



Competing identities?

Understanding the role of national and European identities in the case of Brexit

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Abstract

The study of European integration has increasingly become an important topic for IR-scholars and has developed into a field of its own. Scholarly interest in the role of identities in these regional integration processes has also risen over the last decades. This study can be comprised within this line of study. By using social constructivism as a theoretical framework, the paper seeks to understand the role of national and European identities in the case of Brexit. The paper also looks at identity formations of citizens and their attitudes towards European integration in relation with these identities. Although the UK has always stood on the sidelines of the European project, the results of the vote indicate that there are deeper processes that need to be studied. By using qualitative content analysis, the paper looks at framings in two national British newspapers and by two political leaders. The paper comes to the conclusion that these identities are both portrayed as compatible and competing with each other.

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1. Introduction

Scholarly interest in the role identities play in the integration process of the European Union (EU) has risen over the last two decades (Carrey, 2002; Bruter, 2005; Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009; Risse, 2005). This is not surprising, as the question of a common identity has become one of the important issues facing the EU today. The aim of the thesis is to understand the role of European and national identities in the case of Brexit by looking at their framings in media and by the political elite in the campaign leading up to the vote. The case represents one of the major setbacks for the integration process of the EU and can be linked to the broader field of study on European integration and identities. The thesis uses an interpretive research design in order to answer the following research questions:

- *How can we understand the role/importance of national and European identities in the case of Brexit?*
- *How do the framings of these concepts relate to the identity formations of citizens and their attitudes towards European integration?*

It is important to note that these questions are not to be understood as separate from each other. Rather, both of these questions feed into each other, and are answered simultaneously throughout the paper. Hence, the main puzzle driving the study is the possible tension between national and European identities, how these identities relate to each other and the possible effect of their framings on citizens identity formations and attitudes towards European integration.

Understanding how framings can affect identity formations of citizens is relevant as citizens have the ability to play an important role in the integration process of the EU. It is especially referendum voting (direct democracy) that gives power to the public on European matters. As argued by Hobolt (2009), "direct democracy has played—and will continue to play—a significant role in the process of European integration" (7). It is important to note that this study does not seek to be an all-encompassing study on the reasons for why people voted a certain way. Rather, by focusing on a bottom-up approach to the case of Brexit, the study focuses on citizens identity formations by looking at the framings of national and European identities.

The research is contributing to the literature on identity and European integration by employing a qualitative content analysis. Why the thesis focuses on media and elites is because it has been argued in previous scholarly works that they have an identity-building ability. For example, in his book, Bruter (2005) argued for the significance of media and the elites on the

feelings of "Europeaness" and European identity, which in turn affects citizens attitudes towards European integration.

1.1 Aim and Purpose

As stated above, the aim of this research is to understand the role of European and national identities in the case of Brexit by looking at their framings and their relation with identity formations of citizens. Both European and national identities have been argued by scholars to have a considerable impact on European citizens attitudes towards European integration (Carey, 2002; Hooge & Marks, 2004; Risse, 2009). This is the initial premise upon which the study is based. As will be shown in later parts of the literature review, some studies have sought to look how external factors such as media and elites can shape identity conceptions of citizens (Vössing, 2015; Hooge & Marks, 2005). The purpose of this thesis is to add to this line of scholarship by looking at how elites and the media portrayed national and European identities in the campaign leading up to Brexit. In order to do so, unit-level social constructivism is utilized as the theoretical framework. This will make the study stand out from previous literature which has mostly used empiricist approaches in order to look at European and national identities. Much of the previous research has also been interested in finding a causal relation between variables of identity and referenda voting (Luhmann, 2017). This thesis does not seek to do so as it follows the interpretative school of thought. Rather, based upon the research question, the focus will lie on understanding competing national and European identities and how the framing can influence identity formations of citizens and thus their attitudes towards European integration.

Social constructivism is an appropriate theoretical perspective for this study as it focuses on social identities of actors and agents in order to account for their interests, hence privileging an idealist perspective (Risse, 2009: 148). Further, it is based on the idea that the world/reality is socially constructed and constantly changing. Therefore, it will depart from other European integration theories such as Ernst B. Haas neofunctionalism (1958) and Hoffman's intergovernmentalism (1965) which have an ontological base which is rationalist and materialist.

1.2. Relevance to the field of International Relations

The study of regionalism and regional integration began as a subfield of International Relations already in the 1950's as regional integration schemes began to appear (Breslin et al., 2002: 2).

It has increasingly developed into a field of its own as understanding the processes that make up these regional schemes have presented scholars with various puzzles to solve. Especially, the constant evolving EU has given rise to multiple competing approaches in IR literature. Further, the EU is one of the leading actors on the international arena and is an important global player in many areas such as those regarding the economy and climate. This study can be comprised within this sub-field of study on regional integration processes.

The EU-referendum represents one of these puzzles and was one of the major events in international affairs in 2016. It also represents one of the major failures of one, if not the most successful regional organization in the world. Understanding this phenomenon should therefore be of interest to scholars working on regionalism but also to other IR-scholars as Brexit will have implications that go beyond the national spectrum. The full implications of Brexit are still not known today since it is the first time a member has decided to exit the regional organization since its creation. Although the political and economic consequences are impossible to predict, it will most likely have a considerable and prolonged impact for the United Kingdom (UK), the EU as a whole and their relation with each other. Further, since the event is quite recent, not many studies have been conducted on this topic yet which makes this case even more relevant.

1.3. Background and structure

The UK joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 thus making it one of the first nine members of the regional organization. Still, as explained by Hobolt (2016), the UK has always been reluctant to the European project and stood by the side lines. Reluctance to the EU project be seen through the fact that the UK has stayed out of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the Schengen agreements. Thus in 2016, it became the first member state to opt out from the organization following the referendum in June of that year. This represents a major disappointment for the construction of a strong EU and European continent.

Some might argue that the UK is not an interesting case to study as it has, through history, always been an awkward member of the EU and the general "Eurosceptic" attitude found amongst elites and citizens has not changed since the 1950's. To some extent, this vision of the EU still is present in the country. At the same time, the EU-referendum showed a clear division in society as the leave vote only won by a margin of 1,9%. The results show that there are deeper processes within the UK that needs further investigation, and that citizens are not as clearly detached from Europe as what one originally would think. Hence, it might not be as straightforward and the thesis argues that the UK still represents an interesting case to study.

The first chapter of this thesis, the literature review, establishes the theoretical framework that will guide the whole research. Different strands of literature will be accounted for and a solid framework based on social constructivism will be developed. The second chapter discusses the method of choice that has been developed in correspondence with the theoretical framework. This section motivates the choice of qualitative content analysis of media articles and elite speeches for answering the research questions at hand. Finally, the analysis permits a discussion surrounding the main concepts, and discovers dissimilar findings in newspapers and speeches. Hence, it is argued that European and national identities are both framed as competing but also as complementary to each other. Further, these findings are discussed in relation to identity formations of citizens and their attitude towards European integration.

2. Literature Review

The following section will briefly introduce the different strands of literature within which this paper is situated. It begins with a discussion surrounding previous literature on the topic of Brexit and argues for what these scholars have missed. The second section provides a comprehensive explanation of the theory chosen, namely social constructivism. This section will highlight the role of the theory in the paper, and why it is useful when studying European integration. In the following paragraphs, the key concepts of this research, identities, is conceptualized and explained. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion surrounding citizens' preference formations towards European integration and most importantly, the role of media and elites the preference and identity formations.

2.1. Previous research on Brexit

The literature on Brexit within IR is not extensive, since the event is relatively recent. But, it has already sparked a decent amount of scholarship (Bourne, 2016; Hobolt, 2016; Vasilopolou, 2016; Clarke et al., 2017). Understanding the reasons behind the "leave" vote has become priority for studies made on the topic. Comprehensive studies on the reason for a "leave" vote include Bourne (2016), Hobolt (2016), Vasilopolou (2016) and Clarke et al. (2017). Common causes identified in these studies are for example immigration, economic issues, issues of sovereignty and the relation between the EU and the UK in general, but there also seems to be conflicting arguments in that literature. For example, Vasilopolou (2016) dismisses identity related variables, and focuses on explanations based on costs and benefits in order to account for the result, which Hobolt and Bourne do not. Further, what is interesting from Hobolt's study, is that she argues that "issue-voting" was important in the referendum, meaning that votes were cast from citizens opinion and feelings and not solely in protest of the government (2016: 1269).

While these scholars provide great insights on the topic of Brexit and identity, the aim of this thesis is not to fully explain the referendum result from multiple arguments since it is beyond the reach of this study. Rather, as mentioned in the introduction, it seeks to understand what role identity framings might have had in the process, how national and European identities were portrayed, thus looking at a possible tension between the two. Therefore, it will depart from studies mentioned above, and will provide a more in-depth analysis of one particular factor, namely identity. Further, what is primarily lacking in their study, which this thesis provides, is the lack of explanation of the concept of identity itself. In their study, it is seen as

something "pre-existing" and independent from various processes. The thesis departs radically from those assumptions as it gives great analytical importance to process whereby European and national identities are formed. Hence, in latter chapters of the literature review, the term identity will be conceptualized and explained from various works, utilizing a social constructivist perspective.

2.2. Theoretical framework

2.2.1. Social constructivism as an approach to European Integration

The thesis is theory-consuming, meaning that it does not aim at testing social constructivism as a theory but rather uses it in order to generate insights and understand the case. Social constructivism has increasingly gained influence in the study of European integration. Throughout this next chapter, its importance for studies on European integration will be demonstrated by accounting for multiple scholars. When applying social constructivism to the study of European integration it is important to emphasize that social constructivism does not aim to be another "grand theory" of European integration. As argued by scholars (Christiansen et al., 2001: 3; Risse, 2009: 145), social constructivism cannot in itself be a substantive theory, and it should therefore not be compared to theories of European integration such as neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism. Rather, it should be seen as a complementary approach which can shed light on particular issues such as identity formations (Checkel, 2001: 51). Indeed, the study of identity formation is a core element of constructivist research (Christiansen et al., 2002: 15). The strength of using social constructivism in relation to other theories is that it allows to look at questions that have been overlooked in conventional approaches to European integration such as identity questions. Further, the thesis will employ social constructivism as conceptualized by Risse, meaning it is utilized as an analytical orientation viable for studies on different regions rather than as a limited approach to European integration.

As mentioned, constructivist IR-theory is particularly relevant as theoretical standpoint when studying identities since it focuses on the social identities of states and individuals in order to explain interest formations (Reus-Smith, 2013: 225). Wendt, a key constructivist author in IR-literature which was credited for popularizing the approach with his article "Anarchy Is What States Make of It" (1992), argued that intersubjective structures and meanings influence behavior rather than material factors. This means that identities can be seen as the basis for

interest formations. Central to his development of constructivist theory is the idea that "identities are not given but are developed and sustained or transformed in interaction" (Zehfuss, 2002:38). Wendt's work has been very influential to the field of constructivism and IR, but, he applies most of his concepts on a systemic level. Hence, he tends to ignore the domestic realm, which is what this study is mostly interested in. Therefore, unit-level constructivism is better suited as a theoretical framework. This form of constructivism gives an importance to domestic factors and identities as an explanation for interests of states (Reus-Smit, 2013: 227). Most importantly, it argues that in order to understand the changing identities of states in the structure of the international system, we need to look at self-understandings and identities of its citizens (ibid). Thus, in contrast to systemic approaches, constructivism on a unit-level of analysis has the ability to explain variations of identities, interests and actions across states, which coincides with the research questions developed above (228).

2.2.2. Agent-Structure debate

As will be shown in following sections of the literature review, citizens can hold multiple identities. Social constructivism is not only a theory concerned with agents, but it also looks at structure to a large extent. As argued by Risse, a prominent scholar in the field, "constructivism is based on a social ontology which insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meaning" (2009:145). This concept can be referred to as "mutual constitutiveness" of structures and agents (Adler, 1997: 324-325; Reus-Smit, 2013: 225). Thus, even though agents can hold multiple identities, some of them will become more salient depending on the context in which people live. This is an important argument for the thesis, as following a social constructivist point of view implies that certain identities constantly change, and therefore it is important to look at the context in which Brexit has emerged. Arising from this argument, one could thus say that European and national identities are not a "given" but are a construct in time and space and their content varies depending on the social and political context in which they are located. Similarly, Hix and Høyland argue that national context influences citizens' attitudes (2011). Therefore, established structures are seen as important in the field of social constructivism and will also play a part in this paper (Reus-Smit, 2013: 224).

2.3. Conceptualizing identity

2.3.1. European and national identities

European and national identities can be conceptualized and explained from different theoretical points of view. Therefore, clarifications about how it is conceptualized in this thesis are necessary. In early works on identity, scholars contended that European and national identities were "competing" with each other. Employing an essentialist point of view, they argued that these could not coexist with each other. These "zero-sum" conceptions have increasingly been argued against in recent constructivist scholarship (Risse, 2009:151; Marcussen et al., 2001). In contrast, these works suggest that citizens of European member states can both feel European but also at the same time be attached to their nation state (Risse, 2009: 151).

Hence, it is now common in the literature to find arguments on multiple identities, meaning that an increase in European identity does not necessarily decrease individual's loyalty to their nation-state (Citrin & Sides, 2004: 164; Christiansen et al., 2001; Risse, 2002, 2005, 2009: 151). It is thus not controversial anymore amongst scholars to speak about European identity as supplement rather than substitute to national identity. But how do these multiple identities relate to each other? There are three main perspectives in the literature. First, as conceptualized by Medrano and Guterrez, one can look at European identity as "nested" within national, regional and local identities (2001). Second, identities can be seen as "cross-cutting", meaning that some but not all members of one identity group are also members of another identity group (Risse, 2009: 153). The third model of multiple identities, namely the "marble cake" conception, was developed by constructivist scholar Thomas Risse. He argued that the first two conceptions are flawed in that they identify different identities as neatly separated from each other. Instead, he argued that different components of identity influence each other and blend together which means that national identity might contain aspects of European identity and vice versa (ibid).

The wide consensus developed above arose mostly out of empirical studies using survey data (Hooge & Marks, 2005; Risse, 2002). For example, Citrin and Sides (2004) found support for multiple identities in an empirical study of the Eurobarometer data. When comparing feelings of belonging to the nation and Europe, they came to the conclusion that attachment to the nation-state is seems constantly strong in European countries but their findings also showed that there was a growing sense of "Europeanness" as identification with Europe had grown exponentially throughout the 90's (2004).

If national and European identities can coexist with each other, where is the real cleavage in society and amongst citizens? According to Risse (2009: 152), the cleavage is located between

”those who exclusively identify with their nation (exclusive nationalists), on the one hand, and those perceiving themselves as attached to both their nation and Europe (inclusive nationalists), on the other hand. Exclusive nationalists usually tend to be more skeptical of European integration than inclusive nationalists. This potential cleavage gives an analytical starting point in order to interpret the findings.

In order to understand identities in more depth, it is also important to look at different interpretations of the concepts in themselves. In the literature on national identities, there is a traditional distinction between ethnic and civic conceptions of citizenship (Fligstein et al., 2012: 112; Reeskens & Hooge, 2010; Bruter, 2005). This dichotomy goes back to early works on nationalism (see for example Kohn, 1944). While civic identity relates to the adherence to a political structure (e.g. the state) and a set of institutions, rights and rules that govern this structure, ethnic forms of nationalism is the adherence to national culture by virtue of being born in it, meaning that your ethnicity determines to which social group you belong to (Fligstein et al., 2012: 112). Thus, the latter is much more focused on language, religion, tradition and culture than the former. This means that civic nationalism is much more achievable, as it does not require to be born in a certain society. Not all citizens within one country hold the same conception of nationalism (ibid). However, scholars like Bruter (2004) have argued that both cultural and civic components can be present at the same time in citizens’ minds. How citizens understand their national identity can affect their sense of European identity, depending on which conception presides in their mind. As Smith (1992) argues, the nationalist doctrine based on an organic cultural unit creates a contradiction between national and European identity to a greater extent than a doctrine based on common laws and rights within a territory does. Although the definition of ethnic and civic types of nationality provide a framework for understanding the phenomenon, it is important to note that this dichotomy is not the only viable framework for understanding national identities.

The distinction between ”civic” and ”ethnic” considerations is helpful when trying to understand identities (Bruter, 2004: 187). Some scholars have sought to apply these concepts to the case of European identity in order to look at whether it is more civic or ethnic in character. Drawing once again upon Risse’s work, it is argued that it is ”mainly cultural identity which forms the substance of citizens’ identification with Europe as a whole” (2003: 17). Hence, most citizens relate to Europe in terms of history, ethnicity and heritage rather than identify with political structures and institutions (ibid). However, there are contrasting arguments in the literature. In a study conducted in multiple European states (France, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom), Bruter demonstrated through a questionnaire method that it is mostly

European civic identities that dominate (2005: 122). Further, he pointed out that "civic" and "cultural/ethnic" conceptions usually refer to different geographical locations in the given context. While the civic conception usually refers to the European Union, the cultural counterpart usually looks at Europe as a whole (2004:188). The thesis will not employ the same method as Bruter, as it seeks to understand how national and European identities relate to each other and how they can be understood in the case of Brexit.

During the last decades, these two competing approaches of identity have become prominent in the discussions of European identity. One can distinguish two versions of the EU. First, one can look at the EU as an active identity builder which focuses on this civic conception of identity (Risse, 2009: 154). Here, modern values such as human rights, democracy, the rule of law are constructed as what unique about the EU. In contrast to this image, there is the conception of "fortress Europe", which is an image based on a discourse which focuses on common culture heritage and history as the foundation of identity (Castiglione, 2009: 46; Risse, 2009: 154). Identity is thus conceptualized in more "ethnic" terms, which can lead to an "exclusionary" vision which was mentioned by Smith (1992). This "exclusionary" construct has increasingly been portrayed by Eurosceptical parties, and thus creates a stronger "out-group" than the EU as a civic construct which is much more context-dependent (ibid).

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to conceptualize national and European identities and show how they can be understood and studied. Throughout the chapter, the disadvantage of studies using mass surveys such as the Eurobarometer become clear. Namely, these fail to explicitly mention what is meant by European or national identities. As argued by Bruter (2004: 187), this creates an issue as "the answers of different respondents might not be directly comparable as they might not refer to the same fundamental definitions and conceptions". Thus, if European and national identity means different things to citizens, then surveys are not very valuable, and this shows the strength of qualitative constructivist methodologies which seeks to look at how these identities are created and their influence for preference formation.

2.3.2. Collective identities & conception of the "other"

Collective identity is closely related to the idea of national and European identity. It can be referred to as "the idea that a group of people accept a fundamental and consequential similarity that causes them to feel solidarity amongst themselves" (Fligstein et al., 2012: 108), which could either be within a nation or a region. Social identities enable the categorization of

individual's belonging to a group, which could either be European or national (or both). According to studies, collective identities emerge from social interaction and comparison to "others" and thus, formation of social identities depends to a large extent on the boundaries between "us" and "them", which are framed from our own ideas (ibid). This line of thought can be traced back to classical constructivist literature as Wendt (1999: 36) argued for example that our identities are formed and maintained by conceptions of the "Self" and the "Other". But, the conception of the "Other" is also found in a lot of literature on European integration where the construction of a European identity has been argued to be to a large extent dependent on a parallel construction of "others" (Christiansen et al., 2001; Neumann & Welsh, 1991). Thus, this concept can be applied when analyzing the framing of European and national identities. While the conception of "Other" has been argued to strengthen the sense of "Europeanness" in relation to other groups (this could be for example Islamic fundamentalists, Soviet Communists during the Cold War etc.) (Christiansen et al., 2001: 102), it can also be used in order to diminish European identity. Variation in heritage, culture, language in the different member states is very prominent, and this could lead to the conception of Europe as being the "other" to nation-state identity (Risse, 2002). How can this be related to the UK? According to certain studies (Marcussen et al., 2001), there has been a detachment between Britain and the rest of the continent, meaning Europe has always been portrayed as Britain's "other". These studies also state that there has not been a change in this conception and framing since the UK's accession to the EU. The Brexit vote seems contradictory to these "clear-cut" conceptions developed by scholars as public opinion was very split. Thus, the research argues that the framing of "others" is important to look at in this context.

2.4. Identity formations and attitudes of citizens

Looking at literature on attitudes towards European integration is also important for this study. Although it does not wish to be an all-encompassing study, these scholars are important for the arguments made in the thesis. There are two conflicting approaches to this question. One line of scholarship looks at multiple external factors such as elites (Hooge and Marks: 2005) and the media (Bruter 2003; Vliegenthart et al 2008; Carey & Burton 2004) in shaping public opinion. In contrast, other literature has focused on citizens' own dispositions for understanding the shift in mass attitudes. While there is no scholarly census on what drives citizens to support or oppose European integration, there are two types of explanation that stand out in the literature

that looks at citizens own dispositions. Utilitarian models of support or non-support for EU integration are based on calculations of costs and benefits where citizens can be responsive to both economic circumstances that influence their collective (their state) or their own economic welfare (Hooge & Marks, 2004: 415; Kirtzinger, 2005; Gabel, 1998). Thus, this approach is based on rational calculations and is often used in functional approaches to European integration. According to these theorists, attitudes of citizens towards European integration are driven by economic assumptions and consequences (Schoen, 2008: 8).

Another strand of thought which is more closely related to this thesis deals with identity related variables and how they affect support for European integration (Carey, 2002; Hooge & Marks, 2005). Here, it is argued that preferences are driven by loyalties, values and norms that make up citizens identities, which often are related to nationality (Hooge & Marks, 2004: 414). Thus, these types of studies on identity as a base for citizens' attitudes tend to coincide more with social constructivist approaches than what utilitarian explanations do. Further, there is one line of scholarship that has tried to look at how elites and external factors such as media can "activate" identity and shape it (Vössing, 2015: 158; Hooge & Marks, 2005). This thesis will follow a similar model to these studies, trying to look at how identity was framed by elites and media, thus looking at how it might have affected citizens' identities and preferences towards European integration. The next section will focus on the role of media and elites as identity-building actors.

2.5. Media and elites

As argued in previous paragraphs, it is important to look at the processes that shape citizen's identities towards Europe. In turn, as argued in Breslin et al. (2012), "these identities are not given but socially constructed by reflective actors, capable of adapting to challenges imposed by the actions of others and changing contexts" (37). According to certain studies made on referendum campaigns, positions taken by elites and political actors play a significant role as have the ability to transform public opinion on European integration (Hix & Høyland, 2011: 153; Vössing, 2015: 71). But as argued by Vössing, the ability of elites to persuade public opinion is dependent on individuals dispositions (such as their identities) to a large extent (2015: 71). Thus, this strengthens the initial hypothesis which argues that we need to not only to look at media, elites and individual dispositions such as identity but how they interact with each other.

Ultimately, this thesis is interested in how media and elites have framed national and European identities in the Brexit campaign, which might have had significance for citizens' identities and thus attitudes towards the European integration. In regard to the social constructivist framework developed above, it is especially framing effects that are of interest in this study as it highlights the role of meanings, language and understanding in shaping identities. In her book, Hobolt (2009) maps out the theoretical framework for understanding referendum behavior in European integrations. She draws attention to multiple topics of interest, such as the relation between elites and attitudes of citizens' in referendums on European integration. According to Hobolt, framing is especially important in the case of European integration, as voters of referendums are usually unfamiliar with issues they vote for. In the case of Brexit, the results of leaving are unknown and linked to a series of complex European laws and procedures which citizens are not familiar with. Further, as a starting point, it is also important to note that "frames" are never entirely neutral, meaning they are often linked to negative or positive sentiments (Hobolt, 2009: 110). Thus, looking at the campaign of Brexit and how it was framed by elites is of importance for the identity formations of citizens.

As argued by Bruter (2005), media also plays an important role in this process of shaping European identity. According to him, "systematic series of perceived good or bad news on Europe will alter the level of European identity of individuals" (Bruter, 2005: 31). In his book, the author looks at a number of questions such as the effect of news on citizens' European identity (Chapter 6). Bruter is important in this case, as he acknowledges the differences between civic and cultural components which many other authors fail to do. One of his findings showed that the media has a strong identity-building power over citizens by disseminating good or bad news on Europe and thus European identity can vary overtime as a result of media communication (2005: 125). He finds an equally strong correlation between exposure to symbols of European integration and higher levels of European identity (126). "These two findings combined prove that elite and institutional messages have a very clear impact on citizens' multiple identities, whether they be civic or cultural" (Bruter, 2005: 126). Further, media also has an impact on the conception of the "other" developed above. Indeed, as Thornborrow et al. argue, "whom we Europeans identify with—who we perceive to be "us" and "them"— may well vary according to the news stories we are told and most of all, by the way they are told." (2012: 87).

As this thesis employs an interpretative research design, it is unable to indicate the exact extent to which media and elite messages influence citizens' perceptions of Europe, nor does it wish to make claims about direct media effects. Rather, it acknowledges the role of the media

as agents in forming national and European identities since they are the main source of information about the EU for citizens (Inthorn, 2006; Vliegenthart et al., 2008: 458).

2.6. Summary

The literature review has outlined the main concepts that will make up the method and analysis chapters of this thesis. Previous studies on Brexit have tended to treat identity as something pre-existing. Using unit-level social constructivism as a base throughout, it has been argued that this approach is flawed, and that they must be understood as constantly changing and related to each other. Different conceptions of national and European identity such as the civic/ethnic dichotomy and the question of "us" and "them" can help understand how European and national identities relate to each other in the case of Brexit. Further, the literature review has also argued for the importance of external factors in shaping these identities. Elites and media are argued to be powerful identity-building actors through framings of certain issues.

3. Method

This chapter starts with a brief ontological and epistemological discussion in order to argue for the qualitative content analysis presented in the following section. The data collection and time frame will be discussed in the last part of this chapter.

3.1. Ontological and epistemological discussion

In order to argue for the method of choice in this thesis, some clarifications need to be made on the ontological and epistemological foundations of the paper as they have fundamental implications for the approach chosen.

As previously mentioned, this thesis adopts an interpretive approach in order to answer the research question and the theory of choice, namely social constructivist, is situated within this school of thought. What are the ontological and epistemological foundations that make up this approach? Ontology is a theory of "being", which tries to answer the question of "what is the nature of the social world" (Halperin & Heath, 2012: 49). The interpretive school is based on an essentialist ontology which argues that reality is not independent but subjectively created, and therefore, the social world is different from the natural world (Marsh & Furlong, 2002: 18). The ontological position has an implication for epistemology which is a theory of "knowledge". It tries to answer the question of what knowledge is possible and an interpretivist epistemology argues that we cannot predict behavior on the basis of generalizations and laws as knowledge is gained through interpretations (Halperin & Heath, 2012: 49). Thus, it often leads to more flexible and context sensitive research.

To summarize, the interpretive tradition argues that the world is socially constructed and contends that it does not exist independently from our interpretations (Marsh & Furlong, 2002: 20; Lamont, 2015: 19). In comparison to positivism, which is at the other side of the spectrum, interpretative research does not seek explain or find causal relations. Rather, it focuses on the understanding of certain phenomena (e.g. identity). Much criticism of this type of research is related to validity issues, as positivist scholars have argued that there is no basis on which to judge their knowledge claims (Marsh & Furlong, 2002: 27). This study is aware of those criticism, but still argues that the interpretive positions is better suited as an approach in order to answer the research question at hand, which is to understand the role of national and European identity.

3.2. Qualitative text analysis

The ontological and epistemological foundations developed above have clear methodological implications for this research as the method adopted needs to be in accordance with these positions. The methodology used in this study will permit the interpretations of meanings and framing and allow for the understanding of the phenomenon at hand.

The method chosen in accordance with the theoretical framework is qualitative text analysis (also called qualitative content analysis). This approach argues that texts, in this case newspapers and speeches, provide important information in order to answer political research puzzles. "Qualitative content analysis is a more interpretive form of analysis concerned with uncovering meanings, motives and purposes in textual content" (Halperin & Heath, 2012: 310). It is not to be confused with quantitative content analysis which is much more systematic and uses numerical data in order to look at the frequency, intensity and amount of word usage. This does not allow to answer the research question properly since it relies on easily observable clear-cut content (319). Qualitative textual analysis is much more sensitive to context and permits a deeper understanding of meanings which this study seeks to do (ibid). Another type of qualitative method sensitive to context is discourse analysis. Although similar in some ways to qualitative content analysis, this approach gives even more importance to context as it seeks to answer questions such as why particular discourses emerge, are dominant and why they are used by actors (Lamont, 2015: 91). The thesis does not give a great analytical importance to these questions, as the study looks at the texts in themselves rather than why these particular framings were used by these actors. Therefore, this method was not preferable for the study.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative text analysis? One critique of content analysis is that the coding and presentation of the texts are influenced by the scholar. Hence, questions of reliability and validity often arise. According to Halperin & Heath (2012), qualitative studies are "valid and reliable to the degree that they are plausible to others" and "must provide their reader with a detailed account of the coding "protocol" including how conclusions were reached" (328). Thus, qualitative research tends to be weaker in offering a systematic valid and reliable study since it often is influenced by the researcher in itself, and the interpretation of the texts. Still, qualitative content analysis' main advantage is that it is "non-intrusive", meaning that the texts in themselves are not in themselves being influenced by the researcher which can happen when using interview methods. Further, it enables to find patterns in large amounts of texts which is helpful in this study.

The next question which to turn attention to is how the qualitative content analysis will be performed. Usually, this type of method is rather inductive than deductive as it is context sensitive (Halperin & Heath, 2012; 332). Although this is true, qualitative context analysis can

also "use existing research and theory in order to provide ideas for what to look for" (ibid). This study will use a similar approach by looking at concepts outlined in the literature review in order to create a framework for the analysis. The theoretical framework proposed will be used in order to code the data and answer the research questions. Although the thesis will categorize the data from these dichotomies and concepts, it will also be opened to other categories that will include concepts that do not fall within those pre-defined categories found in previous literature. This will enable a deeper understanding and give flexibility to the study. Why an entirely inductive approach (which generates all categories from the data) has been neglected in this study is mostly because of the time frame available. Further, the texts will be manually coded and read in their entirety. There are two main categories the analysis will use as basis for the analysis:

3.2.1. Civic/ethnic dichotomy

Distinguishing which types of identities are predominant in media and elite discourses in a given state can increase the understanding of national and European identities and how they interact with each other. In order to operationalize the terms of civic and cultural identities, this thesis will base itself on Inthorn's study. Civic identity relates to the identification with a political structure, set of institutions, rights and rules that preside over the community. Thus, it is linked to concepts such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect and protection of minorities. These can both be applied to European and national civic identities. References to EU decision making, the common market and foreign policy of the EU also construct a civic concept of identity (Inthorn, 2006: 87). Cultural components of national and European identity are operationalized in terms of references to religious traditions, cultural heritage (such as literature and music), history, language and traditions (83).

3.2.2. "Us" and "them"

Drawn mainly from social constructivist works, it has been argued in the literature review that the question of "others" or the distinction between "us" and "them" is important for identity formations and for distinguishing group boundaries. Thus, for an identification process to come about, whether it be European or national identities, exclusion of the "other" is necessary (Olausson, 2010: 143). This variable has been included in multiple studies on identities towards the EU (Olausson, 2010; Inthorn, 2006), and will be included in this analysis as well. This section will not include predefined expectations or categories as the question of "us" and

”them” is context sensitive, meaning that the ”out-group” is not always the same and varies over time.

3.3. Data collection and time frame

Qualitative data is obviously an important source of information when doing interpretative research as it enables sensitivity to contexts and nuances (Olausson, 2010: 149) and the selection of qualitative text and materials is an important part of content analysis (Lamont, 2015: 92). The materials that will be used in this thesis are mainly media news reports/articles and speeches made by the political elite. Hence, the materials used are collected from primary sources.

When doing qualitative studies on media and campaigns, it is important to use media that reaches a large portion of the population (Olausson, 2010). According to the statistic database Statista (2018), the four national newspapers with the highest monthly reach are *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*. Two of them have been selected for this study, which are *The Guardian* online and *The Telegraph* online. Why the two other news channels have been neglected is because they are mainly referred to as ”tabloids”, meaning citizens tend to look at them for entertainment rather than for accurate and reliable news. Further, *The Guardian* has a more left-leaning audience and *The Telegraph* a more right leaning audience. Therefore, the two papers chosen represent a good mixture and give a broad perspective on the issue. Because of lack of access and the time frame available, only the articles from the website of the newspapers will be analyzed. This is important to mention as it might have an impact on the outcome of the study. For example, one could argue that age is an important factor in this case, as younger citizens most likely use newspaper websites more than older voters. At the same time, internet has increasingly become an important source for information on national and European issues and newspapers online tend to reflect the content they offer in their printed versions. Further, the thesis will focus solely on the opinion articles of the newspapers. This column was chosen as writers express clear recommendations concerning the EU/Europe rather than just reporting on what others have said. The opinion articles were retrieved from the EU-referendum/Brexit column of the newspapers.

As previously mentioned, news media represents an important source of information for citizens. They shape our understanding of the world and our place within it. The study will follow a similar argument presented by Inthorn. In her text, she argues that news media contribute to our understanding of what it means to belong to a cultural and political collectivity,

such as Europe or the nation-state (Inthorn, 2006: 72). Only two politicians have been selected in this study because of the time frame available. Thus, the thesis will focus on speeches made by David Cameron and Nigel Farage. They have been chosen because they represented two different sides of the political spectrum as one was largely for leaving and the other wanted to remain.

The time frame chosen for the collecting of data has relevance for the outcome and should therefore be chosen carefully. Because the thesis is focused on understanding national and European identities and the role of media and elites as identity-building actors, it seems appropriate to solely focus on the time before the voting. For newspaper articles, the thesis focuses on data from the month prior to the referendum (23 May - 22 June). As many voters remained undecided until the referendum day, the last weeks prior were important for newspapers and politicians in order to affect the outcome of the referendum. The political speeches used have a different time frame, and included speeches from the whole campaign (February - June)

The texts will first be coded in their entirety based on whether they are for European integration (Brexit) or against it (Remain). This will also include a neutral category. After coding the texts generally, a second reading will permit the researcher to look at particular sections and paragraphs in order to understand framings of national and European identity as well as framings of "others". The articles that did not provide information or framings of these variables were then deleted from the study.

4. Analysis

The analysis is built on what is outlined in the literature review and the method chapters. It is divided into three main parts. Firstly, it showcases the findings in media, then presenting the

findings in the speeches and lastly, a discussion of these findings in relation to the theory developed above. The theories and concepts in the literature review will be utilized throughout the analysis chapter.

4.1. Findings in media

In the following section, the arguments and framings present in *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* will be presented. The analysis is structured along the themes presented in the method section, namely the civic/ethnic dichotomy and framings of "others". As mentioned in the methodology section of this thesis, the articles were retrieved from the opinion column of the newspapers. A total of 145 articles were found in *The Guardian* but only 45 articles could be retrieved from *The Telegraph* website. There is a potential explanation for this difference in terms of the number of articles found. In a report on UK media coverage of the 2016 EU referendum campaign, Moore and Ramsay studied the intensity of the coverage of Brexit (2017). Their report showed that *The Guardian* published the greatest number of referendum-related articles during the campaign (15 April - 23 June) with a total of 1,628 articles while *The Telegraph* was only in 10th place with 909 articles during that same time frame. Although their study looks at all the sections of the newspapers and covered a larger time frame, we would still expect fewer articles in *The Telegraph* than *The Guardian* from their report which is in line with the findings of this study. Although fewer articles were studied in *The Telegraph*, 45 articles have been deemed enough by the researcher in order to understand the phenomenon under study.

4.1.1. The Guardian

After coding and a careful reading the collected articles, only 84 of the 145 were deemed important for this study as some articles did not hold any important information for the analysis. Some of the articles that were excluded covered topics such as the political battle between the Tory/Labour/UKIP during the referendum campaign, as well as economic issues that did not have any references to the Common Market or the Single Market. The 84 articles that were maintained showed that *The Guardian* overall portrays the EU/Europe in a positive manner. Approximately 70% of the articles argued for the UK to stay in the EU with the rest of the articles being either neutral or negative towards European integration.

4.1.1.1. European identity

After reviewing the pieces, the particular concept of "European identity" was not found in any of the articles. This shows the need for qualitative text analysis. Still, the reading of the data shows that there is a clear aim of trying to construct a sense of European identity and community in the articles presented in *The Guardian*. Here, the focus lies mostly on those articles that are positive towards remaining an EU-member since they represent the main portion of the data. The coding permitted to find themes in that part of the literature and it has revealed that the newspaper overall frames European identity in "civic" terms. The "civic" construct of European identity in *The Guardian* is linked to its institutions and the benefits of being an EU member state. The civic values of the European Union as an organization are highlighted in several articles as something good and something that the UK should be attached to.

"I hope the UK will stay with us for the same values that got me into this job in the first place: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights" (Anonymous, 2016)

"An integrated Europe, with its single market, common rules and a shared framework of human rights and justice, is a legacy worth improving, not abandoning" (Vezjak, 2016)

From analyzing the texts, democracy seems to be one of the main themes in relation to civic identity in the articles. In his article, Hutton argues that even though the EU is run by civil service, it is also run by politicians who are elected and open to scrutiny by the media and thus are held accountable. According to him, the EU is a "...*work in progress, but this is a well-intentioned, democratic, accountable structure dedicated to improving the lot of ordinary Europeans – and it does surprisingly well.*" (2016). Linking this back to the literature review, one can clearly see an aim of trying to frame the values of the EU as what is unique about the organization.

Although the framing of "civic" European identity is positive in most cases, many of these authors also acknowledge that the EU is in need of reforming. Many articles argue that although the UK should be attached to the EU because of the sharing of values such as democracy and the rule of law, the organization also needs to improve on many levels. Hence, negative arguments were also found in those texts that frame the EU as something positive. The democratic deficit is one key theme in this regard. For example, Jenkins backs remaining in the EU but also frames the EU as undemocratic in his article, arguing that "*it was right to join the common market but not the subsequent European Union, with all the toxic, undemocratic*

supranationalism that has come in its train.” (2016). Hence, in several articles, the main theme emerging is that the UK should remain in the EU in order to reform it and solve the institutional issues rather than walking away.

An ethnic framing of European identity was also present in the data, although not to the same extent as the civic framing. In terms of ethnic European identity, it is especially the history of Europe as a continent which is mentioned in the articles and represents a visible pattern. In an editorial piece on *The Guardians’* view on the EU referendum, one can read a statement that clearly constructs European identity by framing it in an ethnic way:

”We need, too, to remember our history. Britain was formed and shaped by Europe. And we are – in historical as well as cultural, geographical and trading terms – a European nation.

In almost every generation of European history until the past 70 years, people from these islands have fought and died in European wars...To turn our back on that is unworthy of our traditions.” (The Guardian, 2016)¹

The history of Europe is here used in articles in order to increase the sense of community with the European states that are part of the organization. The reference to a common history was thus a clear visible pattern when analyzing ethnic framings of European identity. Two more examples highlight this conception:

”I could rehearse economic arguments that have been better expressed elsewhere, but in truth my support for the cause is cultural and historical” (Behr, 2016)

”It is because tens of thousands of our citizens gave their lives in that war, and the first world war, so that we and our friends in the rest of Europe could live in freedom, peace and harmony.” (Smith & Izzard, 2016)

4.1.1.2. National identity

When analyzing the framing of national identity, a clear distinction between civic and ethnic conceptions was harder to discover. The analysis revealed a pattern of national identity framings which is more balanced between the two categories than European identity which is

¹ ”The Guardian view on the EU referendum: keep connected and inclusive, not angry and isolated ”

mostly framed in civic terms. Further, in the case of national identity, one could see that these two conceptions were often present at the same times in the articles. Although the civic/ethnic divide did not provide a clear pattern, the analysis of the texts revealed another aspect of identity which is interesting.

The reading of the texts showed that solely nationalistic framings in *The Guardian* are not often present and this likely has to do with the fact that most articles project a positive picture of the EU. Thus, framings of national identity (both civic and ethnic) are often linked to the place of the UK in the EU/Europe. In his article, Rawnsley frames civic national identity in relation to the EU by referring to Barack Obama:

"You should be proud that the EU has helped spread British values – democracy, the rule of law, open markets – across the continent and to its periphery. The European Union doesn't moderate British influence – it magnifies it." (Rawnsley, 2016)

Other authors have also argued that the EU actually spreads the national civic values which Britain is built on. For example, sovereignty is mentioned in several articles a key national attribute which the EU helps to promote and strengthen:

"Far from undermining our sovereignty, our membership of the EU made it possible to secure our national interest." (Lucas & Ashton, 2016)

"The truth is that leaving the EU would weaken our economy and our national sovereignty by reducing our power to influence events in an ever more complex world." (Benn, 2016)

In those articles, the authors argue that the sovereignty of the UK actually increases by staying in the EU since it enables Britain to exert influence through a powerful global actor, which is better than going at it alone.

Although finding positive framings of British sovereignty in relation to the EU, the texts also reveal contrasting arguments, both in the articles that are backing Brexit and those that wish the UK to stay in the organization. Unsurprisingly, several authors mention that the sovereignty of Britain diminishes by staying a member of the EU.

"We can win our sovereignty back. But to win it we must escort the high priests of the market cult from their citadels here at home, not strengthen their hold by leaving the EU" (Lucas & Ashton, 2016)

"There might be strong arguments to say we should leave Europe for our sovereignty – because Germany or France are bullying us and have more of a say in the EU than we do. Perhaps we would even be better off as a nation if we left" (Barnes, 2016).

The framing of national ethnic identity is also split between the articles supporting the EU and the articles that do not. Though, since most authors argue for the UK staying in the EU in *The Guardian*, most of them argue that remaining in the EU would not threaten national culture. As argued above, many authors refer to national cultural identity in relation to the UK's place in the EU/Europe. O'Toole gives attention to this in his article, and argues that the cultural identity of Britain is largely dependent on the relation with the rest of the world:

"As a cultural identity, Englishness is wonderfully potent but not distinctive – its very success means that it is global property. From the English language to the Beatles, from Shakespeare to the Premier League, its icons are planetary. The great cultural appeal of nationalism – we need political independence or our unique culture will die – just doesn't wash" (O'Toole, 2016)

In his article, Hutton (2016) also frames British identity in a similar way by arguing against the mindset of Brexit which refers to historical conceptions of British identity. According to him, the Brexiteers *"inherit the mindset of empire and Britain in 1940: British identity is about the power to go it alone"* (2016), which is not the way forward according to him.

Lastly, another pattern found *The Guardian* is the reference to questions of regional identities in the United Kingdom. Thus, it does not fall in the predefined categories, although many writers link regional identity to the concept of national identity. A number of writers argue that Brexit would increase differences between different parts of the country and undermine national identity since Brexit only reflects upon "Englishness" (english nationality). Here, there are no references to civic or ethnic conceptions. Rather, identity is framed as a whole. In his article, O'Toole argues for example that Brexit would lead to the rising of regional identities and the separation of the Kingdom:

”Over time, the main political entity most likely to emerge from Brexit is not a Britain with its greatness restored or a sweetly reunited kingdom. It is a standalone England. Scotland will have a second referendum on independence, this time with the lure of staying in the European Union. Northern Ireland will be in a horrendous bind, cut off from the rest of the island by a European border and with the UK melting around it.” (O’Toole, 2016)

”In the name of defending Britain, Brexit will destroy Britain, if Scotland then leaves”
(Cohen, 2016)

In these cases, the authors seem to frame national identity as stronger within the EU than outside, which is an interesting finding. Thus, they argue that leaving would make the UK as one nation-state more fragile and increase difference between regions.

To summarize, it seems that European identity is mostly referred to in civic terms in *The Guardian* while national identity framings are more split between the two concepts. What has come out of the articles in this newspaper can be related back to the ”marble cake” conception developed by Risse (2009: 153). Indeed, the reading of the texts showcase European identity as a supplement to national identity rather than a substitute to it, meaning that they blend together in many of the articles. Thus, there seems to not be a particular tension between national and European identities.

4.1.1.3. ”Us” & ”Them”

After a careful reading and coding of the data, immigration was found to be key theme. One could relate immigration to this conception ”others”, but, most of writers in *The Guardian* do not use immigration as a way to create a barrier between ”us” and ”them”. Some articles acknowledge that immigration is an issue, but most of them argue against the picture that has been drawn by the Brexit campaign. Hutton and Stuart write on this particular phenomenon in their article:

”The Brexit position is that immigration is a problem. It sets up the immigrant as the unwelcome foreign “other”, against whom it is culturally and socially acceptable to object. There is a reluctant recognition that the country needs immigrants” (Hutton & Stuart, 2016)

Thus, the writers rather frame immigration as something good which has helped the UK get where it is today and argue that it is a part of the British identity. Especially, this can be related to the cultural/ethnic identity of Britain. Although arguing to vote leave in the referendum,

Hutton and Stuart actually frame immigration as something positive to the national identity of Britain, arguing that:

"This openness – to trade, immigrants, the flow of ideas, new technologies – is the essence of Britishness. Britain is formed from the inflow of many peoples and cultures – Roman, Danish, Norwegian, Norman, Celt, Huguenot and, more recently, Indian, Pakistani and Caribbean"

(Hutton & Stuart, 2016)

Thus, many authors in *The Guardian* argue that the national identity of the UK is to a large extent based on different cultures and communication with the world and thus do not relate to the concept of "others". At the same time, contrasting arguments have also been found in the texts. A handful of writers do frame immigrants as "the others". In an article backing Brexit, Mason argued for example that citizens are right *"...to worry about the cultural impact. In a big, multi-ethnic city, absorbing a lot of migrants is easy. In small towns, where social capital is already meagre, the migrant population can feel unabsorbed"* (Mason, 2016). Although these are present, they are not found to be the key theme in the literature and thus the overall picture does not frame any group as a particular other. By not framing a particular out-group, the articles overall increase the sense of solidarity and belonging to the region.

4.1.2. The Telegraph

The overall framing of European identity and national identity in *The Telegraph* contrasts considerably from the findings in *The Guardian* as will be shown in this section of the analysis. 37 out of the 45 articles collected were kept after the initial coding. Approximately 85% of the articles were negative towards EU-membership. Thus, only a handful of pieces were coded as neutral or positive. Nonetheless, the findings show that the opinion articles in *The Telegraph* are in line with their official statement of backing Brexit. Thus, when doing an overall comparison with *The Guardian*, one can argue that both newspapers are biased but that *The Telegraph* is even more so since 85% of their articles are negative. Further, while the overall positive articles in *The Guardian* held some negative statements about the EU/Europe, the negative opinion articles in *The Telegraph* do not seem to project any positive framing of the EU at all.

4.1.2.1. European identity

Like in *The Guardian*, the concept of "European identity" was not found in any of the articles. Further, there was no clear arguments for trying to create a sense of community with the European Union as explained in the paragraph above. Similar to *The Guardian*, the authors often refer to civic conceptions in order to account for their arguments but in this case, contradictory to the previous, these framings were used in order to diminish European identity and the relation with other countries.

Unsurprisingly, some of the the negative arguments that were found in *The Guardian* have been used in *The Telegraph* as well, but have been amplified. Here, the analysis will focus on the articles that are negative towards the EU since they appear more often and thus represent the main category of articles found in the newspaper. Overall, after reading the texts, one can observe that *The Telegraph* does not aim at strengthening civic European identity. Almost none of the authors refer to the EU as this "civic identity builder" which was clearly shown in *The Guardian* and outlined in the literature review. First, similarly to some authors in *The Guardian*, many writers frame the EU as an undemocratic and elitist organization. In multiple editorial pieces, *The Telegraph* argues that the EU is largely undemocratic because of the EU bureaucrats governing:

"The fact that the EU is a collection of democracies does not detract from the reality that this is a profoundly undemocratic institution. This has nothing to do with being anti-European. It is about the type of institution the EU has become" (The Telegraph, 2016)²

"The principal reason is its anti-democratic nature - the dislocation between those who govern and the governed. While people can vote for their national leaders, who then have an input into collective decision-making, they are no longer able to influence events that affect them directly through the ballot box." (The Telegraph, 2016)³

Other negative framings of civic European identity refer to the foreign policy and security section of the EU. In two editorial pieces written by *The Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph*, writers argue that the EU is becoming too supranational by referring to the idea of an EU army. Thus, they try to diminish the concept of civic European identity rather than framing it positively.

² "Vote leave to benefit from a world of opportunity"

³ *ibid*

”There will be moves after the referendum to forge closer economic and political integration in the Eurozone and to give the EU the ultimate symbol of statehood: an army.

This is a dangerous approach.” (The Sunday Telegraph, 2016)

”The idea of an EU army is both laughable and alarming. Laughable because the organization is so divided and incompetent. Frightening because its proponents within the European elite are clearly distracted from their economic problems by delusions of grandeur.” (The Telegraph, 2016)⁴

Hence, the common theme found in *The Telegraph* in relation to civic European identity is that writers argue against EU institutions and frame the organization in a negative way in relation to the fact that it has become too supranational. It is especially the move from The Common Market to an increasingly political organization which the writers find troubling. In an article, the writers of *The Telegraph* argue that each treaty of the EU has contributed to this shift mentioned above and *”have further aggrandized the EU into a supra-national body...It now has the trappings of the nation state that we were always assured it would not become.”* (The Telegraph, 2016).⁵

Thus, to summarize, there was no mentions of EU values such as human rights and the rule of law which were present in *The Guardian*.

Continuing to the ethnic framing of European identity, it does not seem to have played an important role in the articles. There were no references to language, religion or art. The only variable mentioned was history, but once again, it was framed in a negative manner and thus it contrasts radically from the framings in *The Guardian*. In his article, Stanley argues that the framing of the remain side by referring to history is faulted. According to him *”we are shaped by history but need not be imprisoned by it. And one thing I find most exciting about Brexit is it gives us the chance to start over again, to write a new chapter in our country’s history.”* (Stanley, 2016). Throughout the article, he refers to history in order to diminish this sense of common cultural identity.

⁴ *”The secret EU army is a dangerous delusion”*

⁵ *”Vote leave to benefit from a world of opportunity”*

4.1.2.2. National Identity

In terms of references to national identity, one could observe through the data that it was framed very differently to *The Guardian*. There was no references to a stronger national identity through staying in the EU and therefore it was framed in an "essentialist" way meaning that national identity was framed as neatly separated to Europe. Hence, in many articles it was argued that national identity would become stronger if the UK left the EU. Both civic and ethnic conceptions were found, although the cultural framings were the most dominant. The framing of national civic identity was linked mostly to issues of sovereignty and being able to make own decisions.

"On balance, however, we believe the Leave campaign has articulated an ambitious vision for Britain as an independent nation, once again free to make its own decisions." (Sunday Telegraph, 2016)

"The Queen's birthday celebrations are not a political event but they do coincide with a referendum that is colored by questions of national identity. Remain says that we are stronger as a country by pooling sovereignty with our European cousins. Leave says sovereignty pooled is actually self-government lost – and that Britain can be freer and richer outside the EU" (The Telegraph, 2016)⁶

As mentioned before, the framing of national identity was mostly done in terms of ethnic references. A key theme is the reference to history of the UK as a nation. *The Telegraph* mainly refers to the colonial history of the UK and the UK as global player rather than its history within the EU and Europe. In his article, Booker refers precisely to this conception. According to him, the history of the UK makes it impossible to be a full fledged and enthusiastic member of the EU because of history. He argues that we need to *"...recognize that Britain's history, national psychology and political culture may be such that we can never be other than a foot-dragging and constantly complaining member."* (2016). Further he framed the UK as one of the greatest countries by stating that *"We sometimes tend to forget that we live in what, for 1,000 years, has been one of the most extraordinary, wonderful, inspiring countries in all human history. Certainly to negotiate an orderly and amicable withdrawal would be difficult. But that is the*

⁶ "These insults suggest that Remain is panicking"

only course we will not in the end live to regret” (Booker, 2016). This differentiation between the UK and Europe found in many articles will be further emphasized in the next paragraph.

4.1.2.3. ”Us” & ”Them”

After studying the articles in *The Telegraph*, one can clearly observe a framing of ”other” which was not present in *The Guardian*. In *The Telegraph*, migration is framed as something threatening to the culture and identity of the UK and represents one of the key themes found in the data.

Migration can refer to many different groups, including refugees and EU-workers. What the findings have shown is that there are especially two groups mentioned in the articles which are referring to migration. The first ”out-group” being portrayed in media is EU-migrants, especially migrants from central and eastern Europe which move to the UK in order to find work. There are multiple framings used in media in order to portray this group as an ”out-group”. These include arguments that EU-migrants take UK citizens jobs, housing, welfare assistance, school places etc.

” There are nearly 450 million people in the rest of the EU and every single one has the right to arrive at Dover, or Heathrow, at any time and live, work, and claim welfare assistance in Britain. If we remain in the EU, that will remain incontestable.” (Heffer, 2016)

”I will be voting Leave on June 23rd because I don’t see how the country that I love can continue to provide a decent quality of life for its people if beleaguered hospitals and schools have to cope with millions more EU citizens” (Pearson, 2016)

Consequentially, many authors argue that if the UK would leave the EU, it would be able to control migration in a more effective way. Further, some writers also refer to language barriers in order to frame EU-migrants as ”others”. Although many argue for the diminution of EU-nationals coming to the UK, they do not frame all migrants as ”others”. Rather, is is quite focused on that group specifically. For example, there are references in some articles to the countries of the Common Wealth, which relate to the colonial past of the UK. The authors of those article have argued that diminishing EU-migrants would increase the capability to receive migrants from the Common Wealth countries, which seem to be framed as much closer

culturally to the UK, for example in relation to language. *"Britain should take more doctors from the Commonwealth "who can speak our language."* (Stanley, 2016).

The other "out-group" which is mentioned quite a lot are Turkish citizens. On numerous occasions, authors refer to Turkey's EU membership procedure in order to strengthen national identity. Although it is quite unlikely that Turkey would become EU member because of the political situation in the country, the topic of Turkey was relevant during spring 2016. In March of that year, the EU signed a deal with Turkey concerning migration. Thus, there was a deepening cooperation between the EU and Turkey which might have led to these framings in the newspapers. Here, the context in which these articles were written might have had an impact for why it was relevant to speak of Turkey.

"But that deal could yet unravel after protests in the Turkish parliament, and even if it does not, it comes at the price of granting visa-free access to the EU to millions of Turks: Europe, in effect, has chosen to swap one sort of immigration for another." (The Telegraph, 2016)⁷

To conclude, the articles in *The Telegraph* clearly portray the EU in a negative manner by diminishing both the sense of civic and ethnic European identity. Many authors frame national identity as something distinct from the EU and it is especially in terms of culture that they do so. Linking this back to the theoretical framework, one could argue that the framing of "out-groups" was specifically targeted towards EU-migrant and used in order to diminish the sense of community and European identity since they were put against another group which was framed more desirable. *The Telegraph* therefore has had an identity-building power in favor of national identity by disseminating bad news on European integration.

4.2. Political elites

4.2.1. David Cameron

Three different speeches have been used in order to look at the framings by David Cameron. The first speech used was from May 9th, the second one from June 7th and the the last speech

⁷ "The EU that Britain is being asked to remain part of faces an endless immigration crisis"

analyzed is the one he made right before the EU-referendum on June 21st, where he made a last plea for citizens to vote for the UK to stay in the EU

4.2.1.1. European Identity

The framings of identity in Cameron's speeches is quite similar to those found in *The Guardian* although there are some differences as well. Firstly, one can observe that there is a clear aim of trying to create a sense of civic European identity, which he does mostly by referring to EU institutions. Especially, he puts an emphasis on the advantages of the Single Market in order to argue for remaining in the EU.

"Britain is better off inside the EU than out on our own. At the heart of that is the Single Market – 500 million customers on our doorstep, a source of so many jobs, so much trade, and such a wealth of opportunity for our young people. Leaving the EU would put all of that at risk." (Cameron, 2016)⁸

"We are part of a single market of 500 million people which Britain helped to create. Our goods and, crucially, our services – which account for almost 80% of our economy – can trade freely by right. We help decide the rules. The advantages of this far outweigh any disadvantages." (Cameron, 2016)⁹

Another key theme found in his speeches relating to this concept is the importance he places on security cooperation among EU member states. Multiple times, Cameron refers to the international situation in order to argue that the UK would be safer inside the EU. Mostly, he praises the efficiency of fast cooperation between member states in terms of security, by framing the Europol as a successful institution.

"Our membership of Europol gives us access to important databases that help us to identify criminals. And we have begun to cooperate on DNA and fingerprint matching across borders, too. These tools help us in real-time, life-or-death situations." (Cameron, 2016)¹⁰

⁸ "The choice is in your hands"

⁹ "Prime Minister David Cameron set out what the UK's European Union membership means for British strength and security in the world."

¹⁰ "Prime Minister David Cameron set out what the UK's European Union membership means for British strength and security in the world."

In addressing security issues, he also argues against the “Leave” side who frames a possible “EU army” as something negative. It seems like Cameron agrees on this and mentions in his speech that the UK would veto any decision that would lead to this. Cameron also spoke about the ties to NATO in relation to this. Although Cameron praises the EU on many levels, he also acknowledges its flaws, but not in the same way as the newspapers did. For example, there are no references to an undemocratic EU led by bureaucrats far too detached from the public. But, it is clear in his speeches that he does not wish the EU to become even more a political union, and seems quite content with the status that the UK has in the organization.

“I know Europe isn’t perfect. Believe me, I understand and I see those frustrations. I feel them myself. That’s why we negotiated and enhanced our special status. Out of the Euro. Keeping our borders. Not involved in ever-closer union. We have the best of both worlds.” (Cameron, 2016)¹¹

Similarly to the newspapers, Cameron frames European ethnic identity by referring to the history of Europe. In several parts of his speeches, he frames common European history as something which is profoundly connected to the UK.

“For 2,000 years, our affairs have been intertwined with the affairs of Europe. For good or ill, we have written Europe’s history just as Europe has helped to write ours. From Caesar’s legions to the wars of the Spanish Succession, from the Napoleonic Wars to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Proud as we are of our global reach and our global connections, Britain has always been a European power, and we always will be” (Cameron, 2016)¹²

Although mentioning the history of Europe, there were no other cultural European identity framings present, which shows that Cameron largely constructed a civic sense of European identity rather than a cultural one.

¹¹ “The choice is in your hands”

¹² “Prime Minister David Cameron set out what the UK’s European Union membership means for British strength and security in the world.”

4.2.1.2. National identity

In his speeches, Cameron refers to the values of the UK as a state on several occasions thus relating to civic identity. The institutions of the UK are framed as something which is unique to the country and which is praised by many around the world.

”Our geography has shaped us, and shapes us today. We are special, different, unique. We have the character of an island nation which has not been invaded for almost a thousand years, and which has built institutions which have endured for centuries” (Cameron, 2016)¹³

But, Cameron also frames the values of the UK in reference to the EU, which is similar to the findings in *The Guardian*. He argues that the EU helps strengthen the UK’s role as a global actor and thus he frames the EU as a promoter of the UK’s national interest and power. According to Hix and Høyland (2011), attachment to one’s country can either be negatively or positively related to support for the EU, ”depending on whether European integration is perceived to strengthen or weaken a country’s national identity” (113). In the following sentences, European integration is framed by Cameron as something that has enabled the country to play a more prominent role on the European and international stage.

”But our EU membership, like our membership of other international organizations, magnifies our national power.”(Cameron, 2016)¹⁴

”If my experience as Prime Minister had taught me that our membership of the EU was holding Britain back or undermining our global influence, I would not hesitate to recommend that we should leave. But my experience is the opposite.” (Cameron, 2016)

Thus, similarly to *The Guardian*, Cameron frames European integration as strengthening national identity rather than undermining. Further, the analysis showed that references to an ethnic concept of national identity was also present in Cameron’s speeches. There was especially one section in his speech of May in which he acknowledges the role of the British culture, but he does not use it in order to argue for a ”leave” vote. Rather, he tries to bring voters together by saying that.... *”for all our differences, one thing unites both sides in this referendum*

¹³ ”Prime Minister David Cameron set out what the UK’s European Union membership means for British strength and security in the world.”

¹⁴ *ibid*

campaign, we love this country” (Cameron, 2016)¹⁵. He continued by stating the greatness of the UK as a nation through history.

”People from all 4 corners of the earth watch our films, dance to our music, flock to our galleries and theatres, cheer on our football teams and cherish our institutions....Britain today is a proud, successful, thriving nation, a nation the world admires and looks up to, and whose best days lie ahead of it. We are the product of our long history.” (Cameron, 2016)¹⁶

Lastly, references to Scotland were also found in Cameron’s speeches. In a similar way to *The Guardian*, the prime minister argued that the decision of leaving the EU could disintegrate the Union of the 4 nations which make up the United Kingdom. He frames national identity by referring to the history of the UK and by concluding that the nation would become more fragile if separated from the EU.

4.2.1.3. ”Us” & ”Them”

When analyzing the three speeches, there were no particular framings of ”us” and ”them”. There was no references to migration in a negative manner, which for example was present in the newspapers. Rather, one could observe through his speeches that Cameron frames the UK as attached to the EU in comparison to the rest of the world. As shown in paragraphs above, he argues that the UK needs the EU in order to tackle challenges such as climate change, migration etc. Thus, one could argue that Cameron strengthens the sense of community with Europe, by stating the rest of the world as ”them”.

4.2.2. Nigel Farage

The first public speech which has been used in this study is the one Farage made on March 16th. The second analyzed was made on April 29th. Finally, his last speech before the referendum which was made on June 22nd was also included.

¹⁵ ”Prime Minister David Cameron set out what the UK’s European Union membership means for British strength and security in the world.”

¹⁶ *ibid*

4.2.2.1. European Identity

In his speeches, Farage frames European identity in a similar manner to the writers in *The Telegraph* although in a more radical way. Throughout both speeches, an emphasis is put on the move from an economical organization towards an ever closer political union which he argues is problematic. Further, Farage also criticizes the economical governance of the EU by arguing that the costs of being a member of the EU are too high for what the country receives. Thus, he frames the EU as something negative throughout. Further, he often refers to European laws and regulations which according to him, undermine British sovereignty.

”But of course,, the real agenda isn't about the economy, the real agenda is political, we are members of a political union. European law is supreme, the European court of justice overrules our parliament and our courts” (Farage, June 2016)

Another key theme in Farage’s speeches are the references to European institutions related to foreign policy and security. He is critical of an EU army, police and navy and argues that those attributes should only be held by states. In these particular arguments, he also affirms the strong relation with NATO in order to argue against European security and defense policy.

”We have relied since 1945 upon a structure where nation states mutually cooperate to protect each other against threats called NATO. It is an alliance that has been hugely successful over the last 70 years and its an alliance that is directly threatened by the EU.”
(Farage, 2016)¹⁷

The arguments above show that there was no framing that would lead to the increase of European civic identity. Nor was there any positive references towards cultural proximity with EU nations as will be shown further.

There was no particular cultural identity framings of Europe and in comparison to Cameron, there was no mentioning of common history. Rather, he undermines the cultural ties with EU by using particular symbols. For example, in all three speeches, the symbol of the EU passport was used in order to frame European cultural identity in a negative manner. Further, he uses the symbol of the European flag vs. British flag in two of the speeches in order to strengthen his arguments. According to Bruter (2005: 126), these national and European symbols are

¹⁷ ”No to the EU”

important for the construction of identity through media and can help emphasize the sense of belonging.

”We don’t even have a British passport anymore. We have a European Union one which of course is available for up to 580 million people and let’s not pretend what this European Union project is. They have an anthem, they are building an army, they already got their own police force and of course the flag.” (Farage, June 2016)

4.2.2.2. National Identity

National identity plays a key role in Farage speeches, and he praises the UK as a nation in different ways. He frames national civic identity by arguing for a more democratic Britain. According to him, a leave vote would give more power to the national parliamentary system as he argues that many of the basic rights and values that the UK is build on have been handed to the EU. Ultimately, he argues that being an independent and self-governing nation-state is the only way to get these rights again and this drives him to argue for leaving the organization.

”We can vote to get our borders back, pride and self respect as nation and who we are as a people back. I want us to vote for Britain to become independent and democratic, to become a normal country which makes their own laws and are in charge of their destiny and future”
(Farage, 2016)¹⁸

”We’ve given away our basic rights, our basic freedoms, our basic concept of parliamentary democracy.” (Farage, 2016)¹⁹

Using these arguments, Farage thus frames national civic identity as stronger outside the EU and mentions national values and institutions in order to undermine the European project.

Cultural national identity framings are also prominent throughout the three speeches. First, as explained above, Farage uses national cultural symbols such as the Union Jack in order to increase the sense of national pride. Similarly to Cameron, Farage makes several references to history but instead of linking it to European history, he frames it as distinct from the latter. In one particular section, he argues that the referendum is *”...about our country and history. It’s*

¹⁸ ”Final speech of EU-referendum campaign”

¹⁹ ”No to the EU”

about respecting those who came before us and those who risked and gave everything they had so that we could be a free independent self governing democratic country” (Farage, 2016)²⁰. Thus, he uses historical arguments in order to argue for Brexit. The framing of national cultural identity is further emphasized in the next paragraph.

4.2.2.3. ”Us” & ”Them”

Indeed, Farage uses the framing of ”us” and ”them” in order to increase the sense of national cultural identity in his speeches. In the same manner as *The Telegraph*, it is especially migrants from European countries which are targeted in his utterances. He frames immigration as being out of control and argues that immigration poses both a security threat but also poses a threat to the social welfare of the UK and its culture. In this regard, Farage refers to mainly one group, ”young males” coming from the Middle East and he argues that them obtaining an EU passport is a big issue, ”... *whether it is the cultural threat that it poses, or the terrorist threat it poses*” (Farage, 2016)²¹. Thus, the first framing of ”us” and ”them” is made in relation to that particular group and he argues that immigrants undermine the sense of community existing in the UK.

”Social cohesion, a sense in our city and market towns that we are one community living together, that have increasingly become divided, fragmented and segmented within our towns and cities because the pace of people coming has been too great to integrate.” (Farage, 2016)²²

Going through the speeches, another group emerges from the data, which is similar to the findings in *The Telegraph*, namely, EU migrants from the former communist countries. For example, Farage argues in his speeches that EU migration has led to housing and healthcare problems as well as the diminution of available primary school places.

”There is nothing we can do to stop unlimited numbers of people from EU countries from settling in the country and enjoying the privileges and rights as rest of us. We warned in 2004

²⁰ ”No to the EU”

²¹ *ibid*

²² ”Speech on EU-referendum”

that allowing the former communist countries would lead to a loss of control with an unprecedented flow into Britain.” (Farage, 2016)²³.

Similarly to The Telegraph, Farage also argues that a relation with the Common Wealth countries is more desirable and these countries are framed as being more similar culturally, as the organization is one “...where English is a common language, where common law and contract law is nearly very similar (Farage, 2016)²⁴.

In conclusion, the boundary of “us” and “them” present in his speeches is used in order to increase the differences that exist between UK nationals and nationals from the rest of EU member states and increase the identity with those that share the same cultural ties as Britain. Referring back to Risse in the literature review, the boundary between “us” and “them” is here clearly used in order to undermine European identity and strengthen national identity. Further, the key theme drawn out from his speeches is that he frames identity as being either “national” or “European”, meaning that he frames them as competing with each other rather than as mutually constituting. Although multiple identities can exist at the same time according to the theoretical background, Farage seems to portray and enhance the essentialist point of view, which argues that identities cannot co-exist with each other.

4.3. Discussion of findings

The analysis of both newspapers and political figures has helped to understand how European and national identity are portrayed in relation to European integration. The findings have revealed that readers predominantly get to see Europe as a civic entity (both positively and negatively), while national identity is often more cultural in character and is emphasized by the framing of the EU as the eternal “other”. As explained by Risse (2002), the conception of the “other” can both be used in order to strengthen the sense of “Europeanness” but it can also be used in order to diminish European identity. In the case of the Brexit referendum, it is clear that it was used by some actors in order to diminish the sense of community with the rest of the EU nations by referring to EU-migrants. These framings of EU citizens as foreign “others” have given media and Farage a strong national identity building ability. As the same time, the analysis revealed contradicting conceptions in *The Guardian*, which framed migration as a vital part to national identity.

²³ “Speech on EU-referendum”

²⁴ “No to the EU”

When comparing both newspapers, one can clearly observe a more nuanced image of the EU in *The Guardian* than in *The Telegraph*. In the former, most authors are positive towards staying a member but still criticize the European project to a large extent. This can be effective in that the arguments become more trustworthy. On the other hand, *The Telegraph* offered a more straightforward approach since positive arguments for the UK to stay in the EU were not present. Although this approach does not offer great variation, it might have increased national identity by having a more effective identity building power over the reader who is forming an opinion through media since most authors differentiate the UK from the EU and Europe. When looking at Farage and Cameron, one can find similar framings. Farage's arguments clearly frame national identity as distinct from the EU and his approach is more effective in that it only shows one side of the coin, while Cameron uses both national and European identity framings in positive and negative ways.

What the findings have shown relate back to Risse's arguments about the division between national identity and European identity. Both *The Guardian* and David Cameron frame British identity as being part of the EU and thus, the main theme that comes out from that data is "Britain first, Europe too". Hence, both national identity and European identity blend together in that case and are not portrayed as competing. Although the framings in *The Guardian* and by Cameron are not exactly the same, both actors frame European identity as a supplement to national identity, which can be related to the marble cake concept developed by Risse (2009). According to him, different components of identity influence each other, meaning that national identity contains aspects of European identity and vice versa. In the analysis, it has been shown that they often highlight the closeness of European and national identities, both in civic and ethnic terms. This correlates with his argument that different identities are not neatly separated. On the other hand, the framings in *The Telegraph* and by Farage contrast radically from this. By putting an emphasis on cultural national identity, these actors do not contribute to an increase in European identity and they largely frame national and European identity as competing. Thus, Risse's argument about cleavage in society seems to be reflected in the campaign leading up to Brexit. According to him, the cleavage is located between "those who exclusively identify with their nation (exclusive nationalists), on the one hand, and those perceiving themselves as attached to both their nation and Europe (inclusive nationalists), on the other hand. Exclusive nationalists usually tend to be more skeptical of European integration than inclusive nationalists (2009: 152).

Once again, the study does not wish to make claims about direct media effect but the framing presented in the newspapers and speeches can still help to answer the second part of the research

question by using previous studies on citizen's identity formations. As strong-identity building actors, both media and elites are able to shape how citizens relate to their nation and Europe. Of course, there are other factors that contribute to this, but media and elites are two of the factors that are important.

What does the civic/ethnic dichotomy tell us about national and European identities? In the literature review, two contrasting views were put forward. While Risse argued that it is mainly cultural identity which forms the substance of citizen's identification with Europe, Bruter argued for the opposite by saying that civic European identities are stronger (2005: 122). From the theoretical background, one can therefore argue that citizens can relate to both type of identities or be attached to one particular conception. Although negative civic conceptions were also portrayed such as the democratic deficit, European civic identity was for the most part not framed as competing with national values. Hence, the readers that identify to their nation and the EU in a civic way, would see European identity as compatible with national identity. Similarly, some articles and speeches portrayed framed Europe as culturally close to the UK. Still, these were overshadowed by the articles and speeches that created a barrier between the UK and the rest of the EU. Hence, citizens attached to their national cultural identity would most likely see the EU as a threat to their own identity as British citizens and therefore these identities are not compatible with each other.

To summarize, there are multiple "themes" that have emerged out of the data, but none of them are consistent throughout both newspapers and elites. This means that citizens' get to see the nation-state and the EU/Europe in different ways depending on what they read or listen to.

5. Conclusion

By analyzing media articles and elite speeches, the thesis has investigated on the puzzle of national and European identities. Although the UK has always been seen as an "outsider" to the European project, the results of the referendum showed a division in society worth investigating. Understanding this phenomenon is important for continued regional integration as well as for IR studies because of the international consequences that the result of the referendum have.

Throughout the paper, I have aimed at giving an understanding of these identities in the case of Brexit and their relation with citizens' identity formations and attitudes. Using unit-level social constructivism as a theory, with insights from the discipline of regional integration, the thesis has responded to the following research questions:

- *How can we understand the role/importance of national and European identities in the case of Brexit?*
- *How do the framings of these concepts relate to the identity formations of citizens and their attitudes towards European integration?*

The aim of understanding the role of European and national identities in the case of Brexit by looking at their framings in media and by the political elite has been central throughout the paper. In the literature review, the key notion of identity was conceptualized and defined. Both the civic/ethnic dichotomy and the concept of "other" were deemed important in order to understand the phenomenon at hand. Further, the literature review allowed the development of the theory of unit-level social constructivism and argued for its relevance for this study. This chapter also enabled to emphasize the role of media and elites as identity-building actors. In the method chapter, epistemological and ontological discussions enabled the understanding of the method of choice, qualitative content analysis which was then used in the analysis section. The choice of method was beneficial in that it allowed the study of the texts in a consistent way. The analysis chapter revealed that the framings were non-consistent throughout. It would seem from the findings that a cleavage in society is found between "exclusive nationalists" and "inclusive nationalists". The findings also revealed that aspects of national identity and European identity are often meshed together, thus relating to the marble cake concept developed by Risse. Accordingly, we need to understand identities as influencing each other, and not as neatly separated. In the civic conception of identity national and European identities were often framed as compatible, while cultural framings on national identity often framed as competing.

Still, there were also contradicting framings found. Because framings were non-consistent in the newspapers and speeches, one can conclude that depending on what citizens predominantly read, they will have different attachments and understanding of their identity. Citizens that read *The Guardian* get to see a more nuanced image of the EU than readers in *The Telegraph*. Still, it is important to note that these identities are also affected by other factors such as age and social class. Accordingly, citizens that feel a sense of belonging to the EU are more likely to support European integration than those who predominantly relate to their national identity.

Since this study is interpretative, it does not seek to be generalizable. Further, since it is the first time a member has left the EU, it is hard to apply the analytical framework to other similar cases which is one of the weaknesses of this paper. On the other hand, the thesis has permitted to gain insight onto one of the most important events since the creation of the ECC. As outlined in the literature review, the thesis argues and utilizes social constructivism as an approach viable for other studies on regional integration. Hence, the thesis can be used in future studies seeking to research identities and regional integration processes. The expansion and evolution of regional organizations as global actors make the sub-field of regional integration important and relevant.

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