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Does ERASMUS Student Mobility Promote a European Identity?

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The potential of European student mobility to promote a European identity and, consequently, European integration has long been stressed by transactionalists such as Karl Deutsch but was never tested empirically. The EU-funded exchange programme ERASMUS moves more than 150,000 university students annually, and it is still widely assumed it plays a pivotal role in the promotion of a European identity. Based on the results of a longitudinal survey among ERASMUS and non-mobile students I show that reality meets only partly these expectations. Whilst ERASMUS enables students to improve their foreign language skills and learn more about other European countries, it does not foster a European self-identity or a sense of European pride. However, the ERASMUS experience does help British students to feel more attached to Europe and to acknowledge they have things in common with continental Europeans.

KEYWORDS European identity; educational policy; Supranationalism

Does ERASMUS Student Mobility Promote a European Identity?

INTRODUCTION[*]

Forty-four years ago Arend Lijphart was urging researchers to collect and analyse data, in order to study the contribution of European student mobility to European integration (1964: 252). Behind this open call lay the popular assumption that personal contact with people of other nationalities can improve international relations and facilitate political integration. Compared to economic migrants, Lijphart continued, university students are more likely to engage in 'intensive' personal contact with the locals and, furthermore, they 'belong to the more influential segments

[*] My thanks go to two anonymous reviewers for their useful comments, to my former supervisor Dr Jonathan Golub and to Dr Spyros Blavoukos for commenting on an earlier version of the paper.

of society' (*ibid*.) implying that a supranational identity is likely to spread beyond the narrow confines of the student community.

Lijphart's premise draws on Karl Deutsch's theory, according to which increased cross-border people mobility is one of the essential conditions for the success of international integration and the formation of a 'we-feeling' among different peoples (Deutsch *et al*., 1968). If we take into account that living abroad is more likely to have a greater impact on one's personality the younger one is, it comes as no surprise that European student mobility is widely seen as an instrument that promotes a common European identity (e.g. Fligstein, 2008; Green, 2007; Wallace, 1990).

For over twenty years now the European Union (EU) has been systematically promoting student mobility within Europe. Through the 'European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students' (ERASMUS), the largest student exchange programme in Europe, nearly two million students have studied abroad and had the opportunity to learn firsthand about other European peoples and cultures. In spite of the widely acknowledged potential of the study abroad experience to instil a European identity among students, there have been no reliable empirical studies measuring its actual effect on European identity. In this paper I address this gap by measuring longitudinally the attitudes of two groups of ERASMUS students, and comparing them with those of a sedentary group of students. The results show the ERASMUS experience helps university students improve their foreign language skills and their knowledge of other European countries, but produces mixed results with regard to a European identity. Drawing on a series of paired sample *t*-tests I argue that the ERASMUS outcome depends less on students' original attitudes and more on the choice of the host country.

THE QUEST FOR A EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Every time European integration stumbles upon a referendum that prevents the ratification of a new treaty, arguments about the democratic deficit of the EU, its legitimacy problems and the absence of a European demos become popular again. Legitimacy refers to the right to exercise political power (Gilley, 2006), and is necessary for the long-term stability and viability of any polity including the EU.[1] Up

[1] For a detailed analysis of the concept of legitimacy see Connolly (1984) and Beetham (1991).

to this day the EU derives its legitimacy primarily from the member states who give it a mandate to exercise power in a semi-autonomous fashion. Since national governments are democratically elected, the EU is indirectly legitimated by the citizens of the member states.

Whilst for some scholars indirect legitimacy is sufficient for the purposes of the EU (Crombez, 2003; Moravcsik, 2002; Zweifel, 2002), for the majority it is deemed inadequate (Føllesdal & Hix, 2006; Mather, 2006; Decker, 2002; Habermas 2001; Lord & Beetham, 2001). Several academics have argued that at least part of the EU's legitimacy deficit is due to the lack of a European identity (e.g. Etzioni, 2007; Green, 2007; Decker, 2002; Howe, 1995). Unlike its member states, the EU can not appeal to its citizens' affections for unconditional support in times of severe crisis; neither can it inspire a sense of belonging to the same polity (Beetham & Lord, 1998).[2] Equally, there is no myth of a shared past or destiny behind the life and work of the EU (Obradovic, 1996).

Defining European identity has proved notoriously difficult and controversial, not least because it can pre-empt the feasibility of such an identity. For instance, if we conceive European identity of simply being a national identity writ large, then we automatically stumble upon the lack of a single historic homeland, of a mass public culture and of a European myth that does not clash with the national ones (Smith, 1995). If, on the other hand, we view European identity as something completely new and unlike the existing national identities (e.g. Kantner, 2006), placing the emphasis on diversity rather than unity, we run the risk to come up with an understanding of collective identity that may be too thin to legitimate the EU (Mather, 2006). It is not my intention to contribute to this debate here, but to explain why I opted for a definition of European identity that while it may not find everyone in agreement, it has been used extensively by other political scientists before me.

According to the social identity theory, developed by Henri Tajfel in the 1970s, 'social identity [is] understood as that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance to that membership' (1978: 63). Hence, European would be someone who identifies oneself as such and attaches emotional significance to this identity. Investing the self-identity component with a certain

[2] On the notion of affective or diffuse support see Easton (1965).

emotional value is important, because some people will call themselves European only to state they were born in Europe. Feeling proud to be European, just like one may feel proud to be French, Bulgarian or Swedish, implies European identity is of certain importance to the individual. A definition of European identity based on self-identity and pride has proved particularly popular among empirical political scientists (e.g. Fligstein, 2008; Green 2007; McLaren, 2006; Niedermayer & Sinnot, 1995), and, perhaps more importantly, it has been used in the Eurobarometer (EB) surveys, admittedly irregularly, between 1992 and 2006.

Another measure of European identity that has been used in the EB surveys, and which I also use here, is to what extent people feel attached to Europe as a whole. This understanding of European identity also draws from the nation-state paradigm; it implies people feel a special attachment to their homeland which makes sacrifices for one's country conceivable. By analogy, strong feelings of attachment to Europe would imply the existence of a European homeland for which people maintain a special position in their hearts.[3]

Unfortunately for the EU, the EB surveys indicate European attachment is substantially lower than national attachment. Similarly, European pride is weaker than national pride, whereas only a minority of Europeans identify themselves firstly as Europeans and only secondly as nationals of their own country (Green, 2007; McLaren, 2006).[4] Given that a common identity would enhance the legitimacy of the EU and allow Europe to integrate further, it is not surprising the European Commission has an interest in fostering a popular European identity (Shore, 2000). In the present socio-political context, however, it is impossible to create a European identity through a standardised Europe-wide education or other methods borrowed from the nationalist toolkit. Such attempts would not only be met with fierce opposition but they would also undermine instead of strengthening the EU. If, however, a European identity could emerge semi-spontaneously from below, it would be far less provocative and more fruitful, which is why it is worthwhile to re-visit Karl Deutsch's theory of international integration.

[3] Of course, people feel attached to smaller geo-political units, such as towns or regions, as well. However, in all EB surveys national attachment has proved considerably stronger than either local or regional attachment suggesting that national identity is stronger than sub-national forms of identification.

[4] Although a European and national identity need not be in sharp contrast with each other, there is little doubt that a strong pan-European identity overshadowing the national ones would help resolve problems arising from conflicting loyalties.

PEOPLE MOBILITY AND INTERNATIONAL CONTACT: A European identity from below?

According to Deutsch *et al*. (1968), international integration is a dynamic process which largely depends on international transactions. The latter take different forms ranging from international trade and capital flows to labour migration, student mobility, tourism, mail exchanges and other types of international exchanges. What is important is that these transactions will create multiple networks of communication between individuals and institutions which may lead to the formation of a 'we-feeling' and, consequently, to a 'pluralistic' or 'amalgamated security community' (Puchala, 1981).[5]

Of the different forms of international transactions Deutsch *et al*. (1968) highlighted the significance of cross-border people mobility. They claimed that their 'finding of the importance of the mobility of persons suggests that in this field of politics persons may be more important than either goods or money' (*ibid*., p. 54), while limited mobility of persons 'is a serious deterrent to further [integration] progress', (*ibid*., p. 154). Cross-border people mobility implies the opportunity of personal contact with individuals of different nationalities and cultures which is 'probably the most efficient and permanent method of gaining knowledge about human actions and values…' (Deutsch *et al*., 1968: 170). Thus, in theory, the more people cross the borders to visit, study, work and live in other European countries, the better the prospects for a European identity.

The idea that personal inter-cultural contacts helps to overcome national prejudices, rectify stereotypes and bring peoples closer is so widespread that it is not surprising Deutsch adopted it. However, labour and tourist mobility do not necessarily yield meaningful communication between the newcomers and the local population. In the early days of the European Economic Community (EEC) Feldstein (1967) noted that the presence of migrant workers from other EEC countries makes communication between Europeans possible but not necessary. On the contrary,

[5] Amalgamated security community refers to 'the formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit, with some type of common government after amalgamation' Deutsch *et al*. (1968: 6). In the pluralistic security community member states have become integrated, that is, they have attained a 'sense of community', institutions and practices strong enough to ensure peaceful changes over long periods of time, but they retain their own independent governments (*ibid*., pp. 5-6).

Feldstein argued, it is quite conceivable they will remain complete strangers, even if they live in the same neighbourhood. Similarly, Connor (1972) criticised Deutsch for excessive optimism in his prediction that increased mobility and contact will lead to a 'we-feeling', whereas Marks (1999) highlighted the importance of intervening factors between personal interactions and European identity.

Social psychologists have long been preoccupied in determining the conditions under which a positive outcome in inter-group encounters is more likely. In 1954 Gordon Allport, a Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, identified four such conditions. He argued that

> [p]rejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom, or legal atmosphere), and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups. (Allport, 1954: 281).

The original contact hypothesis was followed by a number of empirical studies resulting in an increase over the years in the number of the favourable contact conditions.[6] Pettigrew (1998: 65), however, criticised 'writers [who] overburden the hypothesis with facilitating, but not essential, conditions'. Instead he insisted on the importance of the original four conditions and added the opportunity to become friends with members of the other group as another essential condition.

The favourable background conditions during the inter-group contact are more likely to hold in the case of European student mobility rather than that of labour or tourist mobility. Young Europeans who study abroad are of equal status with their host country peers, they share the same goals, they have common interests, they enjoy the support of their host university and, finally, there is clearly a potential for the development of international friendships. However, personal contact is not the only means of social learning. While abroad, students are exposed to a series of stimuli from their host environment which may involve little, if any, personal contact. For instance, students learn about their host country from watching television, reading the newspapers and travelling within the country.

[6] Stephen (1985) identified as many as thirteen conditions. For a literature review and the historical origins of the contact hypothesis see Ward *et al*. (2001) and Pettigrew (1998).

The EU has played an indispensable role in promoting student mobility within Europe. The rulings of the European Court of Justice played their part by forcing the Member State authorities to stop the discrimination between national and EU students in terms of tuition fees and diploma recognition. As a result, studying full-time in another EU country is easier than ever before. The focus of this paper, though, is on short-term EU student mobility through the EU-funded ERASMUS programme. Although some of the findings may apply to both categories of mobile students, full-time students stay for several years abroad which inevitably requires a different methodology than the one employed here.

THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME

The exchange programme ERASMUS was launched in 1987 and enables students and teachers to spend a period of up to one year at a university of an EU country other than their own. Initially ERASMUS was a self-standing programme, but after 1995 it came under the umbrella of 'Socrates' alongside other education related programmes (EP & Council, 1995; Maiworm, 2001). In 2007 ERASMUS entered its most recent phase of development becoming part of the 'Lifelong Learning Programme' that integrates the educational with the vocational training programmes (EP & Council, 2006).

ERASMUS has grown enormously over the years proving rather popular among students. From 3,244 students in 1987 ERASMUS moves now more than 150,000 students annually (Commission, 2008), and has become the largest organised exchange programme in Europe. In addition to the 27 EU member states, ERASMUS covers Turkey, Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein. Thus far almost two million students in total have crossed the borders of their country, and the European Commission's goal is to raise this number to three million by 2012 (Europa Press Releases, 2006). The most popular ERASMUS destinations are Spain, France, Germany, the UK and Italy attracting almost 63 per cent of the total ERASMUS population (Commission, 2008). The number of outgoing students, though, does not always balance that of the incoming. In the case of the UK, in particular, the ratio between incoming and outgoing students is higher than 2:1.[7]

[7] In 2005/06 Britain received 16,395 ERASMUS students and sent only 7,131 (Commission, 2008).

The Commission takes pride in ERASMUS because it 'stands out as one of the most concrete and popular examples of the progress achieved during fifty years of European integration' (Europa Press Releases, 2006).[8] As the Commission president José Manuel Barroso said, 'ERASMUS has developed beyond just being an educational programme. It gives many European university students the chance for living for the first time in a foreign country, and it has reached the status of a social and cultural phenomenon' (Europa Press Releases, 2006). The truth is that ERASMUS was never 'just an educational programme'. From its inception it was expected to play a key role in the promotion of a European identity among the younger generations of Europeans. This is clearly reflected in the official objectives of the programme, as stated in the original Council Decision of 1987:

> The objectives of the ERASMUS programme shall be as follows: (i) to achieve a significant increase in the number of students…spending an integrated period of study in another Member State, in order that the Community may draw upon an adequate pool of manpower with first hand experience of economic and social aspects of other Member States…; (iv) to strengthen the interaction between citizens in different Member States with a view to consolidating the concept of a People's Europe; (v) to ensure the developments of a pool of graduates with direct experience of intra-Community cooperation, thereby creating the basis upon which intensified cooperation in the economic and social sectors can develop at the Community level. (Council, 1987: 21-2).

Several scholars share the Commission's assumption that the ERASMUS experience abroad and personal contact with other European fosters discreetly but firmly a European identity from below (e.g. Fligstein, 2008; Etzioni, 2007; Green, 2007; Petit, 2007; Lutz *et al*., 2006; Marks, 1999; Laffan, 1996; Wallace, 1990). Nevertheless, there are only two studies, to the best of my knowledge, that attempt to measure empirically the ERASMUS effect, and they both suffer from serious methodological weaknesses.

The first study is based on a series of interviews with female students at Birmingham University. Krämer-Byrne (2002) argues that ERASMUS students realised during the sojourn that they were becoming more European orientated, even

[8] ERASMUS has attracted media attention several times. See, for instance, Bennhold (2005), The Guardian (2006). In 2002 the ERASMUS student experience was dramatised in the French film 'L'Auberge Espagnole' ('Pot Luck' in English).

if this feeling excluded the UK, their host country. However, the small and unrepresentative sample of Krämer-Byrne's (2002) does not allow us to generalise from these findings.

Even a large-scale survey would be inappropriate if it did not measure properly the development of European identity over time. As Stroebe *et al*. (1988: 82) pointed out, '[s]tudents who choose to study abroad are…a highly selected group, but only selected for positive attitudes'. ERASMUS students, therefore, are likely to hold a strong European identity prior to the sojourn, and it may even be the reason why they choose to study abroad. It is precisely for this reason why we can not accept the findings of the second empirical study at face value. King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) maintain that former ERASMUS students are more likely than sedentary graduates to identify themselves as partly or exclusively European. However, their survey findings are based on a retrospective rather than longitudinal assessment of the ERASMUS effect. As I show in the next section, ERASMUS students are indeed more likely to have a stronger European self-identity than non-mobile students, but this is not the result of the overseas experience *per se*.

FINDINGS FROM A LONGITUDINAL SURVEY ON ERASMUS AND EUROPEAN IDENTITY

The Model and Sample Demographics

To measure the effect of the ERASMUS experience on students' European identity I conducted a longitudinal survey measuring the attitudes of the same individuals at the beginning (pre-test) and the end (post-test) of the academic year 2003/04. To ensure any observed changes were due to the ERASMUS sojourn rather than historical, developmental or cohort factors, the same questionnaire were distributed to a control sample of sedentary students.

The control sample consists of 60 Reading University students who did not go abroad during 2003/04, and the ERASMUS sample is divided in two sub-samples (Table 1). The incoming group consists of 241 continental European students who spent their ERASMUS period in one of nine English universities (Essex, Keele, Oxford Brookes, Reading, Southampton, Southampton Solent, Warwick, Western England/Bristol, York). The outgoing group consists of 161 students, mostly British,

who studied in continental Europe and had as their home institution one of the nine English universities.[9]

Table 1. Sample Demographics

		Control (N=60)		Outgoing (N=161)		Incoming (N=241)
Pre-test Response Rate (%)		24.2		45.8		46.6
Post-test Response Rate (%)		25.1		25.6		26.8
Gender (%)	Female	61.7		70.2		64.7
	Male	38.3		29.8		35.3
Age	Mean	21.3		21.7		23.4
	Std. Dev.	5.6		1.2		2.0
Nationality (%)	British	85	British	81.4	German	28.6
	Dual British	8.5	Dual British	4.8	French	25.3
	Other	6.5	German	2.5	Italian	16.2
			Italian	2.5	Spanish	8.7
			Other	8.8	Dutch	3.3
					Belgian	3.3
					Swedish	2.5
					Austrian	2.5
					Other	9.6
Host Country (%)			France	36.6	UK	100
			Germany	28.6		
			Italy	10.6		
			Spain	6.8		
			Netherlands	5		
			Other	7.4		
			Unknown	5		

Source: Author's own data.

Ideally, in order to fully distinguish variation in the ERASMUS effect between countries and nationalities, we would need a pre-test and post-test sample of incoming and outgoing students from every European country participating in the programme. A large-scale and Europe-wide longitudinal survey, though, comes at a very high cost and, therefore, had to be excluded as an option. Hopefully, future research will rectify

[9] Panel attrition is inevitable in longitudinal studies (Menard, 1991), but it is only a problem if it introduces bias in terms of the dependent variable (Allison, 2002). The missing value analysis suggested this is not the case here.

this. Nevertheless, the distinction between outgoing and incoming students here allows us to test the hypothesis whether the ERASMUS outcome is conditional on the host country choice. Incoming students stayed for a year in Britain, one of the most Eurosceptic countries in the EU (McLaren, 2006: 21-30), whereas the majority of the outgoing students visited countries less Eurosceptic than the UK.[10] That means that environmental influences, regarding European identity development, are more likely to be positive amongst the outgoing rather than the incoming sample.

In the following sections I employ bivariate analysis to test whether the ERASMUS experience has a positive effect on students' knowledge of the host country and its culture, and on their European self-identity, pride and attachment. In addition, I examine what is more relevant for a positive ERASMUS outcome: the original level of students' European identity or the choice of the host country.

Knowledge of the Host Country and its Language

When ERASMUS was incorporated in 1995 in the 'Socrates' programme the 'quantitative and qualitative improvement of the knowledge of the languages of the European Union' became one of its official objectives (EP & Council, 1995: 13). The encouragement of European language learning was expected to lead 'to greater understanding and solidarity between the peoples of the European Union, and to promote the intercultural dimension of education' (*ibid.*). At the very least, speaking more than one European language is indispensable for communicating with other Europeans. Thus, if personal contact and communication with other Europeans can foster a European identity, being able to converse in a common language is of fundamental importance. Furthermore, the foreign language learning process involves learning about the particular foreign culture which is also instrumental in the formation of a common European identity.

The ERASMUS experience should help students to improve their foreign language skills in several ways. Firstly, a relatively large number of students study for a foreign language/culture degree and usually choose for their ERASMUS sojourn the

[10] In virtually all EB surveys British respondents are amongst the least likely to value the EU and European integration positively.

host country whose language and culture they study.[11] Secondly, all ERASMUS students, regardless of their academic subject, are instructed either in the host country language or in another European language. Thirdly, outside the classroom students communicate with other Europeans in a language other than their own, which again may be the host country language or another major language such as English or French. Foreign language improvement, therefore, is integral to the ERASMUS experience.

In addition to the possibility of improving one's European languages skills, the ERASMUS experience gives students the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the culture of their host country. Students do not spend all their time in lecture theatres, but reserve some for their recreation and for travelling within the host country. Their social activities in the new environment should help students to learn more about their host country. In short, the ERASMUS experience should promote students' knowledge of their host country and their competence in the host country language.

My survey findings confirm both hypotheses, as Table 2 shows. In line with the results of other studies (Maiworm & Teichler, 2002; Krzaklewska & Krupnik, 2006; Otero & McCoshan, 2006) both outgoing and incoming ERASMUS students reported a statistically significant increase ($p<.001$) in their host country language competence. In a scale from 0 (low) to 6 (high) the linguistic competence mean for the outgoing group rose by .74 units from 3.58 to 4.32. Similarly, the average increase among the incoming group was from 3.88 to 4.50. The higher pre-test mean probably reflects the fact that the host language for the incoming students was English which is very popular as a first foreign language.

[11] In 2005/06 15.2 per cent of ERASMUS students followed Language and/or Philology degrees making it the second largest subject group after Business studies (Commission, 2008).

Table 2. Host Language and Country Knowledge (Paired Sample t-tests)

0: Low	Pre-test		Post-test	
6: High	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
How would you rate your competence in the language of your host country?				
OUT (n=158)	3.58	(1.57)	4.32***	(1.55)
IN (n=235)	3.88	(.96)	4.50***	(.92)
How much do you know about the country you did your ERASMUS studies?				
OUT (n=158)	4.18	(1.10)	4.61***	(.94)
IN (n=239)	3.38	(.98)	3.82***	(1.04)

Note: SD=standard deviation. ***p<.001 (two-tailed).
Source: Author's own data.

The outgoing students appeared well informed about the country they would spend their ERASMUS period. The pre-test mean for the outgoing students was 4.18, whereas for the incoming it was closer to the scale's midpoint at 3.38 (Table 2). Nevertheless, both groups improved their knowledge about the country they visited over time. In both samples the increase was statistically significant (p<.001) and almost identical in absolute terms. In particular, the post-test country knowledge mean reached 4.61 for the outgoing student and 3.82 for the incoming.

Obviously the host country knowledge and language variables do not apply to the control sample, but it is safe to assume the improvement over time in both variables is the result of the ERASMUS sojourn. Not only are there strong theoretical reasons to expect such an outcome, but it was observed in both ERASMUS samples which minimises the possibility of alternative explanations. We can conclude, therefore, the ERASMUS programme achieves its objective in promoting European language learning and familiarity of other European cultures. Unfortunately, however, the survey findings are not as encouraging regarding the programme's effectiveness to foster a European identity.

The ERASMUS Effect on European Identity

For the measurement of students' European self-identity, pride and attachment I borrowed the questions from the EB surveys number 49 (1998) and 57 (2002) –the exact wording can be found in Tables 3 and 4. The self-identity question, which asks respondents if they see themselves in terms of their nationality only or also as European, is a categorical variable, while the other two variables are handled as numeric. The values in the latter variables range from 0, indicating a weak European pride or attachment, to a maximum of 6. In addition to the three well-established questions measuring European identity, I asked students whether they feel they have many things in common with other Europeans. Since ERASMUS is meant to bring European students closer to each other and help them realise their culture is part of a European family of cultures, we would expect students to realise in the course of their sojourn abroad that they have more things in common than they originally thought.

Table 3. In the Near Future Do You See Yourself As…?

	Control		Outgoing		Incoming	
%	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Nationality only (1)	39.3	35.7	18.9	17.5	2.5	3.7
Nationality and European (2)	39.3	37.5	53.8	55.2	64.7	63.5
European and nationality (3)	12.5	17.9	18.2	19.6	29.5	30.7
European only (4)	3.6	5.4	6.3	5.6	2.1	1.2
Missing	5.4	3.6	2.8	2.1	1.2	.8
Primarily European (3+4)	16.1	23.3	24.5	25.2	31.6	31.9
Primarily Nationality (1+2)	78.6	73.2	72.7	72.7	67.2	67.2
MH Test Sig. (two-tailed)	.223		.677		.638	
N	56		143		241	

Notes: MH= Marginal Homogeneity. Only responses from British students in the Control and Outgoing categories are reported.
Source: Author's own data.

Against popular expectations, I find no evidence that the ERASMUS experience leads students to adopt a European self-identity. On the contrary, what is clear is that ERASMUS students are more likely to see themselves as primarily European, that is, European only or first European and then nationals of their country, than non-mobile students, but not because of the study abroad experience itself. As we can see in Table 3, there are no statistically significant changes over time in any of the samples.

Virtually as many outgoing and incoming students continued to identify themselves they way they did at the start of the ERASMUS sojourn. What is also interesting, but not surprising, is that British students are more likely, compared to their continental peers, to profess an exclusive national or European self-identity (cf. Cinnirella, 1997).

Table 4. European Pride, Attachment and Commonalities (Paired Sample t-tests)

0: Low	Pre-test		Post-test	
6: High	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
Are you proud of being European?				
CONTROL (n=59)	2.73	(1.64)	3.08*	(1.68)
OUT (n=156)	4.04	(1.41)	4.14	(1.56)
IN (n=234)	4.31	(1.43)	4.00**	(1.52)
How attached do you feel to Europe?				
CONTROL (n=60)	2.57	(1.36)	2.60	(1.38)
OUT (n=160)	3.51	(1.28)	3.72*	(1.43)
IN (n=231)	3.90	(1.18)	3.82	(1.36)
How many things do you feel you have in common with other Europeans?				
CONTROL (n=60)	3.12	(1.24)	3.22	(1.20)
OUT (n=158)	3.64	(1.01)	3.93***	(1.06)
IN (n=238)	3.83	(.78)	3.94	(.85)

Notes: SD=standard deviation. *p< .05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed).
Source: Author's own data.

Table 4 compares the European pride, attachment and commonalities pre-test and post-test means and exhibits some intriguing results. Again contrary to conventional wisdom, ERASMUS does not strengthen students' European pride. Moreover, if the ERASMUS experience in continental Europe simply had no effect on outgoing students' European pride, it had a negative impact among incoming students. From 4.31 the incoming European pride mean fell to 4.00 over time, a statistically

significant decline ($p<.01$).[12] This result, in combination with the development of the other two variable means, suggests the ERASMUS experience in England may be counterproductive in terms of European identity growth. In particular, while the ERASMUS sojourn in continental Europe helps outgoing students to feel more attached to Europe and acknowledge more commonalities with other Europeans, it has no such effect in England.

Before we can be more confident that the ERASMUS outcome is likely to differ between countries, possibly because of, for instance, the influence of Eurosceptic media or other environmental parameters, we need to address the possibility of a ceiling effect. Stroebe *et al*. (1988) asserted that mobile students are a self-selected group, and usually there is more room for deterioration rather than improvement in their attitudes towards their host nation. In Tables 3 and 4 we can see that ERASMUS, and in particular incoming, students are more likely to hold a European identity which may be the reason why the sojourn did not have an effect on European self-identity and a negative one on incoming students' European pride.

A simple way to check for a potential ceiling effect is to divide the samples into 'Eurosceptics' and 'Europhiles' and compare the development of the means over time. If a ceiling effect does obstruct European identity growth and the choice of host country is irrelevant, we should see both outgoing and incoming students with low levels of pre-test European identity to report an increase over time. Likewise, ERASMUS students with particularly strong European identity should see their European identity weaken over the sojourn. However, the statistical artefact known as regression to the mean needs to be taken into consideration. Kelly & Price (2005) explain that when the correlation between different time measurements is less than perfect, respondents with values below the mean in the pre-test period will, on average, have higher values in the post-test period and vice versa. In order to avoid the regression fallacy and mistakenly interpret the result as a ceiling effect, it is necessary to observe there are no statistically significant changes in the control sample.

[12] Notice the European pride mean in the control sample moves in a different direction than the mean in the incoming sample. Hence, we can conclude the ERASMUS experience in England had actually a negative impact on students' European pride.

Table 5. European Pride, Attachment and Commonalities among Eurosceptics (Paired Sample t-tests)

0: Low	Pre-test		Post-test	
6: High	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
Are you proud of being European?				
CONTROL (n=40)	1.85	(1.12)	2.38**	(1.46)
OUT (n=53)	2.47	(.91)	3.00**	(1.53)
IN (n=62)	2.39	(1.01)	2.68	(1.55)
How attached do you feel to Europe?				
CONTROL (n=43)	1.93	(1.01)	2.35*	(1.40)
OUT (n=77)	2.47	(.80)	2.91**	(1.24)
IN (n=83)	2.61	(.68)	3.17***	(1.31)
How many things do you feel you have in common with other Europeans?				
CONTROL (n=36)	2.28	(.78)	2.75*	(1.13)
OUT (n=62)	2.60	(.64)	3.29***	(1.09)
IN (n=74)	2.86	(.38)	3.51***	(.93)

Notes: Eurosceptics are respondents with pre-test values below or equal to three ($Y_{t-1} \leq 3$). SD=standard deviation. *p< .05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed).
Source: Author's own data.

If we return to Table 3 we notice that those students who see themselves exclusively as European or as nationals of their country only did not change their mind over time. In other words, a ceiling effect does not apply to the European self-identity variable.[13] The t-tests in Table 5 show that there is a statistically significant increase for nearly all students with a pre-test value below the scale midpoint, regardless if they are ERASMUS or not. The sole exception are the incoming students who fail to show any signs of European pride growth, even if their original European pride levels are rather low. It seems, therefore, ERASMUS does not have a greater effect among students with a weak European identity. Consequently, outgoing students did not feel more attached to Europe simply because their original European

[13] Unless an equal number of respondents shifted from one response category to another, which is very unlikely, the percentages between the pre-test and post-test periods remained virtually identical because the same individuals opted for the same responses.

attachment was very weak; it was the ERASMUS experience itself that fostered this change.

Table 6. European Pride, Attachment and Commonalities among Europhiles (Paired Sample t-tests)

0: Low	Pre-test		Post-test	
6: High	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
Are you proud of being European?				
CONTROL (n=19)	4.58	(.77)	4.58	(1.02)
OUT (n=103)	4.84	(.83)	4.73	(1.21)
IN (n=172)	5.00	(.77)	4.48***	(1.19)
How attached do you feel to Europe?				
CONTROL (n=17)	4.18	(.53)	3.24**	(1.15)
OUT (n=79)	4.52	(.73)	4.51	(1.13)
IN (n=148)	4.62	(.68)	4.18***	(1.25)
How many things do you feel you have in common with other Europeans?				
CONTROL (n=24)	4.38	(.50)	3.92*	(.93)
OUT (n=96)	4.31	(.49)	4.34	(.81)
IN (n=164)	4.26	(.46)	4.13*	(.74)

Notes: Europhiles are respondents with pre-test values above three ($Y_{t-1} > 3$). SD=standard deviation. *p< .05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed).
Source: Author's own data.

Likewise, we can argue that it was the ERASMUS experience in England, in particular, that led incoming students reappraise their European pride downwards. The t-tests on the Europhile sub-samples in Table 6 confirm this. More than half of outgoing students felt very proud to be European at the beginning of their sojourn, but there are no signs of a statistically significant decrease over time. The opposite is true for the incoming students: the European pride mean fell from 5.00 to 4.48 which is a statistically significant decrease (p<.001). With regard to European attachment and commonalities it is again only incoming Europhile students who reported a decline during the sojourn. However, the statistically significant change among the control

group suggests the reason behind the falling means in the incoming sample is regression to the mean rather than anything else. Thus, a ceiling effect is only to a limited extend responsible for the lack of European identity growth over time.

Given the evidence presented here, the Commission has every interest to reverse the ERASMUS student flow imbalance in Britain. As long as the ERASMUS experience in Britain does not enhance a European identity and any positive effects are confined to the outgoing students, it is unfortunate that Britain receives more ERASMUS students than it sends. Even worse, the number of British ERASMUS students has been falling for over ten years now. According to the Commission (2008) data, outgoing mobility in Britain reached its apogee in 1994/95 with 11,988 students. However, by 2005/06 there were only 7,131 outgoing students, a drop of 41 per cent. As a result of this trend, British universities have been keen to reduce the intake of ERASMUS students, which may not be too bad an idea from a European identity development perspective. Overall, if ERASMUS is to play any role in the dissemination of a European identity it is not enough to leave things in chance. On the contrary, what is needed is to strengthen mobility to and from those countries where the inter-cultural sojourn is most likely to have a positive impact on students' European identity. This may not be easy, but it is definitely worth a try.

CONCLUSIONS

Whether ERASMUS is really a success story or not depends, ultimately, on one's standpoint and expectations. Leaving other pedagogical dimensions aside, the study abroad experience helped ERASMUS students to familiarise themselves with another European country and culture. Equally, it enabled them to practise their foreign language skills and, in particular, to improve their competence in the host country language. Both these developments are good reasons for the European Commission and the national authorities to praise the value of the ERASMUS programme.

If, however, ERASMUS is seen as the secret weapon that will convert young Brits, French, Greeks, and so on, to archetypal European citizens with a strong sense of European identity, one is bound to be disappointed. The findings from the longitudinal survey confirm that mobile students are more likely to hold a European identity, but not because of the mobility experience itself. The ERASMUS sojourn failed to instil a European self-identity or enhance students' European pride. On the

contrary, continental Europeans felt, on average, less proud to be European at the end of their sojourn in England. Similarly, it was only outgoing ERASMUS students who strengthened their attachment to Europe and who reported an increase in terms of perceived commonalities with other Europeans.

Finally, I showed that a ceiling effect played only a limited role in the particular ERASMUS outcome. What is more important is the host country choice. Unfortunately, the outgoing sample is not large enough to examine the ERASMUS effect in each European country individually. Nevertheless, the countries the outgoing students visited were all less Eurosceptic than Britain which may be the reason why only outgoing students felt more attached to Europe and acknowledged more commonalities with other Europeans. Future research will hopefully shed more light on the question of environmental influences, and allow us to determine why the ERASMUS experience varies between countries and, furthermore, in which countries it is most or least likely to have a positive impact on European identity.

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