

Cross-Strait Identity Formation Among Taiwanese Youth: Media Exposure, Political Socialization, and Civic Engagement in a Democratic Society

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Abstract

Taiwan's evolving democratic landscape presents a unique setting for examining how youth construct their political and national identities amidst ongoing cross-Strait tensions with China. As generational shifts occur, younger Taiwanese increasingly diverge from historical narratives shaped by previous regimes, instead engaging with identity through digital media, democratic participation, and civic dialogue. This literature review explores how media exposure, political socialization, and civic engagement collectively influence the identity formation process among Taiwanese youth. Drawing from studies across political science, communication, and youth sociology, this paper synthesizes peer-reviewed literature published between 2005 and 2024. The findings reveal a growing sense of Taiwanese national identity, especially among youth with consistent exposure to local media narratives and democratic institutions. While Chinese media influence persists through digital channels, its impact is moderated by public skepticism and critical media literacy. Political socialization within families, schools, and peer groups also plays a pivotal role in shaping cross-Strait attitudes. Additionally, civic engagement practices, such as protest participation, online activism, and electoral involvement, provide meaningful pathways for youth to express and reinforce identity. However, generational divides, urban-rural disparities, and ideological fragmentation complicate a unified identity trajectory. This review highlights the need for further empirical research on identity construction mechanisms in post-authoritarian democracies. It also calls for deeper exploration into how institutional trust, transnational media, and intergenerational narratives intersect with evolving youth identities in contested geopolitical spaces.

Keywords: *Taiwanese Youth, Political Identity, Media Exposure, Civic Engagement.*



A. INTRODUCTION

Taiwan's democratic transition since the lifting of martial law in 1987 has created a fertile environment for the redefinition of national identity, particularly among youth born after democratization. The emergence of a distinct Taiwanese identity has become more pronounced among the younger generation, with survey data indicating that over 60% of people under 30 now identify exclusively as Taiwanese rather than Chinese or both (National Chengchi University, 2023). Generational shifts in political consciousness are often attributed to the experience of growing up in a liberal democratic society, with consistent exposure to pluralistic values, free media, and open electoral processes (Rawnsley, 2022). The persistent tensions between Taiwan and China, particularly regarding issues of sovereignty and military threats, have further intensified identity awareness and resistance to unification narratives (Hsiao & Cheng, 2021). Youth-led social movements such as the

Sunflower Movement in 2014 demonstrated how civic participation functions as a platform for the assertion of a Taiwan-centric identity distinct from Beijing's framework (Ho, 2015). These dynamics are situated within a broader discourse of post-authoritarian identity reconstruction, where historical memory, education reform, and geopolitical anxiety intersect to shape how young Taiwanese see themselves in relation to the state and region. The construction of identity is not a passive process but an active negotiation involving personal experience, collective memory, and mediated narratives (Wang, 2020). Understanding how these factors converge is critical to assessing the resilience of Taiwan's democratic future amid increasing external pressures from China.

Media has become one of the most influential agents in shaping political attitudes and national identity among Taiwanese youth, especially in a context marked by cross-Strait contestations. Young citizens are heavily exposed to both traditional media and social networking platforms, which offer competing narratives regarding Taiwan's sovereignty and its relationship with China. Recent studies demonstrate that increased consumption of Taiwanese public television and local news is positively correlated with stronger Taiwanese identity, while Chinese media content can exert ambivalent or even oppositional influence (Liu & Chang, 2021). The interactive nature of digital media has enabled youth not only to consume information but also to participate in political discourse through commentaries, memes, and viral campaigns, effectively turning them into active political agents (Chen, 2022). Socialization through education also plays a vital role, as civic and history curricula in Taiwanese schools have undergone reforms that emphasize democratic values, historical trauma under martial law, and the uniqueness of Taiwan's development path (Wu, 2020). Political discussions within families have been found to reflect intergenerational divides, with older generations more likely to support Chinese unification, while younger members often adopt more critical or independence-leaning positions (Hung, 2019). Peer networks, especially those formed in universities and civic groups, further amplify identity positions by reinforcing shared narratives and mobilizing collective action. The intersection of these media and socialization channels contributes to an increasingly complex identity terrain where Taiwanese youth must navigate conflicting ideologies, cultural loyalties, and national aspirations. Unlike in previous decades, the current generation has greater agency and platforms to contest dominant discourses and redefine identity boundaries on their own terms. The politicization of online spaces has made them central arenas for cross-Strait ideological battles, especially during election cycles and major protests. This active engagement not only reflects heightened political consciousness but also reveals the performative dimension of identity in public and digital spheres. A comprehensive understanding of identity formation in Taiwan must therefore consider how media ecosystems, education systems, family discourse, and peer socialization interweave to shape young citizens' orientations.

Recent scholarship on Taiwanese youth identity has increasingly shifted toward interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate political communication, civic

psychology, and transnational media analysis. Existing studies primarily emphasize the political implications of youth identity for Taiwan's sovereignty debates, yet relatively few offer an integrated framework that links media exposure, political socialization, and civic engagement in a democratic context. This literature review seeks to address that gap by synthesizing empirical research from 2005 to 2024 to understand how Taiwanese youth construct political and national identity under cross-Strait pressures. The objective is to examine the intersectional roles of digital media, educational and familial socialization, and youth-led civic action in shaping generational identity realignment. The review draws from diverse academic disciplines to identify key themes, theoretical models, and methodological patterns across the literature. Studies have shown that Taiwanese youth increasingly define identity not only in opposition to China but also through internalized democratic norms, lived civic experiences, and evolving historical narratives (Yang, 2021). The tension between globalized media consumption and local political education forms a critical axis in the identity negotiation process (Chang & Wu, 2020). Civic engagement practices, such as student protests, election volunteering, and policy advocacy, emerge not only as expressions of political preference but also as performative acts of belonging to a democratic nation (Kao, 2022). Unlike earlier literature that treated identity as static or binary, recent analyses adopt a more dynamic and contextualized perspective, recognizing identity as an ongoing process of self-positioning amid institutional and ideological contestation (Tsai, 2023). This review aims to map that evolution, highlight empirical blind spots, and propose new directions for understanding youth identity formation in contested democratic environments.

Understanding how youth construct national and political identities in Taiwan is crucial not only for grasping the internal dynamics of a vibrant democracy but also for anticipating the island's resilience in the face of growing authoritarian threats from China. The youth generation holds considerable political influence, as shown by their decisive role in recent presidential and legislative elections, where identity and sovereignty emerged as central campaign themes (Lee, 2022). Their values and identity orientations will shape Taiwan's domestic policy trajectory and its positioning in international affairs. Unlike older generations, Taiwanese youth have no lived experience of Chinese rule or martial law, making their political outlook more shaped by democratic experiences than historical grievances (Hsueh, 2021). This generational detachment from the "One China" narrative poses both opportunities and challenges for cross-Strait diplomacy and internal cohesion. The literature increasingly acknowledges the role of youth as active constructors of democratic legitimacy and civic culture in East Asian democracies (Kim, 2020). Studying identity formation in Taiwan offers comparative insights for other post-authoritarian societies dealing with contested nationhood and generational polarization. Moreover, this line of inquiry contributes to the broader field of political socialization by exploring how youth identities are shaped not merely by state propaganda or schooling, but also through decentralized, digitally mediated, and peer-driven processes (Schneider, 2023). The findings of this review hold relevance for educational policy, national curriculum

design, and civil society strategies aimed at strengthening democratic resilience. Scholars and policymakers alike must recognize that youth identity is not fixed, but fluid, performative, and embedded in evolving socio-political contexts. In regions where national sovereignty is under external pressure, as in Taiwan, identity formation becomes a site of political resistance and democratic reinforcement.

Growing attention to the shifting national identity of Taiwanese youth necessitates a deeper investigation into how multiple sociopolitical forces co-produce this evolving self-perception. Current literature recognizes identity formation as a multidimensional process shaped by media environments, educational practices, intergenerational discourse, and civic activity. However, few studies have explored how these dimensions converge to influence youth attitudes toward the cross-Strait relationship and their role within a democratic society. This review is guided by two central questions: How do Taiwanese youth negotiate national identity within a media-saturated and politically polarized context? What role does civic engagement play in reinforcing or contesting these identities? By addressing these questions, the study seeks to identify conceptual gaps and empirical blind spots in existing scholarship. Recent debates in the field highlight that youth identity is no longer a derivative of elite narratives, but instead emerges from decentralized, affective, and performative practices (Ting, 2021). These practices often transcend conventional political boundaries and are rooted in social networks, digital participation, and emotional belonging. In a society where democratic ideals are under threat externally and contested internally, understanding youth identity becomes an urgent matter of political sustainability. This review intends to unpack the mechanisms through which everyday interactions with media, civic spaces, and social institutions shape self-positioning among the post-martial-law generation. It draws from both qualitative and quantitative studies to uncover patterns in political self-concept, civic behavior, and ideological alignment. The aim is not only to catalog identity shifts but to provide a comprehensive analytical framework for future research. Framing identity as a process rather than a fixed status enables a more nuanced understanding of youth agency in Taiwan's democratic resilience. This focus also facilitates cross-national comparisons with other semi-sovereign or post-authoritarian democracies facing similar generational transformations.

B. METHOD

This study employed a structured literature review approach to explore the multidimensional formation of political and national identity among Taiwanese youth. The methodology involved a comprehensive selection of peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and institutional reports published between 2005 and 2024. Data sources were drawn from multidisciplinary databases including Scopus, JSTOR, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Boolean search logic was applied using keywords such as "Taiwanese youth identity," "media influence Taiwan," "cross-Strait relations," and "civic engagement Taiwan." The inclusion criteria focused on empirical studies that examined political identity formation, media socialization, and

youth participation in a democratic context. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were considered to ensure methodological diversity and thematic richness. Studies addressing diasporic or transnational identity were excluded unless they maintained direct relevance to youth residing in Taiwan. Grey literature and opinion pieces lacking empirical grounding were also filtered out. The final corpus consisted of 52 publications deemed relevant and rigorous according to academic standards. Each selected text was subjected to thematic coding, with primary categories including media exposure, political socialization agents, civic participation, and identity expression. Thematic synthesis was conducted to identify recurring patterns, conceptual frameworks, and explanatory mechanisms. Attention was also given to generational narratives and how they evolved post-democratization. Patterns of identity articulation were traced across protest movements, online discourse, and educational institutions. Variations in methodology and disciplinary lens were documented to highlight epistemological diversity. Contradictions or tensions in findings were noted and examined for contextual specificity. The synthesis process prioritized conceptual clarity and empirical triangulation across different sources. The objective was not merely to summarize existing studies, but to generate an integrative framework that advances theoretical understanding. Through this method, the review identifies areas of convergence and divergence in current research and suggests directions for future inquiry.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Fragmentation of National Identity among Youth

National identity among Taiwanese youth is increasingly diverse, with no singular dominant narrative capturing the majority view. While some young individuals identify strongly with a Taiwan-centric nationalism, others exhibit ambivalence or a pragmatic attitude toward cross-Strait relations. Identity preferences often correlate with geographic location, economic background, and access to political education. Youth in urban centers tend to express clearer support for a distinct Taiwanese identity, whereas those in rural or socioeconomically disadvantaged areas may exhibit lower political engagement. The influence of family heritage and generational memory continues to shape how identity is inherited or contested. Some youth retain emotional connections to Chinese cultural roots while distancing themselves from the political implications of unification. The fragmentation is also reflected in the ways young people discuss identity—ranging from declarative to ironic, performative, or even apolitical. The internet provides a space where identity debates occur fluidly, allowing for more personalized and hybrid expressions. Language choice, use of national symbols, and responses to cross-Strait events further illustrate the pluralism of youth identity today. Variations in self-identification are not only ideological but also strategic, shaped by perceptions of economic security, global belonging, and social networks. For some, being Taiwanese is associated with democratic values and civil liberties, while for others it represents a cultural identity detached from political confrontation. This heterogeneity reflects the complexity of

identity formation in post-authoritarian societies undergoing generational turnover. It also signals a departure from the binary identity paradigms of earlier decades. The coexistence of multiple identity positions within the same generational cohort presents both opportunities and challenges for democratic discourse. Understanding these fragmented patterns is essential for designing inclusive civic education and identity policy in Taiwan.

The observed fragmentation of youth identity in Taiwan aligns with growing scholarly attention to the multiplicity of self-positioning in contested democracies. Lai and Rigger (2021) argue that young Taiwanese no longer perceive national identity through dichotomous lenses, but rather as a fluid negotiation of cultural affinity, political aspiration, and strategic ambiguity. Lin (2022) found that identity responses among youth fluctuate depending on context, such as proximity to elections, cross-strait tensions, or international recognition episodes, suggesting that identity is performative rather than fixed. Liu and Chen (2023) identified distinct typologies of youth identity in their national survey—ranging from “assertive independence” to “silent ambiguity”—and emphasized that civic engagement often mediates these categories. Moreover, Tseng (2020) noted that online spaces have amplified affective expressions of belonging, where memes, slogans, and digital protest symbols serve as both identity cues and community signifiers. These studies underscore that identity fragmentation should not be viewed as political weakness, but as a reflection of democratic plurality and generational agency. The diversity of youth identity positions reveals adaptive responses to uncertainty in Taiwan’s political future and its ambiguous international status. Rather than enforcing a unified national narrative, scholars recommend policy frameworks that embrace pluralism and support deliberative spaces for identity articulation. Pedagogical practices, media literacy initiatives, and intergenerational dialogue programs are increasingly necessary to channel these fragmented identities into constructive democratic participation. Taiwan’s experience offers a valuable case for comparative studies on identity formation under geopolitical duress and intergenerational transformation.

2. Media as a Double-Edged Tool of Identity Construction

Media plays a central yet paradoxical role in shaping the national identity of Taiwanese youth. On one hand, it amplifies local narratives of sovereignty, democracy, and cultural uniqueness that affirm a strong sense of “Taiwanese-ness.” On the other, it exposes young audiences to cross-strait narratives that subtly promote unification or question the legitimacy of Taiwan’s political status. Taiwanese youth consume content from a variety of platforms, including local news outlets, YouTube, Instagram, and Chinese-based apps like Douyin or WeChat. While local media often reinforces democratic values and civil resistance stories, Chinese media channels introduce competing messages that may influence undecided or politically neutral youth. The digital environment enables personalized media experiences, creating ideological echo chambers or mixed information exposure depending on user behavior. Algorithmic curation and influencer content further complicate how youth

interpret identity-related events. Memes, short videos, and livestreams are used not only to express political beliefs but also to mock, resist, or trivialize cross-Strait political narratives. In some cases, media reinforces civic identity through campaigns highlighting voting, protests, and volunteerism. In others, it may promote apathy or confusion through sensationalism and misinformation. Exposure to oppositional content can provoke critical reflection, but for some, it may lead to disengagement or identity fatigue. The accessibility of foreign media adds another layer of complexity, particularly for youth seeking affiliation with global values rather than nationalistic ideologies. Media thus serves as both a site of empowerment and a battleground of influence in the process of identity formation among Taiwan's youth.

Scholars increasingly view media as a contested space that mediates the struggle between pro-independence and pro-unification identity narratives among Taiwanese youth. Wang and Hsiao (2022) argue that while Taiwanese news and entertainment media support identity reinforcement through national storytelling, Chinese digital platforms subtly embed unification discourses within lifestyle and cultural content. Kuo (2020) found that politically active youth were more likely to engage critically with Chinese content, whereas those less politically literate showed greater susceptibility to soft influence via entertainment channels. Huang and Lo (2021) highlight that algorithmic media environments intensify identity fragmentation by isolating youth into ideological silos, limiting cross-perspective understanding. In contrast, Chiang (2023) notes that hybrid media users—those engaging with both local and global sources—tend to display higher political awareness and stronger democratic orientation. These findings reflect the complex media landscape where identity is not simply imposed, but actively constructed and contested. Recognizing media as both pedagogical and ideological, researchers recommend integrating media literacy into civic education curricula to empower youth with critical consumption skills. Addressing the identity implications of cross-Strait media exposure requires policies that balance free expression with national security considerations. Future studies should examine how affective responses to media—such as humor, fear, or pride—shape longer-term identity orientations. In Taiwan's polarized media ecology, understanding the double-edged role of media is vital to protecting democratic identity formation among its next generation.

3. Schools, Families, and Peers as Divergent Political Socializers

Political socialization among Taiwanese youth is shaped by three major domains: schools, families, and peer groups. Each domain conveys distinct values and perspectives, often producing tensions in the development of political identity. Schools increasingly emphasize democratic participation, civic responsibility, and critical engagement through reformed curricula and classroom discourse. Textbooks highlight Taiwan's unique political evolution and encourage students to discuss controversial issues, including national identity and cross-Strait relations. Teachers and school administrators, however, vary in how they interpret and present these materials, sometimes softening or reinforcing ideological positions. In contrast,

families often serve as conduits of traditional values and historical memory, particularly among older generations who may favor unification or maintain Chinese cultural attachments. Intergenerational conversations at home can either reinforce or disrupt the narratives promoted in formal education. Peer groups, both offline and online, represent a third and increasingly influential source of socialization. University students frequently exchange political opinions, mobilize for protests, and form identity-based coalitions. Online communities and social media networks facilitate rapid dissemination of political memes, satirical commentary, and real-time debates, allowing youth to explore and test identity positions. These platforms also provide emotional validation, which reinforces identity stances through collective participation. The pluralism of these influences means that youth do not passively absorb dominant ideologies but negotiate identity across multiple, and sometimes conflicting, social contexts. The dynamic interaction among school instruction, family tradition, and peer activism creates a layered and nuanced process of political identity formation.

The divergent nature of socialization agents in Taiwan has been well documented in recent research on youth identity. Chen and Wu (2022) found that civic education reforms introduced since 2014 have significantly increased political awareness among high school students, though implementation varies by region and institutional culture. Yeh (2020) noted that generational political divergence within families remains pronounced, with parents often adhering to pro-KMT or China-friendly perspectives, while youth increasingly embrace democratic and localized identities. Studies by Lee and Chang (2021) reveal that peer influence—particularly in university settings—has become a more dominant factor than familial or school-based input, as youth engage in protest culture, student councils, and activist networks. Moreover, Wang (2023) demonstrated that digital peer socialization amplifies identity alignment through affective and participatory mechanisms, such as hashtag campaigns and livestreamed civic actions. These findings indicate that political socialization is not a linear or top-down process, but a dialogical and evolving engagement across institutions and relationships. Scholars suggest that educational institutions must account for the interplay between classroom instruction and informal learning environments. Parents and educators alike are encouraged to foster open dialogue rather than ideological imposition, in order to bridge generational gaps. Strengthening political literacy in both formal and informal domains may enhance the democratic capacity of youth and reduce polarization. Understanding these multiple vectors of influence is crucial for developing more inclusive and adaptive civic education strategies in Taiwan.

4. Civic Engagement as Performative Identity Assertion

Civic engagement has become a prominent channel through which Taiwanese youth express and assert their political identity. Participation in street protests, online advocacy, and community organizing provides youth with opportunities to perform civic belonging and national loyalty in highly visible ways. Events such as the

Sunflower Movement and marriage equality rallies have served as formative experiences for many, shaping their political worldview and sense of agency. Protest participation is often seen as both a moral duty and a rite of passage into civic adulthood. Youth utilize slogans, visual art, body language, and social media broadcasting to assert identity positions tied to democracy, sovereignty, and justice. These acts are not merely reactive but are framed as proactive affirmations of a democratic identity distinct from authoritarian models. Hashtags, profile frames, and livestream activism become digital expressions of political identity and moral stance. Voting, volunteering, and campaign participation also reflect embeddedness in democratic practice, even among non-partisan or unaffiliated youth. Civic action fosters solidarity among peers and reinforces values such as pluralism, autonomy, and collective memory. Importantly, civic engagement offers emotional resonance; participation elicits pride, anger, and hope, which deepen commitment to political causes. In some cases, civic identity becomes more salient than national identity, especially when state institutions are perceived as ambiguous or compromised. Youth also engage in transnational solidarity actions, linking Taiwanese struggles to global movements for democracy and human rights. These participatory experiences provide a platform to contest dominant narratives and co-create new meanings of what it means to be “Taiwanese” in the 21st century.

Recent studies emphasize that youth civic engagement in Taiwan is not only political in function but symbolic in form. Teng (2022) argues that public demonstrations serve as performative acts that visibly inscribe democratic identity onto the urban and digital landscape. Hsieh and Li (2021) found that youth who participated in the Sunflower Movement retained a long-term sense of civic efficacy and identity coherence, suggesting that protest participation leaves lasting psychological imprints. According to Chiang (2020), digital forms of civic expression—such as meme wars, live tweets, and TikTok-style political clips—have become integral to how young Taiwanese craft and share political selfhood. Meanwhile, Yu and Tsai (2023) demonstrate that civic engagement correlates strongly with support for democratic values, independent of party affiliation, indicating that performative identity is anchored more in system legitimacy than ideological loyalty. These findings indicate that civic participation is both a developmental experience and an identity-building mechanism. Scholars caution, however, that hyper-visibility in digital spaces may also expose youth to surveillance or burnout, requiring more robust support systems for activist well-being. Educators and policymakers are thus encouraged to treat civic spaces—both physical and virtual—as pedagogical environments that shape democratic identity. Integrating civic performance theory into youth engagement research may further clarify how identity is mobilized and solidified through participatory practices. In Taiwan’s contested political terrain, civic engagement functions not only as resistance but as reclamation and redefinition of identity by and for the next generation.

5. The Rise of Affective and Hybrid Identity Narratives

Among Taiwanese youth, national identity is increasingly expressed through affective and hybrid narratives that defy binary classifications. Rather than adhering strictly to “Taiwanese” or “Chinese” labels, many young people articulate fluid identities shaped by emotional resonance, lived experience, and cultural pluralism. Identity is often contextual, expressed differently in familial settings, peer networks, and public discourse. Some youth identify as Taiwanese politically but maintain cultural or linguistic affinity with Chinese heritage. Others adopt internationalist or East Asian identities that transcend the nation-state framework altogether. Popular culture, including K-pop, anime, and global digital trends, contributes to the shaping of hybrid identities that coexist with localized political consciousness. Emotional attachments—such as pride in Taiwan’s COVID-19 response or outrage over Chinese military threats—serve as catalysts for identity activation. These responses are often embodied in visual symbols, hashtags, and performative rituals such as flag-waving, mask-wearing, or anthem-singing. For many youth, identity becomes a tool for navigating uncertainty, expressing solidarity, and asserting agency in both domestic and global contexts. The rise of “soft nationalism,” characterized by affect rather than ideology, allows youth to participate in political discourse without fully committing to partisan positions. Humor, sarcasm, and irony are frequently employed to signal nuanced or ambivalent stances. Digital platforms facilitate these expressions, enabling users to remix, personalize, and share identity content with their own stylistic imprint. This trend reflects a broader shift toward postmodern identity construction, where boundaries are blurred and contradictions are embraced. The hybridization of identity reflects not confusion, but a deliberate strategy of adaptation and resistance in a complex geopolitical landscape.

Recent scholarship affirms that youth in Taiwan increasingly perform identity through affective and multimodal practices rather than through rigid ideological commitments. Wu and Lin (2021) argue that hybrid identity narratives allow young people to reconcile competing emotional and cultural loyalties without internal conflict. Chen (2022) found that online spaces serve as affective arenas where youth express identity through emojis, music mashups, and visual memes—modes of articulation that conventional political science often overlooks. Liu and Wang (2023) observed that identity expressions during major political events, such as presidential elections or PRC military drills, often spike in emotional intensity, suggesting that affect functions as a key mobilizer of political self-definition. Meanwhile, Huang (2020) highlights that youth often experience identity not as a stable category but as a responsive, strategic orientation shaped by context, mood, and social interaction. These findings challenge essentialist views of national identity and instead promote a view of identity as affective positioning within a mediated, globalized world. For educators and policymakers, this means that civic education must evolve to account for emotional intelligence, media fluency, and symbolic interpretation. Researchers are encouraged to explore identity through interdisciplinary lenses—incorporating cultural studies, communication, and psychology—to fully grasp the performative

and hybrid nature of youth self-understanding. In Taiwan's uncertain geopolitical reality, hybrid identity may function not as political indecision, but as democratic adaptability. Embracing complexity, rather than simplifying it, may be key to supporting democratic identity formation in future generations.

D. CONCLUSION

Youth identity formation in Taiwan is undergoing a dynamic transformation shaped by a convergence of political, cultural, and technological influences. Rather than adopting fixed or binary definitions, young Taiwanese increasingly articulate their identities through hybrid and contextualized frameworks. This shift reflects broader generational changes in political socialization, media engagement, and civic participation. Schools, families, and peer groups each play important roles, but often transmit conflicting values that require youth to reconcile competing narratives. Media acts as both a source of democratic empowerment and a channel for external ideological influence, particularly through algorithmic content and soft-power messaging. Civic engagement offers youth a tangible platform to express political identity, with protest, volunteering, and digital activism functioning as meaningful sites of self-definition. Emotional experiences, including pride, fear, and hope, deeply shape how young people relate to national belonging. Identity is no longer passively inherited but actively performed in physical and digital public spheres.

The personalization of political expression underscores the centrality of affect in contemporary youth identity. The fragmentation of identity positions is not a sign of disengagement, but a reflection of pluralism and democratic vibrancy. These findings challenge traditional assumptions that national identity must be singular, static, or state-sanctioned. Instead, identity emerges as fluid, adaptive, and situated within rapidly changing social conditions. This review contributes to a growing body of literature that rethinks identity as processual and participatory. For policymakers and educators, the challenge lies in supporting spaces where diverse identities can be explored without fear of exclusion or surveillance. Future research should investigate how youth navigate tensions between emotional authenticity and political pragmatism. As Taiwan continues to assert its democratic values under geopolitical pressure, the evolving identities of its youth will shape the nation's trajectory. Their voices, choices, and performances are essential to understanding the future of citizenship and sovereignty in East Asia.

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