

Working Report

Of Defenders and Explorers: An identity conflict over belonging and threat

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Chapter 1. Introduction

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Soon after the collapse of state socialism in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, Francis Fukuyama articulated the thesis that the history of ideological conflicts had come to an end, and that Western liberal democracy had prevailed as a form of society and government across the world. Doubts have since been growing about the veracity of this thesis. Only recently, researchers such as Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (2019) have pointed out that the increasing approval of (right-wing) populist, nationalist and authoritarian ideas among the population could be an expression of a cultural countermovement.

In fact, we can discern growing points of conflict in the public debate, triggered by issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, and the opening of national borders. In essence, these issues seem to revolve around questions of identity such as social belonging and demarcation. Moreover, discussions about identity seem to be increasingly linked to questions regarding the societal and political participation of different groups of citizens. However, the division of society into camps according to their notions of identity, and the coupling of these camps with perceptions of social and political representation, have not yet been demonstrated empirically.

The aim of the present study is to provide first systematic *empirical findings* to accompany the diverse *discussions* on cultural and identity-related conflicts. We do so by using a comprehensive database to explore the following four questions: Can we really observe consistent camps in society that differ with regard to their notions of identity? Do these camps also diverge with regard to the other issues of conflict that relate to societal and political representation? What factors influence membership to one of the two camps? What political attitudes and positions are associated with the diverging societal camps?

Our study included 5,000 respondents in four countries (Germany, France, Poland, Sweden). First, the results show that a substantial share of the population is indeed split into two camps that differ in their notions of identity – measured by a narrow vs. open definition of belonging, as well as by a high vs. low perception of threat from strangers defined in ethno-religious terms. We call these camps *Explorers* and *Defenders* (see infobox). Second, our findings demonstrate that these camps are also diametrically opposed in terms of their perceived societal marginalization and their assessment of political representation. Third, our data show that Explorers and Defenders differ substantially in relatively stable cultural, religious and psychological characteristics. Fourth, our findings demonstrate that being an Explorer or Defender has ramifications for the desired form of democracy in the population. Our findings, thus, indicate that cultural conflicts over identity have become strongly entrenched politically, and now structure the societal and political views of the population to a significant extent.

Explorers versus Defenders

Explorers endorse an open definition of belonging and do not feel threatened by strangers (Muslims, refugees). They also see themselves as well represented, i.e. are less likely to feel marginalized, are more likely to be satisfied with democracy in their country, and trust political institutions more. **Defenders**, on the other hand, are more likely to endorse a narrow definition of belonging, feel more threatened by strangers and marginalized by society, are more dissatisfied with democracy in their country, and trust political institutions less.

These core findings can be backed up with detailed results: Explorers and Defenders each represent a substantial proportion of respondents. In Germany, for example, 14% of respondents belong to the Explorer camp, and 20% to the Defender camp. These two camps occupy opposite and widely divergent positions in identity conflict. In the group of Explorers in Germany, fewer than 15% have a somewhat narrow, ethno-religious definition of belonging, none feel threatened or marginalized, the vast majority are (or tend to be) satisfied with democracy (93%) and trust (or tend to trust) political institutions (federal government: 100%; EU: 99%). On the other hand, 61% of Defenders endorse a narrow definition of belonging, 49% and 55% feel threatened by Muslims and refugees respectively, 45% feel culturally marginalized, only 21% are satisfied with democracy, while only 11% trust the government and parliament. Although the percentages differ somewhat, similar patterns and group differences emerge in Sweden and France.

An important exception is Poland, a semi-authoritarian country in which the government provides populist support to the Defender positions, for example by advocating ethno-religious homogeneity and protection of the homeland from foreigners. Here, it is not only a considerable proportion of Defenders who feel marginalized, but also of Explorers. The latter are even more affected when it comes to political marginalization than the former (49% as opposed to 29%). Most Explorers in Poland also tend to be dissatisfied with democracy in the country and distrust the government, whereas, as in the other countries, a large proportion (74%) strongly trust the EU. In contrast, a slight majority of Defenders in Poland tend to be very satisfied with democracy in the country (57%), with almost three-quarters (72%) also trusting the government and parliament quite strongly; however, the proportion of those in this group who trust the EU is significantly lower (32%). Moreover, society is much more divided in Poland, with Explorers and Defenders together accounting for over 70% of the population. The political system and political communication thus influence the extent to which a society is divided, and the degree to which each of the camps of Explorers and Defenders feel marginalized and accept democratic institutions.

More in-depth analyses have revealed that the two groups also differ in terms of their cultural and religious attitudes as well as their psychological dispositions. In Germany, only 24% of Explorers have a high level of religiosity; 31%, a strong attachment to home; 4%, a strong preference for social hierarchies; and 3%, a low level of trust in people. In contrast, 33% of Defenders have a high level of religiosity; 52%, a stronger attachment to home than to the world; 34%, a preference for clear social hierarchies; and 31% tend to be sceptical of other people in general. Our results also suggest that the conflict between Explorers and Defenders has clear political effects: Defenders are much more in favour of populist parties and the notion of a “strong leader”, and they are more prone to conspiracy theories. For example, 26% (Germany), 16% (France), 57% (Poland), and 34% (Sweden) of Defenders are likely to vote for a populist party, while hardly any Explorer in any of the countries is likely to do so.

In short, the study presented here provides the first empirical evidence of the emergence of a new overarching societal cleavage, one that is based on different definitions of belonging and perceptions of threat. While a considerable group in society, whom we call Explorers, welcomes the foreign and does not feel threatened by strangers, another group, whom we call Defenders, takes the opposite position in both respects. An open definition of belonging and an absence of feelings of threat correlate with a low perception of marginalization and a high assessment of representation. Those who tend to close themselves off to others and experience foreignness as a threat are more inclined to feel marginalized and politically unrepresented. Defenders are also more likely to be dissatisfied with democracy and less likely to trust political institutions, while the opposite is true of Explorers. Both groups represent widely divergent positions and each accounts for a substantial proportion of

the population. However, the extent to which the population splits into these opposing camps, and the degree to which existing differences in notions of identity are associated with perceptions of marginalization and distrust in political institutions, varies across political systems. It can thus potentially be influenced by political communication.

Structure of the report

In *Chapter 2 (The empirical study)*, we present in more detail the methodology of our empirical study and the central variables. In *Chapter 3 (Two groupings in identity conflict: Defenders and Explorers)*, we show that, with regard to the aspects diversely discussed in conflict over identity, two groups with widely divergent positions can indeed be consistently identified: Explorers and Defenders. Moreover, we show that the extent to which these groups represent the total population, feel marginalized, and accept democratic institutions depends on the political system and political communication. In the chapters that follow, we first have a closer look at those factors that dominate identity conflict – the question about the relevance of ethnic and religious criteria for belonging to society (*Chapter 4. Identity conflict as an expression of belonging: Who considers whom as belonging?*), and the (delimiting) perception of threat from foreign groups framed in ethno-religious terms (*Chapter 5. Identity conflict as an expression of threat: Who feels threatened by whom?*). We also investigate which individual characteristics and attitudes shape the positions of respondents with regard to these factors. We show that Explorers and Defenders differ especially in relatively stable cultural-religious and psychological aspects. In *Chapter 6 (Identity conflict and concepts of democracy: Who wants what form of democracy?)*, we return to the groups of Explorers and Defenders to find out which political models of societal governance – and in particular the specific form of democracy – the two groups favour. We find that Defenders, in contrast to Explorers, tend to endorse anti-pluralist ideas of democracy (including a preference for populist parties and authoritarian leaders), and are more prone to conspiracy theories. Finally, in *Chapter 7 (Implications)*, we interpret our findings and derive some relevant implications. Here, we first argue that, with their striving for security and stability (Defenders) or for openness and change (Explorers), the two groups differ in terms of their fundamental needs.

Although pursuing both of these needs could actually be adaptive for a society, identity conflict and its spiral of mutual debasement have hardened both groups' stances into seemingly incompatible societal positions. In our view, this implies the need to refrain from taking one of the two sides, especially at the political level. Instead, the underlying core needs of both groupings should be taken seriously and given political representation. A dialogue can then take place between the opposing positions; a dialogue based on factual arguments that do not devalue the needs of the other camp from the outset.

Chapter 2. The empirical study

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Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based on data from a survey conducted in four European countries (Germany, France, Poland, Sweden) as part of the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” project “Perceptions of threat, feelings of belonging, acceptance of democratic rule: A new religiously shaded line of conflict in Europe?” Kantar Germany (Berlin) was responsible for organizing and coordinating the survey.

The survey period was from 9 November to 18 December 2020. The survey was conducted using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) and was based on a dual-frame sample design (taking into account landline and mobile phone numbers). Respondents were randomly selected from the population of all persons living in private households in each country. Only persons eligible to vote in the national parliamentary elections at the time of the survey were included in the sample. A total of 5,011 respondents took part in the survey. The number of interviews actually carried out was 1,402 in Germany (of whom 506 were in the five states of the former East Germany and Berlin), 1,208 in France, 1,200 in Poland, and 1,201 in Sweden.

In order to correct distortions of the sample due to different selection probabilities or dropout-related factors, we weighted the data after the survey based on age, gender, education and region, among others. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, the findings presented are based on weighted data.

Measurement concepts and variables used

The measurement concepts and variables used in this report are briefly presented below. A detailed list and description of all variables and indices can be found in Table A 2.1 in the Appendix. We first list the measurement concepts and variables that constitute the groups which we describe in more detail in Chapter 3:

Ideas of national belonging

To measure ideas of national belonging, we used a questionnaire module already employed in several large international surveys such as the *International Social Survey Programme* (see Balke et al. 2014). We distinguish between criteria that relate to more ascriptive principles emphasizing ethnic and religious affiliation (having been born in the country, having lived in the country for most of one’s life, belonging to the dominant religion, and having ancestors who belong to the ethno-national majority), and characteristics that are essentially acquirable and located in the civil-cultural sphere (respect for political institutions and laws in the country, mastery of the national language, and the feeling of belonging to the national majority). The following explanations will focus on the approval or rejection of the ethno-religious principle of belonging. We calculated an index which is based on the respondents’ average approval of the criteria already described above (having “been born in [Germany, France, Sweden, Poland]”, having “lived in [Germany, France, Sweden, Poland] for most of her life”, being “a Christian [in Poland: a Catholic]”, and having “[German, Swedish, French, Polish] ancestors”). Low values on this index thus indicate disapproval of this principle, while higher values indicate approval.

Threat perceptions

In addition, we asked questions about perceptions of threat elicited by ethnic and/or religious minority groups. We focus on perceptions of threat elicited by Muslims. These threat perceptions relate to concerns about threatened resources, security and cultural values. Following Landmann et al. (2019), we measured these perceptions using a total of six items (for example: “Muslims threaten our way of life and our values in Germany”, “Muslims threaten the economic situation in Germany”, “Muslims living here threaten public safety in Germany”). For the graphs and calculations that follow, we created a variable, “Threat from Muslims”, depicting the average approval of the six items. In addition, we used a variable “Threat from refugees” that is based on three items and measures perceptions of threat elicited by refugees.

Perception of social marginalization

Following Bollwerk et al. (2021), we measured the perception of social disadvantage through the approval or rejection of six items gauging perceptions of marginalization – two items each for the economic (for example: “The work of people like me is not recognized enough in society”), political (for example: “Most politicians do not care what people like me think”), and cultural (for example: “The customs, traditions, and manners of people like me are less and less appreciated”) dimension. For the graphs and calculations, we created a variable for each dimension (“Economic marginalization”, “Political marginalization” and “Cultural marginalization”) that contains each respondent’s average approval of the respective statements.

Assessment of political representation

As for how citizens assess political representation, we surveyed three variables – satisfaction with democracy in own country, average level of trust in the two main political institutions of a country (government and parliament), and level of trust in the European Union. All three variables express how much respondents feel represented in the national and European political system.

We will now present a number of further variables. On the one hand, these variables serve to describe in more detail the profile of Explorers and Defenders (chapter 3), and their preferred models of political governance (chapter 6). On the other hand, we use the variables to examine the defining features and attitudes of those who endorse an ethno-religious definition of belonging (chapter 4), and feel threatened by Muslims or refugees (chapter 5), as well as to carry out further multivariate analyses.

Socio-demographic characteristics

We recorded the socio-demographic profile of respondents on the basis of age (in years), level of education (the highest level of education attained according to the international standard classification ISCED), as well as place of residence (rural; small or medium-sized town; large city).¹

Assessments of the socio-economic situation

Unlike with socio-demographic characteristics, our focus here is not on objective features, but rather on subjective assessments. We measured the (subjective) social status of respondents by respondents’ self-positioning of their family on an imaginary social ladder between “at the bottom” and “at the top”. In addition, we asked respondents whether they believe that they receive their fair share in life compared to others. Besides their personal situation, we also asked them to assess the

¹ Gender differences are often also reported with regard to socio-demographic characteristics, without any theoretically plausible justification for this. Since, in contrast to all other variables, we also have no theoretical expectation with regard to the role of gender in identity conflict and, moreover, the empirical distribution of gender across the groups of defenders and explorers in the different countries does not follow a uniform pattern, this does not add any value to our study.

economic situation of the country. And, finally, we used an index to measure the degree of perceived social support (based on the items “There are people who really like me” and “I have people that I can always rely on”).

Socio-cultural factors and attitudes

Here, we first recorded how often respondents (again according to their own assessment) have personal contact with Muslims. Second, we asked where respondents feel most at home – whether they perceive themselves rather as cosmopolitans (“like to travel the world and feel at home everywhere”) or as attached to home (“prefer their familiar surroundings, and therefore feel at home in a specific place”). Third, we measured the level of national pride by asking whether they were very proud, quite proud, not very proud, or not proud at all to be German, French, Polish or Swedish.

Personality traits and social attitudes

Here, we measured generalized beliefs and worldviews, all of which are established as central predictors of politically and socially relevant attitudes. General trust expresses the extent to which someone believes in the benevolence of other people, or tends to be sceptical of others. We measured this by asking respondents how much they believe that most people can be trusted. Internal locus of control –represents the extent to which people expect desired results to occur as a consequence of their own behaviour. It was assessed by respondents’ (dis)agreement with the statement that effort also leads to success. We also measured *right-wing authoritarianism* (Altemeyer 1981), which elaborates the construct of the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al. 1950). This was done by forming an index aggregating respondents’ approval of three items covering the sub-aspects of *authoritarian aggression*, *authoritarian submissiveness* and *conventionalism* (“Troublemakers should be made to feel that they are not welcome in society”, “People should leave important decisions in society to their leaders”, “Well-established behavior should not be questioned”). People with a high (as opposed to a low) level on this scale tend to be more obedient to authority, to be morally rigid in their judgments, to endorse conventional positions, and to behave aggressively in the name of authority towards those who express a dissenting opinion. We also used a two-item index (“An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom”, “We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups” [reverse coded]) to measure people’s social dominance orientation.

Religion and religiosity

Here, we first used three indicators from the standard repertoire for quantitatively measuring religiosity. We measured religious affiliation (in our case, affiliation to Christianity) via the question of which denomination or religious community the respondent belongs to. The dimension of religious practice was measured via the question on the frequency of church attendance. The intensity of religiosity was measured by respondents assessing themselves on a scale from “not religious at all” to “deeply religious”. Beyond these standard indicators, we surveyed two specific manifestations of religiosity that not only differ greatly from each other in how they are conceived, but that can also be assumed to differ in their effects on and associations with the questions that we are interested in. Thus, we measured on the one hand whether and to what extent respondents consider themselves spiritual (analogous to the scale of religiosity from “not at all” to “deeply spiritual”). On the other hand, we surveyed fundamentalist positions based on respondents’ approval regarding three items that represent the essential elements of such an attitude (items: “There is only one true religion”, “Observing the commandments of my religion is more important to me than the laws of the country in which I live”, “Only Christianity can solve the problems of our time”).

(Preferred) models of political governance

We distinguish three dimensions of political governance – the rejection/approval of democracy as an idea, the rejection/approval of liberal and direct expressions of democracy, and the rejection/approval of populist positions.

With regard to the first dimension, we measured respondents' approval of democracy as an idea by whether they agree with the statement that democracy is a good form of government. In addition, we measured their preference for authoritarian forms of government, i.e. forms of government opposed to democracy, by whether they agree with the statement that there is a need for a strong leader who does not have to worry about parliament and elections. For the second dimension, approval of the idea of liberal and direct democracy, we used two instruments. For the concept of liberal democracy, respondents were asked to rate how important it was for democracy that a) the media have a right to criticize the government, b) minority rights are protected, and c) courts can stop the government from exceeding its powers. The measurement of direct democracy only includes a question about how important it is for democracy that citizens have the final say on important issues through referendums. For the third dimension, approval of populist positions, we used three instruments. First, we used an instrument recommended by Castanho Silva et al. (2020) to measure populism across countries. The level of populism is the average approval of respondents regarding two items (for example: "The country is ruled by a few large interest groups looking out for themselves"). Second, we asked respondents which party they would vote for in a hypothetical national election. We then created a variable separating those with a preference for populist parties from all other respondents. Third, we asked respondents to agree with an item that measures a general conspiracy mentality ("There are many important things happening in the world that are controlled by influential groups without the public's knowledge").

Chapter 3. Two groupings in identity conflict: Defenders and Explorers

Mitja Back, Gerald Echterhoff, Olaf Müller, Detlef Pollack and Bernd Schlipphak

Given the indicators presented in Chapter 2 (definitions of belonging, feelings of threat, perception of social marginalization, and perception of political representation), are there consistent social groups that oppose each other in identity conflict? To answer this question, we use the statistical tool of cluster analysis.² A cluster analysis first checks with regard to all the variables entered into the analysis whether different groups can be identified that are characterized by very similar positions in relation to these variables. The cluster analysis then tests how far these groups differ from each other regarding their respective positions. In our case, the cluster analysis thus serves as a descriptive tool that looks for groups that differ in terms of their ideas of belonging, their feelings of threat, and their perception of marginalization and representation.

Figs. 1 to 4 present the results of a cluster analysis that includes those variables described above that are central to identity conflict. In all countries, there are two social groups with opposing and widely divergent positions (shown here in red and blue), and two groups with intermediate positions.³ We focus in this report on the two groups that reflect the two poles of identity conflict: the Explorers (blue) and the Defenders (red). These groups together account for between 25% (France) and 72% (Poland) of respondents in our samples. Thus, both groups represent a substantial proportion of respondents in all countries, one that, as Poland shows, can under certain conditions grow into a majority. This shows that the national context and differences in political communication also seem to play an important role in the differentiation of these two groups.

The group of Defenders (represented by a red line) has the highest rates of approval in all countries when it comes to the role of ethnic and religious factors in national belonging, and to the feeling of threat from foreign groups (in our study, from Muslims and refugees). In three out of four countries (Germany, France and Sweden), this group also has a high level with regard to the perception of marginalization (economic, political and cultural), and to dissatisfaction with how they are represented in the political system (measured by satisfaction with democracy and political trust). In contrast, the blue line representing the group of Explorers is almost the exact opposite, this group having high rates of rejection regarding ethno-religious definitions of belonging and low rates when it comes to feelings of threat. In Germany, France and Sweden, the perception of marginalization is also low in the Explorer group, while the perception that their own preferences are represented in the political system is high.

² Correctly speaking, we use a *latent profile analysis* here, which is very similar to traditional cluster analysis (Scrucca et al. 2016; Vermunt and Magidson 2002). These analyses are based on unweighted data. The authors can provide more detailed information on the statistical procedure on request.

³ The values or characteristics of the groups in the following diagrams represent the difference between the groups and the mean value in the country as a whole. For modelling reasons, we had to standardize the mean values ("standardized score"). As a result of such standardization, the original mean value becomes 0, and the value 1 represents a standard deviation.

Fig. 3.1 Identity conflict and societal groups in Germany

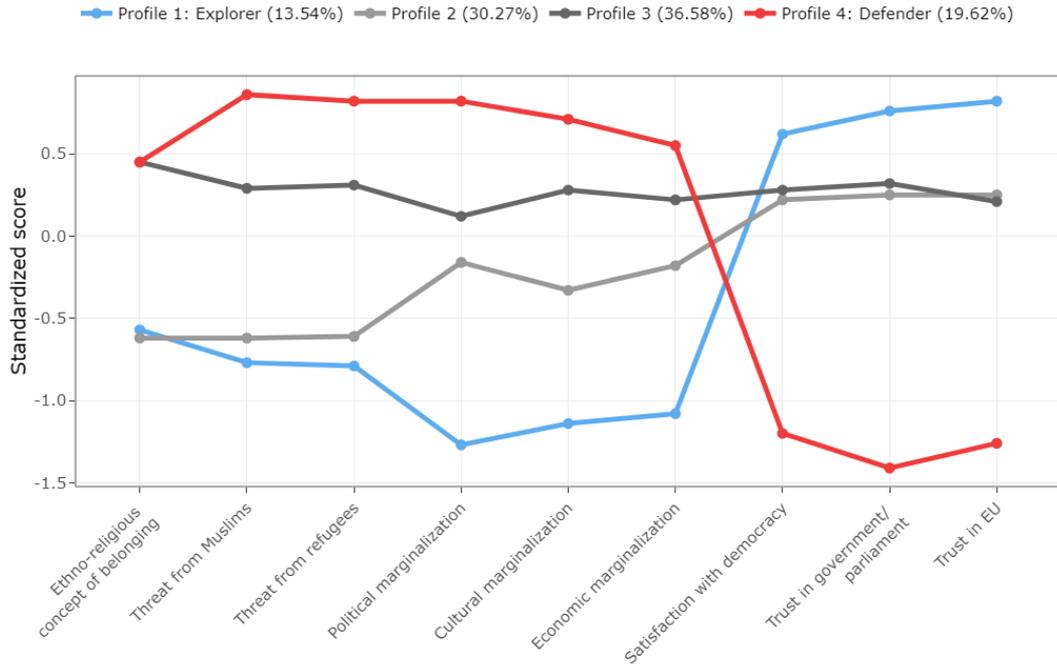


Fig. 3.2 Identity conflict and societal groups in France

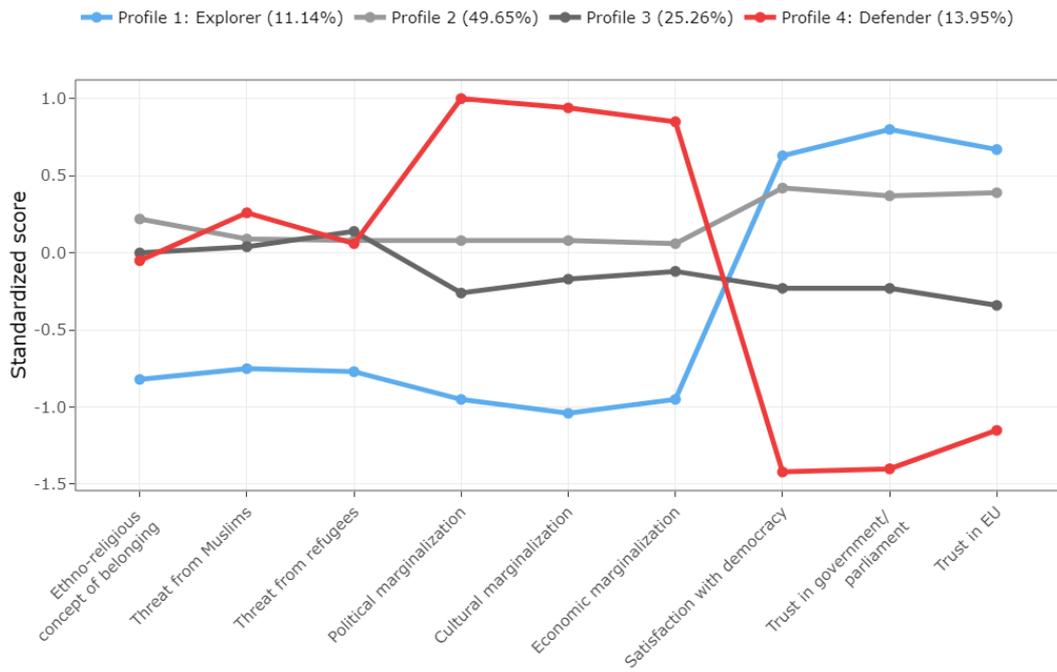
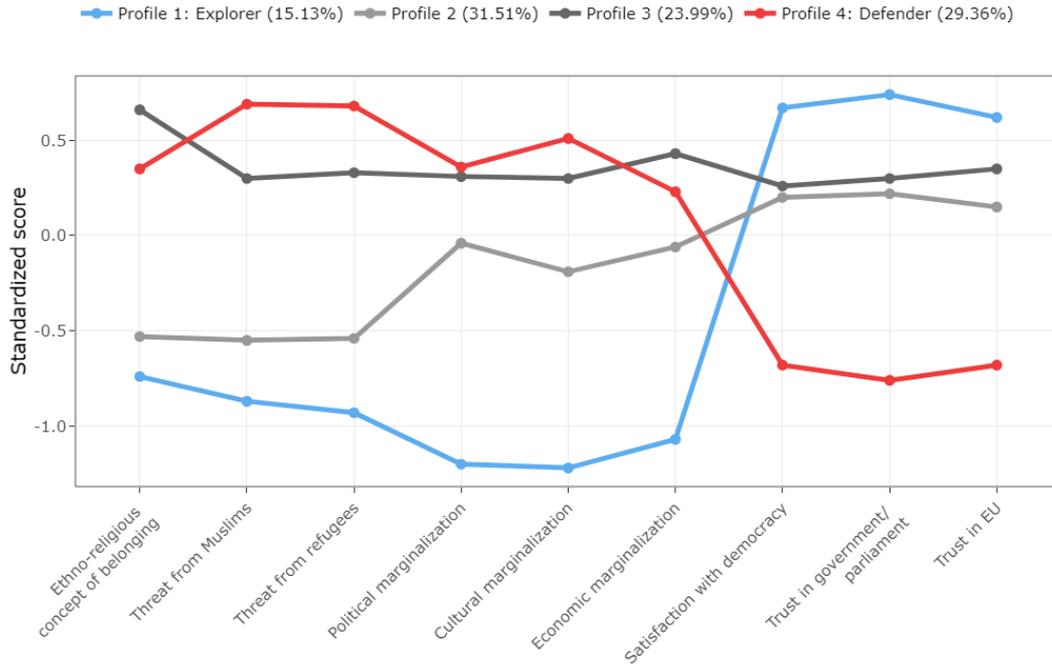


Fig. 3.3 Identity conflict and societal groups in Sweden



For Poland, however, there are different relationships. Here, we can also distinguish the two groups of Defenders and Explorers who have diametrically opposite positions in regard to the identity conflict. Quite different observations can be made for the two groups in Poland and their counterparts in Germany, Sweden and France when it comes to perceptions of marginalization and political representation, however. In Poland, the group of Defenders (marked in red) clearly feel less marginalized than the group of Defenders in the other countries, and is thus more satisfied with political representation – but only at the national level. In contrast, the group of Explorers (marked in blue) have a higher level when it comes to perceptions of (especially political) marginalization, and a low level in terms of perceived political representation at the national, but not the international (i.e. European), level.

Fig. 3.4 Identity conflict and societal groups in Poland

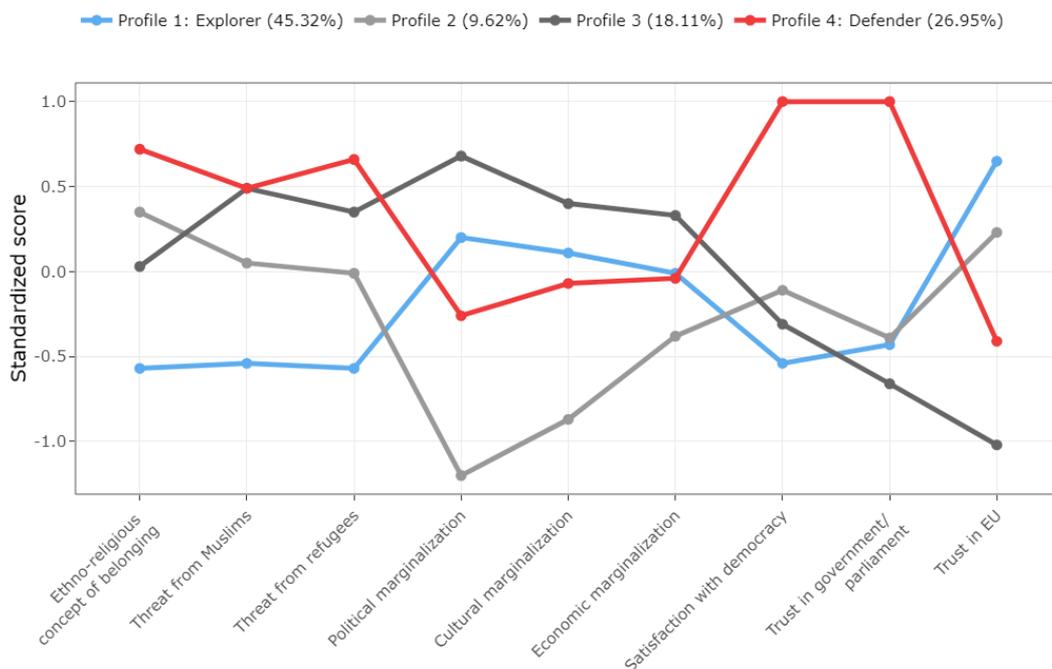
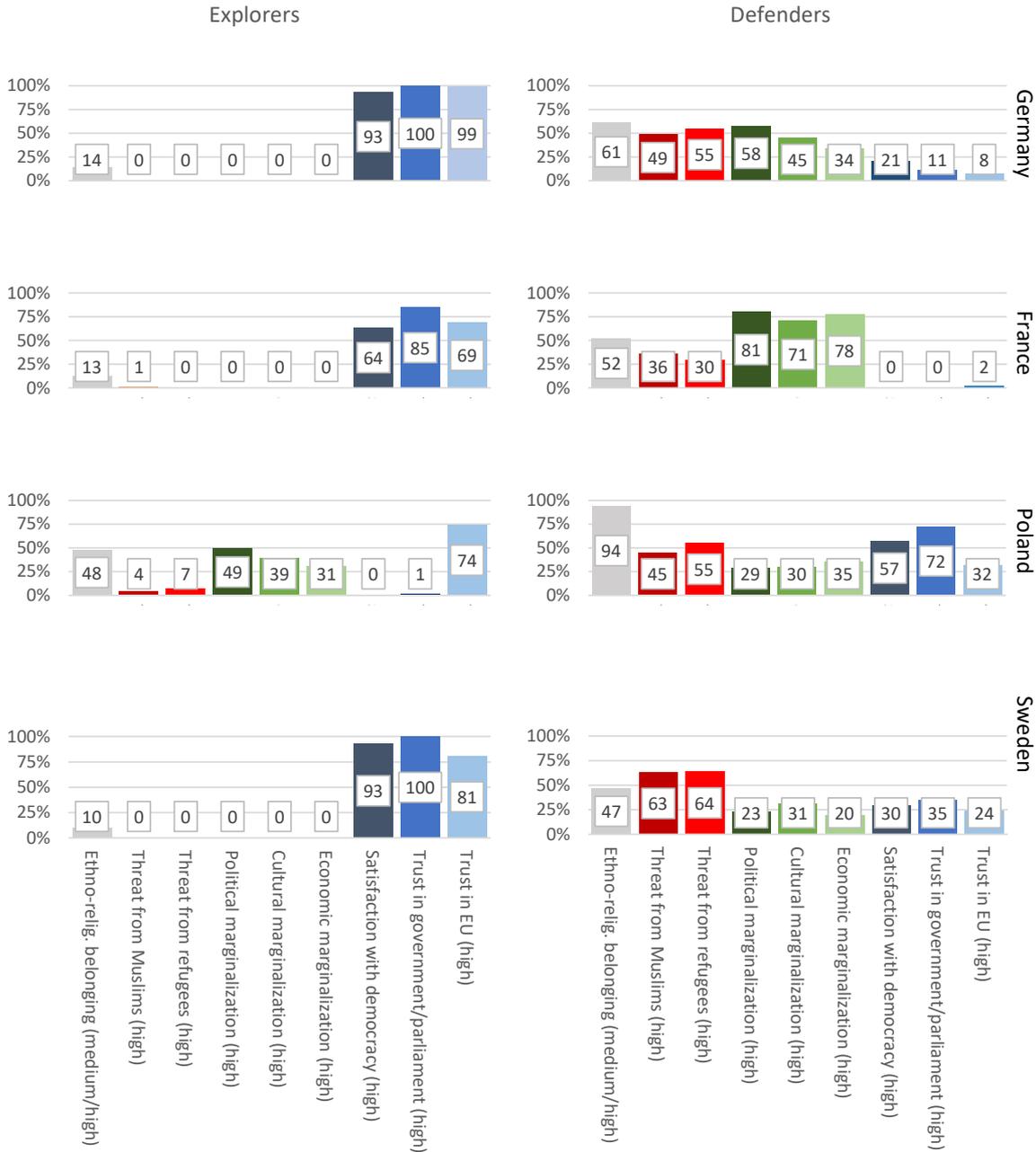


Fig. 3.5 uses percentages to illustrate how much the two camps differ with regard to the variables included in the cluster analysis (i.e., definitions of belonging, feelings of threat, and perceptions of social marginalization and political representation). Results in all countries show that Explorers have much lower proportions of respondents with narrower definitions of belonging and with higher levels of feelings of threat. In Germany, France and Sweden, hardly any Explorers demonstrate a high level of perceived threat, while between 30% and 64% of Defenders feel threatened. Both groups have higher values in Poland, but the difference between the groups remains: while 48% of respondents in the group of Explorers in Poland have a narrower definition of belonging, this proportion is almost twice as high in the group of Defenders (94%).

An interesting and complicated picture emerges when we consider perceptions of societal marginalization and political representation. In the group of Explorers, nobody feels culturally, economically or politically marginalized in Germany, France and Sweden. However, this is different in Poland, where more than 30% of Explorers feel marginalized, almost half (49%), politically marginalized. In comparison, we observe that (far) fewer Defenders in Poland feel politically and culturally marginalized, while more do feel marginalized in the economic dimension.

In our view, these differences are due to the political context. With regard to how perceptions of marginalization are distributed, we can hypothesize that other contextual factors – such as overall prosperity in a society and how far the welfare state is developed – also play a role. There are much lower perceptions of marginalization in Germany and Sweden overall, for example, than in France, and perceptions of economic marginalization are lower even among the group of Defenders in Sweden and Germany than are perceptions of political and/or cultural marginalization.

Fig. 3.5 The core profiles of Explorers and Defenders in proportions



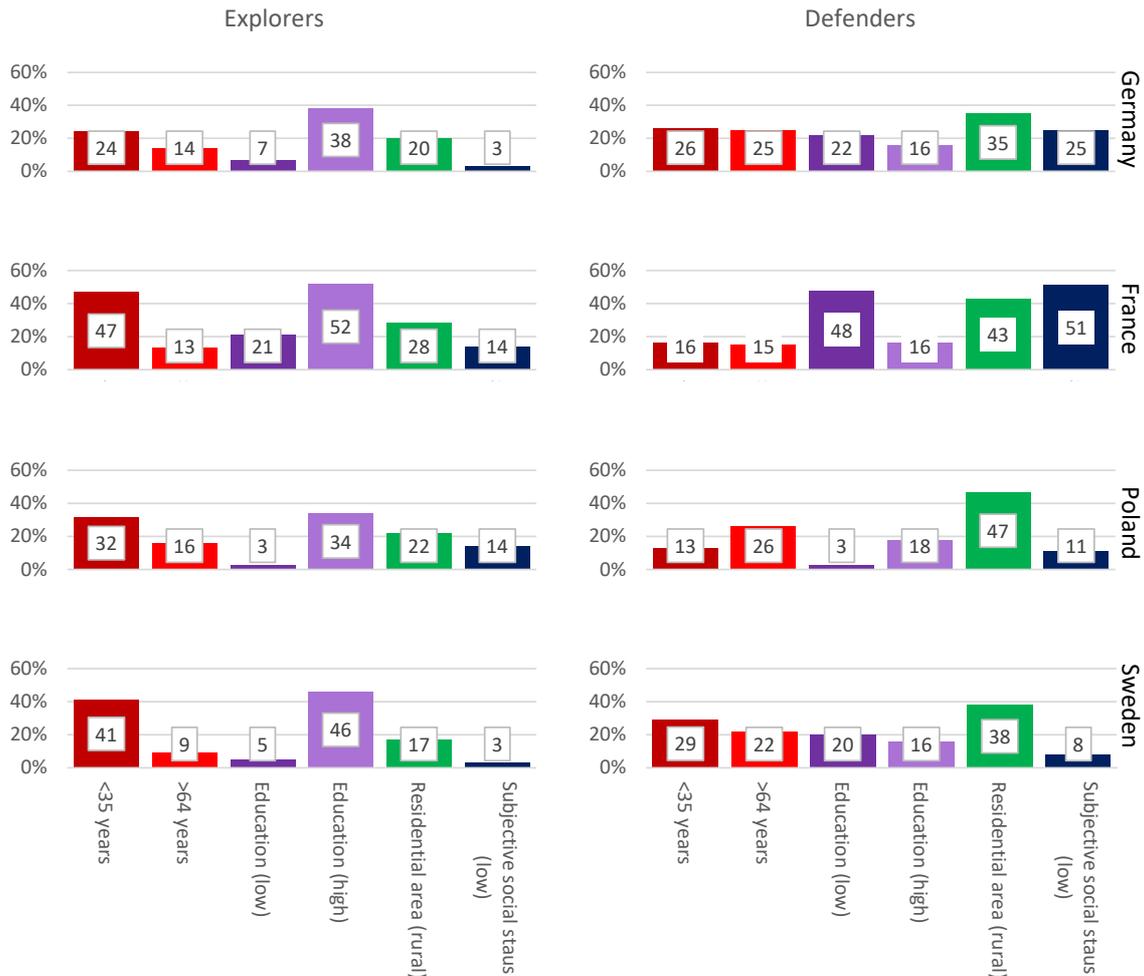
Finally, a clear picture also emerges when it comes to the perception of political representation. An overwhelming majority of respondents in the group of Explorers in Germany, France and Sweden is satisfied with democracy and trust political institutions at national and European level. The opposite is true for the group of Defenders in these countries: a maximum of one third of respondents in this group is satisfied with democracy and trusts political institutions (in Sweden, political trust at the national level). In France, it is even the case that no respondent in the group of Defenders is satisfied with democracy or trusts political institutions at the national level. In Germany, 21% are satisfied with democracy, while only about 10% trust national or European institutions. In Poland, we again find a pattern that corresponds to the assumed role of political communication and government stance. No Explorer is satisfied with democracy in the country, and only 1% trusts national institutions. In contrast, 57% of Defenders are satisfied with democracy, and 72% trust political institutions at the

national level. The picture changes when the EU, as an oppositional force to what is happening at the domestic level in Poland, is added: 74% of Explorers trust the EU, but only 32% of Defenders.

For us, these results indicate that the Polish government has absorbed the preferences of the group of Defenders in its communication, and perhaps consciously reinforces these preferences to maintain its own power by presenting itself as capable of saving the country from the (culturally different) “enemy” (migrants, the EU, secular individuals, Russia). This also explains the difference between political trust at the domestic and the European level, a difference that we only find for respondents in Poland. By constantly rejecting the EU and its criticism of how democratic and constitutional institutions are being dismantled in Poland, the Polish government can paint itself as the sole body representing the defender cause (see, for example, Schlipphak and Treib 2017).

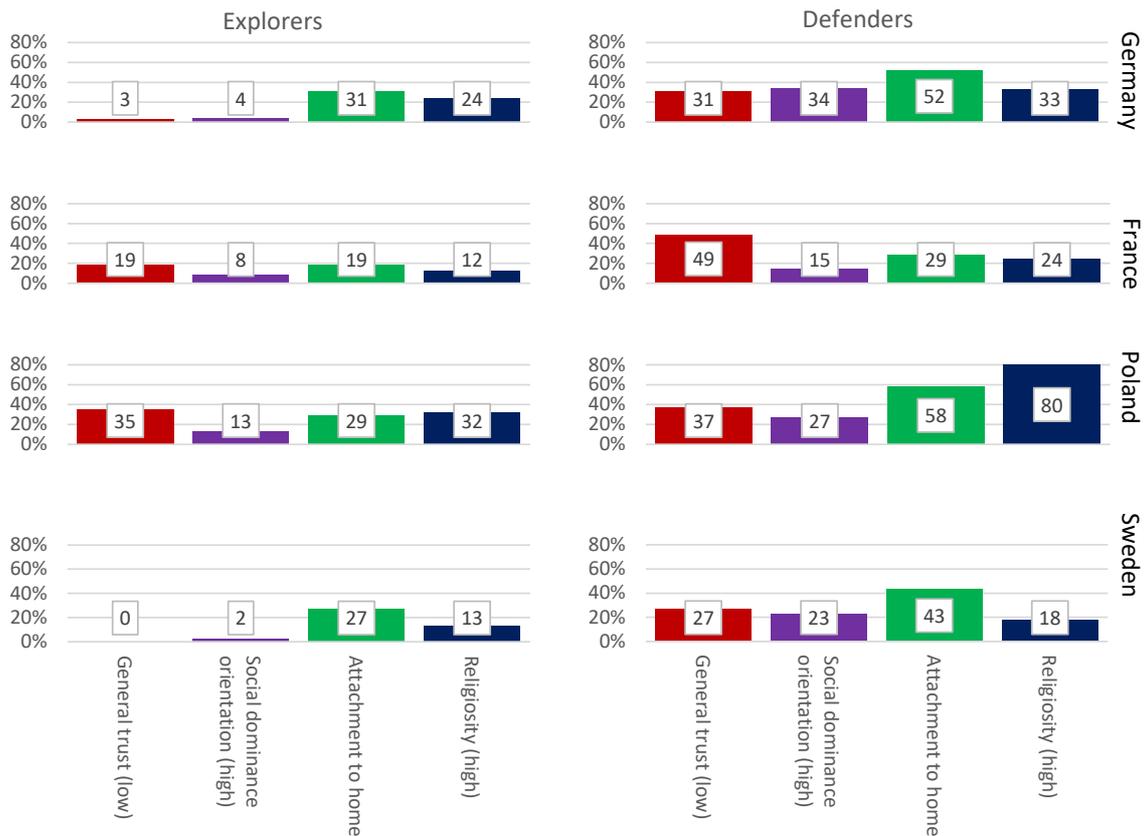
But who, then, are the Explorers and Defenders? Chapters 4 and 5 will delve deeper into this question and analyze the individual profiles of those who ascribe to narrow vs. broad definitions of belonging, and who have high vs. low levels of perceived threat. Still, in the remainder we shortly introduce the two camps in society by using brief profiles at this point.

Fig. 3.6 presents the socio-demographic and socio-economic differences between the two camps, showing that an Explorer is relatively young (except in Germany), highly educated, more likely to come from an urban area, and less likely to be affected by socio-economic hardship. In comparison, Defenders tend to be older, comprise a larger proportion of people with a low level of education (except in Poland), are more likely to live in a rural area, and more often have a low subjective socio-economic status – again with the exception of Poland.

Fig. 3.6 Socio-demographic and socio-economic profiles of Explorers and Defenders

The differences are even more pronounced regarding socio-cultural, religious and psychological characteristics shown in Fig. 3.7. In Germany, France and Sweden, for example, between 0% (Sweden) and 19% (France) of Explorers tend not to trust their fellow citizens, a figure that rises among Defenders to between 27% (Sweden) and 49% (France). In Poland, on the other hand, there is virtually no difference in this characteristic between Explorers and Defenders. In all countries, Defenders are clearly more attached to home and more religious than Explorers, although the difference varies between the countries. In Sweden, for example, 13% of Explorers and 18% of Defenders are deeply religious, while in Poland 32% of Explorers and 80% of Defenders classify themselves as religious or very religious. It is also worth highlighting the differences between the two camps when it comes to the question of whether a society should be hierarchically structured, i.e. distinguish more strongly between the stronger and the weaker: while between 2% (Sweden) and 13% (Poland) of Explorers share this view, this applies to between 15% (France) and 34% (Germany) of Defenders.

Fig. 3.7 Socio-cultural, religious and psychological profiles of Explorers and Defenders



Chapters 4 and 5 will now look more closely at those cultural, religious and psychological factors that induce a narrow vs. open idea of belonging (Chapter 4), and a high vs. low degree of perceived threat towards strangers defined in ethno-religious terms (Chapter 5). After Chapter 6 examines possible differences between Explorers and Defenders in their preferences regarding democracy, we then embed our findings in the scientific literature in Chapter 7, and use this to derive implications for both the academic domain and (political) practice.

Chapter 4. Identity conflict as an expression of belonging: Who considers whom as belonging?

Olaf Müller and Detlef Pollack

Two types of definition of belonging: ethno-religious and civil-cultural

We now wish to look more closely at one of the central lines of division between the two groups of explorers and defenders: namely, the idea of national belonging. As already mentioned at the beginning of this report, different positions can be identified with regard to the question of what it takes in the opinion of the population to “belong” to the respective national community, these positions differing above all with regard to the width or narrowness of the definition, and also its inclusive or exclusive character. We focused in our analyses of explorers and defenders on the positions within a continuum ranging from the firm rejection to the unqualified approval of using ethno-religious criteria of belonging.

Before looking at the question of who deems these criteria to be particularly important or who tends to oppose such an idea of national belonging, we will first take a brief look at how the rates of approval of the ethno-religious principle relate to a concept that can be distinguished from it, which we will call the civil-cultural definition of national belonging.⁴ The latter is not simply characterized by the rejection of ethno-religious criteria of belonging; it can also be measured by other items. Again: while the ethno-religious principle is represented by the requirement that a person be born in the country, have lived in the country for most of her life, belong to the dominant religion, and have ancestors who belong to the ethno-national majority, the civil-cultural principle is represented by the approval given to the idea that it is important above all to respect the political institutions and laws in the country, to speak the national language, and to feel a sense of belonging to the national majority.⁵

If we now look at the overall average values for both dimensions based on the average approval of the individual items (the minimum value of 0 would stand for a position in which all criteria are not considered important at all, while the maximum achievable value represents the attitude that all criteria are deemed equally important), we first see that in all countries people approve more strongly on average of the civil-cultural principles than of the ethno-religious criteria (Fig. 4.1). There are hardly any differences between the countries when it comes to rates of approval of the civil-cultural principle, which can be attributed to the fact that the overwhelming majority of respondents in all the countries surveyed can agree that, in order to belong to the national community, a person should respect institutions and laws, speak the national language, and feel German, French, etc. (the rates of approval of the individual items are often well over 80%, and sometimes over 90%). On the other hand, the requirement that a person be born in the country and have spent most of her life there, have ethno-national ancestors and the “right” religion, is something that attracts quite different levels of support overall in the individual countries, which is also reflected in the greater differences with regard to the overall average value for approval of the ethno-religious principle of belonging. This

⁴ We are drawing on a distinction here that is widespread in the literature and that is widely discussed both theoretically and empirically under the labels “civic vs. ethnic”, “open-inclusive vs. closed-exclusionary”, or “ascriptive-objectivist vs. civic-voluntarist” (see Ariely 2020; Brubaker 1992; Helbling et al. 2016; Jones and Smith 2001a).

⁵ The specific questions and answers from the German questionnaire are listed in Table A 2.1 in the Appendix. In Poland, because of its overriding importance for national identity, we did not ask about affiliation to Christianity as in the other countries, but to Catholicism. The item “have [German] citizenship” in the ISSP toolkit (see Balke et al. 2014) that we used was in our questionnaire, but in the end we did not take it into account in our analyses, since it could not be assigned to one of the two dimensions either in terms of content or in further statistical analyses (factor and cluster analysis).

principle has the least approval in Sweden (average value 0.96), closely followed by Germany (1.02). In France, the average approval is much higher, although rejection of the principle still predominates (the average value of 1.34 is still below the scale mean of 1.5, which would indicate a neutral or undecided attitude on average), while the ethno-religious principle of national identity is by far the most popular in Poland (1.72).

Fig. 4.1 Ethno-religious and civil-cultural principles (mean values)

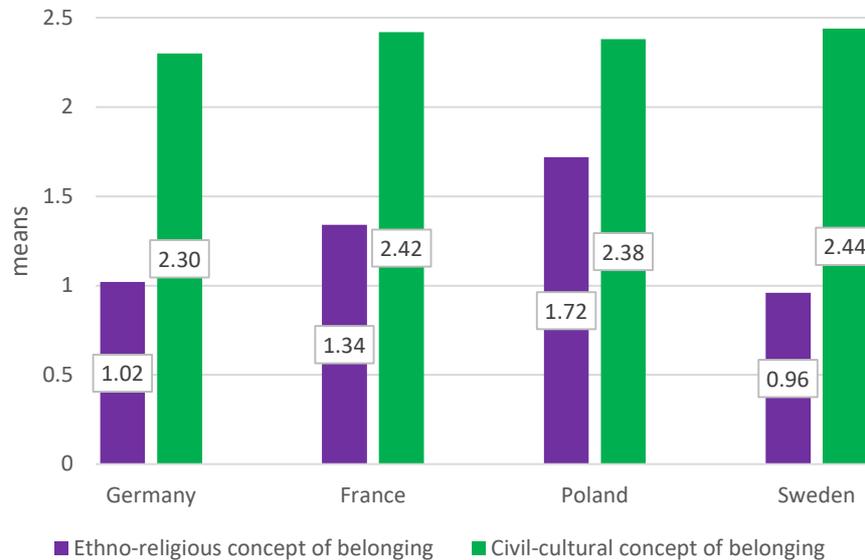
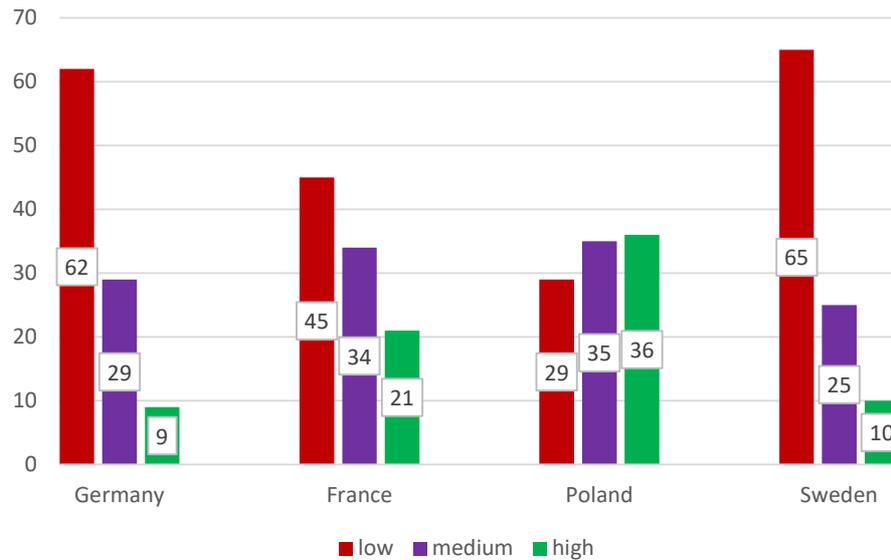


Fig. 4.2 shows the intensity and degree of approval of the principle of ethno-religious belonging. For this purpose, we have divided the respondents into three groups: those who disapprove or only weakly approve of this principle overall, those who show medium levels of approval, and those who strongly approve.⁶ In terms of differences between the countries, the same pattern emerges as in Fig. 4.1. In Sweden and Germany, the proportion of those who tend to reject the ethno-religious criteria as a basis for national belonging (over 60%) outweighs the proportion of those who consider these criteria important by a factor of more than six. The group of those who show medium rates of approval in this regard ranges from 25% to just under 30% in both countries. In France, too, those who have little sympathy for the ethno-religious principle are the largest group, with 45%; however, at least one fifth of the respondents here show high rates of approval, and about one in three show medium rates. Poland is the only country where the proportions of rejection and approval are reversed, and where there is a clear tendency towards “closed” positions: here, those who strongly approve of the principle of ethno-religious belonging, together with those who moderately approve, represent the largest group (36 and 35%), while fewer than 30% express disapproval in this regard.

⁶ The respective values of the variable “ethno-religious belonging” ranges within the groups from 0 and 1 (low approval), to greater than 1 to 2 (medium approval), and greater than 2 and 3 (high approval; see also Table A 2.1 in the Appendix).

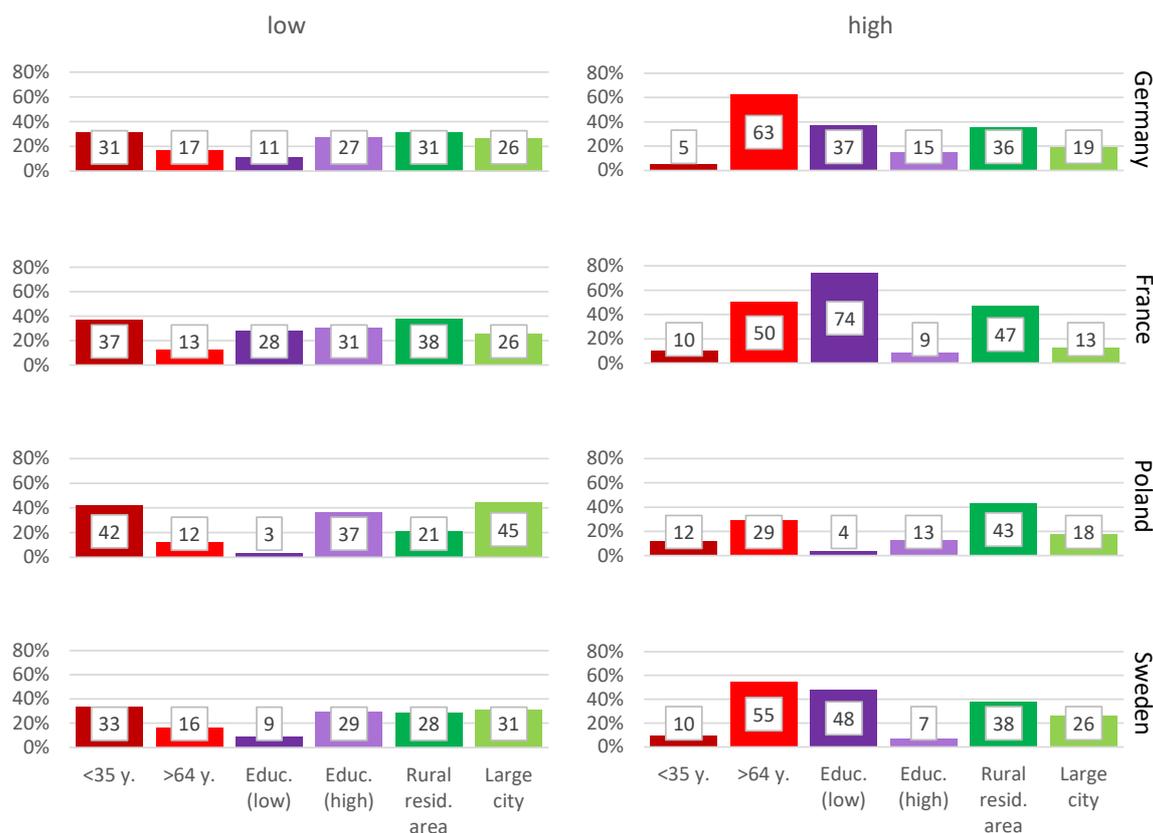
Fig. 4.2 Approval of the ethno-religious principle as a percentage

The principle of ethno-religious belonging – who approves of it, and who rejects it?

The fact that proponents of a national community that is ethno-religiously homogeneous feel more threatened by “foreign groups” (in our case, by refugees and Muslims) and more economically, politically and socially marginalized, have little trust in the European Union and the government of their own country (with the exception of Poland), and (again with the exception of Poland) tend to be dissatisfied with how democracy functions in their country – this was already evident from the profiles of the groups of explorers and defenders at the beginning. We will now describe in somewhat more detail the two groups with regard to certain socio-demographic and personality traits, as well as socio-economic and socio-cultural assessments and factors, one group giving above-average approval of the ethno-religious principle of belonging, and the other tending to reject it.⁷

If we first take a look at the socio-demographic profile of the two groups (Fig. 4.3), we can see some characteristic patterns across the countries: what is immediately apparent is that the proportion of younger respondents (<35) is much lower and the proportion of older respondents (>64) is several times higher in the group that ascribes to the ethno-religious principle than in the group that tends to reject this principle. What is also striking are the differences in the level of education as well as where a respondent lives. While between 30% and 40% of those who consider ethno-religious homogeneity to be unimportant as a criterion of national belonging have a higher level of education, the proportion of highly educated people in the other group is only between 7% and 15%; in contrast, the proportion of people with a low level of education is above average in the group of those ascribing to the principle. Those endorsing this principle are more often found in the rural population, while those living in large cities tend to approve less of this principle. To a certain extent, the results reflect the pattern known from other studies: namely, that older people, the less educated, and the rural population have traditional and security-oriented values, tend to stick to the tried and tested, and are sceptical or even afraid of the new (see Inglehart 1989).

⁷ For reasons of clarity, we do not present the group of those with medium rates of approval. A detailed description of the underlying variables and the formation of the respective comparison groups can be found in Table A 2.1 in the Appendix.

Fig. 4.3 Ethno-religious belonging and socio-demography

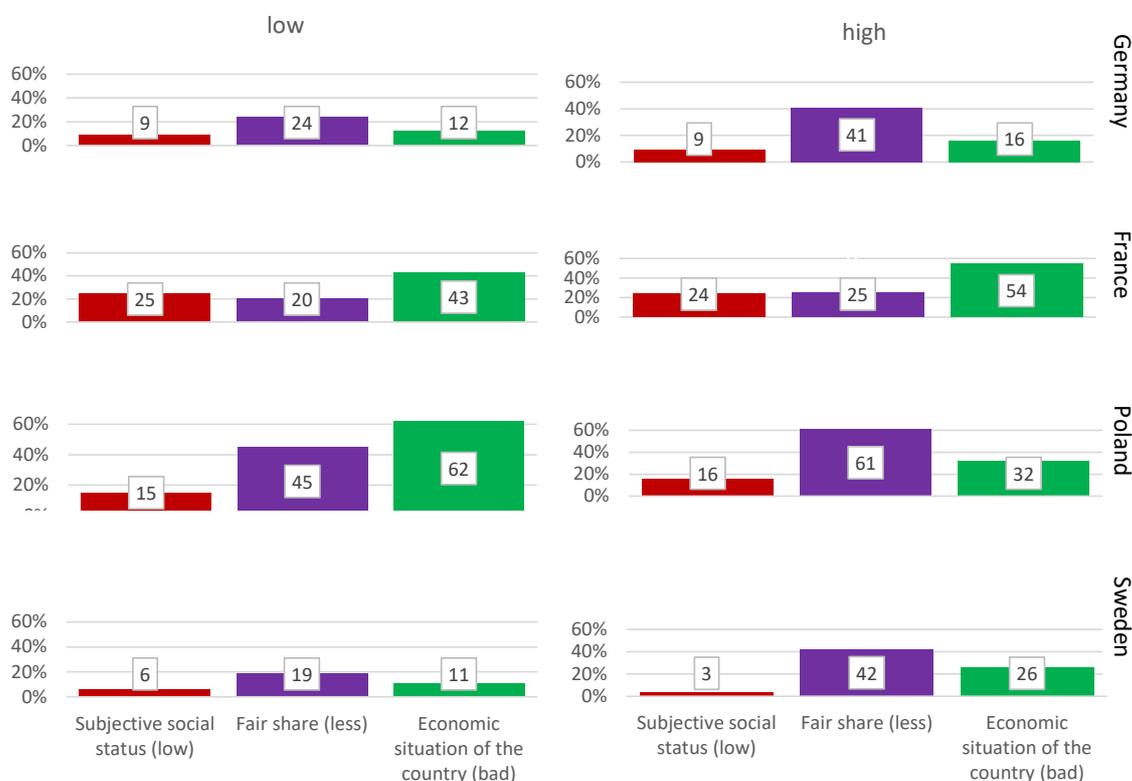
As for the question of whether someone reacts more openly or defensively to the inclusion of “foreign groups”, the literature repeatedly alludes to the role of socio-economic status. People with a lower socio-economic status are said to favour a narrow definition of belonging, one based on ethnic homogeneity, since they are more likely than those who are better off to fear potential competitors in ethnic minorities when it comes to scarce goods, for example on the segmented labour market and (increasingly) on the housing market (Bonacich 1972; Kunovich 2009). However, some of the differences between the two groups with regard to how respondents assess their personal socio-economic situation are not as clear within the individual countries as one might initially assume (Fig. 4.4), with the proportion of those who place themselves at the bottom of an imaginary social ladder hardly differing between the groups.

The differences are somewhat clearer with regard to how people assess the economic situation of their country. In Germany, France and Sweden, the proportion of those who tend to assess their country’s economic situation as being bad is larger in the group endorsing the ethno-religious principle than in the group rejecting this principle. In Poland, however, the opposite is the case: it is mostly those who are dissatisfied with the economic situation of their country who have low values on the belonging index (62%), while the proportion of those who are dissatisfied among the supporters of the ethno-religious principle is only 32%.

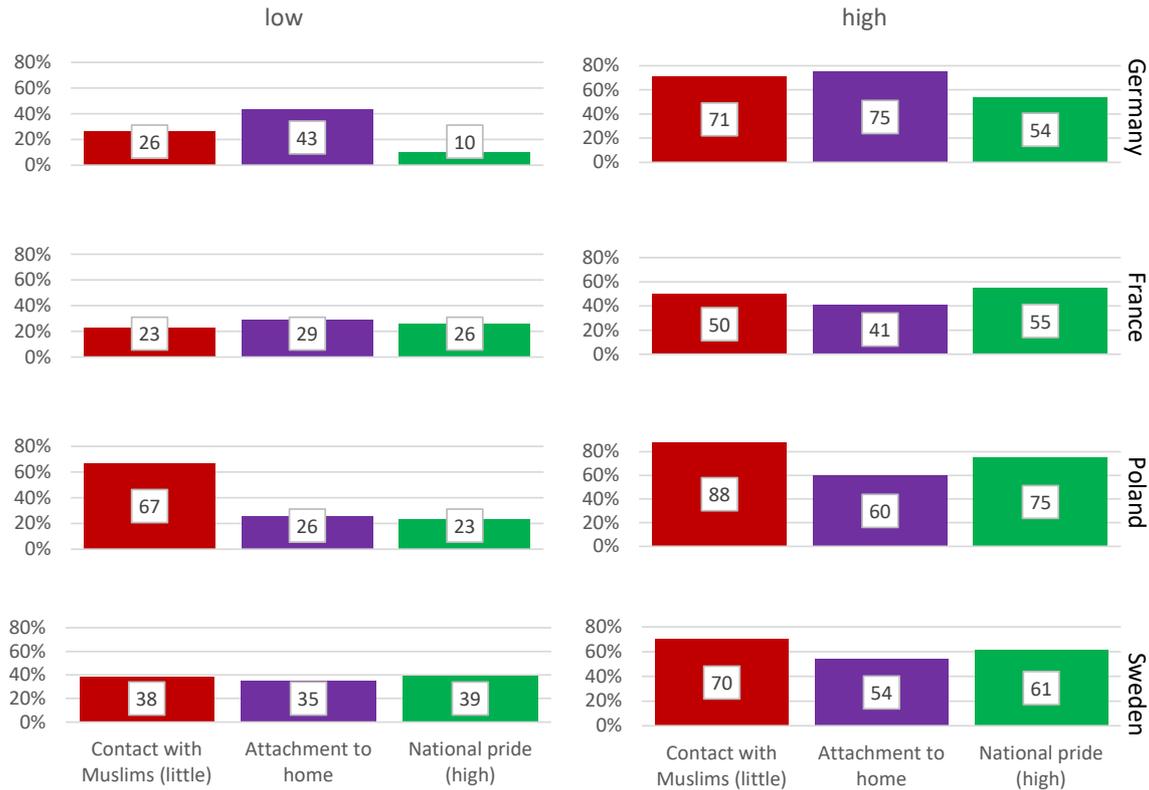
The clearest difference between the two groups can be seen when it comes to the question of whether someone believes that they receive their fair share or not: in Germany, 41% of those who endorse the ethno-religious principle say that they believe that they receive less than their fair share compared to others, while only 24% of those who reject the principle have the same opinion. In Poland, the ratio is 61% to 45%; in Sweden, 26% to 11%; only in France are there no significant differences in this respect (25% as opposed to 20%). All in all, the results indicate that, where socio-economic factors play a role, it is not the individual socio-economic status (or, more precisely,

people's assessment of it) *per se* that plays a formative role here. Rather, defensive attitudes come into play above all when people have a general feeling of disadvantage, or when the perception prevails that the overall social situation does not open up much scope for redistribution.

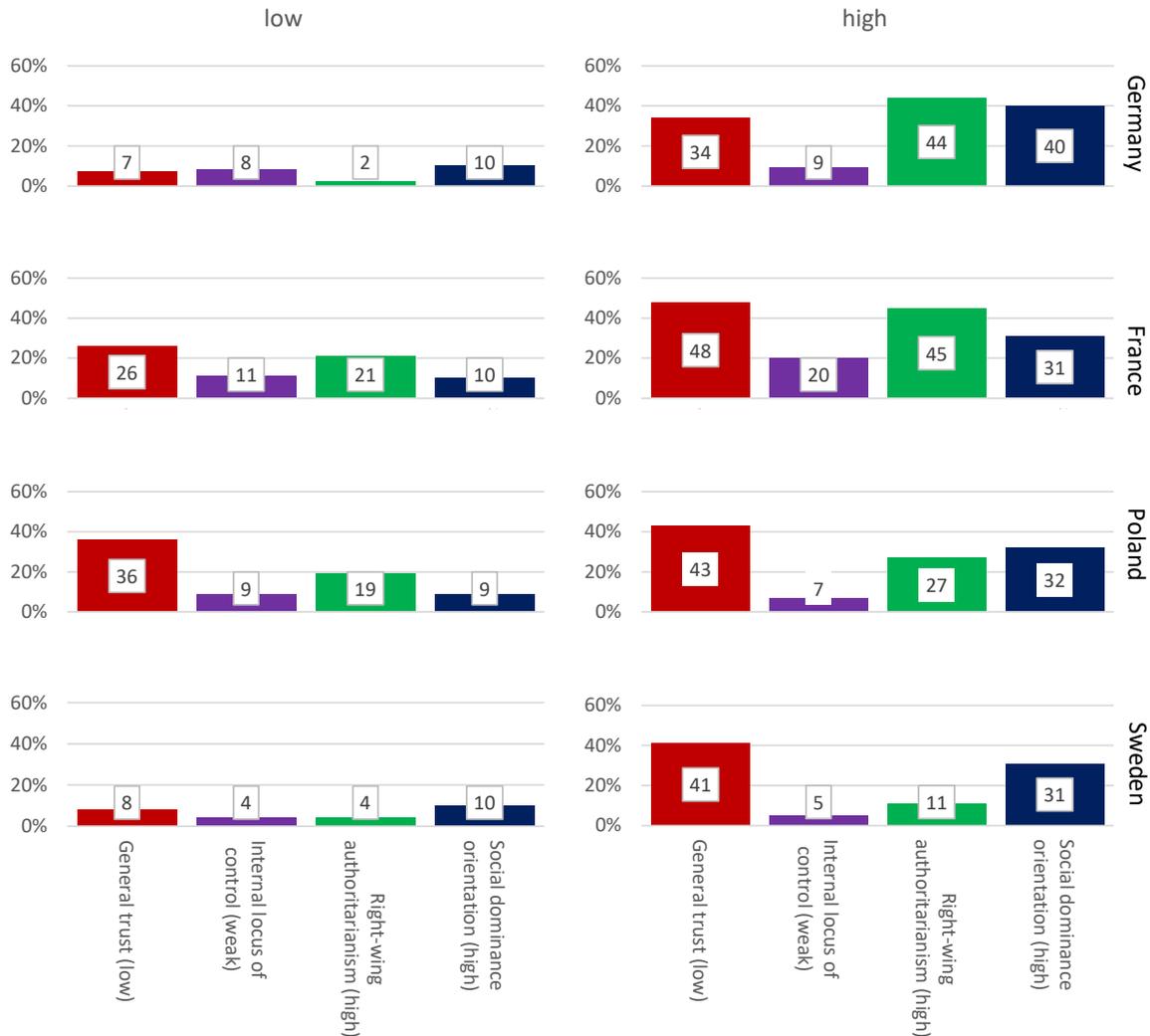
Fig. 4.4 Ethno-religious belonging and assessments of the socio-economic situation



The results are again quite clear regarding the correlation between the degree to which people endorse the ethno-national principle and certain socio-cultural factors or attitudes (Fig. 4.5). The finding from research on prejudice – that contacts with “foreign groups” are more likely to reduce scepticism and fear in most social constellations than to increase them (see Allport 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006) – also seems to be true with regard to the subject matter studied here: in all countries, a much larger number (between 70% and 90% in Sweden, Germany and Poland, and slightly more than 50% in France) of respondents in the group endorsing the ethno-religious principle state that they tend to have little contact with Muslims than is the case in the other group (23% to 38% in France, Germany and Sweden, and 67% in Poland). In addition, there are significantly higher proportions in the group of supporters of the ethno-religious principle who have a strong sense of national pride (54% to 75%, as opposed to 10% to 39%), one that is also clearly exclusionary here. The fact that there is a higher proportion of people with attachment to home among those who affirm the ethno-religious principle than among those who reject this principle (41% to 75%, as opposed to 26% to 43%) also points once again to the fact that the contrast between local attachment and a more global, cosmopolitan view does indeed seem to be developing into a line of conflict that extends beyond mere self-location in terms of identity.

Fig. 4.5 Ethno-religious belonging, and socio-cultural factors and attitudes

What has been studied time and again since the classic work on the authoritarian character (Adorno et al. 1950) is the extent to which whether someone tends to deal with her environment more openly or to close herself off and tends to have ethnocentric views is also partly influenced by relatively stable personality traits, some of which were socialized at an early age and are to some degree detached from the current personal situation and external circumstances (see, for example, Herrmann and Schmidt 1995; Blank 2002). As for the issue that we are interested in here, we can also discern patterns that suggest a link to certain personality traits (Fig. 4.6): for example, right-wing authoritarian attitudes are just as prevalent among proponents of the ethno-religious principle as a strong social dominance orientation in all countries; and, except for Poland, where the two groups hardly differ in this respect, there are more people who feel a strong distrust of others in general among proponents of the ethno-religious principle.

Fig. 4.6 Ethno-religious belonging, personality traits and social attitudes

Finally, we wish to take a closer look at the factor of religion or religiosity, with the question of whether the idea of the collective community also becomes increasingly religious with the degree of individual religiosity, i.e. whether religious people are *per se* inclined towards the ethno-religious principle, being anything but trivial. The insight that religion can certainly have ambivalent effects on questions of social coexistence, tolerance towards the “foreign” or “other”, and also with regard to certain demarcations in society is not new. The literature points out here that this is less a question of “religious or not religious”, or of the mere intensity of religion, but rather of certain forms of religious expression and orientation. It is often claimed, for example, that intrinsically motivated religiosity and a certain openness in religious matters tend to have inclusive, instrumental-extrinsic forms, whereas religious dogmatism and fundamentalism tend to have exclusionary effects (Allport 1954; Batson and Ventis 1982). And, given the high level of approval in most European countries (among religious people, too) of the principle of separating religion from other social sub-areas such as politics, the economy and education (*compartmentalization*; Dobbelaere 2002), it is also conceivable that demarcation from the “other” does not have a genuine religious motivation. In other words, demarcation occurs not necessarily in relation to a person’s own religiosity or religious tradition, but rather in the sense of defending the secular foundations of modern democratic societies against “foreign” religions or religious communities that in the eyes of the “long-established” population threaten to override these principles.

We do not claim to be able to answer these questions in detail here. Nevertheless, we want to use selected indicators to show the extent to which affiliation to a religious tradition, as well as the level of churchliness and individual religiosity, go hand in hand with the view of who belongs to the national community. In addition, we want to take into account the idea mentioned above that the concrete form of religiosity could play a decisive role here, and we do so by also considering the level of spirituality (i.e. a form of life and belief that is, at least from its own perspective, particularly open and tolerant) and of religious fundamentalism.⁸

Fig. 4.7 does indeed seem to confirm the thesis mentioned at the beginning: namely, that religious ties and ideas of any kind do encourage a more delimiting idea of belonging, one that is oriented towards ethnic and religious boundaries. The proportion of Christians and regular churchgoers is in all countries much higher in the group of those who endorse the ethno-religious principle than in the group of those who tend to oppose this principle.⁹ The same applies to the proportion of those who consider themselves deeply religious. The picture is less clear, but by no means contrary, when it comes to self-assessed spirituality, in that this simple bivariate analysis shows that the proportion of deeply spiritual people is also somewhat higher (significantly so in Poland) in the group of those who tend to embrace the ethno-religious principle of belonging. On the other hand, the relations diverge by far the most in the case of religious fundamentalism: while there are hardly any religious fundamentalists in the group that tends to reject the ethno-religious principle (from 1% in Germany to 8% in Poland), they account for between 29% (Germany) and 66% (Poland) in the group that tends to support the principle.

⁸ Our nuanced consideration of very different variables of religiosity takes our study beyond other studies on this issue, since, if such studies focus on the aspect of religiosity at all, they mostly limit themselves to indicators of (church) religious belonging and practice (see Jones and Smith 2001b; Kunovich 2009; PEW 2017, 2018).

⁹ In order to interpret the results better, we only included Christians and non-religious people in these analyses.

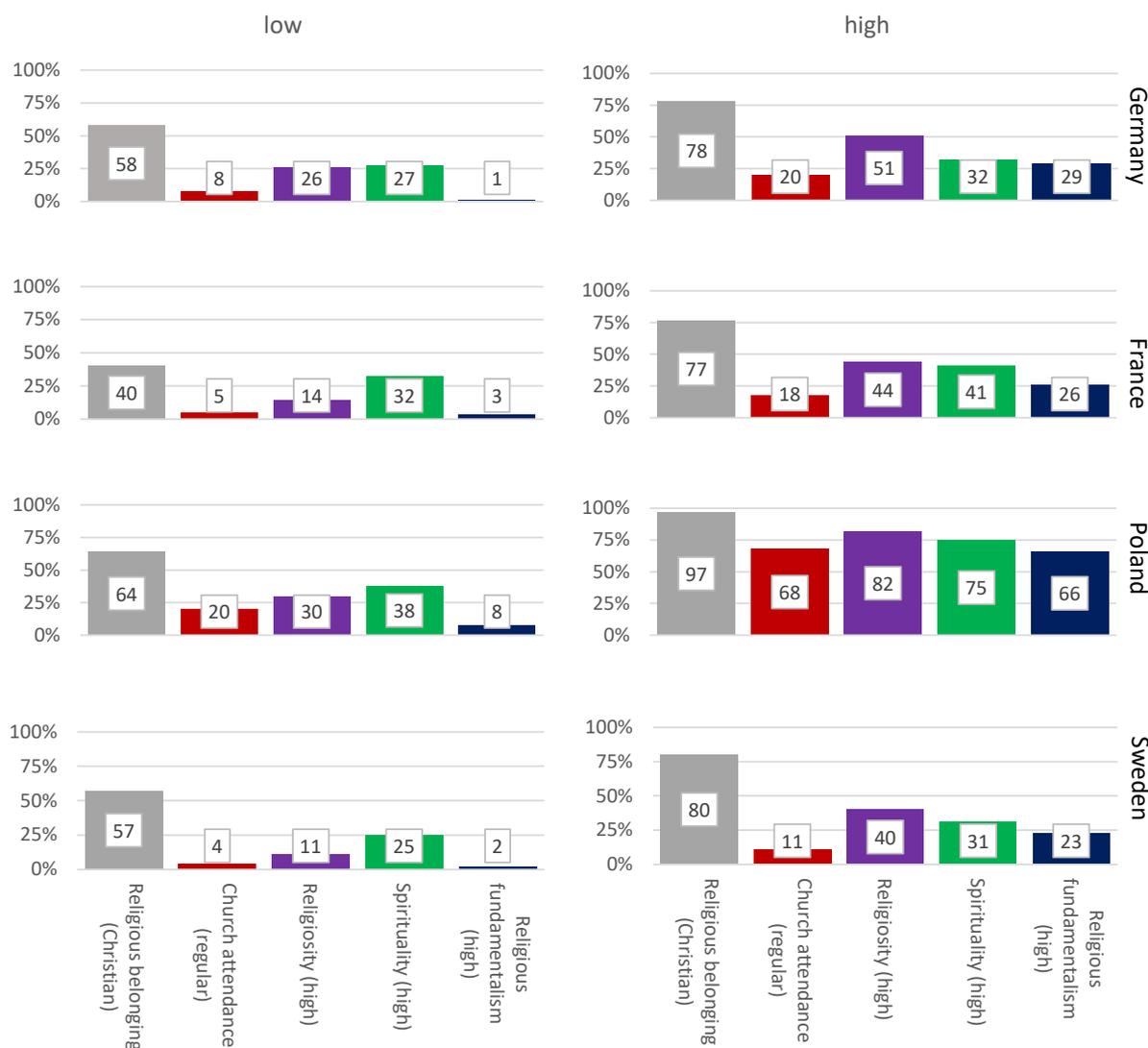
Fig. 4.7 Ethno-religious belonging and religiosity

Fig. 4.7 admittedly only gives an initial impression of how different manifestations and forms of religiosity are related to attitudes towards the criteria and boundaries of national belonging. The analysis so far indicates at best which of the variables examined are more important with regard to attitudes to national belonging, and which are perhaps less decisive. If we wish to explore this question in more detail, then we must first take into account the fact that the variables of religiosity are themselves not independent of each other.¹⁰ The same applies to the relationship with several other variables, some of which have already been considered above. The multivariate regression analysis that follows takes this into account by focusing on the relationship of each individual variable to our so-called dependent variable (here again, the overall index “ethno-religious belonging”), and by controlling for the influence of other variables. Besides the variables of religiosity, we also added here the age and level of education of respondents as control variables – as we have already seen, both variables are related to attitudes towards the notions of belonging, and numerous studies have shown them to correlate with various religiosity items (see Stolz 2004).¹¹

¹⁰ Why this is important with regard to answering the question can be briefly explained with the help of an example. It can be assumed that, while the group of the deeply religious probably includes almost all religious fundamentalists, not everyone who describes herself as deeply religious holds a fundamentalist view. It could therefore be that the group differences among the deeply religious are not due primarily to the mere intensity of religiosity, but to the fact that religious fundamentalists are differently distributed in this group.

¹¹ As for the frequent claim that there is a correlation between the variable “age” and certain indicators of religiosity, most empirical research on religion has concluded that this is not a pure lifecycle effect (in the sense

Table 4.1 does indeed provide evidence that not every characteristic of religiosity fosters approval of the ethno-religious principle of belonging to the same extent (or at all). This multivariate analysis shows that affiliation to Christianity is not significant in Germany, Sweden or France, and the same applies to spirituality in Poland and Sweden. The correlation even becomes positive in Germany and France, i.e. controlling for the influence of all other variables in this model reveals that spiritual persons tend to reject the ethno-religious principle of belonging. On the other hand, religious fundamentalism, along with age, turns out to be the strongest predictor. It is therefore indeed the case that, even more than the intensity of religiosity (which still nonetheless has a significant and positive effect in all countries), it is above all the rigour with which a person lives her own religion and represents this religion with regard to others and society that seems to make the decisive difference.¹² It is particularly striking that the correlation between a fundamentalist attitude and approval of the ethno-religious principle is especially strong in Poland, where by far the most people with a fundamentalist religious worldview can be found in the country comparison (26%), and the predictive quality of the overall model is especially high with a variance explanation (corr. R^2) of almost 50%. This indicates (alongside the results presented in the next chapter) that the factor of religion is a particularly strong dividing line in Polish society in comparison to the other countries.

Tab. 4.1 Ethno-religious belonging and religiosity: multivariate regression

	Germany	France	Poland	Sweden
Age (ascending)	.291***	.290***	.177***	.282***
Education (ascending)	-.128***	-.103***	-.116***	-.162***
Christian	n.s.	n.s.	.091**	n.s.
Church attendance (often)	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Religiosity (high)	.131***	.204***	.132**	.093*
Spirituality (high)	-.104***	-.138***	n.s.	n.s.
Religious fundamentalism (high)	.242***	.240***	.409***	.269***
<i>corr. R²</i>	.25	.33	.46	.28

Note: standardized regression coefficients Beta; *** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$; n.s.= not significant. Criterion variable (predicted variable): endorsement of the ethno-religious principle of belonging

This chapter, then, has shown that, while the group of those who completely or almost unreservedly approve of the principle of ethno-religious belonging represents a clear minority in three of the four countries, the total number of those who hold such a narrow understanding of national belonging (one aimed at homogeneity) is, at least in some cases, quite considerable. While the latter applies to Sweden, Germany and to an even greater extent to France, those who have a strong or at least partial ethno-religious understanding of national community even make up the clear majority in

that people become more religious with increasing age), but that a cohort effect is partly (possibly even largely) evident here (which means that a person's religiosity is essentially determined by the social circumstances under which she grew up and was socialized; see Sasaki and Suzuki 1987). However, because our analyses are based on a cross-sectional survey, we cannot examine how far this fact also applies to the correlation with the idea of national identity studied here.

¹² Multivariate analyses that include other non-religious variables also have religious fundamentalism as by far the strongest predictor of an ethno-religious principle of national belonging.

Poland. Whether a person wants to see her own national community placed on a homogeneous, ethno-religious basis, or whether she rejects such a narrow definition, cannot be linked solely or primarily to socio-economic differences. Rather, a decisive role is also played by issues to do with the subjective perception of fairness, cultural and religious location and orientation, and political socialization (factors that may be connected to the socio-economic situation, but that to some degree have an effect independent of it).¹³

¹³ Other multivariate analyses showed that issues of perception and personality, as well as cultural-religious factors, have just as much (if not more) influence than socio-economic factors.

Chapter 5. Identity conflict as an expression of threat: Who feels threatened by whom?

Mitja Back and Gerald Echterhoff

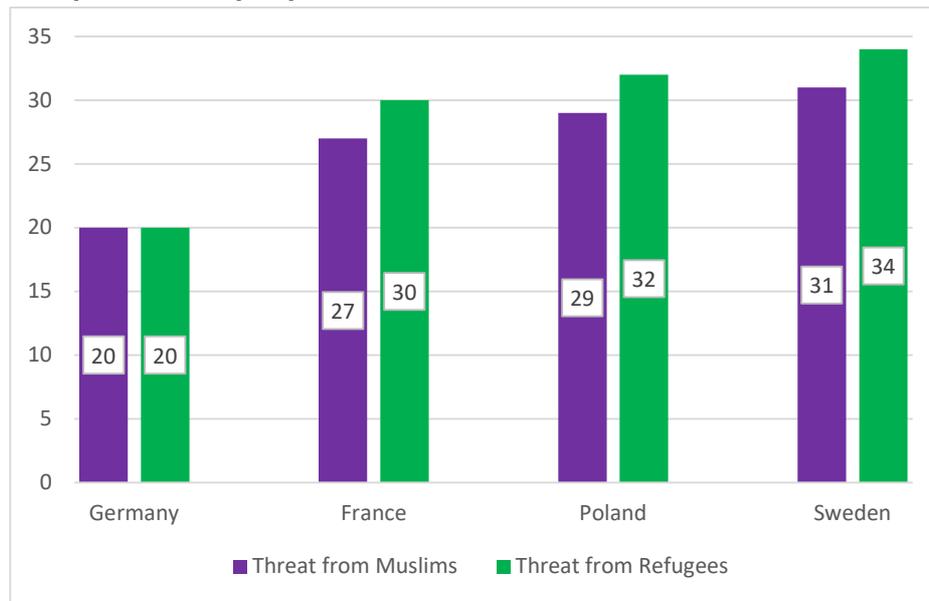
Two ways of perceiving ethno-religious strangers: threatened vs. non-threatened

According to psychological research, people who identify more strongly with their ethnic group, nation or religion also feel more threatened by groups that they perceive as foreign and different from the group with which they identify (Obaidi et al. 2018; Riek et al. 2006). The subjective construction of social identity and belonging appears to be closely related to perceived threat posed by strangers. Indeed, the groups of Defenders and Explorers described here do differ in how they demarcate themselves from, and feel threatened by, ethno-religious foreign groups. Defenders see ethno-religious foreign groups as a threat – in terms of competition for jobs and social benefits (so-called “realistic threat”); of safety in the country (so-called “safety threat”); but above all symbolically and culturally, in terms of threats to their own culture and values (so-called “symbolic threat”; Landmann et al. 2019). The group of Explorers, on the other hand, are open to the ethno-religious stranger and do not see the stranger as a threat.

According to psychological research (Blascovich and Tomaka 1996), the experience of challenge versus threat is a central reaction to demanding and potentially stressful situations. In the past decade, these situations included dealing with Islamism (including Islamist violence), the sudden increase in the number of refugees (the so-called “wave of refugees” from 2015), the increasing proximity of and confrontation with violence, crises, war and terror in non-European regions, and the uncertainties over how to deal with cultural differences and (value) conflicts. People may experience such situations more as a threat or more as a challenge, which depends especially on how they cognitively evaluate (Tomaka et al. 1997) the demands (danger, uncertainty, effort required) and their own resources (knowledge, skills). Feelings of threat have been most evident in recent years in how people react to Muslims and refugees.

In our study, reported feelings of threat were, on average, lowest in Germany, with a mean value of 2.41 (threat from Muslims) and 2.46 (threat from refugees) on a scale from 1 to 6 (graded agreement with statements expressing feelings of threat between 1, “totally disagree”, and 6, “totally agree”). France (2.57 and 2.72), Poland (2.70 and 2.87) and Sweden (2.77 and 2.94) had slightly higher values. In all countries, however, there were large differences within the population regarding the prevalence of feelings of threat.

To simplify, we distinguish in the following between those who feel no or hardly any threat (≤ 1.5 on a scale of 1-6; hereafter referred to as “non-threatened”), and those who tend to feel threat, i.e. those above the midpoint on the scale (≥ 3.5 on a scale of 1-6; hereafter referred to as “threatened”). Fig. 5.1 shows the proportions of the latter. Our results show that a substantial proportion (20-34%) of the population in all four countries surveyed tend to feel threatened by Muslims and refugees, the values being somewhat lower in Germany (at about 20% of the population), and at about 30% in France, Poland and Sweden. In Germany and France, slightly above 30% feel no threat from Muslims, and 25%, no threat from refugees, while the proportions in Poland and Sweden are around 25% and below 20% (with regard to refugees in Sweden) respectively.

Fig. 5.1 Proportions of people who feel threatened

Feelings of threat from ethno-religious minorities – who feels threatened by Muslims and refugees? Differences between threatened and non-threatened

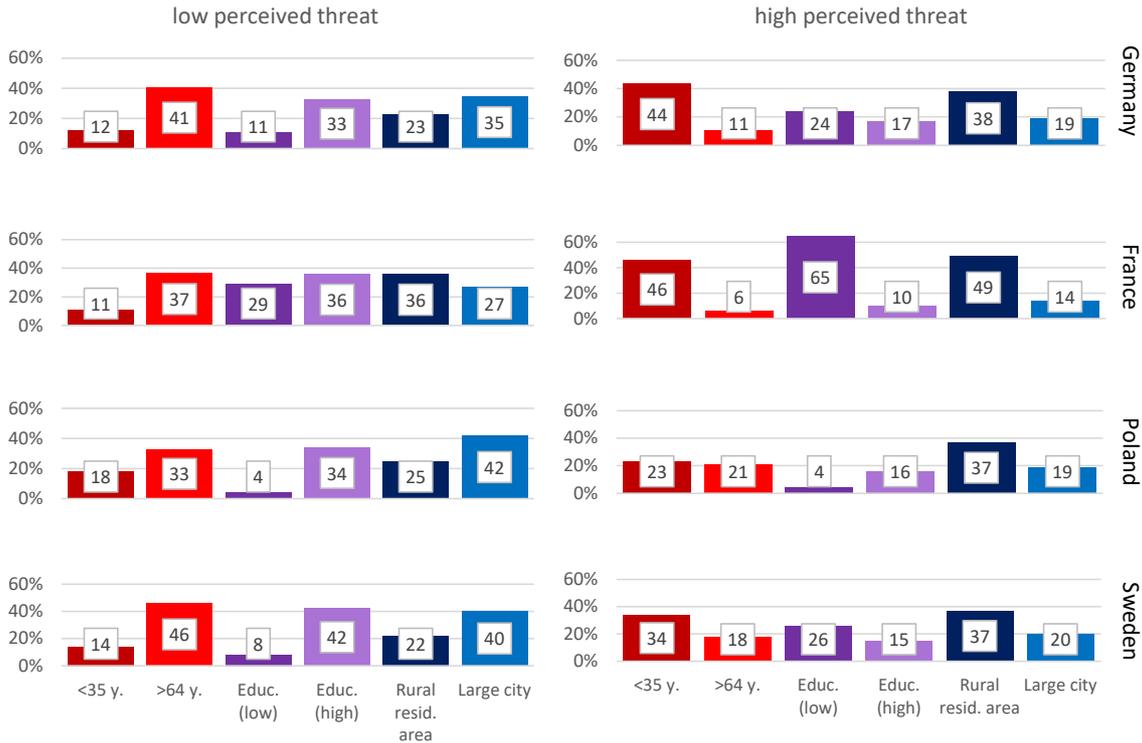
The feeling of threat generally leads to attitudes, judgments and behaviours that are negative, delimiting or even hostile (Blascovich et al. 2001; Scheepers 2009). Thus, the perceived threat from immigrant and Muslim groups is also a central factor in prejudice and hostility towards these groups (Ciftci 2012; Esses et al. 2017; Stephan et al. 1999), and it is important to understand their predictors better: How can we characterize the threatened? And how do they differ from the non-threatened?

Analyzing the profiles of Defenders and Explorers has already shown that feelings of threat from Muslims and refugees across countries are associated with support for a national community that is ethno-religiously homogeneous, and with a low level of trust in the EU. Except in Poland, feelings of threat are also accompanied by perceptions of economic, political and social marginalization, lack of trust in the government of one's own country, and dissatisfaction with how democracy functions at home. The results suggest that we should formulate the contrast between threat and challenge in the following terms: while the group of Defenders perceive contact with ethno-religious strangers as a threat to the community, the group of Explorers tends to see this contact as a challenge.

We will now consider more closely at factors that exacerbate or mitigate feelings of threat from ethno-religious foreign groups. Our analyses suggest that it is a spectrum of socio-demographic, religious, cultural and psychological factors that together contribute to this feeling of threat.

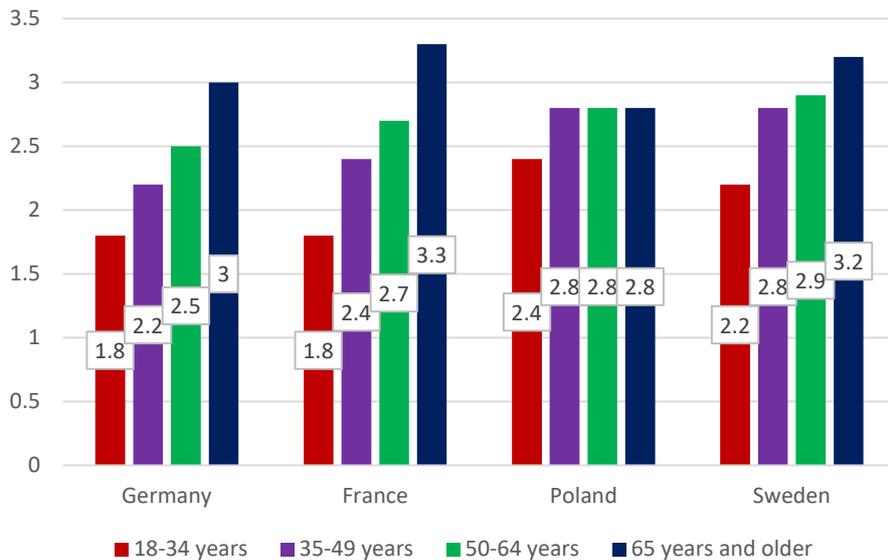
Fig. 5.2 illustrates the correlations between feelings of threat and socio-demographic factors. For all results reported below, we focus on feelings of threat from Muslims, but there are similar results for feelings of threat from refugees. In distinguishing between low and high threat, we refer in what follows to the groups introduced above of threatened and non-threatened.

Fig. 5.2 Feelings of threat and socio-demographic factors



Age and a low level of education are the two strongest socio-demographic predictors when it comes to feelings of threat. While 33% of the over-64s in Germany, for example, feel threatened by Muslims, only 9% of the under-35s do. Analyses for Sweden reveal a similar difference: 41% (over 64-year-olds) and 21% (under 35-year-olds). This difference is even more pronounced in France (47%, as opposed to 7%), but somewhat weaker in Poland (33%, as opposed to 24%). The clear correlation between age and increased values with regard to feelings of threat from Muslims is illustrated once again in Fig. 5.3, which takes into account different age groups. The average level of feelings of threat increases continuously with age in all countries, although this effect is less pronounced for Poland.

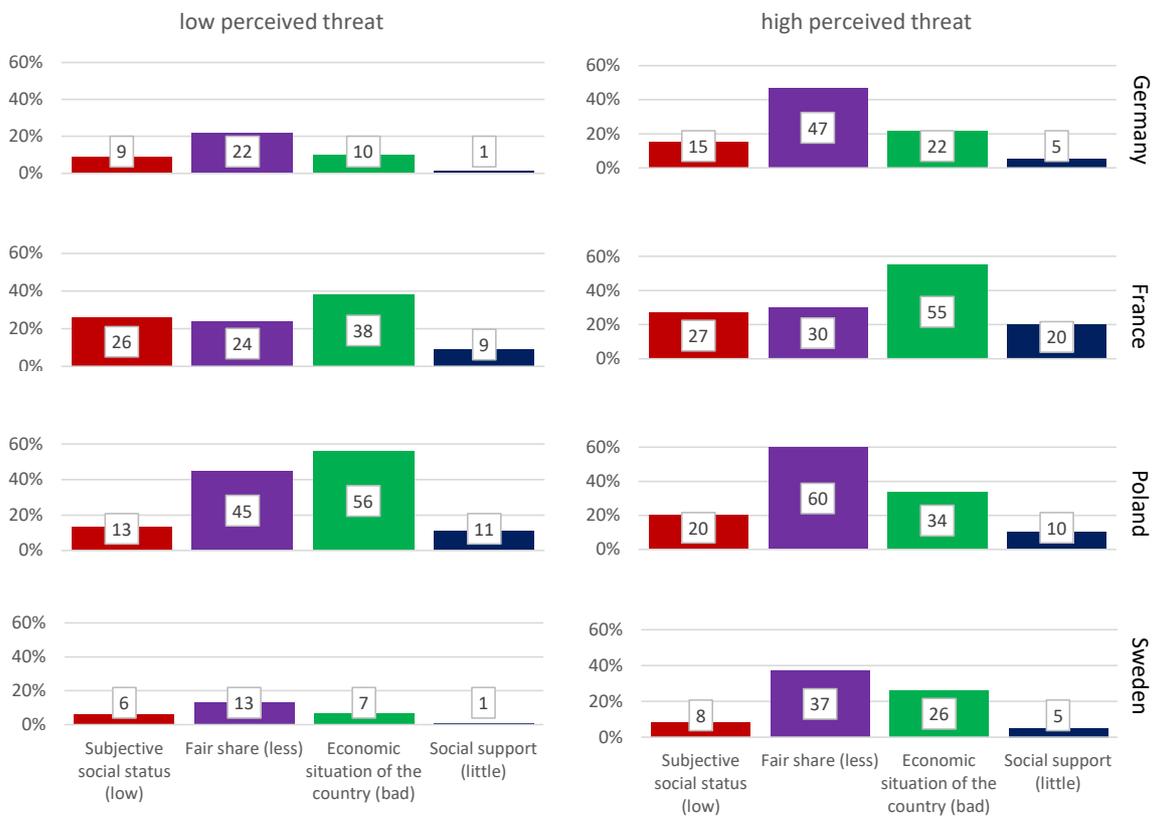
Fig. 5.3 Feelings of threat in age groups



A higher level of education is accompanied by a lower threat in all countries. In Germany, for example, significantly more people in the threatened group do not have a university-entry qualification (24%, as opposed to 11% in the non-threatened group), and significantly fewer people have a university degree (17%, as opposed to 33%). This difference is even greater in France (no university-entry qualification: 65%, as opposed to 29%; university degree: 10%, as opposed to 36%), and Sweden (no university-entry qualification: 26%, as opposed to 8%; university degree: 15%, as opposed to 42%). Also, slightly more people feel threatened in rural areas than in large cities. The group of those threatened live predominantly in rural areas (between 37% for Sweden and 49% for France), and less in large cities (between 14% for France and 20% for Sweden), while the reverse is true for the non-threatened group.

Our analyses also show that the subjective presence of socio-economic resources can mitigate feelings of threat; and, conversely, the subjective absence of such resources makes such feelings more likely (see Fig. 5.4). In Germany, for example, the threatened feel that they have a lower social status (15%, as opposed to 9%), are more likely to feel that they are not receiving their fair share (47%, as opposed to 22%), rate the economic situation in their country as poor (22%, as opposed to 10%), and are more likely to experience little social support in their private lives (5%, as opposed to 1%). This pattern is similar in the other countries, with the exception of Poland, where the non-threatened are more likely than the threatened to rate the economic situation as poor. This fits with the peculiarities in Poland already described: Polish respondents who feel threatened by strangers defined in ethno-religious terms are more likely to agree with the (economic) policies of the government that embraces these fears.

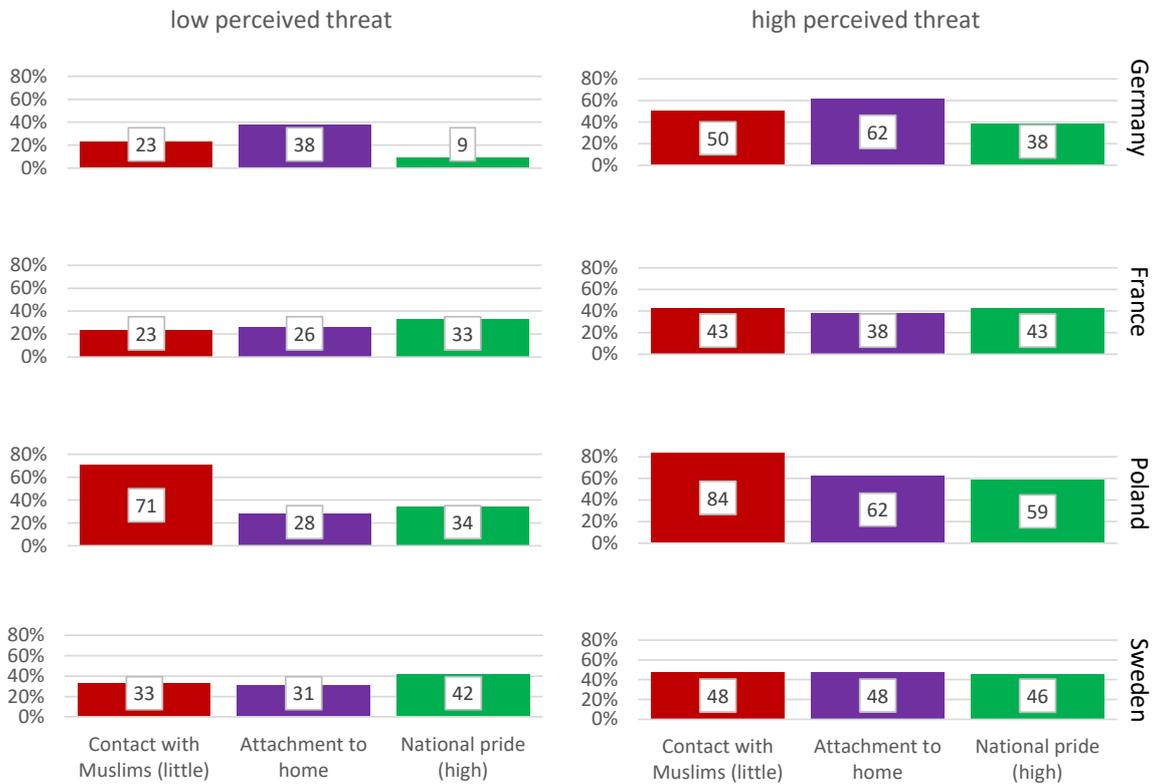
Fig. 5.4 Feelings of threat and assessments of the socio-economic situation



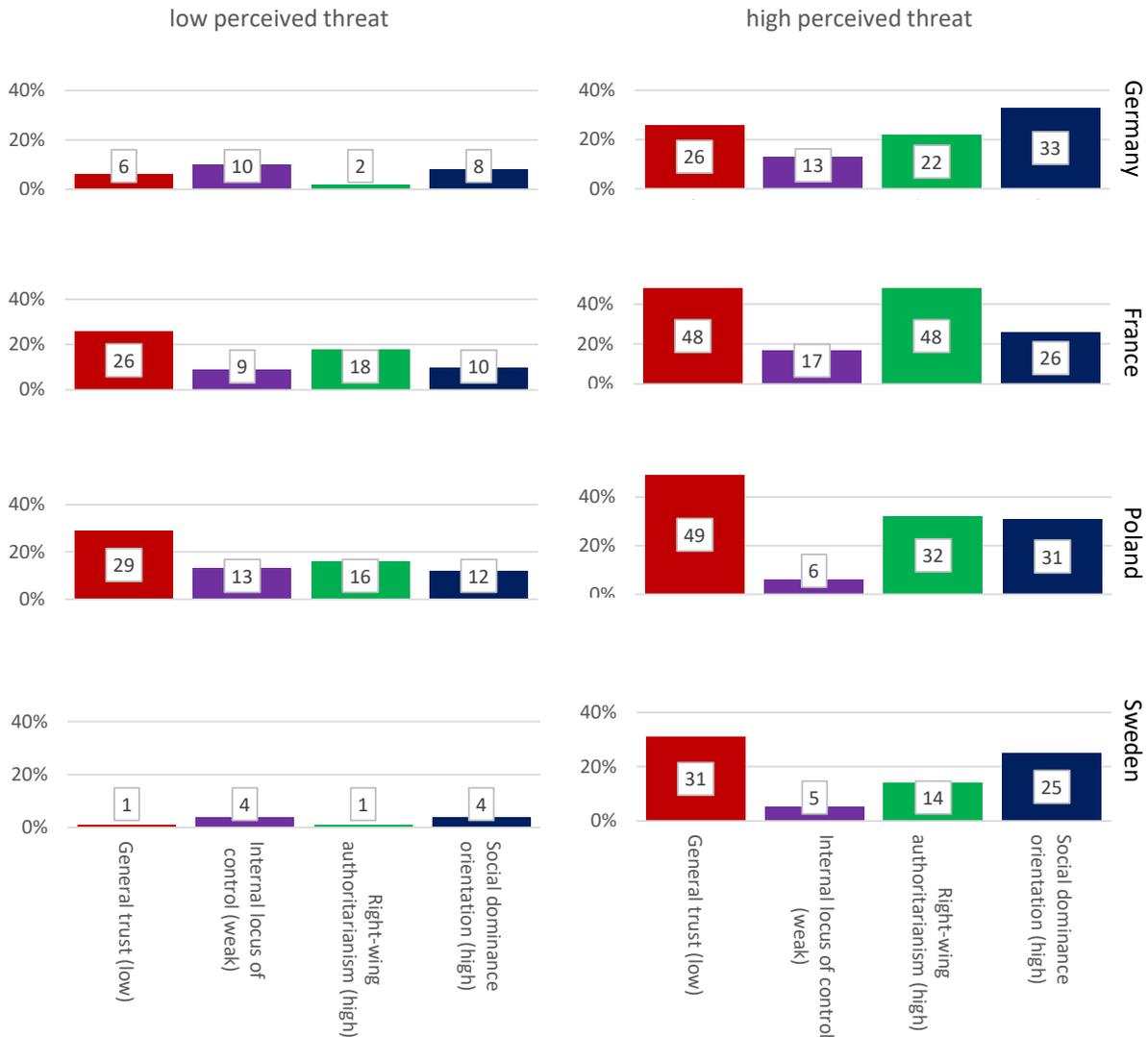
Expected differences are also found with regard to socio-cultural factors and attitudes (see Fig. 5.5). In line with the idea that increased threat is directly correlated with a narrower definition of national identity and attachment, 38% in the threatened group in Germany feel strong national pride, while

only 9% do so in the non-threatened group. In the other countries, national pride is more prevalent in both groups, and the difference between the groups is somewhat smaller, but still present. Moreover, in Germany, the threatened group is more attached to home/less cosmopolitan than the non-threatened group (62%, as opposed to 38%), and has less contact with Muslims (50%, as opposed to 23%). These differences are also present in all other countries.

Fig. 5.5 Feelings of threat, and socio-cultural factors and attitudes



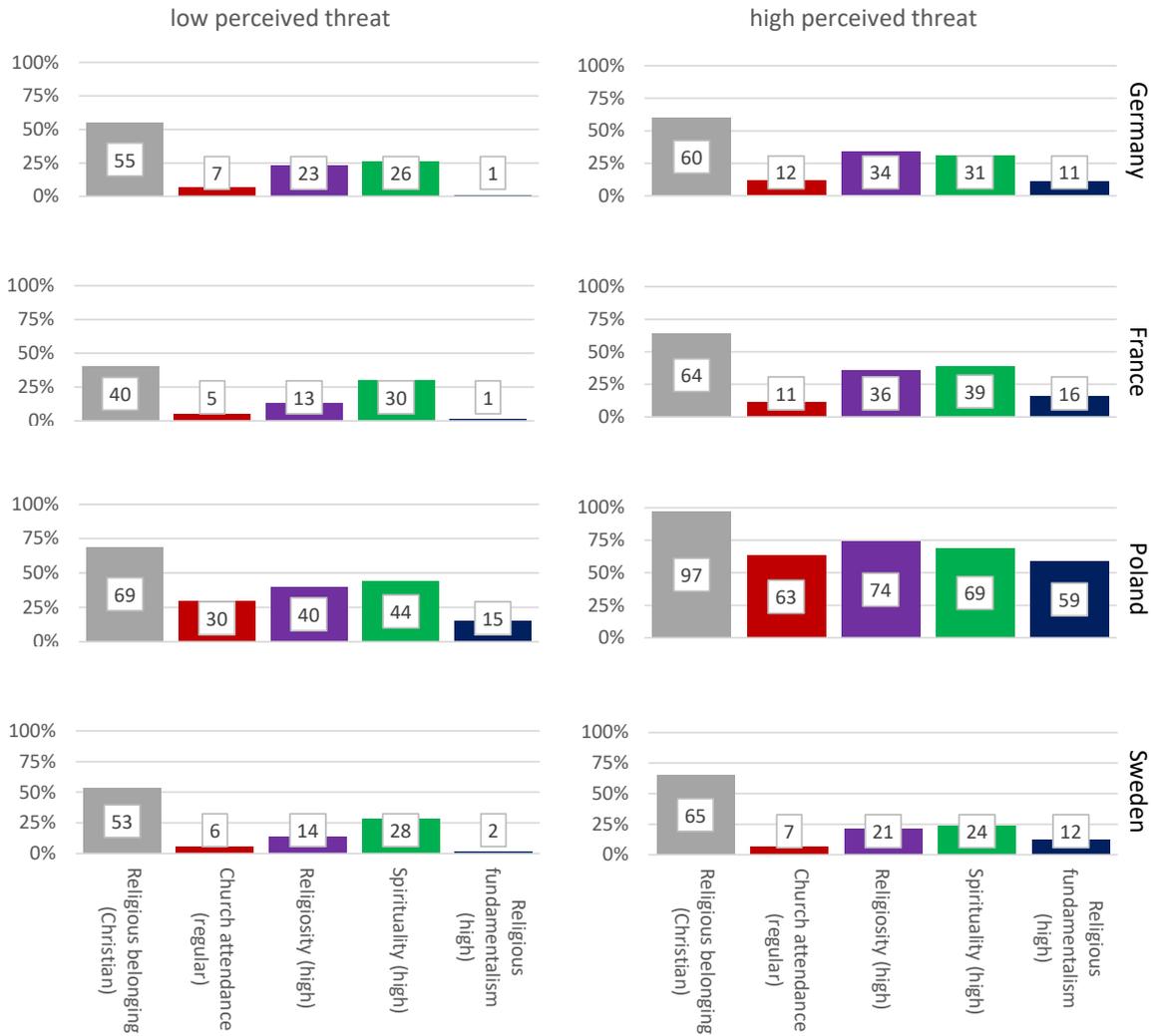
Finally, our analyses show clearly that the threatened and non-threatened groups also substantially differ in terms of relatively stable personality traits and social attitudes (see Fig. 5.6). In particular, the threatened group has less trust in people in general, stronger right-wing authoritarian attitudes, and a preference for social hierarchies. These traits are linked to a general scepticism towards the benevolence of others, a rejection of the unknown in favour of the tried and tested, and a subordination to fixed power structures, all of which also help to increase the feeling of threat from ethno-religious minorities.

Fig. 5.6 Feelings of threat, personality traits and social attitudes

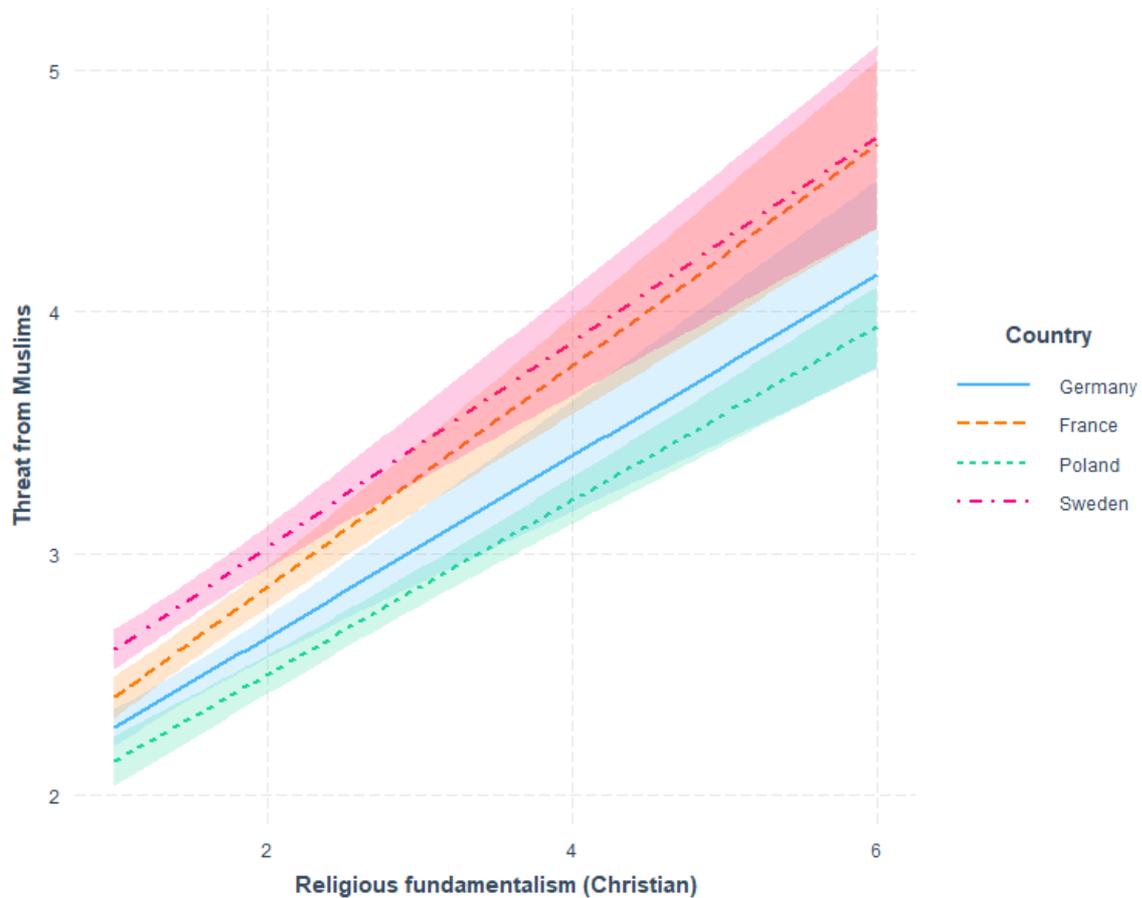
What role individual religiosity and religious attitudes play in feelings of threat has been the subject of heated debate (Hillenbrand 2020; Küpper and Zick 2010; PEW 2018). On the one hand, religion is understood as a buffer that provides security and therefore mitigates the need for delimitation from foreign groups. A similar argument is made when emphasis is given to the role of religion in helping those in need (“Christian charity”), a line of reasoning that claims that religiosity goes hand in hand with lower feelings of threat. On the other, a person’s religion can be seen as a defining feature of her own community and identity, with people with a higher level of religiosity therefore making belonging and demarcation more dependent on religious affiliation – and devaluing religious strangers more strongly and feeling more threatened by them (“saving the Christian Occident”). Based on this reasoning, religiosity should go hand in hand with stronger feelings of threat. While religiosity can of course have both effects, our findings suggest that the latter explanation is more convincing (see Fig. 5.7): Christian denomination and a higher level of religiosity are accompanied by stronger feelings of threat from Muslims/refugees. This is most clear in Poland, where 97% of the threatened (as opposed to 69% of the non-threatened) are Christian, and 74% (as opposed to 40%) say that they have a high level of religiosity. This difference is weaker but still present in other countries (e.g. for Germany, 60% as opposed to 55% are Christian, and 34% as opposed to 23% have a high level of religiosity). Additional analyses show that the positive correlation between religiosity and threat is largely due to fundamentalist religious attitudes. While strongly religious-fundamentalist attitudes are barely present in the non-threatened group (with the exception of Poland) (Germany: 1%, France: 1%, Poland: 15%, Sweden: 2%), they make up a small but

substantial proportion in the threatened group in Germany (11%), France (16%) and Sweden (12%), and a large proportion in Poland (59%).

Fig. 5.7 Feelings of threat and religiosity



The correlation between religious fundamentalism and feelings of threat is illustrated once again in Fig. 5.8, which shows in all four countries that higher levels of religious fundamentalism are accompanied by significantly higher levels of feelings of threat from Muslims.

Fig. 5.8 Feelings of threat and religious fundamentalism

This correlation also remains when we control for the respondents' age, education, religious affiliation, religious practice, religiosity and spirituality. Non-religious spirituality, on the other hand, is even linked to lower feelings of threat in France and Sweden in such a joint analysis (see Tab. 5.1).

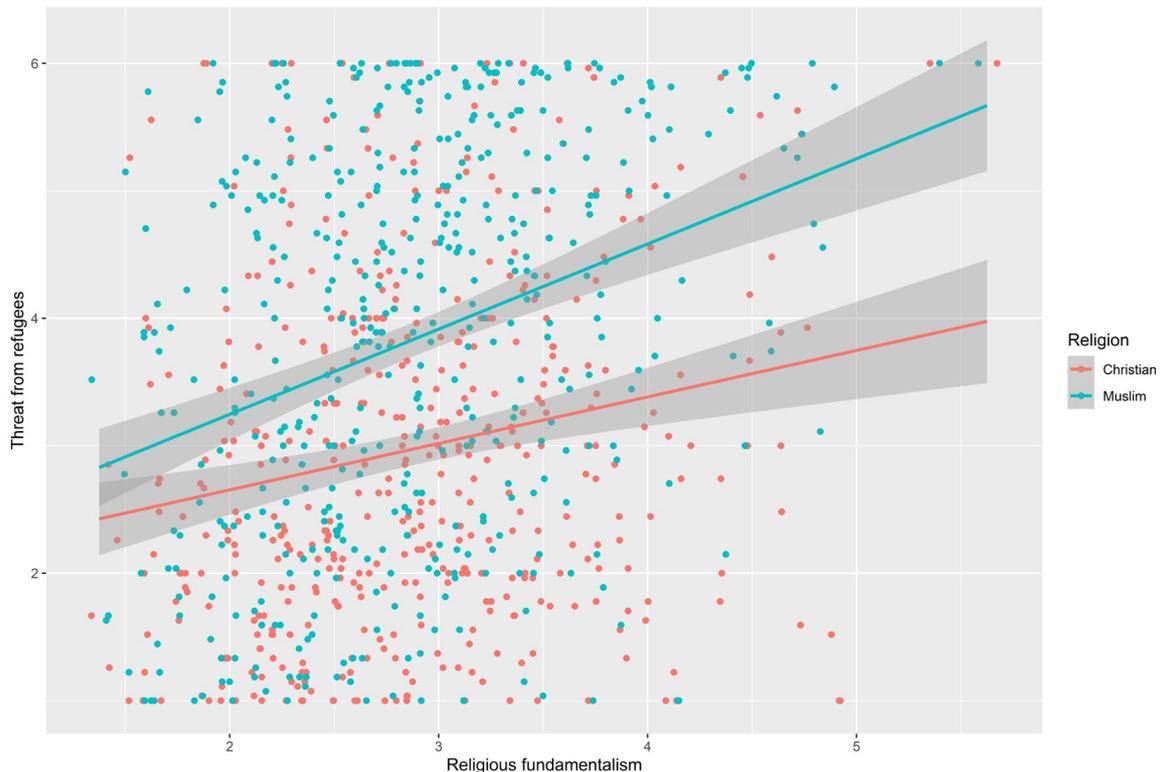
Tab. 5.1 Feelings of threat from Muslims, and religiosity: multivariate regression

	Germany	France	Poland	Sweden
Age (ascending)	.321***	.248***	n.s.	.164***
Education (ascending)	-.122***	-.140***	-.081**	-.176***
Christian	n.s.	n.s.	.120**	n.s.
Church attendance (frequent)	-.067*	n.s.	n.s.	-.096**
Religiosity (high)	n.s.	.095*	n.s.	n.s.
Spirituality (high)	n.s.	-.075*	n.s.	-.107**
Religious fundamentalism (high)	.198***	.203***	.403***	.280***
<i>corr. R²</i>	.175	.217	.216	.172

Note: standardized regression coefficients Beta; *** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$; n.s. = not significant. Criterion variable (predicted variable): perceived threat from Muslims

An additional study with respondents in Germany (representative of the population in terms of age and gender, 33% of respondents with a clearly right-wing political orientation) provides additional evidence that the religion of strangers being judged and a person's own religious beliefs (in particular fundamentalist religious attitudes) also play a role (Echterhoff et al. 2020). In this study, respondents reported perceived threat by both Muslim and Christian refugees. Again, a fundamentalist religious attitude (religious dogmatism) correlated positively with perceived threat, even when including religiosity, age and level of education as predictors. Moreover, the degree of religious fundamentalism was a stronger predictor for the perceived threat from Muslim refugees than from Christian refugees (see Fig. 5.9).

Fig. 5.9 Correlation between religious fundamentalism and felt threat from refugees, differentiated according to their religion



In summary, our analyses show that there are large differences in the population in all the countries studied in terms of how much people feel threatened by Muslims and refugees, i.e. by ethno-religious strangers. In all countries, a substantial proportion of the population perceives threat from Muslims and refugees. Besides socio-demographic factors such as age and education, relatively stable differences in religious-cultural and psychological characteristics play an important role in determining whether a person belongs to the group of the threatened or that of the non-threatened.

Chapter 6. Identity conflict and ideas of democracy: Who wants what form of democracy?

Bernd Schlipphak

Following our insights into the existence of the opposing camps of Explorers and Defenders, and into their cultural, religious and psychological profiles, the question arises as to which political conflicts are associated with the affiliation to the different camps. Here, our focus will not be on specific political positions or the evaluation of individual political actors, but on fundamental preferences with regard to how social coexistence should be governed politically.

In essence, we distinguish here between a *pluralist* and an *anti-pluralist* notion of political governance. The former demands that governance take society's diversity seriously, and that it recognizes this diversity when formulating political regulations. The pluralist conception therefore considers politics as a sequence of processes of negotiation in which different groups represent their respective interests, leading in the end to an (institutional) regulation that is a compromise between these different interests. Anti-pluralist governance, on the other hand, essentially claims that there is a single and shared popular will. It is then the task of political regulations to express this will. Politics therefore consists primarily in directly enforcing this popular will through institutional regulations.

When it comes to the institutional configuration and underlying political positions regarding pluralist and anti-pluralist governance, we can distinguish three dimensions. For pluralist governance, a form of government is necessary that allows and checks processes of negotiation and the participation of different social groups, such a form of government being most closely associated with the idea of democracy (dimension 1) and in particular with the liberal form of democracy (dimension 2). In contrast, anti-pluralist governance is primarily interested in the efficiency and immediacy with which the will of the people is enforced, this being safeguarded in more authoritarian settings (dimension 1) or through direct forms of democracy (dimension 2). Moreover, the notion of anti-pluralist governance is compatible with the core of (right-wing) populist arguments and conspiracy theories (dimension 3), which claim that the (homogeneous) will of the people is betrayed by corrupt elites both at home and abroad. The very idea of a homogenous people obviously contradicts the notion of pluralist governance.

Our core argument is that the opposing groups in society (Explorers and Defenders) are also more likely to advocate these two different conceptions when it comes to their preferences for governance: Explorers should also favour a pluralist perspective in the political configuration of a polity, while Defenders should favour the ideals of the anti-pluralist perspective on governance.

To test this, we examine the degree to which the two camps approve of or reject the three dimensions of underlying attitudes that for us comprise the conceptual dichotomization of pluralist and anti-pluralist governance. Table 6.1 summarizes our theoretical expectations with regard to how Explorers and Defenders will agree when it comes to the three dimensions and the concepts to measure them.

Tab. 6.1 Expected approval of dimensions of underlying attitudes towards democracy among explorers and defenders

	Dimension 1 – Democracy vs. authoritarianism		Dimension 2 – Liberal vs. direct democracy		Dimension 3 – Populism
	Democracy as an idea	Preference for authoritarian leader	liberal democracy	direct democracy	
<i>Explorers</i>	high	low	high	low	low
<i>Defenders</i>	low	high	low	high	high

In the remainder, we will present the descriptive findings for the differences in averages between the two groups. After presenting the questions used to measure the respective dimensions, we will then demonstrate the empirical results in the form of a bar chart.

Dimension 1 – Democracy vs. authoritarianism

For the approval of democracy as an idea, we asked respondents whether they agree with the statement that democracy is a good form of government. For their preference for authoritarian forms of government, we asked them whether they agreed with the statement that a strong leader is needed who does not have to worry about parliament and elections. In each case, they could indicate agreement on a scale from 1 = totally disagree to 6 = totally agree.

Figs. 6.1 and 6.2 show the distribution of mean scores for the two groups of Explorers and Defenders by country. Fig. 6.1 demonstrates that in all four countries the approval of democracy as a good form of government is stronger among Explorers than among Defenders. However, this is only true to a small extent in Poland. In essence, we can observe that approval of democracy as an idea is shared by both camps and is above the theoretical mean (= 3.5 on a scale of 1 to 6) across all countries. In all countries, there is therefore a preference for democracy as an idea in both camps, but in some cases the intensity of the preference varies considerably between the two camps.

Fig. 6.1 Approval of democracy as an idea

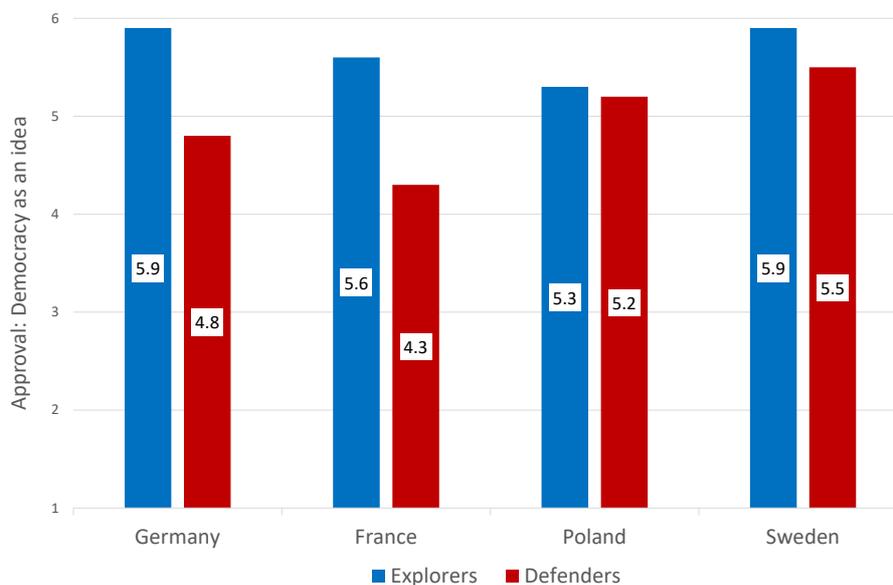
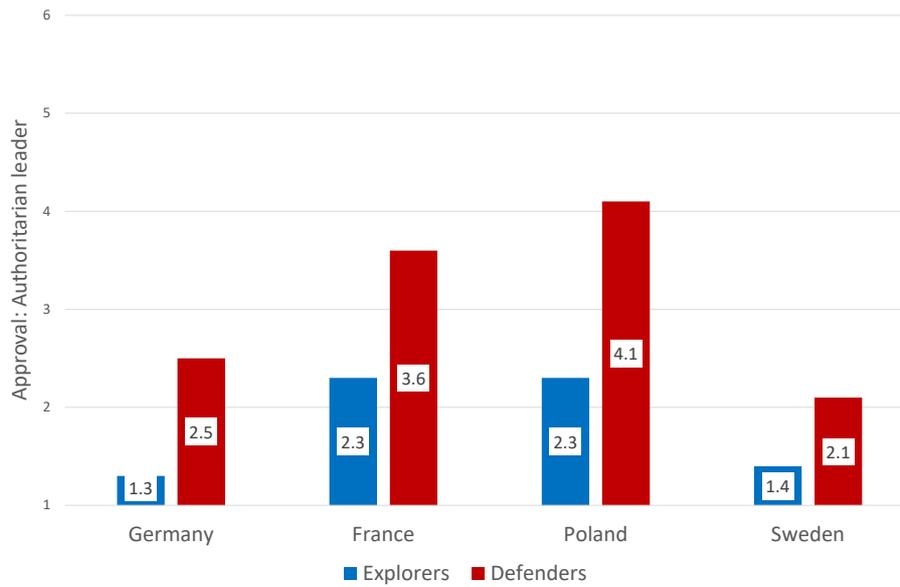


Fig. 6.2 shows even more significant differences between the two groups. In all countries, Defenders are much more likely to agree with the statement that a strong leader is needed who could disregard parliament and elections. In Poland and France, approval of such a leader even predominates in the Defender camp (group mean above the theoretical mean of 3.5). Calculating a bivariate regression between approval of democracy as an idea or the idea of an authoritarian leader, and the affiliation of persons to one of the two groups, statistically significant differences for both sub-concepts of the first dimension emerge: Compared to Explorers, Defenders approve much less of democracy as an idea and much more of the need for an authoritarian leader.

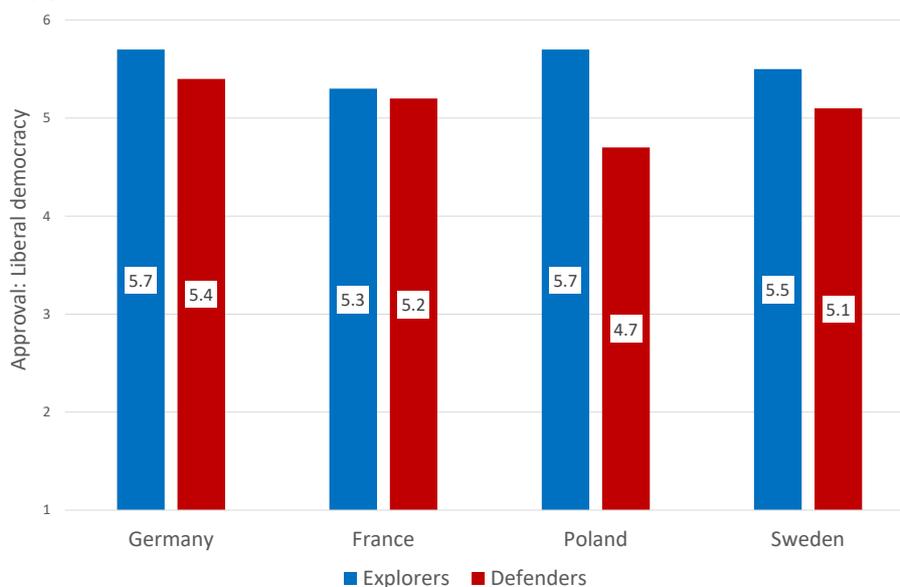
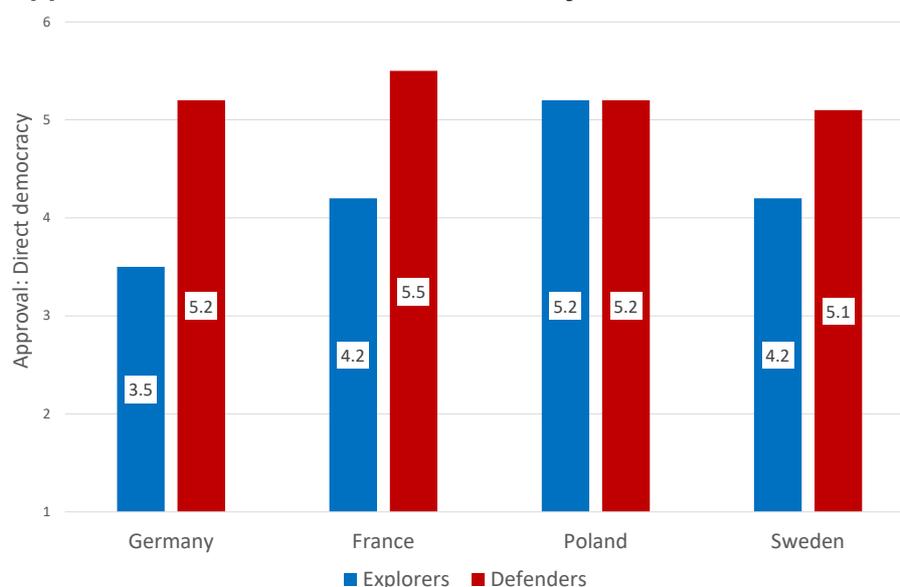
Fig. 6.2 Preference for an authoritarian leader



Dimension 2 – Liberal vs. direct concepts of democracy

For the second dimension, our analysis includes approval of the idea of liberal democracy and of the idea of direct democracy. Following the classifications in Ferrin and Kriesi (2016), we define approval of liberal democracy as the average agreement with three questions. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale from 1 = not important at all to 6 = very important, how important it was for democracy whether a) the media have the right to criticize the government, b) minority rights are protected, and c) courts can prevent the government from exceeding its powers. The measurement of direct democracy only included the question on how important it was for democracy that citizens have the final say through direct referendums on the most important political issues. Figs. 6.3 and 6.4 again show the differences between Explorers and Defenders in the four countries.

Both figures largely show the expected patterns. Defenders assign less importance to the liberal idea of democracy than Explorers, and deem the direct component to be more important. Bivariate regressions across all countries demonstrate that these differences between Explorers and Defenders in terms of their preferred models of democracy are statistically significant.

Fig. 6.3 Approval of the idea of liberal democracy**Fig. 6.4 Approval of the idea of direct democracy**

However, we should emphasize two things at this point. First, the groups differ more regarding the relevance of direct democracy than they do regarding the relevance of liberal democracy. Second, there is a pattern in Poland that deviates from expectations with regard to approval of direct democracy, with Explorers approving of direct democracy to the same extent as Defenders. This might be explained by the stronger feeling of marginalization among the group of Explorers under the current Polish government.

Dimension 3 – Populism

For the approval of populist positions, we use three measures. First, we use a measure recommended by Castanho Silva et al. (2020) to measure populism across countries, but limit ourselves to measuring two dimensions instead of three: namely, the idea of the primacy of a single popular will, and the idea of corrupt elites opposing the people. The level of populism is then the averaged approval of respondents of these two items on a scale from 1 = totally disagree to 6 = totally agree. Second, we use another measure so that we can include the behaviour of the

population. Here, we asked which party respondents would vote for in a hypothetical election at the federal level. We then created a variable separating those with a preference for a populist party from all other respondents. Third, we asked respondents to agree with an item taken from an instrument measuring a general conspiracy mentality in the population: “There are many important things happening in the world that are controlled by influential groups without the public’s knowledge.”. We use belief in conspiracy theories here as one aspect of approval of populism because, to adopt a musicological image by Castanho Silva et al. (2017), conspiracy theories are just variations of the populist leitmotif. Figs. 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7 show the differences between explorers and defenders in their approval of populist positions.

Fig. 6.5 Level of populism

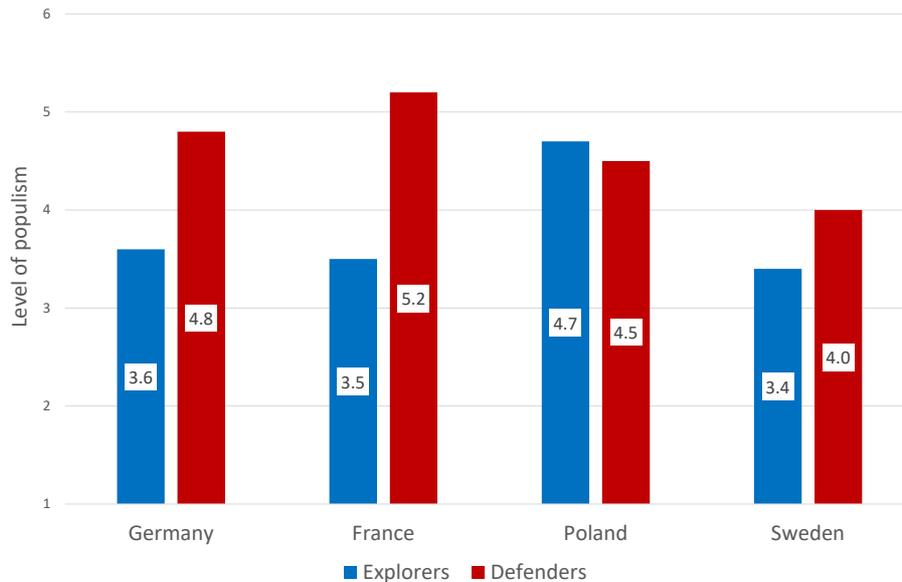


Fig. 6.6 Likelihood of voting for a populist party

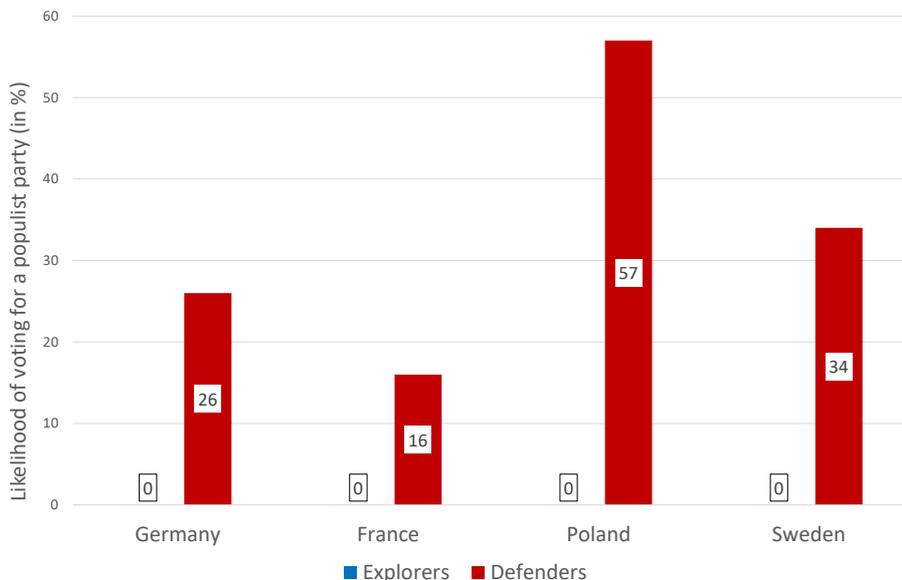
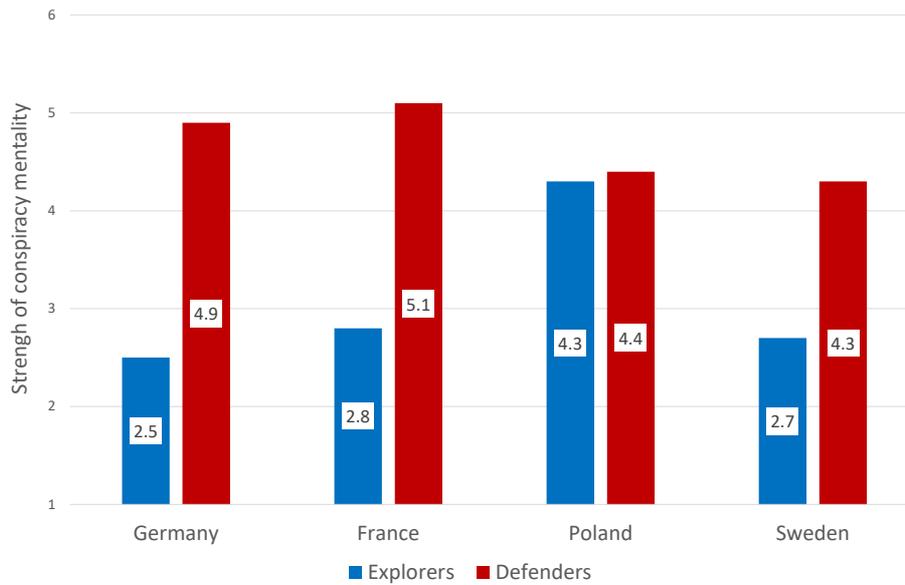


Fig. 6.7 Prevalence of conspiracy mindset

The figures make clear that Explorers and Defenders also differ in their proximity to populist positions, and most strongly in how likely they are to vote for populist parties. These differences are also statistically significant. Thus, the expected patterns are again consistently confirmed.

The individual findings in the figures also indicate that Poland is the exceptional case in our country sample with regard to populist beliefs in the camps of Defenders and Explorers. In Poland, Explorers approve more strongly of populist positions than Defenders, while there is hardly any difference between the two camps with regard to belief in conspiracy theories. The fact that the specific findings for Poland are so consistent seems to corroborate the thesis that we put forward in chapter 3: namely, that these findings reflect the effect that populist government (leadership) in Poland has. We will deal more intensively and in more detail with these divergent findings and their theoretical significance in further publications.

In summary, our expectations can be confirmed. The groups of Explorers and Defenders also adhere to different pluralist and anti-pluralist ideas of political governance with regard to their political preferences, too, which suggests once again that a new line of conflict is developing in society between these two opposing groups, one that fosters social and political polarization.

Chapter 7. Implications and embedding in the research

Mitja Back, Gerald Echterhoff, Olaf Müller, Detlef Pollack and Bernd Schlipphak

This Working Report discusses the results of a study that is the first to use a broad empirical approach to analyze the hardening of an identity conflict into a new overarching societal and political cleavage. Our study shows that the identity conflict is not only based on different notions of belonging and different degrees with which people feel threatened; it is also tightly bound to feelings of social marginalization and political representation. However, the linkage to a specific definition of identity is not necessarily tied to a specific perception of marginalization or representation. In all four countries studied, Explorers endorse a more open understanding of belonging and have a low level when it comes to feelings of threat, and *vice versa* for Defenders. The link between belonging and the feeling of threat on the one hand, and marginalization and representation on the other, however, varies according to the political context. While Explorers feel less marginalized and better represented politically at the national level than Defenders in Germany, France and Sweden, the opposite is true in Poland, where the government gives greater political support to the positions of Defenders.

What implications do these findings have? From our point of view, the implications are not independent of the research perspective taken, and we shall therefore first locate our results both in psychological research on inter-individually varying needs, and in research in the social sciences on the context of globalization. Based on such an embedding of our results in the current literature, we will then develop three central implications.

Identity conflict as a result of different needs

Identity conflict comprises two opposing positions or social groups. One is represented by a section of the population whom we call *Explorers*. This group endorses an open definition of society and of how people belong to society. It perceives the opening of borders, especially with regard to (im)migration, as a challenge and an opportunity rather than as a threat and a risk, and sees the individual freedom associated with modernization as the basis for the fact that society can and should represent many cultural notions of life side by side and on an equal footing.

The second position is represented by a group of people whom we call *Defenders*. This group advocates a narrower concept of society and argues against too much openness. In the debate on social belonging, this group defends traditional criteria such as ethnic and religious homogeneity. An ideal society is thus characterized for this group by the greatest possible cultural similarity of its members, with Defenders demarcating themselves from ethnically and religiously foreign groups and even perceiving them as a threat.

Using the perspective of psychology and the social sciences, we can trace this line of conflict based on identity to the tension between the basic needs for security as opposed to exploration (Carstensen et al. 1999; DeYoung 2015; Elliot 2006; Higgins 1997; Rathunde and Csíkszentmihályi 2007; Saucier et al. 2014; for a similar approach in sociology, see Inglehart 1989). From this point of view, individuals are able to strive for both predictable and safe social environments (security), and new and challenging social experiences (exploration). Explorers have a strong need for exploration, for novelty, and feel stimulated and challenged by social change, while Defenders have a strong need for security and stability, and feel threatened by social change.

It is important to point out here the fundamental nature of these needs, which in the past and present in essence foster the pursuit of collective goals of both stability and progress. However, while the

existence of both the security-oriented individuals (Defenders) and the exploration-oriented individuals (Explorers) means that these goals can be pursued simultaneously at the societal level, one of the two needs often takes precedence at the individual level (since a single individual cannot maximally pursue both security and exploration at the same time). Research on personality traits and the effect of socialization emphasizes that the individual weighting of needs remains relatively stable over the course of a person's life, changing only slowly (Bleidorn et al., in press; Roberts and DelVecchio 2000). We can therefore expect societies to be always composed of a mixture of Defenders and Explorers, although their relative proportions may also change over time.

The results of our study support the thesis that the substantial differences in definitions of identity that we can observe in the population are rooted in fundamental differences in needs for security and stability (Defenders) as opposed to exploration and change (Explorers). This applies in particular to the findings that point to the significance of long-term social, cultural and personal characteristics for a person's affiliation to one of the two camps. For example, the age-related differences fit very well with findings from lifespan psychology that highlight that people in young adulthood have a stronger orientation towards social exploration and the acquisition of new resources, and that people then develop a stronger orientation towards the narrower social environment and the securing of resources (Carstensen et al. 1999). We can also interpret the differences in characteristics and attitudes between Defenders and Explorers (general scepticism as opposed to trust with regard to people, the preference among defenders for clear and established social, cultural and religious rules, group allocations and hierarchies) as prioritizing either caution, stability and clear hierarchy (= security), or openness, change and social permeability (= exploration).

But, if the needs tend to have long-term stability and people have always differed with regard to them, then why has identity conflict hardened into a societal cleavage, and why has the conflict become polarized, as can be seen, for example, in the way that one group devalues, delegitimizes and vilifies the other?

The hardening of identity conflict in the context of globalization

In our view, we cannot understand the hardening of identity conflict into a societal cleavage without pointing to the effects of globalization (understood as the increasing mobility of people and goods across national borders). Increasing transnational cooperation has led to different developments central to the hardening of identity conflict. First, globalization has led to an increase in legal and illegal migration, with people therefore being increasingly confronted with "strangers". Second, in the wake of globalizing tendencies, nation states are increasingly ceding power to higher-level international institutions. Third, crises that may have previously been confined to one country (or a few) are increasingly becoming global crises in the globalized context, as we can see from the financial crisis, the so-called migration crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

These developments make questions of belonging and perceptions of threat increasingly important. The differences in needs that exist in every society thus become a salient and relevant topic of political debates, with Explorers and Defenders participating in these debates and expressing their basic needs in them. Identity conflict is thus first and foremost the consequence of a cultural backlash against globalization and modernization (Norris and Inglehart 2019), and therefore not surprisingly overlaps substantively with the conflicts between globalization winners and globalization losers (Helbling and Jungkunz 2020; Teney et al. 2014), between cosmopolitans and communitarians (Koopmans and Zürn 2020), and between "somewheres" and "anywheres" (Goodhart 2017).

That the social and political impact of identity conflict has resulted in a societal cleavage is therefore due to the interaction between basic individual needs and social developments. But what is the

source of the polarization between the two groups involved in this conflict? What explains the hardening of this conflict, one that seems to differ from the character of other, more economically framed, lines of conflict?

Identity conflict and its polarization of social groups

For us, identity conflict is indeed marked by a specific quality of conflict, which is rooted in the long-term and relatively stable needs of the individual either for security or for openness. Unlike the interests of different groups in economic conflicts, for example, identity, which is based on fundamental needs, is difficult to question and thus largely closed to negotiation (Willems 2016). These ideas of identity are largely closed to negotiation because they result from the individual's fundamental and largely non-negotiable needs, and from their different weighting in individuals. This is especially true when the conflicting ideas of identity have a religious hue (Huntington 1996; Willems 2016).¹⁴

If, for example, fundamentalist principles that are treated as unquestionable come into play, then the different groups are more likely to meet in an atmosphere of irreconcilability, and the conflict is more likely to escalate. Helbling and Jungkunz (2020) show that both the winners of globalization (who are more open to ethnic minorities) and its losers (who are more prejudiced against these groups) tend to avoid direct contact with one another in everyday life: "Winners and losers of globalization do not only vote for different parties that support or oppose denationalization processes; they also try to avoid each other in daily life. It seems that the hostile political rhetoric of opposing parties left its imprint on ordinary citizens" (Helbling and Jungkunz 2020: 1204). And where these two groups do interact, the result is often mutual debasement and the intensification of conflict.

In summary, we thus understand the emergence of a new line of conflict based on identity as resulting from the different basic needs of individuals, needs that the social developments of globalization emphasize and make relevant. The specific quality of the new cleavage therefore lies in the fact that the unquestionability of these needs seems inevitably to polarize the conflict. Embedding our findings in the research literature yields the following implications.

Implication 1: The polarization of social groups through identity conflict is due to the mutual demarcation and devaluation by Defenders and Explorers.

Identity conflict hardens in the public debate primarily because each of the two groups involved in the conflict distinguishes itself from the other side, and denounces and disparages its counterpart, thereby challenging the other side to react in a similar manner. Thus, on the one hand, Defenders radicalize their homogenizing ideas of nation, nationality and society, and in doing so increasingly disregard the need for social change in the course of modernization and justified demands for equal rights for minorities. They therefore increasingly transform their need for security into an aggressive attitude towards foreigners and strangers, and towards the group of Explorers. Explorers then in turn increasingly perceive Defenders as being motivated by xenophobia. On the other, Explorers with increasing vehemence focus on implementing social changes that are in line with their own ideas of maximum openness and diversity. In doing so, they give less and less consideration to the fact that these demands for change sometimes play only a subordinate role in the reality of life of other groups in the population and/or can be understood as a fundamental rejection of concepts of life based on security and stability. The need for exploration and change among Explorers thus turns

¹⁴ See, for example, the reactions to the article by Wolfgang Thierse in the FAZ from 22 February 2021, and to Sahra Wagenknecht and her book *Die Selbstgerechten* (2021).

increasingly into an annoyed and arrogant attitude, which only provokes the other side all the more and thus intensifies the conflict.

As a result, there is no longer mutual recognition between security-oriented people who help defend existing structures of the community, and change-oriented people who help discover new possibilities open to the community. Instead of this difference, which is at its core beneficial for a society, there is now a non-negotiable conflict between Defenders (whom Explorers perceive as aggressive and backward xenophobes) and Explorers (whom Defenders perceive as arrogant missionaries divorced from the realities of life).

Implication 2: Political reactions so far have further polarized the groups on account of the identity conflict.

Our results have shown that the political context plays a decisive role in the social and political consequences of identity conflict. In Poland, for example, where the Defenders' partly radicalized positions are taken up and may be even stimulated by the Polish government, Defenders see themselves as less marginalized than Explorers, and are therefore also clearly more satisfied with democracy and the political actors in their own country.

Nevertheless, the Polish model is of course not an answer to the polarization of social groups through identity conflict. In Poland, as in other countries such as Hungary and the USA under Trump, adopting the extreme positions of Defenders does not and did not solve their problems. They may for the moment feel less marginalized and more satisfied with the government, but the consequences of globalization – such as increasing international openness – and the problems of insecurity and perceptions of threat that they see as resulting from globalization remain. At the same time, Explorers now feel marginalized by such politics, meaning that there is no improvement in the perceived representation of the population as a whole, and identity conflict becomes even more polarized.

The political reactions of liberal governments and parties in other parts of the Global North have, however, also not led to a defusing of the social conflict over identity issues. Demands by Explorers for social change, especially for equal rights for minorities and the dismantling of discrimination, have largely been adopted. However, insufficient account was taken of the fact that some of the positions of Explorers are far removed from the reality of life of large parts of the population. The lack of alternatives with which changes have been justified and the devaluation of opposing views as uneducated and requiring correction have further strengthened the perception among Defenders that they are socially marginalized and lack political representation.

Implication 3: Differences in needs between Explorers and Defenders must be taken seriously, without accepting or adopting polarized positions. At the political level, identity conflict can be moderated by accepting and representing the core needs of both Explorers and Defenders. Neither the positions already polarized by the conflict should be adopted, nor one of the two sides devalued.

For us, the first goal in societal and political dialogue should therefore be to return this polarizing conflict that eludes negotiation to the differences in individual and psychological needs. These differences cannot and should not be dissolved; rather, they should be seen as resources that can make a society stronger.

This requires taking the different needs seriously, which for us means being open to the underlying arguments of both groups. It is important here to reduce the (sometimes very divergent) demands of both groups to their functional core, i.e. to explore which positions are essential and indispensable for satisfying the needs of both groups, and which positions are negotiable. Only by doing so can we find a basis for compromises between the two groups that currently seems impossible.

Political actors, and in particular the political parties, have an important role to play here. In our view, it is of central importance that the different political actors in their totality ensure that all needs are really represented, and that they initiate a discussion in which the needs of the other camp are neither devalued nor treated as something that should be fundamentally rejected. Only by doing so will a space open up in which dialogue between the two camps can develop at the level of ordinary people.

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Appendix

Table A 2.1: Description of variables and indices

Variable	Description	Question/Item(s)	Scale	Characteristics
Variables used to create the groups <i>Explorers</i> and <i>Defenders</i>				
Ethno-religious concept of belonging*	Average approval of the principle of ethno-religious belonging (4 items)	<p>“Some people think that the following things are important to be a real German. Others think that they are not important. How do you rate these things? In your opinion, to be a real German, is it very important, quite important, not very important, or not important at all that a person ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has been born in Germany? - has lived in Germany for most of her life? - is a Christian? - has German ancestors?” 	0 - not important at all 1 - not very important 2 - quite important 3 - very important	<= 1: low >1 and <= 2: medium >2: high
Threat from Muslims	Average feeling of threat from Muslims (6 items)	<p>“Muslims threaten our way of life and our values in Germany.”</p> <p>“The values and beliefs of Muslims are not compatible with the general values and beliefs in Germany.”</p> <p>“The costs of Muslim integration programs put a strain on Germany.”</p> <p>“Muslims threaten Germany’s economic situation.”</p> <p>“The Muslims living here threaten public safety in</p>	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	<= 1.5: low >= 3.5: high

		Germany.” “Because of Muslims there are more acts of violence in Germany.”		
Threat from refugees	Average feeling of threat from refugees (3 items)	“The refugees’ values and beliefs are not compatible with those of Germans.” “Refugees threaten Germany’s economic situation.” “Refugees threaten public safety in Germany.”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	<= 1.5: low >= 3.5: high
Economic marginalization	Average perception of economic marginalization (2 items)	“The work of people like me is not recognized enough in society.” “No matter how hard we work, people like me are not appreciated.”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	>=5: high
Political marginalization	Average perception of political marginalization (2 items)	“The problems of people like me are unimportant to most politicians.” “Most politicians do not care what people like me think.”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	>=5: high
Cultural marginalization	Average perception of cultural marginalization (2 items)	“The values of people like me are becoming less and less important in society.” “The customs, traditions and manners of people like me are less and less appreciated.”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	>=5: high
Satisfaction with democracy	Satisfaction with democracy in one’s own country	“All in all, I am satisfied with how democracy works in [country].”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	>= 5: high
Trust in government/parliament*	Average trust in government and parliament (2 items)	“For the following public institutions or groups of people, please indicate how much you personally trust each of them. - Bundestag - federal government”	0 - do not trust at all to 10 - trust completely	> 5: high
Trust in EU	Trust in the EU	“For the following public institutions or groups of	0 - do not trust at all	> 5: high

		people, please indicate how much you personally trust each of them. - the EU”	to 10 - trust completely	
Variables used in Chapters 4 to 6				
Civil-cultural concept of belonging*	Average approval of the principle of civil-cultural belonging (3 items)	“Some people think that the following things are important to be a real German. Others think that they are not important. How do you rate these things? In your opinion, to be a real German, is it very important, quite important, not very important, or not important at all that a person ... - is able to speak German? - respects the political institutions and laws in Germany? - feels like a German?”	0 - not important at all 1 - not very important 2 - quite important 3 - very important	
Age	Age in years			
Education*	Highest level of education attained	“Please indicate below the highest educational qualification that you have obtained” - country-specific classification according to ISCED 2011	0 - Elementary education (pre-school education until the start of basic school education/school completed without primary school leaving certificate) 1 - Primary education (basic literacy and numeracy) 2 - Secondary level I (elementary/secondary school leaving certificate, internship, pre-vocational training year) 3 - Secondary level II (higher education entrance qualification, completed apprenticeship, college) 4 - Post-secondary non-tertiary sector (<i>Fachoberschule, Technische Oberschule, Berufsfachschule, Abendschule, Duales System</i>) 5 - Short tertiary education programme (technical/vocational	0-2: low 6-8: high

			college, administrative college, technical college) 6 - Bachelor's degree or equivalent educational programme (state-certified technician, master craftsperson's certificate, diploma from a university of applied sciences) 7 - Master's degree or equivalent educational programme (Diploma University) 8 - Doctorate (PhD)	
Residential area	Respondent's area of residence	"Would you say that you live in a rural area, i.e. in a village, in a small or medium-sized town, or in a large city?"	1 - rural area 2 - small or medium-sized town 3 - large city	
Subjective social status	Self-positioning on an imagined social ladder	"Imagine an 11-step ladder that depicts the social positions of the population in [country]. Where would you place yourself and your own family on this ladder if 0 means 'at the bottom' and 10, 'at the top'?"	0 - at the bottom 10 - at the top	0-4: low
Fair share (relative deprivation)	Respondent's assessment of whether he/she receives her fair share	"Compared to how others live here in [country]: Do you think that you receive your fair share, more than your fair share, a little less than your fair share, or much less than your fair share?"	1 - more than fair share 2 - fair share 3 - a little less 4 - much less	3-4: less than fair share
Economic situation of the country	Respondent's assessment of the economic situation of the country	"How do you currently assess the economic situation in [country] on a scale from 1 = very bad to 6 = very good?"	1 - very bad to 6 - very good	1-2: bad
Social support	Average perception of social support (2 items)	"There are people who really like me." "I have people that I can always rely on."	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	1-3: little
Contact with Muslims	Frequency of contact with Muslims	"If you now think of your personal contact with Muslims, how often do you have contact with this group on a scale from 1 = 'no contact' to 6 = 'very frequent contact'?"	1 - no contact to 6 - very frequent contact	1-2: little
Attachment to home vs.	Respondent's feeling of	"People differ in terms of where they feel at home.	1 - in a specific place	1-2: attachment to

cosmopolitanism	where he/she is at home	Some people like to travel the world and feel at home everywhere. Others prefer their familiar surroundings, and therefore feel at home in a specific place. How about you, where do you feel at home on a scale from 1 = in a specific place to 6 = in the world?"	to 6 - in the world	home
National pride		"Would you say that you are very proud, quite proud, not very proud, or not proud at all to be German?"	1 - very proud 2 - quite proud 3 - not very proud 4 - not proud at all	1: high
General trust	Trust in people in general	"In general, do you think that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be careful enough when dealing with other people?"	1 - can't be careful enough to 6 - most people can be trusted	1-2: little
Internal locus of control		"If I put my mind to it, I will succeed."	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	1-3: weak
Right-wing authoritarianism	Average agreement with right-wing authoritarian principles (3 items)	"Troublemakers should be made to feel that they are not welcome in society." "People should leave important decisions in society to their leaders." "Well-established behaviour should not be questioned."	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	5-6: high
Social dominance orientation	Average agreement with social dominance orientations (2 items)	"An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom." "We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups." (reverse coded)	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	4-6: high
Religious affiliation*	Affiliation/belonging to a Christian church or religious community	"To which denomination or religious community do you belong to?"	1 - the Roman Catholic Church 2 - the Protestant Church 3 - a different Christian community 4 - Islam 5 - Judaism 6 - a different non-Christian community 6 - no religion/denomination	1-3: Christian

Church attendance	Frequency of church attendance	“How often do you attend church services [the mosque/Cem House/synagogue]?”	1 - at least once a week 2 - 1 to 3 times a month 3 - several times a year 4 - less frequently 5 - never	1-2: regular
Religiosity	Respondent's assessment of her own religiosity	“How religious do you consider yourself to be?”	1 - not religious at all to 6 - deeply religious	4-6: high
Spirituality	Respondent's assessment of her own spirituality	“Regardless of whether you consider yourself religious: How spiritual do you consider yourself to be?”	1 - not spiritual at all to 6 - deeply spiritual	4-6: high
Religious fundamentalism	Average approval of fundamentalist principles (3 items)	“To what extent do you agree with the following statements? - There is only one true religion. - Observing the commandments of my religion is more important to me than the laws of the country in which I live. - Only Christianity can solve the problems of our time.”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	4-6: high
Approval of democracy as an idea	Approval of the idea of democracy	“Democracy is a good form of government.”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	
Preference for authoritarian leader	Approval of the need for a strong leader	“There should be a strong leader who does not have to worry about parliament and elections.”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	
Approval of liberal democracy	Approval of the concept of liberal democracy (3 items)	“Please tell me on a scale from 1 = not important at all to 6 = very important, how important you think it is for democracy in general that ... - the rights of minorities are protected? - the media have the right to criticize the government? - the courts are able to stop the government acting beyond its authority?”	1 - not important at all to 6 - very important	

Approval of direct democracy	Approval of the concept of direct democracy	“Please tell me on a scale from 1 = not important at all to 6 = very important, how important you think it is for democracy in general that ... - citizens have the final say on the most important political issues by voting on them directly in referendums?”	1 - not important at all to 6 - very important	
Populism	Average approval of populist positions (2 items)	“The country is ruled by a few large interest groups looking out for themselves.” “The will of the people should be decisive in this country’s politics.”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	
Likelihood of voting for a populist party	Likelihood of voting for a populist party	“If national elections were to be held now, and you had to choose between the following parties, which one would you vote for?”	for D: 3 - AfD for F: 3 - Le Rassemblement National for PL: 1 - PiS for S: 3 Sverigedemokraterna	
Strength of conspiracy mentality	Approval of generalized conspiracy theory	“There are many important things happening in the world that are controlled by influential groups without the public’s knowledge.”	1 - totally disagree to 6 - totally agree	

*country-specific question: the table shows the wording from the German questionnaire