Follow father or mother?

Understanding the monoethnic identification of biethnic children in China

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Abstract: In China, children's ethnicity is often decided by their parents at the time of birth or during childhood; individuals are only allowed to be identified by a single ethnicity. Ethnic identification is therefore a contested issue shaped by the intra-family power structures that determine which parent's ethnic heritage will be passed down. In this paper, we use China's 2005 and 2015 inter-census surveys to examine the factors impacting the ethnic identification of children in interethnic families. All in all, we find the likelihood that children are identified with their fathers' ethnicity is decreasing between 2005 and 2015. Relative to children with a minority mother and a Han father, those with a Han mother and a minority father and those with parents from different minority groups have higher odds of following their father's ethnicity. Being a girl, being older, having a parent with an Islamic heritage, having more educated parents, having urban or migrant status, and the local concentration of ethnic minorities all tend to lower the odds. Moreover, stratified models demonstrate that Islamic heritage positively predicts boys' adoption of fathers' ethnicity but negatively predicts girls' adoption in families where the father is the only minority parent. Eligibility for bonus points on the college entrance exam is negatively associated with the odds of following father when the mother is the only minority parent but is positively associated when the father is the only minority parent. The results illustrate the nuanced social processes involved in the social construction of ethnic identification.

Keywords: ethnic minorities, ethnic identification, gender, education policy, interethnic marriage, China

Introduction

In China, parents choose their children's ethnic identification according to officially designated categories upon the child's birth or during childhood. Unlike countries where more than one racial or ethnic category can be selected or where a mixed-race category is available (Lichter & Qian, 2018; Qian, 2004; Xie & Goyette, 1997), in China only one ethnic category may be chosen in official records, including the census, residential registration (*hukou*) system, and national identification cards (Francis-Tan & Mu, 2019). In light of China's strong assimilationist discourse portraying all ethnic groups as part of a unified Chinese nationality, identification as an ethnic minority can serve an important role in preserving individuals' ethnic heritage and identity (Francis-Tan & Mu, 2022). Thus, interethnic families face a significant choice in granting more legitimacy to either the father's or the mother's heritage when deciding which one to pass down to the next generation. The parents' decision-making processes are shaped by numerous factors, including patrilineal traditions favoring the father's ethnic heritage and instrumental considerations such as preferential policies for ethnic minorities in China.

Increasingly, research on racial and ethnic identification has taken a constructivist perspective rather than treating ethnic identity as immutable and biologically determined (Barth, 1969; Wimmer, 2008). That is, identification with a particular ethnic group is seen as shaped and reshaped by various social processes, such as changes in the cultural salience of ethnic boundaries, institutional systems, and political and power structures. Among studies with a constructivist perspective, the nature and process of socially constructing ethnicity have been the subject of ongoing debates, which have often dealt in reductive dichotomies of authenticity versus instrumentalism in relation to ethnic identification. Those treating ethnicity as a matter of authenticity tend to see ethnic identification as mostly driven by an individual's subjectively felt reality and deeply embedded "identity," whereas those who see the matter in terms of instrumentalism focus on how ethnic identification reflects the interests and benefits attached to membership in a specific ethnic group. However, as Wimmer (2008) observes, using dichotomies to understand the nature of ethnicity limits the ability to capture the nuanced and interactional relationships shaping the subjective experiences and instrumental considerations that determine individuals' ethnic identities. Instead, he proposes identifying and studying the dimensions of variation along which these interactions take place.

Interethnic marriages have increased over time in China. According to census data, 3.46% of Chinese people had parents of different ethnic origins in 2005, either with one Han Chinese parent and one minority parent or with two parents from different minority groups; this number increased to 3.87% in 2015. That is, the percentage of parents faced with the decision about their children's ethnicity is rising. At the same time, extant research on children's ethnic identification in interethnic families in China often takes a descriptive quantitative (Guo & Li, 2008; Xiao, 2009) or ethnographic approach (Zhu, 2017). In this paper, using China's inter-census surveys from 2005 and 2015, we examine the impacts of the genders of parents and their children, Islamic heritage, and preferential educational policies on ethnic identification among children in interethnic families. This study moves beyond a dichotomous understanding of the social construction of ethnicity by systematically elucidating the concurrent and interactional influences of preservation of ethnic identity and the pursuit of instrumental ethnicity-based benefits.

Ethnic Identification: Authenticity versus Instrumentality?
Race and ethnicity have long been considered inherent and unchangeable. Theories of social construction have stressed the flexible, situational, and dynamic nature of ethnoracial identity (e.g., Bailey, 2009; Barth, 1969; Jenkins, 1994; Loveman, 2014; Marx, 1998; Nagel, 1994; Wimmer, 2008). A constructivist approach treats race and ethnicity as fluid, flexible, and impermanent (Davenport, 2020) and understands ethnicity not simply as a matter of cultural inheritance, but also as the result of a social process that is created and recreated rather than assumed, and chosen rather than inherited (Wimmer, 2008). In recent decades, opponents and proponents of constructivism have engaged in protracted debates that have often hinged on binary notions of "primordialism" versus "instrumentalism" or "essentialism" versus "situationalism." While those emphasizing "primordialism" tend to assert that ethnic membership is acquired through birth and represents a given feature of the social world, those focusing on "instrumentalism" argue that people choose between various identities based on their own self-interest. Those espousing an "essentialist" view emphasize ethnic cultures' transcontextual stability, while those arguing from a "situationalist" perspective look at how people identify with different ethnic groups depending on the logic of the situation. Overall, the two sides take opposing positions on whether ethnic identification mostly reflects authentic

"identity" driven by subjectively experienced reality and deeply embedded ethnic distinctions, or whether the instrumental "interests" attached to membership within a given group determine ethnic identification.

However, as Wimmer (2008) insightfully argues in his theoretic work on the social construction of ethnic boundaries, dichotomies of this nature may prevent us from fully understanding the social processes underlying different forms of ethnicity and empirically documenting the entire range of variations behind ethnic identification. Wimmer (2008) also stresses the importance of aggregating actions across various societal levels regarding influences at the macrostructural level and at the level of individual agency, along with impacts resulting from reciprocal responses between these levels.

A number of empirical studies have aimed to understand the nuanced, complex, and interacting social factors behind children's racial and ethnic identification in families with parents from different ethnic backgrounds. According to those studies, family is often a site of "struggle and compromise," where the child's racial and ethnic identification is negotiated and contested between the parents (Xie & Goyette, 1997). Or, in the words of Lichter and Qian (2018), the child's racial and ethnic identification reflects a "tug-of-war" between parents whose status and power differential results in opposing claims on the race and ethnicity of their children. Based on this literature, each parent's gender and socioeconomic status, the salience of the focal racial or ethnic heritage, and social contexts have all been established as crucial factors influencing power distribution between parents and, in turn, their children's racial and ethnic identification (Davenport, 2020).

The gender of each parent is a contested factor given the coexistence of patrilineal traditions with expectations of mothers' primary roles in socialization (Xie & Goyette, 1997). Wilson (1981) argues that women are the primary carriers of ethnic culture to their children, and therefore biracial or bicultural children are more likely to identify with their mother's race or ethnicity. Other researchers contend, on the other hand, that a father's ethnicity is more critical in determining children's ethnic identification because of a desire to pass on the status of the father to children (Qian, 2004; Xie & Goyette, 1997; Waters, 1990).

The salience of identifying with a particular race or ethnicity in terms of phenotype, religion, or language may shape decisions about ethnic identification, and individuals may experience different degrees of freedom to choose how they self-identify (Choi et al., 2008). For

example, because of higher rates of intermarriage and lower levels of residential segregation among American Indians than among other racial minorities, American children with both indigenous and nonindigenous backgrounds experience considerable flexibility in choosing whether to identify as multiracial, white, or native American (Nagel, 1995; Harris & Sim, 2002). Individuals with Anglo-Asian or Anglo-African backgrounds, on the other hand, are likely to be identified with the parent who has a minority background and experience less fluidity in their perceived ethnic identities (Brunsma, 2005; Qian, 2004). In 2000, when more than one racial category began to be allowed on the U.S. census, multiracial identification became more common when one of the parents was white and the other American Indian (Bratter, 2007). Some findings illustrate the opposite pattern. Liebler (2016) found that while children in families with one Asian parent are almost always reported as multiracial or of mixed ancestry, many non-Asian mixed-heritage children are identified as monoracial on the census, especially those with American Indian heritage. Gender and race-specific salience also shape children's racial and ethnic identification in interactive ways. For example, according to another two studies on American society, biracial children with Asian and white parents (Bratter & Heard, 2009) or black and white parents (Davenport, 2016) are more likely to incorporate their mother's race into their reported identities than biracial children with other parental backgrounds. Religion also uniquely influences decisions about racial and ethnic identification. For instance, Davenport's (2016) study found that while belonging to a religion that is more frequently linked with racial minorities is related with a minority identity, Jewish identity predicts whiter self-identification. For Asian-white biracials, adhering to a religion that is more frequently practiced by Asian ethnic groups, such as Hinduism, Islam, or Buddhism, may increase their sense of being uniquely Asian (Kurien, 2005; Ying & Lee, 1999).

Children's racial and ethnic identification is also influenced by their families' socioeconomic status. For example, Brunsma (2005) demonstrated that well-off parents of Hispanic-white and Asian-white biracial children are more likely to move their children away from a single minority identity. Similarly, greater affluence has a whitening effect on biracial individuals' self-identification (Davenport, 2016). Moreover, better parental education positively predicts children's biracial identification (Townsend et al., 2012) and identification as an ethnic minority (Xie & Goyette, 1997).

Social contexts shape children's racial and ethnic identification as well. The labels that interracial parents attribute to their children are influenced by their national origin and proximity to the immigrant experience (Lichter & Qian, 2018; Saenz et al., 1995). The racial environment of the region in which the families live and the racial mix of their social networks are also important contextual factors shaping children's racial and ethnic identification (Brunsma, 2005; Herman, 2004; Roth, 2005). For example, Xie and Goyette's work (1997) shows that as local concentrations of an Asian population increase, Asian identification also increases. A unique social context is created when preferential policies exist for racial and ethnic minorities. While the aforementioned other social contexts may incline individuals to preserve their ethnic heritage, preferential policies such as affirmative action may motivate the individuals' instrumental considerations and, in turn, incline them to make decisions about their racial and ethnic identification in order to take advantage of the benefits attached to membership in specific racial and ethnic minority groups (Francis & Tannuri-Pianto, 2013; Francis-Tan & Tannuri-Pianto, 2015; Francis-Tan & Mu, 2019, 2022).

In this paper, we examine the influences of the factors just outlined—gender and education of parents, salience of a particular ethnic heritage, and social contexts—on children's ethnic identification in China. First, moving beyond the extant literature, we consider not only the stand-alone main effects of parents' gender and education, but also the interplay between parents' and their children's gender and between the parents' gender and education as they shape children's ethnic identification. Second, by incorporating eligibility for preferential educational policies into our consideration of parents' choices around their children's ethnic heritage, we explicitly move beyond the dichotomous categorization of ethnic identification by unpacking the relationships between ethnic identity and instrumental considerations and the patterns of ethnic identification resulting from those interactions. Third, given the historical, religious, and for some groups phenotypical and linguistic differences, an Islamic heritage has a unique salience that distinguishes it from the heritage of the majority Han Chinese (Mu, 2022). Therefore, we also examine how Islam, all else being equal, shapes intermarried parents' decisions for their children's ethnic identification. Finally, we examine contextual influences by estimating the association between local concentrations of ethnic minorities and ethnic identification. By incorporating the above factors, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of how the interactions between authentic ethnic identity and instrumental considerations shape and reshape

the power dynamics between the parents and, in turn, their decisions about their children's ethnic identification.

History and Identification among Ethnic Minorities in China

The tension between creating a unified national identity and allowing citizens to retain their separate ethnic identities has fundamentally shaped the history of Chinese ethnic minorities and the state's treatment of them (Gladney, 1994; Mu, 2022). Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the government launched measures aimed at improving ethnic minorities' economic development and integrating them into society (Zhou, 2009). The state commissioned party cadres and researchers in the early 1950s to identify ethnic groups and classify them according to religion, language, and culture (Gladney, 2004). However, given the administrative and assimilationist purposes of these efforts, only 41 of the more than 400 groups that petitioned for recognition were recorded in the 1953 census (Gladney, 2004). The state-supported ethnic classification system was not completed until 1982 and recognized only 55 ethnic minority groups (Mackerras, 2003) in addition to the Han Chinese, who, according to the 2015 inter-census survey, make up 90.5% of the population.

Mao Zedong initiated the Cultural Revolution in 1966, a radical drive to consolidate power and enforce uniformity across China (Meisner, 1999). Ethnic minorities, in particular, were disproportionately affected. As ethnic diversity was seen as incompatible with the idea of a unified Chinese people (Heberer, 2017), many ethnic minorities were forced to abandon their customs and identities and to assimilate to the state's anti-traditionalist agenda (Dillon, 1994). However, by the early 1980s, the situation for China's non-Han population had much improved, and official policy shifted in favor of ethnic minorities (Hannum & Xie, 1998; Wu & He, 2018; Wu & Song, 2014; Zang, 2015). The state began to encourage cultural diversity by preserving the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities—for example, through the promotion of folk customs and art forms (Sautman, 2006). The government also launched a slew of programs aimed at narrowing the socioeconomic gap between majority and minority communities (Wu & He, 2018; Zang, 2015). Many citizens of non-Han heritage desired to publicly register their minority identification when the ethnic classification system was updated in 1982, motivated by an enthusiasm to embrace their ethnic backgrounds, take advantage of ethnicity-based policies, or both (Francis-Tan & Mu, 2019, 2022; Scharping, 2013).

In China, ethnicity is recorded on individuals' identity cards and residential registration. Historically, minority identification was only affirmed if one could show proof of ethnic ancestry. In many situations, this could be as simple as confirming one's birth village since many villages were linked to specific ethnic groups. The system's informality made it straightforward to achieve minority status, but it also allowed for some intentionally false claims (Scharping, 2013). By the 1990s, policies of ethnic identification had tightened, and a person could only claim to be a member of a minority group if one or both parents were minorities. As a result, the only people given a choice about their ethnicity were those with parents of different ethnicities (Francis-Tan & Mu, 2022). Officially, only monoethnic classification is permissible since the concept of a multiethnic identity is not institutionally supported (Lu, 2022). The ethnic identification of Chinese children from interethnic families is therefore a particularly contested issue because of the interplay between patrilineal traditions of carrying on one's heritage and the utility of using one's heritage to take advantage of preferential policies for ethnic minorities.

Ethnic Heritage and Patrilineality in China

Despite the Chinese government's effort to enhance cultural diversity and reduce socioeconomic inequality between ethnic minorities and the Han majority, success has been selective and superficial (Zang, 2015). The state supports and promotes only those aspects of minority cultures that can be conveniently aligned with the idea of a unified Chinese nationality (Gladney, 2004; Li & Shan, 2015). Thus, the state controls minority representation in the mass media and discourages expressions of ethnic heritage at the grass-roots level (Baranovitch, 2001; Gladney, 2004; Zhang, 1997). Self-identifying as an ethnic minority is one of the few ways to claim official recognition for one's ethnic heritage and identity in China. This is particularly relevant to ethnic minorities in intermarriages who must negotiate the tension between preserving their own cultural heritage and adapting to their spouses' cultural backgrounds (Mu, 2022).

Another cultural force—namely, patrilineality, which has long been prevalent in China—may complicate the social processes behind ethnic identification as a reflection of one's identity and cultural heritage. In patrilineal cultures, the heritage of the father is expected to be carried on by the sons to sustain the family lineage (Freedman, 1961; Jankowiak & Moore, 2016). Proverbs like "a son keeps incense at the ancestral alter burning" and "investing in a girl is like pouring water onto another's land" represent the different expectations of men and women in sustaining

the family lineage (Murphy et al., 2011). Under the condition of patrilineality, fathers may be particularly keen to identify their children as belonging to their own ethnicity, especially in the case of sons. Francis-Tan and Mu (2022) have found that among various factors, the father's ethnicity is the strongest predictor of a child's identification with an ethnic minority. Still, children's ethnic identification is a process involving competition and negotiation according to the power and status of the parents (Qian, 2004; Xie & Goyette, 1997). The relative socioeconomic status of the father and mother may serve to strengthen or weaken the father's authority in determining the children's ethnic identification. Therefore, it is important to empirically examine the interplay between the genders of both parents and their children and the interrelation of these factors with the parents' relative socioeconomic status. This paper proposes to examine how these factors work with or against each other to influence parents' decisions about what aspects of their ethnic heritage to pass on to their children.

Preferential Policies for Ethnic Minorities in China

To alleviate the socioeconomic inequality and conflicts between ethnic minorities and the Han majority, the Chinese government has implemented public policies in the areas of political representation, fertility, employment, and education (Zang, 2015). Education policy in particular has grown in importance over time as the economic returns to education have risen dramatically since the 1980s (Yang & Wu, 2009; Zhao, 2010).

Numerous policy efforts have aimed at improving educational outcomes for minorities and closing the socioeconomic gaps between ethnic groups. The government subsidizes the construction and operation of schools in minority communities at the basic and secondary levels, while certain Tibetan and Uyghur children are given the option to study in special courses in Han-dominated institutions (Leibold, 2016). The government funds 12 ethnic minority universities and offers preparation courses to assist minority students in their transition to college (Leibold, 2016; Sautman, 1998; Zhu, 2010). The most common policy, however, is the awarding of additional points on the national college entrance examination (Sautman, 1998; Wang, 2007). Ethnic minorities receive extra points in most provinces, but not all. For a detailed compilation of preferential policies on the college entrance exam, see Francis-Tan & Mu (2022).

As mentioned above, ethnic identification is a product of social construction. Ethnic identification can be driven by both the desire to preserve and demonstrate one's ethnic identity

and the intention to take advantage of potential benefits attached to a particular ethnic group (Wimmer, 2008). However, the actual decision-making processes may be more complex than what is suggested by this dichotomous conceptualization between authentic identity and instrumentalism, and the two mechanisms may interact. For example, under what circumstances do fathers forgo their patrilineal claims on their children's ethnic identification for the sake of potential benefits attached to an identification with the mother's ethnicity? When do they instead renounce these instrumental interests to sustain their ethnic lineage, which is passed down patrilineally? This study will be an empirical effort to showcase the nuances and interplay between the two mechanisms of how ethnic identification is socially constructed.

Methods

Data

We employ 10% samples from China's 1% inter-census population surveys for 2005 and 2015 (i.e., the mini-censuses for 2005 and 2015). These sources, comprising the biggest possible sample of ethnic minorities and their familial relationships, provide enough data points to analyze interethnic unions. The National Bureau of Statistics conducts the census in China, sending enumerators to interview households all around the nation. A representative from each household, typically its head or a member with good knowledge of the family, responds on behalf of the entire household. Parents are overwhelmingly the respondents who report their children's ethnic identification. In official records, parents almost always report their children's ethnicity at birth, and it is rare for children to change it later (National Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China, 2015). We focus on children who were 25 or younger in 2005 and 2015 as they are in the age group most influenced by preferential educational policies for ethnic minorities. We further restrict our sample to those with either one Han parent and one minority parent or parents from different ethnic minority groups. Note that it is useful to include children whose parents belong to different minority groups. Since their parents do not differ by minority status, their inclusion in the sample allows us to better examine how predictors of child's identity, particularly parents' and child's genders, operate independently of parent's minority status. Altogether, the analytical sample consists of data for 29,559 children from 20,754 households.

Variables

Our dependent variable is an indicator for whether the child of an interethnic family is identified with the father's or the mother's ethnicity, with the latter serving as the reference group. The variable is compatible with the monoethnic classification scheme used across China. Note that this dependent variable allows us to directly examine how parental ethnicity, along with parental gender and education, the child's gender, and eligibility for educational preferential policies jointly predict the tendency to follow patrilineal traditions by carrying on the legacy of the father's ethnic heritage. Analyses using this dependent variable are first based on all children in interethnic families, including those with one Han parent and one minority parent as well as those whose parents are of different ethnic minorities. To fully unpack the interaction effects between parental ethnicity and other predictors, we stratify the sample into three subsamples: children whose mother is the only minority parent, those whose father is the only minority parent, and those whose parents belong to different minority groups.

To account for the influences of patrilineality in shaping children's ethnic identification, we use a variable to indicate the combination of parental ethnicity and gender with three categories: only the mother is a member of a minority group, only the father is a member of a minority group, or each parent is a member of a different minority group. As already mentioned, this variable is also used to stratify the sample for the purpose of exploring the interaction effects of parental ethnicity and other variables. We also include children's gender to examine how ethnic identification further differs between boys and girls.

To examine how power imbalances based on parental gender and education jointly shape children's ethnic identification, besides including parents' average years of schooling, we also include a variable to reflect the patterns of educational assortative mating using three categories: parental educational hypogamy, in which the father has a lower education level than the mother; parental educational homogamy, in which parents have the same level of education; and parental educational hypergamy, in which the father has a higher education level than the mother. We code parents' years of schooling according to the original categorical variable: no schooling = 0, primary school = 6, junior middle school = 9, senior middle school or technical secondary school = 12, associate college = 14, university = 16, and graduate school = 18.

To reflect the interplay between ethnic identification and instrumental considerations, we construct a variable to indicate the child's eligibility for bonus points on the college entrance

exam as an ethnic minority. Specifically, we follow Francis-Tan and Mu's (2022) procedures. As they argue, this binary measure encapsulates the extensive margin due to the importance and competitiveness of the exam. Eligibility for bonus points is a more influential factor in children's minority identification than the actual number of points. Overall, in our full analytical sample, 60% of children in all interethnic families are eligible for bonus points on the college entrance exam.

As noted above, the salience of a given ethnic heritage can uniquely shape ethnic identification. In comparison to other ethnic groups, distinct religious, linguistic and phenotypical characteristics make identification with a particular ethnic group or heritage more salient (Mu, 2022; Van Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018), and this is particularly true in the case of the ten Islamic groups recognized in China. Thus, we also control for whether either of the child's parents is of Islamic heritage. To do this, we construct an eight-category variable combining parental ethnicity and Islamic heritage. Specifically, this variable is coded as follows: 1 = only the mother is a minority and the minority group is not associated with Islam, 2 = only the mother is a minority and the minority group is associated with Islam, 3 = only the father is a minority and the minority group is not associated with Islam, 4 = only the father is a minority and the minority group is associated with Islam, 5 = the parents belong to different ethnic minorities and neither minority group is associated with Islam, 6 = the parents belong to different ethnic minorities and only the mother's minority group is associated with Islam, 7 = the parents belong to different ethnic minorities and only the father's minority group is associated with Islam, and 8 = the parents belong to different ethnic minorities and both parents' minority groups are associated with Islam. In the analyses based on subsamples, we further interact the child's gender with the parents' Islamic heritage.

We also include the percentage of ethnic minorities at the prefecture level, which is the smallest geographic unit provided in the census data, to capture contextual influences (Xie & Goyette, 1997). We additionally control for the child's age, whether the child is of urban status (as indicated by the ownership of rural land within the family), whether the child is a migrant (as indicated by nonmatching places of residence and residential registration), the province of residential registration, and the census year.

Statistical Models

We use logistic regressions to estimate the statistical associations between the independent variables outlined above and the dependent variable—namely, whether a patrilineal pattern of ethnic identification is followed—with both the full sample and the three subsamples based on pooled data from the 2005 and 2015 mini-censuses. Note that results based on the separate 2005 and 2015 samples are consistent with those based on the pooled sample. Particularly, results are robust to the addition of controls for the number of siblings, a variable only available in 2005. Thus, we elect to use the pooled sample for its bigger sample size considering the limited number of ethnic minorities in China. We use robust standard errors that account for clustering on household given that some households have more than one child.

Results

Descriptive Results

Table 1 shows the patterns of children's ethnic identification in relation to patrilineality. The children are grouped according to their parents' ethnicities. As shown, overall, interethnic marriages with children are infrequent but increasing. Specifically, in 2005 and 2015, respectively, 1.68% and 1.81% of all children aged 25 or less had a minority mother and a Han father, 1.33% and 1.53% had a Han mother and a minority father, and 0.45% and 0.53% had parents from different minority groups. A clear pattern of patrilineality can be seen in children's ethnic identification in the sample. In 2005 and 2015, respectively, 47.15% and 37.54% of children follow their father's ethnicity when only their mother has a minority background, while 85.06% and 88.67% follow their father's ethnicity when only their father has a minority background. Furthermore, when parents are from different ethnic minority groups, 74.65% and 73.49% of children are identified with their father's ethnicity.

[Table 1 about here]

The next section will discuss regression results. As mentioned earlier, we first examine factors that predict whether the child is identified with the father based on the sample including all three types of intermarriage. We then stratify the sample according to the three types of intermarriage. Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the analytical samples.

[Table 2 about here]

Results based on the full sample

Table 3 examines factors that determine the child's likelihood of identifying with the father's ethnicity in the sample pooling the types of intermarriage. We use two models with different variables to indicate parental ethnicity. First, we use a three-category variable indicating whether only the mother has a minority background, only the father has a minority background, or the parents have different minority backgrounds. Next, we use an eight-category variable that incorporates parental ethnicity and the ethnic group's association with Islamic heritage.

[Table 3 about here]

Relative to children with a minority mother and a Han father, those with a Han mother and a minority father and those with parents from different minority groups have 11 and 5 times the odds of adopting their father's ethnicity, respectively. Moreover, girls are significantly less likely to identify with their father's ethnicity than boys are.

We further unpack parental ethnicity according to its association with Islamic heritage. Children with only a Muslim minority mother are no more likely to follow their father's ethnicity than children with only a non-Muslim minority mother (reference group). In all other cases, having an Islamic heritage lowers the likelihood of following father's ethnicity, ceteris paribus. Among children with only a minority father, children with a non-Muslim father have 11 times the odds, while those with a Muslim father have just 6 times the odds. Among children with two minority parents, children with no Muslim parents have 5 times the odds, those with one Muslim parent have 3-4 times the odds, and those with two Muslim parents have just 2 times the odds. This may have to do with gender differences among children. While Islam is associated with a strong tendency to pass the heritage on from one generation to the next, its emphasis on patrilineality may make it less likely for fathers to pass it on to girls, and this may serve to flatten the coefficients. Among parents who belong to different minorities, the father's Islamic heritage more strongly predicts the children's identification with the father's ethnicity than does the mother's Islamic heritage alone or the association of both parents with Islam. These findings jointly demonstrate the relevance of patrilineality in shaping children's ethnic identification.

Eligibility for bonus points in the college entrance exam is negatively associated with the odds of passing down the father's ethnicity. However, the effects are not statistically significant. This suggests the interplay of the underlying counterforces of patrilineality and instrumental considerations in light of preferential policies for ethnic minorities.

15

In terms of parental education, the average number of years of schooling negatively predicts the likelihood of passing down a father's ethnic heritage. The implications are two-fold. First, more-educated parents may be more gender egalitarian and also more knowledgeable and appreciative of their minority heritage, regardless of paternal or maternal heritage, than their less-educated counterparts. Second, parents who are more educated may hold higher educational expectations for their children than parents who are less educated. Thus, more-educated parents may prefer to deviate from the patrilineal tradition of ethnic identification so as to qualify their children for the educational preferential policies. Moreover, the coefficients on parental educational hypergamy positively predict the likelihood of passing down the father's ethnic heritage, even though they are only marginally significant. This modestly suggests the possibility that a father's higher education may confer bargaining power in deciding the child's ethnicity.

A local concentration of an ethnic minority population negatively predicts the odds of passing down a father's ethnicity to children. This may indicate that a higher local concentration of ethnic minorities reflects a strong pull from the ethnic cultures and socializations associated with local communities. For children living in such communities, identification with the local minority heritage may be more crucial than identification with their father's ethnic heritage.

As for other independent variables, we find that children's age is negatively associated with the tendency to identify with the father's ethnicity. Having urban status and being a migrant are both negatively associated with the odds of identifying with the father; this may be due to the more liberal and egalitarian mindsets among urbanites and migrants than among their rural and non-migrant counterparts. Over time, from 2005 to 2015, children are less likely to be identified with their fathers' ethnicity.

Results based on the subsamples
Some variables, e.g., eligibility for bonus points, are challenging to interpret in models pooling observations from different family types. For this reason, models stratified by family type are especially valuable. Table 4 examines factors that determine the child's likelihood of identifying with the father's ethnicity in three subsamples—namely, among families where only the mother belongs to an ethnic minority, only the father belongs to an ethnic minority, and the parents belong to different minority groups—to uncover the interplay between ethnic identity, patrilineality, and instrumental considerations. Particularly, we further interact the child's gender

with Islamic heritage to fully understand the relationships between patrilineality and ethnic saliency in the presence of Islamic heritage.

[Table 4 about here]

Among families where only the mother has an ethnic minority background, girls are less likely to identify with their father's ethnicity than boys, regardless of whether or not the mother's ethnicity is associated with Islam. This suggests an alignment between patrilineal traditions and the instrumental benefits attached to being an ethnic minority in these families. This is further corroborated by the negative coefficients on both bonus point eligibility and local concentration of ethnic minorities. Consistent with the results in Table 3, the child's age, the parents' average number of years of schooling, urban status, and census year all negatively predict the odds of perpetuating the father's ethnic heritage.

Among families where only the father has an ethnic minority background, the child's gender loses statistical significance in the case of non-Muslim fathers. However, a sharp gender difference emerges when the father's ethnicity is associated with Islam. Specifically, while the father's Islamic heritage positively predicts boys' likelihood of adopting the father's ethnicity, the association is negative for girls. Unlike the patterns for the pooled sample in Table 3, as well as the patterns for the subsample of families where only the mother has a minority background, in families where only the father identifies as an ethnic minority, factors such as bonus point eligibility, the parents' average number of years of schooling, the level of concentration of ethnic minorities, and census year all positively predict the likelihood of children adopting their father's ethnicity. These contrasting patterns indicate that patrilineal inheritance of ethnicity differs by parental ethnic composition. In turn, they underscore the importance of conducting analyses with both the pooled sample and the subsamples stratified by parental ethnic composition. The negative coefficients on the child's age and being a migrant remain.

Among families where the parents belong to different minority groups, most of the covariates lose statistical significance, possibly due to limited sample size. For the coefficients that remain significant, bonus eligibility positively predicts the likelihood of identifying with the father, indicating that when both parents are potentially eligible for the education policy, patrilineal preferences may dominate the decision regarding the child's ethnic identification. Furthermore, parental education shows a marginally significant negative influence on identifying

17

with the father, suggesting a moderate liberalization effect of education against patrilineal traditions.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper, we use China's 2005 and 2015 inter-census surveys to examine the concurrent and interactive influences of parents' ethnicity and gender, children's gender, Islamic heritage, preferential education policies, and other factors on the ethnic identification of children with biethnic family backgrounds. We focus on offspring who are 25 or younger and whose parents are of different ethnicities. All in all, we find the likelihood that children are identified with their fathers' ethnicity is decreasing between 2005 and 2015. Relative to children with a minority mother and a Han father, those with a Han mother and a minority father and those with parents from different minority groups have higher odds of following their father's ethnicity. Being a girl, being older, having a parent with an Islamic heritage, having more educated parents, having urban or migrant status, and the local concentration of ethnic minorities all tend to lower the odds. Moreover, stratified models demonstrate that Islamic heritage positively predicts boys' adoption of fathers' ethnicity but negatively predicts girls' adoption in families where the father is the only minority parent. Eligibility for bonus points on the college entrance exam is negatively associated with the odds of following father when the mother is the only minority parent but is positively associated when the father is the only minority parent. The results illustrate the nuanced social processes involved in the social construction of ethnic identification.

This study contributes to the extant literature in the following ways. First, we examine how the interplay between parents' and children's gender, as well as between the parents' gender and education, impacts children's ethnic identification in addition to the stand-alone main effects of parents' gender and education. Second, we provide a first attempt to reveal the negotiations between authentic ethnic identity and instrumental considerations behind ethnic identification by integrating eligibility for preferential educational policies. Third, drawing on findings on how Islamic heritage influences parents' decisions in interethnic families regarding their children's ethnic identification, we demonstrate the complexities and variations in constructing ethnic identification by showing how religion interacts with ethnic identity and jointly shapes ethnic boundaries. Last, we include local concentration of ethnic minorities to understand contextual influences.

Through this approach, the paper aims to provide an understanding of how the interactions between authentic identity and instrumental considerations shape and reshape the power dynamics of parents and their decisions about their children's ethnic identification. The findings from this study lead us to echo Wimmer's (2008) call for attempts to transcend binarism when discussing ethnicity and to explain the range of empirically documented variations in ethnic identification to a fuller extent while considering various levels of social factors. Our findings indicate the nuanced and interactional relationships between social factors that shape authentically felt ethnic identities and instrumental considerations, respectively. On one hand, earlier communist campaigns suppressed minority identity, and later changes in the social environment helped minorities to express their "true" selves and motivated them to pursue official ethnic identification. In combination with the patrilineal tradition of preserving and passing on ethnic heritage, minority status is to a great extent a cultural feature transmitted intergenerationally among male heirs. On the other hand, people strategically resort to making use of favorable policies toward minorities when deciding their children's ethnic identification. In other words, patriarchal ideologies may yield to favorable policies shaping patterns of ethnic identification, and vice versa. This study calls for a more comprehensive conceptualization of ethnic identification by transcending the binarism of authentic identity and instrumentalism and revealing how they are intertwined and embedded in other relevant social processes, such as socioeconomic imbalances, variations in the salience of a particular ethnicity, and contextual heterogeneities. In China and beyond, ethnoracial identification escapes simple conceptualization, as it is fluid, contextual, and dynamic.

Data Availability

The data underlying this article cannot be shared publicly due to the privacy of individuals that participated in the study. The data will be shared on reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Tables

Table 1. Ethnic classification of children by ethnicity of parents

Mother's ethnicity	Father's ethnicity	% Child's minority ethnicity		% Child's ethnicity following father		N	
		2005	2015	2005	2015	2005	2015
Han	Han	0.00	0.00	--	--	346,994	348,834
Minority-same	Minority-same	100.00	100.00	--	--	45,417	35,852
Minority	Han	52.85	62.46	47.15	37.54	6,825	7,238
Han	Minority	85.06	88.67	85.06	88.67	5,390	6,134
Minority-different	Minority-different	100.00	100.00	74.65	73.49	1,838	2,135

Note: Calculated from the 2005 and 2015 inter-census surveys.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Samples	All intermarriages (N = 29,559)	Subsample 1: Only mother minority (N = 14,062)	Subsample 2: Only father minority (N = 11,524)	Subsample 3: Parents different minorities (N = 3,973)
Variables	Mean/%	Mean/%	Mean/%	Mean/%
Following father's ethnicity (ref.=following mother's)	63.94	42.20	86.98	74.02
Family type				
only mother minority (ref.)	47.57	100.00	0.00	0.00
only father minority	38.99	0.00	100.00	0.00
parents different minorities	13.44	0.00	0.00	100.00
Islam				
only mother minority: not associated with Islam (ref.)	45.20	95.02		
only mother minority: associated with Islam	2.37	4.98		
only father minority: not associated with Islam	36.44		93.47	
only father minority: associated with Islam	2.55		6.53	
parents different minorities - neither associated with Islam	11.62			86.46
parents different minorities - only mother associated with Islam	0.32			2.39
parents different minorities - only father associated with Islam	0.40			3.00
parents different minorities - both associated with Islam	1.10			8.16
female (ref.= male)	47.03	47.11	47.55	45.21
age	11.51	11.44	11.68	11.21
eligible for bonus points (ref.=not)	59.94	56.85	55.73	83.11
parents' average years of schooling	8.68	8.70	8.97	7.80
parental educational matching				
parental educational hypogamy (ref.)	11.69	12.40	11.50	9.69
parental educational homogamy	57.10	56.98	58.22	54.29
parental educational hypergamy	31.22	30.62	30.28	36.02
urban status (ref.=not)	44.44	44.01	46.89	38.86
migrant (ref.=not)	13.23	13.50	13.89	10.34
% ethnic minorities in prefecture	34.36	31.45	31.35	53.37

Source: 2005 and 2015 inter-census surveys.
Note: Descriptive statistics for provinces are omitted.

Table 3. Logistic models predicting whether children of interethnic marriages follow father's ethnicity in China, all intermarriages (*N*=29,559)

	Following father's ethnicity (ref.=following mother's)	
Family type (ref.=only mother minority)		
only father minority	10.770***	
	(0.480)	
parents different minorities	4.745***	
	(0.266)	
Family type with Islamic heritage (ref.=only mother minority: not associated with Islam)		
only mother minority: associated with Islam		1.048
		(0.108)
only father minority: not associated with Islam		11.283***
		(0.517)
only father minority: associated with Islam		6.035***
		(0.822)
parents different minorities - neither associated with Islam		5.201***
		(0.311)
parents different minorities - only mother associated with Islam		3.627***
		(1.155)
parents different minorities - only father associated with Islam		4.552***
		(1.376)
parents different minorities - both associated with Islam		1.819**
		(0.388)
female (ref.= male)	0.906***	0.907***
	(0.024)	(0.024)
age	0.992**	0.992**
	(0.002)	(0.002)
eligible for bonus points (ref.=not)	0.908	0.897
	(0.060)	(0.060)
parents' average years of schooling	0.948***	0.945***
	(0.006)	(0.006)
parental educational matching (ref.=parental educational hypogamy)		
parental educational homogamy	1.023	1.016
	(0.053)	(0.053)
parental educational hypergamy	1.110†	1.102†
	(0.063)	(0.063)
urban status (ref.=not)	0.851***	0.858***
	(0.035)	(0.035)
migrant (ref.=not)	0.852**	0.856**
	(0.043)	(0.043)
% ethnic minorities in prefecture	0.996***	0.996***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
census year 2015 (ref.=2005)	0.886**	0.887**
	(0.034)	(0.034)

Source: 2005 and 2015 inter-census surveys.
Note: Odds ratios are reported in the table. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. Coefficients for provinces are not shown. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.10$.

Table 4. Logistic models predicting whether children of interethnic marriages follow father's ethnicity in China, stratified by types of intermarriages

Dependent variable: Following father's ethnicity (ref.=following mother's)	Subsample 1: Only mother minority ($N = 14{,}058$)	Subsample 2: Only father minority ($N = 11{,}521$)	Subsample 3: Parents different minorities ($N = 3{,}968$)
female (ref.= male)	0.914*	0.965	0.877
	(0.034)	(0.057)	(0.070)
mother's ethnicity associated with Islam (ref.=not)	0.876		
	(0.127)		
Interactions: female (ref.=male) X mother's ethnicity associated with Islam (ref.=not)	0.836		
	(0.155)		
father's ethnicity associated with Islam (ref.=not)		1.526*	
		(0.296)	
Interactions: female (ref.=male) X father's ethnicity associated with Islam (ref.=not)		0.637*	
		(0.128)	
Islam (ref.=neither parent ethnicity associated with Islam)			
only mother's ethnicity associated with Islam			0.794
			(0.294)
only father's ethnicity associated with Islam			1.116
			(0.408)
both parents' ethnicities associated with Islam			0.952
			(0.418)
Interactions: female (ref.=male) X Islam (ref.= neither parent ethnicity associated with Islam)			
only mother's ethnicity associated with Islam			1.236
			(0.535)
only father's ethnicity associated with Islam			1.065
			(0.510)
both parents' ethnicities associated with Islam			0.930
			(0.226)
age	0.994†	0.984**	0.997
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.007)
eligible for bonus points (ref.=not)	0.615***	1.463**	1.794**
	(0.057)	(0.207)	(0.384)
parents' average years of schooling	0.886***	1.044**	0.968†
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.017)
parental educational matching (ref.=parental educational hypogamy)			
parental educational homogamy	1.029	1.032	1.044
	(0.076)	(0.109)	(0.164)
parental educational hypergamy	1.109	1.030	1.199
	(0.088)	(0.117)	(0.198)
urban status (ref.=not)	0.862**	0.880	0.854
	(0.048)	(0.073)	(0.102)
migrant (ref.=not)	0.916	0.754**	0.912
	(0.066)	(0.075)	(0.142)
% ethnic minorities in prefecture	0.992***	1.009***	0.997
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
census year 2015 (ref.=2005)	0.701***	1.321***	0.924
	(0.037)	(0.101)	(0.103)

Source: 2005 and 2015 inter-census survey.

Note: Odds ratios are reported in the table. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. Coefficients for provinces are not shown. 4 cases dropped in Subsample 1 and 3 cases dropped in Subsample 2 due to perfect prediction of the dependent variable in Tibet; 5 cases dropped in Subsample 3 due to perfect prediction of the dependent variable in Beijing and Shandong. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.10$.