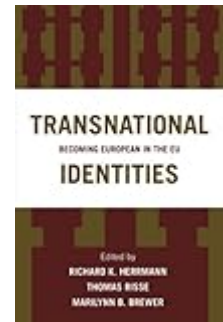


Richard K. Herrmann, Thomas Risse, Marilyn B. Brewer, eds. *Transnational Identities: Becoming European in the EU*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004. v + 305 pp. \$96.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7425-3006-5; \$36.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7425-3007-2.



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The Emergence of a Common European Identity

With the relatively successful creation, consolidation, and expansion of the then European Economic Community (EEC) and the later European Union (EU), the last several decades have seen a veritable explosion of social science scholarship dealing with a fundamental issue that frames the European integration project: the construction of a European-wide identity. This development is not necessarily surprising. The “founders” of the project, men like Jean Monnet and Paul-Henri Spaak, had many underlying motivations behind their postwar efforts to foster closer integration. These ranged from economically binding the nations of Western Europe together in order to reduce the likelihood of war to creating a political and economic counterpoint to the superpower struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. One important component of this effort focused on constructing the various new institutions of a united Europe, which could serve as the agents of both structural integration and, more importantly, identity formation. This neofunctionalist strategy, as it is described, hoped to use cross-state cooperation in such areas as transportation, communication, economic management, and law to detach Europeans’ national alle-

giances from the nation-state and inculcate a cross-state European identity.[1] Without this European identity, so the argument goes, low levels of citizen attachment to the European Union potentially weaken its strength on the international stage, affect its legitimacy to govern and legislate among its citizens, and could lead to the entire project’s failure. The success, or lack thereof, of this process of identity formation is therefore integral to the European integration project as a whole as it struggles with contemporary issues like monetary integration (the Euro), enlargement, the new European Constitution, defense and foreign policy coordination, and the prickly question of Turkey’s eventual membership (with its nearly seventy million Muslim citizens).

Understanding whether or not Europeans have cultivated a transnational identity centered on the European Union, how it is constructed, what it exactly means to the individual European, and what its relationship is to other local, regional, and national identities are, therefore, vital questions, and Herrmann, Risse, and Brewer’s *Transnational Identities* tackles them head on. Using as its main reference point the interaction and engagement be-

tween communal identity development and EEC/EU institutions that exercise some level of political sovereignty over Europe, the volume adopts a multidisciplinary approach to the question. It brings together political scientists, social psychologists, sociologists, and linguists, who utilize diverse methodological tools and considerable empirical evidence, to flesh out a fairly engaging and cautiously optimistic picture of what Risse describes at one point as an “emerging European demos” (p. 270).

Besides a concise and clear introduction by Hermann and Brewer and a conclusion by Thomas Risse, the volume includes three excellent essays (by Brigid Laffan, Ruth Wodak, and Eugenia Siapera respectively) that examine notions of identity among elites in the various EU institutions and the press corps based in Brussels, a group of three essays (by Jack Citrin and John Sides, Michael Bruter, and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof respectively) that attempt to investigate the salience of a European identity to the non-elite mass public throughout Europe; and three essays that attempt to test several theoretical models of identity change in Europe from a social psychological perspective. These three contributions from social psychology are particularly interesting for the varied and engaging frames of reference they bring, as well as the differing conclusions they arrive at. The first by Glynis Breakwell uses Identity Process Theory to argue that the notion of Europe has poor and unclear definitions as a supraordinate category for identity construction, thereby leaving open the question of whether the community exists as a measurable category at all; the second essay by Emanuele Castano uses the concept of entitativity to argue that the European Union needs to be perceived as a real entity (to have psychological existence in the minds of EU citizens) for a common identity to emerge; while the third by Amalie Mummendey and Sven Waldzus uses another theoretical model—the in-group projection model—to argue that increasing the entitativity of the EU as an identity construct could lead to increased national conflict because each group within a supraordinate identity category projects its own in-group characteristics on it and the other constitutive groups.

It is the diversity in scope and methodology that is the strongest feature of this volume. This diversity allows the contributors to tease out different lines of thought regarding identity formation in Europe by mixing discourse analysis, application of social psychological theories, quantitative survey data, laboratory experiments, long-form elite interviewing, and the construction of theoretical models on political identities. Naturally, it also produces differing conclusions. However, instead of

highlighting a problem with the volume’s scope or the particulars of a given methodology, it emphasizes the fact that the very notion of a European identity is not a static category, but rather a contested social grouping among many that retains different meanings in different contexts. Though the contributors’ conclusions at times differ, there is a remarkable degree of agreement in their findings. Most useful to note, from a public policy point of view, is the conclusion, specifically noted by Risse, that citizen attachment to the European Union and Europe as a civic polity is increasing among both the political, economic, and social elites that have driven the integration project over the years and the general public as well (p. 271). Breakwell’s essay and, to a greater extent, Meinhof’s contribution, somewhat question this conclusion, particularly when it comes to the mass public. For instance, Meinhof notes somewhat in surprise that her German and Polish interview subjects only commented on Europe when specifically prompted by direct questions, rather than during the free-form narrative component of her interview experiments (p. 216). However, the empirical evidence discussed and analyzed by the other contributors, specifically Citrin and Sides’s work, exhibits strong evidence that, regardless of what meanings individuals attach to the concepts of Europe and the European Union or the specific cultural, socio-economic, or geographical background of said individuals, positive attachments to Europe are generally rising among many segments of the European public.

From a historical point of view, what makes this volume even more intriguing is not so much its intricate theoretical probing of identity formation as it is the considerable empirical evidence gathered and analyzed to support it. At times, one frustration of historical research is the paucity of evidence in a specific area one wishes to investigate, particularly when it comes to exploring intellectual notions held by those below the elite levels of society. Works like *Transnational Identities* go a long way toward developing a pool of evidence which social scientists can examine and consider now while future historians of late-twentieth century Europe will be able to explore for many years to come. This is an important and useful work for any scholars in the social sciences studying identity formation.

Note

[1]. For more information on this long-standing neo-functional argument from the scholar who first argued it, see Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957* (Stanford: Stanford

University Press, 1958). For a more recent comment, see *state or New Market Economy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.27-28.

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