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Pride, Prejudice and Manchurian Heritage: North Korean Migrants and Memories of a Land Left Behind

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RESULTS: Pride, Prejudice and Manchurian Heritage

The Distinction between “Official” and “Real” Culture in North Korea

“Everyone has to adapt themselves to their life.”

James ‘Joe’ Dresnok in *Crossing the Line*¹

Riding the escalator in a subway station in the North Korean capital, P’yŏngyang, takes a long time. The tunnels are deep, famously so in order that they may serve as bomb shelters in times of war; and the escalators, by definition long, are also slow. The ride up and down takes minutes, not seconds.

One day in 2011, a male P’yŏngyang resident on one such subway station escalator met an Asian-looking male visitor to the city. Both were going the same way – up – which gave the two a chance to converse. P’yŏngyang citizens are not discouraged from engaging with foreign visitors, so such a conversation is not in itself unusual.

The local man asked whether the visitor was Chinese. It was reasonable for him to assume this to be the case, given the preponderance of Chinese among visitors to the DPRK at the time (and still now, in 2019). The object of the local man’s interest was also attired in a way that implied he was not North Korean, and given that South Korean citizens have never generally been able to visit North Korea, that left China as the most likely origin.²

¹ “Crossing the Line,” documentary film directed by Daniel Gordon (London: VeryMuchSo Productions, 2006)

² The right-wing administration of Yi Myŏngbak enforced South Korea’s anti-communist National Security Act more strictly than its immediate predecessors had done, in particular following the death of a South Korean tourist at the Mt. Kumkang resort in North Korean Kangwon Province in July 2008, seven months after Yi came to power. For more on the question of Chinese tourist numbers to DPR Korea, see: Jonathan DeHart, “Chinese Tourists Make Noise in North Korea,” *The Diplomat*, August 6, 2013. <http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/chinese-tourists-make-noise-in-north-korea/> (last accessed July 5, 2017).

However, the foreign visitor was in fact an American citizen, one of Korean descent (*chaemigyop'o*, often reduced to simply *gyop'o*). Upon learning of this, the local man reacted as if taken aback. Having issued pro forma criticism of the perceived anti-DPR Korea bias of United States government policy – generally referred to at the time by a blanket term, “US hostile policy” – he moved on to question the premise underpinning the American man’s reply, asserting that a person of Korean ethnicity could not be anything other than a Korean citizen.³

“Korean nationalism” is first and foremost rooted in ethnicity; it is commonly claimed that the “Korean nation” is rooted in its ethnic basis.⁴ This, the now-pre-eminent form of Korean nationalism stems from Korea’s emergence as a modern nation at the turn of the 20th century when, as Shin notes, “Ideas about nation and nationalism were among the many new and ‘modern’ ideas to which Koreans were exposed.” The period saw a debate among intellectuals as to “how to position their country vis-à-vis a rapidly changing regional and world configuration.”⁵

However, a specifically ethnic form of nationalism only took its place as the dominant form of collective identity in the 1920s, as both a response and in opposition to both colonial racism – which preached the racial indivisibility of the Korean and Japanese people – and international socialism – which prioritized class over nation. “In response to colonial racism, Korean nationalists advocated the purity and distinctiveness of the Korean nation or race,” according to Shin.⁶ Understandably given the history, ethnic nationalism has tended to be recognized in

³ When the two men reached the top of the escalator, they shook hands and went their separate ways. This story was told to the author by someone who has made more than fifty visits to DPR Korea, and who wishes to remain anonymous.

⁴ See, e.g., Brian R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters* (New York: Melville House, 2011).

⁵ Shin Gi-wook, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 21 and 224.

⁶ Shin notes that The latent potential of pan-Asianism, class-based politics, and membership of the Japanese Empire were all subjects open for elite discussion. See: Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea*, 225.

Korea, both North and South, not as a negative force, but as an ideology of anti-colonialism and, primarily in the North, anti-imperialism. It also serves as the basis for the ostensible imperative of Korean national unification in both Koreas.⁷

Among other things, the logic of ethnically-based national identities⁸ does not allow for people of one ethnicity to be “true” members of another state/society.⁹ Like most of Europe and all of Asia, Korean citizenship works on the basis of *jus sanguinis* (Latin: right of blood), not (as in the US but very few other places) *jus soli* (Latin: right of the soil). In other words, to be Korean, one must have Korean blood. Place of birth is irrelevant. The basis for membership of the Korean nation, premised on ancestry in this way, does not countenance the notion of non-ethnic Koreans being genuinely Korean, nor ethnic Koreans being true citizens of another state. The (ethnic) nation and state (in the form of citizenship) are regarded as isomorphic.

Needless to say, then, that an ethnocentric conception of national identities is dominant in both North and South Korea today.¹⁰ North Korea, the state that is of primary interest to us here, has an “ideal culture” – those values and norms articulated by the state – or “official culture” that

⁷ For more, see: Henry Em, *The Great Enterprise: Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Roy Richard Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Michael Robinson and Gi-Wook Shin (eds.) *Colonial Modernity in Korea, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard East Asia Council Publications, 1999); Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*; as well as Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea*.

⁸ Here I use the term “national identity” on the grounds that it refers to a mostly elite, top-down conceptualization of national membership. It would make little sense to speak of “national self-understanding”.

⁹ Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: journeys into the new nationalism* (London: BBC Books, 1993).

¹⁰ I set aside here the topic of South Korea. To summarize the South Korean case, contemporary research claims that in the South, an ethnically-based conception of national belonging that claims one cannot be Korean unless one has Korean blood has given way in the post-democratization era – specifically the post-1997 IMF crisis, 21st century era of South Korea's rapid globalization – to a civic conception of national belonging wherein anyone who is willing to “play by the rules” of South Korea can be South Korean. There are shortcomings to this research, not with the de-coupling of ethnicity from national identity per se -- though in this area research also appears to be absurdly blasé about the emergence of a new civic nationalism -- but with the claim that globalization has produced a whole new concept of “doing being Korean.” Steven Denney and Christopher Green, “Yongusil 72: The End of Ethnic Nationalism? A Review,” *Sino-NK*, August 10, 2015. <https://sinonk.com/2015/08/10/yongusil-72-the-end-of-ethnic-nationalism-a-review/> (last accessed September 17, 2019); Emma Campbell, *South Korea's New Nationalism: The End of 'One Korea'?* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2016).

has a strong ethnocentric color, and this emerges strongly in state-run print and visual media.¹¹ This is not a matter of any serious debate. In addition to the aforementioned literature covering colonial Korean conceptual history and the emergence of ethnic nationalism, DPR Korean state (official) ideology has also been deconstructed from different perspectives by, inter alia, Kim Suk-young, Brian R. Myers, and Sonia Ryang.¹² Channeling the influential PhD dissertation of Han Hongkoo, Shin Gi-wook dedicates an entire chapter of his book on Korean ethnic nationalism to the task of describing not only the nature of North Korean real culture, but also its origins in Kim Ilŏng's disillusionment with his experience of international socialism in Manchuria in the 1930s, when the so-called Minsaengdan Incident led to the deaths of a great many Korean communists at the hands of the Chinese.¹³

It has been established through these studies that the state propagates a separatist ideology that promotes ethnic closure¹⁴, defining what it means to be North Korean in terms of ethnic unity, "collective self-glorification and denigration of other groups."¹⁵ Racism, in other words. North Korean official culture promotes many of what Milton Mayer calls in the case of Nazi Germany "non-intellectual virtues" such as patriotism, loyalty, duty, purity, labor, simplicity, *and, most*

¹¹ Ideal culture is the practices, norms, attitudes and values that a society claims to follow or asserts the existence of, and real culture is those practices, norms, attitudes and values that are actually followed. Another subject that originated in the United States, the oldest and one of the most common articulations of the difference between ideal and real cultures is that between "the American creed" and "the actual behavior of Americans in various circumstances". Joel B. Montague, "Real and Ideal Culture Patterns as Revealed in Students' Responses to Dichotomous Questions," *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 24, no. 3 (Nov. 1950): 167-176.

¹² Suk-young Kim, *Illusive Utopia: Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 2010); B.R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves – and Why It Matters* (New York: Melville House, 2011); Sonia Ryang, *Reading North Korea: An Ethnological Inquiry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹³ Shin Gi-wook, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy*, 79-95; Han Hongkoo, "Wounded Nationalism: The Minsaengdan Incident and Kim Il Sung in eastern Manchuria," PhD diss., University of Washington, 1999.

¹⁴ The phenomenon by which a dominant ethnic group maintains exclusive access to resources through the structural exclusion of others.

¹⁵ Young Yun Kim, "Ideology, Identity, and Intercultural Communication: An Analysis of Differing Academic Conceptions of Cultural Identity," *Journal of Intercultural Communications Research* 36, no. 3: 240. Kim contrasts separatist ideologies against three other forms of top-down ideological messaging strategy: assimilationist, pluralist, and integrationist.

*importantly, ethnic heritage.*¹⁶ It is a proposition that the exchange on the P'yŏngyang subway escalator would appear to corroborate.

However, whilst the tenor of North Korean official culture is broadly agreed upon, the salience of top-down state discourses to the attitudes, values (culturally defined ideas about what is and is not important) and behaviors of individual North Koreans is not clear.¹⁷ The interlocutor on the P'yŏngyang subway escalator acted in his interaction with the ethnic Korean visitor like a textbook representation of the state's separatist, arguably racist ideology. Yet, we do not find out anything about the individual other than his gender, though we may further infer that, as a resident of P'yŏngyang, he was one of the better-off members of DPR Korean society. Other than this, his background and motivations even for engaging in the conversation, let alone anything else, remain opaque. We certainly cannot be sure what he sincerely thought and felt about his interlocutor.

There are counter-claims that point to a different, more pluralistic form of "real culture" – the values and norms that are actually followed by the median North Korean in his or her daily life. In her writings – and in private conversations with this author – Monique Macias, who fled to P'yŏngyang in the autumn of 1979 after a coup in her native Equatorial Guinea and was raised among elite society in the North Korean capital, explains that she did suffer occasional moments of racism in both elementary school and university, but put this largely down to ignorance.¹⁸ Conversely, Macias notes that her quotidian experiences in the 1970s and 80s did not lead her to

¹⁶ Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans, 1933-45* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017), 111.

¹⁷ In the anecdote with which this chapter began, we do not find out anything about the interlocutor, other than the fact that, as a resident of P'yŏngyang, he was presumably one of the better-off members of DPR Korean society. His background and motivations must forever remain opaque.

¹⁸ Monique Macias, "Mixing with the Cleanest Race: My upbringing in North Korea," *NK News*, February 28, 2014. <https://www.nknews.org/2014/02/mixing-with-the-cleanest-race-my-upbringing-in-north-korea/?c=1559681733684> (last accessed June 5, 2019); Monique Macias, "How I unintentionally ended up spending 15 years of my life in North Korea," *NK News*, February 21, 2014. <https://www.nknews.org/2014/02/how-i-unintentionally-ended-up-spending-15-years-of-my-life-in-north-korea/> (last accessed July 3, 2019).

feel like an outsider in the North Korean social world.¹⁹ Few people, or so it would seem, had any quarrel with the color of Macias' skin in so far as it related to her ability to integrate into North Korean society.

Likewise, the children of four soldiers, members of the US military based in South Korea who fled their posts across the *pimujang chidae*, or Demilitarized Zone into North Korea at various points in the 1960s, were born and socialized into DPR Korean society, married North Korean spouses and appear to have become full members of that society. They do not self-describe as ever having been subject to social discrimination on grounds of ethnicity.²⁰

Finally, over more than fifteen years of working on North Korea in various capacities, I have catalogued stories of romantic and even sexual encounters between foreign nationals and North Korean citizens that, whilst hardly daily occurrences, take place frequently enough to be of more than passing interest. An expression of regret that a foreign citizen is not North Korean -- accompanied by the statement that if he or she were North Korean then a romantic relationship would be possible -- reflects the state's determination to maintain ethnic group closure.²¹ It is

¹⁹ Only when she began to meet other foreigners did Macias question her own sense of genuine North Korean identity. Monique Macias, *Nanŭn p'yŏngyangŭi monik'aumnida* 나는 평양의 모니카입니다 [I am P'yŏngyang's Monica] (Sŏul: Yedang, 2013); Robert Lauler, "A Life in P'yŏngyang Leaves More Questions," *Daily NK*, October 10, 2013. <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk00100&num=11052> (last accessed June 13, 2017).

²⁰ Two of the men, Theodore Ricardo (b. 1980) and James Gabriel (b. 1982) Dresnok, sons of James Joseph Dresnok, appeared in a video published in 2016 by a pro-North Korea digital media called *Minjok Tongsin*. See: Anna Fifield, "An American GI defected to North Korea. Now his sons are propaganda stars," *Washington Post*, May 25, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/05/25/the-north-korean-born-sons-of-an-american-defector-speak-in-korean/> (last accessed June 13, 2017). The men's marriages to local citizens were confirmed in conversation with an English businessman who works closely with North Korea. Brian R. Myers is one of those who is dismissive of this line of argument, as he notes in the following post on his personal blog: Brian Myers, "Apropos of Otto Warmbier — B.R. Myers," *Stbele Press* (blog), June 24, 2017. <http://sthelepress.com/index.php/2017/06/24/thoughts-on-otto-warmbier/> (last accessed June 28, 2017). Notably, both Macias and the children of American defectors speak near-perfect Korean; a point that is returned to later.

²¹ Fredrick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Illinois: Waveland, 1969). See also James Pearson and Kham Nguyen, "Lovers, comrades! Forbidden love in North Korea finds a way in Vietnam," *Reuters*, February 13, 2019. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa-vietnam-couple/lovers-comrades-forbidden-love-in-north-korea-finds-a-way-in-vietnam-idUSKCN1Q2084?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=Social (last accessed February 13, 2019).

generally accepted that North Korea's rigid political and social structure, in keeping with the state's separatist ideology, actively impedes the development of inter-personal relations between North Koreans and foreigners.²² But the deviancy of these amorous interactions seems also ultimately to disprove the hypothesis of an internalized racism in the persons being enclosed.²³

A request for more cosmopolitanism in P'yŏngyang seems like a wish for more foreign influence in DPR Korea, not less.²⁴ That wish may be fundamentally about economic incentives – more foreign people and businesses coming to the country means, all other things being equal, higher incomes for members of the same group (residents of P'yŏngyang) whose members tend also to be the ones making the calls for greater foreign influence. However, it may equally reflect a preference for greater diversity per se. Again, it is the state that proscribes unofficial interactions between native-born North Koreans and foreigners, not the native-born North Koreans themselves. These tales of nascent romance, some sordid, and unusual as they are, speak above all to the complexity of how the North Korean people understand the concept of “being North Korean”. That complexity is at odds with the apparent rigidity of official culture.

The distinction ought to be expected. And yet, external interpretations of official culture – which form the majority of the literature in this area of Korean Studies – often reinforce rather than challenge that rigidity. Though methodologically rigorous on their own terms, studies tend only to focus on the content of the narratives that the North Korean political system produces and the ways in which those narratives are disseminated through literature, art, music, and broadcast

²² Of course, Monique Macias' upbringing in P'yŏngyang and the marriages of the Dresnok brothers are the kind of vignettes that must be approached with great caution, not because they are not true, but because the circumstances under which they occurred are unusual. Similarly, stories of romance and sexual interactions between North Koreans and foreigners visiting the country may be salacious, sensationalized, or simply false.

²³ As an aside, it is easy to laugh at the fact that almost all such anecdotal evidence of romantic and sexual interactions involves stairwells and toilets. However, illicit relations between both non-Koreans and North Korean and North Korean couples take place in conditions of very limited privacy, explaining this situation.

²⁴ Each sentence in this paragraph relates to a specific story told to me in the period 2015-18 by separate individuals directly involved. All of my informants wish to remain anonymous.

and print media.²⁵ This inevitably foregrounds official culture and privileges top-down articulations of national identities. As Andre Schmid notes, “Our histories have paid insufficient attention to how the use of North Korean sources has led to the exaggeration of state power even for a country ruled by a lone family.”²⁶ Studies fail for the most part to address the question of whether ordinary people are actually impacted, and if so to what degree, by the top-down narratives propagated as part of the socialization processes by which citizens are nominally led to crystallize the identities, values and behavior that remain relatively persistent throughout later life.²⁷

This apparent dichotomy is not a new area of interest. In 1963, Robert Scalapino lamented the impossibility of his desire to know how North Korean official culture was received by the general population of the country, saying in his analysis of a 1962 speech by Kim Ilŏng:

It would be fascinating to know to what extent Kim's listeners and readers accept this standard Communist picture of the South. Do they suspect gross exaggeration and distortion? Do they ever wonder why so few South Koreans flee this hell-hole for the North? Are they puzzled that anti-American incidents are few and generally of minor proportions?²⁸

However, while the interest may be long-standing, it is a new area of active inquiry, one that has been advanced – albeit not satisfactorily – by contemporary methods. That, then, is the theme of this chapter. I interrogate the nature of North Korean self-understandings vis-à-vis official

²⁵ Using an innovative but controversial production method, the Russian-made documentary *Under the Sun* demonstrates that ideological adherence does not even happen reflexively for adults, much less children; rather, it takes thought, and is not a natural state of being. *Under the Sun*. DVD. Directed by Vitaly Manskiy. Leipzig: Deckert Distribution GmbH. 2015. The substantive point was made in “Just Act Like the Camera Isn’t Around: The meaning of performance in *Under the Sun*,” an unpublished 2019 essay by Chantal den Braber, then an MA student at Leiden University.

²⁶ Andre Schmid, “Historicizing North Korea: State Socialism, Population Mobility, and Cold War Historiography,” *American Historical Review* 123, no. 2 (2018): 439-462.

²⁷ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publishing, 1995); Laura Stoker and Jackie Bass, “Political Socialization: Ongoing Questions and New Directions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*, ed. George C. Edwards III, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Robert Y. Shapiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 453-470.

²⁸ Robert A. Scalapino, “The Foreign Policy of North Korea,” *The China Quarterly* 14 (April-June 1963): 3.

culture.²⁹ I ask what constitutes a “true North Korean” in the views of the survey sample, and conclude that while the separatist ideology propagated by the state is salient to the identities of North Korean people, it is partial and contingent, and other complex forms of self-understanding exist alongside, within, and even in defiance of it.³⁰

True North Koreans?

What constitutes a “true” North Korean? The question raises definitional challenges – what does “true” even mean? Disaggregating the term “true” is one thing. I use the following definition: “In accordance with a standard, pattern, or rule; accurate, exact, correct.”³¹ But defining what one might reasonably include in that standard or pattern is more difficult. It is a question of which individual or combination of attributes North Korean people themselves – in this case, a sample of defector-migrants – regard as key to full membership of the North Korean national community and society.

The survey asked which of the following attributes are (or are not) salient to the process of becoming a “true” member of the North Korean national community: Having been born in North Korea; having North Korean citizenship; having lived in North Korea for most of one’s life; being able to speak Korean; respecting North Korean institutions and laws; having Korean bloodline (Korean ancestry); understanding Korean/North Korean history and following Korean/North Korean traditions; and following Confucian teachings. Due to the limitations of

²⁹ In a private discussion with an anonymous senior defector from North Korea in 2015, this author was told that North Korea’s ethno-nationalist discourse was “just for ordinary people; none of us (meaning people who work or worked within the regime, living in P’yongyang) believe it.” The sample used in this thesis contains too few senior defectors to interrogate the question of elite thought, but the author’s experience talking to such former elites accords with the claim.

³⁰ More on the limitations of this approach can be found both in the methodology chapter of this thesis and in the appendix. Identical questions are not entertained once again here.

³¹ This definition is one of several definitions of “true” in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2019.

these data, the results are presented in the form of descriptive statistics. They are not weighted.³² Discussion of issues including missing categories and potentially confusing wording is in the Methodology chapter.

Most of this battery of questions mirror those used in question number 56 in the International Social Survey Programme: National Identity III - ISSP 2013.³³ The battery was amended to reflect some of the distinctive features of North Korean life. Specifically, respecting North Korean institutions and laws and having Korean bloodline (Korean ancestry) is an augmented version of the ISSP counterpart (which simply says “to feel [Korean]”). This amendment was made because on a divided peninsula where nation and state are not isomorphic, imprecise language can be fraught with the potential for misinterpretation. Also, in a second case – the attribute “having Korean bloodline” – “bloodline (*hyölt'ong*)” replaced the original ISSP term “ancestry (*chosang*)”.

Hypothetically, all the attributes listed may be of importance to “doing-being North Korean” under one set of circumstances or another.³⁴ Each also highlights a different notion of what it might mean to be North Korean, and as such, each could be analyzed individually. But together, the attributes also fall into one of two broad categories for the purpose of analyzing Korean ethnic nationalism. To have been born in the DPRK, to be able to speak Korean, and to have Korean bloodline are all attributes whose prominence indicates an ethnocentric form of self-

³² In another publication based on a combined data set from this and one other survey, overall responses were weighed according to the known population parameters provided by the 2008 UN population census, but no significant differences were found after weighting. See: Steven Denney and Christopher Green, “Referenda on the Nation: Exploring the Relationship between Ideology and Daily Life in North Korea,” under review.

³³ The decision to use existing questions was made on the basis that it would ultimately facilitate cross-national comparisons, though I do not do so here.

³⁴ Respondents were asked the following (in Korean): “Some people say that the following things are important for being truly Korean. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?” Respondents were invited to answer in each case by choosing one of the following responses for each of the attributes: very important (*maeu chungyo*); somewhat important (*taso chungyo*); not very important (*pyöullo chungyohaji anhüm*); not important at all (*chönhyö chungyohaji anhüm*); or cannot choose (*sönt'aekhal su öpta*).

understanding that mirrors official cultural values, prioritizing what is called “ascribed status” (heritage and ancestry, place of birth, etc.) over respect for the institutions of state and adherence to its laws and norms. Conversely, open, inclusive and pluralistic forms of self-understandings are implied by responses that prioritize facets of “achieved status”, so-called since this category of attributes can in principle be gained by anyone, ethnic Korean or otherwise. Such attributes, which include respecting the institutions of state and its rules, provide evidence of a relatively more inclusive understanding of “doing-being North Korean”.³⁵

The results are tabulated below. They show that the only attribute that a majority of respondents regard as of vital importance for being “truly Korean” is being able to speak the Korean language. In fact, the requirement that a *chinjŏngban* North Korean be able to speak Korean is the only response to attract more than 30 percent support in the “very important” category and more than 50 percent support overall (59.7 percent).³⁶

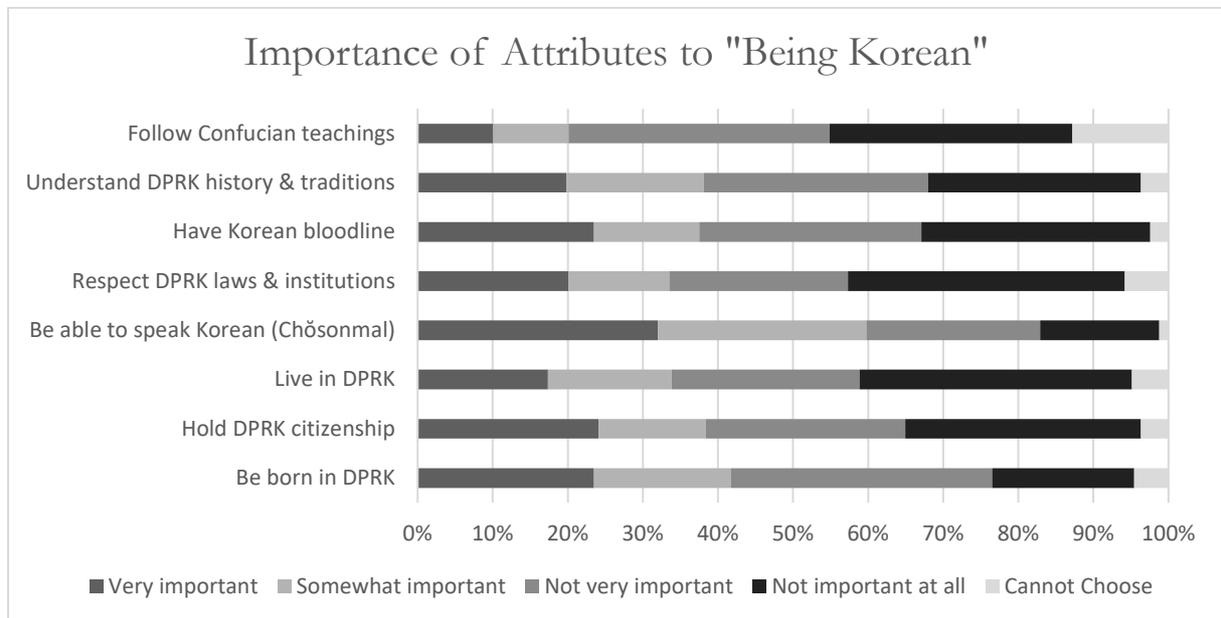
	Be born in DPRK	Hold DPRK citizenship	Live in DPRK for most of one’s life	Be able to speak Korean (Chŏsonmal)
<i>Very important</i>	23.5	24.1	17.4	32
<i>Somewhat important</i>	18.3	14.3	16.5	27.7
<i>Not very important</i>	34.8	26.5	25	23.2
<i>Not important at all</i>	18.9	31.4	36.3	15.9
<i>Cannot choose</i>	4.5	3.7	4.9	1.2
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100

³⁵ Ascribed and achieved status are concepts first coined by Ralph Linton in the 1930s. They are criticized for failing to take into account surrounding social structures, which is a reasonable critique. However, they serve for the purpose required of them here. Irving S. Folidare, “A Clarification of ‘Ascribed Status’ and ‘Achieved Status’,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1969): 53-61; Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1936), 115-131.

³⁶ It may seem odd that the number, 59.7percent is as low as it is, but the reader will note that the responses for all attributes are on the low side. This led to a reevaluation of the wording used in later iterations of the survey in 2018, but should not overly concern us here. It is not my intention to compare these 2016 results with other data, and so internal validity is all that is required.

	Respect DPRK laws & institutions	Have Korean bloodline	Understand DPRK history & traditions	Follow Confucian teachings
<i>Very important</i>	20.2	23.5	29.8	10
<i>Somewhat important</i>	13.4	14	18.3	10.1
<i>Not very important</i>	23.8	29.6	29.9	34.8
<i>Not important at all</i>	36.9	30.5	28.4	32.3
<i>Cannot choose</i>	5.8	2.4	3.7	12.8
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100

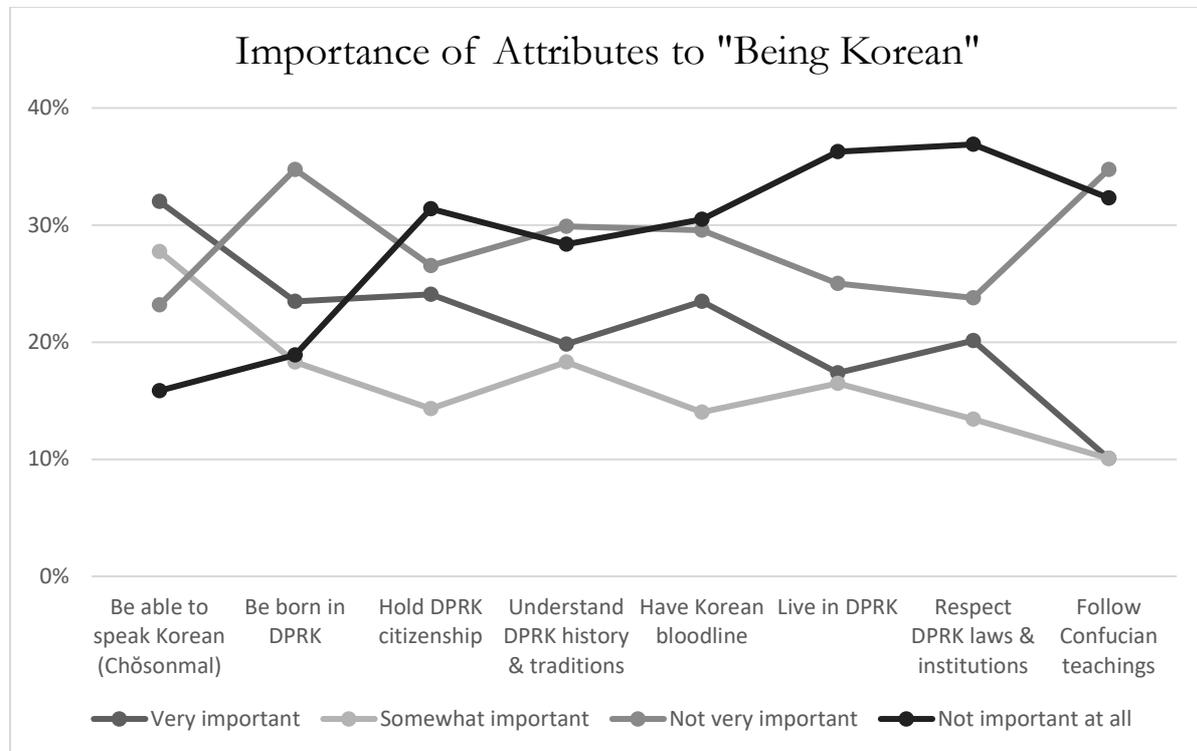
Importance of attributes to "being Korean" (unit: percent; N=328)



Importance of each in a basket of attributes to "being Korean" (N=328).

“Being born in the DPRK” is also regarded as “very important” by 23.5 percent of respondents, and “somewhat important” for a further 18.3 percent, meaning that 41.8 percent of respondents viewed birth within DPR Korean territory as important overall for being Korean. “Having Korean bloodline” is cited as “very important” by 23.5 percent of respondents, and somewhat important by a further 14 percent. Accordingly, 37.5 percent of respondents believe that being of Korean heritage is important to being genuinely North Korean. The claim that being a *chinjŏngban* North Korean requires one to have lived most of life in the DPRK was viewed as less important, with 17.4 percent of respondents thinking it is a very important component and 16.5 percent

believing it to be somewhat important. Respecting DPR Korean laws and institutions was also seen as considerably less important, with just 20.2 percent and 13.4 percent seeing it as very or somewhat important; a total of 33.6 percent.



Importance of attributes to "being Korean", broken down into four possible responses (N=328).

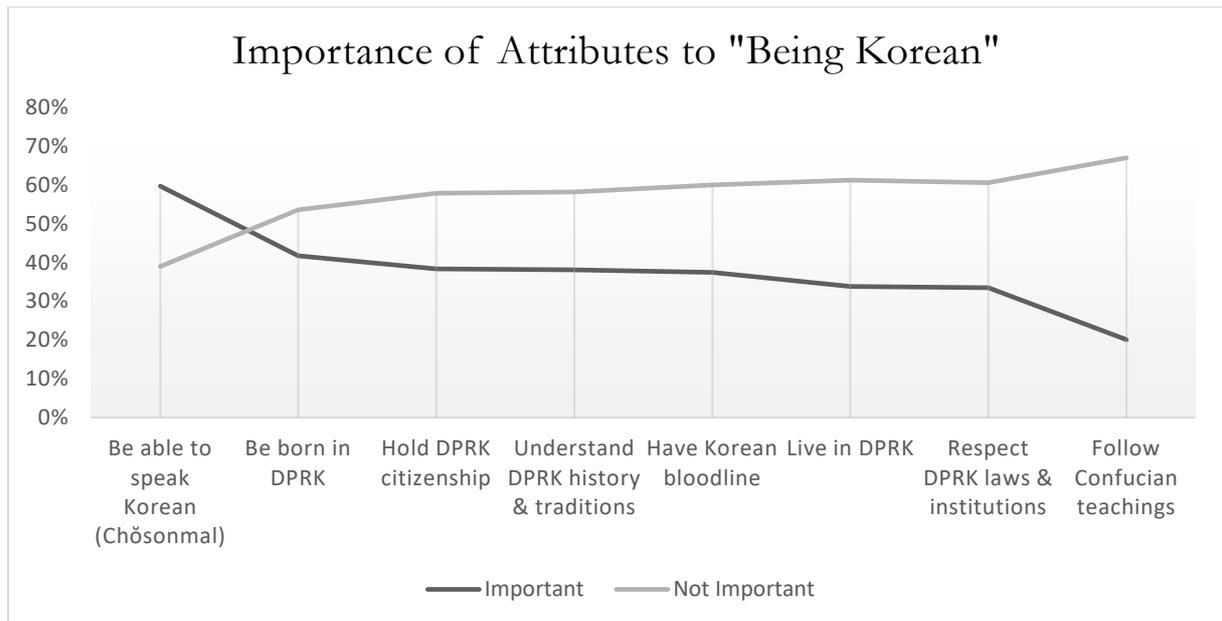
Recoding the attributes so that "very important" and "somewhat important" are combined into simply "important," while "not very important" and "not important at all" are combined into "not important," and then listing them from highest to lowest, the results can be seen more clearly (note that "cannot choose" and no response at all are both omitted)³⁷:

Variable	Important (%)	Not important (%)
<i>Be able to speak Korean (Chōsonmal)</i>	59.76	39.02
<i>Be born in DPRK</i>	41.77	53.66
<i>Hold DPRK citizenship</i>	38.41	57.93
<i>Understand DPRK history & traditions</i>	38.11	58.23
<i>Have Korean bloodline</i>	37.50	60.06
<i>Live in DPRK for most of life</i>	33.84	61.28

³⁷ The almost-26-point gap between the attribute deemed to be the most important by resettled North Korean respondents, being able to speak *Chōsonmal*, and least important, the need to observe Confucian teachings, indicates among other things that survey participants engaged with the survey sincerely and did not simply check boxes at random.

<i>Respect DPRK laws & institutions</i>	33.54	60.67
<i>Follow Confucian teachings</i>	20.12	67.07

The results show that North Korean defector-migrants regard the ability to speak Korean and to have been born in North Korea as the two most important attributes of “doing being North Korean”.



Importance of attributes to "being Korean", grouped into important and not important (unit: percent; N=328).

Concluding Remarks

What can we take away from this analysis? First, it reconfirms that the North Korean people tend towards an ethnocentric – some would (and do) say racist – conception of national belonging and self-understanding.³⁸ Prior research into official culture based on interpretation of North Korean documents, visual images and so forth is seemingly reflected in North Korean real culture.

³⁸ This aspect of the survey is the most open to criticism. In the process of migration, many questions are raised about identities. Ergo, there is a chance that the views of North Koreans still inside North Korea would be different to the views of those outside. The notion of a “true” North Korean is also confusing given definitional and terminological issues it raises in the context of a divided nation.

The claim here is not, of course, that North Korean people have not had their values and attitudes shaped by colonial history and DPR Korean official culture, nor indeed that they do not tend toward ethnocentrism. What is interesting is the relative unexceptionality of defector-migrant conceptions of what it means to “be North Korean” in the context of modern nation-states.

Comparative cases confirm the un-exceptionality of North Korean self-understandings. The top requirement for national belonging in the North Korean case – being able to speak the local language – is also the top attribute in a social attitudes survey conducted in the United Kingdom approximately once per decade (in 1995, 2003, and 2013), the British Social Attitudes Survey.³⁹ A large majority of Americans say that speaking English is a vital attribute of American self-understandings.⁴⁰ In Canada, 71 percent of respondents said that becoming a citizen *and speaking the native language* qualified one as part of the nation.⁴¹

All of which shows that, first, everywhere (at least, everywhere that I looked) there is broad consensus on the importance of language as a component of belonging. And second, it shows that the supposedly uniquely exclusionary ethnocentricity of North Korea (and likely also the putatively “less-developed East” in general) is a weaker phenomenon than has previously been articulated.⁴²

³⁹ The British Social Attitudes Survey. For more on the survey, in particular the section on national identity, see <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-31/national-identity/the-concept-of-national-identity.aspx>.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Who Counts as an American? The Boundaries of National Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Cara J. Wong, *Boundaries of Obligation in American Politics: Geographic, National, and Racial Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁴¹ A full report on the surveys and top-line data by country can be found at the website of Ipsos: <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/Canada-US-have-most-inclusive-views-of-nationality> (last accessed 26 August, 2019).

⁴² There is no compelling logic for assuming that a North Korean, American or British person who admits a concern for whether those around him or her share the same language is ethnically oriented in their self-understanding and sense of belonging. Communication is the basis of community; very few people wish to live in atomized isolation. The distinction between a liberal, ordinarily benign form of nationalism ascribed to the “West” and a more malignant form ascribed to underdeveloped states outside the developed West dates back to a book chapter, “Two Types of Nationalism,” in John Plamanetz in Eugene Kamenka, *Nationalism: the nature and evolution of*

Stories and anecdotes from people who engage regularly inside North Korea support this argument. While ordinary North Korean people do not explicitly reject the central state's deeply conservative, separationist stance on ethnicity and self-understanding, that stance is accepted on a contingent basis, and comes mixed with other attributes of equal or greater salience.⁴³

The North Korean government promotes a certain vision of itself, as governments seem inevitably to do. In the North Korean case that vision is racist, and enforces ethnic group closure as a general principle. But ordinary people retain agency – the capacity, condition or state of exerting power, in this case the capacity to freely define their self-understanding(s) – in their private lives, and as such may reach conclusions based not only on the socialization process imposed by the state from above in schools and other institutional settings – which is the subject of the next section – but also varied life experiences, either directly experienced or received through other means, such as family interactions, external media and/or direct/reported interactions with in- and out-group members. They may think differently to those who would seek to control their thoughts.

If there is a distinction to be drawn here, it is between forms of self-understanding favored in western Europe and Korea, and those ostensibly internalized in the United States and Canada.

But even that claim is looking increasingly tenuous in the current era. At any rate, the distinction is clearly not between East and West. When polled, defector-migrants show an ethnocentric

an idea (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), 22-38. Conversely, Ernest Gellner posits that development of the two types of nationalism in specific locations is down to the presence or absence of industrial society. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (2nd ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 96-7. In Gellner's more defensible framework, it is unsurprising that the features of North Korean, American and British nationalism should be shared. North Korean industrial society has proven poorly designed and economically unsustainable, but that doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

⁴³ Whilst it may be the case that it is only once a North Korean citizen leaves North Korea that he or she sheds his or her specific ethnic nationalist identity, evidence suggests that the young start out with an inclusive vision of identity and national belonging, whilst the old acquire a more conservative outlook over time, and that migration in this instance does not have a significant effect on self-understandings.

concept of what it means to be North Korean; however, the ethnocentric component of that conception is no more or less significant than it is found to be in the United Kingdom, United States, or Canada.⁴⁴ Resettled defector-migrants – and by implication the wider community of Koreans – are as oriented towards ethnocentrism as a similar sample of British or American citizens.⁴⁵

It is worth considering how the issues raised in this chapter surrounding language trigger practical questions that could drive fruitful future research. For instance, diaspora studies has the expectation that a shared language plays a key role in aiding diasporic integration. In Anderson's rather florid prose, "What the eye is to the lover [...] language - whatever language history has made his or her mother-tongue — is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed."⁴⁶ Then, what of ethnic Korean diaspora whose language skills are weak or non-existent?⁴⁷ Where, if anywhere, do they fit into the Korean national community(ies) of North or South?

This is more than a purely academic matter; it is a practical, pending one. There is strong evidence of declining Korean language proficiency among the young generations of ethnically Korean populations living in third countries, most notably China. In my own research in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture of China, I was repeatedly told that "around half" of

⁴⁴ There are of course distinctions between European countries, but there is not space to explore them here.

⁴⁵ It is true that the "old democracies" of Europe have not normally been seen as civically oriented in the same way as the United States, often labelled a nation of immigrant peoples. However, those "old democracies" had been relatively immigrant-friendly, too, at least until recent years. Many questions surrounding identity in Europe and North America have re-emerged as contentious since the financial crisis of the mid-2000s. Results on defining British national identity are described at the website British Social Attitudes: <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-31/national-identity/defining-british-identity.aspx> (last accessed September 17, 2019).

⁴⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983): 154.

⁴⁷ Iain Watson, "The Korean diaspora and belonging in the UK: identity tensions between North and South Koreans," *Social Identities* 21, no. 6 (2015): 554.

young ethnic Koreans (*chosŏnjok*; 조선족; 朝鮮族) are not at the level of full functional fluency in the Korean language.⁴⁸ It remains to be seen whether the declining language proficiency of this group will act going forward to deprive them of their putative “Koreanness” through the exclusionary structuring of difference along linguistic lines.⁴⁹

Speaking of which, the structuring of difference in North Korean society is the subject of the third part of this Results chapter. Before we get there, though, we must now turn our attention to the impact of the so-called “Manchurian heritage” on self-understandings.

⁴⁸ No attempt was made to verify this claim, which was tangential to the purpose of the research I was doing at the time and under conditions of considerable duress due to Chinese state suspicion of the ethnic Korean community. Steven Denney and Christopher Green, “From Hero to Zero: North Korea’s Failure in Yanbian,” June 14, 2016. <https://www.nknews.org/pro/from-hero-to-zero-north-koreas-failure-in-yanbian/> (last accessed March 27, 2019).

⁴⁹ This is explored in the context of South Korea’s emerging multiculturalism in Steven Denney, Christopher Green, and Peter Ward, “New Values and Old Orders: Where do North Koreans fit in the new South Korea?” The report is available at the Leiden Asia Centre website and on the research website Sino-NK: <https://sinonk.com/2019/05/14/new-values-and-old-orders-where-do-north-koreans-fit-in-the-new-south-korea/> (last accessed September 17, 2019)

The Mixed Legacy of Mt. Paektu

“Why try to pursue what is completed?”

Mikhael Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*

Mt. Paektu straddles the border between DPR. Korea and the People’s Republic of China. It is at the northern head of the Paektu Daegan mountain range, which traverses the eastern flank of the Korean peninsula as far south as Mt. Jiri, the Republic of Korea’s largest national park. At just over 9000ft, Mt. Paektu is the highest mountain not only in the Paektu Taegan range, but on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia as a whole.⁵⁰ It is an active volcano.

The mountain has a long history in Korean cultural works. It famously appears in the *Samguk Yusa* (삼국유사; 三國遺事), a book of folktales and legends about the pre-modern kingdoms of Paekche, Koguryŏ and Shilla written at the end of the thirteenth century. But of more interest to us here is the fact that since the end of World War II, an extensive (and growing more intense over time) program of what the sociologist of propaganda Jacques Ellul categorizes as integration propaganda has transformed the mountain into a metonym for the rule of the Kim family over what is now DPR Korea.⁵¹

Ellul coined the term “integration propaganda” (within a schema of eight distinctive types of propaganda in four sets of paired opposites, with integration propaganda placed in opposition to agitation propaganda) to mean the kind of propaganda that sets out or reinforces the “way of life” of a people through its myths and legends, thus promoting acceptance and support for a

⁵⁰ The highest mountain in South Korea is Mt. Halla on the island of Jeju, at 6400ft.

⁵¹ “Integration propaganda” is a term coined by Jacques Ellul to mean the kind of propaganda that sets out or reinforces the “way of life” of the people of a nation through its myths and legends. In North Korea, these myths and legends are central to political socialization in schools and other state institutions. Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes* (London: Vintage, 1973).

given political system.⁵² It is, in other words, propaganda designed for political socialization, a term that is defined as “the process whereby political attitudes and values are inculcated as children become adults and adults are recruited into roles.”⁵³

In North Korea, myths and legends that involve Kim Ilŏng and predominantly take place in the foothills of Mt. Paektu and the broader Manchurian region are central to processes of political socialization implemented primarily in schools and other state institutions.⁵⁴ The ostensible legitimacy of the rule over North Korea of the “Mt. Paektu bloodline,” comprising Kim Ilŏng, Kim Chŏngil and Kim Chŏngŭn, is premised upon the virtuous nature of Kim Ilŏng’s actions on and around the mountain. The narrative of these actions comprises a series of genuine and in some cases very brave acts mixed with folktales, legends and assorted embellishments that I bring together here under the banner heading of “Manchurian heritage.”⁵⁵

The incorporation of Mt. Paektu and Manchuria into North Korean political socialization practices is older than the state itself. The mountain forms the background to several northern Korean literary productions of the immediate post-liberation period⁵⁶, including Han Sŏrya’s (1900-c.1970) *Hyŏllo* (Path of Blood), which was completed in 1946, just six months after

⁵² As such, it is quite different to the “propaganda of agitation,” the type many people most often think of when they think of propaganda. Brett Silverstein, “Toward a Science of Propaganda,” *Political Psychology* 8, no. 1 (March 1987): 49.

⁵³ Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little Brown, 1966), 24.

⁵⁴ In North Korea, political socialization is concerned with two tasks: (1) to condemn and eliminate vestiges of the old political and ideological order (which is described – more accurately – as “political de-socialization”); and (2) to foster a receptive disposition towards the new ideology of, at least initially, communism. Hyung-chan Kim with Dong-kyu Kim, *Human Remolding in North Korea: A Social History of Education* (Lanham, MA: University Press of America), 3.

⁵⁵ Heonik Kwon and Byung-ho Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). One might be better off using the term “putative actions,” for although these works lionize the activities of the partisans who fought for Korean liberation from Japan in the 1920s, 30s, and throughout WWII, the actions within them are literary; neither entirely false nor faithfully recreated, their primary obligation is to serve the political purposes of the DPR Korean government.

⁵⁶ Benoit Berthelier, “Symbolic Truth: Epic, Legends, and the Making of the Paektusan Generals,” Sino-NK (online), May 17, 2013. <http://sinonk.com/2013/05/17/symbolic-truth-epic-legends-and-the-making-of-the-baektusan-generals/> (last accessed September 10, 2017).

Japanese rule on the Korean peninsula came to an end but fully two years before DPR Korea was officially created as a sovereign state.⁵⁷ A second example of the use of Manchurian heritage in both direct descriptive prose and repurposed as a form of magical realism for DPR Korean political purposes in this early post-liberation era is the epic poem “*Paektusan*” (Mt. Paektu in English; 白头山 in simplified Chinese). The poem, which dates to February 1947, 18 months before the official establishment of DPR Korea, was penned by the Soviet-Korean poet and newspaper editorialist Cho Ki-ch’ŏn (1913-1951).⁵⁸ Born in Primorsky Krai, the maritime province of eastern Siberia in today’s Russian Federation, Cho was one of the first of many Soviet-Koreans to move to the northern part of Korea following liberation from Japanese rule, arriving on the peninsula in August 1945.⁵⁹

In his poem, Cho, who would go on to become vice-chair of the Central Committee of the Federation of Unions of Literature and Art of Korea (*Chosŏn munhak yesul ch’ongdongmaeng*, or KFLA) in March 1951⁶⁰ before dying in his office during a Korean War bombing raid on July 31 the same year⁶¹, touches upon all of the literary symbols and elements that resonate in North Korean integration propaganda in the present. Kim is described in the poem as the symbolic son of Mt. Paektu, both its “faith” and “hope”.⁶² To this we may add “intelligent,” “persistent,”

⁵⁷ Brian R. Myers, *Han Sŏrya and North Korean Literature: The Failure of Socialist Realism in the DPRK* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994): 37, 190.

⁵⁸ For more detailed information on the life and work of Cho Ki-ch’ŏn, see Tatiana Gabroussenko, “Cho Ki-ch’ŏn: The Person Behind the Myths,” *Korean Studies* 29 (2005): 55-94.

⁵⁹ North Korea’s claim that Cho was born in the Hamgyŏng region of Korea has been challenged by Tatiana Gabroussenko; she suggests that Cho had never visited Korea prior to 1945. In any event, Cho was demonstrably an enthusiast for the communist cause, having written poems infused with the rhetoric of radical socialism from the age of 17. Ideological commitment is likely to have influenced his decision to rush for the northern half of the peninsula in the heady revolutionary days of 1945. See: Gabroussenko, “Cho Ki-ch’ŏn,” 61.

⁶⁰ Park Taeil, “*Chŏnjaenggŭ Im Hwa-wa ‘Cho-Sso Ch’insŏn’-ŭi hwaldong*” 전쟁기 임화와 ‘조소 친선’의 활동 [Poet Im Hwa and ‘Chosŏn-USSR Friendship’ during the Korean War], *Kukcheŏnŏmunhak* [International Language and Literature] 30 (October 2014): 253.

⁶¹ Jo Ki Chon, *Mt. Paektu: An Epic Poem* (P’yŏngyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1990): 1. See also: Jerome de Wit, *Writing under Wartime Conditions: North and South Korean Writers during the Korean War (1950-1953)*, PhD. Diss., Leiden University, 2015, 43-44. De Wit also comments (p. 232) that the eulogization of Kim Il-sŏng began in earnest in North Korean literature at or near the end of the Korean War.

⁶² Berthelie, “Symbolic Truth.”

“unbending” and “benevolent”, each of which also feature prominently. As Jerome de Wit notes, Cho “inspired numerous eulogists of the North Korean leader to depict Kim Ilŏng as an intelligent, persistent, and unbending hero.”⁶³

In the North Korean education system, today’s young North Koreans first encounter the Manchurian heritage that Cho helped to sketch out, and which has since been embellished on a vast scale by the state and placed at the center of official culture and political socialization. From the earliest days of kindergarten, children study variations of *Kim Ilŏng hyŏngmyŏng nyŏksa*, or “Kim Ilŏng revolutionary history”. A mixture of myth and fact about the anti-Japanese activities of a group of partisan guerrillas supposedly led by Kim in modern Jilin Province during the early 20th century, Kim Ilŏng revolutionary history is, in the ungenerous but not entirely inaccurate words of BC Koh, no more than a collection of “patently distorted, grossly exaggerated, and partially fabricated chronicles.”⁶⁴

Koh is in a sense right; Kim’s Manchurian heritage is, to shamelessly appropriate a tiresome neologism, #fakenews. But to focus on its dubious veracity is to miss the point. For the purpose for which it is used – political socialization – the historical accuracy of a given claim made in Kim Ilŏng revolutionary history classes doesn’t matter very much, if at all.⁶⁵

⁶³ Gabroussenko, “Cho Ki-ch’ŏn,” 76.

⁶⁴ BC Koh, “Ideology and Political Control in North Korea,” *The Journal of Politics* 32 (1970): 655-674.

⁶⁵ As long as there is no countervailing source of information that can serve to expose the falsehoods and exaggerations that are incorporated into the Manchurian heritage narrative, that is. The danger posed by narratives offering alternative explanations of historical events is just one of several reasons why the North Korean government goes to considerable lengths to restrict domestic access to external sources of information. To strike an analogy, much Nazi wartime propaganda is thought to have been successful right up until Germany’s damaging retreat from Stalingrad, which was such an obvious catastrophe that the German regime could not hide it. In the Nazi imaginary, Stalingrad was a single prominent event that told many Germans that they were actually losing World War II, where they had hitherto been told, and are thought to have believed, that they were winning. Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 197.

Kim Ilŏng revolutionary history absorbs a great deal of classroom time at all levels of North Korean schooling.⁶⁶ In 2014, a year after the DPR Korean Ministry of Education added the study of *Kim Chŏngŭn hyŏngmyŏng nyŏksa*, or “Kim Chŏngŭn Revolutionary History” to the school curriculum, South Korean state broadcaster KBS obtained an internal North Korean document stipulating that senior school students should spend no fewer than 160 hours per year on Kim Ilŏng revolutionary history alone.⁶⁷ Students were also ordered to spend a comparable period on the life of Kim Chŏngil, and to a lesser but no doubt inexorably rising extent also on Kim Chŏngŭn.⁶⁸

At a kindergarten in Shinŭiju, the largest city on North Korea’s border with China, much about North Korea’s approach to Manchurian heritage-based political socialization can be witnessed first-hand. Watching the regular performance put on by the talented pupils, one receives a bullet-point list of those ostensible successes of the DPR Korean state of which North Korean children were at the time being inculcated to be proud.⁶⁹ Sporting success, most notably but not exclusively in women’s football; the power of the North Korean military; tree-planting, and roller-skating all dominated in 2016.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ North Korea does not release actual budgetary numbers very often. Therefore, it is not possible to establish how much of the state budget is absorbed by education, or indeed by anything else.

⁶⁷ For the purpose of comparison with the structure of the same course in previous years, see Kim with Kim, *Human Remolding in North Korea*, 191-249.

⁶⁸ Green, C. [@Dest_P’yŏngyang]. (2014, Nov 24). #DPRK adds KJU to revolutionary history curriculum. 81hrs of KJU, fewer than KIS or KJI, but 2xK]Suk. @kbsnewstweet <http://t.co/kHD09aiUg4> [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Dest_P’yŏngyang/status/537021442559606784. At the time, in addition to the 160 hours spent on the Manchurian activities of Kim Ilŏng, students were also spending 148 hours a year on Kim Chŏngil revolutionary history, and 81 hours on the revolutionary history of Kim Chŏngŭn. The addition of Kim Chŏngŭn’s (putative) past to the curriculum is just a part of a wide-ranging reform of the education system that took place at the time. A textbook was written for the new classes, *Childhood of Beloved and Venerated Leader, Kim Jong Un*. See: Moon Sung-hui, “New School Textbook on Kim,” *Radio Free Asia*, February 9, 2013. <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/book-02092013104325.html> (last accessed November 3, 2017).

⁶⁹ This type of nation-building rhetoric is, as previously noted, scarcely remarkable. Shortly after my visit to the kindergarten in Shinŭiju in 2016, South Korean public broadcaster KBS did something similar, broadcasting a documentary list of national successes to commemorate the 56th anniversary of the April 19th Revolution (4.19 혁명) that brought down the government of President Yi Sŏngman (Rhee Syngman) in 1960. The list focused on the country’s first limited-access expressway, which connected Sŏul and Pusan in 1970; the 1988 Sŏul Summer Olympics; 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup; and 2010 G20 Sŏul Summit.

⁷⁰ The Kim Chŏngŭn era has seen a policy focus on reforestation. The policy is ideologically focused on reverse-engineering connections to the rule of Kim Ilŏng, but practically it is intended to remediate the denuded hillsides that have characterized North Korean rural areas since the famine era of the 1990s, and which seriously undermine

But more importantly in the context of this research, the kindergarten shows also how the process of Kim Ilŏng revolutionary history education begins.⁷¹ Nobody there is reading Cho Ki-ch'ŏn, of course, but one entire department of the kindergarten, renowned for its production of artistically gifted pupils and open to foreign visitors, who may tour the facility and see a show put on by some of the pupils, is assigned to *Paektusan sam-taejanggun ōrinsijŏl iyagi* (“stories of the childhoods of the three great generals of Mt. Paektu”).⁷² As with the “Mt. Paektu bloodline,” “The three great generals of Mt. Paektu” is a term used to indicate Kim Ilŏng, his son Kim Chŏngil, and Kim Jŏngsuk, one of Kim Ilŏng’s fellow revolutionary partisan guerrillas who

agricultural productivity. On February 26, 2015, Kim Chŏngŭn gave a talk to senior party, military and administrative officials which was subsequently published as “Let the Entire Party, the Whole Army and All the People Conduct a Vigorous Forest Restoration Campaign to Cover the Mountains of the Country with Green Woods.” The publication is quite clear on the root of the problem, saying that “as people have been felling trees at random since the days of the Arduous March on the plea of obtaining cereals and firewood and, worse still, as no proper measures have been taken to prevent forest fires, the precious forest resources of the country have been devastated.” Its publication initiated a vigorous period of afforestation nationwide. See: Kim Chŏngŭn, *Let the Entire Party, the Whole Army and All the People Conduct a Vigorous Forest Restoration Campaign to Cover the Mountains of the Country with Green Woods* (P’yŏngyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2015). The period has also seen roller-skating promoted as a form of healthy leisure, especially for the country’s middle class. A particularly well-appointed rollerskating rink was opened in P’yŏngyang with considerable fanfare in 2012 and, as is the way in North Korea, rolled out to the regions thereafter. A similar park opened in 2018 in Shinŭiju, for instance. Curtis Melvin, “Developments in North Korea’s Sinuiju City under Kim Jŏngŭn,” Tearline, June 20, 2018.

https://www.tearline.mil/public_page/u-developments-in-north-koreas-sinuiju-city-under-kim-jŏngŭn/ (last accessed May 14, 2019). An image of one performance given by the students at the kindergarten in Shinŭiju can be seen on the Instagram feed of the co-founder of one tour company focused on tourism to North Korea, Young Pioneer Tours: https://www.instagram.com/p/BwsqsCthkxP/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=1eksqp3cd8cn1 (last accessed May 14, 2019).

⁷¹ While there is sufficient cause to believe that the kindergarten in Shinŭiju, being open to visits from foreign tourists, is in better physical condition than kindergartens elsewhere, even if only because it has the opportunity to charge a small fee in hard currency to each visitor or their respective tour company, there is no reason to claim that the *Paektusan sam-tae janggun ōrinsijŏl iyagi* taught to pupils is different to that which is taught anywhere else. Examples of Kim Ilŏng revolutionary history textbooks available for perusal at the North Korea Documents Center in Sŏul corroborate the view that the curriculum in this and every other respect is universal. According to a record of discussions between Kim Ilŏng and Eric Honecker in 1986, North Korea had five million “spaces in daycare centers and primary schools,” an allocation of resources designed to facilitate women’s labor force participation. However, the collapse of the North Korean economy in the late 1980s and early 90s led to mass absenteeism, which constrained the ability of the state to deliver effective ideological education for several years. See: “Transcript of Official Negotiations between Comrade Erich Honecker and Comrade Kim Il Sung,” October 19, 1986, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA, DY 30, 2460. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110143> (last accessed September 17, 2019).

⁷² The kindergarten is the source of some of the most gifted young participants (skipping, mostly) in the Arirang mass games, the mass gymnastics performance held at the May Day Stadium, P’yŏngyang on a semi-regular basis since 2002. The source of this information is two informants in the North Korean tourist industry. For a pictorial record of the Arirang mass games, see: “North Korea’s Arirang mass games – in pictures,” *The Guardian*, February 17, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2015/feb/17/north-koreas-arirang-mass-games-in-pictures> (last accessed October 1, 2017).

became Kim's first wife and, in 1942, gave birth to the boy who would become his successor, Kim Chǒngil. *Paektusan sam-taejanggun ōrinsijŏl iyagi*, the early-childhood education precursor to Kim Il-sŏng Revolutionary History, has existed as a standalone pre-school subject since April 2013, when it was created out of several antecedents that had been part of the curriculum in one form or another since 1983.⁷³

Kim Il-sŏng dominates the *Paektusan sam-taejanggun ōrinsijŏl iyagi* classroom. High on the wall facing the only door is positioned the smiling, avuncular *t'aeyangsang* (as one particular form of *ch'osanghwa*, or portrait, of Kim family members is known) of Kim in a dark suit that has been ubiquitous in North Korea since Kim's death in July 1994.⁷⁴ Surrounding the portrait is a much larger wall mural of the house in the Man'gyŏngdae district of P'yŏngyang that is officially considered to have been Kim's birthplace.⁷⁵ In front of the mural is a glass-encased diorama of the aforementioned house and surrounding area at Man'gyŏngdae. Along both sides of the diorama are low chairs for the pupils. Several more framed images of Kim and/or quotations attributed to him line the walls. A piano and a TV with a DVD player, both shrouded in laced blankets when not in use, complete the furnishings. According to a schedule posted on the wall outside, each kindergarten class is taught – if that is the right word – *Paektusan sam-tae janggun ōrinsijŏl iyagi* twice a week.

⁷³ Yang Oksŭng, “t'ongildaebi pukhanŭi yŏngyua kyoyukpoyuk sisŭt'em punsŏk” 통일대비 북한의 영유아 교육보육 시스템 분석 [Analysis of North Korea's infant childcare and education system [in] preparation for unification], *Saengt'aeyuagyoyŏngyŏn'gu* [[The Journal of Eco-Early Childhood Education] 13, no. 4 (2014): 267; Andrei Lankov, *North of the DMZ: Essays on Daily Life in North Korea* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 60.

⁷⁴ Prior to his death, Kim Il-sŏng was usually portrayed in a serious pose. The same is true of Kim Chǒngil.

⁷⁵ According to Soviet sources, the house was chosen as Kim's birthplace by Soviet officers charged with building up Kim Il-sŏng's profile after he was hurriedly selected to lead the DPRK on the initiative of Lavrentiy Beria, the chief of the Soviet secret police and a factionalist who sought to ingratiate himself with Stalin. See: Fyodor Tertitskiy, “Soviet Officer Reveals Secrets of Mangyongdae,” *Daily NK*, January 22, 2014. <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?num=11335&cataId=nk03600> (last accessed November 3, 2017).

The pedagogical role of *Paektusan sam-taejanggal ōrinsijŏl iyagi* is, as noted previously, to inculcate the attributes of being North Korean in the country's young. Though the exploits of Kim Il-sŏng appear everywhere in North Korean school textbooks, and these appearances play a role in immersing school children in "being North Korean", only here is there a dedicated space for specifically North Korean political socialization. It centers on inculcating the values ostensibly encapsulated in the Manchurian heritage centered on Kim Il-sŏng. Kim is not lauded here for his political acumen; on the contrary, the focus is on his unbending nationalistic virtue in defending the Korean people from Japanese (and, later, American) aggression.⁷⁶

The central government's policy that North Korean school children be inculcated with the semi-mythical revolutionary history of Kim Il-sŏng and his successors is unremarkable. Governments (at least those of successful states) tend in general to proceed on the assumption that the survival of the relevant political system depends at least in part upon defining the historical foundations of the putative national community in the minds of its subjects, thus establishing the equally putative inevitability of the existing ruling structure. In this regard, North Korea faces more challenges than most, having begun the state-building process from scratch just seventy years ago in a region whose history recounts many instances, albeit some of them rather exaggerated, of intervention and subjugation by larger powers, and having been locked in competition with South Korea ever since. But it is not *sui generis*.

The question of whether this political-ideological education is effective over the long term is, however, less clear than one might imagine given the resources that are devoted to its implementation. If one defines the goal of political-ideological schooling in North Korea as

⁷⁶ Ōm Hyŏnsuk, "Pukhan yuch'iwŏn kyoyugŭi chŏngch'isahoehwae-e kwanhan yŏn'gu" 북한 유치원 교육의 정치사회화에 관한 연구 [Study on the political socialization of North Korean preschool education], *T'ongiryŏn'gu* [Unification Research] 18, no. 2 (2014): 102.

grounding the reality of what it means to “be DPR Korean” in some form of usable collective history from an early age, it is not certain that the time and resources that the state devotes to the task are productively utilized.⁷⁷

Obviously, proving this one way or the other is tricky. The continuation of the political regime in North Korea could be said to reflect the successes of political socialization, but it is an outcome of many other variables, too. There has never been a survey of DPR Korean students for their political views before and after they study Kim Ilŏng revolutionary history. Nor should we anticipate survey data of this kind ever being generated. Even as they systematically lay out a critique of North Korean political socialization practices in schools, Kim and Kim acknowledge the same dilemma. “Judgment on whether or not a school program is successful largely depends on what it does for the recipients of the program,” they note, but due to a lack of access, “It is almost impossible to gauge what emotional and psychological impact such intensive indoctrination programs have left on North Korean students.” All Kim and Kim feel able to say with confidence is, “North Korean educational authorities seem to have been convinced that students, when they are thoroughly indoctrinated, will support and defend Kim Ilŏng and Kim Chŏngil.”⁷⁸

Maybe that is so. There is some evidence from the USSR to suggest that such education is effective. For children in the Soviet Union, a more pluralistic and open society than North Korea for all of its post-Stalin history after 1953 but, like China, a comparable case given a similarly extensive program of integration propaganda from the earliest days of schooling, ideological

⁷⁷ Though much ink is spilled in criticism of the fact that blatantly hagiographical works are taught in schools at all, and with good reason, there have been few attempts to establish the impact that those works have on the students who are obliged to attend the classes.

⁷⁸ Kim with Kim, *Human Remolding in North Korea*, 187. I think there is just cause to doubt even this limited conclusion – North Korean officials are structurally disincentivized from speaking honestly about bad news to their superiors, so any doubt that exists would be hidden – but in any event, it doesn’t get us closer to an answer.

education is said to have worked. Shlapentokh notes that in the USSR, the young were “one of the most dedicated sectors of the population.”⁷⁹ Though nuclear scientist-turned-dissident Andrei Sakharov ended up far from being a representative example of a Soviet citizen, it is worth noting how as an anonymous younger man it “never entered [Sakharov’s] head to question Marxism as ‘the ideology best suited to liberate mankind’.”⁸⁰ The Soviet political-ideological socialization process was effective on him. “Almost all children and teenagers entered the Pioneer and Konsomol organizations with great joy and pride [...] Young people were under intense ideological pressure as they moved forward through schools and colleges. The absolute majority of young people, even in families hostile toward the system, were enthusiastic supporters of the Soviet order.”⁸¹ The situation was such that, Shlapentokh goes on to say, “in most cases, parents were afraid of telling their children about their genuine attitudes toward the system.”⁸²

But the effectiveness of political socialization practices cannot be measured only in terms of its impact on the young. Reading against the grain suggests that where the inculcation of such foundational meta-narratives was effective on Soviet youth, even to the extent that parents were seemingly afraid of telling their offspring of their genuine feelings, the impact of ideological education did not last. Why were parents frightened? Presumably because parents felt differently to their highly indoctrinated offspring, and knew that if their own private disagreements with official culture as imposed by Moscow were to become known to their children, the risk of those

⁷⁹ Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society*, 133.

⁸⁰ Lowe, *The Fear and the Freedom*. 237. Andrei Sakharov, a Soviet nuclear scientist and subsequently a dissident who died in 1989, ended up not at all representative of Soviet society as a whole. Nevertheless, as a young man he was subject to the same processes of socialization as many millions of other Soviet citizens. His words remain valid as evidence of the phenomenon of weakening ideological commitment that Shlapentokh describes in *A Normal Totalitarian Society*.

⁸¹ Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society*, 133.

⁸² Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society*, 133.

attitudes becoming public knowledge – and therefore liable to be punished – would greatly increase.

One might be tempted to offer the counter-claim that generational differences of opinion in the USSR that I put down to “ideological decay” over time were in fact down to parents and grandparents being educated under the old Tsarist autocratic regime prior to the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1917 and subsequent embedding of new socialization practices. There may even be some truth to that proposition in some cases. But the USSR survived for more than 70 years, so it does not hold for later generations. There, the only plausible conclusion is that the effects of ideological education were apt to wane.⁸³

Historical evidence suggests that in the absence of circumstances oriented toward keeping revolutionary energy levels high in an entire populace – the immediate demands of societal construction, the direct threat posed by an external enemy, wartime social controls and suchlike – and in particular where direct experience contradicts the narratives put forward by the state, adults experience this “ideological decay”. This is an outcome of the inevitable conflict between rigid ideologies and dynamic societies. As Sang Woo Rhee notes:

Social changes [...] cannot be controlled entirely by political planners no matter how carefully they may seek to manage affairs. Even revolutionary political ideologies are essentially conservative, since they do not usually carry self-correcting mechanisms. Well-formulated political ideologies are normative systems, in which prescriptions for action

⁸³ Method of ideological education matters, too. Kim Chŏngil concluded that the key to ideological education rests not in exposing and critiquing negative practices but in finding and popularizing positive examples. He was likely correct. Children everywhere are apt to be intoxicated by the derring-do of heroes in their battles against evil. The Manchurian heritage is an example of this. As personal conversations with defector-migrants have shown, young North Korean children are enthused by the heroism of the semi-mythical exploits of Kim Il-sŏng. This is not, of course, to say that the DPR Korean ideological apparatus does not utilize exposure and critique of negative practices as a tool of control. Self-criticism is as common in North Korea as it was in the Soviet Union. Christopher Richardson, “Still Quite Fun to Read? An Introduction to North Korean Children’s Literature,” *Sino-NK*, September 7, 2013. <http://sinonk.com/2013/09/17/still-quite-fun-to-read-an-introduction-to-north-korean-childrens-literature/> (last accessed November 19, 2017); *Kim Jong Il: Brief History* (P’yŏngyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1998), 7; Felicity Ann O’Dell, *Socialisation Through Children’s Literature: The Soviet Example* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

are deduced from value judgements. These judgements reflect the ideas of one era. Once formulated they cannot easily be changed, because they are tied to so many interrelated, derivative propositions. [...] Societies change, but not political ideologies. It is inevitable therefore that conflict arises between societies and unchanging political ideologies.⁸⁴

One result of this clash between public dogma and private dynamism is the awareness among those who have come of age that society is increasingly at odds with ideology. Whether this type of consciousness transition over time is a life-cycle effect – i.e. all young people start off believing the propaganda they are inculcated with in school, but in adulthood the conviction wanes, as Lowe seems to imply – or a cohort effect – i.e. experiences and information received by early Soviet citizens resulted in sticky ideological values for them, but not for later cohorts, which acquired different but equally sticky values – is an important and interesting question. Alas, it is impossible to establish an answer to it here. The Soviet Interview Project does not offer a definitive answer – indeed it cannot, as both life-cycle and cohort effects may be present at the same time, and disaggregating one from the other is impossible in the absence of the conditions for a natural experiment. Only, Donhowe and Millar, analyzing the results of the SIP from the vantage point of 1987, note that “the social atomization bred by the terror of the Stalinist years has been withering away in the Soviet Union – particularly among the young, who did not experience the Stalinist period directly.”⁸⁵ They do not venture to suggest why, but the implication is there.

How does this manifest in the North Korean case? I noted in the previous section an unremarkable degree of ethnocentric sentiment among respondents to the structured survey of North Korean defector-migrants. The obvious question that is raised by this insight is: If ethnicity is no more or less prominent in North Korean self-understandings than in other

⁸⁴ Sang Woo Rhee, “North Korean Ideology, Social Change, and Policy toward the South.” In *North Korea Today: Strategic and Domestic Issues*, eds. Robert A. Scalapino and Jun-Yop Kim (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1983), 234

⁸⁵ Donhowe and Millar, “Life, Work and Politics in Soviet Cities,” 1.

societies, then what are we to say about the self-understandings of DPR Korean citizens? Of what else are their values and attitudes constituted? In this section, I look at this question via an analysis of the common argument that self-understandings and social cohesion in DPR Korea are created and maintained through the mutually agreed upon legitimacy conferred upon Kim family rule through the so-called “Manchurian heritage” of Kim Ilŏng’s military exploits in Manchuria during the 1920s and 30s, which are transferred to the young through the North Korean school system. The North Korean people, in this conception, see themselves as the children of Kim Ilŏng; the children of the semi-mythical Manchurian struggle, and the public-school system is the cradle of this political-ideological structure. But is that the case in reality?

I interrogate these questions using evidence from the structured survey. I investigate the successes and/or failures of Manchurian heritage-based political socialization processes, and contemplate how salient the exploits of Kim Ilŏng in Manchuria are or are not in the self-understandings of the survey respondents in different age cohorts. I find that overall, respondents are somewhat conscious of the dubiousness of the founding myths of their state. This does not mean they reject the Manchurian heritage; such a conclusion would be far too black and white. But it is my view that the Manchurian heritage is accepted to a contingent degree.⁸⁶ Perhaps predictably, political socialization as to the virtuousness of the Manchurian heritage as a legitimizing narrative of political rule is neither wholly successful nor a complete failure.

Manchurian Heritage and Pride

The findings in this chapter were established via a battery of questions that asked respondents to assess their subjective feelings of pride in twelve different attributes of being North Korean. The

⁸⁶ Respondents were invited to say whether their answers reflected long-held beliefs dating back to their time in North Korea, or were acquired more recently in South Korea. The responses were mixed.

twelve attributes in question are as follows: the way DPR Korean socialism works; DPR Korea's political influence in the world; its economic achievements; its social security system; its scientific and technological achievements; its achievements in sports; its achievements in arts and literature; the Mt. Paektu bloodline's achievements in political leadership; its armed forces; anti-Japanese revolutionary history; its fair and equal treatment of all groups in society; and the achievements of the *chuch'e* ideology.⁸⁷ Possible responses were "very proud", "somewhat proud", "not very proud", "not proud at all" or "cannot choose".⁸⁸ Due to the limitations of these data, the results are presented in the form of descriptive statistics. They are not weighted. In another publication based on a combined data set from this and one other survey, overall responses were weighed according to the known population parameters provided by the 2008 UN population census, but no significant differences were found after weighting.⁸⁹

I contend that responses to these questions can be interpreted as markers of support, or lack thereof, for key elements of North Korea's 70-year old nation-building project, and that a high degree of pride would likely equate to (politically) socialized members of the North Korean national community. The pride items, which are sub-divided into three baskets – ideological, which includes the Manchurian heritage item, cultural, and socio-economic – represent *de facto*

⁸⁷ The battery of questions mirrors those used in question 58 of the International Social Survey Programme: National Identity III - ISSP 2013. It augments the original battery of questions with several options that pertain specifically to DPR Korea: number eight ("The Mt. Paektu bloodline's achievements in political leadership"), number ten ("Anti-Japanese revolutionary history"), and number twelve ("The achievements of the *chuch'e* ideology"). The questions were formulated with the assistance of several resettled North Koreans living in Söul, who assessed them and suggested edits that might make them more instinctively understood by the respondents. The unique identifier of International Social Survey Programme: National Identity III - ISSP 2013 is ZA5950. Respondents were requested to answer by choosing one of the following responses for each attribute: very proud (*maeu charangsüröpta*); somewhat proud (*taso charangsüröpta*); not very proud (*pyöllo charangsüröpchi anhüm*); not proud at all (*chönhyö charangsüröpchi anhüm*); or cannot choose (*sönt'aekhal su öpta*). The question does not ask about pride in the legacy of the Korean War, a shortcoming that I thank Koen de Ceuster of Leiden University for bringing to my attention. Nor does it ask about pride in the bottom-up marketization process that has taken place since the 1990s, something raised in private conversation by Rozalia Toth, a former Leiden MA student. These two items have been added to later iterations of the survey.

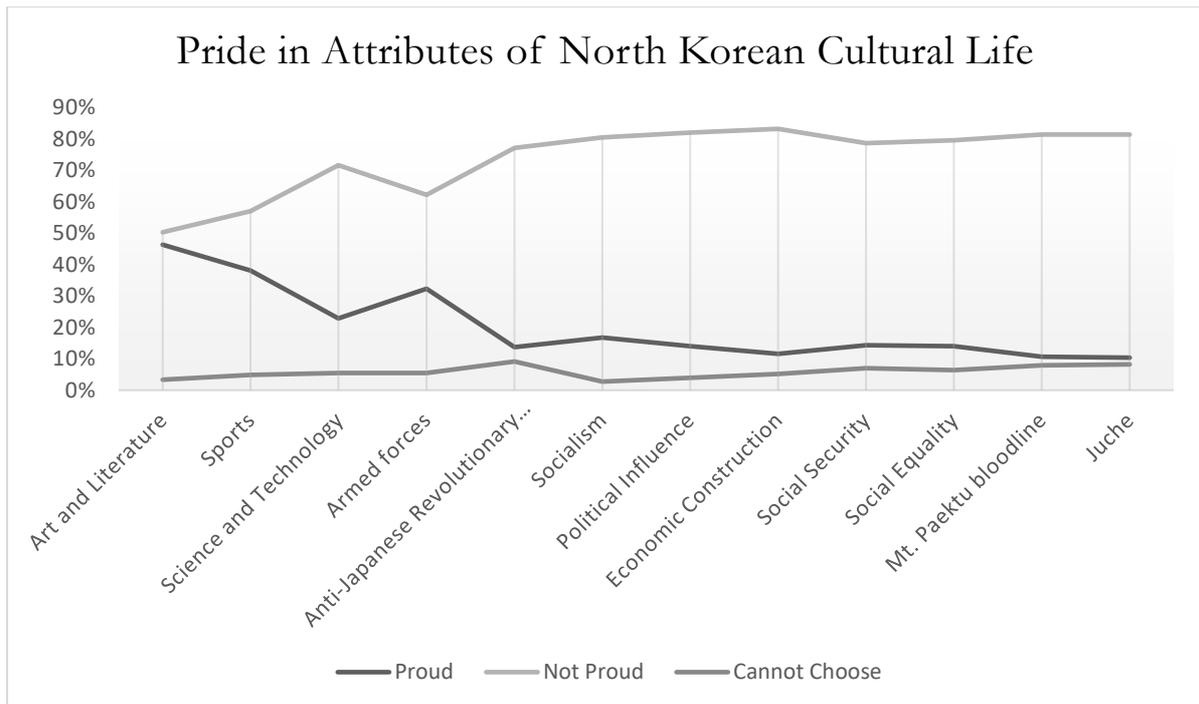
⁸⁸ It was also possible not to respond at all; an average of 0.9 percent of all respondents did so for each question.

⁸⁹ See: Steven Denney and Christopher Green, "Referenda on the Nation: Exploring the Relationship between Ideology and Daily Life in North Korea," under review.

referenda on the North Korean state's ability to construct citizens, including socializing them into an ideological structure rooted in the collective memory of Manchurian struggle.

The limitations of this approach will be obvious to readers of the Methodology chapter of this thesis. First, there is a risk of respondents falsifying their preferences with regards to pride in ideological attributes in particular, as ideology is a politically sensitive topic in the South Korean social context. Second, the defector-migrant community is self-selecting (though I showed previously that this is not as serious an issue as is often contended thanks to the diversity of that community in the second decade of the 21st century). And third, although I have shown that values remain sticky even after resettlement in South Korea, the Soviet case implies the possibility that ideological decay occurs as a result of a lack of political-ideological maintenance, which is hard to disaggregate from the impact of departure since political-ideological maintenance would cease at the moment of escape. Whilst I acknowledge these limitations, there is still value in the results, given the diversity of the defector-migrant community, and tentative evidence that the attitudes and values of the defector-migrant group are stickier than the lay observer might suppose.

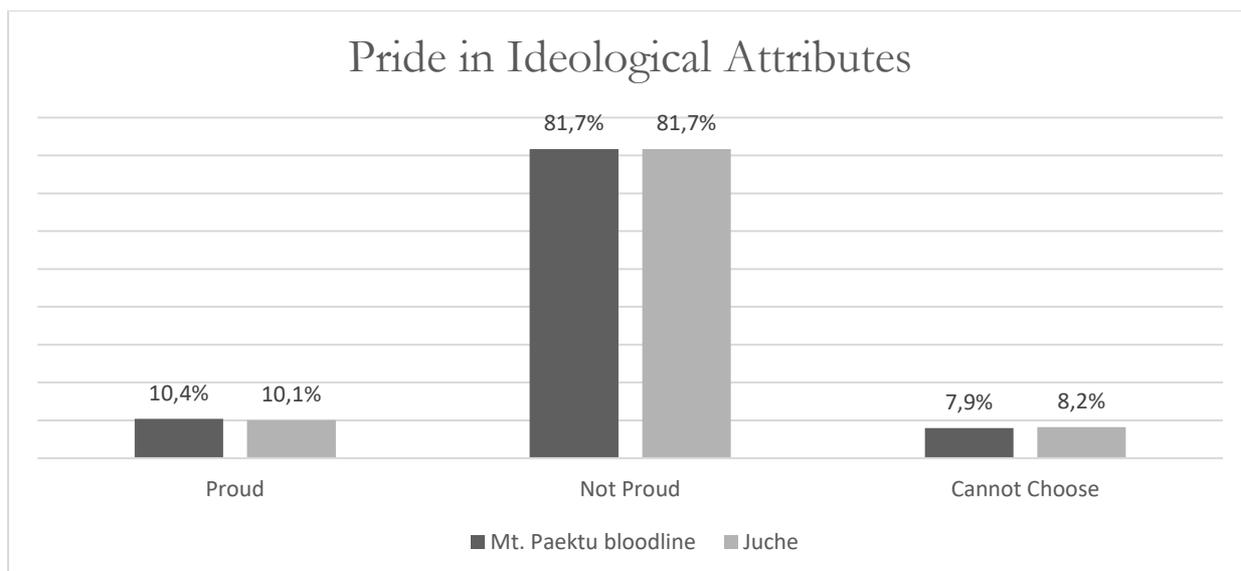
Visualizing the results below, the divergence between cultural, socio-political, and ideological factors becomes clear. The visualization combines the variables “very proud” and “somewhat proud” into “proud” and the remainder, “not particularly proud” and “not proud at all,” into “not proud”, and ranks them from most proud to least proud.



Pride in twelve different attributes of North Korean life, recoded into "proud", "not proud" and "cannot choose" (N=328).

The survey results show that resettled North Koreans feel pride in some of the items presented, indicating that those attributes are salient to the individual's self-understandings of what it means to be North Korean. These are mostly in the cultural sector: art and literature; sports; and science and technology. But whereas pride in cultural items is comparatively strong, pride in socio-economic items is weak, and in ideological items even weaker still.

The Manchurian heritage, which is encapsulated by the "anti-Japanese revolutionary history" item, is comparatively unpopular. It garners 15.1 percent pride among the sample. However, ideological items even less grounded in historical facts perform even worse. The average respondent does not find the "Mt. Paektu bloodline" or *chuch'e* to be sources of pride to any meaningful extent. Pride in both the Mt. Paektu bloodline and achievements of the *chuch'e* ideology run at less than five percent each.



Pride in three different attributes of North Korean life, recoded into "proud", "not proud" and "cannot choose" (unit: percent; N=328).

Conversely, pride in North Korean art and literature comes close to fifty percent (47.3 percent). This is the case irrespective of the fact that much if not most of the content of DPR Korean art and literature productions is directly related to or connected with the ideology of the Kim regime. A lower but still noteworthy degree of pride in North Korea's sporting achievements was also recorded (39.4 percent).

Interviews with defector-migrants bear the survey findings out, and offer answers to the follow-up question of why the findings should be as they are.⁹⁰ Survey respondents assert that irrespective of ideological content, North Koreans do indeed have pride – and defector-migrants retain that pride – in those items at which the North Korean state has succeeded in whole or in part (or claims relatively convincingly to have succeeded). That is: the arts; sports; the military; and science and technology. It is likely not coincidental that in these instances, lived reality is

⁹⁰ There were 352 respondents in the 2016 project. Of these, 95 agreed to follow-up interviews. All interviews took place between July 12 and August 14, 2016 in Söul, each lasting one hour or more. The interviews, a combination of individual interviews and small (2-6 people) group sessions, were led by a trained social worker (South Korean citizen).

roughly in concordance with the content of government propaganda (not to mention the content of that performance I saw at the kindergarten in Shinŭiju).

Conversely, where lived reality is at odds with the content of ideological propaganda, sometimes grossly so, respondents returned lower pride scores.⁹¹ And where a respondent from any age group has direct experience behind the scenes of ideological productions, memories of these experiences mean that their pride scores are reduced.

One male⁹² who departed North Korea in 1996 offered up a position representative of a considerable number of older respondents who find in North Korean cultural forms a wellspring of stories and ideas that contribute to their self-understanding. While harboring no greater respect for North Korea's ideological and socio-economic outcomes than anyone of any age, he showed high regard for the country's achievements in the arts, sports, and science and technology, ending the interview with a flourish: "North Korea does [culture] really well!"

When questioned on the link between North Korean cultural productions and the ideological strictures that underpin them, the man was clear, "These are separate things."

"There is the part that is idolization of the Kim family, and then there is the artistic and cultural [parts]... these should be seen as separate things. Not having pride in our arts because they laud the Kim household... it makes no sense."

At age 75, the man comes from the generation of North Korean defector-migrants who grew up in the heyday of the North Korean state; the 1960s and 1970s. The tendency of this cohort toward pride in the accomplishments of that state is arguably unsurprising. A government that

⁹¹ Naturally, individual responses are dependent in large part on direct experience vis-a-vis North Korea's economic and political fortunes, which have waxed and waned over the years.

⁹² Male, age 75, lived in Chagang Province, spent 55 years in North Korea.

delivers on its policies will tend to be judged favourably, and in that era North Korea emerged from the Korean War – a war that North Koreans are taught (1) they did not start; and more importantly (2) did win – in ruins and was rebuilt from the ground up via a system of mass mobilization that, whilst undeniably coercive, had a cohesive effect on society.⁹³

Yet it is not the case that North Korea is only a country that old men (and women) can be proud of. Time after time, the young demonstrate equal or greater pride in the culture of North Korea than those in middle age, and only somewhat weaker than the elderly. One young woman⁹⁴, born in 1994 and thus entirely divorced from the Kim Ilŏng period, agreed that “of course you can like North Korea art and culture without feeling pride in the Kim family.” At just 23, the woman didn’t even find it troubling to quote Kim Ilŏng, although she got the quotation wrong and had to correct herself.

“Kim Ilŏng said that a great item of art can move the hearts of millions... no, he said it can carry the hearts of millions...”

Direct experience of ideological impositions can be a confounding factor, however. On one occasion, a focus group interview was conducted with a 31-year old female⁹⁵ who left North Korea in 2007 at the age of 20, and a 44-year old female⁹⁶ who lived there until 2003, leaving at the age of 31. Both women were from towns on the Tumen River in North Hamgyŏng Province, on North Korea’s border with China.

The younger woman showed greater pride in North Korea than her older co-interviewee, with an emphasis placed on cultural items. The image of a people moving as one looks visually

⁹³ Although the regime’s ideology was, naturally, subverted. See for example: Dmitry Mironenko, “A Jester with Chameleon Faces: Laughter and Comedy in North Korea, 1953-1969,” PhD diss. Harvard University, 2014.

⁹⁴ Female, age 23, lived in North Hamgyŏng, spent 15 years in North Korea.

⁹⁵ Female, age 31, lived in North Hamgyŏng, spent 20 years in North Korea.

⁹⁶ Female, age 44, lived in North Hamgyŏng, spent 31 years in North Korea.

exceptional, the younger woman explained with noticeable enthusiasm after raising the example of the Arirang Mass Games. It looks like "people acting as one."

However, pride also appears to be partially dependent on having avoided the hardships of direct experience. Ideology doesn't manifest in daily life without the effort – often coerced, rarely entirely voluntary – of the population. In middle school, the older interviewee had formed part of the card section of a regional variant of the Arirang Mass Games. Drawing on this experience, she highlighted the hardships of preparation for ideologically centered performances, suggesting in a moment of shared humor between the two women that the younger woman had pride in such things precisely because the rigors of preparation for public ideological events were alien to her, whereas she herself had experienced what we might call the dark side of ideological propaganda.

But whereas pride, or otherwise, in North Korean official culture may be linked to direct experience, it seemingly is not linked closely to one's views of the ruling political system. This runs contrary to conventional wisdom about the pernicious impact of ideology in support of the Kim family (delivered through the tools of political socialization) on the thought processes of North Korean residents. Pride, where it exists, seems mostly to be a rational response to the quality of the domestic product being assessed. According to the 75-year old male, responses (*panǔng*) to and emotions (*kamdong*) engendered by North Korean cultural productions reflect the inherent qualities of those productions, which in his estimation are a very natural and convincing expressions of feelings that ordinary North Koreans share.

But whereas many defector-migrants are comfortable with the fact that their cultural identities as North Koreans are revealed to be unexpectedly sticky – i.e. that they don't radically alter post-

escape – others suffer from cognitive dissonance as a result. One 43-year old female⁹⁷ who left North Korea in 2003 commented on a feeling of being “slightly unsettled” by the reality that her emotional attachment for the culture of North Korea lingers; its style and content continue to appeal:

It is not as if I am thrown deep into doubt by this, but I do think to myself, ‘What is this feeling?’ We defectors (*t'albukch'a*) don't think about it in depth as we are not by and large political, but nevertheless that is our confused feeling (*bollansŭrŏun nŭk.kim*).

Concluding Remarks

There are two takeaways from this section. First, the average respondent to the structured survey does not find ideological items per se to be sources of pride. They are not prominent in the self-understandings of most respondents. Pro forma ideology in its most brutal, clunky, *obvious* form does not resonate. Pride in *chuch'e* and the Mt. Paektu bloodline is extremely limited. There is pride in the country's history of anti-Japanese struggle – the Manchurian heritage – but at just over 15 percent, this is lower than one might otherwise have expected given the tenor of official culture and the conclusions of many external interpretations of that official culture.

Conversely, pride in the North Korean arts and to a lesser extent sport is noteworthy. Pride in North Korean art and literature runs very close to fifty percent (47.3 percent), and a lower but still noteworthy degree of pride in North Korea's sporting achievements was also recorded (39.4 percent). This is the case irrespective of the fact that much of the content of the North Korean arts, and even its sporting achievements, is highly ideological in tone, being directly related to or connected with the ideological confections of the Kim regime.

⁹⁷ Female, age 43, lived in North Hamgyŏng, spent 31 years in North Korea.

Of course, we must pause also to reflect on methodological challenges that might impact these results. First, there is the accusation that resettled defector-migrants would be unlikely to articulate their true preferences with regards to ideological items (social desirability bias); second, the claim that this shows only the impact of defection from North Korea on the resettled defector-migrant population, and that any finding would not transfer to the context of North Korea itself (invalid referent population); and third, that as time passed since resettlement, effects would fade.

The strong ideological items in this battery of questions could fall foul of so-called desirability bias; the long-standing and well-understood notion that people avoid publicly stating opinions that they hold but which they believe to be socially unacceptable, because subjects have “the need [...] to respond in culturally sanctioned ways.”⁹⁸ Values and attitudes are notoriously hard to measure for precisely this reason. The scores for the ideological items in the survey almost certainly are lower than they would be in a comparable survey taken inside North Korea (were such a thing to be possible, which it isn’t, in particular without coercion impacting upon the responses to a far higher degree).

In North Korea, pride in ideological items like *chuch’e* is held up as a normative part of official culture, even if, as Myers points out, people may be unable to define the term *chuch’e* when asked to do so.⁹⁹ Given that, as Kuran notes, people “rely on the prevailing climate of opinion in developing the personal belief systems that underlie their private policy preferences,” one should

⁹⁸ Derek L. Philips and Kevin J. Clancy, “Some Effects of ‘Social Desirability’ in Survey Studies,” *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 5 (March 1972): 921-940; Douglas Crowne and David Marlowe, *The Approval Motive* (New York: Wiley, 1964), 354.

⁹⁹ Brian Myers, “Ideology as Smokescreen: North Korea’s Juche Thought,” *Acta Koreana* 11, no. 3 (December 2008): 161-182.

anticipate a greater degree of pride in ideological items among people inside North Korea, even in the entirely hypothetical absence of the existing coercive state apparatus.¹⁰⁰

That does not mean that trends *within* the data are invalid, however. Respondents demonstrate a considerable attachment to North Korea's achievements in art and literature, sports, and other cultural items, exceeding their pride in socio-economic and ideological items by a notable margin. This pattern is reflected in data on other former Soviet bloc states, it is worth noting. In light of the fact that our question here concerns the constitution of North Korean forms of cultural self-understanding, these findings are valid. We can contend that the same hierarchy of pride items would exist among the non-defector North Korean population as a whole, even if the specific numbers might differ.

Moving on to the second and third of the critiques; scholars who use defector-migrant surveys to make inferences about public opinion or behavior of North Korean people implicitly assume that time spent in South Korea impacts upon values and attitudes. They say that survey methods ought to be limited to those who are newly arrived, so that answers are not confounded (or are at least less confounded) by the process of resettlement.¹⁰¹

However, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, we can tentatively declare this concern invalid. If one averages the results of the survey across three groups: (1) new arrivals (those having spent 1 year or less in South Korea); (2) newly resettled (2-5 years in South Korea); and (3) fully resettled (6+ years in South Korea), the data indicate that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, opinions remain more or less similar across groups. The takeaway is that attitudes towards certain qualities of life and experience in North Korea are not strongly impacted by the

¹⁰⁰ Kuran, "Preference Falsification," 642-643.

¹⁰¹ Byung-yeon Kim, *Unveiling the North Korean Economy: Collapse and Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). See, esp., Chapter 3.

length of time one has spent in South Korea.¹⁰² In this case, it may be right to say that resettlement or exposure do not have a significant impact on responses.

This finding supports the method of analyzing *all* respondents' views, regardless of when they defected or arrived in South Korea (as long as they spent 15 formative years in DPR Korea). It also supports the conclusion that the attitudes shown in this chapter are resilient opinions of people who came of age in North Korea. It thus strikes down the second concern about the reasonableness of using defector-migrants as a referent for the broader North Korean population. It can be claimed that the survey responses represent North Korean perspectives and not only the opinions of a self-selecting defector class. However, in the absence of definitive methods of measuring the specific impact of departure from North Korea on the attitudes and values of escapees, we cannot say with high confidence that the defector-migrant population can be used as a referent for the population of North Korea as a whole.

These results are worth taking seriously not only for what they might tell us about North Korea, but also for what they tell us about the resettlement experience. Roy Richard Grinker cautioned in his 1998 book that harm was apt to be done when defector-migrants resettling in South Korea became “distressed by what they perceive to be a general South Korean view that nothing in the North is worth preserving.”¹⁰³ The results in this chapter show what those things perceived as “worth preserving” might be. It isn't statues of Kim Il-sŏng.

¹⁰² There is no place to explain this issue in more detail in this thesis. Instead, see Steven Denney and Christopher Green, “Chuch'e and the Everyday: Does Ideology Matter for Ordinary People in North Korea? Insights from Interviews and Surveys with North Korean Defector-Migrants,” presented at the Association of Asian Studies Annual Conference in Denver, March 2019.

¹⁰³ Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures*, 227.

Structures of Difference in North Korean Society

“Even though we guides have to say ‘we are working toward unification’ and ‘hopefully it will happen soon’, none of us actually thinks it will happen. But we just have to say it.”

Comment from a North Korean state employee¹⁰⁴

“The youth didn’t see the war. They can go around without thinking.”

Comment from an elderly Cypriot woman¹⁰⁵

During a visit to North Korea in the spring of 2017, I spoke with a young woman of 24 from P’yŏngyang about the symbolic power that is ascribed to Kim Ilŏng in North Korea’s official culture. Kim Ilŏng is defined locally as the founder of DPR Korea, which is contestable on grounds of Soviet involvement in Korean liberation from Japanese rule but generally accepted by North Koreans as historical fact. Political socialization practices position Kim as the head of a neo-Confucian national community encompassing the entire North Korean population. Accordingly, it would be reasonable to assume that Kim is a source of pride and emotive power, and perhaps even a cohesive glue upon which individual self-understandings are built.¹⁰⁶

Yet, the woman in P’yŏngyang could not immediately respond to my inquiry. She did not seem to be overcome with any particular emotion. If anything, she seemed a little embarrassed as she explained to me that she “was born in 1992, so I was only two years old when Great Leader Kim Ilŏng passed away.” What my interlocutor seemed to be aiming to convey was her emotional

¹⁰⁴ A North Korean employee of the DPR Korean state-run travel company KITC talking about unification of the two Koreas sometime in 2019.

¹⁰⁵ The Guardian, “Nicosia, Cyprus: the last divided capital in the world,” November 27, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=24&v=bMA6QyuhrsU&feature=emb_logo (last accessed November 27, 2019).

¹⁰⁶ The way the interlocutor truly felt about Kim could differ considerably from the way it was articulated to me, a foreigner. Equally, asking someone – anyone – how they feel about someone or something directly is not a good way to arrive at an accurate understanding of those feelings. Christopher Green, “Focusing Illusions: ROK Opinion Polling and the North Korea Lens,” *Sino-NK*, January 19, 2016. <https://sinonk.com/2016/01/19/focusing-illusions-rok-opinion-polling-and-the-north-korea-lens/> (last accessed September 17, 2019).

longing for North Korea's founding leader, as he had died while she was too young to form a meaningful relationship (in the context of the partisan family state¹⁰⁷) with him.

However, what she actually communicated was probably contrary to her intention. What I took from the exchange was that for young North Koreans, even those from the elite class based in the North Korean capital, Kim Il-sŏng is not as salient a factor in their self-understandings of what it means to be DPR Korean as he was for previous generations.

The era of Kim Il-sŏng's rule is now closer to history than lived experience for ordinary North Koreans. Kim died in July 1994, more than a generation ago, and had receded somewhat from public view several years before that (in the early 1980s). Kim is officially the "eternal president" of DPR Korea, and as we have seen, his prominence in top-down narratives of political socialization has not declined significantly since his passing. In fact, the Manchurian heritage remains central to the North Korean state's narrative of legitimacy. Presumably, then, Kim's salience in individual self-understandings has declined primarily because the active presence that he represented in North Korean public life after 1945 has declined.

In human societies, there is a distinctive difference and interplay between what Mentré calls "institutions" – taken here variously to mean the DPR Korean state, the Korean Workers' Party, the leading departments of that party such as the Organization and Guidance and Propaganda and Agitation departments, as well as the organizations that constitute what is known collectively as *chojiksaenghwal* ("organizational life") – and the looser-knit organizations that Mannheim calls "free human groupings" – which in the North Korean case might include informal groupings such as market traders or parents of schoolchildren.

¹⁰⁷ Kwon and Chung, *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*, 15-33.

It is the tendency of institutions to “lay down a lasting pattern of behavior, either by prescriptions of by the organization of collective undertakings, thus preventing the new generation from showing its originality.”¹⁰⁸ Institutions exhibit tendencies toward collective conservatism, and change slowly. Free human groupings tend to change more rapidly, and institutions therefore work to catch up. This is the pattern of most places, most of the time.

As my P’yŏngyang interlocutor’s words implied, Kim’s practical accomplishments have only limited salience in the daily lives of North Koreans. P’yŏngyang – in this case meaning the institution of the North Korean state, or more particularly the ruling Korean Workers’ Party Propaganda and Agitation Department – responded to the declining relevance of Kim Ilŏng in the everyday lives of individual and groups of young North Koreans by elevating Kim to a metaphysical state.¹⁰⁹ Kim is promoted as a folk hero, one whose actions – labelled here the “Manchurian heritage” – justify Kim family rule over North Korea today. But Kim does not have any direct bearing on the policy decisions of the state.¹¹⁰

The structured survey gives evidence of a contemporary commitment to DPR Korea as a state that does not find all or even most of its roots in either ethnocentric official culture of nationalist unity – as outlined in the first section of the Results chapter – or the relatively distant history of

¹⁰⁸ François Mentré, *Les générations sociales* (Paris: Ed. Bossard, 1920), cited in Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” 279.

¹⁰⁹ Marsha Haufler, “Time in the Mosaic Murals of the DPRK,” unpublished manuscript. It may in theory be the case that Kim’s elevation to a metaphysical state has resulted in his declining relevance in the everyday lives of the young. However, that is very unlikely to be the direction of causation given what we know about how societies evolve. As an aside, the elevation of Kim in this way is also cross-cut by a trend toward colored and vibrant, smiling and youthful statues of Kim Ilŏng which are used to link Kim to his grandson, Kim Chŏngŭn. See: Carey Park, “Changes in the Depiction of Kim Il Sung under Kim Jong Il,” conference presentation, 11th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), July 18, 2019.

¹¹⁰ One is put in mind of the declining salience of the Anglo-American alliance in the British context: in the broadest sense, the bond of blood formed of American intervention in two world wars is salient to the older generation of British people, but it is identification with the European project that animates the emotions of younger people. The result is a latent generational schism, which may be activated and become problematic under certain circumstances (such as after the 2016 Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom).

the Manchurian heritage discussed in the second section. For all the energy and investment devoted to the dissemination of Manchurian heritage in North Korean schools as part of a national program of political socialization, the connections of adult members of the DPR Korean population to their state, and the Kim family, does not spring entirely from memories of *Paektusan sam-tae janggun ōrinsijŏl iyagi*. Though these aspects of political socialization are surely relevant to individual self-understandings on some level and to some degree, conscious and/or subconscious, we can still draw the conclusion that North Korean self-understandings are not isomorphic with support for Kim Il-sŏng and his regime, and nor are they solely rooted in the so-called Manchurian heritage.¹¹¹

Then, North Korean self-understandings must have other roots. As we have already seen, it is a shared history of sporting, literary, artistic and theatrical productions and accomplishments that seem apt to linger in memories, seemingly reminding the carriers of those memories what it means to them individually to be North Korean. The roots of North Korean self-understandings stem from many of the same things that conjure the subjective cultural self-understandings of other groups.

But of course, individual attributes of self-understandings – be they cultural, economic, political or ideological – are not felt to be equally important by every individual or – in the aggregate – every group. Independent determinants of self-understandings could include class (divided into upper, middle, and lower), location (divided into capital, border, and interior), age (young, middle aged, and old), and more.¹¹² Distinctions in the values and attitudes of different cohorts are

¹¹¹ To reiterate, I do not claim these findings as robust evidence for the changing consciousness of North Koreans inside North Korea. However, I raise hypotheses, and propose that they spur future research in this area.

¹¹² One of many curious aspects of the analysis of North Korea is the seeming assumption that the people of North Korea are largely monolithic in terms of self-understandings. It is as if the existence of a publicly uncontested official culture leads to an uncontested form of real culture. This is of course not so. Koreans are as variegated as any other group. As Roy Richard Grinker put it, “North Koreans will never be replicas of south Koreans, any more than one

presumed to be generated by experiential differentiations. That is why I drew on the work of Mannheim in the Literature Review chapter of this thesis.¹¹³

Older, middle-aged and younger North Koreans do in general have widely differentiated experiences. This is the legacy of North Korea's history of social and economic change: from the Korean War to rapid social reconstruction, then economic stagnation and decline, followed by ruinous famine and slow recovery. The result is presumed to be significant generational gaps.

The same is assumed to be true of geographical (for which read regional) distinctions. Korea is renowned for strong patterns of regional loyalty, in some cases appearing to transcend state loyalties. Ra Chongil recalls consternation among North Korean forces during the early part of the Korean War, as the North Korean army overwhelmed a weak South Korean military, forcing it to retreat behind a hastily established defensive line at Pusan. Despite introducing emancipatory policies in the towns and villages that fell under North Korean control in this process, policies that ostensibly benefited previously marginalized groups, for example ending feudal modes of production and releasing women from servitude, the North Koreans were widely dismissed and disregarded, their policies rejected. Why? Because the North Koreans were not local to southern regions.

In South Korea, post-1987 democratic voting patterns evidence the continuing existence of strong regional loyalties among people from the Chōlla and Kyōngsang regions, in particular.

Roy Richard Grinker draws on these same regionalist tendencies when he scorns the notion that “Koreans from the southwest and the southeast [could be] identical to one another.”¹¹⁴ In the

would assume that poor and rich south Koreans, male and female south Koreans, or Koreans from the southwest and the southeast are identical to one another.” Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures*, 225.

¹¹³ Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” in Paul Keeskemeti (ed.), *Karl Mannheim: Essays* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1952, republished 1972): 276-322.

¹¹⁴ Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures*, 225.

North, the same is said of the people of the Hamgyŏng region in the country's northeast, although a complete absence of credible plebiscites makes such anecdotal evidence of variation harder to prove conclusively.

In this chapter, we zoom in on these two schisms – generation and geography – that are anecdotally said to structure difference in contemporary North Korean society. Specifically, we ask whether splits along the axes of age and location are borne out in the data. On the one hand, we observe the differences that exist between resettled North Koreans who lived through the Kim Ilŏng period of North Korean history and those who did not. And on the other, we seek answers to the question of what differences exist between people who used to live in P'yŏngyang, the border region, and the interior of the country.

A Generational Cleavage?

Generational analysis is a well-established area of social science, most notably in the U.S. where it originated. There, scholars divide the population into six generational cohorts: Greatest Generation (b. 1901-1927); Silent Generation (b. 1928-1945); Baby Boom (b. 1946-1964); Generation X (b. 1965-1980); Millennials (b. 1981-1996); and Generation Z (b. 1997+).¹¹⁵ These generational cohorts have been causally tied to a variety of domestic social and political outcomes, including political attitudes and participation in political discourse, tools and styles of social interaction, and approach to work and the workplace.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ "The Generation Gap in American Politics," Pew Research Center, March 1 2018. <http://www.people-press.org/2018/03/01/the-generation-gap-in-american-politics/> (last accessed February 6, 2019).

¹¹⁶ Elza Venter, "Bridging the communication gap between Generation Y and the Baby Boomer Generation," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 22, no. 4 (2016): 497-507; Louis Chauvel, and Fransje Smits, "The Endless Baby Boomer Generation," *European Societies* 17, no. 2 (February 2015): 242-278; Andrea Hershatter and Molly Epstein, "Millennials and the World of Work: An Organization and Management Perspective," *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25, no. 2 (2010): 211-223; Michael D. Hais and Morley Winograd, *Millennial Makeover: MySpace, Youtube, and the Future of American Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

Generational analysis has also been conducted in and about South Korean society, though to a lesser degree. Though the volume of research is smaller, the results are in many ways more fascinating. In the South, a compressed modernization process is believed to have fostered noteworthy differences in attitudes and values between younger and older generational cohorts. Much research has dealt with value change pre- and post-democratization in 1987¹¹⁷, and the related issue of voting behavior.¹¹⁸

No such thing has been attempted in the case of North Korea. In addition to the fact that generational analysis tends to be conducted in liberal democracies rather than dictatorships, the same methodological and practical reasons that hinder North Korea-related research across the board apply in this area, too.

As a general principle, it is not at all surprising that there should be a degree of generational differentiation in North Korea; first, because it is the case in every society to a greater or lesser extent; and second, because one variable that has been shown to create or expedite trends in the direction of differentiation is rapid social dislocation, which promotes shifting societal and self-understandings.¹¹⁹ North Korea has suffered its share of such dislocations.

¹¹⁷ Auh Soo-Young, "Value Change and Democratization in South Korea," in Thorleif Pettersson and Yilmaz Esmer (eds.), *Changing Values, Persisting Cultures: Case Studies in Value Change* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill N.V., 2008), 305-332; Auh Soo-Young, "Continuity and Change in Korean Political Culture," *Korea Observer* 30, no. 2 (June 1999): 211-246; Hong Nack Kim, "Change and Continuity in Korean Political Culture: An Overview" *International Journal of Korean Studies* 2, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 1998): 100-120; Dong Wonmo, "Generational Differences and Political Development in South Korea." *Korean Studies* 17, no. 1 (1993): 1-16.

¹¹⁸ Choi Eunjung, "Political Issues, Generation Gap, and Voting Behavior in South Korea: The 2010 Söul Mayoral Election," *East Asia* 30, no. 4 (December 2013): 237-254; Cho Jin Man and Eom Ki Hong, "Generation Effects? An Empirical Analysis of the Korean National Assembly and Presidential Elections," *Asian Perspective* 36, no. 3 (2012): 353-386.

¹¹⁹ It is a direct consequence of previously discussed limitations on information, access, and some rather poor past analysis that in North Korea-related research, generational cleavages get subsumed beneath a veneer of simple generalizations about society. But that does not mean that such cleavages do not exist.

Disastrous events such as war and famine lead people and groups to abandon, disregard, augment or edit frames of self-understanding. Writing about the social dislocation of a Papua New Guinean tribe in the late 20th century, Robbins notes, "When people enter the market economy in force, or migrate to new locales [...] their old understandings of the way things are prove unable to help them navigate the new worlds they come to inhabit. In the face of the failure of their old conceptual schemes, they turn to new ones better suited to their current circumstances (emphasis added)."¹²⁰ Dikötter writes about analogous phenomena in the case of China in the Cultural Revolution, while Fitzpatrick and Kotkin deal with it in the Soviet Union.¹²¹ In North Korea, Suzy Kim recalls how Soviet occupation and the rising tenor of the Cold War undermined the revolutionary spirit of the nation long before the Korean War erupted in 1950, a little less than five years after liberation from Japanese rule.¹²²

The dislocation caused by the eruption of the North Korean famine in the 1990s is of a type with these past historic ruptures such as WWII and, later, the Korean War. People who came of age after the great schism in North Korean social life of the 1990s can be expected to have arrived at significantly differing values and attitudes to those who did so before and during the period. Dividing the structured survey sample into generational cohorts, then, each corresponding to a political period in North Korean history and defined by the moment of reaching the age 18-25, we should be able to observe these generational distinctions.¹²³

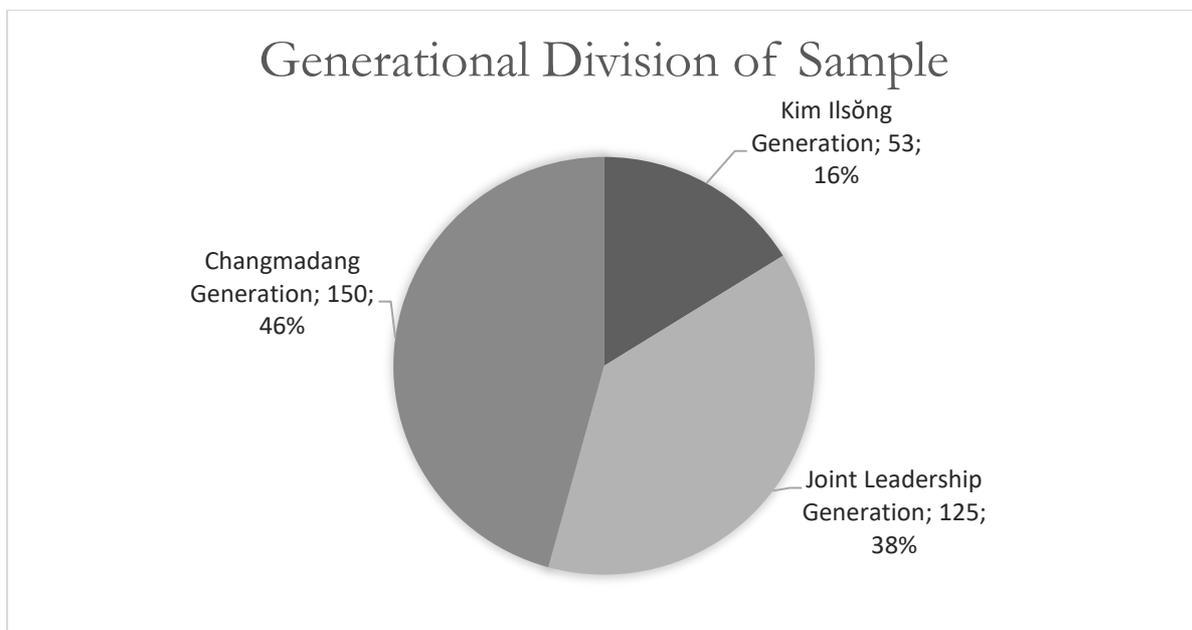
¹²⁰ Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 2.

¹²¹ Frank Dikötter, *The Cultural Revolution: A People's History 1962-1976* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's Team: Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1997); Stephen Kotkin, *Steeltown, USSR* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

¹²² Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945-50* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

¹²³ This does not amount to a generational analysis of the general population of North Korea – it is the generational analysis of a non-random sample of the diasporic North Korean community in South Korea – but it does give us hints.

People who reached the age of 18-25 in the period when Kim Ilŏng led North Korea (1948-1980) are classified here as the “Kim Ilŏng Generation.” People aged 25 or older in 1980 were 61 or older in 2016 at the time of the survey. People who came of age between 1980 and 1994, a transitional period in which Kim Ilŏng and Kim Chŏngil governed North Korea in tandem, are categorized as the “Kim Ilŏng-Kim Chŏngil Generation” or “Joint Leadership Generation”. This means that respondents in this cohort were between 44 and 61 in 2016 when the survey was conducted. People who came of age after the onset of famine in North Korea are categorized as the “Changmadang Generation.” Respondents aged 25 or younger in 1997 were 44 or younger in 2016.¹²⁴



Generational division of the sample into three main political periods (unit: count; N=328).

Why is the sample sub-divided in this way? The Kim Ilŏng era, prior to 1980, was the heyday of sustained quality of life improvements in North Korea. A process of national construction and development began at the end of the Korean War, and reached its apogee in the 1970s. This

¹²⁴ These analytical distinctions are only partially a reflection of lived reality. Significant grey areas exist between generations that are not captured. Those who left North Korea before the age of 25 are omitted from the data. I divide the sample this way instead of dividing it into ten-year age cohorts in response to prior scholarship about North Korean social life over the course of the 70-year history of the DPRK as a separate state, which I treat in detail in the literature review.

involved relatively high levels of interaction with foreign countries and peoples. People old enough to have come to adulthood in the Kim Ilŏng era are therefore assumed to harbor more positive, broadly speaking, views of North Korea as a whole than people who came of age later.

The “Joint Leadership Generation” was a period of what the average lay adult North Korean at the time would still have seen as relative abundance, in particular in the early years. However, that abundance was in the context of a declining economy and widening disparity between lived reality and the rhetoric of state loyalty – increasingly shrill and enforced frequently through coercion, replacing the ideological commitment that is commonly assumed to have preceded it. The latter part of the period from 1986 to 1994 was characterized also by decline, though different groups in society will have experienced this differently.

The third generation, the “Jangmadang Generation” consists of people whose memory of both the golden period of North Korean history and the decline that followed it is, though not always absent, nevertheless limited. These people do not have the “anchor” of the Kim Ilŏng period to situate their understanding of North Korean ideology and politics.¹²⁵ Nor did they experience the ideological strictures of the Joint Leadership period. Their educational experience will in many cases have been at variance with earlier generations, since economic collapse triggered mass absenteeism. The Changmadang Generation grew up in North Korea’s marketization era, marked by a transition to individualism and away from reliance on the state for the provision of food and daily necessities. This will have adversely affected the state’s capacity to socialize this group into the political-ideological system. It is assumed, though not empirically tested, that the Changmadang Generation is disinclined toward DPRK state loyalty, and is less likely to be

¹²⁵ I use 1997 to situate the pinnacle of the famine of the 1990s. By this time many people had radically changed their economic activities to accommodate the new social structure.

moved by the Manchurian heritage – Kim Il-sŏng’s revolutionary exploits fighting the Japanese Empire.¹²⁶

Research and anecdotes show that the political and social awareness and self-understanding of North Koreans inside North Korea changed enormously in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. There is no doubting the rapidity of social change and extent of the dislocation of people in North Korea during this period, caused not only by hunger, malnutrition, and death, but also by the rapid and ad hoc entry of people into the market economy in a process of *shijanghwa* (“marketization”) that was not accompanied by a simultaneous process of education or explanation from the state.

According to defector-migrant testimony, inside source media reports, and anecdotes from people who frequently visit North Korea and interact with a section of its population, the outcome of North Korea’s *konanŭi haenggun* (“Arduous March”) famine and subsequent marketization has been, contrary to the propaganda of a monolithic *ilshim dan’gyŏl* (“single-hearted unity”) espoused by the regime, that loyalty to the foundational politics of the DPR Korea leadership system, centered on Mt. Paektu and the legacy of guerrilla struggle in the hills of Manchuria – the Manchurian heritage – diminished markedly.

There are several questions to explore here: Is a relative absence of pride in the so-called “ideological” attributes a phenomenon prevalent in the younger generation more than the older generation, as one would perhaps expect in the context of the social change of the post-famine

¹²⁶ My categorization of the Changmadang Generation is imperfect. There were preventable deaths due to hunger already in 1993 and before, and moreover, people have always died of hunger in North Korea for the simple reason that the country has always lacked a social security safety net to protect the most vulnerable. However, my categorization captures the essence of the period immediately prior to the partial recovery of state power under Kim Chŏngil, which began in 1997 (after 3 years of national mourning for the death of Kim Il-sŏng), and 1998 (when the DPR Korean constitution was revised to acknowledge the legality of private property ownership, among other things).

era? And given North Korea's social history, is the observed (comparatively) high degree of pride in the art and cultural productions of North Korea evenly spread throughout the age cohorts?

To answer the first question, I look at the three specific attributes in the battery of questions that represent North Korean art and cultural production: art and literature, sports, and science and technology.

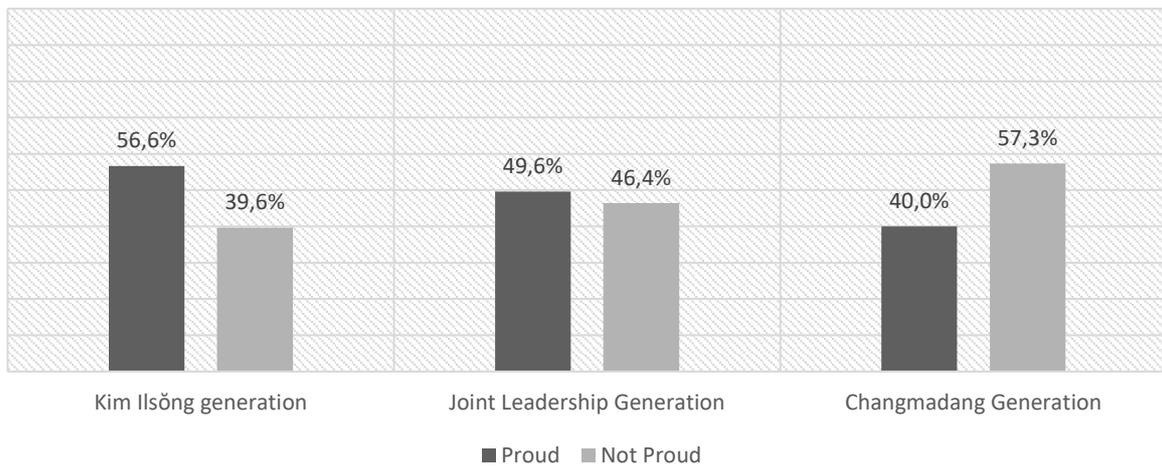
The definition of these attributes as "art and culture" may be open for debate: for instance, the North Korean government is infamous for its willful misapplication of scientific and technical know-how in the service of nuclear and missile programs, and the development of chemical and biological weapons. The survey is ill-equipped to establish nuanced distinctions – what, exactly, is it that a respondent is proud of? The answer may of course be that the respondent does not themselves know what memory of life in his or her former homeland prompts his or her answer to this or that question, and asking him or her about it won't help establish that.

Due to the limitations of these data, the results are presented in the form of descriptive statistics. They are not weighted. In another publication based on a combined data set from this and one other survey, overall responses were weighed according to the known population parameters provided by the 2008 UN population census, but no significant differences were found after weighting.¹²⁷ Cross tabulated by generation, the respondents answered as follows. Percentages are in parentheses, rounded to one decimal place. This is followed by a visualization of the same information, omitting those who were not able to choose.

¹²⁷ See: Steven Denney and Christopher Green, "Referenda on the Nation: Exploring the Relationship between Ideology and Daily Life in North Korea," under review.

	Kim Ilŏng Generation	Joint Leadership Generation	Changmadang Generation	Total
<i>Proud arts</i>	30 (56.6)	62 (49.6)	60 (40.0)	152
<i>Not proud arts</i>	21 (39.6)	58 (46.4)	86 (47.3)	165
<i>Cannot choose</i>	2	5	4	11
	53	125	150	328

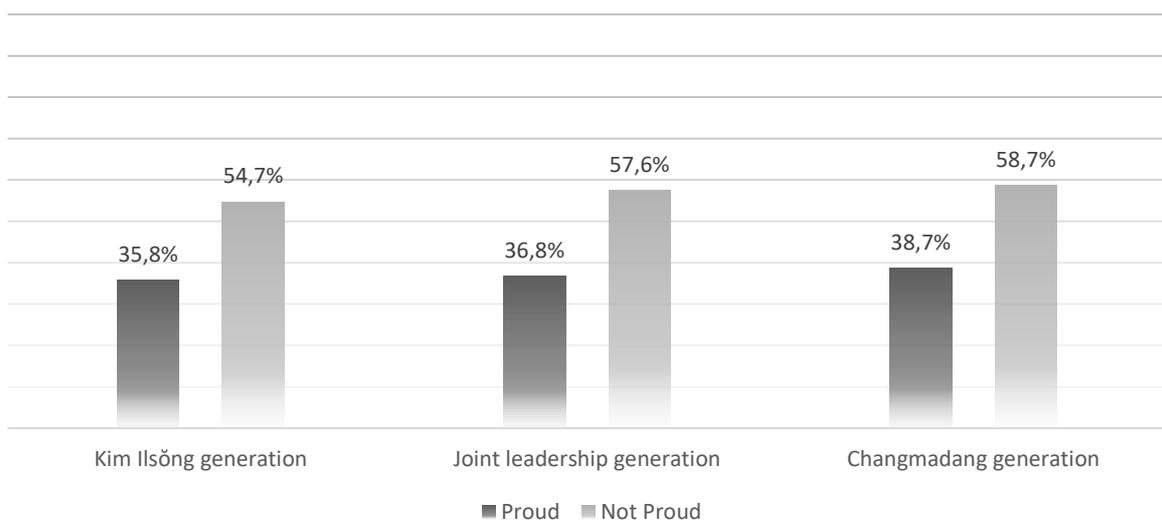
Pride in the Arts by Generation



Pride in North Korean art and literature by three main political generations (N=328).

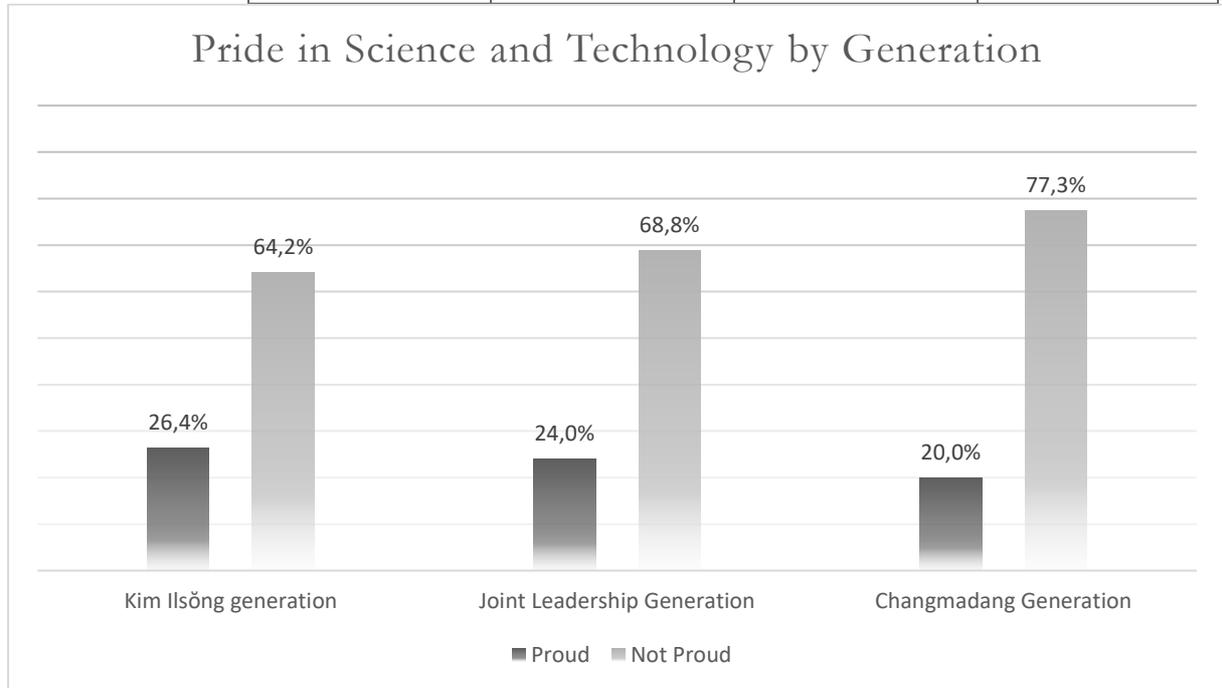
	Kim Ilŏng generation	Joint Leadership Generation	Changmadang Generation	Total
<i>Proud sports</i>	19 (35.8)	46 (36.8)	58 (38.7)	123
<i>Not proud sports</i>	29 (54.7)	72 (57.6)	88 (58.7)	189
<i>Cannot choose</i>	5	7	4	16
	53	125	150	328

Pride in Sports by Generation



Pride in North Korean sports by three main political generations (N=328).

	Kim Ilŏng generation	Joint Leadership Generation	Changmadang Generation	Total
<i>Proud science and technology</i>	14 (26.4)	30 (24.0)	30 (20.0)	77
<i>Not proud science and technology</i>	34 (64.2)	86 (68.8)	116 (77.3)	243
<i>Cannot choose</i>	5	9	4	18
	53	125	150	328



Pride in North Korean science and technology by three main political generations (N=328).

The results show a decline in support through the three generations of respondent for the first and third variables; art and literature, and science and technology. The older a respondent is, to a marginal extent, the prouder of North Korean art and literature, and science and technology he or she is likely to be. This is not the case for sport, where the young are slightly more likely to feel proud than the old. It is worth noting in this regard that since 2012 the state has been seeking to build up and emphasize its sporting ability, something that may be related to the specific capacity of sporting success to bring younger generations on board with the state-making project.¹²⁸ The youngest group – the Changmadang generation – shows the lowest levels of pride overall.

¹²⁸ “Sport”, unpublished manuscript presented at the World Congress of North Korean Studies in Sŏul, October 2014.

A Geographical Cleavage?

It is claimed, not least by many defector-migrants, that the values and attitudes of North Koreans are impacted by a geographical cleavage that is concerned with the impact of location on the formation of political attitudes. People who resettle in South Korea from areas along the border between North Korea and China, which is a significant majority of the total defector-migrant population, invariably put forward anecdotal evidence of noticeably different political views to people from: (1) the interior of North Korea; and (2) P'yongyang.

These differences are not derived deterministically from geographical location per se, but from the advantages that geographical location brings. In the case of the border region, that means access to China, with the advantages in terms of cross-border trade and access to information uncontrolled by the central state apparatus that it brings. In the case of P'yongyang, it means higher incomes and quality of life, higher average education levels, and more access to cultural resources. But is this so?

To establish an answer, one must first establish a workable definition of “border region”. Here, I use provincial boundaries to demarcate groups. These are not a perfect proxy for the true “border region”, and so categorization of the sample by province is unsatisfactory if one is examining life in the border region as distinct from the interior.¹²⁹ What is considered to be North Korea's northern border region (*kekkyōng jiyōk*) is not isomorphic with North Korea's northern border provinces. It is a considerably smaller geographical area, and is defined with reference to attributes such as access to external broadcast media and cellular telephone coverage

¹²⁹ Province of origin is the categorization employed by the Ministry of Unification in its regular statistics on defector-migrant numbers. It is not the most useful classification one can imagine.

rather than official political-geographical boundaries.¹³⁰ Moreover, the scope of the *kukkyōng jiyōk* varies in different locations: Chinese cellphone signals and television stations such as YBTV (*yōnbyōllajioTVpansongguk*), a regional Chinese broadcaster that broadcasts in Korean and carries some South Korean programming, each penetrate just a few kilometers inside mountainous northern regions of the DPRK. Signal jamming hinders access to other broadcasts in more populous, and flatter, western regions surrounding the major border city of Sinūiju.¹³¹

Nevertheless, a large percentage of the populations of the four border provinces is concentrated in towns and cities along the border itself, mostly Hoeryōng and Musan in North Hamgyōng Province, Hyesan in Ryanggang Province, Manp’o in Chagang Province and particularly Shinūiju in North P’yōngan Province.¹³² Therefore, one can reasonably hypothesise that border provincial residency defined in this way may still be sufficient for evidence of specific political attitudes to arise in the analysis.

Below we can see the comparison, noted in the Methodology chapter as well, between the structured survey sample and the defector-migrant community as of March 2016. A significant number (32) of respondents did not provide adequate information to establish their precise

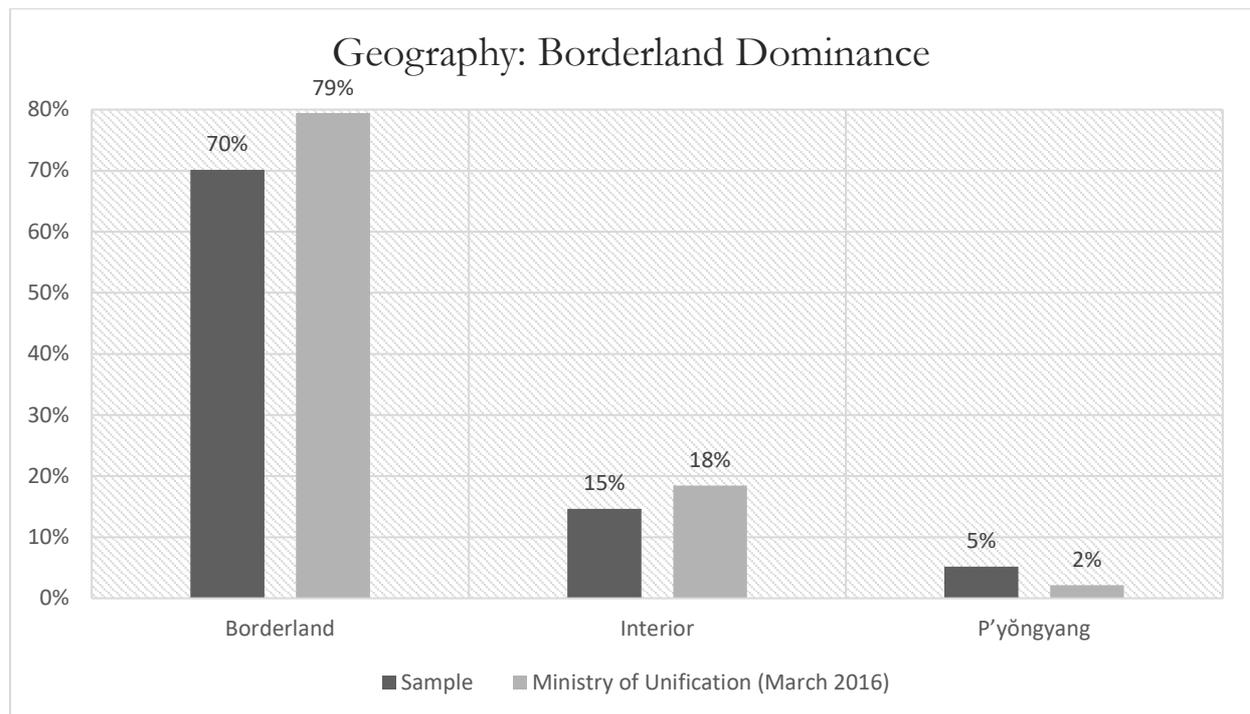
¹³⁰ In the literature on border studies, there is not a fixed definition of what constitutes a “border region” or “border region.” Borders are social constructs, and so are border regions; they are socio-spatial and operate at various scales. As Passi states, much in the study of borders is contextual. This makes analysis of border region dynamics diverse and insightful, but reduces the capacity for comparative study. See: Anssi Paasi, “Generations and the ‘Development’ of Border Studies,” *Geopolitics* 10 (2005): 668.

¹³¹ Moon Sung Hwee, “Civilians along the North Korea-Chinese Border Prefer Small TVs,” *Daily NK*, November 13, 2007. <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk00100&num=2904> (last accessed on February 16, 2017).

¹³² The largest city in Chagang Province is Kanggye, 52.5km from Manp’o but served by a direct road and rail link. It is not a true border town. Indeed, its comparative isolation is one reason why it was developed into a center for the North Korean arms industry. Nevertheless, on a visit to Ji’an, PRC in 2014, I found that most of the waitresses at the largest North Korean restaurant in town were from Kanggye. Given that information flows are one of the most important aspects of life in the North Korean border region compared with the interior of the country, Kanggye straddles the divide. The same is true of Ch’ōngjin, North Hamgyōng Province. It is 87.9km from Hoeryōng and the North Korea-China border, and thus not a border city per se. However, many of those who escape from North Hamgyōng Province do so from Ch’ōngjin. A port city, Ch’ōngjin has a thriving market for illicit external media and foreign fashions. See: Tudor and Pearson, *North Korea Confidential*, 135-137.

location of residence in North Korea (e.g., respondents who replied, “North Korea” or did not reply at all). These respondents are therefore omitted from all the analysis in this chapter.

	Border region	Interior	P’yŏngyang	Total
<i>Survey Sample</i>	230	48	18	296
<i>Ministry of Unification (3.2016)</i>	22861	5310	615	28786



Comparison of structured survey sample and Ministry of Unification data on border region residency of defector-migrants.

The border region has long been ground zero in the hunt for evidence of what I previously termed “ideological decay”.¹³³ Partly this is a function of external access. There is better information available on the border region than other parts of North Korea, including P’yŏngyang. But the information flows both ways, and border region residents are thought to have a particularly high degree of awareness of North Korea’s situation vis-à-vis the rest of the world precisely because they have a higher degree of access to information on conditions beyond the borders of the country.

¹³³ It is not possible to demonstrate that this “particular visibility” is due to the objective fact of rapid ideological decline; it may be due to the comparative ease with which the border region can be observed by outsiders.

This awareness is an attribute that is thought to promote ideological decay.¹³⁴ Researchers cite the changing consciousness of border region residents as evidence of a so-called “revolution” in information access.¹³⁵ This means that people in the border region abutting China have been able to use Chinese cellphones inside North Korea for two decades, and they have been using those phones to speak to relatives and friends in South Korea.¹³⁶ Defector-migrants from the border region talk about the transformative effect on their self-understanding of watching Chinese television, too. There is a wealth of evidence of music and visual media from outside North Korea crossing the border from China and thereafter circulating in the grey markets that operate in the shadow of North Korea’s legal system of more than 400 public markets, or *jonghap sijang*.¹³⁷ South Korean publicly-funded television network KBS and others regularly produce news and documentary reporting on the changing nature of cross-border legal and more often illegal trade in illicit media. Due to the changing structure of the North Korean social world, state efforts to

¹³⁴ It is an open question whether ideological decay is a more serious phenomenon in border regions, or it is simply more readily observed because the border region is the region to which we have relatively easier access. If the former, we may hypothesize that it is so because contemporary North Korea is made up of three constituent regions: the capital (metropolitan P’yongyang), the border region, and the interior, with the border region having relatively better access to ideas and goods from abroad. But in any event, without more evidence from the interior than is currently available to us, it is very difficult to test this claim.

¹³⁵ Take for instance Jieun Baek, *North Korea’s Hidden Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); Tudor and Pearson, *North Korea Confidential*; Kang and Pak, *Saramgwa saram*; and Kang Dongwŏn, *Pukbanŭroŭi oeraemunbwa yuip hyŏnbwanggwa sil’ae: cheŏkugŭi pukbanjumin myŏnjŏpchosarŭl chungsimŭro* 북한으로의 외래문화 유입 현황과 실태: 제 3 국의 북한주민 면접조사를 중심으로 [A Study on the Introduction of Foreign Culture into North Korea and Changes to the North Korean Society: With an Interview Survey with North Koreans in a Third Country], *T’ongjirinmunhak* 통일인문학 [Journal of Humanities for Education] 60 (December 2014): 167-202. To summarize these research results, the information revolution resulted from a combination of salient variables, including: the changing nature of the North Korean economy in the 1980s and after, and the establishment in 1992 of bilateral relations between China and South Korea, the death of Kim Il-sŏng in July 1994, the Sunshine Policy of the South Korean governments of Kim Taejung and Ro Muhyŏn between the end of 1998 and early 2008, and the expanding flow of defector-migrants entering South Korea and other third countries both during and after the beginning of the Arduous March famine of 1995-8.

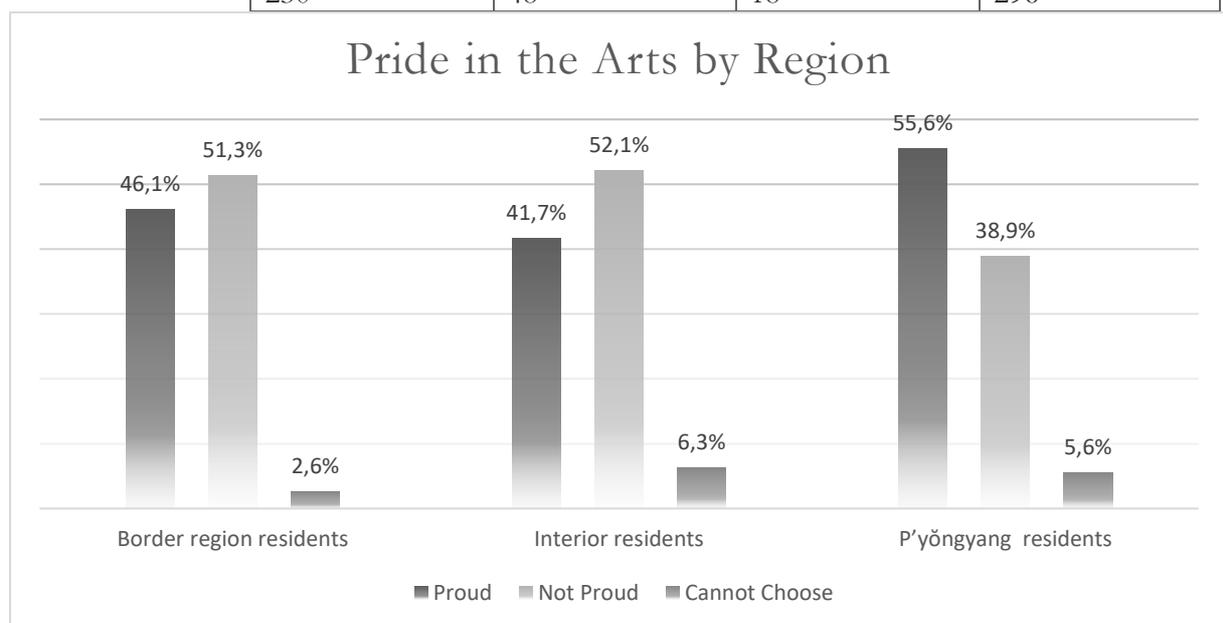
¹³⁶ I worked from 2008-2015 for Daily NK, a media company based in Sŏul that utilizes access to the Chinese cellular phone system from within North Korea to get information out of the country through a network of so-called “citizen journalists,” North Korean civilians trained in the basics of journalism and based in North Korea, where they report on domestic affairs that would otherwise not appear in the news. Some of Daily NK’s activities in China and North Korea remain sensitive, and therefore I am not able to go into further detail here.

¹³⁷ External, unsanctioned audio-visual media used also to enter North Korea via Wonsan, a port city on North Korea’s east coast, which used to be connected to Niigata in Japan by a regular ferry service. Young defector-migrant from the city speak of the early 21st century, after media began to enter the country in significant quantities and before Japan put in place sanctions that halted the ferry service, as a golden age for their experience of life in the city. Interview with defector-migrant born in Wonsan, Sŏul, January 2019.

control information flowing in and out of the country have lost some of their effectiveness, and access to information for ordinary people has over time been, by accident rather than by design, liberalized.¹³⁸

Then, can we find evidence of the specifically border region consciousness that such anecdotes suggest? Cross tabulated by generation, the respondents answered as follows. Percentages are in parentheses, rounded to one decimal place.

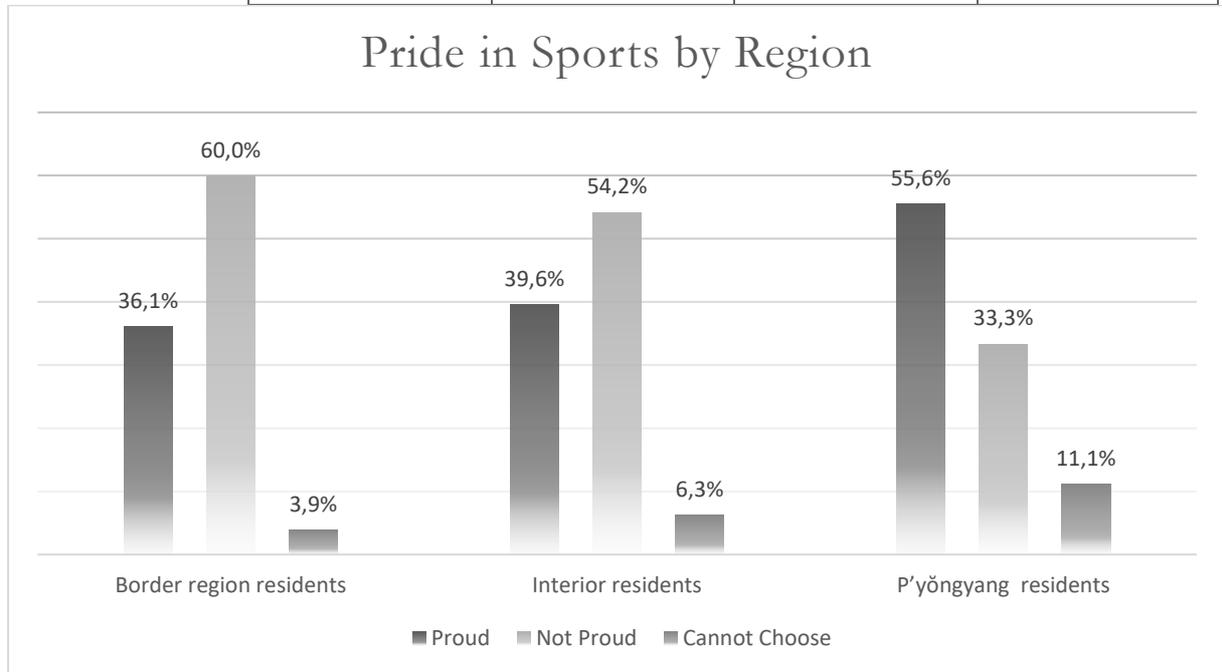
	Border region residents	Interior residents	P'yŏngyang residents	Total
<i>Proud arts</i>	106 (46.1)	20 (48.1)	10 (55.6)	136
<i>Not proud arts</i>	118 (51.3)	25 (52.1)	7 (38.9)	150
<i>Cannot choose</i>	6	3	1	10
	230	48	18	296



Pride in the North Korean arts by geographical area (N=296).

¹³⁸ Kang and Pak, *Saramgwa saram*; Nat Kretchun and Jane Kim, *A Quiet Opening: North Koreans in a Changing Media Environment* (Intermedia, 2012); Nat Kretchun et al. *Compromising Connectivity: Information Dynamics between the State and Society in a Digitizing North Korea* (Intermedia, 2017). http://www.intermedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Compromising-Connectivity-Final-Report_Soft-Copy.pdf (both last accessed July 25, 2017). All these sources contain insights from interviews with resettled North Koreans. In the case of the Kretchun texts, those in the process of travelling through China to South Korea en route to resettlement, and in the case of Kang and Pak, one hundred North Korean citizens visiting China on official permits.

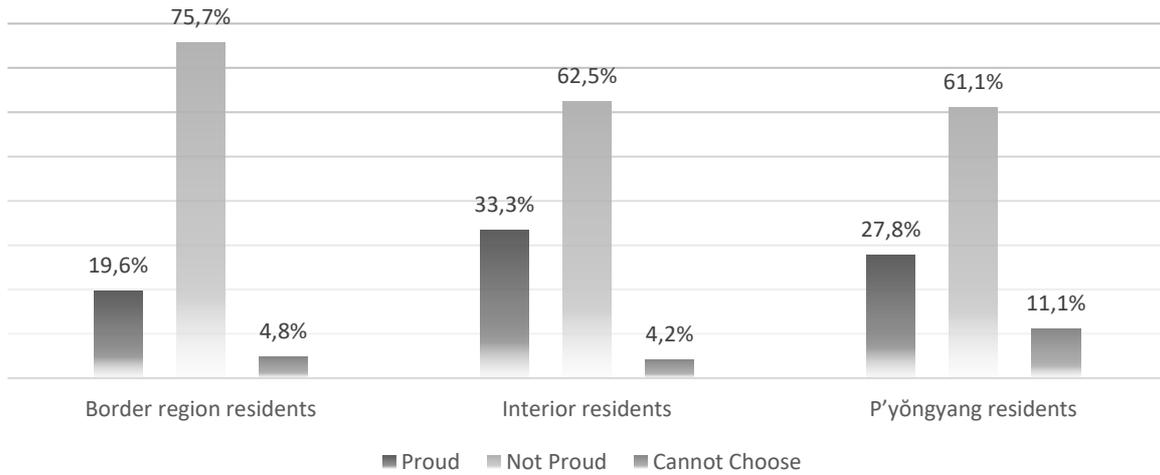
	Border region residents	Interior residents	P'yŏngyang residents	Total
<i>Proud sports</i>	83 (36.1)	19 (39.6)	10 (55.6)	112
<i>Not proud sports</i>	138 (60.0)	26 (54.2)	6 (33.3)	170
<i>Cannot choose</i>	9	3	2	14
	230	48	18	296



Pride in North Korean sports by geographical area (N=296).

	Border region residents	Interior residents	P'yŏngyang residents	Total
<i>Proud science and technology</i>	45 (19.6)	16 (33.3)	5 (27.8)	66
<i>Not proud science and technology</i>	174 (75.7)	30 (62.5)	11 (61.1)	215
<i>Cannot choose</i>	11	2	2	15
	230	48	18	296

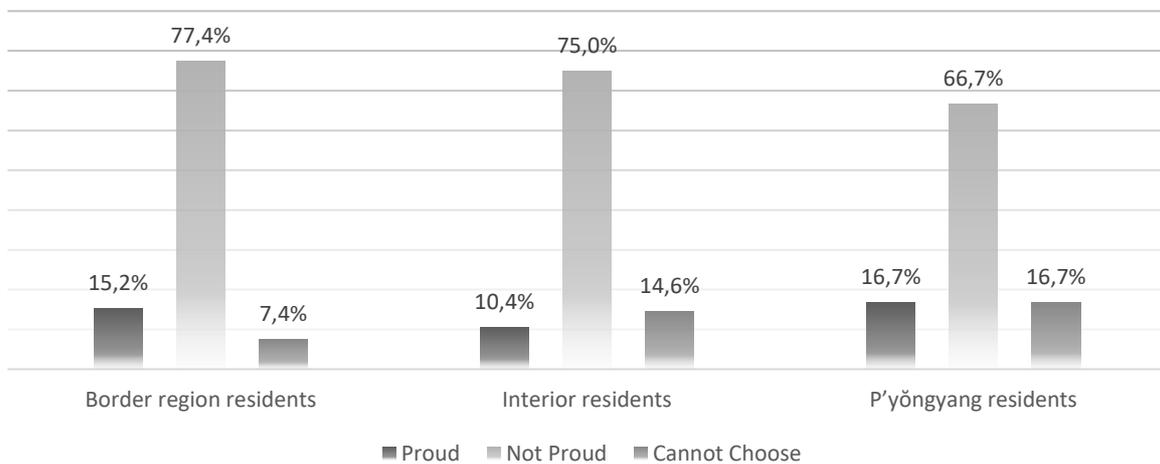
Pride in Science and Technology by Region



Pride in North Korean science and technology by geographical area (N=296).

	Border region residents	Interior residents	P'yŏngyang residents	Total
<i>Proud</i>	35 (15.2)	5 (10.4)	3 (16.7)	43
<i>Not proud</i>	178 (77.4)	36 (75.0)	12 (66.7)	226
<i>Cannot choose</i>	17	7	3	27
	230	48	18	296

Pride in Anti-japanese Revolutionary Heritage



Pride in North Korea's anti-Japanese revolutionary heritage by area (N=296).

The results do not conclusively demonstrate the existence of the differences between border region and interior that are often posited, including former border region residents themselves, and the notion of a unique consciousness among border region residents does not emerge from the data. The results (see below) suggest that being a former resident of P'yŏngyang is the best

and possibly only variable in the geographical realm to act as a predictor of elevated pride in attributes of North Korean self-understandings. People who lived in the North Korean capital appear to take a more positive view of both the North Korean arts and sports than people who did not. Given the preeminence of the capital city in both terms of general quality of life and the provision of opportunities in the cultural realm, that is a logical outcome.¹³⁹

Concluding Remarks

The results reported in this chapter may seem intuitive, and perhaps that is because they are. Among defector-migrants, (1) older people and (2) people who lived in P'yŏngyang prior to migrating out of North Korea prove to be more satisfied overall with their experiences of “being North Korean”. These groups may have firmer, less contested self-understandings as a consequence of their life experiences. At any rate, they are comfortable with the notion of “doing being North Korean.” However, the differences between those who expressed satisfaction and those who did not are not large. Overall, unsurprisingly, North Korea does not appear to be a particularly satisfying place for anyone.

In P'yŏngyang, at least, one is more likely than elsewhere to interact directly with the “sham and show of the Kim dynasty,” and this has a seemingly significant impact on positive attributes of self-understandings.¹⁴⁰ The North Korean capital is home to people whose relationship to political power is the most direct and directly beneficial; it is no simple task to reside in the

¹³⁹ We would be unwise to conclude that the results above reflect the attitudes of more than two million residents of P'yŏngyang metropolitan area given that the evidence is based on a small sample. Nevertheless, this preliminary result does accord with our general understanding of the difference between life in the North Korean capital and life in the provinces of North Korea.

¹⁴⁰ I spoke to Crawford Young, a veteran scholar of Zaire, in 2013 during research for a comparative political paper on currency reforms. Such a reform was implemented in Zaire in 1979, in a manner very similar to North Korea on November 30, 2009. The phrase “sham and show” has stuck with me ever since, an appropriate and appropriately scornful phrase Young used to describe the project of lionizing the Kim dynasty. Young's best known work on Zaire is the masterful Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

capital city if one's family has a historically bad relationship with the Kim family-state. It is too much to say that everyone in the capital is a regime loyalist – preference falsification is rife, and in any case central state employees and elite family members account for a mere ten percent of the total population of the city, or around 200,000 people, where the total population of the metropolitan region is two million – but we may be confident that few if any of the city's official residents are registered as “hostile” in the context of the *songbun* system.¹⁴¹

There is no significant difference between border residents and interior residents. One is similarly likely to have a negative view of North Korean art and literature and North Korean sport whether one lives in the border region or not. Where science and technology is concerned, there is a difference between border region residents and interior residents, but it is small; a person from the border region is less likely to feel a sense of pride in North Korean science and technological successes. None of these differences appears to be significant.

Of course, in parsing the results, it is important to note some pertinent limitations. Maybe the questions asked in this survey were simply not the right ones to tease out the differences between border and interior residents. After all, anecdotal evidence – much of it directly gathered by this author from defector-migrants and North Koreans in DPR Korea during research trips – presents challenges to the claim here that generational and geographical differences are not significant. I myself remain somewhat skeptical of my own claim! It was clearly noticeable to me when I visited the North Korean city of Sinŭiju that people there were savvier and sassier than people elsewhere, including P'yŏngyang. The city gives every impression

¹⁴¹ A copy of the P'yŏngyang municipal residency register was smuggled out of North Korea in the 2010s. Current through the beginning of 2007, it showed every resident of the city, his or her age, address and other demographic data, including *songbun* status, under which individuals are classified as supporters, neutral, or hostile to the government. The register has never to my knowledge been made publicly available. It was shown to me by a senior defector, Chang Chinsŏng. Chang did not bring it out of North Korea himself. He defected from P'yŏngyang in 2005.

of being a salient example of the impact on self-understandings of living cheek-by-jowl with dynamic, ever-changing China. The photo below shows the view of China that greets this group of North Korean farmers on the outskirts of Sinŭiju on a daily basis.¹⁴² It would be hard, I contend, *not* to be affected by it.



The *shin ammokkang daegyo* (“New Yalu River Bridge”) at Dandong, seen clearly from the rice paddies south of Shinŭiju in North Korea’s North P’yŏngan Province. The existence of Dandong across the Yalu River – bringing with it trade and inter-personal exchanges that both sustain and threaten – poses a unique challenge to the North Korean state and its narratives. | Image: Christopher Green, 2016

However, what I am confident of is that a “conviction North Korean,” someone who supports the state and has positive memories of its achievements, is most likely to be an elderly person who has spent most or all of their adult life in P’yŏngyang. The least persuaded of the merits of DPR Korea is a middle-aged person from almost anywhere other than P’yŏngyang. Children are inculcated with the state’s well-honed propaganda of integration, and the impact may be considerable in early life, even to the extent that, per the Soviet experience, parents may be afraid

¹⁴² The outstanding question, that must be kept back for future research, is how the generational and geographical variables interact. How do the attributes of an older person from the border region compare with those of a younger person from the interior (not P’yŏngyang) of North Korea? This is an important avenue to explore. But for now, we are left with the tentative conclusion that not only is North Korean society complex and multi-layered, but also that age and border region residency are salient variables in self-understanding-formation processes.

of telling their offspring of their genuine feelings about the state and its leadership. But all other things being equal, this effect does not last, and by adulthood, ideological decay has set in.