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## ARTICLES IN ENGLISH

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### **THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM AS A SOURCE FOR NATIONAL PRIDE: A CROSS-NATIONAL ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL AND COUNTRY-LEVEL FACTORS**

This research considers how representations of the social security system can be a source of national pride. It aims to uncover the specific features of pride in the social security system by estimating the effects of various factors based on cross-national evidence from the International Social Survey Program – National Identity and multiple country-level measurements of social policies. The results show that the level of pride in the social security system is higher than pride in other socioeconomic achievements and has higher variance at the aggregated country level. The higher variance is due to the country-specific objective characteristics of the social sphere, especially those directly related to material well-being, and also to the expectations formed by the past: the socialist legacy negatively affects pride in the social security system even more strongly than other facets of pride. The strongest individual-level factors affecting pride in the social security are those directly related to social inequality. Pride is lower among those who are more vulnerable and dependent on social policies (generally women rather than men) and those who bear the costs (full-time employed as main taxpayers). On the other hand, it is higher among those who might appreciate its necessity in ideological terms (the better educated) and need it less (those with higher subjective social status). This outcome shows an important discrepancy in evaluations: those with a greater impact on policymaking have a more op-

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timistic view of the social security system than those whom it primarily affects. These results have important policy implications as they suggest that, by presenting social policy issues in a more positive manner and specifically targeting past-oriented expectations, policymakers can foster public understanding and involvement.

*Keywords:* social security system, national pride, mass achievements, elite achievements, social policies

Social security issues rarely become framed as objects of national pride in public discussions. National governments tend to use the media to provide rather elaborate excuses for persistent social problems (Iarskaia-Smirnova et al. 2016), rather than to boast of improvements in a country's social security system. Only cases of evident success, such as the Scandinavian welfare model, are regarded as grounds for pride (Esping-Andersen, Korpi 1986; Cox 2004; Kvist et al. 2012). In the rest of the world, the sphere of social security hardly ever features as a component of positive national identity. This is due to a number of reasons. Firstly, social security issues have an immediate impact on everyday lives, especially for the most vulnerable members of society. This impact is more obvious and easier to evaluate objectively than a country's less tangible achievements in fine arts, science, or history – the habitual core of nationalist imagery around the world. Second, social security relates to the pressing issue of social justice, while ideological clichés tend to use national pride to foster social cohesion and minimize the awareness of social divisions stemming from social inequality (Solt 2011). In short, the social security system, compared with other of the country's achievements, is a less popular tool for eliciting national pride in propaganda.

The underrepresentation of social security issues in public discussions related to national pride raises the question of how a country's achievements in this sphere feature in public consciousness. Do people tend to be less proud of a country's social security system than of its other achievements? How accurately do the differences in pride in the social security systems across countries reflect objective relevant characteristics? How is pride in the social security system, compared with other facets of national pride, affected by individual differences within countries? These questions are of more than merely theoretical interest, since, as shown in Pavel Romanov's study of new public management policy in post-Soviet Russia (Romanov 2008), the successful implementation of social policies strongly depends on public awareness, knowledge, and involvement.

Existing research on pride in the social security system is rather scarce. The available studies either cover pride in the social security system among other facets of national pride without giving it specific attention (Smith, Jarkko 1998; Smith, Kim 2006; Fabrykant, Magun 2016) or compare pride in the

social security system between two countries or regions with obvious and marked differences in their past or present social policies, such as the US and Canada and West and East Germany (Simon, Brooks 2009). These studies suggest that pride in social security system is compatible with pride in other achievements directly related to everyday life, especially in the socioeconomic sphere, and that evaluations of social security systems by the population are strongly related to objective indicators. More comprehensive research is needed, however, to provide a coherent understanding of individual and country-level factors in pride in the social security system.

This research aims to uncover the specific features of the social security system as ground for national pride by estimating the effects of various factors based on cross-national evidence. In reply to the questions posed above, we suggest the following hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1.* Since social security issue is a rare and inconvenient target of nationalist propaganda, we hypothesize that pride in the social security system is lower than pride in other achievements and that divisions between countries on this facet of pride are more pronounced.

*Hypothesis 2.* Following the previous evidence of the impact of the objective features of social policies and their outcomes, we believe that pride in social security systems is significantly related to objective indicators, especially those directly reflecting material well-being and are, therefore, more easily grasped and estimated.

*Hypothesis 3.* At the individual level, pride in the social security system compared with pride in other achievements is more strongly affected by those individual differences more directly related to social inequality. At the country level, we believe that a socialist past affects pride in the social security system more strongly than other facets of national pride.

## Data

The data on national pride used to test these hypotheses come from the third wave of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) – National Identity (ISSP Research Group 2015). The data was collected from 2012 to 2014 and contain answers from 45,297 respondents from 37 countries and regions to questions on various nationality-related issues, including national pride. Respondents were asked to evaluate pride in each of 10 of their country's achievements using the same four-point scale ('How proud are you of [COUNTRY] in each of the following? Very proud, somewhat proud, not very proud, not proud at all'). The achievements were formulated in the questionnaire as follows: 'the ways democracy works', 'its political influence in the world', '[COUNTRY'S] economic achievements', 'its social security system', 'its scientific and technological achievements', 'its achievements in sports', 'its achievements in the arts in literature', '[COUNTRY'S] armed forces', 'its history', 'its fair and equal

treatment of all groups in society'. This data allows comparisons to be drawn between pride in the social security system and pride in other of the country's achievements.

In addition, the ISSP dataset contains sociodemographic variables used as individual level predictors of national pride. They include the respondent's age, gender, education level (this was recoded as a dichotomy: complete higher education or lack of it), attendance at religious services as a proxy for religiosity (an 8-point scale ranging from 'several times a week or more' to 'never'), and subjective social status (top to bottom self placement on a 10-point scale).

The country-level indicators used in the research come from several databases. The evaluations of social security systems were taken from Dixon's study covering 172 countries (Dixon 2000). Instead of relative country rankings we used the original design scores on which the rankings are based for a more precise measure of differences between countries. Another set of evaluative indices come from the NATIXIS Global Retirement Index report, which provides a four-dimensional index of welfare in retirement and old age in 150 countries (NATIXIS 2015). The data on objective quantitative measures of social policies in different countries come from the World Social Protection Report (ILO 2015). They include the duration of paid maternity leave, the proportion of active contributors to the pension scheme in the labor force, the proportion of old men and women over the retirement age who receive a pension, and government expenditures on health and social protection measured as a share of GDP. The data on the indicators targeted by social policies – male and female life expectancy at birth and male, female, and total unemployment rates, – and also on the GDP per capita, come from the World Bank Data Catalogue (World Bank 2016).

### **Country Scores on Pride in the Social Security System**

Before turning to the substantive, structural differences between pride in the social security system and other achievements, we estimated the differences in level of pride in various country achievements based on country-level scores. The results show that even at this basic level, pride in the social security system differs from pride in all other achievements in at least two important respects.

Figure 1 shows mean scores for pride in each of the country's 10 achievements, computed as a second-level mean of aggregate country means. To analyze this data, we use the classification of grounds for pride into elite and mass achievements (see, Fabrykant, Magun 2016). Mass achievements are the result from everybody's contribution and have an immediate and obvious impact on the quality of life. The social security system belongs to this category, as do economics, fairness, and democracy. Elite achievements, on the contrary, reflect mostly efforts of specific individuals and have only indirect and unclear

impact on the majority’s everyday lives. They include achievements in arts, sports, science, armed forces, and history.

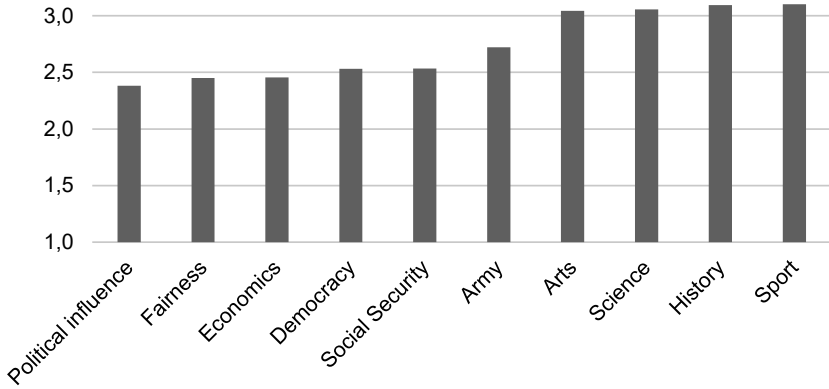


Figure 1. Mean scores on pride in country’s various achievements

The results presented in Figure 1 show that pride in each elite achievement is on average higher than pride in any mass achievement and, contrary to Hypothesis 1, it does not appear that pride in the social security system is higher than pride in any other mass achievement. As predicted in the Hypothesis 1, however, and as shown in the Figure 2, countries vary on pride in the social security system more strongly than on pride in any other achievement. In other words, the evaluation of a country’s social security system provides the most important differentiating factor for national pride related to specific achievements.

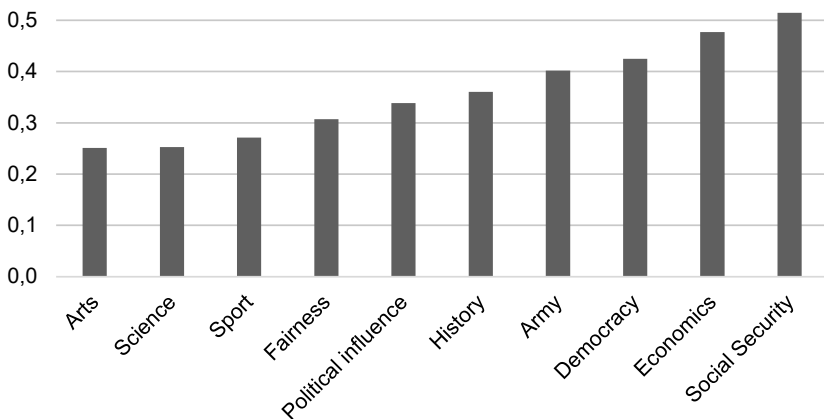


Figure 2. Standard deviations for county scores on national pride

Figure 3 shows how specific countries differ from each other in the level of pride in a country's social security system compared to pride in other achievements. As might be expected, it shows that pride in the social security system is at its highest in the Northern European countries and at its lowest in post-Socialist, and also some Southern European countries. These results supposedly show the importance of perceived as objective grounds for pride. The highest pride in the social security system, however, is displayed not by any Northern European country, but by Israeli Arabs, while Israeli Jews score much lower. These differences demonstrate the impact of the other factor behind pride in specific achievements besides objective grounds – the level of expectations: Israeli Arabs might compare Israel's social security system to the state of affairs in other Middle Eastern states, and Israeli Jews, to the most advanced European countries. To estimate the impact of various objective factors, as opposed to the subjective level of expectations, we next turn to examining a series of bivariate relations between pride in the social security system and country indicators of social development.

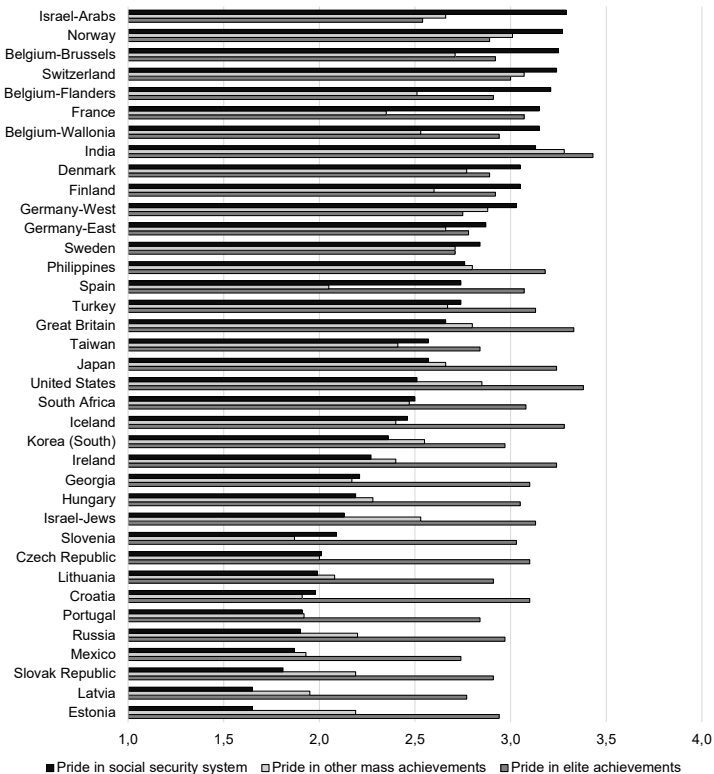


Figure 3. Country mean scores on pride in social security system vs pride in other mass achievements and pride in elite achievements (sorted from top to bottom in the descending order of pride in social security system)

## Relations of Pride in the Social Security System to Social Policy Indicators

The descriptive statistics revealed significant differences between countries on pride in the social security system, higher than on pride in any other country's achievement. The next step is to find out how pride in the social security system is related to the system's objective characteristics as measured by various country-level indicators. These indicators can be subdivided into measurements of social security policies, indices constructed for evaluating and ranking social security systems, and economic and demographic statistics showing the actual state of affairs in the spheres targeted by social security policies. This section presents Pearson's correlations between each of these indicators and pride in the social security system, seeks to determine which of these correlations are unique for this particular facet of national pride, and presents correlations of the same indicators with mean pride in other mass achievements and pride in elite achievements.

Table 1 shows correlations with a set of country-specific quantitative measures of social policies. Pride in the social security system is significantly and, in a predictable direction, positively related to the proportion of a country's GDP spent on social protection and on health separately, and to total social protection and health expenditure, but not to other social policy measures. These results confirm Hypothesis 2 suggesting the stronger relation of pride in the social security system to indicators directly reflecting material well-being. The statistically significant correlations we obtained are specific for pride in the social security system: neither pride in other mass achievements nor pride in elite achievements are significantly related to social policy indicators.

Table 1

### Correlations of National Pride with Social Security Policies

	<i>Maternity Leave, weeks</i>	<i>Active contributors to pension scheme, percent of labor force</i>	<i>Proportion of old men and women receiving pension</i>	<i>Total social protection and health expenditure, percentage GDP</i>	<i>Health expenditure, percentage GDP</i>	<i>Social protection expenditure, percentage GDP</i>
Pride of social security	-0.23	0.12	-0.05	0.34*	0.33*	0.32*
Pride of other mass achievements	-0.20	-0.02	-0.09	0.03	0.09	-0.03
Pride of elite achievements	0.16	-0.18	-0.19	-0.21	0.01	-0.26

Table 2 shows correlations with indices constructed for the evaluation and comparison of various countries' social security systems in general and retirement programs in particular. Here again, the results are consistent with Hypothesis 2. Pride in the social security system is significantly and positively related to indices reflecting material issues – indices estimating quality of life and the material well-being during retirement. Pride in other mass achievements is significantly positively related to the index of material well-being after retirement, which is supposed to reflect general well-being constituting objective grounds for pride in mass achievements. Interestingly, pride in elite achievements is significantly related to the evaluation of social security systems, and the relation is negative. This outcome matches Frederick Solt's suggestion that national pride can serve as a symbolic compensation for high social inequality (2011).

Table 2

### Correlations of National Pride with Social Security System Evaluations

	<i>NATIXIS Health Index</i>	<i>NATIXIS Finances at Retirement Index</i>	<i>NATIXIS Quality of Life Index</i>	<i>NATIXIS Material Wellbeing Index</i>	<i>NATIXIS Global Retirement Index</i>	<i>Social Security Design Score</i>
Pride of social security	0.15	-0.06	0.35*	0.41*	0.31	0.26
Pride of other mass achievements	-0.06	0.09	0.20	0.43**	0.25	-0.08
Pride of elite achievements	-0.27	-0.18	-0.15	-0.12	-0.22	-0.34*

Table 3 presents correlations with indicators that directly reflect the state of affairs in some of the spheres targeted by social security policies, and also with the GDP per capita as an indicator of affluence. Here again, the results confirm Hypothesis 2: pride in the social security system is more strongly related to the indicator of general affluence than to measures more specifically related to social policy issues. Thus the results corroborate the idea behind Hypothesis 2, namely that the evaluation of a country's social security system is primarily based not on the most relevant issues, but on the issues easier to estimate since they directly reflect material well-being and affluence.



Table 3

**Correlations of National Pride  
with Social Security System Outcomes and GDP pc**

	<i>Male life expectancy at birth</i>	<i>Female life expectancy at birth</i>	<i>Male unemployment,%</i>	<i>Female unemployment,%</i>	<i>Total unemployment,%</i>	<i>GDP pc PPP</i>
Pride of social security	0.34*	0.15	-0.30	-0.26	-0.28	0.43**
Pride of other mass achievements	0.16	-0.05	-0.53**	-0.49**	-0.52**	0.39*
Pride of elite achievements	-0.15	-0.21	0.06	0.07	0.06	-0.33

**Individual and Country-Level Factors of Pride in the Social Security System**

Having examined the relation of pride in the social security system to various social policy indicators, we now turn to estimating the effects of more general individual and country-level predictors of national pride. Our primary task at this stage is to compare the effects of the same independent variables on pride in the social security system and pride in the other achievements of the country.

Table 4 presents a series of multilevel ordinal regression models, one for each facet of national pride. As can be seen from the table, pride in the social security system is positively related to age, education level, religiosity, and subjective social status, and negatively, to gender (meaning here that women are on average less proud of the social security system than men), employment status (those employed full-time are less proud than others), and a country' Socialist past (pride in the social security system in post-Socialist countries is significantly lower). Let us examine each of these effects one by one.

The positive effect of age appears for almost all facets of national pride, with the only exception being pride in sports – a sphere arguably more important to younger people. This effect may arguably be attributed to an increase in support for conservative values and attitudes, such as national pride, with age, and partly, to the cohort effect, since it is possible that the younger cohort's formative experiences are more strongly influenced by globalization and multiculturalism than national pride. Contrary to the common impression that nationalist activist groups are largely made up of young people, for the population in general pride

in various achievements is highest for those aged over 60 and lowest for those aged under 30 (Smith, Kim 2006). The effect size for pride in the social security system is roughly the same as for other facets of national pride.

One plausible reason for the lower level of pride in the social security system among women than men is that, in most countries, women are still more vulnerable and more dependent on social policies, for example those relating to maternity and gender discrimination. In general women exhibit lower levels of pride in other mass achievements, except for pride in a country's political influence in the world, and higher levels of pride in elite achievements. Thus, here we might see at the individual level the pattern similar to the one observed by Solt (2011) at the country level: the underprivileged develop a lower estimation of the spheres directly related to material well-being, but compensate for it by exhibiting pride in a country's perceived geopolitical and cultural grandeur.

The negative effect of employment status is interesting because it applies to pride in the social security system, and is not significant for pride in other mass achievements. It is significant, and also negative, however, for pride in two kinds of elite achievements – the armed forces and history. It can be suggested that people in full-time employment feel more secure and, as a result, they require less support from the social security system, less protection from the army, and less symbolic satisfaction from the glorious past as a substitute for individual self-realization in work and career. In addition, those employed full time may feel that as taxpayers they give more than others to the social security system and for this reason have the right to expect more in return.

The positive effect of education level is also quite unusual. The prevailing effect of education on national pride is negative, it can be asserted this is because higher education may foster critical thinking, leading to higher expectations and less support for conservative ideology, such as nationalism (Inglehart 1977). The only other sphere that elicits more pride in people with higher education is arts and literature, since higher education provides the cultural capital necessary to simultaneously benefit from arts and contribute to them. The positive effect of education on pride in the arts is nevertheless weaker than for pride in the social security system. This effect may be due to two different factors. First, as supported by growing empirical evidence (Gross 2013), contemporary higher education tends not to be value-neutral, but rather instills left-wing values, including higher importance placed on social welfare and social security. Within this mindset, the social security system can appear not merely as a tool for solving pressing social issues, but also as a social asset with the potential for developing new functions and assuming new responsibilities. On the other hand, on average the better educated have increased opportunities on the labour market and are less likely to require help from the social security system and have less first-hand experience of its drawbacks and imperfections. The higher level of pride in the social security system for the better educated arguably takes the form of disinterested affirmation of the importance of the social sphere as such.



The positive effect of religiosity on pride in the social security system is similar to the positive relation between religiosity and other facets of national pride, because both may be perceived as conservative values (Inglehart 1977). The difference lies in the effect size, which for pride in the social security system is considerably smaller than for pride in other mass achievements, and about on par with pride in the arts and sciences. The tentative explanation may be that many religions prescribe individual charity that can contradict the less traditional governmental social policies.

The effect of self-evaluated social status on pride in social security is, as predicted, much stronger for pride in the social security system than for pride in any other achievement. The effect for all facets of national pride is positive. The plausible reason is that respondents who see themselves as holding higher positions in society regard not only their own position, but also the state of society as a whole with greater satisfaction and approval. In addition, people with higher social status can view their countries' achievements as being due to a greater extent to their own contributions. Why this effect is strongest for pride in a country's social security system, even controlled for education, is another and more difficult question. The bottom-line explanation might be the same as for the positive effect of education: a country's achievements in the sphere of social security elicit higher pride in those who most highly appreciate the necessity of social policies and at the same time are less dependent on its functioning and therefore less appreciative of its imperfections.

The individual level effects confirm Hypothesis 3: the differences between the impacts on pride in the social security system and pride in other achievements appear stronger for predictors immediately related to social inequality – education and subjective social status. At the country level, economic inequality between countries has significantly less impact on pride in the social security system than a country's socialist past. These results also confirm Hypothesis 3 by showing that, even controlled for the GDP per capita, pride in the social security system in post-Socialist states is significantly lower and that this negative effect is more pronounced for pride in the social security system than for other facets of national pride. As stated in the hypothesis, this effect reflects not only to actual drawbacks of social policies in post-Socialist states, but also a higher level of expectations from the mechanisms of social protection and support in post-Socialist countries, leading to a clash between subjective standards held by the population and the circumstances of socio-economic transition

## **Conclusion**

The research results partly confirm and partly reject Hypothesis 1 and consistently confirm the Hypotheses 2 and 3. First of all, the level of pride in the social security system is unexpectedly higher than pride in other mass achievements, including those more frequently targeted by propaganda. These results show the

discrepancy between public discussions and mass consciousness and suggest the readiness to view social security issues in a more positive light than is usually found in public discussions. This general effect, which for the social security system varies more strongly across countries than for all other facets of national pride, is nevertheless moderated by country-specific objective characteristics of the social sphere, especially those directly related to material well-being. This is due not only to the current state of affairs, but also to the expectations formed by the past: the Socialist past negatively affects pride in the social security system even more strongly than other facets of pride, so that pride in post-Socialist countries is lower than in other countries with comparable level of economic development.

The individual-level factors affecting pride in the social security system more strongly than pride in other achievements are those directly related to social inequality. Pride is lower among those more vulnerable and dependent on social policies (women) and those who bear the costs (full-time employed as main taxpayers) and higher among those who might appreciate its necessity more for ideological reasons (the better educated) and need it less (those with higher subjective social status). These results show an important discrepancy in evaluations: those with more impact on policymaking have a more optimistic view of social security system than those whom it primarily affects.

The obtained results have important policy implications. First of all, the majority of countries covered by the ISSP dataset reveal more positive representations of social security issues in the public sphere. This outcome is of limited use to nationalist propaganda because, apart from ethical issues, pride in the social security system is rather strongly related to actual experiences and cannot be artificially increased too much or for too long when unsupported by objective achievements. On the other hand, this demand for a more positive representation of the sphere of social security has the potential to be instrumental in increasing the public involvement and understanding of the social policy issues. Those pursuing this goal should account for relatively more optimistic views held by people with higher level of education and social status, which include most elites and specifically most policymakers, and pay close attention to path-dependent expectations formed by a country's past, probably by bringing them closer to the contemporary global realities.

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