

Economic, Political and Social Identity in the European Union

Professor John Wilton

Lecture 3

**Social Constructivism and an
E.U. identity**

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Two perspectives about the way in which identity is produced are:

- ESSENTIALIST
- CONSTRUCTIVIST

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1. ESSENTIALISM

- an approach that looks for the 'essence' or 'true core' of objects, values, identities and cultures

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2. CONSTRUCTIVISM

- identities not 'fixed' or static, but instead should be understood as a process of 'becoming' within which they are continually mediated and influenced by other factors, built up – for example, socially – or constructed

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- citizen identity is 'constructed' every day by the social determinants of our actions
- Constructivism is based upon the concept of

IDEATIONAL SOCIALISATION

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Constructivists hold the view that the ‘building blocks’ of international reality are *IDEATIONAL*, as well as material

- in other words, ideas, as much as experience and actuality, shape international reality

(- the ideas, beliefs, norms and values of elites, as much as the actuality and experiences of individual citizens, shape and form the reality of everyday life)

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E.U social and cultural policies

PLUS

economic growth and stability

(material interests)

‘citizen interest’

+

E.U. cultural and social images and institutions

= socially constructed E.U. identity