

Exploring the Shifting Identities of Mongolian Women in Hungary

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Abstract:

This research aims to explore the identity formation of Mongolian women residing in Hungary, focusing on how they maintain their self-identity while adapting to Hungarian culture and society. Qualitative research methods, including participant observation and structured in-depth interviews, are employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences, self-identification, and social interactions. Four Mongolian women, representing diverse backgrounds and roles within the community, are selected as research participants after a year and a half of fieldwork. The study begins with a literature review on identity, self-identification, collective identity, acculturation, and adaptation. Subsequent chapters delve into Mongolian national identity, its historical roots, and the influence of socialism and democracy. The methodology chapter outlines fieldwork intricacies, participant selection, and data categorization. Research findings are presented in Chapter 4, exploring appearance-based interactions within the Mongolian and Hungarian communities, as well as the influence of racial categorization on interpersonal relationships. The study concludes with a discussion, limitations, and key implications in Chapter 5, and a summary of findings in Chapter 6.

Introduction:

This study focuses on the experiences of Mongolian women who migrated to Hungary for study, work, and residence. Research is trying to find the significance of these women's self-identity and national identity in the context of new environments and adapting to the Hungarian culture. The research subject is a group of Mongolian women from different backgrounds and experiences. They have been living, working, and studying across Hungary from 2 to 18 years; the age group falls between 21 to 49.

This focuses on answering these questions based on their experiences:

1. Internal and External Identification:

- a. How do Mongolian women in Hungary self-identify and nationally identify within their small community, and what factors influence these identities?
- b. To what extent does group identity and cultural relativism impact the self-identification of Mongolian women in Hungary?

2. Cultural Adaptation and Assimilation:

- a. What strategies do Mongolian women in Hungary employ to adapt to the host community's culture while preserving their cultural roots, and what are the key challenges they face in this process?
- b. How do the experiences of cultural adaptation and assimilation contribute to the development of new identities among these women?

3. External Perceptions:

- a. How do external perceptions, including stereotypes and categorizations based on appearances, affect the daily lives and experiences of Mongolian women in Hungary?
- b. To what extent does the concept of the "Asian look," the notion of "otherness," sexualization, and Orientalism influence the external perceptions of these women, and how do they respond to these influences?
- c. How do external perceptions of Mongolian women in Hungary differ within their own community compared to the broader host community, and how do these differences impact their sense of identity and belonging?

With all this exploration, I aim to understand the experience of Mongolian women in Hungary, how they adapt and navigate their identity, build a sense of belonging, and confront appearance, gender-based expectations, and stereotypes.

Research Objectives and Methodology:

The main objective of this research is an exploration of the identity formation of Mongolian women and their national identity, how they kept their self-identity, and how they established some sense of belonging while adapting to the Hungarian culture and society.

Qualitative research methods will be applied to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experience of Mongolian women residing in Hungary. First, participant observation, which allows me to delve into engagement in their daily lives and experiences, offers insight into their self-identity, collective identity, social cues, and social interactions. The second method is structured in-depth interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences and stories that will contribute to a nuanced understanding.

Research Participants:

This research will spotlight the experiences and identities of Mongolian women residing in Hungary with a cultural anthropological approach. Research participants are from different backgrounds and play different societal roles, contributing to an in-depth understanding of this community's dynamics. After actively engaging with the Mongolian community and conducting a year and a half of fieldwork, I have selected four women to be the focus of this research. Participants were chosen for the unique experience and inclusivity of their perspectives, making them proper representatives of the Mongolian community in Hungary. Each has a different approach to self-identifying and adapting the host community's culture to their daily lives. The methodology chapter will elaborate on further detailed information regarding the participants.

1. Literature review

1.1. Identity

Defining someone's identity means navigating through multiple layers of societal and self-identification. With the rapid growth of ongoing migration waves and globalization, concepts of self and national identity are evolving and changing at every moment, making it challenging to reach universally applicable definitions. In social identity theory, it is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Moreover, identity can be explained as a fundamental sense of belonging in many groups and categories. According to Turner, this concept is referred to as "self-categorization". (Turner, Hogg, et al., 1987). Self-categorizations include various collective social groups, such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, race, and sexuality. (Leve, 2011). In identity theory, the fundamental point is that individuals see themselves as someone filling specific roles, such as being a parent or student. Moreover, each role comes with certain expectations and meanings, and how to show certain behaviors while filling this role. These expectations create standards that guide our behavior in society. (Stets & Burke 2000). Although many versions of the definition of identity cannot be explained straightforwardly because of its complex nature, Brubaker highlights this matter. In his critique work "Beyond Identity", he claims that "identity" has become an overused term in social science. It seems to be everywhere but nowhere to be found, meaning the complexity of its nature and layers of identity is an idea that has always been hard to pinpoint. In contrast to his critique, Jenkins (2014) says that even though usage and discussion were winding up, there was still a persistent necessity to explain the fundamental human experience. He claimed that identity matters because it is humans' primary cognitive mechanism to sort out themselves and their fellows, individually and collectively. This is a "baseline" sorting that is fundamental to the organization of the human world; it is how we know who is who and what is what. (Jenkins, 2014, p.13) It is important to note that this research is delving into constructed identity or identification based on pragmatism rather than focusing on an individual's self-identity and its significance with the cultural anthropological viewpoint.

1.2 Acculturation, adaption

In today's globalized world, migration has become a common phenomenon, and researching the national identity of migrants is both fascinating and challenging in social science. With the complex nature of identity, it is crucial to note that identities can change due to various circumstances. According to Erikson, identities have the potential to change and evolve through assimilation. (Erikson, 2001).

When individuals move to a different country or even to a different continent, it is not just their national identity that changes. Their cultural identity and, most importantly, their sense of self transform while adapting to a new environment and culture. The acculturation process can be

explained as a complex process that occurs when people from different cultural backgrounds interact. (Margaret,2001) Acculturation results in cultural modification within both groups; however, the primary change happens to the non-dominant or minority group, often surrounded by adaptation of the dominant group's social cues, culture, and practices. (Berry, 1992)

Acculturation, according to Berry's 1992 discoveries, causes a chain reaction of changes at the group level as well as at the individual level. At the group level of acculturation, changes include physical ones: a new environment and a new housing situation. Biological: new nutritional status; political: due to being a member of a non-dominant group, it may involve some loss of autonomy; economic: a new form of employment; cultural: a new language; educational and religious institutions; and lastly, social relationships can be altered into new shapes. These changes have the potential to have a significant impact on migrants' daily lives and psychological well-being. (Berry,1992)

Furthermore, on the individual level, Berry notes that individuals undergo behavioral shifts during acculturation. Existing attitudes and identities can change during behavioral shifts, and personal and ethnic identities tend to shift. The complexity of the process of acculturation is essential to note. During this process, lots of migrants go through psychological challenges, such as anxiety and depression, often referred to as acculturative stress. Recognizing and addressing acculturative stress is essential for promoting the well-being and mental health of individuals undergoing acculturation. (Ren & Jiang, 2021).

When people from different cultures interact, they learn how to navigate their coexistence in that culture through adaptation. Language, traditions, customs, values, and social behaviors are all cultural factors that can be considered during the adaptation process.

Adaptation is an active course of individuals attempting to integrate into and engage with a new society, also known as the "host" society. It is viewed as a natural outcome of the process of acculturation. Berry (1976) explained that adaptation has three strategies for integrating into the host society's culture. This includes the processes of adjustment, reaction, and withdrawal. Adjustment is the action of individuals attempting to harmonize with the host culture to avoid conflict. The reaction involves resistance to the new environment, which can lead to changes and improve group alignment. Withdrawal process of an individual or group being removed from the adaptation process either voluntarily or by exclusion. Berry (1976) views that, among these strategies, adjustment is the most practical or even realistic approach to adapting one culture since it often avoids complexities of the host culture while minimizing conflicts. (Berry,1976)

The central understanding of acculturation revolves around the adaptation of non-dominant culture members, meaning migrants getting used to the host and dominant society's culture. While it may become a synonym of assimilation due to its definition, Berry (2006) takes on Redfield and Linton's (1936) first statement that assimilation is not the only form of acculturation and illustrates the four different strategies of ethnocultural groups and the larger society. The strategies of ethnocultural groups include assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Assimilation is when individuals prefer to adopt the dominant culture while forsaking their fundamental culture. Separation is holding on to their original culture while avoiding and limiting

interactions with new/dominant cultures. Integration, by definition, is a strategy in which people adopt elements of the new culture while retaining their roots. Finally, marginalization refers to an individual or group losing cultural and psychological contact with their traditional roots while failing to integrate into a new culture due to mostly intentional exclusion.

Acculturation strategies can be different in each circumstance and experience. Many factors, including host culture, dominant group attitudes, and individual backgrounds, can shape these strategies in various ways. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to acculturation. Hence, diverse minority groups face different challenges and expectations during acculturation, depending on factors such as cultural stereotypes and historical backgrounds. (Taillandier & Maisonneuve, 2005). Indicating that some minority groups opt for one acculturation strategy to avoid any further complexity, depending on the reaction of the host culture. Furthermore, when contextualizing the adaptation of Mongolian women living in Budapest, it is critical to recognize the complexity of acculturation.

1.3 “Racial Appearance” and Gender

In this study, it is essential to recognize the significant influence of “racial appearance” on the acculturation process, particularly considering that some community members may experience discrimination based on their “racial appearance” (Berry et al., 1989). Stereotypes based on appearance are prevalent in communities like Mongolian women in Budapest, often carried out for obvious reasons.

Categorization by “racial appearance” is a cognitive process that happens automatically and heuristically (Kurzban et al., 2001). However, in the anthropological approach, race can be: "Race is a socially constructed concept that profoundly affects marginalized communities. (Ifekwunigwe, J. O., Wagner, J., et al. 2017) It is essential to note that a person's “racial appearance” does not necessarily provide accurate information about their nationality, culture, or heritage.

However, race is still a vital sector for dividing people into distinct groups based on their skin color, and it has historical connections with racial prejudice implemented by empirical means. Viewpoint As Kurzban (2001) pointed out, cognitively, people tend to make immediate judgments about others based on three primary categories: race, age, and sex. In this study, three of these categories are relevant, as it focuses on Mongolian women (who have Asian appearance) in different age groups (participants aged 19-48), and it is essential to note that judgments based on appearance factors will be elaborated in the methodology and finding parts. It is also important to point out that women, often viewed as having non-dominant societal roles, can face unique challenges during acculturation.

When diving into the study of race, particularly concerning minority migrant populations such as Mongolian women in Hungary, Edward Said's work on Orientalism is valuable to note.

The critical work of Said's (1978) Orientalism proposed the theory of Western superiority ideology in social science. His theory encompassed Orientalism's representation of the ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient" and "the Occident". In Said's perspective, the

Occident views itself as the source of peak civilization and knowledge, whilst the “Orient” is primitive and coarse.

Following this ideology of categorization of "us" as European and "those" as non-European terms. In short, the author described Orientalism as a framework that the West crafted to distinguish themselves from the East while reinforcing superiority and otherness. (Said, 1978) Furthermore, Said (1978) brings up the historical and material aspects of Orientalism and pinpoints its origination starting from the late eighteenth century, when the Occident exercised authority and institution over the “Orient”. In essence, it is a systematic set of beliefs used by European powers to manage and imitate the concept of the “Orient”. Political ties, social rules, military, science, and ideology generated and reproduced the split between the “Orient” and the “Occident”. It suggests that the West forged 'fundamental' distinctions between the “Orient” and itself to create and replicate its identity and authority. (Said, 1978) Moreover, the “Orient”, written and exposed by European scholars, travelers, and ethnographers, have historically employed and perpetuated the ideology of otherness and aesthetical difference by meaning racial differences that represent a form of exoticism and fetishization.

Said further discussed the subject of “Orient” feminization and exoticization by looking into different descriptions of Western travelers, writers, and academics and how, in most cases, the “Orient” women remain voiceless and devoid of their presence or history. In the first chapter of the book, he briefly delves into the relationship between Flaubert and the Egyptian courtesan, and the author interprets this interaction as a widely influential model of the Oriental women: she never spoke of herself, and she never represented her emotion., (Said.O. 1978.p6). The binary of the courtesan, Flaubert is relatively wealthier and has more authority, foreign, and most crucially male. This "superiority" not only allows him to extend the pattern of Western dominance over the East but also enables the discourse of characterization of the “Orient” women. Said's arguments are not unique but sharpen the universal ideology and characterization of the “Orient” women in colonial discourse, which are often painted as weak, exotic, sexual, and desirable, yet something that can be controlled.

Many critics, such as Aijaz Ahmad, claimed that Said's lack of inclusion of gender as a theme, but historically, there were hardly any women orientalists. (Burney, S. 2012). Said was aware of gender in Orientalism, but there was a lack of literary work to cover this matter. In Addition, Said (1978) viewed all of this relationship between superiority and authority of the West; race played a much more pivotal part than gender and class. (Burney, S. 2012)

Not so surprisingly, this matter of racial and gender hierarchy is still a highly debated subject in social science. These dynamics may also be necessary for Mongolian women's research in Hungary. According to Chang (2006), in the present day, the "oriental women" image exists in all types of discourses, from mass media to individuals' day-to-day interactions. The author noted that images and traits of Asian women that orientalists perpetuated now have evolved to stereotype among Americans. Such as that they are "exotic" and "submissive". (Chang 2006.) These can be categorized as racial fetishism, and it is a notion of the Western stereotypical ideology of Asian women being submissive, innocent yet promiscuous, and up to the point of almost dehumanizing.

It is crucial to point out that these terms are not only oppressive terms of racism but also sexism. Even in the cases of the participants in studies, when they were adapting to the new cultural environment of Hungary, particularly Participant C, went on a date and had an instance of fetishization and judged by only their race. Hence, the racial stereotypes and the theory of Orientalism will be used widely in this research within the context of Mongolian women in Hungary. This chapter explored theories of self and collective identity, the concept of migration, and various aspects of race and gender that are pertinent to our research questions. The upcoming chapter will delve into theories concerning Mongolian national identity, tracing its evolution from a nomadic warrior culture to a modern context. We will also examine the national identity of Mongolian women and the relatively new concept of Mongolian migration.

2. Mongolian National Identity

2.1 Nomadic warrior trope

Mongolian's national identity is closely tied to its nomadic culture and history. The nomadic lifestyle, which is often portrayed "romantically" in Western media and documentaries, remains the central aspect of Mongolian identity even to this day. According to Maydar (2011), the ideology of Mongols being nomadic is the only way to narrate "authentic" Mongolness, almost reaching the extent that to be Mongol, you must be Nomad. (Maydar,2011) The essence of the nomadic lifestyle is closely tied to vast expanses of open space and profound freedom, unburdened by any form of authority and institutional oppression.

Moreover, the nomadic warrior trope, historical events, and figures such as Chingis Khan and the Ikh Mongol Empire are closely tied to national identity and values. Most Mongolians are proud of their nomadic identity, and in recent years, nationalism has become increasingly apparent in social life. The concept of "Nomadic Mongolian" has developed symbolic values and distorts national and individual identities. The nation's history has been marked with many tragedies and triumphs, and the nation's identity has undergone a gradual transformation, leading to diverse perceptions and experiences.

National identity and true Mongolian nomadic identity is often represented by horse-rider or horse in general showing the main symbol of nomadic mobility and freedom. Even today Mongolian nomads are often described as fierce, and independent from the higher authority. (Maydar, 2011). All these ideologies are often portrayed in Western media as "nomadic war machines" with the exoticized notion of nomadic mobility. Which often followed with connotations such as "savage and wild".

In today's life Mongolian nomadic identity is still strongly influential yet not often matched with the description, since not many people are now living in a nomadic lifestyle due to modernization and herders are not even using horses as their main form of mobilization but cars and motorbikes. Therefore, nomadism in Mongolia reformed and shaped itself into a different state. However, the decorative romantic identity of real Nomadic Mongolians still holds a significant role in the self-

resistance of Mongolian cultural heritage and boundaries. While nomadic identity remains a primary element of Mongolian identity, it is essential to note that it only represents one layer of the multi-dimension of the nation's collective identity.

2.1.1 Result of Socialism

Mongolia has a long history of associating with socialist networks, spanning over 70 years, starting shortly after gaining the nation's independence in 1921. Mongolia was never an official member of the Soviet Union. However, because of its close geographical position and the influence of the communist network, the Russian federal government's political approaches had significant consequences on Mongolia. (Maydar, 2017) This resulted in particular, colonial political ideologies being adopted, adding a complex layer to Mongolia's national identity.

Remarkably, despite the significant impact of Soviet political colonization and ideology in other contexts, Mongolia is often overlooked in research on this subject. (Maydar, 2017) Maydar points out that the drastic difference between Mongolian socio-economic conditions at the beginning and end of the Soviet era can demonstrate how powerful an influence it left in Mongolia. Mongolia became an industrialized, high-modernist, administratively organized nation in this seven-decade from a nomadic herder country. However, the process of becoming "modernized" left a pretty big mark on nations' identities. Said's Western Dominance over the Orientals can be applied in this case since the nomadic herders of Mongolia were considered "backward" next to the Soviet metropolitan center and its echoed creation of "others" in colonial discourse. (Maydar, 2017) During this time, Mongolia's primary goal as a member of the socialist network was to create a "New Mongolia", in which implementing the idea of the old nomadic traditions was brutal, and only now are we becoming enlightened with the help of our "Russian Brothers", which we can often reach through almost all film, music, and literature made during the socialist era. For instance, the Soviets pressured Mongolia to abandon the classical Mongolian script, which had over 700 years of history and development, and replace it with Russian Cyrillic. They essentially burned the cultural connection of Mongolians to their language and prevented them from connecting with their "backward" heritage. Furthermore, all forms of literature and art include messages that glorify communist ideology, and those who attempted to escape of Communist Party manifesto were facing extreme punishment not only for themselves but their family as well. (Maydar, 2017)

This dramatic change and reshaping of Mongolia as a country was a not merely highly modernist project it was a "colonial: project designed to benefit the Soviet Union, not only politically but also cultural manifestation of communist ideology. (Maydar, 2017)

As a result, the political and cultural influence of socialist networks profoundly affected the psyche of three generations of Mongolians left with a strong colonial mentality believing everything from Russia and then the Soviet Union is a profoundly good show that we strongly embracing Said's view of the unbroken, all-embracing Western tutelage of an Oriental country' (Said 1979: 35)

2.1.2 Democracy and Nationalism

After the fall of the Soviet Era, Mongolia quickly and peacefully shifted to democracy and introduced socio-political and economic liberalization, offering a taste of freedom to many Mongolians. Moreover, religious rights, open discussion, and expression about nation-rich history became open. Educational systems evolved, history books were rewritten, and the once-suppressed narrative about the Ikh-Mongol Empire and Chingis Khan was openly embraced.

This led to extreme ideology and expression of Pan-Mongolism¹ and Halkh-centrism² closely intertwined with Mongolian national identity. In under three decades, Mongolia shifted into a nationalist society. In the context of this evolving national identity, Mongolians grew collective consciousness regarding the given geographical and political state. (Bulag, 1998). According to Bulag, following the fall of the Soviet Union, Mongolia was exposed to its ultimate enemy: China. Many nationalists fear that China might assert its influence silently; therefore, many view it as necessary to police the national boundaries, especially regarding the nation's land. As a result, constant efforts were made to encounter nearby threats across societal spheres, including the media, literature, academia, and even politics. One significant instance is the daily airing of the radio program "Mal, Hel, Hil"³ on Mongolian national public radio in the late 1980s and early 1990s. (Maydar, 2017) This program name is quoted from the famous nationalistic poem and emphasizes the importance of keeping nations herd, language, and border. The Program has been airing for over a decade. It preaches nationalist ideology about ensuring the critical role of land, language, and tradition in "national security", which led the title to turn into a nationalist phrase that has significant symbolic value.

2.2 Mongolian national identity on women

Nomadic tradition and lifestyle include a specific division of roles in a household. Every member of the family has their duties, even the children. Hence, specific expectations of women's roles are deeply rooted in its tradition. The traditional kinship system of Mongolia is based on patrilineal, exogamic, and patrilocal lineages. Marriage consisted of providing one's son with a house and a wife by paying the latter's family matrimonial compensation, or the 'fiancée's price'. (Even & Tomlinson, 2015, p. 167). In the context of marriage, a young woman would often lose her individuality, and as soon as she became a wife, she had to accept the role of "person of the house." This transformation was signified by her wearing a distinctive headdress and a sashless tunic,

¹ Pan-Mongolism is an ideology that advocates not only cultural but also political unification of ethnic Mongols into one nation-state. UNDARYA, T. (1999).

² Oppressive ideology of Halkh-centrism, a concept nurtured during socialism. The Halkh centrists define the Mongolian nation as coterminous with the Halkh nationality, the majority ethnic group in Mongolia. They propagate jealous protection of its purity and authenticity from cultural and biological 'pollution' by non-Halkh Mongols and foreigners. UNDARYA, T. (1999).

³ herds, language, border.

leading to the common designation of married women as "betless"⁴ (Busgui Khun). (Even & Tomlinson, 2015)

During the socialist era, Mongolia, as a nation, made significant progress regarding gender rights, especially in terms of educational opportunities. Before 1921, ordinary women had no access to education, and the literacy rate of women was only limited to a small portion of noble family members. In the early stages of the socialist era, female enrollment in schools was relatively low but steadily increased over time. Notably, by the mid-point of the socialist era, women had achieved a prominent presence in positions of power and decision-making processes, surpassing the levels seen in today's democratic society. (Even & Tomlinson, 2015).

The socialist era added various social expectations, such as contributing to the workforce while actively engaging in political and community activities. On top of this, women were still expected to be "persons of the house." These heightened the complexities of women's roles and responsibilities during that period.

Not surprisingly, after democracy took root, gender rights and expression started to decline, and women's societal roles and expectations shifted to more traditional principles. Academics, politicians, and some extreme nationalist thinkers promote the notion that "women's purity" is "somewhat" crucial to the country's development and value. (Even & Tomlinson, 2015) They vehemently opposed women's rights to abortion and preventing unintended pregnancies, inciting public hostility and demonizing women who chose to wed foreigners as unpatriotic and "filthy".

Some even attempted to turn these statements into public policy by circulating petitions calling for the prohibition of abortion. Various media and art literature intensely focused on Mongolian "women's purity", emphasizing its significance. Even today, the "purity" of Mongolian women is a hotly debated topic, and the proverb "If women are pure, the nation is pure" (охид ариун бол төр ариун) is deeply ingrained in the Mongolian national identity. Moreover, this proverb is still widely used in political statements, everyday interactions, and even as a branding and marketing tool for national production.

Figure 1

⁴ The term "Busgui hun," which translates to "Person without the belt," continues to be used to refer to married women in Mongolia. In the Mongolian language, the word for "lady" is "бүсгүй," reflecting this historical cultural practice.



Note: Ikh-Taiga, a tea brand, placed the proverb "охид ариун бол төр ариун" on the product box.

As in many aspects of modern women's lives in democratic Mongolia, little has changed; women continue to make up a large proportion of the workforce while being socially expected to be perfect traditional wives. In 2023, advice specifically for girls was included in a textbook of 11th-grade civil education with the title "Fifteen Rules of How to Interact with Your Mother-in-Law." Soon after, it was discovered that this information had been downloaded from a website aimed at a female audience and that "it was included because it is necessary for girls to know how to communicate in every context after getting married and to lead a harmonious family," as officials explained. This is just one example of how women are treated and raised with the expectation of becoming someone's wife in the future, even in a formal educational system.

Furthermore, many recent studies show that the educational ratio gap between Mongolian men and women has grown significantly in the last 30 years, which is primarily explained by the fact that, for economic reasons, parents decided to drop out their boys at a young age to help the household earn money, primarily by making them become herders. On the other hand, most families view their daughters as "fragile" and decide to keep them in school, even encouraging them to pursue higher education. (Adiya, E., & Weidman, J. C. 2011). However, this did not guarantee women access to a better life because societal pressures and expectations remained high, and having an education degree did not make it easier to reach a management role.

A statement by the Mongolian government made in 2007 explained that in the labor market. However, women's share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector is near parity with men, and inequalities in gender relations in the workplace persist. Even impressive educational achievements will not guarantee a financial return or the expectation of reaching managerial or decision-making positions. (UNIFEM 2001; Government of Mongolia 2007). Women are also discriminated against because of societal expectations that women would leave the labor force in order to start a family (UNIFEM 2001).

Furthermore, Even and Tomlinson (2015) highlighted an article about “ten characteristics of the perfect wife”, the first of which stated that she should treat her husband as a deity because he is the master, "protective genius," and "good fortune" of the household. This text was accompanied by a photo depicting a modern Mongolian woman portrayed as an Indian divinity with thirteen arms, each performing domestic duties. Today, these archaic norms, once confined to the shadows, are openly embraced because they are considered integral to the now-rehabilitated traditions and Mongolian identity. A "true" Mongolian woman is expected to stick to these established rules and norms.

So far, this chapter delved into the tangled web of Mongolian national identity, which is inextricably linked to its nomadic past and culture. The chapter underlines the lasting importance of the idealized nomadic lifestyle in contemporary Mongolian identity and looks into the historical significance of the nomadic warrior stereotype, with figures such as Chingis Khan and the Ikh Mongol Empire having a significant impact on forging national identity. The chapter also investigates the major impact of socialist era “colonization” on Mongolian identity and culture. As Mongolia moved toward democracy, there was a revival of nationalism, with an emphasis on protecting traditional values, and language. To progress with our research, we must investigate into the relatively fresh topic of Mongolian migration.

2.3 Mongolian migration

One of the most significant changes that followed the emergence of democracy in Mongolia was the freedom to migrate abroad. During the socialist era, migration was mainly limited to China and other former Soviet Union nations and mainly driven by educational purposes.

According to data from the UN International Migrant Stock for the middle of 2020, there were 82,098 migrants from Mongolia overall, with 42,732 females. Given that one in eleven Mongolians lives abroad, according to the International Organization for Migration, this indicates that emigration outnumbers immigration in Mongolia. (IOM,2020)

Mongolian migrants primarily fit the profile of young, educated individuals seeking better economic opportunities and a better quality of life for themselves and their families. These migrants commonly choose destinations in Asia (such as China, Russia, Korea, and Japan), as well as various European countries (including Belgium, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland), Australia, and the United States. (IOM,2020)

There has not been much in-depth study done in this area because immigration among Mongolians is still a relatively new phenomenon. It is important to emphasize that Mongolian immigration generations are still in their early stages, resulting in a limited number of generational Mongolian migrants worldwide. As a result, Mongolian migrants now living and working in other countries are often from lower socio-economic classes.

According to a 2023 National Statistical Commission report, 19 percent of Mongolian migrants were relocating abroad for educational purposes, with 8.9 percent later seeking employment and the opportunity to extend their stay in that country after completing their education.

These occurrences of the highly educated migration wave of Mongolians abroad could signal the start of a global wave of middle-class migration among Mongolian residents.

Furthermore, the sense of community and collective identity of Mongolian migrants present dual-edged characteristics. Research participant C expressed her experience on this matter. "In fact, everyone in Mongolia would say to you before you leave the country: beware of the Mongolians." This statement points out the complex interactions of the Mongolian diaspora, emphasizing issues of social class and reputation. The Mongolian diaspora's negative reputation in the community is based on common instances of fraud, scams, and work exploitation. This perception can be partially explained by the fact that the lower socio-economic is vastly vulnerable to various challenges. In the upcoming chapter, we will delve into the migration flow to Hungary as it pertains to our research case.

2.3.1 Mongolian Migration Flow to Hungary

Mongolia and Hungarian diplomatic relations were established in 1950. However, it is relevant that during this era, both countries followed the Soviet sphere of influence, and the scale of migration was noticeably limited by only a few instances of student exchanges.

Since 2016, following the cooperation program between Mongolia's Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science and Hungary's Ministry of Human Resources, 200 students have been eligible to be awarded the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship each year. According to a news release from the Mongolian Ministry of Education, this scholarship is highly competitive, with nearly 1,500 students competing for it each admission period. As a result of this academic collaboration, there has been a noticeable increase in the migration of Mongol citizens to Hungary. Currently, approximately 2,000 Mongolian students are pursuing higher education in Hungary.

Furthermore, according to a statement from the Mongolian Embassy in Hungary, 1,900 citizens of Mongolia have been working and living across Hungary, with these rising numbers supporting a growing Mongolian presence in Hungary's workforce and community.

On the other hand, from Hungary to Mongolia, even visitation is limited. According to a report from the Mongolian Embassy in Budapest, Hungary, in 2022, only two Hungarian citizens applied for a travel visa directly to the embassy.

3. Methodology

3.1 Fieldwork, Spaces, and Data Research

The primary objective of this study is to provide an in-depth understanding of Mongolian women's self-identity and national and collective identity in the context of Hungary. Specifically, how Mongolian women articulate their cultural identities while undergoing acculturation, both within the community and in their external social stances.

Research data is collected and carried out using a range of qualitative research methods, including participant observation and a mixture of narrative and semi-structured interviews. These interview methods were selected based on their nature as a mix of preparation and flexibility and their ability to make the interview process comfortable and practical.

The fieldwork, from February 2022 to July 2023, began with investigating the Mongolian community's presence in Hungary and beginning with a review of the community's online presence. The fieldwork began with active engagement and participant observation. The first observation of the community and attempt to connect with the participant occurred at one of the Mongolian Student Council's organized events in Hungary. Furthermore, the Mongolian community, with the support of the Mongolian Embassy in Hungary, organizes national celebrations such as Lunar New Year and Mongol Naadam in Hungary, primarily in Budapest, because most Mongolians live in the capital.

These two events have significant cultural and symbolic value to Mongolians, and numerous traditions, expressions, rituals, and art forms, including national sports competitions, take place each year.

The Mongolian Student Council in Hungary is one of the active organizers of the community; as previously stated, education is a primary motivator for Mongolian migration to Hungary. The Student Council mentors newcomers and organizes orientation and networking events, picnics, parties, sports competitions, and other activities. These events were where my initial engagement began. I observed my fellow community members and initiated my first interactions.

Participating in community events was a usual practice throughout this research, and it's important to point out the significance of specific establishments that served as communal gathering spaces. The most notable establishment was "Nabi," the first Mongolian cuisine restaurant, which opened in June 2022. Nabi played a vital role as the first venue where Mongolians could convene and interact without the need for specific events or organizers. Nabi also partnered with the Mongolian Student Council to host various entertainment events such as parties, quiz nights, karaoke sessions, and open mic nights.

Furthermore, in December 2022, another restaurant, "Mongolian Yurt" opened. "Mongolian Yurt" highlights and celebrates Mongolian national identity, exhibiting a carefully curated concept and interior design, enhancing the cultural landscape of Mongolian cuisine in Hungary.

3.2.1 Participants and Interview Process

After the active engagement of the community, various discussions were conducted during informal social interactions with the consent of the participants. During the participation of the field work, as mentioned it started with collecting the online presence of the Mongolian community and gathering information on informal and formal events. Overall attended multiple public events

during the participation. Two student orientation meetings with the presence of the Mongolian Ambassador in Hungary and attended the Mongolian Naadam Festival of Budapest two years in a row. Further, I occasionally joined the open mic, karaoke night, and Student New Year's party held in Nabi Mongolian restaurant.

First, participant observation started by attending student events organized by the Mongolian student council, the event provided information about the process of accessing official documents, laws and regulations, and getting used to the Hungarian environment. Which shows the collective affinity of the community. Participants of the event were solely students, and the event also served the purpose of getting together and finding friends and acquaintances while adapting and adjusting to their lives in Hungary. Naturally, most community gatherings for young people revolve around traditional food and drinks, providing a warm and nostalgic connection to their home country. As I observed and from the participants' expressions, these gatherings serve as the primary hub for getting to know each other and forming connections. The participants mentioned that they approach getting involved in the Mongolian community with caution due to common concerns about potential dangers and scams involving fellow Mongolians. As a result, they prefer to have their own small groups of friends. Thus, these events provide an opportunity for them to meet new people, establish connections, and eventually create their own close circles that they prefer to stick with.

In the initial approach with the participants regarding my research was open conversation primarily centered on their experiences as migrants and their self-perception and identification. With conscious choosing and sampling, these four participants were selected based on their diverse backgrounds, wide age ranges, different life experiences, and, most importantly, their willingness to participate in the research.

All four selected participants agreed to be interviewed and consented that their transcripts would be further used in research. In order to protect the personal privacy of the participants, they will be named Participants A, B, C, and D, shortened to P A, P B, P C, and P D. Semi-structured Interviews were conducted in different spaces, such as their home, a coffee shop, or a workplace, based on the participant's requests and availability. Each interview began with the preparation of a sequel question as a method of semi-structured interviewing; however, to get in-depth knowledge and understanding of their experiences, follow-up questions from the answer, and open discussions often took place. The interview atmosphere varied with each participant. For example, Participant A and I interviewed at her home, during the interview she allowed me to look around her home, and we discussed the home décor that she chose which was all from Mongolia.

The interview question is mostly followed with one format (see annex 1) however when it was time to answer questions about their personal relationship participants were hesitant to answer. Table 1 included general information about the participants, including age, residency time in Hungary, and the primary reason for their migration.

Table 1

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Residency time in Hungary</i>	<i>The primary reason for migration</i>
<i>Participant A</i>	43	18	<i>Work</i>
<i>Participant B</i>	25	5	<i>Education</i>
<i>Participant C</i>	21	3.5	<i>Education</i>
<i>Participant D</i>	28	1.9	<i>work</i>

Brief Description of Participants:

Participant A: Mother of Three

Background: She has lived in Budapest, Hungary, for 18 years with her husband and three daughters, ages 5, 7, and 21. Her entire family, including herself, speaks Hungarian fluently. Because the two youngest children were born and raised in Hungary, they will never learn their native Mongolian language.

Participant B: Recent Graduate in a Prestigious Role

Background: She has been in Hungary for five years, first as a student and then as a permanent employee of a multinational corporation.

Participant C: Student and Korean Karaoke Bar Hostess

Background: This participant has lived between Debrecen and Budapest for 3.5 years, pursuing bachelor's studies while working as a hostess in a Korean Karaoke bar.

Participant D: Migrant Worker with a Working Visa:

Background: This participant arrived in Hungary in 2022 on a working visa. She was employed by a well-known pizza chain.

3.4 Data Categorization

I have established three sets of discourse categories to structure the data gathered from interview transcripts, each with a limited number of subcategories. The categories were based on the main theme of the interviews and connected the dots with the research question.

Identity discourse: National Identity, Self-identification, Collective identity

Cultural Discourse: Adaptation, keeping the cultural roots in the host community.

Racial discourse: Otherness and Appearance categorization

4 Findings

4.1 Identity discourse: National Identity, Self-identification, Collective Identity

In National identity discourse, we will delve into the paradox of being Mongolian yet not being comfortable publicly announcing it. Participants, in their day-to-day interaction, encounter appearance-based categorization so often reach the point that they stop addressing it directly and let it go. In the case of the National Identity of Mongolians, the national consciousness is so solidified that the whole nation constantly felt threatened by the neighboring country China. During the interview process, all four participants expressed that they hold more resentment, especially when the Hungarian society members mix their nationality and culture with Chinese.

P D: I know it is silly, but I feel angry whenever someone perceives me as Chinese. I mean, it is foolish, but I encounter this at least two or three times a week, such as just passing by people calling me "ching"⁵ or a random stranger saying "Ni Hao"⁶, In the beginning, I would be furious, and try to correct them, but after living here almost two years, I am just so used to it and even jokingly say "Ni Hao" back. Maybe I am losing my will to protect my nationality or my "Mongolness" since it does not affect my day-to-day life. I have plenty of other things to be worried about.

Furthermore, they expressed that Mongolian national identity was built on a nationalistic view, admitting that it can be extreme and disregarding some other cultures based on long-lasting historical conflicts.

P C: I decided early on that I would be leaving my country, talked with my mom frequently, and started preparing for early on my high school. So, my mom always knew that there was some potential for me not getting together with Mongolian men. So she accepted that but then noted I could marry anyone as long as it was not someone Chinese. This hatred toward Chinese people is intense in the previous generation's mindset; hopefully, it will be different from my generation. This is unnecessary hate, but I still feel upset when someone says or asks if I am from Chinese. I cannot help it since I grew up hating it.

In the context of Mongolian women's experience, expressing their nationality has two-sided effects in their opinion. Therefore, they would like to introduce themselves to their nationality, but all agree that being called Asian is simpler than explaining where they come from.

P C.: Whenever I go out with my friends or colleagues to public places, the first question I get asked is, "Where are you from?" When I often answer that I am from Mongolia, people do not

⁵ Ching chong and ching chang chong are ethnic slurs used to mock or imitate the Chinese language, people of Chinese ancestry, or other people of East Asian descent perceived as Chinese. Wikipedia.

⁶ Ni Hao refers to hello in the Chinese language

know about it or say, "I thought you were from China or Korea". Furthermore, I will not necessarily say these things have hostile energy or something related to that, but more like harmless curiosity. However, one thing I felt about it is that sometimes it felt dreadful to talk about my country or nationality since almost no one knows about it besides Chingis Khan. Especially when it reached the point that I had to explain my culture and customs, I felt like an "alien" since no one seemed to understand. I would not say I like to talk about it. So, I am just okay with being called Asian.

On the note of the Mongolian National identity of these women, their answers were mixed. However, during social interactions, there were some instances of dodging to express that they were from Mongolia. Those were often based on a wish to avoid an awkward introduction of demonstrating what it is like to live in Mongolia.

P C: When I meet someone new, especially if it is a date, I let them guess where I came from. They have to buy me some drinks if they cannot guess. So far, I have never lost this game. I often feel it is unnecessary to announce to everyone that I am from Mongolia. It does not have anything related to my personality or my values. Also, sometimes I feel a change of tone or shift of behavior towards me when I announce it; I know that it is not on me and that those people are the ones who have the problem but are still wicked.

The results were mixed when the participants were asked how they felt about being Mongolian women here. However, they had similar tendencies given the background of coming from a developing country; they all carry a sense of pride. Given Mongolia's current socioeconomic situation, an increasing number of its residents seek opportunities abroad. The promise of improved access to education and work opportunities is a crucial motivator for this drive. It is crucial to point out that, as is often the case for people from developing nations, acquiring access to migration can be difficult and competitive. Therefore, living in Hungary access to a better life is a form of success for the participants.

P B: I tried my best to achieve the scholarship, and graduating with an Honours degree was one of my proudest moments. I feel so happy to think about it that I am from a rural area of Mongolia, and I managed to come here, get a degree, and now work in a prestigious company. I consider myself lucky to have this much opportunity next to my friends living in the country. In a sense, I am a proud Mongolian, and I always try to show how much I respect my own culture and be a good representation of my people everywhere I go.

For further discussion, I asked them to explain their experience as a Mongolian and Mongolian woman and how much they differ and similarities. Participants responded in their own way, but all had specific patterns of breaking free from certain cultural norms. Mainly from a treatment based on patriarchal culture, women had clear labor division and expectations of certain behaviors.

P B: As a Mongolian woman, I think Hungary is better in many ways; I feel happier when I go out or work. It may be because of the cultural difference. I feel more carefree and feel better about my

looks and life. Because back home, people tend to comment nonstop on your looks, weight, age, and relationship status. Here, it feels free from all this burden and finally in peace. Moreover, even in personal relationships, it is more open. I came to Hungary when I was 20. At home, there was lots of pressure and expectations on my shoulders, such as being a good girl, always having good grades, being good with my mom, helping to do home chores, and most importantly, having to say "yes" to things, even when I feel uncomfortable. Maybe I have matured and changed, but being here helped me learn to say "no," creating a safe space where no one can tell me otherwise.

This section explores identity discourse among Mongolian women in Hungary. They navigate complexities around their Mongolian national identity, often simplifying to "Asian" due to frequent misidentifications. Participants express a strong connection to their Mongolian heritage, shaped by a deep national consciousness influenced by historical tensions with China. Despite acknowledging similarities with other Asian cultures, they identify as distinctly Mongolian. Participants. In Hungary, they experience a departure from cultural norms and gender expectations, finding greater freedom from societal judgments. This reflects the multifaceted nature of identity and the transformative impact of migration on Mongolian women's self-identification in Hungary.

4.2 Cultural Discourse: Adaptation, keeping the cultural roots in Hungarian society

During the assimilation process, participants expressed that they were adjusted to the society to harmonize with the culture of Hungary. Participant A is a fluent speaker of the Hungarian language; she attended a language school for years and a half following her arrival. The other three participants had completed at least six months of the Hungarian language course. However, it is important to note that these classes were mandatory due to their scholarship and work agreement. All the participants had experiences engaging the Hungarian national celebration days, such as Hungarian Revolution Day, October 23, and State Foundation Day, August 20, which are centered on nationwide holidays and free museums, exhibitions, and concerts.

P C: I like these holidays and even wait for them each year. I plan what to do and which museum to visit before the celebration. It is a routine. I have already visited at least ten museums.

P A: Since living here for almost two decades, we have engaged in many Hungarian national celebrations and cultural things. One celebration we all love is the day of Mikulás; I love seeing my kids clean their shoes and excited to get presents.

There are few cases of keeping in touch with their heritage while adapting to the host community's culture since the migration flow is relatively young. However, as per mentioned. Each year, with the support of the Mongolian embassy in Hungary, Mongolians celebrate their most significant holiday, the Mongolian Naadam Festival⁷ in Budapest. Mongolian Naadam festival is held in

⁷ Naadam is a national festival celebrated every year from 11 to July 13 across Mongolia that focuses on three traditional games: horseracing, wrestling and archery. Unesco.com

summer; it follows specific rituals, wearing the traditional clothing Deel⁸ (дээл). The Festival includes three traditional games: wrestling, horse riding, and archery. In Budapest's Naadam Festival of 2023 summer, wrestling and archery competitions were held, nurturing community involvement and togetherness. Many Mongolians attended the Naadam Festival, traveling from various regions around Hungary and neighboring countries such as Austria and the Czech Republic. Most people wear the deel, even having a small competition for the best attire.

Figure 2



Note: Mongolian Naadam Festival 2022

Mongolian Naadam festival is one of the biggest community gatherings for the Mongolian community here, and all of the participants of this research have attended at least once during their residency in Hungary.

P D: I went to the Naadam festival primarily for food. Since I live alone, I barely have time to cook traditional Mongolian food. During the Naadam, it is the only time to eat Khuushuur⁹, and it always reminds me of home and my childhood.

P.C.: Last year, I went to the Naadam here with my friend for the first time. I did not expect people to have such enthusiasm. I felt like a "bad Mongolian". Many people traveled far away to attend the competition, and the Festival wore nice deel, hats, shoes, and everything. On the other hand, I did not even know about the event happening the day before; I just went along with my friends.

⁸ Deel is traditional Mongol clothing consisting of a caftan-like long garment, sash, belt, hat and boots. [Unesco.com](https://www.unesco.org/en/repertoire/inscribed-non-material-heritage)

⁹]Khuushuur is a meat pastry popular in Mongolia, similar to recipes in Russian and other cuisines like chiburekki. It is a circle of wheat flour dough folded in half around a filling of minced or ground beef, mutton, or camel, and ground up or deep fried. [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khuushuur)

The Festival was great; when I was a kid, I never really paid attention to this Festival or the games, but here I find myself watching a wrestling and archery game and enjoying it. It took me by surprise how much I enjoyed just using my native language to make a purchase, saying excuse me by passing people in the crowd. I felt so happy to be there. I am excited to attend Naadam every year, even thinking about asking my mom to send me a deel.

The community gatherings and celebrations were not only held for entertainment but more focused on connecting people; at least once a year, Mongolians celebrated the nation's establishment and culture. Participants all differ in the concept of assimilation. However, they all admitted to longing for their national culture's cultural and social impact and enjoy being a part of it. A significant point of the Naadam was hosted by two anchors; one was solely speaking in Mongolian, and the other was speaking and interpreting everything in Hungarian for inclusivity. Naadam, the Festival, is not only for having fun and vendors making profits but also a cultural expression.

The perception of Mongolian women inside the Mongolian community is also not far from the deeply rooted ideology of purity with a sprinkle of nationalistic thinking. This was also one of the reasons why participants were less likely to be active community members. Sadly, for these women, the long-lasting expectations and societal norms were unescapable even in Hungary.

P.C.: I had a friend who was belittled by just dating a foreigner, a Hungarian boy. She was only eighteen, so obviously, she was a "girl" when she came here. She had many Mongolian friends that she made in the dormitory. After some years passed, they all moved out of the dorm, and the rumors and talks about her were spreading like wildfire. She started dating for the first time in her life, experiencing life. But her past male friends started making remarks about how much she went terribly from a good pure girl to a wrecked "Эвдэрсэн"¹⁰ (evdersen). And how she went out with many foreigners and became a foreign mattress "гадаадын дэсвгэр"¹¹ (gadaadiin devsgger). The rumor got so bad to reach to the point that she was feeling depressed and even told me that she felt suicidal. It was just annoying and maddening for me.

The concept of "women's purity" is ingrained so deeply in people's minds that even the younger generation is following the ideology. In the case of getting a bad reputation for dating foreigners, women are powerless. Some even said that women get some titles based on their dating history.

P.D.: In my opinion, it does not matter if you date a foreigner or Mongolian. Girls always get talked about and get гүншин¹² (gunshin). Such as "Ah she use to date this guy, she had fucked this guy", etcetera. So, I tend to keep my personal life private and separate from others. I would not even think about dating inside the Mongolian community here.

¹⁰ Slang commonly used in Mongolia is a case of teen or adolescent kids going through rough patches or wrong paths.

¹¹ Slur often used as a degrading Mongolian woman who had/had a relationship with a foreign man.

¹² Gunshin refers to name, fame and title.

Context of Cultural expression and sense of holding roots with it: All participants varied in different levels, from never feeling any connection to holding and practicing cultural rituals every day.

P B: I went to Mongolia for 21 days for vacation. I expected myself to be super excited and welcomed since I was going home after three years. However, as soon as I got there, I realized I could not connect with the culture like I used to. I felt "less" Mongolian, I could not be great with people properly, and talking in my native language was complicated; I would remember things in English but not Mongolian. I felt so guilty about it. But at the same time, when it comes to some traditions I used to follow daily were not even applicable here. For instance, when I was in Mongolia, I would get up, and the first thing I would do was make milk tea and sprinkle it in the sky¹³. But if I do that here, my downstairs neighbor will call the cops on me.

Interview with Participant A was held in her home. She moved to Hungary 20 years ago with her family. They were living in a two-bedroom apartment in an outer part of Budapest. When I entered their house, I felt like I was back in Mongolia. According to the nomadic tradition, the Mongolian home's interior decoration, seating position, and furniture are carefully arranged. Their furniture was placed in a clockwise direction, had a Buddhist shrine alongside a copy of Mongolian Secret History, and a small tapestry with a portrait of Chingis Khan in their khoimor¹⁴ (хоймор). All are transported from 8000km away from Mongolia. When I asked about the significance of the shrine and the portrait, she answered that she collected all of the things in her two-year going home trip, one by one. Sometimes, she even makes her mother buy things for her and asks her to give them to someone coming to Hungary. In this small trade, the great size of Mongolians in Hungary's Facebook groups plays a supporting role.

P A: Even though my family lives away from our culture and religion, it does not mean we can be proud of our culture. I am not religious, but having a shrine at home makes me feel protected. I feel like I am home.

To conclude the chapter, during the acculturation process, all the participants attempted to adjust to Hungarian society by learning the language and attending cultural events and celebrations while maintaining their own cultural connection, such as celebrating their heritage and fostering and participating in community engagement. Even showing efforts to instill Mongolian culture within their home in Hungary. On the other hand, some of the participants said that during their stay they

¹³] Sprinkled into the air, milk offerings are offered to Tenger (Sky/ Sky God), Buddha, ancestors or nature spirits. They are an everyday part of traditional Mongolian worship, nearly always in the morning. This ceremony is traditionally performed alone by women mothers praying in supplication of blessing and protection for their family. Stephens, W. (2021)

¹⁴ Хоймор: The northern side of the Ger, called Khoimor, is dedicated as a God's area. It is where Mongolian people place Gods like Buddha on the avdar (a chest). The chest features traditional Mongolian patterns on the outside. It acts as a closet or box that stores some invaluable items inside. Any religious rituals are done in the Khoimor area. Wikipedia

felt they were losing touch with their own traditional customs due to lack of use. Furthermore, the concept of "women's purity" and societal norms continue to affect these women even in Hungary, with dating foreigners often leading to negative judgments within the Mongolian community. Participants expressed a need for privacy and separation from community judgments regarding their personal lives.

4.3 Racial Discourse: Otherness and Appearance Categorization

4.3.1 Appearance-based Interactions (Inside the Asian Community)

Being categorized solely based on appearance and getting into categorization were common instances of the participants. Even people from other Asian countries frequently mistake them for one of them; it is no big deal when that happens. However, why does someone who does not "look Asian" do the same thing and come across as rude? I wanted to deliver an answer to that construct of racial categorization still exists regardless of the intention or the interaction, or even inside the community.

P A: When I picked up my kids to kindergarten, a Chinese boy ran to us and started talking with us in his language. He was an adorable kid, maybe hoping to play with my girls.

Participants expressed that this type of incident often occurred, feeling the "sameness" in Hungary with other Asian Migrants. Given the circumstances of the migration wave in Hungary, the Asian population is relatively low; according to a study by the European Commission, there are 42 thousand Asian immigrants living in Hungary in 2021, making up 26 percent of immigrants in Hungary from Asian countries. Participants agreed that naturally, they form a collective consciousness with other migrants from Asian countries.

P D: I traveled to Croatia last summer. I booked a direct train from Budapest, but something happened, and I had to change three times. The train conductor would not even try to talk to me and just screamed sentences in Hungarian. I did not understand anything but just followed the other people who were getting off, and when we were waiting for the changing bus, I got anxious a bit, but then I noticed another Asian lady, and I felt relaxed and not alone.

This led to the big question of the "Asian Look". Many people from Asian Countries have similar elements in their appearance, but why does that matter, and why is that affecting people's daily lives and social interactions? Participants were struggling to answer these questions.

P B: I think many people perceive me as an Asian, thinking that I am Chinese since there are a billion people, and most probably one nation that migrated around the world and represented Asia for many years. So, for some people here, all they know about Asia is a few representations of Chinese people in media or family-owned small fast-food restaurants across their street. Simply

put, these categorizations of Asian looks and certain expectations are just misguided information, in my opinion. Many people of Mongol descent in Russia look exactly like us but never define themselves as Asian or many people in the Asian continent do not have the "Asian Look" we are discussing.

P C: Many people think about or even fantasize about the Asian look as a few cultural waves from movies and music. Now that anime and K-pop become popular worldwide, everyone gets the idea of looking Asian from there. Like, girls in high school uniform, cutesy.

Participant C is a student and works as a night karaoke bar hostess. Her customers are only Korean men. In recent years, Samsung Corporation has built a few big factories around Hungary, and the Korean population in Hungary has increased immensely. Most of the time, factory workers come here for three months and return to Korea. These workers are primarily men; they arrive in Hungary alone without any of their partners or wives. They spend their free time going to the Korean person-owned few restaurants and karaoke hostess bars. Participant C was 20 years old when she started working there. As her explanation, the hostess is almost like a Geisha¹⁵ but in a modern context. Customers come to the Karaoke and wait for the hostesses to go into their room; at least ten different girls will be there, and the karaoke owner will introduce them and give them a number as a name. Customers must choose the girl they want fun with and say the number. The hostesses whom customers do not select will go back to their waiting rooms. These girls dress up, put on makeup, and fix their hair every night without knowing if they get to work that night. The hostess is supposed to drink and sing, dance with the customers, and care for them, helping to have a good atmosphere in the party room. When she first started this job, the owner told them that it was just a Korean cultural thing, and men like to have company when they drink, and the job itself is nothing more than being a company. She agrees with this on specific points because this is the only good-paying job you can do at night after classes. Some drunk men can be very generous with tips. While she noted that this is not her dream job, it works for her right now. She also said that in her experience, there is no intimate work between her and the customers, and sometimes, they make her feel uncomfortable, but that is it.

P C: Bar owners say that there is never sex work happening here, and if you feel uncomfortable with the room and customer, you can get out, but that was never the case. All these drunk men will grab you even if you tell them not to. I had one case in which I wanted to go out because one customer was trying to touch my breast repeatedly. I told the manager and workers there, but no one helped, and I ended up working in that room for two more hours. So, I do not believe what they say. However, most of our hostesses are young girls and students; we are close to helping each other while working. I believe things are clean in our bar, and we do not have any instances of prostitution.

¹⁵ a Japanese girl or woman trained to provide entertaining and lighthearted company, especially for a man or a group of men. Webster dictionary

A Korean businessman owns this Karaoke, and he occasionally asks Participant C if any of her friends are interested in working there since the customers are always asking for new girls and faces. The participant never told her Mongolian friend she works such a job, so she politely declined the question. However, this man intentionally asks her this question because of his words, "She looks Korean enough".

P C: Many people, like friends and even the customers in the Karaoke, always tell me that I look like a Korean person. That is why they like me and choose me as their partner when they come to the bar. Bar owners always ask if I have a friend who is pretty and pale like me and tell us all the time that we need Asian girls. That is why, in this bar, there are many girls from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolian works. And they are the ones who are primarily selected and often receive generous tips.

In other words, Participant C is a perfect example of the notion of the "Asian Look" and how it can be just ideology and social standard set for women primarily by men, especially from the Asian community. She is working there, selling her time and company, and monetizing and feeding the ideology of how Asian women should look in Hungary. In conclusion, even in the Asian community, beauty standards or expectations put on women mainly were based on East Asian cultural influence through music, movies, and animations that girls must have pale skin and a thin body, everything that new generational Asian culture represents. This is a newly built construction of racial ideas about Asian women and how they should look and behave. Those high beauty expectations can be the explanation for the phenomenon of "Asian Looks".

4.3.2 Appearance-based Interactions in Hungarian Society

On the note of casual interaction with Hungarians, participants expressed that forming strong bonds with them is difficult due to a lack of similarity and general knowledge of their culture and country. This may have led to the withdrawal process, and most of the time, participants voluntarily stopped their attempts to reach out to the company of the Hungarian society members.

P D: I went to this international event called "Blah Blah", where you talk in English and meet people, primarily internationals. I met this girl from Kazakhstan, and we vented about our bad experiences in Hungary and on the street. We both eagerly agreed that many people here do not know central Asian countries that can speak Russian, or massive historical events are seemingly unknown here. She told me that in school, we read about the E.U. USA history, always watched world news, and got to know what was happening out there, but here, people seemed not interested in anything other than themselves.

Regarding participants' daily interaction with Hungarians as a Mongolian person, I split their social contacts into three environments: stores and streets, a workplace, an educational setting, and

personal relationships. All cases of interactions featured low numbers of patterns of unintentional nationality misclassification and daily microaggression.

P A: During my stay, I had many harmful incidents based on my race or for being an immigrant, but I had a great time as well. I know the hardships I may face before coming here, so I usually never complain.

During the interview, all participants faced unfavorable incidents, but a shared experience was that none of them were willing to defend themselves or fight back because they did not want to make a big "fuss" out of it.

P C: Another day, I was walking around the fashion street Deak Frenckel, and two Hungarian guys approached me and asked me where I was from. I felt uncomfortable, but I did not know how they would react if I rejected them bluntly. So, I acted like I did not speak English to protect myself from the unwanted conflict. When the guys realized they could not communicate with me, they started cursing me and saying many things. However, I only got to the part where they were saying this along the lines of "kínai"¹⁶ and "kurva"¹⁷. I was stunned and shaken but mostly annoyed. Then I just walked away. When this type of encounter happens, I cannot process the whole thing on the spot, so I just walk away without causing the scene. In the end, power is still on their side, so why bother putting myself in more danger? Nevertheless, the main reason I am pretty upset is that they "must" put some nationality categorization whilst insulting me. I do not go around saying bad things about people and jumping to the conclusion that it is because of their nationality. I feel this is an insult to me and the whole Asian diaspora in Hungary.

Regarding the professional environment, such as educational institutions, workplace participants had a good and welcoming experience. They all replied that they never felt any hostile behavior regarding their nationality or race. Especially in an educational environment, it was the most welcoming space for internationals.

P C: At university, I have never felt or experienced hostile or harmful behavior that focused on my appearance or race. I think it is mainly because this environment itself is an international one, and everyone in my class is an international student, so no one is mean or hostile. The professors are great and understanding. If I have to find a bad trait, we are not connected with the Hungarian students. I believe it is because of the language barrier. But they are never rude. Some of them usually say they are shy; they always tell us it is because of their lack of English knowledge but then proceed to talk in perfect English. It is funny.

¹⁶ Kínai refers to the Hungarian language

¹⁷ [15] Inherited from Old East Slavic курва (kurva, "prostitute, whore"), from Proto-Slavic *kury ("whore"). Wikipedia

All the participants have been actively working since they arrived in Hungary. Their working experience varies, but no one expressed that their race or nationality affects their workplace acceptance and how their performance is evaluated.

Chart 2: Participants' work experience in Hungary

<i>Name</i>	<i>Workplace</i>	<i>Work status</i>	<i>Year</i>
<i>Participant A</i>	<i>Supermarket</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Participant B</i>	<i>Multinational Company</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Participant C</i>	<i>Korean Karaoke</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>1.5</i>
<i>Participant D</i>	<i>Pizza chain restauraunt</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>2</i>

P A: I have an advantage since I speak Hungarian, and I have never really experienced harmful incidents at work because I am Mongolian. Since I speak Hungarian, blending in with my coworkers is easy. I made really good friends at work. Hungarians tend to be closed when you first meet them, but they can be very welcoming and warm with time and after you earn their trust.

Participant B's experience as an individual who shifted from student to full-time worker shed light on a better understanding of the daily life of high-class migrant workers. She is a recent graduate and works as a software engineer in a multinational company. She landed this job right after her graduation. She was a high achiever by nature, and in her five years of experience living in Hungary, she went through graduation, a new job, and multiple relationships. In her words, university life was challenging but in a lovely and supportive bubble. Her classmates were friendly, but she also never got to be friends with Hungarian students since the English and language program students were mostly separated.

On the other hand, at the workplace, she is the only international member of her team. At first, she was excited to befriend her Hungarian coworkers, but that excitement died down pretty quickly because of the nature of their workspace. Although they all primarily interact with each other in English on professional matters, her teammates choose to speak in their native language regarding non-professional office interactions.

P B: I was the only international hire of that week, and the onboarding video and HR training were in Hungarian. I did not want to make a strong impression or make a complaint on my first day, so I did not say anything. When I first started the job, I wanted to make a good impression on everyone, but after some time, I started to believe that I did not have to be friends with each one of my teammates. They are never mean or rude, but sometimes I feel left out. Voicing that matter to my manager or HR would lead to an awkward confrontation, so I just let it be like this. Just do my job, go home, get paid.

She expressed that her being a woman, or a Mongolian woman has not affected her work performance review, but on a level of office informal interaction, it plays some role.

P B: One time, we were having lunch, and the topic of race came for debate; they talked about how people cannot use highly offensive slang to African-American people. However, they said things such as, "I get it that they find that offensive, but no one should control what I want to say, I will say the word if I feel like it." I tried to debate how degrading that word is historically, but they were not backing down until I said it is almost the same as calling me a "Ching". Then they all started saying that they would never call me like that, that is bad, etc., which made me question if I were a black woman and if they would have talked about Asian people like that.

She explained that even though she is now working in a prestigious company with highly educated people, she never truly acts like herself, because whenever she is around internationals or Hungarians, she always wants to be the best representation of her nation. And every time she is around her community, she feels like a foreigner because of the expectations that women are put in that society. She feels judged whenever she is with other Mongolians, based on how she looks, and how she chooses to love and date foreigners. So, she expressed that she feels only partially welcome in the communities she is in right now.

P.B: One a significant incident that happened recently, I worked with and sat next to each other with this lady for almost a year. I took my paid leave to travel back to Mongolia this summer. A day before I went for my leave, she asked me, "Which part of China I am from?". I could not believe it. This incident showed me how ignorant some people can be and reminded me that I do not belong here. Even though I never feel discriminated against workwise, that does not guarantee that I feel welcomed. Since the person who is physically close and interacts almost daily refuses to acknowledge where I came from, even after working together for a year.

Moreover, Participant D arrived in Hungary with the sole reason of working, just like many Mongolian migrant workers. As mentioned, moving away from Mongolia for work is the primary motivation for migration. The reason behind this is simply financial, and migrants consist of young, educated individuals seeking a better life.

Participant D has worked at the infamous pizza chain for almost two years. As a migrant worker in the food industry, she receives a minimum wage salary. She explained that when she was first introduced to the work and agreement in a Mongolian agency helping people get work contracts, she felt like her life was about to change, and she would be well off in the blink of an eye. She used to be a chef in a small restaurant in Ulaanbaatar, and her salary was not even half of the salary she was getting in Hungary. However, when she moved here and started work, she noticed the reality was different. As much as the salary and quality of life are better than in Mongolia, it is not enough earning to maintain a life in Hungary. Therefore, she currently lives in a cramped space with one other employee, and she felt tricked into coming here after being given false hope about her ability to support her parents and save money by the organization that placed her here. Since

she has a work agreement and was granted a residence visa, which is supported by her employment, it is difficult for her to leave her job and find another one. Besides these difficulties, she did not want to leave Hungary. She explained that she feels complex emotions regarding not only her residency in Hungary but the whole situation of being a migrant worker who is just trying to find a better life for herself. She said that even though there were many challenges, she never regretted moving away from Mongolia.

P D: I do not want to come up as an ungrateful or complainer because that is not my entire experience here. I am so grateful for the many experiences and chances this work and living in Hungary has given me. I get to travel and learn languages. However, that does not undermine the bad experiences I face here. Sometimes, I even feel bad if something comes up and I complain. Like a train getting delayed or the food price getting up but not the salary. I feel like people judge me as I have no right to complain or express negative feedback since I come from a far worse country. Some even would say, "At least it is better than where you come from". Realistically, that is very true; that is why I moved here. I usually try not to say much.

Participant D further stated that after a year of residing here, she realized she needed to accept and adapt to many difficulties, including racism, micro-aggression, and low pay like any other migrant worker. Since they are from developing countries, the challenges they will face will vary, but most of the time it will still be better for their quality of life if they flee their home country. This experience illustrates the difficulties of migrant workers not only in a materialistic way but in a mentality change and acceptance of global inequality.

To conclude, participants shared their complex experiences as a migrant and women, where they met various unpleasant events based on their looks such as not being able to defend themselves or being hesitant to express negative emotions about their situation in Hungary, as they come from places considered "much worse" by societal standards. In addition to examining external factors, we will delve into the interpersonal relationships of the participants.

4.3.3 Racial Categorization on Interpersonal Relationships

Regarding the research question of how the racial status of the participants affected managing personal relationships, including friendships. Participants' answers agreed to some certain extent that racial status had affected their relationship based on cultural similarities such as cuisine, and language. Therefore, they expressed that it was simpler to befriend other Mongolians or even Asians in Hungary. On the other hand, participants expressed that befriending Hungarians was hard, and they often seemed cold or uninterested in maintaining a friendship. Hence, they often let go after a few tries.

P B: As I told you before, I tried to befriend people I work with, but they seemingly closed off from being close friends. I still think of and appreciate them as acquaintances. But it is safe to say that I

do not seek friendship from Hungarians; being with people with the same type of energy and expression is better and more emotionally fulfilling.

Participants all expressed that they do not want to put racial limits on their interpersonal relationship by categorization. However, Participants C and D pointed out they had developed consciousness after they arrived in Hungary and preferred to be surrounded by other Mongolians or other Asian diaspora community members in Hungary. However, all of them agreed they had gone through identity changes during their stay in Hungary. Participant C expressed that she never had a strong racial identity until she arrived in Hungary and made various international friends. However, she never gave a thought about this matter but during the interview, she figured out almost all of her friends are from other Asian countries.

P C: Obviously, I was aware of my race but never really put too much thought into it, but now, even in Hungary, I am constantly surrounded by other Asians. Mainly, it is because of my job, but even in university, all my friends are from different Asian countries. Because I feel safer in that situation, now I think I have accepted that I will be categorized as Asian, or even maybe with my years of experience living here, I started putting this category on myself.

Participants A and B expressed that they wanted not to be tied down to their racial identity and never really cared about race in their interactions with people.

P A: My friendship or personal relationship depends on the connection I built with these people, but it never really depends on race or ethnicity. I just become friends with people I like. But I think naturally, people become friends through shared experiences and similarities, so that is why I have many Mongolian or other Asian friends here.

Regarding a romantic relationship, participants expressed frustration based on cultural differences. Mongolian culture is family-oriented, and the division of labor and gender is still evident and specific. These roles became the main topic when we started discussing the romantic relationships of the participants in Hungary. As a Participant A, she was already married and moved to Hungary with her husband and toddler. Now, her oldest daughter is engaged to a Hungarian young man. She expressed their happiness but was concerned some relatives would still talk badly about the situation.

P A: My daughter posted the engagement on social media, and everyone congratulated her, but later on, I heard from my sister that some of my relatives were saying, "As expected".

The rest of the participants have never been married and have been in a romantic relationship during their stay in Hungary. They all have experience of going on casual dates with foreigners and Hungarians. Participant B was in an intercultural relationship, whilst Participants C and D were in a relationship with other Mongolian guys residing in Hungary. When they expressed their

dating life, they expressed the difference in dating tradition, courting women, and expectations were different from what they have been used to.

P D: Many people might call me vain, but I have certain expectations when it comes to dating, and I have tried to go on dates with Hungarian guys, but none of them met that. Such as being gentlemanly by just providing the date they invited me or waiting for the intimate action until the relationship gets solidified.

P C: I never specifically went out to be in a relationship with another Mongolian guy or planned it, but it just happened. I think it also depends on the person. I have Mongolian girlfriends who specifically avoid going out with other Mongolians or foreigners, and vice versa. Everyone has preferences regarding dating, and I have never given much thought to this matter. In my case, I am sure it was more manageable, and connecting with that person was easier.

Participants answered questions about how Hungarians treat them as a woman and if the "Asian look" categorization came across in their relationships. All of them agreed that how men treat them as a woman is different in the Hungarian community, and it can vary by each person and their preference. Moreover, participants stated that they did not intentionally choose the "race" or nationality of their partner purpose when we talk about preference, Participant B chose not to date Mongolian guys because of the pressure, and traditional expectations some of them put on women. In addition, Participant D expressed that having an intimate relationship with an individual with the same background was easier.

P B: Even though my family constantly pressures me to be with a Mongolian man, I have not met someone I can connect with so far. I do not avoid or run from another Mongolian man in here or ever try to form a relationship with them. It is just constant judgment and expectation that follow when you date inside the community is the reason, I avoid dating Mongolians. If I date someone here and break up, everyone will discuss it and make their judgment. It is a very small community. I want to keep my private life private.

Participants had instances of racial categorization when it came to dating, and some man expressed their interest solely based on their "racial appearance" and even vocalized about it without hesitation.

P C: I went on an online dating platform, as everyone does, and went on a pub date in the city center. My date was pretty pushy and insisted on going to his place to watch a movie. When I rejected the date, I did not take it well and said I only went out with you because I like Asians.

Participant C claimed that this type of instance happens often, but they try not to focus on the negative side. Since if we talk proportionally, only 2 of 20 interactions were likely to lead to this result. In the case of Participant B, in her words, "she wanted to break free the social norm in her community and decided to navigate her personal life however the way it comes across, so she

explained that she is very open with any type of intercultural relationship", she also expressed that there were many cases where she was only racially targeted or overly sexualized based on her racial generalization. Which were mostly based on the "Asian fetishization" of that intersection of racism and sexism that Asian women like her often face daily.

P B: A few years ago, I saw this article about how Asian women are most liked and wanted on an online dating platform, and for a man, it was white men who were most likely to get the most matches. I think it applies here, too. When I use dating apps, I get many matches, mostly from white males. Most of their first message and expression is based on how I look or how short and petite I am. I find that very disturbing, but at the same time, it is a dating app, so I am not expecting the best form of respect. Messages usually go something like "You are so exotic" or "I have never been someone like you, I am so excited" One I like is "I love fucking Asian chicks, they are so short and easy to lift" That was the first message they sent me.

Due to the numerous instances connected to "Asian fetishism", all participants expressed suspicion and anxiety when starting a romantic relationship with a male. They claimed that some of the encounters made them feel objectified and categorized and that they were feeling uncomfortable with their race. Participant D stated that she finds it challenging to determine whether a person is truly appreciative of her or whether it is simply a fetish based on her previous unpleasant experiences. As a result of fetishization and exotism, which are the products of orientalist ideology, all women have expressed intense mental and emotional discomfort. Participant C expressed her ongoing identity crisis based on her daily life interaction with Hungarians and her international friends.

P C: After living in Hungary for two years, I now feel so conscious about race in daily interactions, like the first thing I notice when I enter a room or party is just the race or skin color of people. I had never thought about it before or at the beginning of my stay. It is because every day in my life, some incident regularly happens that reminds me of my race. So I began to see myself as Asian, even though I had not done so previously, and not in a geographical sense but more in terms of race, as a result of the reception I received in Hungary. It is funny because I am with my other friends from other Asian countries, such as China, the Philippines, and Thailand. I feel less culturally Asian there; I cannot use chopsticks and have a low tolerance for spicy foods.

To conclude the chapter, Participants have varying views on their racial identity, with some becoming more conscious of it during their time in Hungary. Some have experienced identity shifts and desire to be surrounded by people from similar backgrounds, some the opposite.

participants expressed that establishing friendships with Hungarians can be challenging due to perceived cultural differences. Additionally, for Mongolian women romantic relationships, cultural differences, and traditional expectations play a significant role. While they prefer not to limit relationships based on race, many find it easier to connect with other Mongolians or Asians

due to shared cultural similarities. Participants have also often encountered racial categorization and objectification in dating which disheartened them to pursue personal relationships. As a result, racial generalization is pervasive in both Hungary and Mongolian diaspora and significantly impacts their daily lives and emotional and physical well-being.

5. Discussion

This research shed light on the daily lives of Mongolian women in Hungary and their shifting identity during the acculturation process. The notion of migration in a small group like Mongolian women residing in Hungary is an opportunity to reveal a new level of social issues and the intersection of racism and sexism. (Back, Solomos, 2013) Choosing the participants and analyzing were based on the showing multiple sides of migrants' life in Hungary, including students to long-term residency.

To begin with, the first question of research is the national identity and self-identity of these women; this delved into traditional customs and symbolic values of the nation's social norms and views of women in Mongolian society, even in Hungary. Mongolia's national identity is dynamic due to its nomadic history, transitioning into a non-official member of the Soviet Union and being left with a colonial mentality. Such an inferiority complex led by the colonial mentality with the title of "Migrant from a third-world country" might be the reason participants avoid disclosing their nationality to Hungarians and in a bigger social setting. Participants are constantly fighting a war of pride and disgrace with their nationality because of a given negative reputation and view, even within the Asian community. For instance, having a game "Guess where I am from" with a potential intimate partner, and never being lost, explaining this in a joking way, may be interpreted as a soft way of coping mechanism of acculturation stress.

The national identity of Mongolians has many layers and complexities and is still forming and shaping itself. During this process, intense nationalistic views are frequently based on pride in the nomadic warrior archetype and its heritage. (Maydar, 2011), Which separates them from the "Threatening a neighbor" China or any other Asian country (Bulag,1998). Beyond that, participants expressed discomfort when they were perceived as Chinese. Shows that the nationwide anxiety of threat is present until this day, even in the daily lives of Mongolian migrants in Hungary.

The discourse of the national identity of Mongolian women is based on urban clichés like being "beltless" and having to hand out their individuality to the nation or their husband. (Even & Tomlinson, 201)5 The concept of "women's purity" is still deeply ingrained in every Mongolian's mind, regardless of gender or age, and has left an immense mark on the mentality and view of the world. All the above is a product of persistent patriarchal oppression and society's attempt to own women's bodies and control interpersonal relationships.

According to participants' responses on this nationalistic perspective, expectations placed on Mongolian women often resulted in them feeling immense guilt for enjoying essential life experiences, such as intimate relationships. Therefore, some expressions of the participants can be interpreted as an attempt to break free of social norms. They led to more freedom and the ability for a Mongolian woman to build self-identity and national identity in an individualistic sense. In a sense, the migration allowed, specifically in the case of Participant B, to find her identity and escape from the traditional values the society put on her without her consent. These are evident results of the process of identity shifting during assimilation and a new form of hybrid identity of new generational Mongolian migrant women.

Secondly, the adaptation of the host community was mainly based on Berry's concept (1976) adjustment strategy, all of the participants expressed the willingness to adjust to a host community and wish to stay in harmony. Furthermore, since the migration wave from Mongolia has one absolute goal, which is seeking a better life and future, all participants expressed that they have been feeling a sense of accomplishment for having successfully migrated from their home country. However, due to the language barrier and "closed off" nature of Hungarians the withdrawal strategy is also often used, and participants were willingly stopped to engage in Hungarians and interpersonal and professional relationships.

The migration and acculturation process of the Mongolian community in Hungary is a relatively new concept and given the small population, the establishment of the community and gathering was impactful to their daily lives and was used as an essential tool for keeping their national identity and engaging their cultural celebrations and virtues. Participants stated they were unwilling to become active community members but preferred creating a small circle where they felt comfortable.

On the last question, the external perception of the Mongolian women's life in Hungary can be interconnected with Said's (1978) Orientalism theory, based on interview participants' experiences with active racial categorization and racism, microaggression in their daily lives. This led to the question of the "Asian look" and who has it. In the participants' experience, all of them had it, but it was hard to define; they all struggled to answer. They all do not know what it is but were experiencing various uncomfortable incidents caused by their "Asian Look" in theory and explanation of participants. The infamous "Asian look" could be one of the subcategories originating from Orientalist ideology and Western and East Asian media. In the beginning, this representation of the Asian look was mainly based on a few cameos of the Asian lady character shown as an exotic, tiny sexual lady in a Hollywood movie, which later turned into fetishization. According to Chang (2006), traits that Western media perpetuated now have evolved into stereotypes such as being "Submissive" and "Exotic" yet "sex-machine". This is similar to Said's (1978) discussion about the "Orient" women remaining silent yet intensely sexualized. Going back to the "Asian look" is a beauty standard based on East Asian pop cultural influence through movies,

animation, and music. Those media often display sexualization of uniform, underage girls, expected to have pale skin and thin bodies, looking like 14 yet being full-blown adults such as everything that new generation Asian Pop culture represents. Generally concluded, all participants had experienced incidents related to “Asian fetishism”, being told "Exotic" as an attempted compliment. The “Asian fetishism” is fundamentally a crossover between sexism and racism until the point of being objectified as an “exotic toy” and it did not leave out these study participants.

5.1 Limitations

This study reveals the notion of the recently started migration wave from Mongolia to Hungary. However, because this study is solely on women’s perspective and their experiences it may not be indicative of all Mongolian migrants and their experiences. Therefore, research on the male focus group is recommended. The study is additionally constrained to represent it fully by focusing on a small number of Mongolian women.

Moreover, considering I am a Mongolian woman, it's important to acknowledge potential limitations, despite my efforts to minimize bias and maintain a rigorous research approach. These limitations include possible sampling bias, cultural nuances not fully captured, time constraints, and the potential impact of translation from Mongolian to English. These considerations should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings, as they may influence the study's scope and applicability.

6. Conclusion

This research aimed to study the life, and self-identity of Mongolian women living in Hungary. To understand the experience and identity of these women, research focused on the idea of national identity, migration process, racial categorization, and generalization theories. The research method included in-depth interviews and questions aimed at delving into their daily life experience.

During the interview and observation main questions were about shifting the national identity of Mongolian women. Based collected data during the fieldwork helped to delve into their emotional and identity shifts during their stay in Hungary. To begin with the national identity of the Mongolian women, they all expressed that nomadic heritage and culture take a big portion of their identity as well as specific cultural expectations of Mongolian women such as the idea of purity of women. This main identity went through changes starting when they migrated to Europe, they were no longer tied down by these misogynistic social norms.

Participants have developed various ways of coping with acculturation stress from jokes to complete withdrawal from the larger society, showing no effort to communicate with Hungarians, and creating comfort zones, putting themselves in a racial-conscious group. For instance, all participants' acceptance of being called Asian is way easier than explaining where they came from.

The research delved into the participant's relationship with the Hungarians and their community as well. During the acculturation process, all participants adjusted and actively engaged in Hungarian culture while attempting to keep their culture and customs by establishing a small community and spaces. However, due to Hungarians closed-off tendencies, they have expressed difficulty forming interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, within educational and professional environments, participants reported feeling generally welcomed. They did not experience hostile behaviors based on their appearance, nationality, or race. This was particularly true in academic settings, which were viewed as international and accommodating. In the workplace, participants felt that their nationality did not affect their job performance or evaluation. Regarding more informal social contexts, including stores, streets, workplaces, educational settings, and personal relationships participants often encountered instances of intentional and unintentional nationality misclassification and daily microaggressions, which added to their feelings of being outsiders. Despite facing unfavorable incidents, participants expressed their reluctance to defend themselves or confront such situations. They often chose to walk away rather than escalate conflicts, mainly to avoid making a big issue out of it.

Participants' engagement with the Mongolian community in Hungary showed an interesting way of coping with acculturation. They all expressed that given the bad reputation and shown triggering behavior of other Mongolians, they tend to distance themselves from bigger groups of community relationships, but they all kept their small circle of friend groups or relatives.

Moreover, given the small amount of the community, the main strategy of acculturation was assimilation, the withdrawal of the larger society. Hungary is a fresh environment and participants all expressed Hungary gives them the opportunity to grow economically and personally. However, they were not motivated to create a personal intimate relationship with Hungarians and even stated they came off as cold and hard to get close to.

Furthermore, research findings delved into their daily life and their interaction with the host and small Mongolian communities. This study shows the common racial categorization these women face daily in every social setting and the mixture of sexism and racism. The primary purpose of this research is to comprehend migrant women's lives in all stages and to present an inclusive and diverse story.

For future reference, it would be valuable to undertake an extensive study on the concept of the "Asian look," exploring the diverse ways it is characterized. This research should involve a broader and more diverse participant group to delve deeper into this concept. The future study could explore If there are specific gender dynamics at play in the perception and categorization of the "Asian look"? Such an approach will lead to a more inclusive and insightful exploration of this phenomenon. In addition to understanding how the perception of the "Asian look" varies across different regions and cultures. These questions can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the "Asian look" and its impact on individuals and communities.

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Annex

Interview Questions

- In terms of nationality, how do you identify?

- Tell me about your life in Hungary; how is it different or similar to your experience in your home country?
- How do you perceive Hungarians, and what is the general perception of Hungarians toward you?
- How does it feel to be a woman, a Mongolian woman, to be here? Tell me about your job and how you studied in that type of environment.
- How often do you feel hostile? and mostly where it comes from.
- Do you believe that being a woman is relevant to any other form of discrimination?
- Do you believe that being a Mongolian woman is relevant to other forms of discrimination?
- What are your thoughts on your “racial appearance”? Do you agree with the common generalization?
- How do you define Asian looks? Do you have it? Who has it?
- If you have it /Don’t have it/ how do people treat you regarding this?
- How do the Mongolian people treat you as a woman?
- How does the Hungarian society perceive you as a woman?
- Do you feel connected to the Mongolian community here?
- Do you feel Mongolian? Can you describe what it is to you?
- How do the internationals or Hungarians treat you as a work environment?
- Where in the Hungarian society do you feel the most welcomed?
- Where do you feel least safe?