet for Tibet students boosts Tibetan local identity.

Education level has been widely used by political scientists as a predictor of political attitudes. In *The Civic Culture*, for example, Almond and Verba argue that "education attainment appears to have the most important demographic effect on political attitudes" (1963, 379). The schooling experience is expected to increase Tibetan students' awareness of the Tibetan identity, according to the previous literature on Tibetan education. If Upton's (1996, 307) and Zhu's (2007b) views about Tibetan textbooks are true, a positive relationship is expected between education level and commitment to the Tibetan identity. The schooling variable is expected to show positive effect on Tibetan identity, especially after age is taken control. Besides education in general, I also include years of language lesson as predictors of identities. More years of Tibetan language lesson, Mandarin language lessons, or English language lessons are likely to make students favor Tibetan identity, Han identity, or English identity respectively.

A student's school performance may be an important factor too. The first hypothesis is that students with higher grades are likely to be more willing to improve their economic status by identifying with the Chinese and English communities. The second hypothesis is that some

students favor Chinese and English language maybe because they can get good grades from these subjects. If the later one is confirmed, it is a disproof of operation in using the language choice as the indicator for community identity.

There are 11 Tibetan students who study in the Han students' classrooms as minorities. It is hard to predict their identity choices. They may be assimilated by the majority environment, or, conversely, resist more strongly because a sense of their primordial identity has become evident along with the increasing Chinese presence (Kolas 1996, 64). The Minority in Han Class variable enters the model to test the effect.

The time of the language lesson started in a student's life is important for him/her to learn the language and to favor the identity. The hypothesis for the effect of the years of Mandarin lessons is that the more years of Mandarin lessons students have in their youth/childhood, the more likely they identify with the Chinese community. The same hypotheses are for the effects of Tibetan and English language lessons. More years of a certain language education is assumed to associate with more identification with that language and community.

Political membership is also an important factor in influencing people's political attitudes. Normally, students with the communist political membership and the youth league membership are expected to identify with Chinese identity, because they are supposed to be active members in the party enterprises. It shall hold true in the inland schools. However, the education environment in Tibet suggests null or even reverse results. Because the Marxism education policy and Tibetan oriented education mentioned in the literature review, students do not need to identify themselves with Han to get the youth membership or party membership. The small number of party membership (6) increases the difficulty to find out the latency. Therefore,

I combine both youth league and party membership into one group and make it into a dummy variable.

5.0 EMPIRICAL RESULTS

I use two tests to show the empirical results. One is the graph of the pattern of language choice and its reasons, variables directly from the data; another is the multiple ordered-probit regression to compare and tell the explanatory power of the tree theories. Not only the patterns in the chart confirm my hypotheses, but also the regression proves the influence of the three theories. Due to the constraints of the case number and collinearity, variables from each theory show the best prediction toward Tibetan students who are the majority of the sample. The variability of the Tibetan language preference is explained most by the model; then it is the model explaining the Mandarin language preference. The English language orientation, however, is not as well predicted. It is not surprising because only Circumstantialist factors favors the English identity among the majority students, but both Primordialist and educational factors are supposed to favor the Tibetan identity. Therefore, Tibetan language receives more attention because more factors tend to encourage Tibetan identity; then the Mandarin language receives second most explanation from all factors; English language choice shows little support because most factors, except self-interested reasons, do not encourage English learning. Combining with the fact that language choice is not a perfect instrument of identity choice, the fitness of the three models is at reasonable level.

5.1 PATTERNS OF GROUP IDENTITIES

A preliminary chart can guide our tests and shed the first light on the synergetic effects of the three theories. When we tabulate the language preference and the ethnicity of the student, we get the pattern of language preference, group identities as the interest of the paper. Figure 3 shows the relative importance of the three languages to each ethnic group. Tibetan students identify English as more important than Tibetan and Mandarin. Han students overwhelmingly choose Mandarin over Tibetan, while regarding English as relatively important. Tibetan students favor Chinese identity to some extent (Mean=0.88) almost as much as their Tibetan identity (0.98), comparing very few Han students choose to identify with Tibetan identity (0.15).

The results confirm the general hypothesis of the identity construction theory. First, Tibetan and Han students both stick to their own ethnicity to some extent, which means both ethnicities stick to their original identity to some extent as Primordialist factors predict. Second, interestingly, there are overwhelmingly more Tibetan students, about one third, would identify with Mandarin, comparing to very few Han students, about 5%, would like to identify with Tibetan language. It indicates that Han students rarely switch to hold Tibetan identity, while almost one third Tibetan students would switch to hold Han identity. This pattern is corrected predicted by the economic argument of the Circumstantialism. Very likely, the reluctance of Han students to identify with Tibetan identity is due to the lack of economic opportunity associating with the Tibetan society. On the other hand, there are much more opportunities associate with Han identity, which is attractive to Tibetan students to switch their favorite language to Mandarin. The strength of the economic opportunity is intensive because Tibetan students need to fight against their Primordialist impulses and perhaps also educational influence to choose the Mandarin. That whether it is the economic reasons that persuade Tibetan students

to choose Mandarin will be further tested later with regression models. Third, all of them stick to English identity to some extent as suggested by Circumstantialists. Since the figure shows a somehow predictable and meaningful pattern, it substantiates the basic assumption of this paper: the identity of people is fixed in a probabilistic way rather than an irregular and unpredictable way.

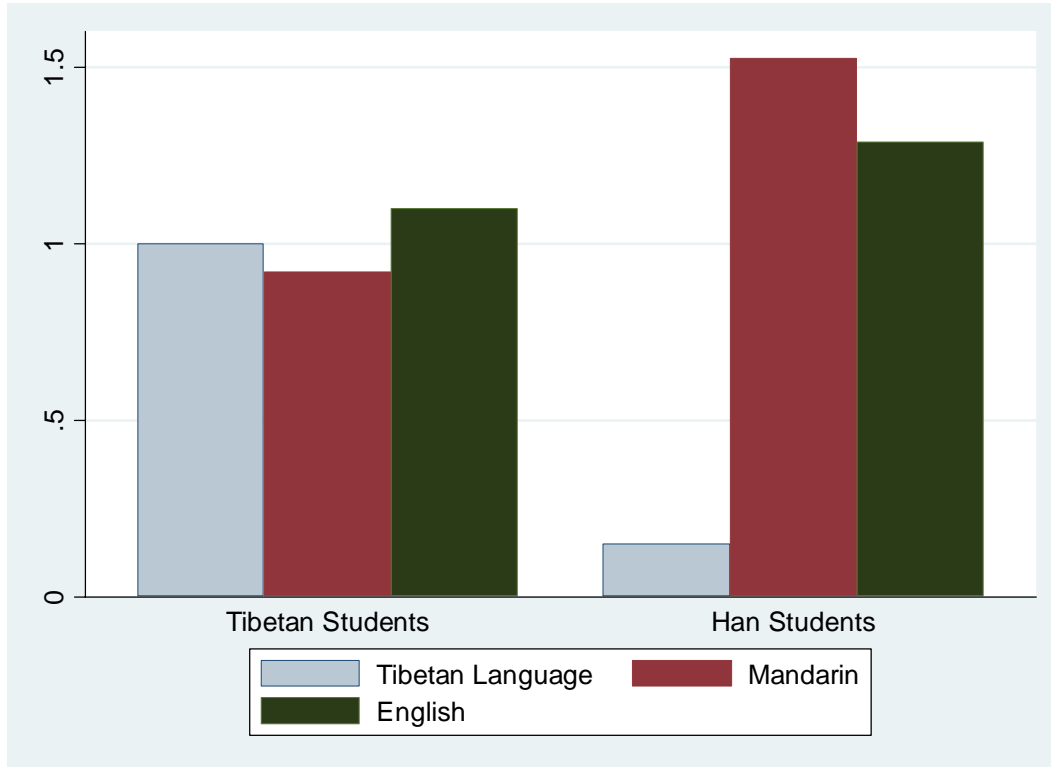


Figure 3. Relative Importance of Three Languages by Ethnic Groups.

The most important language is coded as 2, the second most important language as 1, and the language not mentioned as 0. Mean of the scores of different groups are shown.

In order to test the influence of economic factors that the above graph fails to show, I use a graph to show the reasons that students choose a language. Figure 4 shows the distribution of

the six reasons for favoring one of the three languages.⁶ “To learn history and culture” is the most frequently chosen reason for selecting Tibetan. The frequency of choosing this reason decreases in supporting a choice of Mandarin and decreases further in supporting a choice of English. On the other hand, reasons that involve self-interest, “for good job and future career,” “for good school grade,” and “for status among peers” are more important to students who favor English. Students who favor Mandarin choose less self-interested reasons. The frequency is even lower for students who favor Tibetan. “For parents” is also more important to students who choose English. “For religion” is higher in the English category than the Mandarin category, because the English community is competing with the Chinese community for some Tibetans. They regard English as a nuanced gesture of opposing Chinese community. I will further lustrate this point in later analysis. It is, however, reasonable to assume that the importance of choosing Chinese and English is over-estimated because of the classroom context of the survey, where these languages are taught.

⁶ An ANOVA test confirmed that, except for the religion reason for Tibetan students, different ethnic groups do not significantly favor specific reasons.

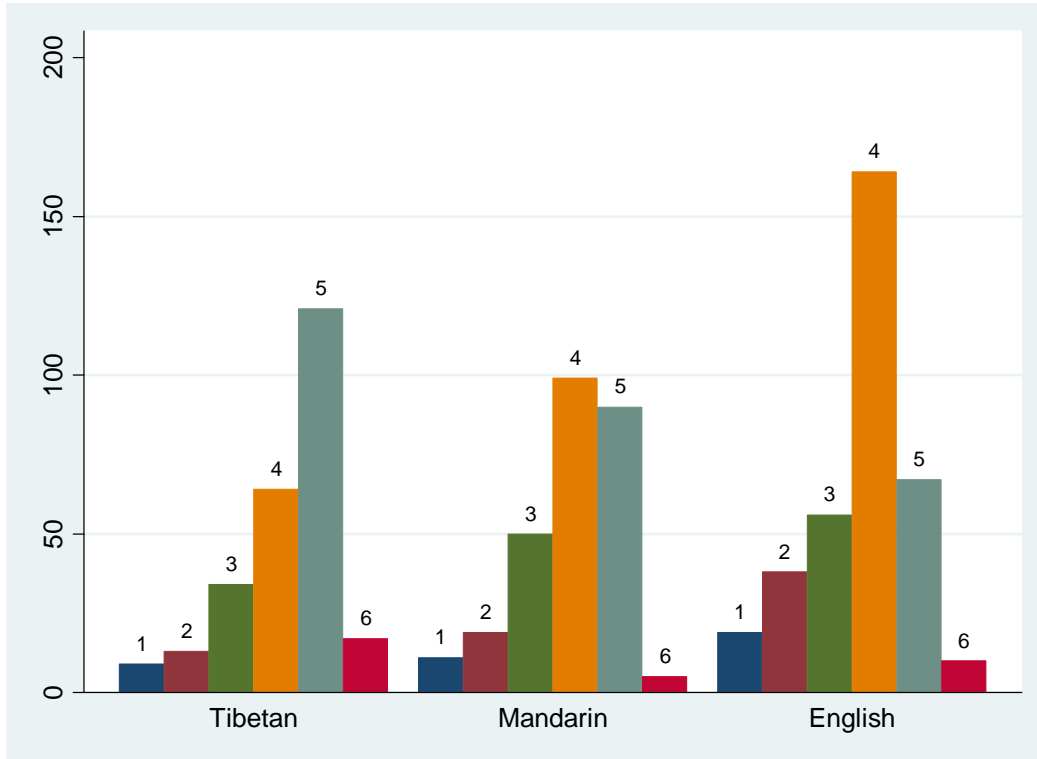


Figure 4. Means of Reasons Chosen for Favoring a Language (Multiple choice).

Note: From left to right the six reasons are: 1. for status among peers. 2. for parents. 3. for good grades in school. 4. for better job and future career. 5. to learn history and culture. 6. for religion.

5.2 PRIMORDIALIST INFLUENCES

In Table 2, parents' religion, job, and educational level are tested for three different language preferences: Tibetan, Mandarin, and English. Overall, the Primordialist variables appear to fit the theory. Most of them have correct signs, though some of them are not significant at 0.1 P-value level. They explain best the preference on Tibetan identity.

Variables concerning parents' influences tend to confirm to the prediction of the theory to different extent. When parents are of the Buddhist religion, they tend to encourage children to

identify with the Tibetan community. The schooling of parents does not matter, which does not confirm to the hypothesis that higher education of parents tend to encourage more Chinese identity. The reason could be that the variable is highly correlated with the family income variable. While the family income variable has significant impacts, the parents' schooling factor may just influence students' language and identity choice through family income. The parents as farmers, on the other hand, discourage the students' choice of Tibetan language and identity, while the income is taken control. This confirms the theory that farmers in parents' generation enjoyed the benefits of the CCP, therefore they tend to favor less about the local Tibetan community. Parents working in the local government do not show significant influence in the multiple regression as predicted. Probably it is also because the variable Parents in Government is highly correlated with parents' schooling and family income variables.

Table 2. Prediction of the three theories (Ordered Probit Model)

| | | Tibetan | | Han | | English | |
|--------------------------|------------|---------|-------|--------|-------|---------|-------|
| | | Coeff | P>z | Coeff | P>z | Coeff | P>z |
| Primordialist Factors | parnbudd | 0.307 | 0.046 | -0.044 | 0.759 | -0.041 | 0.774 |
| | parnsch | -0.012 | 0.271 | 0.009 | 0.379 | 0.003 | 0.778 |
| | parnfarm | -0.328 | 0.041 | 0.177 | 0.234 | 0.166 | 0.255 |
| | religious | 0.048 | 0.383 | -0.102 | 0.050 | 0.014 | 0.785 |
| | zang | 5.466 | 0.075 | 1.674 | 0.446 | -2.124 | 0.315 |
| | age | 0.228 | 0.165 | 0.127 | 0.268 | -0.135 | 0.217 |
| | zangxage | -0.266 | 0.118 | -0.084 | 0.487 | 0.091 | 0.443 |
| Economic Factors | faminc | -0.028 | 0.685 | -0.154 | 0.016 | 0.172 | 0.008 |
| | selfrsn | -0.130 | 0.000 | 0.052 | 0.119 | 0.092 | 0.006 |
| Educational Factors | schlevel | 0.255 | 0.008 | -0.146 | 0.105 | -0.088 | 0.322 |
| | zlyear | 0.045 | 0.231 | -0.101 | 0.007 | 0.028 | 0.434 |
| | hlyear | -0.034 | 0.281 | 0.069 | 0.026 | -0.028 | 0.369 |
| | elyear | -0.020 | 0.758 | -0.011 | 0.851 | 0.025 | 0.677 |
| | minorinhan | -0.156 | 0.709 | 0.402 | 0.338 | -0.155 | 0.708 |
| | gradelev | -0.081 | 0.226 | 0.021 | 0.731 | 0.042 | 0.480 |
| | N | 394 | | 394 | | 394 | |
| Pseudo-R ² | 0.16 | | 0.11 | | 0.05 | | |

An index of traditional attitudes is made to test the relationship between the traditional attitudes and the national identities. Table 3 shows the distribution of students' attitudes on Tibetan tradition. In a pairwise examination, the tradition index variable shows strong correlation with identity choices. However, the traditional attitudes do not show significance in the regression because the variable is substantially correlated with the Parnbudd and Zangxage variables. I believe the variable would show its influence with a large N study. Since the adding of the traditional variable do not change signs in the model, I remove it from the regression model for the sake of saving available cases and variance. The distribution of the students' religious label and degree of religiosity is shown in Table 4.

Table 3. Distribution of Degree of Traditional Beliefs among All Students.

| | lucky day for wedding, funeral, opening, & moving | Hold memorial ceremony for ancestors is a good tradition | Consider Fengshui before buying a house | Do you believe in Fortune-telling and Fengshui |
|-----------------|---|--|---|--|
| | Percent | Percent | Percent | Percent |
| No, not at all | 7.86% | 8.67% | 23.21% | 25.81% |
| No, not so much | 23.10 | 26.02 | 34.18 | 46.90 |
| Yes, somewhat | 34.52 | 35.46 | 30.10 | 22.08 |
| Yes, absolutely | 34.52 | 29.85 | 12.50 | 5.21 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Note: Questions are “Do you agree with:” for the first three statements, and “Do you believe in” for the fourth questions. The answers for the four questions are in the same scale.

Table 4. Distribution of Degrees of Religiosity among All Students

| | How often do you worship Buddha? | How often do you spin prayer wheels? | How often do you visit Monasteries? |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Percent | Percent | Percent |
| never | 10.21% | 34.35% | 24.14% |
| only for important festivals | 46.83 | 36.11 | 55.82 |
| two to three times a month | 9.51 | 26.04 | 16.81 |
| two to three times a week | 23.24 | 2.41 | 3.02 |
| at least once per day | 10.21 | 1.09 | 0.22 |
| Total | (N=284) 100 | (N=457) 100 | (N=464) 100 |

The ethnic identity exhibits the greatest predictability in the model. Being labeled as a Tibetan contributes directly to the choice of Tibetan identity. The interaction term shows that, along with the growth of age, Tibetan students show fewer proclivities to identify with the Tibetan language and community, with a coefficient of marginal significance. This confirms the Circumstantialist argument that the birth identity can be remodeled by social and educational contents. The gender does not show any significance in any conditions and therefore is removed from the model.

5.3 ECONOMIC INFLUENCES

The family income shows significant influence over students to choose Chinese and English identities. As expected, students tend to favor Chinese identities less when they have higher family income while other factors are taken control. Another finding is that the wealthier students tend to identify with English language more. This phenomenon could imply the hypothesis that the absolute value of family wealth is important. It deserves more study in the future.

Self-interest variable shows significant and substantial influence across three languages. Students who has higher points in the self-interest reason variable tend to identify themselves with Tibetan identity least, but English identity most, and Chinese identity more than Tibetan identity. This is a strong prove for the Circumstantialist argument.

5.4 EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCES

The education variable is designated to find the influence of schooling and textbook content on students' language preference in Tibet. To disclose its influence, age must be controlled for, so that the effect of years in school can be disclosed. After age is controlled for, years of education are significantly related to the national identities. The more years of education, the more students identify to Tibetan language and identity and less to Chinese language and identity. This confirms the previous qualitative research that Tibetan students receive education in Tibet rich in Tibetan content, rather than Chinese context. The ethnicity centered policy is proven to exist in Tibet rather than cultural destruction education. The result of the Tibetan centered education is leading students identify more to Tibetan community and less to Han community.

Besides schooling variable as a whole, variables representing years of language lessons also enter the model. I construct variables to represent years of Tibetan language lesson, of Mandarin lesson and English language lesson. The results clearly support the hypotheses that the more years of Tibetan language lesson the less likely students would identify with Han community, and more years of Mandarin lessons, the more likely students will identify with Han community. English lessons, as an exception, do not have significant impact on identity and language choice, which is likely due to the high collinearity among several year variables.

The party membership and youth league membership do not influence the identity choices, which is the expectation. Once again the insignificance of party label variable proves that schooling content in Tibet is not Han culture oriented. The high schools do not praise students for being more Han oriented. The moral education in Tibet shows no preference in identity or community. No sign will change by adding or dropping the variable. I drop the variable from the model to increase the fitness of the model.

A student's performance in school does not predict the identity of a student, which means students do not favor languages just because they can get good grades in class. This finding is in my defense for criticism that the survey measures students' language preference which only due to their language ability rather than identity orientations. The grade level variable shows no significance with or without political variable.

Tibetan students who study in Chinese majority class do not favor a certain language when other factors are equal. It is also the case for Han students sit in Tibetan class as minority. However, the effect of this variable is inconclusive because the number of student as minority in class is too small (less than ten in both cases.) Also the effect may mix two conflicting trends into one within the student group as predicted by hypothesis. The variable does show significant impact when parental influences are removed from the full model. It is not clear if the significant relationship is spurious or snuffed by constraints. If the relationship does not exist, the assimilation theory is not founded. If the relationship manifests itself when more cases are included, people can say Han immigrants may have the assimilation effect on Tibetan minorities. The only way to prove or disprove the theory is by including more cases and proper interaction terms.

5.5 ROBUSTNESS CHECK

Scholars have argued the strength of the explanatory power and the uniqueness of regional factors in predicting people's political believes. One theoretical approach holds that any difference along regional lines is simply reflecting demographic differences, in particular, ethnicity and language. This approach maintains that attitudinal differences would disappear

were one to control for the component ethno-linguistic factors (Barrington 2002, 459-60; Agnew 1987, 4; Bigelow 1980).

The second approach, the “regional culture” approach, considers regions to be something more than just territorial depositories for people with similar ethnic or linguistic backgrounds (Barrington 2002, 460). Economic infrastructures and other “place-specific” features in different regions lead to regionally different patterns of thoughts within the country which do not disappear by controlling for ethnicity or language (Ellison 1991; Agnew 1987).

To see the regional effects, I recode all observations into seven regions, regressing national identities on regional factors. The result of the test is shown in Table 5. In the fourth and the fifth columns, I test only the regional effects on identity choices. As both theories predicted, regional factors do have some explanatory powers by themselves ($R^2=0.18$ and $R^2=0.13$). Perhaps it is because that the educational system has huge variations in the educational infrastructure and degrees of access depending on the geographical areas. (Upton 1999, 282) Then, I test whether the explanatory power of regional factors goes beyond the socio-demographic effects. After including the relevant factors, the regional dummy variables, however, fail to remain significant. Therefore, regional factors, at least in this case, do not explain more than socio-demographic differences. The first theory is accepted. In addition, the proper specification of the model is also proven. Regional factors can be all explained by factors including in the model, which shows that the necessary factors have been considered, so that the regional effects was eliminated.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results presented in this paper have both theoretical and practical importance. The paper argues that language choices are reliable and accurate indicators of community identities and political communities in Tibet. The argument is supported by theoretical and historical reasons. The empirical tests from Tibetan data indicate the pattern suggested by the argument.

National identities and feelings are affective orientations of diffuse political supports toward political communities. The level of political support influences the stability of regime and the potential conflicts among different groups of people. Tibetan students are strongly attracted to the Chinese and English communities, while, at the same time, maintaining their own ethnic identity; Han students firmly adhere to the Chinese identity and also favor the English identity. Few of them are attracted to the Tibetan identity. The pattern of the community identities implies an equivalent pattern of political support toward these communities.

The second theoretical implication of the paper is that the constructivist theory of identity construction, which includes primordialist and circumstantialist factors, offers a path to research the identities in empirical studies. In practice, the constructivist theory exerts influences in Tibet where a complex situation exists which offer choices of languages and of identities in Tibet. Not only do the patterns of language choice confirm the hypothesis, but also the three categories of variables included in the models. Primordialist reasons promote students in Tibet to stick to their birth identity. The value and attractiveness of the Chinese and English identities are based on

circumstantialist reasons that contribute to the formation of identity. The economic values of the Chinese and English communities, the daily exposure to them, and media influences gradually lead students to accept these identities and communities not provided by their immediate environment. Educational factors also shape students' identity. Students are open to the influences of schooling environment, textbook content, teachers' instructions, and friends' influences. These factors vary across region and time, so their effects are more difficult to predict. This paper shows that the primordialist, circumstantialist theories of identity construction have a fairly good explanatory power regarding the national identities of the students in Tibet, which, again, justify the basic assumption that language can be used as the indicator of identities. The findings put an end to the disputes that only one of the three theories is useful in predicting identities.

The intervening and competing identities in Tibet could cause personal identity disturbance or even political conflicts among different communities. It is important whether these different identities can become peaceful complements and incentives to each other. As suggested by some political theorists if only people can bring their identity crises to satisfactory conclusions, many political problems can be resolved automatically (Weinstein 1971, 7).

This paper suggests policy implications from the result of the test. First, the patterns of the identities and the reasons of the identification show that Tibetan students are attracted to the economic value of the Chinese and the English communities. Therefore, the tendency of the future patterns of identity in Tibet is highly related to the economic performance of the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the Chinese government. The community with higher economic and political values is likely to get more political support than the weaker one. Some students, however, will hold their primordial identity, regardless how strong the other communities are in

economy. The parents' generation has strong impact on children's identity choices. As higher education a generation get, the more likely the parents from the generation will encourage their children to identify with the Chinese community rather than the Tibetan community. Traditions and Religion in Tibet are very important factors influence students' identity choice. With the increase/decrease of the role in both tradition and religion, the identification with the Tibetan community will increase/decrease. Certain types of religion practices, particularly, are expressions of the dissatisfaction with the CCP's rule. The educational content of the high school is the most important factor influencing the choice of identity. As the current emphasis of education policy on ethnic awareness, Tibetan students are getting more ethnic oriented year by year. The assimilation of Tibetan by Han people is not proven by the test. As more Han students move to Tibet for education, the identity of the Tibetan students, who is relatively disadvantaged in population, are no more likely to be assimilated gradually. However, the time of carrying out lessons in Mandarin in Tibetan schools is very important. The earlier it is given in a student's life, the more likely it nurtures a student's sense of Chinese identity.

Still, many possible interactions and many additional factors are not tested in this paper. More variables are expected to be considered in future surveys to deal with the national identity and political support that the Chinese ethnic minorities have. More observations are needed to reach more universal and significant conclusions. Most importantly, cross-ethnicity and cross-time surveys would be valuable in reflecting the sources of ethnic identity and in proving theories in the identity and ethnicity study.

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