



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Identity conformity in Taiwan and South Korea: why citizens in divided societies are pressured to overstate national pride

Denney, S.C.; Steinhardt, C.H.; Bhowmick, L.

Citation

Denney, S. C., Steinhardt, C. H., & Bhowmick, L. (2026). Identity conformity in Taiwan and South Korea: why citizens in divided societies are pressured to overstate national pride. *Nationalism And Ethnic Politics*. doi:10.1080/13537113.2026.2616954

Version: Publisher's Version
License: [Creative Commons CC BY 4.0 license](#)
Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4308437>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Identity Conformity in Taiwan and South Korea: Why Citizens in Divided Societies Are Pressured to Overstate National Pride

Steven Denney, H. Christoph Steinhardt & Lisa Bhowmick

To cite this article: Steven Denney, H. Christoph Steinhardt & Lisa Bhowmick (12 Feb 2026): Identity Conformity in Taiwan and South Korea: Why Citizens in Divided Societies Are Pressured to Overstate National Pride, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, DOI: [10.1080/13537113.2026.2616954](https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2026.2616954)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2026.2616954>



© 2026 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.



[View supplementary material](#)



Published online: 12 Feb 2026.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 1664



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

Identity Conformity in Taiwan and South Korea: Why Citizens in Divided Societies Are Pressured to Overstate National Pride

Steven Denney^a , H. Christoph Steinhardt^b  and Lisa Bhowmick^a 

^aLeiden University; ^bUniversity of Vienna

ABSTRACT

To what extent do social and political pressures in divided societies compel individuals to exaggerate allegiance to a dominant national identity? This study examines how conformity pressures shape expressions of national pride in Taiwan and South Korea, two structurally similar democracies whose national identity norms diverged during democratization. Using list experiments to mitigate social desirability bias, we compare direct and indirect measures of national pride across subgroups defined by identity strength, identity content, and background. We find evidence of pride inflation in both societies, with larger and more pervasive effects in South Korea. In Taiwan, individuals who weakly identify as Taiwanese or hold dual Taiwanese and Chinese identities modestly overstate Taiwanese pride, while those of native-origin majority background also inflate pride and Mainland-origin minorities do not. We find no evidence that Chinese identity is suppressed. In South Korea, weak identifiers substantially overstate national pride, and migrants from North Korea markedly exaggerate pride in being South Korean while concealing pride in their origin. We argue that these patterns reflect more pluralistic identity norms in Taiwan and more stringent, state-reinforced norms in South Korea.

Societies marked by territorial or political division often confront citizens with competing narratives of national identity. A large body of research has considered the processes of identity formation and competition, particularly in contexts marked by elite contestation, regime change, and external threat.¹ Yet, how contested settings generate identity conformity—the individual inclination to adjust the expressed identity relative to the truly held identity to conform with social norms—has received less attention.² As Mylonas and Tudor³ note, much of the existing literature focuses on the origins and content of national identity and less on how dominant identity narratives are reproduced among populations. This leaves open a theoretical and empirical gap about how identity norms are maintained, enforced, and negotiated by citizens.

Here, we examine Taiwan and South Korea—two structurally similar but identity-divergent societies that offer a comparative vantage on how identity norms operate under democratic conditions. Both share colonial legacies and histories of civil conflict, and face ongoing geopolitical tension tied to unresolved questions of sovereignty and national identity. Yet, they differ significantly in the trajectories of identity formation and the resulting norms surrounding national identity.⁴ These environments provide an ideal

CONTACT Steven Denney  stevendenny@gmail.com  Institute for Area Studies, Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands.

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2026.2616954>.

© 2026 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

setting to investigate how individuals navigate identity expression under social pressure, and how dominant identity norms play out. Prior work has shown that when individuals expect negative repercussions for holding particular views due to prevailing social norms, they may overstate or suppress those views.⁵ This phenomenon, often termed preference falsification, has implications for understanding and measuring national identity, particularly in contexts where identity is contested.

To investigate how social expectations shape identity expression, we conduct a comparative analysis of national pride in both societies. National pride is a powerful affirmation of national identity, which may pressure individuals to conform to dominant narratives. We leverage Taiwan and South Korea's shared historical and institutional features to better understand how variations in state-society relations and identity norms condition conformity pressures. We pose two primary research questions: First, do individuals in Taiwan and South Korea exaggerate their expressions of national pride? Second, do subpopulations who weakly identify with the dominant identity or have contested identity backgrounds overstate their pride more? Additionally, we explore a third question: Between Taiwan and South Korea, which context exhibits stronger identity conformity? To address these questions, we employ list experiments, an indirect measurement approach designed explicitly to mitigate social desirability biases inherent in self-reported attitudes. These experimental measures are complemented by observational indicators used to delineate subpopulations within each society.

Our findings indicate notable differences in the magnitude and distribution of conformity pressures between the two contexts, with South Korea exhibiting substantially greater pressures toward conformity than Taiwan. In Taiwan, individuals who weakly identify as Taiwanese—the dominant national identity—and those with a dual Taiwanese-Chinese identity overstate their national pride somewhat. However, the objective group marker of family origin reveals a different picture. Mainland-origin respondents do not inflate their pride, but native-origin individuals do. We find no evidence that pride in being Chinese is over- or understated. This indicates relatively pluralistic identity norms, where in-group dynamics and individual processes may be more important than social pressure from the majority on minority groups. In South Korea, conformity pressures are considerably more pronounced and pervasive, affecting segments of the majority population and minority groups. Native-born South Koreans with comparatively weaker attachments to the dominant national identity feel compelled to exaggerate their national pride, substantially more so than their Taiwanese equivalents. Questions about dual identity in South Korea were not asked because they would appear bizarre to native respondents. However, migrants from North Korea face intense social desirability pressures, leading them to dramatically inflate expressions of pride in South Korean identity while significantly understating their pride in North Korean heritage. This points to more demanding identity norms with strong pressure from the majority on the minority.

These comparative insights highlight how social desirability biases significantly shape self-reported identities, complicating traditional understandings of national identity expression,⁶ particularly in divided societies. We interpret these dynamics as a form of nation-building through social conformity. In line with studies on social identity theory,⁷ this illustrates how identity expression is not solely driven by personal conviction but also regulated by societal norms. South Korea's cohesive national identity,

reinforced during democratization and perpetuated through close state-society linkages, generates strong social expectations for conformity.⁸ Consequently, both North Korean migrants and less strongly identifying native South Koreans are pressured to conform. Conversely, Taiwanese national identity remains more fluid and contingent. Democratization destabilized the previously dominant pan-Chinese identity norms and provided incentives to emphasize a pluralistic identity narrative.⁹ Although Taiwanese national identity has become dominant,¹⁰ a cultural attachment to Chineseness remains historically embedded and widespread.¹¹ Hence, pressures to conform with expectation on Taiwanese pride remain weaker and pride in being Chinese is not suppressed.

This article underscores how different historical and political trajectories shape contemporary norms surrounding national pride and identity expression, emphasizing that patriotism as a socially desirable attitude varies considerably even between otherwise comparable democracies.¹² As both South Korea and Taiwan experience ultra-low fertility and increasing migration,¹³ understanding how national identity norms impact identity expression becomes increasingly important.¹⁴

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the identity norms and their evolution in our cases of choice. Next, we detail our data and methods, focusing on direct and list-based national pride measurements. We then present findings, first in direct comparison, then with a sub-case focus on different groups, before we summarize the key insights and conduct robustness on issues related to identity. Finally, we discuss our findings' broader implications for national identity in divided societies and beyond.

Theoretical foundations

National identity, patriotism, and identity norms in divided societies

National identity varies in content and salience. An important dimension of national identity is patriotism. It is both an individually held attitude and a social norm. Non-adherence to the norm can lead to social stigma. Norm compliance is strongly enforced by states in authoritarian regimes. Although enforcement is often more subtle in democracies, there are reasons to believe that identity norms are stricter and more actively enforced in divided societies.

National identity is constructed through shared narratives, institutional frameworks, and historical experiences.¹⁵ Contemporary scholarship treats national identity as a socially constructed and historically contingent phenomenon, shaped by elite narratives, mass incorporation, and state-led nation-building efforts.¹⁶ National identity varies in its content and salience across time and place, depending on institutional transmission, strategic elite framing, and individual-level experiences of inclusion or exclusion within the national community.

Closely related is patriotism, a positive affective attachment or pride in one's country, distinguished from nationalism, which implies exclusionary attitudes or perceptions of national superiority.¹⁷ National pride can also be specified by separating patriotism—positive sentiment toward a nation due to its economic or political accomplishments—from feelings of superiority over other nations, often labeled as chauvinism.¹⁸

National identity and patriotism function not only as individually held attitudes, but also as social norms that individuals feel compelled to uphold. Social identity theories emphasize that group memberships shape personal self-esteem and attitudes through the internalization of group values.¹⁹ Yet, individuals may also publicly embrace or perform certain identities to comply with societal expectations rather than out of deep personal attachment.²⁰ Abdelal et al.²¹ describe such identities as governed by “constitutive norms,” informal rules prescribing appropriate group behavior, making identity expression a form of norm compliance rather than personal conviction.

The enforcement of identity norms is captured in Noelle-Neumann’s²² “spiral of silence” theory, which posits that individuals often suppress minority identities or opinions in public to avoid social isolation. This self-censorship reinforces dominant norms, generating a feedback loop in which socially desirable identities come to dominate public discourse, regardless of private beliefs. These dynamics are especially pronounced when minority identities carry social stigma, prompting individuals to conceal aspects of the self that are perceived as discrediting.²³ As Kuran²⁴ argues, such concealment can lead to preference falsification, where private beliefs are deliberately misrepresented in public to conform to prevailing norms. In these contexts, expressions of national identity may reflect strategic adaptations to social pressure rather than sincere self-identification.

Empirical work in social psychology further supports this dynamic. Crandall et al.,²⁵ using their “justification-suppression model,” illustrate that individuals regularly suppress genuine attitudes that conflict with prevailing social norms unless an acceptable justification for expressing these views is present. Extending this to identity, individuals privately ambivalent or weakly attached to dominant national identities might publicly display great national pride when social contexts demand it. Conversely, when cosmopolitan or subnational identities become normatively valued, individuals may publicly downplay nationalist sentiments to maintain social acceptance.²⁶ Thus, national identity and patriotism often reflect a tension between internal attitudes and external normative pressures, leading individuals to strategically calibrate their public identity performances based on perceptions of social desirability.

The enforcement of national identity norms takes different forms depending on regime type. In authoritarian regimes, state power directly dictates which identities are acceptable, compelling individuals to display loyalty.²⁷ National pride is not just encouraged but mandatory, with severe consequences for noncompliance. In China, for instance, the government actively uses patriotic propaganda to promote the dominant mode of national identity and loyalty to the regime.²⁸ Scott’s²⁹ concept of “hidden transcripts” highlights how individuals in such settings maintain private dissent while publicly conforming.

Democratic societies enforce national identity through subtler social mechanisms. Fox and Miller-Idriss³⁰ argue that nationalism in democracies is reproduced through daily practices, such as standing for the national anthem, expressing pride in national history, and adhering to civic rituals. This kind of banal nationalism,³¹ while also relevant in autocratic regimes, is particularly important in democracies since the availability of political competition enables the boundaries of national identity to be continuously renegotiated through these daily practices.³² Although individuals in democracies are not formally obligated or overtly expected to express national pride,

they may, nonetheless, incur reputational costs for failing to do so. Vlachová,³³ examining survey responses in Czechia, finds that national pride can be so deeply embedded in social expectations that individuals overstate their patriotic sentiments to avoid appearing disloyal. By contrast, West Germans understate their desire to leave behind a “perpetrator-focused narrative” of German history for fear of ostracism.³⁴

The enforcement of national identity norms is especially salient in divided societies, which we understand as contexts where national belonging is contested through mutually exclusive and politically irreconcilable identity narratives. These divisions go beyond routine pluralism or identity diversity; they involve rival claims to legitimate nationhood, often rooted in unresolved conflicts over territory, sovereignty, or statehood.³⁵ In such environments, the act of self-identification becomes not only politically charged but socially consequential, as individuals may face reputational costs or even exclusion for expressing identities that diverge from dominant narratives.³⁶ These pressures should be most pronounced in societies where identity conflict is linked to civil war, secession, or militarized confrontation, as in the cases of South Korea and Taiwan. Given these considerations, Taiwan and South Korea are “most likely” cases for identity-based preference falsification under democracy.

The distinction between privately held and socially ascribed identities points to two analytically separable channels through which conformity pressures operate. A *subjective channel* concerns individuals’ self-identification: when national attachment is weak, ambivalent, or pluralistic, individuals may strategically inflate expressions of patriotism to align with dominant norms. Separately, an *objective channel* operates through ascribed origins. Individuals marked by contested or minority backgrounds may face stronger social scrutiny and therefore overstate their national pride to conform.

Democratization and national identity norms in Taiwan and South Korea

In line with the logic of a *most similar systems design* (MSSD),³⁷ Taiwan and South Korea share key significant historical and structural similarities yet differ on a crucial dimension: the historical evolution of identity norms and the degree to which national identity is contested and internally coherent today.³⁸ This may have important consequences for the strength and operation of identity norms and resulting identity conformity.

Taiwan and South Korea are high-income societies of comparable size, with export-led economies and a Confucian cultural background. Both are characterized by ultra-low fertility and an increasing dependence on immigration.³⁹ They share historical experiences of Japanese colonial rule and Cold War authoritarianism, and both transitioned to democracy during the third wave of democratization in the 1980s.⁴⁰ Today, both face geopolitical pressure and irreconcilable concepts of national identity from their authoritarian neighbors (Mainland China and North Korea), making them divided societies. However, their national identity formation has diverged considerably.

Taiwan’s identity norms have undergone dramatic change. Under Kuomintang (KMT) rule via martial law (1949–1987), a pan-Chinese national identity was imposed through top-down mechanisms, including Mandarin language imposition, historical education, and the suppression of dissent.⁴¹ Adherence to Chinese nationalism was quite successfully entrenched.⁴² However, the Taiwanese language and identity remained rooted among the lower classes. A clandestine Taiwanese identity movement became a driving

force of democratization.⁴³ Public expressions of Taiwanese identity became, first, politically permissible and, later, dominant. Longitudinal data show that the proportion of citizens identifying as exclusively Taiwanese rose from under 20% in the early 1990s to over 60% by the 2010s.⁴⁴

Although identity politics figures prominently in Taiwan,⁴⁵ democratization also created incentives for a more inclusive identity narrative. Politicians sought to replace the sub-ethnic division between native Taiwanese and Mainlanders with an inclusive narrative to maximize votes.⁴⁶ A new school curriculum emphasized not only Taiwan's distinctiveness from China, but also its multiethnic heritage.⁴⁷ Whether one identifies as Taiwanese or Chinese increasingly functions as a political identifier rather than a primarily ethnic or cultural one.⁴⁸ Majorities did not relinquish their ethnic and cultural Chineseness,⁴⁹ and significant minorities maintain China-friendly attitudes.⁵⁰ In such settings, the expectation to perform national pride could be somewhat alleviated.

How far this relative pluralism translates into social desirability pressures remains to be seen. Even as elite narratives de-emphasized sub-ethnic cleavages, long-standing distinctions between native Taiwanese (*Benshengren*) and Mainland-descent groups (*Waishengren*) continue to orient social expectations about belonging.⁵¹ Research shows that public attitudes toward immigrants in Taiwan vary systematically with racialized appearance and local linguistic proficiency, underscoring how identity boundaries are policed in everyday life.⁵² Recent evidence indicates that some pressure is tangible, as Taiwanese understate China-friendly opinions to align with prevailing norms.⁵³

South Korea, by contrast, has maintained a comparatively stable and cohesive set of national identity norms rooted in ethnic nationalism and anti-communism. These norms were forged during the period of military rule through mass education, compulsory conscription, and state-centered historical narratives that emphasized ethnic homogeneity, sacrifice, and vigilance against internal and external threats.⁵⁴ The South Korean state remains constitutionally committed to national unity despite long-standing political, administrative, and social separation from North Korea. The Korean nation has thus been understood as extending across regimes, with division interpreted as a political and historical condition rather than the basis for competing national communities. This understanding is reflected in South Korean law, under which North Koreans who resettle in the South are recognized as citizens.⁵⁵

Democratization did not unsettle South Korea's national foundations. Instead, the transition to democracy reframed established identity norms in civic and democratic terms while leaving their core premise intact. Political contestation centered on competing pathways to national unity rather than on the meaning of the nation itself.⁵⁶ Competitive elections and mass participation further reinforced appeals to loyalty and patriotic duty, embedding national pride as a marker of good citizenship rather than an optional cultural sentiment.⁵⁷ Unlike Taiwan, where democratization rendered the nation itself contested and encouraged the emergence of alternative identity narratives, South Korea's post-democratization trajectory reinforced a unitary conception of the nation.

One might ask whether South Korea qualifies as a divided society, given that North Korea's competing national identity project has largely been treated as external and illegitimate, never enjoying substantial support in the South. Yet the unresolved military confrontation on the peninsula has profoundly shaped how national identity norms are institutionalized and enforced. Loyalty, unity, and public expressions of national pride have

been framed as civic duties tied to state legitimacy, reinforced through educational institutions, legal frameworks, and national security discourse.⁵⁸ Even limited domestic challenges to dominant identity narratives have historically been treated as security threats, contributing to the securitization of national belonging and the normalization of legal and social enforcement mechanisms.⁵⁹ Together, these dynamics suggest a distinctive mode of national identity enforcement in South Korea, combining democratically legitimated securitized institutions with everyday norms that reward public displays of loyalty.

These norms and institutions continue to shape behavior today. Marginalized populations, such as North Korean migrants, must publicly affirm loyalty to South Korea to access full membership, which is a dynamic that Hough and Bell⁶⁰ describe as conditional inclusion. Kim and Oh⁶¹ find that defectors often display a disconnect between their implicit and explicit identities. Denney et al.⁶² and Kim and Lee⁶³ show that native South Koreans themselves exhibit social desirability bias in their attitudes toward these migrants.

The contrasting trajectories of identity formation in Taiwan and South Korea allow us to examine how identity conformity patterns vary with the configuration of national identity norms.

Hypotheses

Our theoretical framework yields two general expectations. First, we posit a *common within-case mechanism* operating through subjective identity strength. Individuals who are less strongly attached to the dominant national identity should be more prone to inflate direct reports of national pride. Second, leveraging our MSSD, we anticipate that the *magnitude and distribution* of this mechanism will differ across cases in ways that reflect their identity norms.

H₁ within-case variation

In both societies, individuals with weaker identification with the dominant national identity will exhibit wider conformity gaps between pride in self-reports compared to less obtrusive measures than individuals with stronger identification: (Weak identifiers > Strong identifiers).

H₂ cross-case magnitude

For comparable groups (all respondents, weak identifiers, strong identifiers), the conformity gaps will be wider in *South Korea* than in *Taiwan*: (South Korea > Taiwan).

We then explore *who* bears conformity pressure in each case, distinguishing between a *subjective* channel, defined by the self-identification with the dominant identity, and an *objective* channel, defined by origin group membership. We acknowledge that North Korean migrants in South Korea and Mainland-origin Taiwanese are not directly comparable.

H₃ sub-case focus Taiwan

Subjective channel. Dual Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers are expected to overstate Taiwanese pride more than Taiwanese-only identifiers do. Dual identifiers occupy a

legitimate yet ambiguous position that makes them subject to conformity pressures and provides an incentive to overstate pride. Taiwanese-only respondents already align with the dominant norm and, thus, have less scope or reason to inflate their pride. (Dual identifiers > Taiwanese-only identifiers).

Objective channel. The greater objective visibility of family origin should invite social scrutiny on Mainland-origin *Waishengren* to conform with the now-dominant Taiwanese identity more than for the native-origin *Benshengren*. (Mainland-origin > Native-origin).

H₄ sub-case focus South Korea

Subjective channel. Consistent with the general mechanism in *H₁*, among native South Koreans, those with weaker identification with the dominant national identity are expected to display wider conformity gaps than those with stronger identification (Weak identifiers > Strong identifiers).

Objective channel. North Korean-origin migrants should exhibit the largest inflation of pride in being South Korean, yielding a graded ordering of conformity pressure that is largest for North Korean migrants, weaker for weak-identifying natives, and weakest for strong-identifying natives. (North Korea-origin > Weak-identifying natives > Strong-identifying natives).

Finally, we also examine pride in being Chinese among all Taiwanese respondents and pride in being North Korean among North Korean-origin migrants in South Korea as an additional exploration of differences.

We now turn to the data and methods used to evaluate these hypotheses. To assess such hidden conformity pressures, we turn to indirect measurement techniques designed to mitigate social desirability bias.

Data and methods

When asked about national pride, respondents frequently adjust their answers to align with perceived social expectations, a phenomenon known as social desirability bias.⁶⁴ Particularly in politically sensitive or stigmatized contexts, such as national identity in divided societies, this bias can result in significant misrepresentation or preference falsification of an individual's true sentiments.⁶⁵

Indirect survey methods, such as list experiments (also known as item-count techniques), are useful for accurately measuring national pride and identity in contexts prone to such biases. List experiments enable respondents to anonymously express sensitive views by embedding controversial items among innocuous ones, thereby significantly reducing social desirability bias.⁶⁶ These techniques help identify concealed attitudes across various sensitive contexts, including nativism and racial prejudice, as well as authoritarian support and fraudulent election practices.⁶⁷

Our study employs list experiments to obtain accurate measures of national pride and identity, minimizing biases associated with direct questioning. Recognizing the

pronounced susceptibility of national pride and identity expressions to social desirability pressures, particularly in politically polarized and divided societies, we adopt this indirect approach for our study of Taiwan and South Korea.

We examine national pride across three groups: Taiwanese respondents, native South Koreans, and South Korean citizens of North Korean origin.⁶⁸ By employing both direct questioning and list experiments, we compare responses to test for preference falsification and to better understand how individuals align their expressed national identities with perceived social expectations.

We conducted surveys with a total of 2,050 respondents in Taiwan, 1,994 native respondents in South Korea, and 301 respondents of North Korean origin currently living in South Korea between December 2023 and January 2024. We recruited respondents for the Taiwanese and native South Korean samples via Qualtrics online panels, using quotas for age, sex, and region to approximate representativeness. We collected data from migrants of North Korean origin who had spent no fewer than 12 years in North Korea through Woorion, a South Korea-based non-governmental organization (NGO) specializing in services for North Korean resettlers. Appendix A of the [Supplementary Information](#) (SI) contains additional details on recruitment, sampling strategies, and the composition of each sample.

In all surveys, respondents completed the list-experiment blocks first, followed by the direct pride questions. This ordering minimizes demand/priming from explicit identity items before the indirect measures.

We then posed direct questions about national pride. Taiwanese respondents indicated their agreement with statements such as “I am proud to be Taiwanese” and “I am proud to be Chinese” (using *zhongguo ren* to specify Chinese identity).⁶⁹ South Koreans and migrants of North Korean origin responded to a similar format, focusing on pride in being “South Korean.” We did not ask South Koreans about their pride in being North Korean as that would be regarded as wholly unrealistic, if not outright bizarre, in the South Korean context. This is a testament to the stability of the national identity we described above. We did, however, query North Korean migrants about their pride in being “from North Korea.”⁷⁰ These direct items allowed us to compare self-reported pride with estimates derived from an indirect approach.

Our primary outcomes for hypothesis testing are pride in being Taiwanese (Taiwan) and pride in being South Korean (South Korea), corresponding with the hypotheses H_1 – H_4 . The alternative identity items for pride in being Chinese (Taiwan) and, for North Korea-origin migrants, pride in being from North Korea are used as auxiliary explorations of difference.

List experiments were used to detect social desirability bias, or indicator of identity conformity, in responses. Each participant received a set of mundane, non-sensitive statements (e.g., “I believe hard work is important to success” or “I like teamwork”), which served as baseline items to mask individual endorsements of the sensitive item. We added one sensitive item, such as “I am proud to be Taiwanese,” “I am proud to be Chinese,” “I am proud to be South Korean,” or “I am proud to be from North Korea,” randomly assigned as a treatment statement. The participants indicated only how many statements they endorsed in total, without specifying which ones. By comparing the average endorsement count between the treatment group (which received the sensitive item) and the control group (which did not), we were able to estimate

the proportion of respondents genuinely endorsing the sensitive item while reducing social desirability bias.

The list-experiment approach reduces bias because individuals need not admit or deny the sensitive attitude directly. We tailored the items for Taiwan and South Korea to capture pride in being Taiwanese or Chinese and pride in being South Korean, respectively, while ensuring consistency in structure. In both surveys, the list blocks preceded the direct blocks by design. This preserved comparability across the two national settings. In Appendix B of SI, we provide the full text of the direct questions and lists and describe how we distributed sensitive items across subgroups. Appendix C reports the balance test output to confirm successful and balanced randomization.

We structured our analysis first to examine how the strength of individuals' identification with the dominant national identity shapes their likelihood to overstate pride, before focusing specifically on subgroups, where we expected pronounced pressures for conformity or concealment. This ordering allowed us to initially establish baseline differences in how social desirability bias operates across groups distinguished by identity strength. Subsequently, we investigated particular subgroups that theoretically embody contested or stigmatized identities, where social pressures to conform or conceal were expected to be especially acute.

For the analysis that supports direct comparison between the two cases (H_1 – H_2), we dichotomized identity strength on the 0–10 scale such that “strong” identifiers were those who selected 10 (the top-box category) and “weak” identifiers were those who selected any value below 10. This measurement strategy aligned with our theoretical expectations that respondents with prior strong national identities should experience less pressure to artificially inflate their pride, whereas those with weaker identification might be particularly susceptible to conformity pressures and, thus, more prone to overstating their national pride. Importantly, our interest here was not primarily in absolute differences in pride across these groups as greater reported pride among strong identifiers was anticipated; rather, it was in how the magnitude of social desirability pressures varied based on preexisting identity commitments in and between the two cases.

After establishing these baseline patterns, we turned to examine specific subnational groups in each country (H_3 – H_4). Specifically, we analyzed the distinct experiences of “Taiwanese-only” identifiers and dual “Taiwanese-Chinese” identifiers in Taiwan, and South Koreans of North Korean origin in South Korea. It is important to emphasize that these groups are not directly comparable. For instance, due to their marginalized position in society, North Korean migrants should be more prone to social pressure than dual identifiers in Taiwan. Nonetheless, the groups represented theoretically meaningful cases for testing how social conformity pressures operate under conditions of contested identity, particularly in contexts where identity boundaries are actively negotiated and often politically charged. By investigating these specific subgroups, we deepened our understanding of how identity conformity varies within societies that face differing historical legacies and contemporary political contexts.

To facilitate the additional subgroup analysis in Taiwan, we measured Taiwanese and Chinese identity separately, using two distinct 0–10 scales rather than a single categorical measure. This approach allowed us to capture nuanced gradations in identity strength.⁷¹ Respondents rated their level of identification with each identity. We defined

those strongly identifying as Taiwanese as respondents scoring at the 75th percentile or higher (a rating of 10), reflecting a clear and intense identification. Similarly, we identified respondents as strong Chinese identifiers if they rated their Chinese identity at six or above (also the 75th percentile). Using these thresholds, we created two subgroups: “Taiwanese-only” identifiers, who reported strong Taiwanese identity but weak Chinese identity (below the specified threshold), and “Taiwanese-Chinese” identifiers, who simultaneously expressed meaningful identification with both identities. Given the negligible presence of respondents holding exclusively strong Chinese identification, this dual categorization effectively captured the identity dimensions relevant for our analysis. Appendix D of the SI provides more detail on the coding procedures and thresholds for each subgroup.

In addition to these main subgroups, we also considered an additional subgroup measure in Taiwan. We distinguished *Benshengren* (local Hokkien or Hakka paternal origin) from *Waishengren* (Mainland paternal origin), following standard practice in Taiwan surveys. This subgroup split captured historically salient identity backgrounds and allowed us to assess whether conformity pressures were stronger for the modal group (*Benshengren*) than for the minority-origin groups (*Waishengren*). We coded paternal origin as the basis for classification: *Benshengren* included respondents of local Hokkien or Hakka descent, while *Waishengren* included respondents of Mainland descent who arrived with or after the Kuomintang in the late 1940s. These categories reflect enduring historical cleavages and are widely used in Taiwanese social science, though their salience has diminished over time. Appendix D in the SI reviews Taiwanese subgroup distributions.

For North Korean migrants in South Korea, we measured identity and pride separately, using the same 0–10 scale method described previously. Migrants rated how strongly they identified as South Korean and how strongly they identified as North Korean. To facilitate subgroup comparisons, we also applied a 75th percentile cutoff to distinguish between stronger and weaker identifiers, consistent with the approach used in Taiwan. Given this group’s unique status, originating from a stigmatized and contested identity in South Korean society, we directly compared their pride in each identity. By evaluating both direct responses and list-experiment estimates, we captured the extent to which North Korean migrants felt compelled to overstate pride in the South Korean identity or understate pride in their North Korean heritage. This measurement strategy enabled us to assess the strength and direction of social desirability pressures specific to this subgroup.

Beyond the pride outcomes used for H_1 – H_4 , we fielded additional list-experiment items to test the *scope* of enforcement beyond identity performance (pride) and to locate where social monitoring was most active. In Taiwan, we looked at support for a formal declaration of independence.⁷² In South Korea, we considered support for the National Security Act (NSA) and views on unification. The independence item probed whether selective enforcement targeted signaling of Taiwanese identity rather than a sovereignty-related declaration. In South Korea, the NSA item captured loyalty-inflected security norms in a more identity-consolidated regime, and the unification item gauged whether a once-central symbol was still being enforced. The Taiwan items were fielded in the same instrument as the pride measures (within-sample comparability). The South Korea items came from a separate 2021 online panel with

Rakuten Insight, providing an out-of-sample robustness probe of norm-sensitive items. Estimation mirrors the main analyses (list=linear; direct=logistic; gap = *List-Direct*).

Across all models, we used regression models to estimate indirect endorsements of sensitive items, employing the *ictreg* package in R, which supports a linear approach for estimating underlying endorsement rates. Each list-experiment model included covariates for statistical controls, including age, sex, university education, and partnership, to adjust for potential confounding. For the South Korean citizens of North Korean origin models, we included controls for the length of time spent in North Korea before leaving and the number of years spent in South Korea instead of an age variable. Educational attainment was measured by whether respondents had completed a university-level education in North Korea. For the corresponding direct measures, we used logistic regression (glm with a binomial family) to predict the likelihood of openly endorsing national pride, including the same control variables. We then combined each indirect (list) model with its corresponding direct model to compute average predicted endorsement rates for each group. We defined the conformity gap as *List-Direct* (percentage points). Separate models were estimated for different subgroups—high versus low national identification groups; Taiwanese-only and Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers in Taiwan; native South Koreans and North Korean migrants in South Korea—enabling subgroup-specific analyses of preference falsification. We reported average predicted percentages with 90% and 95% confidence intervals.

A final data note concerns Taiwan's "New Residents" (*xin zhumin*), a population of foreign-born immigrants (primarily from Mainland China and Southeast Asia) whose presence has grown in recent decades and who could, in some respects, be considered analogous to North Korean migrants in South Korea. According to official statistics, foreign residents made up about 4% of Taiwan's population in late 2024,⁷³ but in our survey, they constituted only around 1% of respondents. This small sample size precludes reliable list-experiment estimation, given the variance-intensive nature of the method.⁷⁴

Findings

Our list-experiment results provide evidence of differences in how identity norms shape the expression of identity pride in Taiwan and South Korea. We first present directly comparable results. We then dive into a separate analysis of groups at the sub-case level in Taiwan and South Korea, before we summarize key findings and conduct robustness tests on related issues.

Identity strength and national pride

Figure 1 presents a comparative analysis of national pride based on identity strength among the Taiwanese and South Korean respondents. It compares direct (self-reported) estimates with list-experiment measures and provides the most directly comparable analysis across the two populations. In the aggregate (all respondents), both Taiwanese and South Koreans expressed similarly high levels of national pride in direct questioning (79–80%). However, the indirect (list-experiment) measures show lower levels of pride (i.e., the "true" preference): approximately 67% for Taiwanese and about 59%

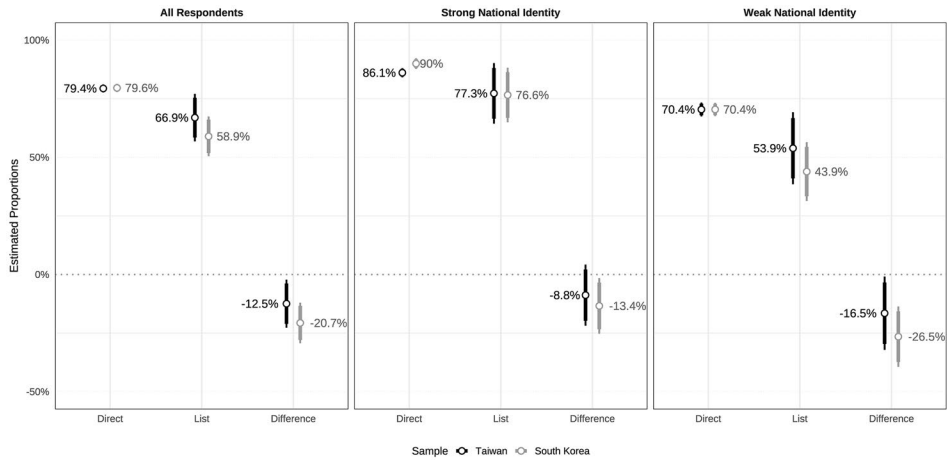


Figure 1. National pride by identity strength in Taiwan and South Korea.

Note: The figure shows estimated proportions of respondents in Taiwan and South Korea who express pride in their national identity, based on both direct (self-reported) and list-experiment measures. Results are presented for all respondents as well as for subgroups defined by strong versus weak identification with the national identity. List estimates are obtained using linear probability models, while direct responses are modeled with logistic regression. Estimates control for age, sex, education, and political identification. Error bars represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals. The “difference” column captures the gap between list and direct responses, reflecting potential social desirability pressures. Results suggest broader and stronger inflation in South Korea across both weak and strong identifiers, whereas in Taiwan, inflation is more selective and concentrated among weak identifiers.

for South Koreans. This yields significant differences of 12.4 percentage points (pp) for Taiwanese and 20.7pp for South Koreans, suggesting that both groups inflate expressions of pride, albeit more substantially in South Korea.

Breaking respondents down by identity strength, strong national identifiers in both countries report high direct levels of national pride (86.1% for Taiwanese and 88.5% for South Koreans), as expected. Indirect measures remain high but somewhat lower (77.1% Taiwanese and 76.6% South Koreans), with statistically insignificant differences (9 to 12pp). This suggests that individuals with strong identification, already deeply rooted in their national identity, feel less pressured to exaggerate their pride.

However, respondents with weak national identity demonstrated pronounced social desirability bias. Weak national identifiers in Taiwan reported pride at 70.4%, but this dropped significantly to less than 54% when using indirect measures, constituting a difference of 16.6pp. South Korean weak identifiers exhibited an even larger disparity: 70.4% for the direct measure versus 43.9% via the list, representing a substantial difference of 27pp. These findings support H_1 and H_2 , underscoring that individuals with weaker national attachments experience stronger pressures to publicly conform to national pride norms, especially in South Korea.

Sub-case group focus: Taiwan

Figure 2 examines Taiwanese pride among three subgroups of the *subjective channel*: all respondents, Taiwanese-only identifiers, and Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers. For all respondents, the direct measure of Taiwanese pride stands at approximately 79%, whereas the list-experiment estimate is 67%. The difference of -12pp (the list estimate

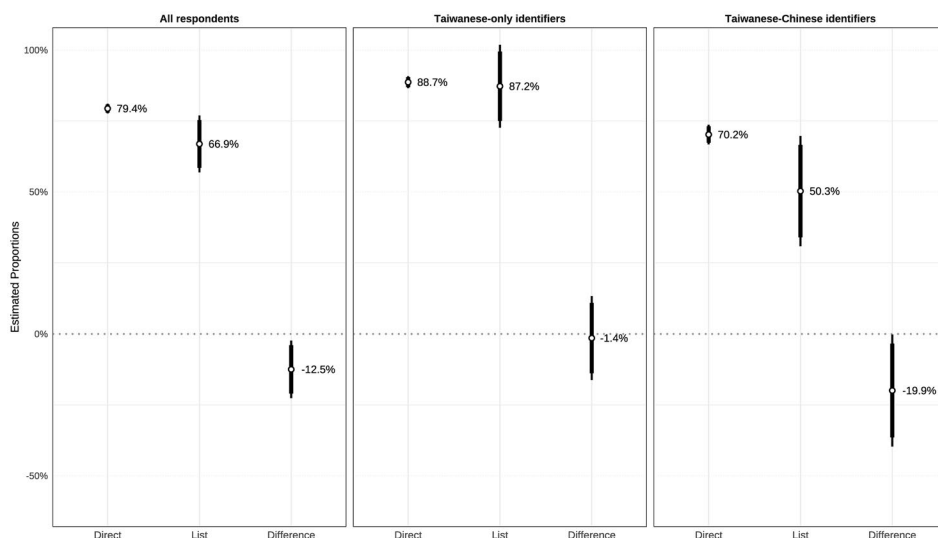


Figure 2. Pride in being Taiwanese by identity subgroups I.

Note: The figure shows estimated proportions of respondents in Taiwan who express pride in being Taiwanese, using both direct (self-reported) and list-experiment measures. The respondents are grouped into three identity categories: all respondents, Taiwanese-only identifiers, and Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers. List estimates are based on linear probability models; direct responses are modeled using logistic regression. Estimates control for age, sex, education, and political identification. Error bars represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals. The “difference” column reflects the gap between list and direct responses and captures potential social desirability bias. Results suggest that while Taiwanese-only identifiers express pride consistently across measures, Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers show substantial inflation in direct responses, indicating stronger conformity pressures within this subgroup.

subtracted from the direct question estimate), significant at the 95% confidence level, suggests that a portion of the broader Taiwanese population may feel some social expectation to emphasize national pride when asked directly.

Looking specifically at Taiwanese-only identifiers, their direct (89%) and list (82%) measures show a discrepancy of approximately -6.5pp . The small difference is statistically insignificant at the 95% and 90% confidence level, indicating that these individuals hold considerable pride in being Taiwanese, absent social desirability bias. Their comfort in asserting this identity implies that expressing Taiwanese pride is socially accepted for this subgroup, leaving less reason to falsify their attitudes.

By contrast, Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers present a relatively large disparity between direct (70%) and list (49%) measures. The difference in direct point estimates between the two groups is as expected – those with mixed identities are less likely to show pride in being Taiwanese. However, the focus here is on social desirability bias.⁷⁵ The difference of -21pp is substantial. The indirect results suggest that individuals with a partial Chinese identity experience strong social pressures to conform to prevailing norms that emphasize a Taiwanese national identity, as we expected in H_3 . Consequently, they are more likely to overstate Taiwanese pride when asked directly.

We next examine Taiwanese pride by paternal origin background, the *objective channel*. Figure 3 reports estimates for *Benshengren* (native-origin) and *Waishengren* (Mainlander-origin). As expected, *Waishengren* report lower direct Taiwanese pride overall (67.6%) than *Benshengren* (81.3%). The pattern in conformity gaps is surprising:

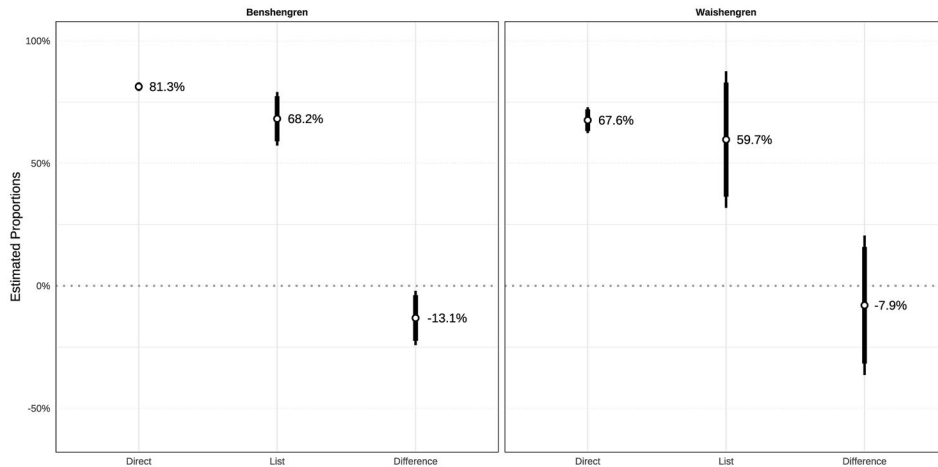


Figure 3. Pride in being Taiwanese by identity subgroups II.

Note: The figure shows estimated proportions of respondents in Taiwan who express pride in being Taiwanese, using both direct (self-reported) and list-experiment measures. The respondents are grouped by paternal origin background: *Benshengren* (Hokkien/Hakka) and *Waishengren* (Mainland descent). List estimates are based on linear probability models; direct responses are modeled using logistic regression. Models include age, sex, education, and political identification as covariates. Error bars represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals. The “difference” column is $List - Direct$ (pp) and summarizes conformity pressure. Results indicate a sizable, statistically significant gap for *Benshengren* and a smaller, nonsignificant gap for *Waishengren*, consistent with selective enforcement concentrated on the modal-origin group.

Benshengren show a sizable, statistically significant gap between direct and list estimates, whereas *Waishengren* show a smaller, statistically nonsignificant gap.

This contradicts the pattern for the subjective channel and our expectation in H_3 . If majority-to-minority pressure were the main mechanism producing the conformity gap, we would expect it to be most evident for the objective channel, where group membership is visible. Instead, we find the opposite: the majority native-origin *Benshengren* inflate their Taiwanese pride, while the Mainland-origin *Waishengren* do not. Two alternative mechanisms are plausible: First, intra-group enforcement might compel native-origin group members to apply pressure to perform Taiwanese identity on each other. Second, cognitive dissonance could exert internal pressure on members of the native-origin group to feel pride in Taiwanese identity that is ascribed to them through their family background. In any case, the mechanism is not majority pressure on minority-origin respondents, reinforcing the relatively pluralistic character of Taiwan’s identity norms identified in the previous section.⁷⁶

Figure 4 explores the same three *subjective* groups in Taiwan—all respondents, Taiwanese-only identifiers, and Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers—but focuses on pride in being Chinese (*zhongguo ren*). As before, the chart includes direct (self-reported) values, list-experiment estimates, and a difference score.

For all respondents, the direct measure of Chinese pride is 25%, whereas the list-experiment estimate is 32%. This yields a difference of about seven percentage points, suggesting that although Chinese identity does not dominate public discourse, some Taiwanese still acknowledge it via direct questions. The moderate gap indicates that some respondents may feel only mild social pressures discouraging expressions of Chinese identity, although the direct-list difference is statistically insignificant.

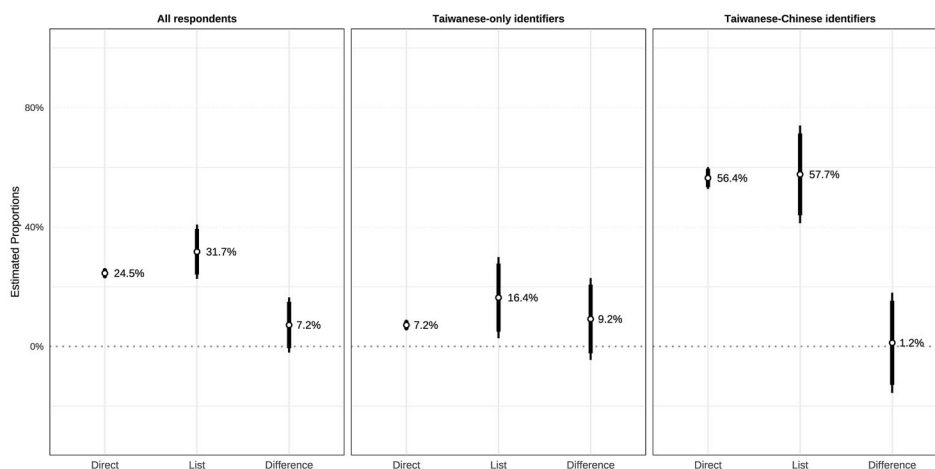


Figure 4. Pride in being Chinese by identity subgroups.

Note: The figure shows estimated proportions of respondents in Taiwan who express pride in being Chinese, using both direct (self-reported) and list-experiment measures. The respondents are grouped into three identity categories: all respondents, Taiwanese-only identifiers, and Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers. List estimates are based on linear probability models; direct responses are modeled using logistic regression. Estimates control for age, sex, education, and political identification. Error bars represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals. The “difference” column reflects the gap between list and direct responses and captures potential social desirability bias. Results suggest that Chinese identity is not suppressed among dual identifiers, who express pride across both measures, indicating that Chinese identity remains privately accepted within this subgroup despite shifting normative expectations.

Among Taiwanese-only identifiers, both the direct (7%) and list (16%) measures remain low, reflecting a clear reluctance or disinterest in identifying as Chinese. The difference is not substantially large or statistically significant, reinforcing the notion that this subgroup’s minimal Chinese pride is consistent across both types of questions. Finally, the Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers exhibit substantially higher levels of pride in being Chinese, with nearly identical direct and list-based measures (56–57%). Although elsewhere this group readily expresses Taiwanese identity—potentially overstating it under social expectations—their consistent and open acknowledgment of Chinese pride strongly indicates that, for this subgroup, the Chinese dimension of their identity is not subject to meaningful social desirability bias.

The absence of social desirability bias among Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers regarding pride in being Chinese confirms the robustness check: inflation appears tied to the dominant Taiwanese identity rather than to identity expression in general. Chinese pride is expressed consistently across direct and indirect measures, while Taiwanese pride is subject to inflation under normative pressure. The slight tendency of Taiwanese-only identifiers to understate Chinese pride further underscores that pressures operate asymmetrically, reinforcing alignment with the dominant identity rather than suppressing attachment to a non-dominant one.

Sub-case group focus: South Korea

Figure 5 illustrates pride in being South Korean among native South Koreans and North Korean migrants, alongside migrants’ pride in their North Korean identity. The native South Koreans express substantial pride directly (80%) but a notably lower

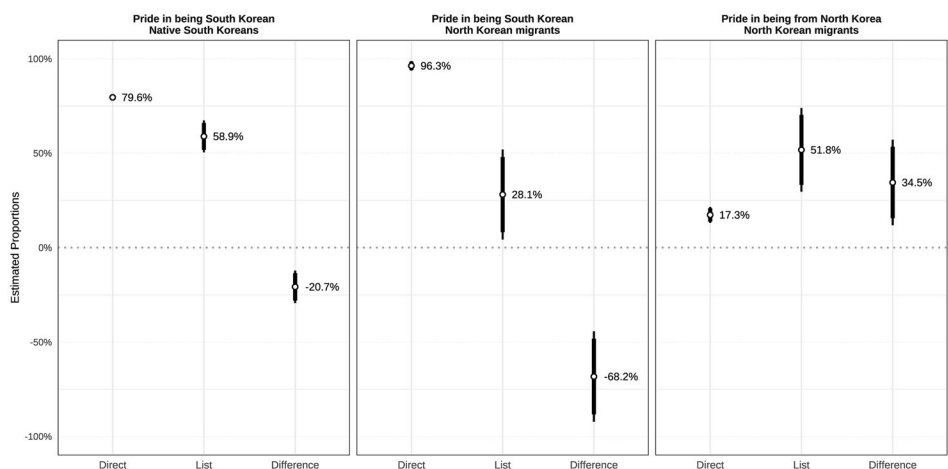


Figure 5. Pride in being South Korean by identity subgroups.
Note: The figure shows estimated proportions of respondents in South Korea who express pride in being South Korean, using both direct (self-reported) and list-experiment measures. The respondents are grouped into three identity categories: all respondents, native-born South Koreans with weak national attachment, and North Korean-origin migrants. List estimates are based on linear probability models; direct responses are modeled using logistic regression. Estimates control for age, sex, education, and political identification. Error bars represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals. The “difference” column reflects the gap between list and direct responses and captures potential social desirability bias. The results show substantial pride inflation across both groups, particularly among North Korean-origin migrants, suggesting strong conformity pressures linked to dominant national identity norms in South Korea.

estimate indirectly (59%), yielding a significant difference of 21 percentage points. This highlights strong normative expectations to express national pride publicly, resulting in considerable inflation of reported pride.

Among North Korean migrants, the direct measure of South Korean pride is extraordinarily high (96%), even exceeding native South Koreans. However, the indirect measure dramatically drops to 28%, producing an exceptionally large difference of nearly –70 percentage points. Conversely, the migrants report very low pride in being North Korean directly (17%) but significantly higher pride indirectly (52%), indicating substantial stigma and social desirability bias that discourages public expressions of North Korean identity. These patterns confirm our expectations in H_4 and reveal the intense social pressures experienced by North Korean migrants to affirm South Korean identity, while suppressing their North Korean heritage.

Results summary

Table 1 consolidates direct and list estimates for each subgroup; gaps are defined as $List-Direct$ (pp), so negative values indicate inflation in direct pride reports. The table summarizes the primary national identity items only: pride in being Taiwanese (Taiwan) and pride in being South Korean (South Korea). We read the table against H_1-H_4 .

Consistent with H_1 (within-case, subjective identity strength), weaker identifiers show wider conformity gaps than stronger identifiers in both societies. Among natives in South Korea, the weak-strong contrast is pronounced (–26.5 pp vs. –11.9 pp, the latter n.s.); in Taiwan, it is also clear (–16.6 pp vs. –9.0 pp, n.s.). This pattern underscores the common mechanism: weaker identifiers have more scope and incentive to overstate pride in direct answers.

Table 1. Direct vs. indirect (list) estimates of national pride in Taiwan and South Korea.

	Direct (%)	List (%)	Gap (pp)	Sig.
Taiwan				
All respondents	79.4	67.0	−12.4	**
Strong ID	86.1	77.1	−9.0	n.s.
Weak ID	70.4	53.8	−16.6	**
Taiwanese-only identifiers	89.0	82.5	−6.5	n.s.
Taiwanese-Chinese identifiers	70.0	49.0	−21.0	**
Native-origin <i>Benshengren</i>	81.3	68.2	−13.1	**
South Korea				
All respondents	79.7	59.0	−20.7	**
Strong ID	88.5	76.6	−11.9	n.s.
Weak ID	70.4	43.9	−26.5	**
North Korea-origin migrants	96.0	28.0	−68.0	**

Note: The table reports estimated proportions using both direct (self-reported) and list-experiment measures for the primary national identity items only (Taiwan: “proud to be Taiwanese”; South Korea: “proud to be South Korean”). Models include age, sex, education, and political identification as covariates. Significance based on 95% confidence intervals.

For H_2 (cross-case magnitude along the subjective channel), gaps are uniformly wider in South Korea than in Taiwan for matched groups: All (−20.7 pp vs. −12.4 pp), Weak (−26.5 pp vs. −16.6 pp), and Strong (−11.9 pp vs. −9.0 pp; both n.s.). This supports the MSSD-based claim that the same mechanism operates more forcefully in South Korea’s more consolidated identity norms.

Turning to the case-specific implications, H_3 for Taiwan receives partial support. *Subjective channel*: Dual identifiers exhibit a wide, significant gap (−21.0 pp), while Taiwanese-only respondents do not (−6.5 pp, n.s.). *Objective channel*: The smaller Mainland-origin *Waishengren* gap (−7.9 pp, n.s.), the native-origin *Benshengren* gap (−13.1 pp) contradicted the expectation that majority pressure falls on minorities.

Our interpretation of the difference between the subjective and objective channels in Taiwan is that: first, individuals with attachment to both identities in an environment where Taiwanese identity has become the norm may try to resolve cognitive dissonance through pride inflation. Second, pressure to perform in line with one’s objective origin operates primarily within the majority group and is not present in the minority group.

For H_4 , in South Korea, the ordering is strongly graded, as we expected: North Korean migrants show by far the widest gap (−68.0 pp), followed by weak natives (−26.5 pp), with strong natives showing no statistically significant gap (−11.9 pp, n.s.). This aligns with the expectation that consolidated identity norms generate widespread pressure, and this is strongest among groups for whom public scrutiny and vulnerability are highest.

Because H_1 – H_4 are defined on pride in the dominant national identity, Table 1 focuses on those outcomes. Alternative pride items—pride in being Chinese (Taiwan) and, for North Korean migrants, pride in being from North Korea—serve to diagnose the direction of enforcement. As presented above, we find little to no suppression of Chinese pride (including among dual identifiers and Mainland-origin respondents). Conformity pressure operates mainly by inflating Taiwanese pride rather than suppressing Chinese pride. Among North Korean migrants in South Korea, direct reports markedly understate pride in being from North Korea relative to list estimates,

mirroring the very large overstatement of South Korean pride and underscoring broad, graded enforcement.

Robustness tests on related issues

We conducted additional tests of list experiment items to examine social norms and enforcement beyond identity pride, specifically regarding support for a formal declaration of independence in Taiwan and for supporting the NSA and unification in South Korea. Figures and supporting text are provided in [Online Appendix E](#).

For the independence declaration in Taiwan ([Online Appendix, Figure E.1](#)), we find no meaningful direct–list difference regarding support, including among Taiwanese-Chinese dual identifiers. In the same sample that shows a sizable conformity gap on Taiwanese pride, policy support for independence is not misreported. This suggests that in Taiwan's pluralistic regime, symbolic affirmations of belonging (identity performance) carry higher stakes than overt policy stances on sovereignty.

In [Figure E.2](#) ([Online Appendix](#)), we show findings for South Korea. Here, we show that the NSA has a large and statistically significant direct–list gap, indicating overstated public support consistent with conformity to security–identity norms. By contrast, views on (opposition to) unification display almost no direct–list difference, implying that unification no longer functions as an enforced identity norm. Together, the NSA/unification results map precisely onto where social monitoring is salient in South Korea's consolidated identity norms.

These issue-linked tests corroborate the main claims presented in this paper. Moreover, they show that in Taiwan, conformity pressures focus on identity performance (pride), rather than sovereignty policy. In South Korea, pressures extend to loyalty-inflected security items (NSA) but not to legacy symbolism (unification). The additional analyses, therefore, clarify the scope conditions of enforcement: where norms are historically institutionalized, socially enforced, and symbolically charged, preference falsification is most likely to appear.

Discussion and conclusion

Our findings demonstrate significant variation in how identity norms shape identity conformity among Taiwanese, native South Korean, and North Korean migrant respondents. Our analysis first established how the strength of identification with the dominant national identity influences the extent of pride inflation. In both cases, the findings supported our assumptions and indicate that individuals with weaker national identification are more prone to overstating their pride, but in South Korea, the pressure to conform is significantly greater. These core tests were defined on the primary national identity outcomes: pride in being Taiwanese and pride in being South Korean.

Subsequently, we focused on specific subgroups to explore additional layers of social and political pressures faced by groups with contested or stigmatized identities. Notable differences emerged between the two cases. In Taiwan, those who strongly identify as Taiwanese consistently express pride across direct and indirect measurements, indicating genuine and socially accepted pride. However, individuals who maintain dual identities

as both Taiwanese and Chinese demonstrate significant pride inflation when expressing Taiwanese identity directly. The opposite pattern appears for objective-origin subgroups: *Benshengren* (the native-origin majority) show a detectable conformity gap for Taiwanese pride, whereas *Waishengren* (the Mainland-origin minority) do not. We did not detect an overstatement or understatement of pride in being Chinese in Taiwan. Together, these findings suggest a relatively pluralistic environment where Taiwanese nationalism is dominant, but social enforcement is limited.

South Korea presents a different pattern, with considerably higher overall levels of pride inflation. Both native South Koreans and North Korean migrants show a pronounced conformity to South Korean national identity expectations. Among native South Koreans, these pressures are especially visible among weak identifiers, whose reported pride is markedly inflated relative to their strong-identifying counterparts. Particularly notable is the case of North Korean migrants, who exhibit extreme levels of pride inflation when expressing allegiance to South Korean identity in direct questioning, but significantly lower levels when measured indirectly through list experiments. Additionally, these migrants substantially understate their pride in being from North Korea, indicating strong stigma attached to their origin⁷⁷ and mirroring the broad, graded enforcement we expected. These patterns underscore that individuals from stigmatized minority groups often self-censor their national identity to avoid social rejection.⁷⁸

The overstatement of pride among subgroups navigating contested or marginalized identities highlights mechanisms of nation-building through social conformity in divided societies. We thereby contribute to an ongoing debate about the maintenance and reproduction of national identity.⁷⁹ While prior work contrasts top-down enforcement in autocracies with banal nationalism in democracies,⁸⁰ our results show that identity conformity is also present in democracies. We show which subgroups bear that pressure and highlight that the extent and breadth of conformity pressures differ substantially in our cases.

Our comparative findings point to the different identity norms the two societies have developed since their democratization in the 1980s and 90s. Taiwan's democratization toppled the ethnocentric pan-Chinese identity norms under authoritarian rule. A politically connoted Taiwanese identity subsequently became dominant. Yet, national identity and questions of sovereignty remain contested, cultural attachments to Chineseness remain widespread, and electoral politics incentivized downplaying sub-ethnic cleavages while emphasizing Taiwan's multiethnic history. These conditions appear to limit majority-to-minority pressure and create room for the expression of alternative identities. South Korea's democratization, by contrast, reinforced its ethnocentric national identity. The state itself plays an active role in maintaining identity boundaries through legal instruments and national security discourse—an aspect that the literature on identity norms in democracies is relatively silent on. This dual enforcement of a unitary identity by both society and state seems to foster an environment where conformity pressures are intense, and the expression of alternative identities is illegitimate.

Future research should explore how such diverging legacies of democratization and national identity contribute to more or less open identity norms, and space for the inclusion of native minority groups as well as new migrants. This article also underscores the importance of experimental measures to capture hidden identities and real levels of national pride. Future work should also study pride inflation or concealment in a broader selection of national contexts, with different minority populations and

across regime types. Scholars might further probe how and when cross- and intra-group pressure or internal cognitive dissonance⁸¹ compel individuals to inflate or understate their identity.

Notes

1. Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Harris Mylonas, *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*. Problems of International Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Maya Jessica Tudor, *The Promise of Power: The Origins of Democracy in India and Autocracy in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (University of Chicago Press, 2006); Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott, "Identity as a Variable," *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 4 (2006): 695–711. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592706060440>; Andreas Wimmer, *Nation Building: Why Some Countries Come Together While Others Fall Apart*. Princeton Studies in Global and Comparative Sociology (Princeton University Press, 2018); Ming-Sho Ho, "Desinicizing Taiwan," *Current History* 121, no. 836 (2022): 211–17. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2022.121.836.211>.
2. Notable exceptions include David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Wilder House Series in Politics, History, and Culture (Cornell University Press, 1998); Vasiliki Fouka, Elias Dinas, and Daniel Ziblatt, "Confronting the Past? Public Norms, Private Truths, and the Politics of Memory in Post-WWII Germany," December. (2024). <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/pcu7e>; Chung-Li Wu and Alex Min-Wei Lin, "Ambivalence and Perceptions of China: Two List Experiments," *Research & Politics* 11, no. 1 (2024): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20531680241234833>.
3. Harris Mylonas and Maya Tudor, "Nationalism: What We Know and What We Still Need to Know," *Annual Review of Political Science* 24, no. 1 (2021): 109–32. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041719-101841>.
4. Weiming Tu, "Cultural Identity and the Politics of Recognition in Contemporary Taiwan," *The China Quarterly* 148 (December, 1996): 1115–40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000050578>; Yun-Han Chu and Jih-Wen Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity," *The China Quarterly* 165 (March, 2001). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009443901000067>; Aram Hur, *Narratives of Civic Duty: How National Stories Shape Democracy in Asia*. Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University (Cornell University Press, 2022); Aram Hur and Andrew Yeo, "Democratic Ceilings: The Long Shadow of Nationalist Polarization in East Asia," *Comparative Political Studies* 57, no. 4 (2024): 584–612. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231178724>.
5. Junyan Jiang and Dali L. Yang, "Lying or Believing? Measuring Preference Falsification from a Political Purge in China," *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 5 (2016): 600–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015626450>. Vicente Valentim, "Political Stigma and Preference Falsification: Theory and Observational Evidence," *The Journal of Politics* 86, no. 4 (2024): 1382–402. <https://doi.org/10.1086/729966>.
6. Anthony D. Smith, "The Ethnic Sources of Nationalism," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 48–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339308442673>. Yong-Soo Eun, "Constructivism: National Identity and Foreign Policy," in *The SAGE Handbook of Asian Foreign Policy*, ed. Takashi Inoguchi (Sage, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526436078>.
7. Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Brooks/Cole, 1979). James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1990). <https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300153569>.

8. Lena Lee and Thomas Misco, "All for One or One for All: An Analysis of the Concepts of Patriotism and Others in Multicultural Korea through Elementary Moral Education Textbooks," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 23, no. 3 (2014): 727–34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-013-0146-1>. Hur, *Narratives of Civic Duty*.
9. Tu, "Cultural Identity and the Politics of Recognition in Contemporary Taiwan." Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity." T. Y. Wang and I-Chou Liu, "Contending Identities in Taiwan: Implications for Cross-Strait Relations," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 4 (2004): 568–90. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.4.568>.
10. Ho, "Desinicizing Taiwan."
11. Yang Zhong, "Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 99 (2016): 336–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1104866>.
12. Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood," *Ethnicities* 8, no. 4 (2008): 536–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796808088925>; Hur, *Narratives of Civic Duty*.
13. Yen-Hsin Alice Cheng, "Ultra-Low Fertility in East Asia: Confucianism and Its Discontents," *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research* 18 (2020): 83–120.
14. Tsung-han Tsai, Chia-hung Tsai, and Chi Huang, "Different Immigrants, Same Attitudes? Making Sense of the Association Between Two Immigrant Groups," *Social Science Quarterly* 100, no. 6 (2019): 2369–90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12706>; Steven Denney, Peter Ward, and Christopher Green, "The Limits of Ethnic Capital: Impacts of Social Desirability on Korean Views of Co-Ethnic Immigration," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48, no. 7 (2022): 1669–89; Timothy S. Rich, Isabel Eliassen, Madelynn Einhorn, Andi Dahmer, and Yi-Chun Chien, "All Are Not Equal: Taiwanese Public Opinion on Southeast Asian Immigration," *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 60–81. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24688800-20221240>; Keoni Everington, "Immigration to Taiwan Has Risen by 25% over 5 Years," *Taiwan News* (November, 2023). <https://taiwannews.com.tw/news/5036126>; Ji-Hye Shin, "Reality Check: How Diverse Is Korea Really? Immigration and Society (8)," *The Korea Herald* (February, 2024). <https://www.koreaherald.com/article/3314047>.
15. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. (Verso, 2006); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (John Wiley & Sons, Limited, 1983); Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*.
16. Mylonas and Tudor, "Nationalism: What We Know and What We Still Need to Know."
17. Rui J. P. De Figueiredo and Zachary Elkins, "Are Patriots Bigots? An Inquiry into the Vices of In-group Pride," *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 1 (2003): 171–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5907.00012>; Rick Kosterman and Seymour Feshbach, "Toward a Measure of Patriotic and Nationalistic Attitudes," *Political Psychology* 10, no. 2 (1989): 257–74. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3791647>.
18. Shang E. Ha and Seung-Jin Jang, "National Identity, National Pride, and Happiness: The Case of South Korea," *Social Indicators Research* 121, no. 2 (2015): 471–82. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-014-0641-7>. Gina Gustavsson and Ludvig Stendahl, "National Identity, a Blessing or a Curse? The Divergent Links from National Attachment, Pride, and Chauvinism to Social and Political Trust," *European Political Science Review* 12, no. 4 (2020): 449–68. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773920000211>.
19. Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict."
20. Francesca M. Cancian, *What Are Norms? A Study of Beliefs and Action in a Maya Community* (Cambridge University Press, 1975).
21. Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott, "Identity as a Variable."
22. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, "The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion," *Journal of Communication* 24, no. 2 (1974): 43–51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1974.tb00367.x>.
23. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963); Andreia-Irina Suciuc and Mihaela Culea, "The Risk of Losing National Identity in the Twenty-First Century Romania, or National Identity from Adaptation to Self-Censorship," *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 18, no. 1 (2015): 13–34. <https://doi.org/10.5782/2223-2621.2014.18.1.13>.

24. Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification* (Harvard University Press, 1995).
25. Christian S. Crandall, Amy Eshleman, and Laurie O'Brien, "Social Norms and the Expression and Suppression of Prejudice: The Struggle for Internalization," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82, no. 3 (2002): 359–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.3.359>.
26. Fouka, Dinas, and Ziblatt, "Confronting the Past? Public Norms, Private Truths, and the Politics of Memory in Post-WWII Germany."
27. Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. 1. publ. (University of Chicago Press, 1999); Alexander Dukalskis, *Making the World Safe for Dictatorship* (Oxford University Press, 2021).
28. Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (Columbia University Press, 2012).
29. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.
30. Fox and Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood."
31. Michael Bellig, *Banal Nationalism* (Sage, 1995).
32. J. Paul Goode, "Becoming Banal: Incentivizing and Monopolizing the Nation in Post-Soviet Russia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44, no. 4 (2021): 679–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1749687>.
33. Klára Vlachová, "'This Country Is Not for Anyone': Explanations of Low National Pride in the Czech Republic," *Nationalities Papers* 47, no. 6 (2019): 1000–12. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.22>.
34. Fouka, Dinas, and Ziblatt, "Confronting the Past? Public Norms, Private Truths, and the Politics of Memory in Post-WWII Germany."
35. Lowell Dittmer, "Taiwan as a Factor in China's Quest for National Identity," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 49 (2006): 671–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560600836721>; Angela Kachuyevski and Ronnie Olesker, "Divided Societies and Identity Boundaries: A Conflict Analysis Framework," *International Journal of Conflict Management* 25, no. 3 (2014): 304–21. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCM-03-2013-0016>.
36. Kachuyevski and Olesker, "Divided Societies and Identity Boundaries: A Conflict Analysis Framework"; Roger Mac Ginty, "Everyday Social Practices and Boundary-Making in Deeply Divided Societies," *Civil Wars* 19, no. 1 (2017): 4–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2017.1343410>.
37. Jason Seawright and John Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options," *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008): 294–308. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907313077>.
38. Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott, "Identity as a Variable."
39. Cheng, "Ultra-Low Fertility in East Asia: Confucianism and Its Discontents."
40. Jung-Hsiang Tsai, "Political Structure, Legislative Process, and Corruption: Comparing Taiwan and South Korea," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 52, no. 4 (2009): 365–83. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-009-9188-y>; Hur and Yeo, "Democratic Ceilings: The Long Shadow of Nationalist Polarization in East Asia."
41. Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity."
42. David D. Yang, "Classing Ethnicity. Class, Ethnicity, and the Mass Politics of Taiwan's Democratic Transition," *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (2007): 503–38. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2008.0006>.
43. Chu and Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity"; Yang, "Classing Ethnicity. Class, Ethnicity, and the Mass Politics of Taiwan's Democratic Transition"; Ho, "Desinicizing Taiwan."
44. National Chengchi University, Election Study Center, "Taiwanese/Chinese Identity (1992/06–2024/12)," (2025, January). <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7800&id=6961>.
45. Dongtao Qi, *The Taiwan Independence Movement in and out of Power* (World Scientific, 2016); Dongtao Qi and Shengqiao Lin, "Dividing without Conquering: Generation, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in Taiwan's 2016 Presidential Election," *Issues & Studies* 57, no. 3 (2021): 2150012. <https://doi.org/10.1142/S1013251121500120>.

46. T. Y. Wang and I-Chou Liu, "Contending Identities in Taiwan: Implications for Cross-Strait Relations."
47. Ibid. Wei-Lin Chen, Ming-Jen Lin, and Tzu-Ting Yang, "Curriculum and National Identity: Evidence from the 1997 Curriculum Reform in Taiwan," *Journal of Development Economics* 163 (2023, June): 103078. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2023.103078>.
48. Zhong, "Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan."
49. Ibid.
50. Wu and Lin, "Ambivalence and Perceptions of China: Two List Experiments."
51. In Taiwan, the terms *Benshengren* (literally "people of this province") and *Waishengren* (literally "people from outside the province") denote historically salient sub-ethnic categories.
52. Rich, Eliassen, Einhorn, Dahmer, and Chien, "All Are Not Equal: Taiwanese Public Opinion on Southeast Asian Immigration"; Jay C. Kao and Amy H. Liu, "Racial Identities, Linguistic Proficiency, and Public Attitudes Towards Immigrants: Evidence From Two Surveys in Taiwan," *Political Research Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2025): 701–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129251319737>.
53. Wu and Lin, "Ambivalence and Perceptions of China: Two List Experiments."
54. Lee and Misco, "All for One or One for All: An Analysis of the Concepts of Patriotism and Others in Multicultural Korea through Elementary Moral Education Textbooks"; Eun-Jeung Lee, "The 1960s in South Korea: Modernisation, Nationalism and the Pursuit of Democratisation," *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 52, nos 3–4 (2021): 187–205. <https://doi.org/10.11588/IQAS.2021.3-4.1618>.
55. Article Three of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea states: "The territory of the Republic of Korea shall consist of the Korean peninsula and its adjacent islands." This provision underpins the legal recognition of North Koreans as citizens, as affirmed by the Constitutional Court of Korea in *Nationality Act Case*, 12–2 KCCR 167 (97Hun-Ka12), Aug. 31, 2000. In practice, however, citizenship acquisition is incremental and conditional rather than automatic (Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "The Geopolitics of Citizenship: Evidence from North Korean Claims to Citizenship in South Korea," *Journal of Korean Studies* 26, no. 1 (2021): 117–151. <https://doi.org/10.1215/07311613-8747746>).
56. Eun A. Jo, "Storytelling Elites and the Remaking of Nationhood in Democratic South Korea and Taiwan," *Comparative Political Studies* (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140251369326>.
57. Hur, *Narratives of Civic Duty*.
58. Ibid. Boyoon Lee, "Educational Content, Exclusive National Identity, and Anti-Immigrant Attitudes," *Journal of Politics* 85, no. 4 (2023): 1182–97.
59. In the 1980s and 1990s, segments of the South Korean student movement—particularly the *Jusapa* (pro–Juche faction), the National Liberation (NL) faction, and *Hanchongnyon* (South Korean Federation of University Students Councils)—embraced elements of North Korean ideological thought and promoted unification largely on Northern terms (Mi Park, "Organizing Dissent against Authoritarianism: The South Korean Student Movement in the 1980s," *Korea Journal* 45, no. 3 (2005): 261–88). Although never mainstream, these factions became politically visible and provoked state responses that contributed to the securitization of national identity in South Korea. Their activities intersected with a national identity enforcement already shaped by Cold War confrontation and ideological boundary policing. Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). The continued enforcement of the National Security Act and its repeated affirmation by South Korea's Constitutional Court reflect the state's view that pro-North sentiment, however marginal, remains a challenge to South Korean sovereignty and national cohesion (Christopher Green, and Steven Denney, "Why Do Democratic Societies Tolerate Undemocratic Laws? Sorting Public Support for the National Security Act in South Korea," *Democratization* 31, no. 1 (2024): 113–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2023.2258082>).
60. J. Hough and M. Bell, "North Koreans' Public Narratives and Conditional Inclusion in South Korea," *Critical Asian Studies* 52, no. 2 (2020): 161–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2020.1740606>.

61. Do-Yeong Kim and Hye-Jung Oh, "Psychosocial Aspects of Korean Reunification: Explicit and Implicit National Attitudes and Identity of South Koreans and North Korean Defectors," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 7, no. 3 (2001): 265–88. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327949PAC0703b_5.
62. Denney, Ward, and Green, "The Limits of Ethnic Capital: Impacts of Social Desirability on Korean Views of Co-ethnic Immigration."
63. Jae Yeon Kim and Taeku Lee, "Contested Identity and Prejudice Against Co-Ethnic Refugees: Evidence from South Korea," *Political Research Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2023): 1433–44.
64. Benjamin R. Knoll, "Assessing the Effect of Social Desirability on Nativism Attitude Responses," *Social Science Research* 42, no. 6 (2013): 1587–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssres-research.2013.07.012>; Katharina Meitinger, "What Does the General National Pride Item Measure? Insights from Web Probing," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 59, nos 5–6 (2018): 428–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715218805793>.
65. Jiang and Yang, "Lying or Believing? Measuring Preference Falsification from a Political Purge in China"; Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies*; Valentim, "Political Stigma and Preference Falsification: Theory and Observational Evidence."
66. James H. Kuklinski, Michael D. Cobb, and Martin Gilens, "Racial Attitudes and the 'New South,'" *The Journal of Politics* 59, no. 2 (1997): 323–49. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381600053470>; Philipp Chapkovski and Max Schaub, "Solid Support or Secret Dissent? A List Experiment on Preference Falsification During the Russian War Against Ukraine," *Research & Politics* 9, no. 2 (2022): 20531680221108328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20531680221108328>; Christopher F. Karpowitz, Sarah Austin, Jacob Crandall, and Raquel Macias, "Experimenting with List Experiments: Interviewer Effects and Immigration Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (2023): 69–91. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfad001>.
67. Ali Çarkoğlu and S. Erdem Aytaç, "Who Gets Targeted for Vote-Buying? Evidence from an Augmented List Experiment in Turkey," *European Political Science Review* 7, no. 4 (2015): 547–66. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773914000320>; Heidi Moseson, Moses Massaquoi, Christine Dehlendorf, et al., "Reducing Under-Reporting of Stigmatized Health Events Using the List Experiment: Results from a Randomized, Population-Based Study of Abortion in Liberia," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 44, no. 6 (2015): 1951–58. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyv174>; Jeffrey R. Lax, Justin H. Phillips, and Alissa F. Stollwerk, "Are Survey Respondents Lying about Their Support for Same-Sex Marriage? Lessons from a List Experiment," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (2016): 510–33. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfv056>.
68. People of North Korean origin residing in South Korea refers to individuals who were born in or formerly resided in North Korea and later migrated to South Korea, whereupon they were granted citizenship as per the country's constitution. These individuals are often referred to as "North Korean defectors" (talbukja), though the term "North Korean refugees," "North Korean migrants," or "migrants of North Korean origin" are sometimes used to emphasize their resettlement experience and reduce the stigma associated with defection. We use a combination of labels emphasizing their migrant background and origins.
69. Zhongguo ren literally translates to "Chinese person." It was used in the Nationalist Party's (KMT) pan-Chinese identity project under martial law and has become increasingly associated with the People's Republic of China. In contrast, references to the "Chinese nation" (zhonghua minzu) carry a cultural connotation of Chinese heritage. Zhongguo ren is used in standard self-identification questions and is more politically contested. It is, therefore, our term of choice here.
70. Furthermore, regarding question wording for North Korean migrants, we initially considered phrasing the item as "pride in being North Korean" but our NGO partner (see Appendix A) strongly advised against this wording, citing concerns that it could be politically sensitive or alienating for respondents. In response, we adopted the softer phrasing "pride in being from North Korea," which was perceived as less ideologically loaded and more acceptable within the migrant community.
71. Naomi Levy, "Measuring Multiple Identities: What Is Lost with a Zero-Sum Approach," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 2, no. 4 (2014): 624–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2014.969742>; H. Christoph Steinhardt, Linda Chelan Li, and Yihong Jiang, "The Identity Shift

- in Hong Kong since 1997: Measurement and Explanation,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 110 (2018): 261–276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1389030>.
72. In the Taiwanese context, “formal declaration of independence” refers to a *de jure* statement that Taiwan (Republic of China) is an independent country distinct from the People’s Republic of China. We deliberately framed this as a policy position (not an identity affirmation) and avoided partisan cues or referendum wording. Because the status quo is widely understood as *de facto* independence, the declaration is rhetorically salient yet contested: some view it as the symbolic completion of statehood, while others see escalation risk. These cross-cutting considerations make it a useful scope test for conformity pressures as any direct-list gap could plausibly run in either direction.
 73. National Immigration Agency, Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan, “Foreign Resident Statistics, November 2024,” (2024), <https://www.immigration.gov.tw/5475/5478/141478/141380/> (accessed 19 December 2025).
 74. To address concerns, we re-estimated all models excluding immigrant respondents as a check on results; they are completely unchanged. We also note that ethnicity and identity transmission in contemporary Taiwan increasingly involve maternal-line pathways, particularly among children of New Residents, most of whom are women. These demographic changes have prompted policies such as the incorporation of Southeast Asian “mother tongue” instruction in schools. Due to our identification of background based on the paternal lineage, we cannot incorporate these dynamics into the present analysis.
 75. It is, of course, possible that identity norms lead those with weaker Taiwanese identities to also overstate their perceived identity strength here, while understating their Chinese-ness. This would in effect “dilute” our “Taiwanese only” group with respondents who have a weaker identity than they admit. This makes us more confident that there is no significant preference falsification in this group.
 76. Alternative interpretations of this pattern also exist. One could argue that even with democratic consolidation, *Waisheng*-origin elites have retained disproportionate influence in high-level state institutions and formal public language practices. From this perspective, *Benshengren* may face stronger expectations to perform Taiwanese identity precisely because they are the modal but not fully dominant group in key arenas. A second possibility is that public understandings of “Taiwanese identity” remain shallow and in flux, and that only *Benshengren* individuals feel a duty to state it publicly in opposition to China. Our analysis does not adjudicate between these interpretations, but we acknowledge them as plausible alternatives.
 77. Kim and Oh, “Psychosocial Aspects of Korean Reunification: Explicit and Implicit National Attitudes and Identity of South Koreans and North Korean Defectors.”
 78. Noelle-Neumann, “The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion”; Suciu and Culea, “The Risk of Losing National Identity in the Twenty-First Century Romania, or National Identity from Adaptation to Self-Censorship.”
 79. Mylonas and Tudor, “Nationalism: What We Know and What We Still Need to Know.”
 80. Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*; Dukalskis, *Making the World Safe for Dictatorship*; J. Paul Goode, “Becoming Banal: Incentivizing and Monopolizing the Nation in Post-Soviet Russia.”
 81. Kai Quek and Samuel S. H. Chan, “Managing Nationalism: Experiments in China,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 69, no. 2–3 (2025): 381–405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027241232961>.

Notes on contributors

Steven Denney is an assistant professor of International Relations and Korean Studies at Leiden University. He works at the intersection of digital humanities with quantitative social science to study national identity, migration, and political change.

H. Christoph Steinhardt is associate professor in the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna. He is a political sociologist conducting research on state-society relations, political culture, surveillance, social trust, and contentious politics.

Lisa Bhowmick is a research assistant in the Institute for Area Studies at Leiden University. She holds a BSc in Political Science and is a current undergraduate student in Korean Studies at Leiden University.

ORCID

Steven Denney  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6542-1055>

H. Christoph Steinhardt  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1521-8566>

Lisa Bhowmick  <http://orcid.org/0009-0003-7609-0591>