Spain in the European Union
A qualitative study of national identity

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A B S T R A C T ● This article focuses on Spanish interpretations of the European integration process. Based on extensive use of primary sources and interviews, the article examines perceptions of national identity, nationalism and people's cultural attachment to the European Union (EU). It discusses the diversity of opinions among the different political parties, labor unions, business leaders and lay citizens regarding the organization of the EU. The study is located in the cultural studies approaches that attempt to describe the complexity and interdependence of political, economic and ideological structures. It shows that the EU is as much about representation and cultural meanings as it is about political economy. In addition, this research shows that national identity is reconstituted, maintained, internalized and reproduced in social processes that involve confrontations and competing interests in the EU. Finally, it reveals that the EU has thus far not contributed to superseding the prominence of the nation-state and nationalism and has not decisively engaged the Spanish populace to support a federal Europe. ●

K E Y W O R D S ● confederation ● culture ● European Union ● federation ● national identity ● nation-state ● sovereignty ● Spain

Many books have been written on the European Union (EU), but few authors have examined how nationalism and member countries' conceptions of national identity have affected integration.[1] Yet the myths and

symbols that constitute a given identity are fundamental for understanding the support or rejection of the EU.[2] As Connor writes, 'when analyzing sociopolitical situations, what ultimately matters is not what is but what people believe' (1994a: 37).

The construction of the EU is a multiple and continuously evolving process in which individuals and groups act, exist and confront each other, and in which cognitive and normative elements mingle. It is arguably the most revealing example of the globalization process at the turn of the century. The populations of the nation-state members of the EU have to come to terms with the complex changes produced by the process.

This article attempts to explain how the dynamics created by the process of European integration are influencing the Spanish sense of national identity. More generally, it tries to assert on the basis of empirical qualitative research Cinnirella's (1996) and Smith's (1991) propositions on the reproduction of national identity, particularly concerning the structure of opportunities and the role of conflicting interest in shaping national identity. The article investigates how the attachment to the nation-state is reproduced in connection with what Cinnirella (1996) calls 'instrumental dimensions', such as perceived benefits associated with membership of the EU, satisfaction with EU policies, and so on. In the process, I also address postnationalist theory's arguments (that is, Baumann, 1992; McNeill, 1986; Soysal, 1996), which suggest that the nation-state is being superseded by the process of globalization.[3]

Research has shown that a sense of community is built and rebuilt by the interaction between symbolic and concrete experiences. As Axford writes, 'social reality is constituted in and through social practice' (1995: 197). Actors ritualize, codify and transmit cultural scripts and the meaning they attach to them. This article interprets people's emotional responses to and the rationales given for their opinions of the EU, and the meaning they assign to their support or rejection of supranational structures. This requires the investigation of the interconnections between seemingly rational explanations, such as relative economic deprivation, and non-rational motives, such as symbols, emotions and feelings.

This research is located within the strand of cultural studies that emphasizes the production and reproduction of national identity and the nation-state in Europe, such as the works of Crawshaw (1997) on textual analysis and representation of national identity in France, Featherstone (1995) and Schlesinger (1994) on the concept of European identity, Honko (1996) on the impact of European membership on Finnish national identity, and Shore (1993) on European cultural policy. These works provide a useful framework for the analysis of national identity and suggest a cultural approach that is attentive to the interaction of symbolic and tangible structures in the reproduction of national identity.

Although I focus on the analysis of Spanish attitudes towards the EU, the

study's significance goes beyond Spain. The study contributes to describing how national identity is reproduced, and how and why this form of consciousness is molding the social and political responses to European integration in particular and to the process of globalization in general.

The empirical data are based on in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews conducted in different regions of Spain in 1996, 1997 and 1998. I used this technique of research to try to gather data on people's perceptions beyond the official declarations of leaders, as reported in newspapers, and more in-depth information on perceptions than the surveys generally offer. Thirty-three political leaders, 16 labor union leaders and 12 business association leaders were interviewed (a total of 61 leaders). To ensure the respondents' anonymity, the generic terms *political leader*, *union leader* and *business leader* are used instead of the position these people occupy in the party, labor union or business association. Fifty-eight citizens were also interviewed, including individuals from the three main sectors of the economy (agriculture, industry and services), equal numbers of women and men, and three age groups (18–30, 31–50, 51 and older).[4] To designate those citizens who do not occupy any recognized leadership position in the above categories I use the term *lay people*.[5] Surveys and government and EU documents provided additional data for the analysis. This study concentrates on developments during the 1990s. For further details on Spain's relations with Europe during the transition to democracy and earlier, during the Francoist regime, see Hooper (1987), Maxwell (1995), Salmon (1991) and Vázquez Barbero and Hebbert (1985).

The article examines first the changing ways in which Spanish people (lay people and leaders) view the EU, and themselves in this organization, in the intertwined areas of economics, politics and culture. It concludes by indicating the connections between my findings and other recent empirical and theoretical works on the topic.

Disenchantment toward Europe

Few Spaniards rejected the idea of belonging to the EU (at that time the European Community) in 1985, when the treaty of membership was signed. Spaniards were largely content to become part of a select club of developed and democratic nations, after having been isolated from Europe for half a century. Besides, for the two years after the treaty was signed (which was in January 1986), Spain became the world's main recipient of foreign investment; the result was that Spain had the highest rate of economic growth in the Community – above 5 percent. In fact, according to data provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas (1996), between 1985 and 1995 the Spanish economy grew 3 percent a year on average, and per capita income increased by 41 percent (the greatest growth occurred from 1985 to 1991).

Average per capita income rose from 66 percent of the EU average in 1986 to 77 percent in 1995. The structural and cohesion funds of the EU (which totaled US$1.1bn transferred to Spain between 1986 and 1995) contributed decisively to improvement of infrastructure, such as roads, bridges and agricultural works.[6] In sum, the first nine years of Spain's membership of the EU brought a qualitative transformation of the economic structure and the creation of significant wealth. Furthermore, within a few years of becoming a member of the EU Spain was no longer viewed by other Europeans as a backward, rural, conservative society, but was seen as a modern, secularized, liberal democracy. The Spaniards themselves valued this change of perception from the outside. All these circumstances reinforced their satisfaction with membership of the EU, as reflected in various surveys conducted in the late 1980s (*Eurobarometer*, 1988, 1989, 1990).

   Since 1992, however, this support has been dwindling. Whereas at the end of the 1980s almost 70 percent of Spaniards felt positive about belonging to the EU (*Eurobarometer*, 1991), by 1996 this proportion had declined to 51 percent (*Eurobarometer*, 1996). The proportion of people who view membership of the EU as negative for Spain has grown from 9 percent in 1986 to 20 percent in 1997. The proportion of those who think that membership has been neither negative nor positive has also increased: from 21 percent in 1986 to 26 percent in 1997 (Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas, 1995; *Eurobarometer*, 1997). This trend is also reflected in my in-depth interviews, which reveal that several factors have contributed to the erosion of support for the EU and have triggered a deep-seated attachment to the nation-state. These include perceptions that Spain's economic situation is no better now than in the past: 'I see that being part of the European Union has not produced more jobs, and the cost of living is going up'; that Spain is not playing an important role in the Union: 'the problem with Europe is that it is really run by France and Germany. Spain is a secondary actor' (political leader, IU, Andalucia); and that the country is losing national sovereignty: 'more often than not, Spain has to accept the propositions of its more powerful partners. In that context, there is a clear loss of national sovereignty' (political leader, PP, Galicia) and national identity: 'with the European Union we are changing; we are losing our national characteristics' (government agency employee).[7] Next I address the perceived economic grievances and examine the feelings of loss of sovereignty and national identity.

Economic grievances

In 1995 most Spaniards believed that belonging to the EU had been negative for Spanish agriculture and had contributed to increasing the price of consumer goods; only 30 percent believed that the EU benefited the Spanish economy in general (Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas, 1995). This

trend has apparently continued until today. The following comments reflect a common reaction from interviewees when they were asked about the positive and negative aspects of membership of the EU:

> Because of the requirements of the European Union, I see Spain's productive capacity being dismantled little by little and [Spain] becoming basically a big supermarket for products that come from all over Europe and the world. We will be left with only the tourist industry, like any third world country. The European Union does not fulfill Spain's needs, as it does for France and Germany. (political leader, PP, Galicia)

These perceptions are based largely on concrete experiences. The EU's agricultural regulations have forced Spain to reduce its agricultural production in many areas. For instance, Spanish wine producers were required to uproot many vines. Similarly, milk producers had to reduce their production drastically; and many medium-sized and small farmers were forced to abandon milk production. It is no coincidence that the people in Spain most strongly opposed to the EU are the farmers. They believe that they have been sacrificed, used as a means of exchange, to bring benefits to other sectors of the economy. They think that agriculture has had to pay a high price for constructing highways and other infrastructure.

The available data on commercial exchange between Spain and the other countries in the Union tend to support those claims. The balance has been negative in many areas of the economy. For example, the balance in agricultural products between France and Spain used to be in Spain's favor, but, after joining the EU, the Spanish market has been invaded by foods such as fish, meat, milk, cereals and fruits imported from France. In 1985, the year before Spain joined the EU, sales of these goods from France to Spain totaled about US$254m; in 1993 those sales totaled more than US$2200m. In 1985 the sales of agricultural goods from Spain to France equaled US$691m; today they equal about US$1308m. In other words, while the export of agricultural goods from Spain to France increased by 190 percent from 1985 to 1993, sales from France to Spain increased by 860 percent. This disequilibrium in commercial exchange is not limited to France or to agriculture. It also applies to exchange with the EU in general. In 1986, the year Spain became a member, it sold the European Community goods worth US$2.2bn more than it bought from the other 11 members. Gradually, imports grew larger than exports in most sectors of the economy; in 1995 Spain had a small deficit with the EU (Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas, 1996; El País, 1996).[8]

However, in macroeconomic and purely financial terms, membership of the EU contributed to economic growth in general. Indeed, if we include in the analysis both the commercial exchange and resources received by Spain from the structural and cohesion funds, there is a small net positive balance for 1986–95 (Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas, 1996). For the managers

of the state apparatus these data are eventually what count the most. For instance, a leader of the socialist party stated in 1996:

> Membership in the European Union has facilitated Spain's expansion and modernization. The European framework has given Spain the stability and the tools to develop and consolidate as a more articulated country, without a serious crisis. Furthermore, for the first time in this century, Spain is participating directly in the development of Europe.

However, even though the structural funds of the EU are being invested in those regions of Spain that have been traditionally backwards or that had suffered as a consequence of the structural changes in the economy promoted by the EU and the central government, some regional political leaders believe that not enough has been done, particularly in Asturias, Galicia and Andalucia. The following quote expresses these frustrations:

> If we look at the consequences of European integration for the whole country, maybe there are some sectors and some regions that have benefited by being part of the European Union, but for Galicia it has been a loss. For instance, agriculture, cattle raising, fishing, and the shipbuilding industry, basic and historical sectors of the economy in our region, have been either totally neglected or forced to reduce production. (political leader, Bloque Nacionalista Gallego – BNG [Galician Nationalist Block], Galicia)

Another grievance often mentioned by the interviewees is the high rate of unemployment. In fact, most political leaders and the population in general consider this the major problem. Many blame this situation on the EU. Indeed, 40 percent of Spaniards interviewed in 1995 believed that membership of the EU had contributed to unemployment; only 27 percent thought that Europe had helped to create employment in Spain (Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas, 1995). The following quotations from political and union leaders I interviewed two years later reflect these views:

> Unemployment is the major problem that Spain has to confront, and the present government is not confronting it because the main priority is to keep pace with the application of neo-liberal policies promoted by the EU. (union leader, CCOO, Madrid)

> So far the European Union depends almost exclusively on economic accords and monetary union, whereas political agreements and above all social matters have been neglected. For instance, unemployment, which is one of the most urgent problems in many countries in Europe, and particularly in Spain, has not really been addressed. They talk about it but nothing is done. (political leader, IU, Madrid)

Contrary to what politicians hoped, membership of the EU has not reduced unemployment. The unemployment rate was rising even in the late

1980s, which were years of high economic growth, and well into the 1990s. In 1998, 20 percent of the working population were unemployed, according to Eurocom (1998). The reforms put into effect to help the country conform to the requirements for monetary union and with the policies promoted in Brussels have not helped to reduce unemployment substantially.[9] Although the various political parties, unions and business organizations hardly agreed on the pace and extent of the reforms, the predominant political parties (PSOE and PP), supported by the major business organizations, held similar views about the need to reduce expenses related to the social benefits that the Spanish state has provided during the past 30 years, and which were expanded during the 1980s. In brief, the reforms have been oriented largely toward reducing the costs of human resources – wages, social security, retirement and other related social benefits (such as unemployment compensations). The process of adapting to this 'new reality' has been far from smooth in Spain, especially if we compare this process with the relatively non-confrontational adjustments in the Scandinavian countries and other northern European nations such as Germany and the Netherlands. In brief, the policies that were applied to fulfill the requirements for monetary union have lessened support for the EU, and this support is not likely to strengthen in the near future. On the contrary, one might expect more conflict and a growing opposition to the EU, particularly among the working classes and their political allies.

Although economic problems do play an exacerbating role, they are not the only factors lessening support for further European integration and reinforcing the attachment to the nation-state. As noted earlier, in addition to perceived economic grievances, other aspects in the symbolic realm have created negative feelings toward the EU. Representations of national identity and sovereignty constitute the most salient aspects.

National sovereignty and national identity

Today, 64 percent of the Spanish lay people and 53 percent of the political and union leaders believe that the EU strongly influences Spanish policies while Spain has little say in the EU (Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas, 1995; personal interviews 1996, 1997):

> The Spanish nation should not be forced to give up its sovereignty as it is doing now to the European Union. Just look at who occupies the most important positions in the European organization. We are hardly getting secondary offices. (miner, Asturias)

Several experiences regarding Spain's relations with the EU have caused these feelings in recent years. In 1993, for example, the Spanish government hoped to obtain the headquarters of a relevant EU office such as the Environment Agency. Instead Spain was assigned the Office for Harmonization of

the Internal Market, a much less prestigious organization. Again, in the second half of 1993 and early 1994, during the negotiations for admission of the Nordic countries, the EU accepted none of Spain's main propositions regarding institutional reforms. Then, in 1995, Spain was engaged in a confrontation with Canada over fishing rights; many respondents believe that Canada was able to impose most of its conditions because Spain could not obtain solid backing from the EU. Also in 1995, in a confrontation over fishing rights with Morocco, the European Commission was unable to modify Morocco's position in favor of Spain.

All these defeats and semi-defeats affected Spanish thinking about the EU as strongly as actual economic adversity, if not more so. Seventy-five percent of the lay people I interviewed, 80 percent of the politicians from the United Left, and 30 percent from the Popular Party believe that when problems arise, Spain does not obtain solid support from the EU. These incidents, coupled with the perceived economic grievances, have helped to revitalize nationalist feelings among Spaniards. As Minogue wrote, 'Nationalism gives an intellectual status to the grievance, and it also adds to it' (1970: 16).

Most Spaniards interviewed expect that their government will provide a structure to ease the insecurities of their existence and will represent them honorably. When these expectations are not met, they criticize the government, but they also take refuge in the traditional ethno-political divisions, blaming the other countries of the Union for what they perceive as conditions that are unfavorable to Spain: 'Lately we have been losing national sovereignty to a large extent. The policies that our government is adopting are clearly influenced by the decisions taken by the bureaucracy of the EU, under the leadership of Germany' (labor union leader, UGT, Andalucia).

Furthermore, respondents perceive the EU not only as a foreign power but as an organization in which they do not have much say:

> At least with the Spanish government if we are unhappy we can always vote for a different party, with the European Union we do not have any democratic mechanism to let our voices heard. The European parliament is more a decorative institution than anything else. (bank employee, Cadiz)

The EU is seen as a distant and vertical power. It is not perceived as providing a meaningful context for social action and participation. By contrast, respondents see the local and national context as offering more institutional mechanisms to defend themselves from the uncertainties of the globalization process. Moreover, representatives of the regionalist and the nationalist groups (such as members of the Basque Nationalist Party, the Republican Left of Catalonia and the Galician Nationalist Block) expressed that the EU was not dealing appropriately with the regions and the autonomies. They complained that all negotiations were made through the central government in Madrid.

In the minds of most lay people, the attachment to national sovereignty

is often coupled with a perceived threat to national identity: 54 percent of those interviewed expressed concern about losing cultural identity as a result of European integration. Their concerns are typified in the following quotations:

> We cannot accept agreements that do not respect our culture. To say that we have the same cultural heritage as other Europeans is wrong. (farmer, Andalucia)

> Spain is not the same now. People are more and more interested in things that come from the outside. You can see the cultural penetration in the way people dress, in what they watch on TV, in what they buy, in the music they listen to, and even in what they eat. Also, the English language is everywhere. A lot of people feel good about being part of Europe but they are also giving up their culture. In fact through Europe what we really get is the culture of the United States of America. (bank employee, Madrid)

US culture was often mentioned when referring to Europe. In fact, through commercialism and mass media, the culture of the USA is more tangible and more present than any incipient European culture. The presence of US culture has increased in recent years, as Spain has opened up to Europe.

On the issue of cultural identity there is a sharp contrast between leaders and lay people. Only a minority of the political and labor union elites interviewed (26 percent) see the EU as threatening Spanish cultural identity, as reflected in this statement: 'There is no doubt in my mind that being part of the European Union has come at a great cost to our culture' (leader, CCOO, Madrid). Most political, union and economic leaders, although also concerned about the importance of defending cultural identity, do not think that the EU is a threat to Spanish national identity: 'Spain has a strong cultural tradition. Although the English language, for example, is very influential, Spanish will not disappear. I think that European nations can strive for unity while maintaining their national identities' (union leader, UGT, Andalucia).

Whether or not they regard the EU as a threat to cultural identity, most of the people I interviewed (both leaders and lay people) emphasized the importance of their national identity and Spanish sovereignty. Their imagined community (Anderson, 1991) – the nation-state – is perceived as a stable institution and a preexisting social reality. In this context, national identity represents the social relations and positions of Spaniards in the EU. In the next section, I examine the interpretation and understanding of the EU according to political parties, unions, business leaders and lay people. First, I briefly summarize the major tendencies in each of the above groups regarding the EU, and then I address their positions concerning the organization of the EU.

Defining the EU

There is no consensus on the positive and negative aspects of EU member-ship, even among leaders of the same political party. Yet, certain tendencies predominate. The leftist parties and the labor unions tend to perceive the EU as an organization that gives primacy to economic agreements among corporations and is detrimental to the people, particularly the working class. The leaders of the most important party on the left (Izquierda Unida) and of the two main unions (UGT and CCOO) oppose the EU because of the market policies applied since the Maastricht Treaty. They categorize the EU as a bureaucracy at the service of the capitalist corporations and the most economically powerful member countries. In other words, the social con-comitants of neo-liberalism that dominate in the EU gave people on the left an inducement to assert their national identity on the basis of economic well-being for the working class. Those leaders feel that the globalizing forces of the EU are not pro-working class; therefore, they see dealing with the national government as the best alternative for this social class. In contrast, members of the center left, such as the Socialist Party (PSOE), regard EU membership as absolutely necessary. According to the PSOE, the EU has decisively supported the modernization of Spain, including its political and economic expansion. In addition, these leaders value what they see as the opportunity afforded to Spain of 'participating in the historical project of building the European Union' (González, 1996: 8). The following quotation summarizes the position of the socialist leaders I interviewed on this topic:

> The European Union, and the monetary union in particular, is absolutely necessary for Spain, even if this entails giving up a little bit of sovereignty in certain respects. In order to maintain equal rank with the United States, Japan, and the so-called Tigers of Asia, the union is a key necessity. A unique currency will benefit each country economically and will reinforce the EU's economic weight in the world. Spain cannot compete in the world economy alone. As a matter of fact, no western European country has the economic weight and power to defend its interests properly in the world market. (politi-cal leader, PSOE, Barcelona)

The conservative Partido Popular is relatively divided on this subject. Although the official party line has tended to support the EU since the party came to power in 1996, my interviews show that many leaders still perceive the EU as a threat to Spanish sovereignty and independence:

> I support the idea of the European Union in terms of agreements among states, particularly on economic matters, defense, peace agreements, and the fight against crime, but I think we should try hard to keep our own state and keep Spain as an independent country with its own army and particular culture. (political leader, PP, Asturias)

Business leaders are mostly divided according to the size of the business they represent. The representatives of large companies tend to be largely in favor of European integration:

> The European Union has opened up markets for our products. Before, because of the tax on imports, our production was limited largely to the Spanish market. Now we have more access to the other countries of the Union, and as a result our business has increased enormously. (business representative, Madrid)

In contrast, representatives from small companies tend to see the EU in a negative light and to seek the support of the state against competition by foreign companies: 'We entered the European market with primitive structures. Therefore we cannot compete on an equal footing with big European corporations. Neither the Spanish government nor the European institutions are doing much for us' (representative of organization of small businesses, Asturias). Small business representatives expected that the government would assume the role of adjusting national and local economies to the demands of a more integrated market at the European level, and suggested some form of protectionism in certain areas.

Among lay people, the opposition to the present process of European integration is strongest among those whose livelihood is directly or indirectly related to agriculture, the fishing industry, and the coal and steel industries. In Galicia and Asturias, for example, regions that have endured the restructuring of their industries (coal and steel, shipbuilding) and other important activities such as fishing and agriculture in the past decade, people tend to see the EU as a disadvantage – more than in other regions such as Andalucia or the Community of Madrid.

Whether critical or supportive of the EU, there are many different understandings about the meaning of European integration and the EU.[10] I tried to address those interpretations related to the organization model of the EU. In the interviews I attempted to learn the respondents' positions regarding support for an intergovernmental organization or for a supranational, federal form of organization. Most of the people interviewed in all categories tended to view the EU as an association of different nation-states – that is, some type of confederate organization. Only a minority among both the leaders and the lay people favored a federal form of organization. Most people believed that a federal organization was not possible in the near future because of what they considered to be the vast socioeconomic and cultural differences among the countries that make up the EU. Others opposed the idea of Europe on ideological grounds: 'The idea of a federal Europe does not seem right to me. The nations should not abandon their sovereignty, for it is their essential liberty' (schoolteacher, Andalucia). Overall, I found the following trends in my interviews among those who support some form of European integration:[11] 66 percent of political and

union leaders preferred a form of confederation, whereas 30 percent were inclined to constitute a federal Europe (4 percent did not have a tangible preference). The interviewees who were prone to support a federation belonged to the Socialist Party. Among the business leaders, 36 percent tended to support a federation, whereas 64 percent favored a confederation. Lay people generally showed a resolute attachment to a national government (72 percent), and favored a loose form of confederation (18 percent were in favor of a federation and 10 percent did not know). A federal Europe seems impossible to some respondents and undesirable to others. Age makes a difference on this issue: of the 18 percent of lay people who supported a federation, 66 percent were less than 30 years old.

Political leaders have a marked desire to influence and control the process of integration from the national perspective. Although the leaders of the European institutions often speak of creating a common European society, the evidence seems to indicate that for now and in the near future we are dealing primarily with the establishment of 'coordinating mechanisms among separate nation states', as Munch (1993, cited by Anheier, 1995) put it. The structure of opportunity framed by the EU and the competing interests between the national representatives of the EU member states have reinforced an attachment to the nation-state and a support for a limited form of intergovernmental organization.

In sum, increasing economic exchange and other activities at the European level have produced a trend toward a postnational identity in only a small minority of the population. This has happened particularly among the few people engaged in research (one of the main areas of collaboration across states in the EU) and among executives in large companies. In their daily work, these people already experience a sense of belonging to a supranational organization. In the population at large, however, and among the unions and most politicians, national concerns determine their interpretations of the EU.

As seen in the previous sections, these views are based on both concrete and symbolic experiences, and also on the perceptions that the institutions of the EU themselves have helped to create. Indeed, the debates within the EU are conducted mostly in terms of national interests, and, through the Council, the nation-states remain the major actors in EU agreements. Furthermore, the EU has historically followed a conception more technocratic than democratic, with the result that economic concerns have taken precedence over political and social matters. The interviews reveal that although changes in social and economic policies are not enough to develop identification with the EU, they are important contributing factors. Neither was attention given to the need to develop a European identity, including a sense of political citizenship in the new union. Even though European citizenship is formally specified in the Maastricht Treaty, it is still basically a 'legally sanctioned economic category' (Deflem and Pampel, 1996: 137)

and a free-movement 'market citizenship', not a full-fledged citizenship of equal participation. In other words, political citizenship is not yet guaranteed beyond the nation-state.

In sum, Spanish membership of the EU has not contributed substantially to reducing nationalist reflexes among Spanish citizens. It might even have helped to reinforce these feelings. Indeed, the present organization of the EU is based on settling disputes among different countries to reach common agreements. In this process, citizens of the country members often perceive that their national aspirations are not met, thereby renewing feelings of national identity.

Conclusion

Most Spaniards agree in the abstract about the relevance of the EU for peace and the need to develop solidarity among the countries of Europe to confront the changes and the dangers of globalization. However, this view does not translate into a desire to create a federal Europe. Most of those interviewed (leaders and lay people) are very much attached to an independent nation-state as the basic constituent of their identity. The Spanish nation-state is viewed as a cultural community, a political community and as a space where its citizens constitute a collective identity.

People's experiences in their relations with the EU have contributed to reproducing this attachment to the Spanish state. The EU, as a visible symbol of economic globalization, is blamed for many grievances. For instance, the EU requirements in the areas of agriculture and industry tend to restrict the structure of opportunities for a part of the population, which in turn leads those engaged in these areas to feel alienated from the integration process. Furthermore, a large proportion of Spaniards believe that they are not treated fairly by the EU. They explain a perceived disadvantageous situation as the result of domination by the other countries in the EU's programs and arrangements. In other words, perceived economic or political grievances are connected to feelings of national identity and sovereignty to shape citizens' views of the EU. Both elite and lay people refer to everyday experiences and concepts of national sovereignty to continually reaffirm a Spanish national identity, however inarticulate this concept may be in their minds.

This form of nationalism is inspired by the old, reflexive 'us/them' view of the world. People look for past or present affronts, and explain economic and other difficulties according to this binary view, which is similar to the feelings of *ressentiment* defined by Greenfeld (1992); although contemporary Spaniards tend to admire other European countries, many feel at the same time what Greenfeld call an 'existential envy' toward those members of the EU which are economically and politically more powerful.[12]

Furthermore, the invocations of national identity are means through which the Spanish population (including the elite) try to address the crises of identity produced by the drastic changes occurring at present in that country, most of which are perceived as originated by the process of European integration. Likewise, the idea of cultural specificity emphasized by the interviewees is combined with an ideology of democracy: people feel closer to their representatives within the nation-state. The Spanish nation itself is conceived as 'a horizontal comradeship' (Anderson, 1991: 7), as opposed to the EU, which is perceived as more vertical and foreign. In addition, this research shows that national identity, besides the original process of socialization in school, is reconstituted, maintained, internalized and reproduced in social processes that involve confrontations and competing interests within the EU.

In sum, the nation-state is 'constantly reformed, remaking of tradition and coherence on ever-altered terrain', as Miller (1993: 103) proposes, and its economic function is shifting from the formulation of national policies to the management of policies devised by the European institutions for all countries of the EU. Nevertheless, the nation-state still inspires a sense of unity and belonging in Spaniards, and constitutes the 'overarching normative ideal of collective identification' (Schlesinger, 1994: 319), even beyond the boundaries of social classes. We saw that the working-class representatives (labor unions and United Left Party) and most lay people interviewed tended to equate class solidarity with national solidarity. In other words, the organization of the EU has thus far not contributed to superseding the prominence of the nation-state and nationalism, as some postnational theorists predicted (Baumann, 1992; McNeill, 1986), and has not decisively engaged the countries' members, and particularly the population of Spain, to support a federal Europe, as the neofunctionalists (Cameron, 1992; Haas, 1968) and their followers in the European institutions expected. In the foreseeable future, Spain will continue to be one of the *patries* that make up the EU, whose organization will likely be a *sui generis* confederation, as defined by Smith (1991). Domestic actors (political leaders and the public in general) have shown a clear preference for this model of organization.

These findings reinforce Rex's theory (1991) that the sense of belonging to a nation is strongly related to a feeling of national identity, which implies individual and social rights and protection of these rights by the state, and that national sovereignty remains a preeminent rhetorical tool in attempting to demarcate political communities. In the EU, and particularly for Spain, Haas' 36-year-old statement (1964: 465) that 'the nation continues to provide the integrative cement that gives the appearance of Community' is still valid.

In addition, this research also reinforces other findings on the EU in general and on other countries, such as England, France and Denmark (Bryant, 1991; Deflem and Pampel, 1996; Hodgson, 1993; Shore, 1993),

showing that the citizens of the member countries still have little European consciousness. The Spanish attachment to the nation-state and concerns over national identity differ, however, from the British Eurosceptics, for example. Even those Spaniards who oppose further integration still want to keep a considerable level of association with the EU.

These results do not imply that a new layer of identification of Spaniards with Europe could not be developed.[13] They indicate that the European project must draw, to a large extent, on the same elements of collective identity that have given nationalism its power (Smith, 1991), including providing a sense of dignity (Greenfeld, 1992), meaningful ways of life across the full spectrum of human activity (Tamir, 1993), and concrete experiences that link individuals to the larger community. Accordingly, the EU must become part of Spanish citizens' everyday lives; it should be perceived as capable of alleviating what people view as the major problems in their society. Furthermore, the EU should serve an 'expressive role' (Tamir, 1993), reflecting the diversity of the nations of the EU and their symbols and institutions. In other words, the process of developing a new identity at the level of the EU will require an entwined process of economic, political and cultural experiences.

Notes

1 I define the term 'nationalism' as a consciousness of belonging to the nation-state, together with sentiments and aspirations for its security and prosperity. This definition is based on Anthony Smith (1991: 72–3), although I added the attachment to the state as important to the nation in the context of the EU. The state is perceived by all the interviewees as either the political extension of the nation or its synonym, and the sentiment of national identity includes being part of the Spanish state. Furthermore, in the popular imaginary this duality constitutes their collective consciousness. The tendency to equate the attachment to the nation (nationalism) with loyalty to the state (patriotism) – a distinction suggested by Connor (1994b) – is so dominant among both lay people and political and economic leaders that it would be futile to try to distinguish between them. In any case, this distinction is not fundamental for the purpose of this research. Perhaps this

distinction would have been relevant if I were studying the relations between the nationalist groups in the Basque Country and in Catalonia with the rest of Spain or with Europe. See the work of Keating (2000) for an extended analysis of these relations. In defining national identity I adopted the definition proposed by Smith (1991: 99): 'national identity comprises both a cultural and political identity and is located in a political community as well as a cultural one'.

2 Myths and symbols are abstract representations of an imaginary community as well as the expression of concrete social relations. This conceptualization includes the political and geographical delimitation of a community in relation to the exterior (that is, borders, enemies and the definition of a foreigner).

3 Spain is somewhere between a nation-state and a multinational state (as defined by Connor, 1994b). A minority of people in the Basque Country and in Catalonia claim to derive from a different ethnic background than the rest of Spain. However, most people, even in these regions, claim allegiance to both their region or community and to the Spanish state. Therefore, I think that the most appropriate, if not perfect, term for the purpose of this research is the nation-state.

4 Differences according to gender, age group and sector of the economy will be specified only when they are significant.

5 The concept of political leaders includes the top leaders of a party in the region, most of whom are also important national figures; these include general secretaries, congressman, senators, mayors and high-ranking officials. I interviewed leaders from the three main national parties and the main regional parties. The main national parties were the center-left Partido Socialista Obrero Español – PSOE (Workers Spanish Socialist Party), the conservative center-right Partido Popular – PP (Popular Party) and the leftist Izquierda Unida – IU (United Left). The main regional parties included in this research were the Partido Socialista de Cataluña – PSC (Catalan Socialist Party), the catalanist Convergencia y Unión (Union and Convergence) and the leftist Iniciativa por Cataluña (Initiative for Catalonia), Izquierda Republicana de Cataluña (Republican Left of Catalonia) and Bloque Nacionalista Gallego – BNG (Galician Nationalist Block). The union and business leaders also include the top leaders of the union or association in each region. The union leaders belong to the two major unions: Comisiones Obreras – CCOO (Workers Commissions) and Union General de Trabajadores – UGT (General Union of Workers). I made an effort to interview those people who, through their functions in their party, union or business association, were also linked to the establishment of policies regarding the EU. The regions of Spain in which I conducted the interviews are Andalucia (Sevilla, Granada, Córdoba and Cadiz), Asturias (Oviedo, Gijon, Llanes and Langreo), Catalunya (Barcelona), Galicia (Santiago de Compostela, La Coruña, Lugo and Vigo) and the Community of Madrid, which

includes the city of Madrid and its suburbs. Because of their economic, cultural and political characteristics these regions represent different perspectives on the process of European integration. People from other regions, such as the Basque Country, were interviewed in Madrid. When quoting these people I mention both the Community of Madrid and their constituency of origin.

6 The purpose of the structural funds is to bind the richest countries together with the poorest ones so that the latter will not lag behind in the move toward European integration.

7 All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

8 The data originally were expressed in pesetas and ECU. In February 1997, US$1 equaled 135 pesetas and 0.845 ECU. (The name ECU has been changed in 1998 to EURO.)

9 To be included in the European Monetary Union, a member nation must have complied with the following requirements: 1) an inflation rate no more than 1.5 percent higher than the three lowest national rates in the EU; 2) long-term interest rates must not be above 2 percent of the average of the three lowest EU rates; 3) the state's budget deficit (including central, regional and local governments) should not exceed 3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and 4) the public debt ratio of the member states should not exceed 60 percent of the GDP.

10 The *Eurobarometer* contains two general questions on unification: whether Europeans are for or against the efforts being made to unify western Europe and whether they are for or against membership of their country in the EU. I attempted to understand what the Spanish people understood by unification.

11 These numbers are presented as tendencies perceived in the groups. The sample is used for interpretive purposes; it is not intended for statistical analysis.

12 Greenfeld (1992) used the term *ressentiment* in the context of explaining collectivist nationalism in Russia and Germany. She defined it as a 'psychological state resulting from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred and the impossibility of satisfying those feelings' (1992: 488).

13 Identities are already experienced by most Spaniards as multiple layers, which include the local, the regional and the national. The monetary union, especially after the year 2002, when everyone will be using the Euro in everyday transactions, might help to create a symbolic image of belonging to the EU.

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