Subjective Patriotism: A Cross-sectional Comparison of the Millennial, Generation X, Baby Boom, and Silent Generation Birth Cohorts

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Abstract

With the power to unite or divide a nation, patriotism is an integral component of the many attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which collectively influence the nature and direction of society. In its extreme forms, patriotism can lead to systematic social disorganization, foster intolerance and fear, or give rise to fascist or neo-fascist movements. Given the diverse and potentially problematic roles patriotism can play, identifying determinants for patriotism represents an important line of inquiry. Although several studies have explored the origins of patriotism in society, prior research has yet to examine the influence of birth cohort effects on patriotic self-identification the United States. This study examines generational birth cohort effects on a subjective measure of American patriotism. Data for this research were collected from the Pew Research Center 2014 Political Survey. Results from our analysis suggest that younger cohorts are significantly less patriotic than preceding generations. Cohort effects on patriotism were significant with and without controls. To our knowledge this is the first study to identify a systematic link between birth cohort and patriotism within the context of a multivariate examination. We also found evidence of a significant interaction between religiosity and birth cohort. Specifically, the positive effect of religiosity on patriotism is considerably more pronounced among Millennials than Baby Boomers. In addition to identifying a new source of variation in American patriotism, this study demonstrates the continued relevance and utility of birth cohort research for identifying and describing broad patterns of variation in society.

Keywords: Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers, religiosity, patriotism.

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Introduction

With the power to unite or divide a nation, patriotism is an integral component of the many attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which collectively influence the nature and direction of society (Alemán and Woods 2018; Coleman, Harris, Bryant, and Reif-Stice 2018; Huddy and Khatib 2007). There is an interesting duality of influence associated with the concept itself. On the one hand, during times of widespread hardship, grief, or perceived crises, patriotism has the power to unite a people under a sense of national community (Gebriel and Miley 2018; Bonikowski 2016; Huiskamp 2011; Spinner-Haley and Theiss-Morse 2003). On the other hand, patriotism has the potential to propagate fear, intolerance,

ethnocentric worldviews, and fascist and neo-fascist movements (Mueller and Mullenbach 2018; Kroes 2017; Ariely 2016; Hoyt and Goldin 2016; Bonikowski 2016; Parker 2010; Mummendey, Klink and Brown 2001). Given the recent influx off patriotic and nationalist movements in the United States and abroad, many of which carry fascist undertones or outright embrace fascist or neo-fascist ideology, research into patriotism, nationalism, and other concepts associated with national attachment is becoming increasingly important (Gebriel and Miley 2018; Kroes 2017; Benhabib 2017).

Although numerous studies have attempted to describe the changing landscape of patriotism in society, these previous inquiries have yet to explore modern birth cohorts as a potential source of variation in American patriotism. To our knowledge, the only previous attempts to examine a potential link between birth cohort and patriotism came from a 2013 (Reilly) study and a 2014 Pew Research Center report on numbers, facts, and trends associated with the Millennial generation. However, these original links were not established beyond a descriptive analysis of generational patriotic differences. The lack of inquiry into cohort effects on patriotism is somewhat surprising considering the relevance and utility of generational-related theories for the study of large-scale patterns in society was established as far back as 1928 (translated to English in 1952) by sociologist Karl Mannheim.

Towards addressing this gap, the purpose of this study is to examine cohort comparisons and effects on subjective patriotism accross a nationally representative sample of 1,821 adults from the 2014 Pew Research Center Political Survey. Using a subjective self-defined measure of patriotism, this study expands existing social scientific understanding of patriotism by examining a new potential determinant for national attachment while simultaneously attempting to circumnavigate much of the obscurity surrounding patriotic expressions, symbols, and beliefs. Analysis for this research began with an examination of mean generational differences in patriotism across the Millennial, Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Silent Generation birth cohorts. Using OLS linear regression, the subjective patriotism dependent variable was regressed on categories of birth cohort with Millennials serving as the reference category. Sociodemographic variables were then introduced in order to examine their role in determining the relationship between cohort and subjective patriotism. Interaction terms were introduced in a third and final model to assess differential effects of religiocity and political views on patriotic self-identification across categories of birth cohort.

Patriotism

In the context of the United States there are numerous contemporary and historical examples of the disparate roles patriotism can play in society (Bonikowski 2016; Schildkraut 2014; Pew Research Center 2014; Huddy and Khatib 2007; Craig and Bennett 1997). Widespread patriotism and profound unification were observed during WWII and, similarly, in the days following the September 11th terrorist attacks. Alternatively, patriotism played a role in fostering widespread contentious politics during the Vietnam war and, more recently, the patriotism-infused uproar that swept across American society as former NFL player Colin Kaepernick dropped to one knee during the national anthem. In their extreme forms, patriotism and nationalism not only give rise to intolerance and fascist and neo-fascist movements, they also have the potential to lead to systematic disorganization in society (Gebriel and Miley 2018; Kroes 2017; Benhabib 2017; Mannheim 1943). Given the diverse and potentially problematic roles that patriotism can play, identifying determinants for patriotism and expanding our understanding of how patriotism operates in society represents as an important and highly relevent line of inquiry.

Previous research has remained consistent when it comes to defining the concept of patriotism. Hurwitz and Peffley (1999) define patriotism as affective attachment to one's country. Expanding beyond affective attachment, Huddy and Khatib (2007) conceptualized patriotism as a concept indicative of both national attachment and commitment. This latter definition is now widely used in patriotism research (Hoty and Goldin 2016; Bronikowski and DiMaggio 2016; Schildkraut 2014). There is far less agreement when it comes to operationalizing the concept for empirical inquiry. The problem with operationalizing the concept of patriotism for macro-level quantitative inquiry largely results from considerable qualitative differences in the way individuals define, identify with, and express patriotism or patriotic identity (Alemán and Woods 2018; Coleman et al. 2018; Carter and Pérez 2016; Huddy and Khatib 2007; Kelly and Ronan 1987). For some, patriotism is central to their identity and closely tied to nationalism or American exceptionalism while others consider

patriotism to be a balance between affection and constructive criticism.

When it comes to measuring patriotism across individuals, one must be cognizant of different types of patriotism, and, which type a particular measurement strategy speaks to. According to a number of patriotism scholars, questions that attempt to single out certain types of patriotism often drive politically polarized responses (Alemán and Woods 2018; Huddy and Khatib 2007; Schatz, Staub, and Lavine 1999; Schatz and Staub 1997). In other words, some measures for patriotism will elicit certain responses among liberals and different responses for conservatives.

The literature defines uncritical or "blind" patriotism as an unwillingness to criticize or accept criticisms of one's nation (Parker 2010; Schatz et al. 1999; Schatz and Staub 1997). Blind patriotism, according to Huddy and Khatib, is politically polarized in that conservatives tend to identify with this form of patriotism while liberals are generally hesitant to identify themselves as entirely uncritical of their country. According to these authors, blind patriotism is measured by items which solicit levels of agreement with statements like: *my country is always right in its actions*; *my country is never wrong*; or, *my country is sometimes wrong*. Another form of national attachment, symbolic patriotism, is also politically polarized and typically expressed in terms of affinity or attachment to national symbols like the American flag. Similar to uncritical patriotism, conservatives are far more likely liberals to identify with this expression of national attatchment (Mader et al. 2018; Hoyt and Goldin 2016; Huddy and Khatib 2007). A third type of patriotism, constructive patriotism, is defined by Schatz and colleagues as "an attachment to country characterized by critical loyalty" or "questioning and criticism" driven by "a desire for positive change" (1999:153). Survey questions which appeal to this form of patriotic expression have, according to Schatz and colleagues, increased potential as a measure of broad, non-divisive patriotism. Agreement with items such as: *I oppose some U.S. policies because I care about my country and want to improve it*, or, *I express my love for America by supporting efforts at positive change*, are measures which reflect constructive patriotism.

Taken as a whole, the literature suggests that researchers employing quantitative surveys to measure patriotism should avoid politically polarized inquiries and questions geared toward certain types of patriotism. Questions which fail to consider subjective differences in the way individuals think about or express patriotism or national attachment can have a polarizing effect on responses (Alemán and Woods 2018; Coleman et al. 2018; Schildkraut 2014; Schatz et al. 1999; Schatz and Staub 1997). In an attempt to navigate this issue and align our approach with recent literature on the subject, we employ a purely subjective measure to operationalize the concept of patriotism and focusing on the extent in which individuals self-identify as a patriotic person (Mader et al. 2018; Hoyt and Goldin 2016; Huddy and Khatib 2007). This identity-based approach, we argue, allows this study to sufficiently circumnavigate issues surrounding individual definitions and types of patriotism.

Birth Cohort

This research is centered under a theoretical framework developed in 1928 by sociologist Karl Mannheim. Mannheim's *theory of generations* presumes that individual attitudes and beliefs are significantly influenced by socio-historical factors experienced during the life-course, particularly during an individual's youth. Although social scientists regularly examine or control for age-effects, including the use of a quadratic (squared) term to examine non-linear effects of age, this study attempts to highlight distinct generational differences or cohort-effects on patriotism that may otherwise have remained hidden when focusing on age-effects alone. According to Mannheim, socialization can be experienced collectively within and across groups of individuals in society. Differential patterns of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors have the potential to emerge from these shared experiences when significant socio-historical events are taking place and, more importantly, the effect of said events on attitudes and beliefs varies across different age groups in society (1952). In other words, younger and older age groups experience events like the Vietnam War, the September 11th terrorist attacks, or the last financial crisis differently and, as a result, these events may have differential effects on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors for younger and older individuals at the time said events occur.

In order to examine cohort variations in subjective patriotism, this study operationalizes cohort in alignment with existing cross-cohort research. Each of the cohorts included in this study are displayed in Table 1 along with birth-year intervals, age intervals (at the time respondents participated in the 2014 Pew

Research Center study), and mean scores for the subjective patriotism dependent variable.

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: BIRTH-YEARS, AGE RANGE (2014), AND MEAN SUBJECTIVE PATRIOTISM SCORES BY COHORT (N=1,466).

COHORT	Birth years	Ages (as of 2014)	Patriotism Score (mean)
MILLENNIAL	1981 to 1994	20 to 33	4.40
GENERATION X	1965 to 1980	34 to 49	4.94
BABY BOOM	1946 to 1964	50 to 68	5.41
"SILENT GENERATION"	Before 1946	69+	5.72

The Millennial Generation

Having recently come of age, Millennials are now sufficiently represented in national probability sampling performed by organizations like the Pew Research Center and the American National Election Study. As of 2014, the general consensus among birth-cohort scholars place Millennials in their 20s and early 30s. Younger Millennials have only recently reached the age when personal and national identities are fully explored (Arnett 2000). A 2014 article by the Pew Research Center describes Millennials as taking a distinctive path into adulthood, relatively detached from organized politics and religion, highly connected by social media, generally distrusting of people, and burdened by debt yet generally optimistic about the future. For purposes of this study, we operationalize the Millennial generation as individuals born between 1981 and 1994.

Generation X, Baby Boomers, & The Silent Generation

Most of the earlier literature focuses on differences between the Silent Generation, people born in the 1930's, and the Baby Boom cohort, persons born in the 1950's (Craig and Bennett 1997). Research attention devoted to Generation X, those born in the 1970's, rose significantly during the 1990s (Arnett 2000; Ortner 1998; Trenton 1997; Roof and Landres 1997). Widespread use of the name Generation X appears to have originated from a 1991 novel by Douglas Coupland. Lower birth rates and considerable differences from previous generations across a wide range of socio-political attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions distinguish Gen X as unique from previous generations (Giles 1994; Peterson 1993). Some studies define Gen X as individuals born between 1965 and 1976 (Mitchell 1995) while others (Dunphy 1999) offer a range from 1963 to 1980. Although specific start and end-points for this cohort is somewhat inconsistent, much of the literature on the subject defines Gen X in agreement with Howe and Strauss (2000) as those born between 1965 and 1980.

Baby Boomers consistently fall between the birth years of 1946 and 1964 among existing cohort studies. Defined in conjunction with a large spike in child births during this time, Boomers were socialized within a political, social, and economic climate unique from preceding generations which, in turn, fostered unique differences in socio-political attitudes and behaviors (Bass 2000; Alwin 1998; Williamson et al. 1997; Hill 1997; Miller 1994). Alternatively, the literature defines the Silent Generation as individuals born between 1930 and 1945 (Mitchel 1995). Members of the Silent Gen generally appear confident in American institutions and exhibit the highest levels of religiosity among mondern cohorts (Gay and Lynxwiler 2013).

CROSS-COHORT SUBJECTIVE PATRIOTISM

Some studies have identified a pattern of increased patriotism with age (Bonikowski and DiMaggio, 2016), however, to our knowledge the only empirical link between contemporary generational birth cohorts and patriotism offered from prior research come from a 2014 Pew Research Center report on numbers, facts, and trends associated with the Millennial generation and a 2013 Pew Research Center article authored by Katie Reilley. The 2014 report was based on the same data used for this research (Pew Research Center 2014) while the 2013 article used 2011 Pew Research Center data (Reilley). In both of the aforementioned articles, younger generations expressed considerably less agreement with statements that had respondents identify themselves as a patriotic person. According to the 2013 article, the patriotic gap between younger and older generations has remained largely consistent in surveys dating back to 2003. These original links, however, are largely descriptive in nature and extend no further than providing a univariate analysis of proportional generational differences.

This study expands these prior descriptive inquiries using multivariate OLS linear regression and Pew Research Center 2014 Political Survey data. Given the pattern of cohort differences in patriotism described above, we hypothesize the following: (1) significant patriotic differences will be observed between categories of birth cohort, (2) birth cohorts will account for a significant amount of variation in subjective patriotism observed for the sample, (3) cohort effects will remain significant while controlling for sociodemographic and attitudinal control variable effects, and (4) cross-cohort differences will follow a pattern of increased patriotic self-identification moving from younger to older cohorts similar to what was described in the 2014 Pew Research Center report and Reilley's 2013 article.

CONTROL VARIABLES

Several studies have demonstrated that individual patriotic self-identification varies across a wide range of sociodemographic variables, many of which include members from dominant groups in society. With increased access to valuable resources, dominant group members often house strong national attachment while subordinate groups, feeling exploited or otherwise disadvantaged, tend to have weaker patriotic identities (Coleman et al. 2018; Bonikowski 2016; Van der Toorn et al. 2014; Peña and Sidanius 2002; Ishio 2010). With this in mind, we examine gender and race, family income, educational attainment, political views, religiocity, and southern residency and assess the role each plays in shaping the relationship between birth cohort and patriotism.

Gender and Race

Findings from a 1987 study by Kelly and Ronan reveal distinct gender differences when it comes to patriotic identity and expression. For females, patriotic associations tended to be general and symbolic while men were specific and concrete. Interestingly, psycho-cultural similarities among females were consistent regardless of ethnicity and measures of educational attainment (Kelly and Ronan 1987). Race also appears to be an important factor for patriotic self-identification (Coleman et al. 2018; Burkey and Zamalin 2016; Carter and Pérez 2016; Van der Toorn et al. 2014). Recall from the previous section that members of socially dominant groups tend to hold greater emotional attachment to their country as opposed to socially subordinate groups. White Americans have a dominant status in society which, in turn, provides greater access to opportunities and scarce resources. Ishio's 2010 study revealed White Americans as having the highest mean patriotism index score among the four included groups while African Americans scored the lowest. In light of these findings, we hypothesize that female and Non-White respondents will self-identify as significantly less patriotic on average than male and Non-Hispanic White respondents.

Educational Attainment and Family Income

Although education alone does not guarantee social advantage as a dominant group, it certainly has the potential to open doors of opportunity. Several studies have identified a significant positive relationship between patriotism and educational attainment (Bonikowski and DiMaggio 2016; Kelly and Ronan 1987). In light of these previous findings we expect to find higher levels of patriotism among higher educational attainment categories. We also expect family income and individual patriotism levels to be positively correlated. Families with higher income levels clearly benefit at least to some degree from their nation's economic system which, as others have shown, has the potential to translate into increased patriotic self-identification (Burkey and Zamalin 2016; Carter and Pérez 2016; Ishio 2010).

Political Views

Several studies have suggested that patriotism, as a concept, tends to be ideological and politically polarized in nature and varies considerably depending on one's political views (Mader et al. 2018; Burkey and Zamalin 2016; Hoyt and Goldin 2016; Ishio 2010; Huddy and Khatib 2007; Hurwitz and Peffley 1999). According to these studies, conservatives tend to hold a stronger sense of national attachment and increased willingness to disclose patriotic beliefs and loyalty toward one's group compared to liberals (Hoyt and Goldin 2016; Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009; Schatz et al. 1999; Hurwitz and Peffley 1999). In fact, a 2010 Gallup/USA Today poll found that only 19 percent of liberals self-identified as *extremely patriotic* compared to 48 percent of conservatives. Similarly, only 2 percent of conservatives identified themselves as *not especially patriotic* compared to 14 percent of liberal respondents. In light of these findings, we expect to observe increased patriotic self-identification among those with more conservative political leanings.

Attendance at Religious Services and Southern Residency

Research examining the relationship between patriotism and measures of religiocity, like attendance at religious services, suggests that the two are positively correlated (Bonikowski and Dimaggio 2016; Ishio 2010). In other words, religion appears to have a positive effect on patriotic self-identification. Similar to religion, patriotism is understood to be a deeply engrained American moral value (Wolfe 1998). Alongside family and God, Wolfe suggests that patriotism appears to be part of a "trinity of things Americans most hold sacred" (1988:163). With the above in mind, we also control for southern residency based on the increased presence of religious institutions and historically conservitive political climate of the region (Bonikowski 2016; Ishio 2010). Ultimately, we expect to find a positive relationship between southern residency and frequency of religious service attendance.

METHOD

Data for this study were obtained through the Pew Research Center February 2014 Political Survey. The Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan research center that conducts public polling, demographic research, media content analysis, and other empirical social science research. These data offer relatively recent information regarding subjective patriotism as well as general demographic and attitudinal information of interest to this study. Interviews were conducted in February of 2014 accross a national representative sample of 1,821 adults 18 years of age and older. Researchers purposely over sampled for Millennials. Respondents with invalid or missing responses for any of the variables used in this study were later excluded from our analysis resulting in a final sample of 1,466 respondents.

Dependent Variable

Subjective patriotism, the dependent variable for this study, was measured through the following item: "Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where (10) represents a description that is 'perfect' for you, and a (1) represents a description that is 'totally wrong' for you: *On a scale of 1 to 10, how well does the description, 'a patriotic person,' describe you?*" This original scale was negatively skewed (i.e., there were very few responses in categories 1, 2, and 3 of the scale). As a result, we combined the first four codes into a value of (1) resulting in a seven-point scale with a skewness value of -.663. Higher scores for this variable reflect higher levels of subjective patriotism.

Independent Variable

Birth cohort serves as the primary independent variable for this study. The Millennial cohort consists of respondents born between 1981 and 1994. Gen X consists of respondents born between 1965 and 1980. Baby Boomers are defined as respondents born between 1946 and 1964, and the Silent Generation houses individuals born before 1945. Dummy variables were created for each cohort with the Millennial cohort serving as the reference category in all analyses. In addition to being well represented within the sample, prior descriptions of generational patriotic differences have repeatedly compared the Millennial generation against other generations (Pew Research Center 2014; Reilley 2013).

Control Variables

Categories of gender were coded (1) for female and (0) for male. The Pew Research Center measured educational attainment by the highest degree the respondent had received using the following eight-point scale: (1) less than high school, (2) high school incomplete, (3) high school graduate, (4) some college, (5) two-year associate degree, (6) four-year college degree, (7) some postgraduate or professional training, and (8) postgraduate or professional degree. For this study, categories (1) less than high school and (2) high school incomplete were collapsed under a single category labeled less than high school. This category serves as the reference category in all analyses. Remaining responses were recoded into dummy variable categories of high school graduate, some college, college degree (those who earned a two-year associate or four-year college degree), and graduate/professional degree or experience. Family income was measured with the original nine-point scale in the survey where responses were coded (1) less than $10,000 to (9) $150,000 or more.

A dummy variable was created for southern residence (South=1, all others=0). Two questions were used to identify respondent race and Hispanic ethnicity. The first question was, "Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban?", with answers coded (1) for "yes" and (2) for "no." The second question was,

"Which of the following describes your race?", with possible answers coded (1) for White, (2) for Black or African American, (3) for Asian or Asian American, or (4) Other-Race. From these two questions, dummy variables for African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Other-Race Americans were created with White Non-Hispanic respondents serving as the reference category.

Political ideology was measured using the following question in the survey: "In general, would you describe your political views as..." Responses in the Pew data set were coded (1) very conservative, (2) conservative, (3) moderate, (4) liberal, and (5) very liberal. Attendance at religious services, as one of the most widely used survey measures of individual religiosity, was measured in the Pew data set with the following question: "Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?" The possible responses were (1) never, (2) seldom, (3) a few times a year, (4) once or twice a month, (5) once a week, and (6) more than once a week.

Analytic Strategy

We use hierarchical OLS regression to assess the net effects of generational birth cohorts on subjective patriotism with and without controls. Likelihood ratio (LRT) tests are used to assess the significance of observed changes to model fit after additional variables are introduced. Model 1 regresses the subjective patriotism dependent variable on categories of birth cohort and is compared against a null model with no predictors. Additional sociodemographic and attitudinal variables are introduced in Model 2. A third and final model examines possible interactions between birth cohort and attendance at religious services, and between cohort and political views.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for the dependent, independent, and control variables are presented in Table 2 (N = 1,466). Responses for the subjective patriotism dependent variable ranged from 1 to 7 with an average score of 5.03 and standard deviation of 1.96. Of the sample, approximately 32 percent of respondents were identified as Millennials, 21 percent as members of Generation X, 33 percent as Baby Boomers, and 14 percent were identified as members of the Silent Generation. Categories of gender were distributed somewhat evenly (47 percent female) within the sample. For categories of educational attainment, approximately 25 percent of the sample were high school graduates, 6 percent had less than a high school education, 17.6 percent completed some college, 34.72 percent had either a two- or four-year college degree, and 17.6 percent reported having either a graduate or professional degree/certification or some graduate or professional experience.

Average family income category for the sample was 5.05 and roughly one third of respondents were identified as southern residents. Approximately 70 percent of the sample identified as White Non-Hispanic, 12.1 percent as African American, 10.9 percent as Hispanic, and 3.41 and 4 percent of respondents self-identified as Asian or Other-Race. On average, sampled respondents appear to lean towards moderate to slightly conservative and reported attending religious services between once or twice a month and a few times a year.

Table 3 displays the bivariate and multivariate results of the OLS regression with subjective patriotism as the dependent variable. Mean patriotism scores by cohort are presented in Table 1. An analysis of variance (not shown) indicated that cohort mean differences for subjective patriotism are statistically significant ($F = 32.61$, $p < .001$). Post hoc comparisons for mean differences suggest that, with the exception of the Boomer-Silent Gen. comparison, the four cohorts included in the analysis are statistically different from one another with respect to patriotic self-identification. No major multicollinearity issues were detected among Model 1 and 2 variables (VIFs < 1.23). As expected, the introduction of interaction terms in Model 3 altered VIF scores for the religious service attendance variable (VIF = 3.56), cohort dummy variable main effects and interaction terms (VIFs between 7.6 and 9.16).

Model 1 assess the impact of generational birth cohort on subjective patriotism. Overall, Generation X, Boomers, and the Silent Generation each appear to be significantly more patriotic than Millennials ($\beta 1genX = .540$, $\beta 2boomer = 1.01$, $\beta 3silent = 1.32$, $p < .001$). The signs of the coefficients reveal an interesting pattern of generational patriotic differences. Patriotism appears to increase from younger to older cohorts with the largest generational gap residing between Millennials and the Silent Generation. A likelihood ratio test comparing Model 1 with a null model (not shown) with no predictors indicated significantly improved model fit (Chi-Sq. = 94.97, $p< .001$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, Means, Proportions, and Standard Deviations (n=1,466).

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	MEAN/ PROPORTION	STANDARD DEVIATION
SUBJECTIVE PATRIOTISM (7-POINT SCALE)	-	5.03	1.96
BIRTH COHORT			
MILLENNIAL (BORN 1981-1994)	466	31.79	-
GENERATION X (BORN 1965-1980)	312	21.28	-
BABY BOOM (BORN 1946-1964)	484	33.02	-
"SILENT GENERATION" (BORN BEFORE 1946)	204	13.90	-
FEMALE	691	47.14	-
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT			
LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL	92	6.28	-
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE	362	24.69	-
SOME COLLEGE (UNDERGRAD)	245	16.71	-
COLLEGE DEG.	509	34.72	-
GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL DEGREE OR EXPERIENCE	258	17.60	-
FAMILY INCOME (9-POINT SCALE)	-	5.05	2.51
SOUTHERN RESIDENCE	542	37.0	-
RACE/ETHNICITY			
WHITE NON-HISPANIC RESPONDENTS	1022	69.7	-
AFRICAN AMERICAN RESPONDENTS	177	12.1	-
HISPANIC RESPONDENTS	160	10.9	-
ASIAN RESPONDENTS	50	3.41	-
OTHER RESPONDENTS	57	4.00	-
POLITICAL VIEWS (5-POINT SCALE)		2.99	1.07
ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES (6-POINT SCALE)	-	3.45	1.59

According to the adjusted R-squared value for Model 1, categories of birth cohort account for roughly 6 percent of observed variation in subjective patriotism.

The sociodemographic and attitudinal controls introduced in Model 2 significantly improved overall model fit (Chi-Sq. = 120.31, $p < .001$). Model 2 variables collectively account for 12.7 percent (Adj. $R^2 = .127$) of variation observed in the dependent variable. The Silent Generation remained the most patriotic ($\beta = 1.13$, $p < .001$) cohort. Gen X and Boomer respondents also continued to exhibit significant positive coefficients ($\beta = .396$, $p < .01$; $\beta = .811$, $p < .001$) when other variables were held constant. Interestingly, coefficients for Gen X and Boomers decreased from Model 1 while the Silent Generation's increased. This suggests that the generation gap between Millennials and the Gen X and Boomer cohorts narrows while the gap between the youngest and oldest generation actually expands after controls were introduced.

As expected, respondents from higher family income categories are significantly more patriotic than those from lower income categories. That is, as income increases, patriotic self-identification also increase. Patriotic differences in the regional comparison of southern and non-southern respondents approaches significance ($\beta = .172$, $p < .10$). This suggests that, albeit with a notable degree of uncertainty, southerners may be more patriotic on average than non-southerners.

Model 2 results also revealed interesting patriotic differences accross racial and ethnic categories. On the one hand, African American and Asian-American respondents identified with significantly lower values on the subjective patriotism scale compared to White-American respondents while, on the other hand, patriotic self-identification for Hispanic and Other-Race respondents appears to be similar to that of White respondents. Political ideology and religiosity measures reveal differential effects. That is, as respondents report more liberal views, they are significantly less likely to self-identify as patriotic. The reverse appears to be the case for religiosity. Increases in frequency of religious service attendance appears to have a significant positive effect on predicted outcomes for the subjective patriotism scale.

The third and final model for this analysis examines possible interactions between cohort and religiosity, and cohort and political views. Separate interaction models were constructed to test the significance of the two interactions individually. Results from a nested F-test (not shown) comparing the main effects model (Model 2) with each of the two interaction models revealed a significant interaction effect for cohort and religiosity ($F = 3.8$, $p < .01$) but not for cohort and political views ($F = .847$, $p > .4$). As a result, the cohort-religiosity interaction terms were the only ones included in Model 3 results. Model 3 interaction term coefficients were positive for each cohort with Millennials serving as the reference category.

Interestingly, the significance of the cohort-religiosity interaction appears to be limited to the Millennial-Boomer cohort comparison. This suggests that relationship between religiosity and patriotism is statistically different for Millennials than it is for Baby Boomers. A visual display of the differential effect of religious attendance by categories of birth cohort are presented in Figure 1. Regression lines for each cohort were obtained from a simplified model (not shown) containing only the dependent variable, religiosity, cohort dummy variables, and cohort-religiosity interaction terms in order to isolate the interaction effects from the effects of other variables in Model 3.

The positive slope for each of the lines in Figure 1 represent the positive relationship between religious service (x-axis) attendance and patriotic self-identification (y-axis). The steepness of the slope estimates reflect the predicted magnitude of the effect. Increased church attendance appears to reduce the generational gap between Millennials, Boomers, and Gen X (the lines move closer together as attendance increases). The slope estimates for Millennials, Gen X, and the Silent Generation are almost perfectly parallel which suggests that the effects of religious attendance on subjective patriotism are quite similar for these three cohorts. Recall that the slope estimate for the Boomer cohort interaction term (Model 3) was the only one which significantly deviated from that of the Millennial cohort.

In addition to the above insights, there are two additional conclusions we should consider drawing from Figure 1 slope estimates for the Millennial and Boomer cohorts. First, the shallow slope for the Boomer cohort suggests that Boomers, regardless of how often they attend religious services, are quite similar when it comes to patriotic self-identification. Second, religious service attendance appears to act as a polarizing force among Millennials in terms of patriotic self-identification. In Figure 1 we can see that predicted patriotism for Millennials is considerably lower at the bottom end of the attendance scale

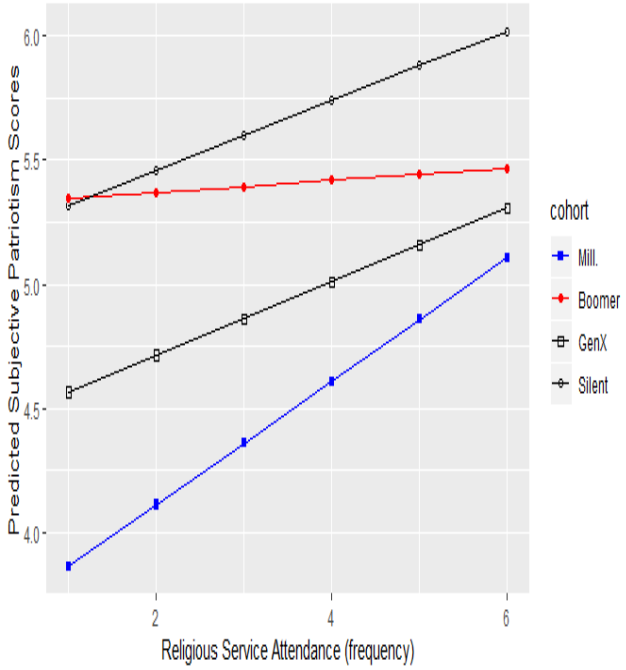
Table 3. Multiple Regression: The Impact of Birth Cohort, Sociodemographic and Attitudinal Variables on Subjective Patriotism (n = 1,466).

Variables	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Millennial (ref.)	-	-	-
Generation X	.540***	.396**	759*
	(.139)	(.137)	(.327)
Baby Boom	1.01***	.811***	1.67***
	(.123)	(.126)	(.283)
"Silent Generation"	1.32***	1.13***	1.44***
	(.160)	(.163)	(.379)
Female		.074	.053
		(.099)	(.099)
Less than High School (ref.)		-	-
High School		.737***	.737***
		(.223)	(.223)
Some College		.900***	.910***
		(.236)	(.236)
College Degree		.908***	.919***
		(.225)	(.225)
Graduate/Professional Experience		.657**	.686***
or Degree		(.246)	(246)
Family Income		.091***	.092***
(9-point scale)		(.022)	(.022)
Southern Residence		.172†	.191†
		(.102)	(.102)
African American		-.595***	-.589***
		(.156)	(.156)
Hispanic		.193	.174
		(.171)	(.171)
Asian		-.591*	-.581*
		(.270)	(.269)
Other-Race		.053	.060
		(.253)	(.253)
Political Views		-.259***	-.264***
(5-point scale)		(.049)	(.049)
Religious Service Attendance		.095**	.221***
(6-point scale)		(.033)	(.057)
Interaction Effects			
Millennial × Religiosity (ref.)			-
Gen X × Religiosity			-.118
			(.088)
Boomer × Religiosity			-.257***
			(.076)
"Silent" × Religiosity			-.105
			(.095)
Constant (Intercept)	4.40	3.72	3.32
F ratio	32.61***	14.32***	12.74***
Adjusted R Square	.061***	.127***	.132**

*[1]Cell values are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. [2]Significance Codes: ***p <.001,**p <.01,*p <.05,†p <.10. [3]Sig. codes for Adj. R Squared derive from Likelihood Ratio Test comparisons.*

compared to the top. In other words, frequency of attendance at religious services appears to have a divisive influence over patriotic differences within the Millennial generation.

Figure 1. Interaction between categories of birth cohort and frequency of religious service attendance.



Discussion and Conclusions

As one of the first studies to identify a direct link between contemporary American generational birth cohorts and widespread societal patterns of variation in subjective patriotism within the context of a systematic multivariate examination, findings from our analysis carry several important theoretical implications for scholarship surrounding patriotism, national identity, and the many attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which collectively influence the nature and direction of a nation. So far as we are aware, the only previously established link between contemporary generational birth cohorts and patriotism came from the original 2014 Pew Research Center report on numbers, facts, and trends associated with the Millennial generation and a 2013 article for Pew Research authored by Katie Reilley. These original links, however, were not established beyond a descriptive univariate graphical display of proportional generational patriotic differences. Results of our analysis suggest that, controlling for sociodemographic and attitudinal factors found to influence patriotism in prior research, cross-cohort differences in subjective patriotism originally identified by Pew Research Center are indeed significant. Younger generations appear to be significantly less patriotic compared to older birth cohorts in the United States.

Findings from prior research concerning the negative relationship between liberal political views and patriotic self-identification were supported by our findings, however, this study carries mixed implications for other determinants of patriotic identity identified in prior research. For example, previous studies have found that increased access to valuable resources resulting from dominant group membership results in stronger national attachment while subordinate groups, feeling exploited or otherwise disadvantaged, tend to have weaker patriotic identities (Coleman et al. 2018; Bonikowski 2016; Van der Toorn et al. 2014; Peña and Sidanius 2002; Ishio 2010). These earlier findings are only fully supported by this study if dominant group status is defined by family income. According to our results, individuals with increased access to valuable resources in the form of higher family incomes are indeed more subjectively patriotic on average than those form lower family income categories. However, the relationship between dominant group status and patriotic self-identification was less clear for dominant categories of education, race and gender.

Naturally, findings and implications for this research should be considered alongside the limitations encountered by this study. First, the cross-sectional design of this study limits any ability to follow a particular birth cohort over time or compare cohorts at similar age or life course stages (e.g., we are unable to compare Boomers and Generation X when each were in their 20's). Tracking subjective patriotism over the life course would require data from repeated cross-sections of individuals over the past several decades. Similarly, some of our findings may be influenced by cultural and political events taking place during this period including escalating pressure for American involvement in the Syrian conflict and resulting refugee crisis, increased tensions with Russia, ongoing nuclear testing and threats from North Korea, a rise in mass shootings, and a supreme court decision on the subject of gay marriage in 2015. However, our results did not substantially deviate from the relatively stable cross-cohort patriotic trends

identified by The Pew Research Center dating back to 2003.

A second limitation concerns the analytic strategy used for this research which limited our ability to tease apart age, period, and cohort effects. Our objective, however, was simply to determine whether significant patriotic differences exist between American birth cohorts. With this in mind, results from our analysis establish a need for future research which uses more complex Age-Period-Cohort multilevel or mixed-effects modeling to further isolate cohort-effects from surrounding age- and period-effects (Alemán and Woods 2018; Heo et al. 2017; Dinas and Stoker 2014; Schwadel and Stout 2012; Schwadel 2011). Alternatively, our attempt to measure subjective patriotism included words like patriotism and patriotic person, terms which may carry disparate meanings for different individuals. In other words, although our findings reveal significant cross-cohort differences with respect to self-identification as a patriotic person, we are limited in our ability to determine whether the term patriotism itself is defined similarly within and across generational birth cohorts. Future research which attempts to address this limitation should consider using a qualitative research design that allows the researcher to explore links between individual biographies and patriotic identity.

With respect to theoretical implications for this research, in addition to establishing a link between generational birth cohorts and subjective patriotism, this study also highlights the relevance and utility of birth cohort research for contemporary social science scholarship. The utility of cohort research, as we demonstrate here, stems from an ability to assist social scientific inquiry with identifying and describing broad patterns of variation in society. Although social scientists regularly examine or control for age-effects, results of our analysis highlight distinct generational differences or cohort-effects on patriotism that may otherwise have remained hidden had we focused on age-effects alone. Ultimately, this study lends support to generational theories proposed by Karl Mannheim (1952), socialization can be a collective experience across groups of individuals in society, and, patterns of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors within and across different groups have the potential to emerge from these shared experiences.

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