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When Perception Strikes Back: Testing Popular Agreement with Blank and Schmidt's Item Categorization

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Abstract For more than two decades, the work of Blank and Schmidt has greatly influenced empirical research on national attachment. Distinguishing between nationalism, patriotism, and national identity, it rests on a set of item batteries that have since been taken up by numerous researchers. In this contribution, we argue that the categorization of most of these items is inconsistent with the perception of a nonexpert sample and, in some cases, even in direct opposition to it. To substantiate this claim, we present the results of an online survey of German university students ($N=424$) who were tasked with assigning all items from Blank and Schmidt's 1997 article to one of the three categories. As hypothesized, the majority of respondents assigned only a few items correctly—so few that their overall agreement with Blank and Schmidt was even lower than what would normally be expected from a random distribution. We also asked about item understandability and found that while some items were considered relatively difficult to understand, there was no obvious correlation between these and the miscategorized ones. Taking this discrepancy between academic and nonacademic concept use into account can further our understanding of national attachment and help us refine existing survey techniques.

Keywords Germany · Nationalism · Patriotism · National identity · Public opinion

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Wahrnehmung im Widerspruch? Blank und Schmidts Item-Kategorisierung auf dem Prüfstand

Zusammenfassung Seit mehr als zwei Dekaden kommt den Untersuchungen von Blank und Schmidt erheblichen Einfluss auf die empirische Erforschung nationaler Zugehörigkeit zu. Mittels verfeinerter Item-Batterien wird darin zwischen Nationalismus, Patriotismus und nationaler Identität unterschieden – eine kategoriale Teilung, die (wie auch die Items selbst) in zahlreichen Folgestudien adaptiert worden ist. Im vorliegenden Beitrag argumentieren wir, dass die Kategorisierung besagter Items sich in den meisten Fällen nicht mit ihrem allgemeinen Verständnis deckt und diesem zum Teil sogar konträr gegenübersteht. Zur Untermuerung dieser These berichten wir von einem Umfrageexperiment, bei dem wir Studierende deutscher Universitäten ($N=424$) gebeten hatten, die von Blank und Schmidt (1997) genutzten Items in eine der drei Kategorien einzuteilen. Wie vermutet, konnte die Mehrheit der Befragten nur wenige Items korrekt zuweisen; eine Übereinstimmungsquote, die jene einer reinen Zufallsverteilung noch unterschreitet. Weiter besteht Verbesserungspotenzial bezüglich der Verständlichkeit diverser Items, jedoch keine konsistente Beziehung zwischen der Fehlkategorisierung und der Einstufung als unverständlich. Um ein besseres Gespür für die Kontextgebundenheit nationaler Zugehörigkeit zu gewinnen und die Skalenentwicklung voranzutreiben, empfehlen wir, die beschriebene Diskrepanz zwischen akademischem und alltagsweltlichem Konzeptgebrauch in künftigen Forschungsarbeiten stärker in den Fokus zu rücken.

Schlüsselwörter Deutschland · Nationalismus · Patriotismus · Nationale Identität · Öffentliche Meinung

1 Introduction

This is an article about another article—more precisely, about the survey items used in another article and the extent to which their categorization differs from the perception of a nonexpert audience. This article, “National Identity in a United Germany: Nationalism or Patriotism?”, was published by Thomas Blank and Peter Schmidt in 2003 and has since greatly influenced empirical research on nationalism in Germany. Even more, it has also become an eminent reference in international research, cited hundreds of times (e.g., Huddy et al. 2021; Rajman et al. 2008; Sapountzis 2008; Sumino 2021) and inspiring a multitude of subsequent studies.¹ Davidov (2009, p. 65), for instance, acknowledges that the items he uses in his comparative work stem “especially from Blank and Schmidt”. So do Wagner et al. (2012, p. 322), whose key indicators are largely “derived from broader scales used by Blank and Schmidt”. Not to mention Ariely (2012, 2020) and Green et al. (2011), who drew methodological inspiration from these follow-up contributions rather than the original article. In short, since its publication, “National Identity in a United

¹ Google Scholar gives 669 citations, whereas Scopus gives 293 (April 15, 2023).

Germany” has had a considerable impact on research dealing with attitudinal aspects of national attachment. This seminal status has been maintained to this day.

Fundamentally, Blank and Schmidt base their article on the assumption that there are two distinct forms of national attachment: *nationalism* and *patriotism*. Although both can be subsumed under the umbrella concept of national identity, they clearly favor “different concepts regarding the nation [...]; they define different social goals and lead to divergent social behavior” (2003, p. 305). Nationalism is regarded as an excessive and belligerent ideology that begets outgroup hostility, while patriotism is considered the exact opposite. Blank and Schmidt substantiate this dualistic view by means of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which indeed shows that a “representative sample of the adult population of Germany confirmed our hypotheses” (ibid, p. 306). In this article, we argue that most of the items used to measure these concepts are at odds with the perception of a nonexpert sample, however. Their measurement *may* or *may not* be useful, but the way Blank and Schmidt categorized these items—that is, how they assigned each item to a conceptual category—is likely to differ from the categorization of the general public. In other words, we expect the items that Blank and Schmidt believe indicate patriotism to be understood as indicating something else, and *vice versa*. To test this assumption, we first discuss the original categorization and hypothesize why such a discrepancy is likely, and then present the results of an online survey in which we asked German university students ($N=424$) to assign each item to the category they thought matched it best. As expected, the majority of respondents categorized most items (eight out of ten) differently; in one case, not even one in 14 agreed with Blank and Schmidt’s categorization. This suggests a significant gap between academic and nonacademic perceptions, throws a critical light on the persistence of (outdated) conceptual assumptions, and challenges the self-evidence of various items. We conclude with a discussion of these implications in which we emphasize the need for greater rigor in the empirical use of context-sensitive concepts: While the nonexpert understanding may be interesting in its own right, it also provides us with food for thought to critically rethink categorical certainties.

2 Items and Item Categories

Setting out to “reach quantitative conclusions concerning the numbers of [western and eastern Germans] who have patriotic or nationalistic attitudinal structures” (2003, p. 306), Blank and Schmidt distinguish between three categories of national attachment. The first is *national identity*, a “positive, subjectively important emotional bond” that appears as a primordial sentiment and constitutes the “status quo of the process of individuals identifying with a nation” (ibid, pp. 290–291). It forms the sociopsychological foundation of the two other categories, *nationalism* and *patriotism*,² which, as mentioned before, assume the roles of opposing principles. For Blank and Schmidt, nationalism is little more than an assemblage of

² “The higher the degree of national identity, the higher the degree of nationalism [and] patriotism” (ibid, p. 295).

Table 1 Items from Blank and Schmidt (2003)

Nationalism (Nat-)	Patriotism (Pat-)	National identity (Ident-)	No.
<i>Pride in nationality</i>	<i>Pride in democratic institutions</i>	<i>Meaning of citizenship</i>	1
<i>Pride in history</i>	<i>Pride in social security system</i>	<i>Meaning of inner ties</i>	2
<i>Pride in sports</i>	<i>Pride in political participation</i>	Possessing citizenship	3
<i>Pride in being number 1</i>	Criticism out of allegiance	–	4
Economic superiority	Obligation to mend problems	–	5
Best country	Criticism to improve society	–	6
Role model for others	–	–	7

Items from the 2003 article (English), with those also appearing in the 1997 article italicized. The complete item text can be found in the appendix

chauvinistic and authoritarian beliefs that include an uncritical acceptance of state authority, an irrational idealization of the nation, and a pervasive sense of ingroup superiority. Patriotism, on the other hand, appears to be the essential “counter-concept to nationalism” (ibid, p. 292)—a self-critical form of national attachment based on a commitment to humanist values and aware of the contradictions and transgressions of the nation. In empirical terms, all three categories are operationalized via batteries of three to seven items that are supposed to correspond to these definitions: the recourse to national greatness, the “democratic aspects of patriotism” (ibid, p. 298), and a broader and less particularized identitarian sentiment (Table 1).

Although it was their 2003 article that rose to international prominence, Blank and Schmidt had written extensively on this subject before. Among their earlier works is a short 1997 article in German, coauthored by Horst-Alfred Heinrich and titled “Nationalismus und Patriotismus in Ost- und Westdeutschland: Ergebnisse einer repräsentativen Studie” [Nationalism and Patriotism in East and West Germany: Results of a Representative Study], which bears a strong resemblance to the 2003 piece. It addresses the same topic (national identity in postreunification Germany), uses the same methodology and sample (985 participants from western and 372 from eastern Germany),³ arrives at similar results, and differs only in its empirical structure. Both articles also employ the same categories, but the 1997 one has six fewer items—three from nationalism (“economic superiority”, “best country”, “role model for others”) and three from patriotism (“criticism out of allegiance”, “obligation to mend problems”, “criticism to improve society”), as well as a different national identity item (“love of fatherland” in lieu of “possessing citizenship”).⁴ Basically, it is a less comprehensive version of the other (Table 2).

Our argument applies to both articles similarly, but our empirical analysis focuses exclusively on the 1997 one. There are two reasons for this: First, the items used there are fewer and more consistent; for example, all nationalism and patriotism items are *pride items* (i.e., they ask about pride in something), which facilitates

³ In the 2003 article, this sample was reduced to 396 western Germans and 175 eastern Germans because of “panel mortality, the exclusion of all East-West and West-East migrants, and listwise deletion of missing values in the variables [...]” (ibid, p. 296).

⁴ While the remaining nationalism and patriotism items were taken from an even older article (Blank and Schmidt 1993), the national identity items came from Kosterman and Feshbach’s (1989) patriotism scale.

Table 2 Items from Blank et al. (1997)

Nationalism (Nat-)	Patriotism (Pat-)	National identity (Ident-)	No
<i>Pride in nationality</i>	<i>Pride in democratic institutions</i>	<i>Meaning of citizenship</i>	1
<i>Pride in history</i>	<i>Pride in social security system</i>	<i>Meaning of inner ties</i>	2
<i>Pride in sports</i>	<i>Pride in political participation</i>	Love of fatherland	3
<i>Pride in being number 1</i>	–	–	4

Items from the 1997 article (German, translated), with those also appearing in the 2003 article italicized. The complete item text can be found in the appendix

direct comparison with each other. Second—and more importantly—the items of the 1997 article are available in German, and our survey was aimed at native German speakers. If we had taken the items from the 2003 article, we would have been forced to retranslate them into German first, possibly changing the original diction. As both articles came to similar conclusions and share nine out of ten items, we are confident, however, that our findings can claim validity in both cases.

3 Hypotheses

Our central assumption is that there is little categorical agreement between Blank and Schmidt and our respondents, meaning that we expect a majority to assign the items in question to a different category—for instance, “pride in nationality” (Nat-1) to national identity or “meaning of inner ties” (Ident-2) to patriotism. This assumption is based partly on item-specific reasons (which we discuss in our subhypotheses) and partly on the observation of a substantial gap between the academic and nonacademic use of contested terms. Race, to take an obvious example, is regarded as a social construct by science but treated as an empirical fact in numerous everyday situations, from the U.S. Census to private prejudice (e.g., James 2001). The same is true for concepts such as populism and democracy: Bale et al. (2011; see also Schwörer 2021) noted a strongly pejorative use of the former in the media, while Dalton et al. found that many citizens do not identify the latter with the principle of majority rule or democratic procedures but with “freedom and civil liberties” (2007, p. 147).⁵ In general, we expect similar results for nationalism, patriotism, and national identity. All of these terms have an academic meaning (reflected in Blank and Schmidt’s categorization), but may be understood differently by nonexperts. To test this assumption, we formulate our hypothesis, H 1:

H 1 Blank and Schmidt’s items are categorized differently by the majority of respondents.

While we expect that there is a lack of agreement on all items, there may be some cases where this is particularly striking and deserves closer examination. Perhaps

⁵ Even though freedom and liberty are regarded by some as essential features of modern democracy (e.g., Diamond 1999), they are nevertheless distinct from what is at the core of the term: the conceptually condensed notion of popular rule.

the most obvious example is Blank and Schmidt's categorization of "pride in sports" (Nat-3) as a nationalism item. Their rationale for this is not entirely clear: The 1997 article lists success in sports among the collective goods associated with "nationalistically oriented emotions"⁶ (Blank et al. 1997, p. 861), but there is no further discussion of this. One possible reason could be derived from the idea that national competition on the soccer pitch or running track is, at its core, a psychologically meaningful form of "war minus the shooting" (as George Orwell put it; see Beck 2013). Yet even if one finds this comparison convincing, it seems dubious to start from the premise that the link between athletic success and national pride must necessarily have a *nationalist* basis. If we take soccer, for example (by far the most relevant sport in Germany), we find instead that in recent years the German national team has been perceived primarily as a bulwark of tolerance and pluralism, with some even viewing it as a key actor in the transformation of national consciousness. Among others, Sullivan argues along these lines when he writes about the 2006 FIFA World Cup (which was hosted by Germany):

"Mass flag displays and a form of non-serious party patriotism also helped to challenge previous norms and discourses that inevitably linked such displays with 'unhealthy' patriotism of the nationalist and right-wing variety. [...] For a new generation, the WM-2006 [sic!] [...] demonstrates that Germans can be liked by others, can like themselves and can experience moments of unity" (2009, p. 250).

Of course, Blank and Schmidt, who published their articles years before the tournament, could not have foreseen this turn toward a more lighthearted pride in athletic success, rooted not in aggression and competition but in joy and community (e.g., Kersting 2007; Majer-O'Sickey 2006; Sark 2012). Nor could they have known that future studies would find a correlation between the success of one's national team and feelings of happiness (Hallmann et al. 2013). All the more valid against this backdrop, however, is our expectation that only a small proportion of respondents (most of whom are not old enough to remember the time before the 2006 *Sommärchen*) associate pride in sports with nationalism. To them, this kind of pride should rather appear benign, tolerant, and playful, embedded in a multicultural framework and detached from any logic of exclusion. Accordingly, we formulate our first subhypothesis, SH 1.1:

SH 1.1 "Pride in sports" (Nat-3) is not considered a nationalism item by the majority of respondents.

Our second subhypothesis concerns Blank and Schmidt's understanding of "love of fatherland" (Ident-3) as an item that measures national identity rather than patriotism. This strikes us as odd since *loving one's country* seems to be almost a textbook definition of patriotism. And in many cases it is. Derived from the Latin *patria* (fatherland), the term is defined as love for one's own country in all major English dictionaries, including Merriam-Webster (1991), Collins (2006), and Cambridge

⁶ German original: "Kollektivgüter, [die] sich nationalistisch orientierten Emotionen zuordnen [lassen]."

(2013).⁷ In the case of the third, there is even a comparative element—patriotism is equated here with the feeling “of loving your country more than any others and being proud of it” (ibid). It is only logical to assume that most people have an intuitive understanding of Ident-3 that fits this definition as well, so they should be inclined to consider it an expression of patriotism rather than national identity. Perhaps all the more so because “love of fatherland” is a universal feeling that is not limited to a particular country but applies to all possible *patria*e. Therefore, we formulate our second subhypothesis, SH 1.2:

SH 1.2 “Love of fatherland” (Ident-3) is not considered a national identity item by the majority of respondents.

Our third and final subhypothesis relates to Blank and Schmidt's three patriotism items and the different forms of pride they measure: pride in Germany's democracy (Pat-1), its social security system (Pat-2), and the opportunities for political participation enshrined in its laws (Pat-3). One can easily link these items to Habermas's (1992) idea of *Verfassungspatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism) or to what other authors have called *constructive patriotism* (e.g., Schatz et al. 1999; Staub 1997; for an overview, see Schatz 2020), that is, a patriotism based on a normative commitment to the rule of law and social justice. Imagined as reflective, critical, and open-minded, this kind of patriotism has little in common with the “hostility toward out-groups” and “uncritical allegiance to country” (Schatz et al. 1999, p. 152) of *blind patriotism* (or nationalism, as others would call it). But here, too, we believe that the categorization of the corresponding items is at odds with the (far less anemic) perception of the general public. For when people say that they love their country, they usually mean that they love its natural or cultural features, for example, its landscapes, cuisine, language, or the mentality of its people, but rarely would they say that they love the institutions that structure its social and political life. Their patriotism may not be blind, but it goes beyond the abstract, emotionless, and, for lack of a better term, empty love reflected in Pat-1, Pat-2, and Pat-3 (“For patriotism requires me to exhibit peculiar *devotion* to my nation,” as MacIntyre (1984) put it in his *Lindley Lecture*). One might also wonder why anyone would associate something as intimate and visceral as patriotism with the welfare state or democratic procedures when both are frequently perceived as sources of controversy. Hans, for instance, may be a supporter of German parliamentarism, while his neighbor Franz may criticize it for its lack of plebiscitary elements.⁸ In turn, Franz may approve of the German welfare state, while Hans may regard it as an exploitative redistribution apparatus with an insatiable appetite. Yet regardless of who believes what, the two

⁷ The same applies to German dictionaries such as the Duden or the Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache. The former defines patriotism as “(leidenschaftliche) Liebe zum Vaterland” [(passionate) love for the fatherland], the latter as “Liebe zum eigenen Vaterland” [love for one's own fatherland]. In either case, the connection is clear and unambiguous.

⁸ The link between pride in democracy (Pat-1) and patriotism has also been criticized elsewhere. Fleiß et al. describe it as “particularly questionable” (2009, p. 431; German original: “besonders fragwürdig”) and point out that limited support for Pat-1 may indicate disenchantment with politics rather than a lack of patriotism.

would be unlikely to relate democracy or public welfare to their sense of national attachment—and if they did, it would probably be in terms of national identity rather than patriotism (see Raney and Berdahl 2011).⁹ For this reason, we formulate our third subhypothesis, SH 1.3:

SH 1.3 None of the three patriotism items (Pat-1, Pat-2, and Pat-3) are considered patriotism items by the majority of respondents.

What might explain the expected differences between Blank and Schmidt's item categorization and that of our respondents? Leaving aside explanations such as sampling effects or attitudinal shifts, we believe that the meaning of some items is not as evident as one might suspect and that our respondents have difficulties making sense of them—a problem previously stressed by Latcheva, many of whose Austrian interviewees found national pride to be an “inappropriate” (2011, p. 1195) concept with a vague and unclear meaning (“I have a problem with pride ...”).¹⁰ It does not appear far-fetched to assume that there is a similar lack of understanding for Blank and Schmidt's items in general and for their nationalism and national identity items in particular (since these tend to be disproportionately ambiguous). For instance, the question of whether Germany is the number one country in Europe (Nat-4) leaves much more room for interpretation than the question of whether one feels proud of German democracy, and therefore carries a higher risk of leading people astray. They may wonder whether being *number one* is about political, economic, or humanitarian achievements; perhaps they also think of soccer, the German *Mittelstand*, or Berlin being a trendier place than Paris.¹¹ Not to mention that the item does not specify what Europe is supposed to mean. Some may simply equate it with the European Union in its current form, while for others it may be more or less than that. And, of course, it is easier to think of Germany as the number one country in a *Kerneuropa* consisting of the parties to the Treaty of Rome than in a Europe stretching to the Urals.

There are many similar ambiguities. Pride in German history can be interpreted either as pride in medieval feudalism, Prussian militarism, and National Socialist totalitarianism or as pride in the postwar period (which may seem rather insignificant from a macrohistorical perspective); pride in being German can be viewed as incurable chauvinism or as cheerful self-confidence; and the question about pride in sports can be left unanswered if one is not interested in the subject or believes that

⁹ Where this is not the case in the literature (e.g., Davidov 2009; Green et al. 2011; Wagner et al. 2012), the same objection applies.

¹⁰ This is also the case with other terms, such as those related to climate change. For example, as Bruin de Bruin et al. remark, some of their interviewees understood terms such as *mitigation* in relation to their own “experience in law or business, referring to [...] cost-cutting strategies.” Some participants also failed to “see the link to climate change, even for terms [...] perceived as easy to understand” (2021, p. 16).

¹¹ This item is also peculiar in that it presents as fact (“The fact that Germany is the number one ...”) what is later described as “nation-related tendencies of idealization” (Blank and Schmidt 2003, p. 297). How can it be an idealization if it is a fact? At best, the wording here is ambiguous; at worst, it is contradictory.

the achievements of German athletes do not warrant such feelings in the first place.¹² In short, while there are substantial concerns regarding the clarity of several items, there is no indication that these concerns have ever been taken into consideration by Blank and Schmidt. Most of the items in the 2003 article were simply taken from the 1997 article, which had taken them from the 1993 article, which had taken at least those items from even older surveys (ALLBUS 1988; Haller 1992) that did not come from the authors themselves (Blank et al. 1997, pp. 862–863). Apparently, it was always assumed that they would be understood without much difficulty. To find out whether this is actually the case, we formulate our hypothesis, H 2:

H 2 Blank and Schmidt's items are considered difficult to understand by many respondents. Both nationalism and national identity items are considered more difficult than patriotism items.

In summary, we expect a clear categorical discrepancy between Blank and Schmidt and the majority of respondents (H 1). We further expect this discrepancy to be particularly pronounced in certain cases, namely “pride in sports” (SH 1.1), “love of fatherland” (SH 1.2), “pride in democratic institutions,” “pride in social security system,” and “pride in political participation” (all SH 1.3). In addition, we anticipate difficulties in regard to the understandability of the items (H 2).

4 Data and Methods

Our data come from a web survey of German university students conducted between May and July 2021 ($N=424$).¹³ We did not exclude any universities or subjects, but the majority of our respondents studied social sciences or medicine at the University of Freiburg, the University of Passau, or the University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover. More respondents reported being female (70.05%) than male (28.77%), an imbalance explained by the overrepresentation of women in these subjects (e.g., only about 10% of veterinary medicine students in 2018 were men). For a similar reason, there are more graduate (59.91%) than undergraduate students (35.38%) in our sample—in German medical education, there are no standalone degrees other than the *Staatsexamen* (state exam), an official licensing exam that all future physicians and pharmacists must pass in order to practice in their chosen field. The mean age was 22.29 years ($SD=3.55$) and the mean number of semesters was 4.17 ($SD=3.06$). There were no relevant differences between male and female respondents.

Since we were not interested in what respondents thought about the items but only in how they *categorized* them, we did not consider their nationality to be of particular importance. Nevertheless, we excluded all non-German citizens from our

¹² Such attitudes can also be volatile. Discussing the shortcomings of pride items, Latcheva highlights the case of an Austrian pensioner who declared, “I was proud until [the year] 2000, and now I am not proud at all, so I can't answer” (2011, p. 1186).

¹³ Results for three control samples with $N=444$, $N=479$, and $N=506$ can be found in the appendix. They all yield similar results with no significant differences.

sample to be consistent with Blank and Schmidt's approach. The vast majority of respondents were not only German but also born in Germany (94.34%), although more than a fifth reported being at least partially of immigrant origin (21.93%).¹⁴ When asked about their political preferences ("Which of these parties do you feel closest to?"), a slight majority favored the Alliance 90/The Greens (Greens; 51.18%), followed by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU; 11.79%), the Free Democratic Party (FDP; 10.38%), the DIE LINKE (Left Party; 8.02%), the Social Democratic Party (SPD; 5.66%), the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU; 4.48%), and the Alternative for Germany (AfD; 0.94%). Given the gender distribution, average age, and educational level of our sample, this overrepresentation of the Greens seems to be in line with recent electoral trends in Germany. As a last question, we wanted to know whether respondents identified themselves as nationalists, patriots, or neither. To our surprise, nine out of ten chose "neither" (90.80%), whereas the share of patriots (7.31%) and nationalists (1.89%) was very low. This seems all the more remarkable when compared with the share of those who feel closest to one of the three center-right parties (CDU + FDP + CSU = 26.65%) and from whom one might have expected a certain degree of patriotic commitment (Mader et al. 2021).

The survey itself was conducted via LimeSurvey and consisted of two separate parts. First, we asked respondents to assign all ten items from the 1997 article to the category (nationalism, patriotism, and national identity) that seemed most appropriate to them.¹⁵ Each item had to be assigned to one category, but one category only. Conversely, there was no limit to the number of items per category. If respondents felt that eight or nine items belonged to nationalism, they could assign them all accordingly. And if they felt that none of the items belonged to patriotism, they did not have to assign any to it. This brought with it a comparatively high degree of freedom, but required respondents to make decisions: We did not want them to rate the items and categories but were only interested in their opinion regarding the conceptual proximity of one to the other. In the second step, we asked how difficult these items were to understand, with understandability measured on a 5-point Likert scale. In both cases, there was no "don't know" or "no response" option, so each respondent had to assign all items and rate their difficulty.

5 Findings

Our assumption concerning H 1 was that a majority of respondents would not agree with Blank and Schmidt's categorization and instead assign the items to other categories. This proved true for eight out of ten items, with the exceptions being "pride in being number 1" (Nat-4) and "meaning of citizenship" (Ident-1). In the first case, a majority agreed with Blank and Schmidt's categorization (54.95%); in the second case, exactly half did (50.00%). In addition, a narrow plurality (41.51%) viewed "pride in history" (Nat-2) as a nationalism item, while 38.68% placed it

¹⁴ We defined this broadly as having at least one foreign-born parent or grandparent.

¹⁵ No definition or explanation of the categories was given to our respondents.

under national identity.¹⁶ In the seven remaining cases, however, a clear majority opted for categories other than Blank and Schmidt's (Table 3). Across all items, the share of mismatched answers is even greater (67.90%) than would be expected from a completely random distribution; this effect is stronger for Pat 1–3 (73.35%) than for Nat 1–4 (65.68%) and Ident 1–3 (65.41%). It is also worth noting that items were more frequently assigned to national identity (41.16%) than to nationalism (24.71%) or patriotism (33.82%), which may be partly a consequence of the term's relative vagueness: It took on the role of a categorical placeholder when the correct answer was not immediately apparent.

Our assumption concerning SH 1.1 was that a majority of respondents would not perceive “pride in sports” (Nat-3) as a nationalism item. And indeed, only 28 out of 424 respondents categorized it that way, whereas the majority (235) chose national identity, and a much larger minority (161) chose patriotism (Table 4). Thus, SH 1.1 can be confirmed: Nat-3 is primarily regarded as an expression of national identity that has little to do with nationalist sentiments and is not indicative of them. Identifying it with nationalism even yields the least frequent item–category combination of all (6.60%).

Our assumption concerning SH 1.2 was that a majority of respondents would not perceive “love of fatherland” (Ident-3) as a national identity item. And indeed, only 70 out of 424 respondents categorized it that way, whereas the majority (247)

Table 3 Overview of all results (frequency and percentage) for item categorization (H 1)

Item/ category	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Nat	145	176	28	233	61	76	65	91	66	107
Pat	170	84	161	112	115	113	111	121	200	247
Ident	109	164	235	79	248	235	248	212	158	70
Σ	424									
Nat (%)	34.20	41.51	6.60	54.95	14.39	17.92	15.33	21.46	15.57	25.24
Pat (%)	40.09	19.81	37.97	26.42	27.12	26.65	26.18	28.54	47.17	58.25
Ident (%)	25.71	38.68	55.43	18.63	58.49	55.43	58.49	50.00	37.26	16.51
Σ	100.00									

The horizontal axis shows the items and the vertical axis the three categories

Nat nationalism, *Pat* patriotism, *Ident* national identity

Table 4 Results for Nat-3 (SH 1.1)

Pride_sports	Frequency	Percentage
Nationalism ^a	28	6.60
Patriotism	161	37.97
National identity	235	55.43
Σ	424	100.00

Results for Nat-3 (“German success in sports makes me feel ...”), with ^a indicating Blank and Schmidt's categorization

¹⁶ However, H 1 refers to a *majority of respondents* rather than a mere plurality.

chose patriotism, and a larger minority (107) chose nationalism (Table 5). Thus, SH 1.2 can be confirmed as well: Ident-3 is primarily considered an expression of patriotism that has little to do with broader identitarian concerns. Identifying it with patriotism even yields the second most frequent item–category combination of all (58.25%).

Our assumption concerning SH 1.3 was that a majority of respondents would not perceive any of the patriotism items (Pat-1–3) as patriotism items. And indeed, only 115 (Pat-1), 113 (Pat-2), and 111 (Pat-3) out of 424 respondents categorized them that way, whereas the majority preferred national identity in all three cases (Table 6). Thus, SH 1.3 can be confirmed as well: Like Nat-3 before, Pat-1, Pat-2, and Pat-3 are primarily associated with identitarian feelings rather than nationalism or patriotism. It should be noted, however, that while the response patterns for Pat-1 and Pat-3 are almost the same, more respondents believed that Pat-2 indicates nationalism (61, 65, and 76, respectively).

Our assumption concerning H 2 was that many of our respondents would perceive Blank and Schmidt's items as notoriously difficult to understand. This can be at least partially confirmed, with scores for understandability ranging between 2.84 and 4.10 on our 5-point Likert scale. On average, the patriotism items were better understood (4.04)—but, as we have seen, not more accurately categorized—than the national

Table 5 Results for Ident-3 (SH 1.2)

Love_fatherland	Frequency	Percentage
Nationalism	107	25.24
Patriotism	247	58.25
National identity ^a	70	16.51
Σ	424	100.00

Results for Ident-3 ("I love my fatherland ..."), with ^a indicating Blank and Schmidt's categorization

Table 6 Results for Pat-1, Pat-2, and Pat-3 (SH 1.3)

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Pride_demo</i>		
Nationalism	61	14.39
Patriotism ^a	115	27.12
National identity	248	58.49
<i>Pride_social</i>		
Nationalism	76	17.92
Patriotism ^a	113	26.65
National identity	235	55.43
<i>Pride_particip</i>		
Nationalism	65	15.33
Patriotism ^a	111	26.18
National identity	248	58.49
Σ	424	100.00

Results for Pat-1 ("Germany's democratic institutions make me feel ..."), Pat-2 ("Germany's social security system makes me feel ..."), and Pat-3 ("The possibilities for participation in Germany make me feel ..."), with ^a indicating Blank and Schmidt's categorization

identity (3.49) and nationalism (3.39) items (Table 7). At the level of individual items, one might have assumed that “pride in history” (Nat-2) would be the most difficult to understand: first, because few countries are similarly “beholden to the past and the collective memory based on it” (Langenbacher 2010, p. 24), and second, because its wording is particularly ambiguous. It leaves unclear whether German history is to be understood as continuous or episodic and whether it goes back to Arminius and Ariovistus or only to the promulgation of the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law) in 1949. This assumption also proved largely true, as only the no less ambiguous “pride in being number 1” (Nat-4) was found to be even more difficult (2.84 vs. 3.18 for Nat-2). But although many items are indeed imprecise and hard to understand, this does not provide a convincing explanation for the substantial differences between our respondents on the one hand and Blank and Schmidt on the other hand (Table 8). It is certainly true that many of the former had problems understanding what, for instance, “inner ties” (Ident-2) meant and how to categorize the corresponding item. Yet it is also true that just as many struggled with categorizing items that are much easier to understand.

Summa summarum, our findings show a significant discrepancy between the item categorization of Blank and Schmidt and that of our respondents. This is true for all three categories, with eight out of ten items (including all those discussed in SH 1.1–1.3) being assigned to other categories by a majority. Moreover, some items, especially those related to nationalism and national identity, were perceived as difficult to understand. There is, however, no direct relationship between the miscategorization of an item and the perceived uncertainty about its meaning.¹⁷

Table 7 Overview of all results for item understandability (H 2)

Item	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
1	44	71	27	93	12	14	11	26	22	61
2	53	64	25	100	16	17	17	42	85	57
3	86	110	55	89	67	80	62	90	125	86
4	101	74	140	64	164	180	164	136	110	86
5	140	105	177	78	165	133	170	130	82	134
Ø	3.57	3.18	3.98	2.84	4.07	3.95	4.10	3.71	3.34	3.41
(SD)	(1.34)	(1.40)	(1.17)	(1.41)	(0.97)	(0.98)	(0.97)	(1.18)	(1.15)	(1.42)
Σ	424									

1 = not understandable at all; 5 = very understandable

Nat nationalism, Pat patriotism, Ident national identity, SD standard deviation

Table 8 Overview of all correlation coefficients (CC) for item categorization and understandability

Item	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
CC	0.0764	0.0085	-0.0971	0.0759	-0.0851	-0.0130	-0.0447	0.0345	-0.0434	0.1428

Following conventional standards, coefficients >0.50 indicate a strong correlation

Nat nationalism, Pat patriotism, Ident national identity

¹⁷ In addition, we also tested Blank and Schmidt's three-factor model via our own CFA, the results of which can be found in the appendix.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, we examined whether Blank and Schmidt's categorization of nationalism, patriotism, and national identity items is consistent with the perception of a nonexpert sample. In line with our main hypothesis, there was not much agreement: Our respondents assigned eight out of ten items to a different category, often by large majorities. In some cases (e.g., Nat-3), the choice of Blank and Schmidt even proved to be by far the least popular. We also found that while some items were rated as difficult to understand, this does not provide a sound explanation for the observed differences. It therefore remains an open question whether these differences are the product of deficient items or driven by social change (e.g., Bitschnau and Mußotter 2022; Latcheva 2011)—the first would suggest that Blank and Schmidt's conceptual idiosyncrasies (such as not considering “love for country” as a patriotism item) are inherently problematic, while the second would concede that their categorization may have corresponded to the *cognitio populi* in 1997/2003 but no longer does so today.¹⁸ If this were the case, the problem would not be so much with the items as with their uncritical application.

In this respect, we argue that our findings are relevant to the study of nationalism, patriotism, and national identity in at least three ways. First (and while this is the most obvious point, it still deserves to be highlighted), they offer a rare glimpse into the conceptual considerations of a nonexpert audience. This is interesting insofar as current research is mainly interested in popular attitudes (e.g., “Would you consider yourself a patriot?”) and preferences (e.g., “Would you support a nationalist candidate for office?”), but pays little attention to what the *person on the street* understands by these terms. As the results of SH 1.1–1.3 show, there are indeed some cases where a closer look at this understanding can help us gain new insights into developments that are too recent to have already found their way into the established knowledge of the discipline. The overwhelming tendency to view “pride in sports” as an expression of patriotism is perhaps the best example of this. Second, there is the apparent contradiction between the perception of our respondents and the categorization of Blank and Schmidt, which raises the above question of whether the items have always been out of step with public perceptions or whether this is a more recent phenomenon and they simply fail to account for social change. Of course, this is only worth considering if one agrees that there should be some kind of perceptual alignment between academia and the outside world. If, on the other hand, one holds that “pride in history” must be a nationalism item because Blank and Schmidt say so, then the perspective of nonexperts is of no importance—it may be desirable for it to match the academic view, but it is not really relevant.

However, this seems to us to be a rather shortsighted position. One need not idealize the wisdom of crowds to find it problematic that most respondents deviate so strongly from Blank and Schmidt's categorization. This is all the more true when we consider that none of the three categories denotes a clearly delineated term for

¹⁸ Because the perception of concepts is ever-changing, items that may have been indicative of nationalist attitudes in 1997 or 2003 may be signs of patriotism today. See Bitschnau and Mußotter (2022) for a detailed discussion of this argument.

which there is a precise and universally accepted definition. The situation would arguably be different if we asked people what they understood by a photon, or whether they could explain the difference between organic and inorganic chemistry. In such instances, the definitions are clear, and any perception that contradicts them can be empirically refuted (e.g., if a compound contains carbon, it does not behave like a compound without carbon). It would also be different if the categorization of Blank and Schmidt followed coherent criteria, could be logically deducted, or if there were good reasons to believe that it was based on special insights. But as things stand, we are confronted with a number of items whose academic categorization (a) is not particularly well explained, (b) sometimes contradicts generally accepted dictionary definitions (Ident-3), and (c) seems misleading or outdated. Assuming that none of the three categories is essentializable, the fact that our respondents categorized the items so differently can thus be taken as a conceptual warning sign pointing to more fundamental deficiencies.¹⁹ At a minimum, and this is our third point, these results should prompt us to engage critically with measures of nationalism and patriotism, their application, their spatiotemporal limitations, and the extent to which we rely on them without proper scrutiny. What were the reasons for including certain items? Were these reasons convincing at the time? Are they still convincing today? Has the meaning of the items, their subtext, or what they refer to changed? And are we perhaps in danger of falling victim to our own complacency, often taking for granted what is not granted at all? As calls for more robust measures grow louder (e.g., Mußotter 2022), those involved in scale development and validation could particularly benefit from such heightened awareness.

That said, there are also some issues that are not the focus of the present article, but which shed critical light on Blank and Schmidt's approach regardless. To give but one notable example, the 2003 article explicitly emphasizes the link between nationalism and antisemitism, calling the latter a "special kind of minority discrimination in Germany" (2003, p. 299), although most German nationalists today tend to reject antisemitic views in favor of Islamophobia (which is also a much more promising electoral strategy). In some cases, they even cultivate a philosemitic habitus: they express their solidarity with Israel but stoke fears of an imminent Islamic takeover; they celebrate Hanukkah and Yom Kippur but polemicize against Muslims who fast during Ramadan; they condemn National Socialism for "sinning against the Jews in the most cruel way" (Nolte 2020, p. 20081) but insinuate that the heirs to Himmler and Heydrich are to be found in backyard mosques rather than bierkellers. Far-right protest movements such as PEGIDA²⁰ take a similar line, likewise rejecting the antisemitic obsessions of the past and instead advocating a more eclectic and adaptive civilizationism (e.g., Bitschnau et al. 2021; Brubaker 2017; Coury 2016).

¹⁹ One could argue that the prognostic validity of Blank and Schmidt's approach (e.g., the fact that what they regard as nationalism correlates well with antisemitism and xenophobia) is more important than its consistency. But just because a particular set of items has such an effect does not mean that it is indicative of nationalism—to think so would mean that the prognostic function determines the nature of the concept. Consider the opposite: If the patriotism items were correlated with xenophobia and the nationalism items were not, would that mean that what was patriotism is now nationalism, and *vice versa*?

²⁰ An acronym for *Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident*.

While this may be a comparatively minor issue, it still shows that there is more to reconsider here than just the items and categories.

Nevertheless, there are also some limitations to our study that may serve as possible starting points for future research. First, because we relied on a student sample that is nonrepresentative in terms of age, gender, and education, the external validity of our survey is limited. A more representative sample would be needed to generalize our findings. We also did not distinguish between western and eastern Germans,²¹ even though the West–East divide continues to have a decisive influence on political culture, electoral outcomes, and sociocognitive constructions of the nation (e.g., Betz and Habersack 2019; Pesthy et al. 2021; Rippl and Seipel 2021). Second, since most of Blank and Schmidt’s items have been adopted in other country contexts, cross-national research would help to corroborate our argument. For now, we cannot rule out the possibility that Germany is a special case and that academics and nonacademics elsewhere are more aligned in their use of concepts (although there is no compelling reason for this assumption). Finally, just because we know that there is a discrepancy between Blank and Schmidt and our respondents does not mean that we know why this is the case and what heuristics the latter use.²² Further qualitative research is needed to deepen our knowledge of what meanings nationalism, patriotism, and national identity connote, what symbolic ties they entertain, and what guides popular understanding of related items. There is more to the study of national attachment than quantitative data can reveal, and there may even be cases where too strong a focus on specific items and categories obscures—rather than clarifies—complex feelings of collective identity and belonging.

7 Appendix

The following appendix to *When Perception Strikes Back* consists of three parts. Part I contains the CFA we used to test Blank and Schmidt’s three-factor model (nationalism, patriotism, and national identity). Part II presents results for three alternative samples ($N=444$, $N=479$, and $N=506$) that expand the main sample to include non-German respondents (A), German respondents who did not complete the second part of the survey (B), and all respondents who did not do so (C). Finally, Part III lists the item wordings of both Blank et al. (1997) and Blank and Schmidt (2003).

²¹ While our sample may include both western and eastern German students, we received responses almost exclusively from western universities.

²² Not everywhere can we make item-specific assumptions, as in the case of SH 1.1–1.3.

7.1 Part I: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In addition to our main findings, we tested Blank and Schmidt's three-factor model (i.e., the distinction between nationalism, patriotism, and national identity) using CFA.²³ We found that the model presented in their 1997 article provides a worse overall fit than a simpler two-factor model consisting of (a) a combination of selected nationalism (Nat-1, Nat-4) and national identity items (Ident-2, Ident-3) for the first factor and (b) all patriotism items (Pat-1, Pat-2, and Pat-3) for the second. The three-factor model also has some weak factor loadings: <0.250 for Ident-1 and <0.150 for Nat-3 (Tables 9 and 10). Given that respondents most often understood the patriotism items as national identity items, Blank and Schmidt's categorization appears to be even more confusing.

Table 9 Factor loadings of the original three-factor model

Item/ factor	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Nat	0.562	0.411	0.127	0.540	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pat	–	–	–	–	0.655	0.651	0.799	–	–	–
Ident	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.243	0.497	0.666

Standardized factor loadings for all nationalism (Nat), patriotism (Pat), and national identity (Ident) items: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.948; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.926; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.046; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.044

Table 10 Factor loadings of the alternative two-factor model

Item/ factor	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Factor 1	0.571	–	–	0.545	–	–	–	–	0.473	0.675
Factor 2	–	–	–	–	0.651	0.646	0.807	–	–	–

Standardized factor loadings for selected nationalism (Nat), patriotism (Pat), and national identity (Ident) items: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.953; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.925; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.060; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.049. Only items > 0.45 are included because only these load significantly on one of the factors

²³ Mplus, version 8.4, MLR = estimator (Muthén and Muthén 2017).

7.2 Part II: Alternative Samples

7.2.1 Alternative Sample A ($N = 444$)

In this first alternative sample, non-German citizens who completed both parts of the survey ($N = 20$) were added to the main sample (Tables 11–15).

Sociodemographics: 69.82% identified as female (-0.23%) and 29.05% ($+0.28\%$) as male. With a mean age of 22.35 years ($+0.06$), 59.46% (-0.45%) were graduate and 35.81% ($+0.43\%$) were undergraduate students. The overwhelming majority (90.99%, -3.35%) were born in Germany, with 7.88% ($+0.57\%$) describing themselves as patriots, 2.03% ($+0.14\%$) as nationalists, and 90.09% (-0.71%) as neither.

Political affiliation: 50.68% (-0.50%) chose Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 11.49% (-0.30%) the CDU, 10.59% ($+0.21\%$) the FDP, 8.56% ($+0.54\%$) the LINKE, 5.63% (-0.03%) the SPD, 4.28% (-0.20%) the CSU, 0.90% (-0.04%) the AfD, and 7.88% another party.

Table 11 Overview of all results (frequency and percentage) for item categorization (A)

Item/ category	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Nat	152	184	29	241	67	82	71	96	69	112
Pat	176	91	173	118	121	123	118	125	208	260
Ident	116	169	242	85	256	239	255	223	167	72
Σ	444									
Nat (%)	34.23	41.44	6.53	54.28	15.09	18.47	15.99	21.62	15.54	25.23
Pat (%)	39.64	20.50	38.96	26.58	27.25	27.70	26.58	28.15	46.85	58.56
Ident (%)	26.13	38.06	54.50	19.14	57.66	53.83	57.43	50.23	37.61	16.22
Σ	100.00									

The horizontal axis shows the items and the vertical axis the three categories. The results are slightly worse for Nat-2, Nat-3, Nat-4, and Ident-3 and slightly better for Nat-1, Pat-1, Pat-2, Pat-3, Ident-1, and Ident-2. All differences except Pat-2 (1.05%) are $< 1\%$

Nat nationalism, *Pat* patriotism, *Ident* national identity

Table 12 Overview of all results for item understandability (A)

Item	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
1	47	74	30	97	13	16	14	30	25	66
2	55	66	29	102	19	21	20	46	88	59
3	94	118	60	92	73	82	65	90	130	91
4	104	77	145	70	170	187	172	142	116	89
5	144	109	180	83	169	138	173	136	85	139
\emptyset	3.54	3.18	3.94	2.86	4.04	3.92	4.06	3.69	3.33	3.40
(SD)	(1.34)	(1.39)	(1.19)	(1.41)	(0.99)	(1.00)	(1.00)	(1.20)	(1.16)	(1.42)
Σ	444									

1 = not understandable at all; 5 = very understandable. The results are slightly worse for Nat-1, Nat-3, Pat-1, Pat-2, Pat-3, Ident-1, Ident-2, and Ident-3 and slightly better for Nat-4. All differences are < 0.05

Nat nationalism, *Pat* patriotism, *Ident* national identity, *SD* standard deviation

Table 13 Overview of all correlation coefficients (CC) for item categorization and understandability (A)

	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
CC	0.0827	0.0005	-0.1042	0.0747	-0.0765	-0.0075	-0.0705	0.0131	-0.0376	0.1522

Following conventional standards, coefficients >0.50 indicate a strong correlation

Nat nationalism, *Pat* patriotism, *Ident* national identity

Table 14 Factor loadings of the original three-factor model (A)

Item/ factor	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Nat	0.542	0.388	0.126	0.511	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pat	–	–	–	–	0.659	0.649	0.806	–	–	–
Ident	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.235	0.472	0.662

Standardized factor loadings for all nationalism (Nat), patriotism (Pat), and national identity (Ident) items: Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.951; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)=0.931; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=0.043; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)=0.042

Table 15 Factor loadings of the alternative two-factor model (A)

Item/ factor	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Factor 1	0.547	–	–	0.520	–	–	–	–	0.454	0.677
Factor 2	–	–	–	–	0.657	0.645	0.810	–	–	–

Standardized factor loadings for selected nationalism (Nat), patriotism (Pat), and national identity (Ident) items: Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.968; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)=0.948; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=0.049; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)=0.043. Only items >0.45 are included because only these load significantly on one of the factors

7.2.2 Alternative Sample B (N = 479)

In this second alternative sample, German citizens who completed the first part of the survey ($N=55$) were added to the main sample (Tables 16–18). As the second part is missing in some cases, there are no tables on item understandability and correlation coefficients.

Sociodemographics: 70.77% identified as female (+0.72%) and 27.97% (–0.80%) as male. With a mean age of 22.32 years (+0.03%), 62.21% (+2.30%) were graduate and 32.99% (–2.39%) were undergraduate students. The overwhelming majority (94.57%, +0.23%) were born in Germany, with 7.31% (+0.00%) describing themselves as patriots, 1.88% (–0.01%) as nationalists, and 90.81% (+0.01%) as neither.

Political affiliation: 50.10% (–1.08%) chose Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 12.11% (+0.32%) the CDU, 10.44% (+0.06%) the FDP, 7.52% (–0.50%) the LINKE, 5.85% (+0.19%) the SPD, 4.59% (+0.11) the CSU, 1.25% (+0.31%) the AfD, and 8.14% another party.

Table 16 Overview of all results (frequency and percentage) for item categorization (B)

Item/ category	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Nat	158	192	31	251	71	85	75	103	72	116
Pat	190	97	175	129	132	131	128	135	223	278
Ident	131	190	273	99	276	263	276	241	184	85
Σ	479									
Nat (%)	32.99	40.08	6.47	52.40	14.82	17.75	15.66	21.50	15.03	24.22
Pat (%)	39.67	20.25	36.53	26.93	27.56	27.35	26.72	28.18	46.56	58.04
Ident (%)	27.35	39.67	56.99	20.67	57.62	54.91	57.62	50.31	38.41	17.75
Σ	100.00									

The horizontal axis shows the items and the vertical axis the three categories. The results are slightly worse for Nat-1, Nat-2, Nat-3, and Nat-4 and slightly better for Pat-1, Pat-2, Pat-3, Ident-1, Ident-2, and Ident-3. All differences except Nat-4 (2.55%) are <2%

Nat nationalism, *Pat* patriotism, *Ident* national identity

Table 17 Factor loadings of the original three-factor model (B)

Item/ factor	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Nat	0.534	0.430	0.090	0.582	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pat	–	–	–	–	0.662	0.641	0.802	–	–	–
Ident	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.269	0.524	0.661

Standardized factor loadings for all nationalism (Nat), patriotism (Pat), and national identity (Ident) items: Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.951; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)=0.931; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=0.045; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)=0.041

Table 18 Factor loadings of the alternative two-factor model (B)

Item/ factor	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Factor 1	0.549	–	–	0.590	–	–	–	–	0.506	0.665
Factor 2	–	–	–	–	0.658	0.636	0.809	–	–	–

Standardized factor loadings for selected nationalism (Nat), patriotism (Pat), and national identity (Ident) items: Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.956; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)=0.929; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=0.059; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)=0.045. Only items > 0.45 are included because only these load significantly on one of the factors

7.2.3 Alternative Sample C (N = 506)

In this third alternative sample, all those who completed either part of the survey (N=82) were added to the main sample (Tables 19–21). As the second part is missing in some cases, there are no tables on item understandability and correlation coefficients.

Sociodemographics: 70.36% identified as female (+0.31%) and 28.46% (–0.31%) as male. With a mean age of 22.38 years (+0.09%), 61.46% (+1.55%) were graduate and 33.79% (–1.59%) were undergraduate students. The overwhelming majority (90.51%, –3.83%) were born in Germany, with 7.91% (+0.60%) describing themselves as patriots, 1.98% (+0.09%) as nationalists, and 90.12% (–0.68%) as neither.

Political affiliation: 50.00% chose Bündnis90/Die Grünen (−1.18%), 11.86% (+0.07%) the CDU, 10.47% (+0.09%) the FDP, 7.91% (−0.11%) the LINKE, 5.73% (+0.07%) the SPD, 4.35% (−0.13) the CSU, 1.19% (+0.25%) the AfD, and 8.50% another party.

Table 19 Overview of all results (frequency and percentage) for item categorization (C)

Item/ category	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Nat	168	203	33	262	79	94	82	110	77	123
Pat	197	104	187	135	141	142	138	141	234	295
Ident	141	199	286	109	286	270	286	255	195	88
Σ	506									
Nat (%)	33.20	40.12	6.52	51.78	15.61	18.58	16.21	21.74	15.22	24.31
Pat (%)	38.93	20.55	36.96	26.68	27.87	28.06	27.27	27.87	46.25	58.30
Ident (%)	27.87	39.33	56.52	21.54	56.52	53.36	56.52	50.40	38.54	17.39
Σ	100.00									

The horizontal axis shows the items and the vertical axis the three categories

Nat nationalism, *Pat* patriotism, *Ident* national identity

Table 20 Factor loadings of the original three-factor model (C)

Item/ factor	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Nat	0.527	0.412	0.096	0.559	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pat	–	–	–	–	0.661	0.637	0.807	–	–	–
Ident	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.269	0.496	0.665

Standardized factor loadings for all nationalism (Nat), patriotism (Pat), and national identity (Ident) items: Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.952; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)=0.932; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)=0.040, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=0.044

Table 21 Factor loadings of the alternative two-factor model (C)

Item/ factor	Nat-1	Nat-2	Nat-3	Nat-4	Pat-1	Pat-2	Pat-3	Ident-1	Ident-2	Ident-3
Factor 1	0.534	–	–	0.566	–	–	–	–	0.484	0.670
Factor 2	–	–	–	–	0.660	0.636	0.809	–	–	–

Standardized factor loadings for selected nationalism (Nat), patriotism (Pat), and national identity (Ident) items: Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.967; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)=0.947; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)=0.039; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=0.051. Only items > 0.45 are included because only these load significantly on one of the factors

7.3 Part III: Item Wordings

7.3.1 Item Wording (*Blank et al. 1997; German*)

Ident-1: “Die Tatsache, dass ich Bundesbürger(in) bin, ist für mich ...”

(1, überhaupt nicht wichtig; 7, sehr wichtig)

Ident-2: “Eine innere Bindung zu Deutschland zu haben, bedeutet mir ...”

(1, überhaupt nichts; 7, sehr viel)

Ident-3: “Ich liebe mein Vaterland ...”

(1, überhaupt nicht; 7, sehr)

Nat-1: “Sind Sie stolz, Deutsche(r) zu sein? Würden Sie sagen ...”

(1, sehr stolz; 4, gar nicht stolz)

Nat-2: “Ich bin auf die deutsche Geschichte ...”

(1, überhaupt nicht stolz; 5, sehr stolz)

Nat-3: “Ich bin auf die deutschen Erfolge im Sport ...”

(1, überhaupt nicht stolz; 5, sehr stolz)

Nat-4: “Ich bin darauf stolz, dass Deutschland in Europa die Nr. 1 ist ...”

(1, überhaupt nicht stolz; 5, sehr stolz)

Pat-1: “Ich bin auf die demokratischen Institutionen Deutschlands ...”

(1, überhaupt nicht stolz; 5, sehr stolz)

Pat-2: “Ich bin auf die sozialstaatlichen Leistungen Deutschlands ...”

(1, überhaupt nicht stolz; 5, sehr stolz)

Pat-3: “Ich bin auf die politischen Mitbestimmungsmöglichkeiten in Deutschland ...”

(1, überhaupt nicht stolz; 5, sehr stolz)

7.3.2 Item Wording (*Blank and Schmidt 2003; English*)

Ident-1: “For me, to be a citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany is ...”

(1, not important at all; 7, very important)

Ident-2: “For me, to have an inner tie to Germany means ...”

(1, nothing at all; 7, very much)

Ident-3: “For me, to possess citizenship is ...”

(1, not important at all; 7, very important)

Nat-1: “Are you proud to be German? Would you say ...”

(1, very proud; 4, not proud at all)

Nat-2: “German history makes me feel ...”

(1, not proud at all; 5, very proud)

Nat-3: “German success in sports makes me feel ...”

(1, not proud at all; 5, very proud)

Nat-4: “The fact that Germany is the number one in Europe makes me feel ...”

(1, not proud at all; 5, very proud)

Nat-5: "Due to Germany's economic superiority, we rightly dominate international decisions."

(1, fully disagree; 7, fully agree)

Nat-6: "For me, Germany is the best country in the world."

(1, fully disagree; 7, fully agree)

Nat-7: "The morale of the Germans should be a role model for other nations."

(1, fully disagree; 7, fully agree)

Pat-1: "Germany's democratic institutions make me feel ..."

(1, not proud at all; 7, very proud)

Pat-2: "Germany's social security system makes me feel ..."

(1, not proud at all; 7, very proud)

Pat-3: "The possibilities for political participation in Germany make me feel ..."

(1, not proud at all; 7, very proud)

Pat-4: "When I criticize the Federal Republic of Germany, I do that out of allegiance to my country."

(1, totally disagree; 7, totally agree)

Pat-5: "If one feels allegiant to one's country, one should try to mend its problems."

(1, totally disagree; 7, totally agree)

Pat-6: "I appreciate the German democratic system very much, but I am willing to criticize it in order to achieve further improvement."

(1, totally disagree; 7, totally agree)

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