From Uncertain Boundaries to Uncertain Identity:

Effects of Entitativity Threat on Identity-Uncertainty and Emigration

Jiin Jung[1], Michael A. Hogg[1], Andrew G. Livingstone[2] and Hoon-Seok Choi[3]

[1]Claremont Graduate University

[2]University of Exeter

[3]Sungkyunkwan University

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Author Note

Jiin Jung, Michael A. Hogg, Department of Psychology, Claremont Graduate University; Andrew Livingstone, Department of Psychology, University of Exeter; Hoon-Seok Choi, Department of Psychology, Sungkyunkwan University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jiin Jung, Department of Psychology, Claremont Graduate University, 123 East Eighth Street, Claremont, CA 91711. Email: jiin.jung@cgu.edu.

Abstract

When people feel uncertain about their national identity, they may want to emigrate from their nation. This uncertainty can arise when people are exposed to an alternative historical narrative about their own national (ingroup) origins promoted by a neighboring nation (outgroup). Drawing on uncertainty-identity theory we propose that the conditions that promote this process would include when: (a) a revised history threatens the entitativity of national identity, (b) people identify strongly with their nation, (c) a neighboring nation is numerically large enough to transform its own view into a new shared reality, and (d) a new interpretation of history is considered credible. We conducted an experiment in the context of historical disputes between China (outgroup) and Korea (ingroup) (N = 160). We measured Korean identification and manipulated type of identity threat (valence threat vs. entitativity threat), relative group size (not salient vs. salient), and source credibility (low vs. how). Then, we measured identity-uncertainty and emigration as dependent variables. As predicted, hierarchical regression analyses yielded a significant four-way interaction on identity-uncertainty. Simple slopes analyses revealed that entitativity (vs. valence) threat significantly increased identity-uncertainty among high identifiers when the outgroup's relative size was salient and its view was credible. Further, the elevated identity-uncertainty strengthened intentions to emigration from the ingroup. Implications for intergroup communications and identity validation are discussed.

Keywords: entitativity threat, identity-uncertainty, emigration

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History constitutes the core of national identity (Tajfel, 1969). Nations construct historical narratives that emphasize their prestigious cultures distinctive from other nations and teach people their version of history to develop a shared sense of nationhood (cf. Hogg & Giles, 2012; Hogg & Rinella, 2018). Disputes emerge when neighboring nations have different versions of historical narratives (e.g., Egypt vs. Sudan over the Hala'ib Triangle, Germany vs. Poland over Posen/Poznań, the South China Sea dispute, Cambodia vs. Thailand over the Preah Vihear temple). How do people respond when neighboring nations' historical narratives conflict with, invalidate, and possibly threaten their own national identity?

Previous literature has documented how groups respond differently to various identity threats (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Hogg & Hornsey, 2006; Hornsey, 2005; Hornsey & Imani, 2004; Major & O'Brien, 2005; Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006; Wohl, Branscombe, & Reysen, 2010). However, little is known about the effect of identity threat on *identity-uncertainty.* Identity-uncertainty is a feeling of uncertainty about the social identity-defining attributes of a group, and thus about oneself as a group member collective domain of self-uncertainty (Jung, Hogg, & Choi, 2016, 2019; Jung, Hogg, & Lewis, 2016; Wagoner, Belavadi, & Jung, 2017)−it readily generates and is caused self-uncertainty (Hogg, 2007; Hogg & Mahajan, 2018). The present study investigates conditions under which contested views of national history and identity elicit feelings of uncertainty about one's national identity.

We derive our main argument from uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2007, 2012). Its key premise is that identification with highly entitative groups−groups that have clearly defined prototypes and are distinctive from other groups−can reduce self-conceptual uncertainty most effectively because such groups provide unambiguous self-knowledge. Our

core argument is that when group entitativity is undermined, for example by an outgroup's historical narratives, the uncertainty-reducing function of the group may also be impaired and thus group members may feel uncertain about their group identity.

Yet, not all outgroups' historical narratives that might undermine group entitativity can actually have such an effect. Here, we examine moderating conditions: (a) identification strength, (b) outgroup's numerical size, and (c) source credibility. First, we argue that greater threat is experienced when the outgroup is numerically large enough for its alternative narrative to transform the ingroup's shared reality (Festinger, 1950; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Hogg & Rinella, 2018). Second, greater threat is experienced when the identity-threatening narrative is credible in terms of factual evidence, rather than contestable, false or fabricated evidence. If these two conditions are not met, group members will more readily reject the narrative that challenges their identity. Finally, the effect should be stronger among those who identify strongly with their group.

We test our analysis in the context of historical disputes between China (outgroup) and Korea (ingroup). This is a relatively high-profile example of regions in the world where lingering disputes over history have been unresolved. Such disputes can, if conditions are met, easily escalate into territorial and boundary disputes that are common underlying causes of interstate wars and militarized conflicts (Hensel, 2001; Huth, 2000).

Entitativity and Identity-Uncertainty

Over the past 40 years social identity theory has developed to become social psychology's most comprehensive analysis of the relationship between self-conception as a group member (i.e. social identity) and group and intergroup behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; for recent overviews see Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Hogg, 2018; Hogg, Abrams, & Brewer, 2017). This analysis originally proposed that the key social identity motivation was self-enhancement through evaluatively positive

intergroup distinctiveness (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1988), a motivation that was guided by people's beliefs about the nature of intergroup relations (e.g., Ellemers, 1993).

More recently an additional social identity motivation has been proposed by uncertainty-identity theory – self/identity uncertainty reduction (Hogg, 2007, 2012). Uncertainty-identity theory has three core premises. First, people are motivated to reduce feelings of uncertainty about themselves. Second, group identification can reduce self-uncertainty because the associated process of categorization of self and others assigns descriptive and prescriptive group prototypes that govern perception and prediction, and determine one's own attitudes, feelings and behaviors. Third, highly-entitative groups with clearly-defined prototypical attributes are best suited to self-uncertainty reduction. Entitativity is the perceptual property of a group. It rests on characteristics including clear boundaries, clear internal structure, common goals, common fate, similarity, and permeability (Campbell, 1958; Hamilton & Sherman, 1996; Lickel, Hamilton, Wieczorkowska, Lewis, Sherman, & Uhles, 2000). When any of these determinants of entiativity weakens, the group may not be able to function effectively as an uncertainty-reduction apparatus. For example, if category boundaries become unclear, people may not feel certain anymore about who they are as a collective entity.

Our main argument, building from the motivational accounts of social identification, is when group entitativity as opposed to group value is undermined, the uncertainty-reducing function of the group may be impaired and thus people may begin to feel uncertain about their group's identity. This main argument was originally suggested by Hogg and Hornsey (2006). Hogg and Hornsey argued that how a group responds to social identity threat is influenced by which motivation (self-enhancement or uncertainty reduction) is aroused by the threat. Valence threat targets the status, value, prestige, and social standing of the group. It is a threat to collective self-esteem that can undermine a person's positive sense of self as a

group member. Whereas, entitativity threat targets what the group stands for, its internal integrity and structure, its distinctiveness, and its cohesiveness. It is a threat to self-conceptual certainty that causes group members to become unsure of what it means to be a member of the group. Hogg & Hornsey's argument, however, has not been empirically tested, and they have not specified important moderating conditions. We will elaborate those conditions in the following section.

Identification, Relative Group Size and Credibility

Group-threatening messages do not trigger the same psychological responses from all group members. If a group is not very important or central to self-definition, a threat to the group does not significantly reflect on the self-concept and thus such a threat would not motivate a strong reaction. In contrast, a much stronger reaction is likely among those for whom the group is a central aspect of their self-concept, and with which they identify strongly. These *high identifiers* are, among other things, motivated to discard, reject, or counter-argue information that potentially threatens their group and identity (Fransen, Smit, & Verlegh, 2015; de Hoog, 2013; Pagliaro, Alparone, Pacilli, & Mucchi-Faina, 2012; Tykocinski, Higgins, & Chaiken, 1994; Zuwerink & Devine, 1996).

Thus, to undermine high identifiers' sense of subjective certainty about their ingroup, challenges to group identity should be perceived as containing some element of truth, especially in contexts of disputes over identity-related history. Identity-uncertainty is an epistemic cognition as well as a feeling (Hogg, 2007) about one's group's normative attributes and social identity, and therefore about what it means to be a member of the group. Criticism of the group's identity that lacks authority and validity can be shrugged off and should not create uncertainty, especially when the criticism comes from an outgroup that the ingroup competes with in terms of identity-related history and about which the ingroup holds negative stereotypes (e.g., ill-intended criticism) (Shuman, Johnson, Saguy, & Halperin,

2018); in such cases, the more likely reaction is anger or hostility toward outgroups that propagate false information. In contrast, any form of identity criticism that one suspects contains a legitimate kernel of truth has the potential to create identity-uncertainty.

There are two criteria that we believe may affect a person's judgment of the veracity of an alternative view of one's group's identity. The first is *source credibility* (Tormala & Petty, 2004; Tormala, Briñol, & Petty, 2007). When there are contested views of one's group and social identity, judgment of whether one view is more reliable than others depends largely on whether the view is based on supporting evidence grounded in credible procedures of inquiry. Alternative perspectives on a group's history pose a particular problem. History is often a matter of interpretation, and the further back in time one goes the more slippery and contested the "facts" become. In these circumstances uncontested and reliable empirical data are needed in order for an alternative view to be credible and thus invalidate existing subjective knowledge about the ingroup.

Second, *relative group size* between ingroup and outgroup can play a very important role in underpinning judgments of informational veracity. Representations of social identity are socially constructed not only by the ingroup, but also by outgroups (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). Such representations are grounded in consensual validation that is critical to feeling certain about one's knowledge about one's group (Festinger, 1954; Hogg, 2000). Because consensual validation is influenced to some degree by the size of the consensus, relative group size matters (Orive, 1988; Tormala, DeSensi, Clarkson, & Rucker, 2009; Visser & Mirabile, 2004). When the outgroup is numerically larger and has higher status than the ingroup then the outgroup's consensual view that is at odds with that of the smaller ingroup may appear more consensual and thus more valid.

To sum up, we have discussed the relationship between challenges to perceived ingroup entitativity and identity-uncertainty, and the conditions that moderate this

relationship. We hypothesize that messages that challenge ingroup entitativity will arouse identity-uncertainty for high identifiers specifically when an outgroup source is numerically large and its alternative view is perceived as factual and thus credible (H1).

Emigration

Besides the core hypothesis, we also tested whether elevated identity-uncertainty may increase intentions to emigrate from the group. It has been found that decreased perceptions of entitativity can increase group members' intention to leave their ingroup (Sani, 2005). Identity-uncertainty has also been found to lead to disdentification from the group (Jung et al, 2016, 2019; Jung, Hogg, & Lewis, 2018). However, the causal path from reduced entitativity through identity-uncertainty to emigration intention has not been directly tested. In the present research, we predict that elevated identity-uncertainty mediates the causal relationship between entitativity loss and emigration intention (H2).

Overview

We test our hypotheses in the context of historical controversies between China (outgroup) and Korea (ingroup). It had long been believed that China and Korea, despite their geographical proximity, have distinct histories, identities, and ancestral roots. Chinese civilization was rooted in the Yellow River region while Korean civilization originated around the Liao (Yoha) River where the ancient Korean kingdom of Gojoseon was located. However, archeological excavations in 1983 at the Liao River discovered artifacts dating much further back than expected, to around 5,000 years ago. This is earlier than the Yellow River civilization. These findings called for a rewriting of East Asian ancient history, a rewriting that disrupted intergroup relations between Chinese and the other East Asian ethnic minorities (e.g., Koreans, Mongolians, Manchurians) and generated several alternative views of the Liao River civilization.

To maximize realism in our naturalistic study, we investigated what views prevailed

in South Korea's public information sphere about ancient civilizations in East Asia (e.g., DongA Ilbo, 2007; KBS History Special–Yoha Civilization, 2009; History KBS special documentary–China's Northeast History Project and the Creation of History, 2012), and directly used excerpts from newspapers and documentaries to create our vignettes.

Among the contested views, two are relevant to the current study. One is the view that the Liao River civilization is the common origin of all East Asian ethnic groups. This perspective makes unclear the boundaries between ethnic categories and by implication undermines Koreans' entitativity. The other view is that the Liao River civilization belongs to China rather than to Korea. While not calling into question Koreans' distinctiveness, it does undermine Koreans' cultural prestige and collective value.

We predict that that the former view that challenges Korean entitativity ad thus arouses uncertainty about Korean identity for high identifiers specifically when China's numerical size is salient and their alternative view is perceived as credible (H1). Further, we expect that identity-uncertainty elevated by entitativity threat in turn predicts intentions to emigrate from Korea (H2).

Method

Participants and Design

Introductory psychology students at a private university in Seoul, South Korea participated in a 2 (Identification: low vs. high) x 2 (Identity threat type: valence vs. entitativity) x 2 (Relative group size: not salient vs. salient) x 2 (Source credibility: low vs. high) between-participants design study in exchange for course credit.

One hundred and sixty participants (58 female, 102 male, 18-33 years of age; mean of 21.22 years) were included in the analysis after removal of nine participants with significant missing data or who did not hold Korean citizenship. Power analysis (GPower: Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996; see also Cohen, 1977, 1992) results showed that a sample

size of 160 yielded 87.4% power to detect a medium size of (f^2 = .15, see Cohen 1992) for multiple regression analysis with the 15 predictors (four main effect terms, six 2-way interaction terms, four 3-way interaction terms, and a 4-way interaction) at an alpha of .05. This sample size still yielded 86.2% power when we added a mediator to the power analysis. Thus, there was more than adequate power (i.e., power * .80) at the moderate effect size level.

Procedure and Materials

Participants entered the laboratory and were told that the research concerned South Koreans' views on East Asian history, especially in relation to China. They completed a questionnaire which included instructions, manipulation, and measures.

Identification. Strength of identification as an ethnic Korean was measured with seven items adapted from previous social identity research (e.g., Hogg & Hains, 1996) that asked participants (a) how important being ethnic Korean was to their self concept, (b) how much they felt they belonged to the Korean ethnic group, (c) how strongly they felt they identified with the Korean ethnic group, (d) how much they would stand up for ethnic Koreans if they were criticized, (e) how glad they were to be ethnic Korean, (f) how much they felt they were a typical ethnic Korean, and (g) how much they felt they were an ideal ethnic Korean; 1 *not at all*, 9 *very much*, α = .92.

Manipulations. Participants read one of eight versions of a short description about the excavation around the Yoha (Liao) River. All participants were first informed of the new excavation of the Yoha River. They were told that the Yoha civilization (BCE 4,500) is identified as the first earliest civilization in East Asia, preceding the Huang He civilization (BCE 2,500) by about two thousand years.

Credibility. Credibility was manipulated by (a) the rigor and transparency of the research process and (b) vested interest in terms of researchers' nationality. Participants in the

low credibility condition read

> "The Chinese Academy of Social Science organized an excavation research team which includes only Chinese archeologists and historians. Due to non-transparency of their excavation and research, it is unknown whether their conduct of an archeological excavation would be legitimate or their research of civilization history would meet international academic standards."

On the other hand, participants in the *high credibility* condition read

> "The Chinese Academy of Social Science organized an international excavation research team which includes archeologists and historians from all over the world. The archeological excavation and scientific research of civilization history met the international academic standards and were conducted legitimately and transparently."

Relative group size. Salience (not levels) of relative group size was manipulated because it was not feasible to create a small relative size condition for China. Participants in the *relative group size salience* condition read

> "The 2012 estimates by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs shows that the populations of Chinese Han, east and north ethnic minority groups are 1.1 billion, 300 million, and 150 million, respectively. Furthermore, the area of China is 9597000km^2, which is 44 times larger than the area of the Korean peninsula and more than 5 times larger than the area of Mongolia and the Korean peninsula combined. Based on its population and area, the current Gross National Product (GNP) of China is the second highest in the world next to the USA and keeps growing."

On the other hand, for participants in the *no salience* condition, this information was not provided.

Identity threat type. The last section of the vignette manipulated identity threat

type. To do this we used excerpts from academic articles and newspapers that discussed the disagreement over history between Korea and China. In the current context of controversy over history, a challenge was to create a vignette that threatened group prestige without having an effect on the perception of entitativity, and a vignette that threatened group entitativity without having an effect on the perception of prestige.

Entitativity threat was manipulated by undermining the entitativity of the Korean ethnic group, noting that all northeast Asian ethnic groups including Han Chinese and the Korean ethnic group shared a common ancestry and civilization. Participants in the *entititativity threat* condition read a vignette that blurred the boundaries among ethnic groups; however, at the same time we made sure that participants could still have a sense of cultural prestige as Koreans:

> "The excavation team sees the Yoha civilization *as the origin of Northeast Asian civilizations* which all northeast Asian ethnic groups including Chinese Han and east and north ethnic groups are rooted in. This implies that the Kingdom of Go-Chosun and its founding father Tangun was an ancient kingdom (not a mythical kingdom) that ethnic Koreans are rooted in."

On the other hand, *valence threat* was manipulated by undermining the historical prestige of the Korean ethnic group, noting that the historically-grounded prestige that Koreans have long believed was actually not part of Korean history. Participants in the *valence threat* condition read a vignette that the Yoha civilization was Chinese rather than a part of Korean history, which posed a cultural prestige threat to the (Korean) ingroup. However, at the same time we made sure that the vignette still made a clear distinction between China and Korea and did not use phrases such as 'shared origin' or 'all northeast Asian ethnic groups' that could blur category boundaries so that participants could still have a sense of ingroup/outgroup distinctiveness:

> "The excavation team incorporated the Yoha civilization to the Chinese civilizations along with the Huang He and Jang Gang civilizations. By doing so, Gochosun located around the Yoha River now became one of the ancient kingdoms originating the Chinese civilization. This implies that northeastern ethnic minorities including ethnic Koreans used to be part of the ancient Chinese nation."

Manipulation Check: Credibility. Credibility was checked with two items: "How just do you think the excavation process conducted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is?" and "How legitimate do you think the excavation process conducted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is?", *1 not at all, 9 very much,* $r = .52$, $p < .001$.

Perceived levels of threat. Perceived identity threat was measured with one item that asked participants how threatening or favorable they thought the ongoing excavation and research project of the Liao River civilization was to ethnic Korean identity, *1 very much favorable, 9 very much threatening.* We measured it for exploratory purpose to check whether both entitativity threat and valence threat would have equally created a similar level of threat.

Identity-uncertainty. How uncertain participants felt about a collective definition of ethnic Korean identity were measured with three items adapted from Jung et al. (2016). Participants indicated how much they experienced the feelings of uncertainty about ethnic Korean identity when they were reading the article about the Yoha civilization research process (e.g., "I am uncertain about who we the ethnic Koreans really are", "I am unsure that the ethnic Korean identity I know is correct", and "I don't know what we the ethnic Koreans really were"), *1 very much certain, very much sure, know very well, 9 very much uncertain, very much unsure, don't know at all,* $\alpha = .87$.

Emigration. Attitude toward emigration was measured with three items adapted from Smith, Cronin, and Kessler (2008) and van Leeuwen, Van Knippenberg, and Ellemers (2003). Participants indicated how well the statements described their thoughts: "I feel I

would like to emigrate to another country", "I understand why some Korean people like to emigrate to another country", "No matter what, I will remain in Korean and succeed to the identity of our nation (reverse coded)", *1 not at all, 9 very much,* $\alpha = .68$.

Manipulation Check: Relative group size. Unlike the other manipulation check items, we measured the manipulation check items for relative group size after measuring the key dependent variables. By doing so, we were able to prevent participants in the no salience condition from being primed to think about China's numerical power.

The relative group size manipulation was checked with three items: "How capable do you think ethnic groups called East minority ethnic groups are of confronting the power of the Chinese Han ethnic group?", " How capable do you think East minority ethnic groups are of confronting the numerical power of the Chinese Han ethnic group?", and "How able do you think the international power and status of East minority ethnic groups are to exceed those of Chinese Han?", *1 not at all, 9 very much capable, .* $\alpha = .68$. We reverse-coded the three items and averaged them so that a higher score indicates that Chinese Han are perceived to have stronger numerical power than East minority ethnic groups.

Finally, participants provided demographic information including age and gender, and were thanked and debriefed.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Credibility. We conducted a 2 (Credibility: High vs. Low) x 2 (Relative Group Size: Salience vs. No Salience) x 2 (Threat Type: Entitativity vs. Valence) 3-way ANOVA on the manipulation check of credibility. The main effect of the credibility manipulation on perceived credibility was significant, F (1, 152) = 12.79, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. Participants in the high credibility condition reported the higher level of credibility ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.49$) than participants in the low credibility condition ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.22$). The main effect of threat

type on the perceived credibility was also significant, F (1, 152) = 17.94, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$. Participants in the entitativity threat condition reported the higher level of credibility (M = 4.33, SD = 1.23) than participants in the valence threat condition (M = 3.45, SD = 1.44). All the other main and interaction effects were not significant.

Relative group size. We conducted the same 3-way ANOVA on the manipulation check of relative group size. None of the main or high-order effects was significant.

Perceived levels of threat

We conducted the same 3-way ANOVA on the perceived levels of threat. There was a significant main effect of threat type on perceived threat, F (1, 152) = 43.40, $p < .001$, η^2 = .22. Participants in the entitativity threat condition reported the higher level of perceived threat (M = 5.35, SD = 1.36) than participants in the valence threat condition (M = 3.46, SD = 2.17). All the other main and interaction effects were not significant.

Main Hypothesis Testing

Identity-uncertainty. We submitted identity-uncertainty to hierarchical regression analyses using identification (continuous, mean centered), identity threat type (effect-coding: -1 = valence threat, 1 = entitativity threat), relative group size (effect-coding: -1 = no salience, 1 = salience, mean centered), and credibility (effect-coding: -1=low, 1 = high, mean centered) as predictors (Table 1). We effect-coded (-1, 1) identity threat type, relative group size and credibility and compute the interaction terms. Following simple slope analysis procedures (Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken, 2003; Dawson and Richter, 2006), the analyses presented below focus on the predicted four-way interaction, and we report the lower order interactions related to the decomposition of the overall effect.

Table 1

Hierarchical regression analyses yielded a significant four-way interaction on identity-uncertainty (b = 0.17, SE_b= .09, t (144) = 1.99, p = .048). The four-way interaction was decomposed into two simple three-way interactions at low and high identification levels. As predicted (Figure 1), the three-way interaction of identity threat type, relative group size, and credibility was significant for high identifiers (+1SD) (b = 0.48, SE_b= .18, t (144) = 2.66, p = .009); but not for low identifiers (-1SD) (b = 0.30, SE_b= 1.43, t (144) = 0.21, p = .834).

The significant three-way interaction among high identifiers was further decomposed into two simple two way-interactions within both no salience and salience conditions of relative group size. As predicted, the interaction between identity threat type and credibility was significant in the salience condition, (b = 0.67, SE_b= .24, t (144) = 2.74, p = .007); but not in the no salience condition (b = - 0.29, SE_b= .27, t (144) = - 1.10, p = .274).

Finally, this significant two-way interaction was decomposed into two simple effects of identity threat type in both high and low credibility conditions. As predicted (H1), in the high credibility condition, participants in the entitiativity threat condition reported a higher level of identity-uncertainty than those in the valence threat condition (b = 1.22, SE_b= .35, t (144) = 3.47, p = .001). The effect of identity threat type on identity-uncertainty was not significant in the low credibility condition (b = - 0.12, SE_b= .34, t (144) = - 0.35, p = .728).

Viewed differently, credibility did not affect identity-uncertainty in the entitativity threat condition (b = 0.47, SE_b= .36, t (144) = 1.30, p = .193), however it decreased identity-uncertainty in the valence threat condition (b = - 0.86, SE_b= .33, t (144) = - 2.65, p = .009).

We conducted sensitivity analyses by including age, gender, and political orientation as control variables. Control variables were not significantly associated with identity-uncertainty, *ps* >.22. Our results were robust when those demographic variables were statistically controlled.

Figure 1

Emigration. We submitted emigration to the same analysis. The main effect of identification on emigration was significant (b = - 0.47, SE_b= .08, t (155) = - 5.74, p < .001). The stronger they identified with ethnic Koreans, the less they felt like emigrating to another country. No other main effects or high order effects were significant.

Indirect effects analysis. We estimated the specific indirect effect of identity threat type on emigration via identity-uncertainty among high identifiers under the relative group size salience and high credibility condition (Figure 2). We conducted indirect effect analyses using Hayes' PROCESS (2013) macro that estimate specific indirect effects as well as bootstrap confidence intervals with 5000 resamples for each specific indirect effect. We found that the hypothesized indirect effect was significant ($b_{indirect}$ = 0.18, SE_b =.11, $CI_{.95}$: .02, .46), such that when high identifiers were threatened in terms of the entitativity of their ethnic Korean ingroup by a credible message from a numerically stronger outgroup, they felt more uncertain about the collective definition of their ingroup, which in turn predicted motivation to emigrate from their ingroup (*note 1*).

Figure 2

Discussion

History constructs a central part of national identity. It provides a clear sense of national identity and of the nation's relations with neighboring countries. Due to imperfect historical records, a nation's past can be constructed to serve national interests that reflect international and political relations and agenda. In many regions, bordering countries have contested historical narratives and lingering historical disputes.

Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987; see Hogg, 2017), and on uncertainty-identity theory in particular (Hogg, 2007, 2012), we tested whether being presented with an alternative historical view that undermines ingroup entitativity can lead high identifiers to feel uncertain about their group and identity, which in turn predicts intentions to emigrate from their group. People tend to cognitively organize the complex social world into relatively fewer categories, define their place in the social world, and derive their attributes of their ingroup in relation to other groups. In this way, social categorization can effectively reduce uncertainty about self, others, and the social world. Entitative groups in particular have clear prototypes that accentuate intra-ingroup similarities and intergroup differences between an ingroup and relevant outgroups. Thus, people can clearly define who they are by internalizing the clear prototypes that entitative groups offer.

Entitativity is not fixed; the perception of entitativity can change as a function of changed intra- or intergroup relations. For example perceived entitativity can weaken when a distinctive minority became a more diffuse majority (cf. Prislin & Christensen, 2005) or when a group fragments into distinctive subgroups (cf. Wagoner & Hogg, 2016). Because group entitativity is a source of identity-certainty, group members may come to feel uncertain about who they are as a collective when ingroup entitativity is challenged, feeling unsure if what they know about their group and identity is correct.

Our research is among the first to demonstrate the link between entitativity threat and identity-uncertainty. We found that entitativity threat is important but not sufficient to cause identity-uncertainty. Other conditions include: (a) group members identify strongly with their ingroup, (b) a source advocating an identity-invalidating view is numerically large, and (c) the alternative view is perceived as credible. We also found that identity-uncertainty further predicts tendencies to emigrate.

Early intervention for territorial disputes

Bordering nations often attempt to legitimize their territorial claims with ill-intentioned revisions of history. Our study provides empirical evidence that historical disputes can cause tangible damage to small groups even before such damage escalates to territorial disputes and militarized conflicts. If a small group experiences identity-uncertainty and numerical membership loss over time, the vitality of the group would be in jeopardy. Early interventions are necessary not only to protect small countries from such membership loss but also to prevent further escalation to territorial claims and militarized interstate conflicts. Indeed, empirical evidence indicated that how intergroup relations are narrated and taught determines attitudes toward intergroup cooperation in the context of EU integration (Sakki, 2016).

It is notable that among highly identified participants who were made aware of the relative size of China vs. Korea and felt the prestige of their Korean identity was threatened, being exposed to a low credibility source as compared to a high credible source produced greater identity uncertainty (Figure 1a). We speculate that Korean participants in this condition may have perceived that Chinese history research would be an ill-intended attempt to claim sovereignty over the Korean Peninsula because the Chinese government has often justified China's territorial claims to, for example, Kashmir (Murphy, 1990), Tibet (Sperling, 2004), and the South China Sea (Dupuy & Dupuy, 2013) as their "historic rights" − attempts to recover land that was, they claim, once part of Chinese territory.

There have been some successful interventions (e.g., networking European citizenship education (NECE), non-government history commission of China-Japan-Korea historians). For example, history teachers from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have collaborated, in 2015, as part of NECE to produce a multi-lingual textbook on the history of the Black Sea region. The aim of their project was to (a) co-write a history textbook that provides different perspectives on past historical events, (b) promote a critical

examination of past history, and (c) emphasize the fact that the project's countries, all former Soviet republics, continue to exist after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The present study can be understood in terms of social verification and the formation and changes of a shared reality. Festinger (1950, p.272) noted that when people judge the subjective validity of their beliefs, dependence on social reality relies on dependence on physical reality. Where there is a high degree of dependence upon physical reality for the subjective validity of one's beliefs (e.g., surface fragility), the dependence on other people for the confidence one has in these belief is very low. Where the dependence upon physical reality is low (e.g., national elections), the subjective validity of a belief depends to a large degree on whether or not other people share the same view. Our findings, that both credibility and relative group size are necessary factors, suggested that both physical and social reality matters for the subjective validity of historical narratives.

Moreover, while Festinger (1950) also suggested that a belief is correct and valid to the extent that it is anchored in a group of people with similar beliefs, he also admitted that this statement cannot be generalized completely. What matters, in his view, is validation from an appropriate reference group for one's belief (e.g., the members of a group to which one refers a belief who think the same way one does; p.273). This implies that when it comes to invalidation, researchers may need to consider an outgroup which does not agree with the ingroup. Our findings suggest that invalidation from an outgroup can make ingroup members feel less certain and confident about whether their belief about ingroup identity is valid or correct. Future research could build upon the present findings by testing whether validation from an outgroup could increase certainty about group identity.

Limitations and Future Directions

We tested our hypothesis in a natural group situation from the perspective of a numerically-small group. In this context, a small ingroup (Korea) cannot compete against a

large outgroup (China) in terms of numerical size. An alternative view from such a large outgroup is more likely to be perceived as an identity threat resulting in withdrawal responses such as emigration. In other situations where ingroup and outgroup are equal in size so that an ingroup can compete against an outgroup, an outgroup's alternative view may be perceived as identity challenge rather than threat. In this case, identity-uncertainty may lead to ingroup-striving rather than withdrawal responses (Major & O'Brien, 2005, p.412).

Due to the same contextual restriction, the manipulation of the salience of relative group size necessarily involved varying both numerical size and power. These two aspects have been seen as two important criteria in defining majority status. With our data, we cannot say that the effects we found were solely due to numerical size, or intergroup power difference that it implies, even though these two factors often go together. Future research could therefore focus on disentangling the effect of numerical size and power in producing entitativity threat in minority groups.

Naturalistic studies are often challenging as they can confront in terms of a trade-off between realism and experimental control. Our vignette for the entitativity threat condition presented a narrative that argued that all the northeast ethnic groups share the earliest and oldest Liao River civilization – a narrative that may blur ethnic group boundaries in such a way as to threaten Korean group entitativity. However this narrative may also affect Korean cultural prestige in two opposite ways. On the one hand, it could undermine Korean cultural prestige if one reads it as suggesting that Koreans cannot claim their sole ownership of the Liao civilization. On the other hand, it can boost Korean cultural prestige if one reads it as suggesting that although other ethnic groups can share the Liao River civilization, Koreans can claim their sole ownership. Future research might investigate this contrast empirically.

We found that the type of threat predicted perceived credibility. One possible explanation might be that people find it quite plausible that ethnic/national categories in BCE

4,500 were unlike those in the present time because ethnic/national categories can emerge or change over a long period of time. Thus, they might find implausible what the vignette of the valence threat condition described−the Liao River civilianization belongs solely to Chinese Han.

Lastly, we measured the perception of identity threat to see whether both entitativity threat and valence threat would have created similar levels of threat. People in the entitativity threat condition reported greater perceived threat than people in the valence threat condition. This suggests a possible alternative explanation for some of our results. Greater identity threat, rather than type of identity threat may have increase identity uncertainty. Future research should resolve this issue.

Conclusion

The causal link between entitativity threat and identity-uncertainty has been theorized (Hogg & Hornsey, 2006); however, direct evidence has not been provided. Herein, we have directly measured identity-uncertainty. We not only demonstrated the causal link between entitativity threat and identity-uncertainty but also identified three key moderators - identification, outgroup size, and message credibility. Our findings suggest that resisting identity-uncertainty is a key driver of reactions to potential identity threats. In a world in which struggles and conflict over identity are as intense as ever, the present findings that entitativity loss can increase identity-uncertainty and indirectly predict intentions to emigrate from an ingroup offer a novel contribution to understanding and potentially ameliorating the effects of such identity conflicts.

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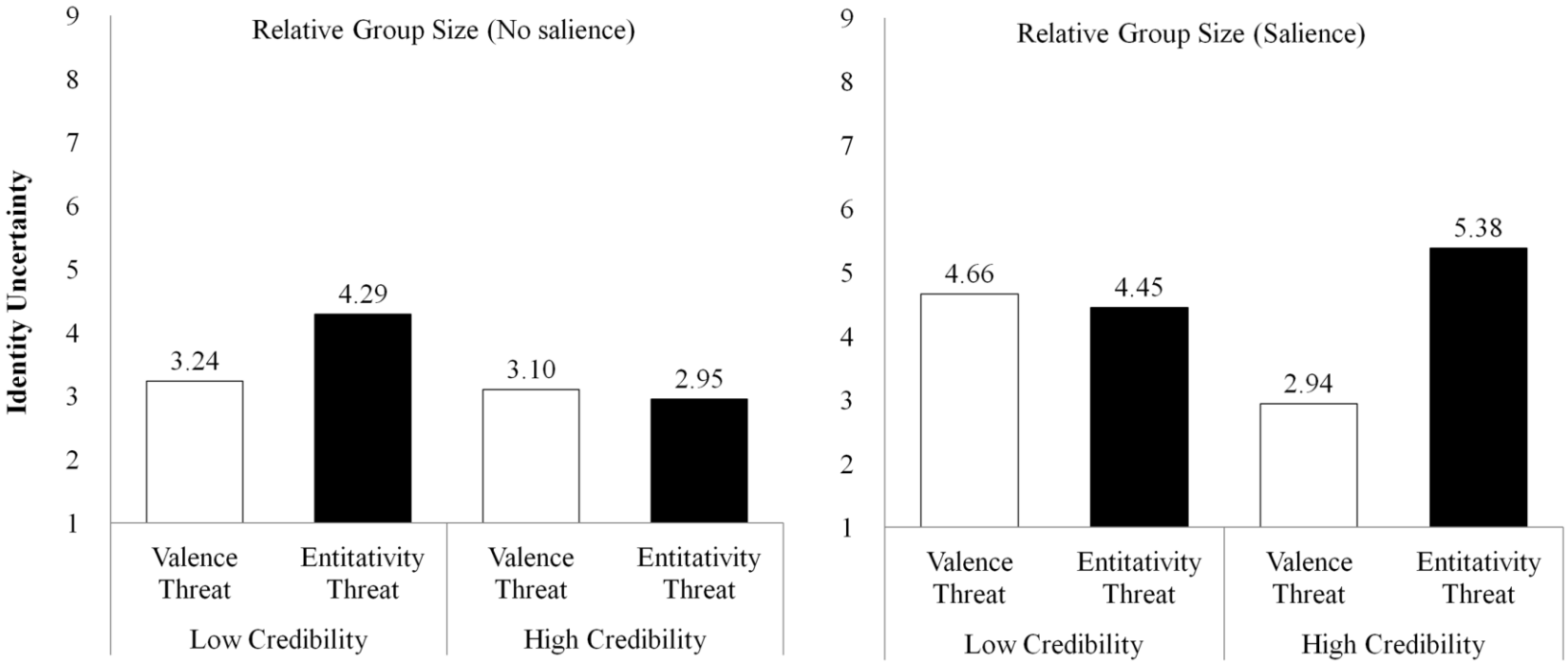
Note

[1] We also used Baron and Kenny's (1986) traditional mediation procedure, where the requirement that a predictor is significantly correlated with the predicted variable is considered a critical requirement. However, MacKinnon and Fairchild (2009, p.17) have noted that mediation can exist even in the absence of such a significant relation, demonstrating several scenarios where significant mediation exists but the overall effect is not significant (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). We found that the effect of identity threat type on identity-uncertainty was significant ($\beta = .73$, $p < .001$) and the effect of identity-uncertainty on emigration was significant at a marginal level ($\beta = .15$, $p = .066$).

Figure 1. Estimated means of identity-uncertainty across levels of relative group size, credibility, and identity threat type, identification

(a) High Identifiers (+1SD)



(b) Low Identifiers (-1SD)

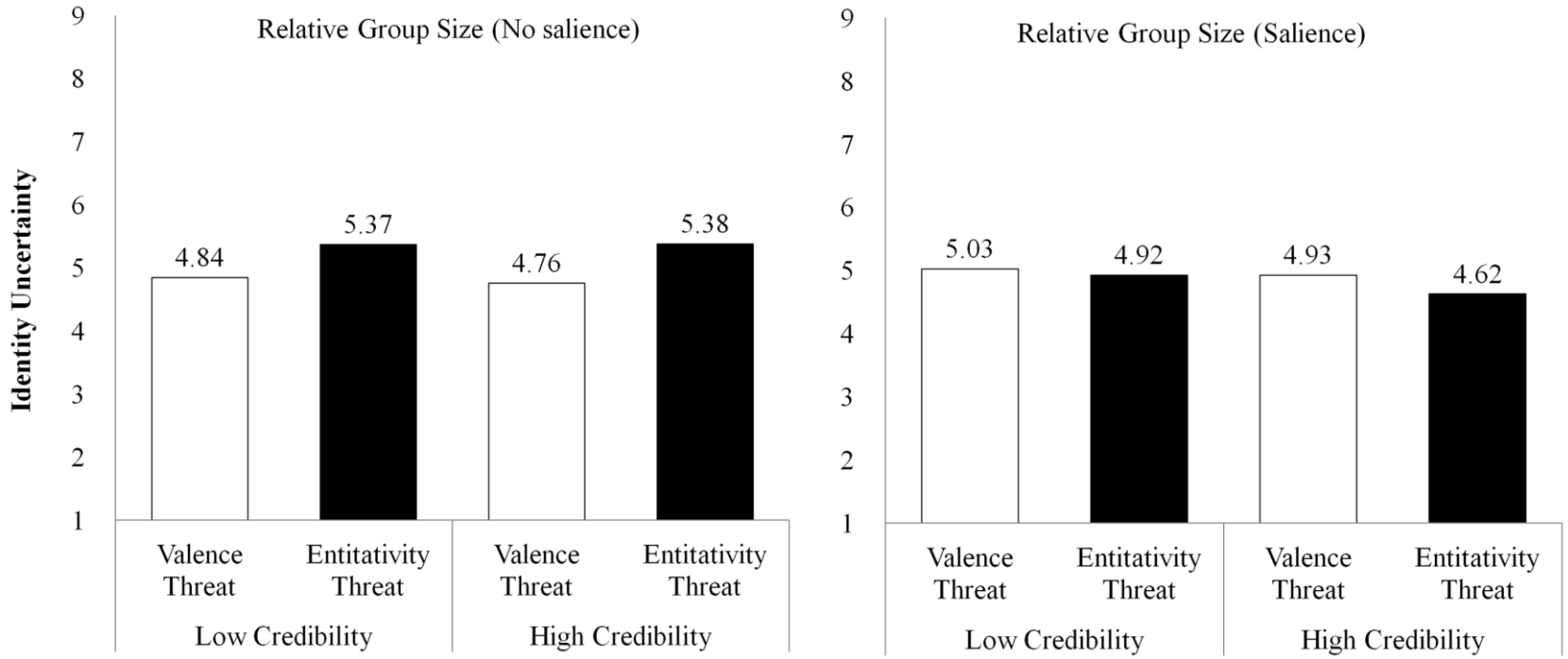


Figure 2. The indirect effect of identity threat type on emigration via identity-uncertainty for high identifiers (+1SD) under the relative group size salience and high credibility condition ($b_{indirect}$ = 0.18, SE_b =.11, $CI_{.95}$: .02, .46) The path coefficients displayed are standardized values. The value in parentheses indicates the total effect of identity threat type on emigration without controlling identity-uncertainty. (N =160)

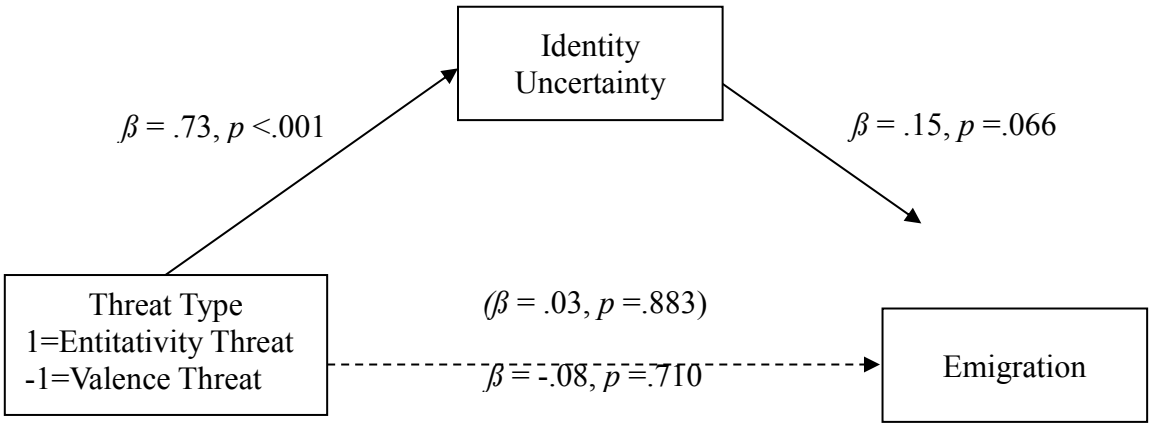


Table 1

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Identity Uncertainty with Identification (ID), Identity Threat Type (ITT), Relative Group Size (RGS), and Credibility (C)

Predictor	Identity Uncertainty	
	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	.14***	
Identification		-.31***
Identity Threat Type		.15†
Relative Group Size		.08
Credibility		-.13†
Step 2	.04	
ID x ITT		.08
ID x RGS		.15*
ID x C		-.07
ITT x RGS		-.003
ITT x C		.05
RGS x C		-.002
Step 3	.03	
ID x ITT x RGS		.10
ID x ITT x C		.08
ID x RGS x C		.05
ITT x RGS x C		.13
Step 4	.02*	
ID x ITT x RGS x C		.15*
Total R^2	.24***	
n	160	

Note. †$p < .1$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed).