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Does European Identification Increase Support for Further Economic Integration?

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Abstract:

Explanations of support for European Union policies are often conceived in terms of utilitarian cost-benefits analysis, yet recent scholarship has demonstrated that ‘soft’ variables, such as identity, are sometimes more useful for explaining preferences about European integration. This article tests a hypothesized link between European identity and support for integrative economic policies to respond to economic crisis in the Eurozone. Data to test the hypothesis are from a novel survey of European university students (n=1872) conducted in Autumn 2012 in four Eurozone countries (France, Germany, Italy, and Spain). Given the economic nature of the policies in question, this is a case where utilitarian calculations might be expected to drive preferences. Yet in each of the four countries, European identity is found to have a significant positive relationship with support for further economic integration, even when controlling for material considerations that might otherwise have been thought to explain these preferences.

Keywords:

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European identity, economic integration, Eurozone crisis, university students, public opinion

Europe is in the midst of a polarising public debate about the proper response to the economic crisis in the Eurozone. One of the major cleavages relates to whether further European integration should be pursued to respond to the crisis. While support for European integration is often conceived in terms of a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis, some recent studies of European Union (EU) public opinion have begun to examine ‘soft’ explanations of EU support. These studies move beyond ‘hard’ material calculations to examine the impact of identities, perceptions of threat, and fear on support for the EU. ‘Soft’ variables have been found useful in explaining both general support for European integration (McLaren 2002, Hooghe and Marks 2005) as well as support for specific proposals, such as Turkish membership in the EU (De Vreese *et al.* 2008).

The economic crisis in Europe provides a critical test case for the utility of ‘soft’, identity-centred variables to explain support for integration. Since the integrative policies in question are economic in nature, material explanations of public support would appear to be especially appropriate. If, however, European identity is associated with support for further economic integration as a response to the Eurozone crisis, then this provides strong support for the more general argument that ‘soft’ variables must be taken into account when explaining, not only diffuse EU support, but also support for specific policies related to European integration.

This article tests the hypothesis that European identity is associated with support for further economic integration. To permit a more satisfactory operationalisation of European identity than is possible with Eurobarometer data, it uses novel survey data from university students from four Eurozone countries (France, Germany, Italy, and Spain) gathered in September and October 2012

($n=1872$). For each country, the analysis reveals a highly significant positive relationship between European identity and support for further economic integration to respond to the economic crisis, even when controlling for alternative material explanations. This provides compelling evidence that *even economic preferences*, which might be expected to derive from utilitarian considerations, are influenced by 'soft' variables such as identity.

The article makes two concrete contributions to existing scholarship. First, it demonstrates that European identity influences individuals' attitudes about further economic integration, a finding that has concrete policy ramifications as a solution to the Eurozone crisis is sought. Second, by developing an alternative means of operationalising European identity, it seeks to improve on recognised shortcomings in existing quantitative approaches to studying European identity. The article proceeds as follows: I first discuss proposals for further economic integration that have been put forward as responses to the economic crisis in the Eurozone. Next I review what existing literature tells us about the determinants of public support for integration, emphasising in particular what has been written about the relationship between European identity and attitudes about the EU. Then I discuss the survey used to collect the data and the operationalisation of the variables. Next I present the empirical analysis and discuss the findings. Finally, in the conclusion, I consider what the findings may imply beyond the sampled population of university students and consider the implications of the findings for the future of European integration.

Economic integration as a response to the Eurozone crisis?

Given that the economic crisis in the Eurozone is rooted in the uneven Europeanisation of economic policies, one potential remedy is further economic integration. Indeed, in response to the economic crisis that has unfolded in the Eurozone over the past three years, a number of *integrative*

economic policies have been proposed. I use this term to indicate economic policies that would respond to the crisis by forging closer transnational cooperation, transferring new competencies to the European level, and strengthening the European institutions. Some integrative economic policies have already been realised. For example, the delegation of supervisory authority over banks in the Eurozone to the European Central Bank (ECB) represents both a transfer of competence in this area from the national to the European level and a strengthening of the ECB as an institution. The creation of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) to provide funding – based on commitments from the Eurozone Member States – to Eurozone states facing liquidity problems increases the joint liability (and thus interdependence) of Member States.

Beyond such developments, further economic integration is under consideration. Proposals to issue pooled Eurozone debt in the form of so-called ‘Eurobonds’ or ‘Stability Bonds’ (European Commission, 2011) would make it cheaper for countries with the highest liabilities to pay down existing debt, but would also imply a significant pooling of liability, by making all Eurozone countries accountable for at least a portion of other states’ debt. The budget review provisions of the ‘two-pack’ legislation (European Parliament 2013) increase the oversight authority of the European Commission by requiring each Eurozone state to submit its annual budget for verification that it would not cause the country to violate the EU’s debt and deficit limits. Perhaps the most far-reaching integrative proposal to come out of the Eurozone crisis has been the idea to create a fiscal union to complement the monetary union that was agreed under the Maastricht Treaty (European Commission 2012). Under the terms of the common currency, monetary policy was Europeanised – within the Eurozone there is, obviously, no longer any exchange rate to manipulate, and the ECB has taken on the management of interest rates – while fiscal policy was left in the hands of each Member State. This dynamic, of course, is at the root of the current crisis (Featherstone 2011). As a

corrective, some call for a fundamental change in the architecture of the Eurozone that would provide for European governance over taxing and spending policies, giving a newly-created European Treasury shared power with states over fiscal policies.

Determinants of support for European integration: A review of the literature

The prospects for further economic integration in response to the economic crisis, along the lines of what is describe above, are at least partly dependent on public opinion. Decision-making about the future of the EU no longer takes place out of the public eye and, increasingly, debates over the integration process and the EU itself have become politicised (Hix 2006, 2008). A rise in mass Euroskepticism in the past two decades has raised concerns that citizens' resistance to the EU may act as a constraint on further integration (Down and Wilson 2008, Hooghe and Marks 2009).² As a result, understanding citizens' preferences about European integration is more important than in the past, when a 'permissive consensus' about the desirability of European integration could be presumed (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). Accurately identifying the determinants of public support for further economic integration in response to the Eurozone crisis is not only theoretically interesting, but of critical real-world significance since this will shape the possible range of responses to the economic situation in fundamental ways.

Over the past twenty years, there have been four major approaches to explaining variation in EU support. The 'sociotropic' utilitarian approach emphasises citizens' material interests, focusing specifically on the net national economic costs and benefits of EU membership (Eichenberg and

² As an illustration of the constraining role of euroskeptic public opinion, consider the numerous rejections of EU treaties in national referendums: Danes' rejection of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, Norwegians' rejection of EU accession in 1994, Irish rejection of the Nice Treaty in 2001, Swedes' rejection of adopting the euro in 2003, French and Dutch rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, and Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty in 2008.

Dalton 1993, Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996, Carrubba 1997, McLaren 2006). According to this model, ‘citizens vary their political judgments [about European integration] with their society’s economic conditions’ (Gabel and Whitten 1997: 84). Still maintaining an emphasis on material interests, the ‘egocentric’ utilitarian perspective looks at variation in EU support within states, emphasising not country-level economic conditions, but individual-level attributes (i.e. age, education, position in the economy, household income) that create ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ from European integration (Gabel and Palmer 1995, Gabel and Whitten 1997, Gabel 1998a, McLaren 2006). While both of these approaches view support for the EU as a utilitarian calculation, a third approach focuses, not on expectations of material benefits (or costs) to explain variation in EU support, but on domestic political attributes (e.g. trust in national government, level of domestic corruption, elite cueing) to explain EU support (Anderson 1998, Sanchez-Cuenca 2000, Hooghe 2007, Rohrschneider and Loveless 2010). Finally, in recent years a fourth approach has drawn on social identity theory (Tajfel 1981; Turner *et al.* 1987) to emphasise the role of group identities as a cause (or inhibitor) of EU support.

Within this last approach to explaining EU support, recent empirical work indicates that individuals who identify, to some extent, as European are more likely to support European integration than those who identify exclusively as members of their national group (Citrin and Sides 2004, Hooghe and Marks 2005, Serricchio *et al.* 2013). This raises three important questions. First, what *is* European identity? Second, how satisfactorily has European identity been operationalised in existing empirical work? And finally, what mechanism or mechanisms might plausibly *link* European identity to support for European integration?

European identity

Social scientists' current understanding of European identity has been deeply influenced by social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986) and self-categorization theory (Turner 1985, Turner *et al.*, 1987).³ Indeed, Tajfel's definition of social identities — 'that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (1981: 255) — is often taken as the starting point for conceptualising European identity (Hermann and Brewer 2004, Kaina 2013, Pichler *et al.* 2012). In this sense, individuals' identification with an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) of Europeans can be thought of as having at least three components. First, there is a *cognitive* element: the individual self-identifies as a member of a group, namely a group of Europeans whose membership can be thought to coincide roughly with the (admittedly blurry) borders of the EU. But while this process of cognitive identification as European 'reveals who or what an individual sees themselves as [...] it tells nothing about the meaning or intensity of that categorization to the individual' (Cram 2012: 72). For that, we must consider the second, *evaluative*, element of European identity, which represents the degree to which group membership (being a European) is significant for the individual. Third, there is an *affective* element of European identity that represents the individual's emotional connection with the idea of Europe and with other Europeans. Kaina calls this 'a sense of belonging together' (2013: 189).

Some suggest that, beyond these cognitive, evaluative, and affective dimensions of identity, the highest level of identification involves altering individual behaviour to favour the group. This *conative* element of European identification, evidenced by a show of group solidarity, loyalty, and mutual trust (Kaina and Karolewski 2013, Imerfall 2010), implies that individuals not only *think* of themselves as European and *feel* a sense of community with other Europeans, but they are willing to

³ See Mols and Weber (2013) for a discussion of the uses (and misuses) of social identity theory in EU attitude research.

‘give up things they value [as individuals] for the sake of the collectivity’ (Zürn 2000: 199) and to ‘pay a price on behalf of the community [when] needed’ (Kaina and Karolewski 2013: 31).

While the multidimensional nature of European identity is widely recognised in principle, in practice empirical studies have primarily operationalised European identity uni-dimensionally. The problem, as Cram sums it up, is that ‘empirical research on EU identity [*sic*] has been driven largely by the available data’ (2012: 72). Most of the data come from the Eurobarometer, which routinely interrogates respondents’ identification *as* European. In particular, the so-called Moreno question, which has been used by the Eurobarometer for more than a decade, has become the standard measure of European self-identification (Citrin and Sides 2004, Hooghe and Marks 2005, Fligstein 2008, Risse 2010, Wilson 2011, Kuhn 2012). It asks whether, in the near future, respondents see themselves as their nationality only, their nationality and European, European and their nationality, or European only.

Even those who rely on the Moreno question to study European identity often recognise that it is an unsatisfactory measure of the complex phenomenon of European identity (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 2005: 433; Kuhn 2013: 996). One problem is that the item only taps into European self-categorisation (the cognitive element of identity) and therefore tells us nothing about the evaluative and affective dimensions of European identity. But even as a measure of cognitive European identification, it is a problematic measure. It implies a (false) sense of hierarchy between national and European identities and, by asking respondents how they see themselves in the future, ‘creat[es] a huge ambiguity between identity and prediction’ (Bruter 2003: 1154). Nevertheless, despite its

shortcomings, the Moreno question remains the predominant means of interrogating European identity empirically.⁴

While Cram (2012) cautions that we must interrogate, rather than assume, the relationship between European identity and (possible) support for European integration, social psychology provides some basis for hypothesising that there is, in fact, a causal link between the two. We know, for example, that individuals hold multiple group identities, and can develop new ones. Particularly relevant here is the common in-group identity model, which posits that the development of a superordinate identity can transform disparate groups, accustomed to thinking in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’, into a single group that begins to think of itself as a common in-group (Gaertner et al. 1993, Gaertner and Dovidio 2012). A basic premise of social identity theory (Tajfel 1981; Turner *et al.* 1987) is that, within an in-group, collective identities foster feelings of mutual obligation, reciprocity, and solidarity among group members. Experiments reveal that individuals who share even a thin sense of group identity act to maximise benefits accruing to the group (Tajfel 1981, Yamagishi and Kiyonari 2000).

Applying these insights from social psychology to the European context provides plausible grounds for hypothesising an association between European identity and support for European integration: individuals who develop a superordinate (European) identity are those who are most likely to develop the conative identification that gives rise to feelings of solidarity with other Europeans. They are thus more willing to support integrative policies and practices, even when they infringe on national sovereignty, if they are seen to be good for Europe and Europeans more broadly.

⁴ There have been some efforts to pursue alternative strategies, however, such as constructing alternative datasets (Bruter 2005) or using other methods, such as ethnography (Favell 2009) or focus groups (Duchesne *et al.* 2013).

Therefore, when integrative economic policies are proposed as a means of resolving the Eurozone crisis, European identity is expected to be associated with greater support for such policies.

Hypothesis: Stronger European identifiers are more supportive of an integrative economic policy response to the Eurozone crisis.

Methodology

To investigate this hypothesis, appropriate measures of both support for economic integration and European identity are needed. This section discusses the survey used to collect the data and the operationalisation of the variables. A summary of all the survey items used in the analysis is included as an appendix.

As others have already noted (Bruter 2005, De Vreese *et al.* 2008, Cram 2012), it is necessary to look beyond the readily available Eurobarometer data to test hypotheses about the influence of European identity on attitudes about European integration since the key explanatory concept, European identity, is poorly operationalised by the survey. Therefore, I analyse a novel dataset comprised of survey responses gathered in Autumn 2012. The surveyed population comprises university students from four Eurozone countries (France, Germany, Italy, and Spain) and a wide range of academic disciplines (Table 1). I designed the survey specifically to investigate sources of identity change among university students, but it also included a host of questions that allow for an analysis of the relationship between European identity and support for an integrative response to the Eurozone crisis.

Table 1: Respondents by country and field of study (n=1872)

Country	n	Per cent	Field of Study	Per cent	Per cent for EU27 ^a
France	451	24.1	Humanities	14.6	14.0
Germany	498	26.6	Social sciences	26.5	30.9
Italy	494	26.4	Sciences	11.3	11.6
Spain	429	22.9	Health & welfare	10.1	15.4

^a Eurostat 2010

There are trade-offs involved when foregoing Eurobarometer (or similar) data. For De Vreese *et al.* (2008), the sacrifice was to limit the analysis to only one country. In this case, the trade-off is targeting the specific demographic of university students, rather than the general public. A number of studies have found that, compared with the broader population, European identity is more common among the young and highly educated (Dogan 1993, 1994, Howe 1995, Hix 1999, Citrin and Sides 2004, Green 2007, Fligstein 2008). The most obvious issue is that, while the findings reported here are generalisable to the larger population of university students, they may not generalise to EU citizens as a whole. On the other hand, even though the sample is comprised of a single demographic group, it is by no means homogeneous. Indeed, there is substantial variation across the sample for each of the variables analysed, including European identity. (Descriptive statistics are provided in the next section.) Furthermore, the analytical focus on the relationship between variables mitigates the most obvious potential for bias, overrepresentation in the sample of European identity and support for further economic integration: since the model accounts for the strength of these variables, conclusions about their association are still likely to be valid. Indeed, the statistical power of the analysis may, in fact, be enhanced by analysing a population that more strongly identifies as European than average EU citizens, since an otherwise-underrepresented trait receives more weight.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The dependent variable in the analysis is support for integrative economic policies that would respond to the economic problems of the Eurozone by forging closer transnational cooperation, transferring new economic competencies to the European level, and strengthening the European institutions. To measure support for further economic integration, the survey asked respondents to use a 7-point scale to indicate how strongly they would support or oppose three proposals: the introduction of Eurobonds, the right of the EU to review national budgets before they are adopted, and fiscal union in the Eurozone. Understanding respondents' preferences about any one of these items is interesting in itself, but only by combining the three items can we gain insight into the latent concept of real interest: support for further economic integration in response to the Eurozone crisis. As the correlation matrix indicates (Table 2), the three items are positively and significantly correlated to each other and to the additive scale comprised of the three items. Like Gabel (1998a: p. 341), I interpret the strength and direction of these correlations as evidence of a tendency for respondents who support one integrative economic proposal to also support others, suggesting a general pro- or anti-economic integration tendency.⁵

Table 2: Pearson's correlation coefficients for support of economic integration items¹

	Support Eurobonds	Support budget review	Support fiscal union	Support economic integration (additive scale)
Support Eurobonds		.37	.50	.78
Support budget review			.37	.76
Support fiscal union				.80

Note: All correlations are significant at the .001 level.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) confirms that a single component explains most (61%) of the variance among the three items (Table 3). Therefore, following Gable, I calculate an additive scale

⁵ As Gabel reminds us, the magnitude of the correlations is attenuated by the use of discrete variables.

of support for economic integration from the three survey items, where higher numbers represent stronger support.⁶

Table 3: Factor loadings for items measuring support for economic integration

	Commonalities extraction	Component loadings
Support Eurobonds	.656	.810
Support budget review	.517	.719
Support fiscal union	.650	.806
Eigenvalue	1.823	
Explained variance	60.8%	

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

European identity is the independent variable in the analysis. As discussed above, European identity—like other social identities—has a cognitive, an evaluative, and an affective component (Tajfal 1981: 255; Hermann and Brewer 2004: 6). In other words, individuals not only recognise that they are members of a group (cognition), but they also assign meaning (evaluation) and emotional value (affect) to that group membership. At their most-developed, social identities may also have a conative component that relates to individuals' behavioural intentions (Kaina and Karolewski 2013, Imerfall 2010). Since it is not possible to operationalise the multifaceted nature of European identity satisfactorily using readily-available data, I rely on novel survey data that allows me to tap, not only the cognitive element of European identity, but also the (generally overlooked) evaluative and affective elements. Specifically, I operationalise European identity by constructing a scale of five items – one related to the cognitive aspect of identity, one to the evaluative component, and three to the affective element. The survey does not include items that tap respondents' behavioural

⁶ While I utilise an additive index since its scale properties are more intuitive, I also calculated a factor solution. To ensure the robustness of the reported findings, I duplicated the analysis using factor scores in place of the additive index scores. The nature and the significance of the findings were not affected.

intentions so the conative component of European identity is not included. Nevertheless, the three elements of European identity that comprise the present measure mark a substantial improvement over what is possible using Eurobarometer data.

The item measuring the cognitive aspect of European identity is a standard Eurobarometer item that asks how often respondents think of themselves as European ('often', 'sometimes', or 'never'). The item measuring the evaluative component of European identity asks respondents to indicate their response to the question, 'How important is being European to you personally?' (0= Does not matter at all, 4=matters a lot). The three items measuring the affective aspects of European identity interrogate the degree to which respondents (a) feel attached to Europe, (b) feel close to other Europeans, and (c) feel proud of being European (0 = not at all, 6 = very much). The five items were all standardised to a 7-point scale and PCA of the items (Table 4) indicates that a single component explains most of the observed variance (59%). I therefore combine the five identity items into a single additive index of European identity.

Table 4: Factor loadings for items measuring support for economic integration

	Commonalities extraction	Component loadings
<i>Cognitive identification</i>		
Self-categorize as European	.575	.758
<i>Evaluative identification</i>		
Value of group membership	.691	.831
<i>Affective identification</i>		
Attached to Europe	.594	.770
Feel close to Europeans	.472	.687
Proud to be European	.640	.800
Eigenvalue	2.972	
Explained variance	59.4	

CONTROL VARIABLES

In the multivariate analysis, I include a number of control variables. Most importantly, I control for alternative material explanations of EU support. The ‘sociotropic’ utilitarian perspective highlights the importance of individuals’ view of the overall national economic costs and benefits of EU membership for explaining support for integration (Eichenberg and Dalton 1993, Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996, Carrubba 1997). Using the standard Eurobarometer item, the survey asked respondents to indicate whether, on balance, their country has benefited from EU membership (response options: ‘benefited’, ‘not benefitted’, ‘don’t know’). To control for individuals’ **perception of net country benefit from integration** (or not), I include a dummy variable for perception of benefit in comparison with a reference group that responded ‘no benefit’ or ‘don’t know’.

The ‘egocentric’ utilitarian perspective suggests that EU support derives from personal attributes like age, education level, socioeconomic status, and position in the economy (Gabel and Palmer 1995, Gabel and Whitten 1997, Gabel 1998). Because the population sampled is comprised entirely of university students, there is no meaningful variation in age or education level and most respondents can be presumed to not yet be active in the economy. I therefore include only a variable to control for **socioeconomic status**. Because of the difficulties associated with comparing household income data across countries, respondents were instead asked to indicate their perception of their own financial status (0 = well below country average, 4 = well above country average).

The available data do not allow me to include control for domestic political attributes (i.e. trust in national government, level of domestic corruption, elite cueing), a third alternative explanation for EU support. However, I do include variables to control for individual political attitudes. I include a five-point scale of self-reported **left-right political orientation** (0 = farthest left, 4 = farthest right).

And because support for integrative economic policies may be interpreted as European-level redistribution (from wealthier to less wealthy countries), I also include an item to control for **attitudes about redistributive policies** at the national level. The item asked respondents to indicate, on a seven-point scale, how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement, 'It is the responsibility of the government to take care of people who can't take care of themselves.' Responses are coded so that higher numbers indicate greater support for a government role.

Apart from controlling for utilitarian considerations and political attitudes, I control for several other potentially confounding variables. Since research indicates that knowledge of the EU shapes attitudes about the EU (Karp *et al.* 2003, Hobolt 2012), I include a control variable for level of self-reported **EU knowledge**. The survey asked respondents to report how much they know about the EU on a scale from 0 to 6, where higher numbers represent greater knowledge. It is also possible that those with greater knowledge about the economic situation in the Eurozone have stronger preferences for or against an integrative response to it. Therefore, I include a variable to control for level of self-reported **knowledge about the economic crisis**. Knowledge of the crisis is measured by two items on the survey, which have been combined into a single additive scale. Respondents were asked to report their level of knowledge about (a) the debt crisis and (b) political debates about the economic crisis. Both items utilised a 7-point scale. PCA of the two items indicates that a single component explains most of the observed variance (88%). Evidence regarding the impact of **gender** is mixed (Anderson and Reichert 1995; Gabel 1998b), but as it may have an effect, I include a dummy variable for being male.

Empirical analysis

This section analyses the relationship between European identity and support for integrative economic policies for each of the four countries in the sample. The country samples are analysed separately since there is likely to be substantial cross-country variation in support for further integration. National histories and traditions differ, not only about European integration, but about redistribution, economic governance, and a number of other factors that may shape preferences about economic integration. Additionally, countries occupy different positions in the European economy; states have fared rather differently over the course of the economic crisis; and party positioning, media framing, and other forms of elite cueing are structured differently from one country to the next. The extent of national variation in the sample is examined below, but explaining the variation is beyond the scope of the present analysis. For the present purposes, the critical question will be whether, notwithstanding national variation, *within* each country European identity is associated with higher levels of support for an integrative economic response to the Eurozone crisis.

This section proceeds as follows: first, I present basic descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is then used to evaluate the significance of national variation in support for an integrative response to the Eurozone crisis. Next, I evaluate the hypothesis that stronger European identifiers are more supportive of an integrative response. I do so by first looking at the bivariate correlation between support for integrative economic policies and European identity and then by using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis to examine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables for each nationality, while controlling for potentially confounding factors.

Table 5 summarises the descriptive statistics for each of the variables used in the analysis. It indicates that, on average, respondents are supportive of an integrative economic response to the economic crisis, although the degree of support varies across the four countries. German respondents are the least enthusiastic supporters, followed by the French; the Spanish and Italians are most supportive. Welch's ANOVA confirms that mean difference in support for integrative economic policies across the four nationalities is statistically significant ($F(3, 990) = 42.592, p < .001$).⁷

⁷ Since the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, I have reported the results of the Welch test rather than a simple one-way ANOVA.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics

	n	Mean	Std. dev.		n	Mean	Std. dev.
Support for integrative economic response (range 0-6)				European identity (range 0-6)			
	1808	3.34	1.18		1814	3.85	1.30
France	432	3.18	1.14	France	432	3.83	1.84
German	484	3.02	1.08	German	488	3.56	1.26
Italy	473	3.78	1.11	Italy	481	4.14	1.24
Spain	419	3.39	1.24	Spain	413	3.88	1.30
Socio-economic status (range 0-4)							
	1754	2.10	0.93				
France	430	2.17	0.90				
German	468	2.12	0.89				
Italy	456	2.00	1.03				
Spain	395	2.14	0.91				
Left-Right political orientation (range 0-4)				Support for redistributive policies (range 0-6)			
	1729	1.35	1.08		1764	4.37	1.47
France	425	1.35	1.13	France	430	4.41	1.41
German	465	1.32	1.05	German	474	4.37	1.54
Italy	444	1.40	1.05	Italy	459	4.39	1.47
Spain	391	1.32	1.07	Spain	401	4.31	1.47
Knowledge of EU (range 0-6)				Knowledge of economic crisis (range 0-6)			
	1866	3.59	1.23		1870	3.08	1.35
France	450	3.61	1.23	France	450	2.86	1.37
German	496	3.53	1.22	German	498	3.08	1.28
Italy	493	3.74	1.26	Italy	494	3.15	1.35
Spain	427	3.46	1.21	Spain	428	3.24	1.37
	n	Male	Female		n	Benefit	None/DK
Gender Distribution (%)				Country net benefit from EU (%)			
	1825	34.8	65.2		1767	68.2	31.8
France	433	33.3	66.7	France	431	65.7	34.3
German	487	33.3	66.7	German	473	69.6	30.4
Italy	483	32.3	67.7	Italy	460	70.0	30.0
Spain	422	41.2	58.8	Spain	403	67.2	32.8

Source: Author's data.

I next examine whether, for the four nationalities, European identity is associated with greater support for further economic integration. Analysis of the bivariate correlation of the independent and dependent variable reveals that, for each nationality, European identity is positively and significantly correlated, at the $p < .001$ level, with support for integrative economic policies (France: $r = .27$; Germany: $r = .23$; Italy: $r = .38$; Spain: $r = .39$). Next, I use multivariate regression analysis

for each country sample to examine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables while controlling for other factors that may affect attitudes about European integration: perception of country net benefit from integration, socio-economic status, attitudes about redistribution, left-right ideological placement, knowledge about the EU and about the economic crisis, and gender. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistics calculated for each model indicate that multicollinearity is unlikely to be a problem in any of the models,⁸ which are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: Multivariate Regression Results: Support for Further Economic Integration

	Support for economic integration in response to Eurozone crisis			
	France	Germany	Italy	Spain
Constant	1.733 ** (.344)	1.482 *** (.324)	1.984 *** (.281)	1.593 *** (.374)
<i>Independent Variable</i>				
European identity	.172 *** (.044)	.177 *** (.042)	.308 *** (.042)	.355 *** (.047)
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Country net benefit from EU	.188 (.121)	.168 (.113)	-.036 (.110)	-.091 (.124)
Personal financial situation	-.022 (.062)	.106 (.058)	.043 (.050)	.018 (.063)
Left-right ideology	.012 (.053)	.041 (.052)	-.046 (.050)	-.016 (.057)
Support for redistribution	.010 (.042)	.066 (.036)	-.003 (.036)	-.003 (.043)
Knowledge of EU	.139 * (.057)	.104 (.060)	.045 (.053)	-.006 (.059)
Knowledge of economic crisis	.024 (.050)	-.083 (.057)	.120 * (.048)	.153 ** (.050)
Male	.223 (.123)	.226 * (.112)	.080 (.107)	.012 (.118)
<i>n</i>	384	435	410	362
adjusted R ²	.088	.062	.188	.170

Source: Author's data.

Notes: Model estimated with OLS regression. Unstandardised betas. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$.

⁸ VIF values larger than 2 are generally interpreted as an indicator of multicollinearity (Fox, 1991). The VIF values in the analysis were all under 2.

The analysis confirms that, even as levels of support for further economic integration vary from country to country, for all four countries there is a positive, highly significant relationship between European identity and support for integrative economic policies to respond to the Eurozone crisis. The relationship between European identity and support for further integration holds for all countries, whether they are likely to be direct and immediate economic beneficiaries of further economic integration or not. The relationship cannot be reduced to utilitarian explanations, since the model controls for 'sociotropic' and 'egocentric' utilitarian variables. In contrast, none of the control variables has a consistently significant relationship with support for further economic integration across countries.

To be sure, there are limitations inherent in the narrow demographic focus of the present study, and one must take care not to over-generalise findings from an analysis of university students alone. Nevertheless, the highly significant, cross-national relationship between European identity and support for an integrative economic response to the Eurozone predicament suggests that identity must be seriously considered as part of any explanation of attitudes about further integration.

Conclusion

At one time a 'permissive consensus' in favour of European integration could be taken for granted (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). In the past two decades it has become increasingly difficult to sustain the notion that there exists a tacit reservoir of support for the integration project. Indeed, some scholars now talk, not of a 'permissive consensus,' but of a 'constraining dissensus' emerging in EU politics (Down and Wilson 2008, Hooghe and Marks 2009). Against this backdrop, European integration is at a crossroads: Europe faces its worst economic prospects in a generation, the fate of the common currency is uncertain, and the political project of building Europe has

stumbled. Given the increasing mobilisation of European citizens around European issues, it is reasonable to expect that the future of the EU will be determined, not only by elite bargains – as has largely been the case in the past – but also more than ever before by public opinion. It is, therefore, more important than ever to know not only *what* Europeans think about the European project, but *what drives* their preferences.

Explanations of support for European integration are often conceived in terms of a ‘sociotropic’ or ‘egocentric’ utilitarian cost-benefit analysis. Especially as the integrative policies interrogated in the present study are economic in nature, material explanations of public support would seem plausible. Therefore, the finding that European identity conditions *even preferences about economic integration* provides strong support for the perspective that ‘soft’ variables must be taken into account to explain attitudes about European integration.

If support for further integration – even economic integration – is rooted in European identity, it is possible that enhancing European identity will increase support for further integration. While identities tend to be relatively stable, to the point where individuals often think of them as being fixed, we know that they are, in fact, social constructions that are diffused through various forms of socialisation (Castano 2004, Bruter 2005, Zürn and Checkel 2005). In the European context, this suggests that it is possible for an individual to acquire and enhance European identity over time, under certain circumstances. Social communication theory, for example, suggests that increased transnational contact among individuals enhances European identity (Deutsch 1953, Deutsch et al. 1957, Lijphart 1964, Fligstein 2008). As a specific example of transnational contact fostering European identity, some have found that when university students participate in an Erasmus exchange, their European identity is enhanced (King and Ruiz-Galices 2002, Fligstein 2008, Van

Mol 2011, Mitchell forthcoming – although see Sigalas 2010, Wilson 2011). But university students are by no means the only groups susceptible to the transformative impact of transnational contact. Indeed, as bankers, financial professionals, and business owners from across Europe work to address and respond to the current economic crisis, they may form just the type of European networks that Fligstein (2008) sees as prime incubators of European identity. If this is the case, then the present analysis suggests that an emergent or enhanced European identity among these groups may ultimately lead to preferences for greater European integration in the future. To the extent that this occurs, the economic crisis in the Eurozone may ultimately contribute to further European integration.

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