

INTERETHNIC FRIENDSHIPS UNDER ETHNIC SEGREGATION THE CASE OF MALAYSIA

Hanson Chong Zhi Zheng (MSc Social Research Methods)

BACKGROUND

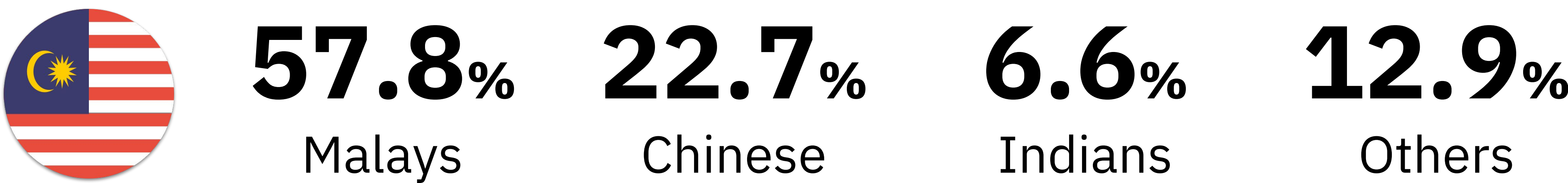
In plural societies, intergroup tensions are a challenge to peace-making and nation-building. **Promoting intergroup friendships** increases tolerance and decreases prejudice, which in turn reduces conflict.

Two drivers of intergroup friendships are:

- 1. **Social identity theory** (Tajfel and Turner, 1979): Ethnic identity provides a sense of belonging and motivates a prioritisation of differences over similarities, leading to a preference for those who are similar to oneself.
- 2. **Contact hypothesis** (Allport, 1954): Opportunities for intergroup contact through education reduce prejudice and facilitate the formation of intergroup friendships.

RESEARCH QUESTION

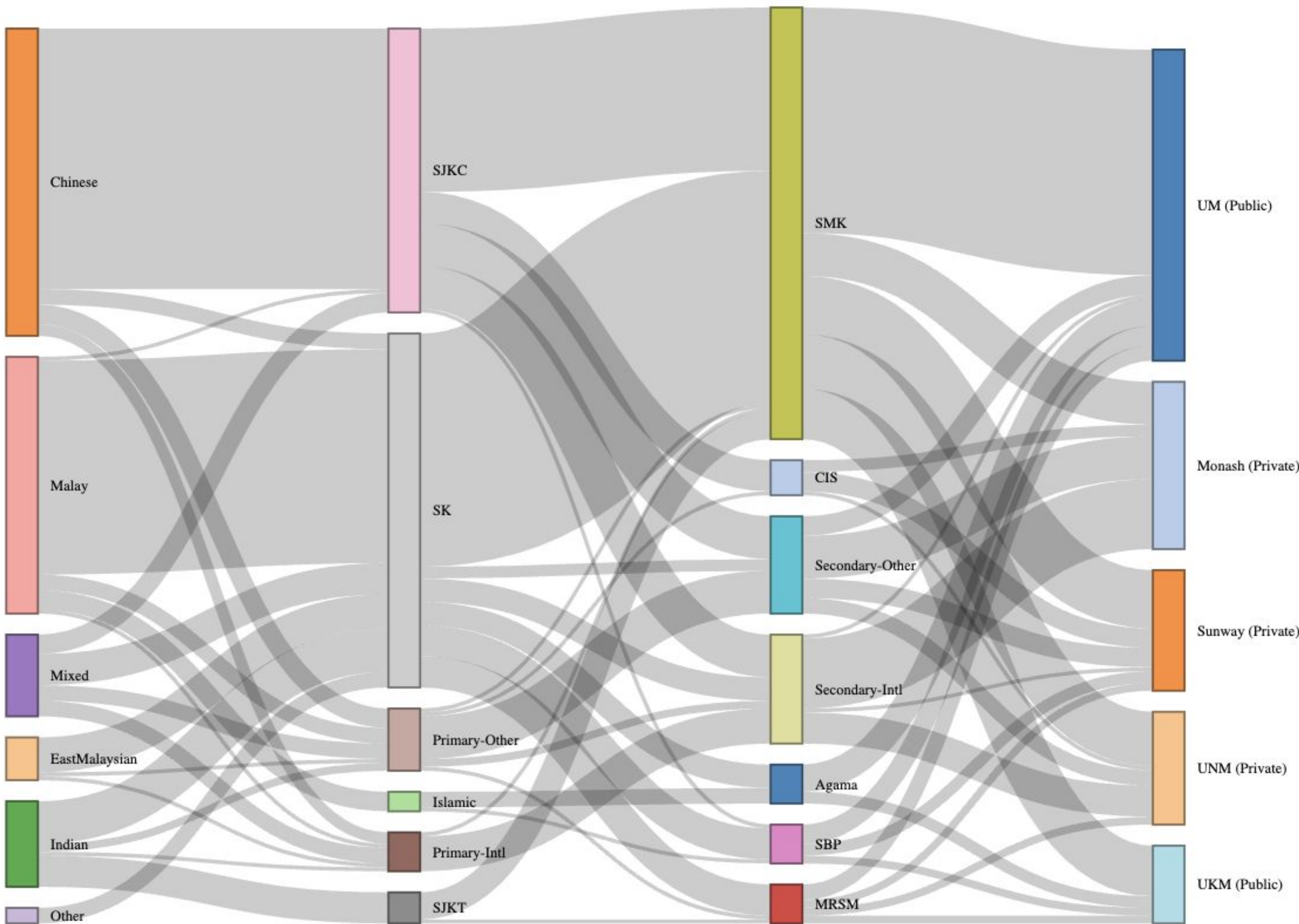
I focus on the case of Malaysia, a plural society consisting of three main ethnic groups and other ethnic minorities, where there is ethnic segregation across levels of education.



Key question: To what extent is friendship formation in Malaysia associated with ethnic homophily, and to what extent is it explained by bias in opportunities for interethnic contact?

DATA

I collect data on Malaysian university students' personal friendship networks ($N = 203$). The survey was conducted in 2 public universities and 3 private universities based on non-probability, quota-based sampling. **Ethnic segregation across education levels** is present in the sample.

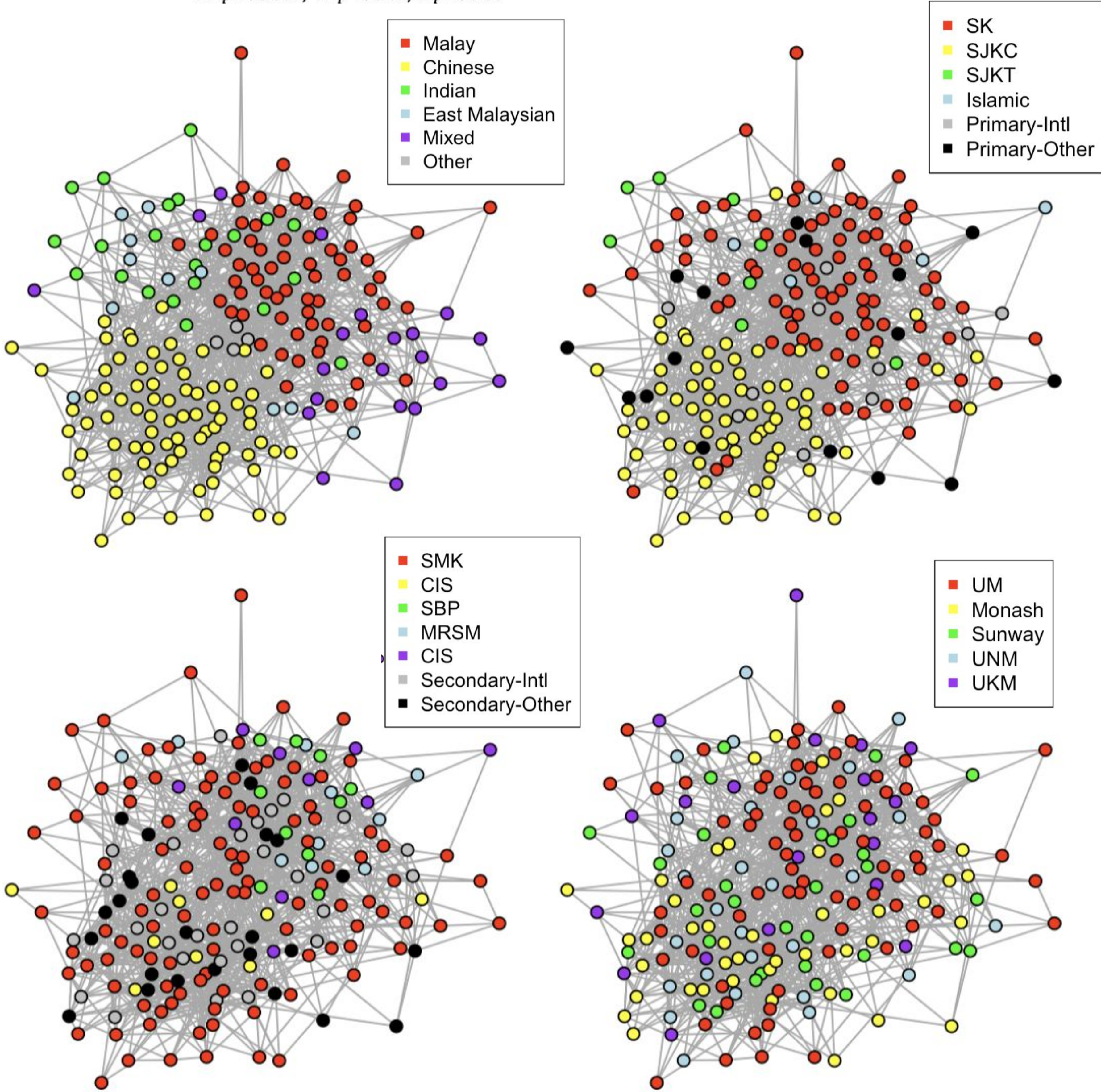


PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- 1. Results from ego ERGM indicate a **statistically significant homophily term**. The odds of a friendship tie is **9.583 times greater** for two individuals of the same ethnicity.

Parameters	Ego ERGM Model
Edges	-.353 (1.498)
Ethnic Homophily	2.260*** (0.139)

Ego ERGM terms for ethnicity, primary school, secondary school, university, and primary language spoken included in the ERGM.
*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$



Simulated Complete Network based on Ego ERGM

- 2. Secondary school has a **statistically significant moderating effect** on ethnic homophily. Those who attended state secondary school exhibit lower effects of ethnic homophily.

ERGM Parameter	AME when Parameter = 0	AME when Parameter = 1	Δ AME
Secondary (Reference = Agama)			
SMK	0.075*** (0.003)	0.098*** (0.008)	0.023*** (0.007)
CIS	0.090*** (0.003)	0.129*** (0.012)	0.039*** (0.011)
MRSM	0.089*** (0.003)	0.136*** (0.011)	0.047*** (0.010)
SBP	0.090*** (0.003)	0.122*** (0.010)	0.032*** (0.009)
International School	0.084*** (0.003)	0.129*** (0.010)	0.045*** (0.009)
Other	0.082*** (0.003)	0.148*** (0.011)	0.066*** (0.010)

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

- 1. Validity of running moderation analysis on simulated complete network based on the ego ERGM model?
- 2. Validity of interpreting moderation analysis results under the hypothesis: "Students who went to state school display lower/higher levels of homophily in their friendship networks."
- 3. What combination of pathways yields lowest homophily?

GET IN TOUCH!

hanson.chongzz@gmail.com

[linkedin.com/in/hanson-chong](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hanson-chong)