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## Changes in Identity

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Since its formation the European Union has brought up many issues, economic, political and even cultural. Although Robert Schuman started the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, with Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and the Netherlands as a political move, the European Union, composed of 25 countries, now involves much more. This Union is no longer solely political or economic; it must take into account its multi-cultural population. But, as Pepermans and Verleye put it, 'how unified are its people?' (1998, p.657).

The European Union (EU) is now composed of 25 members, less than half of which also belong to the European Monetary Union (EMU). The idea of this paper is to study the effect of the Euro on identity building, and to compare the national versus supranational feeling of belonging of teenagers in two contrasted countries: in France which has used the Euro since January 2002 and in the UK, which is not willing to replace the Pound.

It would seem that in France the concept of European unity has far from gained everyone's sympathy: although the 2003 French Barometer concluded that nearly half of the French had a good or very good image of the EU, while 21% had a bad or very bad image of it. In one way the younger generation (18 to 24 years old) is clearly favourable to this Union, as for example, 75% of a national sample of this age group have supported the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004 (Métro, 26/04/04); nevertheless, a year later, during the French referendum on the European Constitution (May 29, 2005), more than 65% of the 18-25 group voted against it.

Looking at the data from the UK (UK Eurobarometer, 2003), 44% of the 18 to 24 year olds provided negative responses regarding the image of the EU; 'this is the highest percentage in the Union and not just substantially above the EU 15 average of 28% but isolates the UK as being the only EU 15 member where there are *more* people not trusting rather than trusting the European Commission'. This distrust has been noted in surveys since 1999; could this be linked to the emergence of the Euro, with the UK having opted to remain out of the European Monetary Union for the time being? Or could this scepticism be arising from lack of information? The 2003 Eurobarometer claims that 14% of the British population declare knowing nothing about the EU. Although this is an improvement from previous results, it is still twice as high as the average over other EU members.

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Loss of culture and identity are the main fears expressed by opponents of the EU, who claim that the EU reduces the kaleidoscope of the members' cultures to a single mould. This feeling seems to be stronger in England than it is in France, where a recent poll (Spring 2004) showed that 71% of French are conscious of sharing a specific European culture. This is seen positively, as the unification seems to encourage peace and tolerance. The different attitudes towards this issue will influence reactions towards various means of unification, such as the Euro.

The emergence of the Euro came with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991, when the 15 members of the EU committed to create a European Monetary Union (EMU). This has been achieved through the Euro, a currency common to 12 of the members. Denmark, Sweden and the UK have decided to remain out of the EMU for the time being. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002, the national currencies of the 12 participating members were replaced by the Euro. Throughout European history, there have been attempts to unify Europe, beyond cultural differences. However Nouël (1997) points out that it is an innovative step to want to realise political unity through economic unity. The Euro is therefore a totally new concept.

This event brought many strong reactions even before its introduction: in 1997, while France was among the most positive countries on the Euro, Britain was a 'eurosceptic' country, and has 'been especially outspoken about the threat to national sovereignty posed by the EMU' (Müller-Peters et al., 1998, p.671). This reaction translates a feeling of loss of control, independence and identity. But is this attitude a cause or consequence of the refusal to introduce the Euro in Britain? Could this be explained by the different perception France and Britain have of their national currency: the British having a more sentimental attachment towards the pound, whereas for the French, who have now adapted to the Euro, that emotional tie with their former currency, the franc, is not as strong?

The Euro introduced on the one hand the notion of 'eurosceptics', portraying that the Euro is a threat to the national economy, but at the other end of the spectrum, there are polls which have revealed positive attitudes: a survey conducted in 2001 reveals that '36% of the participants (54% French and 24% Dutch) consider that the Euro will bring Europeans together' (Koenig, 2002, p.92). This shows that the Euro is not only an economic tool, but also a symbol of unity. It lays the grounds for integration and opens countries' boundaries.

### **National Identity or European Identity?**

In what way can currencies contribute to a sense of identity? Helleiner (1998) initially studied this question. Based on insights of 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century observers, the author suggests that national currencies might foster national identities. He describes five ways in which the currency can stimulate the feeling of national identity. First, the national currency can provide a vehicle for nationalist imagery that constructs a sense of collective tradition and memory; and can also act as a common medium of social communication that may facilitate the 'communicative efficiency' of members of the nation and encourage similar frameworks of thought. By creating collective monetary experiences, it can bolster the feeling of membership in a national community of shared

fate. It also contributes, according to Helleiner, to a sense of popular sovereignty if the national currency is managed in a way that corresponds to the people's wishes; and it can strengthen the kind of quasi-religious faith that is associated with nationalism, especially when the currency is managed in a stable manner.

Recent research has addressed issues of monetary integration focussing on the euro. Müller-Peters *et al.* (1998) demonstrated that, in most countries, attitudes towards the euro are positively correlated with attitudes towards the European Union. Pepermans and Verleye (1998) showed that the latter are also linked to perceptions of national features. The results obtained by van Everdingen and van Raaij (1998) also specify that national identity has indirect effects on attitudes, by influencing expectations about the euro. More importantly, the difference between opponents and supporters gravitates around preoccupations of national identity, this being directly linked to the feeling of belonging.

In France the sense of belonging, which used to be rooted in social class, has recently been evolving towards a feeling of territorial belonging (Dirm, 1990). In a specific analysis of the 1999 *European Values Survey*, Bréchon (2000) states that the feeling of belonging seems to be evolving from social belonging to territorial belonging, national and/or infra national (83% of the respondents selected 'town, region, or country'), as well as towards a supranational (15% selected 'Europe or the world') feeling of belonging. The individual now is faced with the choice of having either a dominant feeling of local territorial belonging, and/or a more global feeling of belonging. Answers to the question concerning geographical belonging indicate that Europe population's potential spatial references are broadening (compared to previous *European Values Survey*) on account of the geographical mobility induced by professional factors and the growing popularity of travelling abroad. Nevertheless, in 1999, results showed that only 4% of the French interviewees selected Europe as their personal choice in terms of territorial belonging.

With the arrival of the Euro there is a new definition of a European space; it has been shown to symbolise a clear symbol of the EU, and has intensified a feeling of belonging to a European community, especially for French teenagers (cf. Roland-Lévy, 2002). The concrete use of the single currency has clearly turned the people's previously exclusive feeling of belonging, a national one, into an entirely new inclusive one, combining a national identity and a supranational identity. While, in France, 85% responded that they clearly felt *French* in 2001, 80% stated that they also belonged to *Europe* in 2002. In 2003, the percentage is somewhat weaker, with still 65% of the teenagers selecting Europe and 50% of the adult samples. They have not abandoned their national identity, or their feeling of being French, but they now also have a significant awareness of being European.

But what was found in France might not be the same in England. People experience different ties with their currency, which correlates with their sense of national identity. Cinnirella (1996) suggests that there are two forms of attachment: a sentimental attachment, which reflects cultural symbols, and an instrumental attachment associated with the benefits of citizenship. The first attitude shows a national pride in historical and cultural symbols, one of its fine examples being the pound, with its image of the Queen. This kind of attachment could therefore reinforce a negative attitude towards the Euro,

seen as a threatening change for English identity. On the other hand, an instrumental attachment involves the 'analyses of the benefits associated with citizenship, satisfaction with political organisations and public services, etc' (Breakwell & Lyons, 1996, p.267). This feeling focuses on weighing the pros and cons of a social phenomenon, such as the Euro. In this case, people would be more likely to consider the single currency's potential benefits.

The Eurobarometer is a good indicator of the general opinion towards the EU. One of the polls revealed in 1996, that when asked if European and national identity could coexist, 52% of the British questioned considered both identities as compatible, but 38% saw a uniform European identity replacing each country's national identity. At the same time, the French participants replied respectively 66% and 27%. According to the 2003 Eurobarometer, 41% of the overall EU population view their identity as purely national. Attachment to one's country is often associated with nationalism, which involves loyalty to one's nation, and a sense of patriotism. Each individual normally has more than one identity, and will choose the most appropriate according to the situation. Therefore the national identity may dominate when involved in a patriotic event, just as the family identity will emerge during other situations, or the professional identity at the workplace. These identities do not clash; it is their development that shapes an individual. His/her identity is not unique, but multiple; each identity completes the other, without obliterating it. Europeans seem to be slowly moving towards a comprehensive merging of a national and a European feeling; they can associate to it, at a larger, international scale, rather than at a national one. The option to have a national as well as an international identity is becoming increasingly important in today's Europe. For example, Müller-Peters *et al.* (1998) states that nationalism and European patriotism in France do not only coexist together, but are even connected to each other. Do EU members consider themselves as 'European' at the present time? If so, how involved are they in this identity: 'a social [...] self-categorisation with Europe implies the engagement of self and motivation with the notion of a European social collective' (Breakwell & Lyons, 1996, p.255). Nowadays discussions about a sense of 'Europeanism' seem unavoidable, as political and social changes mean 'we are developing multi-faceted and layered identities, that reflect the contingencies of European integration' (Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz & Ross, 2004, p.vii). Europe can be seen as a social group made up of a diversity of members, who are all different culturally, but can also relate to the European group.

Nonetheless this point of view is not shared by all: the Eurobarometer (2003) showed that for 30% of the British, the EU represented the loss of each member state's cultural identity, compared to a EU 15 average of 15%. Margaret Thatcher (1988) also expressed this opinion by stating that the European Commission was 'trying to create an 'identikit European identity''. It would seem here that the criticism is directed towards the EU in particular, rather than Europe in general. So in this situation it would seem better, as Breakwell & Lyons express it 'to talk more precisely of a European Community identity, rather than a more inclusive European identity' (1996, p.25). This type of identity is more precise, and in this case the Euro could symbolise this identity, as a representation of the group's unity.

## Social Representations

As Meier and Kirchler (1998) report, opponents, indifferent respondents, and supporters of the euro are distinguished on the basis of social representations, which may vary in content and structure. Social representations will be used in this study in relation to attitudes towards the EU in general and the Euro in particular. The concept of social representations was initially introduced by Durkheim in the nineteenth century as 'collective representation', then revived by Moscovici in 1961. Social representations can be defined as ideas, thoughts, images and knowledge about a 'social object', i.e. a subject matter of social interest such as the Euro (Moscovici, 2001). They constitute the commonly held knowledge and ideas of a collective or social category that allows mutual communication and behaviour. Therefore it is not rare to find that different social groups will have social representations that vary from those of other groups. These groups can include different social norms and values, as well as a different cultural environment. In this case, France and England are the two contrasting social groups, as an 'environment in relation to the individual or the group, and they are, in certain respects, specific to our society' (Farr & Moscovici, 1984). The social group plays an important part in the representation, as it contributes to the individual's knowledge of the object, thus determining his/her attitudes.

However they are not only linked to the society, but also to each individual, who projects on the observed object his/her culture, memories, and habits. These thoughts, these representations, shape the discernment of the social object: they 'conventionalise the objects, persons and events we encounter. They give them a definite form, locate them in a given category and gradually establish them as a model of a certain type, distinct and shared by a group of people' (Farr & Moscovici, 1984).

Along with the notion of social representation are two ideas: objectification and anchoring. Objectification translates some of the characteristics of an unfamiliar object, such as a new currency, into the terms of our reality. In this process, the individual selects some specific information of that unfamiliar object (this stage is called 'selection of information'); with this selected information, the individual reorganises his/her knowledge ('de-contextualising'); and is then ready to reconstruct this unfamiliar object into something more familiar (this stage involves a 'reconstruction' into a new schema built with certain specific dimensions). Anchoring includes two different aspects: a cognitive aspect, according to which the object is integrated into the previous thoughts of individuals; the second aspect is a social one, having to do with a social group giving meaning to a representation. Thus interpretations of a particular object can differ from one group to another. The Euro might be associated here to concrete realities such as the EU or Europeans, since a currency is very social and represents a society.

Social representations are composed of the society's content, but are also reasoned through structure. Abric's (1976) structural approach implies that social representations are made up of a central nucleus surrounded by peripheral elements. The nucleus is the indestructible core of the representation, which could only be modified through a great change in the social group. On the other hand, the periphery is composed of the more versatile elements, which constitute the interface between the central core and the concrete situation in which the representation elaborates or realises itself. This means

that peripheral elements are the bridge between the core of the concept and the environment in which this concept evolves, for example in the economic environment.

### **Adolescents**

It seems that children have managed to determine a sense of 'Europeanism': what, to them, makes a country European. In a study carried out with Polish children, the criteria were: how often the country is talked about in the media, its geographical position, and its culture and tradition (Nasman & Ross, 2002). Therefore their perception of what makes a country 'European' may differ from an adult's, as a child's perception may take biased elements into account. In another study, only 28% of the children participating stated that England was part of Europe, and most of them denied being European themselves (Breakwell & Lyons, 1996). But when it came to 14 year olds, 65% gave a positive answer to being European. So there may be a change of attitudes operating in the younger generation.

The main focus of this paper is adolescents' sense of a European identity. This develops through socialisation, which is, as Zigler and Child wrote in 1968, 'a broad term for the whole process by which an individual develops, through transactions with other people, specific patterns of socially relevant behaviour and experience'. Although the literature proposes various definitions, their main conceptual contents are the same; socialisation refers to the problem of general education in any society, implying a process of interaction between individuals and their environment. This socialisation might bring the children to create positive clichés about their own national identity, while developing less positive stereotypes about foreign nationalities, using them as contrasts. Their social identity will be composed of various identifications, all working at a different level, whether sub-national or supra-national (Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz & Ross, 2004). It is therefore important to study young people's attitudes on this topic, since the EU, as an institution, combined with the adoption of the Euro, could be a means to increase tolerance and acceptance.

Also included in socialisation is the development of economic thinking. As the research into this topic began, different age groups were studied to find that they had different perspectives on the concept of money: according to Furth (1978), it is only from about 11 years old onwards that children present a coherent and logical societal knowledge. Therefore this study's population will consist of adolescents between 11 and 15 years old. The focus is therefore, in this paper on 'naive subjects' (cf. Albou, 1984) with some kind of familiarity with the economic world and some knowledge and understanding of how it works.

It is especially important to consider the young population's opinion when talking about Europe, as this seems to be quite different from that of adults: there is a greater majority of young people, compared to adults, who would like to feel that they belong to the European community, who find advantages to it and to consider its future with optimism. When asked about the EU, 41% of those aged 18 to 24 believed their country had benefited from being a member, whereas only 25% of people in the oldest age bracket (55 or more) took this positive view (Eurobarometer, 2003). Not only are there variations between age groups, but also according to the level of education: when asked

about the UK's benefits in being a member of the EU, only 22% of those who had left school early replied positively, whereas there was more than twice this number (52%) when asking those who had received higher education (Eurobarometer, 2003). The young Europeans also mention mobility, symbolised by the Euro, so they are aware that the Euro does not only have an economic purpose, but also a unifying one.

The young population also seems to adopt a European point of view more readily; there are already encouraging indications from the Eurobarometer opinion polls that, across Europe, the young are perhaps the most enthusiastic about integration. This suggests, perhaps, that social representations and social identities might be more malleable at an early age. It therefore seems important to study the adolescents' attitudes and social representations on European matters, as it is at this age that their own opinions start to take shape.

### **Method**

This research is a comparative study that uses a between-subjects quantitative design. The dependent variables measured are the attitude towards the Euro and the European identity, and the main independent variable is nationality, with two conditions: French nationality or English nationality (a sub-set of UK nationality). The participants are divided into two groups, according to their nationality. They all completed the same short questionnaire used to assess these variables. This questionnaire is composed of a combination of several sources: the questionnaire for the 15-country project on the Psychology of the European Monetary Union (Muller-Peters et al., 1998), questions from the Eurobarometer, and a questionnaire designed and tested in France in 2003. The final questionnaire consists of multiple-choice questions, two open-ended questions, some attitudinal scales, a classical free-association task, and a 'selection of blocs' task.

The free association task is used to apprehend the social representation of the Euro. Each participant had to evoke six words or expressions connected to the Euro. Their terms are then investigated in the same way that Vergès (1992, 1998) studied spontaneous representations of an economic notion, by combining ranks and frequencies of appearance of freely produced terms. This will allow identifying the central core from its peripheral elements associated to the key word: the Euro (cf. Abric, 1994). An extra element was added: the participants had to define the affective dimension they attribute to each of the produced terms; their expression of values can be positive, neutral or negative. An Osgood semantic task is also included, followed by a Likert-type attitude scale (six-point scale: *strongly agree* versus *strongly disagree*), used to assess attitudes towards the Euro and the EU. The 'selection of blocs' task (inspired by Guimelli, 1989) was also used; it focuses on the links between the chosen items from a list of 25 terms relating to the Euro.

Participants were given unlimited time to complete the task, however they took on average 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### *Participants*

The French sample for this study is composed of 93 school students, 42 girls and 51 boys, all aged between 11 and 15 years old, the mean age being 13 years old. The English sample is composed of 68 school students, 46 girls and 22 boys, all aged between 12 and 15 years old, their mean age also being 13. The English sample is less spread out compared to the French population, as there are no 11-year-old participants, and only one 15 year old. There is a more or less equal gender distribution for the French sample, but there are twice as many girls in the English sample. There are less English participants, and a higher total of girls.

**Table 1: Description of the samples**

Nationality	Gender	Girls	Boys	Totals
French		42	51	93
English		46	22	68
Totals		88	73	161

### *Hypotheses*

This study concerns the analysis of the social representation of the Euro among English and French adolescents, as well as the emergence of a European identity among these young students. The following main hypotheses were made:

1. French adolescents will have a significantly more positive attitude towards the Euro than English adolescents.
2. French adolescents will have a significantly more developed sense of European identity than English adolescents.

### *Results*

The first hypothesis, stipulating that the French adolescents will have a more positive attitude towards the Euro than the English adolescents, can be verified through several of the questionnaire's items.

The study of the free association task reveals different representations of the Euro according to nationality. The core of the French adolescents' representation is composed of one strong economic negative attribute, *increase in prices* (38; 2.3; -)<sup>2</sup>, and three positive ones linked to the idea of the *European Union* (26; 2.2; +) and *Europe* (25; 1.9; +), without forgetting the *single currency* (35; 2.2; +). The neutral aspect of the Euro is only mentioned with a low frequency, the adolescents are more preoccupied with attributes accompanied by stronger feelings, such as *good* (5; 1; +) and *bad* (4; 2; -). On the other hand, the core of the English students' representation of the Euro is composed

<sup>2</sup> The first figure provides the frequency of spontaneous appearance of the terms, while the second figure is the mean rank of appearance, while the sign indicates the dominant value attributed to the term by the participants: positive= +, neutral=n or negative=-.

of two terms which they describe as neutral: *money* (40; 1.9; n) and *Europe* (46; 2.5, n); the majority of the French sample considered *Europe* as a positive attribute. There are more negative consequences mentioned by the English sample than by the French one, and very few positive ones. There are also more neutral words, whereas there are none in the French spontaneous representation of the Euro (cf. Tables 2 a & 2 b).

**Table 2.a. Social Representation of the French sample: free association task**

FRENCH	Low rank	High rank
High frequency	<i>increase in prices</i> (38; 2,3; -)	<i>simple</i> (20; 3,1; +)
	<i>single currency</i> (35; 2,2; +)	<i>coins/notes</i> (good looking) (19; 4,2; +)
	<i>European Union</i> (26; 2,2; +)	<i>money</i> (17; 2,2; +)
	<i>Europe</i> (25; 1,9; +)	<i>conversion</i> (not exact) (14; 2,9; -)
Low frequency		<i>travel</i> (11; 2,8; +)
	<i>unity</i> (7; 1,9; +)	(commercial) <i>exchanges</i> (9; 4,1; +)
	<i>change</i> (8; 2,5; -)	(economic) <i>power</i> (8; 3,4; +)
	<i>complicated</i> (7; 2,6; -)	<i>friendship/together</i> (6; 3,8; +)
	<i>good</i> (5; 1; +)	<i>dollar</i> (6; 3,5; +)
	<i>purchase/spending/pay</i> (5; 1,8; +)	<i>globalisation</i> (5; 4,2)
	(monetary) <i>equality</i> (4; 1,7; +)	<i>economy</i> (4; 3,5)
	<i>bad</i> (4; 2; -)	

**Table 2.b. Social Representation of the English sample: free association task**

BRITISH	Low rank	High rank
High frequency	<i>Europe/European</i> (46; 2,5; n)	<i>travelling/holidays</i> (20; 3,8; +)
	<i>money</i> (40; 1,9; n)	<i>France, Spain, Crete, Germany</i> (17; 3,3; n)
		<i>coins, notes</i> (15; 3,8; n)
Low frequency		<i>Britain different from Europe</i> (14; 3,8; +)
	<i>change</i> (11; 2,9; -)	<i>against/prefer/loss of pound</i> (11; 3,6; -)
	<i>boring/awkward/weird</i> (10; 2,5; -)	<i>European Union</i> (10; 4,5; -)
	(single) <i>currency</i> (11; 3; +)	<i>unites Europe</i> (7; 3,7; +)
		<i>exchange</i> (rates) (6; 5; -)
		<i>government/politicians</i> (6; 4; -)
	<i>decrease in value</i> (6; 4,6; -)	

The other task linked to showing the social representation of the Euro is the 'selection of blocs', which gives an indication of the differences between the two groups of adolescents (cf. Table 3). The French sample most strongly associates the Euro with *Europe* (88) and *union* (80), whereas the words, which to them are the least associated to the Euro, are *Dollar* (-68) and *exchange rate* (-58). A further analysis reveals that the French also mention the ideas of *community* and *symbol*, as being important. The English sample also selects *Europe* (96) as strongly associated to the Euro, along with *currency* (94), *money* (74), and *notes & coins*, (68). The words most frequently chosen term for the English sample, as being the least representative of the Euro are *Dollar* (-98), *easy* (-62) and *symbol* (-42). The social representation of the Euro for the English

sample is very similar to the one of a French sample in 2001, before the Euro was introduced (cf. Nivoix & Roland-Lévy, 2002).

**Table 3. Social Representation of the 2 samples: selection of blocs task**

Fr 'least'	FR 'best'	FR Totals	Words provided	UK Totals	UK 'best'	UK 'least'
<b>32</b>	20	-24	purchase	-12	4	10
20	<b>32</b>	24	symbol	<b>-42</b>	10	<b>31</b>
16	<b>29</b>	26	community	-18	9	18
13	<b>28</b>	30	new	32	<b>23</b>	7
14	<b>36</b>	<b>44</b>	coins, notes	<b>68</b>	<b>38</b>	4
<b>26</b>	21	-10	easy	<b>-62</b>	1	<b>32</b>
<b>25</b>	16	-18	globalisation	4	12	10
22	19	-6	unique	<b>-58</b>	4	<b>33</b>
<b>29</b>	16	-26	complicated	16	18	10
16	23	14	economy	14	12	5
<b>25</b>	<b>32</b>	14	travel	12	18	12
4	<b>44</b>	<b>80</b>	union	6	16	13
19	23	8	expenses	2	7	6
16	11	-10	bank	-12	5	11
<b>25</b>	11	-28	France	-32	9	<b>25</b>
5	<b>32</b>	<b>54</b>	currency	<b>94</b>	<b>47</b>	0
15	13	-4	conversion	2	8	7
<b>42</b>	8	<b>-68</b>	dollar	<b>-98</b>	0	<b>49</b>
19	10	-18	purchasing power	-32	2	18
7	23	<b>32</b>	change	18	11	2
5	<b>49</b>	<b>88</b>	Europe	<b>96</b>	<b>50</b>	2
7	20	26	money	<b>74</b>	<b>38</b>	1
16	16	<b>0</b>	country	-32	1	17
15	19	8	exchange	-6	3	6
<b>36</b>	7	<b>-58</b>	exchange rate	20	13	3

Legend: *positive results (>0)* negative results (<0)

When looking at the other results, the English strongly associate the Euro with *travelling* (40). According to them this would be by far the most obvious gain England would acquire from adopting the Euro. They also see this currency as a way to *connect more with Europe* (16). Many of the other gains mentioned are of an economic nature, such as *no exchange rate* (8), and *more tourism* (3). But the English adolescents consider that introducing the Euro in their country would lead to a loss of *independence* (11), of *individuality* (20), of *identity* (3) and of the *pound* (18). All these words relate an opposition to the Euro. As for the French, the main advantage of the Euro is that it is a *single currency* (17). The fact that it simplifies *travelling* (15) to certain countries is also important, as well as the *friendship* (7) it creates between countries. To five French adolescents, it also *symbolises belonging to Europe*. The main disadvantage is again the

*increase in prices* (27). Few of the French participants refer to the *loss of cultural identity* (5), of the *franc* (4), and of *autonomy* (3); although the Euro facilitates relationships between some European countries, two French participants declared that it *creates difficulties for France's relationship with the UK or the USA* (2).

Concerning attitudes, the French express strong agreement that the Euro helps the EU function (mean = 4, on a maximum of 5). They also believe that one does not need to have a specific currency to be a proper country (3.6). However the majority do not believe that the Euro encourages a European identity (2.2). The mean average over all items for the French sample is 3.25, which shows a clear positive attitude. In contrast, the English constantly score less on each item, with an average of 2.3. Their lowest score (1.8) shows an opposition to the idea that the Euro encourages a European identity. (cf. Table 4)

**Table 4. Attitudes towards the Euro and Europe**

ATTITUDES	facilitates	autonomous	future of EU	currency	no need EU	more Euro
<b>French (M)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2,8</b>	<b>3,1</b>	<b>3,6</b>	<b>3,9</b>	<b>2,2</b>
std deviation	1.6	1.9	2.1	2.0	1.7	2.2
n° of Xs %	7.5	31.2	17.2	17.2	12.9	14.0
<b>British (M)</b>	<b>2,6</b>	<b>1,8</b>	<b>2,6</b>	<b>3,1</b>	<b>1,9</b>	<b>1,8</b>
std deviation	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.7
n° of Xs %	33.8	10.3	39.7	4.4	10.3	13.2
<b>Fr aver. M</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>Brit aver. M</b>	<b>2.3</b>			

Finally, French participants say that they have no difficulty in using and understanding the Euro nowadays, whereas most of the English participants do not feel well informed about the Euro.

The second hypothesis states that French adolescents will have a significantly more developed sense of European identity within the EU than English adolescents. The majority of the French sample felt a greater attachment to their 'country', with nearly 41% of participants having chosen France as where they belong most. The second most popular choice was 'city' with 21.5%; nearly 15% chose 'the whole world', and 13% chose 'Europe' as their answer. On the other hand, the English felt more attached to their 'city', with 57.4% of the sample choosing this answer; 'country' was the second most chosen answer (16%), and 'Europe' obtained a very low score (2.9%).

Three specific items shed light on the adolescents' attitudes towards the EU. The French score highly in all these items, especially on the one showing that the participants believe France needs the EU (mean = 3.9). The English obtain a lower score on these items; they especially do not think that the Euro would make them feel more European, (mean = 1.9, with a maximum of 5).

For the question on possible links between national and European identity, the French sample mostly considered that European identity is a component of national identity (30.1%). However quite a large proportion (10.75%) declare that European identity does not exist, and a higher number did not answer the question (24.75%). Most of the

English adolescents did not know how to answer this question either (38.2%). The most popular answer was that both identities coexist with no link between them (20.6%). Only 5.9% of English students believe that European identity does not exist.

The question *do you feel like a European citizen* offered a 100mm line on which each had to put an X where he or she felt appropriate; the results show that although the French score above average (6.21) and the English score just below average (4.35), the difference is not significant ( $t(58)=4.376$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). The standard deviation in the French sample is higher (3.8) than in the English sample (2.9). The second part of the question reveals that the English adolescents who considered themselves as European did so because they were 'born or lived in Europe' (12), or because the 'UK is part of Europe' (8). However there were more reasons given for not feeling European, the most popular being that the 'UK is different and separate' (12), or that the 'UK is an island' (12) and is therefore 'physically separated from mainland Europe' (9). The English adolescents also stipulate that they feel 'more British than European' (9). As for the French students, they also stated that they felt European because 'France was part of Europe and the EU' (19) or because they were 'born or lived in Europe' (16). They also mentioned the Euro as a defining feature of being European (6). However they considered differences such as nationalities and identities (7) a hindrance to European identity, along with the national attachment to France (6).

Concerning participants' national pride in their country, the French are most proud of their language (with a mean of 2.9), their history (3.0) and their cookery (2.9). However they are not proud of their political influence (1.7) or their president (1.9). There is no significant difference between the French total average (2.4) and the English average (2.5). The English are most proud of the pound (3.0), but also of their history (2.9) and their language (2.9). Similar to the French, they are not proud of their political influence (1.8) or the queen (1.9).

Overall, these results, when combined with the item on the feeling of belonging, determining which one of national or European identity dominates the other among the adolescents, are confirmed. For the French participants, there are nearly 20% (19.35%) who gave 'no answer' to this question; some (28%) who select 'more French than European', but there are almost as many (22.6%) who see themselves as much European as French. Compared to the French, more than twice as many English chose 'more British than European' (60.3%), and only half as many as the French saw both identities as equally important (10.3%); only 5.9% gave no answer. No English participant chose 'European only', but only 4 French participants did. (cf. Table 5)

**Table 5. National identity versus supranational identity**

IDENTITY	including	component	coexist	not exist	don't know	Total
<b>French (S)</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>93</b>
French %	17.2	30.1	17.2	10.75	24.75	100
<b>British (S)</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>68</b>
British %	17.6	17.6	20.6	5.9	38.2	100
Total (S)	28	40	30	14	49	161

## Discussion

### *Social Representation of the Euro for French and English adolescents*

From the results from the free association task and the 'selection of blocs' task, the French adolescents have an overall positive view of the Euro, with many words accompanied by a positive evaluation. The strongest negative connotation associated to the Euro, 'increase in prices', is very concrete and experienced daily by these teenagers, but it may also be a topic they have heard their parents or the media talk about.

They strongly associate the Euro to 'Europe' in general and the 'EU' in particular. In their minds there seems to be a blending of those two words, alternatively used, and may, to them, mean more or less the same. This shows that the EU constitutes an important organisation to the French adolescents; they consider it as part of their life, they feel concerned by its developments, one of those being the Euro. When the EMU was first introduced in France, the government invested in a massive awareness campaign, which targeted, among other institutions, schools. This was part of a mission to prepare students for this cultural change, for the broadening of their political and cultural horizons, and for the elaboration of their European identity. This was achieved through educational programs and slogans such as 'to adopt the Euro is to be part of Europe'. France strongly promoted the Euro as not only representing an economic community, but also creating a European citizenship, therefore extending the students' identity beyond the national boundaries. But educating students also has another benefit: 'Experience proves that a strong bottom-up effect exists in this field: informing students amounts to informing their families' (French Eurobarometer, 2003). Therefore educating the children would benefit the whole population, increasing knowledge about the EU, and thus tolerance towards it. It would seem that the Euro promotion in France was successful.

However there is a slight discrepancy in their attitudes towards the Euro and its role within the EU. Overall the French adolescents are positive about the Euro, but they do not feel that it makes you more European, even though to them it facilitates the functioning of the EU, and does not diminish a country's identity. It seems that although the Euro is a symbol to them, they do not see it as playing a real role in building a European identity. This is also reflected by the fact that many saw both national and European identities intrinsically linked, but an important number also believed that a European identity does not exist. So although the Euro does not seem to play a major role in promoting a European identity, it is still largely accepted by the French teenagers, and may in time symbolise it more than it does at the present time.

The social representation of the English is very different. The core of their representation consists of words considered by them as neutral, such as 'money' and 'Europe/European'. There are many more neutral words mentioned, especially relating to the Euro as a currency. The English adolescents seem to feel less involved: they are distanced from the Euro and do not have strong attachments towards it. This may be due to a lack of information about the Euro, and a distancing from Europe in general. The media could play a useful role in bringing information to the English public, who believes that 'there is too little media coverage of the EU [...] there appears to be a media vacuum that should be filled' (UK Eurobarometer, 2003). Many also believe that the coverage which is offered depicts the EU in a negative light, which could explain the public's reticence towards the Union. The media could, along with the national curriculum, help build a different perception of Europe. Unlike the French, they do not consider the Euro as a simple device, because it involves 'change' which has a negative connotation for them. Neither do they see it as a symbol of Europe, maybe because they do not use the Euro themselves, and therefore cannot yet develop this specific link. When describing the Euro, the English are less oriented towards the EU than the French are: they do not give much importance to non-economic features, they focus on neutral economic words. The use of the word 'travelling' suggests that the English associate the Euro with visiting foreign countries. All these words create a distancing from the Euro, which may be due to a lack of concern from the part of the English teenagers.

However there are also benefits to adopting the Euro according to English students, that involve a 'connection with Europe'. This statement suggests that England is seen as different from mainland Europe, as is confirmed by the English stating that they do not feel European because they are on a separate island. However the benefits are outweighed by many perceived losses including identity, especially the loss of the pound, which the students are very proud of, and probably include in their national identity. For them it may be a symbol of independence, as the Euro is a symbol of unity for the French adolescents. These losses, all referring to nationality, could explain the negative attitudes towards the currency. Adopting the Euro seems to consist in too much effort for the English adolescents, involving 'change' and 'learning a new currency'. Therefore the English view the Euro as a complicated concept which would involve too much change and too many losses. To them it is nothing more than an economic tool, which belongs more to mainland Europe than to the UK.

#### *A European identity for French and English adolescents?*

Most French adolescents felt more attached to their country than to Europe, which is contrary to what was found soon after the Euro was introduced in France (cf. Roland-Lévy, 2004); this might imply that a European identity is only starting to emerge. However there is an opening up towards Europe, it is acknowledged and accepted as being part of one's environment. The French students express a positive attitude towards the EU, feeling optimistic about its future and about France's place within the Union. This may have a positive effect on the emergence of a European identity for the young French generation.

Nevertheless, many of the French participants attribute as much importance to being European as they do to being French; for them, the European identity is thought to be a

component of national identity, which is reinforcing previous results (Roland-Lévy, 2004). Many of them accept the existence of Europe within their identity, but without giving up their national identity. This is reflected in the measuring of their pride in France's characteristics. The French sample is very proud of the history of its country. This history includes the creation of the EU, thus leading us to believe that the French are proud of the EU and of being part of it. However they are not proud of their political influence, which may be linked to the EU, but most probably refers to the issues in Iraq, which constituted a current debate at the time of the questionnaire. Overall, the French adolescents are conscious of belonging to Europe, even though it is only just emerging as part of their identity. It does not dominate their national identity, but seems to merge into it, and gradually be accepted as a fact. There is a greater awareness of Europe as a whole, which is emphasised by the adoption of the Euro, thus linking EU countries together.

The English have a distinctively different perception of European identity. The English are generally more attached to their city rather than their country, and very few feel any attachment to Europe as a whole. This reveals a strong local and national attachment, which is emphasised by their pride in the various characteristics of England. This is especially true for the pound, which would explain their reticence towards the Euro as a possible replacement of their present currency, which in turn affects the adolescents' perception of Europe and the EU. This negative stance is apparent in the adolescents' attitudes towards the UK's membership to the EU. The English adolescents' answers reveal a pattern of not wanting to be part of the EU, declaring that England does not need it. This correlates with the feeling of loss of independence and autonomy should England adopt the Euro. These students also had difficulties in answering questions relating to present knowledge of the EU, thus suggesting that they are not given much information about the Union, and therefore they feel that they are not in a position to comment. This lack of information is an important variable, and could explain the English adolescents' rejection of the Euro and the EU, because they do not trust the unknown. It is interesting to note that there are less English students who believe that a European identity does not exist compared to the French. Most saw the two identities as separate and not being able to coexist, suggesting that to them, electing one identity means giving up on the other. This confirms the feeling of loss expressed by the adolescents through various answers.

Compared to the French sample, the English students view themselves as significantly less European. They do not consider their European citizenship as important as the French do, and focus much more on their national attachment. Although most of them acknowledge belonging to Europe and the EU, they prioritise their country. From the results obtained, there is a distinct feeling that the English adolescents distance themselves from the EU and Europe, that living on an island rather than on the mainland creates a marginality.

## **Conclusion**

This study reveals noticeable differences between French and English adolescents concerning their attitudes towards Europe, the EU and the Euro. The findings suggest that education at school as well as the media have a crucial role to play in expanding knowledge and understanding of the EU, although some authors admit that there is still

some progress to undertake: 'In this process of changing consciousness, adolescents show the same delay as is shown by adults, and this is evidence that the educational institutions in the different European countries are still unable effectively to stimulate and promote the development of those cognitive and affective processes necessary to build a European social identity' (Nasman & Ross, 2002, p.192). It is vital to ensure adequate teaching of European culture, starting at a younger age if necessary, to promote the development of a European conscience.

With the introduction of the Euro in many EU countries, a wider identity is more important than ever. These rapid changes mean that 'children's and young people's socialisation and their development of identity are on the contemporary social agenda' (Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz & Ross, 2004, p.79). To adapt in today's society, young people's identity must be multi-faceted, and can be symbolised by the Euro: one side of the currency's coins picture Europe, the other side is specific to the country. Thus it represents national as well as European identity, and with the intermingling of coins, one can observe the emergence of a European culture. It can be a tool to unite what seemed to many as irreconcilable: fidelity to our country as well as the creation of a united Europe.

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