Article

Assessing the national identity and sense of belonging of students in Germany with immigration backgrounds

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Keywords: national identity, integration, immigration background, transnationality

– Students in Germany score low on national identity when it is measured with national symbols

– Students with immigration backgrounds show lower national identity scores in 20 countries

– Over 90% of German students with immigration backgrounds feel a sense of belonging to Germany.

– Research instruments measuring national identity must consider transnationality and fluidity.

Purpose: This paper aims to analyse the data regarding the national identification and sense of belonging of secondary school students with and without immigration backgrounds collected through the International Civic and Citizenship Study 2016. It also assesses whether the research instruments used are suitable for the German context.

Method: Likert scale items measured national identification. Acculturation theory based categories were employed to measure the sense of belonging. Differences between students across and within countries were assessed using *t* tests.

Findings: Students with immigration backgrounds tend to present statistically lower scores for the scale 'attitudes toward country of residence' in 20 of 24 participating countries. In international comparison, German students with and without immigration backgrounds score relatively low on all five items of the scale. Despite achieving significantly lower scores for national identification, 90% of students in Germany with immigration backgrounds feel a sense of belonging to Germany.

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1   INTRODUCTION

Integration and migration are terms which frequently go hand in hand in political and media debates because integration is often presented as a goal that migrants must achieve, either on their own or with the support of the state and other civil society actors (Lingen-Ali & Mecheril, 2020). A systematic review of 42 peer-reviewed articles confirmed that the way in which students with immigration backgrounds change their behaviours and attitudes in an intercultural context (acculturation strategies) influences both their adjustment at school and their academic achievement (Makarova & Birman, 2015). Hence it is relevant to analyse the extent to which students with immigration backgrounds identify with their country of residence and the country of their parents. In the specific context of Germany, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 study showed that 50% of the surveyed 15-year-old students felt a strong sense of belonging to Germany, while the remaining 50% did not (Edele et al., 2013). This paper aims to examine whether a picture of a widespread lack of national identification of students with immigration backgrounds in Germany (Edele et al., 2013; Ziemes et al., 2019) corresponds to the empirical (real) situation, or whether the primary problem lies in the research instruments and analytical methods used to assess concepts such as national identification and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the paper intends to raise awareness of the issues of transnationality and the historically problematic German relationship with feelings of national identity, which are not addressed in the analysed research instruments. For all statistical analyses, this paper will draw on data collected by the International Civic and Citizenship Study 2016 (ICCS 2016), which allows for comparisons between the 24 participating educational systems.

2   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1   National and Transnational Identity

Identity is a form of social representation which conciliates the relationship between the individual and the social world (Chryssochoou, 2003). Chryssochoou (2003) argues that identity has three components: cognition ("what do I know about me?"), self-action ("claims I want to or can make about myself") and others ("actions that recognize me and allow me to make the claims I wish to make about myself"). With these aspects, it is then possible to answer the three main identity questions, which are: "Who am I?", "Who are they?" and "What is our relationship?" (Chryssochoou, 2003). Based on this assumption, for individuals to develop a sense of national identity, they must know that there is a national group, a national territory, national emblems, customs, and traditions; furthermore, they must have knowledge about the typical characteristics of members of the national group ('stereotypes'), and they must be able to assess how similar they are to the national stereotype (Barrett, 2000). Studies show that five-year-old children are already able to talk about their membership of their own national group (Barrett, 2000).

However, there is also the theory that distinguishing and differentiating a nation from other nations plays an important role in the construction of a national identity. This, in turns, raises the question whether members of a nation become aware of their common features only as a means of differentiating themselves from others (Triandafyllidou, 1998). Such differentiation might be a challenge for migrants and people with immigrant backgrounds who often assume two or more national identities depending on the context (Clark, 2017). Migrants establish familial, economic, religious, and political relationships which cross geographical, cultural, and political borders, often to a larger extent than non-migrants do. They can be involved in both the home and the host society, and this dual involvement is a central element of transnationalism (Schiller et al., 1992). Behaviours and preferences which are related to the heritage culture may occur concurrently with the adoption of new behaviours that are aligned with the host culture (Lee et al., 2020). Studies show the complexity of the identity of transnational individuals, highlighting that their identity cannot be viewed from a standpoint that opposes 'them' and 'us'. A quantitative study with 166 secondary school students with Moroccan parents in Belgium concluded that the majority of subjects (72%) identified as Moroccan and not as Belgian. However, for these students, having Belgian friends and acquaintances was very important; their scores on this particular item were higher than average, showing that a lack of Belgian identification did not imply a lack of willingness to develop good relationships with Belgian people (Snauwaert et al., 2003). The researchers replicated this study with 124 subjects with Turkish parents living in Belgium and came to similar conclusions: those participants who identified themselves as Turkish and not as Belgian attached a lot of importance to participation in the Belgian society and to regular contacts with Belgian individuals (Snauwaert et al., 2003). This finding suggests that identifying more with the "home" society does not necessarily imply a separation from the "host" society (Snauwaert et al., 2003); however, other factors may influence how people with immigration background may identify themselves with the country they live in. A quantitative study with 141 Russian nationals of Finnish descent who immigrated to Finland showed a correlation between perceived discrimination and low national identification and negative attitudes towards the national majority. This shows that experiences of rejection, discrimination, and identities ascribed to immigrants by other members of the national group influence immigrants' identification with the country of residence (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2012).

Qualitative studies provide a much deeper picture of the complexity of the identity of migrants. In a group discussion with six adult children of immigrants living in Finland, it became clear that even though the participants' parents were more attached to their culture of origin than the participants themselves and often longed to move back, their children saw themselves more as being part of a global network. Despite longing for some aspects of the culture of origin of their parents, the participants often mentioned that they felt too different from their parents' culture to be able to move there permanently. Participants discussed taking some aspects of Finnish culture and making

them part of their identity, a phenomenon which the researcher describes as a 'pick and mix of culture' (Nieminen, 2018). This highlights that it may be difficult to define one national identity for migrants because they adhere to transnational identities, mixing aspects of different cultures in their own identity. One participant of a similar study conducted in Sweden describes this duality:

> I see myself as a Syrian and as an immigrant. I do not feel Swedish. But at the same time, I love this country. And I have many Swedish qualities, values, and ways of thinking. But we have black hair. We are not Swedish. It's very difficult in Sweden because if you are an immigrant you cannot become Swedish. (Runfors, 2016)

Despite sharing many qualities and values with the members of the country of residence, the quote describes an example in which migrants feel that they cannot identify themselves as members of this country because they are not recognized as such due to aspects of the country's stereotypes which they do not share (in this case, citizenship and physical appearance).

A qualitative study with Indian migrants in the United States sheds light on how the identities of migrants are not only plural and deeply influenced by how migrants are being perceived by the society of the country of residence, but also fluid and unstable. In their interviews with four highly skilled migrants from India living in the United States, Bhatia and Ram (2009) observed that their collective identity changed drastically after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The participants had previously considered themselves as integrated and had shared a comfortable sense of belonging; some even identified as American. After 9/11, they started to experience an uneasy state of being outsiders. Their cultural identity suddenly shifted to 'the zone of being different, of not belonging, of being the other' (Bhatia & Ram, 2009) due to their fear of being mistaken for a terrorist and their fear of experiencing discrimination and violence. Suddenly, all the characteristics which made them different from Americans were much more visible than the similarities they shared with them, and this also caused their cultural identity to shift. They started to perceive themselves as 'others' and no longer as 'American'.

These qualitative studies demonstrate that the idea of a mononational identity is insufficient when describing the collective identity of transnational individuals with immigration backgrounds because the plurality and fluidity of their cultural identities allows them to identify—and not to identify—with multiple nations at the same time. Hobsbawm (1996) affirms that identities depend on context and that individuals are also able to combine them instead of choosing one. This theory is highlighted especially in studies about European identity, which show the ability of individuals of identifying simultaneously with Europe and their country of residence. Analysis of data of Eurobarometer 89.1 from the year of 2018 with over 26000 respondents from 28 European Union Member States highlighted that almost two thirds of them identify themselves with Europe and their nation; higher levels of satisfaction with life and

democracy in country of residence are predictors for this multiple identification (Aker, 2019). Another study also drawing on data from Eurobarometer corroborates these findings, coming to the conclusion that the likelihood of holding multiple identities concurrently is increased by having positive feelings about politics, economy or society as a whole (Steenvoorden & Wright, 2019). For students, Ziemes et al. (2019)found a significant positive correlation between national and European identity in all EU-member countries participating in ICCS 2016. Guibernau (2004) considers national identity to be defined by the sense of belonging to a nation. This relationship between both concepts is especially important for this paper and its further understanding. Thus, the next sub-section will briefly define the concept of belonging and its position in a cosmopolitan and globalised world.

2.1.1 Sense of belonging

Sense of belonging can be defined as the experience of feeling personally involved in a system or environment to the point that people see themselves as an integral part of it (Hagerty et al., 1992). Belonging to a nation culminates in the intimate feeling of being at home (Antonsich, 2010). Hedetoft (2004) defines familiar places, human interaction and local knowledge as the necessary conditions for feelings of belonging and homeness. The sense of belonging derives from a positive identification with these necessary conditions. Hedetoft (2004) highlights, that sense of belonging needs to be conceptually distinguished from a nation-state dependent form of identity institutionalized by a "passport, citizenship, socialization agencies and official, ethno-national versions of historical memory" in which borders of sovereignty between 'us' and 'them' are drawn. This discussion will be relevant in the course of the article, in which two different research instruments will be compared: one measuring national identity through the lens of a nation-state dependent form of identity and one measuring sense of belonging through an emotional and mutual perspective.

The next section discusses acculturation strategies such as integration, which play a role in the formation of a sense of belonging of migrants and transnational individuals.

2.2   Acculturation strategies

The concept of acculturation refers to the cultural changes experienced by individuals who are adapting to new cultural contexts as a result from migration (Berry, 1997). Acculturation strategies encompass the changes in an individual in the process of acculturation, mostly members of non-dominant groups as a result of influence of the dominant society (Berry, 1992). This section discusses Berry's acculturation strategies (1997) which provide an analytical framework within which it is possible to explore the different factors influencing acculturation experiences (Phillimore, 2011). Berry (1997) proposes four strategies, which can be adopted by individuals of the non-dominant groups. *Assimilation* takes place when individuals do not wish to keep their cultural

identity and would rather establish daily interaction with other cultures. *Separation* occurs when individuals avoid interaction with other cultures and hold on to their original culture. *Marginalization* describes situations where there is a lack of interest in interacting with other cultures (often due to exclusion or discrimination) combined with little possibility to maintain the original culture and little interest in doing so. Finally, *integration* takes place when individuals have an interest both in maintaining their original culture and in interacting with the dominant culture (Berry, 1997). Berry further emphasizes that integration is only possible in open societies which have positive views on cultural diversity. Integration requires mutual accommodation as both groups must accept that *all* groups have the right to live in culturally different ways. For integration to occur, the levels of prejudice, racism, and discrimination in society must be low so that immigrant individuals do not feel pressured to distance themselves from their original culture.

In more recent works, Berry (2011) uses the word 'preference' ('a relative preference for maintaining one's heritage culture and identity; and a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups'; see Berry, 2011, p. 25), proposing the idea that some migrants are not unwilling to integrate as such but simply have a preference for keeping their cultural heritage and identity alive.

One example of how acculturation strategies can be used in empirical research is the analysis of the PISA 2009 data done by Edele et al. (2013) which is based on the same set of questions regarding sense of belonging used in this paper. Over 2400 ninth graders in Germany with immigration background responded the question "How much do you feel that you belong to the following groups of origin: a) the people of my parents' home country or one of my parents' home countries and b) the people from Germany" with either strongly (1), to some extent (2) and not at all (3). According to their answers, Edele et al. (2013) classified them into four groups: *separated* (low identification with Germany, high identification with parents' country), *marginalised* (low identification with Germany, low identification with parents' country), *assimilated* (high identification with Germany, low identification with parents' country) and *integrated* (high identification with Germany, high identification with parents' country). In their results, the four groups were homogeneously represented, accounting for one quarter of the total sample each. However, Edele et al. (2013) considered the option "to some extent" as weak identification and regarded it as the same as "not at all". This detail will be crucial in the further course of this paper, as a different approach will be followed and the answer "to some extent" will be regarded as the presence and not the absence of identification while the analysis of this same question on a different sample will be carried out.

On the basis of Berry's theoretical framework, new concepts have been developed. One example is the *alternation model* in which individuals know and understand two different cultures and are able to alter their behaviour to fit a particular context (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Another example is the *fusion model* in which cultures will

fuse together until they become indistinguishable from each other and thus form a new culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Integration is presented as one possibility among other possibilities as well as a personal choice. Integration is then not measured by facts—such as having an occupation, social prestige, and participating in political decisions as Esser (2001) declares—but rather it becomes a choice; a choice to value both the dominant and the non-dominant cultural heritage. In contrast, the value of the non-dominant cultural heritage is not considered in the original concepts of social and system integration by Esser (2001), which measures integration by factors such as having a job or attending educational institutions. While Berry (2011) defines different acculturation strategies and sees integration as a possibility and an individual choice, Esser (1980) defines acculturation solely as a phase of learning about cultural characteristics of the new country of residence in order to achieve integration, as viewed by him as the last phase of the process of integrating in the new society.

Analysing these different interpretations of the term integration highlights why it can be difficult for scholars to develop scales that measure integration levels effectively and reliably. It is very important to focus exactly on what should be measured and with what objectives. A scale based on the concept of system integration as defined by Esser (2001), should use different items than a scale aiming to determine a subject's tendency to adopt the different acculturation strategies outlined by Berry (1997). Therefore, these two research instruments would likely come to different conclusions regarding the nature and extent of the integration of the subjects they survey because they draw on different concepts and criteria for measuring integration. The definitions of integration and the criteria proposed for measuring how 'integrated' someone is were stipulated by scholars who are members of the host-dominant society. The very term 'integration' as defined by Esser (1980; 2001) actually reaffirms the ascription of foreignness as it is mainly used to talk about 'people with a migration background'. This labelling practice constructs individuals as potentially 'foreign elements' that must be integrated, even if they were born and raised in their current country of residence and have based their lives there (Lingen-Ali & Mecheril, 2020). There is a lack of scientific research on and political initiatives concerning those members of society who are 'non-integrated' even though they do not have migration backgrounds. It is perfectly possible individuals without migration backgrounds do not meet the integration criteria defined by scholars (Esser, 2001); for example, they may lack trust in social institutions, have no access to the labour market, or may not recognize basic moral norms. These individuals tend to be viewed as socially disadvantaged rather than unwilling to integrate. The main criticism of the idea of integration as it is prevalent in the German-speaking scientific and political debate can be summed up as follows.:

> In a modern society, integration means accepting differences and respecting the right of every person to shape their own life independently. Nobody— immigrants or native citizens—can be asked to do more than to recognize the values of the constitution and to abide by the applicable legal system.

Immigrants cannot be obliged to follow the traditions of a nationally defined culture any more than native citizens. (Rat für Migration e.V., 2017)

In view of this, the next section discusses the particularities of the idea of a German national identity. As this paper focuses on a study conducted in Germany, the German historical and social contexts must be considered when analysing results and suggesting improvements for research instruments.

2.3   National Identity in the Context of Germany

This paper has already discussed that reasons such as the diversity and fluidity of migrants' national and cultural identity make it difficult for scholars to develop research instruments that assess migrants' identities. Additionally, scholars developing such instruments for use in Germany must carefully consider the historical context of the German national identity and all aspects related to it. In Germany, love for one's own country and identification with the German flag or national anthem is often viewed as an expression of right-wing orientation (Oesterreich, 2002). This has historical reasons, which are related to the era of National Socialism. The crimes committed in the name of nationalism during that time make it difficult for German people, even for those born after that time, to identify with their own nation. For this reason, items that address identification with national symbols are likely to have a different significance in Germany than in other countries (Oesterreich, 2002).

This has been observed in research studies conducted in Germany throughout the years. In 1982, young adults between 15 and 24 years of age were interviewed in ten European states about diverse topics such as their ways of life and their values. The answers of the German subjects to the question 'Would you say that you are proud/very proud/not very proud/not proud at all to be German?' were at the lower extreme of the compared values in the participating countries. When reporting these results, the researcher herself remarked that the teenagers seemed to have learned to say no to national self-praise (Hübner-Funk, 1985). Furthermore, subjects felt guilty when spontaneously answering 'yes' to the question 'Are you proud to be a German?' and regarded the word 'fatherland' as inappropriate (Hübner-Funk, 1985).

The difference between Germany and other countries in terms of agreement to items that address national identification could also be observed in the results of the Civic Education Study 1999 (CIVED 1999), which was conducted in 28 countries. The difference averages 20 percentage points, verifying that German young people have a significantly lower level of identification with their own nation than young people from other countries (Oesterreich, 2002).

However, it is also important to mention that the relationship of German people with their national identity appears to have been experiencing a shift in the last decade or so. A highly visible reason that supports this assumption is, for example, the public expression of solidarity at major sporting events, which was first observed during the

2006 Football World Cup held in Germany (Mader, 2016). Representative surveys also confirm that an emotional attachment to Germany has increased continuously since the end of the 1990s (Klein, 2014; Westle, 2013). National identity is a meaningful concept for a large majority of German people today, and this majority also feels emotionally connected to their country. Concurrently, fewer Germans distance themselves from their nation today than in the 1990s (Klein, 2014). However, comparative international studies are still needed to assess whether the differences between Germany and other countries in terms of national identification persist. For this paper, it is of particular interest how far the national and cultural identity of migrants in Germany differ in a similar way from the identity of migrants in other countries.

3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the available data obtained through ICCS 2016, this paper aims to explore the identification of secondary school students with immigration backgrounds with their country of residence and their sense of belonging to this country, with in depth analyses for Germany (North-Rhine Westphalia). This will be done by analysing data relating to two areas of enquiry.

The first area of enquiry involves the scale 'attitudes toward country of residence', which consists of five items focusing 'on affective components of identity, such as pride and respect'. According to the previous research, the scale can be used to assess subjects' national identity (Ziemes et al., p. 7). This scale was administered in all countries participating in ICCS 2016, and some of the items had already been used in CIVED 1999 (Schulz et al., 2018; Schulz & Foy, 2004). Previous analysis of the 2016 sample has shown that participants based in Germany achieve significantly lower scores for this scale compared to participants from other European countries (Jasper et al., 2017) and that students based in Germany with immigration backgrounds show lower levels of identification with Germany than students based in Germany without immigration backgrounds (Ziemes et al., 2019). In this paper, the five items of the scale will be analysed separately. According to Roshwald (2015) the term 'civic nationalism' encompasses common rights and values of citizenship which unite people with a shared political identity, despite ethnic or cultural differences . 'Ethnic nationalism', on the other hand, is based on shared cultural traits and traditions (Roshwald, 2015) and looks back into the remote past in order to justify itself while being eager to impose its values upon other societies (Jaskułowski, 2010). To distinguish the constructs from nationalism as a political idea that include superiority to other countries, we follow Berg & Hjerm (2010) refering to the constructs as civic and ethnic national identity. The first, third and fifth item incoporate respectively the ideas of the nation's flag, the nation's past and nation's comparison with other countries and, therefore, can be regarded as items depicting an ethnic national identity. On the other hand, the second and fourth item are enunciated in a more direct phrasing and have to do with having respect and being

proud of the country of residence. These assumptions must however be interpreted with care. No hypotheses will be made in this regard, however, the results achieved by observing the items separately might be useful for further research, in case differences are considerable. In view of this, this paper proposes three hypotheses relating to this scale.

Hypothesis 1.1: In view of the historical context discussed above, German students without immigration backgrounds will show significantly lower levels of agreement with the items of the scale 'attitudes toward country of residence' than students without immigration backgrounds living in other countries.

Hypothesis 1.2: Students with immigration backgrounds living in Germany will follow this same pattern and will present significantly lower levels of agreement with the items of this scale when compared to students with immigration backgrounds living in other countries. If confirmed, Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2 will produce results that are distinct from the already available data because the data sample will be divided in two sets based on the variable 'immigration background', and therefore the attitudes towards country of residence of students with and without immigration backgrounds will be analysed separately by country.

Hypothesis 1.3: Drawing on data by Ziemes et al.'s (2019) and data from Snauwaert et al.'s 2003 study with Moroccan students in Belgium, Hypothesis 1.3 states that in all participating countries, students with immigration backgrounds will show lower levels of identification with the scale's items than students without immigration backgrounds.

If Hypotheses 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 can be confirmed, the implication follows that students with immigration backgrounds in Germany follow a *global* pattern of lower national identification with their country of residence when compared with autochthonous students (Hypothesis 1.3), and a *national* pattern of low national identification when compared with students with immigration backgrounds from other countries (Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2). The implication will further sustain the theory that comparative analyses using data from the ICCS 2016 research instrument are not applicable to the German context without considering the limitations of the instrument.

With this backdrop for the second area of enquiry, in-depth analyses will explore the sense of belonging of students with immigration in Germany. The questions on the "sense of belonging" were implemented as an addition to ICCS 2016 by the German research team. These students were asked to what extent they feel to belong to the people of their or their parents' home countries and in a separate item to what extent they feel to belong to the people from Germany. Students whose parents were both born in Germany were instructed to skip this question. This question was also used in the PISA 2009 study; in the analysis of the data, students were categorized according to the four acculturation strategies defined by Berry (1997) on the basis of their answers to the two different items. Based on answering with strongly agree category, about half of the students were categorized as assimilated and integrated (identification with Germany), whereas the other half was categorized as marginalized and separated (lack of

identification with Germany), see Edele et al. (2013). Considering these results, the following hypothesis is presented:

Hypothesis 2: The distribution of the students according to the four acculturation strategies will mainly be homogeneous, with each acculturation strategy accounting for one quarter of the participants.

This hypothesis is entirely based on Edele et al. (2013) results. It is our aim to test if different or similar results will be achieved when using the same instrument on a different sample. Our analysis method will be, however, slightly different from the one used by Edele et al. (2013), this will be explained in detail in the Methods chapter. Therefore, it is also possible that this slight change will create different results and the hypothesis will be discarded.

The last hypothesis serves to shed light on the relation between the "attitudes toward country of residence" and the sense of belonging. National identity demonstrates the sentiment of belonging to a nation (Guibernau, 2004) and, thus, according to this theory, there should be a strong correlation between research instruments aiming to assess both aspects. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

Hypothesis 3: There shall be a significant correlation between the scale 'attitudes toward country of residence' and the question regarding a sense of belonging to Germany.

In the case that this hypothesis is discarded, it will be an evidence that the questions are measuring different constructs.

4   METHODOLOGY

4.1   Sample

The analysed data was acquired through ICCS 2016, an representative survey which was conducted in 24 different educational systems in Asia, Europe, and Latin America with eighth grade students (or ninth grade students, if the mean age of eighth grade students was less than 13.5 years). This study involved a student test which consisted of items measuring students' civic knowledge, a student questionnaire with questions on different aspects of their political, cultural, and learning experiences and attitudes, and a specific regional questionnaire for Europe and Latin America. The analysed sample comprised 94,603 students and mostly drew on data from the international student questionnaire, and specifically the scale exploring 'attitudes toward country of residence'.

The data set was divided into two subsets: students with and students without immigration backgrounds. Students' immigration background was assessed with the question 'In what country were you and your parents born?' Students who responded that both parents were born in their country of residence were considered *not* to have an immigration background. Students who selected the option 'other country' at least

once (either for themselves or for their mother or father) were considered to have an immigration background. Unfortunately, no questions regarding the country of birth of their grandparents were administered, making it impossible to assess if students were third-generation migrants. In total, 84% of all participating students of all countries (n = 75,449) did not have immigration backgrounds, whereas 16% of the participating students (n = 14,243) had immigration backgrounds.

In Germany, only the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) took part in this survey. NRW is Germany's biggest constituent state by population and has a vast history of immigration, with one third of its students having immigration backgrounds (Ziemes et al., 2019). In NRW, 1451 students in 59 different schools took part in ICCS 2016. As 40% of the participants from NRW had immigration backgrounds, the data is considered as suitable and representative for analysis in this regard (Ziemes et al., 2020).

4.2   Method

The analysis of Hypotheses 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 focuses on the items making up the already introduced scale 'attitudes toward country of residence' (CNTATT). Items could be answered on a 4-point Likert scale in which 1 = *strongly agree* and 4 = *strongly disagree*. The five items were as follows:

- The <flag of country of test> is important to me.

- I have great respect for <country of test>.

- In <country of test> we should be proud of what we have achieved.

- I am proud to live in <country of test>.

- <Country of test> is a better country to live in than most other countries.

Analyses were conducted with the International Database Analyzer (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2018) which provides macros for IBM SPSS Statistics software to apply weights and to calculate the appropriate standard error for population-based estimations. In order to find out whether groups differed significantly from each other, t tests were conducted for each of the five items of the scale (NRW students with immigration backgrounds versus students from other countries with immigration backgrounds; NRW students without immigration backgrounds versus students from other countries without immigration backgrounds; and students with immigration backgrounds versus students without immigration backgrounds). This specific analysis of the items was chosen rather than working with the whole scale because one of the goals of this paper is to examine how each item works in the German context in order to propose suggestions for the development of improved research instruments.

The analysis of Hypotheses 2 and 3 focuses on the question regarding students' 'sense of belonging' to Germany and to the country of birth of their parent(s). The question

asked 'How much do you feel that you belong to the following groups of origin: a) the people of my parents' home country or one of my parents' home countries and b) the people from Germany'. Respondents could choose between *strongly* (1), *to some extent* (2) and *not at all* (3). It was possible to choose the same option for both items; for example, (1) for both Germany and country of their parents. As previously mentioned, this question was only administered in Germany. Based on their answers, students were categorized into four different groups in accordance with the acculturation strategies defined by Berry (1997):

- Students who marked *not at all* for Germany and the birth country of their parents were placed in the marginalization group.

- Students who marked *not at all* for Germany and either *strongly* or *to some extent* for the birth country of their parents were placed in the separation group.

- Students who chose the option *not at all* for the birth country of their parents and either *strongly* or *to some extent* for Germany were considered to be in the assimilation group.

- Students who replied *strongly* and/or *to some extent* for both Germany and the birth country of their parents were placed in the integration group.

As the answer choice *to some extent* implies the presence of an identification rather than its complete absence, it was decided to regard this answer as indicating an existing sense of belonging, even though it is not as strong as the answer choice *strongly*. It is possible that national identification does not play an important role for the individual identity of those students who selected *to some extent*. However, this answer choice does not indicate the absence of an identification in the same way that the answer choice *not at all* does. While other researchers have opted for different approaches towards analysing this question (Edele et al., 2013), from a transnational point of view, this seems to be the most reasonable and fair way to approach this categorization, especially as the qualitative studies by Niemen (2018), Runfors (2016), and Bhatia and Ram (2009) outline that transnational individuals have difficulty identifying themselves fully with one nation only and instead tend to develop a feeling of being between two worlds.

5   RESULTS

Descriptive results of the number of participants and mean scores for each group for the five analysed items relating to the scale 'attitudes toward country of residence' are presented in Table 1, which also shows results of the *t* tests. Scores which significantly differ from the German sample are not marked when the compared group presented higher levels of agreement with the items than the German sample because this was the expected result. Scores which did not significantly differ from the German comparison group are written in italics, whereas scores which significantly differ from the German

group are marked with ** when the compared group presented lower levels of agreement with the item than the German sample. In order to test Hypothesis 1.1, the columns showing results for students without immigration backgrounds (A) are examined. German students have significantly lower scores than all other autochthonous students for the item regarding the importance of their country's flag, except for Sweden and the Netherlands (no significant difference). When asked about the respect they feel for their country, only Hong Kong, Dutch, and Swedish students show significantly lower levels of respect. Only Hong Kong and Italian students are significantly less proud of their country's achievements and significantly less proud to live in their country than German students. Finally, only Italian, Latvian, and Lithuanian students present lower agreement scores for the item '<Country of test> is a better country to live in than most other countries' than German students. Contrary to the expected results, some countries present significantly lower scores than the German sample without immigration background in single questions, such as Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Sweden and Italy. However, considering the number of analysed countries, it is still possible to conclude that Germany belongs to the group of countries with the lowest scores for all items of this scale. Especially, for the question regarding the flag, the German sample has the lowest scores in all 24 participating countries. Therefore, hypothesis 1.1 partially holds.

In order to assess whether Hypothesis 1.2 can be confirmed, the columns presenting the scores for students with immigration backgrounds (I) are examined. Just as the German sample without immigration background, this German sample with immigration background has the lowest levels of agreement with the item 'The <flag of country of test> is important to me'. This same pattern is observed for the other items: when a country presented significantly lower results than the German sample without immigration background, the same happened for the samples with immigration background with very few exceptions, such as Estonia for the second and fourth items. This shows that, in some cases, the German sample with immigration background presents significantly higher levels of national identification than other countries' samples with immigration background. Overall, it is possible to say that Hypothesis 1.2 can be confirmed and that students with immigration backgrounds living in Germany follow the same pattern as German students without immigration backgrounds in terms of their levels of national identification as measured by the five items of this scale.

Finally, *t* tests were conducted to assess possible statistically significant differences of mean scores for each item between students with and without immigration backgrounds of each country. A statistically significant difference for all five questions between both groups (the immigration group presenting the lower agreement scores) was identified in the following countries: Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, and Belgium. As for Germany, a statistically significant difference between both groups was observed in all questions, except the question whether the country of residence is a better country to live in than others ($t(1342) = -.53$,

p = .58). Other countries which also presented significant differences for the four remaining items were Bulgaria, Italy, Peru, Russia, and Sweden. It is interesting to observe that there was no or very little significant difference between students with and without immigration backgrounds in the participating Asian countries. No differences were observed in Taiwan; and in South Korea and Hong Kong, a statistically significant difference was observed in only one item. Therefore, Hypothesis 1.3 can be partially confirmed, except in the Asian participating countries.

To test hypothesis 2, students with immigration backgrounds were categorized according to the four different acculturation strategies as defined by Berry (1997). 507 students with immigration backgrounds answered the question regarding their sense of belonging to Germany and the country of their parents and could be considered for this analysis. Results of the categorization are shown in Table 2.

The results reported in Table 2 strongly differ from the results expected based on Hypotheses 2. Slightly modifying the categorization used by Edele et al. (2013) and interpreting the answer choice *to some extent* as the presence of a sense of identification rather than its absence has produced totally opposing results to Edele's conclusions. Over 90% of students feel at least some sense of belonging to Germany. Groups are not homogeneously large, as hypothesized. Instead, the group of integrated students accounts for more than three quarters of the total. The marginalized group consists of only six students, whereas with around 7% of the students, the assimilated and separated categories are almost equal in number of respondents. When analysing separate results for each of the two questions, the conclusion is that the option *strongly* was indeed selected the most times of all three choices. 281 students claimed to feel strongly that they belonged to their parents' country, whereas 201 students chose the option *to some extent*. 42 students did not report feeling a sense of belonging to their parents' country. Regarding Germany, just over half of the students (*n* = 256) reported feeling *strongly* connected to Germany (in accordance with Edele´s findings), whereas 214 students felt connected *to some extent*. 43 students felt that they did not belong to Germany at all. These results stand in contrast to the results for the scale 'attitudes toward country of residence', in which students with and without immigration backgrounds in Germany presented low levels of identification with Germany.

In order to check if there was a correlation between a sense of belonging to Germany and the items making up the 'attitudes toward country of residence' scale, bivariate Pearson correlations were conducted. All five items correlate with the question of sense of belonging to Germany, *p* < .01. However, the correlations are not strong but rather small according to Taylor (1990). The Pearson product-moment correlation with the sense of belonging to Germany produces results for each item as follows:

- Importance of flag (*r* =.24, *n* = 533, *p* < .01);

- Respect for country (*r* =.29, *n* = 532, *p* < .01);

- Proud of what country has achieved (*r* =.31, *n* = 536, *p* < .01);

- Proud to live in the country ($r =.38$, $n = 532$, $p < .01$);

- Better country to live in than others ($r =.19$, $n = 532$, $p < .01$).

Therefore, Hypothesis 3 cannot be confirmed, enabling the conclusion that there is no strong correlation between a sense of belonging to Germany and the items chosen to assess national identification with country of residence in ICSS 2016.

Table 1: Mean Scores of the Analysed Items Divided by Students with Immigration Backgrounds (I) and Students Without Immigration Backgrounds (A)

Country	n		Importance of national flag		Respect for country		Proud of country's achievements		Proud to live in country of test		Better country to live in than others	
Country	I	A	I	A	I	A	I	A	I	A	I	A
Germany (NRW)	532	813	2.70	2.28	1.88	1.68	2.00	1.88	2.06	1.75	2.34	2.30
Bulgaria	70	2678	1.53	1.30	1.60	1.34	1.68	1.43	*1.88*	1.53	*2.40*	2.21
Chile	228	4399	1.84	1.50	1.59	1.45	1.79	1.50	1.87	1.54	*2.48*	2.03
Taiwan	543	3286	1.62	1.58	1.70	*1.66*	1.58	1.53	1.61	1.53	1.75	1.68
Colombia	103	5017	1.36	1.35	1.40	1.31	1.45	1.37	1.35	1.28	1.89	1.80
Croatia	912	2867	1.55	1.49	1.40	1.38	1.44	1.44	1.54	1.46	*2.44*	*2.32*
Denmark	1048	4663	2.44	2.12	1.81	*1.68*	1.80	1.64	1.85	1.65	1.96	1.83
Dominican Republic	184	2875	1.13	1.10	1.24	1.17	1.32	1.21	1.42	1.22	1.76	1.66
Estonia	628	2099	2.21	1.63	2.11**	1.56	*1.97*	1.51	2.25**	1.66	*2.44*	2.02
Finland	309	2745	1.91	1.64	*1.80*	*1.62*	1.74	1.52	1.78	1.50	1.88	1.65
Hong Kong	1441	1020	2.11	2.14	*1.97*	2.02**	*2.09*	2.14**	*2.00*	2.02**	2.12	2.11
Italy	584	2606	1.70	1.51	1.63	1.52	*2.11*	2.08**	*1.98*	1.86**	2.63**	2.42**
South Korea	36	2463	1.73	1.53	*1.92*	*1.65*	1.67	1.53	1.64	1.64	2.03	1.90
Latvia	592	2423	1.90	1.53	*1.89*	1.55	*1.97*	1.58	*2.14*	*1.72*	2.75**	2.43**
Lithuania	434	2977	1.81	1.52	*1.83*	1.56	1.80	1.55	*2.15*	*1.77*	2.77**	2.59**
Malta	780	2619	1.99	1.54	1.69	1.47	1.70	1.48	1.90	1.54	*2.30*	1.85
Mexico	247	4768	1.61	1.39	1.60	1.44	1.69	1.48	1.71	1.46	2.12	1.95
Netherlands	506	2234	*2.69*	*2.31*	2.02**	1.76**	*1.93*	1.69	*2.10*	*1.73*	2.13	1.88
Norway	1338	4448	2.07	1.76	1.57	1.43	1.63	1.40	1.61	1.39	1.78	1.54
Peru	152	4467	1.40	1.26	1.47	1.29	1.44	1.32	1.54	1.29	1.91	1.76
Russian Federation	888	6056	1.64	1.59	1.48	1.45	1.50	1.45	1.55	1.45	*2.21*	2.08
Slovenia	649	2120	1.89	1.66	*1.87*	*1.68*	1.78	1.59	*1.96*	*1.68*	*2.36*	2.11
Sweden	913	1995	2.49	*2.26*	*1.95*	1.94**	1.84	*1.78*	1.79	*1.68*	1.87	1.80
Belgium (Flemish)	723	2084	2.50	*2.31*	1.75	*1.67*	1.79	1.69	*1.95*	1.64	*2.35*	2.13

Note. Answer choices were: 1 = *strongly agree,* 2 = *agree,* 3 = *disagree,* 4 = *strongly disagree. Italics* denote that scores did not differ significantly for the German comparison group. **denote scores that differ significantly from the German group, whereby the comparison group presented lower levels of agreement with the item than the German group.

Table 2: Immigrant Students Divided According to Their Sense of Belonging to Germany and their Parents' Country

Assimilation strategy	n	%
Integrated	428	84.4
Assimilated	36	7.1
Separated	37	7.3
Marginalised	6	1.2

6 DISCUSSION

This paper has analysed in depth one scale with five items and one question with two items which was used to assess the national identification of students with their countries of residence and/or birth. This analysis was conducted both at international level and at national level for Germany (NRW). The focus of the analysis was students' immigration background and how to assess students' national identification with their country of residence and the country of their parents using quantitative research instruments. The authors point out that empirical operationalizations of general national identity should be consistent in the form of national identity they intend to measure. If some items contain words and concepts matching the ideas of ethnic national identity whereas other items fit more the idea of civic national identity, results may be jeopardized. In this case, it is possible to observe that survey respondents in Germany presented lower agreement levels with the items which were assumed to fit the ideas of ethnic national identity (concept of flag and comparison with other countries). The authors further raise the criticism that the scale does not take into account the fluidity of national identification in transnational individuals. This criticism is based on the following analytic insights.

First, in order to demonstrate that some of the item wording caused students in Germany to present one of the lowest, or the lowest, scores for national identification, comparisons between the scores of participating countries were completed by means of t tests. Results showed that students living in Germany with and without immigration backgrounds present low scores for all five items of the scale, especially for the item regarding the importance of the country's flag. The symbol of the flag can be viewed as the most problematic item in the German national context because German people to this day tend to shy away from using national symbols due to the events of the National Socialist era (Strulik, 2006). This result further shows that it would not be possible to assess the reported recent increase of a certain emotional attachment to Germany as the country of residence (Klein, 2014; (Westle, 2013) using these scale items in the way they were configured for ICCS 2016. Had the items relating to the country's flag and pride been replaced by other, differently worded items which do not involve national symbols, the results for Germany might have been different in the international comparison.

Regarding students with immigration backgrounds, previous studies had shown that German students with immigration backgrounds present significantly lower scores for this scale than German students without immigration backgrounds (Ziemes et al., 2019). However, when conducting an international comparison, statistically significant differences could be observed between students with and without immigration backgrounds in all participating countries except the three participating Asian countries; in this regard, further analysis considering those countries' immigration histories would be required to assess the reasons for this difference. These results allow us to draw two conclusions for German students with immigration backgrounds. First, they have emulated the historical German pattern of low national identification, which is highlighted by the comparison with other countries. Second, they also follow the pattern of low national identification when compared to students without immigration backgrounds, which was shown by the comparisons of both groups for all countries. These conclusions highlight the importance of observing findings holistically rather than through the lens of one aspect. Whereas the low levels of national identification reported by German students with immigration backgrounds as compared to their counterparts without immigration backgrounds might seem to be a cause for concern, the results presented in this paper show that they are well within the expected range. The research instrument that was used caused Germany to be a statistical outlier due to its complex historical relationship with nationalism. It also does not regard the transnational identity of students with migration backgrounds, resulting in lower scores for this population. This trend is demonstrated by the analysis of the question regarding the sense of belonging to a country. Over 90% of students with immigration backgrounds felt that they belonged to Germany either *strongly* or *to some extent*. And over 90% of students also felt that they belonged to the country of their parents. These findings confirm the multiplicity of national identity for transnational individuals as shown in qualitative studies (Nieminen, 2018). It is a reality for transnational individuals to identify with multiple countries—although often not completely with each one, but instead with certain cultural aspects of both home and host society. Therefore, it is important that transnational identity should be considered when choosing a method to analyse findings. As this paper has shown, previous studies such as the one by Edele et al. (2013) have come to very different conclusions because they do not take sufficient account of the multiplicity of national identity and opted to interpret the answer choice *to some extent* as a lack of identification.

In light of the above findings, it would be reasonable to assume that German students with immigration backgrounds *can* identify with Germany. However, it is important to consider that these results are just a snapshot. Studies have shown that individuals' national identification can change over time and that is influenced by many factors, such as discrimination experiences (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2012). The best way to assess the prevalence and persistence of national identification would be through a longitudinal study. Nevertheless, the findings presented here may raise awareness of the problems

that arise when research instruments are developed and used for analysis without considering important national and cultural contexts which might jeopardize results. Furthermore, the case of German students with immigration backgrounds highlights the importance of analysing results using multiple comparisons. It was shown that the levels of national identification of these students were not alarming low. On the contrary, when assessed using simple and direct questions which did not involve national symbolism, levels of national identification of students in Germany with immigrations backgrounds are actually quite high. Therefore, the authors of this paper propose the development of a scale following this pattern of direct questions based on the concept of sense of belonging and considering the students' own perception rather than national or historical aspects. Such a scale might consist of items such as 'How connected do you feel to the people of <country>?'; 'How similar do you feel to the people of <country>?' and 'How much do you feel that you belong to <country>?' These questions can be asked regardless of the country's history. Questions on sense of belonging from a cosmopolite perspective could also be asked, such as 'How much do you feel that you belong to <continent>?' or 'How much do you feel that you belong to the global community?'. Findings deriving from these questions could be much more elucidating as the ones from the scale 'attitudes toward country of residence', as it remains unclear, if having low scores in this scale can be regarded as something negative or as something positive, if it means that respondents are less inclined to a national identity based on national symbols. On the other hand, the scale sense of belonging would be based on positive identification, familiarity and emotions (Hedetoft, 2004).

In summary, the aspect of hybridity cannot be mapped using the scale 'attitudes toward country of residence', but the national addition of items in ICCS 2016 in Germany (NRW) opens up the possibility of examining which acculturation strategies young people with migration backgrounds deploy (Abs & Hahn-Laudenberg, 2017). Overall, this paper advocates the consideration of countries' historical and social contexts when developing research instruments which will be used in large-scale international studies and encourages researchers to assess, analyse, and report results using a transnational perspective, considering both the complexity of migration and the limitations of research instruments.

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