**Feeling European: An exploration of ethnic disparities among immigrants**

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ABSTRACT

*Over the last 20 years, European identity has become a key topic widely investigated in social sciences. However, most research has only focused on EU nationals and EU immigrants, neglecting the fact that a substantial segment of citizens in Europe are non-EU immigrants. This article explores the differences between and within EU and non-EU immigrant groups in terms of European identity and potential factors behind these differences. Based on the 2013 IAB-SOEP Migration Sample of first generation immigrants in Germany (N=2,581), this paper reveals that non-EU immigrants tend to identify as European – even if to a lesser extent than EU immigrants. Moreover it provides a systematic comparative exploration of different factors possibly able to foster a European identity among EU and non-EU immigrants. It reveals, for instance, that religious affiliation has no significant impact but that spatial mobility is especially important in accounting for patterns in ethnic disparities in the endorsement of a European identity. Furthermore, this article illuminates a positive association between European identity and identity with the receiving society among both EU and non-EU immigrants as well as a positive association between European identity and identification with the origin country among EU immigrants.*

Keywords: European identity; immigrants; EU free movers; spatial mobility; assimilation

A widely shared European identity has been considered a crucial determinant for the success of the European project since its origins ([Belot 2010](#_ENREF_2)). The construction of a Europe-wide political integration project requires solidarity among Europeans that would justify the production of a supranational state to protect the ‘European community’ ([Fligstein 2007](#_ENREF_26)). This solidarity does not only depend upon shared rights but also upon a shared sense of belonging. Outlining the importance of how EU citizens identify themselves, Scheuer and Schmitt rightly state that ‘the growing together of a political community [here the European Union] depends at least as much on people’s self-perception and identification as on the provision of rights of citizenship or on predominant modes of government ([Scheuer and Schmitt 2007, 508](#_ENREF_49))*.*

Given the importance of a strong identification with Europe for the sustainability of the EU polity, studies on European identity of European nationals have flourished over the last 20 years in political science and sociology ([see Belot 2010 for an overview](#_ENREF_2)). Quantitative studies, usually based on Eurobarometer data, have shown that a significant proportion of European nationals feels European or attached to Europe ([Citrin and Sides 2004](#_ENREF_9); [European Commission 2015](#_ENREF_18)). However, qualitative studies suggest that a sense of European belonging should be interpreted as an ongoing process rather than a tangible form of identity ([Duchesne and Frognier 2008](#_ENREF_16)).

Studies on European identification have focused on European nationals and EU immigrants at length. Scholars have paid considerable attention to the endorsement of European identity among EU immigrants but have neglected to incorporate non-EU immigrants in their studies. This gives a rather partial view of the European society. At first glance, such a focus seems un-balanced, since intra-EU immigrants remain a small segment of the overall immigrant population in Europe; despite recent increases in EU migration flows, the stock of immigrants in EU countries remains heavily biased towards non-EU origins ([Eurostat 2015](#_ENREF_19)). Furthermore, very few studies have thus investigated ethnic disparities in European identity. Among studies based on general population survey data, such as the Eurobarometer, immigrants remain indeed at the margins of the analysis (usually captured by a dummy as control variable in the statistical models) (e.g., [Pichler 2008](#_ENREF_39); [Kuhn 2012](#_ENREF_36)) ([but see Roeder 2011 for an analysis of political attitudes towards European integration with a slightly more fine-grained differentiation between immigrant groups](#_ENREF_47)). Accordingly, non-nationals tend to identify as European to a larger extent than national citizens, which is likely to reflect opinions of EU immigrants who have enjoyed the freedom to move (but not always without any difficulties). Although one can expect that identification with Europe for non-EU immigrants may turn out to be an even more complex and not a necessarily successful process, it remains essential to empirically investigate immigrants’ sense of belonging by considering them as a highly diversified group and to assess the extent to which non-EU immigrants differ from EU immigrants in regards to European identification. Indeed, [Cinnirella and Hamilton (2007](#_ENREF_8)) put forward this argument in their comparative study of indigenous white British respondents and first and second generation respondents from a South-Asian ethnic minority background in the UK. Even if e UK is known for its Euroscepticism, they show that British Asians (both generations) are more pro-European than the white British respondents and that British Asians’ national identity is not negatively correlated with their European identity, while it is negatively correlated for white British respondents. They conclude by saying: ‘[I]t is not wise to assume, in a multicultural nation, that the construction of European and national identities, as well as associated attitudes, will be broadly similar throughout all ethnic groups’ ([Cinnirella and Hamilton 2007, 496](#_ENREF_8)). Moreover, their results reveal the potential contribution of European identification among non-EU immigrants to the longevity of the European project. In sum, investigating ethnic differences in European identification between and within EU and non-EU immigrants will illuminate the extent to which feelings of belonging are related to legal inclusion. Furthermore, and with regard to the broader issue of European integration, it is crucial to identify possible factors that could foster European identification among non-EU immigrants, among which many are likely to settle in Europe for a long time.

This contribution aims at addressing these issues by investigating ethnic disparities in European identification among immigrants from 20 countries and regions of origin in Germany. In recent years, Germany has become the primary destination country for both EU and non-EU immigrants ([Eurostat 2015](#_ENREF_19)), which makes Germany a particularly relevant case study. The analyses are based on a large-scale representative sample of first generation immigrants in Germany (the 2013 Migration Sample of the Institute for Employment Research and the German Socio-Economic Panel – hereafter IAB-SOEP). Throughout the article, we use the term of ethnic disparities or ethnic differences to refer to differences between first generation immigrants in Germany from different countries of birth. By encompassing the entire known immigrant population in Germany in the sample, we are able to take into account the increasing ethnic diversity of European societies ([or `superdiversity´ following Vertovec 2007](#_ENREF_56)) and the role ethnic origin may play in the endorsement of a European sense of belonging. Moreover, we are able to shed light on the extent to which EU citizenship[[1]](#endnote-1) is an empirically salient characteristic in the endorsement of a European sense of belonging among the immigrant population. By drawing on the literature of both the sociology of immigration and of the EU, we assess the power of transnational social practices and structural assimilation in explaining these ethnic disparities. Furthermore, we investigate the relationship between European identification and identification with the receiving society and with the country of origin among both EU and non-EU immigrants.

In the literature, the concept of European identity has been associated with a wide range of definitions so that some have become sceptical of its use and called it a ‘loose and baggy’ concept ([Favell 2005](#_ENREF_20)). With consideration for these complexities, we have chosen to adopt a rather encompassing definition of European identity as an active, conscious and also emotional identification to Europe, which also corresponds to one that is frequently used in quantitative research. Compared to Bruter´s (2005) approach, our aim is not to explore the multidimensionality of the concept but to capture more broadly the extent to which people reflexively identify with Europe as a whole. We therefore take a bottom-up approach of European identity[[2]](#endnote-2) defined as the extent to which individuals feel European, which is not necessarily in contradiction with other forms of identifications (Díez Medrano and Gutiérrez 2001; Risse 2004, 2010; Rother and Nebe 2009). This is inspired by Duchesne and colleagues’ definition of ‘European identity as a psycho-sociological or socio-political process of citizens’ attachment to the European space or to the political community designed by integration’ ([Duchesne 2010, 7](#_ENREF_15); [translated by Recchi 2014, 119](#_ENREF_42)). The European identity emerges, then, in the ‘process by which individuals and social groups make sense of who they are and what they want’ ([Risse 2010, 20](#_ENREF_44)).

1. Ethnic differences in European identity among immigrants

As already discussed, very few studies have assessed ethnic disparities in European identity and most of them have targeted EU immigrants, showing that the more Europeans experience Europe through cross-border mobility, the more they feel attached to it ([see for instance Rother and Nebe 2009](#_ENREF_48)). EU immigrants have indeed received particular attention from scholars aiming at studying European identity. Because EU immigrants constitute the group of EU citizens that makes the most use of the advantages provided by the EU, such as EU citizenship, they are expected to endorse the largest European identity ([Favell 2008](#_ENREF_21); [Favell and Recchi 2009](#_ENREF_24); [Rother and Nebe 2009](#_ENREF_48)). This group has been referred to in the literature as ‘European pioneers’ ([Recchi and Favell 2009](#_ENREF_43)) or ‘intra-EU movers’ ([Favell et al. 2011](#_ENREF_25)) and they have been considered as prototypical Europeans ([Favell and Guiraudon 2009](#_ENREF_23)).

However, even if EU immigrants can be considered to be a highly privileged group of immigrants thanks to the *acquis communautaires* like EU citizenship with its free movement right and its right of non-discrimination based on nationality, they nevertheless face many challenges in the receiving societies similar to those faced by the overall immigrant population. They need to integrate into the labour market, (often) learn a new language, build new social contacts, adapt to a new culture and – even if to a lesser extent than non-EU immigrants – potentially suffer from discrimination, especially newcomers in the EU ([see Moroşanu and Fox 2013 on Romanian migrants in the UK](#_ENREF_38)). Thus, the almost exclusive focus on this group of immigrants in the study of European identity seems somewhat arbitrary and fails to take benefit from comparisons between EU and non-EU immigrants.

To the best of our knowledge, a comparison between EU and non-EU immigrants on the endorsement of a European identity has been carried out only by [Di Mauro and Fiket (2014](#_ENREF_13)) and by [Teney and Hanquinet (2015](#_ENREF_54)) (but without a more detailed differentiation than the dichotomy between EU and non-EU immigrants). These two studies come to similar conclusions: EU immigrants identify significantly more as European than non-EU immigrants and nationals. These differences between nationals, EU and non-EU immigrants in terms of their EU identity are likely to be due to the fact that the EU represents for EU immigrants an umbrella political entity that encompasses both the origin and receiving countries. Thus, identifying as European enables EU immigrants to conciliate their potential identities with both origin and receiving countries.

1. Determinants of European identification among immigrants

The literature on determinants of European identity provides a fruitful framework to explain ethnic differences in the endorsement of European identification. According to [Recchi (2014](#_ENREF_42)), studies on European identity draw on two distinct theoretical approaches which are not mutually exclusive. First, within the culturalist research tradition, European support and identities are considered to be generated, reproduced and transmitted through culture ([Recchi 2014](#_ENREF_42)); attitudes result from the internalisation of meanings, symbols and messages that are transmitted within a specific cultural context. Exposures to influential content-specific messages – or political socialisation – compose the main factor in the process of attitudes formation ([Recchi 2014](#_ENREF_42)). The latter idea of political socialisation has been supported by Bruter’s ([2003](#_ENREF_6)) and Risse’s ([2003](#_ENREF_45)) findings showing how the development of European currency, and European symbols and idioms more generally, have promoted the existence of a distinctive European frame ([see also Diez Medrano 2003 for an in-depth analysis of cross-national variation in the way Europe is framed](#_ENREF_14)). Following the culturalist approach, the level of European identification of immigrants in Germany should be similar to the one of the overall population in their countries of origin. Accordingly, ethnic differences among immigrants in European identification would follow similar patterns to the variation in the overall level of European identification among the population of the different countries of origin. This hypothesis relates ethnic differences in European identification among immigrants to the varying contexts in which they were socialised. It should thus only apply to citizens who have been socialised in their country of origin and who immigrated to Germany in adult age. We therefore test this hypothesis on a sample restricted to respondents who immigrated to Germany as adults and by controlling for the length of stay in Germany in order to take into account the potential socialising effect of the receiving society. This leads us to formulate the following hypothesis: *among citizens who immigrated to Germany as adults, ethnic differences in the endorsement of European identity can be explained by differences in the level of European identity among the general population in the countries of origin (H1*).

The second kind of explanations used in the literature on the formation of a European identity considers socio-spatial interactions that are content-free of identity references as determinants for European identity ([Recchi 2014](#_ENREF_42)). According to this line of research which has been labelled ‘transactionalist’ following the lead of Deutsch’s thesis ([1954](#_ENREF_12), [1969](#_ENREF_11)), numerous social interactions and experiences across borders within the EU are associated with higher levels of European consciousness ([Recchi and Favell 2009](#_ENREF_43); Kuhn 2015). Therefore, we use measures of transnational social practices (such as the frequency of visits in the origin country) to shed light on the plausibility of this explanation: a positive association of European identification with transnational social practices among EU immigrants would provide some support to the socio-spatial interaction explanation. Such a result would indicate that a European sense of belonging is endorsed to a larger extent by those who most frequently use their free movement rights. So far, transnational practices have repeatedly shown to be positively related to European identity among the general population (e.g., [Gustafson 2009](#_ENREF_31); [Recchi 2015](#_ENREF_41)). However, the extent to which this correlation can be generalised to the different groups of immigrants who live in another country than their origin country has – to the best of our knowledge – not been assessed yet.

Furthermore, the literature outlines two mechanisms that explain the link between European identification and cross-border movements as well as the reason why this link could vary among migrants. The first mechanism is derived from the common in-group identity theory developed by social psychologists ([e.g., Gaertner et al. 1993](#_ENREF_28)). According to this theory, positive contacts and interactions with members of an out-group blur group boundaries and can contribute to the development of a common in-group identity. Thus, positive social contacts and experiences with other Europeans can transmit a sense of belonging to the same in-group and thus enhance European identification. Yet, [Favell (2009](#_ENREF_22)) describes a hierarchy among immigrant groups in Western Europe that is likely to affect, to a varying extent, the positive evaluation of social contacts and experiences made by immigrants with members of the receiving society. This, in turn, might explain ethnic differences in the endorsement of a European identity. Accordingly, immigrants from Western EU countries are considered as ‘free movers’ and face little discrimination in their countries of residence, while immigrants from Central and Eastern EU countries continue to be labelled as ‘immigrants’ and suffer from unequal opportunities on West European labour markets, even if all have the same rights through EU citizenship. Lastly, non-EU citizens belonging to the traditional emigration countries compose the group of immigrants facing the most prejudice and discrimination in Western Europe. The varying inter-ethnic preferences of the majority in multi-ethnic societies correspond indeed to a hierarchy in social distance between the majority and ethnic minorities ([Hagendoorn 1995, 225](#_ENREF_32)). Social distance is understood as the subjective state of nearness felt for certain individuals and relates to the perception that the other belongs to a different category ([Shibutani and Kwan 1965](#_ENREF_51)). Such an ethnic hierarchy refers therefore to a consensual social representation of the relative positions of ethnic groups in society ([Hagendoorn 1995, 202](#_ENREF_32)). Accordingly, ethnic groups that are culturally and socio-economically the most similar to the majority face the lowest social distance (and will be thus highly ranked on the ethnic hierarchy) ([Hagendoorn 1995](#_ENREF_32); [Hagendoorn and Sniderman 2001](#_ENREF_33)). By contrast, ethnic groups that are perceived by the majority as culturally and socio-economically dissimilar suffer from large social distance and are thus lowly ranked in terms of inter-ethnic preferences.

In Western Europe, ethnic minorities from Western Europe are the highest ranked, while ethnic groups from countries with a Muslim majority tend to be the ones placed at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy ([Hagendoorn 1995](#_ENREF_32); [see Potârcă and Mills 2015 for a recent cross-national comparison](#_ENREF_40)). The few studies analysing inter-ethnic preferences and social distance towards ethnic minorities in Germany seem to confirm the ranking among immigrant groups discussed by Favell (2009). For instance, a recent survey on general trust in diverse immigrant groups shows that Germans trust Western European immigrants the most, followed by (among others) Eastern Europeans, while Turkish immigrants represent an ethnic group that generates the highest relative level of mistrust among Germans ([SVR 2012, 39](#_ENREF_53)).

The second mechanism that might explain the link between European identification and cross-border movements is based on a perspective that we refer to as ‘instrumental’. Accordingly, people who make use of their EU citizenship and free movement rights are the ones who most take advantage of the facilities provided by the EU to its residents. Since these people directly experience the benefits of the EU, they are thus more likely to identify as Europeans. As [Fligstein (2007](#_ENREF_26)) argues, European identification strongly depends on the extent to which individuals benefit from the EU. This interest-based determinant of European identification can be an explanation for the strong European identification among highly mobile citizens. Following this idea, Western EU immigrants would be the group who identify most with Europe, since they originate from the countries benefitting the longest from the *acquis communautaires.* Citizens from the EU13 countries that joined the EU in 2004 and after would form the second group who feel most European. Lastly, citizens from non-EU countries would be the ones identifying the least as European, since non-EU citizens do not have access to the advantages provided by EU citizenship. The ordering of origin countries along the length of time they benefit from EU citizenship matches the aforementioned ranking of immigrant groups derived from the social distance perceived by Germans. Since the ranking of origin countries are similar for both the social distance and instrumental explanations, we will not be able to disentangle these mechanisms in the interpretation of the results.

We see that mobility practices can foster immigrants’ identification for both instrumental and socio-psychological reasons. Yet, relying on the literature discussed just here above, we may suggest that mobility practices will not necessarily have the same kind of positive outcomes for all migrant groups. A recent study seems to indicate that, even when mobile, the procedure to clear visa restrictions for Turkish migrants may impact on how they relate to Europe compared to other groups of migrants, such as Romanian migrants[[3]](#endnote-3). Therefore, we cannot simply postulate that the more mobile migrants are the more they feel European but instead this relationship is likely to be moderated depending on the country of origin and its historical relation with the EU. We therefore derive the following three hypotheses:

H2: *Western EU immigrants identify the most as Europeans, followed by immigrants from the EU13 countries that joined the EU since 2004. Lastly, non-EU immigrants are the ones with the weakest European identity.*

*H3: The larger the transnational social practices, the stronger the European identification.*

*H4: The relationship between transnational social practices and European identification is stronger for* *immigrants from countries benefitting the most and for the longest period from EU citizenship without any restrictions. We thus expect this relationship to be the strongest among West EU immigrants, followed by EU13 immigrants and the lowest among non-EU immigrants.*

Besides these ethnic differences depending on the extent of EU citizenship and the resulting access to free movement rights, another divide discussed by scholars might explain ethnic disparities among non-EU immigrants. As [Bruter (2005](#_ENREF_5)) notes, European identity can refer to the degree to which people recognize themselves both in the political project proposed by the EU and also in its cultural, political and philosophical values and norms. These civic and cultural dimensions may be in tension according to Bruter. As [Risse (2010](#_ENREF_44)) puts it, ‘the substantive content of the EU’s political identity […] refers to a modern, democratic, secular, and cosmopolitan value community’ ([Risse 2010, 51](#_ENREF_44)). The cultural element refers to Europe as a social community with common history, shared social, cultural and religious heritage and traditions. This dimension directly refers to the idea of European civilisation, which has been used to support an exclusionist nationalist vision of Europe as being white and Christian ([Risse 2010](#_ENREF_44)), or a ‘fortress’ ([Delanty 2002](#_ENREF_10)) in which Muslim citizens would be ill at ease.

This multidimensionality suggests that those immigrants who can embrace both the civic/political and cultural components of European identity are more likely to feel European. On the other hand, those who feel distant from the Europeans for cultural and/or ethnic reasons are less likely to feel European. In a context where ‘the stereotyped non-European is often the non-white immigrant Muslim’ ([Fligstein et al. 2012, 114](#_ENREF_27)), Muslim immigrants might find it difficult to identify with a conception of Europe in which Eurocentric visions of a White and Christian Europe are still vivid. Despite the fact that Muslim immigrant populations in Europe are comprised of people from various Islamic denominations, public discourse in Western Europe is dominated by homogenised representations of Muslim populations without giving much consideration to the heterogeneous currents and movements within the Muslim population throughout Europe ([Cinalli and Giugni 2013](#_ENREF_7)). The feeling of being ostracized by this exclusionist nationalist vision of Europe is thus likely to be perceived by immigrants of Muslim affiliation, regardless of their specific denominations. Therefore, it can be postulated that *immigrants of Muslim affiliation are less likely to identify as European than Christian immigrants and immigrants without religious affiliation (H5*).

Finally, two further hypotheses for explaining ethnic disparities in European identity can be derived from assimilation theory. The classical assimilation theory assumes that the extent to which immigrants assimilate depends on the length of stay in the receiving society ([Alba and Nee 1997](#_ENREF_1)). This would imply that immigrants on the long run show a similar level of European identity to the German average population. We therefore expect *ethnic differences in European identity to decrease as a function of the length of stay in Germany (H6*)[[4]](#endnote-4). Furthermore and according to the classical assimilation theory, structural assimilation (i.e., incorporation into society so that immigrants have equal access to the major institutions) is a condition for the assimilation on the other dimensions (including the emotional one on which identities load) ([Gordon 1964](#_ENREF_30)). Hence, only when immigrants experience a successful structural assimilation will the assimilation in other dimensions take place. Ethnic differences in European identity are therefore expected to decrease as a function of structural assimilation. Since the analyses are based on a sample of adult immigrants, this structural assimilation will be assessed with subjective and objective measures of labour market outcomes (i.e., perceived discrimination on the labour market, and employment status respectively). We thus expect *ethnic differences in European identification to be the lowest among immigrants who successfully integrated into the German labour market both in objective and subjective terms (H7*).

1. Multiple identities among immigrants

While the hypotheses derived so far aim at explaining ethnic differences in European identification, the last set of hypotheses we develop refers to the relationship of European identity with other dimensions of identification, namely identification with the receiving society and the country of origin. The sociology of immigration has extensively shown that identities with the receiving society and the origin country among immigrants are not mutually exclusive (e.g., [Waters 1990](#_ENREF_57); [Berry 1997](#_ENREF_3); [Esser 2006](#_ENREF_17)). Furthermore, research in the field of EU studies has pointed to the compatibility of European and national identities among the general population: holding a strong national identity does not exclude any sense of belonging to a supranational entity among the general population (e.g., [Hanquinet and Savage 2012](#_ENREF_34); [Schlenker 2012](#_ENREF_50); [Teney et al. 2014](#_ENREF_55)). According to [Favell et al. (2011, 15](#_ENREF_25)), citizens are able to add a European dimension to their collective (sub-)national identities as long as the group memberships are constructed as nested (their (sub-)national identities are embedded within an European one ) rather than as mutually exclusive ([see also Medrano and Gutiérrez 2001](#_ENREF_37); [Risse 2005](#_ENREF_46)). If we follow this line of reasoning, we would expect *a positive association between European identity and identification with the receiving society (H8*), since a German identity is nested within the European identity. In a similar vein, we would expect *a positive association between European identity and identity with the origin country for EU immigrants (H9).* By contrast, European identity and identity with the country of origin among non-EU immigrants are not nested and might be perceived as incompatible. We therefore expect *a negative association between European identity and identity with the origin country among non-EU immigrants (H10).*

1. Data and Methods

We empirically tested our hypotheses using the 2013 IAB-SOEP Migration Sample. The IAB-SOEP Migration Sample is a joint project of the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), establishing the first wave of the largest longitudinal household survey of immigrants in Germany ([Brücker et al. 2014, 2](#_ENREF_4)). The focus of the sample is on immigrants who have immigrated since 1995 and the descendants of immigrants who have entered the German labour market since 1995. These so-called anchor persons in the sample were drawn from administrative register data of the IAB. In addition to the 2,723 anchor respondents, all household members above 16 years were interviewed. Hence, in 2013, 4,964 persons participated in the first wave of the survey. In our analyses, we controlled for being a non-anchor person. In order to assess the robustness of our results, we replicated the analyses presented in this paper on the sample restricted to the anchor respondents. These replication models show similar results to the analyses presented in the article. We excluded ethnic German resettlers (‘Spätaussiedler’ and ‘Aussiedler’) from the analyses due to their special status[[5]](#endnote-5). Moreover, we focused on first generation immigrants only, i.e. persons born outside of present-day Germany. This means that our analyses are based on a sample of 2,581 first generation immigrants.

We operationalised our dependent variable, European identification, using the following question: ‘In very general terms, how European do you feel?’ (5-point scale, recoded from lowest to highest identification). This question seems appropriate to measure European identity as an active, conscious and also emotional (i.e. *feeling* European) identification to Europe. Comparing different questions on identity available in the cross-national surveys of values and attitudes, such as the European Values Study, the World Values Survey and the Eurobarometer, [Sinnott (2006](#_ENREF_52)) showed that questions using rating in terms of identification are the most reliable unidimensional measures of European identity. Therefore, this question offers an adequate way of operationalising the encompassing definition of the European identity we have adopted. As discussed above, our paper does not aim to explore the different components (cultural versus civic/political, Bruter 2005) nor dimensions ([cognitive, evaluative and affective; see Favell et al. 2011](#_ENREF_25); Tajfel 1981) of European identity but is designed to assess the extent to which people consciously identify with Europe. In addition, European identification and other identities are not mutually exclusive.

The main independent variable is the respondents’ country of birth. In order to provide for adequate case numbers, we grouped some countries of origin. We are able to differentiate between: Italy, Spain, Greece, the remaining EU15 countries, Poland, Romania, the remaining EU13 countries, non-EU Europe & USA, Russia, Ukraine, Ex-Yugoslavia, Serbia, Turkey, Western Asia, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Southern and Eastern Asia, Northern Africa, Sub Sahara Africa and Latin America. For testing H1 (the culturalist explanation), we used the weighted data of the 2013 Eurobarometer wave 80.1 to compute the average level of European identity among the general population in immigrants’ countries of origin (with the question ‘Please tell me how attached you feel to the European Union?’). Because the Eurobarometer surveys are carried out solely in the 28 EU member states, we are limited to investigating a restricted number of countries – namely, the EU countries – when testing the culturalist hypothesis.

To test the socio-spatial interactions explanations (H2, H3 and H4), we used the number of visits to the country of origin in the last two years, whether or not the respondent has sent remittances to someone living outside Germany in the last year, and regular contact with friends and relatives abroad as measures for transnational social practices. Additional migration experiences were considered by a question about whether the respondent had moved to another country before immigrating to Germany.

Belonging to a church or religious community is used to test H5.

With regard to the hypotheses based on the assimilation theory, we tested H6 by generating a variable on the average length of stay in Germany (measured in months).

Structural integration (assessed in H7) was operationalised with the employment status (objective measure) and perceived discrimination on the labour market (subjective measure).

To test H8, H9 and H10, we used the questions about how German the respondents feel (identification with receiving country) and how connected they feel with their country of origin (identification with origin country) (5-point scales respectively, recoded from lowest to highest identification). Control variables include age, gender and education (referring to the highest degree attained either in Germany or abroad). The question wordings of the main variables can be found in Table A1 and the distribution of the variables in Table A2 of the Appendix.

To test the hypotheses, we ran hierarchical linear regressions. We used the STATA package ‘coefplot’ ([Jann 2014](#_ENREF_35)) for the visual presentation of the results.

1. Results

Our first hypothesis (the culturalist hypothesis) states that *ethnic disparities in European identity among immigrants can be explained by differences in the level of European identity among the general population in the countries of origin.*  In order to test H1, we plotted in Graph 1 the average level of European identity endorsed by immigrants in Germany against the average level of European identity endorsed by the general population from the immigrants´ countries of origin. For the immigrant population, we restricted the IAB-SOEP Migration Sample to immigrants who came to Germany as adults (i.e., age at arrival of at least 18 years old) in order to exclude immigrants who spent their main socialising years in the receiving society. This restricted sample was only used to assess H1, while the remaining hypotheses were tested with the entire immigrant sample. Based on this restricted sample, we estimated the predicted value for European identity for each group of origin by controlling for compositional effects (i.e., education, age and gender) and for the length of stay in Germany in order to take into account the potential socialising effect of the receiving society. We computed the average level of European identity among the general population of the origin countries of the respondents from the IAB-SOEP Migration Sample with the weighted data of the 2013 Eurobarometer wave 80.1. Due to the limited number of countries sampled in the Eurobarometer data, we have to exclude non-EU immigrants from the analysis of the cultural hypothesis testing. The assessment of the cultural hypothesis is thus based on seven categories of origin for which we can match the level of European identity of citizens originating from these countries and residing in Germany (from the IAB-SOEP Migration Sample) with the average European identity endorsed by the average population in these origin countries (from the Eurobarometer data). Moreover, two out of these seven origin categories are composite categories (i.e., EU13 without Romania and Poland; and EU15 without Spain, Italy, Greece and Germany).

Due to these data limitations, the results plotted in Graph 1 should be interpreted with caution; it is an initial estimation of the plausibility of the culturalist hypothesis rather than a robust empirical test of it. The results presented in Graph 1 do not give much support to the culturalist hypothesis. Indeed, the culturalist hypothesis would have been confirmed if the average European identity in the origin countries were positively correlated with the average European identity of the corresponding immigrant groups. However, the plotted values on the X and Y axes in Graph 1 are only weakly correlated, which means that the level of European identity of immigrants in Germany is not related to the level of European identity among the average population of the respective origin country. The general population in Spain, Romania, Italy and the remaining EU13 countries do not show large cross-national differences in their European identity. Furthermore, the results for Greece and EU15 seem to contradict H1: the overall population in Greece and in the remaining EU15 countries holds a relative weak European identity, while immigrants from these countries residing in Germany endorse an average European identity (in the case of Greeks) or an above-average European identity (in the case of the EU15 immigrants). A glance at the very low R² value (0.007) confirms this interpretation: these results do not provide any support to H1.

\*\*\*Graph 1 about here\*\*\*

The remaining hypotheses are tested on the entire IAB-SOEP Migration Sample with hierarchical regression models. For the sake of clarity, the ethnic disparities with their standard errors estimated in Models 1 to 4 are plotted in Graph 2. Models 1 to 4 aim at testing the hypotheses that seek to explain ethnic differences in European identity (i.e., H2 to H7). The coefficients for the remaining variables can be found in Table 1. Model 1 is the baseline model composed of the ethnic categories and the control variables (i.e., education, age and gender). The ethnic disparities in European identity estimated in Model 1 show patterns in line with H2 (*H2: European identity is the strongest among EU15 immigrants, followed by EU13 immigrants and lastly non-EU immigrants*); immigrants from the EU15 countries (i.e., Italy, Spain and the remaining EU15 countries – with the exception of Greece) identity the most with Europe. By contrast, immigrants from the new EU member states (i.e., Romania and the remaining EU13 countries) hold significantly lower levels of European identification with the exception of Poles, who do not significantly differ from EU15 immigrants in their European identity. Furthermore, non-EU immigrants identify as European to a significantly lower extent than EU immigrants.

\*\*\*Table 1 about here\*\*\*

\*\*\*Graph 2 about here\*\*\*

\*\*\*Graph 3 about here\*\*\*

In Model 2, we introduced the measures of transnational social practices as main effects in order to assess H3 (*H3: The larger the transnational social practices, the stronger the European identification)*. As can be seen in Table 1, regular social contacts with people from another country and sending remittances are not significantly associated with European identity. By contrast, immigrants who regularly visit their country of origin and who moved to a third country before arriving to Germany are significantly more likely to identify as European. It seems thus that transnational social practices without spatial mobility do not matter much in the endorsement of a European sense of belonging among both EU and non-EU immigrants. This may be due to the fact that immigrants interact with citizens from other countries on a daily basis given their shared immigration experiences, so that extra regular transnational social practices without physically crossing borders do not add much ‘transnational experience’ to their daily life. By contrast, the items measuring cross-border spatial mobility – such as repeated migration experience and regular visits to the origin country – are positively and significantly associated with European identity. This gives some support to the socio-spatial interaction explanation: those who are spatially more mobile are those identifying the most as European (H3).

In order to assess the moderating function of ethnic origin in the associations of transnational practices with European identity (H4), we estimated the regression of Model 3 separately for the subsample of EU15 immigrants, the subsample of EU13 immigrants and the subsample of non-EU immigrants. The associations of the transnational practices variables with European identity for each of the three groups are presented in Graph 3. Repeated migration shows a significant and positive association with European identification solely among non-EU immigrants. By contrast, the coefficient of the item measuring the number of visits in the origin country is significant only among EU15 immigrants. Remittances do not show a significant correlation with European identity with any of the three origin groups. Lastly, non-EU immigrants with regular social contacts to people residing abroad tend to hold a significantly but only slightly lower level of European identity than non-EU immigrants without such regular contacts. These results do not support H4, assuming that the relationship between transnational social practices and European identification is stronger among EU15 immigrants. Indeed, groups of origin do not exert a consistent moderating effect on the association between transnational social practices and European identity; repeated migration is significantly associated with European identity only among non-EU immigrants, while the coefficient of regular visits to the origin country on European identity is solely significant for the group of EU15 immigrants.

In Model 3, we included immigrants´ religious affiliations to test H5. Muslim immigrants identify as European to the same extent as Christian immigrants, which contradicts H5. Furthermore, considering religious affiliations in the model does not facilitate a reduction of ethnic differences for countries and regions of origin composed of a majority of Muslim citizens (see Model 3 in Graph 2).

Model 4 intends to test the hypotheses related to the assimilation theory (H6 and H7) and comprises the variables measuring length of stay in Germany and structural integration. The length of stay in Germany is positively and significantly associated with a European sense of belonging: the longer the stay in Germany, the stronger the European identity. With regard to the integration into the German labour market, only one of the employment status categories shows a significant coefficient: compared to fully employed immigrants, immigrants who are marginally employed are significantly less likely to identify as European. Lastly, the subjective measure of structural integration is also significantly associated with a European sense of belonging: immigrants who feel often discriminated on the German labour market are less likely to identify as Europeans. Overall, while these variables are all significantly associated with European identity, they fail to explain much of the ethnic differences (compare Models 3 and 4 in Graph 2). Therefore, we can confirm neither H6 nor H7: length of stay and structural integration play a significant role in the endorsement of a European identity, but cannot explain much of the ethnic disparities in the level of European identity.

\*\*\*Graphs 4 and 5 about here\*\*\*

Lastly, we introduced the variables measuring identification with the country of origin and with Germany in Model 5. Since the coefficients for these identification variables are expected to differ between EU and non-EU immigrants, we also included in this last model interaction terms between these identification variables and a dummy differentiating EU from non-EU immigrants. The results of these interactions are presented in Graph 4 and 5. Graph 4 confirms our hypothesis on the relationship between European identity and identification with Germany (H8): the more immigrants identify with Germany, the higher their European sense of belonging. This positive association is significantly stronger for non-EU immigrants than for EU immigrants. German identity among immigrants goes therefore hand in hand with European identity. Lastly, Graph 5 depicts the association between European identity and identification with the country of origin. As expected, EU immigrants who strongly identify with their country of origin are significantly more likely to identify as Europeans: these results support H9. By contrast, the extent to which non-EU immigrants identify with their country of origin is not significantly associated with a European sense of belonging; H10 is therefore rejected.

1. Conclusion

In this article, we presented the first detailed study on ethnic differences in European identity among EU and non-EU immigrants. Our results provide new avenues to scholars interested in European identity and have important implications for the broader process of European integration. First and in contrast to the culturalist explanatory framework, the socio-spatial interactions mechanism highlighted in the literature enables us to understand the patterns of ethnic disparities in the endorsement of a European identity. Indeed, immigrants from countries that benefit the most and for the longest from EU citizenship (i.e., the EU 15 countries) tend to share a stronger sense of European belonging than immigrants from the newer EU countries and non-EU immigrants. The differences in European identity between EU15 immigrants and EU13 immigrants are however not consistent across all origin categories that we could distinguish in the analyses. Thus, the distinction between immigrants from the old and new EU member states in their identification as European is somewhat blurred. By contrast, there seems to be a clear-cut and systematic boundary between EU and non-EU immigrants in their level of European identity; the development of a sense of European belonging is closely linked to the EU citizenship. Nevertheless, non-EU immigrants do consider themselves to be European, even if this affiliation is weaker than that of EU immigrants. The relative presence of a European sense of belonging among those who are legally excluded from the EU free movement rights is an important finding to the issue of a sustainable European integration project. Indeed, as our results showed, the access to the advantages provided by the EU to its citizens is positively associated with the strength of European identification, but is not a required condition for the development of a sense of European belonging. Moreover, non-EU immigrants compose an increasingly important segment of the European population, although they have been largely overlooked by scholars studying European identity. Hence, non-EU immigrants can play a significant role in the solidarity among the European population necessary to the construction of a Europe-wide political integration project. It is therefore essential to incorporate them more systematically in future studies. The inclusion of immigrants who were not primarily socialised in an EU country provides precious insights into the endorsement of a European identity which can consequently have broader implications to European integration. For instance, belonging to a religious affiliation that differs from the dominant religious tradition of the EU does not seem to affect the level of European identity. Although this study focuses on the differentiation between groups of migrants in terms of their relationship with Europe (EU15, EU13 and non-EU), it is more than likely that, within each of these groups, migrants also differentiate with each other according to their country of origin (which is to some extent represented in Graph 2). We did not have the room to discuss these variations at great length in this article, but we hope that this study will lead the way to further research on the issue of ethnic disparities in European identification (especially among non-EU migrants).

Another important finding of our study concerns the role of transnational social practices in European identification among immigrants; our results highlighted the relevance of distinguishing transnational social practices with the physical crossing of borders from the others. Accordingly, transnational social practices that imply spatial mobility (such as visits to the country of origin) are indeed the only transnational social practices to be positively and significantly associated with European identity among immigrants.

Moreover, the classical assimilation theory turned out to be a promising theoretical framework to understand the endorsement of a European identity among immigrants. Indeed, the length of stay in the destination country as well as structural assimilation measured both objectively (occupational status) and subjectively (perceived discrimination on the labour market) are positively and significantly associated with European identity, even if these measures do not show any power in explaining ethnic differences in European identity. Within the broader debate of European integration, these results suggest that a successful structural integration of immigrants in the receiving society can contribute to the sustainability of the European integration project by enhancing a European sense of belonging among a non-negligible segment of the population. This political implication assumes however that a successful structural integration causes the rise of European identification among immigrants. Because of the well-known limitations of cross-sectional data, we cannot empirically assess the validity of this causal assumption. However, according to the seminal work of Gordon (1964), successful structural assimilation precedes the emotional dimension of assimilation. Our results help to extent Gordon´s theory to supranational identification; identifying with the supranational political entity to which the destination country belongs seems to constitute a component of the emotional assimilation dimension. The positive and significant association between German and European identities among both EU and non-EU immigrants gives support to this interpretation of European identity as a component of the emotional assimilation dimension. Lastly, our results showed that a European sense of belonging can help EU immigrants to conciliate both identities with their origin and destination countries. Aside from a positive and significant association between German and European identities, EU immigrants who identify strongly with their country of origin tend to hold a significantly higher level of European sense of belonging. Thus, the incorporation of theoretical insights from both the sociology of the EU, with its socio-spatial interactions explanation, and of the sociology of immigration, with its classical assimilation theory and its identification theory, provides a fruitful framework to understand the patterns and mechanisms of European identity among the immigrant population in its ethnic diversity.

To conclude, we would like to mention two limitations of our study. First and due to data availability, our analyses were restricted to a sample of first generation immigrants without any reference group of nationals from the receiving society. The integration of subsamples of both nationals and immigrants in future studies would provide an additional comparative dimension in the assessment of ethnic disparities in European identity. Lastly, the generalisability of our results to immigrants residing in other EU countries remains an open question that needs to be empirically assessed. Germany constitutes a particular case with regard to the components on which its national and European identities are built. The reinvention of the national German identity following the Second World War has been explicitly directed towards European and international components. Germany´s responsibility towards countries that suffered from WWII is for instance a core component in the supportive discourse of German elites towards the European integration project ([Diez Medrano 2003](#_ENREF_14)). Thus, both the national and European identities in Germany have been built – at least partly – on a cosmopolitan frame. These particularities are likely to result in patterns of European identity and associations between identities among immigrants that are not necessarily generalisable to other EU receiving countries.

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1. ‘Any person who holds the nationality of an EU country is automatically also an EU citizen’, on the definition of EU citizenship see http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/index\_en.htm retrieved on 04/03/16 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. In this article, we use the terms identity, identification and sense of belonging interchangeably. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. This comes from the EUCROSS project (<http://www.eucross.eu/cms/>) in which Hanquinet was actively involved. Some prelimary results on this could be found in Pötzschke et al. (2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The fact that ethnic disparities in European identity among immigrants are likely to decline with the length of stay in the receiving society does not contradict the hypothesised positive association between transnational social practices and European identity: the length of stay in the receiving society and transnational social practices are two independent measures that are not necessarily negatively correlated. Migration research has indeed repeatedly shown that immigrants can simultaneously integrate in the receiving society and remain involved with the country of origin ([see for instance the pioneer work of Glick Schiller et al. 1992](#_ENREF_29)). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Ethnic German re-settlers are ethnic Germans from the successor states of the former Soviet Union and from other Eastern European states who have suffered from the consequences of war. By means of a special acceptance process, ethnic German repatriates automatically receive German nationality. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)