

DEPOSIT AND CONSULTATION OF DISSERTATION

One copy of your dissertation will be deposited in ORA (Oxford University Research Archive), where it is intended to be freely available online. In order to facilitate this, you are requested to complete and sign the form below.

Please use block capitals

Surname	
ZHU	
First names (in full)	
WEI	
Faculty board	EDUCATION
Degree name and pathway	
MSC EDUCATION (RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY)	
Title of dissertation	
A STUDY ON CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD MINORITY EDUCATION POLICIES AND THEIR SENSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY	
Supervisor	
PROFESSOR ARIEL LINDORFF	
Subject keywords	<i>Enter your own keywords or phrases to describe your work. This information helps us describe your work in ORA</i>
ETHNIC MINORITY EDUCATION, MINORITY EDUCATION POLICY ATTITUDES, SENSE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY	
Research methods used	<i>This information helps us describe your work on SOLO for future students e.g. quantitative, interviews, vocabulary test, systematic review, etc.</i>
ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES, OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	

Declaration by the candidate as author of the dissertation

1. I understand that I am the owner of this dissertation and that the copyright rests with me unless I specifically transfer it to another person.
2. I understand that the Department requires that I shall deposit one copy of my dissertation in the Oxford University Research Archive ('ORA') where it shall be freely available online for use in accordance with ORA's Terms and Conditions of Use [https://ora.ox.ac.uk/terms_of_use].
3. I understand that this dissertation should not contain material that can be used to personally identify individuals or specific groups of individuals, and that such material should be removed before this dissertation is deposited in ORA.
4. I agree to be bound by the terms of the ORA Grant of Non-exclusive Licence [www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ora/deposit-in-ora/deposit-licence] and I warrant that to the best of my knowledge, making my thesis available on the internet will not infringe copyright or any other rights of any other person or party, nor contain defamatory material.
5. I agree that my dissertation shall be available for download in ORA in accordance with paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 above.

Signed [an electronic signature is sufficient]: WEI ZHU

Date: 25/08/2022

Wei Zhu

**A study on Chinese ethnic minority university students' attitudes toward
minority education policy and their sense of national identity**



Wei Zhu

Blackfriars Hall

University of Oxford

A thesis submitted for the degree of *Master of Science in Education*

Trinity Term 2022

Word Count: 19,955

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.....	vii
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures	ix
Abstract	10
Chapter One Introduction.....	11
1.1 <i>Research background</i>	11
1.1.1 Introduction to ethnic minority and minority education policies in China	11
1.1.2 The development of policy over time	13
1.1.3 Effects of the policies for different stakeholder groups	14
1.2 <i>Rationale and benefits for conducting the current research</i>	15
Chapter Two Literature review	17
2.1 <i>Conceptions of “identity” and “sense of national identity”</i>	17
2.1.1 “Identity”	17
2.1.2 Definitions of sense of national identity	18
2.2 <i>Theoretical framework</i>	19
2.2.1 Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory	19
2.2.2 The applicability of these theories in the current study	22
2.2.3 Critics of the applicability of SIT in the eastern context.....	23
2.2.4 The internal structure of (sense of) national identity	24
2.3 <i>Relevant literatures on national identity</i>	25
2.3.1 Sense of national identity and different research aims.....	25
2.3.2 Sense of national identity and associated variables	27
2.4 <i>Attitudes toward educational policies relevant to minority groups in China</i>	29
2.4.1 Research on language policies and language attitude	29
2.4.2 Literatures on other education policies relevant to ethnic minority students.....	30
2.5 <i>Methodological gap</i>	31
Chapter Three Methodology	33
3.1 <i>Overview</i>	33
3.2 <i>Researcher’s positionality</i>	34
3.3 <i>Sample</i>	35
3.4 <i>Data collection</i>	37
3.5 <i>Ethical considerations</i>	39
3.6 <i>Limitations</i>	40
Chapter Four Results and findings	42

4.1 <i>Research Question 1</i>	42
4.1.1 Survey results	42
4.1.2 Results from the open-ended question	47
4.2 <i>Research Question 2</i>	52
4.3 <i>Research Question 3</i>	55
4.4 <i>Research Question 4</i>	57
Chapter Five Discussion.....	62
5.1 <i>How to understand the results</i>	62
5.1.1 Policy attitudes	62
5.1.2 Students' sense of national identity.....	63
5.2 <i>Implications of the findings</i>	65
5.2.1 Policy-related implications.....	65
5.2.2 Practical implications	68
5.3 <i>Suggestions for future research</i>	71
5.3.1 The need for conducting longitudinal studies	71
5.3.2 Explore the role of higher education in shaping ethnic minority students' sense of national identity.....	72
Chapter Six Conclusion.....	73
References	75
Appendix A: The Online Survey (The translated version)	88
Appendix B: The CUREC Ethical Approval Notification.....	91
Appendix C: Results of the exploratory factor analysis and reliability test of the policy attitudes scale and the identity scale	92
Appendix D: The Ethnic Minority High Level Talent Training Program	99
Appendix E: Results of ANOVA (Dimension differences in Policy Attitude Scale) with assumption-checking procedures	100
Appendix F: Results of ANOVA (Dimension differences in Identity Scale) with assumption-checking procedures.....	102
Appendix G: Results of the independent-samples <i>t</i> -test (Gender differences of students' policy attitudes).....	104
Appendix H: Assumption checking for regression analysis (Gender and Grade Level predict Students' Policy Attitudes).....	105
Appendix I: Results of ANOVA (Students' Sense of National Identity across 5 Grade Levels) with assumption-checking procedures	109
Appendix J: Results of the independent-samples <i>t</i> -test (Gender differences of students' sense of national identity)	111

Appendix K: Assumption checking for Pearson’s correlation (students’ policy attitudes and their sense of national identity) 112

Appendix L: Assumption checking for regression analysis (Grade Level and Policy Attitude predict Students’ Sense of National Identity) 114

Acknowledgement

Given this opportunity, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to all the people who have ever helped me in this paper.

My sincere and hearty thanks go firstly to my supervisor, Professor Ariel Lindorff, whose suggestions and encouragement have given me much insight into critical thinking in conducting empirical research, especially in the aspect of research design. Her advanced knowledge of research methods has helped me develop a rich analyzing process. It has been a great joy to study under his supervision, through which I greatly benefitted from her exacting requirements academically, as well as her personality. I believe that what I have learned from Ariel during this year would help me overcome more potential difficulties in my future studies.

I would also like to express my gratitude to professors and tutors in the Department of Education, for their valuable advice to my paper, encouragement, and their excellent courses which have strengthened my passion for conducting research in the field of education. Special thanks to my study participants; I am grateful that they voluntarily sacrificed their valuable time to participate in my survey.

My acknowledgements also go to my friends who helped me through the whole process of writing the paper. Particularly, I want to thank my dear course mates in the RDM pathway for their kindness, support and generosity throughout the year.

Finally, I am very grateful to my parents. Only with their selfless support, concern and love, can I overcome those difficulties and pursue my study till now. their loving and considerations are the source of my strength.

List of Tables

Table 1: Structural Details of the Questionnaire Sections.....	35
Table 2: Results in The Policy Attitudes Scale.....	40
Table 3: Dimension differences in Policy Attitudes Scale	43
Table 4: Results in the Identity Scale	49
Table 5: Dimension differences in the Identity Scale.....	51
Table 6: Gender and Grade Level predict Students' Policy Attitudes	54
Table 7: Students' Sense of National Identity across 5 Grade Levels.....	56
Table 8: Education Level and Policy Attitudes predict Students' Sense of National Identity .	57
Table 9: Education Level and Special Policy Attitudes predict Students' Sense of National Identity	58

List of Figures

Figure 1: Distribution of Ethnic Groups in the Sample	34
Figure 2: Distribution of Students' Grade Level in the Sample	34
Figure 3: Students' Policy Attitudes across Grade Levels	54
Figure 4: Students' Sense of National Identity across Grade Levels	56
Figure 5: Students' Policy Attitudes and Sense of National Identity across Grade Levels.....	56

Abstract

In China, research into ethnic minorities' national identity has increased significantly since the development of ethnic group theory. However, most existing research on minorities' national identity has relied primarily on theoretical studies, with relatively few empirical studies conducted. Aiming to better understand minority students' perceptions toward relevant educational policies, and the potential association between policy attitudes and their sense of national identity, this study takes an online survey as the data collection method which is philosophically grounded in pragmatist position. Specifically, the questionnaire includes a policy attitude scale, a scale of sense of national identity, and an open-ended question, in which the two scales were adapted from previous research. Findings suggest that the sampled students (n = 119) generally hold positive attitudes towards ethnic minority education policies and have relatively strong sense of national identity. The responses generated from the open-ended questions indicate three major themes: perceived benefits of multilingualism, the diversity of opinions on preferential admission policies, and the perceived importance of preserving minority cultures both within minority groups and in the Chinese mainstream society. This study revealed that gender did not significantly influence policy attitudes or senses of national identity among sampled students, but that students' grade level may have a significant influence on both. Most importantly, findings indicate that students' policy attitude can explain 46.8% of the variance in students' sense of national identity when controlling for their gender. The results triggered multiple policy and practical implications, leading to further considerations of how sense of national identity could be taken into account in the formulation, adjustment, and improvement of minority education policies, and how relevant education policies could help build and enhance ethnic minority university students' sense of national identity.

Keywords: Ethnic minority education; Minority education policy attitudes; Sense of national identity; Attitudinal research.

Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Research background

1.1.1 Introduction to ethnic minority and minority education policies in China

Ethnic minorities refer to ethnic groups other than the main ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic country (Su & Xue, 2020). According to the seventh national census in 2010, the Han Chinese constitute the majority of the Chinese people, accounting for approximately 91.51% of the overall population of the country. The other 55 ethnic groups have a relatively small population, accounting for about 8.49% of the total population, and are hence referred to as “ethnic minorities” in China (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Despite the small population, minority groups in China are widely distributed in nearly all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government. This distribution pattern could be attributed to the interaction and mobility of various ethnic groups during long-term historical development (Su & Xue, 2020; Yuan et al., 2013).

While policies affecting ethnic minority groups in China are manifold, such as the national regional autonomy system, fertility policies, linguistic equality policies, and religious freedom policies, this study focuses on the educational aspect, which aims to bridge the gap between minority and Han education. The development of education is hampered by several factors, such as the isolation of most ethnic minority areas, the harsh natural environment and the relative economic backwardness (Su & Xue, 2020). The State has therefore enacted and implemented various targeted education policies for ethnic minorities to support the country’s 56 ethnic groups’ shared and harmonious growth, striving for a more equal future for educational development.

Ethnic minorities' education policies can be divided into two categories: preferential policies and special policies. Preferential policies, also known as “compensatory policies,” are planned and implemented largely to achieve equity in national education and exemplify the principle of “different but equal” (Chen et al., 2019). A series of preferential policies are

designed to alleviate the disparity in educational resources and enrolment to some extent, in order to ensure relative equity in educational development nationwide. This is primarily due to the backwardness of educational resources, the relatively low level of education, and the closed educational environment in ethnic minority areas (e.g., Chen et al., 2019; Jiang, 2015). Special policies are those that take into account the unique characteristics of minority education in terms of educational aims, values, content, and techniques (Chen et al., 2019). These policies exist only in minority education and are adopted by minority groups in China.

Preferential policies

The policy of admission inclination refers to the principle of merit-based admission and appropriate care in accordance with the prescribed ratio in the admission of students to the secondary and senior secondary school examinations (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022). And students from border areas, mountainous areas, pastoralist areas, and areas inhabited by ethnic minorities would be appropriately admitted with reduced scores. At the same time, students from ethnic minorities living in Han areas are given priority for admission under the same conditions as Han candidates.

Counterpart support policy. The counterpart support and exchanges from mainland universities have not only provided advanced teaching equipment, but also educational ideas and models for reference in the construction of universities in minority areas (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

Teacher concessions. To address the uneven quality of the teaching force in ethnic minority areas, the serious shortage of teachers and the brain drain issue, the State has adopted the practice of improving the treatment and status of teachers, increasing the education subsidies for teachers in ethnic minority areas, and providing them with certain preferential care policies in areas such as health care and title assessment (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017).

Special policies

Bilingual education policy. Of the 55 ethnic minority groups in China, more than 20 have their own scripts. Bilingual education is widely applied in teaching in ethnic minority areas to pass on the language and script distinctive to the ethnic group while adjusting to their unique cultural and social background (Wang, 2019). Over decades of research, the teaching technique of mixing Chinese and minority languages has developed into a system model that is commonly used in Tibet, Xinjiang, and other ethnic minority areas (Wang, 2012; Wang, 2019).

A unique endeavor to improve ethnic education is the formation of ethnic colleges/ethnic preparation courses (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2005). Ethnic colleges and ethnic minority preparatory classes are a system of teaching classes developed according to the characteristics of minority students with special measures. Its purpose is to improve the basic cultural knowledge of minority students and strengthen the training of basic skills, so as to lay a good foundation for their subsequent professional study in higher education institutions. Some regions in mainland China have created ethnic colleges and ethnic classes, making use of the high-quality teaching personnel and modern teaching facilities to cultivate talents with comprehensive qualities specifically for minority regions.

1.1.2 The development of policy over time

China's ethnic higher education policy has gone through three successive stages, led by the political discourse system of "aiming at training cadres of ethnic minorities", the economic discourse system of "aiming at enhancing the productivity of ethnic regions" and the value discourse system of "aiming at promoting equity in education for ethnic minorities", showing different development trends and stage characteristics (Su & Xue, 2020).

At the beginning of the founding of New China, China's ethnic higher education career was in its initial stage. During this period, there was an urgent need to establish administrative management systems in ethnic areas, and a large number of ethnic minority management personnel were needed (Su & Xue, 2020). Therefore, the ethnic higher education system was initially formed through the implementation of preferential policies on the establishment of

ethnic colleges and minority enrollment to cultivate political cadres. During the “Cultural Revolution”, the development of ethnic higher education in China suffered serious setbacks. After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in 1978, socialist modernization became a new development need, and China's ethnic higher education entered a phase of economic discourse dominated by recovery and reconstruction by training professional and technical talents, and organizing ethnic classes in colleges and universities, with the aim of enhancing the productivity of ethnic areas. In the context of the implementation of the “Scientific Outlook on Development” in 2003, China’s ethnic higher education policy has focused on issues such as equity in ethnic education through adopting strategies such as the high-level talent program for ethnic minorities, the standardization of ethnic matriculation education, and the establishment of a higher education counterpart support system. The primary goal of implementing education policies for ethnic minorities has shifted toward the promotion of equity in minority education (Su & Xue, 2020; Sun & Han, 2019).

1.1.3 Effects of the policies for different stakeholder groups

Many educational policies for ethnic minorities have had a positive impact at different stages in promoting inter-ethnic educational equity and contributed to the process of educational development in ethnic areas. Different stakeholders, however, tend to have a variety of perspectives. An example is the policy of admission inclination for ethnic minorities in terms of gaining extra marks in major examinations such as *gaokao*. Due to the difference in the level of regional economic development in China, the education level of remote minority regions, which are relatively lagging economically, differs greatly from that of the relatively economically developed eastern and central regions (Chen et al., 2019). Therefore, if the principle of “absolute fairness” in terms of equality of scores is still upheld in the entrance examination, ethnic minority students who are limited by their regional education level will be disadvantaged in the competition for higher education (e.g., Chen et al., 2019; Liang, 2020). It is precisely because of this relative disadvantage of access to education for ethnic minorities and the relative lack of educational resources that the development of preferential policies has become an inevitable choice. The preferential policy makes up for the unequal position of ethnic

minority students in competitive selection due to their pre-existing weak education resources and gives them the right to further their higher education (Chen et al., 2019).

However, in a highly competitive selection test like *gaokao*, where extra points in the college entrance examination relate to the vital interests of every candidate, this policy for ethnic minorities only is considered unfair by some Han candidates (e.g., Cao, 2015; Chen et al., 2019; Jiang, 2015; Yang, 2010). This kind of perception has even led to many social problems, such as the phenomenon of the *gaokao* migrants¹ and various cases of fraudulent favoritism in the college entrance examination (Hu & Ga, 2016). Cases of falsification of ethnic identity constantly happened, which are not only unfair to Han Chinese candidates, but also reflect the disconnect between the implementation of the preferential policy in *Gaokao*, and social development (Chen et al., 2019). On the other hand, relevant research findings also indicate that some ethnic minority students feel inferior and need to be taken care of as a result of this policy, and become less confident in their studies and daily interactions with their classmates (e.g., Cao, 2015; Chen et al., 2019). Some even explicitly express their wish to abolish preferential policies for ethnic minority students such as extra points and priority admissions (Cao, 2015; Jiang, 2015). This example indicates the importance of relevant research on different stakeholders' perceptions of certain education policies to further inform the policy development.

1.2 Rationale and benefits for conducting the current research

With the deepening of ethnic group theory, many researchers have begun to focus on the national identity of ethnic minorities (e.g., Jiang, 2015; Liu, 2010; Sun, 2013; Sun, 2017; Wu & Wang, 2020; Xu, 2014). However, the existing research results on minorities' national identity are still mainly based on theoretical studies (e.g., Guo, 2013; Liang, 2020; Liao & Shen, 2020; Liu, 2010), while empirical research is relatively few (Jiang, 2015). On the other hand, studies on the national identity of ethnic minority university students often focus on aspects such as religion, cultural genetics, and civic education, while neglecting the shaping of ethnic

¹ Gaokao migrants refer to students who register to take the exam in a different province to boost their chances of scoring higher.

minority education policies on their sense of national identity. How have minority education policies influenced or contributed to students' sense of national identity in the process of policy implementation? And how should the factor of sense of national identity be taken into account in the formulation, adjustment, and improvement of minority education policies? The answers to these questions may help us gain a fuller understanding of the ethnic minority students' attitudes towards relevant education policies, and the latent association between these perceptions and their sense of national identity, which is conducive to enriching the connotation of patriotic education, and the long-term stability of ethnic minority regions in China (Liang, 2020; Wang, 2015). Therefore, this study aims to better understand minority students' perceptions toward relevant educational policies, and the potential association between policy attitudes and their sense of national identity. The findings of this study are presumed to be integral for informing both preferential and special education policies relevant to minority students in China, hoping to contribute more empirical evidence on this topic for future replication studies and cross-study comparisons.

The dissertation contains five chapters, The next chapter, Chapter 2, will draw on the conceptions of "identity" and "sense of national identity", and previous literature and existing research exploring ethnic minority students' policy attitudes and their sense of national identity. The chapter ends with a discussion on the methodological gap within the existing studies. In Chapter 3, samples and procedures, instruments, and analytic procedures are outlined. Descriptions of the methods of the analyses employed to address the research questions will be explained. After that, the results chapter will outline the key findings. In Chapter 5, the findings concerning previous literature and the implications, strengths, and limitations for further research will be discussed.

Chapter Two Literature review

2.1 Conceptions of “identity” and “sense of national identity”

2.1.1 “Identity”

The concept of identity has spread throughout different fields such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and political science, in which the definition of identity tends to differ from one field to another (Guo, 2003; Jenkins, 2014). In the fields of sociology and political science, for instance, scholars have often used “identity” as a “cause” or “motivation” to explain socio-political phenomena such as group identity, feelings, and behavior (Qian, 2006). Considering the concept of identity from a psychological perspective, however, Freud saw it as a process of emotional and psychological convergence between an individual and another person, a group or a figure to be imitated, and as the earliest expression of an individual's emotional connection to others (Sytnik-Czetwertyński, 2021; Wang, 2002). Later, Mead explained the process of the development of self-awareness in terms of symbolic interactionism (as cited in Stryker, 2008). Building on Freud's and Mead's research, Erikson (1994) defined identity, which he took to mean that individuals have a solid ego and share some essential characteristics with others of their kind. According to Erikson's (1994) theory of identity, a person's identity is not limited to the individual, but also to the collective and social. Identity is considered as the difference, character and sense of belonging found in interpersonal interactions and interactions between groups (Erikson, 1994), and it arises from the self-views that emerge from the reflexive activity of self-categorization or identification in terms of membership in particular groups or roles (Stets & Burke, 2000).

The richness of the connotations of identity and the diversity of theoretical orientations have resulted in differences in the conceptions of identity in different research which seems to be manifold. According to Jenkins (1952), the term identity has two meanings: firstly, sameness or similarities between two individuals; and second, uniqueness, expressed as the consistency and coherence over a span of time. He believes that the essence of identity is a sense of belonging and proposes three levels of expression: cognitive, affective and behavioral identity

(Jenkins, 1952). Shah (2002) considers identity as a concept used in psychology to explain the mechanisms of personality integration, that is, how personality interacts with society and culture to maintain. She holds that identity is considered as the internal force that sustains the interaction between personality and society and culture, and thus the internal force that sustains the unity and consistency of personality. According to Guo (2003), there are currently two distinct orientations in the study of identity in psychology: Erikson's (1994) self-identity, and Stryker et al.'s (1982) role-specific identity. In summary, the current research agrees with Erikson (1994) and Jenkins (1952) and adopts that the conception of identity could be viewed as a matter of dealing with the relationships between individuals and individuals, and between individuals and groups.

2.1.2 Definitions of sense of national identity

The concept of national identity has been defined mainly from two perspectives: the political science perspective and the psychological perspective (Dittmer & Kim, 2018; He & Yan, 2008; Jiang, 1998; Pye, 1994). From a political science perspective, Pye (1994), an American political scientist, proposed that national identity is the attitudinal orientation of people who are within the decision-making sphere of the state. Dittmer and Kim (2018), on the basis of their previous research, hold that national identity should contain two interdependent dimensions, one of which presents the degree of strength regarding people's identification behavior, and the other the substance of people's identification, that is, the state itself. Similarly, He and Yan (2008) hold that national identity relates to citizens' identification with the historical and cultural traditions, moral values, ideals and beliefs, and national sovereignty of their homeland. They have highlighted the underlying connotations of national identity, including the sameness of the political community itself, the activity of identifying oneself to which political community a person believes he or she belongs, and one's expectation of the political community to which one belongs or wishes to belong. This is in line with Gao (2010), which believes that one's national identity could be reflected in their knowledge of the geographical and cultural aspects of the political community to which people perceive as belonging. In summary, there are some commonalities shared among different connotations scholars have

attached to the term “national identity”, namely the sense of belonging to a particular political community (e.g., Jiang, 1998; He, 2008), and certain identifications with and knowledge about the history and culture of that community (Dittmer & Kim; 2018; Gao, 2010).

Exploring the concept of national identity from a psychological perspective, Zuo (2000) argues that national identity contains the knowledge, tolerance or acceptance of people’s membership in a nation and perceptions of their compatriots. He indicates that national identity is a complex system of psychological structures that includes many components, which can be distinguished into subsystems of knowledge and perception, and subsystems of emotion and evaluation. The former, as a cognitive component, includes people's knowledge and related perceptions of their own country and people; and the latter, as an affective component, involves people's feelings, emotions and evaluations of the country and people. This conception of national identity could be better understood in Chen’s (2004) study, in which she has developed three components necessary for comprehending the construction of national identity, including cognitive, evaluative, and affective dimensions.

Based on the comparison between conceptualizing “national identity” from different perspectives, the concept of national identity appears to have the following characteristics regardless of whether from a political or psychological perspective: (1) firstly, national identity is an individual's belonging to a group; (2) the content of national identity is multiple and these are closely linked to the state; (3) the level of national identity is multidimensional. Integrating the existing concepts of identity and national identity, this study considers national identity as an individual's or group's sense of belonging to the country to which they belong, which includes three components: cognitive, affective and evaluative.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory

Based on different theoretical foundations, many aspects of national identity have been explored in depth in the existing literature. Some start from the internal cognitive development of students concerning the formulation of their sense of identity (e.g., Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel &

Turner, 1986), while others pay more attention to the external socio-cultural environment, arguing that identity development is influenced by the social environment, including parents, education and mass media (e.g., Rutland, 1996; Rutland, 1999). The application and understanding of different theoretical positions could lead to important insights for a deeper and more thorough understanding of national identity development. The researcher is also aware of the potential influence of the external social and cultural environment on the national identity of minority university students (e.g., Chen, 2004; Rutland, 1996; Rutland, 1999), such as the classroom and family. However, the current study tends to base more on cognitive theories, given the research aim that includes the exploration of potential grade-level differences in ethnic minority students' sense of national identity and has adopted an identity scale that is designed based on relevant theories (Chen, 2004).

Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) are theories that emphasize cognitive aspects, which take cognitive categorization as a starting point for the formulation of identity. Both theories argue that it is with cognitive categorization that individuals categorize the social world, and that identity phenomena are the product of categorization processes (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thus, the structural view in SIT and SCT focuses on the cognitive dimensions of identity development in terms of internal cognitive construction and categorization, which considers all these phenomena as intra-individual cognitive processes (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Social identity theory

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), social identity is a part of a person's self-concept, which is determined by belonging to a social group (or groups) in combination with the value and emotional significance that accompany this belonging. There are two fundamental points in this definition: (1) the awareness of a person that he/she belongs to a certain group so as to form one's own image of the Self and the image of the community with which he/she relates oneself, and (2) the recognition of the emotional and value significance of group membership for a person. Tajfel and Turner (1986) believe that the person perceives the world through the sense of belonging to a specific group, and argues that the formation of social identity takes

place through three steps. First, social categorization is necessary in order for a person to understand the social environment as one self-identify as part of one particular group. Secondly, via social identification, an individual identifies with a particular social group through acquiring the norms and behaviors of that group. Finally, a person's perception and cognitive attributes would be transformed into attitudes and actions through a process of social comparison. These characteristics are associated with the preference for an ingroup over an outgroup, enabling individuals to gain a deeper understanding of their sense of belonging. (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Among the three steps, Tajfel (1978) assigns a crucial role in the formation of social identity to the social categorization process, which allows a person to organize information about the world around oneself, and to self-identify in a social context. He concludes that being categorized as a member of a particular social group or community, people strive to preserve and maintain a positive social identity (Tajfel, 1978). Such a positive assessment of one's ethnic group is a natural socio-psychological mechanism that ensures self-respect at the individual level, and the group level – the preservation of ethnic culture and its transmission to subsequent generations (Tajfel, 1978).

Self-categorization theory

Social categorization becomes crucial not when it is presented to individuals from outside, but when it is accepted by them independently (Turner, 1987). In this case, the categorization becomes “self-categorization”. The theory of self-categorization, proposed by Turner (1987), may help explain this phenomenon. Despite self-categorization theory's (Turner, 1987) logical connection to Tajfel's (1978) social identity theory, their approaches concerning the reasons for forming and maintaining social identity differ. Specifically, Tajfel (1978) examines social identity from the perspective of “connectedness” with the group as a mechanism of intergroup relations, while Turner et al. (1994) believe that social identity includes a social categorization of oneself, which causes group phenomena. Given that, the main idea of the concept of self-categorization lies in the way a person understands or defines him/herself through “representations” or “categorizations”, which are seen as “cognitive groupings of self-inherent

features and the representation of oneself as identical, analogous, or equivalent to a certain class of stimuli that is different from another class of stimuli (Zakiryanova & Redkina, 2020, p. 107).” Turner et al. (1994) argue that people can categorize themselves as individuals based on their differences from other people or as social groups in terms of common characteristics that distinguish them from non-members of a given group.

2.2.2 The applicability of these theories in the current study

Based on the above discussion and synthesis of the concept of "identity," research on national identity, from the perspective of human social behavior, tends to focus more on intergroup behavior than on interpersonal behavior, that is, the behavior of people as a large social category of "nations" (Ellemers et al., 2002). Second, people's social identity can reflect and also influence their perceptions, emotions, and behaviors (Ellemers et al., 2002). Therefore, when exploring intergroup relations and social behavior issues, it would be appropriate to study them at the level of group identity. From this perspective, social identity theory, as a general theory that helps understand intergroup behaviors and group membership, can be used to explain the phenomena of large-scale social categories (Cinnirella, 1996).

Furthermore, Tajfel and Turner (1986) emphasize that it is very important for a person to have a positive identity in order to perceive the environment as balanced and in “compliance”, as disharmony prevents adequate behavior in the social world, and the image of this world may begin to collapse. This is especially evident in conditions of radical social transformations when most of the social categories through which people previously defined themselves and their place in society seem to have lost their boundaries and their values (Katz, 1985). Therefore, Tajfel’s theory of social identity and Turner’s self-categorization theory can help understand ethnic minority students’ sense of national identity from the intergroup perspective, which is considered applicable in the Chinese context in which the national identity of different ethnic minority groups tends to be a prominent research topic. Given their valuable theoretical bases, the two theories can also help clarify and refine the dimensions of the “sense of national identity” in the current study.

2.2.3 Critics of the applicability of SIT in the eastern context

There are two controversies regarding the applicability of social identity theory to explain national identity in the Chinese context. Katz (1985) argues that national identity becomes more important in times of war because in other situations, it is difficult to resonate with a person's psychological state or emotions. Müller-Peters (1998), on the other hand, is convinced that it is appropriate to use social identity theory to study national identity in most contexts where the comparison with the out-group and emotional involvement appear to be prominent. This study agrees with Müller-Peters's (1998) view that the state is also a large-scale social category, as he argues that "National identity refers to a special form of collective or social identity, and in this case, the collective which constitutes identity is the nation (p. 703)". In addition, the current research contends that national identity is still culturally and politically important in contemporary societies, although its significance may be different from that of wartime. This is consistent with Müller-Peters (1998) as he holds that "not only war but also the integration of groups can trigger processes of comparison with the out-group (p. 703)". Though the society of Modern China is not under severe transformation or under radical changes, ethnic minority university students may still face challenges due to the historical legacy of not being the "majority", the uniqueness of ethnic minority cultures which differ from that of Han Chinese, and the value bias of ethnic policies throughout history (Liao & Shen, 2020). It is therefore crucial for university students who are from minority groups to have a stable, conscious, and positive sense of national identity to better form the "boundaries" and their own values (Liao & Shen, 2020).

The second issue lies in the applicability of the theory in different cultural contexts. As SIT was developed and applied in a Western cultural context it is worth considering whether the theory is suitable to explain phenomena in Eastern cultures. Although conducting research under the same theoretical framework would facilitate the comparison of research results (Chen, 2004), conclusions would be carefully drawn given the different cultural backgrounds in which research is conducted, which may affect the comprehension of the theory itself as well as that way the theories could be adopted to help understand and explain the research results.

2.2.4 The internal structure of (sense of) national identity

Scholars have derived various dimensions of (sense of) national identity based on different theoretical grounds and empirical results, that is, what are the components of sense of national identity. In the analysis of the factors influencing the national identity of Korean refugees living in South Korea, Yu Shi-Eun et al. (2012) argue that the dimension of national identity should include four components: national consciousness, positive emotions, positive values and negative values. Huntington (2012), in his analysis of the constituents of national identity in the US context, divided it into four components: national, ethnic, cultural and political aspects. Herrmann et al. (2009) classify national identity into three dimensions: national attachment, culturalism and national chauvinism, while Thelen & Honeycutt (2004) argue that national identity should include national heritage, cultural homogeneity, belief systems and ethnocentrism.

Within the Chinese context, Xu (2011) argues that four factors should be considered in the construction of the sense of national identity: the common interests of various ethnic groups and the overall national regime which are the material basis of national identity; the shared values in a multicultural context; the unity of love for ethnicity and patriotism which functions as the psychological bond; and the political identity including identification with the political system and power. Jin (2011) deduces from the above four elements of identity and further refines the dimension structure into the subject and object, the purpose and rationale of national identity. Ma (2008) believes that national identity contains many elements, with the most important ones including political identity, cultural and historical identity. Summarized from relevant research within the Chinese context, the construction of national identity is more often considered from four dimensions: evaluation, cognition, emotion and behavior. However, different scholars also consider sub-items under these four dimensions, which make the structure of national identity more concrete and operational.

Having synthesized the core elements of national identity dimensions from relevant research within the Chinese context concerning the theoretical frameworks, the current study considers the following three dimensions: cognitive, evaluative and affective. Given that, the

national identity scale developed by Chen (2004) was adapted, which includes the three dimensions with two sub-dimensions under each dimension. Specifically, the structure consists of a cognitive component (self-categorization and self-concept importance), an evaluative component (public collective self-esteem and interdependence beliefs) and an affective component (positive affective evaluation and negative affect). The specific items under each dimension and subdimension are described in detail in Chapter Three: Methodology.

2.3 Relevant literatures on national identity

Literatures relevant to minority groups in China have focused on different perspectives in their investigation of sense of national identity. In this section, relevant literatures on sense of national identity will be reviewed and critically discussed, including different research objectives and focus, and influencing variables incorporated.

2.3.1 Sense of national identity and different research aims

It is found that relevant research on minority students' sense of national identity is oriented toward three broad research objectives and aims. Most studies aim to investigate the current situation and causes of the sense of national identity among ethnic minority university students (e.g., Guo, 2013; Li, 2011; Wang, 2002; Wu, 2016), in which researchers have found that, ethnic minority university students have a strong sense of national identity in general, including their sense of belonging, pride and responsibility for their country, and a concern for the future destiny of their country (e.g., Han, 2010; Zeng & Tan, 2013). Some scholars have also identified problems related to national identity among ethnic minority students (e.g., Wang, 2013; Wu, 2016). For example, Wang (2013) used a questionnaire to investigate the current situation of national identity among university students in Xinjiang, and found that university students' national identity is largely influenced by political stability and cultural integration, though some students display low levels of national emotions and consciousness. They seem to have misunderstandings regarding their citizenship, rights and obligations, and their view of the country and the legal system appears weakened. Wu (2016) also found that the sense of national identity of ethnic minority university students is weaker than that of Han Chinese university

students (Wu, 2016).

Regarding the causes of the national identity crisis among ethnic minority university students in China, scholars have analyzed them from multiple perspectives and have gained some consensus. Firstly, the trend of economic globalization, political multi-polarization, cultural pluralism, and social informatization have to a certain extent affected the formation of the national identity of minority students (Han, 2010). Furthermore, China is in a period of social transition, in which there is a great disparity between the rich and the poor in various regions which leads to unbalanced economic development, potentially influencing the national identity of students from ethnic minority regions (Han, 2010; Lin, 2002; Ma, 2015). Some researchers argue that the education mechanism of national identity for ethnic minority university students is not sound enough, and thus call for more attention from all educational institutions for more comprehensive national identity education (Lin, 2002; Liu, 2010). This would also help develop students' abilities pertaining to critical thinking and identity formation (Han, 2010).

The second type of research has emphasized the importance of strengthening the sense of national identity of ethnic minority university students. Some have considered this issue from national and social levels (e.g., Chen, 2012; Zheng, 2012). For example, Zheng (2012, 2016) pointed out that strengthening the national identity of minority students is a long-term strategy to maintain national unity and stability, which is in line with the conclusion drawn by Chen (2012), which argues that it is conducive to arousing the patriotic enthusiasm of minority students, improving national cohesion and safeguarding national sovereignty. Other researchers start from the personal level of students. For example, Han (2010) and Liu (2010) believe that strengthening the national identity of minority university students could improve cultural integration, which can facilitate the attenuation of the perceived foreignness and strangeness of minority university students to Chinese culture and help them achieve good cultural adaptation. Given that, minority students' consciousness of their sense of national identity could be further enhanced, which would help promote their all-round development.

The third type of research focuses on countermeasures to strengthen the sense of national

identity perceived by ethnic minority university students (e.g., Lin, 2002; Zhang & Zhang, 2013; Zheng, 2012). Some scholars have investigated the current situation of ethnic minorities' sense of national identity and the influencing factors through empirical studies, and have put forward countermeasures and suggestions to enhance the national identity awareness of ethnic minority university students. Relevant suggestions include introducing ideological and political education courses within compulsory education (Zheng, 2012), promoting traditional cultural symbols such as ethnic traditional festivals (Lin, 2002; Zhang & Zhang, 2013), and accelerating the economic development of ethnic minority regions (Zheng, 2012).

2.3.2 Sense of national identity and associated variables

There is a wide variety of sociodemographic variables involved in the exploration of minority groups' sense of national identity, such as gender, age, and level of education. Among relevant research, most have focused exclusively on university students who age above 18 years old (e.g., Chen, 2004; Li, 2011; Liu, 2010; Sun, 2017; Wang, 2019; Xu, 2014), in which the findings indicate an overall high level of sense of national identity perceived among the participants. For example, Xu (2014) collected 2822 valid responses from 28 universities among 13 provinces and cities in China, exploring the national identity of ethnic minority university students along four dimensions: cognitive, affective, behavioral and evaluative. The questionnaire consisted of 35 questions, designed on a five-point Likert scale, in which a higher score suggests a higher level of sense of national identity is measured. The results show that the participants tend to have a strong psychological and emotional foundation for their sense of national identity. He found that the proportion of ethnic minority university students who "strongly agreed" with all items increased with their grade level, and concluded that there was a positive correlation between the level of national identity of ethnic minority university students and their education level (Xu, 2014). The findings also suggest that ethnic minority students who identified more with their own ethnic identity also identified more with their country.

Similarly, Geng and Xiao (2015) also found that higher education could influence students' sense of national identity. Specifically, they selected 1,000 ethnic minority university students

from 10 universities, including 56 ethnic groups, as their research participants through a socially stratified sampling method, in which they focused on freshman and senior year students, who accounted for 75% of the total. Through the comparative analysis of the questionnaire results, the researchers examined the changes in students' sense of national identity through several years of higher education, as well as the effect of education on these changes. The results show that students generally have a positive sense of national identity, including self-confidence, self-esteem, a sense of belonging and pride, a strong sense of responsibility and obligation, and a concern for the development of the country (Geng & Xiao, 2015).

These results are in line with Li (2011), in which she focuses on the concepts of “ethnic identity” and “national identity”, and uses a mixed method of questionnaires and interviews to study ethnic minority students in universities directly under the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. A total of 1,200 students were selected as the sample of this survey, of which 1,185 were valid. Case studies and interviews were used to enhance the depth of the study, explain the reasons behind the problems and elucidate individual differences in the same educational environment. The results show that ethnic minority university students have a stronger awareness of national identity among senior students than their junior schoolmates. However, Danzeng's (2014) study found the opposite, as her research results indicate a significant difference in sense of national identity among different grade levels, in which first-year Tibetan students have significantly higher scores than those who are in the second-, third- and fourth-year.

Contradictory results have also been presented in different research on other sociodemographic variables, such as gender. Most relevant studies did not find any gender differences in participants' sense of national identity (e.g., Wang, 2019), while a few of them did (e.g., Danzeng, 2014; Sun, 2017). Specifically, the results of Danzeng's (2014) study show that there are significant gender differences in the six dimensions of national identity and total national identity scores among Tibetan students, with boys scoring significantly lower than girls. Similarly, based on the survey results, Sun (2017) concludes that the sense of national identity of ethnic minority students is volatile and there are significant gender differences, with females

generally scoring higher than males. However, some studies did not find any significant gender differences regarding students' sense of national identity (e.g., Wang, 2019). Given the dissimilar results and the explorative nature of the current study, therefore, it would be important to incorporate gender and level of education as potential influencing variables to minority students' sense of national identity in the present study, in order to further explore the association in a different context, thus contributing more empirical evidence to future replication studies.

Apart from university students, the number of studies focusing on younger age groups is relatively smaller (e.g., Danzeng, 2014; Qin & Zuo, 2007). Qin & Zuo (2007) found that adolescents' national identity is stronger than their own ethnic identity. In addition, among adolescents aged 11-20, the highest ethnic identity scores were found at the age of 11, followed by a decreasing trend of sense of national identity, and then an escalating tendency after the age of 20, indicating that the age of 20 might be a critical period for the development of adolescents' sense of national identity. An analysis of the influencing factors found that one's growing environment has a significant effect on one's ethnic and national identity formation.

2.4 Attitudes toward educational policies relevant to minority groups in China

2.4.1 Research on language policies and language attitude

Most studies on minority policy in China have been conducted from the standpoint of economics and political science, while studies on minority education policy have primarily focused on policies related to bi/trilingual education and students' attitudes toward language. For example, aiming to explore the relationship between ethnic identity, language proficiency and language attitudes, Hu and Dong (2017) selected 102 Mongolian pre-college students at the Inner Mongolia University of Technology whose mother tongue was Mongolian, and used a questionnaire to investigate the current situation of students' ethnic identity, language proficiency and language attitudes. They conclude that there is a negative correlation between students' ethnic identity and their English attitude, a negative correlation between their English proficiency and ethnic identity, and a positive correlation between English proficiency and

English attitude. Unfortunately, the researcher misunderstood the statistical significance and magnitude of the effect of the relationship between the two, which leads to the opposite conclusion. This methodological failure of the study will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Similarly, Yuan et al. (2013) adopted a questionnaire to examine attitudes towards trilingual education for cross-border ethnic minority students in Yunnan Province. Participants were recruited from 25 primary and secondary schools and 2 universities in 7 border cities, and 15 counties (districts) in Yunnan Province, and the 3905 sampled students involved in the study have covered 16 cross-border ethnic groups in Yunnan. The average age of the participants was 15.7, with the youngest being 10 years old and the oldest being 24 years old. The results of the questionnaire on language attitudes show that in general, students agree that language assimilation does not work in the context of Yunnan, but bilingual/trilingual education would be feasible. Furthermore, students generally had a favorable attitude towards the bilingual and trilingual education policy, believing that its implementation would promote regional economic development and national unity, as well as stability and security in cross-border areas (Yuan et al., 2013).

2.4.2 Literatures on other education policies relevant to ethnic minority students

In addition to language policies, a small number of studies have explored other educational policies, such as the preferential policy on admission inclination, and multicultural education courses. For example, Chen et al. (2019) have reflected on the function and effectiveness of the preferential policy in the national college entrance examination (*gaokao*) for ethnic minorities in China in this new era, in which major social contradictions have changed due to education development and social transformation. They advocate that policies related to ethnic minority students should be transformed from a mere combination of compensation and preference toward a more dynamic diversity (Chen et al., 2019). Regarding the policy of providing multicultural education courses, Liu (2010) argues that the implementation of multicultural education and modern civic education for ethnic minority students in higher education, with the basic value of “harmony in diversity”, will help them form a more scientific national cultural

outlook and realize a conscious national identity. However, most relevant studies only focus on the evaluation of the effectiveness and influence of the policies, while few have given attention to students' perceptions of these educational policies which are closely related to their education and personal development. This leaves room for the present study to explore the current situation of students' attitudes toward relevant education policies and bridge the gap regarding the relationship between students' attitudes and their sense of national identity.

2.5 Methodological gap

The existing results of studies relevant to ethnic minority national identity are still mainly based on theoretical analysis (e.g., Liang, 2020; Liu, 2010), while empirical studies are relatively few (Wei et al., 2020). Additionally, there are still problems with the rigor of research design, the completeness of data analysis and the validity of data application. In relevant empirical studies, while most of which are limited to descriptive analysis (e.g., Lv & Yin, 2016; Ying, 2011), the overlook of the effect sizes and the over-reliance on significance levels tend to be two major problems in those studies that have used inferential analysis.

It has been emphasized that effect size, which can be defined as “an objective and standardized measure of the magnitude of observed effects” (Field, 2009, p. 56), has recently gained a lot of attention regarding its inherent limitations (Ellis, 2010; Larson-Hall & Plonsky, 2015; Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). A major concern is the sample size, since it is possible to find statistical significance (e.g., *p*-value) with a large sample even if there is a weak association, whereas effect size is standardized and is less influenced by sample size (Morgan et al., 2011). However, despite its importance in data analysis, few studies in this field attempt to explain or interpret effect size (Wei et al., 2019).

It is important to note that omitting to indicate effect size may have negative effects (e.g., Zientek et al., 2008). Some empirical research in this field seem to focus solely on the statistical significance level to determine the strength of the association between variables without reporting the effect size (e.g., Hu & Dong, 2017; Sun, 2017; Xu, 2014). For example, in the result section of the research conducted by Sun (2017), the author simply stated that “There are

significant gender differences in students' national identity, with females all scoring higher than males" without giving the effect size for these relationships with students' sense of national identity, thus making it difficult to gauge the strength of the association of gender and participants' sense of national identity, let alone make cross-study comparisons. Similarly, based on the results of the independent-sample *t*-test, Du and Fang (2013) claim that there are statistically significant gender differences in terms of participants' sense of national identity. However, they only rely on the significance level while ignoring the necessity of reporting effect sizes along with the *p*-value, which leads to misleading conclusions.

The omission of effect sizes in quantitative research may obscure important information in the interpretation of statistical results, even leading to the opposite conclusion. For instance, Hu and Dong (2017) investigated the English proficiency and attitudes toward bilingual education of 100 Mongolian students at a university in Inner Mongolia, and statistical analysis showed a positive correlation with an effect size range between 0.16 and 0.39. Unfortunately, they misunderstood the relationship between statistical significance and strength or magnitude of the association, and thus incorrectly determined that there was no correlation between the two variables when the correlation coefficient was as high as 0.195. Thus, statistical significance and effect size should be reported as complementary tools, and only providing *p* values might expose the interpretation of the data incompletely (Fan, 2001). The present study follows recent calls for the employment of more robust statistics in quantitative studies from scholars within educational research (e.g., Pring, 2015) and beyond (e.g., Ellis 2010; Larson-Hall 2016). To conclude, this gap in reporting norms and methodological limitations leaves room for more rigor in this study's methodology, in both reporting and interpreting data analysis.

Chapter Three Methodology

3.1 Overview

The philosophical position that this study takes could be understood using pragmatism, which lies somewhere in between the spectrum of positivism and interpretivism. This position has defined the approach adopted in this current study, through a combination of the lived experiences possessed by the researcher that help inform measurement and measurements that are meaningful to be generalized. The overarching positioning and the approach to research have further led to the research design which seems best fit to the questions that this study tends to address.

Specifically, aiming to explore ethnic minority university students' attitudes toward relevant education policies and the relationship between this attitude and their sense of national identity, this study takes an online questionnaire, including a policy attitude scale, a scale of sense of national identity, and an open-ended question, which is philosophically grounded in pragmatist position. This position takes the assumption that rejects the notion of quant and qual approaches being inherently incompatible (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009), and stresses the "dictatorship of the research question". Results from the two scales help understand participants' attitudes toward relevant education policies and their sense of national identity, thus helping make further generalizations within and beyond the sample, while the open-ended questions allow participants to indicate the articulation of their ideas concerning the rationale behind their choices in the questionnaire. Using the open-ended questions would complement the results from the scales by allowing us to explore "how" ethnic minority university students perceive relevant education policies, and "why" they have such opinions. By adopting this research design, a "question-driven" approach was applied, in which researchers are able to choose methods that best answer those questions rather than a paradigm-driven approach (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

The data were collected from 124 students who are from any of the 55 ethnic minority groups in China and are studying at a university, in which 119 responses (out of 124) are

complete (see 3.1.2 Sample for more details). An online questionnaire that includes open-ended questions was selected as the data collection tool with wide-ranging positives, such as more flexibility and convenience in distributing and being less time-consuming. But what the most pertinent to this study is primarily lying on the research objectives and practical considerations. Since this study aims to understand the general situation of how university students from ethnic minority groups perceive relevant education policies, using questionnaires helps the researcher to reach out to a broader range of potential participants, in which the data derived from the scales can be quantified to order to make generalizations. Moreover, given practical considerations such as travel restrictions and the difficulty to approach students for interviews, it is most feasible to collect the data using online questionnaires. An elaborate description of the data collection process is presented in 3.1.3 Data collection. The procedures are introduced in 3.1.4 Data analysis.

3.2 Researcher's positionality

Within the existing literature focusing on ethnic minority students' sense of national identity in the Chinese context, none has been identified explicitly acknowledging the researcher's positionality, and only a few studies have shown the consistency between the theory and their methodology (e.g., Chen, 2004). Some researchers simply discussed the meaning of national identity by adopting definitions from similar studies or referring to relevant theories without reflecting on their positionality which might drive the different ways in which the term "sense of national identity" could be characterized and the particular theory would be chosen (e.g., Guo, 2013; Liang, 2020). Given this issue related to the lack of awareness of positionality within the existing literature, the current study aims to understand and discuss ethnic minority students' sense of national identity in the Chinese context via a situated and contextually specific approach, in which the researcher positionality has been explicitly described and reflected.

While researcher positionality has been greatly valued and widely included in most qualitative studies (e.g., Holmes, 2020), it seems to be under-discussed in quantitative research (Jafar, 2018). However, the absence of positionality when considered alongside the notion of

bias, may challenge the idea of validity, and it is important to note that positionality does not undermine the value of such research, instead it defines the boundaries within which the research was produced (Jafar, 2018).

In the course of conducting this study, the researcher was constantly switching between being an insider and being an outsider. As a Chinese citizen from Bai ethnic group, the researcher shared some commonalities with the participants: the ethnic identity being “minority”, and having similar perceptions regarding certain education policies relevant to ethnic minority students, such as the preferential policies in college entrance examinations. In this sense, the researcher could be seen as an insider belonging to the macro group of ethnic minority students. This positionality potentially brought advantages of easier entrée and desirable contextual knowledge of the topics discussed (Kacem & Chaitin, 2006; Padgett, 2008). As the researcher positions herself in between the spectrum of positivism and interpretivism, she believes that the lived experiences can be used in a meaningful way in adapting the established questionnaires whenever felt necessary, while not influencing the way respondents answer the questions. However, the researcher would also be considered as an outsider because of the environment she grew up and experiences with relevant policies, which may differ from many participants. Specifically, since the researcher was not grown up in places where ethnic minorities inhabit, she was not influenced by or adhere to some policies which are only applicable under certain conditions, such as place of residence. Therefore, the researcher is fully aware of this potential cognitive gap and remains cautious when drawing any conclusions. s

3.3 Sample

In the total sample of 119 complete responses, around 66%² of them were female, 31% were male, fewer than 5 indicated that they are non-binary gender or third gender, and 2 refused to answer. Among the respondents, 21 (19%) are from the Zhuang group, 17 (16%) are from the Bai group, 16 (15%) are from the Zang group, 12 (11%) are from the Man group, and the numbers of participants who are from other minority groups are all below 10. Most respondents

² Percentages are rounded to avoid disclosure of sensitive content. This format applies to the data presented in this chapter below.

are studying for a master degree (n = 54), followed by those in their final year of undergraduate studies (n = 27), Year-3 (n = 13), Year-2 (n = 12), Year-1 (n = 13), and other stages (n = 10). The average age of the participants is 23.9, while the youngest being 19 years old, and the oldest being 34.

Figure 1 Distribution of Ethnic Groups in the Sample

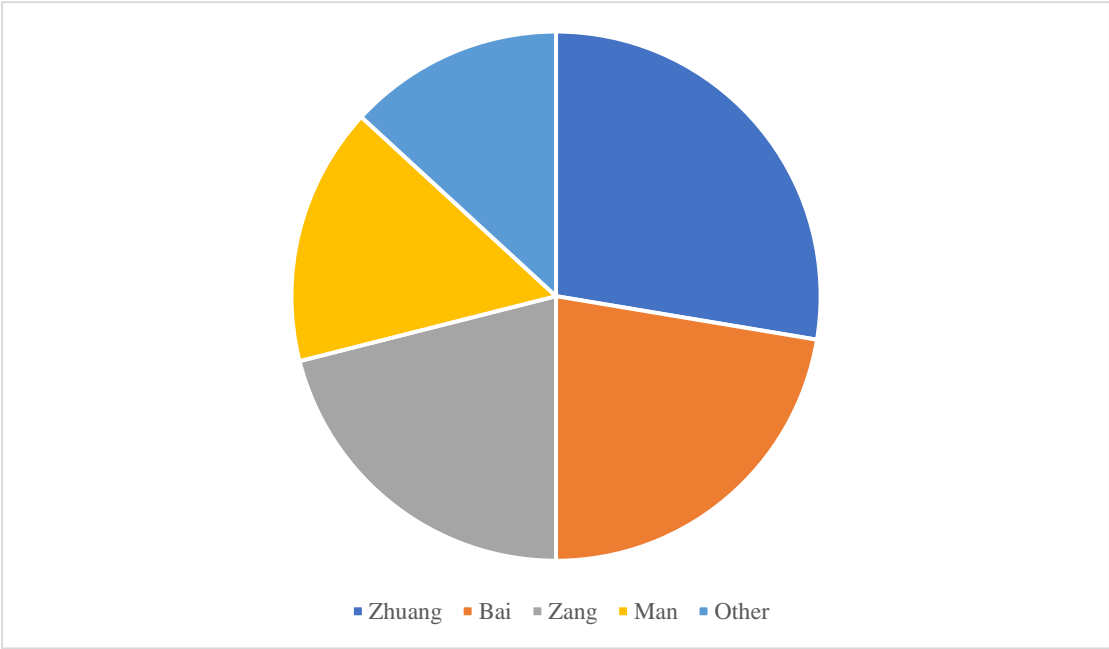
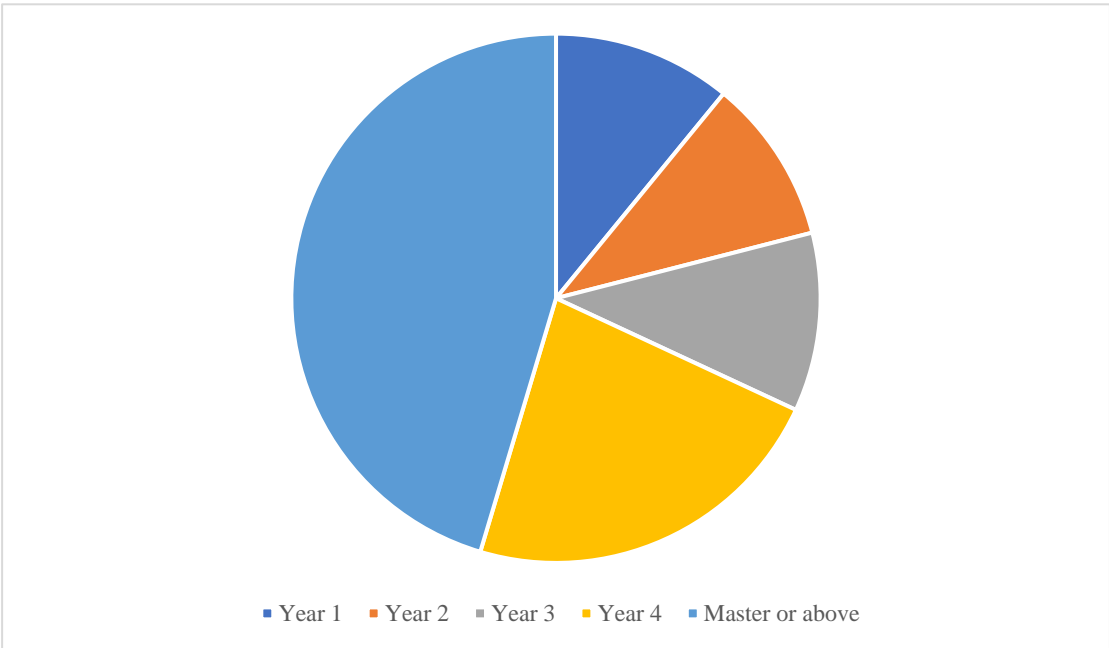


Figure 2 Distribution of Students' Grade Level in the Sample



When the variable of gender is used as an independent variable in later analysis, only the binary gender was included, while the third category was dropped from the analytical sample. This is mainly based on the consideration that it would be unethical to draw conclusions from the third category or describe their experiences because they are considered to be particular.

3.4 Data collection

The main instrument that the present study employed is a questionnaire consisting of four parts. This includes sociodemographic information about the participants, the attitude scale of education policies relevant for minority group students³, the scale of sense of national identity⁴, and an open-ended question regarding the reasoning or complementary comments for the prior choices. The first part surveys background information such as gender, ethnic group, age, and the first language(s) acquired by the participants. In the second part, an attitudinal scale, consisting of 15 items, was adapted from Wei et al. (2021) and Luo & Zhang (2011), which extracts information concerning participants' attitudes toward relevant education policies for students from ethnic minority groups in China, including policies related to both special and compensatory policies. The third part, which sets out to measure students' sense of national identity, was adapted from Chen (2004) and Guan & Guo (2019), and the original 21-item scale for evaluating sense of national identity is widely used in research studies in China (e.g., Chen, 2004; Guan & Guo, 2019; Danzeng, 2014). In terms of the auxiliary part, participants were allowed to give their justifications and/or additional comments for their previous choices on the scales of policy attitudes and sense of national identity. Thus, the information from the open-ended questions would complement the quantitative data from the main questionnaire through a thematic analysis of what the respondents believe and why (Macaro & Akincioglu, 2018). The complete questionnaire was attached in Appendix A in the translated version.

³ Abbreviated as "policy attitudes scale" for convenience in the following sections and chapters

⁴ Abbreviated as "identity scale" for convenience in the following sections and chapters

Table 1 Structural Details of the Questionnaire Sections

Section title	Sociodemographic information	Policy attitudes scale	Identity scale	Open-ended question
Scale information	Background information, including gender, ethnic group, age, and the first language(s) acquired by the participants	Ethnic minority university students' attitude toward relevant education policies	Ethnic minority university students' sense of national identity	Justifications and/or additional comments for their previous choices in the scales of policy attitudes and sense of national identity
Number of items	5	15	21	/
Sources (adapted/adopted scales)	/	Wei et al. (2021); Luo & Zhang (2011)	Chen (2004); Guan & Guo (2019)	/

Due to constraints of time and resources, the researcher has informally piloted the questionnaire with her sister who is from Bai ethnic group and is pursuing her undergraduate studies, and she will not be counted in the valid sample in the formal recruitment process. Based on the feedback given at the end of the piloting, the researcher refined some wording and sequence of the questions in the questionnaire. Although it would not be possible to validate the questionnaire through this pilot, a validation check was performed on the actual sample. After checking the wording of certain items, the researcher used Qualtrics, which is an online platform containing services of online survey tools, to distribute the questionnaire. The data collection process took place from late-April to late-May, 2022. Apart from distributing through social media, including WeChat (a free messaging and calling app based in China) and WhatsApp (a mobile app that supports instant messaging), the researcher has sent emails to lecturers and administrative officers in some universities in China to help advertise the questionnaire.

Before conducting the main analysis, factor analysis was performed to assess the internal structure of the questionnaire. Firstly, aiming to examine the construct validity of the policy

attitudes scale, an exploratory factor analysis shows that four factors were extracted, together accounting for 67.78% of the variance in the scale, which suggested that the policy attitudes scale was dimensional. In terms of reliability, a high Cronbach's alpha value (.85) of the attitudes scale confirmed that it was appropriate to add up the scores from the four items to generate a total attitude score for later analysis. The four items were named language-related policy attitudes, general special policy attitudes, general compensatory policy attitudes, and attitudes toward High talented program⁵ (see Appendix C for details of the factor analysis and the clustering of items).

A similar analysis was conducted on the identity scale, in which the results tend to slightly differ from that of the original study (Chen, 2004). Specifically, in Chen's (2004) study, there are six dimensions identified in the national identity scale, while in the current study, the results show that four factors were extracted, together accounting for 80.20% of the variance in the scores for respondents' sense of national identity. This indicates that the identity scale was dimensional, in a way that consists of four major sections. Although the items were not clustered in the exact way as in the original study there are still certain similarities regarding the clustering pattern of items (details see Appendix C). Therefore, the researcher has named the four dimensions as Positive Emotional Evaluation, Collective self-esteem and interdependence beliefs, Self-categorization, and Negative emotions by referring to the original scale dimensions (Chen, 2014). The Cronbach's alpha value (0.96) for the identity scale also reaches an excellent level according to Field (2009), showing good consistency of the internal structure of the identity scale, which also confirmed the appropriateness of the adding-up process to make a composite variable for participants' sense of national identity.

3.5 Ethical considerations

This research received ethical approval from the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) at the University of Oxford (see Appendix B). Although the topic of this study is related to ethnic minorities which might be considered as sensitive issues, participants

⁵ Considering that this policy is both preference-oriented and special, the researcher believes that it is more appropriate to discuss it separately from the general preferential policies and special policies (see Appendix D for details).

will not be asked to answer sensitive issues, particularly in the local context, and they can decline to answer any question that they choose to skip, which is specified in the information section preceding the questionnaire. The questions are not intended to be highly sensitive and it would not be expected that they could cause stress. Informed consent was obtained from the research participants, as written information was provided at the beginning of the questionnaire for participants to read before they agree to take part, including the aims and objectives of the research project, the contact information of the researcher, and the freedom to withdraw the data collection process before submitting. They can choose to not answer questions if they prefer not to answer and can withdraw from the study before the submission.

The researcher also made efforts to protect the participants' rights to confidentiality by securely storing and using the data. Usually, the data will not be directly identifiable given that participants are not asked to give any personal information and participants' data will be anonymous. However, the researcher is aware that the combination of data may cause individuals to be potentially identifiable. Therefore, the storage of the data is encrypted and only held by the researcher. Using an online questionnaire allows people to respond in a space of their choice, which is considered to be safe and private for the participants. They will not be asked to give contact information and directly identifiable information. Also, data protection measures will be in place to ensure confidentiality, and data security is maintained.

3.6 Limitations

Firstly, this research takes the form of an online questionnaire to collect data, which has its inherent drawbacks despite numerous advantages. As Dewaele (2018) pointed out, one major limitation of using questionnaires, and online questionnaires in particular, is the respondents' "inevitable self-selection bias" (p. 271). To be specific, for online surveys, it may not be possible to apply a "systematic sampling strategy" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 122), as only people who are interested in this topic, and/or feel unthreatened would be willing to respond to the questionnaire. In this sense, potential participants who would be enrolled in an online questionnaire are described as "self-selected" (Dewaele, 2018, p. 271) with accessibility and availability. Additionally, this form of data collection method may also require the possession

of the appropriate technology and a safe space perceived by the respondents to answer the questions (Dewaele, 2018). Therefore, the current data collection method may lead to sampling bias which necessitates considering those who might be systematically excluded in the data collection process, as this would limit the generalizability of findings because it is a threat to external validity, specifically population validity (Dewaele, 2018).

The use of a questionnaire containing open-ended questions can also have limitations. Specifically, this approach could limit the kind of conversations that the researcher can have on students' policy attitudes and their sense of national identity. Questionnaires may be considered to be bounded and does not give opportunities to participants and the researcher to expand on some points. However, it does give a starting point to help understand this unknown picture of the current situation of ethnic minority university students, and their general experience on a larger scale. Therefore, the researcher has found this as a reasonable tradeoff concerning the approach adopted in this study, and remain cautious when drawing any conclusions.

Furthermore, the third category of gender, namely those who indicate their gender as the non-binary or third gender, was dropped in the main analysis where gender was used as one of the independent variables. This might lead to the incompleteness of the data analysis in which the study is unable to explore this group of respondents' policy attitudes as well as their sense of national identity. However, the decision to exclude this group from the main analysis is due to the sensitive nature of research in this group of participants, as they are considered to be particular, and reporting small numbers is potentially sensitive.

To summarize, while potential bias in research design should not discourage researchers it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of research design and sampling method and remain conscious and careful in drawing any conclusions from the results (Dewaele, 2018).

Chapter Four Results and findings

In this chapter, the research questions will be addressed through analyses of the survey data. Research question 1, which examined ethnic minority students' attitudes toward relevant educational policies, was mainly investigated based on descriptive statistics and analysis of variances. A thematic analysis was conducted on the textual data of the open-ended question, in which participants were allowed to indicate the articulation of their own ideas concerning the rationale behind their choices in the policy attitudes scale, to help understand and explain the quantitative results derived from the scale. Research question 2 was answered by presenting, comparing, and interpreting the descriptive statistics in each dimension of the identity scale, so as to reflect the general situation of the sampled students' sense of national identity. Research Question 3 aims to explore the extent and the way that gender and grade level are associated with students' sense of national identity. It was answered through analysis of variance and regression, so as to investigate potential group differences in students' policy attitudes regarding gender and education level. The final question (RQ4) investigates how and to what extent is students' sense of national identity associated with their attitudes to educational policies relevant to ethnic minorities, and to what extent and how accounting for background factors affects this association. It was addressed mainly through regression analysis with a preliminary analysis which includes an independent-sample *t*-test and correlation analysis.

4.1 Research Question 1

What are students' attitudes toward educational policies relevant to ethnic minority groups?

4.1.1 Survey results

According to Table 2, the average score (3.91) for the composite variable "policy attitudes," based on the 15 questionnaire items, has exceeded the mid-point (viz. 3) between "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree" on the five-point Likert scale. More specifically, it actually exceeded 3.5 and nearly reaches 4.0, which shows a relatively high score on the composite variable "students' policy attitudes." This indicated that, overall, the attitudes of the sampled

students were slightly favorable toward relevant minority education policies, including both compensatory and preferential aspects. Findings regarding the constituent items of policy attitudes suggest that the mean scores for all items have exceeded the mid-point, being consistent with findings from previous research. For example, for Items 1-6, the positive attitudes toward bi/trilingualism and policies such as bi/trilingual education are in line with previous findings which also target ethnic minority students in the Chinese mainland (e.g., Wei et al., 2021).

Table 2 The Policy Attitudes Scale

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean (SD)
1. Bilingualism/Trilingualism is important.	119	2	5	4.16 (.80)
2. Bilingualism/Trilingualism helps me find a good job.	119	2	5	4.28 (.75)
3. Bilingualism/Trilingualism makes me more brilliant.	119	2	5	3.92 (.77)
4. Bilingualism/ Trilingualism helps me make more friends.	119	2	5	3.84 (.99)
5. Bilingualism/Trilingualism makes it easier for me to be promoted in the workplace.	119	2	5	3.83 (1.08)
6. Bi/trilingual education helps me make more money.	119	1	5	3.69 (1.00)
7. <i>Minzu</i> /multicultural curriculums are important.	119	2	5	4.01 (.91)
8. <i>Minzu</i> /multicultural curriculums has given me a deeper appreciation of the history and culture of my ethnic group.	119	2	5	4.13 (.96)

9.	<i>Minzu</i> /multicultural curriculums have a positive impact on the educational development process for ethnic minorities.	119	2	5	4.22 (.80)
10.	Policies such as counterpart support and collaboration are important for minority education.	119	1	5	4.14 (1.00)
11.	Policies such as counterpart support and collaboration have a positive impact on the educational development process for ethnic minorities.	119	2	5	4.59 (.75)
12.	Preferential admission policies such as extra points in <i>gaokao</i> are important for ethnic minority students.	119	2	5	3.64 (1.08)
13.	Preferential admission policies such as extra points in <i>gaokao</i> have a positive impact on educational equity.	119	1	5	3.32 (1.21)
14.	The policy of the Ethnic Minority High Level Talent Training Program is important for the career development of ethnic minority students.	119	2	5	3.61 (.72)
15.	The policy of the Ethnic Minority High Level Talent Training Program has a positive impact on the educational development process for ethnic minorities.	119	2	5	3.47 (.73)
Composite for policy attitudes					3.91 (.51)

Regarding attitudes toward special policies, which includes items 1-11, the average scores of these 10 items show a relatively positive attitude held by participants in general, in which all items score above 3.6, and many exceed 4.0. Notably, item 11, aiming to explore students' perceptions of the practical effects of relevant compensatory policies on the educational development process for ethnic minorities, has scored the highest (4.59) among all the 15 items in the policy attitude scale, with its standard deviation below 1. This demonstrates that the sampled students generally held a highly favorable attitude toward the policy of counterpart support and collaboration between schools in ethnic minority areas and more developed regions, expanded upon in results derived from the open-ended questions (see 4.1.2 Open-ended question results).

Among all the 15 items evaluating ethnic minority students' attitudes toward relevant education policies, it is found that only 2 items scored below 3.6, that is, items 13, and 15. This result indicates that participants generally held a slightly favorable attitude toward their perceived effect on relevant preferential education policies for ethnic minority students, supported by the average scores which just exceed 3.0. Compared to students' perceived importance of relevant policies indicated by the results in items 12 and 13, however, it is supposed that the sampled students may not consider that the policies are being implemented as effectively as they should be. Furthermore, it is noted that the standard deviation of item 13, which aims to explore participants' perceptions of preferential admission policies, is relatively larger than that of other items in this scale, indicating that responses for this item may tend to be more varied. This result appears consistent with some responses that emerged from the open-ended question, which were analyzed and discussed in more detail in section 4.1.2.

Given that this scale of students' policy attitude is dimensional, in which four dimensions were identified after conducting exploratory factor analysis, it would be meaningful to see students' responses in each dimension in order to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions regarding different policy focus.

Table 3 Dimension differences in Policy Attitudes Scale

Dimensions	n	M	SD	skewness	s.e. of skewness	kurtosis	s.e. of kurtosis	F	Sig.	η^2
1.Language-related policy attitudes	119	3.97	.65	-.42	.22	-.46	.44			
2.General special policy attitudes	119	3.66	.46	.37	.22	.08	.44			
3.General compensatory policy attitudes	119	3.48	1.10	.33	.22	-1.36	.44			
4.Attitudes toward High talented program	119	3.53	.69	.87	.22	-.14	.44			
								10.14	< .001	.06
Post-hoc results		Mean difference								
1	2	.32				.07			< .001	
	3	.49				.12			< .001	
	4	.45				.09			< .001	

Note. The post-hoc analysis was conducted using Games-Howell, given that the assumption of homogeneity was violated (details in Appendix E).

Table 3 presents the dimension differences on the policy attitudes scale, indicating that there are statistically significant differences regarding scores in each dimension ($F = 10.14$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$) with a medium effect size according to Cohen (1988). A post-hoc analysis further demonstrates that the group difference only exists in language-related policy and the other three dimensions. Given that, a conclusion could be drawn that students' attitudes toward language-related policies, such as bilingual education, tend to be statistically significantly more

favorable than other special policies, general compensatory policies, and the special program for ethnic minority high talents.

4.1.2 Results from the open-ended question

The open-ended question allows participants to indicate the articulation of their ideas concerning the rationale behind their choices in the questionnaire, thus complementing the survey findings. Through a thematic analysis, three main themes were developed based on the responses, including the perceived benefits of multilingualism, the diversity of opinions on preferential admission policies, and the perceived importance of preserving minority cultures both within minority groups and in the Chinese mainstream society.

Perceived benefits of multilingualism

In terms of the first theme, 36 out of 43, who responded to the open-ended question, have claimed that the ability to master both Mandarin and the ethnic group language (being bilingual) has brought multiple benefits perceived by ethnic minority students. Primarily, being bilingual can contribute to their personal development regarding job opportunities, especially for students who are from ethnic areas and are more inclined to continue working there.

Being bilingual can open up an additional path to employment. For example, bilingual speakers of the ethnic language and Chinese can become natural translators. There are also other paths, such as the targeted recruitment of the Tibetan-speaking high school students from Qinghai-Tibet region, which is designed to train bilingual judges in Tibetan areas (these students are not dual native speakers and most of them need to work hard to learn Chinese and pass Chinese minority Chinese proficiency level exams). Normally, bilingual minority students have many opportunities to participate in the national visiting programs of *Minzu* University (receptions, visits to Hong Kong and Macau, etc) [R15]⁶.

Furthermore, the ability to speak both Mandarin and ethnic language also relates to the relationship with peers, which, not only for those from the same ethnic group, but also for those studying an additional ethnic language, promotes deeper understanding among students. This has been reflected in comments from an Uyghur respondent such as “I think language also plays

⁶ [R15] indicates that the foregoing quote is an excerpt from Respondent No.15. This format applies to the other quotes below.

a very important role in getting along with schoolmates of various ethnic groups as being bilingual has made me understand more about my Uyghur classmates, their situation and mood” [R23], and “Because there are some things you can't experience unless you put yourself in their shoes, if I use Uyghur to express my thoughts, I obviously feel that there will be less of a gap between us which creates more empathy” [R23]

Apart from responses related to the potential benefits related to personal development perceived by students, some also shed light on the interactive relationship between Mandarin and ethnic language, in which different responses have emphasized the independence of the ethnic language when considering any influence on ethnic language brought by the use and popularization of Mandarin. Eight responses indicated that the relationship between the ethnic language and Mandarin may depend on what ethnic language it is. For example, one commented that “In the case of Manchu, there are few people who can speak it now. But in my hometown (Manchu Autonomous County), some dialects originate from Manchu, and all government agencies are using Manchu-Chinese bilingualism. Beijing dialect also has a lot of Manchu: ‘Harbin’ in Manchu means ‘sunnet field’” [R41], showing that ethnic languages like Manchu which are so close to extinction, may only exist in the form of Chinese dialects.

This student’s viewpoint resonated with other remarks such as “Personally, I think Mandarin Chinese may also have certain influences on those vivid ethnic languages such as Mongolian, Uyghur, Tibetan, and Korean. Just as there are foreign words in Chinese that originate from English, there may be words in ethnic languages that originate from Chinese” [R9], in which the respondent further suggests that “there are some concepts in Chinese that are not found in Uyghur, so it is more convenient to express them directly in Chinese. Therefore, it is common to see bilingual students and teachers of these ethnic groups often speak the ethnic minority language and Mandarin Chinese in a way of code-switching” [R9]

The diversity of opinions on preferential admission policies

The second theme was developed based on students' responses, in which a certain number of responses have touched upon the controversial nature of preferential admissions policies. 15 out of 43, who responded to the open-ended question, have expressed their understanding of the necessity and importance of implementing relevant preferential policies, mainly due to the economic conditions which are relatively less developed in ethnic minority areas. Among the 15 responses related to the understanding of the establishment of preferential policies, 10 have indicated that students are aware of the importance for the nation to coordinate/balance the educational resources, which contributes to education equity, as reflected in remarks such as "Those preferential policies are aimed at promoting more educational opportunities for minority students, as the impression is that minorities are always associated with poverty, remoteness and backwardness" [R12]. This remark has gone beyond the discussion of economic conditions, which leads to further reflections on the effects of preferential policies on educational resource allocation and the link to minority students' personal development. For example, a student from the Man group commented that preferential education policies are a means for the state to promote and adjust educational equity given that the allocation of educational resources can be limited, and "without these preferential policies, there is no way they can come to universities in more developed cities" [R14].

By better allocating the educational resources, the establishment and implementation of preferential education policies also contribute to the personal development of ethnic minority students through better educational opportunities - ethnic minority students would be able to access knowledge/learn skillsets that might be impossible if they do not have the chance to go to cities and attend higher education. This has resonated with other remarks such as "the enrollment preference policy allows them to participate in some other activities to broaden their network" [R37], and "Without these preferential policies, we may not have the access to these resources for the rest of our lives, and the gap between the education level of ethnic minorities and Han group would be expanded" [R31].

But a few responses also reflect students' personal feelings after gaining the extra points, as well as their concerns about the potential inequality for Han students which may be caused by the preferential policies. For instance, one student commented that "As a person with vested interests, I will be complacent because of the satisfaction of vanity. But more than that, I am a bit ashamed of it" [R17]. This complicated feeling may be derived mainly from her concern about the practical effects brought by the preferential policies, as reflected in her remarks such as "the extra points for ethnic minorities should be given to the real candidates from poor, educationally backward areas in the west so that the extra points will be of practical use" [R19], and "Ethnic minorities like me, who grew up in the big cities in the east, are no different from our Han Chinese counterparts in other aspects, especially in education, except for some ethnic cultural habits, so we don't really need extra points" [R21]. Therefore, responses to the open-ended question may stimulate further discussion about ways to improve the current preferential policies, both in terms of defining the applicable population and implementing specific measures.

The importance of preserving minority cultures both within minority groups and in the Chinese mainstream society

Among the 17 responses related to themes of minority cultures, 14 have stressed the importance of understanding the culture and custom of one's ethnic group, as reflected in the following comment:

I think it is the common desire of all ethnic minorities to learn about their own culture, after all, they have a different ethnic identity from the Han Chinese. I think it is sad if a person only has a "minority" identity, but knows nothing about his or her own traditional culture. From this point of view, it is quite necessary to introduce minority culture courses in primary and secondary schools in my hometown. [R32]

It should be noted that more than half of the responses have mentioned their perceived identity of "being" ethnic minority but not "feeling" minority, mainly due to their place of residence/growth which are big cities, rather than those typical ethnic minority regions. Given that, the perceptions of being the minority while not feeling ethnically minority tend to be the common case as reflected in the responses, which closely relates to one's construction of the

sense of identity. The following response has also described the participant's regretful feelings on account of the lack of ethnic language ability which potentially influences her sense of identity construction.

Just like me, I am usually no different from Han Chinese. Back home, only by hearing the dialect of the Manchu language, and seeing the special food, Manchu traditional New Year's customs, and the bilingual Manchu-Chinese signs everywhere, can I then be sure that I was a minority. Through self-study and the Manchu language class during college, I'm able to write a few Manchu vocabulary, so as to make up for the lack of the Manchu language. [R35]

Apart from those responses indicating the perceived importance of preserving ethnic minority cultures and languages within the minority group, one respondent also mentioned a situation where some parents in places inhabited by the Zhuang ethnic group only teach their child Mandarin rather than the Zhuang language. The respondent expressed a degree of understanding of the situation, as he commented that "many parents hope that their children will be better integrated into mainstream Chinese society by mastering Mandarin" [R32]. At the same time, however, he expressed regret because he believes that cultural diversity in society at large and the preservation of ethnic minority languages can be of great importance.

To this end, the first research question has been addressed through presenting and analyzing the survey results, including the analysis of the policy attitude scale, and a thematic analysis of the responses to the open-ended question. Findings have shown that ethnic minority students generally have a favorable attitude toward relevant education policies, and further analysis indicates that students' attitude toward language-related policy differentiates statistically significantly from the other three dimensions, that is, general special policies, compensatory policies, and the special program of ethnic minority high talents. Through conducting a thematic analysis based on responses derived from the open-ended question, three themes were developed, namely the perceived benefits of multilingualism, the diversity of opinions on preferential admission policies, and the perceived importance of preserving minority cultures both within minority groups and in the Chinese mainstream society.

4.2 Research Question 2

What is students' sense of national identity?

Table 4 The Identity Scale

Item	N	Min.	Max.	Mean (SD)
(1) I am proud to be Chinese.	119	2	5	3.76 (.89)
(2) If there is an afterlife, I would still like to be Chinese.	119	2	5	3.84 (1.04)
(3) I think that the Chinese have a lot to be proud of.	119	2	5	4.44 (.84)
(4) In general, I think Chinese people are very kind.	119	2	5	3.61 (1.26)
(5) Being Chinese is very important to me.	119	2	5	3.50 (1.20)
(6) I think the Chinese are highly capable.	119	2	5	3.45 (1.11)
(7) Overall, I feel good about Chinese people.	119	2	5	3.68 (1.31)
(8) I think that most foreigners respect Chinese people.	119	2	5	3.99 (.94)
(9) I think that most foreigners are very friendly to Chinese people.	119	2	5	3.43 (.86)
(10) I think that people from other countries find Chinese people nice.	119	2	5	3.54 (.69)
(11) When I hear foreigners praising Chinese people, I feel like I'm being praised.	119	2	5	3.99 (.90)
(12) I feel that the success of other Chinese people is equivalent to my own success.	119	2	5	3.71 (1.15)
(13) I feel that what happens to the Chinese is what happens to me.	119	2	5	3.75 (.75)
(14) When foreigners chastise other Chinese people, I feel like they are chastising me.	119	2	5	3.50 (.92)

(15) When interacting with foreigners, I would struggle with my Chinese identity.	119	1	3	2.03 (.47)
(16) My Chinese identity is holding me back.	119	1	3	1.92 (.35)
(17) If foreigners say bad things about Chinese people, I don't think it's any of my business.	119	1	3	2.15 (.55)
(18) When dealing with foreigners, they feel that I have a strong Chinese identity.	119	2	5	3.33 (.71)
(19) I think when foreigners see me, they will think I am what the Chinese look like (physical appearance).	119	1	5	3.62 (.87)
(20) I have many similar character traits to other Chinese people.	119	2	5	3.55 (.73)
(21) I feel like a typical Chinese person.	119	2	5	3.47 (.79)
Composite for sense of national identity				3.77 (.63)

Table 4 has shown the descriptive statistics derived from the identity scale, in which the raw scores of the reverse-coded items were presented. When assigning a composite score to individuals to determine their sense of national identity, the three reverse-coded questions were reverse-scored, which is also applied in later referential analysis.

In general, the sample students had a relatively high level of sense of national identity with the composite score (3.77) significantly exceeding midpoint 3, being in line with the vast majority of relevant research on ethnic minority students' sense of national identity in the Chinese context (e.g., Chen, 2009; He, 2009; Li, 2011; Liu, 2010; Sun, 2017; Wang, 2019; Xu, 2014), in which students appear to perceive positively regarding their sense of national identity. It is also found that some items in this scale tend to score relatively higher than other items, such as item 3 "I think that the Chinese have a lot to be proud of", item 8 "I think that most

foreigners respect Chinese people”, and item 11 “When I hear foreigners praising Chinese people, I feel like I’m being praised”.

Table 5 Dimension differences of the Identity Scale

Dimensions	n	M (SD)	Skewness	s.e. of skewness	Kurtosis	s.e. of kurtosis	F	Sig.	η^2
Positive Emotional Evaluation	119	3.78 (.98)	-.40	.22	-1.31	.44			
Collective self-esteem and interdependence beliefs	119	3.74 (.77)	-.98	.22	.11	.44			
Self-categorization	119	3.70 (.64)	-.56	.22	.70	.44			
Negative emotions	119	3.96 (.39)	.84	.22	1.90	.44			
							3.06	.03	.02
Post-hoc results		Mean difference							
Negative emotions	Collective self-esteem and interdependence beliefs	.22				.08		.03	
	Self-categorization	.26				.07		< .001	

Note. The post-hoc analysis was conducted using Games-Howell, given that the assumption of homogeneity was violated (details in Appendix F).

Results of the analysis of variance indicate that there is a statistically significant difference ($p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .02$) within the mean scores of the four dimensions of the identity scale, and the

Games-Howell procedure further suggests that the mean score of Dimension 4 “Negative Emotions” tends to be statistically significantly higher than that of Dimension 2 “Collective self-esteem and interdependence beliefs”, and Dimension 3 “Self-categorization”. As all items in Dimension 4 “Negative Emotions” are negatively-worded (reverse-coded), individuals’ responses have been reverse scored so that high scores on the questionnaire reflect relatively high levels of the attribute (sense of national identity) being measured by the questionnaire. Reverse-scoring the negatively-coded items ensures that all of the items, those that are originally negatively-coded and those that are positively-coded, are consistent with each other. Therefore, this result, that the reverse-scored mean score of Dimension 4 “negative emotions” tend to be statistically significantly higher than that of Dimension 2 and 3, has suggested that the sample students generally have positive emotional evaluation toward their sense of national identity, being consistent with the mean score of Dimension 1 “Positive Emotional Evaluation”.

4.3 Research Question 3

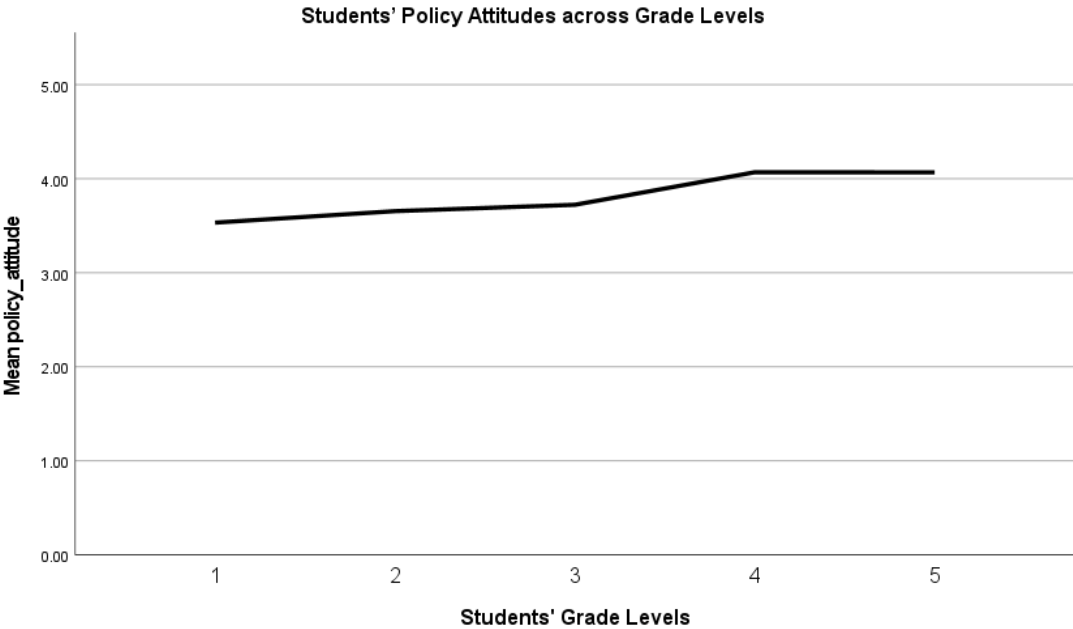
To what extent and how are gender and grade level associated with students’ policy attitudes?

First, an independent-sample *t*-test was conducted to investigate any gender difference in students’ policy attitudes. According to the results, there is no statistically significant difference between the two gender groups (Appendix G), indicating that male students’ attitudes toward relevant education policies are not significantly different from those of female students. Given the potential interactive effect existing in gender with other factors, and the exploratory nature of the present study, gender had better be retained for later regression analysis, so as to ascertain if there is any respective influence on students’ policy attitudes.

To determine whether is any association between students’ policy attitudes and their grade level, Spearman’s rank correlation was adopted as “grade-level” is considered to be an ordinal variable. Results show that there is a statistically significant correlation between students’ policy attitude and their grade level, $r_s = .392$, $p = .045$, indicating a medium effect according to Field (2009, p. 180). The positive correlation coefficient suggests that ethnic minority students’ attitudes toward relevant education policies tend to be more favorable with a higher

level of education level. A line chart (Figure 3) has been created to display the changing pattern of the sampled students' policy attitudes across the grade levels. Figure 3 shows that ethnic minority students' attitudes toward relevant education policies tend to be more positive as they proceed to higher levels of education in the university. Overall speaking, the attitudes toward relevant education policies of the sampled students tend to be more positive among students at higher levels of grade. Specifically, the positive change in their policy attitudes tends to be more explicit between Year-3 students and Year-4 students.

Figure 3 Students' Policy Attitudes across Grade Levels



After checking the assumptions (details in Appendix H), a regression analysis was then conducted. The results shown in Table 6 indicate that gender does not predict students' policy attitudes. After controlling for gender, students' grade level can explain 14.8% of the variance in their policy attitude, reaching the "medium" threshold according to Cohen (1988). This result leaves further discussion on the potential impact that higher education might have on the shaping of students' perceptions of relevant education policies.

Table 6 Gender and Grade Level predict Students' Policy Attitudes

	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	s.e.	β	p	B	s.e.	β	p
Intercept	3.93	.06		< .001	3.37	.14		< .001
Gender	-.002	.07	-.002	.98	-.04	.07	.03	.69
Grade level					.14	.03	.39	< .001
ΔR^2					.148 $F_{[1, 116]} = 20.10$ $p < .001$			
R^2	.000 $F_{[1, 117]} = .001$ $p = .98$.148 $F_{[2, 116]} = 10.05$ $p < .001$			

Note: All parameter estimates are from SPSS 28. Durbin-Watson statistic equals 1.51

4.4 Research Question 4

How and to what extent is students' sense of national identity associated with their policy attitudes? And to what extent and how does accounting for background factors affect this association?

First, a line chart (Figure 4) has been created to display the changing pattern of the sampled students' sense of national identity across their grade levels. Figure 4 shows that Year-2 students have shown a significant low point in their national identity among all the five grade levels. Additionally, the sampled students' sense of national identity tends to increase after Year-2, while slightly decreasing between the final year and degrees beyond.

It might be helpful to visually understand the relationship between students' policy attitudes and their sense of national identity by depicting the changing pattern in the same diagram. As shown in Figure 5, it could be identified that students' policy attitudes and their sense of national identity both increase to some extent across Year-2, Year-3 and Year-4, while either remaining essentially at the same level or slightly declining after Year-4.

Figure 4 Students' Sense of National Identity across Grade Levels

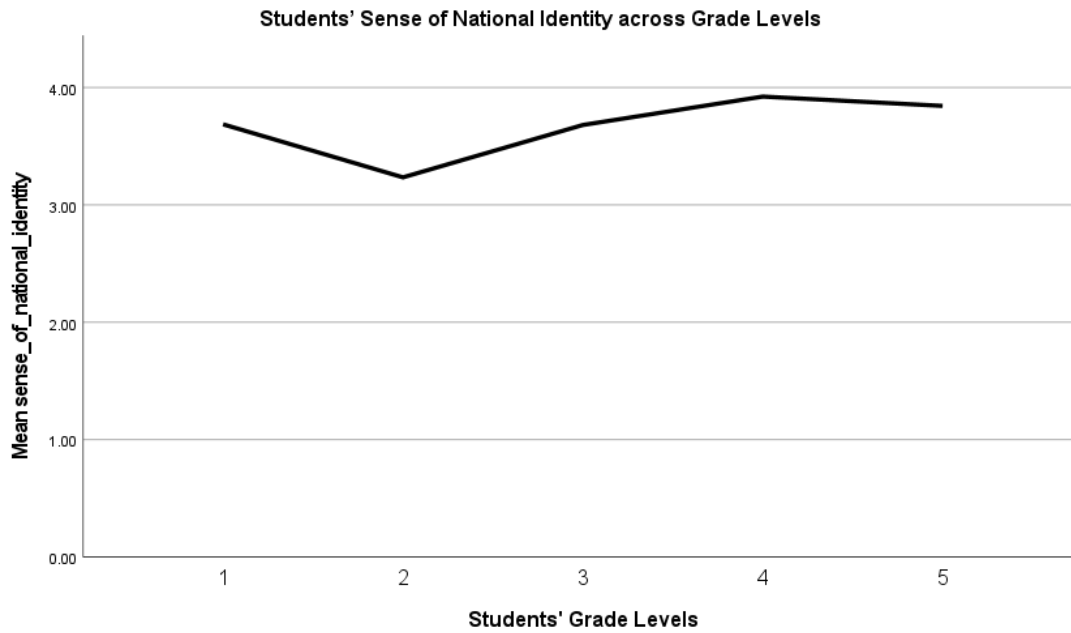
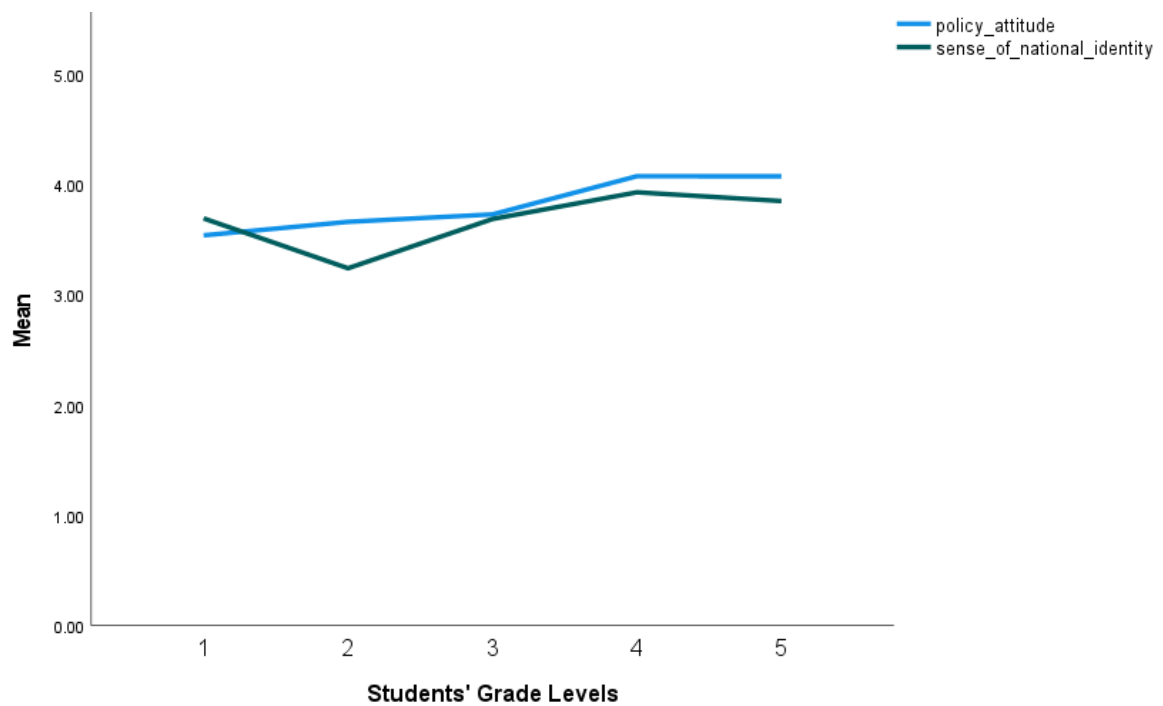


Figure 5 Students' Policy Attitudes and Sense of National Identity across Grade Levels



After visually understanding the changing patterns of students' policy attitudes and their sense of national identity, an analysis of variance was conducted after checking the assumptions (details in Appendix I) to determine whether there are statistically significant grade-level differences regarding students' sense of national identity. Results in Table 7 show that there is grade level difference regarding students' sense of national identity ($F = 3.07, p = .02, \eta^2 = .10$) with a medium effect size (Field, 2009, p. 391), in which the group difference is statistically significant between Year-2 and Year-4 ($p = .036$), and between Year-2 and Year-5 ($p = .050$).

Table 7 Students' Sense of National Identity across 5 Grade Levels

Grade level	1	2	3	4	5	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	η^2
n	13	12	13	27	54			
M	3.69	3.24	3.68	3.92	3.84			
SD	.50	.47	.65	.59	.65	3.07	.02	.10
Post-hoc results		Mean difference	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>				
2	4	-.69	.21	.04				
	5	-.61	.19	.05				

Note. The analysis was carried out in SPSS 28. The post-hoc analysis was conducted using Scheffe, given that the assumption of homogeneity was met.

The grade-level difference can be visualized by showing the changing pattern, presented in Diagram 1, in which ethnic minority students' sense of national identity tends to fluctuate across their grade levels, in which the level of their sense of national identity decreases significantly from Year-1 to Year-2, and increases from Year-2 to Year-3. This fluctuated sense of national identity across students' grade levels in higher education is consistent with previous research (e.g., Danzeng, 2014).

Results from the independent-sample *t*-test show that there is no statistically significant gender difference in terms of students' sense of national identity ($t = -1.35, p = .29$) (details see

Appendix J). After checking the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity (Appendix K), Pearson’s correlation was conducted, suggesting that students’ policy attitude highly correlates with their sense of national identity ($r = .71, p < .001$), with the effect size exceeding the “large” threshold (.5) according to Cohen (1988). Therefore, it seems worth investigating the extent to which variables of interest, namely students’ grade level and their policy attitudes, can predict their sense of national identity.

Students’ grade level was entered first in the hierarchical regression model, as there is some evidence from previous literature that ethnic minority students’ sense of national identity differs across their grade or education level (e.g., Danzeng, 2014; Xu, 2014), while students’ attitudes toward relevant education policies remain understudied within the topic of sense of national identity.

Table 8 Education Level and Policy Attitude predict Students’ Sense of National Identity

	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>p</i>	B	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.41	.17		< .001	.33	.32		.30
Grade level	.09	.04	.21	.03	-.04	.03	-.08	.27
Policy attitude					.91	.09	.74	< .001
ΔR^2					.47 $F_{[1, 116]} = 110.78 p = .03$			
R^2	.042 $F_{[1, 117]} = 5.11 p < .001$.51 $F_{[2, 116]} = 60.35 p < .001$			

Note: All parameter estimates are from SPSS 28, assumptions were checked (Appendix L). Durbin-Watson statistic equals 1.58

Table 8 gives the model summaries of the hierarchical regression, in which the variable “grade level” individually accounted for 4.2% of the variance in students’ sense of national identity, and “policy attitude” has explained an additional 46.8% of the variance which has respectively exceeded the “small” and “large” thresholds according to Cohen (1988).

Table 9 Education Level and Special Policy Attitude predict Students' Sense of National Identity

	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>p</i>	B	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Intercept	.41	.34		.23	.67	.34		.05
Special policy	.92	.09	.67	< .001	.71	.11	.52	< .001
Compensatory policy					.15	.05	.25	.003
ΔR^2					.455 $F_{[1, 116]} = 9.19$ $p = .003$			
R^2	.04 $F_{[1, 117]} = 97.66$ $p < .001$.495 $F_{[2, 116]} = 56.84$ $p < .001$			

Note: All parameter estimates are from SPSS 28, assumptions were checked (Appendix M). Durbin-Watson statistic equals 1.58

Interestingly, as shown in Table 9, it is found that students' attitudes toward special policies, which is one of the four dimensions of the policy attitude scale, can predict 45.5% of the variance in their sense of national identity, while the predicting power of students' attitudes toward compensatory policies tends to be much smaller ($\Delta R^2 = .04$, $p < .001$).

The demonstrated great predictive power of ethnic minority students' policy attitude, especially their attitudes toward special policies, to their sense of national identity has indicated the need to further consider the practical functions of education policies relevant to ethnic minority students, as the development of relevant policies seems not a mere reflection on the current situation of ethnic higher education. More specifically, it would be worthwhile for policymakers to be aware of how different types of education policies can shape ethnic minority students' sense of national identity. Therefore, the next chapter has furthered the discussion by proposing and critically discussing relevant policy implications based on the findings presented in this section, in which suggestions were also made at the practical level.

Chapter Five Discussion

This chapter discusses the main findings through the lens of the results derived from previous literature. Policy-related and practical implications for practitioners will be generated and suggestions for future research will be shared.

5.1 How to understand the results

5.1.1 Policy attitudes

Based on the results presented in Chapter 4, students' attitudes toward relevant educational policies in this study were generally positive. In particular, the attitude score for bilingual/trilingual education policy was statistically significantly higher than the other three dimensions. Results from Spearman's rank correlation show that there is a significant positive correlation between students' policy attitudes and their grade level ($r_s = .39, p = .05$), and further analysis has found that student's grade level can explain 7.7% of the variance in their policy attitudes. That is, as students progressed to higher levels of tertiary education, their attitudes toward minority-related education policies tend to be more positive overall. This result can be explained by theories related to cognitive development, including Social Identity Theory (SIT) and other theories which emphasize more on the impact of society on the individual, such as Sociocultural theory (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). On the one hand, students' cognition is changing, and on the other hand, it is influenced by socialization contexts such as parents and school. This is consistent with the results of previous studies (e.g., Chen, 2004; Rutland, 1996; Rutland, 1999).

The analysis of the data collected from the open-ended questions showed that three main themes were developed based on the responses: language-related perceptions, personal evaluation of preferential admission policies, and opinions on cultural differences and integration. These responses have complemented the data derived from the policy attitudes scale and provide a source from which the quantitative data of the questionnaire can be understood. Aside from mitigating the limitations inherent in using a single approach, using

open-ended questions alongside the main questionnaire also offers a variety of new insights that go beyond simply combining quantitative and qualitative results, which also allows the researcher to gain new knowledge that is much broader than the simple summation of the two (Fetters & Freshwater, 2015). Through the analysis of the two forms of data, the research question can be addressed with more sufficient breadth and depth, thus creating synergistic effects (e.g., Dawadi et al., 2021; Poth & Munce, 2020; Terrell, 2011). Specifically, perceptions related to language were mentioned most frequently in the open-ended questions, and most responses have described multiple perceived benefits of mastering the bilingual ability as a minority student who can speak both ethnic language and Mandarin, including positive influence regarding future job seeking and the relationship between peers. This may help explain the relatively high mean value of the dimension of attitudes toward language-related policies in the questionnaire which is significantly higher than that of the other dimensions.

Although studies investigating ethnic minority students' policy attitudes are much fewer in number than those exploring students' identity, they also tend to be relatively limited regarding the policy direction included in the discussion, which generally focus on language-related ones. In addition, within the limited literature on students' policy attitudes, only a few studies have incorporated relevant socio-demographic variables, such as gender, and students' educational level. While Wei et al. (2021) have identified gender as one of the statistically significant predictors of students' attitudes toward trilingualism, the current study did not find any gender differences regarding students' policy attitudes. Nevertheless, the questionnaire data of the current study, including that from both the policy attitudes scale and the open-ended question, appear consistent with previous literature on attitudes toward minority educational policies (e.g., Yuan et al., 2013), in which favorable attitude toward the bilingual and trilingual education policy seems common within ethnic minority students. This result has triggered further implications concerning future policy development and improvement, which will be discussed in detail in 5.2.1 policy-related implications and 5.2.2 practical implications.

5.1.2 Students' sense of national identity

Overall, the sample students had a relatively high level of sense of national identity with

the composite score significantly exceeding midpoint 3, being in line with the vast majority of relevant research on ethnic minority students' sense of national identity (e.g., Chen, 2009; He, 2009; Li, 2011; Liu, 2010; Sun, 2017; Wang, 2019; Xu, 2014). There are statistically significant differences in students' sense of national identity according to their grade level, while there is no gender difference.

The results of the identity scale can be better explained and understood within the theoretical framework of social identity theory, which believes that individuals have not only a "personal self" but also many other levels of "self". This manifold "self" can be reflected in multiple perspectives, such as race, country, political party, social class, gender, family, region, occupation, and so on. Sometimes individuals think, feel, and act from their individual selves, while they may also think, feel, and act from other levels of self (Hogg & Abrams, 1999; Turner, 1987, p. 20). At each level of the self, individuals tend to have two deeply rooted motivations: defining themselves and pursuing positive self-esteem (Ellemers & Van Knippenberg, 1997). This perceived need to pursue self-definition and positive self-esteem would lead individuals to view themselves, and/or the groups to which they belong, in a more preferred way, resulting in in-group preferences (Hogg & Abrams, 1999; Turner, 1987). This can be reflected in the results derived from the identity scale, in which the sampled students generally scored high in dimensions of "Collective self-esteem and interdependence beliefs" ($M = 3.74$) and "Self-categorization" ($M = 3.70$). Therefore, in general, the sampled minority college students tend to define themselves with Chinese identity and have positive self-esteem with relatively high levels of perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members.

The results of this study found that students' education level and policy attitudes are statistically significant influential predictors of their sense of national identity. First, as grade level, or educational attainment, increases, the national identity of minority college students tends to be more favorable accordingly. This result aligns with the hypothesis of relevant cognitive development theory, represented by the Social Identity Theory and social categorization theory, which focus on the cognitive dimensions of the identity development process in terms of internal cognitive constructing, categorization and staging, considering all

these phenomena as internal cognitive processes of individuals (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1987). More specifically, given the situation that students' age and their grade level are generally consistent with each other within the Chinese context (Danzeng, 2014), their sense of national identity tends to develop accordingly with their cognitive development. However, sociocultural theory emphasizes that students' development of their national identity is also influenced by a variety of environmental circumstances, including family, school, and locality (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). These elements can have some degree of influence on students' development of their national identity (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995), which views identity formation as a socio-culturally contextualized activity. In addition, this study also found that in addition to cognitive and environmental factors, students' attitudes toward relevant policies, a factor that has not been incorporated in previous studies on national identity, had an impact on their sense of national identity. This influence appears even stronger, with policy attitudes ($\Delta R^2 = .468$) predicting students' sense of national identity more strongly than grade level ($\Delta R^2 = .042$).

5.2 Implications of the findings

5.2.1 Policy-related implications

The functions of minority education policies: as a means to reflect the current situation of ethnic higher education, and shape the national identity of minority students

After more than a few decades of implementation, the situation of China's preferential entrance examination policy for ethnic minorities has changed greatly, mainly in the following ways: (1) the overall education level of ethnic minorities has improved significantly (brief details in Appendix N); (2) in the process of modernization and urbanization, a considerable number of compatriots of ethnic minorities have gradually moved from the diaspora and remote areas or integrated into urban employment and life (Chen et al., 2019). These significant changes have shown that, as the economic situation and educational resources that used to lag have gradually improved, the value orientation of China's preferential college entrance examination policy can no longer be limited to compensatory equity, since the implementation of this policy on the grounds of equity has gradually aroused social doubts (Chen et al., 2019).

Therefore, policies relevant to minority education are expected to be reflexive regarding the function as a means to reflect the situation of minority education as well as predict future development. This expectation of the formulation and implementation of relevant educational policies would require more elaborate research on the current situation of minority education and relevant stakeholders' perceptions which help practitioners better understand the authentic situation with empirical evidence.

Furthermore, many countries around the world have used minority education policies as a means to shape the national identity of minority college students. For example, the Indian government has implemented the "Tribal Auxiliary Program", to promote the development of minority education (Jia, 2007). Germany, guided by the theory of intercultural education, has launched an educational policy that focuses on the education of the second generation of immigrants, attempting to promote mutual adaptation between its own society and that of immigrants. Being consistent with previous research results (e.g., Chen et al., 2019; Jiang, 2015), the influence of students' attitudes toward relevant education policies on their sense of national identity has indicated that minority education policies may help shape students' sense of national identity. Findings of the current study have triggered some provoking questions, such as what are the minority education policies that better promote national identification in the process of implementation, and how should the factor of national identity be considered in the formulation and adjustment of minority education policies so as to contribute to the social stability and long-term stability of minority regions. Answers to these questions could lead to further considerations of the future transformation of relevant policies.

The transformation of policy emphasis

In the past, the implementation of preferential policies for ethnic minorities in China's college entrance examinations started as a compensatory measure for ethnic minorities, reflecting the value orientation of compensatory equity. This approach is taken mainly due to the relatively backward economic developmental level and the unbalanced allocation of educational resources in ethnic minority areas, which greatly limited the development of ethnic minority education. However, in the new historical period, if the education policies still focus

on compensatory equity, it is easy to devalue the meaning and value of the relevant policies, which may trigger further controversies regarding education equity (Cao, 2015; Chen et al., 2019). In light of this, it is proposed that ethnic education policies be shifted to the internal side of ethnic education development, improving the blood-making function of ethnic education through the refinement and implementation of special policies, including cultivating talents in ethnic areas and promoting collaborations of universities in developed with those in ethnic minority regions. This is supported by the current research findings in which the predicting power of special policies ($\Delta R^2 = .455$) is found to be much stronger than compensatory/beneficiary policies ($\Delta R^2 = .40$) concerning the shaping of minority students' sense of national identity. Moreover, bilingual education policy, as one representation of special education policies, is found to be closely related to students' sense of national identity, and is perceived to be beneficial in multiple aspects, including future career development, and interpersonal relationships with peers. Therefore, it is necessary to consider conducting a "top-down design" through policy refinement and implementation to strengthen the positive influence of bilingual education policy on ethnic minority students' sense of national identity. Practical implementation approaches are suggested and discussed in 5.2.2.

Therefore, it is suggested that the focus of future policies relevant to ethnic minority education should be transformed from solely compensatory equity to diversity advocacy. The suggestion is made based on the empirical results derived in the current study, in which the sampled ethnic minority students tend to have diverse opinions regarding the effectiveness and equity issues of preferential education policies. Additionally, as students' attitudes toward special policies appear to have stronger predictive power than preferential policies regarding students' sense of national identity, sole reliance on compensatory approaches to help promote minority students' sense of national identity and improve minority education seems undesirable. This leads to further considerations of the possible ways of transforming the policy emphasis from compensatory equity to special cultivation of minority education, thus making more minority students receive and complete high-quality higher education through preferential policies while respecting the cultural differences of various ethnic groups and enabling them to live together in harmony.

5.2.2 Practical implications

Strengthening the protection of minority languages

In addition to the value of communication, language is also a carrier of culture (Burton et al., 2016; Kramersch, 1998). It carries the history, culture, life experience and emotional attachment of each ethnic group, and is also a powerful symbol of national identity (Burton et al., 2016; Kramersch, 1998). President Xi has pointed out that the culture of ethnic minorities is the common cultural asset of the Chinese nation, and it is necessary to first protect cultural diversity (As cited in The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2015).

Although some work has been carried out at the national and local government levels to promote and protect some ethnic languages, many ethnic minority people seem less motivated to pass on their own languages (Xinhua, 2020). This can be exceptionally explicit in some rural areas where there is a common mentality that “speaking Zhuang is backward” and parents only teach their children to speak Mandarin (Xinhua, 2020). Given the current situation, it is still difficult for supportive policies to be effectively implemented to help improve bilingual education and the preservation of ethnic minority languages (Xinhua, 2020). Specifically, in addition to promoting bilingual education in ethnic minority areas, ethnic minority students could be further motivated to learn their ethnic group languages through policy formulation, such as including ethnic languages and scripts in school entrance exams, civil service recruitment, and title evaluation. It is therefore necessary to increase support for various types of activities targeting the protection, transmission and research of minority languages and scripts. Institutions of higher education, such as ethnic colleges and teacher training programs, could provide the "soil" for the preservation and use of minority languages and scripts by offering specialized courses and public seminars.

Further standardize and improve the mechanism of relevant education preferential policies

The most direct manifestation of the compensatory equity value of the preferential policies for ethnic minority in *gaokao* is that it enables more ethnic minority students to enter college

through extra points, so that they can gain access to higher education. Local enrollment departments set the region-specific range of extra points for minority students in accordance with the enrollment documents issued by the Ministry of Education (see Appendix O for an overview of the current state of relevant preferential policies). From 2005 to 2012, many provinces, such as Shanxi, stipulated that "under the same conditions as Han Chinese candidates, admissions will be given priority to minority students. Most provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government have specified specific points. The Xinjiang region has the largest range of extra points and the most detailed regulations, with 80 extra points for candidates who fully use ethnic minority language in the test; other regions have a range of 20 and 10 points. From 2012 to 2018, the preferential policies in many provinces such as Shanxi have not changed, but Shandong clearly stipulates the abolition of the preferential policy of extra points for minority candidates, and the range of extra points in some regions has been significantly reduced (Chen et al., 2019). It can be seen that there is a tendency to shrink the preferential policy of extra points for minority students, not only the margin of extra points becomes smaller, but also the number of regions that cancel or gradually cancel this preferential policy is increasing.

Given this context, it is worth further thinking to understand China's preferential policies for ethnic minorities in higher education from the perspective of compensatory equity. This is mainly because some regions have stopped using this preferential policy as an important means to promote educational equity. On the other hand, although some regions are ready to abolish this preferential policy, such as Hunan and Ningxia, the target has been further refined by specifying the scope of extra points for ethnic minorities in some economically underdeveloped counties, cities or diaspora areas. In terms of the surface meaning, this means that this preferential policy is gradually changing from ethnic preferences to regional preferences, that is, to fully take care of the remote areas, educationally underdeveloped areas of the minority candidates, to avoid the situation where some minority students from developed areas also enjoy extra points which may lead to different educational inequity. Nonetheless, this preferential policy, in a broader sense, is meant to provide higher education opportunities for students inhabiting in areas with a high concentration of minorities.

The responses derived from the open-ended question of the current study have also indicated that students tend to have diverse perceptions of relevant preferential policies such as receiving extra points in *gaokao*. Their responses have expressed the understanding of the necessity of implementing this policy for allowing more ethnic minority students to enter higher education, thus to some extent compensating for the unbalanced education resources allocation. They also shared concerns regarding the equity for Han students in entrance examinations due to the potential lack of the refinement of policy implementation targets and relevant rigorous review mechanisms to ensure that those ethnic minority candidates who are from remote and educationally underdeveloped areas can truly enjoy the benefits of this policy and thus receive educational opportunities. Therefore, from the educational level, the value orientation of the preferential policy such as receiving extra points in *gaokao* for ethnic minorities in China should be further transformed, from solely compensatory equity in the era of elite higher education to the direction of diversity advocacy in the era of mass and even universal higher education.

Strengthen the efforts to protect and promote the ethnic cultures

If it is said that the degree of cultural development determines the height of economic and social development, how to promote cultural development and prosperity could be the core issue of social development. As different ethnic groups have different cultural traditions, there is no superiority or inferiority of culture. Each culture has its uniqueness and justification for its existence, while each unique culture shapes individuals with unique thinking patterns and sense of identity. China is a multi-ethnic unified country, which Fei (1989) calls “pluralism and unity”: pluralism means different ethnic groups and different cultures; unity means a unified country. This resonates with responses derived from the open-ended questions in which there is perceived importance regarding the preservation of ethnic minority cultures both within the minority groups and in the Chinese mainstream society. Therefore, the basis of "pluralism and unity" is the existence and development of multi-ethnic culture through integrating the cultural diversities in the mainstream society with the goal of being “unity: under the one”, there could still be cultural richness and differences.

As more and more ethnic minority students are enrolled in mainland colleges and universities, this is not only beneficial to the cultural adaptation of those minority students, but also helps Han Chinese students understand and identify with minority cultures, and improve their cross-cultural understanding ability. Therefore, it is especially important to introduce different minority cultures in colleges and universities in the form of cultural lectures, elective courses and public seminars as mentioned in responses to the open-ended questions. The need to further strengthen the protection and promotion of different ethnic minority cultures can also be reflected in the results of the policy attitude scale in which the sampled students tend to have a relatively high level of favorable attitudes toward *Minzu*/multicultural curriculums. Furthermore, it is not only to let minority students understand more about their own ethnic history and culture, but also, to let Han students understand the cultural background of minority students while promoting interpersonal communication across cultures. Therefore, given that students' policy attitudes can greatly predict their sense of national identity, it seems of great benefit to keep protecting and promoting ethnic minority cultures through the formulation and development of relevant policies that encourage the preservation of different ethnic cultures, thus helping ethnic minority students better be aware of the beauty of the cultural heritage of their ethnic groups, and how the diversity of cultures can be integrated into the Chinese mainstream society.

5.3 Suggestions for future research

5.3.1 The need for conducting longitudinal studies

Longitudinal studies are necessary to reduce the influence of other factors. In the data this study has obtained, there may be several effects intertwined, generation effect, life-cycle effect, and cohort effect. We cannot clearly distinguish these effects from each other within a cross-sectional study. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the development of national identity among university students, it is necessary to combine longitudinal and cross-sectional studies.

5.3.2 Explore the role of higher education in shaping ethnic minority students' sense of national identity

As an important medium in changing the paradigm shift in one's individual, education, especially higher education, is also regarded as vital guidance in human life, through which individuals get to understand themselves (Chen, 2012; Chen et al., 2019). Through this process, cognitive and behavioral changes constantly happen, which may trigger further consideration and exploration of the role of higher education regarding the formation and development of one's sense of identity and national identity. Given that, discussion and research on the classroom environment would be encouraged, for example, how different cognitive and environmental variables influence students' sense of national identity.

Chapter Six Conclusion

This study has added to the existing body of research on university students' perceptions towards relevant education policies that focuses particularly on ethnic minority students. Research results suggest that the sampled students generally hold positive attitudes towards education policies that are relevant to ethnic minority stakeholders. Students' attitudes toward language-related policies, such as bilingual education, tend to be statistically significantly more favorable than the other three dimensions (special policies, general compensatory policies, and the special program for ethnic minority high talents). The responses to the open-ended questions have indicated three major themes: perceived benefits of multilingualism, diverse opinions on preferential admission policies, and ideas related to cultural difference and integration. The textual data has complemented the results derived from the scales and contributed to informing future policies. By means of introducing an under-studied variable within the topic of "ethnic minority students' sense of national identity", namely students' attitude toward relevant education policies, the present study has made contributions in terms of broadening the research scope, so as to further explore the extent to which relevant ethnic minority education policies shape students' sense of national identity.

Notably, this study has found that there is no significant gender difference within the sampled students' policy attitudes nor their sense of national identity, while students' grade level could be an influential predictor of both their policy attitude and sense of national identity. Moreover, results have shown that as students proceed to higher levels of education, their attitudes toward relevant education policies tend to be more favorable, and their sense of national identity appears more positive. Most importantly, students' policy attitudes were found to be an important and robust predictor of their sense of national identity. Based on cognitive development theory and other socialization-oriented theories, it is possible to explain and better understand the result that grade level and policy attitudes can influence ethnic minority students' sense of national identity. In such theories, a number of variables play a role, such as students' self-cognitive development, and family and school effects in tandem. Therefore, future research is encouraged to continue exploring the effects of both cognitive and environmental variables,

and the joint effects of multiple variables, concerning ethnic minority students' policy attitudes and their sense of national identity, given that it is crucial for university students who are from minority groups to have a stable, conscious, and positive sense of national identity in order to better form the "boundaries" of their self-definition, their place in society, and their own values.

The research finding of the significant predicting power of students' policy attitudes on their sense of national identity has triggered multiple policy and practical implications. This leads to further considerations of how factor of senses of national identity could be taken into account in the formulation, adjustment, and improvement of minority education policies, and how relevant education policies could be used as a means to help build and increase ethnic minority students' sense of national identity.

References

- Burton, H., Padden, C., Bellos, D., Berry, M., & Mishra, P. (2016, November). *Language and Culture* [Video]. <https://www.kanopy.com/en/product/10871408?vp=ox>
- Cao, Q. (2015). 民族平等视角下少数民族高考加分政策研究[A Study of the Extra Credit Policy for the College Entrance Examination for Ethnic Minorities from the Perspective of Ethnic Equality]. *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University (Educational Science Edition)*, 28(2), 9-11. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/85307X/201502>
- Chen, B., Li, S., & Zhang, J. (2019). 从补偿性公平到多样性倡导：我国少数民族高考优惠政策的价值反思与重构[From compensatory fairness to diversity advocacy: The value reflection and reconstruction on the preferential policy of college entrance examination for ethnic minorities in China]. *Jiangsu Higher Education*, 10, 28-34. <https://doi.org/10.13236/j.cnki.jshe.2019.10.005>
- Chen, D. (2012). 民族院校加强少数民族大学生国家认同教育的思考[Reflections on strengthening national identity education for ethnic minority college students in ethnic colleges and universities]. *Theoretical Front in Higher Education*, 10, 34-37. Retrieved from http://www.nssd.cn/articles/article_detail.aspx?id=43415002
- Chen, J. (2004). 11 至 20 岁青少年的国家认同及其发展[*National identity and its development among 11- to 20-year-olds*]. (Master's thesis, Central China Normal University). Available from China Masters' Theses Full-text Database.
- Cinnirella, M. (1996) A social identity perspective on European integration. In G. Breakwell & E. Lyons (Eds.), *Changing European Identities: Social psychological analyses of social change* (pp. 253-274). Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Cinnirella, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (2002). *Self and social identity*. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53(1), 161-186.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Danzeng, Z. (2014). 藏族青少年国家认同研究[*A study of Tibetan adolescents' national identity*]. (Master's thesis, Tibetan University of China). Available from China Masters' Theses Full-text Database.
- Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-Methods Research: A Discussion on its Types, Challenges, and Criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 2(2), 25-36. <https://doi.org/10.46809/jpse.v2i2.20>
- Dewaele, J. M. (2018). Online questionnaires. In A. Phakiti, P. De Costa, L. Plonsky, & S. Starfield (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of applied linguistics research methodology* (pp. 269-286). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59900-1_13
- Dittmer, L., & Kim, S. (2018). *China's Quest for National Identity*. Ithaca. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501723773>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Du, L., & Fang, W. (2013). 大学生国家认同的实证研究-基于全国 31 个省区市普通高校的调查分析[An empirical study of college students' national identity: A survey and analysis based on 31 provinces and municipalities in China]. *China Higher Education Research*, 11, 79-84. Retrieved from http://www.nssd.cn/articles/article_detail.aspx?id=47595065
- Ellemers, N., & Ad Van K. (1997). Stereotyping in Social Context. In R. Spears, P. J. Oakes, N. Ellemers & S. A. Haslam (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Stereotyping and Group Life*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (2002). Self and social identity. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53(1), 161-186. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135228>
- Ellis, P.D. (2010). *The essential guide to effect sizes: Statistical power, meta-analysis and the interpretation of research results*. Cambridge University Press.
- Erikson, E. H. (1946). Ego development and historical change; clinical notes. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 2(1), 359-396.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity youth and crisis*. Norton.
- Erikson, E. H. (1994). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. Norton.

- Fan, X. (2001). Statistical significance and effect size in education research: Two sides of a coin. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 94, 275-282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670109598763>
- Fei, X. (1989). 中华民族的多元一体格局[The pattern of diversity in unity of the Chinese nation]. *Journal of Peking University (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 4, 1-19.
- Field, A. P. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS*. Sage.
- Gao, W. (2010). 现代性语境中的民族认同与国家认同[Ethnic identity and national identity in the context of modernity]. *Literature, History, and Philosophy*, 6, 151-157. Retrieved from http://www.nssd.cn/articles/Article_Read.aspx?id=35912916
- Geng, Y., & Xiao, P. (2013). 少数民族大学生国家认同教育的调查与思考[Investigation and reflection on national identity education of ethnic minority college students]. *Journal of South-Central Minzu University (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 33(3), 17-21. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/81738A/201303>
- Guan, J., & Guo, Q (2019). 国家认同概念边界与结构维度的心理学路径 [Psychological paths of conceptual boundaries and structural dimensions of national identity]. *Journal of Southwest Minzu University (Humanities and Social Science)*, 40(3), 214-221. Retrieved from http://www.nssd.cn/articles/article_detail.aspx?id=6100250515
- Guo, J. (2013). 西方心理学自我同一性概念的解析[The analysis of the concept of identity in Western Psychology]. *Advances in Psychological Science*, 11(2), 227-234. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1671-3710.2003.02.019>
- Guo, Y. (2013). 新疆少数民族大学生国家认同的现状调查与分析[Survey and analysis of the current situation of national identity among minority college students in Xinjiang]. *Journal of Suzhou Education Institute*, 16(6), 29-30. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/85129X/201306>
- He, J., & Yan, J. (2008). 论从民族认同到国家认同[From ethnic identity to national identity]. *Journal of Minzu University of China (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 35(3), 5-13. Retrieved from http://www.nssd.cn/articles/Article_Read.aspx?id=1000392773

Herrmann, R. K., Isernia, P., & Segatti, P. (2009). Attachment to the nation and international relations: Dimensions of identity and their relationship to war and peace. *Political Psychology*, 30(5), 721-754. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00723.x>

Hogg, M., & Abrams, D. (1999). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes* (Ebook central). Routledge.

Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher positionality - A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research - A new researcher guide. *International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232>

Hu, Q., & Dong, J. (2017). 论蒙古族预科生民族认同、语言水平与语言态度关系[On the relationship between ethnic identity, language proficiency and language attitudes among Mongolian pre-college students]. *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University: Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition*, 46(4),123-127. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1001-7623.2017.04.021>

Hu, Y., & Ga, Y. (2016). 正确认识少数民族高考加分政策[Scientific understanding of the extra points policy in minority college entrance examination]. *Journal of South-Central Minzu University (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 36(5), 18-22. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/81738A/201605>

Jafar, A. J. N. (2018). What is positionality and should it be expressed in quantitative studies? *Emergency Medicine Journal*, 35(9), 578. <https://doi.org/10.1136/emered-2017-207158corr1>

Jenkins, R. (2014). *Social identity* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Jia, Y. (2007). 印度少数民族政策及其对我国的启示[India's minority policy and its inspiration for China]. *Journal of Hubei Minzu University: Philosophy and Social Sciences*, 25(2), 27-32. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1004-941X.2007.02.006>

Jiang, X. (2015). 少数民族教育政策影响少数民族大学生国家认同的实证研究[An empirical study on the influence of minority education policies on the national identity of minority college students]. *Modern Education Science*, 4, 34-37. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/85504B/201504>

- Jin, Z. (2011). 论国家认同与民族（族群）认同实质的相异性[On the difference between the substance of national identity and ethnic (group) identity]. *Forward Position*, 9, 138-143. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/82678X/201109>
- Kacen, Lea, & Chaitin, Julia. (2006). The times they are a changing: Undertaking qualitative research in ambiguous, conflictual, and changing contexts. *Qualitative Report*, 11(2), 209-228. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2006.1671>
- Katz, J. (1985). *People in space: Policy perspectives for a "Star Wars" century*. Transaction Books.
- Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture (Oxford introductions to language study)*. Oxford University Press.
- Larson-Hall, J., & Plonsky, L. (2015). Reporting and interpreting quantitative research findings: What gets reported and recommendations for the field. *Language Learning*, 65(S1), 127–159. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12115>
- Li, Z. (2011). 少数民族大学生民族认同与国家认同现状研究 - 以国家民委直属六所高校为例[A study on the status of ethnic identity and national identity among college students of ethnic minorities - A case study of six universities directly under the State People's Committee]. (Master's thesis, Minzu University of China). Available from China Masters' Theses Full-text Database.
- Liang, L. (2020). 少数民族教育政策影响少数民族大学生国家认同研究[A study on the influence of minority education policies on the national identity of minority college students]. *Out-of-School Education in China*, 5, 24-25.
- Liao, Y., & Shen, Z. (2020). 70 年来我国民族政策对少数民族国家认同的影响[The impact of China's ethnic policy on the national identity of ethnic minorities in the past 70 years]. *Journal of Yangtze Normal University*, 36(1), 79-86. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1674-3652.2020.01.011>
- Lin, B. (2002). 全球化时代民族国家的爱国主义教育[Patriotic education in a multi-ethnic country in the age of globalization]. *Studies on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*, 1, 42-45. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1006-6470.2002.01.010>

Liu, W. (2010). 高校少数民族大学生多元文化教育与国家认同[Multicultural education for ethnic minority college students and their national identity]. *China Adult Education*, 20, 18-19. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/97691X/201020>

Luo, P., & Zhang, Y (2011). 民族认同的心理学研究述评与展望 [A review of psychological research on national identity and prospects]. *Journal of Shanghai Normal University (Philosophy & Social Sciences Edition)*, 40(1), 108-116. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1004-8634.2011.01.014>

Lv, W., & Yin, X. (2016). 三语背景下西北少数民族聚居地中学生语言态度对比研究[A Comparative Study of Language Attitudes of Middle School Students of Trilingual Context in Northwest Ethnic Minority Regions.]. *Science & Technology Information*, 8, 120-121.

Ma, W. (2015). 全球化时代，我们如何进行国家认同教育？[How do we educate about national identity in the age of globalization?]. *People's Education*, 20, 16-21.

Macaro, E., & Akincioglu, M. (2018). Turkish university students' perceptions about English medium instruction: Exploring year group, gender, and university type as variables. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 39(3), 256–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2017.1367398>

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2005). 教育部关于印发《普通高等学校少数民族预科班、民族班管理办法(试行)》的通知[*Notice of the Ministry of Education on the Issuance of Measures for the Administration of Minority Preparatory Classes and Ethnic Classes in General Higher Education Institutions (for Trial Implementation)*]. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xxgk/gk_gbgg/moe_0/moe_495/moe_1073/tnull_11941.html

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2017). 李康代表：提高少数民族地区乡村教师待遇[*Representative Li Kang: Improve the treatment of rural teachers in minority areas*]. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_zt/moe_357/jyzt_2017nztzl/2017_zt01/17zt01_dbwyjy/201703/t20170315_299694.html

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2019). 教育部关于做好新时期直

属高校定点扶贫工作的意见[*Opinions of the Ministry of Education on completing the targeted poverty alleviation work of universities directly under the Ministry in the new period*]. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A03/s7050/201905/t20190509_381301.html

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2021). 教育部办公厅关于下达2021年少数民族高层次骨干人才研究生招生计划的通知[*Notice of the General Office of the Ministry of Education on the Enrollment Plan of High-level Cultivated Talents from Ethnic Minorities in 2021*]. Retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2020-10/14/content_5551190.htm

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2022). 教育部关于做好2022年普通高校招生工作的通知[*Notice from the Ministry of Education on the completion of the 2022 general college admissions process*]. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A15/moe_776/s3258/202201/t20220129_596858.html

Morgan, G. A., Leech, N. L., Cloeckner, G. W., & Barrett, K. C. (2011). *SPSS for introductory statistics: Use and interpretation* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Müller-Peters, A. (1998). The significance of national pride and national identity to the attitude toward the single European currency: A Europe-wide comparison. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 19(6), 701-719. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-4870\(98\)00033-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-4870(98)00033-6)

National Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 第七次人口普查数据[*Tabulation on the 2020 Population Census of The People's Republic of China*]. Retrieved from <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pcsj/rkpc/d7c/202111/P020211126523667366751.pdf>

Padgett, D. (2008). *Qualitative methods in social work research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Penuel, W. R., & Wertsch, J. V. (1995). Vygotsky and identity formation: A sociocultural approach. *Educational Psychologist*, 30(2), 83-92. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3002_5

Plonsky, L., & Oswald, F. L. (2014). How big is 'big'? Interpreting effect sizes in L2 research. *Language Learning*, 64(4), 878-912. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263116000231>

Poth, C., & Munce, S. E. P. (2020). Commentary—Preparing today's researchers for a yet

unknown tomorrow: Promising practices for a synergistic and sustainable mentoring approach to mixed methods research learning. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 12(1), 56-64. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2037373.2037384>

Pring, R. (2015). *Philosophy of educational research* (3rd ed.). Bloomsbury. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474228596>

Punch, K., & Oancea, A. (2014). *Introduction to research methods in education* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Pye, L. W. (1994). Comparative politics -- china's quest for national identity edited by lowell dittmer and samuel S. kim. *The American Political Science Review*, 88(2), 492. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/comparative-politics-chinas-quest-national/docview/214429903/se-2>

Qian, X. (2006). 从认同的基本特性看族群认同与国家认同的关系 [The relationship between ethnic identity and national identity from the perspective of the basic characteristics of identity]. *Ethno-National Studies*, 6, 16-25. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.0256-1891.2006.06.002>

Qin, X., & Zuo, B. (2007). 民族认同的心理学实证研究——11 ~ 20 岁青少年民族认同的结构和状况 [An empirical psychological study of ethnic identity - the structure and status of ethnic identity among adolescents aged 11 to 20]. *Journal of Hubei Minzu University: Philosophy and Social Sciences*, 25(6), 37-41. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1004-941X.2007.06.006>

Rutland, A. (1996). European identity among English children: A Vygotskian approach. *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, 55(2/3), 150-160.

Rutland, A. (1999). The development of national prejudice, in-group favoritism and self-stereotypes in British children. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 55-70. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466699164031>

Shah, L. (2002). 社会心理学 [Social Psychology]. China Renmin University Press.

Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(3), 224-237. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2695870>

Stryker, S. (2008). From Mead to a structural symbolic interactionism and beyond. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34(1), 14-31. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134649>

Stryker, S., & Richard, T. S. (1982). Commitment, identity salience, and role behavior: Theory and research example. In W. Ickes & E. S. Knowles (Eds.), *Personality, Roles, and Social Behavior*. Springer-Verlag.

Su, D., & Xue, H. (2020). 我国民族高等教育政策的历史演进与逻辑透视[The historical evolution and logical perspective of China's ethnic higher education policy]. *Guizhou Ethnic Studies*, 5. Retrieved from http://www.cssn.cn/mzx/202007/t20200713_5154334.shtml

Sun, J. (2013). 少数民族学生国家认同的文化基因与教育场域[Cultural genes and the educational field of national identity for ethnic minority students]. *Educational Research*, 12, 91-96. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/96925X/201312>

Sun, J. (2017). 少数民族学生国家认同和文化融合研究[A study on national identity and cultural integration of ethnic minority students]. *Educational Science Research*, 10, 92-96. Retrieved from <http://onsgep.moe.edu.cn/edoas2/website7/level3.jsp?infoid=1335254564530193&id=1493691608843716&location=null>

Sun, J., & Han, X. (2013). 70 年少数民族基础教育发展的“中国经验”[The “Chinese experience” in the development of basic education for ethnic minorities in the past 70 years]. *Ethnic Education Research*, 6. Retrieved from http://www.cssn.cn/mzx/llzc/202005/t20200522_5132693.shtml

Sytnik-Czetwertyński, J. (2021). Concept of personal identity. *Journal of Education, Health and Sport*, 11(10), 102-115. <https://doi.org/10.12775/JEHS.2021.11.10.009>

Tajfel, H. (1978). Social categorization, social identity and social comparison. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Academic Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worschel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup Relations* (2nd ed.). Nelson-Hall.

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (Eds.) (2009). *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research:*

Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences. Sage Publications.

Terrell, S. (2011). Mixed-methods research methodologies. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(1), 254-280. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/mixed-methods-research-methodologies/docview/920733426/se-2>

The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. (2015). *Cultural diversity and "One Belt, One Road"*. Retrieved from <http://www.scio.gov.cn/ztk/wh/slx/31210/Document/1436010/1436010.htm>

Thelen, S. T., & Honeycutt Jr, E. D. (2004). Assessing national identity in Russia between generations using the national identity scale. *Journal of International Marketing (East Lansing, Mich.)*, 12(2), 58-81. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jimk.12.2.58.32900>

Turner, J. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell.

Turner, J. C., Oakes, P. J., Haslam, S. A., & McGarty, C. (1994). Self and Collective: Cognition and Social Context. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20(5), 454-463. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167294205002>

Wang, J. (2012). 关于我国少数民族双语教学问题的若干思考[Some thoughts on the issue of bilingual education for ethnic minorities in China]. *Contemporary Education and Culture*, 4, 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1674-5779.2012.04.002>

Wang, J. (2013). 新疆少数民族大学生国家认同状况实证研究 -以新疆师范大学为例[An empirical study on the state of national identity of minority students in Xinjiang - Taking Xinjiang Normal University as an example]. (Master's thesis, Xinjiang Normal University of China). Available from China Masters' Theses Full-text Database.

Wang, J. (2015). 新形势下我国民族教育研究的新方向[New directions of China's ethnic education research under the new situation]. *Ethnic Education of China*, 3, <https://doi.org/10.16855/j.cnki.zgmzjy.2015.03.009>

Wang, J. (2019). 坚持依法推进我国少数民族双语教育的政策和模式[Adhering to the policy and model of promoting bilingual education for ethnic minorities in China in accordance with the law]. *Ethnic Education Research*, 1. Retrieved from:

http://ex.cssn.cn/mzx/201910/t20191014_5013637_2.shtml

Wang, Y. (2002). 少数民族认同研究的现状[Current status of minority identity research]. *Advances in Psychological Science*, 10(1), 102-107. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1671-3710.2002.01.016>

Wang, H. (2019). 新疆少数民族大学生国家认同实证研究[*An empirical study on the national identity of Xinjiang minority college students*]. (Master's thesis, China University of Mining and Technology). Available from China Masters' Theses Full-text Database.

Wei, R., Hu, Y., & Xiong, J. (2019). Effect size reporting practices in applied linguistics research: A study of one major journal. *SAGE Open*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019850035>

Wei, R., Jiang, H., & Kong, M. (2021). Attitudes toward trilingualism: A survey study of Chinese Mongolian university students. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 42(3), 291-306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2019.1689245>

Wu, T., & Wang, K. (2020). 消解与再现：身份认同理论下少数民族大学生身份的教育建构[Dissolution and reproduction: The educational construction of minority college students' identity under identity theory]. *Guangxi Ethnic Studies*, 3, 165-172. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/82724X/202003>

Wu, Y. (2016). 新疆少数民族大学生国家认同教育发展研究[*Research on the development of national identity education for minority university students in Xinjiang*]. (Master's thesis). Available from China Masters' Theses Full-text Database.

Xinhua News Agency. (2020). 守住多民族文化的语言宝库——代表关注少数民族语言传承保护[*Keeping the language treasures of multi-ethnic cultures - Delegates focus on minority language heritage protection*]. Retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-05/24/content_5514510.htm

Xu, B. (2014). 少数民族大学生国家认同的教育研究[A study on the education of national identity of ethnic minority college students]. *Ideological and Political Education Research*, 30(5), 73-77. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/82334X/201405>

- Xu, L. (2011). 论多民族国家中民族认同与国家认同的冲突——以中国为例[On the conflict between ethnic identity and national identity in a multi-ethnic state: The case of China]. *Journal of Northwest Normal University (Social Sciences)*, 48(1), 34-40. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1001-9162.2011.01.006>
- Yang, F. (2010). 少数民族高考加分政策的公正性探究[Exploring the fairness of the extra credit policy for ethnic minority college entrance examination]. *Ethnic Studies*, 6, 9-20.
- Ying, J. (2011). 蒙古族青年的语言态度研究[Research on the Language Attitude of Mongolian Youth]. *Forward Position*, 19, 154-156. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1009-8267.2011.19.038>
- Yu, S., & Eom, J., & Jeon, W. (2012). The factors affecting the development of national identity as South Korean in North Korean refugees living in South Korea. *Psychiatry Investigation*, 9(3), 209-216. <https://doi.org/10.4306/pi.2012.9.3.209>
- Yuan, Y., & Hu, D., & Feng, Z., & Li, P., & Shang, Y., & Yuan, Y. (2013). 云南跨境民族学生三语教育态度实证研究[An empirical study on attitudes toward trilingual education of ethnic minority students in cross-border areas of Yunnan province]. *Journal of Research on Education for Ethnic Minorities*, 24(6), 80-87. <https://doi.org/10.15946/j.cnki.1001-7178.2013.06.006>
- Zakiryanova, I., & Redkina, L. (2020). Research on ethnocultural identity in H. Tajfel's social identity theory and J.C. Turner's self-categorization theory. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 87, 103-110.
- Zhang, S., & Zhang, M. (2013). 论当代大学生的国家认同教育[On national identity education of contemporary college students]. *Education Review*, 2, 60-62. Retrieved from <http://www.nssd.cn/journal/cn/97172X/201302>
- Zheng, H. (2012). 国家认同教育：培养理性的爱国者[National identity education: cultivating rational patriots]. *Educational Research and Experiment*, 3, 22-27. Retrieved from http://www.cacme.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/20140418114703_40879.pdf
- Zientek, L., & Capraro, M., & Capraro, R. (2008). Reporting practices in quantitative teacher education research: One look at the evidence cited in the AERA panel report. *Educational Researcher*, 37(4), 208-216. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30138003>

Zuo, B. (2000). 论儿童国家认同感的形成[On the formation of children's national identity].
Educational Research and Experiment, 2, 33-37.

Appendix A: The Online Survey (The translated version)

Hello! Thank you very much for taking part in this survey. The purpose of this study is to investigate college students' attitudes toward ethnic minority educational policy in China, and the relationship between such attitudes and their sense of national identity.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time before submitting without explanation and without any disadvantage to you. Also, you can decline to answer any question that you choose to skip. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact the researcher: wei.zhu@education.ox.ac.uk or the principal investigator: ariel.lindorff@education.ox.ac.uk.

Any personal information collected in this study (e.g. ethnic group) will be kept strictly confidential and will not be published. Also, all the data will be stored safely on a password-protected drive and backed up to a OneDrive for Business folder accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor.

By submitting the questionnaire, you are confirming that you are fully aware of the information above and are willing to participate. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Part one: Socio-biographic information

1. Which language(s) did you acquire first before the primary school?

(You may pick more than one option):

Putonghua

the ethnic language

the local dialect

English

Others (please specify)

2. What is your ethnicity on the ID card?

There will be a drop-down box for the participants to choose.

3. What's your gender?

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

4. What's your grade level?

Year 1

Year 2

Year 3

Year 4

Others (text entry)

Part two: Attitudes toward educational policy for ethnic minority students

1) The Special policies (including bilingual education, *Minzu*/multicultural curriculums,

counterpart support and collaboration)

Basically, there are two parts of educational policies (special and compensatory) and participants will need to indicate their perceptions towards these two parts of educational policies. Since policies for bilingual education is an important part of the special policy for ethnic minority students in the Chinese mainland, the first 7 items were adapted from Wei et al. (2021), which is an attitudinal scale for bi/trilingual education in ethnic minority areas (specifically for Mongolians).

All in five-point Likert scale

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

1. Bilingualism/Trilingualism is important.
2. Bilingualism/Trilingualism helps me find a good job.
3. Bilingualism/Trilingualism makes me more brilliant.
4. Bilingualism/ Trilingualism helps me make more friends.
5. Bilingualism/Trilingualism makes it easier for me to be promoted in the workplace.
6. Bi/trilingual education helps me make more money.
7. Minzu/multicultural curriculums are important
8. Minzu/multicultural curriculums has given me a deeper appreciation of the history and culture of my ethnic group
9. Minzu/multicultural curriculums have a positive impact on the educational development process for ethnic minorities
10. Policies such as counterpart support and collaboration is important for minority education
11. Policies such as counterpart support and collaboration have a positive impact on the educational development process for ethnic minorities

2) Compensatory policies (preferential admission policies, establishment of ethnic colleges/ethnic preparatory classes, Ethnic Minority High Level Talent Training Program)

All in five-point Likert scale

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

12. Preferential admission policies such as extra points in Gaokao are important for ethnic minority students.
13. Preferential admission policies such as extra points in *Gaokao* have a positive impact on educational equity
14. the policy of the Ethnic Minority High Level Talent Training Program is important for the career development of ethnic minority students
15. the policy of the Ethnic Minority High Level Talent Training Program has a positive impact on the educational development process for ethnic minorities
16. Open-ended question

There are more related educational policies for ethnic minority students, such as increasing the salary and improving the status of teachers in ethnic minority areas. What other relevant policies are you aware of? Are there any thoughts about any such policies that you wish to share? You are also welcome to share your opinions on your choices in the above scale.

Part three: Sense of national identity

All in five-point Likert scale

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

1. I am proud to be Chinese.
2. If there is an afterlife, I would still like to be Chinese.
3. I think that the Chinese have a lot to be proud of.
4. In general, I think the Chinese are very kind.
5. Being Chinese is very important to me.
6. I think the Chinese are highly capable.
7. Overall, I feel good about Chinese people.
8. I think that most foreigners respect Chinese people.
9. I think that most foreigners are very friendly to Chinese people.
10. I think that people from other countries find Chinese people nice.
11. When I hear foreigners praising Chinese people, I feel like I'm being praised.
12. I feel that the success of other Chinese people is equivalent to my own success.
13. I feel that what happens to the Chinese is what happens to me.
14. When foreigners chastise other Chinese people, I feel like they are chastising me.
15. When interacting with foreigners, I would struggle with my Chinese identity.
16. My Chinese identity is holding me back.
17. If foreigners say bad things about Chinese people, I don't think it's any of my business.
18. When dealing with foreigners, they feel that I have a strong Chinese identity.
19. I think when foreigners see me, they will think I am what the Chinese look like (physical appearance).
20. I have many similar character traits to other Chinese people.
21. I feel like a typical Chinese person.

Appendix B: The CUREC Ethical Approval Notification

CUREC Ref: CIA-22HT-058

Hamish Chalmers <hamish.chalmers@education.ox.ac.uk>

Fri 01/04/2022 11:39

To: Wei Zhu <wei.zhu@education.ox.ac.uk>

Cc: Ariel Lindorff <ariel.lindorff@education.ox.ac.uk>; Student CUREC <student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk>

Dear Wei Zhu

Title: The influence of minority education policy on minority university students' sense of national identity in the Chinese mainland: an attitudinal study

Ref: CIA-22HT-058

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethics approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted.

If your research involves participants whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question (this includes those under 18 and vulnerable adults), then it is advisable to read the following NSPCC professional reporting requirements for cases of suspected abuse

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/information-service/factsheet-child-abuse-reporting-requirements-professionals.pdf>

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application you should submit details to research.office@education.ox.ac.uk for consideration.

Good luck with your research study.

Best wishes

Hamish Chalmers

Member of the DREC

Dr Hamish Chalmers

Departmental Lecturer in Applied Linguistics and SLA

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY

Tel: +44 (0)1865 284 091

Email: hamish.chalmers@education.ox.ac.uk

Director: The International Database of Education Systematic Reviews IDESR.org

Appendix C: Results of the exploratory factor analysis and reliability test of the policy

attitudes scale and the identity scale

1. policy attitudes scale

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.740
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1235.183
	df	105
	Sig.	<.001

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
1	.646	.657
2	.606	.548
3	.512	.542
4	.481	.414
5	.589	.562
6	.573	.362
7	.785	.798
8	.773	.760
9	.670	.665
10	.806	.803
11	.691	.646
12	.771	.817
13	.773	.835
14	.818	.858
15	.823	.900

Extraction Method: Principal Axis

Factoring.

Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Loadings			Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
				Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %			
1	5.225	34.835	34.835	4.944	32.962	32.962	3.889	25.926	25.926
2	3.136	20.909	55.744	2.757	18.379	51.341	2.938	19.587	45.514

3	1.878	12.519	68.262	1.698	11.318	62.660	1.821	12.139	57.653
4	1.064	7.092	75.354	.768	5.121	67.781	1.519	10.128	67.781
5	.827	5.514	80.868						
6	.581	3.872	84.740						
7	.485	3.231	87.971						
8	.428	2.850	90.822						
9	.353	2.353	93.175						
10	.272	1.813	94.988						
11	.242	1.613	96.600						
12	.186	1.239	97.839						
13	.137	.912	98.752						
14	.107	.716	99.468						
15	.080	.532	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotated Factor Matrix^a

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	
(8) Minzu/multicultural curriculums has given me a deeper appreciation of the history and culture of my ethnic group.	.848				General special policy attitudes
(10) Policies such as counterpart support and collaboration are important for minority education.	.822				
(7) Minzu/multicultural curriculums are important.	.814				
(11) policies such as counterpart support and collaboration have a positive impact on the educational development process for ethnic minorities.	.798				
(9) Minzu/multicultural curriculums have a positive impact on the educational development process for ethnic minorities.	.795				
(1) Bilingualism/Trilingualism is important.		.758			Language-related policy attitudes
(5) Bilingualism/Trilingualism makes it easier for me to be promoted in the workplace.		.736			
(3) Bilingualism/Trilingualism makes me more brilliant.		.723			

(2) Bilingualism/Trilingualism helps me find a good job.		.717				
(4) Bilingualism/ Trilingualism helps me make more friends.		.594				
(6) Bi/trilingual education helps me make more money.		.558				
(15) The policy of the Ethnic Minority High Level Talent Training Program has a positive impact on the educational development process for ethnic minorities.			.913		Attitudes toward High talented program	
(14) The policy of the Ethnic Minority High Level Talent Training Program is important for the career development of ethnic minority students.			.906			
(13) Preferential admission policies such as extra points in Gaokao have a positive impact on educational equity.					.800	General compensatory policy attitudes
(12) Preferential admission policies such as extra points in Gaokao are important for ethnic minority students.	.465				.760	

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Factor Transformation Matrix

Factor	1	2	3	4
1	.827	.403	.111	.376
2	-.343	.822	.386	-.240
3	.179	-.399	.871	-.223
4	-.408	-.049	.283	.867

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	119	16.6
	Excluded ^a	596	83.4
	Total	715	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.845	11

2. Identity scale

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.881
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3518.330
	df	210
	Sig.	.000

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
1	.860	.767
2	.954	.820
3	.874	.822
4	.947	.854
5	.971	.984
6	.933	.789
7	.913	.806
8	.841	.792
9	.944	.785
10	.951	.807
11	.901	.867
12	.842	.778
13	.914	.825
14	.904	.870
15	.744	.737
16	.706	.466
17	.704	.617
18	.826	.799
19	.864	.826
20	.927	.964
21	.889	.867

Extraction Method: Principal Axis

Factoring.

Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	12.577	59.891	59.891	12.404	59.067	59.067	5.565	26.502	26.502
2	1.926	9.170	69.060	1.607	7.655	66.721	5.217	24.843	51.345
3	1.625	7.739	76.799	1.434	6.828	73.550	3.737	17.796	69.141
4	1.546	7.363	84.162	1.396	6.650	80.199	2.322	11.058	80.199
5	.610	2.906	87.068						
6	.546	2.602	89.670						
7	.409	1.945	91.616						
8	.347	1.653	93.269						
9	.319	1.517	94.786						
10	.201	.959	95.744						
11	.173	.824	96.568						
12	.161	.768	97.336						
13	.135	.642	97.978						
14	.091	.436	98.414						
15	.081	.384	98.797						
16	.068	.324	99.122						
17	.064	.306	99.428						
18	.047	.226	99.654						
19	.032	.154	99.808						
20	.024	.114	99.922						
21	.016	.078	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotated Factor Matrix^a

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	
(1) I am proud to be Chinese.	.748	.404			Positive Emotional Evaluation
(2) If there is an afterlife, I would still like to be Chinese.	.738	.411			
(3) I think that the Chinese have a lot to be proud of.	.663	.558			

(4) In general, I think Chinese people are very kind.	.820				
(5) Being Chinese is very important to me.	.870				
(6) I think the Chinese are highly capable.	.806				
(7) Overall, I feel good about Chinese people.	.727				
(8) I think that most foreigners respect Chinese people.	.449	.706			Collective self-esteem and interdependence beliefs
(9) I think that most foreigners are very friendly to Chinese people.	.472	.666			
(10) I think that people from other countries find Chinese people nice.	.504	.656			
(11) When I hear foreigners praising Chinese people, I feel like I'm being praised.		.812			
(12) I feel that the success of other Chinese people is equivalent to my own success.		.817			
(13) I feel that what happens to the Chinese is what happens to me.		.747			
(14) When foreigners chastise other Chinese people, I feel like they are chastising me.		.774			
(18) When dealing with foreigners, they feel that I have a strong Chinese identity.			.758		Self-categorization
(19) I think when foreigners see me, they will think I am what the Chinese look like (physical appearance).			.757		
(20) I have many similar character traits to other Chinese people.			.891		
(21) I feel like a typical Chinese person.			.859		
(15) When interacting with foreigners, I would struggle with my Chinese identity.				.770	Negative emotions
(16) My Chinese identity is holding me back.				.640	

(17) If foreigners say bad things about Chinese people, I don't think it's any of my business.				.748	
--	--	--	--	------	--

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Factor Transformation Matrix

Factor	1	2	3	4
1	.611	.588	.459	.265
2	-.495	.213	-.098	.836
3	.606	-.271	-.660	.351
4	.122	-.731	.586	.327

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	119	16.6
	Excluded ^a	596	83.4
	Total	715	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.963	21

Appendix D: The Ethnic Minority High Level Talent Training Program

The Program for High-Level Cadres of Ethnic Minorities, referred to as the Ethnic Minority Cadre Program, is a major initiative of five ministries and commissions to implement the Communist Party's ethnic policy and promote the western development strategy with the strategy of developing the country through science education. It is planned to train a group of highly educated professionals of ethnic minorities for the west in five years from 2006, with the training schools being key universities and the students coming from the western provinces. The program is based on the requirements of "orientation enrollment, orientation training, orientation employment", and special policy measures such as "unified examination and appropriate score reduction" are adopted to recruit new students. Graduates are all employed in the orientation areas and units according to the orientation training and employment agreements, with a service period of 5 years for masters and 8 years for doctors. Considering that this policy is both preference-oriented and special, the researcher believes that it is more appropriate to discuss it separately from the general preferential policies and special policies.

Appendix E: Results of ANOVA (Dimension differences in Policy Attitude Scale) with assumption-checking procedures

Tests of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Score	Based on Mean	45.285	3	472	<.001
	Based on Median	17.020	3	472	<.001
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	17.020	3	329.496	<.001
	Based on trimmed mean	44.406	3	472	<.001

ANOVA

Score

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	17.541	3	5.847	10.142	<.001
Within Groups	272.098	472	.576		
Total	289.639	475			

ANOVA Effect Sizes^a

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Score	Eta-squared	.061	.022	.102
	Epsilon-squared	.055	.016	.096
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.054	.016	.096
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.019	.005	.034

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: pa_score

Games-Howell

(I) dimensions	(J) dimensions	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		(I-J)			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	.316*	.073	<.001	.127	.506
	3	.492*	.116	<.001	.190	.793
	4	.445*	.087	<.001	.220	.671
2	1	-.316*	.073	<.001	-.506	-.127
	3	.175	.108	.373	-.107	.457
	4	.129	.076	.333	-.069	.327
3	1	-.492*	.116	<.001	-.793	-.190
	2	-.175	.108	.373	-.457	.107
	4	-.046	.118	.980	-.353	.260
4	1	-.445*	.087	<.001	-.671	-.220
	2	-.129	.076	.333	-.327	.069
	3	.046	.118	.980	-.260	.353

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix F: Results of ANOVA (Dimension differences in Identity Scale) with assumption-checking procedures

Tests of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Score	Based on Mean	50.300	3	472	<.001
	Based on Median	23.861	3	472	<.001
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	23.861	3	406.847	<.001
	Based on trimmed mean	45.853	3	472	<.001

ANOVA

Score

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.810	3	1.603	3.061	.028
Within Groups	247.238	472	.524		
Total	252.048	475			

ANOVA Effect Sizes^{a,b}

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Score	Eta-squared	.019	.000	.045
	Epsilon-squared	.013	-.006	.039
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.013	-.006	.039
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.004	-.002	.013

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: sense_it_score

Games-Howell

(I) dimensio ns	(J) dimensio ns	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	.043	.114	.981	-.251	.337
	3	.086	.107	.854	-.191	.362
	4	-.178	.096	.252	-.428	.071
2	1	-.043	.114	.981	-.337	.251
	3	.042	.091	.967	-.194	.279
	4	-.222*	.079	.027	-.426	-.018
3	1	-.086	.107	.854	-.362	.191
	2	-.042	.091	.967	-.279	.194
	4	-.264*	.068	<.001	-.441	-.087
4	1	.178	.096	.252	-.071	.428
	2	.222*	.079	.027	.018	.426
	3	.264*	.068	<.001	.087	.441

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix G: Results of the independent-samples *t*-test (Gender differences of students'

policy attitudes)

Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
policy_attitude	0	65	3.891	.496	.062
	1	50	4.008	.522	.074

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
policy_at titude	Equal variances assumed	.011	.918	-1.223	113	.112	.224	-.117	.095	-.306	.072
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.215	102.786	.114	.227	-.117	.096	-.307	.074

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
policy_attitude	Cohen's d	.507	-.230	-.600	.140
	Hedges' correction	.511	-.229	-.596	.139
	Glass's delta	.522	-.224	-.594	.149

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.

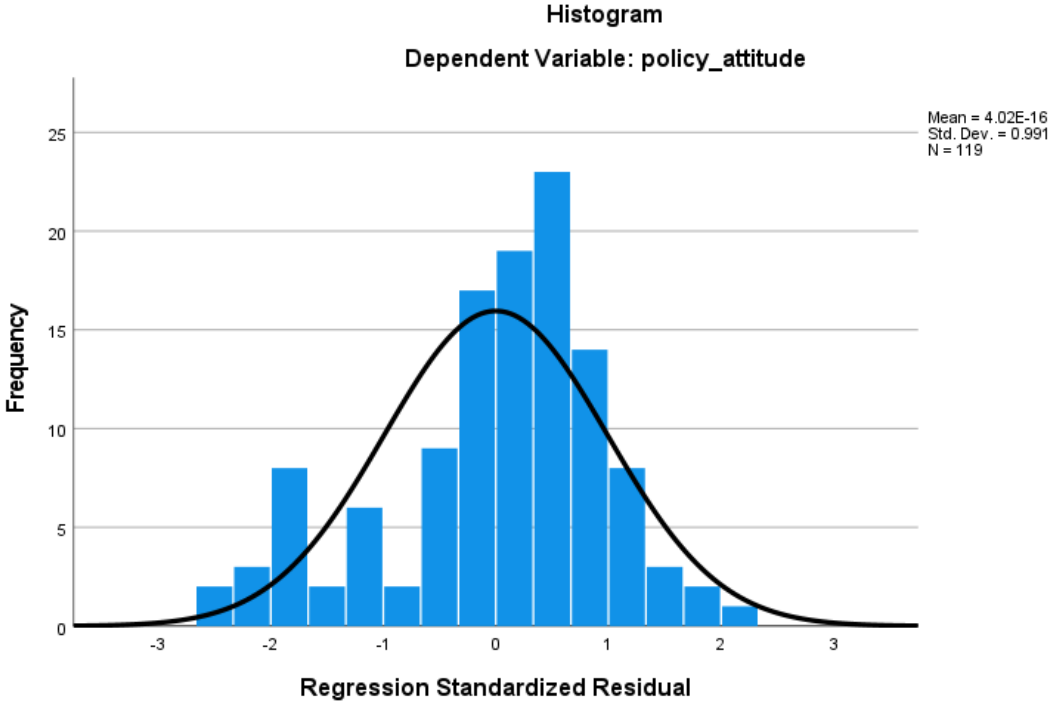
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.

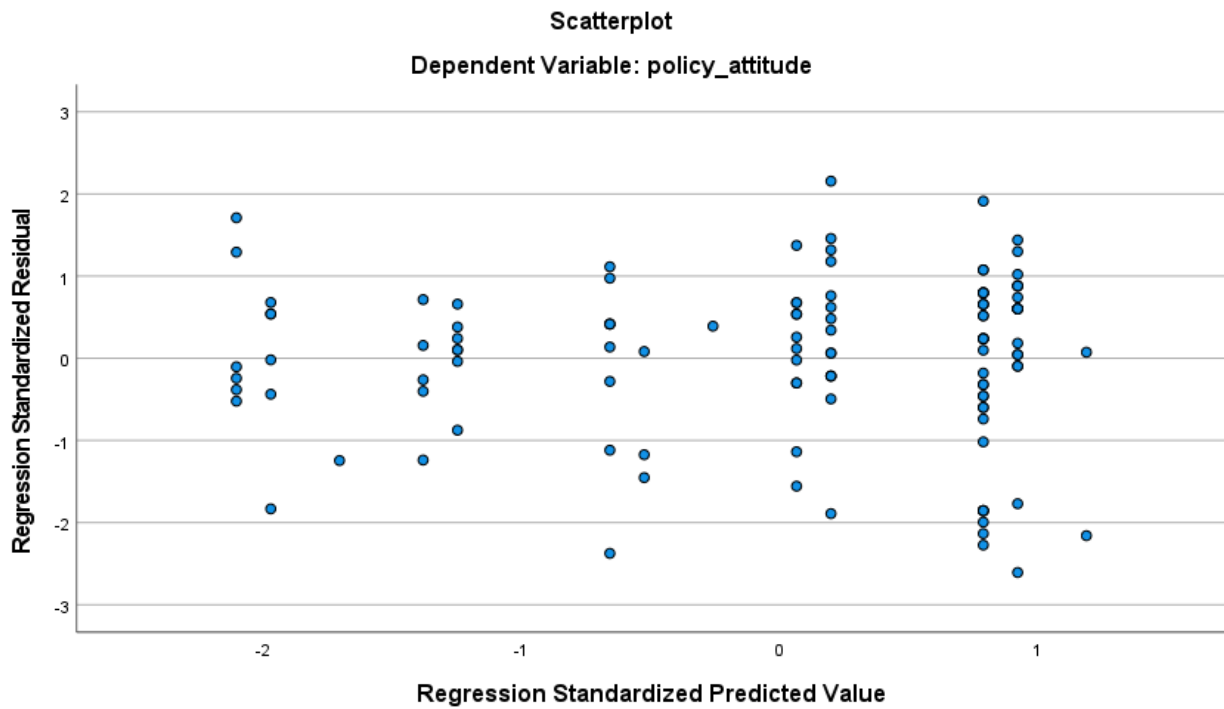
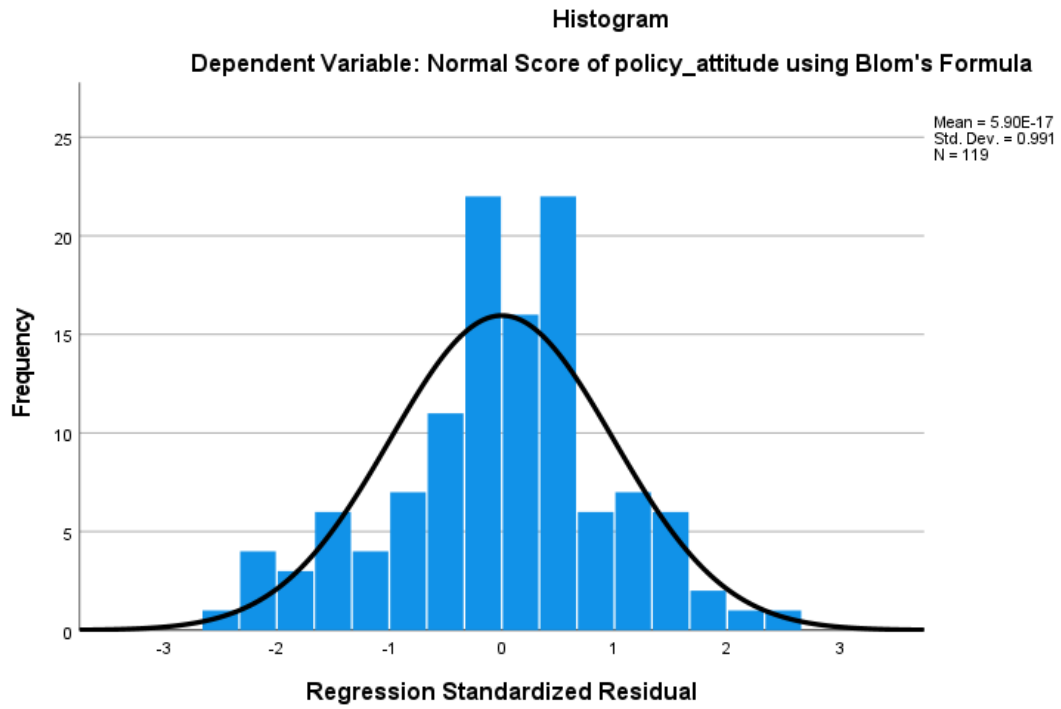
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.

Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

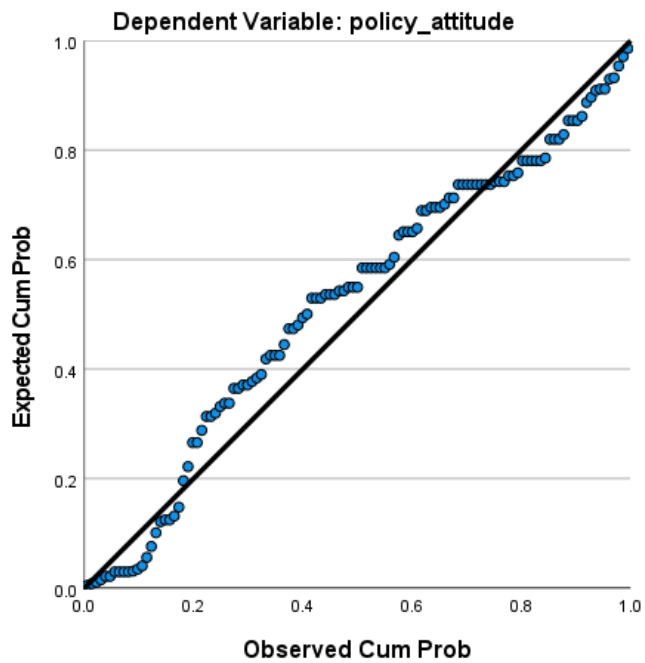
Appendix H: Assumption checking for regression analysis (Gender and Grade Level predict Students' Policy Attitudes)

Firstly, the dependent variable for the regression model, students' policy attitudes, is considered to be an interval scale and has met the assumption of normality, supported by the skewness (-.395) which falls within the range of -1 and +1, and the kurtosis (-.476) falling within the range of -3 and +3 (Field, 2009). In addition, model diagnostics have shown that the assumption of homoscedasticity and normality of residuals have been met, and there is no evidence of multicollinearity. The P-P plot for the model suggested that the assumption of normality of the residuals may have been violated. Therefore, the dependent variable, students' policy attitudes, has been transformed for later analysis. For the assumption of multicollinearity to be met we want VIF scores to be well below 10, and tolerance scores to be above 0.2; which is the case in this model. The Cook's Distance statistic for each participant was also generated and the maximum value of Cook's distance in our sample is .281 which is less than the value of 1 that may be a cause for concern as problematic cases in the sample (Field, 2009). Therefore, assumptions for conducting the regression model have been checked.

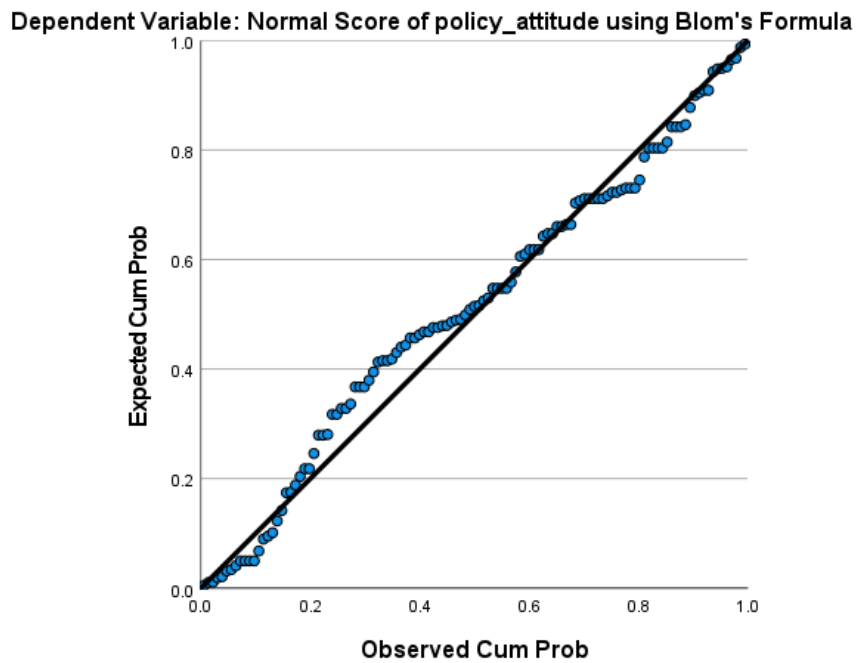




Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual



Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual



Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cook's Distance	119	.000	.281	.010	.029
Valid N (listwise)	119				

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.931	.060		65.771	<.001		
	gender	-.002	.070	-.002	-.025	.980	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	3.373	.136		24.748	<.001		
	gender	.026	.065	.034	.401	.689	.991	1.009
	Grade_level	.143	.032	.386	4.483	<.001	.991	1.009

a. Dependent Variable: policy_attitude

Appendix I: Results of ANOVA (One-Way ANOVA for Students' Sense of National

Identity across 5 Grade Levels) with assumption-checking procedures

Tests of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
sense_of_national_identity	Based on Mean	1.316	4	114	.268
	Based on Median	.390	4	114	.815
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.390	4	103.918	.815
	Based on trimmed mean	1.102	4	114	.359

ANOVA

sense_of_national_identity

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.552	4	1.138	3.073	.019
Within Groups	42.214	114	.370		
Total	46.767	118			

ANOVA Effect Sizes^{a,b}

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
sense_of_national_identity	Eta-squared	.097	.002	.183
	Epsilon-squared	.066	-.033	.154
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.065	-.033	.153
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.017	-.008	.043

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: sense_of_national_identity

Scheffe

(I) grade	(J) grade	Mean Difference		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		(I-J)	Std. Error		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	.452	.244	.491	-.311	1.214
	3	.005	.239	1.000	-.742	.753
	4	-.236	.205	.856	-.880	.407
	5	-.157	.188	.951	-.746	.432
2	1	-.452	.244	.491	-1.214	.311
	3	-.446	.244	.503	-1.209	.317
	4	-.688*	.211	.036	-1.349	-.027
	5	-.609*	.194	.050	-1.217	-.001
3	1	-.005	.239	1.000	-.753	.742
	2	.446	.244	.503	-.317	1.209
	4	-.242	.205	.846	-.885	.401
	5	-.163	.188	.945	-.751	.426
4	1	.236	.205	.856	-.407	.880
	2	.688*	.211	.036	.027	1.349
	3	.242	.205	.846	-.401	.885
	5	.079	.143	.989	-.370	.528
5	1	.157	.188	.951	-.432	.746
	2	.609*	.194	.050	.001	1.217
	3	.163	.188	.945	-.426	.751
	4	-.079	.143	.989	-.528	.370

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix J: Results of the independent-samples *t*-test (Gender differences of students'

sense of national identity)

Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
sense_of_national_identity	0	65	3.710	.637	.079
	1	50	3.869	.608	.086

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
sense_of_national_identity	Equal variances assumed	1.137	.289	-1.345	113	.091	.181	-.158	.118	-.391	.075
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.353	107.841	.089	.179	-.158	.117	-.390	.073

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
sense_of_national_identity	Cohen's d	.625	-.253	-.623	.118
	Hedges' correction	.629	-.251	-.618	.117
	Glass's delta	.608	-.260	-.631	.114

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.

Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.

Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.

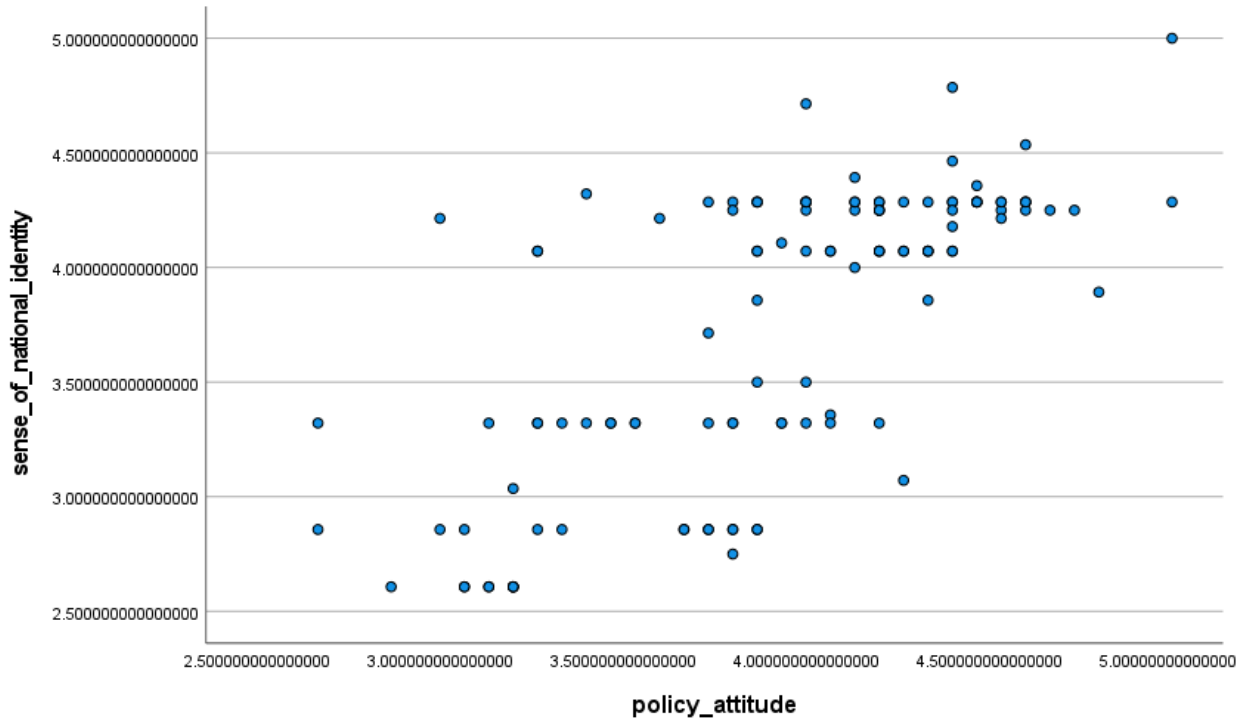
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

Appendix K: Assumption checking for Pearson’s correlation (students’ policy attitudes and their sense of national identity)

First, both variables are measured at the interval level and have met the assumption of normality, supported by the skewness (-.395, -.554) which both fall within the range of -1 and +1, and the kurtosis (-.476, -1.065) falling within the range of -3 and +3 (Field, 2009). The linearity relationship has also been checked using the scatter plot in which the points represented a straight line. moreover, the assumption of homoscedasticity has also been checked by looking at the scatter plot with the fit line

Statistics

		policy_attitude	sense_of_national _identity
N	Valid	119	119
	Missing	596	596
Mean		3.931	3.766
Std. Deviation		.513	.630
Skewness		-.395	-.554
Std. Error of Skewness		.222	.222
Kurtosis		-.476	-1.065
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.440	.440
Minimum		2.667	2.607
Maximum		5.000	5.000



Scatterplot

Dependent Variable: sense_of_national_identity

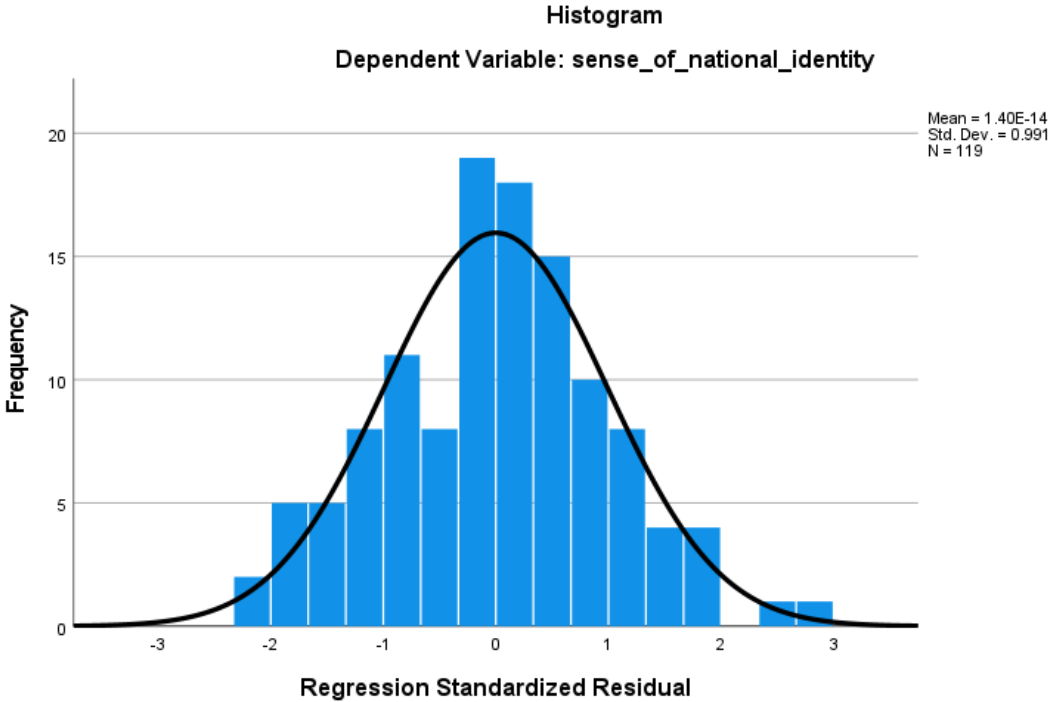
R² Linear = 0.495



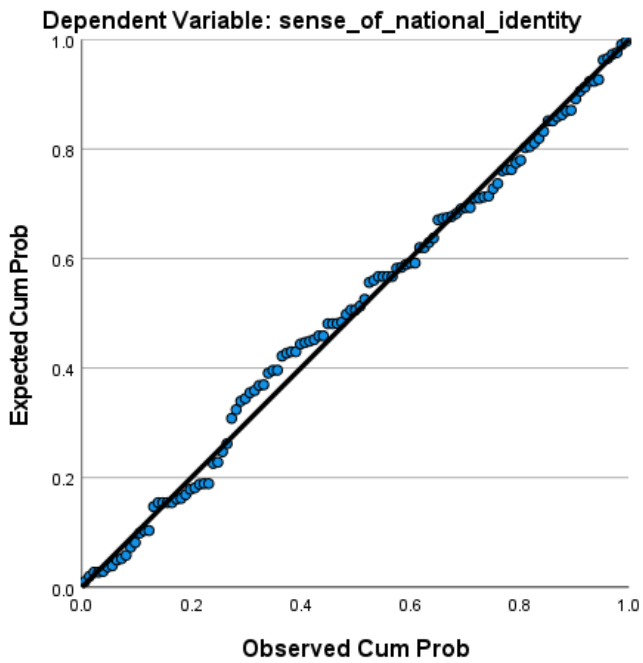
Appendix L: Assumption checking for regression analysis (Grade Level and Policy

Attitude predict Students' Sense of National Identity)

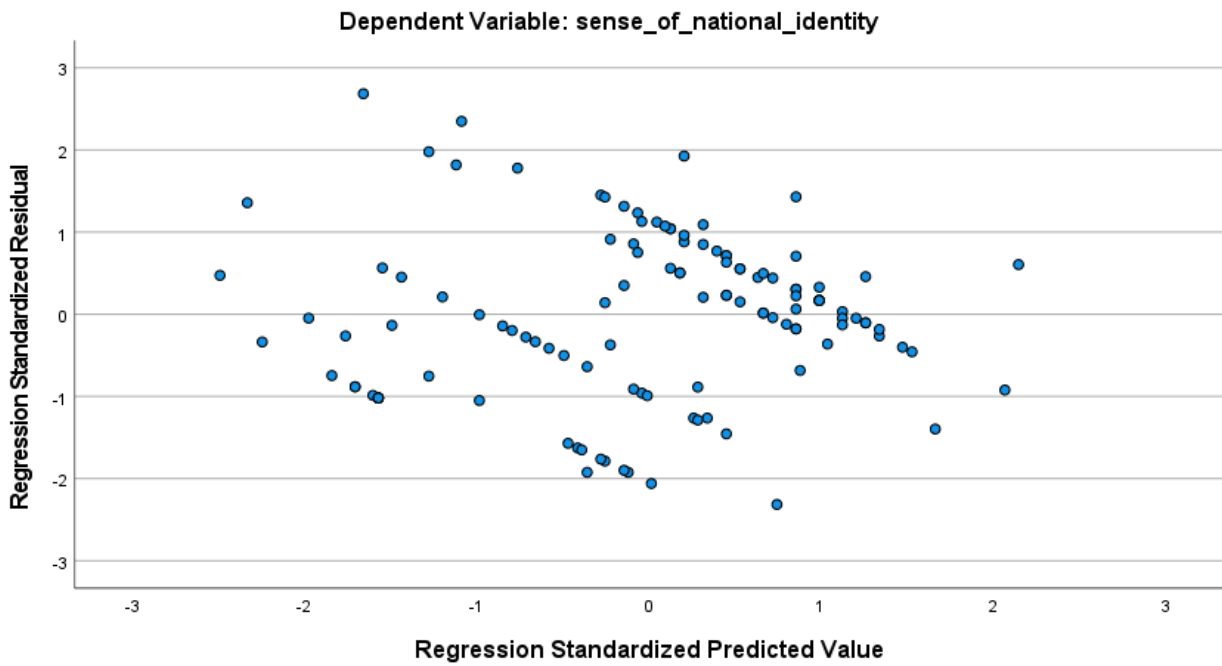
Firstly, the dependent variable for the regression model, students' sense of national identity, is considered to be an interval scale and has met the assumption of normality, supported by the skewness (-.554) which falls within the range of -1 and +1, and the kurtosis (-1.065) falling within the range of -3 and +3 (Field, 2009). In addition, model diagnostics have shown that the assumption of homoscedasticity and normality of residuals have been met, and there is no evidence of multicollinearity. The P-P plot for the model suggested that there seems to be some deviation from normality between the observed cumulative probabilities of 0.2 and 0.6 but it appears to be minor, which would not be considered as a severe problem with normality of residuals. For the assumption of multicollinearity to be met we want VIF scores to be well below 10, and tolerance scores to be above 0.2; which is the case in this model. The Cook's Distance statistic for each participant was also generated and the maximum value of Cook's distance in our sample is .145 which is less than the value of 1 that may be a cause for concern as problematic cases in the sample (Field, 2009). Therefore, assumptions for conducting the regression model have been checked.



Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual



Scatterplot



Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cook's Distance	119	.000	.145	.009	.017
Valid N (listwise)	119				

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.412	.166		20.510	<.001		
	grade	.093	.041	.205	2.261	.026	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	.330	.316		1.045	.298		
	grade	-.036	.032	-.079	-1.120	.265	.854	1.172
	policy_attitude	.909	.086	.741	10.525	<.001	.854	1.172

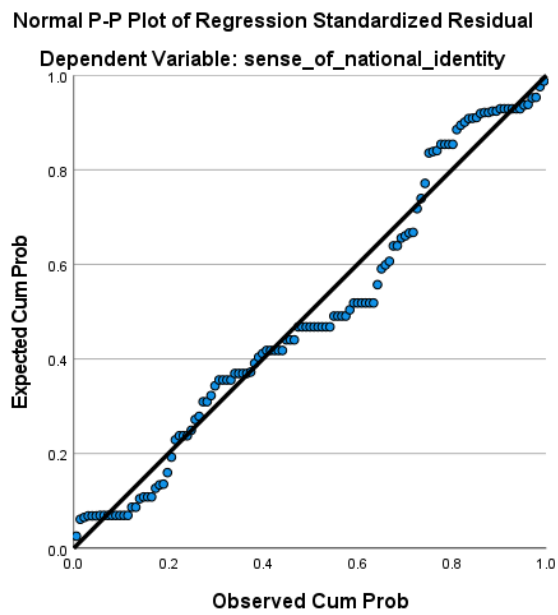
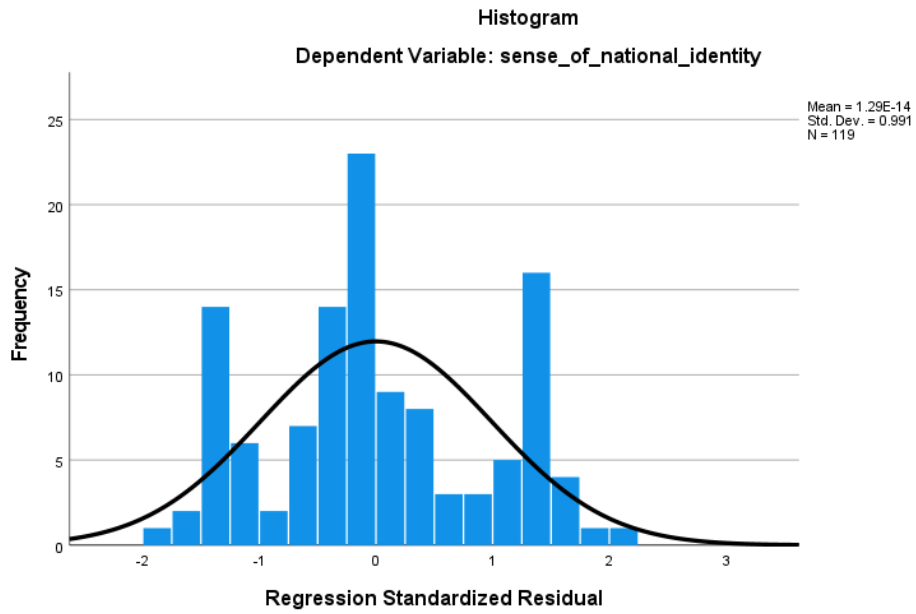
a. Dependent Variable: sense_of_national_identity

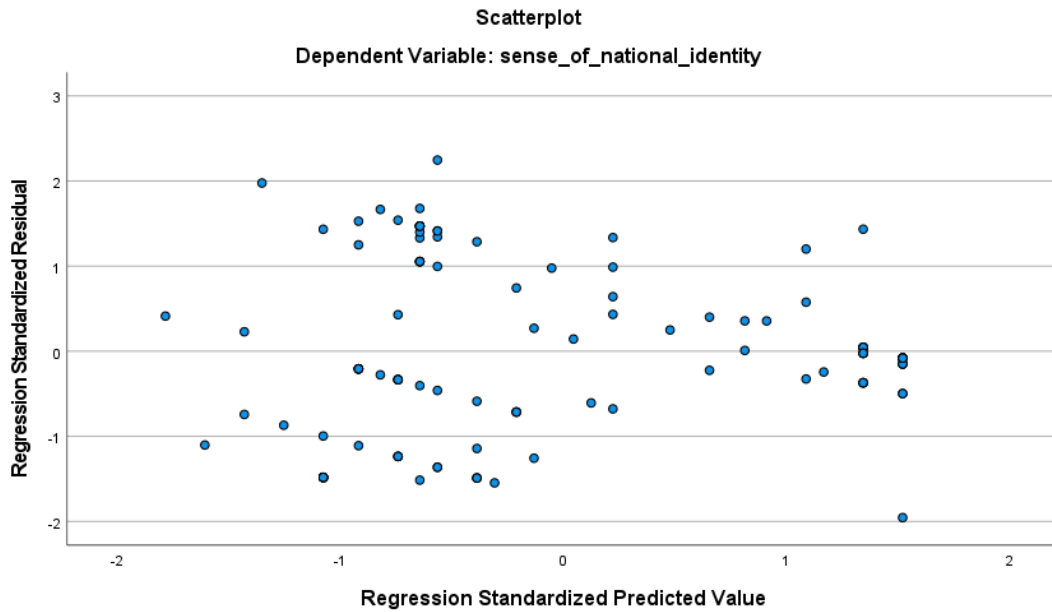
Appendix M: Assumption checking for regression analysis (*Grade Level and Special Policy Attitude predict Students' Sense of National Identity*)

Firstly, the dependent variable for the regression model, students' sense of national identity, is considered to be an interval scale and has met the assumption of normality, supported by the skewness (-.554) which falls within the range of -1 and +1, and the kurtosis (-1.065) falling within the range of -3 and +3 (Field, 2009). In addition, model diagnostics have shown that the assumption of homoscedasticity and normality of residuals have been met, and there is no evidence of multicollinearity. The P-P plot for the model suggested that there seems to be some deviation from normality between the observed cumulative probabilities of 0.4 and 0.8 but it appears to be minor, which would not be considered as a severe problem with normality of residuals. For the assumption of multicollinearity to be met we want VIF scores to be well below 10, and tolerance scores to be above 0.2; which is the case in this model. The Cook's Distance statistic for each participant was also generated and the maximum value of Cook's distance in our sample is .068 which is less than the value of 1 that may be a cause for concern as problematic cases in the sample (Field, 2009). Therefore, assumptions for conducting the regression model have been checked.

Statistics

		special_policy _attitude	sense_of_national_ identity
N	Valid	119	119
	Missing	596	596
Mean		3.483	3.766
Std. Deviation		1.089	.630
Skewness		.334	-.554
Std. Error of Skewness		.222	.222
Kurtosis		-1.363	-1.065
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.440	.440
Minimum		2.0	2.607
Maximum		5.0	5.000





Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cook's Distance	119	.000	.068	.008	.011
Valid N (listwise)	119				

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.412	.166		20.510	<.001	3.082	3.741		
	grade	.093	.041	.205	2.261	.026	.012	.174	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	2.405	.195		12.306	<.001	2.018	2.792		
	grade	.065	.034	.144	1.901	.060	-.003	.133	.988	1.012
	Preferential_policy_attitude	.319	.044	.552	7.294	<.001	.233	.406	.988	1.012

a. Dependent Variable: sense_of_national_identity

Appendix N: Brief details of the development of overall education level of ethnic minorities

Before 1949, the vast majority of minority regions were socially and economically backward, and modern education was almost blank. After the founding of New China, the state vigorously developed education in minority areas, gradually establishing and improving a modern school system from elementary school to university, and vigorously developing preschool education and vocational and technical education, forming a more complete and integral education system for China's minority groups. Within the whole education system (including early childhood education, basic education, vocational and technical education, adult education and higher education)

At the early stage of reform and opening up (after 1978), the level of development of basic education for ethnic minorities was still very backward. Individual regions were still in urgent need of education-related infrastructure. In response, the state issued a series of policies to improve the backwardness of education in minority areas, including gradually universalizing compulsory education, strengthening teacher training, and implementing bilingual education.

In the 21st century, China began to enter a period of further deepening reform and opening up, and educational equity became one of the main tasks of the new period. Entering the 21st century, China began to step into a period of further deepening reform and opening up, and educational equity became one of the main tasks of the new period. In this period, many policies emphasized the importance of vigorously promoting bilingual education, while actively promoting distance education projects to realize the sharing of educational resources. The sense of Chinese national community has also become the core goal of national unity education in the new era.

Appendix O: An overview of the current state of education preferential policies relevant to ethnic minority students across China

The newly released 2022 *General Higher Education Enrollment Regulations* indicates that "ethnic minority candidates in border areas, mountainous areas, pastoral areas, and areas inhabited by ethnic minorities" can be added a certain number of points to the total score of the general cultural examination. Although different provinces have different policies for minority candidates, but in general, minority candidates who meet the relevant conditions can add up to 20 points.