Journal of Comprehensive Social Science Research

Ethnic Identity of Urban Indigenous Adolescents in Taiwan

Shang-hao Huang[1*], and Yi-ning Fan[2]
Department of Social Work & Child Welfare, Providence University, Taiwan.

Abstract

Amid Taiwan's industrialization and changing production methods, indigenous tribes' economies were affected, leading to the emergence of "urban indigenous people." However, subsequent generations are city-born and raised, receiving city-centric education. This makes it difficult for urban indigenous descendants to have a sense of identity with traditional tribal culture and indigenous identity. Therefore, this study hopes to understand how urban indigenous adolescents establish their ethnic identity. This study conducted semi-structured interviews with six urban indigenous adolescents aged between 12 and 18 years. The research results indicate that the ethnic identity of urban indigenous adolescents shows evident cultural disconnection, slight characteristics of "pseudo-cultural identity" and the reproduction of stereotypes about ethnic groups. In addition, this study also thoroughly analyzed the factors that facilitate and hinder the development of ethnic identity among urban indigenous adolescents, as well as how they cope with ethnic identity crises.

Keywords: Ethnic Minorities; Cultural Competence; Constructionism; Stigmatized Identity; Cultural Hegemony; Cultural Disconnection

Introduction

One of the characteristics of Taiwanese society is its ethnic diversity. The people of Taiwan can be categorized as the Han Chinese and the indigenous people. The Han Chinese can further be divided into three sub-ethnic groups: Hokkien, Hakka, and Mainlanders [1,2]. However, the differences among these three sub-ethnic groups are insignificant regarding physical characteristics, cultural customs, and language.

In the past, Taiwan's indigenous population was classified into two groups: those living in the plains and those residing in the mountains. The plains-dwelling aborigines, also known as pingdizu or Pingpu people, experienced significant assimilation and intermarriage with the Han Chinese, leading them to adopt many cultural traits and practices similar to the Han Chinese, to the extent that they are no longer strictly considered as part of the aboriginal category. The mountain tribes were resistant to intermarriage with the Han people and were relatively isolated, so they did better in maintaining their cultural identities. Currently, whenever aborigines are mentioned

without special qualification, the mountain dwellers (gaoshanzu) are usually meant [1].

Currently, the total population of indigenous peoples in Taiwan is approximately 586,191 people, which accounts for only 2.5% of the total population of Taiwan, estimated at 23,361,084 people [3]. When considering the significant differences between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in terms of language and culture, it is accurate to refer to indigenous peoples as "minority ethnic groups" in Taiwanese society.

Indigenous peoples in Taiwan originally resided mostly in non-urban areas, preserving their traditional cultures and skills. However, industrial upgrades and economic development were brought by the rise of local capitalists after land reforms in Taiwan and the investment of multinational corporations seeking to take advantage of Taiwan's low-cost labor to reduce costs. As a result, the economies of indigenous tribes have also been unable to escape the impact and challenges posed by the comprehensive changes in Taiwan due to capitalist modes of production. Therefore, many indigenous people migrated to urban areas and lived as "urban indigenous people." As of June 2023, indigenous people residing in metropolitan areas accounted for approximately 49.25% of Taiwan's indigenous population [3].

The first generation of urban indigenous people, who migrated from tribes to cities, have already been exposed to the baptism of indigenous culture. Therefore, despite facing cultural shocks while making a living in urban areas and interacting with Han Chinese culture, they generally retain a strong sense of ethnic identity. On the other hand, the second and third generations of urban indigenous people are born and raised in the city, and their education is also city-centric. They have little exposure to their own tribal culture; they neither speak the indigenous languages nor have they experienced tribal life, let alone inherit traditional skills or rituals [4]. Therefore, it is difficult for the descendants of urban indigenous people to have a sense of identity with traditional tribal culture and indigenous identity.

According to the constructivist perspective, ethnic identity is a social construct, and innate factors may not necessarily be the determining elements of identity [5]. In other words, the ethnic identity

of urban indigenous descendants can also be Hokkien, Hakka, or Mainlander, but most of the time, they are not accepted as part of those ethnic groups. This situation leads them to experience a state of ambiguous ethnic identity or to develop stigmatized identities. Based on Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, adolescents are in the stage of self-identity or role confusion, so establishing identity is crucial for their personality development during adolescence [6,7]. Therefore, this study hopes to understand how urban indigenous adolescents establish their ethnic identity. Additionally, the study aims to analyze the factors that facilitate or hinder ethnic identity and provide constructive recommendations.

Definitions and connotations of ethnic identity

Many scholars have expressed their views about the definition of "ethnic group". From an objective standpoint, the ethnic group refers to a social category that is used to label an individual's characteristics or attributes classification, members of the same ethnic group possess a common bloodline, religion, language, customs, and historical memory [8,9]. From a subjective standpoint, the ethnic group involves the individual's derived self-concept from the group and becomes a framework for their cognition and information processing, providing the basis for their behaviors [10]. In summary, the ethnic group refers to individuals who subjectively identify themselves as belonging to a certain group based on various factors such as skin color, appearance, language, religion, living habits, and cultural imagination, so that they have a certain degree of cohesion to a certain group and think that they are different from other groups.

The concept of "identity," originally rooted in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, refers to taking the person they respect or admire as a role model at the subconscious level, through imitates and becomes the psychological and social process [11]. Then, Erikson further elaborated on the concept of identity, proposing that it possesses both consistency and continuity, serving as the core of self and personality, all individual self-esteem, attachment, and sense of belonging are deeply influenced by identity [12].

To summarize the scholars' discourse on ethnicity and identity, this research defines "ethnic identity" as the subjective sense of belonging an individual has towards a particular ethnic group, the willingness to identify as a member of that group, and the active participation in its activities. It also involves the acceptance and internalization of the cultural essence, values, and norms of the ethnic group into one's personal beliefs and daily behaviors.

In addition to the diverse discussions on the definition of ethnic identity, many scholars also pay attention to the fact that the state of ethnic identity will change with time and situational contexts [13-15]. Therefore, individuals may exhibit different states of ethnic identity and generate different meanings in various stages of life. In childhood, ethnic group is only considered a tool to mark "who you are". However, when entering adolescence with the enhancement of social cognitive abilities, one can begin to comprehend how the ethnic group to which one belongs affects life opportunities and social experience, thus forming a more evident state of ethnic identity [13, 15,16]. From this, we understand that adolescence is a crucial stage for developing ethnic identity, and ethnic identity is dynamic, subject to changes based on the individual's environment and psychological state.

Theories related to ethnic identity

Summarizing past research on ethnic identity, discussions have primarily revolved around three main perspectives on how identity forms and persists over time: primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism. The details are as follows:

1. Primordialism

Scholars adhering to this theory believe that an individual's identification with an ethnic group originates from sociobiology and cultural commonality [17]. They believe that ethnic identity is innate, and individuals are born into specific ethnic groups, tribes, and geographical regions, having similar skin color, bloodline, and genes to create natural connections with other people [18,19]. However, in addition to the emotional strength generated by kinship, ethnic groups also develop a collective consciousness from a shared language, culture, history, and traditions. These factors assimilate individuals into specific social groups, thereby defining their identities, and through generational inheritance, they become inherent in human nature. As a result, the individual's identification with the identity of the ethnic group is regarded as fixed, unchangeable, and inherited [20-22].

2. Instrumentalism

Compared to primordialism, although instrumentalism still roots ethnic identity in primordial foundations, it viewed the formation of ethnic group identity from a more rational point of view and believed that the individual's identification with the ethnic group was artificial and utilitarian [17]. Ethnic identity is conceptualized as a tool for competing for scarce resources, where individuals categorize themselves into certain ethnic groups to collectively vie for resources. Whether an individual identifies with or belongs to a particular group depends on whether they can benefit from being part of that ethnic group [23]. For some individuals, the aspect of benefiting extends beyond material gains, rewards, or access to resources and services; it also includes emotional, intellectual, and political satisfactions, such as the pursuit of happiness, social connections, leisure, and recreation [24]. From the above, instrumentalism views ethnic identity as unstable, subject to change, and flexible. When individuals perceive that changing their ethnic identity can better satisfy reality interests, they may choose to disengage from their original group and join another [25].

3. Constructionism

Constructivism posits that ethnic identity is a social construct, and primordial conditions may not necessarily be the determining factors for identity formation. It leans towards explaining the formation of ethnic identity through the social environment and societal changes. Groups will create a common sense of belonging through the construction of social relations and the definition of identity [5]. In other words, every individual is assigned a certain ethnic identity at birth, however how an individual perceives this identity and how strong a sense of identity they have will be constructed according to social systems, economic resources, population conditions, and political factors. Therefore, an individual's identification with their ethnic group is an artificially constructed phenomenon rather than an eternal and unchanging one [26].

From the above, each theory has varying interpretations and perspectives on the significance and formation of ethnic identity. However, some scholars criticize primordialism, arguing that it views ethnic identity as an inherent and unchangeable concept, oversimplifying and disregarding the fluidity of ethnic identity. Some scholars also argue that the instrumentalist perspective is overly utilitarian, overlooking the implicit emotions and cultural values that ethnic identity generates in individual and social life [27,28]. As a result, in recent years, an increasing number of scholars believe that constructivism is the most suitable explanatory perspective, as it comprehensively considers the various factors influencing individual ethnic identity and can account for ethnic identity in different contexts [29-31]. To sort out the various discourses and critiques of scholars and consider that urban indigenous people's ethnic identity may be influenced by multiple factors such as social and contextual elements, this research will adopt "constructivism" as its theoretical foundation to conduct a more comprehensive analysis and understanding.

The ethnic identity dilemma of urban indigenous people

Affected by factors such as agricultural economic decline and colonial governance policies, the number of Taiwanese indigenous people who choose to migrate from tribes to urban areas has grown rapidly. Although leaving their original way of life and space has brought some benefits, it has also caused a dilemma in the ethnic identity of urban indigenous people. By consolidating relevant studies and adopting an ecological systems perspective as the framework, generalized as follows:

1. Microsystem

The microsystem refers to the most direct field of interaction and influence with the individual, including family, school, and workplace [32]. Regarding the family aspect, according to Cheng's research [4], some urban indigenous people who have migrated to cities do not regularly contact their parents and have no relatives living in the original tribal communities, leading to a lack of opportunities to experience tribal life and traditional ceremonies. In terms of schools, the education system accepted by urban indigenous people is still based on Han Chinese culture, lacking indigenous-related teaching staff and curriculum.

As a result, it is difficult to learn about indigenous traditions, culture, and related knowledge. In school, they may also easily experience discrimination and bullying during peer interactions [33-35]. As for the workplace aspect, urban indigenous people may face disrespectful attitudes and behaviors such as exclusion, harassment, violence, and racial discrimination from non-indigenous colleagues, which may lead to a situation where they may deny their own ethnic identity [36,37].

2. Mesosystem

The mesosystem refers to the relationships and interactions between two or more microsystems in which individuals are directly involved. If the interactions between the systems can be maintained in a positive and frequent manner, it will facilitate the smooth development of the individual [32]. For instance, negative biases held by school personnel towards indigenous individuals can affect the interaction between schools and families, making it impossible to form common educational goals and develop possible trustworthy parent-teacher relationships [38]. Urban indigenous families may also face the problem of poor neighbor relations. Non-indigenous residents may have varying levels of understanding and acceptance of the indigenous people's festive activities and religious beliefs, which can create situations where urban indigenous individuals find it difficult to understand, thus impacting their relationship with neighbors [38]. As mentioned earlier, urban indigenous people may be in a situation full of prejudice for a long time, experiencing the devaluation and lack of acceptance of their own ethnic and cultural identity. Furthermore, the interactions within the microsystems they are involved in tend to be negative, leading to a further deterioration of the situation. Consequently, this gradually affects their sense of ethnic identity [39,40].

3. Exosystem

Although individuals do not directly participate in the exosystem, they are indirectly influenced by them, especially minority group individuals, who may shape and contemplate their ethnic identity through mass media [41,42]. However, according to Huang's research [43], although Taiwanese media has become more inclusive of indigenous culture, it often tends to misinterpret or oversimplify indigenous traditional culture. For example, creating overly primitive images, emphasizing poverty or displacement, these external representations may lead young indigenous individuals to resist learning and using their own culture and language.

4. Macrosystem

Although indigenous people were the first ethnic group to settle in Taiwan, they have been influenced by the past ruling history, there is still a deep-rooted stereotype of the urban indigenous people within Han Chinese society, including negative traits such as being perceived as barbaric, heavy drinkers, having high unemployment and dropout rates, laziness, and illiteracy. These stereotypes make indigenous people can't gaining cultural recognition and support, leading to discrimination, feelings of inferiority, and low self-esteem, and diminishing their sense of cultural pride [35].

Based on the above, it can be seen that urban indigenous people are highly prone to experiencing negative experiences related to their ethnic identity within their environment. According to the perspectives of instrumentalism and constructivism, these negative experiences will create the dilemma of generating ethnic identity with urban indigenous people. However, besides the challenges summarized by the aforementioned scholars, are there any other unnoticed dilemmas? And how do urban indigenous adolescents cope with these dilemmas in their lives? Furthermore, how mainstream society responds to and proposes improvements for these various issues mentioned above are all of the main research objectives of this study.

Methodology

This study aims to explore the ethnic identity of urban indigenous adolescents. Due to the highly complex nature of ethnic identity construction, it cannot be explained by a single factor or variable. This process is influenced by the subjective interpretations and interactions of individuals who are the protagonists in their environments and contexts. In short, the construction of ethnic identity possesses subjective and dynamic characteristics. Therefore, conducting research on ethnic identity requires an in-depth understanding of the inner world of the research subjects. For this reason, the researchers believe that this study is better suited for qualitative research methods. The primary advantage of qualitative research is its ability to generate descriptive data, including people's spoken words, written text, and observable behaviors, which helps to gain a deeper understanding of the most authentic and context-rich feelings.

In qualitative research methods, common research methods include ethnography, interviews, observations, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, content analysis of texts, historical research analysis, etc. This study has used "in-depth interviews" as the data collection method. In-depth interviews refer to directed conversations conducted face-to-face between the researcher and the participants. Through interactive processes, the researcher collects the experiences, attitudes, and thoughts of the participants regarding the research topic. The advantages of in-depth interviews, compared to other methods, include minimal invasiveness, suitable for asking complex and abstract questions, providing high freedom for interviewees to express their opinions, and ensuring the right of research participants to withdraw from the study at any time. This study employed purposeful sampling. Based on the principles of information saturation and data richness associated with purposeful sampling, the researcher invited nine urban indigenous adolescents aged between twelve and eighteen years to participate in interviews. Eventually, six individuals agreed to be interviewed.

The in-depth interview method can be further classified into three approaches: (1) Informal conversational interview: In this approach, the researcher and the participant engage in a conversation without predefining interview topics. The conversation takes place in a natural context. (2) General interview guide approach: Also known as a semi-structured interview, the researcher prepares interview topics and questions in an outline format. They ask or mention certain key points systematically and use an open-minded attitude to explore additional unplanned questions. (3) Standardized open-ended interview: In this approach, each research participant answers the same set of questions in the same order. The interview follows a standardized procedure [44].

The choice of using semi-structured interviews in this study is based on three reasons: Firstly, the semi-structured interview achieves a

harmonious balance between maintaining focus and allowing flexibility. Unlike informal conversational interviews, it prevents digressing from the topic, and unlike structured open-ended interviews, it avoids potentially stifling the naturalness and connectedness of participants' narratives. Secondly, ethnic identity is characterized by its "processual" nature. The semi-structured interview employs open-ended questions to encourage participants to freely articulate relevant experiences and feelings. Consequently, the developmental process of participants' ethnic identity can be presented more comprehensively. Thirdly, the semi-structured interview can consider the culture, context, and experiences of urban indigenous adolescents. Respecting their values and backgrounds helps establish a trusting relationship, making participants more willing to share their inner thoughts and emotions.

For the analysis of in-depth interview records, this study adopts grounded theory as the basis for data analysis. Grounded theory was initially proposed by Glaser and Strauss [45], who claimed that theory could be developed through a systematic data coding process, allowing the theory to emerge from the data. Their work made significant contributions to the analysis of data coding and indirectly challenged quantitative researchers' criticisms of qualitative research methods.

Traditional grounded theory tends to align with the positivist paradigm, aiming to discover objective social realities through a systematic data coding process. However, Charmaz [46] further developed constructivist grounded theory, incorporating the concepts of multiple truths and the realities of subjectivism. In order to avoid data collection from deviating from the interviewees' subjective experiences, researchers record the original content expressed by the interviewees in writing memos and engage in theory co-construction with them. This approach ensures that the research process is grounded in the interviewees' perspectives and experiences.

Charmaz [46] proposed a 10-step process for grounded theory: (1) Formulating research questions and initiating the research inquiry; (2) Initial coding of data; (3) Creating initial memos to place codes into tentative categories; (4) Focused coding of data; (5) Refining codes into conceptual categories through advanced memos; (6) Conducting theoretical sampling to seek new data; (7) Writing theoretical memos and further refining concepts; (8) Categorizing memos; (9) Integrating memos; (10) Drafting a preliminary manuscript. All interviews in this study were taped and transcribed verbatim. The interview texts were analyzed following the steps provided by Charmaz. The study's two authors conducted a dual review to validate the process of concept development.

Results

1. Overview of ethnic identity among urban indigenous adolescents

The previous literature review section mentioned that urban indigenous adolescents are typically born, raised, and educated in urban areas. As a result, they have fewer opportunities to engage with indigenous culture. Some of them are unable to speak their native language, let alone inherit traditional skills or participate in rituals. The establishment of ethnic identity becomes particularly challenging for them. Overall, existing literature tends to hold a pessimistic view of the ethnic identity of urban indigenous adolescents. The findings of this study align closely with the existing literature, further solidifying the conceptual understanding. The main discoveries are summarized as follows:

(1) Evident cultural disconnection

Due to living in urban areas for an extended period, these adolescents have had minimal opportunities to learn traditional skills such as farming, hunting, and fishing. Mandarin Chinese has also become their primary language of communication. As a result, when I asked them questions about indigenous culture, it was evident that their knowledge and understanding of indigenous culture were severely lacking.

"I don't know much about the characteristics of indigenous people... I mean, we are just indigenous, right? As long as we are different from the Han Chinese, that's enough." (A02)

"I don't speak our native language. Only my grandparents can, not even my dad." (A01)

"Our Amis[1] tradition is to catch fish by casting fishing nets, but I have never done it myself or seen others do it. I've only fished using a fishing rod, haha." (A03)

(2) Slight characteristics of "pseudo-cultural identity"

During the conversations with the interviewees, it was observed that they had limited knowledge about indigenous culture. However, they still possessed a strong sense of ethnic identity and exhibited resistance or rejection towards the Han Chinese. Researchers speculate that this might be because these urban indigenous adolescents have been taught by their parents or elders to take pride in their indigenous identity. However, they lack a deeper understanding of the cultural context and the underlying values behind it.

"A lot of Han Chinese guys are effeminate, and I feel like punching them when I see them. And some of them have such pretentious faces, I don't know why they act so arrogant." (A01)

"Oh, the Han Chinese? They're all about makeup. After they remove their makeup, they look like drug addicts." (A05)

"Besides studying, what else can the Han Chinese do? When they're hungry, all they know is instant noodles with an added egg! They're so weak, you know." (A04)

(3) Reproduction of Stereotypes about Indigenous Ethnic Groups

In Taiwan, there is an ongoing issue of indigenous groups being labeled with negative stereotypes by mainstream society. As a result, stereotypes, prejudices, or even discrimination against indigenous groups can be deeply ingrained in the educational system and the mindset of educators. These urban indigenous adolescents, who receive education in urban areas, have gradually internalized these stereotypes through constant exposure. This internalization process restricts their imagination of future possibilities, reinforcing self-fulfilling prophecies.

"Indigenous people are not smart, but we're really good at singing and dancing, just like artists like A-Mei, Show Luo, and Van Ness Wu[2] —they're all indigenous." (A06)

"The Han Chinese are better at studying, while we're not, but we're a hundred times better than them in sports." (A05)

2. Factors facilitating and hindering the development of ethnic identity among urban indigenous adolescents

If unable to successfully construct an ethnic identity, it will adversely affect various aspects of adolescents' personality development, academic achievements, and mental health. Therefore, this research aims to understand the facilitating and hindering factors in constructing ethnic identity, to provide insights for future policy and services. The main findings are summarized as follows:

(1) Hindering factors: Negative interactions within the same ethnic group

Ethnicity is a subjective identification of oneself with a particular group based on various factors such as skin color, appearance, language, religion, lifestyle, and cultural imagination. Therefore, the behaviors of others within the group and the experiences of intergroup interactions can also influence one's own sense of ethnic identity.

"Sometimes I feel like punching other indigenous people, you know? I just wonder why they have to bring disgrace to the indigenous community, making me not want to acknowledge my own indigenous identity." (A06)

"Sometimes I feel it's really tragic being an indigenous person. Even our own people don't support each other. I was previously

[1]Taiwan officially recognizes a total of 16 indigenous communities, and the Amis tribe is one of them.
[2] A-Mei, Show Luo, and Van Ness Wu are well-known aboriginal entertainers in Taiwan.

insulted by Han Chinese and called a beggar, and the shocking part is that the director of student affairs at our school, who is also an indigenous person, punished me instead of punishing the Han Chinese. Don't you think it's too unfair? " (A04)

(2) Hindering factors: Discrimination and exclusion from mainstream society

Almost all the interviewees stated that they have experienced discrimination, and such experiences have made them hesitant to express their indigenous characteristics, thus affecting their sense of ethnic identity.

"I really want to wear traditional indigenous clothing when I go out, but I'm afraid of being pointed at and judged by others. Whenever we wore indigenous attire in the past, we would constantly be stared at by passersby, which made me very uncomfortable." (A06)

"I'm really fed up with those Han Chinese people. They always exclude us indigenous people and say that we are dark and untidy." (A04)

"Han Chinese people would insult us indigenous children, saying that we all smoke, drink, chew betel nut, and look down on us." (A05)

(3) Facilitating factors: The exposure of indigenous peoples in society

When indigenous ethnic groups are more frequently exposed in mainstream media or interviewees have more opportunities to engage in discussions related to indigenous issues in their daily lives, as long as the content is not negative, it generally enhances the sense of identity of urban indigenous youth towards their indigenous ethnicity.

"I feel particularly happy whenever I see indigenous people in the news or when an indigenous person receives an award. It also brings joy to see indigenous athletes performing well in international competitions." (A05)

"Sometimes when the teacher discusses indigenous topics in class, and I know more than others, I feel very proud." (A02)

3. How urban indigenous youth confront ethnic identity crisis

Regarding the issues of indigenous ethnic groups occupying a disadvantaged position in society and the increasing challenges in preserving indigenous culture, it is noteworthy that urban indigenous youth are highly aware of these circumstances. Therefore, during the interviews, I also inquired about how they perceive and confront the difficulties they encounter. Surprisingly, their responses were unexpectedly optimistic. Through their experiences, we witnessed the resilience of life embodied in these young individuals.

(1) Aspiring for peaceful coexistence through positive communication among ethnic groups

Although the life experiences of these urban indigenous youth often involve negative interactions with Han Chinese individuals, they are not disheartened, pessimistic, or inclined to isolate themselves. During the interviews, they expressed predominantly optimistic and proactive attitudes. Some interviewees also mentioned their hope of fostering a better understanding of indigenous peoples within mainstream society, aiming to achieve mutual peaceful coexistence.

"Do you know? In Taiwan, if the indigenous people and the Han Chinese can coexist peacefully, we will definitely not lose to other countries." (A05)

"I would like to invite my Han Chinese friends from school to participate in our Harvest Festival³ to learn more about indigenous culture. I believe that by fostering such understanding, ethnic conflicts wouldn't be as severe." (A06)

"Just through communication and mutual understanding, indigenous people and Han Chinese will eventually coexist peacefully." (A02)

(2) Pursuing inner validation rather than external validation

While labels from mainstream society and judgments from others can influence the process of constructing an ethnic identity for urban

indigenous youth, they are not the sole determining factors. Self-affirmation and self-identification play crucial roles in maintaining their mental and emotional well-being. Therefore, internal unity within the ethnic group and individual self-affirmation become the most powerful tools for urban indigenous youth to confront external challenges.

"Actually, sometimes I feel it's okay if we don't speak our native language. The important thing is to know that we are indigenous and to love ourselves." (A01)

"I believe that indigenous people need to be united among ourselves, so we don't have to worry about how others perceive us." (A02)

"If we can't get along with Han Chinese, let's just leave it. After all, isn't it enjoyable for us indigenous people to gather together and have a drink?" (A03)

Discussion

Based on the aforementioned research findings, the researchers have four recommendations for policymakers and service providers working with urban indigenous adolescents. These recommendations are as follows:

1. Indigenous knowledge and indigenous culture should be given greater importance within the education system

Both previous literature and the findings of this study indicate that there is a significant cultural disconnection among urban indigenous youth. Their limited understanding of their own culture may lead to a condition of "pseudo-cultural identity." In more extreme cases, it can even lead to blind nationalism, exclusionary attitudes, xenophobia, or self-imposed limitations. According to the ecological systems perspective, the growth and development of adolescents are influenced by environmental factors, with schools being the most direct and significant context affecting the ethnic identity of urban indigenous youth. When their perceptions of ethnicity are altered through education, it is possible to influence their behaviors and emotions related to ethnicity.

Therefore, if schools can incorporate more elements of indigenous knowledge and culture into their curriculum design and track and assess students' learning outcomes, it is believed that the cultural disconnect among urban indigenous youth can be alleviated.

2. Frontline educators should possess a higher level of multicultural competence

Frontline educators, such as homeroom teachers and subject teachers in primary and secondary schools, must have a strong foundation in multicultural competence. According to constructionism, the intensity of an individual's ethnic identity is influenced by their surrounding environment. Therefore, if they lack understanding or hold stereotypical and rigid views towards indigenous people, it can influence their expectations and perceptions of indigenous students, and even manifest in their outward behavior, thus it may limit the ethnic identity development of these urban indigenous youth.

Just as the results of this study have shown, some urban indigenous youth have a Han Chinese-centric and stereotypical perception of indigenous culture. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a solid foundation in basic education and dismantle the stereotypes and labels society holds towards indigenous ethnic groups. This is an urgent task that needs to be addressed.

3. Cultural exchange should start with localization

Although the government, schools, and other organizations in Taiwan promote cultural exchange opportunities for youth, the current focus is often on international cultural exchange, with little emphasis on local cultural exchange. For example, the government invests significant funds yearly to subsidize students for volunteering abroad, and schools establish sister-school partnerships with foreign institutions for student exchange programs. As a result, many students have had experiences of traveling abroad or interacting with foreigners before reaching adulthood.

³The Harvest Festival is an ancient traditional sacrificial activity of the Amis people, aboriginal people in Taiwan.

However, when it comes to local cultural exchange within Taiwan, it is relatively scarce. Few Han Chinese students have had the opportunity to visit indigenous tribes or participate in indigenous festivals such as the Harvest Festival. According to ecological systems theory, individuals do not directly participate in exosystems and macrosystems, but these two systems can still indirectly influence individuals. Previous literature and this study similarly affirm that external systems and macrosystems significantly impact the development of ethnic identity among urban indigenous youth, especially in how mainstream society and mass media simplify and misrepresent indigenous culture. In other words, the public's lack of understanding of indigenous peoples will further contribute to unfriendly exosystems and macrosystems toward indigenous communities. Therefore, cultural exchange should not be limited to seeking opportunities abroad. The government and educational institutions should focus more on organizing local cultural exchange activities to enhance mutual understanding among different ethnic groups.

4. Strengthening the preservation and unity within indigenous communities

According to the constructivist perspective, ethnic identity is a product of society, and an individual's level of identification with their ethnic identity is influenced by their surrounding environment. This study confirms this perspective and underscores the importance of positive interactions within the same ethnic group. The research findings emphasize how such positive interactions within the same ethnic group play a significant role in enhancing the ethnic identity of urban indigenous youth and empowering them to resist external pressures. Therefore, the mission of preserving indigenous culture should not solely depend on external Han Chinese individuals. Instead, it should empower individuals within indigenous communities, fostering their ethnic awareness and enabling them to serve as advocates for their culture. By taking this approach, the preservation of indigenous culture and the development of ethnic identity can be more effectively promoted.

Conclusion

This study aims to explore the process of ethnic identity formation among urban indigenous adolescents. The research findings indicate that the ethnic identity of urban indigenous adolescents shows evident cultural disconnection, slight characteristics of "pseudo-cultural identity" and the reproduction of stereotypes about ethnic groups. In addition, this study also thoroughly analyzed the factors that facilitate and hinder the development of ethnic identity among urban indigenous adolescents, as well as how they cope with ethnic identity crises. The primary facilitating factor in ethnic identity development is the exposure of indigenous peoples in society, while the main hindering factors include negative interactions within the same ethnic group and discrimination and exclusion from mainstream society. To address ethnic identity crises, urban indigenous adolescents primarily employ cross-ethnic proactive communication and seek inner validation.

Based on the research results, four recommendations are proposed: First, indigenous knowledge and indigenous culture should be given greater importance within the education system; Secondly, Frontline educators should possess a higher level of multicultural competence; Thirdly, cultural exchange should start with localization; Finally, strengthening the preservation and unity within indigenous communities.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

1. Chu, J. J. (2000). From incorporation to exclusion: The employment experience of Taiwanese urban aborigines. *The China Quarterly*, 164, 1025-1043.

2. Jackson, L. (2014). *Under construction: The development of multicultural curriculum in Hong Kong and Taiwan*. Springer.

3. Council of Indigenous Peoples (2023). Indigenous Population Statistics (once a month). Retrieved July 30, 2023, from https://www.cip.gov.tw/zh-tw/news/data-list/940F9579765AC6A0/index.html?cumid=940F9579765AC6A0

4. Cheng, S. Y., & Jacob, W. J. (2008). American Indian and Taiwan Aboriginal education: Indigenous identity and career aspirations. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 9, 233-247.

5. Wicke, C. (2019). Constructivism in the history of nationalism since 1945. In S. Berger & E. Storm (Eds.), *Writing the History of Nationalism* (pp. 131–154). Bloomsbury Publishing.

6. Erikson, E. (1963). *Childhood and society*. George J. McLeod Limited.

7. Erikson, E. H. (1994). *Identity and the life cycle*. WW Norton & Company.

8. Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2000). Violence and the social construction of ethnic identity. *International Organization*, 54(4), 845-877.

9. Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: review of research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(3), 499.

10. Fearon, J. D. (1999). *What is identity (as we now use the word)?*. Unpublished manuscript, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif, 1-43.

11. Billig, M. (1997). The dialogic unconscious: psychoanalysis, discursive psychology and the nature of repression. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 36(2), 139-159.

12. Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Quintana, S. M., Lee, R. M., Cross Jr, W. E., Rivas-Drake, D., Schwartz, S. J. (2014). Ethnic and racial identity during adolescence and into young adulthood: An integrated conceptualization. *Child Development, 85*(1), 21-39.

13. Marcia, J. E. (1994). *The empirical study of ego identity*. Sage Publications.

14. Nishina, A., Bellmore, A., Witkow, M. R., & Nylund-Gibson, K. (2010). Longitudinal consistency of adolescent ethnic identification across varying school ethnic contexts. *Developmental Psychology, 46*(6), 1389.

15. Phinney, J. S., Horenczyk, G., Liebkind, K., & Vedder, P. (2001). Ethnic identity, immigration, and well-being: An interactional perspective. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(3), 493-510.

16. Quintana, S. M. (1994). A model of ethnic perspective-taking ability applied to Mexican-American children and youth. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 18*(4), 419-448.

17. Kataria, S. (2018). Explaining ethnicity: Primordialism vs. instrumentalism. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal, 5*(4), 130-135.

18. Adlparvar, N., & Tadros, M. (2016). *The evolution of ethnicity theory: Intersectionality, geopolitics and development*. Institute of Development Studies.

19. Horowitz, D. L. (2002). *The primordialists. Ethnonationalism in the contemporary world: Walker Connor and the study of nationalism*. Routledge.

20. Chandra, K. (2012). *Constructivist theories of ethnic politics*. Oxford University Press.

21. Esteban, J., Mayoral, L., & Ray, D. (2012). *Ethnicity and conflict*. Theory and facts science.

22. Jesse, N. G., & Williams, K. P. (2010). *Ethnic conflict: a systematic approach to cases of conflict*. CQ Press.

23. Bacova, V. (1998). The construction of national identity on primordialism and instrumentalism. *Human Affairs, 8*(1), 29-43.

24. Kebede, M. (2001). Directing ethnicity toward modernity. *Social Theory and Practice, 27*(2), 265-284.

25. Kearney, A. (2012). Ethnicity in wounded spaces: Instrumentalism and the making of Africa in Brazil. *Nineteen sixty nine: an ethnic studies journal, 1*(1), 39-55.

26. Wimmer, A. (2008). The making and unmaking of ethnic boundaries: A multilevel process theory. *American Journal of Sociology, 113*(4), 970-1022.

27. Sulikova, J. (2016). Unintended revelations in history textbooks: the precarious authenticity and historical continuity of the Slovak nation. *JSSE-Journal of Social Science Education, 15*(3), 26-39.

28. Ukiwo, U. (2005). The study of ethnicity in Nigeria. *Oxford Development Studies, 33*(1), 7-23.

29. Suny, R. G. (2001). Constructing primordialism: Old histories for new nations. *The Journal of Modern History, 73*(4), 862-896.

30. Thananithichot, S. (2011). Understanding Thai nationalism and ethnic identity. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 46*(3), 250-263.

31. Valbjørn, M. (2020). Beyond the beyond(s): On the (many) third way(s) beyond primordialism and instrumentalism in the study of sectarianism. *Nations and Nationalism, 26*(1), 91-107.

32. Ungar, M. (2002). A deeper, more social ecological social work practice. *Social Service Review, 76*(3), 480-497.

33. Chou, H. M. (2005). *Educating urban indigenous students in Taiwan: Six teachers' perspectives*. University of Maryland, College Park.

34. Huang, W. D. (2007, September). *Indigenous students' negotiation of cultural differences: the construction of linguistic identities amongst Amis students in Taiwan* [Paper presented]. British Educational Research Association Annual Conference.

35. Yen, S. H. (2009). Effective strategies for teaching Taiwanese minority students with low achievement and low socio-economic backgrounds. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 1*0, 455-463.

36. Farquhar, S., Samples, J., Ventura, S., Davis, S., Abernathy, M., McCauley, L., Shadbeh, N. (2008). Promoting the occupational health of indigenous farmworkers. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 10*, 269-280.

37. O'Loughlin, R. A., Kristman, V. L., & Gilbeau, A. (2022). Inclusion of Indigenous workers in workplace mental health. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: *An International Journal, 41*(3), 340-351.

38. Milne, E. (2016). "I Have the Worst Fear of Teachers": Moments of Inclusion and Exclusion in Family/School Relationships among Indigenous Families in Southern Ontario. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne Sociologies, 53*(3), 270-289.

39. Button, P., & Walker, B. (2020). Employment discrimination against indigenous peoples in the United States: Evidence from a field experiment. *Labour Economics, 65*, 2-57.

40. Kenrick, J., & Lewis, J. (2004). Indigenous peoples' rights and the politics of the term 'indigenous'. *Anthropology Today, 20*(2), 4-9.

41. Clément, R., Baker, S. C., Josephson, G., & Noels, K. A. (2005). Media effects on ethnic identity among linguistic majorities and minorities: A longitudinal study of a bilingual setting. *Human Communication Research, 31*(3), 399-422.

42. Green, C. L. (1999). Ethnic evaluations of advertising: Interaction effects of strength of ethnic identification, media placement, and degree of racial composition. *Journal of Advertising, 28*(1), 49-64.

43. Huang, K. (2022). 'We are Indigenous people, not primitive people.': the role of popular music in Indigenous language revitalization in Taiwan. *Current Issues in Language Planning,* 1-20.

44. Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.

45. Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Aldine.

46. Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.

Appendix: Interview Outline

1. How do you comprehend the concept of "ethnic identity"?
2. Share your feelings about having indigenous ancestry and the impact it has on you.
3. Which ethnic group do you believe you should identify with? Has this thought ever changed? Have you ever been troubled by this?
4. What do you consider to be the key factors influencing your ethnic identity?
5. Could you please share your understanding of the culture of the ethnic group you identify with?
6. If cultural workers or relevant individuals invited you to participate in Indigenous affairs, would you be willing to participate? If so, why?
7. Please share your general experiences when interacting with individuals who share the same/different ethnic identity as you.
8. Have you ever experienced discrimination due to your indigenous ancestry? If so, could you please share your experience of encountering discrimination?
9. Please share your perspective on the preservation of indigenous culture.
10. Could you please share your thoughts regarding the future in relation to your ethnic identity? Do you have any concerns? For instance, in areas such as making friends, pursuing employment, marriage, etc.