YOUTH AND EUROPEAN IDENTITY

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The symposium is a collection of presentations originating from a multi-lateral research project on 'Youth and European Identity', which is funded by the European Commission in its 5th Framework Programme. The project unites research groups from Scotland, England, Spain, Austria, Germany, and Slovakia. Its primary focus is on the relationship of local, regional, national, and European identities among 18-24-year-olds in countries with different histories vis à vis Europe. Representative samples (N~400) from the cities Edinburgh, Manchester, Madrid, Bilbao, Vienna, Vorarlberg, Bratislava, Prague, Chemnitz, and Bielefeld are compared with each other and with additional samples (N~100) of youth on particularly European trajectories from all of these cities. The latter samples encompass youth who, for example, study international law, intercultural communications, or two European foreign languages, or work in a company that explicitly serves the European market. The symposium will have six presentations by researchers from Scotland, Spain, Slovakia, and Germany. Their presentations will shed light on different aspects of identity formation among urban European youth. The different papers will focus of the question of a European citizenship (Grundy & Jamieson), compatibility and conflict among different levels of identity (Grad & Garcia), Gender aspects of European identity (Bianchi), acceptance of 'the other' in different nations (Fuss), youth identities in the process of European integration (Lasticova), and comparative identities (Ros, Rodriguez, & Grad). Several of the papers utilize the entire set of representative samples available in the multi-lateral project, others focus more on mono-cultural and bilateral analyses.
This paper examines, theoretically and empirically, the meanings of being a citizen of the European Union. The focus explores membership as a relatively meaningless abstract category on the one hand, to an important aspect of sense of self, on the other. The paper draws on the insights of ‘social constructionist’ theoretical approaches, which make preliminary suggestions concerning the circumstances in which the latter is possible. We summarise the extent to which there is any evidence of such circumstances in the data of our European Commission funded project. The project chose national and regional contexts that offer access to different resources with which to build local, national and European identities. We ask, are the privileged minorities with resources and connections, which enable travel across Europe, the people who are the most likely to feel ‘European’? Is there any evidence of everyday social interactions relating to or reflecting an interest in the European Union? Do conceptions of citizenship suggest a greater potential for the growth of ethnic citizenship and ‘fortress Europe’ or the celebration of more abstract principles of fairness and justice that might promote ‘global ‘rather than’ European citizenship?
Regional, country and European identities were studied in a wider study about beliefs and experiences regarding the European Union among youth of Austria, Germany, Slovak Republic, Spain, and the United Kingdom. At each country, representative and Europe-oriented youth samples (N=400 and N=100 each) of 18-24 years (50% female), were gathered at a country ‘majority’ (Vienna, Bremen, Bratislava, Madrid, and Lancaster), and an ‘alternative’ (Voralrberg, Chemnitz, Prague, Bilbao, and Scotland) location from an identity point of view. The interviewees rated different cognitive (also towards their birth, growing up, and living places), affective and evaluative aspects of these social identities. The internal relationships among the identities were studied by means of correlational and structural (SSA) analyses. The analyses have shown systematic variations in the configuration (the mutual compatibility or conflict) among the identities, reflecting the specific meanings of regional, state and European identities in ‘central’ and ‘peripheral’ locations, across the different aspects of identity. These configurations are related to the relative importance of “civic” and “ethnic” components of the social representation of the referent group, and to the motivational meaning of each studied identity in the context of the personal value system. Different configurations of regional, state, and European identities may facilitate or difficult the processes of European identity building.
Title of the Symposium: Youth and European Identity
Convenor: Klaus Boehnke
Discussant: 

Title of Symposium Paper: Gender Aspects of European Identity
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Active European policy addressing the issues of women is currently best expressed in the gender-mainstreaming paradigm. Gender mainstreaming involves all aspects of life including education, work, health, social care, etc. This paper offers a particular insight into the multidimensional nature of identity – European, national, and regional – from the aspect of both sex and gender differences. The presented data were gathered in a European Commission funded project exploring young people (18-24 years) and their European identity in six European countries (UK, Spain, Germany, Austria, and the Czech and Slovak Republics). The main questions asked here are e.g. what is the importance of gender identity within an overall identity in different European countries?, what role do gender stereotypes play in different European countries and how do they interact with the Europen identity itself?, which Euro-specific types of activity are significantly influenced by sex differences (e.g. previous travel experience, expected work mobility)? Results are discussed in terms of the possible - either facilitating or limiting - consequences of gender and sex onto living in an unified and open Europe.
Title of the Symposium: Acceptance of the Other among Youth from different Nations
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The paper tackles the issue of inclusion and exclusion of others in a European context. Against the background of the EU enlargement, public and scientific discussions focus more and more on the question of a European identity and the extent to which the process of European integration is supported by population. This aspect again is closely related to the problem of inclusion vs. exclusion. Many surveys show that the integration of new states is accompanied by widespread fears of uncontrolled immigration and economic marginalization – especially at the border regions to the new member states.

The paper presents rich empirical material from an international research project funded by the European Commission. It shows how young people from Austria, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, Czech and Slovak Republic feel about the European integration and how they deal with questions of ethnic heterogeneity, discrimination and xenophobia. It examines the relations between the acceptance of others and personal characteristics like socio-economic status, level of education or friendship to persons of different nationality or ethnic origin. Moreover, it asks for the importance of several conditions for gaining national citizenship as the final stage of formal inclusion.
Title of the Symposium: Youth and European Identity
Convenor: Klaus Boehnke
Discussant:

Title of Symposium Paper: Identities of Youth in Integrating Europe
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The aim of this paper is to examine, theoretically and empirically, the relationships between European, national, regional, local and personal identities of young Europeans aged 18-24. The paper draws mainly on the theoretical insights of “social identity theory” and “self-categorization theory”. It considers the above-mentioned identities as nested categories (Riketta, 2002), going from abstract category memberships on the one hand to an important aspect of sense of self on the other. This European Commission funded project chose different national and regional contexts both in EU member and candidate states that offer access to different resources with which to build local, national and European identities. We ask, what is the type of the relationship between these identities? Are they consonant, dissonant or indifferent (Cinnirella, 1996)? What is their importance within the overall identity of an individual? Are there any differences in the “feeling of being European” between young people from EU member states and young people from the candidate states? The results are discussed in the context of the ongoing EU enlargement process.
**Title of the Symposium: Youth and European Identity**

Convenor: Klaus Boehnke
Discussant:

**Title of Symposium Paper: Youth Comparative Identities in Europe and some Consequences**

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