



This paper is taken from

*Developing Identities in Europe:
Citizenship education and higher education
Proceedings of the second Conference of the
Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe
Thematic Network*

London: CiCe 2000

Edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 1 85377 3239

Without explicit authorisation from CiCe (the copyright holder)

- Only a single copy may be made by any individual or institution for the purposes of private study only
- Multiple copies may be made only by
 - Members of the CiCe Thematic Network Project or CiCe Association, or
 - A official of the European Commission
 - A member of the European parliament

If this paper is quoted or referred to it must always be acknowledged as

Lastrucci, E. (2000), History consciousness, social/political identity and European citizenship, in Ross, A. (ed) Developing Identities in Europe: Citizenship education and higher education. London: CiCe, pp 227 - 237

© CiCe 2000

CiCe
Institute for Policy Studies in Education
London Metropolitan University
166 – 220 Holloway Road
London N7 8DB
UK

This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- The CiCe Central Coordination Unit for both the organisation of the conference and this collection, and in particular Martin Sundram and Cass Mitchell-Riddle for seeing this book through revisions, layout and to press
- The University of North London, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The SOCRATES programme and the personnel of DGXXII for their support and encouragement.

History consciousness, social/political identity and European citizenship

Emilio Lastrucci

Università di Roma 'La Sapienza' (Italy)

This paper illustrates from a critical viewpoint the most recent and relevant theories and models of the relationship between the development of historical consciousness and political socialisation. It is particularly concerned with aspects of the development of a 'European identity', and with the relationship between this and national identity. The problem is approached by considering findings of some recent empirical research, particularly the wide comparative survey 'Youth and History', but also by drawing on other theories and surveys on the development of historical consciousness, political socialisation and the construction of social identity.

The 'Youth and History' project

The research project 'Youth and History - the comparative European project on historical consciousness among teenagers' began in 1991 and ended, at international level, in 1998. Today, in each of the participating countries, the researchers involved are engaged in spreading the findings of the project and promoting less broad and more specific inquiries at national level, using the same research tools and strategies. The fieldwork was carried out during the winter of 1994/95 and the spring of 1995. In this period more than 31,000 15-year-old students, from 27 different countries across Europe and the Middle East, were interviewed by means of a questionnaire. This questionnaire consists of 48 item-blocks (280 precoded questions in total) using the Likert attitude scales.

To ensure the possibility of making comparisons between countries across Europe it was important to have a wide variety of countries among the participants. The overall sample consisted of the following countries:

1. *Far North countries*: Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland;
2. *Post-Soviet countries* (including Baltic republics: Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine);
3. *Central-Eastern European countries*: Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia;
4. *South-Eastern European countries*: Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey;
5. *South-Western European countries*: Spain, Portugal;
6. *Central-Western European countries*: Germany, Italy (with an extra sample of South Tyrol, consisting of all three language-groups), Belgium (Flemish community only);
7. *Western European countries*: France, Great Britain (with an extra sample of Scotland);
8. *Israel*, including a sample of its Arab citizens and another of Palestinians (West-Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem).

The Netherlands also participated, but did not, for various reasons, manage to complete the fieldwork within the fixed time. Their data is therefore not taken into the main comparison of the data set¹.

European citizenship/identity versus national citizenship/identity

Analysis of answers to different questions in the questionnaire produces some interesting findings about European teenagers’ feelings and attitudes towards European integration and, more generally, their level of political socialisation and its relationship with European citizenship on the one hand, and national citizenship on the other.

Firstly, we can examine answers to some questions aimed at establishing the degree of development in adolescents of the most general and fundamental political concepts: ‘nation’, ‘democracy’, ‘Europe’ etc. It is interesting to first analyse teenagers’ views concerning European integration. Figure 1 gives the mean responses to the item-block of the questionnaire in which the students were asked ‘What do Europe and European integration mean to you?’

Figure 1

What do Europe and European integration mean to you?	Mean	Std. Dev.
A. Europe is a geographical expression, no more	2.34	1.02
B. Europe is the birthplace of democracy, enlightenment and progress	3.34	.92
C. Europe is a group of white, rich countries guilty of economic and ecological exploitation of the rest of the world	2.80	1.05
D. European integration is the only way to peace between nations that previously attempted to destroy each other	3.27	.96
E. European integration is a danger to sovereign nations, to their identity and culture	2.80	.94
F. European integration will solve the economic and social crises of the countries in Europe	3.23	.91

What do Europe and European integration mean to you? Mean Std. Dev. A. Europe is a geographical expression, no more 2.34 1.02 B. Europe is the birthplace of democracy, enlightenment and progress 3.34 .92 C. Europe is a group of white, rich countries guilty of economic and ecological exploitation of the rest of the world 2.80 1.05 D. European integration is the only way to peace between nations that previously attempted to destroy each other 3.27 .96 E. European integration is a danger to sovereign nations, to their identity and culture 2.80 .94 F. European integration will solve the economic and social crises of the countries in Europe 3.23 .91

Three of the statements characterised Europe as a historical-political entity. There was one affirmative statement (B. ‘Europe is the birthplace of democracy, enlightenment, and

¹ For a general presentation of the research and its results see M. Angvik, B. von Borries, 1997.

progress'), a critical one (C. 'Europe is a group of white, rich countries guilty of economic and ecological exploitation of the rest of the world') and one dismissing its relevance altogether (A. 'Europe is a geographical expression, no more'). The other three statements dealt with the future role of Europe, in particular the development of European integration. One was critical and two were positive: D. 'European integration is the only way to peace between nations that previously attempted to destroy each other'; E. 'European integration is a danger to sovereign nations, to their identity and culture', and F. 'European integration will solve the economic and social crises of the countries in Europe'.

The statement most favoured by students was the acknowledgement of Europe's role in history as the birthplace of the core values of modernity (democracy, enlightenment, progress) (Koerber, 1997: 143). This was slightly more favoured by students interested in politics (we can verify this by analysing the correlation between answers to this item and answers to another item in the questionnaire that asks students how much they are engaged with and interested in politics). The second most popular statement was that regarding European integration as the way to peace; the third in the ranking was the item that conceives European integration as the way to solve economic and social crises. This third statement is preferred by students in Portugal and in most Southern European countries, i.e. the nations that, in the middle of the 90s, saw participation in the process of European integration as an important means for their economic development. We have factor-analysed the items of this group and found a two-factor solution: pro- and anti-European integration. Analysing correlations between these two factors and other political principles, the most important finding was the quite strong correlation between support for Europe and the affirmation of democracy. The development of European integration and that of democracy are seen by European adolescents as closely associated. These conclusions are supported by results from the EUROBAROMETER standard No.44 (October/November 1995 - the same period during which the questionnaire was administered), which found a similar picture among adult citizens of the European Union in terms of approval and criticism of European integration. There is, therefore, at least some suggestion that the views of the students questioned generally correspond to those of adult citizens of their respective countries, which is an argument for considering their views and concepts as largely conventional (Koerber, 1997:146).

The second political concept about which adolescents' opinions are of interest is that of the 'nation'. The questionnaire included the question 'What are your views on nations and the nation state?' We can examine the results for this item in Figure 2.

Figure 2

What are your views on nations and the nation state?	Mean	Std. Dev.
A. Nations are born, grow and perish in history, just like everything else	3.02	1.04
B. Nations are natural entities, unified by common origin, language, history and culture	3.71	.88
C. Nations represent a will to create a common future, despite cultural differences in the past	3.45	.85
D. The claims of national groups for a state of their own was one main cause of wars in recent centuries	3.40	.89
E. National groups have the right to go to war to make their own state	2.68	1.11
F. National states should give an essential part of their sovereignty to a supranational organization	2.88	.91

What are your views on nations and nation state? Mean Std. Dev. A. A. Nations are born, grow and perish in history, just like everything else 3.02 1.04 B. Nations are natural entities, unified by common origin, language, history and culture 3.71 .88 C. Nations represent a will to create a common future, despite cultural differences in the past 3.45 .85 D. The claims of national groups for a state of their own was one main cause of wars in recent centuries 3.40 .89 E. National groups have the right to go to war to make their own state 2.68 1.11 F. National states should give an essential part of their sovereignty to a supranational organization 2.88 .91

In statement B. we have a classical definition of ‘nation’. This is the one provided by Herder, generally seen in political theory as in opposition to that provided by Renan, who is summarised in statement C. Other statements concern some particular aspects of the role that the idea of ‘nation’ and national states have had in the past or could have in the future. Some of these statements are clearly in conflict with others, but none contradicts the others completely. As we can see, the ‘Herderian’ idea of nation is the one most favoured by European teenagers, while the ‘Renanian’ interpretation is in second place. The former was most favoured by students from the Czech Republic, Greece, Russia, Bulgaria and Turkey; the latter has the highest average value in Italy, followed by France and Greece. Statement D. also has a high positive value, coming third in the ranking. The acceptance of this statement reveals a positive correlation with the acceptance of the ‘Herderian’ idea of ‘nation’, as well as with the ‘Renanian’ one. Applying factor-analysis to the item-block, these three items appear too close to define a principal factor. The prevalent view of the nation among European teenagers seems thus to be based on a blend of three fundamental principles, not perceived as contradictory: nations are both natural entities and the result of the will of the people. This historical fact, nevertheless, is associated with the negative effect of generating conflicts and wars. This finding shows clearly that the complex structure of the concept of ‘nation’ held by the majority of European teenagers can be well grounded only if it assumes the features of an objective, history-based idea. So, we could conclude that European adolescents are not nationalist, although they accept national states as a historical necessity. This interpretation seems

very convincing, but probably is not quite so unanimous. In fact, if we look at the results obtained in response to statement F., we can verify that European adolescents do not willingly accept the idea that nations should give away part of their sovereignty to a supra-national entity. I think this last result is of key importance for understanding the relationship between national identity and European identity: European teenagers, probably homogeneously with adults from whom they have adsorbed and internalised their attitude-models, still have a strong feeling for nationality. It is not easy for them to immediately develop a new social identity (see below) relating to an enlarged social group, much wider and more heterogeneous both linguistically and culturally.

Some interpretations, according with different theories of political socialisation

Thalia Dragonas and Anna Frangoudaki (1997) offer an interesting interpretation of the results of 'Youth and History', in research explaining attitude-patterns of European teenagers, particularly concerning *European identity* versus *national identity*. Their interpretation examined the findings of the study from a socio-psychological point of view, based on the theory drawn up by Serge Moscovici (1988). According to this, explanations for occurrences, events, societal (and historical) problems, and issues affecting individuals (in our case adolescents involved in the research through their answers to the items in the questionnaire), are not only the results of individual cognitive processes, but rather an outcome of social forces. We can, in fact, identify their origin in widely held and shared beliefs, in the form of collective values, or 'representations'. A fundamental premise of this theory is that it is only because individuals share these representations that it is possible for a social group (primarily a national group) to establish a specific identity. Moreover, it is possible for different social groups within a society to establish their identity and come to differentiate themselves from other groups within the same society. According to Moscovici and other authors who base their psycho-social theories on the social origin of attitudes, every social group, irrespective of its size or geographical extension (local, regional, national, European, world) or other characteristics (language, race, ethnic and cultural background and traditions, religion, social class, ideological and political association and so on), exist only if its members identify themselves with the group.

Another relevant theory, useful for interpreting explanation-patterns of historical and political events and problems demonstrated by European adolescents, is the *Social Identity Theory* of Henri Tajfel and J.C. Turner (Tajfel, 1981, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). A fundamental principle of this is that each individual constructs an important and necessary part of their own identity (the *social identity*) by means of a specific socialisation process, the *identification* process. A central idea is that the identification process is not based exclusively on absorbing the values, beliefs and other socio-cultural elements peculiar to the community or social group with which an individual identifies, but is also based on a process of *distinguishing* from other communities or groups. Identification, in other words, acts on the basis of a *divisive* process of categorisation: I feel myself to be a member of my community, or group, because I distinguish myself from the 'other'; I feel *we* are a community because I clearly image 'them', the 'others' from whom we are distinct. Again, according to the theory, each individual needs to develop their self-esteem not only in terms of a positive judgment of themselves as individuals, but also in terms of a positive evaluation of the social group to which they belong. Social identity is, therefore, a relevant condition of one's self-esteem.

If we base our approach to an interpretation of events and problems faced by European adolescents on these theoretical principles, it is perhaps possible to understand more clearly:

- what are the prevailing patterns among European adolescents about national citizenship versus European citizenship (including differences shown by a comparative analysis of answers given by pupils in different countries);
- how the socialisation process of constructing a European identity and citizenship works, and through what different stages of development it goes (this also appears to be useful in identifying which difficulties and obstacles need to be removed to facilitate this process); and
- how to translate this knowledge into effective educational strategies aimed towards developing and sustaining a sense of European identity and citizenship in children and young people.

According to the interpretation provided by Dragonas and Frangoudaki:

The long historical process of the formation of modern nations has been characterised by the identification of social groups with the nationalist ideal, according to which nations are seen as groups of people sharing the same past and ancestors, and having a common language and culture. All national ideologies have thus shaped the idea of belonging to a nation by means of a myth indirectly referring to the national community as a family, and consequently describing the members of the nation mainly in terms of what they are not, that is in constra distinction to the 'other'...

The authors, developing one of the fundamental premises of the Social Identity Theory, affirm that

The cultural features of (national) identity are related to economic power and social privileges, and their determination is based on differentiation, through which the categories of race or ethnic group are serving the legitimacy of social division of wealth, as well as domination (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 1997: 417-418).

The attitudes shown by European adolescents towards this topic (national identity versus European identity) can be analysed by referring to the answers given in response to questions concerning their interest in history at different geo-political levels (local, regional, national, European, world), and by comparing the mean scores of the two answers we are interested in between different countries (National History – History of Europe; see Figure 3).

A glance at the table shows very different extents in country means for these two answers. Students of the Nordic, Western European and some Eastern European countries (Estonia, Slovenia), show a level of interest in national history below the European average. Students of another group of countries, including most of the Eastern European countries and some Southern European countries (Italy, Spain, Israel), show an interest near the mean of overall sample. A third group including Lithuania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Arab Israel, Palestine and Portugal indicates a very high level of interest in national history. In most of the countries included in this third group we also find a high level of

interest in European history. So, there is an high correlation between a general motivation for history as subject-matter and specific kinds of history in terms of the geo-political contexts to which it refers (in particular, the national and the European ones). We notice, moreover, a remarkable general preference for the item 'history of my country' over 'history of Europe'. In fact in every country and region except Sweden, Finland and South Tyrol, the interest in national history outweighs that in European history, but to a different extent. Germany and the Eastern countries (Estonia, Ukraine and Slovenia) show almost no differences in response (Kindervarter & von Borries, 1997: 82-83). Moreover, we obtain a high correlation between an interest in history deriving from the answers we are analysing, and agreement with other statements in the questionnaire designed to measure interest in history from another point of view, that is, the relevance of history for different aims - for knowing the past, for understanding the present and for orientating future perspectives. Generally, students who show enthusiasm for national and European history also affirm that history is relevant for understanding the present and orientating the future (see figure 4).

Figure 3: Interest in history

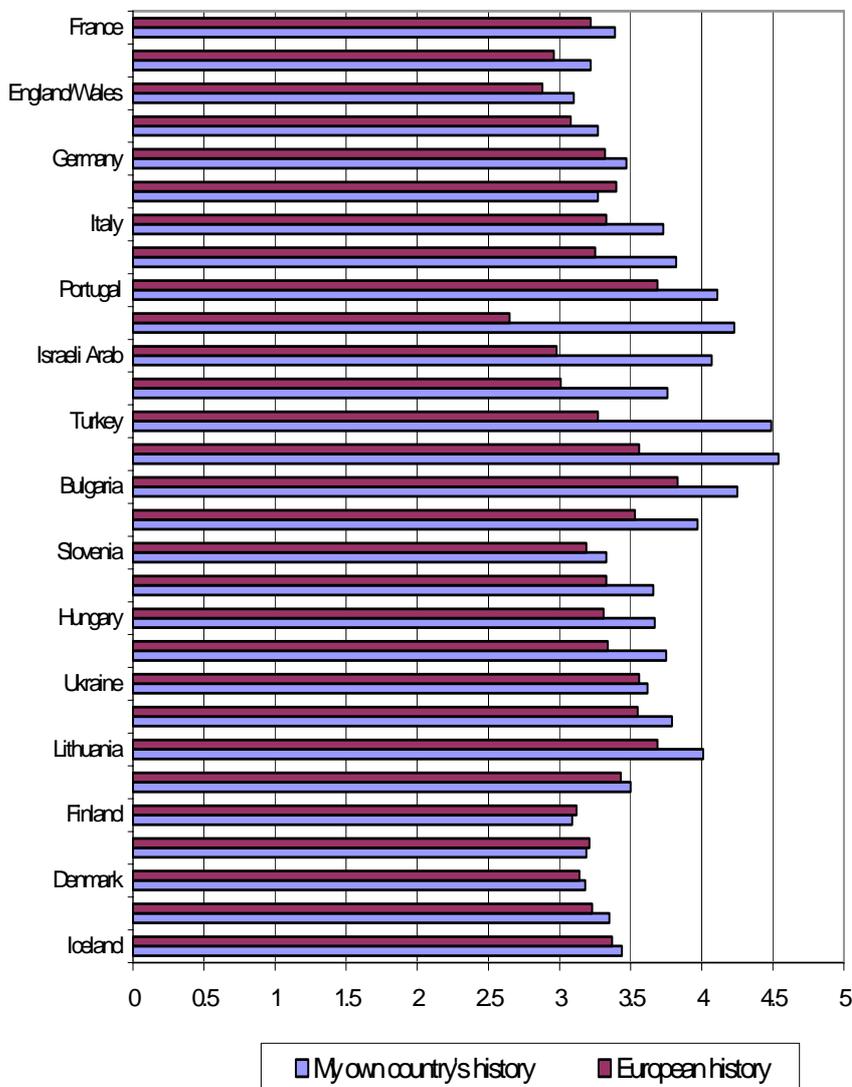
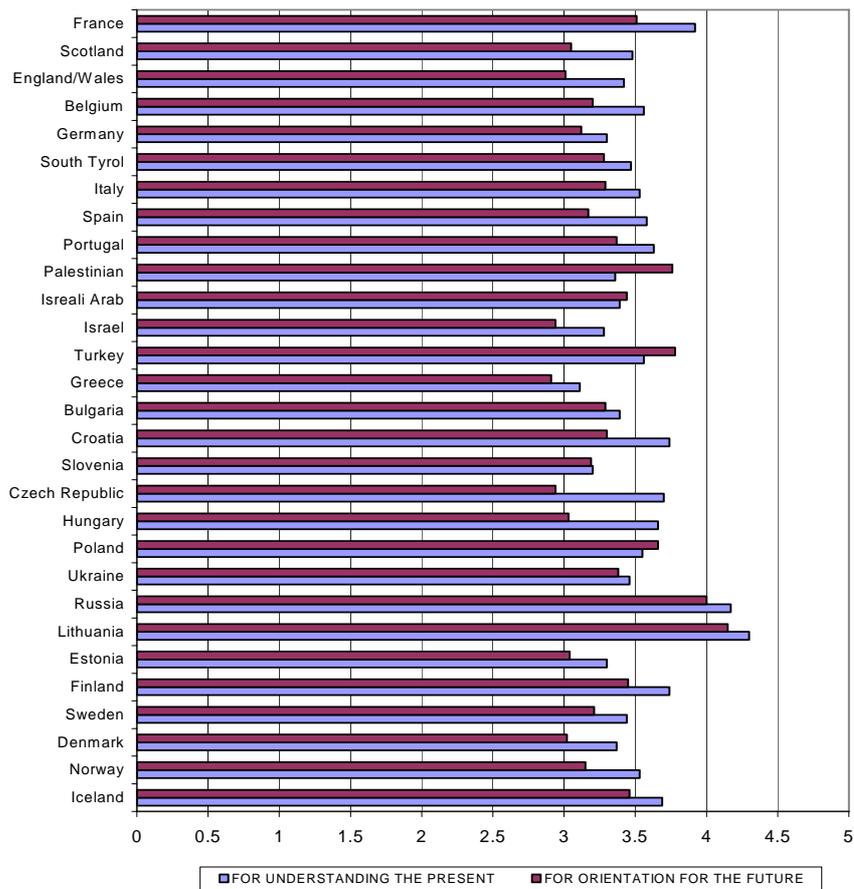


Figure 4: History is relevant



The first hypothesis we can develop to interpret these results is that students from countries that have recently been involved in events and processes of deep change show, generally speaking, more interest in history, and particularly national history, when compared to students from countries where there have been long periods of stability. We can therefore suggest that the activities of the present and the recent past (in other words events they have directly experienced and that are alive in their own memory) stimulates an enthusiastic interest in the knowledge of the past in adolescents (Lastrucci, 1997: 346; see also Corda Costa, Lastrucci and others, 1996). A significant result, related to this, is that the interest in politics shown by adolescents is highly associated with an interest in the past. In other words a stronger interest in history, being inspired by a quickly moving and changing present and thus by close, directly experienced events, is consequently linked more closely to a nationalistic profile than one of Europeanism.

A second interesting thesis is provided by Dragonas and Frangoudaki: the evident preference for national history ‘indirectly reveals one’s desire to be tied to one’s own group, i.e. an ethnocentric tendency’ (1997: 418). The countries or minority groups that scored highest in having an interest in local and national history were Greece, Lithuania, Portugal, Palestine and Arab Israelis.

Drawing from the argument that an ethnocentric attitude bolsters the positive distinctiveness of the group, one may claim that the adolescents' expression of an ethnocentric tendency is associated with the strong motive on their part to upgrade their sense of national belonging. They come from countries (Greece, Lithuania, Palestine, and Portugal) or from groups (Arab Israeli) which are all (each to a different degree, and for different historical reasons) currently facing a number of social and economic problems, and thus they would be ranked rather low among the rest of the countries of the so-called Western world. The adolescents find themselves being part of national groups which cannot be evaluated positively relatively to other groups. They thus respond to the identity threat by assuming an ethnocentric stance (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 1997: 418-419).

The authors then analysed data concerning answers relating to an interest in history, referring to different extensions of the geographical area and comparing them with those concerning preferences for various periods of history (the Ancient World, the Middle Ages, 1500-1800, 1800-1945, 1945-today). The result is interesting: many of the same national groups who assumed an ethnocentric attitude also placed a stronger emphasis on the history of the distant past. Furthermore, adolescents who are more focused on the past have a stronger interest in politics.

As a rule, nations which celebrate their antiquity tend to forget their historical recency². A strategy is often assumed by which identity structure is compared to a past structure which is more highly valued and is coupled with an idealisation of the past. Identification with an idealised identity contributes to the formation and elaboration of an aggrandised and exalted national self which is desirable and often unattainable³. Many school curricula serve this idealisation of an identification with a glorious past. The social identity approach argues that there is a vested interest in being associated with categories which are positive, since these can confer positive self-evaluation and create feelings of self-worth or self-esteem⁴. Europe's imperial expansion, and the 'West and the Rest'⁵, imbues the category of Europe with great symbolic power. Europe has a past of colonialism, expansionism, and violent struggles for the formation of a multitude of independent nation-states. This past shaped a particular ideology serving in legitimating territorial claims, expansion and wars, as well as dominance of 'others'. As regards education policy, European curricular systems have been, and some still are, ethnocentric. They have systematically overlooked the contribution to human knowledge and progress of substantial groups of people, such as the non-majority indigenous groups within the particular states of the EU, first and second generation migrants representing a great range of cultures and all those countries on the periphery of the EU whose status as Europeans is increasingly marginalised⁶. Following the arguments of the social identity approach, since it regards one's association with positively strong categories, identifying with Europe and its fate is likely to reflect an underlying motive to favour one's national self (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 1997: 419-420).

² See Billig, 1995.

³ See Breakwell, 1986.

⁴ See Hogg & Abrams, 1988.

⁵ See Rattansi, 1994.

⁶ See Coulby, 1995.

Conclusion

The process of European integration is a slow and difficult process of change, and real and effective integration is only possible if it is based on a widespread common consciousness. This consciousness consists of, firstly, a historical consciousness founded on a view of European history being that of a unique civilisation. Secondly it is founded on a social identity, built on a conscious European citizenship, and on the feeling of belonging to a European community and civilisation instead of to one's own national group. Progressively, in short, the former must become stronger than the latter in each member state of the European Union. The fact that adolescents show in this process the same delay as adults is evidence that educational institutions across Europe are still unable to stimulate and promote the development of the cognitive and affective processes necessary to build a European Social Identity. The most important findings of the European survey we have considered, therefore, indicate the necessity of developing, in different national curricula throughout Europe, educational goals and strategies linked to this perspective of change. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to provide teachers with the professional competences and tools necessary to pursue this aim.

References

- Angvik, M. and von Borries, B. (1997) *Youth and History* Hamburg: Koerber Stiftung, 2 vol. and a CD-Rom.
- Billig, M. (1995), *Banal nationalism* London: Sage
- Breakwell, G. (1986), *Coping with Threatened Identities* London: Methuen.
- Corda Costa, M., Lastrucci, E. et al (1996) *Formare il cittadino* Firenze: Nuova Italia
- Coulby, D. (1995) Ethnocentrism, post modernity and European curricular systems in *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 18, 2/3: 143-153.
- Dragonas, T. and Frangoudaki A. (1997) National Identity among European Adolescents: A Psychosocial Approach, in Angvik M. and von Borries B., 1997, pp. 417-423.
- Hogg M. and Abrams B. (1988) *Social Identification* London: Routledge.
- Kindervarter, A. and von Borries, B. (1997) Historical Motivation and Historical-Political Socialization, in Angvik M., von Borries B., 1997 pp. 62-105.
- Koerber, A. (1997) Knowledge, Associations and Concepts, in Angvik M. and von Borries, B. 1997, vol. I, pp. 106-152.
- Lastrucci, E. (1997) Specificities of Historical Consciousness in Italian Adolescents, in Angvik, M. and von Borries, B. 1997, vol. I, pp. 344-353.
- Moscovici, S. (1988) *Notes Toward a Description of Social Representations* European Journal of Social psychology, 18: 211-250.
- Rattansi, A. (1994) *Western racism, Ethnicities and Identities in a Post-Modern Frame*
- Westwood, S. (ed) *Racism, Modernity and Identity on the Western Front* Cambridge: Policy Press.
- Tajfel, H. (1981) *Human Groups and Social Categories* Cambridge: Univ. Press.
- Tajfel, H. (1982) *Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* Annual Review of Psychology: 33: 1-39.
- Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. (1970) An integrative theory of intergroup conflict, in Austin, W.G and Worchel, F. (eds) *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* Monterey: Brooks/Cole, pp. 33-48.

Tajfel, H. and Turner J. (1986) The social identity theory for intergroup relations, in Austin, W.G and Worchel, F. (eds) *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* Monterey:Brooks/Cole, pp. 7-24.