

# When objective group membership and subjective ethnic identification don't align: How identification shapes intergroup bias through self-enhancement and perceived threat

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## Abstract

When objective group membership and subjective ethnic identification don't align, which has a greater impact on how people feel towards the groups they affiliate with, and why? Deprived of many distinctiveness markers typically found in intergroup relations (e.g., physical features, obvious status differences), Taiwanese society provides a perfect natural context to explore the impact of objective group membership (Taiwanese nationality) versus subjective ethnic identification (Taiwanese or Chinese) on intergroup bias. Results from representative telephone ( $N = 1,060$ ) and Internet ( $N = 500$ ) surveys demonstrated that even among participants with no visible distinctiveness markers or differences in social status, subjective ethnic identification contributed to intergroup bias in favor of Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders (main effect). Both self-enhancement (collective self-esteem as Taiwanese) and perceived threat from Chinese Mainlanders helped account for this finding (mediation effects). Implications for intergroup relations are discussed.

## Keywords

collective self-esteem, perceived threat, social identity theory

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If you are officially classified as Black but self-identify as White, which group would you favor? Which would shape your feelings towards the two groups, the official classification (Black)?, your subjective identification (White)?, or both?

To answer such questions, the existing literature on multiethnicity has largely focused on the identity development, self-esteem, and psychological adjustment of multiracial Americans who differ by visible markers (e.g., black vs. white skin

tone) and social status (e.g., lower vs. middle class; e.g., Shih & Sanchez, 2005). For example, some

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research suggests that individuals in interracial marriages tend to report better psychological adjustment in a multicultural state like California (Binning, Unzueta, Huo, & Molina, 2009), while other research reports that multiracial individuals suffer from greater depressive symptoms than mono-racial individuals—possibly due to conflicts between the two racial groups (e.g., Black–White individuals; Herman, 2008). Still other scholars suggest a moderating effect of research methodology on maladjustment among multiracial individuals (e.g., Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

However, there are cases where visible markers do not distinguish the groups involved, and where relative social status is less obvious. For instance, Rwandans tend to share a common official nationality, but each may subjectively self-identify ethnically as Hutu or Tutsi. During the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the majority Hutu massacred approximately 70% of the minority Tutsi. Rwanda today, however, is ruled by a Tutsi, Paul Kagame. In such circumstances, how do Rwandans view one another? Such overlooked cases in which the groups involved are visibly alike and their relative status uncertain or shifting offer a unique perspective on the pure effects of subjective identification on intergroup bias.

This paper explores the case of Taiwan, where objective group membership (i.e., Taiwanese nationality) and subjective ethnic identification do not always align (e.g., Taiwanese nationals who self-identify as Chinese). Today, 98% of Taiwan's residents are Han Chinese (subethnicity: Minnanese, Hakka, or Waishengren) who emigrated over the last several centuries from Mainland China, currently ruled by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Theoretically, they may therefore embrace *both* being “Chinese” as a superordinate identity based on their cultural and ancestral origins, and being “Taiwanese” as a subordinate identity.

In practice, however, the sociopolitical context has conspired to create a tension between these two ethnic identities. Politically, the people of Taiwan have had to live with cross-strait tensions for over 60 years. The PRC unquestionably represents a security threat to Taiwan, having

fired missiles both at and around Taiwan almost since its founding in 1949. Many residents of Taiwan view Mainland China as a threat to their collective self-esteem as well, continually snubbing Taiwan within the international community. Political differences (Taiwan is now a consolidated democracy, while the PRC remains authoritarian) have also led many Taiwan residents to question their identification with Mainland Chinese. Others, however, refuse to adopt a Taiwanese identity (see Liu, 2012).

Measures of ethnic identification among the people of Taiwan that are commonly used in surveys require respondents to make a forced choice among the following options: (a) Taiwanese, (b) Chinese, and (c) dual-identity Taiwanese and Chinese. The proportions of Taiwanese who endorse these three ethnic identities have shifted dramatically over the past few decades. According to the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University (2016), in 1992, just 17.6% of people living in Taiwan identified as Taiwanese, while the majority identified as either Chinese (25.5%) or both Chinese and Taiwanese (46.4%). By 2016, however, the majority of people living in Taiwan had come to self-identify as Taiwanese (59.3%), with dual identifiers (33.6%) also far outnumbering a tiny minority of Chinese only identifiers (3.0%).

The complex and rapidly shifting identity dynamics in Taiwan offer a unique opportunity to evaluate the effects of subjective ethnic identification on intergroup bias, because the effects of ethnic membership (i.e., Taiwanese nationals defined by patrilineal ethnicity) and of the society as a whole are controlled for. From a historical standpoint, all Taiwan residents should be considered Taiwanese if their fathers are from one of Taiwan's four subethnic groups (Minnanese, Waishengren, Hakka, and aboriginal tribes), and have resided in Taiwan for more than 50 years due to the closing of the China–Taiwan border in the 1950s. However, during the Cold War, the ruling Kuomintang government implemented education policies that promoted Chinese identification and literacy in Mandarin Chinese and forbade the use of the Minnanese and Hakka

languages (Wang, 2001). As a result of the education policies which promote China as the motherland, Taiwan residents often use “Chinese Mainlanders” to refer to PRC citizens, and “Mainland China” to refer to the PRC.

Indistinguishable by physical appearance, many people in Taiwan today continue to struggle between self-identifying as Chinese and/or Taiwanese though all are objectively classified Taiwanese nationals. Chinese identifiers often argue that Taiwan and Mainland China belong to the same family, sharing the same cultural, linguistic, and ethnic origins. Taiwanese identifiers, by contrast, maintain that the Taiwanese have their own history and ethnic lineages and that the Taiwanese should be proud of their own economic and political (i.e., democratic) achievements (Huang, 2007).

Tajfel and Turner’s social identity theory (SIT; 1986) can help us better understand ethnic identification in Taiwan. According to SIT, individuals seek group belongingness to bolster self-esteem (Capozza, Brown, Aharpour, & Falvo, 2006; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a, 2000b). To achieve positive self-regard, individuals identify themselves with a group (i.e., the ingroup) and display favoritism towards that ingroup over various outgroups (i.e., intergroup bias; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). Intergroup bias occurs even when other groups pose no threat to one’s ingroup, in contexts where no previous intergroup interactions have occurred, and when the individual has no interactions with fellow ingroup members (Diehl, 1990). Consistent with SIT, previous research has shown that in Taiwan, Taiwanese identifiers hold more negative attitudes towards Chinese Mainlanders than Chinese identifiers do (Chuang, 1999; Lee & Pratto, 2011).

Although the relationship between self-esteem and intergroup bias seems intuitive, two issues have emerged. The first is whether the relationship is positive or negative. Abrams and Hogg (1988) initially suggested both that (a) intergroup bias may increase self-esteem and (b) threats to self-esteem may promote intergroup bias. In the former, there is a positive association between self-esteem and intergroup bias; in the latter,

there is a negative association between self-esteem and intergroup bias (declines in self-esteem leading to greater intergroup bias). Subsequent research has largely supported a positive relationship between self-esteem and intergroup bias (e.g., meta-analysis by Aberson, Healy, & Romero, 2000). In this research, we explored the possibility that high self-esteem is linked to greater intergroup bias. That is, the more individuals feel proud of being members of a group, the more likely they are to display intergroup bias.

The second problem in the exploration of self-esteem and intergroup bias is whether personal or collective self-esteem should be associated with intergroup bias (Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). Some suggest that personal self-esteem (e.g., Gramzow & Gaertner, 2005) is the primary driver of intergroup bias, some argue it is collective self-esteem (e.g., Cremer & Oosterwegel, 1999; Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997; Rubin & Hewstone, 1998), while others find no difference (Aberson et al., 2000). We sided with the collective self-esteem argument because it is theoretically consistent with SIT’s proposition that individuals attain positive self-regard through personal achievement (reflected in personal self-esteem) and group achievement (e.g., the ingroup’s superiority over outgroups, as reflected in collective self-esteem).

To address this latter issue, we pit collective self-esteem as Taiwanese (in Studies 1 and 2) against personal self-esteem (Study 2) to predict Taiwan residents’ level of intergroup bias against Chinese Mainlanders. Following SIT, we argue that Taiwanese identifiers are more likely to report high collective self-esteem as Taiwanese than Chinese and dual identifiers, and will in turn show greater intergroup bias in favor of Taiwanese and against Chinese Mainlanders. Part of our prediction was tested by Negy, Shreve, Jensen, and Uddin (2003), who found that the more Whites identified as Whites *and* the more personal self-esteem they reported, the more negative attitudes they showed towards other groups. However, Negy and his colleagues targeted personal self-esteem, instead of collective self-esteem. They also were unable to

replicate this result (with White respondents) among either Hispanics (whose outgroup attitudes were predicted only by identity) or African Americans (no significant predictors), nor did they test mediation effects. Thus, the question of whether accepting one's ethnic identity predicts higher collective self-esteem, which in turn predicts more negative attitudes towards outgroups (self-enhancement mediation), remains to be confirmed.

Perceived threat may also mediate the effect of self-identification on intergroup bias. In the integrated threat model, ingroup identification is depicted as positively associated with perceived threat (e.g., Stephan, Stephan, & Gudykunst, 1999). However, the empirical findings are mixed. Some studies showed no significant association between ingroup identification and perceived threat (e.g., Stephan & Stephan, 2000), some showed an inverse association between ethnic identity and perceived threat (operationalized as perceived unfriendliness of others to the group; Ethier & Deaux, 1994), whereas others showed a positive association between ingroup identification and perceived threat (e.g., on symbolic and realistic threat, see Curseu, Stoop, & Schalk, 2007; Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010; on realistic threat, see Bizman & Yinon, 2001). It may only be when ingroup identity is salient (Fischer, Haslam, & Simth, 2010) and perceived threat is evaluated on the group level that a positive association between ingroup identification and perceived threat emerges. Because Taiwanese identification is highly salient—it is a hot topic in Taiwan's politics and pop culture—and because we measured perceived threat at the group level, we expected that there should be a positive association between ingroup identification and perceived threat.

Furthermore, perceived threat at the group level—whether realistic or symbolic—is a robust predictor of outgroup attitudes (see meta-analysis by Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006). According to Stephan and Stephan (2000), realistic threats are threats to the existence of the ingroup, regardless of whether they are due to economic competition or force; symbolic threats are challenges to

the ingroup's values, beliefs, or norms. Thus, the greater the perceived threat from an outgroup, the greater the negative attitudes toward that outgroup. In short, we expected that perceived threat may also mediate the link between self-identification and intergroup bias.

As the outlined literature suggests, there are many different kinds of threat. Though the PRC may pose several kinds of threat to Taiwan, to keep the nature of threat consistent across our studies, we focus on the realistic threat the PRC poses to Taiwan by declaring its willingness to use force to "reunify" Taiwan with the "Motherland." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Nationalist Kuomintang Party (KMT) were at civil war from 1927 to 1949 (interrupted only by a wartime alliance to fight the Japanese). After the KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949, the PRC and Taiwan never signed a peace treaty and the PRC has on numerous occasions stated its intention to use force against Taiwan if needed to stop Taiwan from gaining "official independence." For instance, during Taiwan's first presidential election (1995–1996), the PRC launched missiles near Taiwan to signal its opposition to presidential candidate Lee Teng-hui, who was seen as insufficiently proneunification. We therefore included perceived realistic threat as a mediator to account for the effects of ethnic identification on intergroup bias.

## Present Research

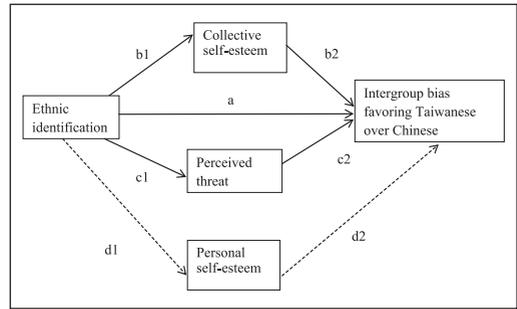
In the present research, we test three explanations for intergroup bias when objective group membership and subjective ethnic identification do not align. The first explanation (the *subjective group identity hypothesis*, Studies 1 and 2) posits a link between ethnic identification and intergroup bias. That is, Taiwan residents should demonstrate more intergroup bias favoring Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders if they self-identify as Taiwanese rather than as Chinese or dual identifiers (those who self-identify as both Chinese and Taiwanese). The second explanation (the *self-enhancement mediation hypothesis*, Studies 1 and 2), consistent with SIT, asserts that collective self-esteem accounts for the

association between ethnic identification and intergroup bias. That is, higher collective self-esteem among Taiwanese-only identifiers explains why they tend to demonstrate higher levels of intergroup bias against Chinese Mainlanders than Chinese-only and dual identifiers. Extending theories emphasizing perceived threat (e.g., SIT, identity integration, and intergroup bias), the third explanation (the *perceived threat mediation hypothesis*, Studies 1 and 2) posits that perceived threat from Mainland China should mediate the effect of Taiwanese identification on intergroup bias. Taiwanese-only identifiers, in other words, should demonstrate higher levels of intergroup bias against Chinese Mainlanders than Chinese-only and dual identifiers due to greater perceived threat from Mainland China.

The Taiwan case is particularly suitable for testing these three hypotheses because many confounding factors related to ancestry and identity (e.g., physical markers, macrosociety) are controlled for. To evaluate the three hypotheses (subjective group identity, self-enhancement mediation, and perceived threat mediation), we conducted two studies. Study 1 utilized telephone interviews with representative samples ( $n = 1,060$ ) from northern and southern Taiwan to investigate: (a) the effect of subjective ethnic identification on intergroup bias, and (b) whether self-enhancement and perceived threat account for the link between subjective ethnic identification and intergroup bias. In Study 2, we utilized an online sample ( $n = 500$ ) that matched the demographic characteristics of the full Taiwan population to replicate (with a different survey method) and extend Study 1. In addition to examining potential mediators, Study 2 also explored an important methodological concern: the linguistic equivalence of “Chinese government” (中國政府), “Mainland China” (中國大陸), and “Mainlanders” (大陸人).

## Study 1

Study 1 tested for both direct and indirect effects of identification on intergroup bias. First, Taiwan residents should demonstrate more bias favoring



**Figure 1.** A path model of the possible effects of ethnic identification, perceived threat, and personal and collective self-esteem on intergroup bias.

Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders if they self-identify as Taiwanese rather than as Chinese or dual identifiers (Path a, see Figure 1, *subjective group identity hypothesis*). Second, the more Taiwan residents identified as Taiwanese (over Chinese), the greater their collective self-esteem as Taiwanese (Path b1) should be, which in turn should be associated with greater intergroup bias (Path b2, *self-enhancement mediation hypothesis*). Third, the more Taiwan residents identified as Taiwanese (rather than as Chinese), the more threat they should perceive from Mainland China (Path c1), which should in turn correlate with greater intergroup bias against Chinese Mainlanders (Path c2, *perceived threat mediation hypothesis*).

## Participants

The questionnaire used in Study 1 was administered via telephone interviews. To allow for a 3% margin of error in a population of more than 10 million from northern and southern Taiwan, we used stratified random sampling to recruit 1,067 participants (552 female and 515 male). To obtain samples that matched each region’s population, sex ratio, and age distribution, we recruited participants using a quota table defined by the aforementioned criteria. In total, there were 626 participants from Taipei in the north, 161 from Tainan in the south, and 255 from Kaohsiung in the south. Ages ranged from 20 to 85, with a median of 44.5. There were 834 Minnanese (78.5%), 74 Hakka (7.0%), 149 Waishengren

(14%), 3 aboriginals (0.3%), 2 immigrants (0.2%), and 5 people who did not respond to this item. The latter seven participants were excluded from further analyses.

### Measures

The survey included measures of demographic information (e.g., gender, region, age, and father's ethnicity), participants' categorical ethnic self-identification, their attitudes/feelings towards Taiwanese and Chinese Mainlanders, their collective self-esteem as Taiwanese, and their levels of perceived threat from Mainland China.

*Predictors.* Categorical ethnic self-identification was a forced choice response among three options: Chinese, dual-identity, and Taiwanese. For the path model, categorical identification was coded 0 for Chinese-only identity, 1 for dual identity, and 2 for Taiwanese-only identity.

*Criterion variables and mediators.* To capture intergroup bias, we used a mixture of positive and negative items from Chuang (1999), Hsu (2010), and Kao (2013). Three positive and three negative items were rated on 1–5 Likert scales to indicate participants' core attitudes/feelings towards Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese.

Exploratory factor analyses revealed that the 12 items largely corresponded to the expected factor structure. Separate factors reflected positive attitudes towards Taiwanese (two items: "hard-working" and "friendly"; eigenvalue = 1.88), negative attitudes towards Taiwanese (two items: "break rules" and "selfish"; eigenvalue = 1.20), and collective self-esteem (two items: "Being Taiwanese is sad" and "Being Taiwanese is to be proud"; eigenvalue = 1.01). Separate factors also reflected positive attitudes towards Chinese Mainlanders (three items: "hard-working," "economical," and "conservative"; eigenvalue = 1.53,) and negative attitudes towards Chinese Mainlanders (three items: "dictatorial," "behind the times," and "I dislike Chinese Mainlanders"; eigenvalue = 1.77; see Table 1 for factor loadings).

We computed composite scores for attitudes towards Taiwanese and Chinese, respectively. Intergroup bias scores were then calculated by subtracting the Chinese from the Taiwanese scores. The higher the composite score, the more intergroup bias.

Lastly, the single item "How would you describe Chinese Mainlanders?" measured perceived threat. The response choices were "family," "friends," "strangers," and "enemies." Due to cross-strait tensions and the PRC's intention to use force against Taiwan if necessary, we believe the response "enemies" connotes threat. Thus, we coded family members, friends, and strangers as 0, and enemies as 1.

## Results and Discussion

### *Intergroup Attitudes Towards Chinese and Taiwanese*

The subjective group identity hypothesis predicts that Taiwanese-only identifiers should exhibit more intergroup bias against Chinese Mainlanders than Chinese-only and dual identifiers. Because there were gender and regional differences in identification ( $p < .02$ )—women and those residing in the south endorsed Taiwanese identification more than men and those residing in the north—gender and area of residence (coded "south" or not) were included as covariates. To test the effect of "subjective" group membership on feelings towards ingroup/outgroup (i.e., intergroup bias), a repeated measures analysis of covariance (covariates: gender, area of residence coded "south" or not) was run to explore the effects of categorical identification (Taiwanese, Chinese, or both), targets of feelings (Taiwanese or Chinese Mainlanders), and the interaction between the two. Identification was a between-subject variable and targets of feelings was a within-subject variable. Results were identical with and without the covariates.

As expected, there was a medium-sized effect of Identification x Target Group,  $F(2, 1023) = 27.91, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$ . Taiwanese identifiers ( $M_D = 0.81$ ) showed the greatest intergroup bias in favor of Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders

**Table 1.** Items used in Studies 1 and 2.

Construct	Items	Loadings
Study 1 DV: Attitudes towards Taiwanese		
	Taiwanese are rule-breakers (台灣人不守規定的)	.67 <sup>a1</sup>
	Taiwanese are selfish (台灣人是自私的)	.62 <sup>a1</sup>
	Taiwanese are hard-working (台灣人是勤勞的)	.65 <sup>b1</sup>
	Taiwanese are friendly (台灣人是有人情味的)	.57 <sup>b1</sup>
Study 1 DV: Attitudes towards Chinese		
	I dislike Chinese Mainlanders (我討厭中國大陸人)	.65 <sup>a2</sup>
	Chinese Mainlanders are dictatorial (中國大陸人是霸道的)	.57 <sup>a2</sup>
	Chinese Mainlanders are behind the times (中國大陸人是落伍的)	.47 <sup>a2</sup>
	Chinese Mainlanders are economical (中國大陸人是節儉的)	.69 <sup>b2</sup>
	Chinese Mainlanders are old-fashioned (中國大陸人是守舊的)	.50 <sup>b2</sup>
	Chinese Mainlanders are hard-working (中國大陸人是勤勞的)	.47 <sup>b2</sup>
Study 1 mediator: Collective self-esteem		
	Being Taiwanese is sad (身為台灣人是悲哀的)	.50 <sup>c1</sup>
	Being Taiwanese is proud (身為台灣人是驕傲的)	.42 <sup>c1</sup>
Study 1 mediator: Perceived threat		
	How would you describe Chinese Mainlanders (您會如何形容中國大陸民眾)? ("Enemy" coded 1; all other answers coded 0)	
Study 2 DV: Attitudes towards Taiwanese		
	Taiwanese are cultured (台灣人是具有水準的)	.70 <sup>a3</sup>
	How do you feel about the following countries? Taiwan (你對下列國家的感受如何?台灣)	.59 <sup>a3</sup>
Study 2 DV: Attitudes towards Chinese		
	How do you feel about the following countries? Mainland China (你對下列國家的感受如何? 中國大陸)	.67 <sup>b3</sup>
	Mainlanders are cultured (大陸人是具有水準的)	.61 <sup>b3</sup>
Study 2 mediator: Collective self-esteem		
	I am happy to be Taiwanese (我樂於作為一個台灣人)	
Study 2 mediator: Personal self-esteem		
	I like my name (我喜歡我的名字)	.79 <sup>a4</sup>
	I regard myself as an open and creative person (我認為我是個開放、有創意的人)	.81 <sup>a4</sup>
	I am a person with high self-esteem (我是個自尊心強的人)	.70 <sup>a4</sup>
Study 2 mediator: Perceived threat		
	What percentage of Mainland Chinese tourists in Taiwan are spies? "來臺的大陸遊客中，有百分之多少會是間諜?"	

Note. Factor loadings < .40 were not shown. The superscript numbers indicate whether they were entered in the same factor analysis; the subscript letters indicate whether they converged on the same factors. Single items were not entered in any exploratory factor analysis.

compared to dual identifiers ( $M_D = 0.41$ ) and Chinese identifiers ( $M_D = 0.25$ ), all  $p$ s < .005. In addition to the expected Identification x Target Group interaction, there was a large target group main effect,  $F(1, 1023) = 116.06$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ . All participants, regardless of their ethnic identification, showed substantial

favoritism towards Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders ( $M_D = 0.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

To account for the effects of ancestry and status differences among different subethnic groups, we further examined intergroup bias in the largest subethnic group of the sample, Minnanese under 60 (as a proxy indicator for those born in

Taiwan). The interaction effect between identification and target group remained significant,  $F(2, 641) = 9.84, p < .001, \eta^2 = .03$ . Consistent with our findings for the full sample, among Minnanese under 60, Taiwanese-only identifiers ( $M_D = 0.80$ ) demonstrated the greatest intergroup bias favoring Taiwanese over Chinese compared to both dual identifiers ( $M_D = 0.42$ ) and Chinese-only identifiers ( $M_D = 0.38$ ).

These findings suggest that “objective” ethnic membership and “subjective” ethnic identification both shape intergroup attitudes. When ethnic membership and ethnic identification are consistent (i.e., Taiwanese ethnic group and Taiwanese self-identification), participants showed robust intergroup bias. However, when the two do not line up (e.g., Taiwanese ethnic group but Chinese self-identification), the effect of ethnic membership is more important than ethnic identification because participants showed favoritism towards Taiwanese over Chinese. However, ethnic identification still shapes intergroup bias in favor of Taiwanese over Chinese, after controlling for the effects of ancestry and group status (i.e., among Minnanese under 60).

### *Mediators of the Association Between Identification and Intergroup Bias*

To explore predictors accounting for intergroup bias, we tested a path model (see Figure 1, without the dotted lines). Because demographics (e.g., gender and region) did not affect the results, to reduce clutter we did not include them. The saturated model displayed good fit, CFI = 1.00.

Supporting evidence for both mediations was gathered. Consistent with the self-enhancement mediation hypothesis, Taiwanese-only identifiers showed greater collective self-esteem than dual and Chinese-only identifiers, and in turn displayed greater intergroup bias (see path coefficients in Table 2). The mediation was significant at  $p = .012$ . The perceived threat mediation hypothesis was also confirmed. Perceived threat mediated the association between subjective ethnic identification and intergroup bias ( $p = .006$ ). Specifically, Taiwanese-only identifiers perceived

Chinese Mainlanders to be more of a threat than Chinese-only and dual identifiers did; the greater perception of threat, in turn, was linked to greater intergroup bias.

## Study 2

The results of Study 1 supported all three of our hypotheses. However, we conducted a follow-up study using a different survey method and several different measures to see if we could replicate these results. First, when addressing sensitive issues like intergroup bias, telephone surveys, like face-to-face surveys, can suffer from self-presentation effects. We therefore decided to see if we could replicate the results of Study 1 online, allowing participants to take the survey in the privacy of their own homes. Second, unlike Study 1, we decided to use identical items to measure attitudes towards both Taiwanese and Chinese Mainlanders. In Study 1, we had selected different items to capture the participants’ core attitudes towards Taiwanese and Chinese. For example, items like “behind the times” seemed more germane to stereotypes of Chinese Mainlanders (Chuang, 1999) than to Taiwanese themselves. It is possible, however, that different items have different anchoring points; we therefore decided to use identical items to tap attitudes towards both Taiwanese and Chinese Mainlanders in Study 2. Third, we used different items to measure the mediators. To measure collective self-esteem, the items in Study 1 left the subject of the sentences ambiguous, so we added the first person “I” to the item wordings. To measure perceived threat from Chinese Mainlanders, we used a direct item to address the realistic threat Chinese Mainlanders may pose to Taiwanese. We also added three items tapping personal self-esteem to address the issue of which type of self-esteem better mediates the relationship between ethnic identification and intergroup bias. Fourth and finally, we tested the interchangeability of various terms commonly used to refer to Chinese Mainlanders, including China, Chinese Mainlanders, and Chinese government. According to the findings of Study 1, we expected to see an interaction between

**Table 2.** Unstandardized (standardized) coefficients in the mediational path models: Studies 1 and 2.

Path	Study 1: Coefficients	Study 2: Coefficients
Taiwanese ID <sup>a</sup> → Intergroup bias (a)	0.26 (0.18)***	0.71 (0.23)***
Taiwanese ID → Collective SE <sup>b</sup> (b1)	0.10 (0.06)*	0.38 (0.21)***
Collective SE → Intergroup bias <sup>c</sup> (b2)	0.13 (0.15)***	0.69 (0.40)***
Taiwanese ID → Perceived threat <sup>d</sup> (c1)	0.07 (0.13)***	1.10 (0.23)***
Perceived threat Intergroup bias (c2)	0.64 (0.24)***	0.11 (0.17)***
Taiwanese ID → Personal SE (d1)	N/A	-0.12 (-.06)
Personal SE → Intergroup bias (d2)	N/A	-0.03 (-0.02)
Collective SE ↔ Perceived threat	-0.11***	0.03
Collective SE ↔ Personal SE	N/A	0.21***
Intercept	Estimate (SE)	Estimate (SE)
Intergroup bias <sup>e</sup>	0.17 (0.07)*	0.86 (0.42)*

Note. <sup>a</sup>Taiwanese ID: Chinese identity coded 0; dual identity coded 1; Taiwanese identity coded 2. <sup>b</sup>Standardized scores. <sup>c</sup>The composite scores could range from 4 (totally in favor of Taiwanese over Chinese) to -4 (totally in favor of Chinese over Taiwanese). <sup>d</sup>“Enemy” coded 1; all other answers such as family members, friends, or strangers were coded 0. <sup>e</sup>Reflecting participants’ intergroup bias when they have average collective self-esteem and did not consider Chinese to be enemies. N/A = not applicable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

identification and target groups, suggesting that Taiwanese intergroup bias against Chinese Mainlanders depends upon the category of ethnic identification. That is, Taiwanese identifiers should show the most intergroup bias favoring Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders, and the effect of ethnic identification should be mediated by collective self-esteem and perceived threat.

### Participants

We designed an Internet survey that the Palo Alto, U.S.-based survey company YouGov implemented in the fall of 2011. YouGov collected a sample of Taiwanese adults with the objective of achieving a dataset that was representative of the general population of Taiwan, age 20 and over. Collecting a sample of 500 allows for inferences about the attitudes and behaviors of the general population with a sufficiently small margin of error of  $\pm 5.93\%$ . There were 556 Taiwan residents who initially completed the survey online. Utilizing 2009 ROC Ministry of Interior (MOI) statistics, the sample was then matched to the full Taiwan population on the basis of age, gender, region, and education level. The final sample of 500 was further weighted on the basis of age,

gender, education, and ethnicity (due to our use of the weighting variable, the sample size may appear to be larger than 500 in the statistics reported in what follows). The majority of the participants were Minnanese (73.0%). The sample was gender balanced (female, 50.2%), with ages ranging from 20 to 78 and a mean of 44, and 30.2% of the participants were from southern Taiwan. Ethnic identification was not associated with reported income ( $r = .01, p = .83$ ). Detailed information on survey design and sampling is described in Gries and Su (2013).

### Questionnaire

The full online survey questionnaire included questions about ethnic identification, foreign countries, and cross-strait relations (i.e., policy towards the PRC). We focused on 12 items (see Table 1). Our predictor was again participants’ categorical self-identification as Taiwanese, Chinese, or both (i.e., dual identification). The mediators and dependent measures all used continuous Likert scales, however. “I am happy to be Taiwanese” tapped collective self-esteem as Taiwanese; response choices ranged from 1 (*disagree very much*) to 7 (*agree very much*). Three items

measured personal self-esteem using the same 7-point scale. Three items measured feelings towards Mainland China as a country (中國大陸), the Chinese government (中國政府), and Mainlanders (大陸人) based on an 11-point Likert scale ( $-5 = \text{dislike very strongly}$ ,  $5 = \text{like very strongly}$ ). This allowed us to deconstruct “China” as an attitude object, explore the interchangeability of the terms, and possibly combine them to create a more robust dependent measure. Because the pairs of items measuring attitudes towards Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese used different scales (i.e., 0–100 or 1–7), we converted the 101-point Likert scale items to a 7-point scale ( $1 = \text{very negative}$ ,  $7 = \text{very positive}$ ). The items were exactly the same except for the words “Taiwan” (台灣), “Taiwanese” (台灣人), “Mainlanders” (大陸人), and “Mainland China” (中國大陸). The four items loaded on one of two factors: attitudes towards Taiwan and Taiwanese (eigenvalue = 1.63, see Table 1) and attitudes towards Mainland China and Mainlanders (eigenvalue = 1.21, see Table 1). We therefore created two item scales in which higher scores indicated more favorable attitudes. Intergroup bias scores were then calculated by subtracting the China score from the Taiwan score.

“What percentage of Mainland Chinese tourists in Taiwan are spies?” indirectly measured perceived threat from Mainland China. Due to China’s intention to use force against Taiwan if necessary and spies are tools to gain the upper hand in a potential cross-strait war, the estimates should reflect perceived realistic threat. Given that there are no reliable figures on this issue, we reasoned that answers to this question would indirectly reveal subconscious perceived threat from China: those who believe China poses a greater threat might guess a higher percentage, while those who do not consider China a source of threat might estimate a lower figure. The higher the percentage given, the greater the threat participants perceived Chinese Mainlanders to be.

## Results and Discussion

We first conducted an exploratory factor analysis on measures of like/dislike for the Chinese

government (中國政府), Mainland China as a country (中國大陸), and Mainlanders (大陸人) to see if they were similar. All three items loaded on one factor, eigenvalue = 1.98, loadings  $> .67$ . Average favorability levels did differ, however. Participants rated the Chinese government more negatively than both Mainland China as a country and Mainlanders ( $p < .001$ ), while there was no difference ( $p = .22$ ) between the latter two terms. We therefore decided to use both “Mainland China” and “Mainlanders” to explore intergroup bias.

Adopting the same repeated measures analysis of covariance used in Study 1, all participants, regardless of their categorical ethnic identification, showed a large preference for Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders,  $F(1, 581) = 110.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .16$ . This again suggests the importance of “objective” group membership. This main effect, however, was qualified by a substantial interaction between identification and target,  $F(2, 581) = 27.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .09$ . Taiwanese identifying participants showed the greatest intergroup bias against Chinese ( $M_D = 2.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by the dual-identity participants ( $M_D = 1.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Intergroup bias did not reach statistical significance among the few Chinese-only identifying participants in the sample ( $M_D = 0.72$ ,  $p = .10$ , see the last column of the eighth and tenth row of Table 3). Regardless of target, Chinese identifiers had a higher response anchoring point than Taiwanese and dual identifiers ( $M_C = 5.00$  vs.  $M_T = 4.27$  and  $M_D = 4.31$ ,  $ps < .01$ ). No other effects were significant ( $ps > .12$ ). Again, restricting the sample to the largest subethnic group, Minnanese under 60, yielded the same main findings. Respondents showed a preference towards Taiwanese ( $M_T = 5.28$ ) over Chinese ( $M_C = 3.19$ ) and the preference was strongest among Taiwanese identifiers ( $M_D = 2.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by dual identifiers ( $M_D = 1.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the weakest among Chinese identifiers ( $M_D = 1.58$ ,  $p = .05$ ).

### Mediation Mechanisms: A Path Model

To further understand the mechanisms accounting for intergroup bias against Chinese Mainlanders,

**Table 3.** Taiwanese identification and attitudes towards Taiwanese and Chinese Mainlanders: Studies 1 and 2.

	Taiwanese identifiers	Dual identifiers	Chinese identifiers
Study 1 (means and 95% confidence intervals)			
Attitudes towards Taiwanese (1 to 5)	3.72 <sup>a</sup> [3.68, 3.77]	3.56 <sup>b</sup> [3.46, 3.66]	3.55 <sup>b</sup> [3.42, 3.69]
Attitudes towards Chinese (1 to 5)	2.91 <sup>c</sup> [2.87, 2.95]	3.15 <sup>d</sup> [3.06, 3.24]	3.31 <sup>c</sup> [3.19, 3.42]
Sample size <sup>a</sup>	761	165	100
Study 2 (means and 95% confidence intervals)			
Attitudes towards Taiwanese (1 to 7)	5.57 <sup>a</sup> [5.44, 5.69]	5.15 <sup>b</sup> [4.99, 5.31]	5.35 <sup>a,b,c</sup> [4.72, 5.99]
Attitudes towards Chinese (1 to 7)	2.97 <sup>c</sup> [2.84, 3.10]	3.46 <sup>d</sup> [3.29, 3.63]	4.64 <sup>c</sup> [3.97, 5.30]
Weighted sample size	353	219	14

*Note.* There were missing data on Taiwanese identification ( $n = 32$ ), positive feelings towards Chinese ( $n = 3$ ), and negative feelings towards Taiwanese ( $n = 1$ ) in Study 1. The data controlled for participant gender and area of residence (coded south or not) in both studies. Different superscript letters indicate significant differences.

we ran another path model (see Figure 1 with the dotted lines). As in Study 1, categorical identification was coded 0 for Chinese-only identity, 1 for dual identity, and 2 for Taiwanese-only identity. Because demographics (e.g., gender and region) did not affect the results, we did not include them in our model. The model displayed good fit,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.04, p = .85, CFI = 1.00$ .

Two of the three indirect paths were significant. Taiwanese identifiers reported higher collective self-esteem as Taiwanese and in turn higher levels of intergroup bias ( $p = .009$ , see Table 2 for path coefficients) against Chinese Mainlanders than did dual and Chinese-only identifiers. Even Chinese identifiers whose collective self-esteem as Taiwanese was in the average range showed bias in favor of Taiwanese over Chinese, a pattern that was consistent with the results of Study 1 (see the intercept in Table 2). In addition, Taiwanese identifiers (in contrast to dual and Chinese identifiers) perceived greater threat from Chinese Mainlanders and in turn showed higher levels of intergroup bias ( $p = .006$ , see Table 2 for path coefficients). The indirect path via personal self-esteem was not statistically significant, however. After accounting for the two significant mediation processes, the direct effect was still significant in predicting intergroup bias against Chinese ( $p < .001$ ). Thus, perceived threat and collective self-esteem were

partial mediators of the association between subjective identification and intergroup bias in favor of Taiwanese over Chinese.

Finally, we compared the final model with an alternative model in which intergroup bias predicts collective self-esteem, rather than vice versa. The alternative model's fit,  $\chi^2(3) = 5.24, p = .16$ , was not as good as the final model (without the nonsignificant personal self-esteem paths),  $\chi^2(3) = 0.34, p = .95$ .

In sum, Study 2 suggests that both objective ethnic membership and subjective ethnic identification are important determinants of intergroup bias. Compared to dual identifiers, Taiwanese-only identifiers displayed stronger intergroup bias in favor of Taiwanese, a finding that is consistent with previous research on superordinate and subordinate identities (e.g., Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a, 2000b). However, as in Study 1, Chinese-only identifiers did not show a preference for Chinese Mainlanders over Taiwanese but rather a preference for Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders, suggesting the importance of objective ethnic membership. Moreover, we demonstrated that subjective identity may exert its impact through collective self-esteem as suggested by SIT, as well as through perceived threat, as argued in the literature on SIT, identity integration, and intergroup bias.

## General Discussion

This paper takes advantage of the complex identity terrain of Taiwan to explore intergroup bias when a person's ethnic membership (defined objectively by patrilineal ethnicity) is in conflict with her/his ethnic self-identification (defined subjectively). The real-life identity politics and cross-strait tensions with Mainland China that today's Taiwan residents experience daily offer a unique opportunity to test the impact of "objective" and "subjective" group markers on intergroup bias.

Despite different survey questions, methods, and samples, the two studies presented here resulted in largely consistent findings (see Tables 1 and 2). First, there is a substantial effect of objective group membership on intergroup bias. In both studies, *all* Taiwanese, regardless of their self-identification as "Taiwanese," "Chinese," or "both," favored fellow Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders (all post hoc tests at effect sizes  $d+s > 0.37$ ). Second, the evidence also lends support for the importance of subjective identity: Taiwanese self-identifiers in both studies showed *stronger* intergroup bias than other Taiwan residents. Third, in both studies the effects of ethnic identification on intergroup bias were mediated by collective self-esteem and perceived threat. Our findings thus support a combined sociocultural and social constructionist view of intergroup bias.

The sociocultural view suggests that the situations group members are in (e.g., common fate and the macroenvironment) shape intergroup bias (e.g., Campbell, 1965). Because all of our respondents, regardless of their subjective identification, showed intergroup bias in favor of Taiwanese over Chinese, our findings support the sociocultural view as argued in realistic group conflict theory (RGCT; Campbell, 1965; Sherif, 1966; Sherif & Sherif, 1966). Consistent with RGCT, even participants who subjectively identified with the outgroup (i.e., ethnic Chinese) showed intergroup bias in favor of their objectively defined ingroup (i.e., Taiwanese). RGCT highlights the importance of "objective" group

membership and emphasizes the common fate shared by all group members, such as overly scarce resources (Campbell, 1965). In a context in which the Mainland Chinese government routinely threatens Taiwan with missiles and the use of military force, it is not surprising that all residents of Taiwan favored fellow Taiwanese over Chinese Mainlanders.

Subjective identification also matters, however. Because ethnic self-identification shaped intergroup bias in favor of Taiwanese over Chinese, the social constructionist view is also supported. The effect of ethnic self-identification is particularly remarkable because several key factors commonly found responsible for intergroup bias were controlled for. First of all, visible features, such as facial features or skin tone, are commonly used to categorize groups and can contribute to intergroup bias (e.g., Hammond & Axelrod, 2006; McDonald, Asher, Kerr, & Navarrete, 2011; Patterson & Bigler, 2006). These findings have been used to suggest that there is an evolutionary basis for intergroup bias (McDonald et al., 2011). Although our research cannot speak directly to this argument, it does support the sociocultural and social constructionist views of intergroup bias. That is, because Taiwanese and Chinese identifiers are indistinguishable by physical features and share the same cultural origin, Taiwan residents demonstrated intergroup bias not because of a visible classification of us versus them. Instead, they were caught between two forces: the Taiwan government's past policy of Sinicization which encouraged its people to embrace Chinese identity, and cross-strait tensions which promoted a separate Taiwanese identity. Consistent with the sociocultural view, intergroup bias can arise from real conflicts between China and Taiwan, as demonstrated by our perceived threat mediation. Protests against the ruling Kuomintang government's pro-PRC educational policies continue today (e.g., Gold, 2015). Consistent with the social constructionist view, the Kuomintang government's policy of Sinicization may have promoted a common identity between Taiwanese and Chinese, thus reducing intergroup bias.

The effect of ethnic self-identification on intergroup bias is consistent with SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and we found support for a self-enhancement mediation. Specifically, the association of ethnic identification with intergroup bias was mediated by collective (though not personal) self-esteem. There are four interpretations for why collective but not personal self-esteem mediated the effect of ethnic identification on intergroup bias (Study 2). First, we deliberately generated distinct items (name and personal qualities for personal self-esteem, and group membership for collective self-esteem) for the two types of self-esteem. They were positively albeit weakly correlated ( $r = .21, p < .001$ , Study 2). Second, previous researchers have often measured intergroup bias in artificial groups (e.g., Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Gramzow & Gaertner, 2005; Long & Spears, 1998). Although such designs may reveal the pure effect of a manipulation on intergroup bias, it may distort the relative effects of personal and collective self-esteem. It is possible that the manipulation affects individuals as a person more readily than as a member of the group because the group is newly formed and artificial, devoid of content. We targeted real groups that are substantively important, allowing the effect of the two types of self-esteem to emerge naturally. Third, it is possible that visible group markers may be used as personal characteristics (e.g., skin tone, facial features) instead of group characteristics, which makes the effects of personal and collective self-esteem not easily separated. Although our correlational data do not allow for a definitive causal claim, we did show that the model where collective self-esteem predicts intergroup bias explains the data better than the model where intergroup bias predicts collective self-esteem (Study 2). Lastly, it is possible that the items juxtaposing Chinese and Taiwanese identities may make intergroup relations more salient (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), strengthening the relationships among collective self-esteem, identity, and intergroup bias. Future longitudinal and experimental studies are, of course, needed to address the

causality issue. To test the replicability of our findings, researchers can target other intergroup contexts unencumbered by visibly salient markers.

In addition to the self-enhancement explanation proposed by SIT, we also examined perceived threat as an explanation for intergroup bias. The current research is not consistent with previous work suggesting that intergroup bias is found only when participants experience direct threat (e.g., Flippen, Hornstein, Siegal, & Weitzman, 1996). For example, when modeling perceived threat to be 0, participants showed intergroup bias in both studies (i.e., the intercept). This difference may be due to the degree to which people feel psychologically attached to groups. For groups to which people feel psychologically attached, intergroup bias may arise even without direct threat; however, for groups to which people do not feel psychologically attached (e.g., a vague community; Flippen et al., 1996), people may need to experience threat to the ingroup to show intergroup bias. Perceived threat was a significant mediator in both studies. That is, Taiwanese-identifying (in contrast to Chinese-identifying) individuals reported more perceived threat from Chinese Mainlanders; and perceived threat, in turn, was associated with greater intergroup bias (in both studies).

We focused on the realistic threat that China poses to the safety of the residents of Taiwan. However, there are other types of threat that have been proposed to be associated with intergroup bias (e.g., symbolic, anxiety, negative stereotype, or group esteem threats; Riek et al., 2006) and other potential mediation processes that underlie intergroup bias, such as cognitive economy (e.g., Stangor & Thompson, 2002), distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991; Jetten et al., 1997), and uncertainty reduction (Hogg, 1993). Future studies should explore how other types of threat may mediate the effects of ethnic identification on intergroup bias.

There are also other limitations of our research. First, because we strived to distinguish collective and personal self-esteem, we developed the items

ourselves, instead of using standardized inventories; these items may not capture the full scope of collective and personal self-esteem. Second, as noted before, because we studied identification and attitudes towards natural groups using cross-sectional data, whether the mediational relationships we found were indeed causal requires further research. Third and finally, due to rapidly changing identity politics in Taiwan, very few Taiwanese today identify as solely Chinese. As a result, in our samples the estimates of solely Chinese-identifying individuals may not be as accurate as the estimates of solely Taiwanese-identifying and dual-identifying individuals.

Major political movements that took place in Hong Kong in 2014—for example, Occupy Central and the Umbrella Movement—suggest that the issues studied here are not limited to Taiwan. Residents of Taiwan and Hong Kong are not the only peoples living in the shadow of massive neighbors, as the residents of Crimea and Ukraine would readily testify. To improve our theories of intergroup relations, we need real-world applications that vary in contextual factors like relative power and objective/subjective markers of group membership. Such applied research may also suggest constructive interventions to avert future intergroup conflicts.

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