

Economic, Political and Social Identity in the European Union

Professor John Wilton

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**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 – the social rules and normal behaviour that we follow every day
- Constructivism is based upon the concept of

IDEATIONAL SOCIALISATION

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

- in other words, ideas, as much as experience and actuality, shape 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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Constructivists argue that:

- ideas (ideology) shape institutions
- those (structural) institutions, based on those ideas, in turn promote rules, values, beliefs, norms and practices which produce a ‘collective’ identity that citizens identify with
- so, ‘ideas’ about identity matter – they have structural characteristics through State and societal institutions – and those ‘ideas’ interact with the individual citizen’s social and cultural experiences = Ideational Socialisation

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E.U social and cultural policies

PLUS

economic growth and stability

(material interests)

should produce

‘E.U.citizen interest’/benefits

+

E.U. cultural and social images and institutions

= socially constructed E.U. identity