The Meaning and Importance of European Identity and its Relationship to Regional and National Identities in Spain: Some Contributing Factors to the Development of European Identity[1]

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The Meaning and Importance of European Identity and its Relationship to Regional and National Identities in Spain: Some Contributing Factors to the Development of European Identity. European, Spanish, and regional identities were studied as part of a wider research survey of youth beliefs and experiences regarding the European Union. The research was conducted in the capital city (Madrid) and the Basque Country (Bilbao). At each location, representative and European-oriented youth samples (N=400 and N=100 each) of 18-24 years (50% female) were gathered. The interviewees were asked about their perception of border countries as included in Europe, and to rate different feasible meanings of the EU, its impact (at personal, regional, and country levels), and different cognitive, affective and evaluative aspects of European, Spanish and regional identities.

Regarding European borders, Turkey was the only country most interviewees did not perceive as part of or belonging to Europe. Geography, membership in the EU and, above all, the Euro currency emerged as the most salient features of meaning for Europe (beyond shared values and traditions). The European Union was perceived as having a positive, but small impact for the person, moderate for the region, and greater impact for the country of Spain.

The identity patterns were similar in most of their aspects: In Madrid, the Spanish identity was the most important, the importance of regional identity was similar to it, and the identification with Europe was moderate, the least important. In Bilbao, the identification with the Basque Country was the strongest, while Spanish and European identities were related and came out of "little" importance. Older interviewees presented stronger European identity in the pro-European but weaker in the general sample. Finally, interviewees considered themselves only "sometimes" as a "European citizen" with no significant difference by Region, Age or Gender group.

These relationships seem to reflect the configuration of different levels of social identity. The hegemony of different nationalist orientations led to a distinct meaning of national identity in each region (Spain in Madrid but the Basque Country in Bilbao). Thus, instead of a continuum of social category inclusiveness (as suggested by Brewer 1991), the results show different breaches between levels of social categories and identities – between Basque and higher levels in Bilbao and between Spanish and higher levels in Madrid. Summing up, the identity level reflecting the dominant national identity seems to function as a basic category distinctively organizing the whole identity configuration.

The impact of the European Union was perceived as much stronger for the country (Spain) than for the region and the person. Madrid and pro-European samples perceived stronger impact on the less inclusive categories. Beyond the different identity configurations, these patterns suggest a relationship between the weak perceived impact of the European Union on levels closer to the person and the weak identification with Europe.

Finally, though interviewees did not recall learning a lot about the European Union at school, this perception, as well as the experience of visiting other European countries and mastering European languages, was enhanced in the younger and the pro-European sample (and among Bilbao respondents). Thus, personal and social experiences would reinforce the perceived impact of the European Union at the personal level and certainly contribute to reinforce a shared European identity beyond national-regional nuances in the Spanish context.

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The restoration of democracy allowed Spain to join the EEC in 1986. Since then, the EU has evolved from being exclusively an economic union to being a union of citizens with civil rights to vote, freedom of movement of people, capital and work, and rights of education and health in any of the members´ countries. Despite the fact that European supranational identity is quite recent as compared to national identities (such as French, English, Polish, Czech or Slovak identities), the experience of European identity construction is undoubtedly longer for present EU members than for accession countries, such as Poland, Czech or Slovakia Republics.

The building of the supranational European identity is an especially interesting process in complex contexts where state-related national identities are contested by regional and nationalist local demands and identities (Keating, M., 2001; McCrone, D., 1998). Spain is an outstanding case of these contexts: For historical reasons (Linz, J. J., 1973, 1993), Spanish nationalism was unable to impose itself as the single hegemonic national ideology or to overcome various regional demands within the territorial borders by building an ideal-type nation-state. Consequently, Spain is currently configured as a plurinational state in which central Spanish nationalism coexists with, and is defined by interaction with, regional nationalisms

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stemming from diverse sources. Therefore, the central Spanish identity coexists with other significant national identities in different regions. Furthermore, the tension between peripheral and central Spanish nationalisms has been one of the salient features of the political agenda at both the regional and central-state levels since the end of the 19th century, and this is well reflected in the political discourse in formal and informal contexts. The relationships between these nationalisms remain both an open question on the political agenda and an indicator of Spanish democratic development.

After the restoration of democracy, the Constitution enacted in 1978 reflected this country's national diversity and established a quasi-federal structure, granting administrative autonomy to 17 regions (called "autonomous regions"). The Constitution acknowledged the existence of 'historical nationalities' in the Basque Country and Catalonia; granted official status to both Spanish and Catalan, and to Basque and Galician in the autonomous regions where these languages are spoken. Hence, Catalonia, Valencia, Mallorca, the Basque Country and Galicia, whose languages were formerly considered dialects and their use restricted to informal situations, are now bilingual autonomous regions.

This orientation also shaped the Spanish educational administration. The 1990s reform of non-university education by means of the Constitutional Law on the General Regulation of the Educational System (LOGSE) decentralized the educational administration leaving the decision about 45% of the curriculum contents to the bilingual Autonomous Regions and 35% of the curriculum contents to the monolingual Spanish regions.

From the historical and political points of view, both Catalan and Basque nationalism were most influential to central Spanish nationalism. Though the democratic constitution reinforced the "civic" codes in Spanish nationalism, the sharing of "ethnic" (cf. Smith, A. D., 1986, 1991)[4] codes in Spanish and Basque discourses (Díez Medrano, J., 1995; Pérez-Agote, A., 1984) led to stronger conflict between these nationalisms, reflected in both institutional confrontation and long-standing political violence and terrorism. At the socio-psychological level, Grad (1999, 2001), Grad and Martín Rojo (2003), and Grad and Ros (1998) have shown that, while the emphasis on 'civic' discourse allowed for compatibility between Spanish and regional-national identifications in Catalonia, giving simultaneous importance to both identities was unlikely in the Basque Country. Consequently, the comparative identity – the importance gap between the regional and the Spanish identities – (Ros, M. – Cano, J. I. – Huici, C., 1987; Ros, M. – Huici, C. – Gómez, A., 2000) was stronger in the Basque Country than in Catalonia.

The main goal of this article is to analyse the implications of these conflicting regional and national identities for the building of the new European identity in Spain. To this end, we will compare the identity configurations and implications in the Basque Country and Madrid, a region representing Spanish hegemonic nationalism. Specifically, we will compare these relationships in the Spanish capital city Madrid, and the main city of the Basque Country, Bilbao.

The research is based on a recent survey sample of 1000 young people, 500 in each city. In order to highlight the features of the process of European identity building, the survey was carried out on both a representative sample of the general population (N = 400) and on a target sample of pro-European participants (selected according to their European orientation in study and work, N = 100).

Finally, this study was focused on youths aged 18 to 24 years in Madrid and Bilbao. Studying the youth of a country is a strategy that allows foreseeing the seeds of the future. Knowing about young people, their demographic, educational and work characteristics as well as their family distribution enables us to have a picture of the future of the country in which they are being socialized. Thus, in order to contextualise the results of our research, we summarize next the most important features of Spanish youth.

Spanish youth at a glance

There are approximately 5.6 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24, representing 13.8% of the Spanish population (INE, 2003a). The trend of the last ten years has been a significant drop in the young population, due to a decline in the birth rate, which is among the lowest in Europe. As a consequence, age distribution in Spain has inverted the pyramid form, the base actually representing the older population and

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[4] The distinction between "ethnic" and "civic" ideal types of nationalism is classic in political sciences (Smith, A. D., 1986, 1991) and is well reflected in both explicit and latent political discourse (cf. Billig, 1995; van Dijk 1998; Grad, H. - Martín Rojo, L., 2003).

On the one hand, "ethnic" discourse implies a communal conception of the national group, and historical and cultural shared aspects (i.e. language, traditions, myths, and original community) are emphasized as a basis for membership and identity. This representation of the national group reinforces the distinction between the in-group and other communities, establishing more rigid and impermeable boundaries, and 'ascriptive' (and therefore exclusive) membership criteria. Consequently, it makes harder to simultaneously hold different identities and to integrate out-group members in the in-group, as they are perceived as mutually contradictory.

On the other hand, the "civic" code of nationalist discourse emphasizes the institutional and political aspects of identity, in addition to the contractual and voluntary aspects of national membership. Citizenship is achieved by participation in political institutions and in civil society, and it implies equality in rights and obligations among citizens (Habermas, J., 1987). Thus, the "civic" code of discourse facilitates compatibility between in-group and out-group identities. It also facilitates internal diversity and the integration of out-group members in the in-group (since group boundaries are permeable and citizenship is defined by 'achieved' instead by 'ascriptive' criteria).

the peak of the pyramid representing the younger.

The General Educational Laws of 1970 and 1990 established free and compulsory intermediate education (to age 14) and the first stage of secondary education (to age 16) in Spain. Thus, according to educational statistics (MECD, 2000), primary schooling was complete for both genders, and the secondary schooling rate rose to 94% of the relevant 1999/2000 cohorts (96% for females), while illiteracy fell to 2.6% in 2001. Young people can decide between continuing studies or starting to work at age 16.

While previously only a minority attended higher education, the expansion of secondary education made the extension of higher education feasible. Therefore, the population of university students rose to 1,581,415 in 1999/2000 – representing 27% of the relevant cohorts (29% among females). The relative figures were higher for Madrid (252,182 students representing 34.1% of the local cohort, and 15.9% of the Spanish total) than for Bilbao (77,782 students, 29.4% of the local cohort, 4.9% of the Spanish students in higher education). Following the general pattern, the proportion of women was higher among university students in both regions. Regional differences in higher education may reflect both the local social structure and the choice of youth from other regions to learn at the prestigious academic institutions of the capital city.

Logically, the occupational status of Spanish youth is mainly dependent on age: According to Elso and Orizo (1999), for young people between 15 and 19 years old, 72% were only studying, 13% were only working, 5% combined simultaneously study and work, and the rest were in "other situations". In contrast, among young people between 20 and 24 years old just 35% were only studying, 33% only working, and 11% working and studying.

Nevertheless, the present situation in the Spanish labour market is characterized by unemployment as well as precarious and temporary jobs for youth. Concretely, unemployment rates are higher for young Spanish women, while activity and employment rates are higher for young men. The difficult situation for young people is evident when comparing Spain to other EU countries: the unemployment rate for Spanish women aged 15 to 24 years is the highest in Europe (48.3%), and that for men of the same ages (36.6%) was only higher in Finland (Eurostat, 1997). Furthermore, precariousness is reflected in that only 26% of men, vs. 21% of women ages 16 to 29 years enjoyed a fixed contract (Cruz, P. – Santiago, P. 1998).

This employment situation is similar in Madrid and the Basque Country, and leads many young people, especially women, to extend their education, believing that a bigger investment in education will give them better access to jobs. This belief adequately reflects the conditions for job access in knowledge societies (Bell, D., 1973; Castells, M., 2001) – since, in Spain as in most developed Western countries, youngsters with a university degree have the lowest unemployment rate (Cruz, P. – Santiago, P., 1998).

In line with these processes, delayed emancipation is another main demographic feature of Spanish youth. In 2001, 73% of 25-year-old youth, 50% at age 28, and 35% at age 30 were single and living in their parents' home (INE ,2003b). The rate of young people living with their parents remained stable in spite of modernization and economic development. Sociological analyses (CIS, 1999; Iglesias de Ussel, J., 1995; INJUVE, 2001) attributed this delayed emancipation of youth to socio-economic (financial difficulties due to unemployment and precarious jobs, expensive rents, and scarce state welfare support to families and to the emancipation of young people), educative (extension of higher education), and cultural factors (importance of family bonds in Catholic and Mediterranean cultures, tolerance of parents, and comfort of young people at parents' home). Compared with other members of the European Union, Spain assigns less financial support (subventions, study grants, welfare and unemployment benefits) to young people (Eurostat, 1997). As in other South European countries (for example Italy, Greece and Portugal), the financial load of youth support is expected to be the responsibility of the family instead of the state (Bontempi, M., 2003; Flaquer, L., 2000) and this adds difficulties to the emancipation of young people.

The decline in the marriage rate is another demographic trend among Spanish youth. Consequently, the proportion of single young adults is increasing (INJUVE 2001). Although a number of Spanish surveys of representative samples of young people ages 15 to 29 years have also shown that marriage is still important to them (Martín, M., - Velarde, O., 1996; Cruz, P. – Santiago, P., 1998), 35% of young people would like to live with their partner before getting married and, in fact, the cohabitation rate rose to 16% according to INJUVE (2001). Actually, in Spain the mean age at first marriage is 28 years for women and 30 for men and, while figures in the Madrid region are similar (CAM 2001), the mean age (24 years) is four years lower for women in the Basque Country (Eustat, 2001).

Method
Participants
A general representative (N = 400) and a pro-European (N = 100) sample of 18-24 years old youth were gathered in Madrid and Bilbao between April and June of 2002. Pro-European participants were chosen

according to their studies (such as European Studies, European Business and Management, and languages) and work (at Europe-based companies). Both samples were stratified by gender (50% each) and by age group (18-21 and 22-24 years, 50% each group). The following table summarizes the main characteristics of the samples:

STUDY LOCALITIES	BILBAO		MADRID	
TYPE OF SAMPLE	RANDOM	TARGET	RANDOM	TARGET
Sample size	424	99	401	102
Age (mean)	21.19	21.34	21.12	21.38
% Female	50	50	50	51
% Born in the country	99	93	98	90
% Born in locality	90	75	87	79

Measures

In order to uncover the definition of the European social category, in the context of a larger questionnaire, respondents were asked whether several border countries are included or not included in Europe (United Kingdom, Iceland, Russia and Turkey, according to geography, and Estonia, Czech and Slovak Republics according to their accession to the EU), and to rate the importance of four feasible meanings of Europe *(membership in the European Union; using the Euro currency; geographical location; shared values and traditions* – that were rated from 0-"Not at all important" to 4-"Very important").

Furthermore, to elicit the identification level with nested socio-political categories in which respondents are included, they were asked to rate cognitive, affective, evaluative and salience aspects of their local (birthplace and city of residence – *Madrid* or *Bilbao*), regional *(Madrid* or *the Basque Country*), Spanish and European identities. The cognitive component of identity was assessed by asking, "How attached do you feel to…" *birthplace, region, Spain, Europe)* on a scale from 0-"Not at all attached" to 4-"Completely attached". The affective component asked, "What is the strength of your feelings about different sorts of identity?" *(regional, Spanish, European)* on a scale from of 0-"No feeling at all" to 4-"Very strong feeling".

The evaluative component was assessed by asking the importance of *(regional, Spanish, and European)* identity as a personal value in the context of a reduced version of the personal values questionnaire or PVQ (Schwartz, S. H., et. al, 2001). A typical PVQ item presents it with a description such as "Being European is very important to her/him. She/He feels proud of being European" and asked to rate "How much is this person like you?" in a scale from 1-"Not like me at all" to 6-"Very much like me".

Finally, the centrality of these social categories for the self was assessed by asking "…the importance of being *(from birthplace, from region, from Spain, and being citizen of the European Union,* among other items) in terms of your identity, that is, how you are, feel or think about yourself?" on a scale from 0-"Not at all important" to 4- "Very important" and the salience of social identities, was assessed by asking respondents to rate "how frequently do you think of yourself as a *(European, global)* citizen" on a scale from 0- "Never" to 4- "Always".

Then the impact of European Union membership on the person, the region and Spain was assessed by means of a combination of two questions. The first asked the intensity of this impact: "Do you think that our membership of the European Union has had much impact on...", on a scale from 0-"No impact" to 4-"Yes, a big impact". The second question reflected the direction of these impacts (asking "Has the impact been mainly positive or negative?"). Furthermore, an impact index was computed weighting the answer to the first question by +1 or –1 according to the answer (in a positive or negative direction) in the second question, giving a range from –4 to 4 to this impact index.

The questionnaire also gathered information about the respondents' European experience: Learning about the European Union at school (in a scale from 0-"Taught nothing" to 4-"Taught a great deal"), knowledge of European languages, and visiting other European countries.

Finally, the expectations of mobility were asked by the question "How likely is it that when you are aged 30 you'll be living in...?" *(the region, other Spanish region, other European country, outside Europe)* on a scale 0-"Not at all likely" to 4-"Very likely".

RESULTS
Europe as a social category

The first step in understanding what Europe means to young people in Spain was to ask them about the content, borders and meaning of this social category.

Borders. When asked whether several suggested countries are included in Europe, a large majority of respondents included UK, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, followed by Iceland and Russia, in Europe: Turkey was the only country not included by a majority of young people. The inclusion of Russia varied by gender: A higher percentage of men (65.4%) than women (56.9%) placed Russia in Europe. There was also a significant difference in answers between sample types: Russia and the UK were included in Europe by a higher proportion of respondents in the pro-European sample (73.9% and 93.5% compared with 58.4% and 86.0% in the general sample). Finally, a higher proportion of youngsters from the Basque Country included the Czech Republic in Europe (81.6% compared with 72.4% in Madrid). These results reflect a geographical concept of Europe that is wider than the European Union, including all the suggested countries with the exception of Turkey.

Meaning. "Using the Euro", "membership of the European Union", and "geographical location" emerged close to one another as the most important meanings of Europe ($\underline{m}$ = 2.79, 2.73, and 2.69 respectively), while "sharing of certain values and traditions" was perceived as less important on average ($\underline{m}$ = 2.19). Both "using the Euro" and "membership of the European Union" received greater importance in Madrid than in Bilbao ($\underline{m}$ = 2.99 vs. 2.57 and $\underline{m}$ = 2.89 vs. 2.56 respectively) and was higher among women than among men ($\underline{m}$ = 2.91 vs. 2.66 and $\underline{m}$ = 2.90 vs. 2.56 respectively). Finally, sample type also has an effect on the importance of "sharing values and traditions" which received more importance in the pro-European than in the general sample ($\underline{m}$ = 2.56 vs. 2.11).

Importance of local, regional, Spanish and European Identities

As mentioned above, respondents were asked to rate cognitive, affective, evaluative and salience aspects of their local (birthplace and residence city, *Madrid* or *Bilbao)*, regional *(Autonomous Community of Madrid* or *the Basque Country*), Spanish and European identities. Table 1 summarizes the results on these aspects of socio-political identity:

Table 1: **Mean of identity levels by aspect**

Aspects		Levels				
		Birthplace	**Region**	**Spain**	**Europe**	**World**
Attachment	Bilbao	3.04	3.18	2.08	2. 10	
	Madrid	3.40	3.15	3.24	2.61	
Strength of Affect	Bilbao		2.92	1.78	1.83	
	Madrid		2.81	2.85	2.23	
Personal Value*	Bilbao		4.36	2.62	3.00	
	Madrid		4.36	4.37	3.95	
Centrality for Personal identity	Bilbao	2.22	2.31	1.37	1.41	
	Madrid	2.44	2.27	2.61	2.07	
Salience of Citizenship	Bilbao				1.95	2.70
	Madrid				2.15	2.66

NOTE: *Scales ranges are 0-4 except for the Personal Values scale which ranges from 1-6.

Regional differences emerged as the main result for the cognitive aspect, because respondents from Madrid felt stronger attachments to birthplace, Spain, and Europe ($\underline{m}$ = 3.40, $\underline{m}$ = 3.24, and $\underline{m}$ = 2.61) than those from Bilbao ($\underline{m}$ = 3.04, $\underline{m}$ = 2.08 and $\underline{m}$ = 2.10) who reported only a "moderate" attachment to Spain and Europe. The attachment to Europe was stronger for women than men ($\underline{m}$ = 2.46 vs. $\underline{m}$ = 2.25).

In general, the affective component was stronger the more local the level of social category. Thus, regional identity aroused "strong" feelings ($\underline{m}$ = 2.90), while Spanish and European identities elicited more "moderate" feelings ($\underline{m}$ = 2.35 and 2.04 respectively). No significant regional effects were found for regional identity, but there were systematic regional effects with respect to Spanish and European identities: The feelings were stronger for Spanish than for European identity in Madrid while merely "moderate" in both cases in Bilbao ($\underline{m}$ = 2.85 vs. 1.78 and $\underline{m}$ = 2.23 vs. $\underline{m}$ = 1.83 respectively). European identity also showed a

gender effect (women reporting stronger feelings than men, m = 2.13 vs. m = 1.94). Finally, European identity showed a significant interaction effect between sample type and age group because the feeling was stronger for the age group 22-24 in the pro-European sample.

The mean responses of the evaluative component of regional, Spanish and European identities followed the pattern found in previous questions. Respondents attributed more importance to regional identity (m = 4.28) than to Spanish and European identities (m = 3.52 and m = 3.48) as a personal value. Again, European identity was rated significantly differently by region (it was rated as more important in Madrid, m = 3.95 vs. m = 3.00 in Bilbao), and by gender (m = 3.65 for women vs. m = 3.30 for men, respectively).

This component of European identity was also rated differently by sample type: As could be expected, European identity was of more importance as a personal value for the pro-European young people than for the general sample (m =3.89 vs. 3.40). Sample type correlated with the region – this difference between sample types was greater in Bilbao (m = 3.70 vs. 2.88) than in Madrid (m = 4.02 vs. 3.93) – rendering the Bilbao pro-European sample close to Madrid levels. Furthermore, the effect of each region interacted with age groups; European identity was more important for 18-21-year-olds than for the 22-to-24-year-olds in Bilbao (m = 3.51 vs. 3.29), while it was less important for the younger than for the older group (m = 3.66 vs. 4.10) in Madrid. Summing up, these interaction effects pointed out trends toward regional convergence in the identification with Europe.

We also studied the centrality and salience of social identities. First, in order to assess their centrality to identity, respondents rated the importance of "being from" their birthplace, "from the region", "from Spain" and being a "citizen of the European Union" for personal identity. Interviewees valued these aspects with "moderate" importance for their personal identity (m = 2.33, 2.29, 2.00 and 1.75 respectively). Once again, the importance of each identity decreased with distance from the self. Thus, "being a citizen of the European Union" was rated as the least important to self-identity.

ANOVAs by region, sample type, age and gender failed to find any significant effects for birthplace and regional identities. Nevertheless, the region produced the most systematic effect on Spanish and European identities: Both identities were rated as "not important" for the self on average (m =1.37 and 1.41 respectively) in Bilbao, while "being from Spain" was "important" (m = 2.61) and being a citizen of the EU" was "moderately important" (m = 2.07) in Madrid.

Furthermore, the importance of European citizenship for self-identity also differed according to sample type and its interaction with age. This identity was more central for the pro-European sample (m = 2.06), and this effect was especially strong for the 22-24-year-old group (m = 2.25 vs. m = 1.87 in the younger group). In the general sample (m = 1.68), however, this identity was more central for the 18-21-year-old group (m = 1.78 vs. m = 1.59 for the older group).

Finally, in order to assess salience, respondents were asked about the frequency with which he or she thinks of him/herself as 'a European' or 'a global' citizen. According to the mean responses, Spanish youth 'often' consider themselves as "citizens of the world" (m = 2.68) and only "sometimes" as "European citizens" (m = 2.04), and there were no significant differences by region, sample type, age group or gender on these questions. In this regard, it is worth noting that these measures of identity salience reversed the pattern found in all the other identity aspects, where higher responses were related to more local identity levels, since the global identity was rated as more salient than the European identity in this measure.

Impact of European Union membership

In general, the results disclosed that young people perceive that the EU has a positive impact (87% on the person, 88% on the region and 90% on the country). The impact index was stronger the further away the reference was: Means were 1.46 for impact on the person, 2.07 for impact on the region, and 2.56 for impact on Spain.

The impact on the person him/herself was rated as being of greater intensity in Madrid (m = 1.78 vs. m = 1.14 for Bilbao) and in the pro-European sample (m =1.89 vs. m =1.38 for the general sample). Impact on the region was also rated to be stronger in Madrid than in Bilbao (m = 2.55 vs. m = 1.56), while there was no significant effect by region, sample type, gender or age group for the impact on Spain.

Past European experience: education, visiting and language knowledge

Learning about the European Union at school. Our respondents recalled having had some instruction about Europe at school (m = 2.00). The younger age group (18-21 years) reported having learned somewhat more about European topics at school (m =2.22 vs. m =1.77) than the 22-to-24-year-old group. A significant interaction effect appears between age and location - the younger group in Bilbao reported having learned much more about the European Union at school (m = 2.46). These differences may reflect regional

differences in curricula, since the regulation of the Spanish educational system gives decisions on 45% of the curriculum contents to the Basque Autonomous Region and 35% to the Madrid Autonomous Region. Furthermore, content that may contribute to the development of European identity could be conveyed through cross-disciplinary subjects depending on the school educational project and teaching staff.

Visiting Europe. More than 50% of respondents had visited another European country after the age of 16. A much larger proportion of the pro-European sample has visited other countries compared with the general sample (53.7% and 46.7%, respectively). Likewise, interviewees from Bilbao showed more experience visiting other European countries than did young people from Madrid (70.3% vs. 45.5% respectively). The most-visited European countries were France, the British Isles (including Ireland), and Italy. The main reasons for visiting other countries were: holidays or cultural trips, then to learn the language in an organized course and, finally, school trips or exchange programs during secondary school.

Knowledge of European languages. Interviewees were asked about languages in which they could converse, in addition to their mother tongue. Forty-two per cent of respondents did not speak any other language, 37.6% spoke another language, and 20.4% spoke two or more additional languages. Region and sample type led to significant differences in this regard, as 53.4% of respondents in Madrid vs. 35.6% of respondents in Bilbao did not speak any foreign language while 7.2% in Madrid vs. 34.0% in Bilbao did speak two or more additional languages. Similar patterns arose in favour of the pro-European samples, where only 14.5 % of the respondents did not speak any foreign language, and 34.3% speak two or more additional languages (vs. 47.8% and 17.5% in the general sample, correspondingly). English and French were the foreign languages most frequently spoken (followed by German and Italian, spoken by far fewer respondents).

Europe in the future: Mobility expectations

Asked about where they plan to be living at the age of 30, a majority of interviewees saw themselves very likely living in their region (the Basque Country or Madrid, $\underline{m}$ = 3.41); they tend to consider it unlikely that they will live in another region of Spain ($\underline{m}$ =1.89), much less likely elsewhere in Europe ($\underline{m}$ =1.06), and highly unlikely outside of Europe ($\underline{m}$ = 0.61). Sample type and gender also showed differences: The pro-European sample reflected a stronger disposition to move, attributing higher (though still moderate) probability to living elsewhere in Spain, in Europe, and outside Europe than the general sample ($\underline{m}$ = 2.23 vs. $\underline{m}$ =1.81, $\underline{m}$ =1.89 vs. $\underline{m}$ =.89, and $\underline{m}$ = 1.06 vs. $\underline{m}$ = 0.51 respectively). As would be expected, this trend was stronger in reference to a possible move to other European countries. Finally, in this regard, women considered it somewhat more probable than men ($\underline{m}$ =1.16 vs. $\underline{m}$ = 0.96) that they would one day live elsewhere in Europe.

Conclusion

According to the survey results, Spanish young people in Madrid and the Basque Country share a definition of Europe focused mainly on the geographical aspect of this socio-political category, including European Union member states, accession countries and non-members of the European Union. Nevertheless, membership of the European Union and, above all, the Euro currency are also identified as important factors along with geography (and beyond shared values and traditions) as the salient features of the meaning of Europe – depicting a more restrictive view in this regard.

The survey included several questions about different aspects of local, regional, Spanish and European identities. Young respondents in Spain provided a similar order of responses for regional, Spanish and European identities on sense of belonging, affective intensity, importance as a personal value and centrality for personal identity (as Grad, H. – Garcia, G., 2003; and Ros, M. – Rodriguez, M., 2003 have already shown). In general, there was a trend to greater levels of identification the closer the socio-political category was to the person. Thus, the person's birthplace, place of residence, and region produced stronger responses. More abstract socio-political entities, such as Spain and Europe (but not universal, global, citizenship), generate lower levels of personal identification in most of the identity measures. These results seem to be consistent with postulates of the general Social Identity Theory (Brewer, M. B., 1991) and findings in the Spanish surveys on these identities (Moral, F. – Mateos, A., 1999).

Europe was the least important of these identity sources for young people in Madrid and Bilbao. Interviewees considered themselves as "European" only "sometimes", and more readily endorsed the abstract "global citizenship" identity. Identification with Europe was stronger among women and among interviewees from Madrid (vs. those from Bilbao, where the answer levels for Europe were similar to those for Spain, and

European identity emerged as of "little" importance for self and as a personal value, the latter effect being stronger in the general sample). Since this regional pattern was similar for the Spanish identity, it reflects the salience of the Basque Country as a basic national category and identity for our Bilbao respondents.

National identity emerged as the second identity source in both locations but, due to the hegemony of different nationalist orientations, it has a distinct meaning in each region: Spain is the national category in Madrid but the Basque category is the main national identity in Bilbao. Thus, the importance order of Spanish and regional (Madrid/Basque) identities was reversed between Madrid and Bilbao.

In this regard, the findings of this study depict more precisely the relationships between different levels of social identity, illustrating that the aforementioned general trend may result in different identity processes and configurations. Firstly, as noted above, a global, abstract identity emerged as more salient than a European identity for Spanish youth. Secondly, from an emic point of view, the region and Spain elicited similar levels of identification (even with some trend to the priority of the Spanish identity) and both of them were clearly stronger than the European identity in Madrid, while the Basque Regional identity was clearly stronger than Spanish and European identities, eliciting similar levels of low identification in Bilbao. Thus, instead of a continuum of social category abstractness, the results point to different breaches between levels of social categories and identities – between Basque and higher levels in Bilbao and between Spanish and higher levels in Madrid. In sum, the identity level reflecting the dominant national identity seems to function as a basic category distinctively organizing the whole identity configuration at each location (Ros, M. – Huici, C. – Gómez, A., 2000; Simon, B. – Kulla, C. – Zobel, M., 1995; Smith, P. B., et. al, in press), and these configurations would facilitate differently or obstruct the development of European identity.

There is a great consensus among the respondents that the main impact of the European Union is enacted at the level of the country, Spain. Regional and pro-European differences in the perceptions of the EU's impact on less inclusive categories suggest some relation between these perceptions and the strength of European identity: Low European identification may result from the weak perceived impact of the European Union on levels closer to the person (though this data does not allow us to assess the direction of the influence).

In this regard, personal and social experiences would contribute to the development of European identity, attenuating the regional-national differences (Huici, C., et. al 1997). In general, stronger European identification was found to relate to higher numbers of languages spoken, studying a language course and living for a longer period in another European country (Fuss, D. – García, G. – Rodríguez, M., 2003). Furthermore, though school learning is reported as a weak source of information about Europe, this perceived contribution is of more importance among the younger respondents especially in the Basque Country (and rose to a level similar to the pro-European sample).

The comparison between the general and the pro-European samples provides further evidence that personal experiences (such as visiting other countries and language knowledge) reinforce European orientations. Older respondents in the pro-European sample show stronger European identification (for instance, in the affective and the salience for self-identity aspects), pointing to the length of experience (conveyed by age) as another contribution to this orientation. The pro-European sample also shows more reliable information about countries belonging to Europe, and perceives shared values and traditions as a more important feature of Europe. The young people in the pro-European sample are more ready to move elsewhere in Europe than are those in the general sample.

Finally, some converging evidence highlights the role of European experience reinforcing a shared identity beyond national-regional nuances and identity configurations. First, the difference regarding European identification between Madrid and Bilbao is much attenuated in the pro-European sample. Secondly, there is a trend among younger Basque youth to give more importance to European identity (as a personal value). These experience factors (learning, personal and cultural contacts, etc.) would reinforce the perceived impact of the European Union at the personal level, and deserve more attention in future European identity building.

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