

**Experiencing the System:  
Social Integration in the European Union**

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## Abstract

There is considerable debate about the effects of European integration on different forms of identification (sub-national, national and European). Using European survey data, this paper examines identification change in the European Union (EU) between 1973 and 1990. The results show that identification has remained fairly static during this period. In particular, the fact that European identification is low and has not increased over time suggests that social integration in the EU is very limited. This paper also advances and tests a conceptual framework for the study of European identification. My main hypothesis is that the more European citizens experience the EU in their daily lives, the more likely they will be to identify with it. The types of experiences examined include: social, economic and cultural experiences *and* evaluations of these experiences compared with those of the nation state. Empirical findings support this hypothesis.

## Introduction

There is considerable debate about the effects of European integration on different forms of identification and about the extent to which people need to identify with the EU in order to legitimate it. Some suggest that little or no sense of a European identity has developed, that national identity remains prevalent and may be rising. In support of their arguments, they point to the increasing popularity of nationalist movements which oppose immigration (e.g. The National Front). It is also argued that integration has been accompanied by a rise in sub-national/regional identity. Regarding the debate about the legitimation of the EU, many contend that further integration, especially political union, *requires* a significant level of identification with the Union, i.e. social integration. Certainly, a number of efforts to advance the unification process have been constrained by fears of a loss of national sovereignty and distinctiveness. Accordingly, it is important to examine **1) the extent to which social integration has taken place in the EU** (i.e. to what extent do Europeans identify with the Union, their national state and their region?) and **2) the social context of EU identification** (i.e. what is the nature of European identity, is it compatible with national identity etc.?). Empirical work on this subject to date has been extremely limited.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the above issues in more detail. The first section examines the nature of social identification and investigates the extent to which identification has changed with advances in European integration. Some empirical evidence is provided by drawing on responses to a social identification question which

was asked in a number European Surveys between 1976 and 1990. The second part of the paper advances and tests a conceptual framework which may be used to empirically analyse EU identification. Central to this framework are "experiences of the Union", social, economic and cultural and my hypothesis is that the more Europeans experience the EU in each of these ways, the more likely they are to identify with it..

## **European Integration and Social Identification**

In developing a framework for studying identification in the European context, I have drawn extensively on general theories of social identification and on William Bloom's national identification theory (Bloom 1990) .

### **a) Social Identification theories**

Social identification refers to the relationship between an individual and social groups. More specifically, Turner describes it as "the process of locating oneself or another person within a system of social categorisations" (Turner 1982, p. 18). This process involves (1) categorising and perceiving the self and others as members of groups according to a salient social identity,<sup>1</sup> (2) learning the typical characteristics and behaviours of these groups and (3) imputing the perceived stereotypical characteristics and behaviours of one's own group to oneself (Turner 1985). Identification is fundamental to social integration. Members of a group often share little more than a common identification, yet this identification is both sufficient and necessary for them to act as a group (Turner 1982, p. 15, p. 22).<sup>2</sup>

Why do people identify with groups or individuals? It is often argued that they do so in order to make sense of the environment or social world. However, more fundamentally, it is also a means of survival, both physical and social. Many of the major identification theorists have argued this in different ways (Erikson 1959; Freud 1957, Mead 1934; Bloom 1990). Mead highlighted that a personality which is acceptable to the immediate social group is important for social survival and that lack of conformity can result in ostracisation (Mead 1934). Similarly, Freud argued that

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<sup>1</sup>. Social identity consists of the sum total of identifications and the values attached to them (Hewstone and Jaspers 1984, p. 381; Turner 1984, p. 527).

<sup>2</sup>. Note that this social identification model (SIM) contrasts with the social cohesion model which contends that a group consists of a number of individuals who like each other. According to the SIM, we do not join a group because we like the members but we may like people because they belong to our group (Turner 1982, p. 25). Empirical research supports the SIM that than the cohesion model.

successful identification involved the gratification of both physical and social needs, resulting in a sense of security and a positive social identity (Freud 1957).

Individuals identify with many groups, that is, they make multiple identifications. To enhance our social identity we identify with groups which we believe will protect us, groups which we evaluate positively (Allen et al 1982, p. 95).<sup>3</sup> However, if perceptions of the group change, this can affect the decision to identify with it or not.<sup>4</sup> Thus, identification is a dynamic, social process. People can assume an identification and "switch" identities depending on the situation (Lyman and Douglas 1973 pp.346-358). It is an on-going and adaptive process for individuals, evolving as they respond to both inner motivations and social pressures (Erikson 1959). People continuously seek to maximise their social identity and can either protect identifications already made or change identifications in order to do so.

There is some debate about the compatibility of certain types of identification. The concentric loyalties or "nesting" view suggests that people can identify with different political communities provided they are inclusive; that is, all are "contained" within an overall "containing" community, such as the region, state and EU<sup>5</sup>. In this view, the development of a European identity need not diminish national loyalty<sup>6</sup> (Hoffman 1966, p. 867; Lodge 1978, p. 247; Klineberg in Lodge 1978, p. 247). Indeed, some argue that nationalists may make the best internationalists, that national pride may facilitate the development of a European citizenship.<sup>7</sup> (Guetzkow 1955; Duchesne and Frogner 1995).

Another view is that there is always potential for conflict among loyalties (Smith 1992, p. 59). For example, functionalists suggest that primary loyalty to supranational

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<sup>3</sup>. Our *social identity* refers to the sum total of identifications used to ourselves, as well as their value and emotional importance of group membership (Tajfel 1972, p. 31). Social identity is distinct from personal identity which consists of particular characteristics of the individual such as tastes, feelings of competence and so on (Turner 1982, p. 18).

<sup>4</sup>. Unsatisfactory comparisons can result in either leaving the group or making the existing one more positive (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 40).

<sup>5</sup>. See Allen et al (1982) for a discussion of "nesting", Garcia (1993) and Lodge (1978) on shared identifications.

<sup>6</sup>. Federalism is, in fact, predicated on multiple identities.

<sup>7</sup>. This concurs with the view that high group esteem facilitates the acceptance of an out-group (Dion 1979, p. 220).

institutions occurs at the expense of national loyalty. However, this reasoning is inconsistent with the fact that functionalists accept multiple *sub-national* loyalties.

### **b) Bloom's National Identification Theory**

Bloom (1990) draws on identification theories to examine how national identification is evoked. He contends that identification with a political entity will only be made if that entity provides both psychological and material benefits to its members. More specifically, a shared group identification can only be triggered by meaningful and real experiences, ones which are seen to be beneficial for the individual. Also, people may identify with an entity because they believe it will protect them in situations of threat.

According to Bloom, national identification is influenced by experiences of the state such as its policies, its ability to provide material benefits and protection against threats (Bloom 1990, pp. 61-2). For example, if people see state policies as a threat, they will react unfavourably to them and identifications with *other* systems may prevail. Alternatively, they will respond favourably to policies which protect their national identity or material interests (Bloom 1990, p. 80, p. 73).

### **c) The importance of European Identification for Integration**

Because identification is a major factor responsible for group formation, it is very important for European integration. However, a review of the political integration literature reveals that different schools attach varying degrees of importance to identification. Functionalists do not *focus* on the issue of identity formation but they argue that loyalty to supranational institutions is an inevitable by-product of receiving socio-economic benefits from them. Most neo-functionalists highlighted the significance of the transferral of *elite* loyalties to new institutions, denying the importance of mass attitudes (Haas 1958).<sup>8</sup> However, later neo-Functionalist writings attach a high degree of importance to *mass* loyalties (Haas 1971; Reif 1993, p. 133). The importance of mass public loyalty was recognised as necessary for the legitimacy of the institutions, especially in the work of Inglehart.

Transactionalists argue that a "sense of community" is of central importance for integration. In describing the nature of this "sense of community", Deutsch argues that it involves mutual identification.

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<sup>8</sup>. For example, Haas disregarded mass attitudes believing the general public to be ignorant of and disinterested in integration. He argued that the loyalty of elites is most important for integration (Haas 1958).

The kind of sense of community that is relevant for integration...turned out to be rather a matter of mutual sympathy and loyalties; of 'we-feeling', trust, and mutual consideration; of partial identification in terms of self-images and interests; of mutually successful predictions of behaviour (Deutsch 1957, p. 36).

According to Deutsch, individuals develop a sense of community by means of social learning, that is, they learn to communicate and understand each other. As a result of social rewards received in the process they also learn to identify with each other.

In the federalist view, one of the three kinds of integration *required* by any political community is that the community be the major focus of political identification for most politically conscious citizens (Etzioni 1965, p. 4).<sup>9</sup> Federalists argue that successful integration depends on national and international elites' ability to evoke the support of the public by means of education, propaganda and so on.

In summary, integration theories suggest that integration either evokes or requires some degree of identification with the new socio-political organisation and it is argued that there is a renewed interest in the necessity of social integration or the development of an affective dimension of European integration (Laffan 1996). Consequently, it is most important to analyse identification change in the European Union.

#### **d) The Effects of European Integration on Identification**

Major economic and political developments are frequently associated with changes in national and ethnic identity (Gellner 1983; Giddens 1985; Hechter 1975; 1978; Rawkins 1980; Rokkan and Urwin 1983<sup>10</sup>; Ross 1980; Sinnott and Davis 1981; Tilly 1975). Consequently, the process of European integration should induce substantial changes in identification as people seek to define themselves in this "new" social space. For many, it makes their world seem more complex, giving rise to concerns and fears about the integration process itself. These fears may be political, cultural, and/or economically; that is fears of a) distant governance, b) loss of cultural personality and c) about increasing competition. This may result in identities being "disturbed" as

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<sup>9</sup>. The other two are a) the central control over means of violence and b) the central allocation of resources. It should be noted that Etzioni is a self-declared "communitarianist" and that his writing is influenced by this perspective.

<sup>10</sup>. Specifically, the changes they discuss include "processes of state-building such as linguistic and educational standardisation; economic expansion or decline; a heightened awareness of the outside world through more obvious government activity within the local horizon, improved communication, higher levels of education, geographical mobility and a more penetrative mass media" (Rokkan and Urwin 1983, p. 138).

people seek to identify with systems which they believe will be most likely to protect them and reaffirm their social identity.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it is likely that European integration affects sub-national, national and European identifications.

### **Sub-national identification**

European integration is thought to increase local identity or to have triggered the revival of local identities previously quashed or submerged by the national state (Laffan 1996, p. 16). Certainly, there has been an increased role for sub-national regions in EU affairs and this has been accompanied by a proliferation of regional representative offices and associations.<sup>12</sup> Also, as Laffan points out, the fact that the Treaty on European Union included the Committee of the Regions in its ambit demonstrates the increasing importance attached to the regions in European affairs (Laffan 1996, p. 18).<sup>13</sup> The strengthening of the role of regions, in conjunction with a simultaneous curtailing of state powers, has enhanced the ability of the region to serve its people and to claim their loyalty to it, while the capacity of the national state to do so has been weakened.

There is some empirical evidence to suggest that regional identity is strong in Western Europe. For example, Reif shows that roughly the same proportion of Europeans feel attached to their regions as the proportion who feel attached to their country (Reif 1993). However, the question is whether or not regional identity has *increased*. The findings of one study suggest that local identity is decreasing (Duchesne and Frogner 1995, p.29). However, it would be erroneous to make conclusions based on these results as the period examined was extremely limited (1976-1979). A more up-to-date examination of Europeans' identification reveals that, between 1976 and 1990, there was relatively little change in sub-national identification (Winston 1996, p. 61). The results are based on answers to the following question:

To which of the following geographical groups would you say you belong first of all? and the next?

1. Locality or town where you live

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<sup>11</sup>. The term "disturb" is taken from Picht who argues that changes relating to labour markets are particularly stressful and "disturbing" for identities (Picht 1993, p. 82).

<sup>12</sup>. EU strategies of subsidiarity and partnership are *specifically* designed to increase participation of the regions. A number of EU policies take regions into account but particularly regional and social policies (Kellas 1991, p. 230).

<sup>13</sup> However, the power of the Committee of the regions may be overestimated and may be more important symbolically than actually - Christiansen argues that the Committee has very limited powers

2. Region or county where you live
3. Your country as a whole
4. Europe
5. The World as a whole.

Table 1 reveals a number of interesting findings about sub-national identification during the period 1976-1990.

**TABLE 1: LOCAL AND REGIONAL IDENTIFICATION 1976-1990**

|                      | Primary Identification |               | Secondary Identification |               |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|
|                      | Local<br>%             | Regional<br>% | Local<br>%               | Regional<br>% |
| 1976                 | 44.9                   | 13.8          | 18.1                     | 29.8          |
| 1978                 | 43.9                   | 14.2          | 18.7                     | 30.7          |
| 1979                 | 43.9                   | 12.1          | 18.1                     | 29.0          |
| 1981                 | 43.3                   | 16.0          | 20.9                     | 30.1          |
| 1990                 | 40.8                   | 17.8          | 18.5                     | 27.7          |
| Difference 1976-1990 | -4.1                   | +4.0          | +0.4                     | -2.1          |

**Source:** 1976=Eurobarometer 6. 1978=Eurobarometer 10a. 1979=Eurobarometer 12. 1981=World Values Survey. 1990=European Values Survey.

Table 1 reveals that, while local identity tends to be more important as a primary identification than regional identification, regionalism has increased slightly (up four percentage points) since 1976, while localism has declined (down 4.1 percentage points). These are by no means significant changes but they may be an indication of the direction of change. With regards to secondary identification, regionalism is stronger than localism and there was no significant change in either between 1976 and 1990. It should be noted that sub-national identity may have changed since 1990. In particular, regionalism as a primary identification should have increased since then as a result of the increasing importance attached to the Region in EU affairs.

### **National Identification**

Some authors contend that national identity is more powerful than any other form of loyalty, that its traditions have great staying-power and cannot be extended to other loci (Smith 1992, p. 58; Waltz 1978, p. 234). Alternatively, others see it as a dynamic process or the deliberate manipulation of symbols by political actors. They suggest that it may fade due to economic forces, education and international communication.<sup>14</sup> In this regard, it should be noted that national states have been socially and politically constructed, that in many cases the formation of states often involved years trying to

<sup>14</sup>. See Deutsch 1987 for a discussion of nationalism studies.



eradicate regional cultures within state boundaries (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1983). As Laffan puts it

"States used their enormous resources and symbols, rewards and punishments to inculcate a sense of loyalty and identification with the national political community (Laffan 1996, p.7).

Moreover, it should be emphasised that some national states are relatively recent and, consequently, the primacy of the national state is relatively recent.

The power of national identity may derive from the "institutional completeness"<sup>15</sup> of national states, that is, the wide variety of state institutions which can provide members with benefits/experiences of some kind. For example, some argue that state programs such as citizenship and political socialisation contribute to nationalism and that people conform to the state's standardised culture in order to fulfil a role in society, to get a job and so on (Garcia 1993, p. 10; Gellner 1987). However, is it not possible that the EU may provide similar experiences and that people would conform to its culture for the very same reasons? If so, these people may identify with the EU.

In the past, the national-state has played the role of "protector" of its citizens (Deutsch 1966, p.101; Lodge 1978, p. 235). Moreover, for many states joining the EU was a means of protecting and/or enhancing their state identities (Laffan 1996, p. 12). However, integration undermines state powers, though to what extent is often questioned (Llobera 1993, p. 64; McLellan and Richmond 1993, p. 17; Picht 1993, pp. 90-91). In an attempt to hold their ground against these processes, national elites often display nationalist tendencies (Lodge 1978). They may try to manipulate nationalist sentiments among their public and, consequently, increase nationalism. Alternatively, people may view the diminution of state powers as undermining its ability to protect them. Picht suggests that, as they no longer see the state as a powerful protector, it will lose its attraction as an object of identification and consequently, national identity will decline (Picht 1993, p. 91).

Empirical studies of national *identification* change are very limited. However, Inglehart and Reif show that national *pride* declined substantially in all of the original member states of the EU between 1970 and 1985 (Inglehart and Reif 1991, p. 19).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>. For more on institutional completeness, see Breton (1964).

<sup>16</sup>. Their evidence comes from the following question asked in a 1970 European Community Survey, the 1981-82 World Values Survey, and Euro-Barometer 24 (1985). The question wording was as follows: "Would you say you are very proud, quite proud, not very proud, or not at all proud to be (Nationality)?"

Similarly, Dogan suggests that West Europeans reveal limited national pride and have a growing trust of other Europeans (Dogan 1993, 1993). However, an examination of national *identification* changes between 1976 and 1990 reveals that the extent to which Europeans identify with their country did not change significantly during that period (Winston 1996, pp. 61-63).

**TABLE 2: NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION 1976-1990**

|                      | <b>Primary<br/>Identification<br/>%</b> | <b>Secondary<br/>Identification<br/>%</b> |
|----------------------|---|---|
| 1976                 | 28.4                                    | 33.7                                      |
| 1978                 | 30.6                                    | 32.6                                      |
| 1979                 | 31.0                                    | 32.7                                      |
| 1981                 | 26.8                                    | 32.2                                      |
| 1990                 | 26.2                                    | 30.7                                      |
| Difference 1976-1990 | -2.1                                    | -3.0                                      |

**Source:** 1976=Eurobarometer 6. 1978=Eurobarometer 10a. 1979=Eurobarometer 12. 1981=World Values Survey. 1990=European Values Survey.

Table 2 also shows that nationalism is slightly more popular as a secondary identification than as a primary identification.

### **European Identification**

It is often argued that European identification remains weak despite years of integration. While there are few empirical studies of *identification* change, many studies examine support for integration, "feeling" European, attachment to the EU and the development of a European "sense of community", all of which suggest potential for the development of European identity.

First, support for the unification of Western Europe is quite substantial. About 70% of a pooled European sample support unification (Sinnott 1996). Also, Niedermayer (1995) shows that, with one exception, mutual trust was higher in EU member states than it had been since the mid-seventies and concludes that this represents a 'moderately developed sense of community' (Niedermayer 1995, pp. 9-11).<sup>17</sup> Another study reveals that, in both 1983 and 1985, about half of the EU public "often/sometimes" saw themselves as both European and (national) (Inglehart 1990). Furthermore, Reif shows that 48% of Europeans felt "attached" to the EU<sup>18</sup> (Reif

<sup>17</sup>. Britain was the only country to experience a decrease in mutual trust.

<sup>18</sup> Reif compares differences in attachment to locale, region, country, and Europe for 1990.

1993, p. 138). While this is still substantially less than the level of attachment to one's country (88%) or region (87%), it is notable. Finally, Duchesne and Frogner (1995) examine responses to a question in which respondents were asked to state if it occurs to them often, sometimes, or never that they are not only citizens of their country but also citizens of Europe. Using this an indicator of European identity, their findings suggests that European identity increased between 1982 and 1986, declined somewhat between 1986 and 1990 and increased again during 1990-92 (Duchesne and Frogner 1995, pp.198-200).

All of these studies are limited in some way. Either they do not focus on identification but on more utilitarian indicators such as *support* for unification, which is subject to fluctuations depending on, for example, the economic climate (Inglehart and Reif 1991, pp. 4-10). Also, the support indicator is *extremely* limited because respondents cannot opt for a neutral position but are forced to say that they are either for or against unification.<sup>19</sup> It is important to examine identification because it gives more of an indication of people's emotional attachment to the Union, feelings which are likely to be more enduring and stable. Many studies which attempt to explore European identity use inadequate indicators of identity and/or fail to examine whether or not it has increased over time. For example, Niedermayer's (1995) examination of the development of "a sense of community" is insufficient because his indicator of "sense of community" is limited to mutual trust between EU members. Similarly, Duchesne and Frogner's indicator of identity is limited as it focuses on citizenship rather than on identity and the wording of the questions varies from survey to survey.

One study focusing on European *identification change* finds that there was no change during the period 1976-1990 and that, as a form of identification, it remains significantly less popular than sub-national and national identification (Winston 1996, p. 61). Table 3 reveals a number of interesting points about European identification. First, people are more likely to choose Europe as a secondary identification than as a primary identification. Nevertheless, whether you examine primary or secondary identification, European identification is low and it has not increased significantly since 1976.

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<sup>19</sup> The specific question is as follows: "In general, are you for or against efforts being made to unify Western Europe? If for, are you very much for this, or only to some extent? If against, are you only to some extent against or very much against?"

**TABLE 3: EUROPEAN IDENTIFICATION 1976-1990**

|                        | <b>Primary<br/>Identification<br/>%</b> | <b>Secondary<br/>Identification<br/>%</b> |
|------------------------|---|---|
| 1976                   | 6.0                                     | 11.7                                      |
| 1978                   | 4.0                                     | 11.6                                      |
| 1979                   | 4.9                                     | 13.6                                      |
| 1981                   | 4.8                                     | 9.8                                       |
| 1990                   | 5.2                                     | 14.1                                      |
| Difference (1976-1990) | -0.8                                    | +2.4                                      |

**Source:** 1976=Eurobarometer 6; 1978=Eurobarometer 10a; 1979=Eurobarometer 12; 1981=World Values Survey; 1990=European Values Survey.

However, a country by country analysis provides a more optimistic picture for European identity that that revealed by the pooled European samples, that is, European identification increased significantly in a number of countries during this period, specifically, Belgium, France and the Netherlands (Table 4).

**TABLE 4: EUROPEAN IDENTIFICATION (FIRST OR SECOND CHOICE) BY COUNTRY: 1976-1990**

| <b>COUNTRY</b>          | <b>1976<br/>%</b> | <b>1990<br/>%</b> | <b>CHANGE<br/>%</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| EUROPE                  | 16.8              | 18.0              | +1.2                |
| <u>Original Members</u> |                   |                   |                     |
| 1.France                | 14.6              | 23.7              | +9.1                |
| 2.Belgium               | 13.6              | 23.2              | +9.6                |
| 3.Italy                 | 20.6              | 20.5              | -0.1                |
| 4.Neths                 | 13.4              | 18.6              | +5.2                |
| 5.Germany               | 16.7              | 17.7              | +1.0                |
| <u>1973 Entrants</u>    |                   |                   |                     |
| 6.Britain               | 17.9              | 10.4              | -7.5                |
| 7.Denmark               | 8.5               | 10.3              | +1.8                |
| 8.Ireland               | 10.9              | 9.7               | -1.2                |

**Source:** 1976=Eurobarometer 6; 1990=European Values Survey.

When compared with other member states, each of these countries has a relatively long history of collaboration in the EU (France, Belgium and the Netherlands). Also, Belgium and the Netherlands have a history of international collaboration as a result of their membership in BENELUX. Moreover, both Belgium and France host major EU institutions and have a relatively high proportion of European organisation headquarters there.

The most interesting finding from this review of the empirical evidence is that identification change has been relatively minor during this fourteen year period. However, there is some evidence to suggest that there is a move towards Europeans identifying more with *both* their locale/region and the European Union (Winston 1996, p. 63).

**TABLE 5: TYPOLOGY OF MULTIPLE IDENTIFICATIONS: 1976-90**

|                                   | 1976 | 1978 | 1979 | 1981 | 1990  | Diff |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|
|                                   | %    | %    | %    | %    | %     | %    |
| <u>Identification:</u>            |      |      |      |      |       |      |
| 1. Sub-national/<br>National      | 66.9 | 68.1 | 64.1 | 68.0 | 60.9  | -6.0 |
| 2. Sub-national/<br>Supranational | 12.1 | 12.8 | 13.0 | 13.8 | 19.0  | +6.9 |
| 3. National/<br>Supranational     | 21.0 | 19.1 | 22.9 | 18.2 | 20.1  | -0.9 |
| N                                 | 5762 | 5730 | 5853 | 9420 | 17119 |      |

**Note 1:** Typology based on primary and secondary identification choices.

**Source:** 1976=Eurobarometer 6; 1978=Eurobarometer 10a; 1979=Eurobarometer 12; 1981=World Values Survey; 1990=European Values Survey.

Table 5 reveals that, while the subnational-national combination is most popular with Europeans, it is becoming somewhat less so, as it has declined by 6 percentage points during this period. The next most popular combination is the national-supranational one, though it did not increase since 1976. Also, the fact that a notable proportion in each year identified with both European and their country suggests that national and European identification are obviously quite compatible. However, it is interesting that it was the subnational-supranational combination which became more popular (up 7 percentage points) during this period. This is in line with Duchesne and Frogner's finding that national pride tends to foster the development of a European identity (1995, p.203).

## **Experiencing the EU: A Framework for Analysing European Identification**

From the above discussion of identification theories it was noted that a recurring theme is the importance of both physical and psychological experiences of a system for identification with that system. "Shared experience" is also a theme frequently

underlying nationalist movements (Tajfel 1970, p. 128)<sup>20</sup> and in works dealing with European integration (Etzioni 1965, p. 11; Garcia 1993, p. 15).<sup>21</sup> For example, Nugent argues that the Greeks (elites and mass public) shifted from a position of scepticism about EU membership to becoming one of the more enthusiastic members as the "realities" of membership began to seep through" (Nugent 1991, p. 377). These 'realities' may be *experiences* of the Union. EU elites themselves recognise the importance of experiences of this nature. As far back as 1975, the Tindemans Report on European Union stated the following:

"European Union must be experienced by the citizen in his (sic) daily life. It must make itself felt in education and culture, news and communication, it must be manifest in the youth of our countries, and in leisure time activities. It must protect the rights of the individual and strengthen democracy through a set of institutions which have legitimacy conferred upon them by the will of our peoples.....European Union should make itself felt in people's daily lives" (Tindemans in Holland 1993, pp. 61-2).

Both the quantity and quality of experiences will be important. People who have negative experiences of the EU will be less likely to identify with it. However, those who have positive expectations and evaluations of the Union compared with their experiences of another system, such as the national state, will be more likely to identify with the EU. Finally, the more wide-ranging and positive these experiences, the more meaningful the EU will be and the more likely it will be to evoke identification.

The fact that the survey data discussed above revealed European identification to be relatively low may be explained, in part, by the fact that changes in loyalty tend to occur over a considerable period of time. Hence, it may take more time for European identity to increase. This view that duration of membership and, hence, *duration of experiences* of Europe are important is supported by the finding that European identity was higher in original members states than in the 1973 entrants.<sup>22</sup>

However, European identification did not increase to the same extent in *all* of the original member states. Hence, duration of experiences of the EU is not sufficient to increase identification. The *degree of experiences* of Europe is also important. There is

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<sup>20</sup>. Tajfel refers to work on Flanders, the Congo, Biafra, Wales, Scotland, Quebec and Slovakia.

<sup>21</sup>. Etzioni suggests that "spill-over" may be important for unification. "Spillover" refers to the process whereby unification in one sector leads to unification in others (Etzioni 1965, p. 53).

<sup>22</sup>. However, those who joined first many have done so because of a higher degree of European identification there.

some evidence to support this in the finding that European identity is higher in countries with a higher density of ties to European organisations (Belgium, Netherlands, France). As mentioned above, relatively high increases in European identification were observed in Belgium, France and the Netherlands and this was linked to the degree of experiences each has of the EU. In sum, citizens in each of these countries may have more experiences of the Union and of collaborative institutions and behaviour within it.

Countries in which European identification has not increased may have fewer experiences of the Union. Their distance from the EU, its visibility and salience for them will also affect the degree to which they experience the Union and, hence, identification with it (Lodge 1978 p. 241). Experiences of the EU will be less than those of more accessible systems such as the region or state or, for some, another international alliance. This will be particularly true for member states on the periphery of Europe and may be one of the reasons why European identification is so low in Denmark and Ireland.

The *nature* of EU experiences also seems significant. In particular, negative experiences or expectations appear to decrease European identity. For example, Britain's experiences of the Union had been relatively unsatisfactory during this period and, consequently, European identification declined. Two factors have been singled out to explain this decline: a) The government of an anti-Europe Thatcher administration from 1979 and b) a perception of inequality on behalf of the British in relation to their contribution to the EU budget.<sup>23</sup>

Another example to support the hypothesis that negative experiences of the EU decrease identification with it include that fact that *support for unification* has been declining since around 1989 due to what could be considered negative experiences or expectations of it: specific sectoral effects of the Single European Act (Project 1992) becoming clear to people; national debates on the Single Market; Maastricht debates, economic recession and 'bad news' from Eastern Europe (Reif 1993, p. 147). Consequently, European identification may have been particularly low in 1990 as a result of these negative experiences or expectations.

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<sup>23</sup>. For a long period during the 1980s, Thatcher fought with the Commission and the European Council over Britain's contribution to the EU budget focused on the inequitable position of Britain. This was a much publicised debate. The literature on ethnic identity emphasises the importance of both the role of elites (Smith 1991) and perceptions of inequality (Breton 1992) for evoking identity.

A related consideration is that the EU has failed to alleviate many threatening problems and, because people identify with a system to achieve a sense of security, the EU's weakness in this respect may be part of the explanation as to why European identification is still relatively low. Some of the threats perceived by Europeans include "terrorism, pollution, drugs consumption, urban crime, on one side, and Islamic fundamentalism, uncontrolled immigration from certain parts of the world, on the other" (Garcia 1993, pp.14-18). Also, one of the common threats thought to bind Europeans together was removed with the demise of communism in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989.<sup>24</sup> Further, the EU has *raised* a number of fears, such as "loss of territory, personality and the power to control one's own affairs" (Llobera 1993, p. 77). This would include concerns about centralisation, distant governance from Brussels and what is perceived to be opaque decisionmaking. In particular, fears that integration might result in cultural standardisation will decrease identification with the EU.<sup>25</sup>

As the integration of EU citizens may take place along several dimensions: social, cultural, and economic,<sup>26</sup> Europeans may experience integration in each of these ways. Those who have more EU experiences in each of these realms will be more likely to identify with it. In addition, one's evaluations of these experiences and comparisons of them with their experiences of the national and regional systems will also affect whether or not they identify with it. The rest of this paper examines these types of experiences of the EU in more detail and, where possible, provides some empirical evidence to support their relationship to European identification. Caution must be exerted when reviewing the findings, however, as the data are from a 1976 survey, as that is only one in which a range of EU experience questions were asked which could be used to test the hypotheses. However, given that the data support my hypotheses, there is a strong case for the collection of similar data in future surveys.

### **a) Social Experiences of the EU and EU Identification**

*Hypothesis 1: Those who have more social experiences of the EU will be more likely to identify with it.*

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<sup>24</sup>. It should be noted that some argue that the threat of communism has been replaced by fears of Islamic fundamentalism.

<sup>25</sup>. Note that this is prior to the introduction of the principle of subsidiarity, introduced after the difficulties in the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. Accordingly, fears relating to cultural standardisation are likely to have been allayed to some extent.

<sup>26</sup>. This is a modification of Keohane and Nye's classification of integration types (Keohane and Nye 1975, p. 366).



The more people are involved in the EU the more likely they will be to identify with it. That is, the extent to which they participate in it, communicate and interact with other members will all affect the degree of their identification with the EU. Communication and interaction between members of a group can produce a sense of belonging (Campbell 1958, p. 22), increase understanding between members (Doise 1988, p.103) and create trust between them, all of which should increase loyalty to the system (Niedermayer 1995, p. 14). Similarly, transactions between nations (such as trade, tourism, migration, mail, and telephone contacts) increase communication between them and may evoke mutual identification (Russett 1970, p.230).<sup>27</sup> Various programmes have been introduced to encourage and facilitate contact among citizens of the EU. The mobility programmes are one example (e.g. Commet, Lingua, Petra, Socrates), as is the creation of organisations at an EU level (e.g. Anti-Poverty network, European Network of Women etc.).

Despite all of the above, the development of an affective identification with the EU may still be limited by its distance, low salience, even obscurity for many members, especially when compared with the national and regional systems. Also, the potential for identification is reduced if members of a system do not share a common language, as in the case of the EU, as communication and contact with other members may be less meaningful. However, as Deutsch has argued, people from different cultures can learn to communicate with each other as a result of new experiences and contact in a new environment (Deutsch 1966, p.91; p.116; pp. 118-9). Indeed, this was often the case when nation states were created from sub-national state areas.

Another consideration is that whether or not contact increases mutual identification depends on the groups involved and on the *quality* of their interaction. Differences may be highlighted, resulting in some degree of conflict and triggering identification with a more exclusive system, such as the nation.<sup>28</sup> This may explain research findings which suggest that contact is *associated* with support for the EU but that it is not a very important predictor of it (Hewstone 1986, p. 184).

Findings from a 1976 Eurobarometer provide some support for the hypothesis that those who experience the EU socially are more likely to identify with it. Using extent

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<sup>27</sup> Factors such as participation in a system and its relative proximity are positively correlated with identification (Breton 1992, pp.19-22; Lodge 1978; Rosenau in Lodge 1978). Communication, transactions and frequency of interaction are also considered significant for the development of identification with a system (Bloom 1990; Deutsch 1966; Etzioni 1965; Lodge 1978; Russett 1970; Kerr 1973, p. 81; Knoke 1981, p. 150; Lerner 1956, pp. 212-221; Svensson 1980, p. 81).

<sup>28</sup> See Sinnott and Davis for a discussion of this (1981, p. 399-400).

of foreign travel as an indicator of social experiences, the study shows that frequent foreign travellers were more than twice as likely to identify with the Union as than people who travelled less often (Winston 1996, p. 77).<sup>29</sup>

## **b) Economic Experiences of the Union and EU Identification**

*Hypothesis 2: Those who experience economic benefits of the EU, or expect to receive them, will be more likely to identify with it than does who do not.*

Receiving economic benefits from a system or expecting to do so helps evoke identification with it (Bloom 1990; Breton 1992, p. 22; Deutsch 1966, p. 173; Dion 1979, pp. 218-9). In part, their significance for identification is that they provide some guarantee that the system can protect them. In relation to the EU, Garcia argues that "European awareness" is associated with perceiving economic advantages from membership in the EU (Garcia 1993, p. 3).

A number of studies argue that support for membership in the EU is linked with economic growth or decline (Inglehart and Rabier 1978; Dalton and Eichenberg 1991). However, other findings suggest that that economic considerations have a minor impact (Bosch and Newton 1995). In terms of identification, findings from a 1976 Euro-barometer reveal that those who perceived economic benefits from membership were more than twice as likely to identify with the EU as those who saw none (Winston 1996, p. 79).

## **c) Cultural Experiences of the EU and European identification**

*Hypothesis 3: The more people experience the EU culturally, the more likely they will be to identify with it.*

Some authors suggest a link between experiencing a system culturally and identifying with it. For example, Gellner argues that nationalism emerged with the extension of universal education required by the processes of industrialisation and centralisation (Gellner 1983, p. 36). Of course, there is some debate about the existence of a "European" culture. The Commission of the EU argues that a European culture consists of the following:

Beneath the surface diversity of languages, tastes, and artistic styles, there is a likeness, a kinship, a European dimension or identity based on a common cultural heritage. The contributions of different individuals, ideas, styles and values have, over the centuries, created our common civilisation (CEC 1985, p.3).

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<sup>29</sup> This was true for both low and high income earners (Winston 1996, p. 77-78).

According to Garcia, there are three definite European traditions: 1) Hellenism, with its emphasis on discipline, rationality, perfection, beauty and justice; 2) Roman law and institutions, the model for organised and stable power; and 3) Christianity and the diffusion of spiritual, moral and human principles and acts<sup>30</sup> (Garcia 1993, pp.5-6). Further, official Union policy appears to be concerned with constructing/reinforcing this culture, hence, the creation of symbols representing it: anthem, driving licence, flag, passport, sporting events. It should also be noted that in many cases culture has been *constructed* by states, elites or intellectuals (Hobsbawm 1983; Smith 1991; Tilly 1975).

On the other hand, Smith suggests that there is no "European culture" (Smith 1992, pp.67-74). But he is confusing on this topic. Elsewhere he discusses a common European culture which "creates sentiments of affinity between the peoples of Europe" (Smith 1991). In Stinchcombe's terms, the EU has a culture because it has "agencies" representing it and an elite "to interpret the fate of the agency, to create the symbols of common orientation" (Stinchcombe 1965, p. 189). Nevertheless, European culture and institutions are not likely to be as numerous or meaningful as their national and regional counterparts.<sup>31</sup>

Europeans can experience the EU culturally by means of involvement with and knowledge of its institutions, attachment to its symbols and so on. Those who are more interested in and knowledgeable about it reveal a "connectedness" to it and they will be more likely to identify with it.<sup>32</sup> A 1976 Eurobarometer has a number of indicators of connectedness to EU culture: interest in the EU, level of information about it, attachment to EU cultural symbols (flag, Olympic team etc.), and foreign language proficiency (Winston 1996). Using these indicators, one study suggests that experiencing the EU culturally tends to increase the likelihood that people will identify with it. This was true for each of the indicators (Winston 1996, pp.82-85).

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<sup>30</sup>. She also argues that "a capacity for dialogue" is the major component of a European cultural identity (Garcia 1993, p. 9).

<sup>31</sup>. It should be noted that, as the EU expands to include Eastern European countries, the harder it will become to talk of a common culture.

<sup>32</sup>. This is somewhat similar to Inglehart's notion of "cognitive mobilization". He contends that there has been an increase in the political skills of the Western Public due to the expansion of public education and mass communication. He argues that those with a high level of cognitive mobilization will be more likely to know about and be more supportive of the EU. However, Mathew finds that "level of information" is a more powerful predictor of EU support than political skills (Mathew 1980, p. 176). Consequently, I have decided to investigate information on and degree of interest in the Union.

*Hypothesis 4: Those who perceive that European integration threatens their national culture are less likely to identify with the EU.*

A related issue is that measures which appear to pose a threat to national culture face a great deal of opposition from the European public. Viewing one's nation as culturally distinctive is socially desirable and this contributes to a positive social identity, one of the motivations for identification (Roccas and Schwartz 1993, p. 583). Those who perceive that European integration diminishes this distinctiveness will be less likely to identify with the EU. Results from a 1976 Eurobarometer support the above hypothesis. That is, those believing that unification would threaten their cultural identity were much less likely to identify with Europe than those who did not share this concern (Winston 1996: 83). These results confirm the importance to social identification of protection from cultural threat.

#### **d) EU Identification and Evaluations of Experiences:**

A number of authors argue that *inter-group comparisons and evaluations* are important for social identification. In order to achieve a positive social identity, people compare the merits of relevant groups and identify with those they perceive positively. Negative comparisons may cause them to leave a group (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 40) and, by extension, may trigger identification with another group. Hence, while experiencing the EU may help to evoke identification with it, *positive* evaluations of these experiences compared with those of the national state and regional system will *increase* the likelihood that identification will occur.<sup>33</sup> Alternatively, negative evaluations will decrease identification with the EU and/or increase identification with the state or region.

A number of types of evaluations and comparisons will be particularly salient:

a) perceptions of system policies, b) perceived inequality between EU members and c) boundary perceptions.

#### **Perceptions of system policies**

*Hypothesis 5: Positive expectations of the EU and negative experiences of the state will increase identification with the EU, while negative expectations of the EU and positive perceptions of the state will decrease EU identification.*

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<sup>33</sup>. Participation in social movements is linked with a cost-benefit analysis of participation (Klandermans 1984, p. 583). There can be significant differences in the perceived costs and benefits between individuals across regions and stages in the life cycle of a movement (Klandermans 1984, p. 584).

A system's policies will affect identification with it (Bloom 1990, p. 68). If they are perceived negatively, people will be less likely to identify with the system and more likely to identify with others. For example, Rawkins links Scottish nationalism in the 1960s with "ineffectual" British economic policies and the "gap between popular expectations and government performance" (Rawkins 1980, p. 146). Findings from a 1976 Eurobarometer support the above hypothesis in that positive evaluations and expectations of the Union and negative evaluations of national state policies increase the chances that people will identify with the EU (Winston 1996, p. 87).

### **Perceptions of economic inequality**

*Hypothesis 6: Perceptions of inequality in the treatment of member states by the EU will decrease identification with it.*

Many authors note that perceptions of inequality between groups within a system, past or present, can decrease identification with that system (Okamura 1981, p. 457; Rokkan and Urwin 1982; Tajfel 1970, p. 128; Tilly 1975, p. 80). For example, Rawkins argues that one of the factors in the emergence of Scottish and Welsh nationalism in the 1960s was their history of disproportionate economic underdevelopment within the British system (Rawkins 1980, p. 127). This suggests that if economic expectations are not met, or are less than those received by other members in the system, identification with that system will decrease. In relation to the EU, Hewstone finds that some countries (Britain and Germany) *perceive* more inequity than others (Hewstone 1986, pp. 135-6). Hence, people from those countries will be less likely to identify with the EU. There is some evidence to support this from the 1976 survey, which shows that those who perceive equality in the treatment of EU members were more likely to identify with the EU than those sensing inequality (Winston 1996, p. 87).

### **Boundary Perceptions**

*Hypothesis 7: Those with more inclusive boundary perceptions will be more likely to identify with the EU than those with more exclusive perceptions.*

Boundary perceptions facilitate comparisons between systems, evaluations of them and therefore affect identification choice. Rokkan and Urwin argue that there are "boundary opening" and "boundary-strengthening" groups. The former wish to keep the boundary as open as possible, while the latter desire its reinforcement (Rokkan and Urwin 1983, pp. 4-5). Thus, a person's boundary perceptions will be more or less inclusive, that is, they will be more or less likely to include different groups within their own. Those with more *inclusive* boundary perceptions, that is, those who believe they belong to a more extensive and encompassing group, will be more likely to identify at the transnational level. For example, those favouring the inclusion of more members in

the EU will be more likely to identify with it. However, it is also possible that those who are in favour of “deepening” the Union may feel that “widening” it will create difficulties. Nevertheless, these people may identify with the Union.

The 1976 survey data provide some support for this hypothesis; that is, those with more inclusive boundary perceptions are more likely to identify with the EU (Winston 1996). The indicators used include: willingness to include new member states; trust of other member states and willingness to give aid to member states in financial difficulty. Those who wanted more members in the Union were twice as likely to identify with it as those who did not. In addition, a high degree of trust in other member states was positively correlated with EU identification. Finally, those willing to give aid to member states with economic problems were substantially more likely to identify with the EU than those who were unwilling to do so (Winston 1996:91-92).

### **e) Additional Factors**

Previous attempts to explain European support or identity tend to focus on the following factors.

#### **Socio-Demographic factors:**

The literature on social change suggests that attitudes can be affected by socio-demographic factors such as *life-cycle and generational effects*. These studies argue that national identity is so deeply engrained that it can only be changed slowly and by generational replacement and socialisation (Inglehart 1990). For example, Dogan argues that a fall in nationalism is most evident among younger people (Dogan 1994). Further, Inglehart contends that young people are more supportive of the EU than older cohorts and this remains with them as they grow older. Their higher degree of support is due three characteristics of their early socialisation: a) the absence of a major war; b) increasing interaction between the countries of Europe and c) the development of European institutions perceived to be beneficial (Inglehart 1990). However, Mathew finds that age differentials in EU support are not overwhelming and in some countries there is no discernible intergenerational gap (Mathew 1980, p. 147). Moreover, he argues that socialisation continues throughout the life cycle and that long term experience of the Union can generate an overall growth in support for it even among those born in the nationalistic atmosphere pre-1945.

Others contend that *life circumstances and integration into society* influence identification so that those who are more integrated into society are more likely to identify with more cosmopolitan entities (Bloom 1990, p. 50). The exact meaning of

the term "integration" is unclear in Bloom's work. High levels of income, education and occupational status may be indicators.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, support for European integration is frequently seen as an elite phenomenon, whereby people with these characteristics are most favourable to the project (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). There is a general perception that the EU benefits those from a higher socio-economic background more than it does others. However, Mathew contends that class interest is not necessarily the best predictor of European support.

The findings from the 1976 Eurobarometer support the view that EU identification is an elite phenomenon. That is, EU identifiers tended to be well-educated, have a high income, and a higher occupational status (Winston 1996:71-74).

Certain types of value priorities are also thought to be associated with support for European integration. Inglehart contends that rising public support for the EU is related to a "silent revolution" (Inglehart 1990). This refers to a change in value priorities away from "materialist" concerns with economic and physical security and towards "post-materialist" values emphasising quality of life. He argues that the economic growth experienced after World War Two, combined with the absence of a major war in Europe, facilitated the fulfilment of physical and economic needs, allowing people to concentrate on non-materialist goals. Consequently, he suggests that post-materialists are more likely to identify with the Union than are materialists, as questions of national security are not high on their list of priorities (Inglehart 1990). However, Mathew finds that an overwhelming switch to postmaterialist values has not occurred and that such values are relatively unimportant predictors of EU support (Mathew 1980, p. 157, p. 176).

### **Period effects**

European identification may also be affected by "period effects" such as the economic climate, levels of unemployment, and migration (Garcia 1993, Inglehart and Reif 1991).<sup>35</sup> For example, Inglehart and Reif argue that support is stronger among the original member states than among those who joined during the economic recession of the mid 1970s.<sup>36</sup> Further, Reif suggests that a significant proportion of people have

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<sup>34</sup>. Indeed, occupation has been linked with localism/cosmopolitanism (Snizek and Mayer 1984).

<sup>35</sup>. The literature on value change suggests that events such as war, revolution, booms and slumps are significant (European Values Group 1992, p. 5).

<sup>36</sup>. There is a tendency, they suggest, for the latter group of member states to place some of the blame for their severe economic difficulties on the EU.

been withdrawing their *support* for unification since around 1989 as a result of specific sectoral effects of the Single European Act becoming clear to people; national debates on the single market; Maastricht and its associated referenda; economic recession and 'bad news' from Eastern Europe (Reif 1993, p. 147). That is, negative experiences or expectations seem to decrease European support. It may also be the case that European *identification* is subject to periodic changes.

Past events may also influence how people identify in the present. For example, Bloom contends that *a history of conquest or liberation* and the degree of nationbuilding will affect national identification (Bloom 1990, p. 74).

## Summary and Conclusions

Despite advances in European integration, social identification change in the EU has been relatively minor since 1976. However, there has been a slight *increase* in regionalism. It is argued that European integration induces fears about loss of control (politically, culturally, and economically) which "disturbs" identities and people search for a system in which they will feel secure. The EU has enhanced regional powers to some extent and the attraction of the region as a locus of identification has increased along with its capacity to protect its members. Its appeal is further enhanced by the fact that it is readily experienced by its members on a daily basis due to its proximity and accessibility. It should be noted that this analysis of identification change needs to be updated. Unfortunately, that particular identification question has not been asked since 1990.

The results presented in this paper suggest that social integration in the European Union has been extremely limited. That is, European identification is low relative to other forms of identification and, for the most part, it has not increased over time. Given that all of the theories of European integration contend that a sense of community is essential for *advanced* integration, my results suggest that there may be some protest against future federal proposals in the EU. However, the *country by country analyses* provide a more optimistic picture for European identity than that revealed by the pooled European sample. European identification increased significantly in a number of member states. I have argued that these were countries with a long history of collaboration in the EU and BENELUX and which have a high



density of European organisations, suggesting that both the duration and intensity of EU experiences are important for EU identification.

This paper presented a conceptual framework for the study of European identification, central to which are experiences of the EU (social, economic and cultural) and comparisons of these experiences with those of other relevant political systems. There is some evidence to suggest that those who experience the EU also tend to identify with it. However, this analysis is limited in that it employs 1976 data. To my knowledge, no European survey has collected information on a range of EU experiences since that time. The study of European integration and identity would be greatly advanced if theoretically relevant questions were framed for future surveys. My conceptual framework could be used for such purposes.

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