Alternative Measures of American National Identity: Implications for the Civic-Ethnic Distinction

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Studies of national identity distinguish between ethnic and civic nations and have sought to identify these alternative conceptions of national identity in public opinion. The standard measurement technique is to assess the normative content of American national identity by asking survey respondents to rate *the importance of particular traits for making someone a "true" American. We argue that such measures are problematic, chiefly because of the impact of nonrandom measurement error. We explore the influence of using* ranking *measures instead of ratings, using a survey experiment conducted on a nationally representative sample of Americans in 2008. The ranking method is superior for distinguishing between ethnic and civic conceptions of nationhood and, therefore, for predicting preferences on issues such as immigration policy. We develop a new statistical method that effectively "converts" ratings into scores that approximate rankings, resulting in the creation of more valid measures of both ethnic and civic national identities.*

KEY WORDS: national identity, pubic opinion, United States, ethnic identity, civic identity

In a world of economic globalization and international migration, what is the staying power of national identities and how do these identities shape public reactions to demographic and cultural changes? In addressing these issues, there is an emerging consensus that the "normative content" of a nation's identity—the criteria that define membership in the nation and the values and traits that are consensually recognized as distinguishing "nationals" from "others"—should be distinguished from the affective dimension of this attitude (i.e., love of and pride in one's country; e.g., Citrin & Sears, 2009; Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Theiss-Morse, 2009). In short, people who love their country and prioritize their national identity above all other affiliations might nonetheless use different criteria for what it means to be American, German, French, and so forth (Citrin & Sears, 2009; Theiss-Morse, 2009).

This analytical distinction between the affective and normative dimensions of national identity has yielded the hypothesis that differences in how one draws the boundaries of nationhood (or normative content) have an independent effect on public preferences on a range of issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, and the inclusiveness of the welfare state (Citrin & Sides, 2008). To

test this proposition, it is critical to develop valid measures for capturing alternative conceptions of national identity, and it is this task that is at the heart of the present article.

The distinction between "ethnic" and "civic" nations (e.g., Brubaker, 1992; Greenfeld, 1992) remains the dominant contrast in typologies of nationhood. While the classification of nations as either ethnic or civic typically is based on a country's laws, literature, and official statements, recent cross-national studies using factor analysis have probed whether these alternative conceptions of nationalism emerge as contrasting images in mass public opinion.[1] This inquiry into the latent structure of beliefs about nationhood is a prelude to exploring *implications* of each conception for theoretically expected differences in policy preferences, an exercise that bears on the construct validity of the measures constructed from factor analyses or other techniques.

We use data from a survey experiment to argue that the *method* used to measure the normative content of national identity has a significant influence on the consequences of "ethnic" or "civic" nationalism for policy trade-offs in the realm of immigration policy. Specifically, when respondents are asked to *rate* a set of traits in terms of their importance for making someone a "true" American (the standard approach in the literature), the ethnic-civic distinction has less discriminant validity in the sense of the distinctive ability to explain other policy preferences of survey respondents. In contrast, we show that the theoretically predicted differences in opinion on immigration policy consistently emerge when the ethnic-civic distinction is captured by a method asking respondents to rank the relative importance of various markers of "Americanism." We then devise a method of adjusting classifications based on ratings that improve the construct validity of the measures along the lines achieved by rankings.

Contrasting Ethnic and Civic Nationalism

Increased ethnic diversity in a democratic polity is widely believed to be a potential threat to social solidarity and civil peace (e.g., Harell & Stolle, 2010). In this context, an inclusive conception of nationality is thought to be essential for social harmony in multiethnic societies for several reasons. For one thing, a strong sense of national attachment should increase the likelihood that citizens will place trust in both their fellow citizens and the institutions of government (Miller, 1995). A strong sense of collective identity also enhances the prioritization of group welfare over individualism in decision making (Kramer & Brewer, 1984). Finally, from the perspective of intergroup relations, the existence of a strong overarching national identity can mitigate competition between societal subgroups (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Transue, 2007).

Liberal nationalists (Miller, 1995) claim that national identity functions as a social "glue" that binds disparate groups together as a cooperative team for whom the motto of all-for-one applies. But even if one accepts that a strong sense of national identity is a public good because it fosters a sense of mutual obligation with all conationals, the question remains of how the line is drawn between "us," the national ingroup, and "them," the outsiders. The importance of this boundary and its permeability matters by demarcating the limits to fellow-feeling and loyalty (Theiss-Morse, 2009). And these boundaries are not simply questions of residence in a country or even citizenship, as the public's subjective definition of who belongs to the nation may diverge from these formal objective criteria.

The ethnic nation, exemplified by Germany and Japan, defines itself on the principle of descent; the nation is a marriage of blood and soil. Objective and ascriptive criteria define whether one is

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[1] For work on the American case, see: Citrin, Reingold, and Green (1990); Citrin, Haas, Muste, and Reingold (1994); Schildkraut (2007); and Theiss-Morse (2009). Rothi, Lyons, and Chryssochoou (2005) and Heath and Tilley (2005) study the British case; Lewin-Epstein and Levanon (2005) focus on Israel, and Shulman (2004) studies national identity in the Ukraine. For comparative approaches to these questions, see Arts and Halman (2006), Hjerm (1998), Jones and Smith (2001), Kunovich (2009), Rusciano (2003), Shulman (2002), and Wright (2011).

considered a "national" or not, and citizenship is in turn accorded along *jus sanguinis* principles. By contrast, the boundaries of the civic nation, exemplified by France and the United States, are permeable; in principle, anyone can belong provided he or she accepts certain fundamental values and institutions. Civic nations thus are often characterized as voluntarist and inclusive, and citizenship is accorded based on *jus soli* principles.

The theoretical distinction between these nationalist types implies differences in how trade-offs in the realm of immigration policy would be made. "Ethnic" nations should be more wary of immigration than "civic" counterparts, especially when the vast majority of new immigrants are ethnically, religiously, and linguistically distinct from the dominant group among the native population. Furthermore, we hypothesize that in ethnic nations, the public would prefer that immigrants who are allowed in should be chosen on the basis of cultural similarity rather than the more "civic" notion of skills and education, willingness to work, or the willingness to obey laws and respect the adoptive nation's political institutions.

The empirical evidence for these surmises is mixed in a way that has influenced our present research design. On the one hand, the linkage between "ethnic" nationalism in mass publics and hostility to outsiders has been well-established; "ethnocultural" conceptions of U.S. identity are associated with nativism and ethnic prejudice, as well as a more general preference for cultural homogeneity rather than diversity; in the policy realm, this translates to more hawkish foreign policy attitudes, decreased support for policies that maintain or encourage cultural diversity, and tighter restrictions on immigration, language, and citizenship laws.[2] What is more, this finding does appear to hold in other countries too. Researchers employing European data have shown that "ethnic" conceptions of the nation are associated with higher perceived threats from immigration, the desire to decrease immigration levels, and the preference for minorities to integrate rather than maintain their own cultures and traditions (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2008; Citrin & Sides, 2008; Kunovich, 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009; Wright, 2011).

On the other hand, the predicted effects of "civic" nationalism in public opinion do not appear as clearly or consistently. Factor-analytic explorations of standard measures tapping the perceived importance of ethnic and civic traits in defining nationhood do tend to produce two latent dimensions (e.g., Jones & Smith, 2001), but these often are highly correlated rather than standing in opposition to each other (Citrin & Wright, 2008). And when these summary measures of ethnic and civic national identity are employed to predict policy attitudes, the theoretical expectation of divergent outcomes does not materialize. Rather, *both* the ethno-cultural and the civic conceptions of national identity are associated with political conservatism and right-wing party affiliation, measures of both patriotism and chauvinism, and anti-immigrant attitudes, although the statistical relationships are stronger in the former case (Citrin & Wright, 2008; Schildkraut, 2007).

One possible explanation of this seemingly anomalous outcome is that "civic" nationalism is not a "genuine" or deeply socialized attitude and thus will not be strongly linked to other beliefs. Another is that "civic" and "ethnic" nationalism are both, at root, exclusionary in nature, with the former being nothing but a diluted version of the latter (e.g., Brubaker, 2004). We explore an alternative explanation for the theoretically unsatisfying results cited above and argue that they are at least in part the product of a particular measurement strategy. Specifically, we claim that the puzzling failure of civic nationalism to predict liberal immigration policy opinions is due to flaws in the method used to ask about the normative content of nationhood. We therefore develop an alternative method and consider whether it results in a more valid measure of national identity that captures the predicted difference between ethnic and civic perspectives in a theoretically plausible way.

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[2] Examples include Citrin et al. (1990, 1994), Schildkraut (2007), and Theiss-Morse (2009).

How Important Are Ascriptive and Civic Traits? Ratings versus Rankings

The data we employ comes from a survey experiment embedded in the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, an online, postelection interview of a national sample of 1,000 Americans conducted by Polimetrix.[3] The list of normative attributes defining "American-ness" included the following eight elements, most of which replicate traits queried in major national and cross-national surveys on the topic: "being born in America," "being Christian," "speaking English," "respecting America's institutions and laws," "feeling like an American," "getting ahead on one's own through hard work," "treating people equally," and "being involved in politics."[4]

This method was pioneered by Citrin et al. (1990) and used in modified form by Schildkraut (2007) and Theiss-Morse (2009). Although these authors did not explicitly refer to the ethnic-civic distinction or necessarily seek to capture it, their terminology and the hypotheses relating to the consequences of alternative conceptions of national identity are quite similar to those spelled out here. Citrin et al. contrasted liberal (civic) orientations with nativist (ethnic) views. Schildkraut also distinguished among liberal and ethnocultural conceptions of American identity, and Theiss-Morse referred to ideas of national identity based on rigid (ethnic) versus permeable (civic) boundaries. We therefore believe that the conceptual distinction explored here not only has solid footing in the historical literature on nationalism, but also parallels other efforts to identify ideas about nationhood in the mass public.

The relevant question at this point is which of these items are ethnic or what we shall call "ascriptive," and which are civic in character?[5] On theoretical grounds, it makes sense to assume that nativity falls into the former category, since people are either born in America or they are not. Christianity, though not *necessarily* ascriptive, is universally treated in the national identity literature as part of an "ethnic" or "ethno-cultural" dimension. On the other hand, both respect for a country's institutions and laws and the belief that it is important to treat people equally constitute the core of the "civic" or political conception of American identity. Where the remaining items fit is less clear, either in conceptual terms or empirically (Citrin & Wright, 2008; Jones & Smith, 2001; Kunovich, 2009; Reeskens, Hooghe, & Meuleman, 2008). As a result, we elide the difficult question of where to classify the more ambiguous items, focusing here on the nativity and Christianity as exemplars of "ascriptive" or ethnic traits, and respect for institutions and laws and treating people equally as civic attributes of national identity.

Our research design randomly assigned survey respondents into one of two treatment groups. One group was asked to *rate* the importance of our set of attributes in making one a "true American (from "not at all important" to "very important"). This rating method of measurement, as noted above, has become the standard practice in public opinion work on the ethnic/civic divide, as typified by the GSS/ISSP and other major national surveys (Schildkraut, 2007; Theiss-Morse, 2009). The other half of our CCES respondents was presented the same set of items, but they were asked to *rank* them in order of their importance for making someone a true American. This ranking technique has not—to our knowledge—appeared in other survey research on national identity.

[3] The CCES was a cooperative study involving 33 universities and organizations, each of which designed a module of questions that was administered online to a national sample of 1,000 respondents. In addition, the combined sample of approximately 30,000 respondents received a common set of questions centered on the 2008 election.

[4] The items pertaining to nativity, Christianity, language ability, respecting institutions and laws, and "feeling American" directly replicate questions asked in the General Social Survey's topical module on national identity and its cross-national extension to the International Social Survey Program's "National Identity Module" (fielded in 1995/1996 and 2003/2004). The others are similar in spirit to Schildkraut's (2007) closer analysis of the American case.

[5] From this point forward, we opt for the term "ascriptive" instead of "ethnic," largely because the case for determining that a trait is "ethnic" in character is rarely self-evident and always debatable. For instance, one's claim that being born in America does not necessarily imply anything about ethnicity per se, though it may indeed have ethnic connotations to the individuals being queried. By contrast, the idea that a trait is "ascriptive" rather than "ethnic" is clearer.

Table 1. Normative Conceptions of American National Identity

Importance	Christian	Born in America	Respect for Institutions and Laws	Treating People Equally
Very	33.3%	28.9%	73.9%	80.5%
Somewhat	18.8	18.3	23.0	16.0
Not Very	17.8	31.7	2.4	2.6
Not at All	30.1	21.1	0.7	0.9

Note: Cell entries are percentages. Sample includes only native-born Americans who answered all four questions. Total *n* for each column is 426. Source: CCES Survey.

Table 2. Frequency of Rankings by Questions

Rank	Christianity	Nativity	Respect For Institutions and Laws	Treating People of All Backgrounds Equally
1	6.2%	16.1%	28.8%	20.1%
2	2.7	7.0	24.8	16.2
3	4.6	6.6	20.3	14.5
4	5.0	8.9	10.1	13.7
5	4.6	9.5	7.9	13.9
6	9.7	15.7	3.7	9.7
7	17.4	22.8	2.5	6.8
8	49.9	13.3	1.9	5.2

Note: Sample includes only native-born respondents. Total *n* = 483.

Table 1 presents the familiar importance *ratings* assigned by respondents in the 2008 CCES internet survey. What stands out is the remarkable degree of consensus on the importance of the items that are "civic" in character: overwhelming majorities say that respect for institutions and laws and treating people equally and "feeling American" are "very" or "somewhat" important, and only tiny minorities express the opinion that these traits are unimportant. By contrast, the ascriptive traits of Christianity and nativity are both contested: the sample is roughly split in half between individuals who feel that these traits are "very" or "somewhat important" for making someone a true American, on the one hand, versus "not very important" or "not at all important" on the other. These results are completely consistent with previous research using the rating technique for these items (Citrin et al., 1990; Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001; Schildkraut, 2007; Theiss-Morse, 2009).

When asked to rank these same items, individuals are forced to choose among these questions and cannot give several the same level of importance. Table 2 depicts the frequencies at which each attribute is ranked 1st–8th in the CCES sample. In one sense, the ranking technique does not appear to fundamentally change the *structure* of respondents' priorities. The ranking of civic items are higher on average than that the ranking of the ascribed ones: "respect for the country's institutions and laws" received the most first choices (29%), followed by the egalitarian value of "treating people of all backgrounds equally" (20%). This roughly parallels the pattern of choices made by the ratings subgroup of respondents. However, the ranks do highlight possible incompatibilities related to the method of measurement. Fewer respondents rank ascriptive traits in the top half of the rankings than rating these as very or somewhat important. Nativity was given the highest importance by 15% of the CCES respondents, but another clearly ethnic criterion, Christianity, was least likely to be ranked first (6%).

Survey respondents in both treatment groups of our experiment were asked two further questions about alternative positions in immigration policy. The first asked whether the current level of immigration into the United States should be increased, decreased, or left the same. For the purpose

of this article, we dichotomize this measure into two categories: in the first, immigration should be decreased; in the second, immigration should be increased or left the same. The second item asks respondents whether the government should give preference to immigrants who have good work skills and education but do not speak English or to those who speak English but lack education and skills. This second item seeks to capture whether respondents favor more "ascriptive" criteria for immigrants (language ability) versus more "civic" ones (education and work skills).[6]

Evaluating the Two Methods of Measuring National Identity

Our primary purpose here is to assess the validity of widely used measures of national identity, focusing on the relative worth of measures based on ratings and rankings, respectively. The key question is whether our conception of the structure of theoretically predicted relationships between ethnic and civic conceptions of identity and other relevant attitudes changes purely as a function of how the former is measured.

Both rating and ranking instruments in surveys have a long history for measuring responses that do not have a natural metric scale, and debates over their measurement properties are almost as long-lived. One debate focuses on when and how it is possible to compare individuals on the basis of loosely defined categorical ratings. Most researchers studying national identity, such as ourselves, observe only individuals selecting from a set ordered Likert-type categories (Likert, 1932), ranging from unimportant to very important. The problems of interpersonal incomparability of ordered rating scales has a long history (McGarvey, 1943; Torgerson, 1958). Most solutions are based on either having a rating of common, objective items rated by all individuals on the same scale (Aldrich & McKelvey, 1977; King, Murray, Salomon, & Tandon, 2004; King & Wand, 2007; Wand, forthcoming) or on employing a parametric scaling method using repeated measures (e.g., Javaras & Ripley, 2007). These approaches are not applicable in this case, since adding multiple anchors for each national identity component, or asking essentially the same questions in multiple ways, would make surveys prohibitively long and likely raise their own measurement problems resulting from respondent fatigue.

Another concern is over the ability of respondents to make reliable rankings. In contrast to the relatively simple task of rating items, which can be done sequentially, rankings require an individual to keep track of and compare multiple items at once. There is a fear that the cognitive engagement required to make a complete set of direct comparisons between large sets of items is simply beyond what most survey respondents are willing (or able) to perform (Alwin & Krosnick, 1985). Moreover, respondents who see no difference between two options are required in ranking methods to make meaningless distinctions.

We contribute to the advance of these debates in two ways. First, we demonstrate the inferential problems related to the use of individual ratings items for predicting policy positions of respondents; these problems do not, however, affect the individual ranking items. However, we advocate that researchers do not rely on the individual items or scales based on the items. Instead, our second contribution is to demonstrate how we can cluster respondents by national identity type using either ratings or rankings as raw materials, but using only rank information, even if attitudes are originally measured as ratings. Our clustering of individuals provides more valid predictions about policy preference (that is, greater construct validity) than either the individual rank or rating items.

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[6] The precise wordings of these items are: "Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to live in the United States should be . . . increased a lot, increased, left the same, decreased, or decreased a lot?" and "In allowing people to legally immigrate to the United States, should the government give preference to people who have good educational qualifications and work skills even if they cannot speak English, or people who can speak English even if they do not have good educational qualifications and work skills?" respectively. It is true that English language ability may not be an "ethnic" trait per se, but it is certainly more so than work skills and education. It is also less likely to elicit biases based on social desirability than asking about, say, "whiteness."

We begin by considering the individual ratings and ranking items. If the measures of "ethnic" and "civic" nationality are valid, then as the importance of ascriptive traits in demarcating the "true national" increase, the likelihood that respondents will favor *decreasing* overall immigration levels should also increase, as should their desire to select immigrants on the basis of culture rather than education or skills. By contrast, as the importance of civic traits increases, individuals should be less supportive of decreasing overall immigration levels, and more likely to favor education or skills over culture in choosing what types of people should be allowed to immigrate. We summarize these hypotheses both in terms of the signs of association and in terms of conditional probabilities in Table 3.

Table 4 provides parameter estimates from bivariate logistic regression models regressing the two policy trade-offs on each of the four *rated* traits. While the ascriptive variables have the expected sign and are significantly associated with the more exclusionary responses on both policy issues, this is not the case for the civic variables under the ratings method. In only one of the four bivariate models is the relationship both correctly signed and statistically significant. By contrast, the ranking measurement method produces consistently negative relationships with our outcomes as hypothesized.

So, as in previous research on the attitudinal consequences of nationalism, scores based on individuals' ratings of ascriptive traits generally predict policy trade-offs in a predictable way, whereas scores based on the rated importance of civic traits do not (Citrin & Wright, 2008; Kunovich, 2009). Previous research reaching the same conclusion typically used additive indices or factor scores, but the fact that the puzzle remains whatever the scoring method for ratings responses underscores that the problem lies with the properties of the civic trait ratings themselves. A solution

Table 3. Theoretical Predictions about the Relationship between Ascribed/Civic Nationalism and Policy Trade-Offs

Predictions	Correlations		Conditional Probabilities	
	Ascriptive	Civic	Ascriptive	Civic
Immigration Levels Should Be Decreased	+	−	High	Low
Language Preferred Over Skills and Education	+	−	High	Low

Table 4. Bivariate Logistic Regressions Predicting the Propensity for More "Ascriptive" Trade-Off Choices as a Function of Ratings

		Decrease Immigration Level			English over Skills/Education		
		Estimate	Std. Error	p	Estimate	Std. Error	p
Ratings	Christian	1.20	0.28	0.00	1.25	0.27	0.00
	Born in U.S.	1.81	0.32	0.00	1.91	0.32	0.00
	Respect for Institutions and Laws	0.63	0.65	0.33	1.08	0.65	0.10
	Treat All Others Equally	−4.32	1.01	0.00	−0.40	0.64	0.54
	n		328			353	
Rankings	Christian	2.26	0.45	0.00	1.95	0.36	0.00
	Born in U.S.	0.98	0.32	0.00	0.75	0.30	0.01
	Respect for Institutions and Laws	−0.89	0.44	0.05	−1.23	0.42	0.00
	Treat All Others Equally	−1.63	0.37	0.00	−1.73	0.36	0.00
	n		368			404	

Note: Each parameter estimate is produced from a bivariate logistic regression. Sample includes only native-born respondents who answered all four items with each measurement category.

Table 5. Exploring the Implications of Ratings Items as "Most Important" or as Top-Ranked on Immigration Policy Trade-Offs, Conditional Probabilities

		Born	Christian	Laws	Equal	MaxDiff	MinDiff
Rating	*Dec Immig*	76	68	58	50	$76 - 50 = 26$	$68 - 58 = 10$
Ranking	*Dec Immig*	75	82	48	40	$75 - 40 = 35$	$75 - 48 = 27$
Rating	*Language*	63	54	44	39	$63 - 39 = 24$	$54 - 44 = 10$
Ranking	*Language*	52	54	30	21	$54 - 21 = 33$	$52 - 30 = 28$

Note: Cell entries are percentages. *MaxDiff* = biggest difference between ascriptive and civil. *MinDiff* = smallest difference. P = probability that ascriptive is same as civic. Source: CCES 2008.

that follows from our survey experiment is to use rankings instead, which consistently produce the expected results.

An alternative way of testing the hypotheses summarized in Table 3 is to measure the predicted relationships in terms of conditional probabilities rather than bivariate correlations. This approach is different in that it is based on comparisons between those that rate or rank ascriptive and civic items as individually important. Because there is no a priori theory of what "high" or "low" levels of policy support on the outcome variables are to be expected, we adjudicate which measurement method better distinguishes among respondents as a function of the size of the gap in the attitudes of ascriptive and civic types for a given question.

Table 5 summarizes the estimated probabilities of responses to our two policy trade-offs, conditional on the respondents being either highly "ascriptive" or highly civic nationals.[7] In this table, we see that both the rating and ranking methods capture the main differences in priorities: regardless of the measurement method, the higher a respondent's scores on the "ascriptive" traits, the more likely he or she is to want to restrict immigration and to favor language over education/skills in allocating visa preferences.

But rankings and ratings do differ significantly in *how well* they predict attitudes on policy trade-offs, with the ranking procedure clearly more effective. Using ratings, the gap between the ascriptive and civic support for decreasing immigration is at most 26 points (76%–50%), and the gap in desired immigrant type is 24 (63%–39%). By contrast, ranking produces differences of 42 (82%–40%) and 45 points (65%–20%), respectively. Thus, on two counts we see that rankings work better than ratings: (1) they are better at mapping the bivariate relationships between the importance of each type of national identity on policy preferences, and (2) they better help us classify behavior.

Identifying Civic and Ascriptive National Identities

The value of the individual survey questions is in indicating whether an individual is ascriptive or civic minded in their conceptualization of national identity. This orientation can be conceived of as a continuum, but it is generally thought that there is a meaningful dichotomy of outlooks that it is important to capture. In this section, we provide a new perspective on how the ratings and rankings measures contribute to our ability to classify these distinct outlooks and how well these classifications predict policy positions.

The classification is based on combining information from the individual components studied in detail in the previous section. The traditional approach is to use an additive scale of rating measures. Even when transformed by factor scores, the use of ratings is simply a weighted average of ratings.

[7] For the ratings, we isolated respondents expressing the attitude that each trait was "very important" (versus all other valid responses), and for the rankings we isolated respondents who ranked each trait either first or second in terms of importance but did not rank either trait of the opposite category in the top two.

As such, the scales depend on the individual rating being on average correct. The goal of the prior section was to show how the individual components of rating and ranking measures related to policy preferences. What we showed was that the conventional ratings-based measures of civic national identity produce dubious results in terms of predicting policy preferences. In contrast, using rankings to measure subjective conceptions of national identity produces more valid measures of both civic and ethnic outlooks.

The proposal we outline below is different from the standard use of scales to compare respondents. Instead, we derive a classification of respondents based on the relative placement of the individual survey questions. In the case of the ranking questions, the calculation of the relative placement of the items adheres intrinsically to the survey instrument. In the case of ratings, there is the challenge of dealing with responses that are tied. Our innovation is in showing how to determine a classification of respondent types from these relative placements. The result is a clearer understanding of (a) the distribution of respondent types, and (b) the mapping between respondent types and policy preferences.

From a methodological perspective, we also gain a key insight on the use of rankings and ratings. The skeptical view of ratings that follows from studying them individually or as an additive scale is replaced by a happier view of their utility. It is possible to gain the same information from these easy-to-administer questions as it is from the more demanding ranking information.

A Method for Classification

The logic of measuring the distinct types of national identity is that respondents who are civic-minded should rate (or rank) civic questions consistently as more important than ethnic ones. Conversely, ascriptive-minded respondents should rate those ascriptive items consistently more important than civic ones. We sharpen this common intuition to extract essential information from both ratings and rankings measures.

Quite simply, respondents are classified as either civic or ascriptive based on how they prioritize the importance of each domain over the other. In the case of either ratings or rankings, we classify respondents as civic if their scores of both respect for laws and treating people equally are higher than their scores for each ascriptive trait. Conversely, individuals are classified as ascriptive if both ascriptive traits are scored above each of the civic ones. The key aspect of this transformation of the data is that they do not rely on the particular values of the ratings or ranking values, only the relative placement of different types (ascriptive or civic) of items.

Not all respondents conform to this simple dichotomy. We find this lack of clean structure is important in and of itself, and we will discuss the distribution of different types of responses in turn. The challenge of accurate classification increases further in the case of ratings where respondents may give multiple items the same rating. In the case of rankings, we will refer to "partial ascriptive" as those individuals who are not pure ascriptives but rank either of the ascriptive traits higher than both of the civic items. These are people who clearly value the importance of one of the ascriptive items, but not to the extent that they are willing to consider them clearly more important than the civic ones. In the case of ratings, we classify partial ascriptive as anyone who rated the importance of either ascriptive trait as more important or tied in importance with both of the civic ones. For example, an individual claiming that Christianity is "very important" in addition to both civic traits being "very important" as well qualifies as partially ascriptive. The respondents who are not classifiable as either outright civic or pure/partial ascriptive nationalists are referred to simply as being unstructured. This is a statement only about how they use the response scales. As we will show, their responses are not unstructured, and indeed they look quite like the ascriptive respondents. The view that ultimately emerges is that there really are only two types of respondents: those who are "pure" civic nationalists and the rest, who are more ascriptive.

The Distribution of National Identities

Table 6 presents the distribution of respondents in these various categories. In both the transformation of rankings and of ratings, most respondents fall into one of our three substantively meaningful categories. Notably, the plurality of respondents fall into the clearly civic category, and only a small fraction are clearly ascriptive. Compared to the pure ascriptive types, many more respondents are classified as partial ascriptive. In the analysis that follows, we collapse these latter two categories into a single ascriptive one. Combining the partial and pure ascriptive categories is not based on the view that there are not potential differences, but the practical consideration that the number of pure ascriptive is so small as to preclude a separate analysis.

Following on the analysis of policy trade-offs considered in the previous section, we again consider whether these categorizations predict beliefs about immigration policy trade-offs. If our classification of national identity for each individual is useful, it should discriminate among the policy trade-off questions at least as well and likely better than the predictions produced by the best of the individual items.

Table 7 shows the policy responses by national identity respondents classified according to their type of national identity. The pattern of policy positions is very much in line with our theoretical expectations, regardless of whether the classification is based on ratings or rankings batteries. By a large margin, ascriptive respondents are more likely than civic respondents to want to decrease immigration levels overall, and more likely to favor English language ability over skills and education.

Table 6. Categorizing Respondents Based on Relative Ratings or Rankings across Ascriptive and Civic Traits

Category	Method of Measurement	
	Rankings	Ratings
Clearly Civic	55% (265)	44% (189)
Clearly Ascriptive	5% (24)	1% (4)
Partially Ascriptive	18% (88)	43% (183)
Unstructured	22% (106)	12% (50)
Total	483	426

Note: Cells depict percentages, with *n* in parentheses. Source: CCES Survey.

Table 7. Predicting Policy Trade-Offs Using Relative Categorizations

		Desired Immigration Level				Preferred Immigrant Characteristic			
		Increased or Left the Same	Decreased	DK	*n*	Skills	Language	DK	*n*
Ratings	Clear Civic	.47	.32	.21	189	.60	.23	.17	189
	Clearly/Partially Ascriptive	.19	.56	.25	187	.36	.47	.18	187
	Unstructured	.26	.50	.24	50	.50	.34	.16	50
Rankings	Clear Civic	.42	.35	.23	265	.63	.22	.14	265
	Clearly/Partially Ascriptive	.20	.53	.28	112	.36	.43	.21	112
	Unstructured	.25	.53	.22	106	.41	.43	.16	106

Note: Cells depict probabilities of each response outcome, conditional on categorization (within measurement method). Source: CCES Survey.

Compared to the results in Table 5, the classifications produce bigger differences in policy support than even the maximal gaps found among the individual questions. Classifying individuals using information in all their responses is better than even the best (post hoc selected) individual questions for discriminating policy preferences.

The responses of those classified as having unstructured views are also noteworthy. In particular, their policy preferences are neither the average of the civic and ascriptive types, nor are they evenly divided. Rather they resemble those of ascriptive respondents much more than clear civic ones. This behavior suggests that there are really only two types of people: pure civics and the rest, ascriptives and quasi-ascriptives. While the modal respondent provides pure civic responses, the majority of respondents are acting in a manner that reflects ascriptive attitudes.

Methodologically, Table 7 also provides a key insight into the debate over the use of ratings and rankings. The quality of the discrimination in policy preferences using ratings-based classifications is not significantly different from those based on classification by rankings. Although ratings are subject to many problems (order effects, ceiling effects, ties), they nonetheless contain the same information. This is of particular importance for scholars of national identity in two ways. First, it shows that existing survey data that contain only rating measures can be transformed to produce meaningful classifications of national identity types. Second, our understanding of national identity is not simply an artifact of a particular method of survey instruments. Researchers may make different principled and practical trade-offs for using ratings or rankings in measuring the types of attitudes explored here but, properly transformed, our understanding is the same.

Conclusion

This purpose of this article is to explore the political implications of differences in the normative content of national identities. By normative content, we mean the ideas and rules that establish the boundaries of membership in the nation. Drawing on the historical literature about nationalism, we focused on the distinction between ethnic and civic criteria for nationhood, a distinction that has become increasingly relevant as immigration is changing the composition of culturally homogeneous states. Building on prior research measuring public beliefs about the attributes defining "true" nationals, we tested the hypothesis that "ethnic" (or "ascriptive") and "civic" conceptions of national identity would have different implications for citizens' policy preferences, using immigration policy as a case study. The catalyst for our survey experiment was the puzzling finding in previous research that while ethnic (or what we call ascriptive) nationalism tends to be correlated with more restrictive and exclusionary preferences about immigration as predicted, the expectation that civic nationalism engenders more open and tolerant policy preferences is not borne out (Citrin & Wright, 2008; Kunovich, 2009).

In seeking to resolve this puzzle, we focused on the possibility that the standard method of asking respondents to rate the importance of a list of traits might mask the "true" effect of civic nationalism by allowing for end-piling at the positive end of the response distribution. We therefore explored whether an alternative method of measurement, a ranking technique, would overcome the influence of nonrandom measurement error and provide for more valid measures of the civic variant of nationhood.

Ratings and rankings-based measures appear to be distributed similarly at the univariate level. On the whole, Americans' prevailing definition of their nation appears to be limned along civic lines. In the ranking treatment group, virtually all respondents ranked respect for institutions and laws and "treating people equally" very highly. In the rating treatment group, an overwhelming majority rated these criteria as either very or somewhat important. The importance of ascriptive traits such as nativity or Christianity is much more highly contested, and in both treatment groups they were endorsed much less frequently than the civic traits.

Once we moved to consider what the policy *implications* of these ascriptive and civic orientations are, the limitations of a ratings-based approach emerged. Whether classified by ratings or rankings, those with ethnic conceptions of nation were, as theory would predict, more likely to want to reduce immigration levels and more likely to favor selecting immigrants on the basis of language rather than education or work skills. But only the *ranking* method produced the predicted association between a civic conception of nationhood and the more "liberal" or culturally inclusive position on these issues. We conclude, therefore, that in terms of construct validity, the rankings procedure is a superior method of measurement (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955).

This is not to say that the ratings method should be consigned to the dustbin of measurement history. For one thing, most of the available surveys now widely used in secondary analysis employed the ratings method, and the interest in trend data surely means that the approach will not be abandoned. It also must be acknowledged that the ratings method is much easier to implement.

For this reason, we explored ways of using the information provided by ratings to create quasi-rankings. The key, we believe, is to categorize respondents based on the rated importance of either ascriptive or civic traits relative to that of traits in the opposing category. In other words, rather than looking at the rated importance of individual ascriptive or civic traits in isolation (or, for that matter, multiple-indicator indices based on these disparate conceptions), it is better to consider their importance in relation to each other. In so doing, we can categorize people according to whether they are "clearly" or "partially" ascriptive, "clearly civic," or "unstructured" in terms of these attitudes.[8] Not only does this approach create both civic and ascriptive categories that predict policy trade-offs approximately as well as the rankings do, but it also yields the observation that most people who are not clearly civic (even if their attitudes are unstructured) tend to behave much more along the lines of "ascriptve" nationalists in these outcomes.

Due to data limitations, this study's comparison of the validity of alternative methods of measuring the normative content of national identity considered just one policy domain: immigration policy. Additional tests should consider the implications of ascriptive and civic outlooks for other issues such as access to welfare state services, language policy, and multiculturalism, among others. Using the improved methods of measurement proposed here, this broader research program would help establish the degree to which distinctive conceptions of national identity shape the policy preferences of mass publics in multiethnic polities.

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[8] Another way of achieving the same end, computationally speaking, is to subtract from respondents' rated importance on each trait in one category the average importance of the traits in the other. Creating "relativized" scores for the civic and ascriptive items in this way produces very similar results to those we demonstrate here (available upon request).

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