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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

EUROPEAN IDENTITY-A CASE STUDY

LI XIN

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Abstract

As far as the European Union is a polity with a status of citizenship, according to political theory, it requires a sufficient degree of political identity for its very political legitimacy. European identity is not only a popular topic among scholars and the European political elites but also is highly noted by the mass media and individuals in the European Community. Throughout the history of the European Union, there have been multifarious understandings and opinions about European identity in different Member States, and there are a lot of researches which have been invested in what this means precisely. The purpose of this thesis is: 1) to reconstruct a plausible concept of the identity of the European Union that has empirical meaning from the EU research literatures and, 2) apply this concept to a small but empirical research project to test this with respect to the attitudes of European college students in Macao.

A brief summary of the main results of my research shows: the perception level of European identity from the European college exchange students in University of Macao is medium-low. The knowledge and political involvements levels are lower than in general the results of the Eurobarometer reports. There is no significant correlation among the factors of the cognitive model, perception level of European identity and knowledge of European citizenship. Cultural component is playing a role in European identity but it still cannot be representation of European identity. National identities do not appear to be threatened by European identity, as the European college students who did not fear for losing their cultural identities tended to adopt the political culture of the European Union. Respondents who trusted the European Parliament and those who did not trust the European Commission were more likely to vote in MEP 2009.

Key words: European identity, European college students, political culture, cultural identity, religious identity, national identity

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