

**CULTURAL DISCONTINUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
A STUDY OF ACADEMIC COMPETENCE OF
NORTH-EAST STUDENTS IN DELHI**

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DECLARATION

I, Salam Priyanka Devi, declare that the thesis entitled "**Cultural Discontinuity in Higher Education: A Study of Academic Competence of North-East Students in Delhi**", submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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Abstract

Academic competence has been a growing area of research, but it has received less attention in the case of ethnic minority students. The culture of higher education reflects mainstream middle-class norms of independence. In contrast, members of the minority group reflect interdependence norms. Ethnic minority students experience cultural discontinuity between home culture and institutional culture. Instead, their academic outcomes are affected by experiencing cultural discontinuity in the education system. The gateway to higher education is not neutral; historically, the higher education system supports only those who are members of the upper-middle class, and students from minority backgrounds face a lack of role models in the educational field. Often they view the academic prospect with suspicion because of the fundamental contradiction of value imposition and the taken-for-granted societal roles. Minority students subjectively develop a fear of negative evaluation and skepticism about future educational prospects, which undermine their ability to compete with other colleagues. It is because people do not live in a socio-cultural vacuum. The self-presentation and the problem faced in life were related to the person belonging to specific group membership. The present thesis focuses on minority students' perceived competence in higher education, looking through the socio-cultural perspectives. It is based on three studies and uses mixed methods to analyze the data. We conducted the first study of exploratory nature, learning about the college experience of minority students. The interview questionnaires were semi-structured, and we identified some themes from the participants' responses. Based on the first study's findings, we designed two more studies. In the second study, we examined students' self-expression through fear of negative evaluation and how it was affected

by students' cultural norms (i.e., independent and interdependent modal of self-construal). The notion of self varies across cultures. Culture plays an integral part in individual self-presentation. Minority students often experience ambivalence regarding the abstract knowledge of education and real-life experience (i.e., limited opportunities in adult life). And in the third study, we examined perceived academic competence through skepticism about the relevance of education and how it is affected by the students' socialization backgrounds (i.e., middle-class vs. working-class). A person belonging to a social class facilitates the transition to higher studies. The socio-cultural resources of the family influence the educational and occupational outcomes of the learners. In the second and third studies, we used factorial design ANOVA for analyzing the data. The finding showed that ethnic minority students experienced a cultural discontinuity in higher education. Minority students who were less self-expressive and fell behind in academic competence in educational settings were those who perceived that the academic and cultural values of the institutions were different from their home culture. The research highlights that the prevalent higher education culture produces social inequality rather than an engine of social mobility. The educational problems of ethnic minority students are more due to socio-cultural factors than only because of academic factors. Educational policymakers and administrators need to promote an interdependent self-construal in the institutional culture to reduce the academic and social gap. It would give a chance to access higher education for members of different sections of society, provide equal rights for deserving students, and help educational enhancement.

Keywords: culture, higher education, social class, self expression, perceived competence

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
List of Tables	xv
List of Figures	xvi
CHAPTER I:	
INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS	17
1.1 Introduction	17
1.2 Statement of Problems	21
CHAPTER II:	
REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND PERSPECTIVE OF THE THESIS	24
2.1 Review of Literatures	24
2.2 The Indian Context of Education	28
2.3 Minority Students and Mainstream Institution	32
2.4 Perception of Competence and its Variance in Different Society	39
2.5 Socio-cultural Diversity	44
2.6 Theoretical Framework	49
2.7 Methodological Perspectives	53
2.8 Overview of Research and Hypothesis	57
CHAPTER III:	
STUDY-1: ETHNIC MINORITY COLLEGE STUDENTS: CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION	62
3.1 Introduction	62
3.2 Purpose of the Study	64

3.3	Review of Literatures	66
3.3.1	An Insight into the North-east Region of India	68
3.3.2	The Setting	71
3.4	Method	71
3.4.1	Interview Procedure	71
3.4.2	Sample Characteristics	71
3.5	Analytic Strategy	72
3.6	The Emerging Themes	73
3.6.1	Theme 1: Social-Class based Socialization	73
3.6.2	Theme 2: Felt Differentness and Fear of Being Judged	79
3.6.3	Theme 3: Students Self-expression	86
3.6.4	Theme 4: Feeling Ambivalence and Skeptic about Academic Success	91
3.6.5	Theme 5: Perception of Competence	96
3.6.6	Theme 6: Cultural Discontinuity	102
3.7	Discussion	109
CHAPTER IV:		
STUDY-2: SELF-EXPRESSION LOOKING THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURE		118
4.1	Introduction	118
4.2	Fear of Negative Evaluation	122
4.3	The College Experiences of Ethnic Minority Students	124
4.4	The Cultural Model of Self	126
4.5	Self-expression	129
4.6	Overview of Research and Hypotheses	131
4.7	Method	134
4.7.1	Participants	134
4.7.2	Measures	134
4.7.3	Research Design	135
4.7.4	Procedure	135

4.8	Results	136
4.9	Discussion	138
CHAPTER V:		
	STUDY-3: HOW DOES SOCIALIZATION AFFECT THE PERCEIVED ACADEMIC COMPETENCE OF THE LEARNERS?	146
5.1	Introduction	146
5.2	Skeptic about Educational Prospect	148
5.3	Social Class	151
5.4	Perceived Academic Competence	153
5.5	Socialization and its Relation with the two Perspectives	156
5.6	Overview of Research and Hypotheses	157
5.7	Method	160
5.7.1	Participants	160
5.7.2	Measures	160
5.7.3	Research Design	161
5.7.4	Procedure	161
5.8	Results	162
5.9	Discussion	165
CHAPTER VI. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION		173
6.1	General Discussion	173
6.2	Theoretical Interpretations	181
6.3	Limitations and Future Direction	186
6.4	Contributions of the Present Research	187
6.5	Conclusion	190
	References	193

Appendices	210
Consent Form	211
Appendix A: Interview Questionnaires	212
Appendix B: Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale	213
Appendix C: Self-Construal Scale	214
Appendix D: Self-Expression Scale	216
Appendix E: Skepticism about the Relevance of School for Future Success	217
Appendix F: Academic Efficacy Scale	218

List of Tables

Table 1	Descriptive Statistics of the Study-2	219
Table 2	Test of Between-Subject Effects for Study-2	219
Table 3	Descriptive Statistics of the Study-3	220
Table 4	Test of Between-Subject Effects for Study-3	220

List of Figures

Figure 1	Conceptual Model of Study-2	221
Figure 2	Bar Graph Representation of Study-2	222
Figure 3	Conceptual Model of Study-3	223
Figure 4	Bar Graph Representation of Study -3	224

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

1.1 Introduction

Traditionally higher education is mainly accessed by the privileged section of society. Students from minority communities and lower class are less represented in higher education institutions. Many scholars have observed that the culture of higher education reflects the mainstream middle-class culture of independence. On the other hand, ethnic minority groups perform unique sociocultural practices differing from the mainstream. Also, they believe that highly educated people must be modest ones without posing one's achievements or status. The notion of competence varies in different cultures. Sometimes, a person belonging to a social class could depict his/her culture. Members of the higher and middle-class have possessed abundant resources; easily make social networks through family status. In contrast, working-class members have limited resources and face difficulty forming networks that benefit educational and occupational purposes.

The concept of cultural discontinuity in education is the lack of cultural alignment between institutional and students' home cultures. A student's home culture, which may be similar or dissimilar to the institutional culture, may almost predict the student's potential, such as success or failure in the academic journey. So, what is culture? Culture refers to the norms, beliefs, and values of a community. The cultural

characteristic transmits from one generation to the next. A person belonging to a culture regulates their behavior and determines specific personality patterns. While transitioning to college, most students face difficulties adjusting to the academic institution, those difficulties are coped with time, but in the case of minority students, it persists. Their college transition required an academic along with social and cultural shift.

The gateway to higher education is not neutral. Higher education becomes an agent that produces social inequality by endorsing an independent model of self. The class that students belong to shapes their college experiences. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds feel threatened while pursuing higher education as their group has either no history or very minimal participation in higher education and thus has hardly contributed to the educational system. Also, they observe and experience social and institutional discrimination. So, students from minority backgrounds subjectively develop skepticism about future academic prospects that might directly or indirectly affect their perceived academic competence. Additionally, they observe unequal access to social resources and a lack of opportunity in adult life.

Ethnic minority students' academic problems are associated with attending substandard schooling, resulting in a lack of motivation to pursue higher education (Loo & Rolison, 1986). Most of them are first-generation college students and belong to lower socioeconomic status. They are more likely to face academic and social discrimination in mainstream institutions. People do not live in social isolation; often, individuals' life problems reflect their group belonging (Bandura, 1982). However, they get support from the family while pursuing higher studies.

Students from middle-class backgrounds receive better support from family and teachers and make better social networks through family educational credentials and status. On the other hand, ethnic minority students experience as cultural outsiders in higher education for practicing different cultural traditions. Being from different cultures, minority students fear negative evaluation in mainstream institutions because they are unfamiliar with the taken-for-granted norms.

Culture plays an essential role in formulating the individual self. The independent self prefers expressing uniqueness, being direct in communication, and focusing on personal goals rather than group goals (Singelis, Bond, Sharkey, & Lai, 1999). On the other hand, the interdependent self maintains a harmonious relationship with others, prefers an indirect mode of communication, and focuses on shared goals rather than personal goals. Thus, culture is the most promising research area in understanding individual and social beliefs. Instead, culture is a group's defined values and belief system (American Psychological Association [APA], 2003).

Moreover, minority and working-class members face difficulty in higher education because the prevailing independent norms of institutional culture make it challenging to pursue academic pursuits. Participation of students from minority backgrounds in higher education is less, and their dropout rate is also high in education. Members of ethnic minorities and lower social caste and class are less represented in education, and not occupying the higher-paying job is the residual effect of social discrimination (Thorat, 2006). There is a stereotype regarding members of the minority group that they are academically incompetent. On the other hand, ethnic minority students often feel whether they will be able to adjust to the

prevalent mainstream culture. Educational institutions are not free from social bias; instead, social prejudice does exist inside and outside the educational institution.

For students from minority groups, challenges in higher education are not only academic. Instead, the sociocultural transition makes them difficult to cope with academic challenges. Because the prevalent higher education culture reflects independent self-construal, such characterization practices by middle-class members; in contrast, members of most ethnic minority groups practice interdependence norms. In higher education, minority students are perceived as less self-expressive and less competent. We argue that this perception is only partially true as these are the outcomes of their sociocultural disadvantage. In mainstream institutions, ethnic minority students have to encounter unfamiliar cultural practices, and due to this, they develop a fear of negative evaluation. It then affects their self-expression and perception of competence.

However, ethnic minority students experiencing cultural discontinuities in higher education are not at the same level. Some minority students have successfully crossed cultural boundaries and excelled in new cultures. In contrast, other students struggle to adapt to the prevailing academic culture and often drop out. The emerging question is, what kind of ethnic minority groups of students face more academic problems while adjusting to the institutional culture? It is essential to analyze native students' sociocultural practices to address the above question.

In any society, ethnic minority groups belong to a poor community, so they face ethnic and class-related stereotypes (Croizet & Claire, 1998) and are skeptic

about the academic prospect (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Additionally, skeptical persons tend to undermine their capability in challenging situations (Bandura, 1982). If ethnic minority students enroll in colleges, it does not mean that they avail all the opportunities that higher education provides. Often minority students enter college with lower academic credentials (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). And lack the knowledge and attitudes to act like a college student. They struggle to understand the common sense of institutional culture.

In the culture of higher education, students from minority backgrounds experience academic and social disintegration. The thesis's main argument is that ethnic minority students' academic competence is affected by experiencing cultural discontinuity in higher education. Thus, the thesis's primary research question is how ethnic minority students experience higher education? If ethnic minority and working-class students experience a cultural discontinuity in higher education, how does it affect their self-expression? And how does it affect their perceived academic competence? Overall, our studies attempted to examine does academic and social integration is essential for student academic competence.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Higher education culture reflects mainstream middle-class norms of independence. While enrolling in colleges, ethnic minority students encounter cultural discontinuity not because they come from deprived cultures but because the prevalent institutional culture is different from their home culture. Ethnic minority students' educational problem is more than academic; sociocultural barriers affect their

academic outcomes. We argue in this thesis that ethnic minority students' academic outcomes are affected by experiencing cultural discontinuity in the educational setting.

Students' educational experiences differ, and it depends on whether they experience cultural continuity or discontinuity in the mainstream institution (Ogbu, 1982). Students' experiences of cultural discontinuity in the educational system affect their psychological and academic outcomes. The socialization practices and the way of living are very different between the members of the working class and the middle class. For example, working-class members work together and endorse collective values, whereas middle-class members work alone and value autonomy.

Moreover, working-class parents fail to inculcate middle-class values and the norms of academic competency among their children. Such a lack of acquiring knowledge leads to educational disadvantages. Members of different social classes and cultures set different values and norms of interaction. While transitioning to college, many minority students need cross-cultural boundaries. Many ethnic minority students wrongly believe that academic success is possible only for students of some particular groups, so they do not put the required effort into the academic pursuit.

It is mainly because minority students' cultural values, beliefs, and practices are different from mainstream culture. In higher education, students who display mainstream culture are perceived as appropriate and discourage nonmainstream cultural values (Tyler, Uqdah, Dillihunt, Beatty-Hazelbaker, Conner, et al., 2008). The issue of higher education culture is the failure to recognize the different aspects of

cultural values. Research indicates that understanding minority students' academic competence needs to examine the socio-historical context (Ogbu, 1992). Minority student self-expression and perceived academic competence are affected by imposing unique socialization values different from theirs. Thus, we argued that ethnic minority students' educational outcomes are affected by experiencing sociocultural dissimilarities or different values employed in mainstream institutions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND PERSPECTIVE OF THE THESIS

2.1 Review of Literatures

Culture is a societal belief system transmitted from one generation to another (American Psychological Association, 2003). Cultural values share in the frame of mutual reference. The self-concept varies across cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis & Singelis, 1998). In the Asian context, the self is understood as a relational entity connected with others, whereas the self is independent and unique in the Western context.

Additionally, individual self-expression is affected by a person belonging specific culture; instead, cultures guide an individual on how to interact and express with others. Different culture has different perspective of expression. In Western or individualist culture, self-expression considers projecting one's thoughts (Kim & Sherman, 2007). In contrast, in Asian or collectivist cultures, those who explicitly express an opinion were neither encouraged nor viewed positively.

The cultural characteristics emphasize the view of self which is cooperative or competitive. In collectivist cultures, people set personal goals related to collective goals (e.g., family, tribe). Individuals tend to be stable with their ingroup and stay even if it demands costly. In contrast, in individualist cultures, people tend to hold more in-groups (e.g., family, coworkers) and individual goals concerned for

themselves or various ingroups. People tend to drop those ingroups that demand inconveniently (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988).

The higher education culture is prevalent by independence norms. Students experiencing cultural continuity in the educational system believe that they belong to the institution, and those beliefs consequently help them pursue and persist in academic goals. In the case of ethnic minority students feel that they do not belong in the institutions. The prevailing independence norms of the institution make it challenging to engage in academic pursuit. Also, ethnic minority students felt reluctant to follow the institutional values of independence because some behavior of these norms fundamentally conflicts with the interdependent practices.

Cultural characteristics play a mechanistic role in advancing knowledge. Formal education primarily values cognitive traits and ignores non-cognitive aspects; instead, the educational system often pays little attention to sociocultural factors. But those non-cognitive characteristics such as culture, social class, and history of a group are closely related to learner's outcomes. Previous research revealed that cultural differences impact human behavior, so the academic culture should not treat as exceptional (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Ogbu, 1982; Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). Moreover, individual knowledge acquires through sociocultural practices (Vygotsky, 1978). The surrounding environment influences personal expertise and forming behavior. Triandis et al. (1988) revealed that cooperation is high in collectivist cultures but differs when other persons belong to an outgroup. Often people's responses are based on who the others are and whether their social background is similar or different.

Prior research indicates that student belonging social background matters in higher education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Stephens et al., 2012). Thus, students from ethnic minorities and less privileged backgrounds would suffer the most in higher education. Because historically, higher education access by the elite and middle-class section of society, minority and disadvantaged backgrounds was segregated from mainstream society and not exposed to middle-class mainstream culture before college. Social capital helps to form the network that leads to institutional support. Instead, social capital is rooted in the family. Children from elite backgrounds benefitted from the educational and occupational status of the family.

Moreover, Phinney (1996) suggested that ethnic groups are subject to prejudice and discrimination. Ethnic minorities are prone to racial stigma makes them feel like second-class citizens in mainstream society. In any community, the members who have been associated with stigma limit their opportunities. It is problematic when a person belonging group is attached to the stigma; it might hinder their achievement growth. Members of the stigmatized group experienced prejudice and discrimination at the hand of dominant groups regarding social, economic, and political consequences (Crocker & Major, 1989). There is no sharp difference between individuals and social functioning (Croizet & Claire, 1998; McGarty & Haslam, 1997). An individual belonging social group is vital for achieving potential life chances. Thus, if an individual not performing well in an academic task is not the sole reason for individual failure, it's needed to look at a broader cultural structure and its social functioning.

Members of the lower social class tend to face more discrimination than their privileged counterparts. At the same time, the concept of discrimination is perceived differently by members of minority and nonminorities groups. Minority students are aware of the stigma attached to their group membership and their under-representation in an academic environment. Also, fear that they might confirm their group's inability to perform well in the educational context (Steele, 1997). Additionally, students from stigmatizing backgrounds have few friends in the intellectual domain. Members of stigmatized groups are sensitive toward their group belonging (Walton & Cohen 2007). Students from minority and stigmatized groups and their social bonds in the academic domain are uncertain. Experiencing uncertainty and stigmatization subsequently affects individual psychology. It consequently contributed to mistrust of the educational system and their treatment.

Additionally, members of minority groups carried the burden of confirming negative stereotypes attached to their group's inability to perform well academically. Felt insecure and uncomfortable in mainstream institutions because they experienced prejudice and discrimination against belonging to a particular group. Lower caste members have fewer assets and educational credentials than higher caste members because of unequal access to social and educational rights (Thorat, 2006).

Moreover, people make prejudices based on a person belonging to race and ethnic background (Cabrera & Nora, 1994). In an academic context, faculty and academic staff had formed a prejudice against minority students that they are not academically serious at studying or incompetent at academic-related tasks. Thorat (2006) indicates that we need to recognize society's exclusionary and discriminatory

components, including the belonging identity of caste, ethnicity, and religion. Historically, members of lower social class and caste were denying of accessing equal rights in society. Practicing such exclusionary roles in society restricted opportunities access for specific groups. However, minority students are not equally suffering in mainstream institutions. Some students are already familiar with the educational culture and firmly believe they could benefit individually and socially through academic achievement.

Members of the minority group representation are less in academic institutions or holding professional occupations, so in such a space, they face more prejudice (Walton & Cohen, 2007). Minority students often lack role models and hardly get the motivation to pursue higher studies from friends, family, and teachers. Such lack of motivation leads to academic and social disintegration in the educational system. So, minority students' belonging to mainstream institutions is in a state of uncertainty.

2.2 The Indian Context of Education

India is a country that possesses rich cultural variation. However, inequalities still exist in India based on gender, class, caste, and community even after independence and practicing democracy (Sen, 2006, p.6). Members of different communities face inequality in social and economic life. This context is not different in the education system, where neglect of mass education reinforces elitism and upper-class-domination. Where specific language is recognized and employed (Mishra, 2017). Enrolling in education is a way of socializing with the demands of society. Schooling or education is effective when it reciprocates societal needs (Srivastava, 2009). Often, academic content is not relevant to the learners.

Education embodies modernity. Sometimes, education changes not only man's values and behavior but also his place to gain a larger economy. The way of urban life is inconceivable in a rural setting (Kumar, 2014). The traditional Indian life approach emphasizes that power over self is the most respected form of a human being (Nandy, 2005, p.50). In a rural community, there is constant speculation of approval by others, living under the gaze of other residents, so exercising individual choice in rural are limited. On the other hand, new opportunities were coming up in the cities, which were not readily available in the ancestral village.

The builder of independent India firmly believes that education would play a vital role in transforming diversity into constructive dynamism (Rao, 2002). Higher education becomes a mechanism to mobilize social and economic status. However, access to higher education is not proportionate to represent various groups. Most of the marginalized sections of students are first-generation college students. Their parents tend to have little or no education and hold low-status occupations. Their limited participation in education is often linked with caste, class, and gender. On the other hand, students from schedule caste and schedule tribe who attended the professional course come from middle or upper-class families.

To be precise, formal education is middle-class affairs. In general, the institutional culture and selection of curriculum orient toward an upper-and-middle class cultural basis. Knowingly or unknowingly favors students from middle-class upbringing (Srivastava, 2009). Students whose socio-cultural background is marked differently from the academic are disadvantaged, alienated, and inhabiting in academic performance. The language used in academic circles differs from many

students' home language. Students who practice a different language from academics have lower self-efficacy, are less motivated to pursue educational goals, and feel alienated, which leads to low academic achievement (Mishra, 2017). Minority and lower social class students suffer the most in the academic system. Moreover, educational institutions tend to discriminate and prejudice students from scheduled castes and tribes (Rao, 2002). It has a drastic effect on students' social and psychological development.

The pre-college academic atmosphere of minority students is often unsuitable for the college setting. Some hindering effect of minority students in the educational system is lack of reference to the diverse way of life in the curriculum, poor teacher training, and the medium of instruction. Our education system is hard to accept the students who make their observations and articulation (Sarangapani, 2003). Instead, students must conform to the book's content and language style. Deviation of language use in book content is not acceptable. The primary source of learning is to memorize the information. Thus, the Indian education system is prevalent by memorization of information. Often, being unable to recall is linked with being unable to learn. On the other hand, minority students are less self-expressive and willing to help others but refrain from getting acknowledged. They are less influential and try to maintain interdependence with others.

Compared to members of western society, members of non-western focus on social competence and prefer to maintain harmony and stability in groups (Srivastava & Misra, 2007). In addition, Das (1994) suggests that the eastern view of intelligence link with moral & religious attitudes. The characterization of intelligence includes

knowledge, mental effort, determination, and feelings. Moreover, the Indian approach to self is holistic and goes beyond the individualistic notion of self (Mishra, Akoijam & Misra, 2009). Each individual has to fulfill due obligation as a member of the family and members of the belonging group. So, people pay more attention to in-group goals over individual goals. However, the Indian self is diverse, sometimes linked with individuality, and maintains relationships with others (Srivastava & Misra, 2007).

Furthermore, the concept of education and modernity are intertwined. Earlier, education was the prime social agency to pass knowledge from one generation to the next; however, during colonial rule, the meaning of education was imparted (Kumar 2014). It emphasizes certified qualifications to acquire school or college or select employment. When education means getting certified, learning becomes subordinate. The new system undermined the community orientation.

A community defines the identity of its members irrespective of their economic status with shares a common language, religion, or ancestry (Beteille, 2007, p. 945). The middle class and working class belong to different communities. In addition, academic achievement and failure relate to a person belonging social context (Sinha & Mishra, 2015a). Primarily members of the marginalized background are outside the school system. The illiterate home environment, poverty, disparaged social status, and social structure leads their children out of the school system. They experience unequal access to education and often show poor performance, lower school completion rates, and more tend to drop out (Nambissan, 2013). The diversity of student backgrounds often carries varied cultural values.

Interestingly, the Indian and Asian level of being 'good at maths' reduces the cultural marginality and stereotype in the host country (Panda, 2012). In the United Kingdom, South Asian and Chinese immigrants pursue higher education despite holding lower socioeconomic status to accumulate cultural capital. People are aware that availing of education is the appropriate means to mobilize the disadvantaged section of society.

Moreover, minority and lower caste experienced discrimination in the past but persisted and experienced unequal social access roles. Thorat (2006) argued that members of higher caste maximum representation in education are the outcomes of enjoying privileges. The social advantages of group transfer into the social asset and cultural capital transit through earlier generations to the present. Members of the minority had a lower share of education and employability due to denying equal access to social roles. The higher caste owes a social debt to the lower caste; thus, a compensatory policy requires.

2.3 Minority Students and Mainstream Institution

Motivation to complete college can transform students' dreams into realities. Many college students begin college with the vague notion of why they do so. Minority and students from disadvantaged backgrounds poorly performed in academics. More tend to leave college after attaining one or two years without completing the course or getting a degree. Often their educational problem is mixed with academic and sociocultural aspects. The cultural practices of minority groups differ from mainstream cultures, such as the belief systems, values, and interaction

styles. Student academic outcomes depend on adapting to the new educational culture. Members of less privileged backgrounds are facing distinct disadvantages. Accessing higher education, they face language barriers and difficulty forming networks that benefit educational and occupational support. They had a lack of resources to support educational aspirations. Ethnic minority students' educational challenges are merely academic; the sociocultural adjustment marked the difference.

Individuals tend to reflect their socio-historical and cultural perspectives and perceive their cultural viewpoints as appropriate. It is because a person's psyche develops through its sociocultural world. Belonging to a group and maintaining uniqueness depends on a person's social identity (Brewer, 1991). Members of any culture engage in social categorization (Cooper & Denner, 1998). The cultural differentiation from the mainstream is not equal to cultural deprivation. Instead, practicing unique culture is necessary to survive in the given ecological structure of a community. Endorsing specific cultural practices in higher education motivates particular groups and demotivates others.

People learn attitude, behavior, and competency beliefs developed based on their social perspectives. But in the context of ethnic minority students, they face problems when bringing personal and cultural characteristics to institutional settings. Because higher education culture emphasizes mainstream or Western culture, minority students' home cultures are not necessarily congruent with the institutional culture. In mainstream institutions, minority students lack self-confidence while presenting to other colleagues, which sometimes restricts their self-expression. Experiencing such a lack of confidence makes it difficult to compete with other colleagues. And also, their

peer group members were knowingly or unknowingly discouraged from adopting appropriate academic culture. Often, ethnic minority students possess less academic credentials, experience discriminatory treatment embodied with identity besides caste or class, and face job ceilings in later life. Instead, the ethnic identity is salience in the mainstream institution.

Moreover, students make groups based on their social class background or ability. Compared to middle-class students, working-class students faced more personal stress in the educational setting. Working-class students possess less educational credentials than the middle class (Granfield, 1991) and are often worried about being personally not up to the academic standards. Students from less privileged backgrounds are found academically unprepared, higher college dropouts, and face social segregation (Ostrove, 2003). A person belonging to a social class is essential in constructing belongingness in the institution. However, in the context of minority students, their group belonging is more attached to ethnic groups. Such association with the ethnic groups perceives as a support system. On the other hand, those less attached to the ethnic group are more likely to face threats and possess low self-esteem (Cooper & Denner, 1998).

Self-concept formation is influenced by a person representing ethnic identity (Roberts et al. 1999). A person holding ethnic identity comprises a sense of belonging to the ethnic group and portrays the associated ethnic attitudes. While transitioning to higher education, many students need to establish a new identity. But, some minority students are reluctant to follow the institutional practices; instead, they persist in holding old values because some sociocultural approach fundamentally conflicts with

their traditional culture. So, in the mainstream, minority students who practice conventional cultural values are associated with low self-regard and feeling inadequacy. On the other hand, students who successfully establish a new identity when they complete their course and return to their community become strangers in their community. The provided curriculum structure and attended courses do not reflect the aspiration of members of such communities.

Experiencing identity conflict and cultural differences in the mainstream undermine ethnic minority students' academic competence. They believed the new educational culture was unreal and showed little interest in academic pursuit. Experiencing different cultural characteristics in mainstream minority students often felt others might judge them negatively because of their different beliefs and cultural practices. In other words, minority students experience a cultural discontinuity in higher education. Lacking cultural alignment between home and institution becomes a hurdle to achieving academic goals. Also, facing socio-cultural differences in higher education leads to skepticism about the relevance of academic success.

Many stigmatized groups (e.g., lower caste or class, racial minorities, etc.) hold secondary status in mainstream society (Granfield, 1991). While transitioning to college, ethnic minority students felt discomfort in the new elite world. They perceived them as different from other colleagues and were embarrassed about posing less academic credentials. They often experienced devaluation and discredit in the mainstream institution. Also face identity conflicts between who they are and what they suppose to be. In higher education, they require to develop a new identity, so in the process, they experience the pain of separation from their previous social

identities. Sometimes they feel guilt about adopting different values, but those feelings can reduce when they successfully adjust to the new academic culture. The educational culture expects students to behave appropriately in an educational setting, be self-expressive and innovative, and cultivate interpersonal skills that accumulate positive academic outcomes.

Moreover, the ethnic or racial group has numerically under-represented in academic settings. They carry a fear of confirming negative stereotypes about the intellectual inability of their group membership. And subsequently, doubt whether people like them belong to the academic environment. In addition, members of the mainstream often suspect that minority students are not serious about studying. They attend higher studies to be part of it or get a degree; they are unrealistically optimistic and spend less time studying, more time at music, partygoers, related to addiction, etc. And often, their friend circle is limited to their ingroup members only.

But, members of ethnic minorities perceive that such association with their ingroup is a support system in a larger unsupportive environment. Their limited making friends in their region is because they wanted to be free from unknown expectations, language or communication barriers, and negative evaluation for practicing particular culture. It is not that they do not want to make friends from other regions; the language barriers and cultural differences are the main reason. If they make friends from their group, they do not have to put much extra effort into understanding other perspectives and are free from committing unknown mistakes.

Ethnic minority or working-class students are aware that they differ from other colleagues regarding their educational exposure and resources. Also, students from marginalized backgrounds try to conceal their social identity for fear of associated group stereotypes. Moreover, a person's culture contributes to the level of motivation and academic interest differently (Croizet & Claire, 1998, p.588). Low-income families spend relatively less money on educational purposes. When they enroll in higher education, they need to acquire new forms of cultural capital to cope with middle-class norms (Aries & Seider, 2005). Though, some student remains ethnically rooted and maintain their ethnic and class identity. They perceive that such resistance is essential for preventing them from assimilating mainstream culture and maintaining their ethnic identity.

Furthermore, most ethnic minority students fall into first-generation college students and often practice interdependent norms. Before college, they experienced less academic exposure and did not have much access to middle-class values. Continuing-generation students have distinct advantages over first-generation college students, including prioritizing personal preferences, adapting to the institutional culture, familiarizing themselves with the academic track, better socioeconomic status, and benefitting from the social network (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). First-generation college students and students from low-income backgrounds were most likely to leave college after the first or second year. They often perform poorly in academics and quit college without earning a degree. Minority groups of students faced prolonged academic underperformance in an educational setting. So, it

is essential to look at the social and cultural factors and how it affects their academic outcomes.

The higher education cultures endorsed the independence model of self exclusively and undermined the other ways of being. It is problematic to many students, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, and practicing interdependence norms. Students who experience an independent self-model are easily connected with the institutional culture, whereas those who understand themselves as an interdependent self-face inconvenience. This difficulty occurs because the institutional culture does not promote an interdependent self. While transitioning to college, many students experience cultural discontinuity between home and academic institutions, but they cope with time. However, the cultural discontinuity problem is more pronounced for those students who belong to minority or marginalized backgrounds (Ogbu, 1982; Tyler et al., 2008). Students from the lower class and first-generation college students' cultural discontinuity problems persist, and they have difficulty coping with the academic culture. Additionally, minority students experience more cultural discontinuity or mismatch than other majority groups of students in higher education (Reay, Davies, David, & Ball, 2001; Roberts et al., 1999; Stephens et al., 2012).

Previous research revealed that minority and working-class students are less self-expressive and academically incompetent in the mainstream institution (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Kim, 2002; Kim & Sherman, 2007; Steele, 1997; Stephens et al., 2012). Ethnic minority students' educational problem is complex and relatively interactive with other social factors (Phinney & Haas, 2003).

Because their challenges are not only academic, sociocultural factors play a significant role. Moreover, Loo and Rolison (1986) revealed that ethnic minority students face sociocultural alienation in mainstream institutions.

2.4 Perception of Competence and its Variance in different Society

Culture is the core societal value (Cooper & Denner, 1998); each culture has distinct values and belief systems. The notion of competence varies across cultures. For example, in American schools, a good student is associated with good performance, lives with one's unique potential, and focuses on the idea of self-fulfillment. In contrast, in Japanese schools, a good student should possess the qualities of kindness, enthusiasm, persistence, a helping nature, honesty, and focus on group goals (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus & Nisbett, 1998). In an individualist culture, a child must cultivate the idea of self-expression and encourage nurturing and practicing competence. But, in a collectivist culture, a child must obey elders and encourage their children to engage in self-criticism. And believe that dealing with such practices would help children's self-improvement. Expressing something directly and explicitly is avoided; instead, it considers disruptive behavior.

Interestingly, the perception of competence varies from one social stratum to another (Ogbu, 1979). Members of the various groups set different levels of competence because of their unique access role in society. Adult of any community transmits their youths to acquire specific skills relevant to the social structure. In formal education, minority students need to develop behavioral skills associated with

academic knowledge enhancement. Their problem in higher education is adjusting the socialization process as the mainstream middle-class does.

Experiencing cultural differences, minority students doubt whether they could be fit and able to succeed in the academic setting. Members of the minority group were less represented in higher education and less occupied in higher-pay jobs. In the mainstream institution, members of minorities hold the racial stigma (Granfield, 1991). Members of the ethnic minority faced discrimination and devaluation in the mainstream institution despite possessing higher educational credentials or belonging to a higher social status. Additionally, people with high self-doubt tend to evaluate negatively (Walton & Cohen, 2007). People who endorse higher self-efficacy have higher performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1982). Often students from minority backgrounds experience a lack of role models from their community and tend to be skeptical about future academic prospects. So, the notion of competence is questionable in ethnic minority students' context. Experiencing sociocultural alienation and lack of opportunity in adult life, minority students develop doubt about pursuing higher studies (Cabrera & Nora, 1994), and such beliefs might affect their academic outcomes.

Minority students who try to familiarize themselves with the institutional culture and disengage some of their prior cultural practices were not perceived positively by others. They were often neither accepted in the mainstream group nor by their group members. Those minority students who thought of crossing the cultural boundary were taking the risk of criticizing both sides. So their belonging to a

particular group is somewhere hanging in the air. Students who successfully cross the line to the academic culture also feel they let down their group.

In higher education, many students face uncertainty and competency crisis. But, ethnic minorities and students from the lower social class have faced additional challenges as cultural outsiders in the education system. They observe that they are different from privileged counterparts based on their academic credential and socio-cultural value. Students from elite families benefitted from family status and social networks that led them to institutional support. Being from privileged backgrounds has certain advantages in education. They know how to express their thoughts, negotiate the system when they face challenges, and possess certain attitudes that fit the educational system.

On the other hand, minority students experience many disadvantages in higher education; they are unaware and uncertain about the academic culture, have fewer academic credentials, and hold lower social status. Posing inadequate educational and social credentials, minority students often experience discrimination in the form of implicit or explicit ways. So, they doubt spending time and putting effort into academic-related tasks (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Moreover, students from minority backgrounds and their family members were often unsupported to attending higher studies; instead, they wanted an immediate job after high school or graduation.

In any culture, ethnic minority groups belong to the underprivileged community and are stigmatized (Croizet & Claire, 1998). People from less privileged backgrounds find it hard to express their opinions in front of others. Interestingly, a person

belonging culture plays a vital role in self-expression. In an educational context, minority students had less academic exposure before college and also lacked English proficiency. These factors lead to developing a fear of negative evaluation. In addition, the socialization of educational institutions emphasizes the independent self and devalues the other way of self-presentation. Learning a new culture is not an easy task. In an educational setting, ethnic minority students need to accommodate the academic culture to achieve the desired educational goals.

Minority students' problem in education is mainly experiencing cultural discontinuity between home and institution. And it causes academic underperformance and dropout from the institution (Ledlow, 1992; Ogbu, 1982). There is a performance gap between dominant and minority students in the educational environment (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Often, ethnic minorities and members of the lower social class experience devaluation, discredit and feel out of place. Students from those discreditable backgrounds feel uncomfortable and conceal their social belonging (Granfield, 1991).

The culture of higher education produces social class inequalities because higher education culture overtly endorses the upper-and-middle-class culture as the appropriate norm (Stephens et al., 2012). Supporting only the middle-class models of independence in higher education becomes problematic for students from different sections of society. The taken-for-granted institutional norms make it difficult to students from a less privileged background to survive and compete with academic peers.

Moreover, different nations have varied beliefs about learning. For example, Li (2005) indicates that the key to education and learning in American contexts is to practice independent self, valued self-expression, and willingness to challenge. On the other hand, in the East Asian context enduring hardship, diligence, and perseverance are the key elements of learning and education. Similarly, people from diverse cultures perceive successes and failures in different ways. The Japanese and Americans would assess the same situation differently and express various emotions (Imada & Ellsworth, 2011).

Interestingly, peoples have different responses regarding positive and negative outcomes. In the case of Japanese culture, people attributed success to the situation and blamed failures for themselves; in contrast, Americans attributed success to themselves and blamed failures for external reasons. Instead, individual perception and subjective beliefs reflect on their belonging culture. Student sociocultural background makes a bridge to connect the academic world (Karp, Holmstrom & Gray, 1998). Many students bring their home cultural practices to the institution, and it becomes problematic when the values differ from the institutional culture.

Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have fewer resources and spend less time on academic-related tasks (Croizet & Claire, 1998). They perceived that spending much time on academic work is a leisure thing instead of perceiving it as means to acquire knowledge. Sometimes, they falsely perceive that pursuing higher education is for those members of privileged backgrounds and doubt their intellectual capability.

Furthermore, higher education culture is based on mainstream or western culture. Those who differ from acceptable cultures are considered culturally deficient and not perceived as culturally diverse. Achieving academic goals and success in adult life mainly depends on possessing upper-and-middle-class competencies. Students from relatively lower social backgrounds perform poorly on academic tasks (Croizet & Claire, 1998). Parents of less privileged backgrounds fail to transmit the middle-class norms of competence to their children. Poor and marginalized students often fail at school because they experience cultural inferiority in the mainstream (Kincheloe, 1999). In sum, achieving academic competence in higher education is linked to endorsing mainstream middle-class cultural values. Students who face impenetrable barriers to crossing the cultural boundary suffer the most are less competent in academics and often tend to drop out without completing the course.

2.5 Socio-cultural Diversity

We generally assume that a nation has a stable or homogeneous culture (Cooper & Denner, 1998). We often fail to recognize the diversity or variation of culture within the nation. There is a close relationship between the person and their social functioning. The individual self-concept develops through belonging to a race, ethnic group, and community (Tajfel, 1981). Culture is dynamic, and each culture uniquely shapes an individual's behaviors. Interestingly, the self is emerging and diluted from its culture. So, the concept of culture appears while addressing the issues of diversity.

The dominant group usually portrays father postures toward the subordinate group, and the subordinate group more or less behaves like grown-up children (Ogbu,

1982). There is no legal prohibition that subordinate group behaves like dominant group members, though their convention states they should not act like dominant group members. But at the same time, the dominant group's custom demands the subordinate group to behave in a certain way. Additionally, members of the dominant group hardly knew about the lifestyle of subordinate groups, but subordinate groups were often bicultural.

Students' cultural models of self matter in academic socialization, people's responses might differ on who the others are and their social status. That is, the other person's social background is similar to or different from theirs. Triandis et al. (1988) revealed that in a collectivist culture, cooperation is high among its ingroup member, but it differs when other persons belong to an outgroup. In general, people perceive individual talent along with their social belonging. Such perception is problematic when an individual with a community background is attached to the stigma. Often, members of the lower social class are not considered knowledgeable and such groups have fewer contributions to the academic sphere (Granfield, 1991).

Working-class members are less exposed to middle-class cultural norms, so they need to acquire new cultural capital in mainstream institutions. People's attitudes and behavior vary when another person belongs to different social background. Social class is divided into upper, middle, and working classes. Upper-and middle-class individuals enjoy more freedom, control, and choice, whereas working-class people experience threat, constraint, and uncertainty in their circumstances. Students from the working class possess fewer academic credentials than the upper and middle classes.

Lower social class students are the first in their families to attend college. Often, they tend to get lesser grades and drop out of the institution without completing the course.

Students from minority and lower social-class backgrounds attend substandard schools. Such schools are less prepared for college. Also, while pursuing college, students of these communities have to deal with non-academic purposes, like looking after the family, doing part-time jobs, helping with household chores, etc. Enrolling in higher education means entering a world they have less experience (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). For them, college transition is not only an academic transition; instead, it's a social and cultural transition.

Educational institution reflects and promotes an independent model of self. According to the independent model, the self is autonomous and free to choose personal preferences (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). A student with an independent self-model would likely be motivated to work individually, explore themselves, and express their preferences. On the other hand, minority and working-class students understand the self as an interdependent entity and perceive that they are part of the social unit and connected with others. The interdependent self tended to work with the group and believed it would help them learn from each other.

Ethnic minority students bring their home cultural practice into the institutional setting and maintain their community model with friends and colleagues. Moreover, they tend to struggle with academic jargon and encounter linguistic incompetence in the educational environment. For example, they felt afraid to raise a question to the faculty and even ask for help from their peers. They tend to struggle in higher

education, and their belonging to the institution is questionable. They perceive that following academic pursuits is a means to cease their culture, so they resist practicing standardized educational norms. Believe that portraying their ethnic attitude and behavior is a medium of maintaining the cultural boundary from the mainstream.

Each community has a different cultural pattern; people are more engaged in the ingroup than the outgroup. In a working-class context, people tend to practice interdependence norms and look at what needs to be done on their part. In contrast, middle-class practice independence norms emphasize the value of self-importance and focus on personal preferences. Moreover, members of the less privileged background tend to think and act together, share ideas, pay attention to each other, and share their common goals. On the other hand, members of the middle-class value autonomy and motivate to work for themselves. This cultural pattern is more similar to higher education culture, where teachers allocate different tasks to the students.

Members of the higher–and middle–class individuals have a distinct advantage in the mainstream institution. They participate in classroom discussions, challenge the hierarchy, express their opinions, and follow their passion. Students from working-class backgrounds hardly participate in classroom discussions, keep their thoughts to themselves, are less self-expressive, and follow group norms. Also, individuals who practice interdependent models were shy away from face-to-face confrontation; instead, they prefer and adhere to maintaining group conformity.

In higher education, ethnic minority and working-class students need to learn academic knowledge with social skills. Belong to different socio-cultural perspectives

from institutions, and many minority students perceive themselves as strangers in paradise. They tend to fear negative evaluation and skepticism about the relevance of academic prospects. Instead, minority students experiencing academic challenges and socio-cultural barriers in higher education make it difficult to self-express and compete with colleagues.

Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds experience limited educational opportunities, but the ignorance and prejudice are high (Allport, 1954). Moreover, Steele & Aronson (1995) suggest that members of the stereotype community asking to reveal their racial identity before the standardized test was enough to decrease almost half of the score.

Furthermore, a person's cognitive development responds to the demands of the environment where they grew up (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Hofstede, 1986). So, if the teacher and student's accustomed cultures differ, the teaching tactics would become problematic. It demands to change in the teaching approaches. The traditional way of learning sometimes makes learning more difficult. Higher education culture needed to include an interdependent model of self, focusing on relevant approaches and practical perspectives to the broader society. The present research used socio-cultural concepts to understand the academic competence of northeast students' in higher education. We argued that we need to examine students' socio-cultural perspectives to understand learners' academic competence.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The main difference in student academic experience depends on experiencing cultural discontinuity in the educational system (Ogbu, 1982). Some students perform well academically because their belonging culture is congruent with institutional culture. Students from minority or subordinate group (e.g., based on class, race, ethnicity, caste, etc.) tends to perform poorly in the academic domain. Also, they are less self-expressive and less competent in educational settings. Often, educators and academic peers perceive students from less privileged backgrounds are incapable of working with their minds.

Despite best efforts and intentions, many minority students could not excel academically, mainly because of a lack of cultural attribution to the institution (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). The person's family's cultural capital guides learning approach, knowledge acquisition, setting own preferences, attitude formation, and posing academic credentials. Cultural capital is incorporated with status attainment. The dynamic of the cultural capital relates to the family's value system, resources, or status. Integrating family cultural capital into the educational setting enhances academic outcomes. The elite parents or members of the higher social class support their children's educational aspirations. On the other hand, low-income families could not help and support their children's educational aspirations.

Moreover, the curricula and formal pedagogy are the product of mainstream society. The curriculum structure hardly includes racism, classism, and other forms of exclusion. Academic institution reinforces specific values, beliefs, learning styles, knowledge acquisition, and language use (Leistyna, 1999). Instead, the upper-middle-

class mainstream cultural perspective is prevalent in the educational culture and perceived as the proper norm.

Learners' academic outcomes are affected by the family sociocultural practice. Minority students are skeptical about their educational prospects because they observe discrimination based on caste, class, and race. Also, they doubt their intellectual ability, and sometimes they do not put the necessary effort into striving toward success. Moreover, students from the working class are uncertain and unknown of the effective way to engage the educational systems. Instead, they face a cultural conflict between the home and the institution. Their home socialization practice does not seem appropriate in the academic environment.

The higher education culture is widely prevalent by mainstream middle-class values. The mainstream middle-class culture primarily endorses an independent model of self, where competition with other peers is a norm. In contrast, members of ethnic minorities practice the interdependence model of self, where each member was perceived as correlated, responding to others' needs, and maintaining harmony are the norms. Ethnic minorities and students from the working class were less exposed to mainstream middle-class culture before college and experienced marginalization in the mainstream. In general, they felt an outsider in the mainstream society, insecure, uncomfortable, and uncertain about dealing with the mainstream institution (Bourdieu, 1986).

Student cultural background distinguishes from successful to unsuccessful one. An individual belonging to cultural capital internalizes and displays in the form of manner, attitudes, disposition of habits, understanding, clothing styles, linguistic

competencies, and interactional styles (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Students' success or failure is often linked with experiencing cultural similarities or differences in the institution. Even if minority students enrolling colleges, also they cannot entirely leave their prior culture. Instead, they bring their sociocultural behavior to the institutional setting. Some minority students face difficulty coping with the new academic culture because adopting the new culture means attributing different beliefs and values systems. However, some minority students could cross-cultural boundaries and excel in academics.

Moreover, minority and working-class students face a lack of resources and geographical immobility in their circumstances. Those students tend to be first-generation college students. Most are unfamiliar with academic jargon and need to learn how to present themselves and compete with other colleagues adequately. And also need to know how to use professional language in an educational setting. In brief, the academic socialization process is similar to upper or middle-class cultural perspectives. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), higher education culture is essential in social reproduction and maintaining inequalities between groups. Inequitable access to educational opportunities is traced down the social and racial stratification (Lareau & Weininger, 2003).

Additionally, Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) suggest that students' college experience shapes the specific socio-cultural capital of the family. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds who enroll in college face distinct cultural discontinuity. Their difficulty is caused by attending substandard schooling and a lack of postsecondary preparation (Walpole, 2003). They also face socio-cultural barriers

in education because academic cultures prevail over middle-class cultural norms (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1990; Stephens et al., 2012).

The individualistic self prefers to express its unique self, exert environmental control, be responsive, and influence others. On the other hand, the interdependent self emphasizes adjusting to others, exercising self-control, taking charge, and resisting to influence others. Expressing self and influencing others is not the center of this cultural norm. In addition, lower or working-class students emphasize interdependence norms; they tend to share and be attentive to others' needs (Stephens, 2009).

When members of ethnic minorities group encounter mainstream society, they feel uncomfortable and uncertain; because every culture employs unique social norms and different social stratification. Additionally, minority students face marginalization in the frame of mainstream middle-class socialization (Stephens et al., 2012). Their challenges in higher education are not only academic; instead, it causes by social and cultural factors. Such challenges make it difficult to fully participated in an educational setting. Often, minority students hardly participate in classroom discussions, are less self-expressive, and are less willing to compete with their peers. It is because they experience academic and social disintegration. Minority students are less likely to perceive that faculty was concerned for student development and get less encouragement to pursue higher education from peers' (Terenzini et al., 1996). Minority students often lack dominant cultural attributes because their socialization differs from the mainstream.

Educational institutions are not totally out of bound or sacrosanct from social bias. Social realities do exist inside and outside of the educational institution. Students from minority sections are underrepresented, earn lower grades, and possess higher dropouts in higher education. Also felt insecure, uncertain, and uncomfortable dealing with the mainstream or dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, we agree with Ogbu's cultural discontinuity concept that minority students experience cultural differences between the institution and home cultural backgrounds.

Ethnic minority students' academic incompetence in higher education is caused by experiencing sociocultural differences. It's not because they belong to deprived cultures; instead, the provided culture is different from their home culture. So, students' educational experience is affected by having similarities or dissimilarities of the cultural practice. The present research argues that experiencing cultural discontinuity in mainstream institutions undermines minority students' academic competence.

The cultural discontinuity hypothesis in education is,

1. Students who are not familiar with the institutional culture.
2. Student home socialization misaligns with the mainstream or institutional socialization.

2.7 Methodological Perspectives

The present research focuses on how cultural discontinuity affects learners' expression and perception of competence; looking through cultural perspective is vital to understanding student ability. Because culture is a core societal value, the notion of

self is different from belonging to a particular culture. Most students experience cultural discontinuity while transitioning from higher secondary to college. However, many students overcome cultural discontinuity with time, but it persists in minorities and students from marginalized backgrounds. The cultural discontinuity effects are more pronounced in the minority and marginalized students' context.

Students who experience persisting cultural discontinuities tend to come from less privileged backgrounds, possess less academic credentials, and attend substandard schooling. Attending such education could not provide much academic exposure to the learners and unprepared students for higher studies. The present study samples draw students from northeastern India who pursues higher studies in Delhi. Members of the northeast region represent ethnic minority groups in mainstream society. Moreover, the top 10 states that have the highest number of colleges in India are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and West Bengal (All India Survey on Higher Education, 2015-2016). None of the eight northeastern states are taking place in the top 10-states. The region has fewer higher institutions and lacks infrastructure for higher studies.

Furthermore, mainstream people often believe that the northeast region is a habitat of the same social group and belongs to a single community. However, the area held different groups and could find diversity between and within the community, such as tribes, religion, language, tradition, social class, gender role, dressing style or various forms of attire, food habits, etc. Generally, members of northeastern experience difficulty adapting to mainstream society. It is mainly because of

sociocultural and language differences they face in mainstream society. Also, members of the northeast region hold a distinct identity that is ethnic or racial. Having an ethnic identity is somewhat related to posing ethnic attitudes and behaviors.

Previous research by Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggested that cognition, emotion, and motivation depend on its belonging culture. In general, higher education culture is a product of mainstream or Western culture; emphasizes the independent model of self. Earlier, higher education was attended by members of affluent backgrounds. And students from minority and working-class backgrounds tend to be first-generation college students and heavily emphasize the interdependence model of self. It might be because of their social structure and limited resources available in their circumstances. Those who practice different cultural traditions from the education culture suffer the most and find it hard to compete with colleagues.

The cultural discontinuity concept is most evident in marginalized student populations (Tyler et al., 2008; Conner, 2013). We argued that minority students' educational outcomes are affected by sociocultural factors. Does the present research mainly focus on how student sociocultural factors might affect learners' perceived academic competence? To answer this question, we analyze and examine student sociocultural factor that forms learners' self-expression and perceived competence.

We conducted three studies to examine ethnic minority students experiencing cultural discontinuity effects in higher education. The first study uses the qualitative method and performs through semi-structured interviews. From the data, we

developed related themes with the help of thematic analysis. Our study participants are from the northeastern India region and pursue higher studies in Delhi.

The interview's main research questions revolved around learners' academic experience in higher education. Like, how do they perceive higher education culture? Whether the educational culture similar or different from their home culture? Also, inquire about how supportive or unsupportive their family is to pursue higher studies? Whether they often doubt their ability to learn or perform a given task? How comfortable or uncomfortable are they to raise a question, share their opinion in the classroom, or participate in the discussion outside the classroom?

Conducting exploratory base study helps better understand the ethnic minority students' academic problems in higher education. Furthermore, with the help of the first study, we further design two more studies. In the second study, we examined how students experiencing fear of negative evaluation have affected learners' self-expression looking through cultural perspectives. Because the notion of self varies according to the person belonging to a culture, it plays a vital role in expressing their opinion or holding onto themselves. In the case of ethnic minority students, enrolling in higher education means entering a new territory of which they are unaware. And more concerned about what impression they are making and what others might think about them. So, the study argues that fear of negative evaluation and individual belonging culture would affect student self-expression.

Moreover, in the final study, we argued that students perceived academic competence is affected by skepticism about future educational prospects. Though, this

effect influences by a person belonging social background. Students representing social class have helped to set different levels of competence. Higher education culture is widely prevalent in the mainstream upper or middle-class socialization. Many ethnic minority students did not expose to such socialization before college. Observing inequality accessing societal roles, they subsequently develop skeptics about the future academic prospect.

Thus, the thesis employs a mixed-method analysis to examine cultural discontinuity effects on learners' perceived academic competence. In the first study, we used the qualitative method employing the thematic analysis. We believe it is vital to test the common assumption, so we conduct two empirical studies to verify the cultural discontinuity effect in education. We applied factorial ANOVA to examine the data and test the hypothesis in the second and third studies.

2.8 Overview of Research and Hypothesis

The academic culture was prevalent by elite or mainstream culture, and students who exhibited nonmainstream cultural values were discouraged. Many minority students face disadvantages in the mainstream frame because they had limited exposure to mainstream middle-class culture before college. Society has some taken-for-granted roles and responsibilities for members of different social classes. Students from the working-class background to being academics mean to erode the working-classness. Students' educational outcomes are influenced by their belonging sociocultural capital of the family (Coleman, 1988). It is essential to look at the socio-cultural background to understand the perceived academic competence of the learners.

This study's cultural perspective is essential because culture influences human behavior and viewpoints. Culture is a core societal value, and the view of self differs from its belonging culture. The perspective of self-expression and perception of competence varies according to the person's culture. Student precollege characteristics and belonging culture shape their college experiences. Hence, we argued that minority student academic competence is affected by experiencing sociocultural differences in higher education.

The prevailing higher education culture expects its students to pay more attention to individual uniqueness, express their opinions, and follow their passion (Stephens et al., 2012). In contrast, ethnic minority students emphasize interdependence, hold their thoughts to themselves, and maintain harmonious relationships with other peers. Experiencing such different cultural practices from the institution has a drastic effect on learners'.

Sometimes, people do not perform appropriately, even if they know well. It might be because self-referent thought intervenes in knowledge and action (Bandura, 1982, p.122). Previous research pointed out that the different populations' achievement gap lies in the cultural discontinuity between the institutions and students' home cultural backgrounds (Ogbu, 1982; Tyler et al., 2008). Members of the minority group are less represented in higher education; they experience stereotypes based on their group belonging. Also, they felt insecure and often doubted their group belonging in the institutional settings; they asked themselves whether they could survive and complete their course.

In the case of northeast students, they hold the racial or ethnic strata in mainstream society. They often observe and experience discrimination based on ethnic identity. Also, they tend to possess fewer academic credentials and experience sociocultural differences in higher education. Experiencing such differences make them feel helpless and lack the self-confidence to compete with other peers. There are three main reasons for choosing ethnic minority students as study participants: first, ethnic minority students experience cultural discontinuity between home and institution. Many of them are unknown to mainstream middle-class culture before college. They are unsure to act appropriately to behave like college students and also experience a lack of academic exposure and material resources in their possession. Second, many ethnic minority students represent first-generation college students in higher studies. That is, their parents did not attend college or get college degrees. And finally, they experience less number of higher educational institutions and a lack of infrastructure in the region.

The present thesis is designated to conduct three studies: the first study explores the ethnic minority student colleges' experience in higher education. In the second study, we examine students developing a fear of negative evaluation that affected their self-expression looking through the cultural perspectives. The person who holds the independence model of self more focused on autonomy tends to develop their voices, follow their passion, and influence the world. In contrast, the interdependence model of self, more focused on the relation with others, tends to adjust to the environment, follow the group norms, and restricts them from influencing others (Stephens et al., 2012). Additionally, ethnic minority students feel alienated in the academic

environment, and their belongingness in an educational institution is questionable. We believe that ethnic minority students' self-expression is affected by experiencing fear of negative evaluation and cultural similarity or dissimilarity in higher education. Therefore, the central hypothesis of the second study is,

Hypothesis 1: There would be a significant effect of experiencing fear of negative evaluation and holding the distinct self-construal on learner's self-expression.

Furthermore, minority students, despite experiencing cultural discontinuity in higher education, some students can cross the cultural boundaries and excel in academics while others tend to struggle. We believe it might be because different social backgrounds play essential roles in educational belief formation and affect academic outcomes. Despite many previous research recommendations, there is little attention to the social class gap in higher education. For example, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) suggest that the working class suffers the most in the educational system. Also, Goffman (1983) demonstrated that members of the lower social class are associated with stigma. Moreover, members of the lower social class often experience devaluation and identity adjustment in mainstreams institution (Granfield, 1991).

In the third study, we examine how students perceive academic competence might be affected by skepticism about the relevance of educational prospects. And this effect might influence by a person belonging to a social class. Students are treated as if they came from a sociocultural vacuum in the formal educational system. Instead, peoples act and perceive things according to their sociocultural perspectives. Often, a person belonging to social classes defines who they are and what goals they set. So,

examining the social context would help better understand students' perceived academic competence. Thus, we formulate the hypothesis of the third study, that is,

Hypothesis 2: There would be a significant effect of skepticism about the academic prospect and students' social class on their perceived academic competence.

In sum, ethnic minority students experiencing cultural discontinuity in higher education might undermine their academic ability. We argued that members of ethnic minorities experiencing cultural discontinuity in higher education restrict student self-expression. And also, devaluing their social-cultural practices, less academic exposure, and limited opportunity undermine their perceived competence. The logic behind our studies is to analyze the associated monocultural norms of the institutions that affect ethnic minority students' educational outcomes. Therefore, the present research revolves around the sociocultural perspective of students and higher education.

CHAPTER III

STUDY-1

ETHNIC MINORITY COLLEGE STUDENTS: CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 Introduction

Historically, higher education avails the privileged section of society. The diversity of the student population has increased recently. However, less research has explored the ethnic minority student college experience. The thesis analyzed the college experience and perceived competence of students from north-eastern regions who receive higher education in mainstream institutions.

Members of the north-eastern region have different languages or dialects used to communicate and practice unique sociocultural beliefs. Though the north-eastern area of India has inherited numerous groups, each group has a distinct social structure. However, when it comes to mainstream society, they have to adapt and attribute a new sociocultural capital because their traditional culture is different from the mainstream society.

Minority students experience academic and social disintegration in the educational setting. They believe that highly educated people must be modest rather than showing attitude and posing achievement. Often, these students have little

support from their families to pursue higher study in financial and motivational aspects. Students find it hard to achieve academic demands and maintain relations with friends and family. To attain academic competence, minority students need to overcome socio-cultural and language barriers in higher education besides the subject matter.

Many mainstream or middle-class students got explicit support for attending higher studies from family and teachers. They have structured and directive instructional goals, which they get from their parents, social network, or schooling. Those students remain focused, self-reliant, motivated to learn new things, and have strong determination in their studies. In contrast, ethnic minority or working-class students rarely get support from their families or teachers; often, their support tends to be implicit. Many of them represent the first in their family to attend college. But, those students possess firm determination of self-regulation in learning (Vermunt, 1998).

Moreover, cultural capital influences individual behaviors and knowledge acquisition. Learning is co-constructed and affected by a person's socio-historical circumstances. Each community has different cultural practices, where people are more engaged in some tasks and less in others. Students can be categorized broadly into two groups based on their cultural background: cooperative versus individualist learners (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Minority students often tend to be less self-expressive and less academically competent, mainly cause of experiencing sociocultural disadvantages in higher education.

The well-educated parents transmitted their cultural advantages to their children. Students from the middle class tend to be individualist and self-expressive, whereas working-class students practice collectivist values and emphasize self-introspection. They encounter cultural discontinuity in the education system. Minority and poor children perform poorly in academics not because they have a deprived culture; instead, the provided academic culture is different from the home culture.

The thesis's main argument is that the academic competence of minority students is affected by experiencing cultural discontinuity in higher education. We need to examine the student's sociocultural perspective to understand the learner's competency better. Thus, we argue that ethnic minority students experiencing cultural discontinuity in the mainstream make it challenging to cope with academic barriers and become competent learners. Therefore, the first step in examining learners' academic competence is to explore the ethnic minority students' educational experiences in higher education.

3.2 Purpose of the Study

The current study explores ethnic minority students' educational experience. The members of the north-eastern region represent ethnic groups in mainstream society. Their cultural practice differs from mainstream society. So, practicing from different cultures and traditions, ethnic minority students experience cultural outsiders in the mainstream. Often, they are subject to stereotypes and categorized as students who are not rigorous at studying. Croizet and Claire (1998) indicate that ethnic minority

groups represent poor community backgrounds in many countries. Hence, members of ethnic minority backgrounds face ethnic and class-related stereotypes.

The higher education culture is widely prevalent by mainstream middle-class norms of independence. In contrast, ethnic minorities and members of the lower class practice interdependence norms. So, members from less privileged backgrounds often experience marginalization in mainstream society. Besides, they attend low-quality schooling and experience less academic exposure before college. They also tend to be silent in classroom discussions and also when they encounter colleagues with more academic credentials or people from affluent backgrounds. In higher education, minority students often feel out of place, and their belonging to the institution is questionable.

In recent decades, many institutions have tried to increase the diversity of students in their student population. They initiate to include students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Most ethnic minority students are first-generation college students and often come from working-class backgrounds. Students from lower social-class backgrounds believe that they hold a lower rung of the social hierarchy. In an academic setting, they earn lower grades and more drops out than the continuing generation of college students. Instead, the first-generation college student cannot fully take the opportunity that higher education has provided. First-generation or minority college students felt they did not belong in university settings (Stephens, 2009). Promoting students' belonging and efficacy in an academic environment is related to bridging cultural continuity to the institutional culture. Thus, this study

attempted to explore the ethnic minority student's educational experience in higher education.

3.3 Review of Literatures

The benefit of higher education is not only for individual mobility but also for social mobility. The working-class members resided in the disadvantaged locality, possessed fewer resources, experienced geographical immobility, attended substandard schooling, and were less represented in higher education. Availing such education did not prepare learners well for higher studies. Similarly, ethnic minority students tend to be underrepresented and more college dropouts. Enrolling in higher education means encountering colleagues from privileged backgrounds and the faculty and academic staff from different social sections. Also, language becomes a barrier to many students from minority backgrounds. The education system expects its students would be competent enough to self-express, have a good command of the English language, understand the concept, articulate the idea, and describe it well. The present study mainly focuses on ethnic minority college student experience and its characteristics, looking through cultural perspectives lenses.

Person knowledge and intelligibility emerge from its belonging culture. The meaning of competence differs; that is, the notion of success and failure interpret differently in various cultures. For example, in the Western cultural perspective, a person's moral code revolves around self-fulfillment. At an early age, American parents pay more attention to establishing independence in children. However, in the Indian cultural context, a person holds a relational view of self. Children have to obey what elders have said and highly emphasize interdependence. People put more

emphasis on family or group concerns rather than personal accomplishments. Moreover, Misra and Gergen (1993) revealed that teachers' and pupils' relations are hierarchical in India and believe that disciplined life is a good life (p.234). Also, people emphasized and passed the family obligation, collective values, helping others in need, and taking blessings from elders were surpassed from generation to generation.

However, culture is not static; instead, it is dynamic. Most people hardly realize that they possess culture; they may believe that the world they see or act in is universal. We generally perceive that culture is stable and homogenous to a nation. For example, European Americans endorse an independent model of self-construal, whereas East Asians endorse interdependent self-construal. But, culture varies even in the same country and within the region. Instead, individual differences and belonging social backgrounds play a crucial role in reflecting such differences. People generally tend to reflect on their socio-historical and cultural points of view. Often person's cultural framework is related to their social belonging. Instead, the human minds and selves are socially structured (Turner & Oakes, 1997).

A sense of human motivation comes from its belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Students from ethnic minorities experience a cultural discontinuity in higher education. It affects their belongingness in the institution, self-expression, and ability perception. So, it is essential to research how to improve ethnic minority students' academic effectiveness? Exploring the educational experience is vital to address the continuing problem that minority students face in higher education. Thus,

our first study explores ethnic minority students' academic experience in higher education.

3.3.1 An Insight into the North-east Region of India

The Northeast (N.E.) region lies at the periphery, far from the mainland. Earlier northeastern states consisted of seven states: Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, and Manipur. In 2002, the regions included Sikkim in the North Eastern Council (NEC). Most of the states of this region share histories and traditions and are ethnically and economically related. So, presently, the area has comprised of eight states. Eight northeastern states included the eleven states that collectively chose the "Special Category of States" (Bhattacharjee, 2016). Special categories of states are suffered inadequately in terms of economic and social development.

In general, people of the mainland perceived that India's northeastern region is limited to people belonging to a community. However, many communities have resided in the area. They have practiced different socio-cultural traditions and had diverse food habits. Such differentness depends on the location of the people they inhabit. Most of the state has faced insurgency problems, and many places are underdeveloped in terms of lack of transportation and infrastructure. Also, the regions hold different faiths, including Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Buddhism, etc., and the rest follow an indigenous religion. Most people who resided in the hills adopted Christian beliefs, and their culture was influenced by Christianity (Barua, 2006, p.33).

The culture of the northeast region is quite distinct from mainland Indian culture (Bhattacharjee, 2016). There was a long neglecting history of this region, but the central government has recently shown concern through India's "look east" policy. Later, it changes to the "act east" policy. The region has experienced many disadvantages, including a lack of transportation and infrastructure, fewer higher institutions, fewer manufacturing and storage units, etc. Because of these reasons, the regions have hindered economic and social growth.

Moreover, the region is not free from ethnic clashes between groups. Another problem in this region is people often protest against the military and paramilitary forces [e.g., to repeal Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA-1958)]. This kind of social unrest in society may cause bands, blockades, and curfew time after time. Besides, the regions have often experienced natural calamities (e.g., earthquakes, floods, and landslides), and such uncertainties often cause them to pay their daily expenses at high prices. Many people of this region face challenges in fulfilling their basic needs mainly because of natural calamities or social unrest. Social and economic instability affected people's day-to-day lives and academic environments.

Generally, members of this region believe there is a lack of social interests and power relations between the area and the mainland. It might be because they do not find common shared history. Instead, the contingency of these regions to the Indian territory is a dilemma of being forced. Moreover, the culture of the northeast region does not necessarily congruent with the mainstream cultural values. And people of this region often experienced a history of exploitation and marginalization in the mainstream frame.

Furthermore, the culture of higher education is accustomed to the privileged class and reflects Western or mainstream cultural values. On the other hand, members of ethnic groups have practiced distinct cultural values, belief systems, interaction styles, and social structures. There is a marked cultural difference between the northeast section of society and mainstream society. Also, many ethnic-minority students are first-generation college students and often belong to the working-class background. In the case of first-generation college students, it seems like they are entering the new territory. They attended low-quality schooling; such education has offered a lack of college preparation. Ethnic minority students perceive academic success as almost equal to ceasing the traditional values and practices.

However, the problem that northeast students face in higher education is different, and such varying problem is because of the individual difference, social background, and earlier education they had. Also, it is influenced by people belonging to different social backgrounds and attaining various social statuses in society. Many minority students face communication problems in education and are unfamiliar with academic jargon. Moreover, the members of the northeastern region faced cultural discontinuity in mainstream society due to their distinct cultural beliefs (Subba, 2012). Experiencing cultural discontinuity in the institution develops doubt about their academic ability and makes them feel incompetent. Many students assume that they neither belong nor succeed in academic settings. Ethnic minority students' educational challenges in higher education are more than academic there are social and cultural barriers. Thus, analyzing ethnic minority students' academic experience in higher education is vital.

3.3.2 The Setting

The data was collected from a public university in Delhi. This university is reputed and scored higher on the country's top university list. Besides, this university is also known for its effort to maintain student diversity in its student population. The university tends to provide several services and activities to support minority students.

3.4 Method

3.4.1 Interview Procedure

We informed students that the study aims to learn college experiences of ethnic minority students. Firstly, we present a consent form to the participants. The purpose of the consent form is to ensure that the participants willingly participate in the study, though they were free to withdraw at any time without any further explanation. The interview questionnaire is in a semi-structured format. We informed participants that their providing information would be kept confidential and used for educational purposes only.

3.4.2 Sample Characteristics

The ten northeastern students who pursued higher education in Delhi have participated in the study. The sample characteristic included the student population from undergraduate to postgraduate, in which four are pursuing M.A., and two each from B.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. students. Including four male and six female students participated in the study; the mean age is 24.6. The interview lasted 30-60 minutes. At

the end of the interview, participants were asked to recommend other fellow students in the university.

The study intends to explore the ethnic minority student's experiences in higher education. The interviews were conducted at an academic institution area, hostels, canteen, and dhabha. However, the interview procedure was identical for all the participants, including consent forms and research questions.

3.5 Analytic Strategy

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data and guide the development of the themes. Our study followed an inductive approach, so our themes emerged from the data. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) instruction, interview materials were read and re-read several times. Verbal data were transcribed into written form. To familiarize ourselves with the data, we read repeatedly and search for themes. We gathered the information together and identified the broader themes that link to recurrent elements. Initially, we code many potential themes and even extract different sub-themes from an individual. Later, we define and further refine, and finally, we refocus on narrowing the subject.

The main reason for employing thematic analysis is to capture the emerging issues that would guide the hypothesis for further study. The journey of ethnic minority students in higher education is like entering a new territory, where one does not know the presumption rules of the game. And they had limited support from friends and family to pursue higher studies. Ethnic minority and working-class students who attain higher education do not necessarily mean they successfully access

the dominant culture. Some students cross the cultural boundary smoothly, while others struggle to cross it. Also, working-class students face more adversity in mainstream institutions than middle-class students. We found in the study that some participants struggled against the odds to attain higher education. Each participant sharing information was unique and remarkable, though we report the major emerging themes.

3.6 The Emerging Themes:

3.6.1 Theme 1: Social-Class based Socialization

The history of education is overshadowed by class and caste inequalities. After many reports and recommendations, the barriers remain the same. Social-class inequality is reproduced in higher education because it employs particular cultures (Stephens et al., 2012). Higher education is out of reach for many students, and if students enroll in the institution, they find it hard to survive in the system. It might be because of their limited representation, financial problems, and the widely prevalent elite and middle-class culture of independence. Holding an ethnic identity and observing less participation, ethnic minority students perceive they are different from other peers. One M.A. student explained,

I did not understand the reality of the caste system until I came to the university. Here I realized that everyone is not equal. Some kinds of hierarchy, namely caste, class, race, and gender, are the biggest obstacle in society. Somehow, it is not separate from each other. Anyway, a person is more tends to judge by holding an ethnic identity. Being different from other students makes me feel low on my capability and competence.

Another M.A. student commented,

The cultures of higher education mechanically back up for those students from privileged backgrounds. Those who differ from them suffered academically. And another problem that minority students often face is language barriers; the way we talk and express ourselves is different. We express our thoughts when necessary, and other students express their thoughts to prove they are knowledgeable. In academics, those who do not follow such patterns are the ones who face the problem most. And then many ethnic minority students are first-generation college learners in their families and even in their communities. Unsurprisingly, many of them lose their academic careers in the journey. They face difficulty understanding the academic jargon, lack of college preparation, and academic tracks. Also, we are unaware of higher education facilities for its learners, so we often miss many opportunities and educational aids.

The culture of the mainstream middle-class is prevalent in higher education. While transitioning to college, many students experience sociocultural discontinuity. Those discontinuity problems were fading away with time. But in the context of ethnic minority students, cultural discontinuity persists (Tyler et al., 2008). Engaging in higher education means adopting mainstream cultural values. Students from underprivileged backgrounds often need to discontinue their initial cultural values to optimize their academic outcomes. Accessing higher education means negotiating the two cultural ideals: home and educational culture. One Ph.D. student revealed that,

Our society is closely associated with class systems besides race and gender. Social class determines almost every part of our lives. It verifies who you are, where you live, the school you attend, the food you eat, the dress you wear, and how you speak.

The uses of language and mannerisms differ among people of different social backgrounds. The university culture and language practices are more similar to the upper-middle-class cultural norms. Students from a working-class background needed

to learn the culture and language norms besides academic understanding of the subject matter. An M.Phil. student commented,

The language problem is a common issue for many students from the northeast. Earlier, I barely understood what other students were talking about inside and outside the class, is not a smooth transition for me. It seems very funny that there has been a time when other peers spoke more to me, the less I understood. Thankfully, I overcame it, or I can say I learned along the way. Anyway, one can cope with such difficulties with firm determination. What you have to do is first you have to find out what are the available support systems in your circumstances. Second, you do not have to be afraid all the time; instead, take part in it, whether right or wrong. And third, you can take help from your peers, or you have to put extra effort into capturing those complex ideas. In this way, you have to spend lots of time in study. If necessary, you read the material several times and try to make sense of those problematic nonsensical words. I know it is not an easy job, but it is achievable. I believe things are changeable; instead, it is just a matter of time. So, with time, the difficulty would fade away.

The variation of social class has held different beliefs system. One M.A. student pointed out that people of various social backgrounds hold diverged understanding and belief systems.

I think I have become a bit of a self-oriented person. Nowadays, I am not hanging out with students committed to working and helping others exceedingly. They are too naive and single-minded sometimes and tend to remind you of your guilt for not participating in their initiative. It is not that I do not like to help others in need. It is a matter of time, and I have different educational goals.

Attending higher education means to uplift one's knowledge and social circumstances. The working-class student felt a sense of uncertainty and incompetency in higher education. While admitting to college, working-class students felt the pride of enrolling in such a course, but those satisfactions become simmering later. Because many minority students maintain their ethnic identity and resist

endorsing the values of mainstream institutions; also, they find it hard to fulfill the academic demand. In general, working-class people put more emphasis on values (Granfield, 1991). A third-year B.A. student explained,

I do maintain my ethnic identity. Manage time and do participate in community gatherings. It gives me a sense of commune and realizing the person as who I am. The social or community group makes you feel at ease and comfortable in a competitive environment. I think it is needed to refresh your mind.

One of the Ph. D. research scholars stated that she felt out of place in the mainstream institution because the higher education cultures prevail the upper-middle-class cultural values.

I do appreciate my ethnic upbringing and humble background. But, I am no longer participating in ethnic, community-oriented group activities. It is not that I have changed much. I think it is just because of timing. And at the same time, I also tried to maintain distance from the elitist crowd, mainly emphasizing the different value systems.

Students tend to make friends and groups with the same ability or based on the same social background. One M.A. student stated,

I have many friends from my region. We had shared beliefs and similar understanding, so I found relief with them. The problem with other peers is communication and lots of attitudinal issues. I am an average student at study. Anyway, when I am with friends from my place, I feel right to be myself. I believe without them, the journey would be uninterested, or I might lose in this world. It makes me acknowledge my existence. After all, I do not need to pretend to be someone else. For example, talking in a different language, wearing a formal dress in academic settings, or attending social gatherings makes me feel like I am imposing on someone else; I mean, people are too formal. When I am with my friends from the same region, I feel easy and comfortable, and I do not need to worry about what others might think of me. It is so natural, and the communication goes smoothly. I can say it is effortless to express what I believe, and others would understand as it is. For me, community gathering helps me a lot. I think such an environment is needed; it is like you just got a chance to be yourself in a harsh world. Other

peers from different regions told me, "you guys are very commune, and most of the time, you guys stick only with your ethnic group." But the thing is, while you make friends from your region, you do not have to make any extra effort to be friends with them. And after all, you do not face problems in communicating with them. Besides, if you stick with your communes, you can often have a chance to eat traditional food as we cooked at home. Otherwise, you have to eat lots of oily and spicy food at the hostel or canteen. Here, I am trying to say that making friends from the same region has many advantages and disadvantages at the same time. The main disadvantage of mingling with your ethnic group is that you do not get a chance to learn other cultural perspectives. Your language difficulty with others will remain the same even if you complete the course. But, when you stick with your communes, you are more relaxed because you know they have some similarities through common shared values and traditions. We see such togetherness as a social support system in a larger unsupportive world.

Students from less privileged backgrounds or working-class members were embarrassed about their social belonging, limited financial status, and their parents' lower occupational jobs. Students from the lower social class face difficulty getting along with other colleagues because of facing other shortcomings in their possession. One M.A. student described that,

My classmate would ask me what my parents did. I replied that my father is an electrician and my mother is a homemaker. They would be surprised. Most of my classmates are sons and daughters of Doctors, Engineers, and other professional jobs. Later on, we have not got along, and also we have some attitudinal problems. Anyway, to better participate in the eminence culture, one should acquire a new dress code, manner of speech, attitudes, and finally, confidence matters a lot.

Students' high school academic credentials and family background matter at college while persisting and achieving their educational goals. More importantly, to succeed in academics, students need to know the academic track or rules of the game. An M.Phil. student commented,

Often, students from our region found it hard to understand the intellectual tradition. Unfamiliar to many students, despite holding middle-class status. It is a hard place, even if you are rich also. Some are better than others. I had struggled for the past one and half years in my research. Still, I have not cleared my research ideas and procedure, and I do not know what to do.

People have different notions about choosing an institution. Students from the working-class face lack of proper guidance regarding selecting an institution and even opting for the subject matter. People from the middle class have a better knowledge of higher studies and career options. One M.Phil. student described a complex institutional hierarchy,

While I enrolled in the course at this university, I finally felt relief. I am registering here because of my friends who guide me. I do not want to look up some random universities. Some are very expensive, and at the same time, many universities do not maintain quality. And in the future also they are not relevant to get a good job. Many random universities almost failed to maintain the quality of education. It is better to wait to take admission to a prestigious university than to register at some low-grade university.

In summary, students make friends based on similar abilities or backgrounds. Students from less privileged or lower social classes realized that they were different from other students. Specifically, they did not seem too aware of the rule of the games or academic track. Minority and working-class students lacked the socio-cultural capital appropriate for higher studies. They do possess lower educational credentials than the middle-class student. And they face struggles in selecting an institution, the subject matter, and career paths. Minority students and students from the working class often experience unfamiliarity with academic socialization, especially expressing and presenting themselves in front of others.

3.6.2 Theme 2: Felt Differentness and Fear of Being Judged

Ethnic minorities and students from disadvantaged backgrounds often tend to be first-generation college students. Generally, they come from less privileged backgrounds and belong to the less represented group in higher education (Strayhorn, 2006, p.83). Less likely to complete their academic course and get a degree. In an academic setting, they experienced a lower level of integration in an educational and social aspects. It is mainly because those students of the lower social class and first-generation college students were unaware of the higher education culture and its unknown expectations (Stephens et al., 2012). Ethnic minority students feel alienated at the mainstream institution because of some taken-for-granted rules and often encounter misfits in the culture of higher education. Ethnic minority students' inability to perform academically desire levels in education is experiencing inadequate academic preparation, social conditions, family environment, and income (Wright, 1991).

Many students get a new identity at college; some are categorized as committed and determined versus less committed at study and undetermined, wonderer, or hopeless students. Students can lend in any of these categories in the academic journey, but the following aspects are alarming. In this case, individuals tend to learn more about group stigmatization. One M.A. student shares her college experience,

When I did not perform well in tests or exams, people started questioning my social group ability, like belonging to a particular ethnicity, class, caste, gender, etc. I am an average student and attended a local school. Most of my classmates participated in a well-known elite school, and some were toppers.

Having interaction and discussions with other colleagues put me in a state of confusion. I do not know how to lead a conversation. We have no commonality and a different understanding. Such differences bother me a lot.

Generally, we perceive that individual behavior is associated with group membership. Individuals' unique identity tends toward the attitudes of their group belonging. While enrolling in colleges, students from ethnic minority and disadvantaged backgrounds often require additional support systems, such as academic mentoring and social support (Stephens et al., 2012; Strayhorn, 2006). They got little help from their families and often did part-time jobs to support their educational and living expenses. They do domestic work at home if they live with family. So, they got limited time to devote to scholarly pursuits and often less participated in extracurricular activities.

Many students from an ethnic minority background are familiar with colloquial expressions but unfamiliar with the rhetoric and academic jargon. They are less self-expressive in classroom discussions and prefer to be silent. Sometimes, they develop a fear of being judged to share their opinions and thoughts. But, this fear of being judged varies among students holding self-construal and also belonging to different social classes. Instead, students with interdependent self-construal were reported more fear of being judged than those with independent self-construal. Much of these fears came from academic inadequacy, lack of subject knowledge, language difficulty, and endorsing different cultural values. Despite scoring good grades, they worried about other shortages they had. They think that they are not up to the level of institutional standards. One B.A. student explained,

I often felt different in an academic setting because I was not born and brought up in such an environment. Ethnic minority students have experienced less academic exposure and hardly attain extracurricular activities to support their theoretical understanding. Besides, there is a lack of representation of students from different backgrounds in higher education. In my condition, the lack of ethnic minority representation in students, teachers, and staff populations makes me ask many questions like whether I would survive and succeed academically. So in such circumstances, feeling discomfort and uncertainty is a familiar context for students like me.

Ethnic minority and working-class students had difficulty understanding the mainstream institution's commonsense. Because most of them are first-generation college students, their parents had not attended or earned a college degree. Such students had a lack of exposure to middle-class mainstream culture before college. Subsequently, in higher education, ethnic minorities and students from the working class often experience the feeling of "strangers in paradise."

They experience a cultural mismatch between the prevalent privileged class of the institutions and their home social background. Experiencing such cultural differences often makes facing or competing with other colleagues uneasy. Those students are often unsure about the "right" approach to acting like college students. Consequently, they doubt their ability, so they start questioning whether they belong in the institution and succeed in academic settings (Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2009; Stephens et al., 2012). A student of B.A. explained,

Nearly sixty of our students' strengths in the classroom, only two were from the north-eastern region. I belong to a remote village, where we know everyone in that community. The village members are interactive, interdependent, and have a support system in the community. In contrast, in higher education, people are unique and show confidence, act smart, and prove that one is better than others. I felt like a stranger and felt out of place. Instead, I believe I did not belong here. I am a bit confused and feeling low. As if I do not know how to behave like a student.

Ethnic minority and lower social class students face various challenges in higher education. They receive less support from their family attending higher studies and often do part-time jobs. Committing to a part-time job, they have limited time to study. Despite gaining admission to a prestigious institution, many students tend to worry. They felt they were not up to the level and often felt academically disadvantaged. It is mainly due to attending substandard schooling and being aware of different values imposition. Higher education culture is widely prevalent by upper-middle-class norms, so students from lower social class backgrounds tend to hide their social belonging in fear of being judged negatively. One M.Phil. student explained her experiences,

As students from the northeast region, we tend to judge before what we are even talking about or doing something. People have a preconceived notion that we are not meticulous at study or work. No matter how well we perform, there is always a bias on the other's side. To change such prejudice and misperception, people need to learn and educate themselves more about different social structures and cultures with an open mind. And I also think that the education system requires awareness of students' diversity, and the syllabus needs to be inclusive.

Moreover, one of the M.A. students reveals that,

I was a bit aware of the social hierarchy practiced in mainstream society. So, I am conscious of my social belonging. It is more or less like one performance or thing is related to one's social background. For example, if you are not performing well in an exam, it is easy to analyze who you are and your group belonging. Sometimes, I felt irritated about that. I realize that other classmates had a better social life and educational credentials. The school which I attended does not support most extracurricular activities. And I hardly get a chance to participate in any academic exposure before college. When it comes to classroom discussion, I stay silent because I was too aware of using "proper" English. And I tend to worry about what will happen if I associate with wrong words or tenses. My English proficiency was not good, so my mind was occupied with what others might think of me if I committed a mistake while speaking. So, I kept quiet and listened to other views.

Sometimes, I wonder how my colleagues formulate questions quickly and put their opinions nicely.

Learners' educational and occupational outcomes influence the socio-cultural capital of the family (Coleman, 1988; DiMaggio, 1982). Students from underrepresented groups and disadvantaged backgrounds are less self-expressive and less competent in the educational system. But, such an outcome causes by experiencing socio-cultural differences and economic disadvantages. First-generation college students or students from underprivileged backgrounds often find the academic environment unreal. They are also less likely to engage and participate in extracurricular activities. One of the M.A. students explained,

I belong to a big family, where income and resources are almost limited; most of us are dependent on the head of the family. Many family members disagreed with my decision to pursue higher studies; instead, they wanted me to get an instant job and support the family to meet the end. To maintain financially, I did private tuition for children. It did not get much money, but it was manageable. I did not pay much attention to my appearance, like how I looked and how presentable I was in front of others. I often wear some shirts and jeans; it is comfortable for me. I distance myself from social gatherings and hardly participate in extracurricular activities. I think I live in my world. And the financial crunch which I experience makes me isolated from other students and attending extracurricular activities. I am still pursuing higher studies because of the quality of education and the low fees facility of this university.

Students from the middle class possess higher academic credentials and are aware of the culture associated with higher education. Only a few working-class students can maintain such academic credentials. Historically, higher education is availed only to those members of the elite or members of the affluent backgrounds. Facing educational inadequacy and cultural discontinuity in mainstream institutions is not new for minorities and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Experiencing

such inadequacy subsequently developed a fear of being judged and felt like an outsider in mainstream society. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) pointed out that black students who excel in academics are considered "acting white" by peers. So, black students who are good at academics have to carry the burden of acting white from peers. Additionally, ethnic minority students fear being judged not only by the outgroup members but also by their ingroup members. One M.A. student explained,

Fear of being judged is not only from the outgroup but also from the ingroup members. Ethnic minority students who try to assimilate into the academic culture are portrayed as people who have no respect for their ingroup, the selfish one, or a person whose soul is almost as equal as "sold out." Consider the person who is willing to live and act like a puppet. On the other hand, students who prioritize themselves or take the path of the mainstream institutional culture believe that academic success is not only for personal interest. Instead, academic achievements can contribute to society at large. Such misunderstanding often occurs between peers.

In college, students often tend to bring their home cultural practice. For example, ethnic minority students get their home cultural practice, ethnic values, and attitudes to academic settings. But in an educational context, learners must prove they are competent, knowledgeable, and reflective of their feelings and thoughts. So, practicing different norms from educational values is considered inappropriate. One M.A. student mentioned that,

If you know that your group belonging is one of the stigmatized groups. And if you want to achieve a certain level in academics, you need to work twice as hard to run along with others. So, I believe in it and spend lots of time in the library, referencing many articles and books. Now, I am no longer bothered about what others might think about me and what kind of impression I made. Earlier I was too concerned about what others might be thinking of me. Time after time, I improved myself. So, now it does not matter which social group I belong to. It is just beyond my limit to correct other people's misconceptions. Instead, I better commit myself to work harder and achieving my academic goal. Any society needs knowledge, money, and power; as a student, it's

better to focus on personal goals. So that later on, I can contribute more to my group and community.

In sum, ethnic minority students develop a fear of being judged in higher education because they are not familiar with the academic culture and unaware of the academic track. They attended substandard schooling, which did not adequately support pursuing higher studies. Students experience fear of being judged both by the outgroup and ingroup members. Many ingroup members perceive those individuals who try to accommodate the academic culture as someone who do not care about the group values and depict as selfish ones. Moreover, the fear of being judged is caused by the language barrier. That leads to communication problems with peers and teachers. Also, they are less self-expressive in an academic setting mainly because of their belonging cultural traditions. Even if they know well, ethnic minority students prefer to be silent in the classroom.

Furthermore, some students face difficulty with English proficiency, which bothers them to speaking publicly or worry about committing grammatical mistakes and tenses. Their belonging to academic institutions is often questionable. Instead, they believe they are an outsider who does not know the rule of the game. Also, they get limited support from their family and friends to attend higher education. Because of their constrained circumstances, family members often want them to get an instant job after schooling. So they had implicit or hardly get support from the family to pursue higher studies. Thus, their developing fear of being judged is the interaction of academics, social, economic, language barriers, and cultural factors.

3.6.3 Theme 3: Students Self-expression

The higher education system expected its students to be self-expressive, self-dependent, and know-how to motivate them to achieve their academic goals. Many ethnic minority students face difficulty expressing their views explicitly in front of others. It is because their belonging culture is markedly different from institutional culture. To maximize academic outcomes, minorities and students from lower social class backgrounds need to cultivate the interpersonal skills that mainstream institutions practice. To be effective learners, students have to develop good social skills, manners of speech, and values associated with more privileged counterparts (Granfield, 1991). One M.A. student mentioned,

First, when I came to this university, I was in my little world and excited to be part of it. Later on, I felt a sense of discomfort and unease to think that other students came from better social backgrounds and possessed more academic credentials than me. They look pretty smart, and I am the opposite one. Simply that thought causes anxiety. As time passes, I hardly interact and restrict myself from sharing my views with others.

Moreover, one Ph.D. student explained her academic experience,

I was often conscious about how I presented myself in the classroom, especially in front of other colleagues, because our self-presentation at home differs from the institutional practice. I belong to a conservative family, and we, as family members, collectively practiced and followed many rules and regulations at home. One of the rules is that younger family members have to be obedient to what elders say. Such imposing rules are implicit as well as explicit. So, the family's young ones must practice listening more and speaking less. The one who follows this instruction becomes obedient and a role model in the family. But it differs in an academic setting; teachers and educators expect students to be self-expressive and participate in the classroom discussion. Besides, the school I attended did not encourage such active participation in classroom discussion; instead, students were supposed to be quiet and active listeners. While attending college, whenever a presentation or classroom discussion happens, I tend to worry and panic;

because I do not know how to ask and formulate a research question. But, with time, I learn some skills. It is just that one's has to relax and be reflective.

The notion of self differs in different cultures, and each culture has a unique self-presentation. For example, in western culture, freedom of expression signifies individual freedom. In contrast, in most Asian cultures, the one who explicitly expresses the thoughts is not considered positive but perceived as indecent (Kim & Sherman, 2007). In an individualist culture, self-expression means expressing oneself and beliefs that self-expression reflects one's thoughts. On the other hand, the East Asian cultural context did not perceive that talking and thinking were connected; instead, they believed that talking might interrupt thought processes (Kim, 2002, p. 829). But, the context of higher education culture highly emphasizes the independent model of self. According to the existing academic culture, students from diverse cultures need to adopt the new educational culture to maximize their academic outcomes. However, many students find it challenging to integrate the existing culture because self-expression relates to their personality traits. One M.Phil. student commented on this,

Sometimes, it's hard to express what I felt and thought. I guess talking might interrupt a person's thinking. While thinking, it's difficult for me to state my thought. Maybe it might be because I hold an introverted personality.

Every culture has a unique way of self-expression. In a collectivist culture, a person expressing one's choices and preferences explicitly in front of others does not perceive positively; instead, it views as a lack of manner. Instead, maintaining the state of silence and self-introspect is the idealized way of thinking. To be educated

means to claim a new identity for the student from less privileged backgrounds (Baxter & Britton, 2001). One M.A. student explained,

Unlike most students here, I did not get a chance to experience such academic exposure before in my life. I believe becoming educated means being assertive and confident. Many of us needed to establish a new identity at college. So, I think students from lower social backgrounds must learn and adapt to the new academic way of life. Though it is not easy, it also requires lots of time, effort, and money.

Another barrier that ethnic minority students frequently face in education is language. Language is the medium to express one opinion and the means of communication. Ethnic minority students often face difficulty communicating in the English language. One B.A. students share the experience,

It seems like the language problem is universal to many students from ethnic backgrounds. Sometimes, language becomes such a barrier that it makes you feel inefficient, powerless, and out of place. For example, if you have a doubt about the classroom lecture and want to ask a question, but you cannot make it. Because, first, you do not know how to formulate an appropriate question; second, you worry about expressing your doubt in a presentable way. Third, you know you will most likely commit grammatical mistakes, and fourth, you do not want to be an idiot for asking such a simple question in front of others. After all, such a notion bothers me the most. So, I remain silent in the classroom.

Also, one of the M.A. students explained the difficulty of sharing the opinions in front of others,

I have trouble expressing my opinion, unlike other students. It seems like they are born and brought up in this way. I believe I differ from other students in the way they talk, their nature, and their way of holding an attitude. Besides, I also felt different from others because of my ethnic appearance, distinct accent, and social background. But, in my mind, I thought they were too loud and noisy. I think people should be polite and respect other points of view.

Individual identity affects one's personal and academic life experiences. Roberts et al. (1999) revealed that holding an ethnic identity influences individual self-concept. Maintaining ethnic identity in mainstream or dominant society is sometimes associated with feeling inadequacy and low self-regard. However, to be mature students and value diversity, students need to attend extracurricular activities to accumulate knowledge and participate in discussions and debates. Such participation motivates learners to view other perspectives and becomes aware of the different value systems. And it also encourages learners to be decent and respect diverse viewpoints. Furthermore, students' self-expression depends on cultural continuity to the institutional environment and its value perspective. One M. A. student pointed out,

While I was doing my graduation, I heard a lot about this university. I also heard that the student population is almost diverse. So, I felt it was the right place to study. One can avail of a higher quality of education with a low fee structure. People are more aware of cultural diversity viewpoints, so I felt more relaxed. I feel fortunate, safe, and happy to be part of this university. And I am surprised to know that after class, students gathered nearby dhabhas or administrative blocks to discuss the perspectives of famous philosophers or renowned scientists (e.g., Foucault, Marx, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Rousseau, Bourdieu, and so on) and even analyzed the government events and policies. You see, such a kind of environment provides an opportunity to know things better, gives the chance to open up and feel free to speak up. And, I learn how to be decent and value diverse viewpoints. We need to nurture such an environment to maintain the quality of education and for a better future.

Furthermore, some northeast students are more expressive than their peers. The difference is noticeable because of education, individual differences, and social status. Similarly, Kim and Sherman (2007) revealed that college-educated participants are more concerned about self-expression than the less educated. One Ph.D. student commented on self-expression,

Luckily, I do not have much problem articulating my opinion or thought. Expressing my view is of utmost importance and a core aspect of selfhood. I do participate in classroom discussions, whether it is right or wrong. I took part in it and shared my perspectives. Since childhood, my parents have encouraged me to speak up on whatever ideas came to my mind. Being self-expressive and participating in the decision-making process is natural to me. Such practices are internalized and attributed to my childhood. My parents are very supportive: first, they are the ones to ask me to pursue higher studies outside the northeastern region, and my answer was yes. It seems like they read my mind. They believe that youth must experience a new culture and new environment. Second, my parents are traditionalists but not a fanatic. They encourage me to be self-independent and explore things. They could not believe that the limited exposure and lack of experience would make a person progress further. After spending some time at the university and the knowledge I get through, I have become more confident. And finally, my parents did not bother me with making a mistake; instead, they told me that mistake is part and parcel of life. What matters in life is you have to learn from that mistake and try not to repeat it. They told me whatever happens in life, "you have to be honest and be yourself." I am delighted to get support from my parents, the value system, and allow the freedom to express myself.

Student from a periphery region has faced many disadvantages in mainstream institutions. For example, the classroom discussions typically focus on the mainland. Such circumstances indirectly sideline and put some restrictions on students from marginalized sections of society sharing their opinions. It makes them feel that they are outsiders and that their views do not matter in the discussion. One M.A. student reflected on this,

Being a northeasterner has many disadvantaged in the mainstream institution. I have many issues. Even in my academic discipline, that is Political Science. Most classroom discussions focused on the politics of predominant states such as the U.P., Bihar, Gujarat, etc. We analyze their political views and effect on politics, and very few or almost no debates on the political context of the north-eastern region.

In sum, self-expression is part of a personal trait. But, people belonging to cultures influence self-expression. Some students believe that talking might interrupt

thought processes. Besides, observing the limited representation of their group members in the educational environment restricted them from sharing their opinion freely. In addition, some students struggle with English proficiency, so it becomes a barrier to self-expression. Experiencing language barriers in higher education makes learners feel incompetent, helpless, and out of place. But at large, the university environment and culture play a vital role in students' self-expression. Making an inclusive environment and valuing diverse viewpoints help to motivate learners. Also, students can attribute such values to participating in extracurricular activities. However, some minority students are very expressive than others. Such differences occur because of individual differences, academic exposure before college, cultural practices, social status, and the family's support to pursue higher studies.

3.6.4 Theme 4: Feeling Ambivalence and Skeptic about Academic Success

Minority and members of lower social class are less represented in higher education. Those groups are more attached to stigma in the educational setting that links with intellectually inferior groups and consider them less focused on study. Moreover, members of ethnic and racial groups experience differential treatment in mainstream society and often experience devaluation and discredit. In addition, lower-income students have low achievement histories (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). In the mainstream institution, minorities and members of less privileged backgrounds face disadvantages such as cultural discontinuity between home and academic institutions, lack of role models, less representation, and a job ceiling in adult life.

Many minority students develop skepticism about the relevance of academic success.

One M.A. student shares the experience,

In higher education, teachers' expectation is high. You have to master the field and have a good command of the English language. In my case, I am the only one from the northeast region in class; sometimes, I feel too small in a crowded place, and suddenly my confidence goes down. I do not know whether I would be able to live up to that expectation. I doubted my ability and started asking people like me to belong in this field? Sometimes, the number of ethnic student representation matters a lot.

Students who experience sociocultural differences in education face more educational challenges because those students are unaware of the taken-for-granted norms. The difference between minority and non-minority groups of students in higher education is the academic preparation they availed. Additionally, having a role model has played a significant role in students' life; it motivates the learner to persist and compel them to fulfill academic goals. The main reasons that minority students are ambivalent and skeptical about academic success cause by a lack of role models, a lack of educational aspiration, and facing discrimination in educational settings. One Ph.D. student revealed that,

Many minority students' low academic performances are caused by not knowing the rule of the game, the examination pattern, and the appropriate writing style. But, sometimes, students were misattributed that there is a weak relation between a college degree and the available job after college. They spend less time and effort on academic-related tasks. Sometimes, their belonging to the academic institution is questionable. Many students from my place believe that the educational environment is unreal.

Another Ph.D. student commented,

One of the main difficulties ethnic minority students often face in higher education is the lack of role models. Besides, they also face inadequate

academic preparation in schooling, and socioeconomic issues in their circumstances lead to educational disadvantages.

Previous research suggests that students whose parents attended college were more likely to continue college than those whose parents did not attend college (Tierney, 1992). Specific characteristics of student background help or divert from persisting college. Moreover, students who know better academic track are well-performed than those who are naive in the educational field. One B.A. student shares the viewpoint,

I am the first one to attend college in my family. And I am eagerly waiting to finish college. I am not planning to pursue further study; I think it is enough for me. Many friends told me I do not need many degrees to get a job. Pursuing higher studies and doing research is a long journey. A person has to devote lots of time and effort to focus on a specific thing, and after that, there is no guarantee of getting a good job. It sounds ridiculous to me.

One M.Phil student reflected on mixed feelings about academic prospects,

I have mixed feelings about attending higher education. On the first hand, it's good to pursue higher studies; on the other hand, there is no job security after spending such a long time studying. I have seen very few of my friends getting an academically equivalent job. People generally had misconceptions that ethnic minority students are not good at studies. Such stigma sticks with an ethnic minority group of students. And prejudice about their admission to higher studies is possible only through reservation policy. Some of my friends told me that, even at the workplace, people were often looking with doubt whether they could deal with their job efficiently or not. Again, members of an ethnic minority group often view educational prospects with suspicion. Instead, we view the academic environment are very artificial and that acquired knowledge is hard to apply in real life. It might be because the formal education system did not consider the aspiration of minority and less-privileged backgrounds.

Ethnic minority and working-class students often felt outsiders in the educational system. They doubt their ability and believe they do not belong to such an

elite community. According to the prevalent academic norms, minority students require to attribute academic skills with social skills; because their home socialization is markedly distinct from academic socialization. If they enroll in colleges, also they have to make drastic changes to adapt to the system. Such adjustments make it hard to cope with the academic challenges, and tend to drop out of the educational system without completing the courses. One B.A. student explained,

Sometimes, I felt doubt about my ability. I have seen many of my inner circle of friends dropping out of college. It often makes me feel like pursuing higher studies is not my cup of tea. I want to do things appropriately, but I do not know how. Things are not happening in my way; something is pulling me out.

To succeed in academics for minority students is almost like obliging to adopt the mainstream culture. But, in the process, sometimes they encounter that they deceit their group values over choosing the mainstream value. Those minority students who integrated into the mainstream culture were negatively sanctioned and called “puppets or dummies”. Who have no sense of their own and are willing to act like someone who does not belong. For example, in America, black Americans who tried to succeed academically and assimilate the mainstream culture were identified as "acting white." To compensate, black American students formed a cultural frame of reference that opposed the mainstream culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). They believe maintaining an oppositional cultural frame of reference is essential to protect and preserve cultural boundaries. However, endorsing the different cultural frames of reference affect their academic outcomes. Similarly, one B.A. student explained,

It is true that people needed to stick with their group. Even if you are a bad or good student, it does not matter; your existing group will not change. So, people should realize and save themselves from making such a mistake of letting down their group values. The duty of an educated person is too

responsible for their group's future, maintaining and preserving the boundaries from other groups if necessary.

Moreover, in the educational system, native and minority students lack role models and get less support from family and friends; experiencing such challenges makes them feel academic success is irrelevant (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Wright, 1991). In the case of higher education, there are fewer faculties and staff representations from ethnic backgrounds. One M.A. student shared an experience,

Ethnic minority students' main problem in education is a lack of role models, and had few success stories. If they got admission to a reputed university, they could not finish their course or get a degree; instead, they tend to drop out. Only a handful of students would succeed academically and get their dream job.

In sum, students' group belonging is essential for academic success. In the educational system, ethnic minorities or members of less privileged backgrounds were not considered academically intelligent fellows. Ethnic minority students carry the psychological burden of being different from the majority of students and are unknown to the academic rule of the game. In addition, the lack of role models and less ethnic group representation in university settings makes them doubt their ability. And emerge questions like whether they belong in the university setting. Besides, they also observe job ceilings in adult life and subsequently develop skepticism about academic success. They believe there is a weak relationship between academic success and future job orientation. So, they are more skeptical about academic prospects and ambivalent about putting time and effort into achieving educational goals.

3.6.5 Theme 5: Perception of Competence

A student's academic competence depends on following the educational standards and acceptance in mainstream institutions. The difference between minority and non-minorities students' academic performance and college persistence influences their academic preparation before college. Often, many college students have a vague notion of why they do so. Academic competence is the coordination of motivation, intellectual exposure, clear vision, and set to achieve specific goals. Motivation to complete college is a powerful desire for achievement (Allen, 1999). One M.A. student revealed that,

Coming to pursue M.A. is the first time I am coming out of my place. Initially, I found it hard to adjust to the new environment and the sudden exposure. I did my schooling and graduated from my hometown. I am an average guy studying. But, I always wanted to pursue higher studies at some renowned university. Earlier, I did not get a chance to enroll, but luckily I had this time. The problem with my places is that they did not maintain an academic atmosphere. Often, the educational environment interfered with the unstable social issues; and the academic syllabus would not cover them timely. But, we have to take an exam at the end of the year or semester. So, I decided to pursue an M.A. out of my place for better education and to explore new things. Experiencing limited academic exposure and a lack of guidance from family and friends, I had not gotten many ideas about choosing courses and colleges. I found many of my classmates are more knowledgeable than me, especially while verbally articulating their thoughts and raising questions. I felt stupid and dumb as compared to my peers. I also struggle to write an assignment. But, now I had learned some skills and gained confidence. I think I improved a lot and felt a bit lucky. And I feel good about this journey; it gives me a chance to prove myself and broadens my horizon. I also learned the value of debates and discussion. It is something like opening up my mind to the new windows. I see myself in a different direction; I hope it is for a better purpose.

Another M.A. student sharing the college experience,

I did not attend the so-called elite school; my other classmate shared their school experience more desirably. They boast about the facility of school and infrastructure which they attended. They participated in many extracurricular activities and had many academic exposures before college. Many are very outspoken and tend to score higher grades in the class. I believe it is natural for them to join classroom discussions or write an assignment. Sometimes, I feel alienated by the thought that I am the only one with lower educational credentials, and simply that feeling makes me anxious and down.

Another disadvantage of minority and working-class students is they face a lack of role models; to whom they can relate and practice similar values that would become a source of motivation. Having a role model is essential to achieving the desired academic goals. One M.Phil. student shares his experience,

Often students from the backward community face a lack of role models and guidance in the academic field. They did not know what subject they should choose for higher studies, which stream they should go to, and what was required to focus on a particular moment. My mind was blank after 10+2 (i.e., XII standard). I do not know what I suppose to do. Lack of academic guidance is typical for many of us from my background. To compete with other colleagues, one needs to hold strong confidence, a firm attitude, and know the academic track. I could not expect my immediate family to guide me on this journey because I am the first to attend college; others participated in formal education till high school. Most of them are farmers and participate in self-help groups, and others do jobs in some local factories. Experiencing a lack of role models and other challenges, such as language problems and financial hurdles, become a drawback in the academic journey. But, I have been firmly determined the study since childhood. Most of my family members are not interested in pursuing higher studies; instead, they want me to do a job. They think I attend enough education, and now is the time for me to support the family. So, I hardly got motivated to pursue higher studies from my family. How I got to enroll in college is like while schooling, one of my teachers provided some information about the benefit of attending higher education. And I dream about it; luckily, with the guidance of some friends, I got through. But, my perception of competence is different from other peers; I see pursuing and surviving in the field as a means of showing competence.

Student precollege academic credentials help connect with new concepts and play vital roles in earning good grades. It gives confidence to the learners that they

already know the fundamental concept. Moreover, adaptability to the new culture might predict student ability and college persistence. Ethnic minority students' academic problems correlate with inadequate academic preparation before college, insufficient financial support, an unsupportive institutional environment, and a lack of native role models (Wright, 1991). Here's one B.A. student who shares the experience,

At the university level, I have seen less representation of ethnic minority students in its student population. Wherever I go inside the campus, I notice mainland faces everywhere. This small representation makes me wonder, asking questions like whether I am at the right place? Whether I would be able to complete my course or I could make a place in this competitive world?

The mainstream middle-class culture is widely prevalent in the academic environment, so students from ethnic minority backgrounds face cultural discontinuity in higher education. Becoming a mature student in higher education means ceasing the working-classness and prior cultural values. So, students from less privileged backgrounds often feel disconnected from where they belong and who they are trying to become. They felt a competency crisis while interacting with better academic credentials and more privileged counterparts. One M.Phil. student explained,

There was a time I almost thought of dropout. I felt like an idiot and incompetent in many ways. Sometimes, I felt embarrassed for not being fluent and articulating ideas like other colleagues. I know it is normal for a student to face challenges in academics. But, considering the case of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, there is a need for a reliable support system at the university level. Also, we need supportive faculty to whom we can relate and feel comfortable stating the problem. And require the faculty to instruct the students on academics and the sense of self-worth.

Students from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds face many challenges in higher education. Often, they struggle to decide which college to enroll in and what subject to choose. In addition, they also face challenges in formulating research ideas,

writing an assignment, and presenting themselves appropriately in the academic environment. Experiencing those challenges subsequently make them feel incompetent in an educational setting. One M.A. student explained it,

I believe the academic underperformance of ethnic minority students causes by the lack of college preparation. To compete with other colleagues, one needs to possess a basic understanding of the subject matter. You see, I did my schooling and graduation back at home. Often, the syllabus did not cover appropriately because of sociopolitical unrest in society. Band and blockade are natural phenomena in the state. This kind of situation hit badly in an educational environment. In such circumstances, you need a support system. Otherwise, it is easy to disconnect and drop out. Schooling in such an environment and getting a chance to enroll in a reputed university made me feel proud initially. Later on, as time passes, as a student of M.A., you have to clear some basic understanding. The teacher expects you to know many things. And you start realizing that you are a stranger in a paradise. I hope you know what I mean where other students know almost everything, and you know nothing. Other peers had lots of ideas, and I often wondered where the idea came from; they formulated questions quickly and actively participated in the classroom discussion. Back home, my father reminds me to be aware of my belongings wherever I go. And told me, "when you go for a war, you have to bring your amenities with you." But, it seems like I am going for a war without any armor. Here I mean the lack of subject knowledge and distinct from other peers. Make me feel low, incompetent, and ashamed of myself.

Moreover, one M.A. student pointed out that lack of proper guidance and lack of career counseling is one reason that makes it feel incompetent in academia.

Some of my friends struggle badly in their subjects matter, and others drop out of college. Because they were not much aware of the subject matter and the course they took. Such a lack of guidance makes it difficult to fit into the system. For example, after 10+2 standards, some of my friends enrolled in colleges, they took subjects like PCM (Physics, Chemistry, and Maths); because they heard those subjects have good opportunities in the future. Without a clear idea of the subject and interest, they hit very badly, and later on, they drop out of college without getting a degree. So, proper guidance and counseling are needed, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In addition, some students indicate that the traditional school system causes academic difficulty in the college setting. One B.A. student pointed out that,

I felt incapable in many ways, especially when participating in classroom discussions and writing assignments. I could not articulate an idea creatively or adequately. I think it was mainly because of the education we generally avail in schooling. In school, teachers provided the answer, and we students needed to memorize it. Expecting us to write a similar copy of it in the exam, we got marks accordingly. We, as students, were neither taught nor encouraged to think and develop in more constructive and creative ways. This kind of educational practice, directly and indirectly, destroys creativity and builds up one own ideas. But, in higher education, teachers expect their students to be creative and develop their unique ideas. It seems like the educational aspects of schooling and colleges are just the opposite.

Moreover, there is a cost of being academically competent. While someone being proficient in academics has received a conflicting response from peers. Sometimes, other peers admire those talented students and want to be friends with them. But on the other hand, other students often dislike them and are labeled as nerds, arrogant and unfriendly. One M.A. student explained,

Trying to be competent students in an academic setting is elusive sometimes if you do not have a clear educational goal. In the journey, you will face many things you are unaware of and sometimes out of knowledge. Often being a minority student, you would get a conflicting reaction from your peers. Sometimes, other peers were reluctant to accept the hard work and effort you put into overcoming the barriers. They would question how one can get more of it? Many peers are not ready to accept the way you are, whether you would be more competent or less competent. The cost of being on both ends is when you are academically more knowledgeable, other peers dislike you and label you as a nerd, whereas when you are less competent, other peers feel pity for you and label you as stupid. Either way, you will find criticism, so the choice is yours.

Often, minority students lack confidence and self-assertive behavior, which other peers and faculty perceive as a bad attitude and less competent. One M.Phil.

student described that students from ethnic backgrounds lack self-confidence in the mainstream institution.

Ethnic minority students are unwilling to share their ideas and opinions in front of others. They prefer to hide it, even if they know the correct answer well. It's mainly because of experiencing communication barriers or respecting their home culture. Besides, many students face difficulty in English proficiency. We are more conscious about pronouncing the right words or using the right phrase, speaking the correct tenses, and so on. It is troublesome sometimes. And it is inappropriate to speak up or answer a question in the native language; if you do so, no one will understand. To be fit in higher education, one must master the English language's efficiency and subject knowledge. Also, one must ensure that the speaking accent must be acceptable and understandable to others. Students might overcome those fears if they had positive interactions with teachers and peers. So they get confidence and realize they can communicate smoothly, perform better, and compete with other peers. Overcoming such inferior feelings would boost individual self-confidence and one's ability.

Overall, the definition of competence is not the same for all students. Some students believe that surviving in the educational system proves competent. Ethnic minority students tend to struggle to compete with peers and fear that they are not up to the college standard because they experience a lack of motivation, role models, and confidence. Besides, they attend low-quality schooling. Such schooling inadequately prepared students for college. In addition, a lack of English proficiency becomes another barrier for many ethnic students. Also, lack of guidance and career counseling makes it challenging to survive and excel academically.

Furthermore, other students had some misconceptions about ethnic minority student competency. If minority students put extra effort into overcoming the language, academic, and cultural barriers, other students would not readily accept it; instead, they show the conflicting response considering a drudge, nerd, arrogant, etc.

In sum, ethnic minority students experiencing a lack of motivation, language barriers, and encountering sociocultural differences in higher education affect their competency, making it challenging to overcome academic barriers and unable to compete with peers. Though, to improve the efficiency of minority students in the educational system, there is a need to provide a reliable support system at the university level so that diverse students might get a fair chance to compete at the academic level.

3.6.6 Theme 6: Cultural Discontinuity

Ethnic minority students' educational challenges are caused by the lack of cultural continuity in the institution. Experiencing a lack of motivation and cultural discontinuity in higher education leads to academic disadvantages for many learners. When ethnic minority students join colleges, there is a need to adopt the new cultural capital associated with upper-middle-class cultures. It is because the prevalent academic culture is distinct from their home culture. Integrating into the institutional fabrics is essential to survive and excel in academics. One Ph.D. student revealed that,

People of the northeastern (NE) regions mainly practice interdependent norms; it may be due to their social structures. In general, each individual knitted with the community fabrics. The NE student brings their home cultural practice to the institutional settings; for example, the college fresher are called their seniors as brother and sister. They approach their seniors from the region when they need any help and perceive such interdependence as a means of being interconnected. As a senior fellow from the area, I can say that most are too shy to put their opinion in front of others. And I also agree that some of them did not put in the necessary effort; as a result, they performed poorly in academics. It seems when a difficulty level arises, they quickly withdraw. It is because they were unfamiliar with or unaware of how to negotiate the system. And often felt that their case was unique, inherent, and caused by their inability to perform adequately. They assume academic and social disintegration is their fault and tend to drop out.

Familiarizing with the institutional rules and regulations is one crucial characteristic that students need to attribute. It helps students fit into the system, work hard to achieve academic goals, and prevent dropouts. So, students who do not know the appropriate norms of the institution may unconsciously invite many difficulties on the way. One M.Phil. student discussed that,

The way to be academically oriented means reading, writing, and speaking up on what you agree or disagree with based on the available literature; pursuing higher education is like no one would hold your hand and teach you like a child. Instead, the teacher expects that you mastered your field, so their expectations are often high. They think learners are mature enough to understand the research processes. Also, believe that students know how to be independent thinkers and motivate themselves to achieve their goals. Those who differ from this practice are suffering academically.

In mainstream institutions, ethnic minority students often experience cultural outsiders. Integrating with the academic culture, they need to adopt the new values and beliefs system. And also need to acquire positive attitudes, and implement a formal dressing style and manner of speech. A Ph.D. student recalled her M.A. days and said once she has compelled to buy a new dress to look like other colleagues.

In my M.A. days, other colleagues teased me about my appearance and told me that my dress was too big. They said it has been like I have been wearing my mom's dress. Later on, with the help of my roommate, I buy some dresses that suit me better. I made many mistakes regarding dressing sense; I did not realize that I had to wear a formal dress at the academic gathering. Earlier, I was too casual and went out and participated in any formal meeting just like any casual day, without paying attention to my appearance and dressing sense. It is not that compulsory, but it is better to look fit into the circumstances. Also, it gives you the confidence to communicate with others. The way of a person's physical appearance defines who the person is and states their status. But, anyway, attending such formal gatherings is key to broadening your mind, updating one's knowledge, and making networks.

Expanding a network is like opening your potential opportunities. So, there is nothing wrong with improving yourself.

Feeling ambivalence is a familiar concept to minority students, especially those who pursue higher education in mainstream institutions. One B.A. student explained the experienced,

My decision to pursue higher studies is not something my parents agreed with me. They want me to do something else. They told me if I had to do higher studies, I could do it at the state university. So, I can lend my hand to the local family business, but I have decided not to do that. It is because I am no more interested in the family business. So, I took the bold decision in that situation. But here, I felt uneasy and uncomfortable to adjust the new academic demand and selective norms.

Many minority students are more worried even after getting enrolled in higher institutions. They doubted whether people like them belonged in the institutional setting and succeeded there. Felt uncertain about whether they could persist and remain in the system until they reached the desired educational goal. One M.A. student commented,

Since my childhood, I had dreamed of attending higher studies at a prestigious institution. Finally, I got that chance after a period of a gap year. And now, I am confused about whether I should continue to study or drop out. I am exhausted; it seems like I no longer belong here. Since joining, I have been struggling with the new academic demands. And, I am not sure what I expected and what I will get after all of this juggling.

Previous research revealed that all students experience some degree of cultural discontinuity while enrolling at college. Though with time, students adjust to the institutional culture. However, it would persist in the case of students from less privileged backgrounds. They were faced unable to cross-cultural boundaries.

Especially, first-generation and ethnic minority students experience an additional burden of being 'cultural outsiders' in the mainstream institution, and such a problem does not fade away with time (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Ogbu, 1982; Pascarella et al., 2004; Stephens et al., 2012; Terenzini et al., 1996; Torres, 2003). To align and bridge the gap with the elite academic class, minority students needed to separate from the working-class values and practices. The ethnic minority students who succeed in academics had become deliberate role models in their community (because they challenged the common misperception). One M.A. student explained his experience,

Often members of the northeastern were treated as outsiders in the mainstream institution. Students are land in a group that is not diligent and focused on academics. But, we need representation and contribution to our part in those underrepresented fields. As a student, what we can do at our level is to overcome the barriers and achieve academic goals in our respective fields. Achieving scholarly pursuit is a means to prove that we can manage and overcome those false beliefs. So, we need to accommodate the new culture. But, it is vital to retain the old one as well.

Moreover, one M.Phil. student commented,

I sometimes think that NE students' confidence might boost if they attend extracurricular activities. We all know that historically higher education is avail to a handful of privileged sections of society. I think it is because many people did not get a chance to pursue higher education. But, we require equal participation in higher education for better social goods. The NE regions have needed highly educated people even more than before for better social mobility and development. The underdeveloped section of every society has very little participation in higher studies, less holding the higher positions, and has fewer affiliations with any political party. Members of such groups often tend to be less aware of their rights and prefer silence. So, I thought about it, and it would be a great initiative to join one of the student political groups on campus. After all, accumulating knowledge and earning a degree benefit the learners.

The culture of ethnic minority groups emphasizes the interdependence of self and lending one helping hand to others in need. For them, context matters the most,

and those who practice personal autonomy over group concerns were not perceived positively. So, in higher education, ethnic minority students often face conflicting cultural and expected role beliefs. It is because members of the minority are not familiar with the culture of education and its expected roles. Instead, they feel out of place and think like strangers in paradise. Interestingly, people who often view individuals who prefer personal goals over group goals were considered selfish and narrow-minded. A Ph. D. research scholar suggested that,

Earlier, I used to think a lot and help others as much as possible. Later, I decided to focus better on my work and not show much interest in others. So, I can maximize my output and enhance my knowledge, but these beliefs and practices produce counter results. Other peers and colleagues referring me as a selfish person who does not have feelings and cares for others. Sometimes, it bothers me and makes me feel how immature and unconcerned I am. It makes me realize that I am not good at anything, neither at study nor interpersonal relations. But, one needs the right frames of mind to pursue higher education and achieve academic goals.

For ethnic minority students adopting academic culture is almost like ceasing their prior cultural practice. And perceive such processes as fundamentally conflicting with their belief system. The education culture is highly prevalent by the independent model of self, which primarily deviates from an interdependent model of self. The independent model of self emphasizes an individual's internal attributes of uniqueness or wholeness. It mainly focuses on the self-actualization process, which expresses one's individuality, and puts time and effort into reaching one potential. The individualist culture's central motifs are the disposition toward a) fundamental autonomy and b) individual recognition, c) maintaining independence, and d) excluding others are the norms. The idea of individualism is that one's success must achieve without further assistance from others.

In contrast, the collectivist culture's central motifs are the disposition toward fitting in, emphasizing contextual factors, maintaining interdependence, and relating to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The ideal of collectivist culture is maintaining harmonious relations with others and putting time and effort into achieving group goals. In higher education, minority students felt a lack of assimilation into the academic traditions and experienced unmotivated by the educational culture. Often unable to cope with academic challenges and face difficulty taking the benefit of higher education. One B.A. student revealed,

When I left my hometown for the first time to a so-called metro city, my parents suggested hanging out with students from other regions but not from the same place where I belong. In that way, they believe I could learn something new and better understand the practicality of life; they may falsely perceive that hanging out with students from the same state would not allow me to ascertain new things or look at new perspectives. So, often they told me that, do not intimidate the local leader because a local leader is almost equal to an ordinary person in a city. They believed that if I learned and successfully adapted to the mainstream culture, which would be the utmost sign of future success. So, I try to hang out with non-north-eastern students. But, I know it is not the only solution or possible way to make the path.

Most students from ethnic and disadvantaged backgrounds attaining higher education are more like someone ambitious enough and attempting to live in two different worlds. Pursuing higher studies is less valued, and emphasizing self-orientation is perceived as selfish in such a community. One M. Phil. students share the experience,

Being a member of a minority community and holding an ethnic identity in the mainstream is like living in two different worlds. Both of them had different sets of norms. I feel crazy sometimes and stupid regarding different sets of rules, which sometimes confuse or burden me. Back at home, I live in a joint family, where my aunt is the head of the family. I have two siblings: one elder brother and a sister. When I returned home for vacation, my aunt

told me to learn and do household work. I guess it is the lightest work at home that one can ever do. But, conducting household work is never-ending till the end of the day; I often find it hard and challenging to maintain time for study. In general, people of my place saw pursuing higher education as a luxury thing that members of an affluent family could enjoy. If I like to study at home, the first thing I have to do is manage the household work and timing. It's a tricky thing, which I hardly get. And also, living in a big joined family has added more tasks. Many people were against the idea of females attending higher education. Back at home, we had the funniest tradition regarding the girl child, in which a girl must learn to work in handloom, weave traditional clothes, etc. For example, after class 12 standards, my sister starts joining to learn weaving clothes instead of enrolling in college. However, she is not very traditionalist; she decided to support the family. In our community, a girl must learn to knit and weave to make clothes; the girl who knows how to make clothes properly was understood their education has completed. So, surrounding people are happier and more satisfied with my sister's education than mine. Regarding my pursuance in higher education, my relatives told my parents that they had spoiled me enough. Here, I am trying to say that people are judged differently for choosing different forms of education and their applicability in real-life circumstances.

Many communities had a different set of norms for a specific gender. Even the value of attending formal education is perceived differently. For example, if a man is getting a higher education is the ultimate symbol of intelligence, obedience, and high morals. Whereas if a woman is attaining higher education, she is perceived as a symbol of intelligence, boldness, and cleverness. From a local perspective, the female who attended higher education perceives as economically independent, selfish, short-tempered, and argumentative. And consider those females were not compatible for marriage because they were not happy to follow the age-old traditions or would not be keen enough to agree with what others said. So, many females who attend higher education get less support from their family and friends.

In sum, ethnic minority students experience a cultural discontinuity in higher education because their cultural practices differ from mainstream cultures. The main

difference in student academic experience and performance was influenced by practicing cultural continuity and discontinuity with the institution (Ogbu, 1982). Ethnic minority students encounter self-alienation and isolation while adapting to the new educational culture and adjusting to the new academic goals. Experiencing the distinctiveness of two different cultural beliefs makes them confused and guilty of not fully belonging to a particular culture (i.e., institutional or home cultures). Additionally, those ethnic students who successfully cross the cultural boundaries or assimilate the mainstream culture were labeled as having imposter syndrome and tended to portray it negatively. Depict them as selfish; those people are more concerned with their personal goals or materialistic achievements over group or ethnic values.

Adapting to the educational culture requires students to hold appropriate attitudes, separate from working-class beliefs, and alleviate ambivalence. It would not be an easy transformation for the less privileged section of students because assimilating with the prevalent academic culture is equal to ceasing their home cultural values. Instead, it fundamentally conflicts with their traditional beliefs. Thus, ethnic minority students perceive those who achieve academic success are the one who prefers personal goals rather than group concerns.

3.7 Discussion

The present study is exploratory, gives a better understanding, and provides in-depth insight into the experience of ethnic minority students in higher education. The questionnaire was in the format of semi-structured. And the responses categorize with

the guide of thematic analysis. The higher education system expected students to be self-expressive, actively participate in classroom discussion, and show competence. But, the notion of self-expression and competence is interpreted differently in different cultures (Greenfield, 1997; Kim & Sherman, 2007). The manifested behavior may differ across cultures (Sternberg, 2019).

Minority and students from less-privileged backgrounds experience cultural deprivation in the educational system. Pascarella et al. (2004) indicate that understanding the culture of higher education the traditional college students has distinct advantages over first-generation college students. In addition, first-generation college students get implicit or very little support from family and friends to pursue higher studies. The study reveals that ethnic minority students experience cultural discontinuity between institutional and home culture. To be educated means learners have to adopt the new academic culture. Sometimes, it is needed to hold a new identity and even erode the working classness.

Most of the participants belong to first-generation college students. Participants' parental occupations were primary school teacher, electrician, carpenter, farmer, and fisherman, except for one parent, who held an administrative job in government. Many ethnic minority students report while pursuing higher education, they have experienced cultural conflict and ambivalence. Minority students who put extra effort into overcoming the cultural and language barriers were getting conflicting reactions from their peers (Weiner, 2005). Also, trying to be competent in academics has received positive and negative responses from their peers.

Generally, academically proficient students, called nerds, show dislike and are often judged as arrogant by others. In the case of minority students, those students were identified as someone who posed imposter syndromes. Sometimes, the ingroup members also view those students who try to cross the cultural boundaries depicted as selfish and do not care much about their ethnic values. And categorize them as people who prefer materialism over tradition. So, many students find it hard to cross-cultural boundaries. But, those students who successfully enclosed the new culture also felt ambivalent because of the notion that they were letting their group down.

Ethnic minority students face conflict in deciding whether to adopt the new culture or hold previous cultural values. It is mainly because learning a new culture is not an easy task. Cultural beliefs have been loaded from history and transmitted from generation to generation (APA, 2003). Adopting the new academic culture, ethnic minority students have to cease their traditional cultural values because both cultural values fundamentally conflict. They believe there is weak relation between academic success and future job orientation. And also perceive that achieving scholastic goals is personal outside the group concerns.

We learned from the study that the culture of higher education is similar to mainstream or elite middle-class, which emphasizes the independence norms. In contrast, ethnic minority and members of the lower social-class practice interdependence norms. Being from different cultures and endorsing different values and practices, ethnic minority students experience cultural discontinuity between home and academic institutions. However, culture is not static; variations within the

same culture are noted (Cooper & Denner, 1998). Sometimes, the person belonging social background plays an important role.

It becomes problematic when the person belonging to a social group is among the stigmatized ones. Because people do not live in social isolation, most problems face in life reflect their group belonging (Bandura, 1982). In general, members of the less privileged background were less educated and held unskilled jobs. Members of minority students enter college with lower academic readiness (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Students from marginalized backgrounds their view are often devalued and discredited in mainstream institutions. Few participated in extracurricular activities, and fewer held higher pay or higher positions.

In higher education, students from less-privileged backgrounds or working-class students lack the appropriate cultural capital compared to their more privileged counterparts. Ethnic minority students had mixed feelings about pursuing higher education. Students' educational persistence is required academic and social integration (Tierney, 1992). In education, they face a lack of motivation and role models. Also, having fewer educational credentials and encountering sociocultural differences are the main barriers. Initially, they are happy to enroll in the university; but later on, experiencing cultural discontinuity and feeling misfitted into the educational system makes them feel unease and incompetent.

Another problem ethnic minority students encounter in higher education is their lack of English proficiency. The study reveals that many students are too aware of speaking proper English, pronunciation, and tense. Some students are more conscious

about committing mistakes while speaking and fear judging negatively. Such consequences make them feel more self-conscious and restrict their self-expression.

Some college students believe that their academic challenges in higher education are because of attending substandard schooling. Experiencing such a lack of academic preparation forced them to study twice as hard to catch up with fellow students. On the other hand, other students believed that academic difficulties were caused by a lack of role models in their circumstances and experiencing cultural discontinuity in the institution. In the context of ethnic minority students, the thought of disconnection from the academic world or the concept of dropping out often occurs. Ethnic minority students who try to adapt to the new institutional culture need to assimilate the values of different sociocultural beliefs. Many minority students felt self-alienation from the system because it employs different values and beliefs. Such challenges become a barrier to thriving toward academic goals. In brief, minority students and students from less privileged backgrounds face a lack of educational and sociocultural support in the educational system.

Roberts et al. (1999) indicate that holding an ethnic identity substantially affects individual self-concept. And person belonging social background plays an essential role in an individual's life. People derive their self-esteem from a particular social group. Ethnic minority students' belonging in the institutional setting is a state of uncertainty. They often had low self-esteem and confidence, which other peers often interpret negatively. Posing such low self-beliefs might be because of experiencing cultural discontinuity at the institution. The culture of higher education discouraged those who manifest different cultural beliefs. Practicing different cultures from

institutional culture is considered cultural deprivation (Greenfield, 1997, Stephens et al., 2012).

Additionally, people have shown varied shared concerns about the identity of other person and their social belonging (e.g., Aries & Seider, 2005; Granfield, 1991; Karp, Holmstrom, & Gray, 1998). Many marginalized or working-class students doubted whether they would survive or compete with other colleagues. Graham and Hudley (2005) indicate that while studying the motivation and competence of an ethnic group, one should not ignore the factor of being ethnic identity.

The problem with ethnic minority students in higher education is their belonging group was not considered a group that is serious in studying and perceived as less competent in the academic setting. Also, they had fewer student representations and less contribution to the educational environment. Those who belong to such groups are often devalued and discredited. They believe that other students possess more educational credentials and knowledge. Thus, ethnic minority students develop doubt about their ability in higher education. Such perceptions also affect their self-efficacy. Students pointed out that they need faculty to state their academic problems comfortably, and also they need faculty to teach self-worth to the students. So, a better student-faculty relationship is required to motivate, retain students and help achieve academic work quality.

The study revealed some interesting aspects that ethnic minority students experience in higher education. Some participants enthusiastically pointed out that the education facility they received in high school or secondary was limited to textbook-centric. Often syllabuses were not covered timely or completed. Others emphasize that

they were less valued in extracurricular activities and had limited academic exposure before college. And some students revealed that ethnic minority students are often silent in the classroom due to language and cultural differences.

Moreover, higher education has two main aspects: one aspect of higher education is to enhance self-awareness and knowledge acquisition. Enhancing knowledge helps to reach the desired academic goals. In higher education, ethnic minority students require to accommodate the new cultural practice while retaining the old one to achieve the academic goals. And another aspect of higher education is social mobility. Educational policymakers and educators need to recognize cultural diversity; including the interdependent norms in its institutional culture is vital. So, it would appreciate the other way of self-presentation in the educational system. Often, ethnic minority students did not perceive the university campus as their home. And less likely to believe that the university culture reflected their ethnic values. Thus, ethnic minority students' challenges in higher education are not only academic instead sociocultural barriers. There are three primary reasons,

- 1) Institutional culture is widely prevalent by mainstream middle-class values and devalues others' norms.
- 2) Many ethnic minority students attended substandard schooling and had limited academic exposure before college.
- 3) Limited diverse student representation in the educational environment makes them feel alienated and doubt their academic ability.

To maximize student representation and diversity inclusion in its institutional setting, we need to increase student enrolment, retention, and motivation to achieve academic goals. The administrators and educational policymakers keep in mind that the cultural synchronization of a larger student population is not only considering the culture of handfuls of students. Minority students' academic challenges are not because they lack the ability or belong to deprived culture; instead, the institution's culture endorses different cultural practices. Including interdependence norms in its culture has advantaged the learners helping to gain knowledge from diverse viewpoints. Students from diverse backgrounds may feel a sense of belonging to the institution, and students learn to cooperate and reflect on higher learning.

It is vital to study minority students' educational challenges in higher education. Conducting such a study would help improve diverse student outcomes and intervene and promote effective educational policies and programs. The study shows that ethnic minority students experienced cultural discontinuity between home and institutions in higher education. It is mainly because higher education culture reflects upper-middle-class cultural norms of independence, whereas ethnic minority students reflect more on an interdependent model of selves.

Furthermore, with the help of the first study, we design two more studies. In the second study, we argued that students' self-expression is affected by experiencing fear of negative evaluation and influences by a person belonging to a culture. Later, in the third study, we argued that students' social backgrounds and the prospect of education outcomes would affect learners' academic competence. If a group experiencing prolonged institutional discrimination and lack of opportunity in adult life

subsequently developed a skeptic about the relevance of academic success. Minority students' educational outcomes are affected by experiencing sociocultural continuity or discontinuity in the institution.

CHAPTER IV

STUDY-2

SELF-EXPRESSION LOOKING THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURE

4.1 Introduction

In mainstream institutions, self-expression is valued and believed as an appropriate way to state one's knowledge. The educational system expects students to be self-expressive, opinionated, innovative, and actively participate in classroom discussions. But, the notion of self-expression is interpreted differently in a different cultures. Instead, culture differs within the nation, community, or sub-culture. Such variation occurred due to individual differences and socialization factors. The racial or ethnic minority students' low achievement correlates with disciplinary infractions in the systems (Gregory et al., 2010); it might be because they emphasize a different set of values and beliefs system. However, ethnic minority students' educational problems are not the same. It depends on the learners' ability to cooperate with the new culture, subject knowledge, language efficiency in English, and capability to diffuse conflict.

Culture is broadly the shared values and beliefs system of a particular group or region. Cultural values play an integral part in a person's self-presentation. Different culture has different norms that guide a person to present in front of others. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), culture can classify into two terms: an independent and interdependent model of self-construal. The independent self-construal emphasizes expressing oneself, being direct in communication, and promoting

personal goals (Singelis, Bond, Sharkey, & Lai, 1999, p.319). They prefer to focus on individual abilities and goals rather than emphasizing the feeling of others and group goals.

In contrast, interdependent self-construal emphasizes relating with others, promoting in-groups or shared goals, and the communication process in an indirect way. According to interdependent self-construal, the self and others are intertwined; instead, self and others are neither separate concepts. They prefer to maintain a harmonious relationship with others and adjust to the situations. Attentive to others' needs and unexpressed thoughts are the common characteristics of interdependent self-construal. This model of self primarily values connecting and fitting with others instead of expressing one's opinion and viewpoint.

Studying cultural perspectives is vital because people share a similar definition of self in a specific cultural context. For example, Western culture values self-independence, autonomy, and uniqueness. Whereas, in Asian culture, people values interdependence, relatedness, and indistinctiveness from others. Previous research revealed that self-expression is more valued in Western culture than the Asian culture (Kim & Sherman, 2007). Moreover, the culture of higher education mainly emphasizes the independent model of self where individuals value their uniqueness, self-preferences, and self-expression. In contrast, members of ethnic minorities practice an interdependence model of self where members are more focused on harmony, adjusting, and practicing self-introspection.

In mainstream institutions, ethnic minority students often experience cultural discontinuity between the home and institutional values. The prevailing independence

norms of higher education make it difficult for ethnic minority students to engage in academic settings. Because before college, they often attend substandard schooling, face communication barriers in English, lack subject knowledge and lack of imposing upper-and-middle class culture, and also possess lower educational credentials. So, ethnic minority students are associated with low self-esteem, and feeling inadequacy is a common phenomenon in educational settings. Experiencing such challenges and unfamiliar cultural practices develops a fear of negative evaluation.

In higher education, students are expected to self-express their views of agreement or disagreement with the concept based on the knowledge and literature. Previous research revealed that first-generation college students often have less academic credentials and lack social integration into the mainstream (Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996). While transitioning to college, many students face difficulties adjusting to the new educational culture. However, in the case of ethnic minority students, their college transition requires not only academic instead social and cultural transformation, and they often face dislocation in the higher educational setting. Also, they face identity and role confusion in acting like a college student. So, students who belong to an ethnic group or possess distinct culture from academics make it challenging to fulfill the expected educational demands.

Students' precollege characteristics matter in higher education; it helps learners form the fundamental knowledge and support to achieve mastery in a field. Most ethnic minorities or students from less privileged backgrounds tend to be first-generation college students. They often struggle to pursue college because their family socioeconomic conditions are not sound. Many ethnic minority college students'

academic challenges are due to a lack of academic preparation in high school. They attend low-quality schooling, which often lacks providing better educational facilities. The socioeconomic conditions of the family affect student college experience, persistence, and college completion.

At college, the teacher's expectation of the students is high. Expects that students know how to motivate themselves, learn through vicarious experience, self-reflect, and hold a clear academic goal. Students from less privileged backgrounds suffer the most in higher education because they lack awareness of the academic track and did not explore middle-class socialization before college (Stephens et al., 2012). The institutional culture emphasizes the middle-class way of independence and attributes it as the right or appropriate way to be a college student. Those who deviate from accepted norms consider inability, lack of interest, or simply stupid (Kincheloe, 1999). There is a lack of acknowledging different cultural dispositions in the formal educational system. Students who experience a lack of middle-class cultural characteristics may develop a fear of the unknown and fear of being negatively judged in the educational institution.

Carleton (2016) revealed that fear of the unknown is the fundamental fear. Academic institutions are not free from social biases. Moreover, individuals are subject to evaluation based on social backgrounds (Carleton, Collimore, McCabe, & Antony, 2011). Being from different cultural backgrounds and unaware of the rule of the game and also speaking other languages in the mainstream, ethnic minority students subjectively developed a fear of negative evaluation (FNE). And subsequently, they are restricted from sharing their opinions in front of others because

they are not familiar with the commonsense of mainstream cultures and have language difficulties.

Experiencing cultural discontinuity, ethnic minority students faced academically and socially disintegrated from the mainstream institution. College transition is easy and feasible when belonging culture similar to the dominant culture (Pascarella et al., 2004). Mainstream students have distinct advantages over ethnic minority students in terms of familiarity with the associated norms and culture. In the context of ethnic minority students, they feel like they are stranger in paradise. Face difficulty understanding the culture of higher education and are unknown rules of the game (Stephens et al., 2012).

Furthermore, minority and marginalized students were less self-expressive in the educational system. We argue that ethnic minority students' self-expression is affected by experiencing the fear of negative evaluation, but it influences by a person belonging to a culture. And we examine how different self-belief holders that are independent and interdependent self-construal affect self-expression. The present study focuses on ethnic minority students' self-expression by looking through cultural perspectives.

4.2 Fear of Negative Evaluation

The cultural tradition of ethnic minority is differing from mainstream culture. Ethnic minority students feel alienated at mainstream institutions because of the prevalent taken-for-granted cultural norms. Besides, they attended low-quality schooling, which inadequately prepares them for higher studies. So, they develop a

fear of negative evaluation while discussing the subject matter or sharing opinions with other classmates. Assume that they possess lower academic credentials and are unknown to the academic jargon.

Much of these fears come from inadequate academic preparation for college, language difficulty, and lack of sociocultural capital. Even if they score good grades, their minds are bothered by other shortages. It might be because they were unfamiliar with the institutional culture and expected roles. Many ethnic minority students are unknown and uncertain about the appropriate way of being a college student. Also, they tend to belong to less privileged backgrounds. Their social conditions and family setting are compact and immobile. Students from lower social class backgrounds tended to hide their social belonging in fear of being judged because individuals tended to evaluate based on their social belonging (Carleton et al., 2011). One of the main reasons for minority students being less self-expressive in the academic setting relates to endorsing different cultural values.

Moreover, minority students are unfamiliar with the academic track. While attending higher education, ethnic minority students often need additional support, such as tutoring and social support. Many minority students often get limited support from their families to pursue higher studies, so they need to do part-time jobs to support their educational expenses. Those students spend less time studying, earning fewer grades, and more drop out of college without completing the course. A student's academic success depends on the time and effort put into the study (Bensimon, 2007).

Students from less privileged backgrounds face limited financial accounts, which costs academic underperformance and a lack of social integration in the

educational setting. Minority students who try to accommodate the mainstream middle-class culture are stated as someone related to imposter syndrome. And ingroup members labeled them as members who disrespect their group values over personal goals. Portrays those individuals as selfish and undermines the group belief over short-term or monetary gain. Furthermore, ethnic minority students' restricted self-expression is caused by experiencing cultural discontinuity at the mainstream institution. In addition, lack of subject knowledge, unfamiliar academic language, and unawareness of the taken-for-granted rules of mainstream institutions. So, those students subjectively feared negative evaluation and were subsequently restricted to self-expression.

4.3 The College Experiences of Ethnic Minority Students

Generally, we perceive that attending college is a voluntary decision, and academic success depends on individual ability than personal socialization factors. In the context of minority students, college underperformance and dropout are caused by attending substandard schooling, lack of academic preparation, experiencing different socialization, and academic-practitioner limited knowledge of students' cultural belonging. Instead, students' cultural belonging shapes their college experience. The existing culture of higher education expects its students to foster the ideas of independence. And also express their opinion and be confident about what they believe (Kim, 2002).

Higher education expects learners to reflect the model of an independent self. Practicing self-reflection is crucial in the academic setting because it shapes and

depicts a student's acceptability in the system. But, endorsing only the independent self-construal in the educational environment is problematic for new students who do not have specific procedural knowledge of higher education. Moreover, people from different cultures have a diverse understanding of education. For example, the Chinese value education as an essential part of life that connects with society's morals, whereas European Americans perceive learning as acquiring personal knowledge (Li, 2003).

Many students perform well academically because their belonging culture is congruent with the academic culture. Less successful students belong to disadvantaged backgrounds, or their culture differs from the institutional culture. Students' socio-cultural environment, directly and indirectly, helps attribute their academic outcomes. In addition, parental cultural capital influences the children's educational enrollment and persistence in college (Austin, 2011). In other words, a student's educational aspiration is affected by the belonging socio-cultural background of the family.

Familiarity with academic culture has many advantages for the learners. It helps to portray appropriate behavior; attributing such cultural characteristics helps excel and achieve educational goals. Lack of cultural disposition from institutions makes it difficult to overcome inherent cultural discontinuities. In the case of ethnic minority students often perform poorly in the academic setting; because learners experience cultural discontinuity between homes and educational institutions (Tyler et al., 2008).

Holding an ethnic identity has an optimal level of distinctiveness. The term "ethnic" often referred to "race," but these two terminologies have different meanings.

Ethnic refers to a group's characteristics that may differ from the majority group in terms of its cultural, linguistic, religious, or ideological concerns. But, race refers to physical features, such as skin color, hair type, etc. Members of the ethnic minority challenge to understand the commonsense of mainstream society. They often experience and perceive themselves as a stranger in paradise.

4.4 The Cultural Model of Self

Culture is a group's shared values and beliefs system transmitted from generation to generation (Cooper & Denner, 1998). It strongly influences a person's self-view because people act according to their belonging culture. However, cultural perspectives differ in various ways (Triandis, 1997). But it can be broadly divided into two that is individualist and collectivist. In collectivist cultures, individual relation to their ingroup is stable, whereas, in individualist cultures, people's relationships with their ingroup are unstable.

In individualist cultures, people have multiple in-groups; drop a group when it inconveniently demands (Triandis et al., 1988, p.324). Most of the relationship in collectivist cultures is vertical (e.g., teacher-student), and in contrast, individualist cultures are more horizontal (e.g., friend-friend). In a collectivist culture, people tended to adopt low levels of competition and maximize the value of interdependence. For example, if we look at the relationship between parent and child, the parent offers frequent guidance and gives less privacy to the child. In contrast, in an individualist culture, they maintain privacy, emotional detachment, competition is generalized and

emphasizes independence. In such a society, parents encourage their children to be self-dependent.

People in different cultures practice different construals of the self and others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For example, Asian cultures have a distinct conception of individuality that insists on fundamental relatedness such as attending, fitting in, and maintaining harmonious interdependence with others. In Western cultures, people emphasize expressing unique nature, focusing on personal development, and maintaining distance from others. The fundamental difference between independent and interdependent self-construal is the perception of self and relation with others.

Bruner (1996) indicates that learning and thinking connect with a person's cultural settings. Individual knowledge development depends on its application to the accessing culture. Specifically, the notion of learning, understanding, remembering, imagining, and expressing things according to a particular culture. Thus, it would lead to a different direction if we took learners' backgrounds as an exception because people do not exist in a sociocultural vacuum. Moreover, culture is an essential variable in analyzing educational problems. Without understanding the basic characteristics of culture, resolving the inherent academic problem of ethnic minority students would be difficult. So, overlooking the societal and cultural issues become problematic in education.

Often student belonging culture would be an indicator to separate students from successful to unsuccessful ones. A person belonging culture guides them to set different goals. Students attend college for various purposes, such as some students

enrolling in higher education to improve their academic skills, whereas others enroll to get a degree (Bensimon, 2007). Education is valuable when the learners aim to reflect societal goals. But, the question is how and who can decide what is essential to achieve through education. Bruner (1996), in his influential book, "*The culture of education*," revealed that culture shapes the mind. The role of culture in our life is not simply constructing our world but also forming a self.

Moreover, members of various social classes have different notions of self. Members of the middle class tend to practice an independent model of self, where individuals are more focused on personal development and self-expression. They tend to possess higher economic capital, practice more choices, and influence others. On the other hand, the working-class members have practiced the interdependence model of self, emphasizing adjusting and relating to others. They possess limited economic capital, experience fewer choices, and find it hard to influence others.

Furthermore, ethnic minority students are less likely to contact or make networks with influential faculty or administrator. In addition, first-generation college students earn fewer grades, tend to dropouts, and fail to build close relationships with their colleagues and faculty members (Stephens et al., 2012). Similarly, ethnic minority students face difficulty adapting and responding appropriately to the academic culture. On the other hand, educational practitioners often have limited knowledge about their student's cultural backgrounds. Besides, minority students' less participation in classroom discussion is fear of negative judgment and associated stereotypes of the particular group.

4.5 Self-Expression

Self-expression is what one presents and perceives by others. A person belonging culture guides a person to think, feel, and act accordingly (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In the independent model of self, a person should influence the context and have motives, goals, and preferences. In contrast, in an interdependent model of self, a person has to adjust to the context, emphasize collective values, and relate with others. People tend to agree with what others agree, follow the group norms, and avoid confrontation.

The interdependent self-construal model believes that the self and others are intertwined. It primarily focuses on harmonious interpersonal relationships and adjusting to contextual factors. Members of interdependence culture lack a challenging attitude towards authority and avoid immediate verbal interaction. Additionally, in collectivist cultures, effective communication emphasizes the receiver's listening skills, whereas, in an individualist culture, effective communication emphasizes the speaker's skills (Singelis & Brown, 1995). In an individualist culture, miscommunication perceives as the speaker's fault. But in a collectivist culture, miscommunication is the fault of the receivers'.

The beliefs of expressing thought are differed according to their belonging culture. In the context of Asian Americans believes that speaking might interfere with the thinking and learning process. But, on the contrary, European Americans believe that speaking is the means to express one's opinion and thoughts. And in the academic context, Asian students believe that speaking interferes with thought processing more than American students do (Kim, 2002; Li, 2003).

Moreover, interdependent self-construal holders maintain relationships with others. They emphasize the ingroup's goals rather than personal goals, and the way of communication is preferably indirect. In contrast, independent self-construal emphasizes uniqueness, personal goals, and preferences. In other words, they prefer to express their feelings and thoughts without considering others, promoting personal goals over group goals, and believing that being direct in communication is the appropriate norm.

Previous research indicates that minority students' lifestyle before college differs in terms of self-expression, behavior manifestation, and accomplishment norms (Bensimon, 2007). Many ethnic minority students find it hard to speak up their minds. Because of their inexpressive behavior, they are invisible to the faculty's eyes. And they feel that their ideas are not vital or unworthy to put in front of others. Sometimes they possess low self-esteem, falsely believe they are underserved in the educational environment and tend to drop out.

Furthermore, culture plays an essential role in human activity and thought processes. Minority students' academic problems are mainly experiencing cultural discontinuity between their home and educational institution. Belonging different cultures and speaking different languages, ethnic minority students are unaware of the mainstream institution's commonsense. Facing a lack of academic credentials and other shortcomings in their life bothered them to speak up their minds. So, in higher education, students from less privileged backgrounds felt different from traditional college students because lack of cultural assimilation and communication barriers

restricted them from sharing their opinions. Thus, ethnic minority students' self-expression in higher education is questionable.

4.6 Overview of Research and Hypotheses

Cultural beliefs vary in different societies. Certain activities are significant in one cultural context but may be inappropriate to other cultures. It is challenging to understand different cultures. Often, people perceive their own cultures as standard and judge other cultures as insensitive. People believe that what is right in their culture is perceived as the universal truth. Instead, a person belonging culture has guides how individuals have to present themselves in front of others.

Different cultures often hold different assumptions about self. Self is a relatively fixed, unique, and functional trait that defines one's personality. Most minority students fall into the category of first-generation college students and often practice interdependent norms. The interdependent self models primarily focus on adjusting, connecting, and responding to others' needs. Explicitly expressing one feeling or thought would be considered negatively. In contrast, higher education culture endorses middle-class norms of independence. Students are expected to be independent thinkers, competent, and self-expressive (Stephens et al., 2012).

Many ethnic minority students attend low-quality schooling, which often lacks college preparation—their academic problems cause by the lack of theoretical knowledge and cultural barriers. Students from minority or less privileged backgrounds face marked cultural differences between home and institution (Ogbu, 1982; Stephens et al., 2012; Tyler et al., 2008). Those students often face

marginalization in the frame of institutional culture. Such challenges occur because particular culture guides a person to behave in specific ways. Individual self-expression is correlated to presenting in a culturally appropriate approach.

Diverse students enroll in higher education, but students' college experiences and academic outcomes differ on their belonging culture. In the context of minority students, they experience multiple forms of oppression in mainstream institutions (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). However, some students easily conform to the academic culture, while others face difficulties adapting and adjusting to the new culture. Students who experience incongruence with the educational culture face a lack of motivation and difficulty achieving academically desired goals. The higher education culture selectively promotes certain activities and disregards others.

The culture of ethnic minorities differs from mainstream culture. In higher education, self-expression is highly valued and a means to state learners' understanding. But the notion of self-expression is interpreted differently in a different cultures. Experiencing cultural differences and other barriers in higher education, ethnic minority students subjectively develop the fear of negative evaluation in the mainstream institution. Moreover, many students from ethnic backgrounds tend to be silent in the classroom. Believing that speaking might interrupt the thinking process, lack of English proficiency, and fear of committing mistakes is the common reason. They are concerned about what kind of impressions they are making and worry that others might notice the shortcomings. Such notions restrict them from expressing their opinion in front of others. We believe that students holding different self-construal played the chief role in their self-expression. Thus, our primary research question

focus on does student self-expression is affected by fear of negative evaluation? And, how does self-expression is varied for students who portray different self-construal?

Moreover, students belonging to culture play an essential role in expressing or holding the idea with them. Individuals who embrace an interdependent model of self-construal feel uncomfortable expressing their views explicitly in front of others; instead, they prefer to choose silence. In contrast, those with independent self-construal feel comfortable expressing their feelings and thoughts in front of others despite facing difficulties in higher education. The conceptual framework of the study presents in Figure 1. We believed that students with higher fear of negative evaluation would be restricted from expressing their true selves and feel more uncomfortable speaking their views explicitly than students with a lower fear of negative evaluation. But, this relation might differ by a person holding a different self-construal. Thus, we argue that self-expression would be drastically affected by facing the fear of negative evaluation and belonging cultural perspective of the learners.

In this study, we formulated three main hypotheses. They are,

1. There would be an effect of different levels of fear of negative evaluation on students' self-expression.
2. There would be an effect of students' self-construal on the self-expression and,
3. There would be an interaction effect of levels of fear of negative evaluation and self-construal on students' self-expression.

4.7 Method

4.7.1 Participants

In this study, hundred and twenty students from the north-eastern region had participated. The samples took from two central universities in Delhi. Participants' academic qualification ranges from undergraduate to postgraduate. Participants were informed that their responses would be kept confidential and used for educational research purposes only. Student participation in the study was voluntary.

4.7.2 Measures

Fear of Negative Evaluation scale: *Brief fear of negative evaluation scale (BFNE-II)* by Carleton, McCreary, Norton, & Asmundson (2006). It contains 12 items, each item rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all characteristic of me) to 5 (extremely characteristic of me). This scale uses to assess the fears of negative evaluation.

Self-construal scale: *The self-construal scale* from Singelis (1994), and the scale contains 30 items. Respondents rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (don't agree or disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale attempts to measure the independent and interdependent self-construal.

Self-expressive scale: *The self-expression scale* from Kim & Sherman (2007) contains 11 items. Items were rated on an 8-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 8 (strongly agree). This scale is for assessing student self-expression.

4.7.3 Research Design

We analyze data with the help of factorial ANOVA. The fear of negative evaluation (i.e., high versus low) and self-construal (i.e., independent versus interdependent self-construal) are *independent variables*. And self-expression is the *dependent variable* of the study.

4.7.4 Procedure

The purpose of the study is to examine student self-expression in higher education, looking at how fear of negative evaluation and self-construal impacted it. Before starting the questionnaire, we presented consent forms. It is to ensure that students have voluntarily participated in the study. And we also collected participants' demographic information, including the language they speak at home and which college generation learners are. Later on, we randomly distributed the questionnaire and were instructed to rate the agreement or disagreement level with the following items. We inform participants that there is no right or wrong answer, so please be open and honest with your responses. And finally, we thanked them for their participation in the study.

Table 1 & 2

4.8 Results

The study intended to measure ethnic minority student self-expression in higher education through the fear of negative evaluation and person belonging self-construal (i.e., independent and interdependent self-construal) perspective. The study had 120 participants, of which 60 participants each endorsed high or low fear of negative evaluation. And again, 60 participants each hold independent and interdependent self-construal. The results show heightened fear of negative evaluation in independent self-construal, rated 46% on the self-expressive scale, whereas interdependent self-construal was placed at about 50% on the scale. On the other hand, low fear of negative evaluation in independent self-construal was rated about 57% on the self-expressive scale, whereas the interdependent self-construal rate was 45%. It shows there is a considerable impact of different self-construal holders on self-expression.

The study shows that the high versus low fear of negative evaluation on self-expression has been found significant at $F(1, 116) = 4.59, p < .05$. Self-expression is limited if participants have heightened their fear of negative evaluation than the lower the participants hold. The effect of self-construal on self-expression was found significant at $F(1, 116) = 7.17, p < .01$. It shows that participants were more self-expressive when holding the independent self-construal than the interdependent self-construal.

And the third hypothesis, that is, the interaction effect of fear of negative evaluation and self-construal on self-expression found significant at $F(1,116) = 30.64, p < .001$. The result indicates that fear of negative evaluation has differently affected by independent and interdependent self-construal holders. Moreover, the self-

expression of students was different in independent self-construal ($M = 46, SD = 8.15$) and interdependent self-construal ($M = 49.93, SD = 3.68$) in high fear of negative evaluation; the self-expression of students was different in independent self-construal ($M = 56.57, SD = 7.6$) and interdependent self-construal ($M = 45.27, SD = 9.45$) in low fear of negative evaluation.

Students who endorse different cultural practices from the prevalent academic culture may unconsciously invite many barriers on the way. The independent self-construal is highly supported in higher education and expected for each student to know how to be self-expressive and self-driven toward the goals. Minority students often face challenges in higher education because they are unfamiliar with the academic culture, unaware of the academic track, lack English proficiency, and lack material resources to support their educational aspirations. Those students consciously or unconsciously restrict themselves from sharing their views.

Members of ethnic minorities practice interdependence norms mainly because of their social condition and firm belief in maintaining harmony. However, cultural diversity occurs within the same nation or region. It is because of individual differences and belonging to their social backgrounds. The study revealed that ethnic minority students hold different self-construal. Students who endorse independent self-construal are less afraid of negative evaluation and more self-expressive than the interdependent self-construal holders.

Overall, our finding suggests that experiencing and developing a fear of negative evaluation and belonging culture strongly influences a person's self-expression. The

higher education culture is prevalent in the mainstream middle-class culture of independence. On the other hand, many ethnic minority students practice interdependent norms and belong to the less privileged background. Before college, they experienced less academic exposure and did not access the middle-class cultural norms. Moreover, members of minority groups socialize through interdependent cultural norms. So, in higher education, they experience a cultural discontinuity and observe discrimination due to endorsing different socio-cultural values. Students practicing different cultural values from the institutions subjectively developed the fear of negative evaluation, and that subsequently caused to hinder their self-expression.

Figure 2

4.9 Discussion

The present study demonstrates that student self-expression is affected by experiencing fear of negative evaluation in higher education. But, the effects vary from person to person their belonging to a specific self-construal. The finding shows that independent self-construal holders were more self-expressive and undermined the fear of negative assessment than students of interdependent self-construal holders. That is, the person holding different self-construal influences their self-expression. A person belonging culture guides them to construct their self-beliefs (Singelis & Brown, 1995). The specific cultural practice or value formation transmits from generation to generation. In other words, culture is a human-made part of the

environment, and it plays a crucial role in an individual life. It helps to shape the self and portray a unique sense of personality.

Cultural discontinuity is faced when individuals encounter a new culture that differs from the existing one. Markus and Kitayama (1991) indicate that the two primary and relatively stable self-construal are independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal. The core belief of independent self-construal is to hold the concept of self that separates from social context. On the other hand, interdependent self-construal belief that the self is interrelated with others and the view of self is not separate from its social context. And interdependent self-construal emphasizes that an individual does not differ from the rest of others. Individuals who endorse interdependent selves promote group goals over personal goals, practice self-introspection, and practice modes of communication in indirect ways. So, individuals internalize the value of belonging culture and externalize it through self preferences and practicing norms.

In contrast, independent self-construal focuses on personal goals, being direct in communication, and expressing uniqueness rather than considering others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis & Brown, 1995). The two self-construal acted as opposite poles. But previous research indicates that the different self coexists at the individual level (Singelis et al., 1999, p.318). However, one kind of self is dominated and represented over time. The surrounding environment plays a vital role in developing such coexisting selves.

Moreover, self-view is affected by a person belonging to a culture because people act according to the culturally appropriate way. The western cultural

perspectives or independent notions of self perceive the self as an autonomous entity that detaches from context. On the other hand, the eastern collectivist culture observes individuals as part of an ingroup and relates to their surroundings. In a collectivist culture, people are more willing to maintain harmonious relationships with others, whereas individuals' opinions matter in an individualist culture (Triandis & Singelis, 1998).

The self tends toward individualists in some cultures and collectivists in others. The notion of self varied across cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). Sometimes, cultural variations happen within the culture (Triandis & Singelis, 1998). For example, Daab (1991) indicates that more educated people, and people who live in cities, men, and the younger generation are more individualist than people who are less educated and live in rural, women, and those who are old in ages (as cited in Triandis & Singelis, 1998, p.36).

Additionally, a person belonging culture influences their self-expression and has a profound dimension on one personality trait. In individualist cultures, individuals' dispositions refer toward fundamental autonomy, independence, uniqueness, freedom of expression, and exclusion from others. The ideal of the individualist norm is to succeed and achieve the goals without depending on other assistance. Such possessive individualism lies in an individual's identity, and status is bound to what a person possesses (Tyler et al., 2008). Also, they tend to firmly believe that the ultimate responsibility of a person is oneself.

In contrast, in collectivist cultures, people emphasize relatedness and interdependence. So, a person belonging social group tends to be more valued than

one's rights and privileges. They emphasize sharing more because it promotes social interconnectedness. The cultural values of collectivism exclusively focused on the group's welfare than a person's self-interest. Moreover, students who hold independent self are more focused on personal characteristics such as self-determination, self-reliance, developing a passion, motivating themselves, and willingness to commit hard work to achieve personal goals than students who hold interdependent self.

Different cultures have different beliefs about learning. For example, learning emphasizes the mind in the Western context, whereas learning emphasizes virtue in the Chinese context (Li, 2005). The Chinese believe that learning is understanding how morally and socially fit into society. Also, achieve mastery in the subject matter and contribute to the community (Li, 2005, p.191). To achieve this, learners are more devoted to the endurance of hardship, determination, and immense focus. Respect for elders, teaching authorities, and the idea of humility are putting the main emphasis on learners. Thus, believing learning is a means for moral cultivation and self-improvement.

Moreover, the cultures of higher education emphasize individual self-expression and beliefs that students would know how to express their thoughts and feelings (Kim & Sherman, 2007). In contrast, minority students' concepts of self, their way of self-expression, and views of knowledge attribution are different. Belonging to different cultures, speaking different languages, and experiencing other shortcomings, ethnic minority students subjectively developed a fear of negative evaluation in the mainstream institution. They tend to be more concerned about what others might think

of them or what impression they are making. So, consciously or unconsciously, they restrict themselves from sharing their opinions and experience in front of others.

Additionally, Fiske (1993) suggests that stereotypes limit individual freedom and life outcomes. Like stereotypes, fear of negative evaluation has limited people's self-expression. Previous research indicated that fear of negative evaluation is associated with excessive anxiety and social avoidance (Carleton, Collimore, & Asmundson, 2010). Also, Loo and Rolison (1986) revealed that ethnic minority students feel alienated in the mainstream institution if their ethnic representation is less (p. 72). Similarly, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) argue that the collective identity of black students' subsequently affects their academic achievement. Their finding indicates that "the fear of being accused of 'acting white' causes a social and psychological situation which diminishes black students' academic effort and thus leads to underachievement (p.176)."

The education system appreciates students who show confidence and self-assertive speaking. In higher education, students learn to speak their minds because it is the valued mode of communication. Learners have to develop decent communication skills. Along with communication skills, students need to develop listening skills. Good or productive communication would not happen without active listening. Moreover, if students from particular sections of society or cultures do not express themselves or speak well in the class, it does not mean that they are stupid; instead, they respect their home culture. Each culture has particular ways of knowing and values modes of communication.

In this study, we focused on the self-expression of ethnic minority college students and the role of culture. The finding shows that minority students experience a cultural discontinuity in mainstream institutions (Conner, 2013; Stephens et al., 2012; Tyler et al., 2008; Ogbu, 1982). Because of endorsing different values, minority students often feel like strangers in paradise. Moreover, despite initiating anti-discrimination policies in the higher education system, ethnic minority students often experience discrimination based on ethnic or racial identity. Also, face the prejudice of belonging to a specific group because of their lack of contribution to the educational field, their mode of communication, and practicing different cultural norms from the mainstream. Instead, their group did not consider a group that rigorous in the study.

Many researchers have pointed out that minority students are silent in formal academic settings or mainstream institutions. But, less known why they are quiet and less self-expressive. Our findings suggested that experiencing fear of negative evaluation and holding different cultural values from higher education restricted to fully self-express in academic environments.

This study examined the potential effect of fear of negative evaluation and cultural value on students' self-expression. Our results suggest that students holding independent and interdependent self-construal has played a crucial role in expressing or restricting their views. The possible explanation for ethnic minority students' restricted self-expression in higher education is representing ethnic identity, facing language barriers, lacking academic knowledge, and experiencing cultural discontinuity.

Our finding contributes to the literature on self-expression and culture, but the study is not free from limitations. First, the study aimed to examine the experience of fear of negative evaluation and holding different self-construal on learner's self-expression. However, we did not compare the between-group (i.e., members of minority group versus majority group) impact on fear of negative evaluation in higher education. Future research must see the effect of a different group. Second, the longitudinal study might help examine ethnic minority students' self-expression in higher education, like looking at the impact of students spending years in the educational system on self-expression. Despite the limitation, the study contributed to the literature on self-expression and highlighted the importance of the cultural role in higher education.

The study shows that student self-expression is significantly affected by conceptualizing fear of negative evaluation and endorsing different cultural values. Minority students are less self-expressive in academic settings, but it tends to vary among students belonging particular culture. In a further study, we intend to examine academic competence through socialization perspectives. The logic behind this study is individual cultural practices are partially or wholly related to their social belonging. We argue that students experiencing skepticism about academic success would affect their academic competence. Also, how different socialization factor (i.e., middle class versus working class) affects learners' academic competence. The higher education culture is prevalent by upper-middle-class norms of independence. First-generation college students need to transform into the elite social class and adopt the literary culture (Stephens et al., 2012). In higher education, the student was expected to engage in an academic setting and be familiar with the notion of competence and

know-how to maintain relations with peers. Without possessing the right skills and adopting appropriate cultural norms, a student would drop out sooner than later, without a degree.

CHAPTER V

STUDY-3

HOW DOES SOCIALIZATION AFFECT THE PERCEIVED ACADEMIC COMPETENCE OF THE LEARNERS?

5.1 Introduction

The notion of competence is not the same in all societies. Competence is socially constructed and inferences on self and others (Weiner, 2005). Every community transmits the skills to their youth essential for adult roles. And society has some taken-for-granted roles and responsibilities for members of different social classes. Historically, members of various social groups do not have an equal chance to access higher education. If members of the lower social class enroll in colleges also, many of them tend to drop out without completing the course.

Parents of a subordinate group fail to socialize or are incapable of transmitting the academically required skills to their children. Such a lack of skill and knowledge leads to academic disadvantages. Minority students' educational challenges cause a lack of theoretical knowledge and sociocultural factors. Often, both these factors are correlated. Experiencing the sociocultural difference causes intellectual incompetence. In this paper, we define competence through learners' perceptions.

Traditionally, higher education is not equally accessible to different sections of society. Higher education is available only to those dominant elites and members of the affluent background. But in recent decades, many academic institutions have

maintained diversity in their student population. In pursuing higher education, minority students had skepticism about the relevance of academic success because they observed institutional discrimination experienced by their group members based on racial and social background. The college experience differs for students belonging to social class backgrounds. Instead, educational outcomes vary on a person's belonging social capital (Coleman, 1988).

The socialization of higher education is prevalent by mainstream middle-class norms. The well-educated parents and affluent family members transmitted the cultural advantages to their children. Members of the middle class tend to live in nuclear families, manage to work alone, and encourage their children to value autonomy and self-expressive. In contrast, working-class members live in an extended family, endorse collective values, and instruct children to be obedient to authority. Members of the working class doubted to present appropriately as a college student in the formal educational setting. So, in higher education, minorities and students from less privileged backgrounds face socioculturally disadvantaged and need to adopt the middle-class mainstream culture while transitioning to college.

The gateway to higher education is not neutral for everyone, and its culture promotes specific culture. Students from minority backgrounds have less represented in higher education. The student college experience differs by their belonging social class backgrounds. Often students from upper-class backgrounds believe that certain domains intend to occupy them and attempt to maintain that position (Ostrove, 2003, p.773). On the other hand, working-class students may experience a profound sense that they do not belong in the higher educational setting. For working-class students,

being educated in higher education means claiming a new identity (Baxter & Britton, 2001). Such development of a new identity would base on adapting to the new environment.

Learning about students' socialization backgrounds become an essential factor in this study because it links with learners' competency. A person's socialization background plays an active role in producing competent adults (e.g., Ogbu, 1979). Individual socialization has guided different manners, value systems, parenting styles, food habits, and language patterns (Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012). Often members of the working-class face disadvantages in an academic environment in terms of fewer resources and limited social networks in their circumstances. So, often they face social and intellectual obstacles in the mainstream institution.

Also, they observe and experience unequal access roles in society. And ethnic minority students develop skepticism about the relevance of academic success, which undermines the value of education and academic competence. In the formal educational system, minority and marginalized students often fall behind in academic competence. The present study argues that socioeconomic disadvantages cause such outcomes. The study addresses the perceived academic competence through the lenses of social stratification and skepticism about the educational prospect.

5.2 Skeptic about Educational Prospect

Members of ethnic minority sociocultural practice differ from mainstream society. Experiencing different cultural practices at mainstream ethnic minority

students often face discriminative acts and observe inequality. Minority and lower social-class students perceive that the educational environment is unreal. Had developed doubt regarding whether they belong in an academic institution and could be successful in academic settings. One reason for ethnic minority students' poor academic performance is the affective dissonance between their educational effort and the outcome. Often, they are not familiar with or unaware of the academic track and rules of the game.

Most ethnic minority students fall into the first-generation college students category and practice interdependent norms. They often experience marginalization in mainstream institutions while adopting institutional values, opportunities for access to education, or holding a higher position. Thus, members of the minority group could not perceive the discriminatory act they faced as temporary (Ogbu, 1982, 1987).

According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), black American students' poor performance or performing below their potential is because they doubt their intellectual ability and start believing that academic success is the sanction for white people. Perhaps unconsciously, they discourage their peers from striving toward academic success. Additionally, they did not put the required effort and determination into achieving their educational goals. However, awareness of the limited opportunities in adult life also causes low performance.

In mainstream society, members of the minority group directly or indirectly experience discrimination. For example, youth from minority backgrounds tend to face job ceilings; they do not get equal benefits that education has provided (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). They feel insecure and uncertain in mainstream society because they

are unaware of the prevalent culture. Face stereotypes and prejudice about their group belongings. Mainstream society often looks at members of ethnic minority youth related to crime and drug addiction. And when it comes to the educational setting, they represent a group that is less focused on the study. Often, educators and academic colleagues consider them less competent.

On the other hand, minority students develop oppositional cultural frames of reference from the prevalent cultures as a form of survival strategies and set competencies. But such techniques are not necessarily up to the label that leads to academic competencies. In addition, subordinate groups underrepresented and underperformed in higher education are due to the lack of education and observing job ceilings in adult life (Ogbu, 1979). Ogbu's study indicates that students of subordinate groups consistently gave grades "C" regardless of individual effort and progress.

Moreover, minority students' academic underperformance and dropping out of the institution are common phenomena, and success stories are a few exceptions (Bensimon, 2007). Members of minority groups have traditionally experienced unequal opportunities to access education and face socioeconomic barriers due to collective institutional discrimination (Ogbu, 1987). Such experience leads to difficulty coping with educational demands. Another problem for minority students in higher education is that they lack role models in the field. Which directly or indirectly makes them feel academically less competent and allows them to ask whether they belong in the institutional setting? Instead, they often felt like outsiders in the institution and were skeptical about educational outcomes.

5.3 Social Class

Colleges and universities serve as an engine of social mobility (Aries & Seider, 2005). People's belonging categories such as ethnicity, gender, and social class became more salient in educational settings. Students from working-class backgrounds may encounter many difficulties due to social-class differences. If they avail higher education and upward their social belonging, they often accompany pain, alienation, displacement, and shame of their earlier group belonging (Aries & Seider, 2005).

Previous research pointed out that social class could be categorized into objective and *subjective social class* (Belmi, 2015). The objective social class characterizes a person's income, level of education, and occupational status in society (e.g., Snibbe & Markus, 2005). And subjective social class is the person's perception of their societal position (e.g., Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009).

In any society, children belong to members of a parent's group. By default, the children belong to their parents' race, not necessarily but compel them to follow the family tradition, religion, caste, occupational status, etc. When the child grows, they can escape specific characteristics of these memberships but not at all (Allport, 1954). The child becomes automatically victimized by their group membership and an object of prejudice. Moreover, high-income parents use their economic resources to fulfill their children's academic aspirations. Whereas low-income families often face disadvantages in fulfilling their children's educational aspirations due to the limited financial condition of the family. Students from low-income families have fewer economic resources. Pursuing college degrees seems implausible because of unstable

financial situations and the difficulty of affording the cost associated with higher studies (Paulsen & St.John, 2002).

Members of the middle class have abundant resources, easy access to socioeconomic capital, geographic mobility, and more opportunities to sustain and influence their livelihood even when they face a setback. Students from such backgrounds have already developed a sense of self-importance, focusing on personal development, choice, and self-preference before college. In contrast, working-class students have faced limited economic resources and are associated with less opportunity, experience geographic immobility, and lack of safety net to cover setbacks. Students of less privileged backgrounds are less emphasis on personal development and are less practice on self-preferences.

Parents from working-class or lower socioeconomic backgrounds provide fewer resources to their children related to academic purposes than middle and upper-class parents. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds practice different cultural practices and face a lack of scholarly terminology, which leads to clusters in low-ability groups. Often experience a lack of motivation and less support from their families to pursue higher studies. Moreover, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds view academic work as unreal and show little interest.

The socialization structure is different for dominant and subordinate groups, and such varied socialization directly or indirectly supports access to education and avail occupational roles in society. For example, black Americans' academic performance is affected by adapting to the limited socioeconomic opportunity available in adult life (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p.178). Subordinate groups often under-reward in the

mainstream institution regardless of their effort and progress (Ogbu, 1979). So, integrating the socio-cultural and academic factors is essential to understanding learners' competency.

5.4 Perceived Academic Competence

Competence is the constructed notion of achieving a task in a set standard of self and others. Success or failure relies on the assumption of one's self-belief, especially to attain assigned competence (Schunk & Pajares, 2005). A person perceived academic competence is the internal attribution of one's ability. The value and belief system forms motivation and helps accomplish a task rather than true objectivity. Sometimes, students' competency visualizes when they behave rather than what they possess. But, people behave differently, even though they have similar skills. Because some people doubt their capability, and others are pretty confident despite modest talent.

Formal education students' competence almost equates to the grades they receive. However, the beliefs about competence vary; some perceive that achieving high scores and others perceive that helping others is socially responsible behavior and a sign of competence. Students from ethnic minorities and disadvantaged backgrounds doubt whether they belong to an institutional environment or can succeed in academics. They are often unsure of presenting as college students. Because the culture of higher education highly endorses an independent model and rarely focuses on various socialization processes. Minority and lower social-class backgrounds experience marginalization in the frame of mainstream socialization.

The socialization of the upper and middle class endorses an independent model of self and comfortable while competing with other peers. In contrast, members of the working class socialized through interdependence, and maintaining harmony with others are the primary goals. So, students from marginalized backgrounds experience insecurity and are uncomfortable dealing with educational culture. They perceive the educational environment as unreal and often lack confidence while interacting with colleagues, especially those who belong to a higher social class and possess higher academic credentials.

However, individuals with a strong sense of competence took a challenging task rather than avoiding it as a threat. Despite the difficulty, high competence students set challenging goals, heighten their effort, and commit to achieving the desired goals (Schunk & Pajares, 2005). Perceived failures are due to inadequate knowledge, insufficient action, and the belief that skills are acquired with time and effort. But, fewer studies on ethnic minority students' academic competence. Some studies compared minority students with non-minority students and showed that minority students hold lower competence beliefs. Such a study compares lower-class minority children with middle-class white children (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, cited in Schunk & Pajares, 2005, p.95).

Students from underprivileged backgrounds attend low-quality schooling (Gregory et al., 2010, p.61), and such education could not prepare them well for higher studies. Often, students from marginalized backgrounds get fewer hours to study and more hours for work to support their families. Additionally, minority students perceive that they are less concerned by the faculty and hardly believe that

the faculty are there to help them (Pascarella et al., 2004). Moreover, ethnic or working-class parents could not transmit sufficient resources to their children's education as mainstream or middle-class parents does. Instead, members of the different societies have different ways of childrearing (Ogbu, 1979) and set competence accordingly. Each culture has diverse functionality of members belonging to various social strata. So, members of subordinate groups consider incompetent in an educational setting because they did not raise their children and set competence to the mainstream middle-class cultural context.

Experiencing a different culture and being unaware of academic norms, ethnic minority students are uncertain about the educational track. Observing less representation in academic settings and job ceilings in adult life, they develop skepticism about the relevance of academic success. Perceive that there is a weak relation between academic success and future job orientation, so they felt ambivalent about putting time and effort into achieving educational goals.

Furthermore, human behavior is affected by its surroundings, and perception is made through direct or indirect contact with the environment. Perceived academic competence is drastically affected by a student belonging to sociocultural aspects. Minority and marginalized students enrolling in colleges is like entering new territory and feeling like strangers in paradise. Formal education is represented mainly by a particular section of society. Leistyna (1999) indicates that if a social or cultural group is disproportionately present and does not succeed in school or the workplace, that should not be generalized as biologically inferior. It's essential to understand the historical and socio-political realities of that group.

5.5 Socialization and its Relation with the two Perspectives

Generally, people assume that the notion of competence should be the same for everyone. Instead, competence is culturally defined, and its level depends on particular cultural values. Competence is the given name of performing a task appreciatively in a specific society. The perception of competence differs in various communities, even in different social sections (Ogbu, 1979, p.7). It might be because diverse social groups have different social, occupational, and political roles.

Personal behaviors are guided and energized by the perception of competence because the possibility of competence shapes human behavior. Competence is a fundamental motivational factor to work according to the set accomplishment and subsequently helps people adapt to their surroundings. Thus the meaning of competence varies in different cultures.

In recent decades, access to higher education for diverse backgrounds has increased. Though minority students have higher college dropout rates, they hold lower socioeconomic status and feel greater alienation in mainstream institutions (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Stephens et al., 2012). Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to complete their college degrees. While pursuing education, they often face economic crises, so they do part-time jobs to support themselves financially.

Moreover, students with a strong sense of ethnic identity are more likely to associate with ethnic student organizations and attend ethnic group gatherings. Believe that such meetings set a positive light, and an individual's essential duty is to

maintain their ethnic group identity. On the other hand, students with a weak sense of ethnic identity were less likely to associate with ethnic student organizations. Members of those groups are more likely to suffer and respond to negative emotions and hold negative self-esteem (Cooper & Denner, 1998, p. 571).

The person's socialization factor plays a fundamental component of competence. Observing different value systems and less representation in higher institutions, minority students doubt their belonging and assume that they are intellectually inferior. Such assumption affects their perceived competence. Though ethnic minority students face academic difficulty in higher education is attending poor school conditions, lacking proper facilities, and belonging to disadvantaged neighborhoods. Minority students believe they have to work twice as hard to run along with other students. Higher education means minorities and students from working-class backgrounds need to develop a new identity and emphasize a sense of self-worth.

Furthermore, societal beliefs and attitudes towards individuals are essential in becoming maximally effective learners (Bjork, Dunlosky & Kornell, 2013). Minority students were often worried about confirming the group-oriented stereotype of their belonging racial or social group based on their weak performance. Previous literature revealed that socio-cultural difference is one of the main reasons that cause students' academic experiences to differ (Ogbu, 1982; Stephens et al., 2012; Tyler et al., 2008). The notion of competence is better understood when we understand the student's social and cultural backgrounds. The student belonging to socio-cultural conditions distinguishes from successful to unsuccessful ones.

5.6 Overview of Research and Hypotheses

Members of different groups face inequality in accessing the roles of societal prospects, especially holding lower socioeconomic and occupational positions. Experiencing unequal access roles in society makes minority students skeptical about academic success's relevance. Inhabiting a particular socio-cultural environment offers them specific competency skills; it allows them to do certain things and prohibits them from doing others. Person socialization is a part of the culture that influences individual behavior and reflects social life. It guides a person's basic psychological processes.

The person belonging local social context or social class guided the person on how to interact, imposing the value system, the way of life, manner of speech, etc. Lower-class individuals emphasize collective values, live in limited resources, stay in a less safe environment, and often experience job insecurity. In contrast, upper and middle-class individuals emphasize autonomy, live with abundant material resources, follow their passion, and explore their interests with less external constraint.

Ethnic minority students' educational problems mixed with academic, social, and cultural factors subsequently affected their outcomes. In mainstream institutions, ethnic minority students were less represented and observed less opportunity structure in adult life. Moreover, the minority section of students is often perceived as less self-expressive and falls into a group of academically incompetent. Though all students from the ethnic minority group did not suffer the same, some minority students performed well in educational settings while others struggled. We believe that students with high skepticism about the relevance of academic success have

drastically affected the formation of perceived academic competence than those who hold low. But, this effect would vary in a person belonging to social class. The conceptual framework of the study portrays in Figure 3. This study's socialization factor is vital in examining students' perceived academic competence because it shapes the value system.

Previous research pointed out a social-class representation gap in higher education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). Generally, those who pursue and persist in higher education mainly come from affluent family backgrounds. On the other hand, ethnic minorities and marginalized sections of students were less enrolled and availed of higher education. They had experienced prolonged socio-historical segregation and often experienced discrimination in mainstream society. Members of such groups felt skeptical about the academic prospect not because they experienced institutional discrimination but rather the applicability of that education in later life. The present study's primary research question focuses on whether academic competence is affected by skepticism about the relevance of academic success? If then, how student socialization affects the perceived academic competence? Thus, this study looked at perceived academic competence through the lenses of socialization prospects. We propose that students perceived academic competence is affected by experiencing skepticism about the relevance of academic success and individual socialization.

We developed three main hypotheses,

1. There would be a significant effect of different levels of skepticism about academic prospects on perceived academic competence.
2. There would be an effect of different social classes on perceived academic competence.
3. There would be an interaction effect of level of skepticism and social class on perceived academic competence.

5.7 Method

5.7.1 Participants

In this study, 100 participants from northeast regions have participated. Their education level ranges from undergraduate to postgraduate. And the samples were collected from two universities in Delhi. Students' participation in the study was voluntary.

5.7.2 Measures

Skeptic about Future Academic Success: *Skeptic about the Relevance of School for Future Success*, scale from Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS) by Midgley, Maehr, Hruda, Anderman, Anderman, Freeman, et al. (2000). The scale contains 6-items. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 3 (somewhat true) to 5 (very true). The items were to assess students' beliefs about the relevance of academic success.

Social Category: *Students' Social class* was defined by their subjective responses to the demographic information. To support the participant's social class response, we asked participants to indicate their annual family income and which college generation learners are in the demographic details.

Perceived Academic Competence scale: *Academic Efficacy scales* from Midgley, Maehr, Hruda, Anderman, Anderman, Freeman, et al. (2000) scale contains 5-items. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (very true)—the scale intended to measure students' perception of competence.

5.7.3 Research Design

To analyze the data, we used factorial design ANOVA. The independent variables of studies were skeptical about the relevance of academic success and socialization of students (i.e., middle class versus working class), and the perceived academic competence was the study's dependent variable.

5.7.4 Procedure

We briefly explain that the study attempts to assess the student's perceived academic competence. Initially, we distributed the consent form and asked to fill it out. Providing a consent form to the participants ensures they are willing to participate in the study. Though, they were allowed to leave from participating in the study. In the consent form, we collect demographic information, including names (as optional), social class, annual family income, and identifying the college generation learners.

Later, we randomly presented the questionnaire and were informed that the participants had to rate the level of agreement or disagreement with the following items. We explain that there are no rights or wrong answers, so please be true to their response. The provided response would be confidential and used only for educational research purposes. And finally, we thanked them for their participation in the study.

Table 3 & 4

5.8 Results

This study attempt to measure student perceived academic competence through the effect of skepticism about the relevance of academic success and student socialization factor (i.e., middle-class versus working-class). The study had 100 participants, where 50 participants each belonged to middle-class and working-class backgrounds. And also, 50 participants each held high and low skepticism about the relevance of academic success. The study aims to measure the ethnic minority students' perceived academic competence through skepticism about the relevance of educational prospects and learners' socialization factors (i.e., middle-class versus working class). The result shows higher doubt about the relevance of academic success in the middle-class students, rated at 16% on the perceived competence scale, whereas working-class students' rate was 17%.

On the other hand, the lower skepticism about the relevance of academic success, those who belong to the middle class are rated 20% on the perceived competence. In contrast, working-class students' rate was 17% on that scale. It proves there is a different impact of people belonging to various social backgrounds on the formation of perceived competence.

The high versus low of skeptics about the relevance of academic success on perceived competence was significant at $F(1, 96) = 7.29, p < .01$. Perceived competence is drastically affected when higher the skepticism about the academic prospects than lower the participants hold. The effect of the socialization category on perceived competence was found significant. The impact of the middle class versus working-class belonging on the perceived competence, $F(1, 96) = 5.17, p < .05$. Perceived competence is more in participants who hold middle-class than the working-class holders.

And finally, the interaction effect of skepticism about the relevance of academic success and socialization backgrounds on student perceived competence was significant at $F(1, 96) = 15.28, p < .001$. The results indicate that skepticism about the relevance of academic success is reacted differently by the middle-class and working-class students. Specifically, the perceived academic competence of students was affected differently that is the middle-class ($M = 16.40, SD = 2.76$) and working-class ($M = 17.32, SD = 2.99$) in high skeptic about success; again, the perceived academic competence of students was different in middle-class ($M = 20.12, SD = 2.81$) and working-class ($M = 16.64, SD = 2.65$) in low skepticism about success.

Our finding revealed a strong relation between skepticism about the relevance of academic success and students' socialization effect on perceived academic competence. The result supports that competence is socially constructed; the person belonging to a social class has set different levels of competence. Each society has set different norms of competence because of its particular role in society. Moreover, the culture of higher education promotes mainstream middle-class socialization. The minority group socialization is different from mainstream socialization. Ethnic minority students face difficulty adapting to mainstream institutions because of a lack of exposure to middle-class values before college. Experiencing such differences in sociocultural value leads to potential disadvantages in mainstream institutions, like a lack of motivation to compete and complete the course.

Minority students observe a weak relationship between academic success and accessing social roles in adult life. Often, minority students are skeptical about the relevance of academic success because they face unequal social access roles while accessing educational institutions and occupational jobs. In higher education, learners get different forms of social support, and a sense of belonging to the institution depends on their social class. The person's socialization factors influence the learning and motivate them to learn (Goodnow, 1992). Moreover, members of low-income families lived in a neighborhood where they experienced more adversity, exposure to crime and violence, and were subject to abuse. Children from these communities suffer from anxiety, stress, and skepticism about educational success. Such conditions may subsequently hinder their belief in academic prospects.

Overall, our hypothesis suggests a social disparity in higher education. Members of the middle class and working class have not accessed the same societal and occupational roles in society. Society has followed some unwritten norms, which we generally take for granted. Pursuing higher education, ethnic minority students are often skeptical about the relevance of academic success. Because they had observed the young adults in their community remain unemployed or working in the construction site or some local factory. They did not get a job that was equivalent to their educational qualification. Those observations indirectly discourage them from pursuing higher studies and putting time and effort into academic-related tasks. Society has set different responsibilities for its members of various social classes. The existing higher education sociocultural values allow members of privileged backgrounds to take advantage of the given educational system or occupational facility; and, at the same time, disregard others. Instead, higher education maintains to produce and reproduce social inequality in society.

Figure 4

5.9 Discussion

The present study revealed that students perceived academic competence is affected by the skepticism of the relevance of academic success. And also examine how members of different social classes (i.e., middle class vs. working class) react to it. Competence is a psychologically inherent need for human survival. People learn

and modify their self-regulatory tools to satisfy competency needs toward achieving specific goals. In western or mainstream society, competition is a core component of life. Competitions are manifest individually or in groups with the preoccupation to surpass others. On the other hand, minority students perceived academic success as a prerogative of dominant groups and a mechanism to replace their cultural identity with the mainstream. They had little interest in competing with colleagues, sometimes put less effort into academic tasks, and became skeptical about the relevance of academic success.

Individual manifested behavior may differ across cultures, and the notions of intelligence mediate by cultural context (Sternberg, 2019). Competence is a socially constructed notion; the self and others acknowledge how to achieve a task. Try or being academically competent is not always perceived as a positive outcome for minority students. Minority students being academically competent, often faces conflicting reactions from peers. Sometimes academic peers label them as nerds, more prone to dislike, and considered arrogant by others (Weiner, 2005). Often, academic peers find it hard to appreciate those students who put extra effort into overcoming the educational, language, and cultural barriers. For instance, Asian American students obtaining academic success and being competent are associated with negative stereotypes and considered drudges (Weiner, 2005, p.83).

Culture is a product of symbolic concepts, including social structures, norms, values, and meaning (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Cultures appear in patterns of artifacts, ideas, practices, and institutions. Studying the culture emphasizes how the surrounding worlds implicitly and explicitly shape individual psychological processes.

Members of the working class are hard to understand the value of pursuing higher education. Instead, their educational goal links to achieving practical economic safety after school. Pursuing higher education is perceived as a grand and luxurious thing, which is the profession of members of affluent backgrounds.

Moreover, ethnic minority students are less likely to endorse mainstream culture before college; on the other hand, the culture of higher education widely reflects and promotes middle-class cultural norms of independence. In the educational setting, minority students often felt like outsiders or a stranger in paradise. The socialization factor is vital in analyzing the perceived academic competence; socialization guides a person on how to acquire competence. Members of an ethnic minority group had experienced prolonged socio-historical segregation from mainstream society. Experience discriminative acts and unequal access roles while availing of the higher societal positions. They had a lack of role models from their community. Thus, students from lower social classes or underprivileged backgrounds develop skepticism about academic success.

Members of the various social groups set competence differently because of the available resources and access roles in society. Ethnic minority students are disadvantaged in mainstream institutions not because of a lack of academic knowledge. Their value system deviates from middle-class socialization. The social stratification and socialization process differs. The student who socializes with the middle class has distinct advantages over the working class in achieving academic goals.

Inadequate early childhood makes it challenging to manage modern technology because of a lack of essential operative intelligence (Ogbu, 1981). The children from the disadvantaged groups could not equip the abstract skills that the children from the professional family background had. Moreover, a member of minority groups experiencing a lack of cultural attribution and aptitude leads to academic disadvantages and causes generations of unemployment.

Additionally, lower-income children are more socialized toward communalism (e.g., Sankofa, Hurley, Allen & Boykin, 2005). Often, members of less privileged backgrounds are disillusioned about the value of higher education. They expect to get an immediate job after schooling to support their livelihood. Facing socioeconomic shortages in their circumstances, they did not expect higher education has something that required them to explore. And hard to believe that higher education is the engine of social mobility or enhances personal development.

Previous research revealed a social-class representation gap in higher education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The higher education culture itself produces social inequalities between different social groups (Stephens et al., 2012). Members of lower social class or less-educated parents socialize towards interdependence, endorse collective values, and teach their children to respond to other needs. On the other hand, higher income and more educated parents socialize toward independence and educate their children to value autonomy. Encourages them to explore their interests. Members of lower social classes are more reliant on others due to the lack of resources and hold underprivileged societal positions.

Moreover, in higher education, ethnic minority students lack role models from the community, especially those who retain ethnic identity. Also, they experience institutional discrimination due to social, cultural, and language differences. Minority students often conflict their abstract beliefs (i.e., emphasizing the value of education) with their elders or parents' concrete experiences. They perceive academic success does not necessarily lead to a good job and does not assure them to overcome the barriers to upward mobility. Instead, they doubted putting time and effort into the academically related task.

Ogbu's suggested that minority students' academic ability is affected by the abstract beliefs of educational value and concrete experience (i.e., the opportunity structure in adult life). Members of the marginalized sections often experience abstract notions contradicted by real-life experiences. Historically, ethnic minority groups were segregated and experienced racism in mainstream society; such circumstances subsequently affected their educational outcomes. They often face discrimination while getting a job and availing of socioeconomic advantages associated with that qualification.

In general, people's social status determines by their occupation. Holding a formal higher occupational job corroborates with higher educational qualifications. Members of minority groups less avail of higher education, accept the hidden injuries of social stratification, and are aware of external barriers imposed on them. In addition, members of minority group underrepresentation in higher professions is more concerned with socio-cultural barriers.

Learners from working-class backgrounds tend to be first-generation college students; whose parents are less educated and come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Members of the working class are more community-oriented. On the other hand, students from the middle class are often continuing college generation students; whose parents are more educated, possess higher income, value self-preferences, and follow their passion (Belmi, 2015; Stephens et al., 2012). Furthermore, upper-middle-class culture is prevalent in higher education. Often this cultural dominance is a taken-for-granted norm in educational settings. So, ethnic minority students and students from less privileged backgrounds struggle to assimilate to the academic culture and tend to drop out. Working-class students feel that the university setting is unreal and not based on students like them (Stephens & Townsend, 2019).

Ethnic minority students' observed and experienced socio-historical discrimination and faced limited occupational opportunities in adult life. They felt a sense of differentness and marginality in the frame of mainstream socialization. And they tend to develop an opposite cultural frame of reference to remain distinct from the majority group. Believe that taking such a step is essential to maintain cultural boundaries from the mainstream. But, often, these strategies could not help to achieve academic competence.

Moreover, the socio-cultural capital of the family influences the educational and occupational outcomes of the learners (Coleman, 1988; DiMaggio, 1982). The upper and middle-class socialization has possessed specific economic power and benefit to attain social privilege. In contrast, working-class members acquire less financial

support and experience disadvantaged in the broader society. And working-class students perceived that they were located in the lower social hierarchy. While competing with other peers, they do not perform at their best level even if they know well. It might be because a person's self-referent thought mediates knowledge and action.

The present study demonstrates that skepticism about the relevance of academic success has hindered students' academic competence. The result strongly supported the hypothesis that students from working-class backgrounds were less perceived competent than participants from middle-class backgrounds. Baxter and Britton (2001) suggest that becoming mature students in higher education means eroding working-classness. Working-class students enrolling in higher education expose them to new values, beliefs, and lifestyles. In the process, they face displacement, renegotiate their identity, and experience painful dislocation between their old and new identities (Aries & Seider, 2005).

Members of the lower social class are more oriented toward interdependence norms, maintain harmony with the community, and are sensitive toward other people's emotions. Also, they emphasize circumstances and incorporate with others when in need. They feel uncomfortable while competing with their colleagues. Students skeptical about the relevance of future academic success lead to disengagement from academic tasks, reducing educational effort and persistence. Though, sometimes they surpass their counterparts under social and peer pressure.

Furthermore, the problem people often face in their day-to-day life affect their educational aspirations, setting academic goals, employment, and taking part in

societal roles. Person experience differs due to social belonging, and such differentness also shapes beliefs about their abilities (Belmi, Neale, Reiff, & Ulfe, 2019). Additionally, Croizet and Claire (1998) revealed that ethnic minority groups belong to the poor locality and are prone to class or ethnic-related stereotypes (p.593). They face limited resources and difficulty forming a network that supports their educational and occupational advantages.

The notion of competence is not the same in all societies. Competence acquisition lies in the socialization process. Rather, minority and working-class students experience sociocultural deprivation in the higher education system. Unsure about how to act like a college student. They feel uncomfortable competing with their colleagues and perceive the academic environment as unreal. Sometimes, skepticism about putting time and effort into academic-related tasks leads to incompetence in higher education.

Students experiencing social or educational disadvantages may cause a discipline and achievement gap in education (Gregory et al., 2010). Maximizing the socio-economic opportunities of the minority group is essential because awareness of limited opportunities affects their academic outcomes (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1987). To prevent students' dropout and racial discrimination, we have to encourage the idea of diversity, cooperation, and social inclusion in mainstream institutions.

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 General Discussion

In higher education, minority students struggle with academic jargon and possess fewer academic credentials. The thesis demonstrated that the minority students were experiencing cultural discontinuity in the mainstream institutions, which affected their academic competence. From study-1, we learned that ethnic minority students struggled to cope with academic demands and adjust to the educational culture. In higher education, students from minority backgrounds and lower social classes face cultural discontinuity. Their academic outcomes are affected by social and cultural factors besides academic challenges. In study-2, it examined how students' self-expression is affected by fear of negative evaluation and person holding self-construal (i.e., independent and interdependent self-construal). And later on, study-3 revealed that perceived academic competence was affected by future educational prospects and socialization factors.

Members of different social classes have diverse values and norms of interaction. It might be due to various histories of reinforcement. Ethnic minority students having difficulties in higher education is not solely academic; instead, it may be due to the problems in adjusting to sociocultural, historical, and economic reasons. Members of any society teach their children and youth to acquire skills for adult roles. There are some taken-for-granted roles and responsibilities for members of different social classes. Ethnic minority and working-class students face difficulty adopting the

mainstream or middle-class culture of independence because they lack those cultural exposures before college. Instead, they experience sociocultural deprivation in the mainstream. It might be because parents of the subordinate group often fail to transmit the middle-class value to their children. On the other hand, affluent families and well-educated parents transferred cultural advantages to their children.

Members of dominant and subordinate groups set the competence level differently because of their social access role in society. However, individuals may repudiate an ingroup and form a new reference group, though one cannot entirely escape from the membership of one's ingroup. Individuals from marginalized communities often face difficulty associating with the reference groups because their community often forces them to tie in their ingroups. At the same time, the outgroup also finds it hard to accept them.

The meaning of competence varies in different societies. Personal socialization factors guide competence. Individuals invest more in attaining competence and avoiding incompetence (Elliot & Dweck, 2005) as defined by their culture. Competence is motivated by both positive and negative outcomes. Most people often avoid the negative aversive possibility of incompetence to achieve positive competence. But, it often tends to affect a person's long-term growth competence.

In any dominant culture, members of ethnic, racial, and lower social class groups appear inferior in self-presentation mannerism and possess attitudes and linguistic approaches which are perceived as inappropriate. The educational systems fail to appreciate the diverse socio-cultural embeddedness of the students. A person's culture plays a crucial role in his/her life. And those cultural values are transmitted

from one generation to another. The elite and middle-class parents were more capable of transmitting effective compliance to their children in pursuance of education.

Educational institutions develop and maintain specific cultural values, beliefs, and learning styles. The academic curricula and teaching styles are the product of the dominant culture. Students who differed from the existing culture were taken as deficient. Despite the best effort and intention on the part of the teachers and the authorities of the academic institutions, minority students did not achieve the desired competence level in higher education mainly because of different cultural attributions.

Moreover, the education system lacked appropriate provisions to maintain inclusion and diversity, and the new policy must address the distress experienced by the students due to the minority status of their culture. The level of sociocultural challenges in higher education differs from individual to individual, class to class, and community to community. Without concerning the diversity condition, it is not feasible to have an effective policy. Similarly, monoculturalisation is problematic because normalization emphasizes the privileged section of society (Mishra, 2017, p.302). Attending education, many individuals fear and are anxious about losing connection with their cultural roots.

Our research examines the cultural discontinuity effect in academic spheres. The thesis focuses on cultural discontinuity experienced by ethnic minority students in higher education and how it affects their perceived academic competence. The study shows why ethnic minority students are less self-expressive and fall behind in academic competence. Our findings support previous research that ethnic minority and first-generation college students experience sociocultural alienation in mainstream

institutions (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Ogbu, 1982; Stephens et al., 2012). In addition, an individual's sociocultural circumstances affect self-expression and perceived academic competence.

The culture of higher education mainly endorses mainstream middle-class norms of independence and sets the standard of competence accordingly. Many ethnic minority students who belong to working-class backgrounds practice interdependence norms. Before college, they did not get a chance to explore the middle-class mainstream culture. Our study showed that ethnic minority students experience a fear of negative evaluation in mainstream institutions which restricts them from sharing their opinions inside and outside the classroom. While transitioning to college from high school, many students experience a cultural discontinuity, though it is more pronounced in ethnic minority students' cases (Tyler et al., 2008). Instead, non-minority students would adjust and cope with time, but cultural discontinuity persisted in minority students' contexts.

Moreover, minority students face difficulty in crossing cultural boundaries in higher education. They often believe that transitioning into the mainstream culture will lead to losing their traditional cultural values. With the help of cultural discontinuity hypotheses, the present study attempts to explain why ethnic minorities and students from less privileged backgrounds fell behind in academic competence. It is vital to look at this perspective because it indicates the educational barriers that ethnic or minority students experience in higher education. Their educational challenges are not limited to academic ability; sociocultural factors influence academic experience and outcome. The cultural discontinuity hypothesis explains why

ethnic minority students are less self-expressive and how they perceive academic competence.

Prior research suggests that minorities and students from lower social-class backgrounds have academic underperformance in the educational system due to attending substandard schooling and limited opportunity structure in their circumstances (Terenzini et al., 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Ethnic and minority students negotiate academic goals, which Fordham and Ogbu (1986) have called the "oppositional cultural frame of reference." Endorsing such references may affect behavioral and educational outcomes in mainstream institutions. However, they believe that implementing an oppositional cultural frame of reference is the medium to maintain cultural boundaries from the non-minority group or mainstream culture.

Our findings extend previous results in two contexts: first, ethnic minority students experiencing cultural discontinuity in higher education subsequently develop a fear of negative evaluation, which affects their self-expression. On the other hand, in higher education, self-expression is highly valued and perceived as a means to state students' thoughts and knowledge. The educational system expected students to be self-expressive, confident, and active participants in classroom discussions. However, self-expression is perceived differently by various self-construal theory holders. And second, students' perceived academic competence was significantly affected by skepticism about future educational prospects and individual socialization factors. Every society has some taken-for-granted roles and responsibilities for members of different social strata. The higher education culture knowingly or unknowingly produces social inequality while emphasizing that upper-and-middle class norms as

appropriate. Thus, students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in the academic institution suffer the most, perform poorly and often drop out.

Moreover, learners' academic success is related to socialization toward mainstream middle-class norms. Parents of the subordinate family fail to associate and transmit the middle-class value to their children and also fail to provide better resources required in an educational context. On the other hand, parents of well-educated and affluent families transmit cultural advantages to their children and provide better help. Though, it is clear that cultural discontinuity alone is not the reason for academic incompetence. Many researchers suggest that a lack of theoretical knowledge and inadequate academic preparation in high school may cause educational challenges (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Stephens et al., 2012; Terenzini et al., 1996). However, minority students' low performance in mainstream institutions is not about cultural deficiency; instead, the academic values and culture deviate from the earlier values (community and home values) these students had (Greenfield, 1997). Thus, a person's sociocultural background influences the educational experience and academic outcomes.

Furthermore, the study has three primary findings based on cultural discontinuity explanations of academic competence applicable to minority and non-minority students. First, many students encounter cultural discontinuity while transitioning to college after higher secondary. Students who cross the cultural boundaries and adapt are good performers and pursue higher studies, whereas those who face challenges in crossing the cultural boundaries are underperformers and tend to drop out of the institution (Pascarella et al., 2004; Stephens, Markus, & Phillips,

2014; Tinto, 1975). Ethnic minority students' academic outcomes are influenced by experiencing cultural discontinuity between home and institution that impedes their academic outcomes. Encountering cultural discontinuity makes it more challenging to cope with academic hardship or achieve the new educational demand. Exploring ethnic minority students' academic experience and analyzing social circumstances is essential to understanding their academic competence.

Second, students' self-expression is affected by developing a fear of negative evaluation and endorsing different self-construal. The higher education culture emphasizes the independent self-construal model and highly values self-expressiveness. On the other hand, those who hold an interdependent model of self-construal practice self-introspection in place of self-expressiveness. A person's cultural context guides an individual's behavior and the nature of the relationship with others (Kim & Markus, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Additionally, many students experience a lack of English proficiency in higher education, so they implicitly develop a fear of negative evaluation. Despite facing the fear of negative evaluation, students who hold independent self-construal were more self-expressive than the interdependent self-construal holders. Kim and Sherman (2007) revealed that self-expression relies on cultural meaning and individual cultural practices. For example, European Americans more emphasize self-expression than East-Asians or East-Asian Americans. Moreover, ethnic minority students' self-expression is hindered by observing less representation in an academic environment. Furthermore, a person endorsing a specific cultural mechanism could promote or suppress the fears of negative evaluation that undermine or support self-expression.

And the third explanation is that students' perceived academic competence is affected by experiencing skepticism about future educational prospects and socialization factors. The unique nature of academic socialization has introduced an opportunity for some students and denied access to others (Thorat, 2006). People get discriminated against based on their social background, such as class, caste, ethnic identity, etc. Members of lower social class and less privileged backgrounds have unique problems. Historically those groups have been excluded from accessing equal rights. At present, some forms of exclusion and discrimination continue in society. Those exclusionary practices knowingly or unknowingly produce and reproduce social inequality. In the mainstream, ethnic minority groups experience exclusion more due to their social or ethnic identity than their economic status. The result indicates that ethnic minority students from middle-class backgrounds were more perceived as academically competent than working-class students despite skepticism about academic prospects.

Members of the lower social class are less represented in higher education. The social class gap in higher education affects learners' outcomes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The culture of higher education prioritizes independent self (Stephens, Townsend & Dittmann, 2018), and students from the working-class struggle to survive and excel academically. The gateway to higher education is not neutral for everyone; it welcomes students from privileged backgrounds and is indifferent to those who belong to disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, a person's socialization factors better explain attaining academic competence.

These three cultural discontinuity-based explanations outline the ethnic minority students' academic competence. These explanations are essential to understanding the learners' academic competence and the associated potential effect. Thus, considering the more comprehensive benefit to society, educational institutions need to maintain sociocultural diversity. There is a need to support inclusivity in the academic environment. To achieve this view, the institution needs to increase the enrolment of students from diverse cultural backgrounds in its student population and help them retain and motivate learners to achieve academic goals. The findings are based on a sample from the North-eastern student population, but the application would not be limited to a particular group. Instead, it would benefit students from other communities, including learners from minority or non-minority backgrounds.

6.2 Theoretical Interpretations

We learned that the perceived competence of ethnic minority students was affected by experiencing cultural discontinuity in higher education. Cultural discontinuity in education is the cultural misalignment with the larger mainstream society (Ogbu, 1982). Cultural aspects are essential to understanding why the members of an ethnic group of students performed less adequately in an academic setting (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Ethnic minorities and students from lower social-class backgrounds experienced marginalization in the mainstream institution (Tyler et al., 2008). Its because the ethnic subculture did not align with the mainstream culture. The culture of higher education endorses mainstream middle-class cultural values. The cultural perspective of higher education plays an agent in maintaining a particular

group's social advancement. Instead, it produces social inequality while only supporting the middle-class values of independent norms in the institutional cultures.

Members of the middle-class and dominant group encourage children to follow their passion, be persistent and achieve competency. In contrast, members of lower social class and subordinate groups emphasize interdependence and encourage their children to obey the group norms, adjusting and maintaining a harmonious relationship with others. Members of the subordinates group tend to be skeptical about academic success due to different socialization processes and societal roles. Members of ethnic minorities believe that adapting to the new culture means ceasing their traditional culture. And views that achieving academic success means something individual outside the group concerns.

Moreover, many social scientists wanted the subordinate group to perform well in mainstream institutions. They provide solutions without understanding the actual problem, but those solutions become unworkable in the real situation. Lack of understanding of the genuine issues leaves them disappointed in their achieving goal. The outcome of ethnic minority students would explain better when we understand the sociocultural perspectives.

Sociocultural diversity contributes to competence rather than obstructing it. Members of disadvantaged communities have a history of low academic achievement. It causes by unequal power relations rather than a lack of intellectual ability or cultural inferiority (Mishra, 2017, p.306). Social factors play a vital role in contributing to the academic knowledge of the learners (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Vygotsky (1978) revealed that knowledge acquisition lies within the cultural sphere. Instead, human behavior is guided by its surroundings, that is, a person's socio-historical circumstances. The learning process is co-constructed and deviated by a person's socio-cultural practices (Conner, 2013, p.7). The similarity of social patterns inside or outside the educational institution plays a vital role in learning, which helps them to understand better (Ogbu, 1982). The community socio-cultural practices guide an individual knowledge formation (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, the cultural discontinuity theoretical perspective is relevant to studying minority students' academic competence.

Cultural discontinuity is the lack of cultural alignment between a student's home and the institutional socialization value. In mainstream institutions, minorities and working-class students face cultural differences, so their educational challenges are not only academic; sociocultural factors play an essential role. Ethnic minority students' experiencing sociocultural differences in the mainstream affects their academic experiences and outcomes. Moreover, in the mainstream, ethnic minorities group experience discrimination based on ethnic identity regardless of holding higher or lowers social strata. Experiencing identity-based exclusion subsequently causes the fear of negative evaluation and develops skepticism about the relevance of academic success (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Furthermore, individuals who endorse an independent model of self are more likely to act as unique rather than conform to the group's norms; and influence others rather than adjust (Stephens et al., 2012). To adapt and succeed in higher education, minority students require fostering the appropriate norms. Adapted to academic

culture is vital to survive and compete with other peers. However, in the process, many minority students experience cultural discontinuity. Trying to assimilate to the new culture makes them difficult to cope with academic challenges. But, some ethnic minority students manage to cross the cultural boundaries, while others struggle to cross. It might be because knowing other cultures need an individual to immerse in the new culture (Misra & Gergen, 1993). Moreover, individuals are not separate from their belonging culture; they are part of that culture. People are rooted in their belonging culture, and that is how an individual self emerges within its culture.

In the case of the north-eastern region, so many communities have resided. Instead, the area does not occupy by a particular group or community and does not necessarily represent a specific culture. One ethnic group is not necessarily similar to the other; instead, it is different in many ways. Though, they are almost identical in the mainstream lens. They hold the ethnic identity and emphasize interdependent norms. Generally, members of this region have practiced an interdependent model of self and guided their behavior accordingly. However, cultural variation occurs due to personal preferences and socialization factors. But, when it comes to higher education, to be mature and competent students in education, students need to accommodate the appropriate institutional culture. Students must be aware of how to interact with colleagues, express their thoughts, and be competitive in the academic setting.

To succeed in academics is almost like students from minority backgrounds to cease their prior cultural practice and adopt a new identity. However, the problem emerges in those circumstances. When the course is complete and returns to their community, students who successfully adopt the prevalent institutional culture and

establish an identity encounter a stranger in their community. They face conflict and no longer fit into the value system of their community. It is mainly because the provided education does not reflect the objective of diverse groups. While pursuing higher education, many minority students need to form a new identity, but at the same time, it is vital to retain the old one. So, pursuing higher education is a burden for many minority students. Administrative attention is required to motivate its student population's diversity. Allowing the interdependence model of self in its institutional culture may be one significant initiative. Such cultural inclusion might not affect the prospect of academic standards. Instead, it would help students to get a chance to learn from diverse viewpoints. Thus, it would help simultaneously fill the social gap while allowing an extensive section of society to assess education and achieve academic goals.

Furthermore, the literature on cultural discontinuity highlights educational systems fail to acknowledge cultural diversity leads to the intellectual incompetence of minority students. Higher education considers cultural norms to play an exclusionary role to the learners. Students who are diverse from institutional cultures are identified as culturally deprived rather than viewed as cultural differences. Remedies are to recognize our society's discriminatory practice against ethnicity, caste, class, gender, and group identity. Administrators and policymakers need urgent attention to maintain and retain the diverse students in the educational setting and help them achieve their academic goals.

6.3 Limitations and Future Direction

The study sample size was small; it would be better if the sample size were bigger. And more enriched when including multiple institutions and making comparisons. The differing academic experience and the outcome of students influence social belonging and represent a specific culture that is the independent or interdependent model of self. Students whose socialization and endorsing self are similar to the prevalent institutional culture easily fit into the system. Often, those students are willing to challenge and thrive toward academic goals.

The study has three main limitations,

1. First, the study sample size is small. And also, the study did not allow equal student participation across the different ethnic groups in the region because of the limited availability of student representation in the institution. Some states have enormous student participation, and on the other hand, other states have few enrolments in higher education. But, the finding would be more beneficial if future research attempts to conduct a study with a larger sample size.
2. Second, the studies were conducted at two central universities located in Delhi. These two universities are among the top-tier universities in the country. Future research may include multiple institutions and compare to examine which institutional, cultural practice is beneficial in larger student sections.
3. Third, the existing higher education culture is prevalent by independence norms, whereas a member of ethnic minorities group widely practices interdependence norms. So, maximum students from minority sections were

experiencing cultural discontinuity in higher education. Future research may examine how to include interdependence norms in the institutional setting without negotiating the academic standard and quality of education.

6.4 Contributions of the Present Research

The meaning of competence varies in different cultures. But, in any culture, competence means effective adaptation to its environment. From the broader perspective, competence is to perform the expected role of age and gender in their cultural context (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Different cultures have different sets of values and expectations. However, a person's survival depends on adapting to its specific culture.

Studying the ethnic minority students' college experience and perceived competence in higher education is essential to reduce the social class gap and social inequality in the academic environment. Minority and students from less privileged backgrounds are not culturally deprived; instead, the provided institutional culture is different from their home culture. Minority students' poor academic performance is due to attending substandard schooling, less exposure to academic-related events and middle-class culture before college, and family socioeconomic conditions. In addition, they often experience a lack of opportunity and job ceiling in adult life (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Moreover, the studies showed three significant contributions:

1. Firstly, our study provides qualitative and quantitative evidence of the cultural discontinuity effect in higher education. The studies prove how unique sociocultural belonging shapes learners' academic behavior and influences outcomes.
2. Secondly, the study suggests that a person belonging culture influences self-expression. The finding shows that people who hold independent selves are more self-expressive than interdependent selves. The interdependent self-holders are less self-expressive and tend to introspect and conform to the group norms. And also showed greater fear of negative evaluation and tended to be more worried about what kind of impression they would make if they committed a mistake. Higher education culture knowingly or unknowingly supports independence norms. But, the present study shows a need to include interdependence norms in higher education culture so that students from different sections access higher education to help them retain in the system and be motivated to achieve academic goals.
3. And thirdly, our study provides evidence that student socialization has influenced academic outcomes. Students from middle-class backgrounds were more perceived academic competent than students from working-class backgrounds. Often, working-class students attend substandard schooling and experience less academic exposure before college. Believe that adopting the educational value means ceasing traditional values, and achieving academic success means individuals outside the group's concerns. In addition, they

observe and experience the role of social stratification in society and limited opportunities in adult life. So, minority students tend to be skeptical about future academic prospects. Moreover, ethnic minority students tend to discriminate based on ethnic identity rather than socioeconomic status. Ethnic minority students perceive academic competence as affected by the concrete experience of reality; instead, they perceive the educational environment as unreal.

Furthermore, ethnic minority students misattribute and falsely believe that the opportunity structure constructs on some groups of students. And sometimes, they do not put the required effort into achieving academic goals. This perspective might change if they believe that people get a fair chance, so they even try harder to achieve academic goals. Reducing disproportionate representation of students and social inequality in the education system requires recognizing diversity, promoting multiculturalism, and empowering educational rights to deserving students. The present study explicitly focuses on the academic experience of ethnic minority students in higher education. In the context of ethnic minority students, reservation policies may initiate based on ethnic identity rather than caste and class. The study finding draws from the participants of the north-eastern region; however, these findings could apply to students from minority and nonminority backgrounds.

6.5 Conclusion

From the studies, we learned that perception of competence is not the same in all societies. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds experience a cultural discontinuity in higher education. The culture of higher education reflects upper-and-middle-class cultural norms and emphasizes independent models of self. In contrast, members of the ethnic minority groups socialize an interdependent model of self. Also, they encounter marked sociocultural differences in the mainstream institutions. Before college, they were unfamiliar with the mainstream upper-and-middle-class culture. Moreover, perceived academic competence is the internal attribution of one's ability and others. Students from minority, lower social classes, and lower-income backgrounds have histories of low achievement (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gregory et al., 2010; Stephens et al., 2012).

The gateway to higher education is not neutral for everyone. Historically, higher education is accessed by members of the upper and middle class or members of affluent family backgrounds. Parents of the subordinate group fail to socialize and transmit the upper and middle-class values to their children. On the other hand, well-educated parents and affluent families transferred cultural advantages to their children. Moreover, minority students possess lower educational credentials, experience a lack of English proficiency, observe social inequality in accessing the social roles, and face job ceilings in adult life. And subsequently develop skepticism about future educational prospects that affect their academic outcome.

To reduce the academic and social representation gap, members of the minority community need to represent an equal access role in education, employment, and different societal positions. Students from less privileged backgrounds are unsure about acting like college students and presenting appropriately in the academic environment. Though, sometimes ethnic minority students try to maintain cultural boundaries from mainstream culture because some cultural values principally contradict their traditional values. Thus, their educational challenge is not academic; instead, socio-cultural factors play a vital role.

Furthermore, one aspect of higher education is self-awareness and knowledge enhancement. And another aspect of higher education is social mobility, so recognizing cultural diversity in higher education is essential for the upliftment of society. It would allow students from diverse sections of society to access education and help them achieve their academic goals. Also, it would help to provide equal rights to all deserving students. Finally, we can conclude that minority students' educational outcomes are affected by experiencing cultural discontinuity in the educational system. Many minority students are unfamiliar with the academic culture. To achieve academic competence, minority students need to accommodate a new culture and identity in the educational setting, but it is essential to retain the old one. For minority students, education is not about fulfilling the new academic demand but rather a sociocultural adjustment. The studies address the attention requirement of policymakers and educators to recognize cultural diversity. And need to include interdependent norms in its institutional culture and reflect the aspiration of different groups in the educational setting. So that students gain knowledge from diverse viewpoints and learn to cooperate. The academic community needs to acknowledge

the diverse culture. The spirit of higher education depends on the diversity of talent. More research requires in this area, and administrative attention needs to focus on how to fit interdependence norms in its educational system without affecting the quality of education.

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APPENDICES

Consent Form

Appendix A: Interview Questionnaires

Appendix B: Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale

Appendix C: Self-Construal Scale

Appendix D: Self-Expression Scale

Appendix E: Skepticism about the Relevance of School for Future Success

Appendix F: Academic Efficacy Scale

Consent Form

Purpose of study: This study intended to learn about the ethnic minority student college experience in higher education. Learn more about the values and beliefs held by minority students that may relate to their academic outcomes. The present research aims to improve educational outcomes and overall success for ethnic minority students. You are asking to participate in this study because of your self-identity as a northeast Indian and attending higher education in mainstream society. Your responses will help to understand appropriate educational policies and reduce the negative impacts. This questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

Confidentiality:

Your response will remain kept confidential and will use it for educational research purpose only.

Benefits of study:

This study will not be directly beneficial to the participants. However, the collected data will help highlight the challenge faced by ethnic minority students in higher studies and hope to improve their learning.

Participating in this study is your choice:

Participation in this study is voluntary. So, the participator has the right to leave at any time.

Demographic information:

Name: Age: Gender: Course:
 Institution: Language you speak at home: State:
 How long have you been in Delhi: Family annual income: **A** (1 to 5lakh);
B (5 to 10lakh); **C** (10lakh and above). Social category:
 Type of School attended (choose any one): (High/Middle/Low standard)
 How good is your English: (Basic/ Advance/Excellence)
 Social class: (Upper/Middle/Working).
 College generation learners: (First/Second/Continuing generation)

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Appendix A

Interview Questionnaires

1. What are the common problems which north-east student often faces in Delhi or mainstream institution?
2. Can you share one of such experiences with me?
3. If you face any discrimination, then how can you cope with it?
4. Do you experience inside and outside the campus differently? Or is there any difference you observe between the campus and inside the classroom?
5. How many friends do you have from the same region?
6. What are the support systems in your study and also in the financial context?
7. Do you avail of any scholarships?
8. How is it (i.e., the academic culture) similar or different from your home culture?
9. How do you motivate yourself to pursue higher studies?
10. Did you ever doubt your ability to learn or perform a given task?
11. How is your family's perception about attending higher studies?
12. Do you identify yourself as North-east or state identity? Have you seen yourself as a part of your ethnic community?

Appendix B

Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale

Read each of the following statements carefully and indicate how characteristic it is of you according to the following scale:

- 1= Not at all characteristic of me
- 2= Slightly characteristic of me
- 3= Moderately characteristic of me
- 4= Very characteristic of me
- 5= Extremely characteristic of me

1. I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference. ()
2. It bothers me when people form an unfavorable impression of me. ()
3. I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings. ()
4. I worry about what kind of impression I make on people. ()
5. I am afraid that others will not approve of me. ()
6. I am afraid that people will find fault with me. ()
7. I am concerned about other people's opinions of me. ()
8. When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me. ()
9. I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make. ()
10. If I know someone is judging me, it tends to bother me. ()
11. Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think of me. ()
12. I often worry that I will say or do wrong things. ()

Appendix C

Self-Construal Scale

Instructions:

This is a questionnaire that measures a variety of feelings and behaviors in various situations. Listed below are a number of statements. Read each one as if it referred to you. Beside each statement write the number that best matches your agreement or disagreement. Please respond to every statement. Thank you.

1= STRONGLY DISAGREE	4= DON'T AGREE OR	5= AGREE
SOMEWHAT		
2= DISAGREE	DISAGREE	6= AGREE
3= SOMEWHAT DISAGREE		7= STRONGLY
AGREE		

1. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects. ()
2. I can talk openly with a person who I meet for the first time, even when this person is much older than I am. ()
3. Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument. ()
4. I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact. ()
5. I do my own thing, regardless of what others think. ()
6. I respect people who are modest about themselves. ()
7. I feel it is important for me to act as an independent person. ()
8. I will sacrifice my self interest for the benefit of the group I am in. ()
9. I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood. ()
10. Having a lively imagination is important to me. ()
11. I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans. ()
12. I feel my fate is intertwined with the fate of those around me. ()
13. I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met. ()
14. I feel good when I cooperate with others. ()
15. I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards. ()
16. If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible. ()
17. I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments. ()
18. Speaking up during a class (or a meeting) is not a problem for me. ()
19. I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor (or my boss). ()
20. I act the same way no matter who I am with. ()

21. My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me. ()
22. I value being in good health above everything. ()
23. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I am not happy with the group. ()
24. I try to do what is best for me, regardless of how that might affect others. ()
25. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me. ()
26. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group. ()
27. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me. ()
28. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group. ()
29. I act the same way at home that I do at school (or work). ()
30. I usually go along with what others want to do, even when I would rather do something different. ()

Appendix D

Self-Expression Scale

Instructions: How much do you agree with each of the following statements?
Please respond using the scale provided.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strongly agree

1. People place too much value on the expression of ideas. ()
2. I express my feelings publicly, regardless of what others say. ()
3. I do not like to talk about my thoughts to others. ()
4. The freedom of speech is the most important right. ()
5. I generally like talking about my thoughts whenever I can. ()
6. I generally keep my opinions to myself because I do not wish to offend others who may disagree with me. ()
7. My thoughts are the most important thing about myself. ()
8. Those who are close to me know my preferences and opinions on many issues. ()
9. I know preferences and opinions of those who are close to me. ()
10. Being able to make my own choice is important to me. ()
11. My opinions and preferences tell who I really am. ()

Appendix E

Skepticism about the Relevance of School for Future Success

This refers to students' beliefs that doing well in school will not help them achieve success in the future.

1. Even if I do well in school, it will not help me have the kind of life I want when I grow up.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

2. My chances of succeeding later in life don't depend on doing well in school.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

3. Doing well in school doesn't improve my chances of having a good life when I grow up.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

4. Getting good grades in school won't guarantee that I will get a good job when I grow up.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

5. Even if I am successful in school, it won't help me fulfill my dreams.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

6. Doing well in school won't help me have a satisfying career when I grow up.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

Appendix F

Academic Efficacy Scale

This refers to students' perceptions of their competence to do their class work.

1. I'm certain I can master the skills taught in class this year.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

2. I'm certain I can figure out how to do the most difficult class work.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

3. I can do almost all the work in class if I don't give up.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

4. Even if the work is hard, I can learn it.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

5. I can do even the hardest work in this class if I try.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All True		Somewhat True		Very True

List of Tables:

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the study, representing *mean* and *SD* of the variables on a Self-expressive scale,

Self-construal		Fear of negative evaluation	
		High	Low
Independent	<i>M</i>	46	56.57
	<i>SD</i>	8.15	7.6
Interdependent	<i>M</i>	49.93	45.27
	<i>SD</i>	3.68	9.45

Table 2

F values of self-construal, fear of being judge on self-expression and interaction of these variables

Variables	Mean Square	<i>F</i>
Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)	261.07	4.59*
Self-construal	407.01	7.17**
FNE * Self-construal	1740.4	30.64***

Note. For this *F* test, *df* = 1 and *N* = 120; * *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of the study, representing *mean* and *SD* of the variables on Perceived Competence,

Social-class		Skeptic about the relevance of success	
		High	Low
Middle-class	<i>M</i>	16.40	20.12
	<i>SD</i>	2.76	2.81
Working-class	<i>M</i>	17.32	16.64
	<i>SD</i>	2.99	2.65

Table 4

F values of self-construal, fear of being judge on self-expression and interaction of these variables

Variables	Mean Square	<i>F</i>
Skeptic about relevance of success (SRS)	57.76	7.29**
Social-class	40.96	5.17*
Social-class * SRS	121.00	15.28***

Note. For this *F* test, *df* = 1 and *N* = 100; * *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001

List of Figures:

A. Conceptual Framework of Study-2:

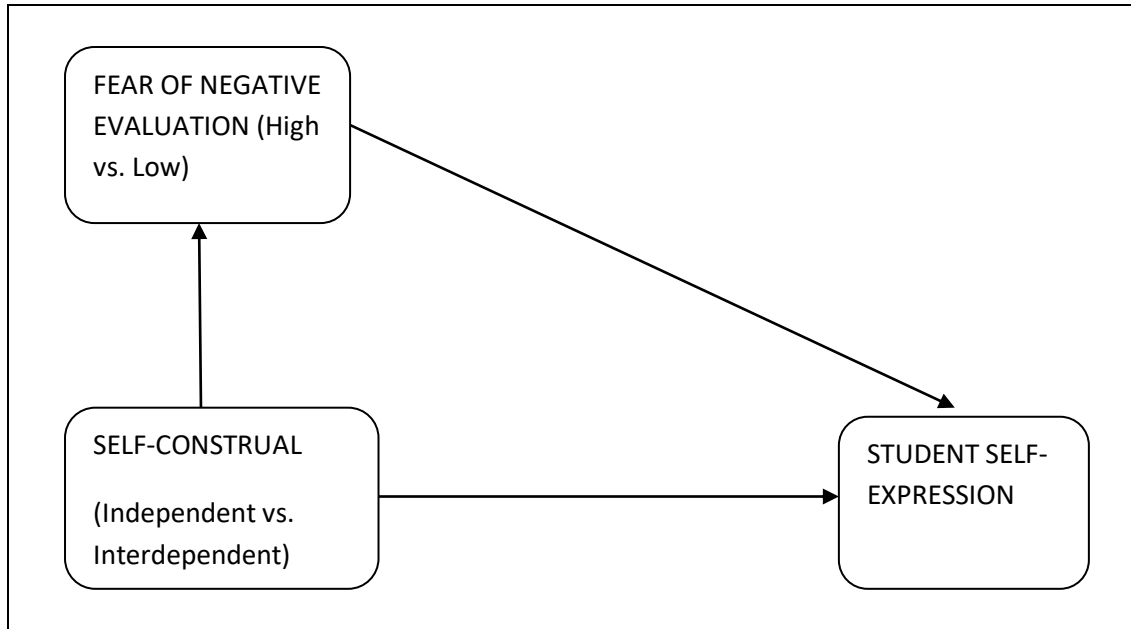


Figure 1. Conceptual model of study-2.

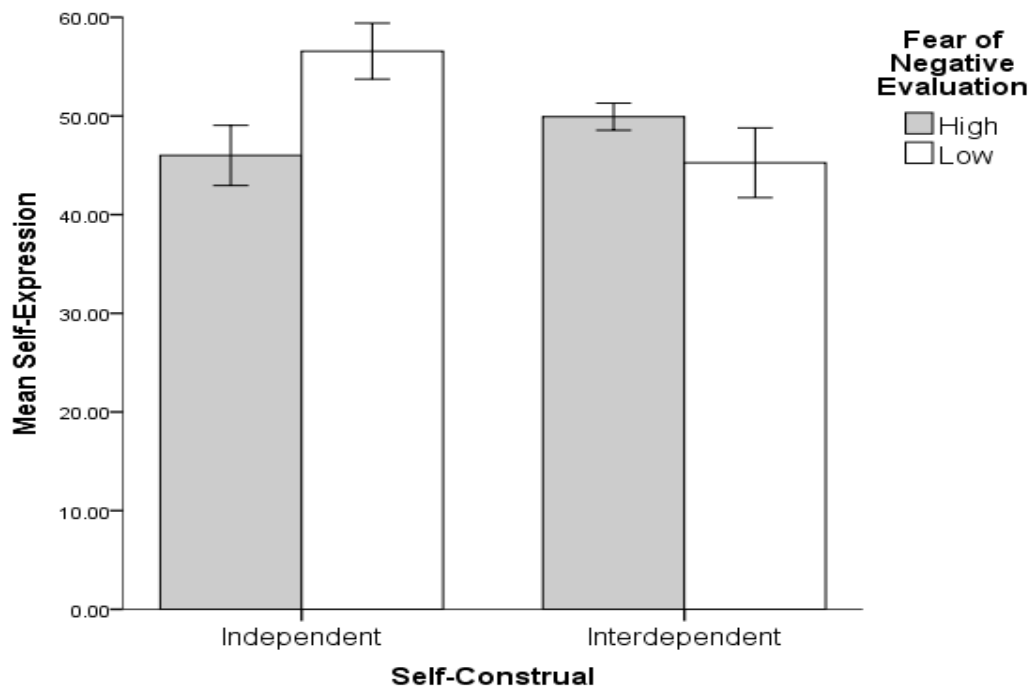


Figure 2. Mean self-expression for each condition of self-construal and fear of negative evaluation (error bars represent 95% confidence intervals).

B. Conceptual Framework of Study-3:

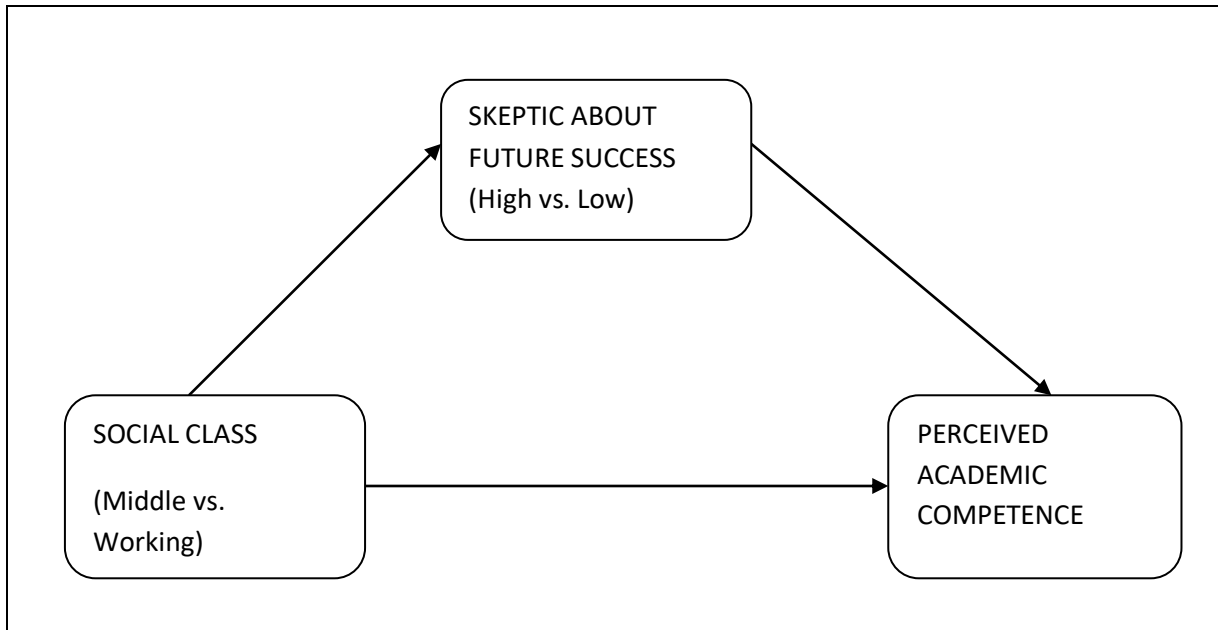


Figure 3. Conceptual model of study-3.

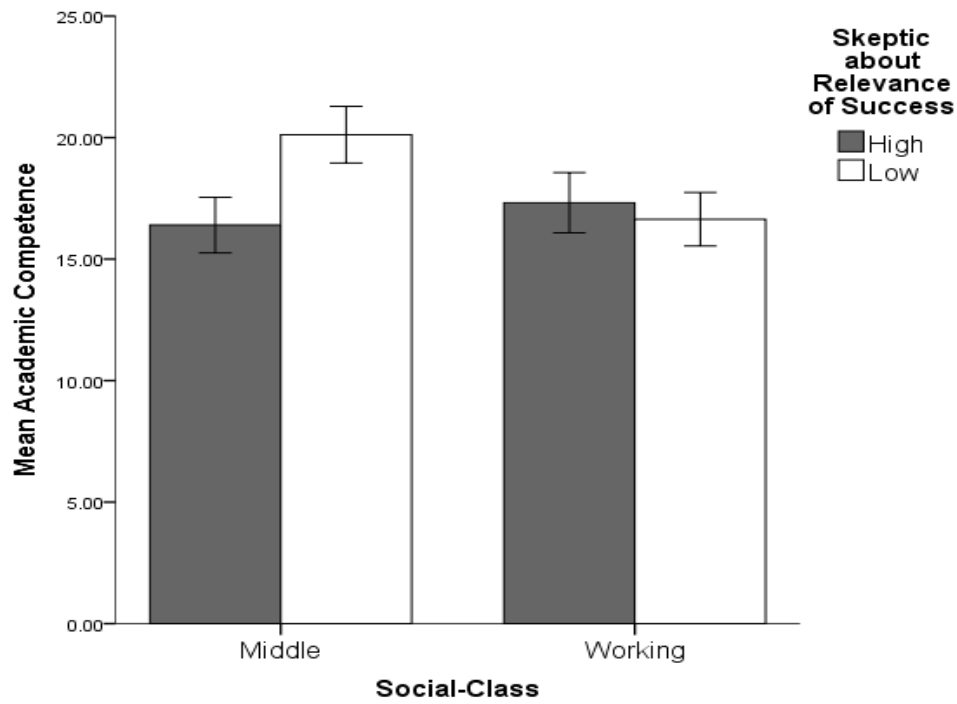


Figure 4. Mean academic competence for each condition of social-class and skeptic about relevance of success (error bars represent 95% confidence intervals).