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Intergenerational Ambivalence, Self-differentiation and Ethnic Identity: A Mixed-methods Study on Family Ethnic Socialization

Hong Yao[1] · Yajie Hou[2] · Carolina Hausmann-Stabile[3] · Angel Hor Yan Lai[4]

Abstract

Ethnic identity, profoundly influenced by familial factors, embodies multifaceted layers; yet, the intricate process of family ethnic socialization warrants deeper exploration. This study focuses on exploring the complexities of ethnic identity formation, specifically within the context of Yi adolescents. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it delves into family ethnic socialization dynamics among Yi adolescents. The research engaged 606 surveyed participants and conducted interviews with 188 individuals in focused group settings in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China. Quantitative analysis revealed correlations between caregiver-adolescent relationships (CAR) and ethnic identity. Adolescents experiencing ambivalent, positive, or neutral CAR exhibited higher ethnic identity levels than those with negative CAR. Qualitative analysis highlighted two key themes. Firstly, families tended to acculturate love through traditional cultural expectations and socialization, demonstrated through unconscious integration of Yi culture and a focus on individual modernity within family values. Secondly, ethnic identity attainment was observed through self-differentiation, including reflexive awareness of Yi ethnicity, enrichment of Yi identity through peer interactions, and the connection of self-actualization with Yi prosperity. The findings emphasize the need for culturally sensitive support, particularly for social workers, to facilitate reflexive self-differentiation among ethnic minority adolescents during family ethnic socialization.

Keywords Family ethnic socialization · Self-differentiation · Ethnic identity · Yi · Ethnic minority · Adolescents

In China's diverse ethnic landscape, home to 56 distinct ethnic groups, the Yi community stands as a culturally rich and significant minority group. Known for their unique traits, including a distinct language, intricate customs, and traditional practices, the Yi represent a unique segment of China's vast ethnic mosaic. These characteristics, deeply embedded in their daily lives and social structures, are critical in shaping the Yi's socialization processes within their families, influencing everything from daily interactions to broader communal engagements (Tao et al. 2020). This rich cultural backdrop provides a fertile ground for examining ethnic identity and socialization, key elements in understanding how minority groups like the Yi navigate their cultural and individual identities within a broader societal context.

The exploration of ethnic identity within the Yi community is compelling due to their distinct cultural heritage. Ethnic identity development, involving a dynamic process from unexamined identity to active exploration and achievement as proposed by Phinney (1993), is particularly salient for the Yi. Their rich cultural practices, languages, and traditions significantly contribute to the development of a cohesive ethnic identity. Understanding this process is crucial, as it forms a core component of an individual's self-concept and well-being, especially within minority groups (Ong et al. 2010). The ethnic identity formation in minority communities like the Yi is influenced by a multitude of factors, including cultural preservation, intergenerational

✉ Yajie Hou
hbmonkey@163.com

✉ Angel Hor Yan Lai
angelhy.lai@polyu.edu.hk

[1] School of Ethnology and Sociology, Minzu University of China, Beijing, China

[2] China Population and Development Research Center, Beijing, China

[3] Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services, Population Health for the City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA

[4] Department of Applied Social Science, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Hong Kong

transmission of values, and adaptation to broader societal contexts (Umaña-Taylor et al. 2014).

The exploration of ethnic identity within the Yi community revolves around the pivotal concept of family ethnic socialization, encapsulating the diverse ways families impart values, traditions, and customs associated with their ethnic-racial group (Umaña-Taylor, and Hill, 2020). Contemporary research in ethnic-racial socialization underscores the profound influence of parent-child relationships on the efficacy of these practices (Hu et al. 2015; Parke, and Buriel, 2006). Children, nurtured within warm and supportive relationships, are more likely to internalize cultural messages and values, fostering the development of a robust and positive ethnic identity (Hughes et al. 2006). This insight holds particular relevance for the Yi, where familial bonds and intergenerational relationships intricately intertwine with cultural traditions and practices. Consequently, examining the dynamics of parent-child interactions within Yi families becomes instrumental in comprehending ethnic socialization's impact on the formation of ethnic identity among Yi youth.

The intricate interplay of parent-child relationships within Yi families finds its grounding in theories of parent-adolescent communication, relational trust, and intergenerational transmission of values. These frameworks provide invaluable perspectives for understanding how familial interactions, characterized by varying degrees of warmth, trust, and communication quality, shape the development of ethnic identity among Yi youth (King, 2015; McLoyd et al. 2000). In the context of the Yi community, where traditional values intersect with modern influences, created intricate and multilayered experiences, like other (multi)ethnic-racial families (Roy and Rollins, 2022). This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively explore both the processes and outcomes of family ethnic socialization among the Yi. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, the research endeavors to capture the multifaceted nature of parent-child dynamics and their profound influence on the development of ethnic identity among Yi youth.

Methods

This study used sequential mixed methods explanatory design consisting of a quantitative and a qualitative strand. Quantitative data ($n = 631$ adolescents, grades 7–9) were obtained in Oct 2018, followed by qualitative focus group interviews conducted in May 2021. The research was conducted with the support of local community organizations serving Yi students in Liangshan. Ethical approval was obtained at institutions involved in the project (Reference no: HASC/17-18/0540). Informed consent was obtained

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of variables

Variable ($N = 606$)	Mean/F(%)	SD	Range
Ethnic identity	37.32	4.31	18–48
Ethnic identity exploration	14.89	2.07	8–20
Ethnic identity commitment	22.43	279	10–28
Caregiver-adolescent relationship			
Ambivalent relationship with caregiver	50 (8.25%)		
Positive relationship with caregiver	214 (43.56%)		
Negative relationship with caregiver	176 (29.04%)		
Neutral relationship with caregiver	166 (27.39%)		
Covariates			
Age	14.87	1.28	13–18
Gender			
Male	162 (26.7%)		
Female	444 (73.2%)		
Ethnicity			
Yi	562 (92.7%)		
Han	44 (7.26%)		
Parent as caregiver			
Yes	503 (83%)		
No	103 (17%)		

from Yi adolescents and their legal guardians prior to the research.

Quantitative Participants

After data cleaning, the quantitative analysis included data from 606 students from grades 7 through 9, from five rural boarding schools in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture and Sichuan Province. These five schools are affiliated with the partner organization, which has been serving Yi students in rural educational settings since 2006. Approximately 72% of participants were women, and 93% were Yi. The ages of participants ranged from 9 to 19. Details are found in Table 1.

Qualitative Participants

For the qualitative study, one classroom of students from these five schools was selected to participate, yielding a pool of 15 classrooms. However, because one of the selected classrooms was not available during the time of the study, only 14 classrooms were recruited. Among these students, 92.5% were Yi, 7% were Han, and 0.5% were from other ethnic groups. For the purposes of the study, only Yi students were selected to participate in the qualitative interviews. All of the selected students agreed to join the focus group interviews. The focus group process ceased

when the data were saturated. Students who were not selected were invited to participate in cultural activities led by our research team members. As a result, a total of 188 Yi youths (aged 12 to 18), with a mean age of 14.77 (SD = 1.35) participated in 30 focus group interviews, with each group consisting of five to seven participants. The majority of the participants were females (females = 73.4%; males = 26.6%).

Quantitative Measures

To achieve the research goals, four measures were included in quantitative analysis. Demographic information also included age, gender (0 = male; 1 = female), ethnicity (0 = Yi; 1 = Others), and caregiver (1 = parent as caregiver; 0 = family relatives as caregivers, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc).

Caregiver-Adolescent Relationship (CAR)

In this study, the Emotional Quality Subscale of The Self-Reported Relatedness Questionnaire (Lynch and Cicchetti, 1997) had been adapted to evaluate the concept of Caregiver-Adolescent Relatedness (CAR) among Yi adolescents. This subscale measured the intensity of specific positive and negative emotions experienced in the presence of primary caregivers. Participants rated their feelings on a 4-point scale with items such as "When I'm with [primary caregiver], I feel happy" to capture positive emotions, and "When I'm with [primary caregiver], I feel ignored" for negative emotions. Cronbach's alpha values for negative subscale and positive subscale were 0.72 and 0.74 in this study.

Based on these responses, CAR was categorized into four distinct types using the medians of scores of positive emotions and negative emotions. Ambivalent CAR was identified by both high positive (positive emotions scores > 21) and high negative scores (negative emotions scores > 7), reflecting a complex, multifaceted relationship with caregivers. The amicable type was characterized by high positive (positive emotions scores > 21) and low negative scores (negative emotions scores ≤ 7), indicating predominantly positive relationships. The negative CAR type was defined by low positive (positive emotions scores ≤ 21) and high negative scores (negative emotions scores > 7), suggesting relationships dominated by negative feelings. Lastly, the neutral type, marked by low scores in both positive (positive emotions scores ≤ 21) and negative (negative emotions scores ≤ 7) dimensions, implied a relationship lacking strong emotional ties. This nuanced categorization provided a deeper understanding of the varied emotional dynamics in caregiver-adolescent relationships.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity was measured with the revised 12-item Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure–Revised, consisting of two subscales: Exploration and Commitment (Lai et al. 2019). There were five items measuring exploration (e.g., "I participate in cultural practices of my own group") and seven items measuring commitment (e.g., "I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group"). Cronbach's alpha value was 0.8 in this study. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger EI.

Peer Support

Peer support was measured by a 4-item Chinese version of the Classmate Support Scale (Torsheim et al. 2016). A total score was generated by summarizing responses to four items. Participants responded on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to items such as "My classmates accept me." Higher scores indicated a higher level of peer support perceived by individuals. The Cronbach's alpha for the current study was 0.71.

Data Collection

In the parent study, a multistage sampling approach, with a convenience sampling strategy in stage one and random sampling strategy in stage two, was used to collect the quantitative data. In stage one, we selected five out of the eight schools recommended by local community organizations within their school serving network. The local organization selected these schools as they have a relatively representable population of Yi students and also they have a deeper working relationships with the school management there. The team then contacted the schools via the partnering organization to invite them to join the study. All selected schools agreed to participate in the research.

In stage two, we randomly selected one class of students (grade 7 to 9) from each secondary level of each participating school. All students from the selected class were invited to complete a survey that included demographic information, parental relatedness, ethnic identity, peer support, trauma experience, and more. Prior to the administration of the survey, consent from the students' guardian were also obtained. During survey administration, the team first explained the purposes of the research and the potential benefits and risks of filling out the survey to the teacher in charge and students in the classroom. All participation was voluntary and students were informed that they could withdraw from filling out the survey any time. All selected students accepted the invitation to fill out the survey. Informed consent was then obtained from all participants before the study. After the survey was

administered, a small incentive was given to each student for their participation.

Focus groups were conducted to collect qualitative data. A non-random purposive sampling strategy was used to select the participants based on the students' attachment to their Yi ethnic group membership. Students who scored in the top 25% (i.e., 1st Quartile) and bottom 20% (i.e., 4th Quartile) in their self-reported ethnic identity scores relative to their classmate in each classroom were selected to join the focus group interviews. This selection strategy allows the team to obtain richer information with a variety of participants based on their connection to their ethnic community. After the participants selection process, the research team then contact the school to invite the selected students to join the interview. Again, the students were reminded of their rights to decline participation or to withdraw anytime without any consequences. All invited students joined the study.

The participating schools assigned the research team to a private indoor or outdoor area, depending on space availability, in which to conduct the interviews. All focus groups were audiotaped after obtaining informed consent from the participants. Each focus group lasted approximately 45 to 60 min. All focus group interviews were conducted by at least two members of the research team, with one person moderating the interview while the other observed. Notes were taken during the interviews to facilitate subsequent analyses, and the interviewers' observations were triangulated for cross-validation.

The guidelines for the focus group interviews included questions regarding family ethnic socialization (i.e., "What does your family think of being Yi?" and "What did your parents/family teach you about Yi?"), attitudes about Yi ethnicity (i.e., "What do you like/dislike about Yi ethnicity?" and "How do you feel about being Yi?"), and school ethnic socialization (i.e., "What do you think of the Han majority?" and "What is the difference between Yi and Han?"). To ensure that all students in the focus group interviews had a chance to express themselves, the moderator encouraged each participant to share his or her opinions throughout the data collection. If participants indicated that they had nothing to share, the moderator proposed topics from the interview guidelines.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis adopted linear regressions to investigate the relationships between CAR and ethnic identity. In comparison to negative CAR, ambivalent CAR(H1), positive CAR(H2), and neutral(H3). CAR were positively associated with ethnic identity. Age, gender, ethnicity, caregiver (caregiver as parents or as relatives) and peer support were controlled as covariates. All qualitative data were analysed by the first and second authors independently. After data collection, two researchers first read the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the data, then coded the transcripts independently and generated meaning initial codes line by line. Then, we highlighted codes and quotes that were relevant to our research questions, thereby generating an initial list of codes that were illustrated with specific segments of texts. Those codes were used to develop a preliminary analytic framework upon which subsequent transcriptions were then coded. With the text segments, we created data matrices in an Excel spreadsheet (Ose, 2016). Next, we categorized the codes into emergent themes. In the final stage, we refined, named, and analysed the themes. When discrepancies were found, we revisited the themes and deliberated with the research team until we reached a consensus.

Results

Quantitative analysis investigated the associations between perceived caregiver relatedness and ethnic identity. Moreover, qualitative analysis further elaborated on the family process of ethnic socialization among young Yi.

Quantitative Analysis: The Impacts of CAR on EI

We used regression analysis to examine the relations between caregiver-adolescent relationship (CAR) and the outcome variables of (i) ethnic exploration (EE) (ii) ethnic commitment (EC) and (iii) ethnic identity (EI), controlling for age, ethnicity, having parent as caregiver, and level of peer support. With EE as outcome variable, we found that ambivalent, positive, and neutral CAR are significant positive contributors, $F_{(1, 606)} = 8.79$, $p < 0.01$, $\Delta R2 = 0.105$. Approximately 10% of the variance of EE was accounted for by ambivalent, positive, and neutral CAR while controlling covariates. Compared to negative CAR, students with the other three CAR were more likely to achieve ethnic identity. Second, with EC as outcome variable, ambivalent, positive, and neutral CAR were significantly and positive associated with ethnic commitment, $F_{(1, 606)} = 15.53$, $p < 0.01$, $\Delta R2 = 0.17$. Third, a significant relation between ambivalent, positive, and neutral CAR and the outcome variable of EI was found, with negative CAR as a reference, $F_{(1, 606)} = 15.56$, $p < 0.01$, $\Delta R2 = 0.17$. Peer support tended to have significant and positive correlations with EE, EC, and total EI. However, the interaction between peer support and CAR was insignificant (Table 2).

Table 2 Regression models on CAR and ethnic identity

Variable	Ethnic exploration	Ethnic commitment	Ethnic identity
Caregiver-child relationship (Negative = 0)			
Ambivalent	1.34*** (0.316)	1.512*** (0.41)	2.853*** (0.634)
Positive	0.999*** (0.207)	1.857*** (0.269)	2.857*** (0.415)
Neutral	0.445* (0.215)	0.705** (0.28)	1.15** (0.433)
Gender	−0.299 (0.183)	0.331 (0.238)	0.031 (0.368)
Age	0.008 (0.057)	0.095 (0.074)	0.103 (0.114)
Ethnicity	−0.331 (0.329)	0.002 (0.426)	−0.329 (0.659)
Parent as caregiver	−0.075 (0.213)	0.027(0.277)	−0.047 (0.428)
Peer support	0.154*** (0.032)	0.263*** (0.041)	0.417*** (0.064)
Constant	12.02*** (0.975)	15.57*** (1.26)	27.589*** (1.957)
R-squared	0.105	0.17	0.17
F test	8.79	15.53	15.56
Total N	606	606	606

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$

Qualitative Analysis: Family Process of Ethnic Socialization

Based on qualitative data analysis, two themes emerged, namely "acculturating love through traditional cultural expectations and socialization" and "ethnic identity achievement through self-differentiation". Exemplar quotations were provided for each theme. Each quotation was identified with the participant ID.

Acculturating Love Through Traditional Cultural Expectations and Socialization

During the ethnic socialization process, family tended to socialize the youth with their ethnic values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors through their daily child-rearing practices, rather than through conscious teachings. However, parental or familial affection and love was conveyed through expecting the best for the adolescents' future. Viewing education as a life-changing path, parents or caregivers were always aware of their roles in urging their children to take initiatives in study, which might have benefitted their adjustment into civilized social lives outside of their hometown. The tension between unaware family process of practicing Yi and reinforcement the importance of education shaped a complex and even conflicting family ethnic socialization, out of which a youth's ambivalence towards parents or family might grow.

Unaware Family Process of Practising Yi

Based on data analysis, interviewees enacted a sense of ethnicity through unconscious normative family practices, such as celebrations of Yi festivals, caregivers' accounts of Yi cultural stories, and daily behaviors. Family practices of

transmitting Yi values and behaviors included exposing children to culturally relevant folktales, teaching music and dance, celebrating traditions and holidays, eating ethnic foods, wearing Yi accessories and clothes, and communicating with the family's native language.

> I learned rituals of Torch festivals[1] from my grandparents. We walked around our house, holding a torch and murmuring prayer words in Yi language, which is supposed to chase the ghosts away and keep us safe. (FS17)

> My parents told me the history of Yi, as well as the ghost stories. (FS113)

Moreover, family ethnic socialization practices were embedded in the localized community, where the situational context of Yi might vary slightly.

> The story of our ancestor was a story of a boy moving from place to place. Some versions of the story indicate that the boy was born out of a peach. Other versions tell that a couple had two peaches. The wife grew a peach into a boy, while the husband ate half of another peach, and the second half turned into a girl,

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[1] The Yi Torch Festival, or "Dutzie," celebrated in China's Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, is a vibrant cultural event rooted in ancient Yi fire worship traditions. Held over three days in the sixth lunar month, it features bullfighting, horse racing, traditional dances, and rituals. Attracting millions, the festival, recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage, showcases Yi culture and is a significant tourist draw. More information about Torch Festival could be found at Tao et al. (2020).

eventually. We (family members) talk about ancestor stories whenever we have time. (GMAG)

Family ethnic socialization practices were also reflected in the rules and rituals of daily activities taught by parents and senior family members. They taught the young Yi to respect the elderly, internalize a sense of family obligations, supervise younger siblings, provide help when demanded by others, and handle illness through Yi rituals. These rules and rituals were intimately attached to the spirit of Yi, particularly highlighting the cohesive integration of self, Yi ethnicity, nature, and existential humanity.

If someone gets sick, we (family) practice bimbo to pray for his recovery. Otherwise, we (family) do it annually. (FS190)

Yi people are somewhat refined in our rough ways. We are taught to respect the elderly and care for children. We are not allowed to bully the weak. (EI7)

Family Values on Individual Modernity

Families of interviewees, like many of the Yi ethnic minority, might have feelings of inferiority and being un-modernized compared to the Han majority (Postiglione, 2017). Therefore, families were expected to have a modern and even "civilized" lifestyle for the future of their children who do not need to repeat their lifestyles of labor-intensive, low-income jobs and less education. Although these caregivers are traditionally and authentically committed to Yi, they still expected that their children might move away from their ethnic communities and adjusting to modern lives in developed areas of China, which is reflected their unconditional love and affection for their children. Furthermore, even when young Yi finally return, family members assume that the interviewees will be able to find stable and well-paid occupations (i.e., civil servants or teachers) in local communities after years of educational experiences in developed cities.

Many young Yi mentioned that they grew up as part of a family where academic achievement and educational productivity were highly valued and that parents often emphasized the importance of higher education and decent jobs. If financially possible, Yi families were likely to list their children's academic achievements as a priority and hoped for a better life for their children through education. For the young

Yi, parents and families served as a continuous and stable resource for their autonomous motivation in education.

My grandma is my favorite. She told me to study hard. When she was a child, her family could not afford education. Although my mom and aunt were excellent in terms of academic performance, they had to work early for a living. Now, I have the chance for education, and my grandmother constantly to encourages me to seize the opportunity to change my life. (FS165)

Education can change my life. Though it is not the only pathway, I was told by my parents that it was the best pathway. (CC16)

Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were found among the young Yi in the focus group. Many students mentioned their improved self-satisfaction and self-efficacy through academic growth, while others indicated extrinsic motivations derived from parental appraisals, teachers' encouragements, and peer support. In particular, the young Yi repeatedly mentioned that their families value education as a life-changing opportunity for their and their family's social economic status.

Ethnic Identity Achievement through Self-differentiation

As mentioned before, the young Yi's perceptions, interpretations, and practices of being Yi was mainly influenced by their parents and families, while their self-differentiation included their cognitive efforts in clarifying, bargaining, and recognizing that inherited information about being Yi. During this process, the young Yi actively achieve a reflexive awareness of Yi ethnicity, enrich their understandings of being Yi through peer interactions, and internalize a notion of self-actualization for Yi development.

Reflexive Awareness of Yi Ethnicity

In the current study, reflexivity refers to an action that comes after an individual has become aware of and reflected on their own ethnicity (Chatterton and McKay, 2015). Years of family ethnic socialization helped to enact a cultural system within young Yi, manifesting a collection of patterns of meaning through time. With this intrapersonal cultural system, interviewees were more capable of absorbing cultural norms and behaviors that they approbated, simultaneously abandoning those they disconfirmed.

As Yi, we are proud of our Torch festivals, Yi New Year, and our own faith. However, I am also frustrated by some traditions, such as Wawa Qin (child betrothals). (EI33)

Since I am Yi, I love Yi ethnicity 100%. However, I know we have shortcomings, such as low quality of our people. They are less educated and not receptive to new knowledge and science. In poor families with many children, parents might discourage us from going to school if they cannot afford fees for all kids. We (children) have to insist on receiving education as one in multi-child families; otherwise, you might drop out if siblings went to school. Putting myself into parents' shoes, I could do nothing but wanted to change their thoughts. All I can do is be excellent in every aspect and help my family. (EI1)

Many interviewees experienced distress due to negative comments or social stigma assigned to Yi people, such as being unhygienic, lazy, and crude. However, a resilient aspect of reflexive awareness was triggered by the youth's forgiveness of being judged or discriminated against from external environments. In discussions of social stigma about Yi ethnicity, interviewees reflected a sense of ethnic confidence and psychological resilience:

As Yi, we should have confidence in own ethnicity; of course, we need to change some negative habits too. (EBAF6113)

We, Yi people, might have had less education, but we kept our integrity as human beings, which matters most. Thus, I love my Yi identity. (EI9)

Enriching Yi through Peer Interactions

Prior to attending their current school, most of the interviewees had completed their early education in local villages, immersed in environments predominantly inhabited by their family members and a specific subset of the Yi people. Upon transitioning to their current school, which hosts a mix of Yi and Han students, these interviewees found themselves in a linguistically and culturally varied setting, shaping their ethnic identity in new ways. The ethnic identity perceptions of Yi youth often showed a marked difference from the views held by their families. Yet, these individual perspectives were deeply intertwined with their personal aspirations, mirroring their unique sense of self amidst a complex web of relationships,

encompassing both their ethnic community and broader societal interactions. Consequently, the construction of their ethnic identity emerged as a dynamic process, influenced by a confluence of personal factors, contextual surroundings, language use, and interactions, particularly with peers.

I had no idea of black or white Yi[2] before coming to this school. I've made friends arriving here, later finding out that my new friend is black Yi. I went to my mom and asked her about it, and she explained the differences to me then. (FS44)

They speak a Yi dialect that different from my Yi dialect. I cannot understand what they say. (EMAB 3125)

For young Yi, equality was a concept applied to both in-group and out-group interactions, rather than limited to the relationships between Yi and Han. Social interactions among same-ethnicity peers were conducive to increasing ethnic identity because such interactions offered opportunities to experience and express their ethnicity. For interviewees, even among Yi students, differences in Yi language proficiency, mastery of different Yi dialects, family cultural orientations, and exposure to cultural knowledge could affect what ethnicity meant to them and, ultimately, their self-identity formation.

We should treat people as the same. I felt that it was wrong to treat white and black Yi differently; after all, we are both Yi. (EI10)

Sometimes, the Yi ethnicity is given negative labels. Maybe there are some Yi people who behave badly, but it could not be applied to the whole Yi ethnicity. Han people just applied it to all Yi. (EI35)

Connecting Self-actualization to Yi Prosperity

It was important to understand the meanings assigned by the youth to the connection between self-actualization and Yi prosperity. For interviewees, belonging to a native place is

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[2] "Black Yi" and "White Yi" are terms that refer to specific social strata within the old Yi society. These terms are not literal descriptions of race or skin color but rather indicate social status and roles within the Yi community. The "Black Yi" (nuoho) and "White Yi" (qunuo) represent different levels of social hierarchy, with each group having its distinct roles and societal functions. The differentiation of these groups is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of the Yi society. More information could be found at Erzi (2003)

essential to their ethnic and personal identity, creating a sense of native-place identity, such as *bendiren*, *butuo*-ness, and *laojia*[3]. This native-place belonging, through interacting with ethnic identity and witnessing the under-developmental native places, nurtured a seed of social changes at the bottom of youths' hearts.

> Knowledge was helpful in changing the conservative thought of older generations. I am going to be a teacher in our village and convey knowledge to the next generation in case they remained conservative, like our grandparents.

> I would like to be a doctor; because Yi people are quite feudal, most of them are superstitious. When they get sick, they do not go to see a doctor. As a result, treatment time is delayed, and many might lose their lives. When I got sick, my educated father would take me to the hospital… but mother and my grandfather stopped him on the road and insisted on superstitious things. I was not fully conscious at that time and do not remember how my father convinced them. In our village, there are a lot of sick young. children or middle-aged people who get superstitious therapies and die in the end. (GHAH)

In fact, the living conditions of the Yi people have gradually improved since China initiated its nationwide poverty eradication policy in 2012. However, many interviewees' ideal occupations were teacher and doctor, as they believed that education and medical care need to be further enhanced. They believed that their individualistic self-actualization, becoming educators and medical professionals, could not only address practical demands, but also contribute to the prosperity of the Yi community through changing indigenous stereotypes of illness and education.

> One day, when I am capable, I will go outside to learn to bring the new knowledge and experiences back to the Yi community. I will come back to develop our Yi ethnicity. (EBAF)

> When I grow up, my dream and goal is to develop our Yi ethnicity through educating children and enhancing their virtues and thoughts. As individuals, motivated

children will complete education; as a group, they may contribute to the development of Yi ethnicity. (EMAA)

Discussion

The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data in the current study provided several conclusions regarding family ethnic socialization. The study findings indicated that young Yi who had ambivalent relationships with caregivers reported higher levels of ethnic exploration in comparison to counterparts with negative or neutral child-caregiver relationships. With parents or caregivers as significant figures who symbolically represented or practically conveyed Yi culture, these adolescents might have struggled with the tensions between socialization by caregivers and agency in defining Yi ethnic identity, leading to ambivalence. Such mixed emotions were widely found among offspring who had to accept parental expectations on their own attainments of social roles, such as being married, employed, or dependent (Beaton et al. 2003; Birditt et al. 2010; Bucx et al. 2010). Some qualitative excerpts further confirmed that reflexive self-differentiation was meaningful in navigating the process of ethnic exploration and resolution, especially with the presence of intergenerational ambivalence. Self-differentiation appeared to be a bargaining between autonomy and relatedness, though autonomy has often been viewed as conflicting with relatedness (Chung and Gale, 2006). With reflexive self-differentiation, the construction of ethnic identity was then associated with an integrated sense of self and might have even served as a strong predictor of mental health among young Yi.

Intergenerational ambivalence might essentially reflect the crux of family ethnic socialization as a dynamic context for the ethnic identity formation of young Yi. Born and raised in Liangshan, parents and grandparents practiced their ethnic identity through ethnic rituals, such as the Torch Festival and Yi New Year, and daily routines and norms. With fewer opportunities to step out of the local community, they might be authentically committed to Yi cultural beliefs and norms that they inherited from their original families and unable to reflect on what Yi stood for by comparing it with other ethnic groups. Without an active ethnic exploration process, their ethnic commitment might not contribute to resolution in self-identity. In recent decades, China's government implemented a series of poverty elimination and national revival movements. Especially in Southwest provinces where Liangshan is located, efforts had been made to ensure the provision of high-quality education for Yi children and adolescents. With increasing knowledge and experiences in schooling, young Yi are

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[3] *Bendiren* refers to being a native person, emphasizing a strong, inherent connection to one's place of origin. *Butuo-ness* signifies a unique identity associated with Butuo, indicating a unique sense of belonging or characteristics associated with this area. *Laojia*, meaning "old home" or "hometown," denotes a profound connection to one's roots.

more likely to gain a comprehensive and critical understanding about Yi and their ethnic identities through constantly comparing Yi with other ethnicities (Sladek et al. 2021). Thus, their reflective awareness of ethnicity itself might differ from or contradict what the previous generation practiced, resulting in an adjustment in identification.

Although a cultural system was mentally established through family ethnic socialization, the majority of interviewees in focus groups showed high self-differentiation from family interpretations about practicing Yi. Familism, a significant feature of Chinese culture, tended to influence the concept of self for interviewed Yi students. Empirical evidence showed that youth played an active role in their own ethnic identity formation, rather than being a container for family ethnic socialization (Umana-Taylor et al. 2013). Self-differentiation, mainly referring to the level of differentiating the self from their family-of-origin, was associated with their psychological and social development. For interviewees, their self-differentiation from family ethnic socialization was achieved by their reflexivity of accepting, interpreting, and contributing to Yi ethnicity, which eventually brought a cohesive sense of self. As young Yi, ethnic identity appeared to be a reflexive self-relation as a unity of self, necessarily connected to a negotiation between native culture and mainstream culture. A mature ethnic identity was an important developmental competence contributing to sense of self, academic adjustment, and psychosocial wellbeing (Lai et al. 2019; Lai et al. 2017).

Together with family, exposure to school and community might collectively contribute to the youths' construction of ethnic identity (Eng and Tram, 2021). Although family are the primary transmitters of ethnic-racial socialization, transmitters within the school context are also important in the development of youth from ethnic minorities (Saleem and Byrd, 2021). Furthermore, family ethnic socialization served as a developmental asset for school-based ethnic-racial identity programs aiming at nurturing a mature ethnic-racial identity (Sladek et al. 2021). In this way, family and schools should be cooperative in building a healthy climate for youth from ethnic minorities to explore their ethnicity. A recent meta-analysis indicated that social dominance orientation, intergroup anxiety, identification with the national ingroup, and parental prejudice contributed to increasing later levels of adolescents' prejudice; however, intergroup friendship contributed to lessening it (Crocetti et al. 2021). Yi ethnic minority have often expressed feeling inferior and un-modernized compared to the Han majority (Harrell, 2012). However, ingroup and outgroup interactions in school might provide the youth with chances to examine their perceptions regarding their own and other ethnicities then come to forgive the prejudices and stigma assigned to Yi (Degener et al. 2021). Given that Yi is often downwardly compared, it makes

sense that they may be academically motivated to devote themselves to the economic and social development of the local community and Yi ethnicity.

This study carries some limitations. Firstly, we focus on a single case of ethnicity in China, thus, findings in current study should be carefully used for generalizability. Future research should consider diverse samples from various regions and ethnic groups both within and outside China to enhance representativeness. Additionally, our study acknowledges the limitation of lacking detailed familial data, which restricts our capacity to deeply analyze how aspects like parental education, occupation, and socio-economic status affect the aspirations of Yi youths and their connection with different CAR types. Future study should design to provide a clearer understanding of the interplay between familial backgrounds and the development of ethnic identity and aspirations among minority youth.

Practical Implications

Firstly, the findings indicate the crucial role of reflexive self-differentiation in ethnic identity achievement. As a facet of self-identity, the construction of Yi youths' ethnic identity may be shaped by exposure to mainstream culture; thus, ethnic minority young people have to navigate and handle the duality of native and mainstream cultures (Umana-Taylor et al. 2014). Social works should be equipped with cultural sensitivity and competence in order to provide high-quality services when ethnic minority young people are struggling with ambivalent feelings towards family ethnic socialization. Particularly, future social work interventions should endeavor to mobilize the unique family resources of youth from ethnic minorities in China to build their ethnic identity, despite ambivalence.

Secondly, dissimilarity in values and beliefs in parent-child relationships could result in estrangement between children and parents, ultimately affecting the mental health of both generations (Coleman et al. 2006). Although youths' differing perceptions of ethnicity as compared to the previous generation might create opportunities for their own ethnic identity exploration and resolution, it could also cause intergenerational tensions for the family and psychosocial maladjustment for the youth. Family social workers might facilitate ethnic minority families to clarify the fact that ethnic identity as Yi is not only collective, but also personal. Acceptance and an embrace of incongruence in terms of ethnic identity might lead to ethnic resolution for both generations.

Lastly, the mixed results highlight dynamics between family and systems beyond family (i.e., school) during the process of ethnic socialization, emphasizing the importance of school, community, and family collaboration on the positive development of ethnic minority

young people (Eng and Tram, 2021; Torres et al. 2019). Psychosocial interventions should be collectively designed and implemented by an alliance of multiple stake takers (i.e., parents and caregivers, peers, teachers, social workers, and policy makers) to enhance the reflexive self-differentiation of youth from ethnic minorities and more effectively prepare them to navigate multi-ethnic social contexts (Laird, 2011).

Conclusion

Findings suggested that family ethnic socialization, as a primary context, interplayed with interactions in schools and communities, ultimately contributing to ethnic identity formation among Yi adolescents. Moreover, reflexive self-differentiation was crucial in achieving ethnic identity resolution, providing motivations for youth from ethnic minorities in academic and life goals.

Compliance with ethical standards

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