**European Identity: States, nations and citizens**

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**Introduction**

A large literature now examines ‘European identities’, or employs the concept of ‘identities’ in analysis of the EU. This is something which could not be said of earlier phases in EU studies (Keeler, 2005, p. 571),[[1]](#endnote-1) even if some of the founding fathers of EU studies address it in their work (Haas, 1958, 1964; Deutsch, 1953, 1957). Ernst Hass, for instance, defined European integration as a process that involved a ‘shift of loyalties’ by ‘political actors in several distinct national settings’ to a ‘new political centre’ to a new political centre (1958, 16), while Deutsch includes a ‘sense of community’ in his conception of integration (for further discussion see Risse, 2005). Growing academic interest in the study of identities in Europe responds to what Rosamond (2007) calls ‘external’ and ‘internal’ drivers. Academic interest in the topic is a response to changes ‘on the ground’, or ‘external’ drivers. The post-cold war, post-Maastricht and even post-‘war on terror’ context has been one in which European integration and certain kinds of identity polemics have become more contentious. This has raised questions about the relationship between identity, on the one hand, and the legitimacy of EU institutions, prospects for meaningful democracy beyond the state and the very future of the EU on the other. Moreover, large scale and continuing enlargement of the EU since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the prospect of Turkish membership and growing contestation over the coexistence of Christian, Islamic and secular traditions in European societies have increased cultural diversity in the EU and the salience of debates on identity. However, academic interest in European identities also reflects the evolution of theoretical debates on the EU, or ‘internal drivers’. It is no coincidence that increasing attention to issues of identity coincide with the onset of what Weiner and Diez (2009) describe as the second ‘analysing governance’ and third ‘constructing the EU’ phase of theory building, which focus more attention on issues of polity and the social context of European integration.

The breadth of research questions posed and methodological approaches employed in the study of European identities is marked. It draws together many subfields, including the study of democracy and citizenship in the EU (Habermas, 2005, 2006 ; Castiglione, 2009), Europeanisation (Harmsen and Wilson, 2000; Risse, 2010) EU foreign policy (Manners, 2002; Katzenstein, 1997), Euroscepticism (Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Taggart and Szcerbiak, 2008), migration (Favell, 2009) and territorial politics (Keating, 2001; Bourne, 2003, 2008). It exhibits a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and approaches, including those drawn from political philosophy, politics, international relations, history, anthropology and social psychology (see, for example, edited collections by Herrmann, Risse and Brewer, 2004 and Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009). Research on European identities is thus an excellent illustration of the essentially multidisciplinary nature of EU studies (Cini, 2006; Rosamond, 2007).

In this chapter I examine research methods employed to address a broad but interrelated set of research questions examining the relationship between identification - whether at mass or elite, member state or substate levels - and processes of European integration. After a brief discussion on the concept of identity, I begin with an examination of key themes in quantitative approaches to the study of European integration, which mostly focus on the impact of identities on support for the EU. I then examine methods employed in the study of a question of particular interest to those employing qualitative approaches, namely the impact of the EU on identification patterns in Europe. Here I single out the work of authors employing a range of methods, data and modes of analysis to illustrate the diversity of approaches. Before turning to consider possible directions for future research, I then turn to examine comparative and case study research designs including that of my own research on European integration and territorial politics within member states with important identity dimensions.

**European identities**

Research on European identity underlines individuals’ ‘multiple identities’, although such identities may nevertheless relate to each other in different ways (Herman and Brewer, 2004, p. 8; Risse, 2004, p. 248; Risse 2010, p. 23-25). Multiple identities and loyalties may be ‘nested’, ‘cross cutting’, or ‘separate’ (Hermann and Brewer, 2004, p. 8) or similar to a ‘marble cake’ (Risse, 2004, p. 251; Risse 2010, p. 25). ‘Nested’ identities can be ‘conceived as concentric circles or Russian Matruska dolls, one inside the next…[so that] everyone in a smaller community is also a member of a larger community (Herrmann and Brewer, 2004, p. 8). Regional identity may be nested in a national identity that is in turn nested in a transnational, or European, identity. For ‘cross cutting’ identities, ‘some, but not all, members of one group identity are also members of another identity group’ (ibid). Racial identities, for instance, may cross cut local and national identities. In contrast, identities are ‘separate’ when ‘the different groups that a person belongs to are distinct from one another, with essentially non overlapping membership’ (ibid). In a ‘marble cake’ model of multiple identities, the various components of an individual’s identity cannot be neatly separated on different levels, but rather ‘influence each other, mesh and blend into each other’ (Risse, 2004, p. 252; Risse 2010, p. 25). As such, an individual’s self-understanding as a German may inherently contain aspects of Europeanness (ibid).

One further point about the concept of European identity must be made. There is a tendency among those who work on European integration to conflate identification with ‘Europe’ and identification with the ‘EU’. This is empirically problematic insofar as an individual may feel European and yet feel no attachment to the EU. It also reflects the strong interest of many contemporary scholars in political identities manifest as loyalty or support for EU governance (rather than cultural conceptions of European identity, for instance). Nevertheless, the tendency to conflate European and EU identities has been defended as a reflection of the EU’s important role – or as Risse puts it, ‘identity hegemony’ – in defining what it means to belong to Europe (Risse, 2004, p. 255).

**Identity and support for the EU**

As a whole, research on European identity has employed methodological approaches embracing positivistic and interpretative epistemological assumptions about what constitutes knowledge in the social sciences, qualitative and quantitative methods and within each of these categories a striking range of research designs. Relevant quantitative approaches principally examine the impact of European identity on support for European integration (for example, McLaren, 2002, Carey, 2002, Hooghe and Marks 2004, 2005, de Vries and van Kersbergen, 2007). This research question emerged from a long standing interest in explaining variation in attitudes towards European integration, but which until the late 1990s tended to focus on variables tapping into utilitarian and economic consequences of integration at the expense of identification (Gabel 1998, Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993, but see also Inglehardt, 1970 on ‘cognitive mobilisation’, Inglehardt *et al,* 1991 on ‘political values’ and Franklin *et al,* 1995 on ‘support for government’).

In different ways, more recent studies have shown that European identity matters in explanations of support for the EU. McLaren, for instance, argues that ‘while self-interest plays an important role in shaping attitudes towards the EU’, attitudes are also ‘based in great part on a general hostility to other cultures’ (2002, p. 564). In the research, the independent variable ‘perceived cultural threat’ is operationalized by firstly distinguishing between threats to the resources of an ethnic or national groups (realistic threat) and threats that other groups pose to the groups’ culture and way of life (ibid, p. 558). Measures of perceived cultural threat were derived from Eurobarometer questions asking respondents whether they thought ‘minority groups’ abused the system of social benefits or whether their religious practices threatened the way of life of the respondent’s community (ibid, p. 558).

Hooghe and Marks also argue that ‘citizens take economic consequences of the market into account both for themselves and for their countries [as well as] their communal identities and their views towards foreigners and foreign culture’ (2005, p. 436-7). Citizens who conceive their identities as exclusive of other identities are likely to be considerably more Eurosceptic than those who conceive of their national identity more inclusively to include some degree of identification with Europe (ibid, 433). Like various other scholars (eg. Risse, 2010, p. 63-86), Hooghe and Marks also find that national identities can both reinforce and undermine support for European integration, but Hooghe and Marks 2005 turn to political cues to explain variation: That is, ‘the more national elites are divided [on questions of European integration], the more citizens will be cued to oppose integration, especially citizens who see themselves as exclusively national’ (2005, p. 419). Identity variables have been operationalized using various Eurobarometer survey questions focusing on the degrees of ‘national attachment’, the degree to which respondents held ‘exclusive national identities’ and their acceptance of cultural diversity in an enlarging EU (2004, p. 419).

Quantitative methods have been employed to address a variety of related questions about identity. Fligstein, for instance, asks why some people across Europe are likely to adopt a European identity while others are not (2009, p. 113). Using Eurobarometer data on national and European identification ‘in the near future’, Fligstein shows that those who identify with Europe tend to be more educated, have higher incomes, be owners, managers, professionals, or white collar workers, young, male and left-wing politically (2009, p. 140-1). Exploring Deutsch’s argument that positive interaction produces common identity, Fligstein also examines social interaction indicators from Eurobarometer data, which show that European identifiers share a similar profile to those most likely to speak second languages and travel to another European country (2009, p. 142-5). Moreover, data on the nature of Europe-wide associations formed between 1959-1993, suggested ‘that educated and the middle and upper classes have taken the opportunity afforded by work and pleasure to create new [Europe-wide] patterns of association.’ This positive social interaction, Fligstein argues, has ‘produced a positive European identity and support for the EU project’ among the privileged few, while for the vast majority of the population, who interact infrequently, the national narrative still dominates (ibid, p. 155).

Bruter (2003) examined the effect of institutional symbols like the EU flag and passport and news conveyed by the mass media on European identities. Using experimental methods Bruter measured responses of 212 participants from three countries (France, Britain and the Netherlands) to survey questions measuring ‘civic’ and ‘cultural’ conceptions of European identity posed before and after they were exposed to an image of an EU symbol and received fake ‘good’ or ‘bad’ news about the EU. Bruter argued that this data showed that ‘persistent good news on Europe – its achievements and successes – modifies citizens’ perception of unification processes and in turn clearly influences their likelihood of identifying with Europe’ and visa-versa (ibid, p. 1165). Consistent exposure to symbols of European integration ‘reinforces a citizen’s sense of identification with Europe’ (p. 1166) (for other examples of experimental approaches see Castrano, Yzerby and Bourguignon 2003 and Cram’s chapter in this book).

As hinted above, quantitative data on identities in Europe is almost always drawn from Eurobarometer surveys, although this may be combined with other data. The most frequently used questions are:

* In the near future, will you think of yourself as a) European only, b) European and nationality, c) nationality and d) European, nationality only;
* People may feel different degrees of attachment to their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell me how attached you feel to a) your city/town/village; b) your region, c) our country and d) Europe

However, many argue, including those who use it, that Eurobarometer data on European identity is ‘far from perfect’ (Hooghe and Marks, 2005, p. 433). Critiques range from technical problems, such as an insufficient number of response categories for some variables (Gabel, 1998); through the lack of certain types of data, such as EU-wide panel data (Carey, 2002, p. 408); to more fundamental problems of internal validity. The later claim includes the identification of problems regarding questions on ‘attachment’ to territory, which are likely to be interpreted differently by different people (Carey, 2002, p. 405), and those about ‘feeling European’, which may mean totally different things in terms of both the intensity of feeling they describe and the imaged community they refer to (Risse, 2004, p. 9; Bruter, 2003, p. 1154). Others suggest that identity labels are themselves more fluid than assumed in surveys, or that individuals may not hold consistent and fixed conceptions of identity (Meinhof, 2004, p. 220), or that ‘reports of identity with Europe’ may be ‘simply artifacts of survey methods’ (Herrmann and Brewer, 2004, p. 5; Meinhof, 2004, p. 227, 241). There is also a more fundamental question about whether the very act of repeatedly asking respondents about identification with Europe, the dissemination and public interpretation of findings – and indeed broader academic debates about European identities – plays some part in the construction of new conceptions of identity in Europe.

**The European Union and patterns of identification in Europe**

Another major theme of research on European identity focuses on the impact of the EU’s political institutions and policies on people’s beliefs about who they are and what communities they belong to; or in other words, this is a research topic where European identity is seen as an ‘dependent variable’ (Risse 2004, p. 248). This has been a major preoccupation of many of those employing qualitative research designs although not exclusively so (see Fligstein 2009 and Bruter, 2003 discussed above).

Laffan (2004) for instance, explores the identity building capacity of the EU and its institutions through analysis of treaty texts, organisational structures and secondary literature on role perceptions of EU elites (eg. Egeberg 1996, 1999; Trondal 2001). From these sources she deduces a series of ‘plausible hypotheses’ addressing the creation of new EU-specific roles and the impact of these roles on the identities of individual elite actors in several institutional case studies (Laffan 2004, p. 84). Laffan argues that the EU has led to ‘the creation of new supranational roles that carry with them Europe-wide responsibilities’ (ibid, p. 96): The ‘logic of appropriateness’ in the supranational institutions is to serve the union as a whole’ whereas ‘in the representative institutions, notably the European Council, the participants face the pressure of ‘double hating’, of representing state preferences while at the same time fashioning collective agreement’ (ibid, p. 76).

Wodak (2004) employs a socio-linguistic and discourse analytical perspective to explore identification among European elites. The approach aims to capture the fluid nature of identities, focusing not so much on static evaluations of what people are or what identities they have, as whether, when and how identities are used (ibid, p. 99). Using mixed methods, Wodak first conducts a qualitative content analysis of 45 semi-structured interviews with MEPs, Commission officials, and Council delegates focusing on whether they felt they were European and if so what the characteristics of being European were (ibid, p. 101). This was followed by a detailed analysis of narratives ‘revealing orientations to particular constructions of self’; participant dialectics or pronominal reference, which focuses on use of ‘I’ and ‘we’ to attribute self-identification with a group; and rhetorical and argumentational strategies (ibid, p. 104). Wodak’s analysis showed Commission officials orienting fairly strongly with their organisational or ‘Commission’ identities more consistently than MEPs (ibid, p. 122-3). In contrast ‘specifically national identities were regularly oriented to by MEPs, often as a way of framing a particular point of view or interpretation of a certain issue…as resources in talk’ (ibid, p. 123). Moreover, all kinds of interviewees offered similar types of definitions of Europeanness as an historical and cultural, instrumental, future oriented and/or social model-based identity, with the latter often used as a means of distinguishing Europe from ‘others’ like the US and Japan (ibid).

Meinhof (2004) focuses on identity construction observed in every day life narratives of families who live on either side of world war two and cold war ‘faultline borders’ from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea, including the now dissolved East-West German border (ibid, p. 215). She employs ethnographic semi-structured interviews data, using indirect methods of questioning and photographic images to permit ‘informants’ to spontaneously articulate negative and positive markers of identity about themselves and cross-border neighbours. Discourse analysis of ‘long stretches of talk’ elicited from interviews focused on linguistic strategies, such as grammatical structure, wordplay and argumentative chains, to sketch the negative images of cross-border neighbours in which the most prevalent emotional response is one of dislike, coupled with fear and disgust. In contrast discourse analysis revealed contrasting ‘in group’ constructions which were multilayered and variable between different individuals ranging from those emphasising weak national identifications, strong transnational Western identities, local and regional identities (ibid, p. 240-1). Suggesting European identities have low salience, Meinhof observes that Europe or the EU did not feature in the narratives even when informants were shown pictures that foregrounded EU-related images (ibid, p. 244).

Favell (2009) examines the impact of immigration in Europe on identity, including the impact of free movement of persons in the EU, using ethnographic studies of would-be cosmopolitans living ‘forms of Europeanised life, [in] highly Europeanised spaces in cities’ like London, Amsterdam, Brussels, Berlin and Barcelona. While these so-called ‘Eurostars’ were the most likely to ‘feel and make a post-national/cosmopolitan identity’, the movers face surprising barriers blocking their aspirations, which makes living a ‘post-national life’ a rather difficult proposition in the EU today (ibid, p. 180-1).

Using a range of methods, Holmes (2009) employs discourse analysis, ethnographic studies (including those conducted by others) and documentary sources to uncover ‘underlying dynamics of identify formation’ at a time when, he argues, Europeans must negotiate ‘between liberal and illiberal registers of consciousness’ and when ‘shifting configurations of consciousness typically do not succumb to a single, stable or unambiguous expression’ (2009, p. 52). Holmes examines a series of ‘paradigmatic’ cases where Europeans conduct ‘experiments with identity’ as a response to varying problems emerging in the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty (2009, p. 78). The case studies are eclectic, including: an interpretation of the place of Europe in the integralism of the former French far-right leader Jean Marie Le Pen; Tony Blair’s conception of multicultural Britain in the wake of terrorist attacks in London in July 2005; reflections on finding of ethnographic studies on the consequences of EU directives on the lives of a ‘community of practice’, or herders in the Alpine valleys of Lombardy; and observations of transEuropean experiences, elicited through interviews and newspaper reports describing a rock concert, with ‘dissonant style’, provocative fashions and symbols associated with neo-Nazi groups.

In the work so far, there is a marked contrast in terms of research ambition between most of those who employ quantitative and qualitative methods. Those employing quantitative methods adopt a positivist epistemology and aim to predict and explain mass behaviour concerning the EU (see for example, McLaren, 2002, p. 563-4; Carey 2002, p. 388; Gabel 1998, p. 334-5). In contrast, those employing quantitative approaches are more modest in claims about their research, particularly their external validity, or generalizability beyond the cases examined. Laffan, for instance, seeks to establish ‘plausible hypotheses’ concerning the identity building capacity of each European Union institution (2004, p. 85). Wodak claims her research provides a ‘plausible interpretation’ for some of the similarities and differences in *orientations to* and *constructions of* identities by the individuals in EU organisations studied (2004, p. 125). Similarly, Holmes claims to have developed ‘analytical perspectives’ on European identities providing ‘glimpses of a volatile and still rather occult political landscape taking shape across all of the member states of the EU’, (2009, p. 78-79). In many cases, these differences of research ambition are grounded on varying ontologies of social identity, with quantitative approaches tending to see identities as more coherent entities measurable through survey methods, while qualitative approaches, tend to conceive of identities as too complex, fluid and contradictory to measure using standard cross-sectional survey methods like Eurobarometer.

**Comparative and case study research designs**

Comparative research designs have been fruitfully employed to examine European identity. One of the best illustrations of what this approach can yield is Diez Medrano’s (2003) work, which seeks to explain the stability of state preferences regarding European integration in Germany, Spain and the UK. Medrano’s approach examines state preferences with reference to elite and citizen attitudes on the EU and how these are shaped by the histories and cultures of countries and regions in which they live. Medrano employs a wide range of sources develop his argument, including interviews, newspapers, novels, school textbooks and public addresses by heads of state, and various analytical tools ranging from frame analysis to statistical regression. He identifies varying country or region specific frames of European integration that resonate with salient cultural preoccupations, national self-images and distinctive interpretations of history.

Thomas Risse employs a similar approach, focusing on elite discourse in Germany, France, the UK, Spain and Poland ‘to demonstrate how national identities are Europeanised or not through communicative practices’ (2010, 10, see also Risse, 2002). Using qualitative content analysis of parliamentary debates in France, Germany and Britain and secondary literature on Spain, and Poland, Risse demonstrates how ‘Europe blends into the narratives of national identities in various ways and relates to a particular country’s history and culture’ (ibid). However he also shows how an identity construction of ‘modern Europe’ – where Europe and the EU stand for economic and political modernisation and for liberal and democratic values – dominates in Spain and Germany, while an identity construction of ‘nationalist Europe’ – an exclusionary and anti-globalist ‘fortress EU – that also protects the national sovereignty and cultural heritage of the member states – has emerged as a countervision in France and Poland, especially among rightwing and Eurosceptical parties (Risse, 2010, 85)

The main advantage of this approach is that it permits a more detailed analysis of variation in patterns of identification among the member states and permits an appreciation of national and subnational variables which may filter and shape conceptions and experiences of what it means to be European.

***Identity Politics, Conflict and Cooperation***

A related theme addresses European integration and the *politics* of identity within states and across state borders. The EU's success as a peacemaker between France and Germany has inspired many to query whether the EU may bring peace to other conflict zones in Europe such as Cyprus and Northern Ireland (Diez 2000; Brewin 2000; Kennedy 2000; Tannam 1997). While some have argued that the EU's impact on the resolution of conflict has been insignificant (Kennedy 2001), or that the EU can aggravate conflicts over territory (Diez 2001, Tocci 2002), others have argued that the EU's emphasis on shared rather than exclusively held sovereignty, its emphasis on breaking down state borders and the promotion of multiple identities, may render conflict over sovereignty and statehood less salient (Diez, 2000; McCall, 1998; Keating and McGarry, 2001; Keating 2001).

Furthermore, EU membership affects the functioning of regional institutions that sit at the core of commitments to preserve and accommodate territorial diversity and may generate new types of relationships (even tensions) between regional and central authorities (Marks, Hooghe and Blank, 1996; Bourne 2003 and 2008; Börzel 2002).

These research topics, like others discussed above, employ a variety of research methods and approaches, ranging from analysis of the identity discourse of regional politicians and state elites (Heywood, 2006) to quantitative analysis (Díez Madrano and Gutiérrez, 2001). Nevertheless, it is a topic where cross-region comparisons and detail-rich, single region case studies predominate (Bourne 2006, Keating and McGarry 2001; Jeffery 2000; Börzel 2002; Kerremans and Beyers 1996, Tocci 2002, Diez 2000, Brewin 2000). In order to illustrate the challenges and opportunities posed by the use of case studies to examine identity politics, I now turn to discuss my own research on the *EU and Accommodation of Basque Politics in Spain* (2008, see also Bourne 2003, Bourne 2004, Bourne 2006).

The research addresses two principal research questions: Does European integration alter the way Basque institutions of self-government exercise political power? Has Spain’s EU membership been a source of conflict or provided new incentives for cooperation between Basque and central governments? These questions were addressed using two different but complementary methods: an institutional analysis, which focused on the evolving distribution of power between regional, central government and EU institutions; and a ‘process tracing’ study examining which kinds of alliances best helped Basque authorities influence EU policies. Alliance strategies were explored in two examples of Basque government efforts to influence EU policy, namely an effort to find EU support for a cross border high speed train link from Madrid via the Basque Country to France and a campaign to defend politically sensitive Basque taxation prerogatives challenged in the context of EU competition rules.

Single case studies are conventionally criticised for their inability to produce findings that can be generalised to other cases. Underpinning this criticism is an inductive logic in which theory emerges in the form of law-like statements generated from the observation of patterns (similarities and differences) between cases or subjects (Landmann, 2008). Nevertheless, single case studies (and small ‘n’ comparisons) may nevertheless contribute to theory building in other ways. For instance, I adopted a single case study as a response to two characteristics of the existing literature. In the first place, existing EU scholarship did not provide a simple answer to questions about the EU’s impact on regional power. There were arguments that European integration might empower regions, disempower them or have ‘no effect’ (See Bourne 2003 and Bourne 2008 for further details). In order to address this ambiguity I devised a new theoretical framework and employed a single case study to explore the plausibility of this new framework. Or, in other words, my study on the Basque Country constituted a first case study testing a new theory which could be used in future comparative studies. Secondly, many of the questions I addressed had been examined, at least in part, in other single or small case regional or country studies, which meant my research findings were ‘transferable’, a criteria for evaluating qualitative research developed by Cuba and Lincoln, 1985, (cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 391-2), which emphasises the utility of ‘thick description’ for researchers working in other milieu.

Case selection was driven by the fact that even though other research on the relationship between the EU and territorial politics was dominated by regional case studies, few had paid attention to the Basque case. Moreover, certain features of the Basque case made it particularly suitable for research on issues of identity politics in the EU. In Spain, the post-Franco devolution settlement and recreation of Basque institutions of self-government have been a crucial – if contested – instrument for the accommodation of Basque difference in Spain. It provides historically unprecedented resources for Basque nation-building and Basque institutions serve as a meeting point for negotiation of conflicting political projects in Basque society. Furthermore, devolution is an integral element of an institutional framework, sustained by the rules and procedures of liberal democratic politics, for mediating disputes with state authorities. A close examination of these arrangements was therefore pertinent for examining the EU and its impact on territorial identity, conflict, and cooperation.

Documents were the principle sources of data for the research. Much of the research made use of a large pool of academic material and official documents from Basque, Spanish and EU government sources. Most material was collected during field trips to the Basque Country although some was available online. The alliance strategy case studies (on EU high speed train networks, and EU rulings on harmful tax competition) were selected after a preliminary survey of available data and drew on newspaper articles, parliamentary debates and interviews with politicians and officials from all levels of government studied. Newspaper articles were drawn from both statewide (*ElPaís* and *El Mundo*) and local Basque newspapers (*El Correo* and *Deia*). Interviews were used early in the research as an exploratory tool to facilitate case selection and later to confirm findings obtained from other sources. Events I examined in the research received considerable attention in the media, political commentary and parliamentary debates, suggesting that they were more than just trivial incidents.

While research on formal institutions was relatively straight forward, that on more informal networks and alliance strategies was more challenging. This may be due to a variety of factors, such as lack of transparency at key stages of the decision process, lack of publically available records, but also due to the wide range of political actors who may be involved in the process. However, such challenges must be met if we are to learn anything about the complex, multi-level political process that has emerged in the course of European integration. Social network analysis (see chapter XX by Sevi and Jenny) is one method that could be employed to map networks. However, this approach tends to rely on interview data from political actors who may no longer be available to speak to researchers for cases with long histories. In such cases, which occurred in my research, it is necessary to employ a range of sources, including interviews where possible, but also newspaper commentary, government documents, parliamentary speeches and secondary sources where available.

Reliance on publically available documentary sources is not without its problems, however. For example, there may be a tendency for newspapers to report and parliaments to debate more ‘newsworthy’ or ‘politicised’ conflictual encounters rather than instances of collaboration between different levels of government. Public authorities may choose not to publish some kinds of records, where discussions may be politically sensitive, but important for research. For instance, analysis of Basque and central government involvement in the interministerial Sectoral Conferences and related bilateral institutions was hampered by the absence of publicly available minutes of meetings or verbatim reports, although some gaps could be filled by government reports and academic commentary. Furthermore, researchers may need to be able to understand various languages and country and region-specific political contexts and research environments. This can be costly and labour intensive but is a process eased with greater digitisation of documentation and availability over the internet. Such challenges suggest it is appropriate to qualify findings with caveats about the difficulty of fully reconstructing complex, multi-level policy processes.

**Innovative Research Designs**

As we have seen, methodological pluralism marks research on European identities insofar as it incorporates qualitative and quantitative research methods and within these approaches, there is variation ranging from experimental, cross-sectional, case study and comparative research designs. As Thomas Risse observes, ‘each method has its own limitations with regard to the study of social identities’ (2010, p. 34):

Statistical analyses of survey data and psychological experiments often highlight the stability, resilience and stubbornness of identities…In contrast, discourse analysis tends to emphasise the fluidity, malleability and ways in which social identities are dependent on context (2010, p. 34)

Risse goes on to say that while some of these differences stem from ‘metatheorical orientations among scholars…one should not overlook the fact that different methods often focus on different aspects of the same concept’ (2010, p. 34). This observation points to the first possible direction that future research on social identities might take; namely adoption of more methodologically ambitious mixed research designs. This is a field were researchers draw on and integrate findings from different kinds of research, but there are few examples of those employing multiple methods in a single empirical study. Where they have been employed (for example, Holmes 2009; Wodak 2004 discussed above) they tend to be within the same quantitative and qualitative methodological traditions. Diez Medrano’s (2003) work provides a good example of what such a mixed methods research project can achieve. It employs qualitative analysis of conceptions of the EU and attitudes to European integration and then seeks to validate these qualitative findings through statistical analysis employing Eurobarometer opinion poll data.

A second avenue which future research on European identities might pursue is to compare patterns of identification in Europe with those in other parts of the world. Although there are some notable exceptions (Katzenstein and Checkel, 2009, p. 218-223; Katzenstein 2005), there appears to be, in general, a strong disinclination for those who conduct research on European identities to systematically reflect upon whether what they observe for Europe is taking place in other parts of the world. This disinclination reflects an predominant interest in political dimensions of European identity related to the development of the European Union institutions of governance. However, it raises issues similar to those Alex Warleigh identifies in relation to the isolation of EU studies from the broader field of ‘new regionalism studies’ (2004, p. 301-2 and see chapter X in this book ). Warleigh argues the predominance of comparative politics approaches to EU studies ‘serve[d] to reinforce the separateness, or difference, of EU studies, locking them in a theoretical silo where the infamous ‘N=1’ problem restricts the improvement of conceptual lenses that scholars use…’ (ibid, p. 302). Work on identities in Europe may fall into a similar trap of assuming that there is something unique about European identity derived from the institutional density, reach and salience of EU policies which makes difficult to compare (see, for instance, comment by Katzenstein and Checkel, 2009, p. 218) .

One difficulty confronting such a comparative endeavour is the question of what to compare Europe with. The notion of a world divided by civilisations, as Samuel Huntington (1996) famously proposed, is fraught with difficulties to do with the delimitation of civilizational boundaries and the coherence of civilizational identities. Nevertheless, if loosely defined as ‘operating at the broadest level of cultural identity’, ‘not fixed in time or space’, and as ‘ideas and identities that are multiple’ (Katzenstein 2007) the concept of civilizational identities becomes more workable for comparative research. Moreover, comparison need not focus solely on broad comparisons of patterns of identification in say, Asia and Europe, or the Americas and Europe, or Africa and Europe. It could also take the form of comparisons of countries within Europe and countries from other regions of the world.

Many of the research questions addressed in existing research on European identity might fruitfully be asked elsewhere, including questions about the role of elites in shaping the content of civilizational identities; the impact of varying forms of regional integration on patterns of identification; the nature of relationships between ‘civilizational’ and national, local and other identities; and the geopolitical obstacles complicating the articulation of common values.

A final critique of the literature on European identity, and thus a possible avenue for future research, relates to the delimitation of the concept of European identities. Various methodological critiques of the literature on Europeanisation observe that it is often difficult to disentangle relationships between European and global phenomena and processes of change. Some argue, for instance, that it is not possible to explain many kinds of EU-induced domestic changes without considering the complex relationship between Europeanization and globalization (Lynggaard, 2011, Rosamond 2000). It is not just that member states are affected by decisions and dynamics of various kinds of international regimes, be it those related to climate change, banking or security related issues. There is also the issue of whether the EU itself might be a factor mediating or filtering the effects of globalization on European states (Wallace, 2000, p. 381).

Such concerns may also be an issue for research on European identities for two reasons. Firstly, there is the issue of how we might differentiate between conceptions of Europe ‘embracing modern, democratic and humanistic values’ (Risse, 2010, p. 6) or ‘outward looking and cosmopolitan European identity projects’ (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009, p. 11-12) and more broadly shared cosmopolitan identity projects other than by the fact that they are views that Europeans claim they hold. The scarcity of studies which systematically compare identification patterns between Europe and elsewhere makes it harder to disentangle conceptually such cosmopolitan identities from certain forms of identification with Europe. Secondly, the difficulties that can sometimes arise in distinguishing between European and global (or other) origins of processes of change can makes it difficult to identify whether European integration is uniquely responsible for producing identity phenomena in Europe. Or, in other words, research on the impact of European integration on patterns of identification, whether that impact is direct or diffuse, needs to consider the ways in which EU-related processes - such as the creation of the single market, removal of borders and free movement, immigration or cultural policies, or the politicisation of European decisions – can be distinguished from broader process of market integration, immigration and politicisation in the global arena.

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1. According to Keeler’s analysis of topics covered in articles about the EC/EU in 24 leading political science, International Relations and public policy journals from 1960 to 2001, there were eleven articles on the topic of identity/public opinion in the 1960s to 1980s period, while some 50 published articles addressed the topic between 1990 and 2001. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)