Comparative identity and evaluation of socio-political change: Perceptions of the European Community as a function of the salience of regional identities

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Abstract

Using questionnaire data concerning perceptions of the European Community (EC) in Scotland and Andalucia we explored how the EC is perceived, and a European identification adopted as a function of the salience of these 'regional' identities. Drawing on the work concerning the concept of ‘comparative identity’ (Ros, Cano & Huici, 1987) it is argued that disidentification with the ‘nation-state’ (i.e. Britain and Spain respectively) is a useful way of measuring the salience of such regional identities.
in the self-concept. We predicted that such identities would be more salient in Scotland than in Andalucia and that in Scotland the salience of subjects’ regional identities would be associated with beliefs concerning the need for strategies of regional empowerment in its relation to the nation (Britain). We further predicted that the EC would be judged as a function of this comparative identity so that in Scotland (but not in Andalucia), a European identification would be associated with what may be called ‘social change’ beliefs (e.g. beliefs concerning the need for changing aspects of the region’s relationship with the nation). Supportive evidence is found for all these predictions. However, no support was found for our prediction of a correlation between the Scots’ regional identification and their European identification. The paper concludes with a discussion of the utility of the concept of comparative identity.

INTRODUCTION

Theories have developed to explain the social and psychological processes by which category membership influences identity and consequently shapes attitudes and actions (cf. Tajfel, 1978, 1982; Turner, 1982; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Obviously any one individual can be assigned to a large number of different categories, e.g. French-speaking, working-class, Catholic, female, inhabitant of Nantes, etc. This raises questions about the relationship between different categories and their relative importance for identity. Some of these category memberships may be relatively independent of one another, or cross-cutting (cf. Deschamps, 1977; Deschamps & Doise, 1978). Others may be structured into an hierarchical ordering with some categories being nested within others. Obviously the impact of these categories on identity, far from being derived simply from the formal ordering of these categories requires detailed analysis of their interrelationship.

Turner et al. (1987) have developed the analysis of self-categorization in terms of levels of abstraction or inclusiveness, partly as an attempt to address the following question: which of various possible categorizations is most relevant to a person’s subjective identity? According to this theory the basis of group behaviour may be found in the structure and function of the social self concept. Self-categorization may occur at different levels of abstraction: personal identity at the individual level, social identity at the intermediate group membership level, identity as a human being at the superordinate level. It is also apparent that one may also distinguish different levels of self-categorization which are based upon social group memberships e.g. one may define oneself through reference to both national and supra-national categories. Recently, particular attention has been paid to the situational determination of category salience. According to Oakes’ functional approach to salience (Oakes, 1987), the use of a category in a given context depends on the accessibility of the category and the fit between the category and reality. Although the self-categorization perspective emphasizes the contextual determinants of salience, we are interested in some more stable determinants of it. Our argument is that when we are considering a hierarchy of nested social categories, the salience of these categories as a framework for the perception of (and ascription of meaning to) the social world, may be inferred from exploring the interrelationship between the different categories.
and the degree of identification with the different levels of categorization. For example consider the hierarchically ordered categories of region and nation; our argument is that a comparison of the degrees of identification with the region and the nation would provide a measure of the relative salience of the lower-order (i.e. regional) category. In the research to be reported below we apply this logic to an exploration of the perception and evaluation of particular social and political developments (in this case the European Community or EC) and so explore how the EC may be differently evaluated (and a European identification differentially adopted) as a function of the salience of particular social categories with this latter being addressed through a consideration of the tensions between participants’ levels of regional and national identification.

**REGIONS, NATIONS AND ‘EUROPE’**

Historically speaking, the sovereign nation state is a relatively recent political innovation. At first the capacity of such entities to attract the loyalties of people was uncertain. Durkheim (1925) saw this problem clearly and wrote extensively about the arrangements that would be required, particularly in the form of universal and secular state education, to transfer attachments from communities and regions to nation-states. Supra-national entities such as the EC are even newer inventions and their ability to provide a source of shared identity and common purpose is as yet largely untried. Moreover the nations embraced by the EC combine regions which have much longer histories as coherent units than the nations themselves. As we write intergroup relations within Europe are in a state of flux. Established political units are disappearing almost overnight and with them established certainties are again brought into question (e.g. in the former Czechoslovakia and even more dramatically, Yugoslavia). Much older regional loyalties and identities are re-emerging in the company of old intergroup antagonisms and weakening higher order entities like national states. At the same time, the EC is developing both as a higher-order, supra-national social and political category but also as a category which articulates with the lower-order categories of nations and regions in a distinctive way. For example, the idea of a ‘Europe of the regions’ is one which not only articulates a supra-national community but one which also offers a very new vision of the nature of the categories that constitute that community and the power relations between them (Harvie, 1994).

Tajfel (1969) observed that such situations of rapid social change involving changes in intragroup and intergroup relations require explanation and that such constructs may be expected to play an important role in structuring people’s visions of the future (in this case the development of such superordinate political entities as the EC, which is currently struggling to fulfil its founding aspiration, ‘an ever closer union’). Obviously, the outcome of these various developments will depend on how populations define themselves, decide their loyalties and evaluate the various identities they are offered and our research seeks to explore the socio-psychological reality and significance of these different levels of categorization. In particular we are concerned with the ways in which identities which are formally nested in a hierarchy can be articulated in different ways so as to give particular levels of categorization (i.e. regional or national categories) a particular meaning and relevance for the
perception and evaluation of political developments. As an illustration of the potential complexity of these identifications take the following example. If one is Basque, one is formally also Spanish, and if Spanish, one is also a European. However, the articulation of the intergroup allegiances may define these relations in different and more complex ways (e.g. in terms of a struggle between the Basque Country and Spain or between Spain and Europe). On the other hand, there may be a considerable degree of loyalty to all three categories (the region, the nation and the EC) and a harmonious interaction between the different identities.

Obviously then, there is a need to explore how identity is affected by the salience and meaning of such categories. Our present work is related to the concept of ‘comparative identity’ (Ross, Cano and Huici, 1987) and tries to build on the work of Tajfel (1978) which emphasizes the relational aspect of the concept of social identity through pointing out that the meaning of an individual’s social identity and its evaluation derives from intergroup comparisons. Consequently the concept of comparative identity stresses the importance of taking into account identifications with social categories at different levels and the interrelationship between them. In particular, it implies that this relational factor may reveal much about the relevance and meanings of these categories for the self-concept and hence perceptions of the social world. More specifically, we want to argue that where there is a hierarchy of categories, the meaning and relevance of the lower-order category will depend on the degree of identification with the higher-order level. We expect that when individuals identify with both the region and the nation to the same degree, these different levels of categories will be integrated and that the regional category will not be as salient or meaningful for perception as when there is a high regional but a low national identification. In this latter case, tensions between the different levels of categorization would be more likely to arise with the regional category being especially salient when judging political developments such as those associated with the EC.

In the present research we examined identifications in Andalucia and in Scotland. We chose these sites because they were deemed to be similar in several key respects whilst contrasting in one central dimension: the degree of identification with the nation-state. Historically both regions can be marked out as distinct social units. Andalucia as ‘Al-Andalus’ was a separate kingdom after the Muslim invasion of 711. Although it was progressively reconquered by Christian Castillian kings up to 1492 when this re-conquest was finally accomplished, its association with Muslim rule and culture gave it a distinctive social and cultural identity. Scotland too was a separate state with a distinctive identity which was incorporated into the larger unit of Britain by the 1707 Act of Union. Both regions have had a disadvantaged economical position within the national state. Andalucia has remained less industrially developed, exhibited a greater reliance on agriculture, has suffered a relatively high degree of unemployment (about 10 points above the national average) and experienced lower standards of living. Although rather different factors operate in Scotland, a similar pattern of economic underperformance relative to the rest of the nation state may be observed. Capitalist development in Scotland meant that several

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1For the sake of simplicity we will use the term ‘nation’ to refer to an existing political unit (i.e. state) regardless of the social and cultural elements normally included in its definitions. Likewise, we will use the term ‘region’ to define administrative units contained within the state despite the fact that some of the inhabitants may prefer to define themselves as a nation.
key areas were heavily industrialized and it has been a decline of these heavy manufacturing industries in the last 30 years that has given rise to steadily increasing levels of unemployment. As relatively deprived regions on the fringes of Europe both Scotland and Andalucía have often benefited from EC programmes for deprived areas.

Major differences arise though in the political relations between both regions and their respective nations. In Spain, the last 15 years have seen the development of a system of regional autonomies (Valles & Foix, 1988). At present all regional autonomies have a parliament and a regional government. Although Andalucía seems to have retained a clear cultural distinctiveness, this has not been strongly translated into political terms. The regionalist political party (Partido Andalucista) has never taken a stand on political independence for Andalucía. Further, popular support for this party has remained low, with 11 per cent of the popular vote in recent elections.

Despite the relative independence of the Scottish legal and educational systems, government in Britain is more centralized. Again in contrast with Andalucía, Scottish political demands and support for independence are stronger. The political party representing this position has attracted support varying between 20 and 30 per cent in recent polls and 21 per cent of the Scottish vote in the 1992 U.K. General Election (Marr, 1992). It should also be noted that support for a redistribution of political power is stronger than these figures imply for a variety of other parties have also campaigned on reforms which fall short of independence (indeed, the only party opposed to such reform, the governing party, obtained only 24 per cent of the Scottish vote). In fact given the dominant position of England in Britain, the concept of ‘British’ is often seen as being defined around the English and ‘Englishness’ (McCrone, 1992). By contrast there is no clearly dominant social group in Spanish political and cultural life.

Given these historical contexts we anticipated that identification with the nation state would be higher in Andalucía than in Scotland. In the former we expected people to identify with both Andalucía and Spain to a similar degree, i.e. these two identifications would be integrated. In the latter, we expected identifications with Scotland and Britain to be characterized by a degree of tension giving rise to a higher comparative identity. If, as we argued, comparative identity indicates to what extent the regional identity is salient we could therefore expect that the regional identity of Scots would be especially salient and that this in turn would provide the frame of reference for their perception of the EC. More specifically, we expect that Scots, having a high regional and a low national identity (high comparative identity) will evaluate and identify with Europe according to the role it may play in resolving interregional tensions and inequalities in Britain. In other words, we expect that those for whom Scottishness and the issues of these inequities is most relevant would identify more with Europe and evaluate the EC according to the role it may play in redressing the relationship between the region and the state. By contrast we expected the Andalucians to have high degrees of identification with both regional and national categories (i.e. a low comparative identity) and therefore an identity which integrates both into a coherent whole, and that their perception of the EC would be less concerned with any affect it might have on region–state relationships and more concerned with its benefits for both the region and the nation.
THE STUDY

The sample

University students responded to a questionnaire survey conducted in regional universities in Scotland and Andalucia. Only subjects who had been born and had lived in the region prior to their university studies were considered in the analyses. The final data set was composed of 136 Scottish and 204 Andalucian subjects. The selection of university students was not only a matter of convenience but also a positive choice as we wished to sample the views of young people in the process of making career decisions in a rapidly changing labour market. We also wished to sample precisely those young people whose career opportunities were likely to be significantly affected by the single European market and who might be expected to pursue new opportunities in the professions, administration and management. We also know from other work (e.g. Emler & St. James, 1990) that willingness to consider geographic mobility in pursuit of work is positively and strongly related to level of education. And finally, we know that interest in politics and degree of sophistication about the kinds of issues raised by possibilities of political and economic union in Europe are also strongly related to educational level (e.g. Banks, Bates, Breakwell, Bynner, Emler, Jameson, & Roberts, 1992). We sampled students in the second year of their undergraduate studies across various academic disciplines such as Medicine, History, Geography, Business and Engineering.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was presented as part of a research study that tried to tap the perceptions of people about several political economic and social questions in the region. It covered the following issues: identification with the region, nation and Europe; evaluation of impact of the EC on the individual, the region and the nation; evaluation of the impact of the EC on region–state relations; beliefs about present state of affairs in the relations between the region and the rest of the state, its causes and need for change.

A more detailed description of the relevant questions is presented where appropriate in the Results section.

RESULTS

Regional and nation-state identities

Table 1 gives mean levels of identification with region and nation respectively as measured on 7-point scales in response to the following questions: ‘to what extent do you think of yourself as being . . . (Andalucian/Scottish; British/Spanish)?’ An equivalent wording was used for the European identification (1 = ’not at all’ to 7 = ‘very much’). It shows that Scottish regional identity was slightly stronger than Andalucian regional identity \(F(1,337) = 4.98, p < 0.05\) whereas Andalucian national identification (with Spain) was much stronger than Scottish national identification.
(with Britain) \[ F(1,337) = 90.78, p < 0.0001 \]. Indeed for the Andalucians the national identification was as high as the regional identification, whilst the Scots showed the predicted sizeable difference in favour of the region (4.17 versus 6.32; \( t(df, 135) = 10.7, p < 0.001 \)). Interestingly the Andalucians exhibited a higher European identification than the Scots \[ F(1,337) = 41.7, p < 0.0001 \].

Further confirmation of the Scots’ relative detachment from Britain is provided by responses to the following question: ‘I tend to think of myself as being . . .’ (a, British, never Scottish; b, mostly British, sometimes Scottish; c, Scottish and British; d, mostly Scottish, sometimes British; e, Scottish, never British. Obviously an equivalent wording was provided for the Andalucian sample). Table 2 gives the respective response frequencies, combining a with b and d with e. As can be seen a majority of the Andalucian sample expressed a dual identification whereas a majority of the Scottish sample expressed a predominantly regional identification (chi square = 84.82; \( df = 2; P < 0.001 \)).

In order to further explore how these identities relate to one another we will examine correlations between the three levels of identification (regional, national and European). With regard to the correlation between regional and national identification in Scotland, one could expect that those who identify strongly with Scotland would identify less with Britain thus producing a negative correlation. Nevertheless, past research (Ros, Cano and Huici, 1987) has shown that most people tend to report a high regional identification and that the real meaning of their identification can be best understood through reference to their national identification. As a consequence, a low correlation between the two could also be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Andalucia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>5.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Mean levels of identification with the region, the nation and Europe in Scotland and Andalucia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Andalucia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National, never regional</td>
<td>3 (2.23%)</td>
<td>16 (8.08%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly national, sometimes regional</td>
<td>53 (39.55%)</td>
<td>160 (80.08%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National and regional</td>
<td>53 (39.55%)</td>
<td>160 (80.08%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly regional, sometimes national</td>
<td>78 (58.20%)</td>
<td>22 (11.11%)</td>
</tr>
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Table 2. Number of subjects ticking statements in response to the question ‘I tend to think of myself as being . . .’
expected. In the case of Andalucia the predicted absence of conflict between these identities would not seem to imply any specific pattern of correlation.

Our results (see Table 3) showed that the correlation between regional and national identification in Scotland was negative but not significant ($r = -0.11$). However in the Andalucian sample the correlation was moderately strong and positive ($r = +0.33; p < 0.005$). This positive correlation though confirming the lack of conflict between the identities is unexpected in its magnitude. The fact that subjects who identify more with the region also tended to identify more with the nation could be interpreted as arising because some use these sorts of socio-political categories in self-definition whilst others do not.

With regard to participants’ degree of European identification we could expect that those that were most Scottish would also identify most strongly with Europe. As we have argued, disidentification with the nation (Britain) is particularly appropriate when considering the degree to which our Scottish subjects use the category Scotland in self-definition and social perception and so we could expect a negative correlation between their national identification and their European identification. However, as Table 3 shows there were no correlations between our Scottish subjects’ national and European identities (nor between their regional and European identities). As before, in Andalucia we found a high positive correlation between European identification and both the regional ($r = 0.35; p < 0.001$) and the national ($r = 0.44; p < 0.001$) ones. Again this could be taken to mean that some subjects have a general tendency to define themselves in terms of these socio-political categories with others doing so to a lesser degree.

**Level of identification and evaluation of the impact of the EC**

*Impact upon the region*

First, we examined the relation between the different forms of identification and evaluations of the impact of the EC on the region. We computed a single scale measuring the positivity–negativity of the EC impact on the region using five items. Four tapped the following specific dimensions: job opportunities, social services, local economy, educational opportunities (the wording of these items had the following structure; to what extent will membership of the EC have positive or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National identification</th>
<th>European identification</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scotland</strong></td>
<td>Regional identification</td>
<td>$-0.11$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National identification</td>
<td>$0.01$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Andalucia</strong></td>
<td>Regional identification</td>
<td>$0.33^*$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National identification</td>
<td>$0.44^{**}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.01; **p < 0.001.
negative implications for job opportunities in Scotland? with a 7-point response format; — (very negative implications) to +3 (very positive implications)). The fifth was an item inviting an overall evaluation of impact (‘overall how much of a good thing is the EC for Scotland as a whole?’ with a 7-point response format; —3 (very bad) to +3 (very good)). As Table 4 shows, there were several differences between the Andalucian and Scottish subjects.

In the Andalucian sample, the perceived benefits for the region were positively correlated with both regional and national identifications (0.16 and 0.22 respectively; see Table 4). In other words, subjects who identified more strongly with Andalucia and with Spain felt that the EC would have a more positive impact on the region. In Scotland, where we also expected regional identification and national identification to correlate with the perceived benefits for the region (positively and negatively respectively) these correlations were non-significant.

As expected, the degree of European identification correlated positively with the perceived benefits for the region in both Andalucia and Scotland (0.27 and 0.23 respectively) indicating that subjects who expect a more positive influence from the EC also report high European identification.

**Impact upon the nation**

We find very similar correlations between the perceived benefits of the EC for the nation and subjects’ levels of regional, national and European identifications (Table 4). Andalucians who identified more with Andalucia and with Spain expect more benefits for Spain arising from the EC (the correlations are 0.23 and 0.29 respectively). On the other hand, there is no correlation between our Scottish subjects’ identification with Scotland or Britain and the EC’s perceived impact on Britain.

Table 4. Correlations between identification with the region, the nation and Europe and the impact of the EC on the region, the nation and the region in the nation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regional identification</th>
<th>National identification</th>
<th>European identification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scotland</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of the EC on the region</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of the EC on the nation</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on the region’s position in the nation</td>
<td>−0.31***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Andalucia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of the EC on the region</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
<td>0.27***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of the EC on the nation</td>
<td>0.23***</td>
<td>0.29***</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on the region’s position in the nation</td>
<td>0.18**</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.
Once again, and as predicted, subjects' level of European identification was positively related to the positivity of the perceived impact of the EC on the nation in both Scotland and Andalucia (0.22 and 0.31 respectively). Before considering the impact of the EC on region–nation relations we would observe that the integration between all three levels of identification in the Andalucian sample (which we saw in the section concerning regional and nation–state identities) seems to have an effect on the evaluation of the impact of the EC on Spain as a whole. This may arise from the political meaning that the Spaniards attach to membership of the EC. The first applications for membership were made under Franco’s regime but full participation was obtained only in the late 1980s. This membership has been presented as an acceptance into a prestigious and selective European ‘club’ made possible by the consolidation of Spanish democracy and as a political development that should bring benefits to all levels of the modern democratic and decentralized Spanish state.

**Impact upon region–nation relations**

We asked subjects about the positive or negative effects on the region arising from changes in national–regional relationships brought about by the EC. Two items, one measuring the perceived positivity–negativity of the increasing unification of Europe under the EC for the region’s relationship with the rest of the nation and the other measuring the perceived positivity–negativity of this increasing unification for the redistribution of economic resources between the region and the rest of the nation (both measured on a 7-point scale: −3, very negative to +3, very positive) were averaged into a single scale. In Andalucia, positive correlations showed that subjects who identified more with Andalucia and with Spain expected the EC to help the region acquire a stronger position in the national context (correlations of 0.18 and 0.21 respectively; see Table 4). Although the fact that the strengthening of the region is correlated not only with the regional but also with the national identity may look striking at first sight, this comes as less of a surprise if we remember that in the Andalucian sample the regional and national identifications are positively correlated. In Scotland the correlation between national identification and this measure of the relationship between the region and the nation is not significant. However, its correlation with subjects’ levels of regional identification is negative and significant (−0.31). At first sight this seems to imply that those who feel more Scottish expect a less positive development for Scotland in its relationship with Britain as a whole, an interpretation that we return to shortly.

With respect to the correlation between European identification and this measure of the EC’s impact on regional–national relationships we predicted a significant positive association (which would show that those who feel more European expect an improved position for the region). Given our analysis of the problematic relationship between regional and national identifications in Scotland and the consequences of this for perceptions of the EC, we expected that this would be particularly strong in Scotland. The data do indeed show that the correlation for Scotland is significantly positive and is also higher than that for Andalucia (0.25 and 0.15 respectively).

As a whole, the Andalucian data show that those who identify more with each of the three social categories (region, nation, and Europe) believe the EC will have a more positive impact at all levels: for the region, the nation, and the position of the
region in the nation. The systematic pattern of significant correlations seems to indicate that those who tend to define themselves more in terms of these socio-political categories have a more positive image of the EC in general with this being manifested in the expectation of a favourable impact at all levels. This consistent pattern of positive correlations is also in accordance with the harmonious hierarchy of regional and national identifications found in Andalucia.

In the case of Scotland we expected that Scots’ regional identification would be positively correlated with the perceived impact of the EC on the region itself and its position within the nation. We also expected subjects’ levels of British identification to correlate negatively with this effect of the EC on the position of Scotland within Britain. However, we did not find any significant relation between the British identification and any expected impact from the EC. Furthermore, the only significant relationship between Scottish identification and the perceived impact was actually negative: subjects with a strong Scottish identification seemed to view the EC as likely to undermine Scotland’s position in Britain. This could be taken to mean that more Scottish subjects see the EC as a threat. However, if this interpretation is to be accepted we should find that those that reject the category Britain should similarly see the EC negatively in this respect (and we do not—the relevant correlation is zero). Given the argument that the salience and meaning of participants’ regional identification is best considered through reference to their national identification, this latter finding casts great doubt on the argument that our more ‘Scottish’ subjects see the EC as a threat. Whilst the precise meaning of the obtained negative correlation is unclear, the contrasting correlations obtained in the two research sites support the argument that the three levels of categorization are more problematically related in Scotland than in Andalucia.

In order to shed further light on these relationships we will now look at how these identifications relate to several dimensions concerning the socio-political interrelationship between the region and the nation.

**Level of identification and desire for regional empowerment**

Questions were also asked about several dimensions more closely related to the perception of conflicts between the region and the nation and we explored how these related to the different levels of identification. Each of the dimensions was measured in a scale comprised of several items. The dimensions that we considered were: (1) **Perceived need for political autonomy** — the extent to which subjects favoured more regional autonomy from the nation (three items, e.g. ‘It is of great importance that Scotland gets its own government’, 7-point scale—‘disagree strongly’ to ‘agree strongly’). (2) **Perceived need for economic development** — the extent to which they demanded an increase in the region’s standard of living (two items, e.g. ‘It is urgent that Scotland achieves a higher standard of living’. 7-point scale—‘disagree strongly’ to ‘agree strongly’). (3) **Perceived relative deprivation** — the degree to which they view their region as worse off than the rest of the nation (four items e.g. How do earnings in Scotland compare with the earnings in the rest of Britain? People in Scotland earn . . . 7-point scale, responses ranging from ‘very much less’ to ‘very much more’). (4) **Perceived discrimination against own region** — the extent to which they feel their region is discriminated against by the nation (one item; ‘The rest of
Britain discriminates against Scotland'; 7 point scale — ‘disagree strongly’ to ‘agree strongly’). (5) Internal attributions for regional differences — where these are explained in terms of variations in natural resources or in their commitment to work (two items e.g. ‘Any regional differences that exist arise because people work harder in one region than the others’; 7 point scale — ‘disagree strongly’ to ‘agree strongly’). (6) External attributions for regional differences — where these are accounted for through unfair treatment by the government or companies (two items e.g. ‘Any regional differences that exist arise because companies are unfair in the way they operate in one region compared to the other’; 7 point scale — ‘disagree strongly’ to ‘agree strongly’).

Taken together these variables reflect a desire for empowerment which can be identified in many ‘nationalistic’ movements (i.e. movements occurring in what we have termed ‘regions’). Those individuals in favour of a strengthening of their region’s status are expected to (a) seek increased political autonomy and regional economic development, (b) perceive the region as relatively deprived, and (c) attribute interregional differences to external biases rather than internal shortcomings. Following our interest in these dimensions as they relate to degrees of identification with the different levels of categorization we made the following predictions. Given the conflicting nature of the regional and national identifications in Scotland, we predicted that these dimensions, linked as they are to regional empowerment, would correlate positively with subjects’ Scottish identification and (more importantly) correlate negatively with their British interregional imbalances or assert regional distinctiveness, this should also be reflected in a correlation between these dimensions and the Scots’ level of European identification. In Andalucia, where all three levels of identification are harmoniously ‘nested’, a much more attenuated pattern of relationships, if any at all, would be expected.

The results are reported in Table 5. As can be seen, the Scots’ level of regional identification correlates significantly, and in the predicted direction, with the perceived need for political autonomy and perceived relative deprivation. The rest of the correlations with the Scottish regional identity do not reach significance. As for the British identification there are significant correlations with four of the dimensions; subjects who feel less British want more political autonomy and economic development for Scotland, see their region as discriminated against by Britain, and account for interregional differences less in terms of internal factors. Interestingly, not only are the number of significant correlations between these measures and subjects’ disidentification with Britain greater, but there is a sizeable difference in the magnitude of the correlations concerning the perceived need for political autonomy (correlation with regional identity = 0.26, with national identity = −0.51). The fact that the pattern of associations is somewhat stronger for the national than for the regional identification may come as a surprise but, as we have argued throughout, arises because the relevance of the lower-order category for identity may best be gauged and understood through reference to the level of national identification.

Considering the Scottish subjects’ European identification we find much as we predicted, a similar pattern of correlations; Scots who feel more European demand more political autonomy and economic development for Scotland and attribute interregional differences more to external biases and less to internal shortcomings. Thus it seems to be the case that those who seek empowerment for Scotland tend to
feel more European. In other words there is a strong basis for arguing that Europe is seen as containing possibilities for strengthening Scotland’s position in Britain.

In contrast to this scenario, only three of the correlations were significant for the Andalucian sample. Subjects who felt more Andalucian demanded more political autonomy whilst those who felt more Spanish did the opposite. Moreover, the only dimension to correlate significantly with European identification was perceived relative deprivation: those who felt more European perceived more deprivation. This confirms our argument that the levels of identification in Andalucia, being harmoniously nested, would not have strong implications for these dimensions of regional empowerment.

**DISCUSSION**

Our data seems to confirm the differential nature of regional and national identifications in Scotland and Andalucia. Whilst Andalucians identify with the region and the nation to a similar degree suggesting an harmonious pattern of identification, Scots see themselves less in terms of the national category (‘Britain’).
and hence more in terms of their regional category (i.e. Scottish). Having found the expected differences in comparative identity (Ross, Cano and Huici, 1987) we can now consider how the differential salience of our subject’s regional identification affected their judgement of the EC.

Here we had predicted that in Scotland, where there is a certain tension between the regional and the national allegiances and the regional category therefore particularly salient and meaningful for the interpretation of social and political developments, we would find that the EC would be judged, at least in part, in terms of the opportunities it may provide to strengthen the region’s relations with, and status in, the nation. Conversely, we predicted that in Andalucia, where this tension is absent and the regional category less relevant for self-definition and the perception of the world, the superordinate category would be evaluated with regards its impact on both the region and the nation rather than on its impact on intergroup (region–nation) implications.

Firstly let us consider the issue of identification with Europe. In Scotland, (but not Andalucia) one could expect negative correlations between national and regional identifications, and between national and European identifications. One could also expect a positive correlation between regional and European identifications. In the event we found that the correlation between the Scots’ regional and national identification, though negative, did not reach significance and that their European identification was not positively related to the regional or (more surprisingly) negatively related to their national one. Although the non-significance of the correlation between British and Scottish identifications can be explained as arising because of the very high degree of regional identification across most subjects, the absence of the predicted negative correlation between subjects’ identification with Britain and their European identification is more surprising. With regard to the Andalucians, who have more harmoniously integrated regional and national identities, no particular pattern of correlations were expected. In the event, the positive intercorrelations that were obtained between all levels of identifications suggest that some Andalucians use this general class of socio-political categories in self-definition to a greater degree than others. Although not initially expected, the positive nature of these correlations reinforces the view, that for those who do use these categories in self-definition there is little sense of tension between them.

Secondly, let us consider the evaluation of the EC. Our main general prediction was that subjects in the settings, differing as they did in terms of their comparative identity, would focus upon different issues when judging the EC. With a high comparative identity in Scotland (and thus a more highly salient regional identity) we expected that such judgements would be focused upon the issue of intergroup relations. In contrast the low comparative identity in Andalucia (and thus a less salient regional identity) was expected to lead to judgements of the EC which were more focused on the benefits provided to both the region and the nation. More specifically we expected that in Scotland a positive evaluation of the EC with regard to intergroup (region–nation) relations would be positively correlated with regional but not national identifications. However, the only significant correlation obtained was a negative correlation between Scottish identification and the impact of the EC on Scotland’s position within Britain which implies that those reporting a higher identification with Scotland viewed the impact of the EC upon Scotland’s position in Britain negatively. Although this may be taken to suggest that the more Scottish
subjects see the EC as a threat to Scotland, this interpretation is not corroborated by a positive association between their British identification and this measure. As we have argued and demonstrated (see Table 5), subjects’ degree of identification with Britain is a more appropriate measure of the degree to which Scottishness is a relevant category, and the failure to find this corroborating correlation is serious. Nevertheless it may be suggested that the fact that there is any correlation between the Scots’ regional identification and the questions tapping the issue of region–nation relations is interesting. As is apparent from Table 4, this is the only significant correlation between our Scots subjects’ regional or national identification and the measures of the EC’s impact on the region, the nation, and the region’s position in the nation. That there is such a correlation when all others are non-significant may be interpreted as indicating that the relative salience of the regional identity may help predict the types of issues that are focused upon when evaluating the impact of the supranational category (the EC). Certainly the contrast with the Andalucian data is striking. The pattern of the Andalucian data again illustrates the non-problematic hierarchy of regional and national identifications; all of the correlations between the perceived impact of the EC and the various levels of identification were significantly positive showing that those Andalucians that use such categories in self-definition also share positive views concerning the EC’s impact upon all these levels of categorization.

Although thus far the Scottish data seems to offer only tentative support for our argument that perception of the EC in Scotland would be bound up with benefits that it may bring for Scotland’s relationship with Britain, the analysis of the several dimensions related to the need for regional empowerment shed new light onto the matter and it is to this that we now turn. As predicted, subjects who disidentify with Britain feel the need for more autonomy and development for Scotland, see Scotland as discriminated against and tend to account for interregional differences less in terms of regional inadequacies. Likewise, those who identify with Scotland also seek more autonomy and perceive Scotland to be relatively deprived. The fact that the pattern is clearer for the measure of disidentification with Britain than for the identification with Scotland is important and reinforces the observation that subjects’ (dis)identification with Britain is more informative as an index of the salience of their Scottishness. In addition, to this, and more importantly, our data show that those identifying with Europe also demand more autonomy, perceive more need for development, and attribute interregional differences more to external discrimination and less to internal shortcomings. The quite stark contrast between these data and those obtained in Andalucia (where very few significant correlations were obtained implying a much more attenuated relationship between these levels of identification and the need for regional empowerment) supports our argument that in Scotland, ‘Europe’ is associated with rather different meanings than in Andalucia.

Whilst we have found that beliefs supportive of demands for social change are associated with a greater adoption of a European identification in Scotland, the failure to find an association between disidentification with Britain and identification with Europe is puzzling. The absence of this correlation (coupled with the absence of a correlation between disidentification with Britain and beliefs concerning the positive impact of the EC on the region’s position in the nation; see Table 4), indicates that although the category ‘Europe’ is (as was predicted) more
closely associated with social change beliefs in Scotland than in Andalucia, the adoption of a European identification is not an inevitable concomitant of disidentifying with Britain and wanting change. One possible interpretation of this finding is that it reveals that there is a range of strategies open to those that disidentify with Britain (i.e. those for whom their Scottishness is particularly important) and that the adoption of a European identity and endorsement of what may be called a ‘European’ strategy is but one of several possibilities. If this is so, future research may usefully examine how people come to adopt particular strategies (and adopt the concomitant identifications) rather than others, through looking at a wider range of strategies and identities. Similarly, and as corollary, beliefs concerning the role of Europe as an agent of social change and the concomitant adoption of an identification as ‘European’, should be examined in relation to the salience of other identities (e.g. identities based on class).

With regard to regional and national loyalties these data illustrate the utility of analysing the interplay between the different levels of nested identities. The concept of comparative identity (Ros, Cano and Huici, 1987) is useful because it argues that the salience or meaningfulness of a category is a function of this comparative process and our data illustrate the appropriateness of examining a particular lower-order identification (e.g. regional) in the context of its relationship with the higher-order category (e.g. national). Although the implications of such identifications for the adoption of a ‘European’ identity are not necessarily straightforward, our data do lend support to our major prediction that the EC will be evaluated according to different criteria in the two research sites because of their differing degrees of comparative identity. As Europe continues to be an important social and political development attracting considerable social-psychological research we would recommend that attention be paid to the concept of comparative identity both as a means to developing richer analyses of identity salience and as a means to developing analyses of the meaning of Europe which are sensitive to the local political scenario.

REFERENCES


