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NATIONAL IDENTITY COMPONENTS IN FOREIGN STUDENTS STUDYING IN SERBIA

Abstract

This paper approaches identity as a variable category, subject to continuous re-shaping under the influence of various contexts in which an individual finds themselves. The ongoing building of identity is particularly characteristic of migrant populations, who face challenges arising from differing social environments. The adopted perspective is that, during this reconstruction process, a core foundation of identity – established during primary socialisation, remains intact despite the interaction of individual predispositions and the social environment. Within this foundation, national identity is identified as a form of collective identity, which is the focal point of the analysis in this chapter. The analysis itself relies on the empirical data collected through a survey. The central point for data processing and interpretation is the notion that national identity consists of components embedded in two distinct types of this phenomenon: ethnic and civic. The objective of the study is to explore the extent to which international students align with these components, whether they are more inclined towards an ethnic or civic conception of national identity, and whether socio-demographic characteristics and contextual factors influence their perspectives. Additionally, an emotional component of national identity is included, which is reflected in students' support for national teams as well as their approaches to portraying their home countries to the foreigners they interact with. A positive attitude towards their country of origin, indicative of the students' identification with it, implies the need for the development of encouraging state policies aimed at harnessing their potential for the advancement of society.

Keywords: national identity, ethnic type, civic type, loyalty test

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to determine the degree to which international students are inclined towards national identity attitudes and to examine their emotional connection to the national group of their country of origin, based on results obtained from empirical quantitative research.¹ Also, this chapter focuses

¹ The methodology, sample, and time frame for conducting the research are presented in the chapter specifically dealing with the methodology applied during the collection of empirical data throughout the project implementation and the data processing process.

on an empirical examination of the potential deterministic influence of certain socio-demographic and contextual conditions on respondents' inclinations, aiming to potentially identify regularities pertaining to their national identity.

The analysis is based on the premise that identity is changeable and is (re)defined under the influence of the social context in which an individual is situated. In doing so, the views of authors who advocate for a complete transformation of the identity (N. Glick Schiller, L. Basch & L. Blanc, 1994; Vertovec, 2001) are rejected, and it is assumed that a firm core of identity is retained (Bauböck, 2010; Gilroy, 1991; Hall, 1992). National identity, as a form of collective identity built through socialisation, is understood to be potentially embedded in the unchangeable core. However, various factors may influence the degree to which this core is preserved and interpreted. Regarding national identity, the adopted perspective aligns with the group of authors (Smith, 1990; Smith, 1998; Hobsbawm, 1996; Tilly, 1994; Kohn, 1944) who distinguish separate components based on different aspects. Based on these components, an instrument was constructed, through which national identity is operationalised. Finally, we examined the presence of an emotional component due to the need to separate the respondents' formal identification from a specific national group.

THE FORMATION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS' IDENTITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Most contemporary authors recognise identity as an ongoing developmental process realised through negotiation with the surroundings, people, institutions and practices in which an individual is involved (Ige, 2010; Margison, 2014; Sarup, 1998). Identity, therefore, is not independent of the context, but rather, it is shaped by it and is built through responses to the requirements of the surroundings. Furthermore, the modern world, which is characterised by globalisation, transnational networking, intense exchange of goods and migrations, as well as daily exchange of ideas resulting from the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), means that an individual is involved in a network of different, even independent communities, as opposed to interacting with one social context. As a result, identity is constantly transforming and growing in order to overcome ever-growing cultural pluralities that characterise the modern world (Bamberg, 2011).

Changes in social circumstances are particularly characteristic of migratory populations. They not only exchange ideas and information using modern ICT, but also adapt to new lifestyles, customs, norms and value systems. Through overcoming geographical, language, and cultural barriers, they are engaged in an ongoing

learning process, negotiating with the environment, thereby constantly developing their self. International students represent a specific group not only because of their interaction with the culture of the country of destination, but also because they adapt and exchange cultural norms with different cultures, especially if they decide to stay in dormitories intended for foreign students (Vesković Anđelković & Vasojević, 2023). In addition to undergoing identity transformation resulting from this context, experiencing new possibilities and options, brings international students in the position to re-examine the history, value systems and attitudes toward their countries of origin. The outcome of this process is that they gain a deeper understanding of themselves, and at the same time, they learn much more about their people and culture. Simultaneously, they build a strong sense of belonging to groups with which they interact (Marginson, 2014).

In these circumstances, a question arises regarding the survival of the firm core of collective identity, built in their country of origin, which could also be interpreted as national identity. In the literature, there are viewpoints that support its complete rejection due to the mixing and reshaping of cultures, which necessarily occurs as a result of adapting to new social environments (N. Glick Schiller, L. Basch & L. Blanc, 1994; Vertovec, 2001). In this context, new hybrid cultures are created, along with hybrid identities associated with them (Chambers. 1996: 50). From this perspective, migrants are connected to at least two places simultaneously, without fully belonging to either (Bhabha, 1994). Accepting the necessity of forming the self² as a result of responses to different social contexts, a more moderate group of theorists³ (Bauböck, 2010; Gilroy, 1991; Hall, 1992) still leaves room for the 'core' identity, which, alongside Hall's enlightened self, characterised by defiance and the preservation of individual identity (Hall, 1990; Vesković Anđelković, 2024), is also directed towards national identity. Therefore, in line with this viewpoint, we can say that the discussion on the preservation and interpretation of national identity still finds its place in the modern world, which, considering the growing number of the migratory population, can rightly be referred to as the 'age of migrations' (Castells, 2000). Considering that national

² Some authors argue that a distinction should be made between the formation of self and the reconstruction of identity, in the sense that the former refers to adaptation and stability while maintaining one's authenticity in a new environment. This implies an emphasis on the internal dimension of self, which is crucial for the experience of identity. On the other hand, reconstruction involves a complete rebuilding that entails assimilation and full acceptance of the identity of the new social context (Marginson, 2014).

³ The other side of the "extreme" view of identity is represented by theorists of the so-called primordialist or essentialist perspective, according to which, the identity of the migratory population remains a pure national identity (Scholte, 2009) understood in a purely ethnic sense, according to Smith's typology, which we will discuss later on. In defining the identity of the diaspora, Bradatan and colleagues state that "members of the diaspora live with their soul at home, and their body abroad" (C. Bradatan, R. Melton & A. Popan. 2010: 177)

identity,⁴ similar to the definition of diaspora, remains preserved among its members regardless of the migrant generation (Bauböck, 2010; Christou, 2006), it is even more reasonable to assume the persistence of national identity among the population of international students, considering that their stay is usually shorter and that, more often than not, they do not have any intention to make the destination country their permanent country of residence.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ANALYSIS

The concept of national identity which is the focal point of the analysis, is tied to an individual awareness and actions of individuals belonging to a single national community (Brubaker, 2004). More precisely, it is tied to their sense of belonging “shared among the population with common values, historical experience and laws” (Smith, 1990). If we were to set aside this sentiment, we would be talking exclusively about national identification, which represents the first step in the integration of community members, but it is not a sufficient precondition for their social and personal integration (Golubović, 1999).

The fundamental point of the analysis is the acceptance of the view that different components of national identity are embedded in different types of this phenomenon. In their separation, we will primarily adhere to Smith’s perspective (Smith, 1990; Smith, 1998), but also to the viewpoints of other authors such as Charles Tilly (Tilly, 1994), Kohn⁵ (Albrekt Larsen, 2021; Kohn, 1944) and

⁴ Contrary to expectations that national identity will be annihilated due to globalisation and technological development, which have opened up opportunities for the exchange of ideas and values on a broader scale, as well as for the possibility of choosing and freely constructing personal identities, the preservation of this phenomenon is viewed as desirable from both social and philosophical perspective. Namely, the possibility of creating multiple identities can cause an individual to feel lost in this multitude. This is when the danger of an identity crisis arises, and the search for security becomes evident. “In this situation, there is a tendency towards non-traditionalism, as the traditional model of identity offers security in times of crisis, expressing a desire for roots and for the ethnicisation of the world” (Golubović, 1999: 6–7). A similar view is held by Žižek, who emphasises that the return to ethnic and religious substance is a response to the postmodern social life we perceive as “non-substantial”. This is an emotional moment of recognition, when the individual becomes aware of their roots, overwhelmed by substance (Žižek, 2001).

⁵ Kohn is also considered one of the precursors of this interpretation of national identity (Albrekt Larsen, 2021:3). Starting from the thesis implying the inherently political nature of this phenomenon, i.e., the existence of a connection between nationalism and the modern, centralised state, Kohn, like most authors dealing with the nation and nationalism (Subotić, 2005), sees the birthplace of nationalism in the French Revolution. He was the first to outline a typology of the idea of national identity and divided it into Western nationalism (primarily referring to France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Switzerland), where nations emerged within an already established and stabilised state framework, or where nationalism coincided with the creation of the nation-state (the case of the USA). On the other hand, in Eastern Europe and subsequently in other parts of the world, nationalism

Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm, 1996), who identified two models of national identity: civic and ethnic. According to these authors, the characteristics of national identity are associated to the way a nation was formed. As Smith notes, nations can be formed in two ways: through the laws and institutions of the state, or through the “mobilisation of the people within and with the help of its local culture and history” (Smith, 2009: 48). Depending on how nations were formed, we distinguish between two models of nationalism: the first is *civic*, related to nations that arose based on “common land”, shared laws, and institutions; the second is the *ethnic model* of the nation, based on ethnic origin, language, myths, and memories of its members. Although he sets up this dichotomy, Smith considers it to be only an ideal-typical model, and existing nations always oscillate between one model and the other.⁶

As for the dimensions of national identity, researchers who have worked on operationalising this phenomenon place emphasis on the place of birth, citizenship, religion, culture and tradition, language, sense of belonging, respect for norms and institutions, and parents’ nationality (Smith, 2009; Wimmer, 2008). These same dimensions are incorporated into our questionnaire, along with the assumption of this dichotomy.⁷ In this regard, the dimensions of the ethnic model of national identity are represented by the country of origin, parents’ nationality, the significance of religion, the valuation of tradition, and national sentiment. The dimensions of the civic type are represented by respect for national laws

emerged later as a protest against existing state-political forms and an attempt to change them according to ethnic criteria. Due to the chronological primacy of nationalism’s emergence in the West, Kohn concluded that nationalism in the East is imitative, imported, or a reactive phenomenon (Subotić, 2005: 27). The reason for the delayed nationalism in Eastern countries, according to this author, is the absence of a middle class, which is the driving force behind the democratisation of society. A problem in Kohn’s division is the discriminatory attitude towards countries east of the Rhine, where he placed the boundary. Later, this division contributed to the negative connotation of the ethnic model of nationalism associated with the peoples of this region.

⁶ As an example of these oscillation types, Smith cites France, where national identity during the time of the Jacobins was primarily characterised by civic components, only for cultural nationalism to take precedence in the early nineteenth century, sometimes Frankish and sometimes Gallic (Smith, 1998).

⁷ It should be noted that, unlike other authors, Smith identified not two, but three types of national identity on the overall scale of nationalism: ascriptive, represented by the country of origin and the nationality of the parents; cultural, which includes the significance of religion, shared tradition, and national sentiment; and finally, civic, which should be operationalised through a scale of respect for national laws and institutions, knowledge of the national language, and the exercise of civil rights in terms of political activities. However, the exploratory factor analysis revealed the closeness of ascriptive and cultural components, distinguishing them from the components of the civic model. This result corresponds to Smith’s division into territorial and ethnic models of national identity, as well as the dichotomy of models in other authors’ work. Moreover, studies of other populations have also shown the separation of only these two models on the overall scale of nationalism (Lazić & Pešić, 2011; Vesković & Toković, 2016).

and institutions, knowledge of the national language, and the realisation of civil rights, which is reflected in citizenship. This division was also confirmed by the factor analysis of the collected data, where the components of civic identity are clearly separated from the components of ethnic identity.

Seen from the perspective of the characteristics of contemporary society, it could be expected that cultural resources are no longer the only or strongest indicators of a national community. Changes in the ethnic structure of the population in nearly all countries, as well as the high interconnectedness of individuals with members of other nations for common goals, lead to an initial hypothesis in favour of a greater representation of the components of the civic model. Therefore, contemporary social movements support Smith's claim that material and institutional factors play an important role in the preservation of national identity (Smith, 2009: 99). However, it is undeniable that only on the basis of cultural resources can we track the development and expression of national identity among the citizens of a particular national community. Thus, Smith argues that maintaining cultural components when analysing the concept of national identity, taking into account the influence of contemporary phenomena that surpass state boundaries, results in national identity today manifesting as a diverse and changing mix of all the mentioned components (Smith, 2009: 99). In light of this, as well as the issues related to the precise definition of the terms "civic" and "ethnic" (Albrekt Larsen, 2021), the question arises pertaining to the justification for dividing the scale of national identity into two types. This division could further lead to a discriminatory division of citizens based on their commitment to the ethnic model (Subotić, 2005), as well as issues related to the precise identification of the components of each model (May, 2023). However, in adherence to established practices in scientific research and the results of factor analysis, we retain the dichotomy between the two models while testing the support for and scale of the entire national identity.

Since the specificity of the population in question is defined by the migration process, which involves displacement from the social context of the country of origin, in addition to analysing the support for these components, we will focus on two additional indicators of national identity that are particularly important for this group. First, this refers to the loyalty test (Kalra et al., 2005: 30), which has been operationalised through questions about support for national representatives of the country of origin who are direct opponents of the national representatives of the destination country. This loyalty, based on deep emotions, Appadurai calls "patriotism," and he describes it as a strong attachment and identification of the migrant population with the territory and the group of people living on this territory and who are characterised by specific cultural norms (Appadurai, 2011: 239). The second indicator refers to the manner the country of origin is portrayed to

foreigners, which again includes the emotional component differentiating the identity from the simple identification.

DESCRIPTIVE DATA ANALYSIS

We will begin the analysis of survey data with a brief overview of the distribution of the respondents' answers on the overall nationalism scale examining both the civic and ethnic components⁸ as well as the distribution of all specified elements of national identity. The average values obtained on the overall nationalism scale indicate that the valuation of national identity is below the theoretical mean⁹ with a score of 2.47. This deviation is interpreted as a consequence of the specific characteristics of the population studied, primarily the fact that it comprises young people who do not yet prioritise national issues. Consequently, nationalist attitudes are less prevalent (Petrović, 2014: 214). On the other hand, as presented in the conceptual section of this chapter, their personal and collective identities are subject to certain changes due to the influence of various contexts they inevitably encounter during mobility. Therefore, it is expected that their national identity would be less pronounced. Interestingly, there is greater support for the ethnic component of national identity, with a mean value of 2.65, compared to the civic component, which has a mean value of 2.17. This result can be explained by a strong sense of nostalgia and the lack of emotional support from family and friends, which further reinforces the desire for collective belonging to a nation defined through attitudes associated with the ethnic component.

Upon examining attitudes outside their grouping according to the specified components, we observed greater support for attitudes forming the subscale of the ethnic component of national identity, with most of these attitudes

⁸ The analysis of the obtained results revealed a high reliability of the overall nationalism scale and good internal consistency, as indicated by the value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84. Regarding the two subscales, the composite scale of the ethnic model of national identity also demonstrated high reliability and good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.8, while the scale of the civic model showed satisfactory reliability and internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7.

⁹ The understanding of national identity was operationalised through Likert-type statements, where respondents indicated their agreement with certain statements representing the components of this phenomenon mentioned earlier. The lowest level of agreement was indicated by respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement, marking a one (1) on the scale. If the respondent fully agreed with the statement, it was indicated by marking a five (5). Other codes were used for intermediate nuances in the respondents' answers. Therefore, since the scale ranged from 1 to 5, the theoretical average value for the nationalism scale, as well as for the components of ethnic and civic national identity, and for all individual statements, is 3.

exceeding the theoretical mean value. Specifically, the attitude with the highest level of support pertains to the same nationality of one's parents, with an average value of 3.11. This can be explained by an increased need for a sense of belonging to family and community, a sentiment developed through primary socialisation. The attitude regarding the place of birth is closely followed by an average support value of 3.04 for the belief that being born in the homeland of one's nation is important for national identity. Slightly below this is the support for the importance of religion, with an average value of 3.02. This result can again be attributed to the specific characteristics of the studied population. While they experience the influence of features from other cultures, which leads to a re-composition of their identity, emotional attachment to their country of origin remains pronounced. The attitude receiving the least support within the group of statements comprising the ethnic component pertains to the sense of belonging to one's nation. This suggests a stronger sense of belonging to other social groups, mainly the group of international students with whom the respondents interact on a daily basis.

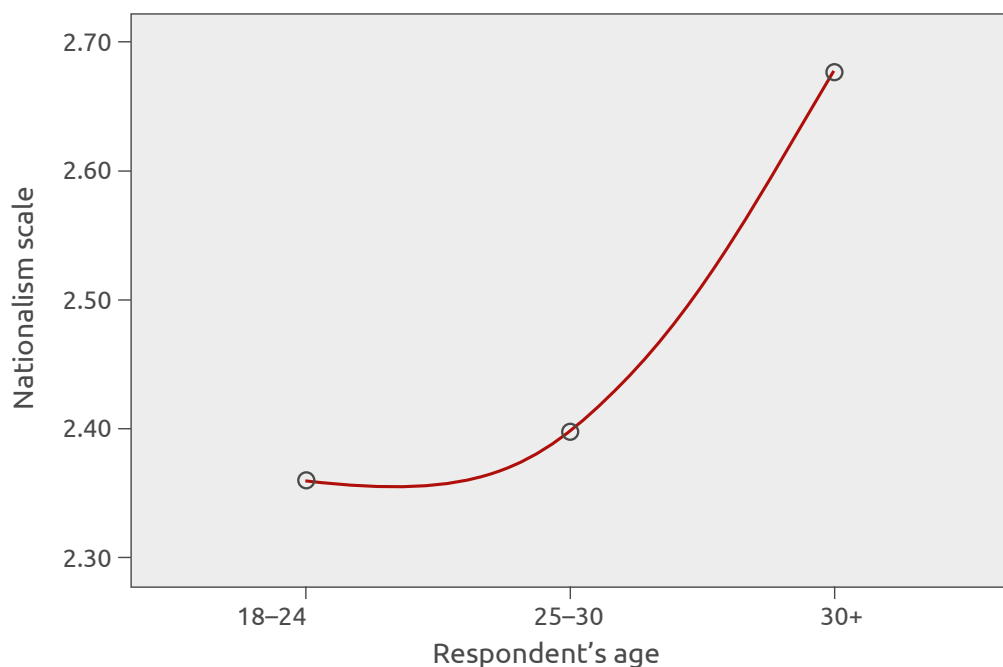
Regarding the attitudes forming the civic component, it is surprising that the attitude concerning the importance of good proficiency in the national language received the least support, with an average value of 1.91. Conversely, the highest level of support, with an average value of 2.51, was given to the attitude emphasising the importance of citizenship in one's home country. The weak support for attitudes related to the civic component of national identity can, on the one hand, be understood as a consequence of the gradual acceptance of modernisation processes and transformations of social systems (Lazić & Pešić, 2011). On the other hand, it may reflect the respondents' lack of a definitive decision regarding their future place of permanent residence as well as the necessity of adopting the norms and values of the countries in which they live during various phases of their lives.

THE IMPACT OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND MIGRATION CHARACTERISTICS ON THE PERCEPTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Socio-demographic and migration characteristics were analysed as variables whose effects were observed at the individual respondent level. Preliminarily, we can state that, contrary to expectations, not all factors in this group exhibited a significant impact on overall national identity, particularly when observed separately in relation to the civic and ethnic types. Specifically, contrary to the expectation that gender would significantly influence support for the components of this phenomenon, namely, that girls would tend to distance themselves from

national identification, as shown in other studies (Lazić & Pešić, 2011), one-factor analysis of variance conducted on our data reveals that gender does not have an effect on the overall nationalism scale ($p > 0.05$). Furthermore, this analysis indicates ($p > 0.05$) that this factor does not influence the ethnic type of national identity. However, gender proved to be significant for the understanding of civic nationalism, favouring female respondents ($p < 0.05$). This finding confirms that women are more inclined to accept the formal conditions of national identity compared to ethnic and mythic components, where they exhibit a high degree of distancing (Lazić & Pešić, 2011: 372). Nevertheless, the eta value of 0.02 indicates that only 2% of the variance is explained, suggesting that gender has a minimal impact on the understanding of the civic component of national identity.

In examining the impact of age on respondents' alignment with the overall nationalism scale, as well as their alignment with the ethnic and civic components, we determined that the homogeneity criterion was not breached: in all three cases, Levene's test values exceeded 0.05, which is the theoretical requirement. In contrast to gender, the effect of respondents' age indicates that individuals over 30 years of age exhibit a higher degree of acceptance of all examined components grouped within the overall national identity scale, as illustrated in Graph 1.



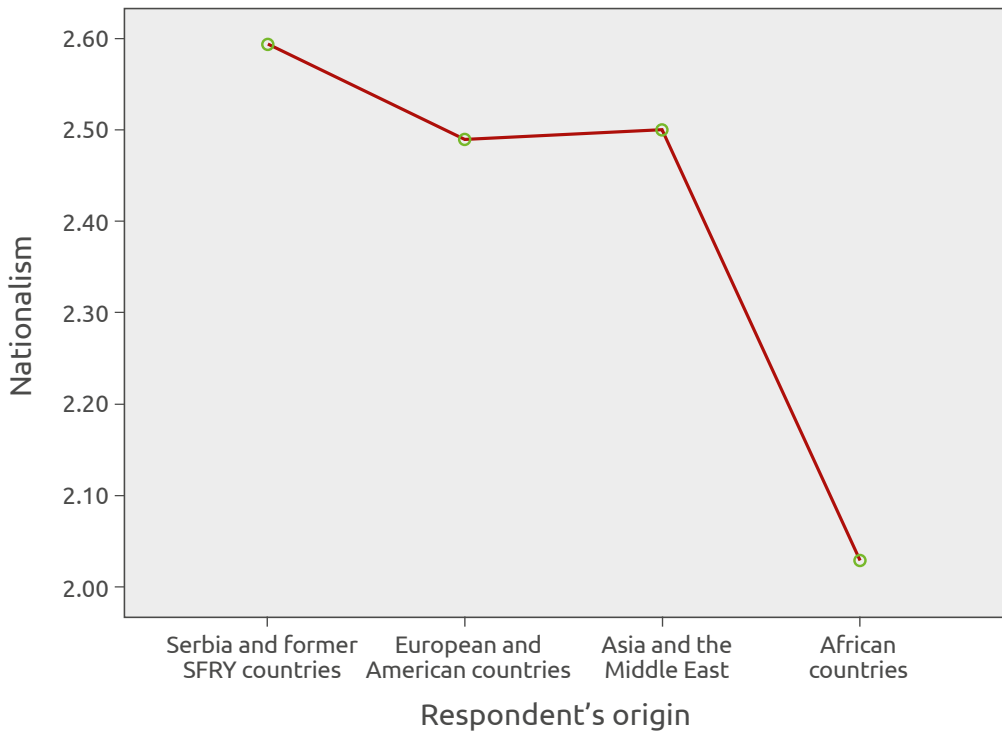
Graph 1. Dependence of the mean value on the overall nationalism scale based on the respondents' age

Similar to the overall nationalism scale, as presented in Table 1, the oldest respondents demonstrated a relatively high degree of alignment with the components of the ethnic type of national identity (with the mean value exceeding the theoretical average). However, no differences were observed in alignment with the civic nationalism scale, where the mean values for all groups remained below the theoretical average. This finding can be interpreted as a confirmation of the general changes experienced by all respondent groups due to migration, involving various formal requirements for coexistence with the local population and peers from other countries. For all respondents, regardless of their age, living in different countries entails adherence to national laws and institutions, the necessity of acquiring a strong command of the local language, and the enjoyment of civil rights that are assumed to be universal for all citizens.

Table 1. ANOVA and post hoc test (Tukey's); dependent variables: national identity components, overall scale of nationalism; factor: respondents' age

Respond- ents' age	Representa- tion	Overall scale of nationalism Levene $p>0.05$; $F=4.339$; Brown– Forsythe $p<0.05$	Civic type of national identity Levene $p>0.05$; $F=4.768$; Brown–Forsythe $p<0.05$	Ethnic type of national identity Levene $p>0.05$; $F=2.179$; Brown–Forsythe $p>0.05$
18–24	82 (36.9%)	2.36	2.53	2.08
25–30	72 (32%)	2.40	2.57	2.10
30+	58 (26.1%)	2.68	2.88	2.34

Furthermore, by examining the impact of origin on respondents' orientation on the nationalism scales, we also found that the homogeneity criterion was not breached – in all three cases, Levene's test value was above 0.05. Additionally, we can generally say that origin, as a factor influencing the orientation towards these attitudes, proved to be a significant factor. Graph 2 shows the relationship between the orientation towards the statements on the overall identity scale by four groups of international students classified according to the region of their country of origin. It is noticeable that students from our region exhibit a stronger attachment to national identity than other students, which is consistent with the results of other international studies and can be explained by the level of modernisation in their society of origin (Lazić & Pešić, 2011).



Graph 2. Dependence of the mean value on the overall nationalism scale based on the respondents' origin

On the other hand, one-factor analysis of variance showed that African countries stand out from other states in terms of their lower support for the attitudes constituting the overall nationalism scale and for the attitudes of the ethnic nationalism component, as shown in Table 2. This result can be interpreted as a consequence of the way modern African countries were formed, that is, not on the basis of shared land and history, but as a result of decolonisation after World War II.¹⁰ Therefore, national orientation, especially of the ethnic type, is expected to be at a lower level among students from these countries. Regarding the representation of attitudes toward the civic nationalism component, a significant difference was found only between respondents from Serbia and former SFRY countries compared to African countries, in that our students show more support for this component. The modernisation processes that have advanced further in our region could once again explain this finding.

¹⁰ Decolonisation did not occur at the same pace across all parts of the African continent, which resulted in a different attitude of the population towards national identity. However, due to limitations in the sample, we are not able to draw definitive conclusions about these differences.

Table 2. ANOVA and post hoc test (Tukey's); dependent variables: national identity components, overall scale of nationalism; factor: respondents' origin

Respondents' origin (area)	Representation	Overall scale of nationalism (mean values) Levene $p>0.05$; $F=7.659$; Brown–Forsythe $p<0.05$	Civic type of national identity (mean values) Levene $p>0.05$; $F=7.994$; Brown–Forsythe $p<0.05$	Ethnic type of national identity (mean values) Levene $p>0.05$; $F=4.612$; Brown–Forsythe $p>0.05$
Serbia and former SFRY countries	135 (60.8%)	2.59	2.29	2.77
European countries and countries in the American continent	23 (10.4%)	2.49	2.04	2.75
Asian and Middle Eastern countries	25 (11.3%)	2.50	2.24	2.65
African countries	39 (17.6%)	2.02	1.80	2.16

Finally, we tested the impact of the duration of the respondents' stay abroad, as well as their affiliation with the group of returnees or those still living abroad. One factor analysis of variance indicated that there is no significant difference in the support for the statements between these different groups. The migratory experience, which implies a certain degree of integration through the acceptance of formal conditions, had the same effect on the relationship of this population towards national identity, regardless of their future decision to return or the duration of their stay. Therefore, we can conclude that this relationship is also a consequence of the re-composition of the international students' identity.

THE ANALYSIS OF INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL CONNECTEDNESS TO THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

In addition to the support for national identity views tested through the influence of individual and contextual factors, we also focused on the emotional component of the respondents as an integral part of their identity. As outlined within the hypothetical-conceptual framework, this component was tested through support for national representatives in competitions and the way the respondents portray their country of origin to foreigners. Regarding the first indicator, more than half of the respondents (56.3%) stated that they always support their country

of origin in competitions. Furthermore, 15.3% stated that their environment influences whom they will support, 3.2% support the host country, and 5.4% support a better representative regardless of their national affiliation. Nearly one-fifth of the respondents (19.8%) did not provide an answer to this question because they do not follow competitions.

Regarding the factors that influence the loyalty test's outcome, we focused on the regions of the respondents' countries of origin, considering the results of the supported components of national identity that we previously outlined. The analysis indicates that there is a significant influence of origin (Pearson Chi-Square $p=0.000$, Cramér's $V=0.35$) on the results of preferences during competitions.

Table 3. Loyalty test – Support for national representatives in competitions (expressed in percentages)

Group of respondents	Always for the country of origin	Depends on the surroundings	For the country where I study	For the better competitor	I don't follow sports or competitions of this kind
Serbia and former SFRY countries	68.9	8.1	14.3	6.7	15.6
European countries and countries in the American continent	34.8	0	17.4	4.3	43.5
Asian and Middle Eastern countries	20	24	8	4	44
African countries	48.7	43.6	0	2.6	5.1

The results presented in Table 3 show that students from Serbia and countries where Serbs are the indigenous population demonstrate the highest level of emotional attachment and belonging to the national group of their country of origin. This can be explained by the continuity of national identification among the people in these regions (Petrović, 2014), but it can also be justified by the successes achieved by individuals and teams in international competitions. Interestingly, we also observe a significant percentage of respondents who support the teams of the country in which they are studying, which can be understood as a result of resignation due to the prolonged social crisis in their country of origin. However, this explanation may be deemed irrelevant, due to the results showing that foreigners of Western origin exhibit even stronger support for the Serbian team at competitions.

The second indicator of emotional attachment to the national group of one's country of origin is the way in which the country is portrayed to foreigners. Generally speaking, the majority of respondents (64.4%) portray their country as it is, with all its virtues and flaws. A slightly smaller number (32%) try to portray it in the best possible light, while the least number of respondents (only 3.6%) give emphasis to the flaws of their country. Regarding the impact of the region of origin on the results, it was found to be an insignificant factor for this indicator. However, it should be noted that the students from our region and those from African countries tend to enhance the image of their country the most. This could be attributed to a sense of marginalisation compared to other countries, as well as the actual poorer living conditions. In this context, students from the West and Asian countries tend to highlight the negative aspects of their homeland to lessen the expected curiosity about the reasons for migrating to a country with a lower standard of living.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the presented data leads to the overall conclusion that national identity, as perceived by international students, is characterised by a hybrid nature, representing a mix of both ethnic and civic components of national identity. In this regard, the studied population does not differ significantly from other groups of respondents tested empirically in other projects regarding the support for these views (Lazić & Pešić, 2011; Vesković & Toković, 2014). However, what generally distinguishes the population of international students from others is their weaker support for national identity as a whole, indicating that they prioritise professional advancement and the building of international networks, while national issues are considered irrelevant. This is further supported by their adaptation to new social norms and the specific (re)construction of personal identity, which involves changes and a sense of belonging to various communities, both social and professional.

On the other hand, contrary to expectations, it was found that the attitudes comprising the ethnic component received higher support than those associated with the civic component of national identity. Nostalgia, lack of emotional and social support, as well as potential search for a strong core of self, contribute to the high acceptance of attitudes that emphasise the importance of parents' nationality, place of birth and religion. The most common reasons why young people decide not to change their place of residence include their sense of belonging to a primary community of socialisation and the uncertainties of a new society, as shown in other research (Bobić, Vesković Anđelković & Kokotović Kanazir, 2016).

Hence, we can conclude that this need is also reflected in the evaluation of the ethnic component views.

Finally, regarding the emotional attachment of the respondents to their national communities, we can conclude that it is very strongly articulated among international students. This is particularly evident from the analysis of their responses to the loyalty test. In this context, it is important to highlight that students from Serbia and neighbouring countries where Serbs are the indigenous population, demonstrated a higher level of patriotism compared to others. Given that other studies have shown a more pronounced national orientation among our nationals (Lazić & Pešić, 2011; Petrović, 2014; Vesković & Toković, 2014), this result was expected. In addition, the results show a moderate tendency to portray our country in a better light than it actually is, which confirms the persistence of pride in their origin despite all the events that have occurred and the image Serbia has built over the past decades. This result can be interpreted as a subtle indication of these young people's openness to cooperation and investing the capital they have gained into the development of the country, which, combined with favourable state policies, could constitute our key potential.

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