Academic Motivation of Yi Orphans in Rural China Schools:
Effects of Ethnic Identity and Classmate Support

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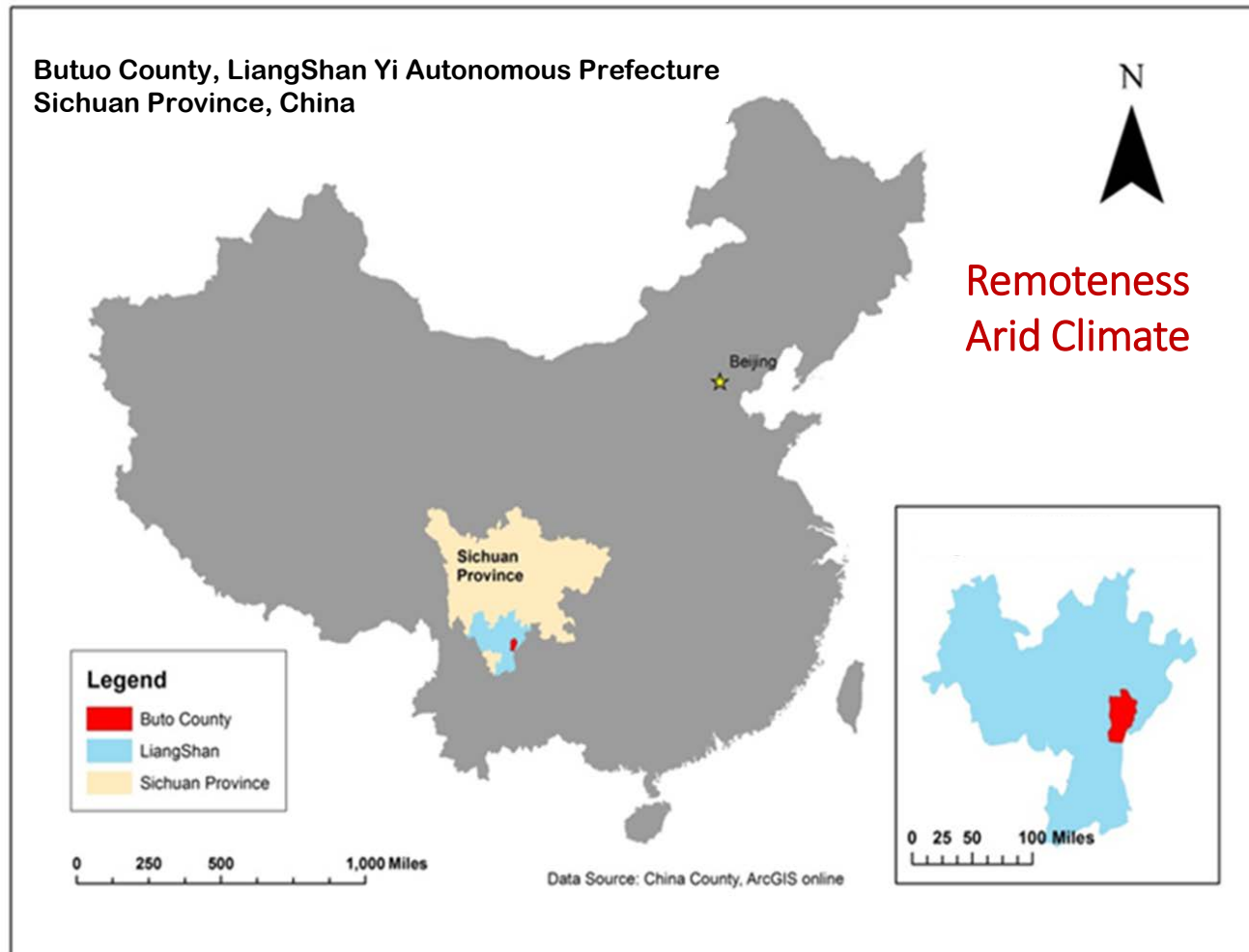Hong Kong Baptist University

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Background

Yi orphans are at-risk of negative development

Butuo County, LiangShan Yi Autonomous Prefecture
Sichuan Province, China

Remoteness
Arid Climate

Extreme Poverty
- 100 USD per year
- 20% extreme poverty

Parental Loss
- 10% lost 1 parent; 43% lost both
- Adopted or stranded

(Jiao, 2007; Li et al., 1999; Yang et al., 2007)

A Philanthropic Organization
2006 - Present
1,300 Yi children

Research Aim and Significance

To examine the pathway from classmate support to positive academic motivation via strong ethnic identity

Why?

- Upward mobility of Yi youths, break cycle of intergenerational poverty.
- Strong ethnic identity means having a solid foundation of SELF that can translate into various forms of positive psychological well-being
- School is a good place to build classmate support.

(Drakes et al, 2014;Jarosz, 2018; Cooper & Seginer, 2018)
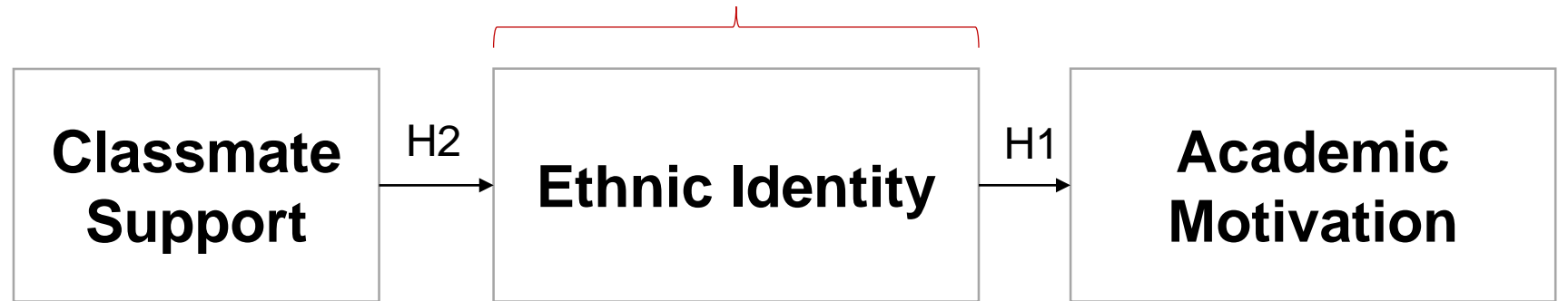
Theories & Conceptual Framework

H3: Mediating role of Ethnic Identify

Ethnic Identity Development Theory:
Diffusion, Foreclosure, **Moratorium**, 13-15 years old
Achieved identity (Phinney, 1996)

| Classmate Support | H2 → | Ethnic Identity | H1 → | Academic Motivation |

Social Identity Theory
Positive socialization with own group
→ strong sense of identity and
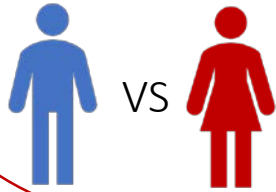*belonging* (Tajfel, 1978)

Cognitive Evaluation Theory
Perceived competence →
motivations (Deci & Ryan,1985)

Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development Theory
Cognitive Evaluation Theory
Social Identity Theory

H4: Gender differences

VS

Ethnic Identity Development Theory:
Diffusion, Foreclosure, Moratorium, Achieved identity *(Phinney, 1996)*

Classmate Support → **Ethnic Identity** → **Academic Motivation**

Social Identity Theory
Positive socialization with own group → strong sense of identity and belonging *(Tajfel, 1978)*

Cognitive Evaluation Theory
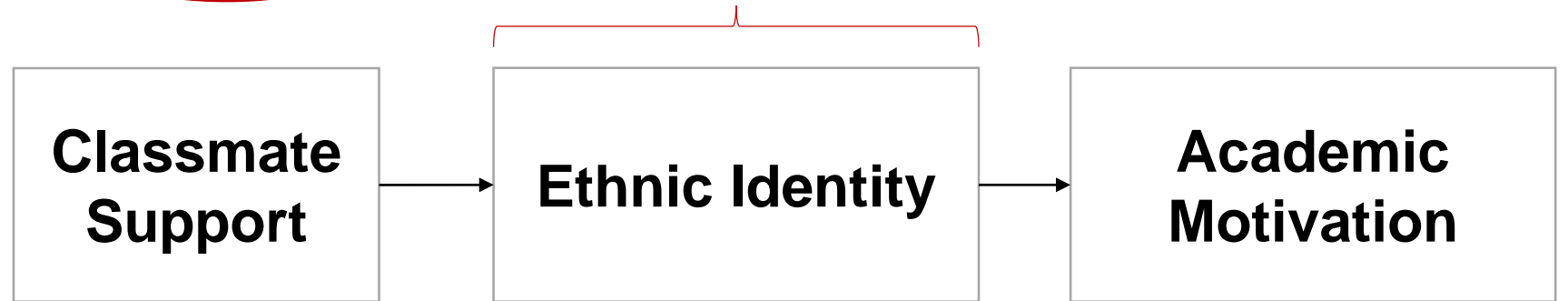Perceived competence → motivations *(Deci & Ryan,1985)*

Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development Theory
Cognitive Evaluation Theory
Social Identity Theory

Methods

Research Design

Cross sectional Quantitative Data (2011)

Participants: All students (13-15 years old, n=135)

Measurements:
- Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure -12 items (Phinney, 1992)
- Academic Motivation Scale -28items (Vallerand et al., 1989)
- Classmate Support Scale - 5 items (Torsheim et al., 2000)

Analysis:
- Mutli- Indicator Mutli-Group Causes Model (MIMC)
- Gender is covariate variable, a model with male participants and a model with female participants were built and results of the two models were compared.

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Results

Peer Support → Ethnic Identity → Academic Motivation

N=87

Mean age : 13.3

N=48
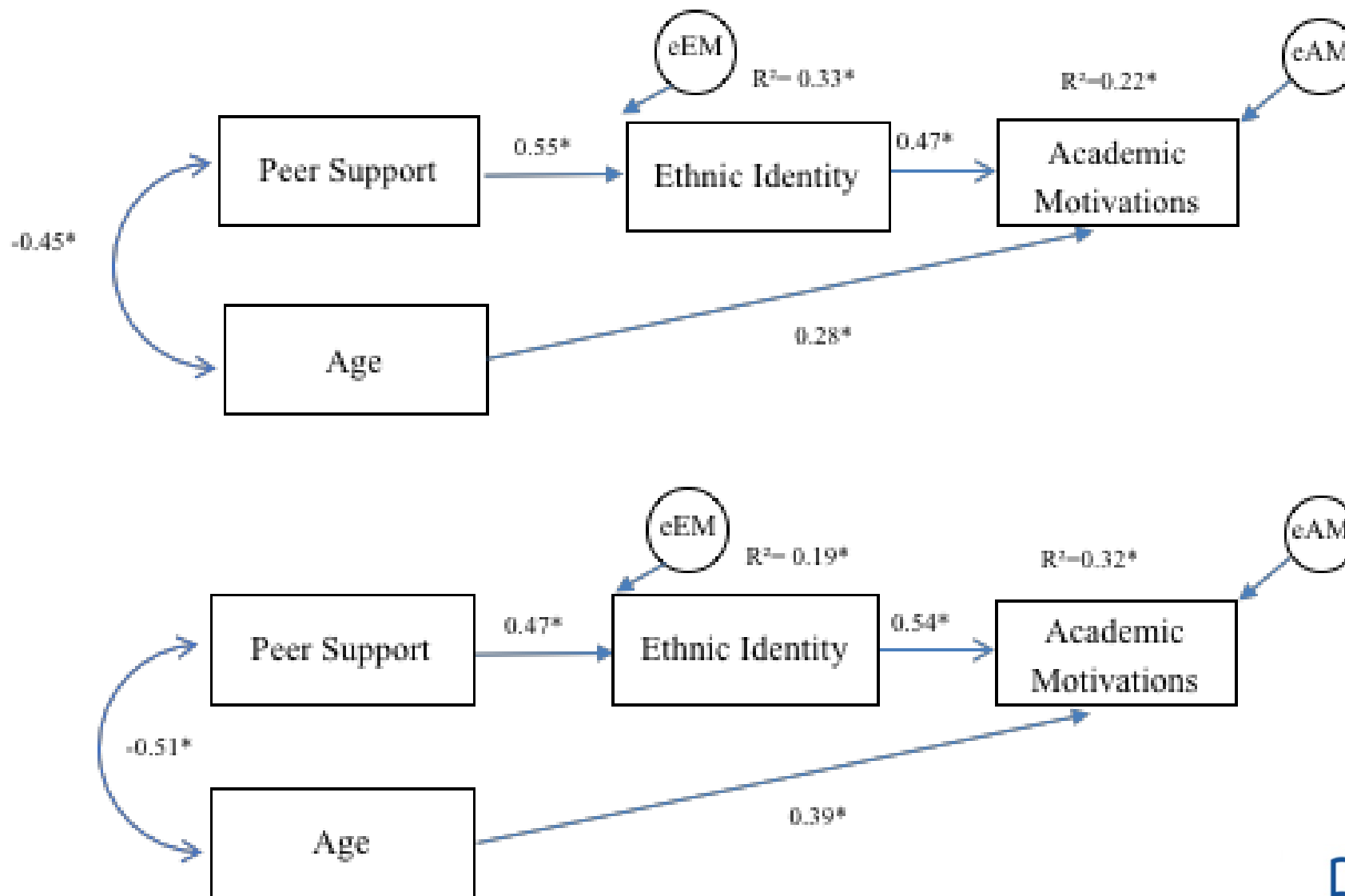
Discussion

Key Findings

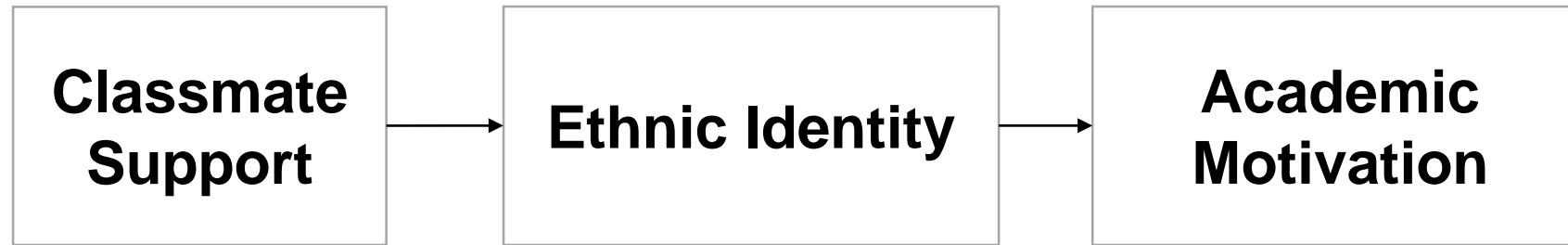| Classmate Support	→	Ethnic Identity	→	Academic Motivation

1. Strong ethnic identity mediates the positive effect of classmate support on academic motivation.

2. Ethnic identity has the same mediating effect on both male and female students.

Innovation & Significance

Use of Strength based approach vs deficit approach

- ✓ "Redefine" on Yi children : Are they at risk? Problematic? Nothing good in them?
- ✓ Identify strengths : Yi children can thrive with strong ethnic identity and peer support

Preventive approach vs. problem solving approach

- ✓ Mobilize existing social resources in school settings
- ✓ Outcomes of Yi Children can be altered (POSSIBILITY)

Possibly application of the same model on natives in North American and Australia ? It will have huge impact on the design of school program .

Strengths & Limitations

Strengths

Solid theoretical Foundation
- Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development Theory
- Social Identity Theory
- Cognitive Evaluation Theory

Limitations

Fail to capture the demographic information of the children (e.g., parental loss and poverty) as covariates

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Questions and Contacts

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