What Leads Young People to Identify with Europe? An Exploration of the Impact of Exposure to Europe and Political Engagement on European Identity among Young Europeans

Reingard Spannring [a], Claire Wallace [b] & Georg Datler [c]

[a] Institute for Educational Sciences, Leopold Franzens University, Innsbruck, Austria

[b] University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK

[c] Austrian Statistical Office, Austria

Published online: 10 Nov 2008.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

What Leads Young People to Identify with Europe? An Exploration of the Impact of Exposure to Europe and Political Engagement on European Identity among Young Europeans

REINGARD SPANNRING*, CLAIRE WALLACE**
& GEORG DATLER***

Institute for Educational Sciences, Leopold Franzens University, Innsbruck, Austria
**University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK*
***Austrian Statistical Office, Austria*

ABSTRACT   *The paper looks at young people's sense of being European in a number of European regions: Madrid and Bilbao, Vienna and Vorarlberg, Manchester and Edinburgh, Chemnitz and Bielefeld, Prague and Bratislava. We considered the ways in which 'exposure' to Europe through travel and speaking languages as well as cognitive mobilisation through discussing politics made young people aged 18–24 more European. However, the most important factor in differentiating ideas of Europe was the region itself with people in Central European regions (Austria, Germany, Czech and Slovak Republics) having much stronger European identification than those in peripheral regions (Spain and the UK). These ideas are explored using both quantitative and qualitative data from the regions and the explanations advanced are framed in terms of a theory of 'entitativity' or people's identification with something beyond themselves.*

KEY WORDS: European identity, young people, languages, mobility, cognitive mobilisation

This paper looks at European identity among young people in selected European regions. Young people have been the target of a variety of EC programmes designed to encourage mobility and participation as ways of promoting a sense of being European. However, it is not clear to what extent such experiences would lead to young people identifying more with Europe, nor why such experiences would make them more 'European'. Hence we look at the relationship between individual

experiences and larger European institutions and spaces through reference to theories of social representation and 'entativity' whilst at the empirical level we look at the impact of 'exposure' to European influences in the form of mobility experiences and languages spoken. We also consider the role of 'cognitive mobilisation' in the form of discussing politics with friends and family as a way of promoting identification with Europe, a factor that was first identified by Ronald Inglehart in 1970. Finally, we look at the role of regional differences in terms of identification with Europe. We consider what impact this has upon their sense of European identity using both quantitative and qualitative data.

The EU programmes targeted at young people have tried to promote their mobility on the one hand and their participation on the other. For example, the SOCRATES programme funds mobility and exchange within the European Union and between member states and non-member states with the aim – among others – to boost language skills, inter-cultural skills and European identity. Under SOCRATES almost 120,000 students per year study in another European country, and almost 25,000 teachers and trainers receive funding to go to another country. More than 10,000 schools are involved in various multinational cooperation projects every year, and 2,000 universities have signed the Erasmus University Charter. SOCRATES is seen as 'a resource to create a united Europe'. First evaluations of these programmes suggest that this is indeed the case (European Commission, 2004). We might assume therefore that these programmes to increase *exposure* to Europe might have had a positive effect upon young people's sense of being European.

The European Commission also tries to encourage other kinds of participation among young people in Europe at a transnational level. Attempts are made to animate the European public sphere and fight political anomie through citizenship education. The Learning and Living Democracy programme 2006–2009, for example, is developed and organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the European Commission and other organisations in order to facilitate this kind of participation. It aims to promote sustainable policies, to support good practice and to encourage inter-state co-operation. How successful are such programmes likely to be? Evidence suggests that these programmes still have a long way to go in building European identity. However, we might assume that stimulating political discussion and participation might in turn lead indirectly to the encouragement of European identity, if the theory of cognitive mobilisation is correct.

In general however, levels of European identity are low in Europe. Knowledge of European citizenship rights and political structures is poor. The impact of decisions and laws at the European level is only felt in an indirect way via national regulations, and the possibility to influence European decision-making processes is perceived as very low. The public space, within which common values, perspectives and visions could be developed at a European level, is limited to an elite, not least because of the national orientations of political parties and media (Eder, 2003; Giesen, 1999). Indeed, the view that the European Union is an abstract, opaque and remote construction makes it seem highly unlikely that European citizens develop a European identity in the same way as a national one. Europe has not much of a cultural, civic or political community which could stimulate the emergence of a group feeling and identification processes in the way that is more familiar in national communities (Delanty, 2002). On the other hand, and others have argued rather for a 'cosmopolitan European identity',

one that recognises diversity and difference rather than being mono-cultural (Beck, 2006; Delanty, 2006). As other papers in this special issue have pointed out, this presupposes a particular level of post-materialist, post-national political development, one perhaps characterised by high levels of mobility, exposure to other values and ideas as well as high levels of cognitive mobilisation (Inglehart, 1970). As well as being regionally variable, these kinds of value systems may also be related to social class (see Pichler, this issue, 2008, pp. 381–396; Thorpe, this issue, 2008, pp. 499–513) because education provides a mechanism for exposure to wider entities and because travel and learning languages require material resources.

The problem with much of the existing literature is that although we know that foreign travel increases levels of identification with Europe, we do not know why. Here, we try to explain this 'missing link' by drawing upon social psychological theories that explore the relationship between individual perceptions and larger institutions and we develop the concept of 'exposure' as a way of characterising this connection. By using the term 'exposure' we try to avoid a causal statement between travel or speaking other European languages and European identification because the relationship is weak and there are also people who do not become European as a result. Rather, we consider the way in which individuals might be introduced to a variety of formative influences that may have lead to them feeling more European.

Our first hypothesis therefore is that the higher the levels of exposure of young people to other cultures and influences, the greater their levels of European identity. Our second hypothesis is that the greater the levels of cognitive mobilisation at a personal level, the higher the levels of European identity. The third hypothesis is that these levels of exposure and cognitive mobilisation would vary between regions because young people in different regions of Europe have differential access to these resources.

Methods

The data were collected in the course of the EC-funded project 'Orientations of Young Men and Women to Citizenship and European Identity'.[1] In this research project a representative survey among 18- to 24-year-olds was conducted in 10 urban areas in Austria, the UK, Germany, Czech and Slovak Republics and Spain.[2] These regions were chosen because in each country there was both a central and a peripheral region. The assumption was that the central region would perhaps better represent national culture and the peripheral one more orientations and that these might in turn be related to European identity. The methodology is more elaborately described in the article by Boehnke and Fuss (this issue, 2008, pp. 466–479), so we will not repeat it here. Hence, within the UK we looked at Manchester and Edinburgh. In Spain, at Madrid and Bilbao. In Germany an eastern and western location were chosen also for this reason (Chemnitz and Bielefeld) whilst in Austria we took the capital, Vienna, in contrast to the extreme Western periphery, Voralberg. From the former Czechoslovakia, we selected Prague with a traditional central national culture and Bratislava as a former regional city. Each location would be likely to have a different status with regard to national, regional and European identification.

In addition, individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were carried out in Vienna. However, before setting out to present the quantitative analysis, we will explore the theoretical underpinning of our hypothesis by looking at why individual experiences would lead to identification with Europe drawing upon qualitative data.

The reason for focusing on young people is that although overall identification with the European Union is low, young people are those most likely to hold such an identification (see Pichler, this issue, 2008, pp. 381–396). Young people have been also considered an object of study in politics because on the one hand they may be open to new ideas and styles that will later become more mainstream. This has enabled some social scientists to identify 'political generations' (Rose & Carnaghan, 1995). A number of people have argued that there has been a general value shift in many societies in the direction of greater political tolerance, especially with regard to gender, gay and lesbian rights and even tolerance of ethnic and other minorities (Bynner *et al.*, 1997) and that young people are leading the way in this respect (Abramson & Inglehart, 1987; Inglehart, 1990). However, other studies have also indicated the growth of xenophobia and nationalism among some groups of young people (Heitmeyer, 1991).

A further argument for the particular status of young people with regard to European identity stems from the work of Karl Mannheim who argues that young people are branded by the significant events that took place during the period in which they became politically aware (Mannheim, 1952). This particular generation of young people have come of age when European integration has intensified following the Maastricht Treaty, the currency union and the discussions around the European constitution. European integration has moved from being purely economic to having more political and social policy dimensions during this period, towards encompassing ever larger parts of public policy and even having the goal of promoting European identity in the population (see Cristiano Bee, this issue, 2008, pp. 431–450). Hence, if we are to find evidence of identification with Europe at all we supposedly find it in this generation of young people rather than the older generations.

The Link between Individual Experience and Identification with Europe

In order to theoretically support the hypothesis that mobility and political engagement are conducive to the development of a European identity we must have a conceptual idea of the process of the emergence of (new) identities. Social cognition theory (Augoustinos & Walker, 1995; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Howard, 2000) starts from the assumption that humans store and process information by categorising it and putting it into cognitive schemas. Self-schemas encompass characteristics, preferences, goals and behaviour patterns we attribute to ourselves alone, whereas group schemas consist of organised information about social positions and stratification statuses, e.g. gender, class, age, ethnicity. Since social positions have a direct impact on the individuals' lives, group schemas and group membership have a major relevance for identification processes (Howard, 2000, p. 368). Similarly, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) maintains that people have social identities, which are defined by group memberships along with personal identities. Both are closely interwoven. Processes of self-categorisation turn 'me' into 'us' and increase the distance to 'them'. One main motivational factor for identifying with a group is seen in its capacity to confer status and enhance self-esteem.

In contrast to these static models, a number of authors have stressed the context-dependent nature of identities (Jenkins, 1996) and the embeddedness in socio-political contexts (Howard, 2000). Hence, it has been argued that major events and processes such as European integration question the structures and meaning of old identities and provoke the emergence of new identities and new relationships

between these identities. They challenge scholars to see identity formation in a more dynamic way (Chryssochoou, 2000b; Howard, 2000).

This link between cognitive structures and social processes is further explored by Moscovici, who argues that information derived from a direct encounter with the facts of the world only constitute a small portion of our knowledge; most information is gathered and processed in the course of social interaction and communication (Moscovici, 1988, p. 215). Representations deal with the contents of everyday thinking, enabling individuals to categorise and relate persons, objects and events. Social representation is therefore mediated by communication with others – by cognitive mobilisation or speaking other languages – which could help to create a particular representation of Europe. A particularly appealing feature of Moscovici's concept in the face of the conditions of multi-cultural and fast-changing societies is his emphasis on the role of representations in turning the strange or unknown into something familiar. The process of coping with the unfamiliar involves anchoring it to an existing social representation by transferring 'a network of concepts and images from one sphere to another, where it then serves as a model' (p. 235). Eventually, the unfamiliar is assimilated and unified in a new representation. In this way, the idea of 'Europe' can become part of young people's everyday consciousness (although we should note that this might not necessarily be a positive identification – it could also lead to more hostile attitudes).

Sociological contributions to the debate on European identity have focused on (the lack of) a common culture, commonly shared values and symbols as well as commonly shared structures, norms and rules (e.g. European citizenship rights) (Delanty, 2005). Here, too, common interpretations of the past as well as shared visions for the community are considered (see Pichler, this issue, 2008, pp. 381–396). Campbell's concept of 'entitativity' based on gestalt principles brings together some of these factors (Campell, 1958, pp. 17–18). Research has been concerned with the antecedents and consequences of entitativity, one of the consequences being identification. Castano *et al.* (2003), for example, have tested the influence of four elements: Common fate, similarity, salience and boundaries on European identity in four separate experiments and found that each of these elements increases the level of identification among those participants who held a moderate view towards the EU. However, the concept still needs to be developed further with respect to the relative importance of the elements and their relationship with each other. Also, as Chryssochoou suggests, the sources of entitativity have different weight in different situations, groups and circumstances (2000b, p. 347). However, we were able to find evidence for each of these elements of entitativity in focus group discussions.

In the literature on the cognitive formation of categories it has been suggested that *similarity* between the parts and their spatial proximity serve as stimuli for such a formation process (de la Haye, 1998). However, similarity and diversity do not seem to offer themselves as opposite poles of a simple axis. Rather, the two have to be seen in the context of familiarity, spatial proximity and boundedness. They are relative concepts with the consequence that unity can indeed be recognised in diversity as the motto of the European Commission proclaims. It may be legitimately argued that travelling in particular increases tolerance towards and familiarity with other cultures so that it becomes easier to integrate them in one larger entity.

> Anne: For me, Europe is a part of the world ... with many different countries
> which fit together nicely, really.

Boundaries, another of the gestalt principles in Campbell's concept, are important markers distinguishing between what counts as similar and what as different by defining the ingroup and outgroups. On a political level this becomes visible in discussions about 'Schengen-land', or the borderless region of the EU where people can travel without passports, the European social model against more market-oriented models, as well as world political conflicts such as the Iraq war. Assessments of the respective arguments may differ, but the very existence of a public debate throughout Europe contributes to the recognition of Europe as a political entity. On a cultural level, boundaries are implied in self-images and stereotypes of others. Homogeneity is often suggested by perceptions of the outgroup, by the status conferred by the membership in the ingroup but is also produced through a process of comparison between ingroup and outgroup. Travelling, especially beyond the political and geographic boundaries of Europe, is one of the means by which individuals are exposed to these stereotypes.

Common fate as the third characteristic of an entity is mainly referred to in the form of anxieties and criticism in the qualitative interviews. However, it is plausible to assume that the politically active young people have visions for Europe linked to their ideologies which were initially developed in a national context – the same process of anchoring might take place in this case as was argued for the knowledge of European political structures above. Indeed, the harshness of some of the criticism and the vehemence of some of the arguments suggest that there is concern for the future of Europe, certainly among the more politically engaged.

> Katharina: If the EU had a common social law or labour law, then we could
> talk about identifying with it, being European. But as long as my
> European citizenship has less value than the freedom of trade I do
> not see why I should identify ...

> Stefan: ... that the people network more, a real European network, that
> people learn to fight for their rights and reach political consciousness,
> that this is their story.

In the qualitative data *salience* appears as an underlying factor, as a situation in which the individual is confronted with some aspect of the European Union. We would therefore choose to see salience not as an additional element but the degree to which other elements are experienced consciously. As has been argued throughout this section, travelling and visits to other countries increase salience in a number of ways. It makes the boundaries between ingroup and outgroup more visible, increases the cognitive knowledge of sub-units of the EU and the feeling of familiarity either via ingroup experiences or perspectives from outside.

> Johanna: There is a very strong emotional component ... and this European
> consciousness probably changes most in our age group and social
> class, because we were away as au pairs.

Public discourse and political involvement also increase the salience of the EU as an entity. That this experience is not only a matter of cognitive mobilisation but also has an emotional dimension was obvious in the heated political debates of the focus groups. It is also expressed in the quote below.

> Petra: It's home because ... I think, that at the moment a lot is changing, for example because of the integration of East and West.

Hence, we can see that social identity theory and the theory of entativity drawn from social psychology can help to explain how individual experiences, such as exposure to European experiences through travel and migration as well as cognitive mobilisation through political discussion could help to create a sense of belonging to some broader entity, one which might call into being a more 'cosmopolitan' identity (Beck, 2006; Delanty, 2006).

The concept of social representations stresses the important role of communication in the production of knowledge. In this sense travelling provides a basis for communication with people from other cultures as well as communication about other cultures on returning home. Both situations help form a representation. The same is true for political discussions which at the current moment in European history can hardly avoid the topic of the European Union in one way or another. This assumption is strengthened by the qualitative interviews of the project in which young people who were politically engaged or had travelled extensively tended to espouse a more coherent, 'holistic' representation of Europe. Some were able to talk about the European Union in a more elaborate way rather than just coming up with catchphrases as was usually the case.

The concept of social representations further explains how existing social representations help integrate new and potentially threatening events and objects, in our case the European Union, into something familiar. It is also possible of course that exposure to other cultures in this way may also help to generate a consciousness of national or regional distinctiveness or even rejection of the other cultures to which one is exposed. There is evidence for this also in the qualitative interviews.

Similarly, someone who has already experienced other European cultures will have more schemes at her/his disposal to deal with the cultural diversity in Europe. For Petra, as one example, travelling experience enables her to recognise similar structures across Europe.

> Petra: I would certainly find my way anywhere in Europe. ... that the culture is no problem, whether I get off the tube in London or have to find a doctor in Italy, there I do not see a difference.

We also considered 'cognitive mobilisation' in the form of political discussion with friends and relatives as a factor that might encourage identification with a larger external community such as Europe. Someone who is familiar with political processes or administrative structures on the national level can more easily integrate information about the EU than somebody who has never thought about these issues at all. This process of anchoring is exemplified by Daniel who is active in the

Austrian Trade Union Youth.[3] For him it is clearly easy to apply his knowledge of (national) decision-making processes to the European level.

> Daniel: It would be important that the trade union is organised on an international level, that would be a point where real codetermination could be exercised. If the European Trade Union had the possibility to intervene somehow ... that would be a real goal.

In our own research we have operationalised these ideas of 'exposure' to external cultures and entities in terms of experiences of travel to other countries in the recent past on the assumption that this will bring an awareness of otherness. A further way of exploring this idea of exposure is to look at personal migration experiences – whether the young person has had experience of having lived elsewhere or whether close members of their immediate family have such an experience, since we would assume that this also brings awareness of other Europeans. Second, we have used knowledge of foreign languages as a measure of 'exposure' to other cultures since this brings an awareness of other cultures. Speaking a foreign language means not only being able to communicate with people outside of your own country but also being able to understand different ways of thinking and acting. Hence, we have used the idea of 'exposure' as a general concept for embracing a variety of personal experiences that might give a more general appreciation of a greater European community, and possibly therefore a sense of belonging to a larger entity.

We also considered cognitive mobilisation in the form of discussion of politics with those in the immediate environment as a possible vehicle for raising awareness of other cultures and issues beyond the immediate environment, since both in terms of existing theory and in terms of evidence from the focus groups in Vienna, this seemed a way in which awareness of Europe was raised.

In the next section we turn to the survey data to show the patterns of European identity as well as exposure and cognitive mobilisation vary across Europe in order to test some of these assumptions.

Variations in European Identity

The measurement of European identity uses an additive index upon two variables:

- Q68: 'Now I would like to ask about the strength of how you feel about being different sorts of nationality? On a scale of 0–4 (READ CODES) how do you feel about being (Region: e.g. Scottish), (Nationality: e.g. British); European?'.
- Q71: 'Using the scale on this card, how would you rate the importance of the following in terms of who you are, that is, how you feel or think about yourself as a person?' (List of items including) 'Being a citizen of the European Union'.

This operationalisation enables us to grasp different aspects of identification with Europe: Q68 addresses the emotional component, whereas Q71 asks for self-evaluation. In the bivariate correlation analysis the two variables achieve Pearson's r of .479 ($p < .01$) and a Cronbach's α of .6281. In Table 1 the mean value of the

Table 1.   Identification with Europe in the research regions, mean values

Country	Region	Mean
Austria	Vorarlberg	4.57
	Vienna	4.51
CZ	Prague	4.92
SK	Bratislava	5.27
GER	Chemnitz	4.77
	Bielefeld	4.77
Spain	Bilbao	3.07
	Madrid	4.24
UK	Manchester	3.32
	Edinburgh	2.77
Overall mean value		4.26

identification index is shown for each region. As two variables scaled 0–4 make up the additive index, the resulting scale is 0–8. The higher the value, the higher is the identification with Europe. This variable was then used as the dependent variable in our regression analysis.

By far the highest values occur in Bratislava followed by Prague, regions that became part of the EU in 2004.[4] The German and Austrian research sites also show relatively high values. There are no regional differences in Germany and in Austria, despite the different locations chosen, with Chemnitz situated in former Eastern Germany and Bielefeld situated in former Western Germany or with Vienna representing the centre of Austria and Vorarlberg representing the periphery of Austria. In Spain the picture is different: Identification with Europe as measured here is much higher in Madrid than in Bilbao, in the Basque region. In Great Britain the identification with Europe is below average, but it is considerably lower in Edinburgh than in Manchester. Previous research on this data set has indicated that national, regional and European identities are not necessarily exclusive – they can co-exist (see Jamieson, 2002). However, it does seem to be the case that different regions encourage different senses of being European. This may be to do with the fact that the levels of exposure in different regions, as we have defined it, may vary and therefore it is necessary to undertake a regression analysis to see whether regional differences are still present once exposure, cognitive mobilisation and other possible influences such as education, have been taken into account.

'Exposure' to Europe

In order to explore the idea of exposure to Europe, in the following sections we look at each of our key explanatory variables descriptively to examine their patterns across the different regions, including mobility, knowledge of European languages and cognitive mobilisation. We then go on to do a regression analysis to look at which of these might be most important for European identity, once we have taken into account other factors such as education, gender and age (within the general category of 18- to 24-year-olds). We also include region in this regression to see if there is an independent effect of regional culture.

Mobility Experience

Mobility experience means the opportunity to get in touch with places and people in other European countries and we have operationalised this in terms of how many countries a young person has visited since the age of 16 (Figure 1).

Although in our analysis mobility experience is represented only as the number of countries the respondent has already visited – and therefore lengths and sorts of the stays abroad are not included – striking differences occur. In the Central European states of the Czech and Slovak Republics, Austria and Germany, around 90% of the young people have already been abroad. Large shares of the respondents, from 46.6% in Bratislava to 64.3% in Vienna, have already visited more than three European countries. Notably again there are no big differences between the former Eastern and Western Germanies. In Bilbao two-thirds have already been abroad, but only a tiny minority have more numerous travelling experiences (2.1%). In Madrid more than half of the respondents have never been abroad. Two-thirds of the respondents have already visited the Continent; in Manchester the proportion is just over half. In Edinburgh extensive travelling experience is three times higher than in Manchester, although it is still well below the values for Central Europe.

Migration

In this context migration experience or background is considered important for two reasons. First, when in-migrants come from other continents their destination is Europe, or at least a country in Europe, which could make them sensitive to Europe as an object to identify with. Second, when in-migrants come from other European countries, migration experience and especially the international personal networks
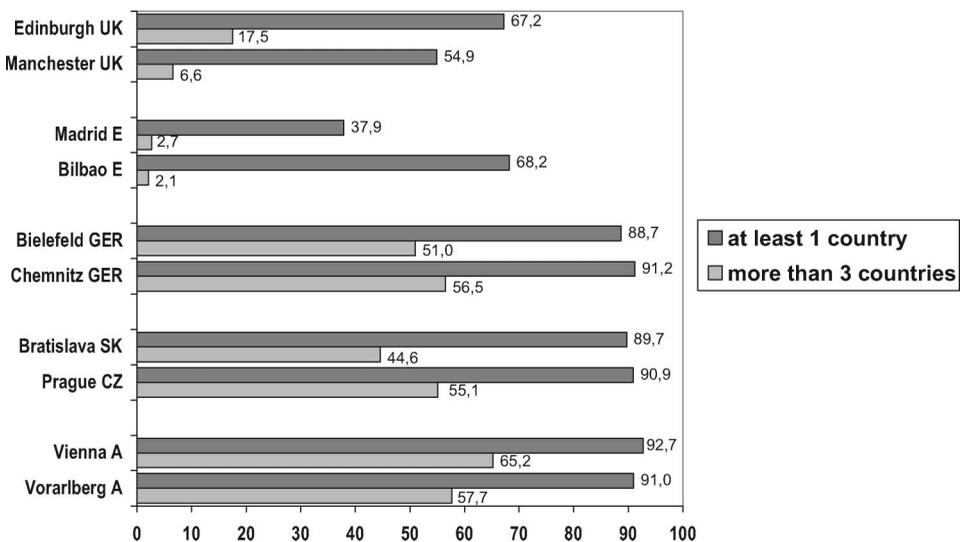

Figure 1. Mobility experience: Number of countries visited since the age of 16, percentages of respondents

that might persist or come into being could influence the identification with Europe. However, as the share of respondents with this kind of experience is too low to make any valid difference to the regression analysis, no distinction has been made according to which countries in-migrants. Instead, the regression model includes information whether the respondent himself/herself was born in another country (migration experience) and whether her/his mother or father was born in another country (migration background). Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents who can be described by either the first or the second item.

Migration experience or background is highest in Bielefeld and in Vienna with more than a third of the respondents having had such experiences. Vorarlberg, although a more rural region, is not so much behind with 26.2%. Migration experience or background is much less common in Bratislava, Prague, Chemnitz, Bilbao and Madrid, with around 5%. Here, there are big differences within Germany with Bielefeld having a much higher number of people with migration experiences than Chemnitz. Within Great Britain the proportion is more than twice as high in Manchester (22.7%) than it is in Edinburgh (11.0%), reflecting the tradition of Commonwealth migration in the former city.

Knowledge of Languages

Knowledge of foreign European languages can be regarded as important for the identification with Europe for at least two reasons. First, European languages transport cultural information, which is partly distinct from other languages and partly can be attributed to a common 'Europeanness'. Second, knowledge of foreign European languages enables people to communicate with people from other European countries.

Figure 3 shows the proportions of young people who speak at least one foreign European language in addition to their mother tongue. Included are all languages that are in use as official languages in European countries. For some countries it is not
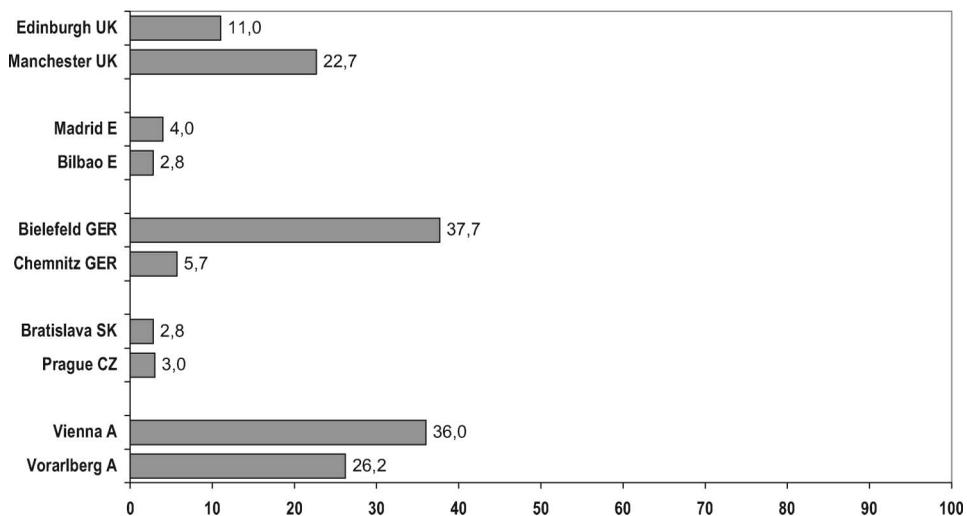

Figure 2.   Migration experience/background, percentages of respondents
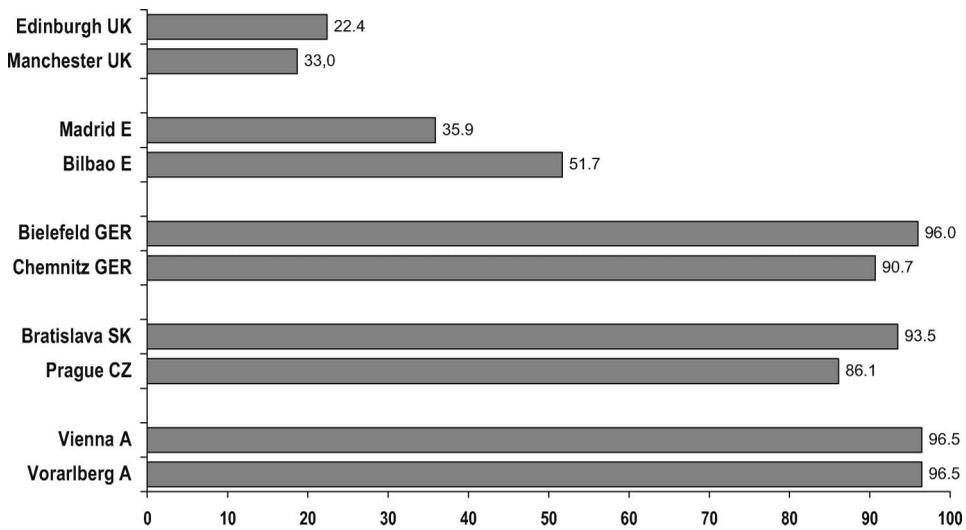
Figure 3. Knowledge of at least one foreign European language, percentages of respondents

quite clear whether they belong to Europe or not. When respondents were asked if Turkey and Russia were European countries in the qualitative interviews, the responses were ambiguous: Around half of the respondents were in favour of regarding the country as European and half of the respondents were against it. However, in the figures presented below, Russian and Turkish – in the case that they were not the mother tongue of the respondents – are included. More extensive analysis of language knowledge has been carried out by other members of this team (Fuss *et al.*, 2004).

In the Central European states around 90% or even slightly more of the respondents are able to communicate in at least one foreign European language. In Bilbao nearly half of the respondents do not speak any additional European language (Basque language was excluded) and in Madrid nearly two-thirds of the respondents cannot communicate in any other European language than Spanish. In both UK regions it is a clear minority – around a fifth of the respondents – who speak foreign European languages. We should bear in mind however, that both English and Spanish are to some extent world languages, in contrast to German, Czech and Slovak, so the pressure to learn foreign languages is not so high in those countries. Even German represents a large language community and therefore the need to learn other languages may be felt less in German-speaking countries than in the Czech and Slovak Republics. However, knowledge of foreign languages is widespread amongst young people in the German-speaking countries, just as high or higher than in the Czech and Slovak republics. We assume that the lack of knowledge of foreign languages can nevertheless limit a sense of 'exposure' to other cultures.

Cognitive Mobilisation

The variable we used to capture cognitive mobilisation codes the reported frequency of how often a respondent talks to family and friends about political and social

issues. The question was coded on a scale from 0 to 4, high values indicating high cognitive mobilisation (Table 2).

The regional differences in cognitive mobilisation presented in Table 2 are by far smaller than those concerning 'exposure'. However, the most important are the following: The mean value of 'talking to family and friends about social and political issues' is noticeably lower in Manchester and Edinburgh than in the other research regions.

What are the Effects of Exposure and Cognitive Mobilisation on European Identity?

Before turning to the regression model a clarification concerning causality might be appropriate. As has become clear in the section on the theoretical background we are dealing with factors that might facilitate an identification with Europe rather than with the direct process of identification. Hence the regression model on identification with Europe developed here is not supposed to operate with the 'causes' of identification with Europe. Instead, we perceive the independent variables in the model as situations and experiences that open up the opportunity to develop a European identity. An example might be helpful: When the variable 'number of European countries visited since the age of 16' is included in the regression model, it does not mean that the sheer number is regarded as the cause of identification with Europe, but it is an indicator of the experience someone has with other countries and the people there. As argued earlier, this experience might enhance identification with Europe.

The regression model is designed to examine the following hypotheses: First, the more 'exposure' to Europe, the stronger is the identification with Europe. 'Exposure' to Europe is captured through mobility experience, migration experience or background and knowledge of European languages. Second, the higher the cognitive mobilisation towards Europe, the stronger is the identification with Europe. Third, given the way in which our sample was constructed through regional selection, we consider whether regions might affect the extent of identification with Europe. In particular, we would expect the peripheral regions within each country to have a greater identification with Europe, because the central regions might have a stronger identification with the national culture. Conversely, we might expect that the more central regions within the European Union (Austria, Germany) would have stronger

Table 2.   Cognitive mobilisation, mean values (scale 0–4)

Country	Region	Mean value 'Discussion'
Austria	Vorarlberg	2.23
	Vienna	2.42
CZ	Prague	2.34
SK	Bratislava	2.05
GER	Chemnitz	2.32
	Bielefeld	2.34
Spain	Bilbao	2.56
	Madrid	2.35
UK	Manchester	1.74
	Edinburgh	1.70
Overall mean value		2.22

identification with Europe than more peripheral countries (the UK and Spain). Alternatively, we could expect that the length of belonging to the European Union might have an influence due to the fact that the European programmes will have been active in those countries the longest, which would put Germany in the category of the strongest identification with Europe, followed by the UK, Spain, Austria and finally the Czech and Slovak Republics, which were not yet members of the EU at the time of this survey.

In addition, we have controlled for gender, age and formal level of education given that these factors have been shown to affect identification with Europe in national representative samples.

With respect to the direction of our hypothesis one may wonder whether the relationship could be the other way round. Indeed, young people could be argued to be more likely to immerse themselves in other European cultures and languages because they already feel more European. In the absence of an adequate theoretical explanation for the sources of such a prior sense of Europeanness, however, the direction of influence suggested here is the more plausible one.

Since the assumption of linear effects proved to be far too strict in linear regression for the variables as they are measured here, we have constructed a General Linear Model, where all variables are included as dummy variables, i.e. regression co-efficients can be interpreted as mean value differences in the dependent variable that can be attributed to the effect of an independent variable. Statistical control of the other independent variables ensures that estimates only show effects that can be attributed to a certain factor. The independent variables have a reference category, which makes up the baseline respondent with the following characteristics: The respondent is female, her level of formal education is 'basic first school leaving qualification', she is aged 18–21, has already visited 1–3 European countries, speaks one additional European language, has neither migration experience nor background and discusses political and social issues sometimes.

Table 3 shows the parameter estimates of the regression model. Significant regression co-efficients indicate a significant difference compared to the reference group. Therefore it also depends on the choice of the reference groups which co-efficients become significant. We use these estimates when looking at differences of identification with Europe within the categories of an independent variable. When we want to assess the explanatory power of an independent variable in comparison to other independent variables, we look at partial eta squared. Partial eta squared is a measure of the explained variability in the dependent variable explained by a certain independent variable. Having a look at the values of partial eta squared it becomes evident that regional differences show the highest explanatory power in the models (partial eta squared = .056). But there is also a significant influence of mobility experience (partial eta squared = .004), knowledge of foreign European languages (partial eta squared = .008) and cognitive mobilisation (partial eta squared = .018). Overall, our model is able to explain 16.5% of the variation of identification with Europe. Thus, our account is far from giving a perfect prediction of identification with Europe, but it does include factors that contribute to the explanation of identification with Europe among young people.

The co-efficients of the control variables show that identification with Europe is lower among male than among female respondents. Age is not an important factor

Table 3. Parameter estimates of the regression model[a]

		Dependent variable: European identity Reference region: Vienna	
		Regression coefficient	Partial eta squared
Control variables			
Gender (ref. Female)	Male	−.168*	.002*
Age (ref. 18–21)	22–24	−.051	.000
Education (ref. Basic first school leaving qualification)	Leaving school before 15/16	−.258	.001
	Basic apprenticeship qualification	−.001	
	Higher apprenticeship qualification or university-entry qualification	.018	
	University degree	−.207	
Regions	Vienna	reference	
	Vorarlberg	.161	.056**
	Prague	.440**	
	Bratislava	.795**	
	Chemnitz	.386**	
	Bielefeld	.336*	
	Bilbao	−.966**	
	Madrid	.373*	
	Manchester	−.501**	
	Edinburgh	−1.002**	
Exposure			
Mobility (ref. 1–3 countries)	No countries	−.016	.004**
	4–6 countries	.245**	
	More than 6 countries	.434**	
Languages (ref. 1 additional language)	No additional language	−.341**	.008**
	2 additional languages	.266**	
	3 or more additional languages	.522**	
Migration (ref. No experience/background)	Experience	−.03	.000
	Background	.183	.001
Cognitive mobilisation			
Discussion of political and social issues (ref. Sometimes)	Never	−.782**	.018**
	Rarely	−.291**	
	Often	.239**	
	Very often	−.161*	
Intercept		4.137	
Number of cases included		3,689	
Adjusted R^2		.165	

[a]The model is calculated with the program package SPSS using the General Linear Model (GLM) module with Typ III Sum of Squares.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

for identification with Europe among young people (note that the sample is restricted to persons aged 18–24). The higher the educational level, the more identification with Europe, although Higher Education has a small negative effect. The paper by Chris Thorpe (this issue, 2008, pp. 499–513) suggests that Higher Education might provide a platform for the creation of cultural capital that would create a greater awareness of Europe. However, it might also promote critical perspectives.

- *Exposure*: The regression co-efficient for mobility experience shows that identification with Europe is weakest among the respondents who have never been abroad, it is slightly stronger for those who have already been to 1–3

European countries (reference category), considerably higher for those who have visited 4–6 European countries and strongest among the group of young people that have already been to more than 6 countries. Knowledge of European languages provides a similar pattern: identification with Europe is weakest among young people who do not speak any European foreign languages and increases with the number of languages respondents can communicate in. Own migration experience does not influence identification with Europe. Detailed analysis showed that the impact of migration background is too small to be significant in our model.

- *Cognitive mobilisation*: In general the results concerning cognitive mobilisation back up our hypotheses. The more young people discuss social and political topics with their families or friends, the stronger is the identification with Europe. Interestingly, however, there is a negative co-efficient for those who discuss political and social issues very often. A possible explanation could be that there is a politically engaged group of young people who are critical of the EU and address a lack of democracy and transparency in EU institutions. A further hint in this direction is the negative co-efficient for young people with a university degree. Although it seems conducive to European identity to know something about the European Union, too detailed knowledge may put people off. This finding may point to a complex relationship between the intellectual, emotional and attitudinal dimension of European identities whose weight may be context dependent.

- *Regions*: We have already seen from our descriptive charts and tables that there are important regional differences. However, this might be because the explanatory variables are themselves strongly differentiated – people are more likely to learn languages in Bratislava or Vienna than they are in Scotland. In the regression analysis, the co-efficients for the regions indicate regional differences that are freed from any differences in the other independent variables, e.g. differences in educational structure or mobility experience. Therefore they can be interpreted as a hint to the 'core identification with Europe' in a region. Comparing all other regions to Vienna our model shows significant positive co-efficients for Prague, Bratislava, Chemnitz and Bielefeld and significant negative ones for Bilbao, Manchester and Edinburgh. These results indicate that the 'core identification with Europe' is higher in the first group and lower in the second group in comparison to Vienna. Therefore, even once we have removed the effect of our other variables, important regional differences remain that cannot be otherwise explained, and in fact these are the strongest effects. The positive regression co-efficient for Madrid signals that young people in Madrid reveal a relatively strong identification with Europe, even though they have less mobility experience and less knowledge of European languages. The findings for Bilbao, Manchester and Edinburgh point to the importance of regional cultures that are less sympathetic to Europe than those in other regions explored here. Therefore, it is not so much length of membership of the European Union that is important, nor is it the effect of core and peripheral regions within countries. Rather it seems that it is the location with respect to Europe as a whole that might be important. Young people growing up in regions that are a long way from the centre – peripheral geographically – are less concerned with Europe than those growing

up nearer the centre of Europe. Indeed, the strongest identification with Europe, once we have taken other factors into consideration, is found in Bratislava, followed by Prague, areas that were not even members of the European Union at the time of the survey.

The results bear out the first two hypotheses – that exposure to foreign cultures (through language knowledge and mobility) and cognitive mobilisation would increase identification with Europe. Out of these, cognitive mobilisation was the strongest factor. However, both of these postulated influences were rather weak. The third hypothesis – that there would be strong regional difference – was by far the strongest factor. The regional differences were very stark, partly because each of the variables we are considering had very strong regional differences, but even once we have controlled for these, the regional differences remain the strongest. However, further analysis on a country basis proved inconclusive because the small sample size rendered most of the results insignificant. The results do bear out those of Florian Pichler (this issue, 2008, pp. 381–396) who found that the basis for identifying with Europe was very different across European countries. The results imply that the more peripheral a country is geographically, the less they will identify with Europe. However, this could also be an effect of regional political culture. In the UK for example, the dominant political discourse is strongly anti-European, whereas the 'return to Europe' of the Eastern European communist countries might have created a temporary sympathy towards things European. The fact that national and regional political discourse is far more prominent than European political discourse helps to reinforce these geographical and cultural tendencies.

Conclusions

Based on the concepts of 'exposure', social representations and entitativity we have tried to argue why it is plausible that travelling and political discussions should increase identification with Europe. Qualitative data from two Austrian focus groups illustrated our line of argument. However, they also highlighted the fact that travelling and political engagement is no inevitable corollary of European identification. Rather, they have to be seen as opportunities for forming social representations of a more or less entitative community, which may serve as a basis for identification processes. However, the theory does not explain which factors are necessary to produce identification once a community is acknowledged as such. For this reason we turned to the empirical research to look at the effects of exposure to other cultures and cognitive mobilisation as possible influences.

The survey data confirm the initial hypotheses that both exposure and cognitive mobilisation do have some small effect overall and thus lend support to the efforts of the European Commission to increase identification via exchange programmes and a strengthened European public space. This would imply that European programmes to encourage mobility and participation among young people might be worthwhile in the long run, but they would not overcome the effect of growing up in a particular region. The region was the strongest influence on European identification, even once we had accounted for the variations in language education, travel and political participation in the different countries. The fact that young people in both UK

regions and in Bilbao were far less likely to identify with Europe than other regions points to the geographical peripheralisation as a factor in European identification. However, it might also be strongly influenced by regional political discourse and culture which is beyond the scope of our survey here. The fact that young people in Prague and especially Bratislava were strongly European, even after other factors have been taken into consideration, could provide further evidence of the different basis of European identification described by Pichler (this issue, 2008, pp. 381–396): Central European countries saw this in historical terms, but in the UK, identification with Europe was determined more by contemporary political issues. These results would imply that the European Commission should concentrate on how to bring peripheral regions more into the European fold.

Notes

[1] Website http://www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/youth/.
[2] Edinburgh $N = 308$, Manchester $N = 364$, Madrid $N = 401$, Bilbao $N = 424$, Bielefeld $N = 400$, Chemnitz $N = 400$, Bratislava $N = 397$, Prague $N = 396$, Vienna $N = 400$, Vorarlberg $N = 400$. In total $N = 3,980$.
[3] This and the following quotes are taken from two focus group discussions which were carried out in Vienna within the frame of the EU-project described above. The young people who took part in these discussions might be characterised as belonging to the European elite: Well educated and mostly middle class. One group consisted of young people who had already been abroad for a longer period of time either as an au pair, as an exchange student or travelling on her/his own accord. For the other group we had invited active members of youth organisations such as Catholic Youth, Conservative Youth and Trade Union Youth. In the following section we will present some of the statements not as proof but as illustrations of our conceptual considerations.
[4] The data were collected in 2002, i.e. before the accession of the Slovak and Czech Republic.

References

Abramson, P. R. & Inglehart, R. (1987) Generational replacement and the future of post-materialist values, *Journal of Politics*, 49(1), pp. 231–241.

Augoustinos, M. & Walker, I. (1995) *Social Cognition: An Integrated Introduction* (London: Sage).

Beck, U. (2006) *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press).

Bee, C. (2008) The 'institutionally constructed' European identity: Citizenship and public sphere narrated by the Commission, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 9(4), pp. 431–450.

Boehnke, K. & Fuss, D. (2008) What part does Europe play in the identity building of young European adults?, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 9(4), pp. 466–479.

Bynner, J., Chisholm, L., *et al.* (1997) *Youth, Citizenship and Social Change in a European Context* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate).

Campbell, D. T. (1958) Common fate, similarity, and other indices of the status of aggregates of persons and social entities, *Behavioural Science*, 3, pp. 14–25.

Castano, E., Yzerbyt, V. & Bourguignon, D. (2003) We are one and I like it: The impact of in group entitativity on ingroup identification, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 33, pp. 735–754.

Chryssochoou, X. (2000a) Memberships in a superordinate level: Re-thinking European Union as a multi-national society, *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 10, pp. 403–420.

Chryssochoou, X. (2000b) Multicultural societies: Making sense of new environments and identities, *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 10, pp. 343–354.

de la Haye, A. M. (1998) *La Categorisation des Personnes* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble).

Delanty, G. (2002) Models of European identity: Reconciling universalism and particularism, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 3, pp. 345–359.

Delanty, G. (2005) What does it mean to be European, *Innovation*, 18, pp. 11–22.

Delanty, G. (2006) The cosmopolitan imagination: Critical cosmopolitanism and social theory, *British Journal of Sociology*, 57, pp. 25–47.

Eder, K. (2003) Öffentlichkeit und Demokratie, in: M. Jachtenfuchs & B. K. Koch (Eds) *Europäische Integration*, pp. 85–120 (Opladen, Germany: Leske & Budrich).

European Commission (2004) Interim Evaluation Report on the Results Achieved and on the Qualitative and Quantitative Aspects of the Implementation of the Second Phase of the Community Action Programme in the Field of Education 'Socrates', Brussels. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/evaluation/intsocrates_en.pdf.

Fiske, S. T. & Taylor, S. E. (1991) *Social Cognition* (New York: McGraw-Hill).

Fuss, D., Garcia-Albacete, G. & Rodrígues-Monter, M. (2004) The role of language skills and foreign country experiences in the development of European identity, *Sociologia – Slovak Sociological Review*, 3, pp. 273–292.

Giesen, B. (1999) Europa als Konstruktion der Intellektuellen, in: R. Viehoff & R. T. Segers (Eds) *Kultur, Identität, Europa. Über die Schwierigkeiten und Möglichkeiten einer Konstruktion* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp).

Heitmeyer, W. (1991) Xenophobia: Modernisation's curse, *European Affairs*, 5, pp. 51–57.

Howard, J. (2000) Social psychology of identities, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, pp. 367–393.

Inglehart, R. (1970) Cognitive mobilization and European identity, *Comparative Politics*, 3, pp. 45–70.

Ingelhart, R. (1990) *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Jamieson, L. (2002) Theorizing identity, nationality and citizenship: Implications for European citizenship identity, *Slovak Sociological Review*, 34(6), pp. 507–532.

Jenkins, R. (1996) *Social Identity* (London and New York: Routledge).

Mannheim, K. (1952) The problem of generations, in: K. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, pp. 276–322 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

Moscovici, S. (1988) Notes towards a description of social representations, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 18, pp. 211–250.

Rose, R. & Carnaghan, E. (1995) Generational effects on attitudes to communist regimes: A comparative analysis, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 11(1), pp. 28–56.

Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. (1986) The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour, in: S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds) *Psychology and Intergroup Relations*, pp. 7–12 (Chicago: Nelson-Hall).

Thorpe, C. (2008) The distinguishing function of European identity: Attitudes towards and visions of Europe and the European Union among young Scottish adults, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 9(4), pp. 499–513.