Unity in Diversity: Exploring the Psychological Processes and Mechanisms of the Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation in Ethnic Inter-embedded Communities

Authors : Jiamin Chen, Liping Yang

Abstract : In 2007, sociologist Putnam proposed a pessimistic forecast in the United States' "Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey," suggesting that "ethnic diversity would challenge social unity and undermine social cohesion." If this pessimistic assumption were proven true, it would indicate a risk of division in diverse societies. China, with 56 ethnic groups, is a multi-ethnic country. On May 26, 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed "building ethnically inter-embedded communities to promote deeper development in interactions, exchanges, and integration among ethnic groups." Researchers unanimously agree that ethnic inter-embedded communities can serve as practical arenas and pathways for solidifying the sense of the Chinese national community However, there is no research providing evidence that ethnic inter-embedded communities can foster the sense of the Chinese national community, and the influencing factors remain unclear. This study adopts a constructivist grounded theory research approach. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used in the study. Data were collected in three communities in Kunming City. Twelve individuals were eventually interviewed, and the transcribed interviews totaled 187,000 words. The research has obtained ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of Nanjing Normal University (NNU202310030). The research analyzed the data and constructed theories, employing strategies such as coding, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling. The study found that: firstly, ethnic inter-embedded communities exhibit characteristics of diversity, including ethnic diversity, cultural diversity, and linguistic diversity. Diversity has positive functions, including increased opportunities for contact, promoting self-expansion, and increasing happiness; negative functions of diversity include highlighting ethnic differences, causing ethnic conflicts, and reminding of ethnic boundaries. Secondly, individuals typically engage in interactions within the community using active embedding and passive embedding strategies. Active embedding strategies include maintaining openness, focusing on similarities, and pro-diversity beliefs, which can increase external group identification, intergroup relational identity, and promote ethnic integration. Individuals using passive embedding strategies tend to focus on ethnic stereotypes, perceive stigmatization of their own ethnic group, and adopt an authoritarian-oriented approach to interactions, leading to a perception of more identity threats and ultimately rejecting ethnic integration. Thirdly, the commonality of the Chinese nation is reflected in the 56 ethnic groups as an "identity community" and "interest community," and both active and passive embedding paths affect individual understanding of the commonality of the Chinese nation. Finally, community work and environment can influence the embedding process. The research constructed a social psychological process and mechanism model for solidifying sense of the Chinese national community in ethnic inter-embedded communities. Based on this theoretical model, future research can conduct more micro-level psychological mechanism tests and intervention studies to enhance Chinese national cohesion.

Keywords : diversity, sense of the chinese national community, ethnic inter-embedded communities, ethnic group

Conference Title : ICCPMH 2024 : International Conference on Community Psychology and Mental Health

Conference Location : Istanbul, Türkiye

Conference Dates : June 27-28, 2024