

Patriotism or Nationalism? Understanding Post–September 11, 2001, Flag-Display Behavior¹

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People reacted to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in a number of different ways. One reaction was to display the American flag on one's home, car, or person. The goal of this research was to understand the underlying motivations that led to this widespread behavior. Specifically, to what extent was post-9/11 flag-display behavior motivated by patriotism (love of country and in-group solidarity), nationalism (uncritical acceptance of national, state, and political authorities and out-group antipathy), or a combination of both? Results of a national survey ($N = 605$) provided much stronger support for the hypothesis that post-9/11 flag-display behavior was an expression of patriotism, not nationalism. Other results supported the notion that patriotism can exist without nationalism, even in the context of people's reactions to a terrorist attack.

*Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations,
may she always be in the right; but our country, right
or wrong.*

—Stephen Decatur (1816)

*What do we mean by patriotism in the context of our
times? I venture to suggest that what we mean is a
sense of national responsibility . . . a patriotism which
is not short, frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the
tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime.*

—Adlai Stevenson (1952)

One of several reactions Americans had to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, was an impulse to display

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the American flag. National surveys found that between 74% and 82% Americans reacted to the attacks with flag displays on their homes, cars, or person (e.g., Moore, 2003; Roberts, 2002). What drove the impulse to display the American flag? Did people fly the flag to express their solidarity with the victims of the attack, the victims' families, and their fellow citizens? Or did they display the flag as a battle standard to symbolize dominance and hostility toward out-groups?

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some flew the flag for love of nation. For example, Todd Gitlin, a former president of Students for Democratic Society (an activist organization known for burning the American flag to protest American imperialism abroad) wrote "I took inspiration from the patriotic activists who seem to have brought down Flight 93 over Pennsylvania and probably saved the White House. . . . It dawned on me that patriotism was the sum of such acts" (as cited in Horowitz, 2003). Gitlin then did something he previously felt was unthinkable: He draped an American flag from his window.

Reactions to the pervasive display of the American flag were not, however, unilaterally positive. For example, one commenter noted "My office . . . seems swept into a surreal state of 'flag waving,' and 'kill a commie for mommie' patriotism" (AlterNet, 2001). Barbara Kingsolver (2001), like others whose political consciousness was shaped largely by the Vietnam War, wrote "Patriotism threatens free speech with death" and "the American flag stands for intimidation, censorship, violence, bigotry, sexism, homophobia, and shoving the Constitution through a paper shredder." A number of university administrations apparently agreed with Kingsolver's view, or for other reasons also felt squeamish about displays of the American flag. Arizona State, Central Michigan, Lehigh, Marquette, Texas A & M, and a number of other universities banned flag displays following September 11, 2001, as potentially offensive and insensitive to diversity on campus (Chow, 2001).

In sum, people differed in the degree that they felt post-9/11 flag displays primarily symbolized love of country, uncritical conformity, derogation of other nations, or all of these. The goal of the research presented here was to explore empirically the degree to which post-9/11 flag-display behavior is connected to love of country and affirmation of cultural values versus hostility toward out-groups and conformity to authority.

Patriotism and Nationalism

The concern about what it means to fly the American flag in response to the terrorist attacks is rooted in assumptions about whether national pride necessarily implies ethnocentricity or xenophobic regard for others. In short, some may be skeptical that it is possible for people to express *patriotism*, defined as love of country and attachment to national values (e.g., Adorno, Frenkel-Burnswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Bar-Tal, 1997; Kelman, 1997; Kosterman &

Feshbach, 1989) without also expressing *nationalism*, which is uncritical acceptance of national, state, and political authorities combined with a belief in the superiority and dominant status of one's nation (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950; Hechter, 2000; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Meloen, 1999; Schatz & Staub, 1997; Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999). Theoretically, patriotism is an affective attachment to the in-group independent of one's feelings about the out-group or authorities. Nationalism, however, is explicitly connected to out-group antipathy (Blank & Schmidt, 1993, 2003).

Factor-analytic studies have indicated that patriotism and nationalism are distinguishable constructs. Different clusters of attitudes correspond to a positive but critical appreciation of one's country and its symbols on the one hand, and an orientation best characterized by "my country, right or wrong" on the other (Blank & Schmidt, 1993, 2003; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Schatz & Staub, 1997; see also Sullivan, Fried, & Dietz, 1992, for a five-factor alternative). Not surprisingly, however, these constructs are nonetheless somewhat correlated because they both include a component of positive in-group evaluation (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989).

In a similar vein, other research taking a social-identity perspective has found that in-group enhancement and out-group derogation are not like conjoined twins, such that wherever there is one, there necessarily is the other (Brewer, 1979, 1999; de Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Peña & Sidanius, 2002). A number of studies have found that increased in-group identification leads to negative out-group attitudes only when the out-group poses a threat to the in-group (e.g., Brewer, 1999; Brown, 1995). Therefore, flag-display behavior may have been a consequence of patriotism without nationalism for those less threatened by the terrorist attacks. However, among those who were more threatened by the terrorist attacks, flag-display behavior may have reflected more nationalism, or a complex blend of nationalism and patriotism.

Consistent with the proposition that flag-display behavior might be a complex blend of both patriotism and nationalism, value-protection theorists have argued that people are intuitive prosecutors who respond to moral transgressions (e.g., a terrorist attack) with a strong sense of motivated arousal and distress (Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock, Kirtel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000). This motivated arousal leads people to respond with both moral outrage (a reaction that includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components, including negative attributions and vilification of the transgressor, rage, and punitive behavior) and value affirmation (attempts to morally cleanse by reaffirming one's commitment to important cultural and moral values or by doing good deeds to reassure oneself of one's own comparative moral commitment and worth).

If people viewed the terrorist attacks as a moral breach that violated, for example, their perception of what constitutes the tenets of just war (Walzer, 2000), the value-protection model (VPM) predicts that they would respond with

both moral outrage and value affirmation. The first would be a more interpersonal and nationalistic response geared toward shoring up the moral perimeter and guarding against future threat, whereas the latter would be a more intrapsychic and patriotic response designed to reassure oneself and other in-group members of one's commitment to in-group ideals. According to this perspective, flag displays may well be the result of increased expression of both nationalism and patriotism, given that people tend to respond to moral threats with redundancy and overkill, rather than using one or another strategy (Tetlock et al., 2000).

In sum, drawing on previous research and theory, we derived three hypotheses for why there was such a dramatic display of the American flag following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The patriotism hypothesis posits that flag-display behavior in this context was a reflection of love of nation and a need to express and defend core American values, and was not a consequence of a need to rally around authority and to defend against out-groups. If the patriotism hypothesis is true, then flag-display behavior should relate more strongly to measures of in-group enhancement and the degree that people engaged in other efforts to support cultural standards of value as a consequence of the attacks (e.g., donated blood, gave money to charity) than to measures of out-group derogation or antipathy.

The nationalism hypothesis, in contrast, posits that flag-display behavior in the context of 9/11 was a symbolic expression of threat-induced needs to uncritically support American leaders and to defend against hostile out-groups. If the nationalism hypothesis is true, then we would expect measures of perceived threat, out-group derogation, moral outrage, and uncritical support for leaders to emerge as stronger predictors of flag-display behavior than measures of in-group enhancement or the tendency to engage in value-affirming behaviors.

Finally, the overkill hypothesis predicts that because the threat posed by the terrorist attacks was so severe, people may have felt compelled to respond with seemingly redundant reactions, and therefore that flag-display behavior was a result of increased nationalism and patriotism. If the overkill hypothesis is true, then we would expect to see measures of threat, out-group derogation and hostility, increased support for authority, in-group enhancement, and value-affirming behaviors to each explain unique variance in the tendency to display the American flag.

Method

Participants

The study sample was drawn from a panel of respondents maintained by Knowledge Networks (KN). KN recruits panel members using random-digit-dialing telephone-selection methods, and therefore maintains a true probability

sample. As expected, given the random selection of participants, the characteristics of the panel therefore closely match those of the U.S. Census.³ Once a panel member agrees to participate, they are given a free interactive device to access the World Wide Web (e.g., a Web TV), and free Internet access in exchange for participation in regular surveys. About 50% of the panelists had no prior access to the Web before becoming KN members, so the KN panel is the only Web-enabled household panel that is truly representative of the American public.

As part of a larger data-collection effort (Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004), a random sample of 605 panel members (an 88% within-panel cooperation rate) responded between December 28, 2001, and January 14, 2002, to a password-protected e-mail that alerted them to the survey. The e-mail had a clickable link that allowed them to initiate the survey. Participants could access the survey only once, and the survey was protected from nonpanel member access. There were no significant differences in demographic profiles between those who did versus did not respond to the invitation to participate. A summary of sample characteristics is provided in Table 1.

The survey assessed people's degree of nationalism, perceived threat of future terrorist attacks, and retrospective reports of behavioral reactions to the terrorist attacks (including whether people displayed the American flag). Finally, the survey assessed the degree that they perceived that their feelings about in-groups and out-groups were more positive, remained the same, or more negative since September 11, 2001.

Measures

Nationalism and support for authority. Theorists have organized a variety of overlapping personality and attitudinal variables into ideological/affective/cognitive stylistic resonances (Alker & Poppen, 1973; Carroll, Perkowitz, Lurigio, & Weaver, 1987). For example, one resonance, *cognitive conservatism*, combines support for traditional power structures and opposition to egalitarianism with personality measures of dogmatism, authoritarianism, and intolerance of ambiguity (a resonance reminiscent of the classic work on authoritarianism; Adorno et al., 1950). Focusing on operational definitions, one could argue on both conceptual and psychometric grounds that an item such as "We need strong national leaders" could as easily be part of an ideology, authoritarianism, or attitude scale.

Therefore, we used four items from Altemeyer's (1996) right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) scale as an attitudinal (rather than a personality) measure of nationalism and support for authority. People were asked to indicate on 5-point

³See <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/> for comparisons of the panel with current U.S. Census figures.

Table 1

Unweighted Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Percentage
Gender	
Male	48
Female	52
Age (in years)	
18-29	16
30-44	30
45-59	33
60 or older	20
Highest level of education	
Less than high school	14
High school	35
Some college	26
Bachelor's degree or higher	25
Household annual income	
Less than \$14,999	9
\$15,000-\$29,999	15
\$30,000-\$49,999	33
\$50,000-\$74,999	24
\$75,000-\$99,999	10
\$100,000-\$124,999	5
\$125,000 or more	4
Race/ethnicity	
White	79
Black	8
Hispanic	9
Other	4
Context	
Urban	88
Rural	12
Region	
Northeast	20
Midwest	23
South	36
West	18

Note. $N = 605$. *Urban* areas were classified as those locations that had a census Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) code. For brevity's sake, ranges are reported, but some variables were measured at more fine-grained levels (e.g., age, income). Because the study sample was a true probability sample, departures of sample characteristics from what would be expected based on current census estimates could be corrected by applying sample weights. All other descriptive statistics and substantive analyses, therefore, are based on weighted data. Hypothesis testing with and without weights yielded the same results, however.

radio-button scales⁴ (*strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree*): “Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us”; “Our country will be great if we honor the way of our forefathers, do what authorities tell us, and get rid of the ‘rotten apples’ who are ruining everything”; “Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs”; and “The way our country can get through future crises is to get back to our traditional values, put tough leaders in power, and silence troublemakers spreading bad ideas.” The items were reverse scored so that higher scores on the measure reflect higher levels of nationalism. The measure had a Cronbach’s alpha of .89 within our sample.

Perceived personal threat. Perceived personal threat was measured with eight items that tapped the degree of worry people felt about future terrorist attacks, flying in commercial aircraft, getting infected with anthrax, other kinds of bioterrorism, retaliation for the war in Afghanistan, the personal safety of themselves and their family, being in tall buildings, and large public gatherings on 5-point radio button scales that ranged from *not at all* to *very much* ($\alpha = .92$).

Group differentiation: In-group enhancement and out-group derogation. Participants were asked how much their feelings about a number of groups had changed since September 11, 2001, on 5-point radio-button scales (*much more negative, more negative, stayed the same, more positive, and much more positive*). A principal-components analysis of the group-differentiation items with an oblique rotation revealed a two-component solution. Feelings about in-group targets—Americans as a whole, American political leaders, firefighters and police—loaded on one component (eigenvalue = 2.42); whereas feelings about out-group targets—new immigrants, Arab American citizens, Palestinians, and those who live in Islamic or Middle Eastern countries—loaded on another component (eigenvalue = 3.18). Given that (a) the expected in-group and out-group components emerged; (b) the components were uncorrelated ($r = -.04, ns$), despite using a data-reduction technique that allowed correlated components; and (c) attitudes toward in-groups and out-groups were on average more positive and negative, respectively, there was a sound foundation for separate measures of in-group enhancement and out-group derogation or distancing ($\alpha = .77$ and $.86$, respectively). The finding that in-group and out-group reactions factored out separately and were subsequently relatively uncorrelated was interesting in its own

⁴Radio-button scales present scale points as “bubbles” or “buttons.” When a participant selects a given response option with a mouse click, the button becomes colored in, and the response is recorded in a computer file. These scales had verbal point labels (e.g., *strongly agree*) but no numeric labels. The computer recorded all responses numerically (using the values 1-5 for 5-point scales, and 1-7 for 7-point scales), with higher scale values reflecting greater degree of the variable measured (e.g., higher values on the threat scale reflected greater threat).

right. In-group and out-group differentiation were clearly distinguishable reactions in how people reacted after 9/11.

Patriotism. A single-item measure was included to tap the degree that people felt an increased level of patriotism after the terrorist attacks. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate "To what extent did you feel a surge of patriotism following the attacks?" on a 5-point radio-button scale (*not at all, slightly, moderately, much, and very much*).

Behavioral checklists: Measures of moral outrage, value affirmation, and flag-display behavior. Participants were presented with a behavioral checklist of different things they may have done in reaction to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. This list included three categories of behavior: (a) behaviors that reflected moral outrage (e.g., said something like "We should just nuke them," engaged in some behavior in an attempt to blow off steam); (b) behaviors that reflected non-flag-related forms of value affirmation (e.g., donating blood, increased attempts to do nice things for family and friends, donating money to charity); and (c) the separate category of flag-display behavior (displaying the flag at one's home; displaying the flag on one's car, or wearing clothing or jewelry that depicts the American flag). Counts of how many of each of these categories of behavior were checked off, therefore, served as our behavioral index of moral outrage (with a range from 0 to 4) and value affirmation (with a range from 0 to 7).

Two measures of flag-display behavior were used: whether people displayed the flag, and how many different ways people displayed the flag (on their homes, their cars, their person, or some combination thereof). This measure was scored on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 to 3.

Profile information. In addition to the measures included on our survey, we also had profile information about each respondent's age, gender, education, income, region of the United States, and political orientation.

Results

National-Level Analyses

Of our sample, 74% indicated that they had engaged in at least one form of flag-display behavior as a result of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, a finding consistent with the results of other national surveys (Moore, 2003). Moreover, 25% of our sample displayed the flag on their home, their car, and their person after the attacks; similar percentages displayed the flag in only one or two of these contexts. There was not a significant difference in whether or how much Americans flew the flag as a function of region of the United States (i.e., whether the respondent lived in states in the South, Northeast, East, or Midwest), $F(1, 601) = 2.19, ns$, and $F(1, 601) = 1.50, ns$, respectively. African Americans

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of Background Variables, Predictors, and Post-September 11, 2001, Flag-Display Behavior

	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Extent of flag display	1.47	1.12	.78**	.08	.10*	-.10*	.15**	.20**	.11**	.36**	.12**	.27**	.40**	.52**	.11**
2. Flag display	1.26	0.44	—	.08	.14**	-.10*	.14**	.13**	.05	.30**	.03	.24**	.35**	.47**	.05
3. Gender	1.52	0.50	—	—	.05	.01	-.09*	.14**	.04	.08*	-.05	-.04	.16**	.10*	-.03
4. Age	45.67	16.29	—	—	—	-.04	.11**	.00	.08	.10*	.02	.01	.08	.19**	.12**
5. Education	4.01	1.63	—	—	—	—	.34**	-.21**	-.28**	-.10*	-.14**	-.09*	.01	-.03	-.06
6. Household income	10.15	3.60	—	—	—	—	—	-.09*	-.12**	-.09*	.05	.03	.14**	.12**	.08
7. Threat	2.56	0.96	—	—	—	—	—	—	.22**	.15**	.14**	.17**	.22**	.16**	-.12**
8. Nationalism	2.63	1.08	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.27**	.13**	.19**	.03	.18**	.20**
9. In-group enhancement	4.78	1.26	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.03	.19**	.34**	.40**	.06
10. Out-group derogation	3.69	1.06	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.25**	.07	.19**	.00
11. Moral outrage	1.25	1.27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.27**	.35**	.05
12. Non-flag-related value-affirming behavioral reactions	1.84	1.54	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.36**	-.05
13. Patriotism	3.83	1.16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.15**
14. Political orientation	4.13	1.60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. N = 605. Extent of flag display ranged from 0 (no display of the American Flag) to 3 (the person displayed the American Flag on his or her person, car, or home). Flag display was coded 1 (Yes) and 0 (No). Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female. Education was measured in nine categories, with a score of 4 reflecting some college (but no degree). Annual household income was measured with 17 intervals; a mean of 10 equates to \$35,000 to \$39,000. Moral outrage behaviors, range = 0 to 4. Non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors, range = 0 to 7. All other measures were rated on 7-point scales (ranging from 1 to 7). Higher values of political orientation reflect greater conservatism.
 *p < .05. **p < .01.

were less likely to display the flag ($M = 0.46$, $SD = 0.50$) and less likely to display the flag in as many places ($M = 0.75$, $SD = 0.98$) than were other ethnic groups (i.e., non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanic, or other; $M = 0.81$, $SD = 0.39$, and $M = 1.62$, $SD = 1.02$, respectively), an effect that was not significant when all other demographic and predictor variables (e.g., income, education) were included as covariates.

As can be seen in Table 2, people who displayed the American flag were somewhat older and less educated, had higher incomes, and were more threatened by the terrorist attacks than were people who did not display the flag. More strongly predictive of displaying the American flag, however, was the degree that people engaged in in-group enhancement, expressed moral outrage about the attacks, engaged in non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors like donating blood, and expressed a higher degree of patriotism as a result of the attacks. Measures of nationalism and out-group derogation were uncorrelated with whether people displayed the American flag.

Although displaying the American flag was, not surprisingly, strongly correlated with how many places people displayed the American flag, there were some differences nonetheless in the pattern of results across these two measures. Age, education, and income were weakly predictive of how many places people displayed the flag. Threat, nationalism, and out-group derogation each emerged as stronger predictors of breadth of flag display than whether people displayed the flag at all. That said, the strongest predictors of extent of flag display were variables more closely aligned with patriotism than nationalism; specifically, in-group enhancement, engaging in non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors, higher levels of patriotism, but also moral outrage.

To better understand the forces that best explained people's tendency to display the flag following September 11, 2001, we explored the degree that our predictors explained unique variance in flag display and extent of flag display by using standardized regression. As can be seen in Table 3, the results were more consistent with a patriotic than a nationalistic or overkill explanation for post-9/11 flag displays. Lower levels of education and higher incomes explained unique variance in both whether people displayed the flag and the number of ways they displayed it. Threat emerged as a weak but significant predictor of breadth of flag displays, but not whether people displayed the flag. Nationalism was a weak predictor of whether people displayed the flag, but did not predict how broadly they did so. The strongest predictors of both whether and how many ways people displayed the flag were in-group enhancement, engaging in non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors, and self-reported patriotism. As each of these increased, so too did whether they displayed the American flag and how widely they did so. Including interaction terms of threat with out-group derogation, moral outrage, nationalism, in-group enhancement, non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors, and patriotism in the regression equations did not yield any

Table 3

Standardized Regression Weights Associated With Background Variables, Predictors, and Post–September 11, 2001, Flag Display Behavior in the Full National Sample

Predictor	Extent of flag display	Flag display
Gender	.04	.02
Age	-.01	.04
Education	-.12**	-.14**
Household income	.13**	.14**
Threat	.08*	.02
Nationalism	.05	.08*
In-group enhancement	.15**	.11**
Out-group derogation	.00	.08*
Moral outrage	.05	.08*
Non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors	.18**	.15**
Self-reported patriotism	.34**	.33**
Political orientation	.06	.04
<i>R</i>	.60	.54

Note. $N = 605$. Extent of flag display ranged from 0 (*no display of the American Flag*) to 3 (*the person displayed the American Flag on his or her person, car, or home*): Flag display was coded 1 (*Yes*) and 0 (*No*).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

significant effects, a result indicating that the degree that people felt threatened by the terrorist attacks did not moderate the effects of the variables that predicted whether and how widely people displayed the American flag.

Regional Analyses

Although there were not significant differences in extent of flag display or whether people flew the flag across different regions of the United States, one still might ask whether the reasons people flew the flag varied as a function of region. To explore this question, we re-ran our regression analyses separately by region (see Table 4 for more detail; regional categories are those defined by the U.S. Census as states in the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West). These analyses revealed that although there were some differences in predictors of flag

Table 4
Standardized Regression Weights Associated With Background Variables, Predictors, and Post–September 11, 2001, Flag-Display Behavior Broken Down by Region of the United States

Variable	Northeast (N = 123)		Midwest (N = 134)		South (N = 216)		West (N = 129)	
	Extent of display	Flag display	Extent of display	Flag display	Extent of display	Flag display	Extent of display	Flag display
Gender	.06	-.01	-.17	-.06	.08	.10	.08	.03
Age	.11	.14	.05	.03	-.01	.08	-.17*	-.12
Education	-.16	-.19*	-.22**	-.12	-.01	-.06	-.15	-.10
Household income	.08	.10	.13	.02	.04	.12	.16*	.14
Threat	-.04	.02	.06	-.12	.20**	.13*	-.03	.03
Nationalism	.02	.01	.06	.09	.04	.07	-.04	-.04
In-group enhancement	.16	.12	.17*	.18*	.06	.07	-.04	-.09
Out-group derogation	.11	.14	-.05	.14	.01	.04	-.02	.09
Moral outrage	.10	-.02	.04	.09	.01	.02	.09	.04
Non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors	.19*	.12	.17*	.08	.21**	.14*	.19*	.21**
Self-reported patriotism	.23**	.30**	.14	.25**	.41**	.35**	.39**	.37**
Political orientation	-.01	.00	.18*	.07	.01	-.02	.03	-.01
R	.51**	.49**	.51**	.45**	.61**	.55**	.64**	.59**

Note. Extent of flag display ranged from 0 (no display of the American Flag) to 3 (the person displayed the American Flag on his or her person, car, or home). Flag display was coded 1 (Yes) and 0 (No). The distribution of participants across different regions of the United States is consistent with what would be expected given census statistics.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

display as a function of region, a regular pattern emerged nonetheless. Variables consistent with the patriotism hypothesis consistently predicted flag-display behavior across all regions, whereas variables consistent with the nationalism hypothesis did not.

For example, extent of flag display was most strongly predicted by non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors and self-reported patriotism for people in the northeastern United States. Turning to whether people in the Northeast displayed the flag, we found that only self-reported patriotism (the strongest predictor) and education explained unique variance in whether people flew the flag. Education was negatively related, whereas self-reported patriotism was positively related to whether people flew the flag.

Education was also a negative indicator of the extensiveness of flag display in the Midwest. Breadth of flag display was higher among those who responded to 9/11 with stronger feelings of in-group enhancement and who engaged in higher levels of non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors in response to 9/11. Two findings were unique to the Midwest: (a) self-reported patriotism was not reliably associated with breadth of flag display; but (b) political orientation was. As political conservatism increased, so too did breadth of flag display. That said, political orientation was not correlated with whether people flew the flag in the Midwest. Instead, whether people in this region displayed the flag was predicted by the degree that they responded to 9/11 with increased in-group enhancement and self-reported patriotism.

Unique to the South was a reliable association between perceived threat with both whether and how extensively people displayed the American flag. That said, nationalistic variables did not predict flag-display behavior in the South; instead, patriotic variables did. Specifically, besides threat, only the degree that people in the South responded to 9/11 by engaging in non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors and with increased self-reported patriotism predicted whether and how extensively they displayed the flag.

Finally, the extent that and whether people flew the flag in the West was most strongly predicted by non-flag-related value-affirming behaviors and self-reported patriotism. Extent of flag display was also associated with lower levels of education and higher levels of income for this portion of the sample.

In sum, the constellation of variables that predicted both flag display and extent of flag display supported the patriotism hypothesis more strongly than the nationalism or the overkill hypothesis at both national and regional levels. Moreover, even though there were some differences in what led to flag-display behavior across different regions of the United States, the most consistent predictors were variables that reflected positive in-group regard, not out-group antipathy.

Other results also supported the notion that people's symbolic expression of patriotism through display of the American flag was independent of nationalism. Specifically, nationalism and patriotism were only weakly correlated ($r = .18$,

$p < .01$), and in-group enhancement as a reaction to the terrorist attacks was uncorrelated with out-group derogation ($r = .03$, *ns*). Taken together, these results indicated that feeling good about one's own group does not necessitate feeling bad about other groups, even in the context of people's reactions to terrorist attacks.

Discussion

There were some good reasons to be concerned that 9/11 might create a nationalistic upsurge. The passage of the Patriot Act, thought by some to pose serious challenges to civil liberties, in addition to widespread willingness on the part of Americans to sacrifice some civil liberties in an effort to fight terrorism (Huddy, Khatid, & Capelos, 2002) together suggested that security concerns might lead people toward a form of nationalism that could undercut many of the cornerstones of a functioning liberal democracy.

Even though Americans reported high levels of moral outrage and perceived threat after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, our results indicated that these reactions were associated more strongly with increased in-group consideration and enhancement than with rampant ethnocentrism or out-group hostility. Moreover, our results indicated that Americans' post-9/11 display of the American flag was a phenomenon that was connected more closely to the same impulses that led people to donate blood and to give millions to charity, rather than to a nationalistic desire to rally around in-group political authorities and institutions, or to express out-group derogation or hostility. In short, our results supported the proposition that patriotism and in-group regard do not necessarily go hand in hand with nationalism and out-group derogation, even under conditions of threat, such as a terrorist attack.

The conclusion that displays of the American flag in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 reflected patriotism and a desire to show solidarity with fellow citizens, rather than a desire to express out-group hostility, does not mean that displays of the flag are always or even often expressions of in-group enhancement without out-group implications. The flag and other symbols of group identity can clearly shift in meaning as a function of the particular social context in which they are used. National polls, for example, have indicated that the number of people who still display the flag since the Iraq War began (56%) was significantly lower than the 74% to 82% of those who displayed the flag in the months immediately following 9/11 (Moore, 2003). One can speculate that what it means to display the flag since the Iraq War began may have shifted more toward the nationalistic end of the spectrum, a sentiment that fewer Americans may be prepared to endorse unequivocally. In short, displaying the flag appears to have considerable meaning to those who engage in it. However, what this meaning is in any given context seems likely to vary.

Of course, this study, like all field studies, is open to alternative explanations and potential criticism. For example, perhaps we would have found stronger effects for nationalism if we had used measures besides items from Altemeyer's (1996) RWA scale or our out-group derogation measure to represent different aspects of this construct. Nonetheless, the variance observed with these measures was sufficiently high to allow the detection of correlations with other variables, so the null findings for nationalistic variables cannot be said to be a result of restriction of range. In addition, it would have been ideal to have a more in-depth measure of patriotism. Nonetheless, the high correlation of our patriotism item with value-affirming behaviors (e.g., donating blood, charitable giving) and with in-group enhancement bolsters the conclusion that this item was tapping the intended construct.

Although this research, like all research, is open to methodological criticism, it also has some particular methodological strengths. For example, this study tested the more general social identity theory hypothesis that in-group enhancement need not go hand in hand with out-group derogation in a painfully real, important, and high-impact context that involved people's real and deep feelings about their country under a condition of an unexpected threat. Although some research has supported the independence of out-group derogation and in-group enhancement in the comparatively sterile confines of the laboratory (for a review, see Brewer, 1979), this research provided an important test of the generalizability of these findings to a more high-impact context. Moreover, because hypotheses were tested using a national probability sample of the American public, the finding that flag-display behavior was rooted more in patriotism than in nationalism is one that we can be confident represented the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of the mass public; moreover, one that generalized across different regions of the United States.

In closing, the results of the study presented here provided insight into the psychological factors that shaped one of the many reactions people had to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks; specifically, why there was such a widespread display of the American flag. Although other factors such as conformity or concern about criticism from others for being nonpatriotic also may have played roles in why people displayed the flag, our results indicated that a sense of increased patriotism, positive in-group identity, and a desire to affirm cultural standards of value were each more strongly related to flag-display behavior than were feelings of nationalism or out-group derogation. These findings also provided real-world support for the notion that engaging in in-group enhancement does not always mean that people will also derogate out-groups. Even under conditions that inspired considerable moral outrage and serious concerns about safety, Americans nonetheless flew the flag to symbolize their commitment and connections to their fellow citizens, not to declare that the United States was superior and dominant, or that out-groups should beware.

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