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REFERENCE POINTS OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY: CONCEPTUALIZING IDENTITY BEYOND THE NATION-STATE*

INTRODUCTION

This article formulates and introduces a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding the nature and characteristics of collective (state) identities, especially European identity here. This conceptual framework shall give new impetus to conduct new and comprehensive research on collective (state) identities in and beyond the nation-state. It has the advantage of being applicable to all kinds of collective identities—from simple private associations, complex nation-states and supra- or transnational political systems like that of the European Union. It shall ultimately not only contribute to finding 'off-the-shelf' definitions of complex and, partly, constructed collective (state) identities, but to first defining typical reference points of collective identities in and beyond the nation-state and to testing the latter against a scientifically established set of functional criteria.

Why is political science interested in the question of understanding collective (state) identities such as that of the European Union?[1] One reason is that the forma-

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1 This article is on the question of European identity. While the European Union does not comprise the whole of Europe, the author still considers the European Union as the only proper object for studying collective European (state) identity. The concept of state identity comprises both cultural and more constructed or contested and thus political facets of European identity.

tion of political identities can be located in the sphere of the political, which is and will always remain the sphere of conflict and power (Mouffe 2010). Giesen (1999, 124) furthermore it speaks of public struggles for recognition when it comes to the formation of identity. The historian, Wolfgang Schmale (2010a, 31), even considers political science a pioneer of historical identity research. In fact, it was Werner Weidenfeld (1985), a major political scientist on European integration, who was among the first to begin to specifically deal with the question of European identity in post-World War II Europe. Politicians have always used strategies to form identity in a given territory. In this context, Citrin (2001, 290) conceives identity politics as the "mobilization of people around group pride." It should be clear now that (collective) identity has an inherently political character, hence the interest of political science in this subject area.

Castano (2004, 40f) delivers another set of reasons why research on (European) or transnational identity is useful. He showed that, until 1990, Eurobarometer surveys brought to light that European integration was gradually considered an asset or good among Europeans. However, loyalty has not changed in a way as to form a European identity ever since. These surveys have only presented a gradual rise in support for EU institutions with record lows in recent years. After the Single European Act (SEA) of 1987 transferred ever more sovereignty from the member states to the supranational level, the question of political legitimacy arose again. It seemed that a sense of belonging was needed. Economic policies alone did not suffice anymore. So Jacques Delors' statement that "people do not fall in love with markets" gained new importance and actuality (p. 41). Strong identification with the European project has been a rare commodity ever since.

Against this background, this article intends to elaborate on a conceptual framework to grasp the functionality of so-called 'reference points' of European identity. It is necessary to elaborate an adequate conceptualization of (European) identity as a form of collective (politico-cultural) transnational identity. Upon a comprehensive review of literature and empirical contributions to the question of collective identity formation, the author argues that the best way to conceptualize (European) identity is to create a system of concepts that allows for the inductive (theory-oriented) analysis of the above mentioned reference points (Bezugspunkte) of European identity, which can be tested applying a set of 'functional criteria' that should allow for the assessment of the suitability of the reference points to foster European identity as a form of transnational collective identity. Beware that this article—as a first step—only aims at defining a methodological framework to conceptualize and measure the functionality of (European) reference points of identity —reference points that are typical of collective (state) identities. This article thus constitutes a theoretical approach to analyzing collective identity.

The article here presents ethnos[2] reference points of state identity like territory, history and language; and demos[3] reference points such as values, symbols, and the public or public sphere (in the sense of a European public, in German *Öffentlichkeit*). The functional criteria are exclusivity (*abgrenzbar*), tangibility (*erfahrbar*) and plausibility (*plausibel*).

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[2] Ethnos refers to the conception of a people as an imagined community of common descent and affiliation. Territory, history and language are elements that make up this community of common descent and affiliation, and are thus perennial reference points of a people's identity that have allegedly always been there. They are not disputed, and therefore they can be called pre-political in the meaning of ethnos (see, e.g. Nowotny 2000).

[3] Demos, in turn, refers to the conception of a people as a politically defined community of public debate, dispute as well as conflict and interest alignment. In this sense, values, symbols and the public sphere are subject and object of conflict, debate and change, and are thus political in the meaning of demos. They are not perennial (see, e.g. Nowotny 2000).

Before elaborating and explaining the conceptual framework of the 'reference points' of identity and their 'functional criteria' mentioned above, there is a need to first give an overview of identity theory, and, secondly, to formulate some epistemological considerations that feed into the third part of this article—the methodological framework to conceptualize identity.

1. ON THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY IN GENERAL AND THEORIES OF IDENTITY SPECIFICALLY

1.1. General remarks on identity—individual and collective identity

This article mainly focuses on the phenomenon of collective identity. However, the author is convinced that it is crucial to depict the various understandings of identity in general as well as its various levels, for collective identity cannot be grasped without looking at the concept of individual identity. Identity is an elusive concept and denotes a lot of meanings and conceptions depending on the scientific and epistemological perspectives applied when trying to analyze, grasp and explain it. Let us make some general remarks on the concept of identity before going on to explain the two major theories of collective identity—essentialism and constructivism.

Given the perspective one adopts, identity can mean and denote various things. Some recognize its ontological/essentialist nature while others highlight its constructivist characteristics. Some might even combine the two. Referring to Max Weber (1988a, 608), people have to make a choice which God they believe in. This means that there is no ultimate truth attributed to any theory or definition of identity. It is rather the discursive power of scientists, politicians and other actors that determines the dominance of any perspective (see, e.g. Foucault 1991).

The author decided to combine ontology and constructivism when it comes to explaining identity. Ontology is the study of the principles and reasons of being, among other things (Prechtl 2005). From an ontological point of view, one could consider identity a principle of the existence of individuals. Erich Fromm (2001, 99), a popular German psychotherapist and social scientist, said that each and every human being requires a feeling of him or herself, a feeling of identity. In this sense, identity denotes the uniqueness of an individual. If one lacks that knowledge of or feeling for the self, one simply cannot exist and goes crazy, according to Fromm. Roughly put, there is an ontological core inherent in any personal (individual) identity, which the author distinguishes from collective identity. If one denies such a core, then one seems to deny diversity and difference, which is constitutive of an individual.

That does not mean, however, that a person's identity does not change at all. An individual always interacts with the outside world, which does have an impact on his or her identity (see, e.g. Fromm 2001). Let us explain this in more detail: there is one identity that denotes the self, the individual, and there is the identity of the-self-in-relation-to-others and to the outside world. The latter is subject to change in the course of a person's life. However, an individual always remains an individual. In other words, I am always I. Persons or individuals do change, but they need some "permanence amid change," as Plummer (2003, 281) puts it.

In this context, Utzinger (2005) refers to the indispensability of the internal coherence of the identity of a person. In the course of one's life a person shares attitudes and views with others, which can lead to the association of individuals with others in order to form a group that has a common purpose and thus a common or collective identity different from others (exclusiveness). Identity etymologically contains the syllables "idem" (to be similar) (p. 240). Thus collective identities require the exclusion of out-groups. The author posits that, while individual identity is changeable (constructivist view) and permanent at the same time (ontological perspective), collective identity and identities are merely social constructs, imagined communities (Anderson 1996, 15f), which might endure for a while but are always potentially subject to change. According to this view, nations are also imagined communities in the sense of collective identities, which are based on shared and imagined pictures of commonness among the individual members of any country. If citizens of a nation did not relate to certain imagined common features, we could not identify with people we have never seen before. Collective identity in the form of constructed shared interests and values thus bind people together in an imagined community.

Identities evolve from the bottom, from the top or even from a combination of the latter two. Exclusive identity is a misunderstanding of nationalism, and hence the denial of a European identity as a result of the belief that the latter replaces national identity (Schmale 2010a, 37). Social psychology studies have clearly falsified or at least mitigated the thesis of exclusive identities by showing that identities complement each other rather than mutually excluding one another (see, e.g. Citrin 2001; Citrin and Sides 2004).

Identity functions to define the self of an individual or collective. Communication science posits that identity has a clear function in the sense of self-definition. There are clear exclusion and inclusion mechanisms working behind this self-definition concept of identity (see, e.g. Schmale 2010a).

Sociology holds that identity provides collectives with continuity and peace within the collective by shifting aggression to the outside. Identity, to a certain degree, transforms diversity into unity. Ultimately identity legitimizes and constitutes a political instrument of power (Ibid.), which is a very interesting finding for political scientists.

1.2. Theories of identity

There have been indeed many attempts to describe Europeanness, and to construct the concept of Europe and the common features of European identity over time. Schmale (Ibid., 76ff) mentions, among others, the works of Sebastian Münster, Voltaire, Rousseau, William Robertson, Herder, Guizot, Halecki and Schieder in this context, all of the latter having different conceptions of what constitutes the European self. Michael Gehler (2005), for instance, offers a nice depiction of ideas and plans on the future construction of Europe from Dante Alighieri to the Karlspreis in Aachen, which is awarded to people who have significantly contributed to European unification. So there have long been plans on how to create a common Europe, ever since the 14th century when Dante Alighieri (1872)[4] postulated a federation of Europe against the background of his rejection of the ecclesial/papal domination of the state. However, the author wants to focus on the most recent identity theories in the following.

[4] See digital version on google.com.

Broadly speaking, there are two collective identity theories. They have evolved from the question of whether pre-political (ethnos) or political (demos) reference points of identity contribute to the formation of collective identities (Wagner 2006). The author first selectively introduces some classic and ideal types of identity theories with their main varieties. They are known as essentialist and constructivist identity theories. These identity theories do not just apply to the case of European, supra-national identity, but to a much larger extent to national identities, as can be seen in the four-field-typology (essentialism: supra-nationalism and ethno-nationalism; constructivism: bounded integration and post-nationalism) in Table 1 below. That does not mean, however, that the theories are oblivious to the concept of European identity. There are additional subcategories of the two latter theories that specifically try to look at identification with the European Union and the nature of European identity, thus focusing on supranational aspects as well, especially in the field of social constructivism within European Studies (see, e.g. Risse 2007) and what the author labels constructivist social-psychology (see, e.g. Castano 2004; Citrin and Sides 2004). Table 1 depicts the premises and main positions of significant essentialist and constructivist identity theories.

Table 1. Typology of identity theories

	Essentialism	**Constructivism**
Reference Points	Pre-political (ethnos); nation	Political (demos); nation
Ideal Type Position	Collective identities, by nature, have an unchangeable core or essence	Collective identities are malleable because they are subject to conflict and contestation; essence of identities is not denied, but is malleable
European Identity	This question is void since collectives' identity is predetermined	Constructivist examine political reference points of identity; European identity is political and constructed, but not cultural
Identity Boundaries	Rigid; essentialization of in- and outgroups	Identity reference points may change; malleable because they are contested and subject to conflict; there are in- and outgroups, but their relations change over time
Schools (Representatives and Positions)	**Supranationalism** (Bragues, Huntington, Morin) Huntington: after the Cold War, reference points of identity continue to be prepolitical, but there will be cultural units acting beyond nation-state boundaries **Ethnonationalism** (Anthony D. Smith) The nation continues to be the main identity marker	**Bounded Integration** (Ernest Gellner) Collective identities continue to be bound to the nation-state **Postnationalism** (Habermas, Giesen, Meyer) Habermas mixed identity theories in that he says that there is not yet a European identity, but it can be constructed by political institutions, democratization, a functioning public sphere of debate and dialogue; and a European Constitution; at the same time he attributtes fixed characteristics

S o u r c e: Cederman (2001a, 13), in: Wagner, Hartmut (2006, 32ff); author's own depiction.

Looking at Table 1, essentialism depicts collective identity as referring to rather rigid pre-political/ethnos features (language, blood, a history of kinship, ethnicity, common heritage) and/or the primordial or perennial nation-state (see. e.g. Smith 1991; Ibid. 1998, 223f). The constructivist identity perspective, on the other hand, insists on the transcendence of ethnos-elements of collective identity while at the same time using both the (constructed) nation and/or civic-political features as a reference point of collective identity. It rather posits that the world has entered a post-national age, in which people identify with civic-political values and common legal principles (demos) rather than with rigid conceptions of ethnic uniformity and master accounts of a common heritage. The demos has thus overcome the ethnos (Habermas 1998). Habermas's (Ibid.) postnationalist theory qualifies the United States of America as one of the first demos constellations, along with Switzerland, for instance.

Essentialism depicts the delimitations of identity as rigid and unchangeable. This implies the formation, perpetuation, and essentialization of both in-groups and out-groups. Constructivism, on the other hand, claims that the demarcations and delimitations to identity are loose, thus highlighting the openness of the concept of identity. Identity, in this sense, has no essence. Constructivists do not deny the existence of pre-political/essentialist reference points of identity. They just simply contend that, while the constructed pre-political features may last a while, they will change at one point. In-groups and out-groups are also recognized in their theory. However, the relations between them may transform over time, too.

For essentialists, the question of whether there is a European identity is void. They claim that collectives cannot exert influence on their identities because the latter are rigid and pre-determined. Constructivists, on the contrary, focus on political reference points of identity only. They argue in favor of the possibility of a European political identity while denying the potential for forming a European identity through pre-political reference points of identity (see, e.g. Meyer 2004).

Table 1 furthermore highlights the various schools of supra-nationalism and ethno-nationalism within essentialism on the one hand, and the schools of bounded integration and post-nationalism within constructivism on the other hand. The supra-national essentialist, Samuel P. Huntington (2003), speaks of a clash of civilizations after the Cold War and divides the world into a number of civilizations that might clash with each other in the future due to competing pre-political/essentialist cultural and religious identities (see Figure 1 below). Huntington is called here a supra-national essentialist because he transcends the nation-state when it comes to the prospect of international conflict and peace in the future. Instead he considers the said civilizations as the main actors and spaces of conflict in the world after 1990. However, pre-political conceptions of religious and cultural identities remain the reference points of these civilizations. Therefore, Huntington is categorized within the perspective of essentialism.

Another (supra-national) essentialist, according to Table 1 above, is Rémi Brague (1993) with his monograph '*Europa. Eine exzentrische Identität'*. He highlights the openness of the concept of collective European identity. It is, according to Brague, the 'Roman posture' that defines European identity. This means that the origin of Roman culture emanates from outside, the Greek culture. He argues in the same vein when it comes to Christianity, which has its origin in Judaism. What has happened over time is that the Romans and Christians have offered reinterpretations of their origins within Greek culture and Judaism respectively, thereby changing collective identity likewise. So Brague

considers the mediation between various positions a specific feature of European identity while still recognizing the external origin of Europeanness.

Brague, however, remains somehow an essentialist or cultural anthropologist when he tries to find unique European features that have led to specific European results. He does not explore, as Schmale (2010a, 36) contends, the modern phenomena of cosmopolitism and Max Weber's value pluralism (Schwaabe 2007, 102), which are both aspects potentially blurring the so called common roots of European identity. On the contrary, post-nationalists like Habermas (1998) believe that a political identity is needed to surpass the narrative of a common cultural or even pre-political identity when it comes to the formation of a European demos and identity. Brague, however, implies the existence of cultural elements that are shared by all Europeans.

Figure 1. Map of Huntington's post-1990 civilizations scheme

Source: Huntington, Samuel P. (2003, 26-27).

Max Weber (1988c, 180) much earlier provides a somehow smarter and more open understanding of culture in general when he says that culture provides a finite sphere of mentally conceived meanings and understandings in the otherwise meaningless infinity of world affairs. This statement somehow implies that people need culture. However, it also suggests the mentally or subjectively constructed nature of culture, with change to the latter potentially always possible. Schmale (2010b, 105) posits that the concept of a "(European) culture" has undergone a significant change compared to the Enlightenment period. He follows Max Weber's understanding of culture,

> "Following Max Weber, culture is today defined semiotically: by culture, everything is meant which symbolically expresses the giving of meaning, the creation of sense and meaning, and the goals of certain human communities. This concept of culture is formulated very openly. It places less importance on overall unity and uniformity, and instead permits variety insofar as coherence can be created. This is what it is about: coherence in diversity. It is less, much less, a matter of being united in diversity, as the motto of the EU rather unsuitably puts it" (Ibid.).

Anthony D. Smith is another essentialist depicted in Table 1 above. He is an ethno-nationalist essentialist because he highlights (Smith 1998, 226),

> "(…) the close links between ethnicity and nations and nationalism and the perennialist historians' argument that some nations and their particular nationalisms have existed well before the advent of modernity (however defined)."

The ethno-nationalist essentialist position is best understood when looking at Smith's criticism for those theorists who are, according to him, deeply hostile to and fearful of the phenomenon of ethno-nationalism. He expresses the fear of anti-ethno-nationalists and then goes on to point out the factual existence of ethno-nationalism in the following,

> "It is the fatal combination of ethnicity and nationalism, as 'ethno-nationalism', that, in the tradition of Elie Kedourie, provokes the greatest fear and condemnation. But, as many of these analysts realize, it is precisely this combination that, whether it is tacit and 'unflagged', as in parts of the West, or explicit and explosive, as in Eastern Europe and parts of Africa and Asia, most requires to be addressed and explained. The fact that it is so deeply ingrained and routinized ('enhabited', in Michael Billig's term) in the West, also requires explanation. To see it as a de-ethnicized, civic form of nationalism is, I would suggest, not only a historical and analytical, but also a policy, error, and to that extent, misleading and unhelpful" (Smith 1998, 219).

Judging from Smith's quote above, it is self-evident that he considers pre-political reference points and nation-states the main drivers of collective identity now, in the past, and in the future.

Table 1 further shows the constructivist theory of bounded integration, the main representative of which is Ernest Gellner (1964). Theorists of bounded integration do not deny the possibility of a European collective identity. They just simply consider the nation-state better equipped to produce a we-feeling due to both its boundedness and its capacity to accommodate large populations in a bounded communicative structure that allows for effective governance. Through defined criteria for membership, the national state can determine citizens' duties and "…extract resources from its citizens" (Cederman 2001b, 157), conditions which are not entirely met in the European Union's polity. It is true that there is an EU citizenship in place, but there is no European Union competence to impose taxes on its citizens, for instance.

Bounded integrationists also imply a mutual, albeit elusive, connection between democracy and the emergence of the nation-state. Cederman (2001b, 157f) claims that

> "This point is important, for the fact that democracy and the nation 'grew up together' does not mean that the two are indissolubly linked. Indeed, bounded-integration thinking does not in principle exclude the possibility of democracy beyond the nation-state; it just postulates more demanding and precise conditions for its success than do post-nationalists. Thus, it is misleading to depict bounded views of the nation-state as 'primordialist' or to claim that all adherents of a retention perspective fail to realize the contingency of the link between democracy and the nation-state. Clearly, identities can be bounded and 'sticky' without being based on ethnic principles" (also see, e.g. Grimm 1995, 292; Kraus 2000, 143; Offe 1998, 38).

As can be seen above, the bounded integration theorists believe in the potential for a European demos, but they think that the conditions for identity formation are better taken care of within the limits of the nation-state.

Last but not least, Table 1 depicts constructivist post-nationalism, a main representative of which is Jürgen Habermas (1998). Habermas somehow mixes essentialism with constructivism when speaking of a European identity. On the one hand, he thinks that there

is no genuine European identity yet; on the other hand, he deems it possible to create a common political identity through the furthering of democratization, the creation of political institutions, a European public sphere, and a European Constitution, the latter of which could lead to a constitutional patriotism similar to that of the United States. He argues in an essentialist fashion, however, when he attributes certain features to Europeans, such as the skepticism towards technology and a certain or rather high degree of secularism.

So much about the forms and classic examples of constructivism and essentialism highlighted in Table 1. Let us now go on to examine a number of other varieties and theories of (European) identity in the section to come.

1.3. Some constructivist varieties of (European) identity theory

—*Identity as a social process*: The first representative of another constructivist variety of (European) identity theory is Utzinger (2005). He claims that the legitimacy—or functionality in Utzinger's words—of the European Union can do without pre-political conditions, and that the concept of identity as a social process would provide relief in this context.

Identity as a social process explains why identities form, as opposed to essentialist accounts which use historical-empirical sources to simply recount what is. Utzinger posits that each identity is changeable, although it requires a certain degree of continuity as part of its defining feature (p. 239f). Ultimately Utzinger defines identity as a stable internal coherence or similarity, which evolves from a difference to the outside (world) and a respective continuity in time (p. 240). In order to answer the question of how persons or groups acquire stable internal similarity or coherence, and how they are perceived by third parties as closed entities, Utzinger makes use of George Herbert Mead's theory of identity. Utzinger categorizes Mead's conception of identity using three adjectives: identities have a social, a procedural, and a functional aspect (Ibid.).

According to Mead (1934, 64-100, in: Utzinger 2005, 241), individual and collective identities are homologous, since they are both social identities (social aspect). Mead claims that consciousness of oneself can only be generated by social and linguistically mediated interactions.

The procedural aspect of identity tries to explain that political collectives are not primary groups that remain relatively stable, such as families (Cooley 1998, 179ff, in: Ibid. 2005, 243). They are, to the contrary, extremely complex and differentiated societies, the similarities of which mainly emanate from rational interactions and transactions (Tönnies 1979, 3-36; Weber 1980, 21f). That means that complex societies change according to their interest-based connections. Ultimately identity formation is also a process of creating demarcations and boundaries (Jenkins 1996, 98).

The functional aspect of identity denotes that identity is functional to the physical and psychological well-being. The association to a group or collective is thus functional. Mead even claims that human survival is impossible outside of communities (Utzinger 2005, 244).

Utzinger (p. 245) concludes from Mead's theory that citizenship is constitutive of the collective identity of modern society, for it is functional and conducive to the physical and psychological well-being of persons and groups. He therefore claims that political institutions and structures precede collective identity, indeed shaping it. That means that European identity can be no precondition for political integration, but it is the legal and

political institutionalization that creates identity. Thus the European Union's functionality strengthens its legitimacy.

—*Social constructivist views on (European) identity in European Integration Theory*: Social constructivists share the view with Utzinger (2005) that institutions, norms and structures shape identities. In fact, Laffan (2004) provides evidence which shows that officials of the European Commission feel more attached to Europe and the EU than to the nations they are citizens of. On the other hand, citizens of the member states feel more attached to their respective nation-states, which are less distant to them. Laffan thus claims that it is the social context and setting that determine attachment. The more (less) embedded one is in the realm of European affairs, the stronger (the weaker) is identification with the European level. This is in line with a sociological institutionalist account "according to which the institutional setting in which people act and are embedded, exerts strong effects on their social identities" (Risse 2007, 168). At the same time social constructivists hold that social reality is constructed, further developed and changed by human actors or agents. This is known as the the social construction of reality (see, e.g. Berger and Luckmann 1966). Constructivism is best described as a social ontology which maintains that human actors do not exist separately from their social setting(s) and their culture(s), the latter of which is a sphere attached with shared meanings. Constructivists are convinced that structures and agents are dependent on each other, in other words, constitutive of each other (Adler 1997, 324f; Wendt 1999). The mutually dependent concepts of structure and agency are the two key terms definitive of social constructivism.

Social constructivism's social ontology sharply contrasts the agency-based rationalist ontology of liberal intergovermentalism and neo-liberalism in International Relations and, to a certain extent, neofunctionalism (see, e.g. Schimmelfennig 2007; Keohane 1988; Haas 1958 and 2001). The latter three are based on an agency-based rationalist ontology. That means that, as opposed to social constructivists, they believe that actors' preferences and identities are given. While the contenders of the spill-over theory of neo-functionalism eventually transcend the actor-centered approach admitting that the EU, through normative integration, might lead to a shift of loyalties and identities to the supranational level although they initially depart from interest- and preference-optimizing individuals with given identities (Risse 2007, 162), rationalist institutionalism, for instance, holds that the EU merely constrains actors' behavior while the latter try to push and assert their interests based upon their fixed identities and strategic positions (see, e.g. March and Olsen 1998).

This is very different from social constructivist thinking, which highlights the defining and fundamental impact of social norms and institutions on people's identities in a given community (Kratochwil 1989; Onuf 1989). Constructivists see actors embedded in a structure, both of which are mutually constitutive. They go on to say that actors behave norm-based. Ultimately Checkel (2001a and 2001b) shows that EU membership, for instance, even socializes actors, groups and individuals.

Along with Foucault (1991, 58), social constructivists finally maintain that discursive practices generate meanings (or identities and loyalties) and are equally determined by power relationships. This view implies that those who have the power and infrastructure to speak and spread a message on the discursive battlefield are best positioned to construct meanings that are ultimately taken for granted by the people. The above statement is nicely underlined by Rosamond's (2001) study of European globalization discourses.

Ultimately, social psychology contributes to the understanding of the social construction of European identity. Social psychologists have shown that people carry multiple

identities. This means that they can feel both strongly attached to the nation-state as well as have a feeling of being Europeans (Duchesne and Frognier 1995; Martinotti and Steffanizzi 1995; Hermann et al. 2004; Citrin and Sides 2004).[5]

Castano (2004, 51f) reproduces the above findings of the existence of multiple identities, showing that varying levels of identification seem to be positively, rather than negatively related to each other in the national samples of Italy and Belgium (see Table 2). This means that a significant portion of Belgians and Italians feel both attached to the nation state and to the European level, for instance.

Table 2. Correlations between different levels of identification as a function of participants' nationality

	European	Identification national	Regional
Belgian sample			
European	—		
national	.22*	—	
regional	.10	.37*	—
Italian sample			
European	—		
national	.19*	—	
regional	–.01	.22•	—
* $p < .005$			

Source: Castano et al. (2000), in: Castano (2004, 52)

Castano (Ibid.) also shows that identifying significantly with one level does not have an adverse effect on the perceived significance of entities at other levels. The same applies to the distribution or transfer of power to the various entities (see Table 3).

Table 3. Perception of homogeneity and power allocation to the EU, the nation, and the region as a function of the level of identification with the EU, the nation, and the region

		Percepcion of Homogenity			*Power allocation*		
		EU	*nation*	*region*	*EU*	*nation*	*region*
	Identification						
Belgian sample	European	.28**	.04	.03	.20**	–.09	–.05
	national	–.13	.23*	.12	.00	.29**	.03
	regional	.11	.10	.51**	.007	.11	.23*
Italian sample	European	–.34**	.17**	–.03	.21*	.08	.05
	national	–.01	.28**	.08	.07	.26**	.02
	regional	–.02	–0.6	.37**	–.20**	–.13*	.35**
** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$							

Source: Castano et al. (2000), in: Castano (2004, 52)

[5] Also see Rawls' concept of double identity in his democratic theory of citizenship, which states that people's perception of themselves relates to both political and personal or private associations (Rawls 1996, 30ff).

Furthermore, Castano's social psychological experiments came to the conclusion that the bigger the psychological existence of an entity (the EU here) in a person's mind,[6] the stronger was an individual's identification with it, while reduced entitativity means less identification. When conducting his experiments, Castano manipulated four different factors considered antecedents of the entitativity of the European Union, which were labeled the common fate, similarity, proximity, and boundedness (Ibid., 53). As opposed to Euro-enthusiasts and Euro-skeptics, it was interesting to see that it was the biggest group of respondents, the moderate EU-supporters, who responded strongly to manipulations of the entitativity antecedents. For instance, one of the studies of Castano measured the attitude and identification of participants toward the EU, using a video on the common fate of Europeans to manipulate entitativity. The results clearly indicated that watching a video on the common fate of European nation-states led to an increase in identification with the EU, especially among the moderate EU-supporters (Ibid., 47).

Castano (Ibid.) states that the European Union needs to promote its reification, which denotes its perception as an entity. The more people perceive the European Union as an entity, the more people thus identify with it. The EU is already recognized as an actor. In fact, the United Nations Resolution 713 on Yugoslavia of 1991 first recognized the European Community as a separate actor from European nations. Ultimately Castano holds that the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the introduction of the euro can increase the entitativity of and thus the identification with the European Union (Ibid., 53ff).

—Ernest Renan's nationalism theory as an antecedent of constructivist identity theory: Ernest Renan once wrote that a nation has an emotional side to it, saying that it is soul and spirit at once (Renan 1995, 55). He defines a nation the following way,

> "A nation is a soul, a spiritual/mental principle. Two things that are truly just one make up this soul, this spiritual/mental principle. (…) Mankind is not created out of nowhere. Just like any individual, the nation is the finality of a long history of endeavors, sacrifices and devotion. (…) A heroic past, great men, glory (…), —this is the social capital upon which a national idea is founded" (translated in: Renan 1995, 56).

Renan's definition of a nation shows that he is a 19th century pioneer of constructivist national identity theory. Unlike it is depicted from Herodot to Herder, it is not the inalienable features of common blood, soil, language, rites and customs that make up national identity, but it is the national memory and commemorations which take center-stage in Renan's national identity conception. This denotes the selective construction of a past considered a common reference point for a heterogeneous collective. His concept of a national community is similar to Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1996). However, Renan goes further than Anderson in that he differentiates between two ways of nation-building: First, the path of modernization through technological and communications progress, and, secondly, the path of myth-building. Renan additionally examines, as opposed to Anderson, the role of myths in the formation and identity construction of nations, which are accordingly more than functional systems. Renan thus highlights the potential of myths to create a common national history of exultation and suffering. The potential of these myths to contribute to common national memories of history lies within the indispensable recognition of the presence as the interstage of a narrative that spans across the past and the future (also see, e.g. Münkler 2009[7], Schmale 2010a).

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[6] The psychological existence of an entity in a person's mind is called entitativity, according to Castano (2004).
[7] Münkler (2009) focuses on the significant role of myths in forming national identity in Germany in his new book *"Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen"*.

Renan said that nations are not perennial, but they will disappear one day. He claimed that common suffering unites people to a larger extent than common joy (Renan 1995, 56f). In her contribution on Europe as a community of remembrance, Assmann (2005) concludes that, for Europe today, it is the common memory of bloodshed and mutual destruction of the 20th century that could unite the peoples of Europe. However, only under the condition that Europeans recognize the dividing lines of these memories can the latter merge into a common memory and open new perspectives for a common European future.

—*Wolfgang Schmale's liquefying thesis of European identity:* Wolfgang Schmale (2010a), in his book *Geschichte der Zukunft der Europäischen Identität*, criticizes the so called unity paradigm in the creation and narration of European identity, which is based on essentialist claims of a common cultural heritage, as it has been widely used in official EU language, identity politics and symbolism. He pleads for a paradigm change to the concept of a liquefied identity, which takes account of today's liquidity and acceleration of all processes, conditions and relations. This new conception of identity, according to Schmale, has inevitable consequences for the self-definition of individuals and collectives.

Schmale (2010a, 140) wants to undo with the drama produced by the essentialist unity idea, which has been adopted by the EU in the form of the motto of "unity in diversity." He contends that this "unity in diversity" concept ends up in an aporia in practical politics. Unity and diversity constantly clash against each other. As has been seen, creating unity —may be even in the form of a *United States of Europe*—is not all that easy against the background of diverse national interests, which still factually dominate EU politics.

Ever since the Document on European Identity released at the Copenhagen Summit in 1973, the EU's identity policy has gradually made use of nation-state symbols, such as the euro, the anthem, the Europe Day, and EU citizenship—the latter are emblems and symbols of unity. What leads, to put it in Schmale's words—the EU into an aporetic situation, a dead end, is that the concept of diversity is always "'scanned' onto the possibility and feasibility of unity" (Schmale 2010b, 99). Schmale (2010a and 2010b) thus offers a new slogan for European identity, that of 'coherence in diversity'. Before one explains what coherence means in this context, the author would like to highlight Schmale's historical approach to finding out what European identity is and has been over history.

When Schmale seeks an answer to the question of European identity, he applies Wolfgang Reinhard's (1979) network analysis approach, which conceives social linkages based on personal, professional, socio-cultural and socio-political relations as the basis for the evolution of collectives. The concept of collectives is fundamental to Schmale's European identity approach. He tries to detect European collectives in European history. He highlights the trans-border process of communication and the respective linking and networking between certain groups across European history (Schmale 2010a and 2010b).

He also highlights two major European collectives who have defined themselves as European in the face of common interests ever since the early modern period in the 15th century. The first main feature of European identity was the idea of a "Christian Commonwealth" that formed mainly against the Turkish threat, which became prevalent for the first time in 1453 when Constantinople fell to the Turks. There was finally a need for Europe to define itself, also against the background of European expansion across the world. The new European collective that evolved against this threat was mainly characterized by personal and patronage-like relations among the governing dynasties (among others, the Habsburgs, the Valois, the Bourbons, the House of Orange, the Vasa and other

smaller aristocratic elements) and the respective stakeholders connected to the former. This group thus had a genuine European—Christian—interest and thus constituted the major manifestation of European identity in early modernity (Schmale 2010b, 100).

Ever since the period between the early modern idea of a "Christian Commonwealth" and the age of Enlightenment, there had been a second collective emerging on the horizon. New actors such as the citoyen, freelancers and intellectuals formed a new European collective, which was mainly directed against the old monarchies and aristocracies legitimized by God. This new collective was based upon new types of social linkages and relations of communicative, professional, and socio-economic nature, as opposed to the old dynastic linkages hinging upon personal relations only (Schmale 2010a, 55).

This new European collective was not based on the identity concept of a Christian Commonwealth, but on the concept of a European culture, highlighting the latter's uniqueness and achievements. It was thus a conception of culture which was based on the idea of unity, an understanding of European identity as a single European culture. However, by the time of the French Revolution, the unity achieved gradually fell apart due to the emergence of competing socio-political groups that were once part of the European network. These groups or European collectives conceived European identity in varying ways, as Schmale (2010b, 102) shows below,

> "(1) monarchs who followed the principle of legitimacy, who to a certain extent carried forward the early modern collective of the European demos – their European identity was expressed by the concept of the Holy Alliance;
> (2) the liberal bourgeoisie, which held political, economic, social, and religious liberalism to be the European identity;
> (3) democrats, and often with them members of republican secret societies and the peace movement of the 19th century, who on the basis of the idea of the fraternity of the politically emancipated people of Europe (nations) recognized the identity of Europe in the United States of Europe for which they strove;
> (4) a further European collective which crystallized in the course of the 19th century and which had quite different aims: the working class, the "intellectuals", the 'capitalists' (entrepreneurs and bankers who operated across Europe) and scholars, generally from universities"

Schmale (2010a and 2010b) further states that the Enlightenment idea was finally crushed by the upcoming of racialist conceptions of history combined with new forms of excessive nationalism, which again led to the catastrophes of the First and Second World Wars. Albeit not achieving the status of a European collective or demos with access to power, it is ultimately the Europeanists of the Interwar Period and the resistance movements during the Nazi rule of Europe who paved the concrete and ideological way for European integration after World War II.

Wolfgang Schmale's identity theory rests upon the finding that, although European integration is best described in functionalist terms, the path taken from the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to the creation of the European Union ultimately reflects the phenomenon of a postnational cosmopolitism, which stands for a change that mainly refers to the liquefying of relations and references of institutional, social, and individual nature. Realizing the necessity of liquefying the relations between nation-states constitutes the driving force behind the formation of the ECSC. Liquefying is synonymous with transcending borders, transnationality, supranationality, exchange, acceleration, detachment, relief, emancipation, the opening of new chances, agility, the ability to adapt, rebuilding, the coexistence of heterogeneity and the creation of new co-

herences as a result of culture and communication transfers. Last but not least, the EU is an interaction, networking and liquefying medium, as Schmale (2010a: 136f) conceives it.

While the EU is not a state with a *Staatsvolk* in the classic international law sense, it does constitute a postnational social collective in the sociological sense. This postnational collective, according to Schmale, constitutes a network which in turn generates hypertexts of European history. As a network, the EU is able to create hypertexts only, for it is not able to provide a national master account of history in the essentialist sense. Hypertexts are steady processes of linking meaning with meaning through networks. Hypertexts ultimately aim at creating coherence in diversity (Ibid., 138).

In constitutional law terms, the EU is more of a network endowed with both vertical and horizontal constitutional layers as well as with both centralist and federal elements, the boundaries of which are open when thinking of accession candidates and associated countries. The European demos corresponds with the structure of the EU. The goal is to generate political, social, economic, cultural and legal coherences, which make up European identity. Schmale's answer to the question of European identity is thus that the common European identity denotes that which is 'coherent in diversity' (Ibid., 139).

Schmale holds that the EU has somehow successfully assumed characteristic symbols of the nation-state. While the way towards a "European state" has already been paved, it is a mistake to base this whole project on the unity paradigm, which has utterly failed when looking at the attempt to ratify a European Constitution. He concludes that the nation-state will not disappear any time soon, and thus pleads for his network model concept of the EU to take account of this fact. He contends that his liquefied identity concept can provide relief against the failed attempt to conceive a nation-state-like European identity based upon the utopian unity paradigm (Ibid., 170). Schmale does not ignore the notion of a European cultural heritage. He simply does not perceive it under the static unity paradigm, but under the aspect of change and liquidity.

Schmale (2010b, 105) explains that generating coherence is the best way to foster European identity,

> "To accept diversity as that which is specifically European, to beget as much coherence as possible, and to seek as much unity as is necessary – it is within this triangle that the European identity of the developing European demos will take form."

After this theoretical introduction on identity formation processes in and beyond the nation-state, the author introduces his own triangle of functional criteria (exclusiveness, tangibility and plausibility) to conceptualize and measure the functionality of European reference points of identity, which are defined here as language, history, territory, values, symbols, and the public sphere. But before introducing this new methodological and conceptual framework, the author deems it necessary to outline his epistemological perspective, since the latter has a huge impact on any methodology applied in scientific research.

2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS PRECEDING THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Before explaining the application of the actual conceptual framework to analyze European identity, there is a need for reflecting on the author's epistemology, his understanding of and approaches to politics and political science, for it is crucial for an author of any

scientific work to be aware of the fact that the way he or she scientifically looks at things can well determine or even manipulate the outcome of scientific analysis (see, e.g. Niedermair 2010)—a danger the author surely wants to and tries to prevent for intellectual righteousness.

In terms of epistemology, the author wants to highlight that all epistemologies, be they rationalist, empiricist or constructivist, are themselves just assumptions that can make no claim for ultimate truth. So the decisionist moment formulated by Max Weber (1988a) comes into play. Against the background of the "polytheism of values" in the world, he claims that there are no ultimate truths anymore. Accordingly, each and every one has to decide which "God" he or she believes in. Max Weber speaks of an incompatibility of the struggle of ultimate statements and views on life, thus claiming that we have to make a choice what we believe in (p. 608).

The author therefore decides to believe in Kant's epistemology. Kant's epistemology can be called constructivist, for he distinguishes two worlds. The latter makes a distinction between a noumenal world (the world as it is in itself) and the phenomenal world (the subjective reality or the world as we perceive it). Kant says that we have no independent access to the noumenal world, except through a conceptual scheme or categories. As for Kant, epistemology determines what is. This means that all that exists is what we know. Thus epistemology swallows ontology (Prechtl 2005, 131f). Although this epistemology implies that identity is something subjectively constructed, the author still insists on the functionality of analyzing a selected inventory of reference points of a possible European identity. Kant's epistemology merely suggests that the reference points of identity mentioned in the introduction are not definitive, essentialist or absolute. In other words, Kant would deny that these reference points are unchangeable or perennial as elements of identity. But, according to his epistemology, he would not deny that certain reference points can potentially bear an inter-subjective reality – So much about epistemology.

It is also important to highlight the author's political science approach and his understanding of politics here. The approach in this journal article is normative-empirical. It goes back, among others, to Ernst Fraenkel's conception of political science within his pluralism theory. He claimed that political science has two main concerns: first it is concerned with the state as it is. Second it is interested in the constitution of the ideal (good) state (Fraenkel 1991, 271ff). Fraenkel starts from the assumption that every human pursuit implies an ideal condition. This means that people are always led by ideas, no matter if the latter originate from reason or experience. Even so, Fraenkel's conception of politics was rather realistic. He recognized the existence of conflict, the pursuit of power and interest in politics (also see, e.g. Mouffe 2010 and Weber 1988b, 506f). He even conceived them as the necessary lubricant of a working pluralist democracy, the antithesis to the Totalitarian ambition for uniformity and suppression of diversity (Massing 2006, 217ff). During his lifetime, Fraenkel, as a political scientist, was thus interested in how things are and how they should be.

Aristotle argues in the same vein when it comes to political science as a normative-empirical science. Aristotle had a practical-philosophical understanding of politics as the science that studies what is good for mankind (Prechtl 2005, 141). However, Aristotle can also be considered the first empirical political scientist, for he did not just reflect on the ideal constitution but he also looked at existing ones (Aristoteles 2006).

Political science oftentimes starts from some basic pre-assumptions (*Grundannahmen*, not *hypothesis*) on mankind, and so does the author here: Just like Aristotle (1990)

and Habermas (1990), this article departs from the assumption that people are inherently communicative, and they are, according to Aristotle (Ibid), additionally expected to naturally organize their lives in communities and rely upon the latter. Actively pursuing happiness for its own sake is considered to be the good to be achieved by mankind. Respectively, the political good corresponds with individual actions pursuing the common good for the sake of the community's happiness, which in turn reflects on the happiness of the individual. For this to happen there is a need for active citizens in an autonomous polis: Political autonomy and freedom are believed here to be the normative and factual reasons for the possibility of individual autonomy and freedom, according to Aristotle (Prechtl 2005, 141). The ancient city-state model emphasizes the active citizen who engages in the community affairs of an autonomous polis for both his or her own sake and that of the community, whereas the modern-liberal democratic state stresses the role of the state to protect its citizens and their privacy.

The author goes on to presuppose (in the sense of *Grundannahme*, not *hypothesis*) that the above mentioned premises are best fulfilled in a European federal union governed in a multi-level system according to the federalist point of view in European integration theory (Scharpf 1994; Friedrich 1968). Burgess (2007, 25) highlights the controversial meanings attributed to federalism.

When talking about the European Union, people ordinarily conceive a federal Europe as a super-state that deprives nation-states of their sovereignties and powers. The fact that today's member states actually share sovereignties across nation-state boundaries rather than losing them is constantly ignored in this context. In his reflections on the federal idea, Burgess (Ibid., 28f) clarifies the original meaning of *foedus* as sort of a union based on a compact, the purpose of which "is to integrate different entities but not to assimilate them. The presumption of a federal union, then, is that it is a union based upon the formal recognition of difference and diversity."

So much about the normative part of this normative-empirical approach. Along with a general interest in the research field of European identity, these normative aspects from above are undoubtedly reason for the author's interest in what European identity is. The author is aware that ideal positions and basic assumptions might distort the inductive analysis of what European identity is. He is aware, however, of their potential to subconsciously manipulate results, which shall be avoided by any author.

After all, it is obvious that the author is convinced of a close connection between politics and ethics (how things should be in order to achieve and pursue happiness and a good and just life in the Aristotelian sense), and so does this article, for science would otherwise deprive itself of the freedoms achieved thus far (see, e.g. Horkheimer 1986 and 1991; Horkheimer and Adorno 1992). Empiricist sciences should thus not ignore the fact that the struggle for freedom is not resolved yet, neither can it be solved by politicians only but also through the guidance of science. Polling the citizens of the European Union alone in the form of Eurobarometer surveys commissioned by the European Commission does not suffice to understand who Europeans are and what could be the reference points of their possible common identity. From a normative political science perspective, these questions are crucial and need to be answered in order for the EU to develop toward a federal union that honors the principles of multi-level governance, subsidiarity, and the maintenance of diversity according to federalist theory (Friedrich 1968; Scharpf 1994).

Last but not least, Salewski (2005, 86) provides an interdisciplinary approach, which is useful for the actual functional analysis of reference points of European identity. He com-

bines a historical approach with an exemplary/model-based political scientist approach. Also doing so enables researchers to equally show both the historical specificity and the time-transcending elements and continuities of the European identity reference points, while taking account of the postmodernist discourse that denies a mechanical and linear course of history.

3. EXPLAINING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

When answering the research question, this article does not start from a main hypothesis according to the deductive method, but it pursues to understand European identity by conducting an inductive analysis of reference points of European identity. Schopenhauer (1859, 244) says that once a hypothesis is made, it gives us eagle eyes for that which confirms it, but makes us blind for what falsifies it. The author is aware of the fact that an inductive analysis requires selection, since there are more reference points of identity that could be possibly scrutinized here. This is to happen through devising a proper system of concepts that allows for the functional study of European identity reference points and thus for laying conceptual foundations for a possible future European and transnational identity theory (inductive method).

The author has also noted that comparisons with the nation-states like the United States of America within the analysis scheme can be useful to elaborate on the nature of European identity. Aristotle (1990) can be considered one of the first political scientists who made use of the comparative method. He did so by empirically studying various forms of rule in order to identify the best of the latter. Lipset (1990, xiii) said that: "Nations can be understood only in comparative perspective."

In order to operationalize the question of European identity, there is a need to define reference points of identity (dependent variable) and functional criteria (independent variable) for the latter referential points. The author identifies such reference points of identity, which can be supplemented by others certainly. He also provides criteria to measure the functionality or intensity of various identity reference points in terms of their suitability to promote identity formation or identification with something. In this conceptual analysis, this article selects the following identity points of reference (*Bezugspunkte*) as already shown in the introduction: Pre-political reference points (ethnos): territory, history, language; Political reference points (demos): values, symbols, the public sphere (in the sense of a European public or *Öffentlichkeit*). So there is a definition of identity reference points for reasons of scientific viability. In order to allow for the analysis of these reference points, it is suggested to use the following criteria to analyze the function and suitability of the above-mentioned reference points of identity: they need to be exclusive (*abgrenzbar*), tangible (*erfahrbar*), and plausible (*plausibel*). It shall now be explained why one uses so called reference points and the said functional criteria of the former:

—*Reference Points*: The self-definition and exclusivity of a collective identity always refer to common characteristics within one's own as well as within single and multiple other groups respectively. There is yet no uniform term used in scientific literature for these common characteristics that determine the content and structure of collective identities. Hettlage (1997, 10ff), for instance, speaks of a "basis of inclusion" and "construction materials" of collective identities. The weaknesses of these concepts are, however, their recurrence on self-definition while neglecting the significance of exclu-

sivity (*Abgrenzbarkeit*) in the process of collective identity formation (Woodward 1997). This contribution therefore relies on Gerhards' (2004, 14) concept of reference points because it takes into account that collective identity may both refer to the common characteristics within one's own group (self-definition) and to those of one or various other groups (exclusivity). A group may identify itself through a single reference point or a combination of the latter. Once there is a collective identity, single or various reference points assume a dominant role in the consciousness of the majority of a group so that partial differences within the group appear to be of less importance (Walkenhorst 1999, 76). If that is not the case, the respective reference points are either irrelevant to the identity formation of a group or the group as such might even be a mere politically intentional fiction (Taylor 1995, 17).[8] In science, these reference points assume the function of an analysis tool. By making use of them, collective identities may be, among other things, operationalized in the framework of qualitative interviews (expert interviews for instance) so as to make them accessible to scientific analysis. As soon as one knows what a group identity refers to, one can compare it to others. Based upon that, it is possible to find explanations for the intensity of a collective identity reference point. The latter is the higher, the better reference points of identity fulfill the three functional criteria already mentioned above and in further detail below.

—*Functional criteria of reference points of identity*: The first of the functional criteria of reference points of identity is exclusivity. The effect of reference points is the stronger, the more specific they are for a certain group and the more they allow for the exclusion of a given group from others. That means that a single group feature that no other group enjoys may be particularly conducive to identity formation. That does not signify that reference points allowing for hardly any exclusivity are necessarily meaningless, which can be shown by the example of bigger languages in Europe, such as German, English, French, Portuguese or Spanish. All of the five languages are spoken in more than just one country and are nevertheless essential components of the respective national identities (Wagner 2006).

Mankind is useless for identity formation since it does not permit exclusivity. A collective identity referring to mankind as a whole is only different from inhabitants of other planets (Schmitt 1996, 54ff). This kind of identity formation is thus not possible yet.

Secondly, reference points need to be tangible (perceivable or experiencable) to all members of a collective identity (Kleger et al. 2004, 151). So the aspect of self-definition of a group is stressed here instead of that of exclusivity. According to Kielmansegg (2003, 59ff), common experiences of a group are one of the three fundamental features of collective identities. Giesen (1993, 495) also underlines the significance of the tangibility of the reference points of collective identity. He considers languages, symbols, history, the public, sports teams, and admission procedures particularly suitable for tangibility. The functional criterion of tangibility is very important because groups are oftentimes "imagined communities," which cannot be perceived in their entirety (Anderson 1996, 15f). Tangible reference points thus reduce abstraction. That means that they follow the pars-pro-toto-principle and bring to light a component that represents the entire collective identity. Tangible reference points additionally strengthen the entitativity (Castano et al. 2002) of a collective identity, which means that the recognition of the group increases in the perception of the identity bearers and thus collective identity is enhanced altogether. In summary, common characteristics of the members of a group do not necessarily lead

[8] Taylor considers the "socialist fatherland" a fiction of collective identity.

to a stronger collective identity, but the former need to be tangible to the individuals within a collective.

Thirdly, reference points have to be plausible to the bearers of a collective identity (Kleger et al. 2004, 151). The decision in favor of or against specific reference points of identity is of utmost importance to a community. Only after this decision is made will a number of people transform into a group. In order for the common identity of a group to be as strong as possible, the decision in favor of certain reference points must be based upon the widest possible agreement. This is merely possible when the selection of identity reference points is plausible to the members of a group. Only then can one guarantee that the reference points of a common identity are internalized by the members of a group and thus separated from outgroups in order to ensure the formation of a collective identity in the minds of the individuals. Since collective identity constitutes a construct, it only comes into being when it is rooted in the heads of group individuals (Wagner 2006, 28).

The better a reference point complies with the functional criteria of exclusivity, tangibility and plausibility, the more relevant it is for the successful formation of collective identity. Wagner (2006), among others, considers exclusivity the most important functional criteria of identity formation because it might also affect the aptness of the two remaining functional tangibility and plausibility criteria for identity formation. The author does not fully agree with that, since people do have multiple identities, as shown, among many others, by Loth's (2002) level-scheme of territorial collective identities (local-regional-national-supranational). But one recognizes the importance of exclusivity for identity building.

These functional criteria are to help determine the impact of the above-mentioned potential reference points on the formation of European identity. Ultimately, it shall be seen which reference points assume a bigger or smaller share when it comes to a potential European collective identity. Thus it shall be possible to recognize what European identity is or could be through the application of these reference points and their respective functional criteria.

It was mentioned already that, where it is useful and makes sense, to make comparisons with nation-state reference points of identity, such as those of the United States, when trying to look at European identity. But, why applying the comparative method? There is widespread agreement in scientific literature that the concept of nation cannot be transferred to Europe since the European Union is a supranational political organization or system *sui generis,* and thus European identity is unique likewise. By arguing like that, a comparative analysis of European identity with aspects of U.S. national identity seems to be impermissible (Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch 2003, 18; Schneider 1991, 161; Eder and Kantner 2000, 306f).

This article, however, suggests the use of comparisons, complementing the conceptual framework proposed here. Wagner (2006) argues that applying the comparative method is necessary and useful. There are four reasons why this is so. First of all, one can only classify the European Union and European identity respectively as phenomena *sui generis* when comparing them to familiar ones. Each new observation only becomes significant after having been compared to older ones (Aarebrot and Bakka 1997, 49). So if one wants to highlight the particular aspects of European identity, one cannot dispense with comparing.

Secondly, European and national identity are analyzed through the same theories. One the one hand, this is due to the low number of theories especially dealing with supranational identity. Because of the EU's uniqueness, there is no equivalent supranational re-

gime, and thus generating new theory or hypotheses is even more difficult. On the other hand, the topic of European identity has only been paid more attention since the end of the Cold War. One thus deals with a rather recent object of research in social sciences (Wagner 2006, 14). Therefore, it is indispensable to resort to explanatory models and theories (essentialism and constructivism) also analyzed by researchers on nationalism (Wodak and Puntscher Riekmann 2003, 284ff).

Thirdly, both national and European identities are forms of identities referring to abstract and trans-local collectives. It is true that the degree of abstraction in national identity is much less intense than in that of the European equivalent. However, there is no equivalent to the EU, and thus national constructs like the United States are apt for comparison (Walkenhorst 1999, 73f). By applying the level-scheme of a territorial multiple identity (local, regional, national, supranational), one is able to additionally recognize that European identity is immediately followed by national identity (Loth 2002).

The European Union also conveys the impression that it does not intend to transcend the nationalism embodied by its 28 member states, but to conceal its unique character and represent itself as a common nation state. What is particularly striking is that it reproduces the features of nation states in the area of symbols and institutions. The European Union has created symbols (flags, anthem, memorial days, passport, driver's license) equaling that of its member states and sometimes even replacing them, e.g. the euro (Wagner 2006, 14). There are similar things to be observed in terms of political institutions like the European Court of Justice (ECJ) or the European Parliament. The tendency to form concepts according to national examples is further strengthened by the "European Constitution" and the latter's terminology, such as the new office of a foreign minister of the Union (Art. I-28) or the existence of European laws (Art. III-330) (Metz 2005, 56).

Finally, this article also suggests conducting complementary so-called qualitative expert interviews, the implementation of which is well explained by Lauth et al. (2009, 166ff). Lauth et al. (Ibid.) point out the difficulty of defining who is an expert and who is not. Defining an expert is indeed something partly arbitrary. Meuser and Nagel (1991, 443, in: Lauth et al. 2009, 170) highlight the fact that there is no expert as such, but an expert is defined as such by the researcher. However, there are certainly objective criteria also. Distinguished men and women of knowledge in the scholarly and political area of European (Union) affairs can surely be defined as experts. The author proposes choosing interviewees according to their expected usefulness as data carriers or providers of information. Interviews can be of semi-standardized nature because the questions in it are closely oriented toward the conceptual or categorical system evolved in this article. The interviewers may ask respondents whether they think that the given reference points of identity (dependent variables) fulfill the functional criteria (exclusivity, tangibility, plausibility-independent variables).

As was outlined before, the better reference points fulfill these criteria, the better the former are suited to foster identity formation. The information gained by these interviews is to help authors while conducting their own conceptual analyses. Important feedbacks to authors' own research efforts are desirable here. The information extracted in interviews may be supplemented in the authors' analyses by the use of long-term survey waves in the form of the Eurobarometer and Transatlantic Trends surveys, for instance.

Last but not least, the levels of analysis are to be explained. This article mainly suggests the use and critical surveying of primary and secondary literature and sources when conducting a conceptual analysis and answering the main research question of Europe-

an or transnational identity or any other collective state identity. Additionally, one may make use of secondary survey data when useful. Lauth et al. (2009, 145) point out that it has become conventional to use secondary data generated by primary data collectors in (comparative) political science. Secondary data that might be useful to outline the results of the trend analyses already mentioned above conducted by and for the European Commission in the form of Eurobarometer surveys,[9] delivering data in terms of the attitude of European citizens toward the European Union. As mentioned before, another possibly useful longitudinal survey is the Transatlantic Trends survey that asks American and European respondents about their attitudes on Europe/EU and the United States as superpowers or on their feeling about the use of force for just reasons, and so forth. At the level of the expert interviews, it shall be noted that interviewees are to be considered information providers (Lauth et al. 2009, 166ff) that give a feedback to authors' own research efforts and questions.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have argued for and introduced a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding the nature and characteristics of collective identities in and beyond the nation-state, especially European identity. This conceptual framework shall give new impetus to conduct new and comprehensive research on collective (state) identities. It has the advantage of being applicable to all kinds of collective identities—from simple private associations, complex nation-states and supra- or transnational political systems like that of the European Union. It shall ultimately not contribute to finding 'off-the-shelf' definitions of complex and, partly, constructed collective (state) identities, but to first defining typical reference points of collective identities in and beyond the nation-state and to testing the latter against a scientifically established set of functional criteria. There are, of course, more reference points of collective (European) identity that could have been possibly chosen to establish a conceptual framework, but the functional criteria to test them are very coherent and comprise pretty much everything there is on identity formation processes. This framework—here comprising the identity reference points of language, history, territory, values, symbols and the public sphere—combined with its functional criteria of exclusivity, tangibility and plausibility can well serve as a coherent tool to give new answers to complex questions such as that of European or any other collective national and/or transnational (state) identity. The quest for identity may start from new.

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[9] See http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

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REFERENCE POINTS OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY: CONCEPTUALIZING IDENTITY BEYOND THE NATION-STATE

Summary

This article formulates and introduces a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding the nature and characteristics of collective (state) identities, especially European identity here. This conceptual framework shall give impetus to conduct new and comprehensive research on collective (state) identities in and beyond the nation-state. It has the advantage of being applicable to all kinds of collective identities – from simple private associations, complex nation-states and supra- or transnational political systems like that of the European Union.

Keywords: Europe, identity, nation-state, European Union

PUNKTY ODNIESIENIA TOŻSAMOŚCI EUROPEJSKIEJ: KONCEPTUALIZACJA TOŻSAMOŚCI POZA OBRĘBEM PAŃSTWA NARODOWEGO

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł formułuje i wprowadza szerokie ramy pojęciowe dla wszechstronnego zrozumienia natury i charakteru tożsamości zbiorowych (państwowych), szczególnie zaś tożsamości europejskiej. Owe ramy pojęciowe powinny stworzyć impuls dla podjęcia nowych, kompleksowych studiów nad tożsamościami zbiorowościowymi (państwowymi) zarówno w obrębie państwa narodowego, jak i poza nim. Zaletą przedstawionego w artykule ujęcia jest to, że możliwe jest jego zastosowanie w odniesieniu do jak najbardziej zróżnicowanych tożsamości – od prostych prywatnych stowarzyszeń przez złożone państwa narodowe do ponad- i międzynarodowych systemów politycznych, takich jak Unia Europejska.

Przekład z jęz. ang.
Jacek SERWAŃSKI