



Sociology 1 - American Identity and Its Relationship to Polarization

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Forms of National Attachment

- Can be defined in multiple different ways, but we'll just focus on one study [\[DA15\]](#).
- **National Identity**
- Symbolic Patriotism
- Constructive Patriotism
- Uncritical Patriotism
- Typically measured using self-reported surveys.



National Identity

This refers to the concept of identifying with a certain nation.

- *How important is being American to you?*
- *To what extent do you see yourself as a typical American?*
- *How well does the term American describe you?*

This is a preferred method of measuring national attachment, since it should be less ideologically divisive than other measures of national attachment.



What Do We Mean by “Affective Polarization”?

- Refers to animosity between two different groups [DA18]
- We will typically discuss this in regards to political polarization.
- This can be applied to multiple different frameworks, rather than just politics.
 - Racial polarization
 - Social polarization
- Also typically measured using self-reported surveys



American Identity and Ethnicity

- Consider the relationship between national and ethnic identities.
- National policies can affect certain populations of people.
 - Arab Muslims in Israel are not included in military conscription
 - Discriminatory housing policies against African-American populations.
- Groups that were the target of systemic oppression (such as ethnic minorities) tend to have an inverse correlation between ethnic identity and national identity [\[DA16\]](#).
 - Low national identity, high ethnic identity



The Relationship Between American Identity and Affective Polarization

- We can encourage a reduction in affective polarization by heightening a sense of national identity [DA17].
- This causes people to view partisans of the opposing party (in this case Democrats and Republicans) more positively.
 - Common identity as Americans, rather than opposing partisans
- Shown to be effective during national holidays like the Fourth of July.
- Will be less effective on ethnic minority populations due to low national identity.



Summary

- We measure national attachment through the metric of **national identity**
 - Preferred due to its nonpartisan nature.
- Minority populations tend to identify more with their ethnic group than with their nation.
- Affective polarization refers to the animosity between two groups of people. (e.g. Democrats and Republicans)
- Affective polarization can be reduced by encouraging sentiments of national identity



Works Cited

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Symbolic Patriotism

This refers to being attached to the specific **symbols** of a nation.

- *How good does it make you feel when you see the American flag flying?*
- *How good does it make you feel when you hear the national anthem?*



Constructive Patriotism

This refers to wanting to improve a nation due to attachment to it.

- *If I criticize the United States, I do so out of love for the country.*
- *I oppose some U.S. policies because I care about my country and want to improve it.*



Uncritical Patriotism

This refers to being supportive of a nation, regardless of its perceived flaws.

- *I support my country's leaders even if I disagree with their actions.*
- *There is too much criticism of the U.S. in the world, and we as its citizens should not criticize it.*