

American Nationalism, Patriotism, and Solidarity in the context of Western Education

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Central Question

What do nationalism, patriotism, and solidarity mean to citizens of the United States formed in a classical/traditional Western educational framework?

Approach

1. Identify elements of western education seen in America's contemporary education system
2. Analyze how these elements impact the perception nationalism, patriotism, and solidarity among the American people

The Building of a Americanized Mind

- What is western “traditional” or “classical” education
 - Emphasizes logic, rhetoric, and ethics (Greek influences)
 - Emphasizes republicanism, civic duty, and law (Roman influences)
 - Emphasizes moral law, human dignity, and accountability (Judeo-Christian influences)
 - Emphasizes natural rights, social contracts, limited government (Enlightenment influences)
- What is this education in the context of America
 - General focus on eurocentric beliefs (racialized elements, patriarchy, class divide)
 - Centers Western people, especially Americans as the “us” (Said, *Orientalism*)
 - Relegates non-Western people as the “them” (Said, *Orientalism*)
 - Maintains existing power dynamics outside of America (Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*), but also within
- The question we now have is how does the “us” interact with their own nation post-western education?

Nationalism

- Loyalty to the ideals on which our nation is founded
 - Enlightenment ideals (Natural rights, Rule of Law, Popular Sovereignty)
 - Racial/Patriarchal/Class prevalence (Elevating the “perfect” American)
 - American exceptionalism (Presidential doctrines/Foreign policy)
- These ideals are reflected in American/Western Education
 - AP Gov stresses the importance of republicanism, democracy, and the consent of governed (AP College Board)
 - In history classes, certain narratives are highlighted that don’t include people of color, women, and working people (Virginia Department of Education)
 - Conversation surrounding American foreign policy approaches are often framed as “protective” and “necessary for security” (Virginia Department of Education)
- **Conclusion:** The Western education framework supports and reinforces the ideals of our nation, which contributes to nationalist sentiment as students are raised and socialized to believe the American way of operating and western way of knowing are the only and best way for either.

Patriotism

- A patriotism is less the love of a nation's ideals, and more a love for the nation itself
- State of the nation may not align with the ideals of the nation
 - Increased concerns of Executive overreach
 - Decreasing approval for Congress and the Executive
 - Increased divisiveness and conflict (global and domestic)
- As a result, patriotism is decreasing
 - Record-low 38% of US adults say they are extremely proud to be American (Gallup)
 - 59% of Americans believe the country is on the wrong track (UMass of Amherst)
 - 43% of Americans believe we are becoming less patriotic (YouGov)
- **Conclusion:** While western education may be useful in building nationalist sentiment, there is currently a gap between what Americans believe America is versus what America should be, almost negating the effectiveness of education as a tool to generate national support

Solidarity

- Solidarity can be understood as civic unity
- Western Education Divided
 - Individualism (natural rights, personal property, individual consent)
 - Solidarity/Unity (popular sovereignty, collective good, etc.)
- Studies show people feel less connected
 - 26% of adults know most of their neighbors (Pew)
 - 44% of adults trust their neighbors (Pew)
- We are also seeing greater displays of community
- **Conclusion:** Western education emphasizes the importance of both solidarity and individualism, leading manifestations of western education in regards to solidarity to be more situational, heavily dependent on what movements certain individuals can really resonate with



Limitations/Additional Thoughts

- **Conclusion:** Citizens educated with a western framework likely resonate with American nationalistic sentiment and agree with how America has historically operated, but may feel “less American” if they perceive America to be veering away from these ideals, feeling less patriotic and more solidarity amongst themselves instead of their government. However, the euro-centric ties of Western education cannot be ignored, and therefore, we must constantly reform the education curriculum through policy changes.
- This information/analysis does not scratch the surface of this conversation
 - Do Americans see a difference between nationalism and patriotism?
 - How have these statistics changed along with changes in curriculum?
 - Does this analytical approach apply to non-Western nations?
- Thank you!