BEYOND BORDERS:
CONSTRUCTING A EUROPEAN IDENTITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

By

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Lauren A. Fackender
To my parents, Chris Carmody and M. Leann Brown—
I am forever grateful for your love and support.
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The story of Northern Ireland is one of war and peace; the conflict has been compared to Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Israel, colonial Algeria, or even the war between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda. The two communities are not only divided by the color of their flag and religions, but political allegiances almost always coincide with religious identity. The Catholics are republicans and the Protestants royalists, the former calling for the province’s entry into the Irish Republic, the latter wanting to remain in the United Kingdom.

Academics contend that the EU could play an important role in creating a form of symbiotic cooperation on the island. The European Union’s Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the six Border Counties of Ireland is one such program. Known as PEACE, the structural adjustment program was created in 1994 to reinforce societal stability and to promote reconciliation. The PEACE initiative includes as its goals various economic and social projects and possibly the construction of a common EU identity. As the EU becomes a key player in the conflict, this community involvement may directly or indirectly foster a shared sense of “European-
ness.” Deliberately fostering the creation of an EU identity could play a role in shifting identity associations from Protestant and Catholic and British and Irish to EU citizen. As the drive towards European unity and integration erodes national borders and the notions of sovereignty that underpin them, it is important to ask: To what extent did the EU conceptualize Priority 2 of the PEACE program to include the construction of a European identity as a solution to the conflict?

The analysis focuses on an examination of primary PEACE II data, specifically the PEACE II Operation Manual, as it is the primary instrument of the Commission with respect to the PEACE II initiative. In addition to the Operation Manual, successful PEACE II grant proposals were examined to determine if the creation of a new identity is reflected in funding requests which were ultimately accepted under PEACE II. This investigation ultimately revealed that despite general references to identity building in the PEACE II Operation Manual, the same language is noticeably absent from the grant proposals that were accepted under PEACE II, Priority 2.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The story of Northern Ireland is one of war and peace; the conflict has been compared to Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Israel, colonial Algeria, or even the war between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda: “Unshackled by space or time, [the Irish conflict] fascinates and disturbs.”¹ The two communities are not only divided by the color of their flag and religions, but political allegiances almost always coincide with religious identity. The Catholics are republicans and the Protestants royalists, the former calling for the province’s entry into the Irish Republic, the latter wanting to remain in the United Kingdom. Visible signs of the conflict remain: peace walls, barbed wire fences separating Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods, barred school windows and murals depicting stories of a long-suffering people. On the Falls Road in Belfast, British flags and painted sidewalks line the streets of the Protestant neighborhoods and just 10 feet away, on the other side of the 15-foot barrier, Catholic communities proudly showcase their Irish heritage. In fact, some scholars contend that the conflict “deeply rooted in British-Irish history, is less one of religious strife than of conflicting national identities in Northern Ireland.”²

Identity conflicts have long been a part of the Northern Ireland genealogy. Prior to 1922, the whole of Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. During the nineteenth

¹ This quotation resonates with me, personally, because as a child I often heard stories about the conflict from my aging Irish grandparents. I have always understood the conflict to transgress all ages, times, and places. Courbage, Y. (1997). The demographic factor in Ireland’s movement towards partition (1607–1921). Population: An English selection, 9, 170.

century, the movement for Home Rule in Ireland emerged as the most significant factor in Irish political life. Faced with armed struggle both for and against Home Rule in the two parts of the country, the British Government settled on partitioning Ireland. In 1921, an independent twenty-six county Irish Free State (now the Republic of Ireland) was established while a six-county Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom. In 1972, Direct Rule was imposed by Westminster and has been the primary source of conflict in the proceeding years. The civil war has cost the United Kingdom more than £8 billion and has resulted in a death toll of more than 3,000 since 1969.3

Scholars often conceptualize the conflict in frameworks that have dominated the analyses of ethnic conflict for decades, including democratic and market transitions and globalization and security challenges. This paper, however, will take a new approach. It will instead seek to explore identity associations and the European Union’s (EU) role in the conflict. Academics such as Paul Teague contend that the EU could play an important role “in creating a form of symbiotic cooperation on the island whereby cross-border economic links and political stability in a new Northern Ireland go hand-in-hand”.4 The European Union’s Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the six Border Counties of Ireland is one such program. Known as PEACE, the structural adjustment program was created in 1994 to reinforce societal stability and to promote reconciliation.


The first PEACE program was agreed to by the European Heads of State and Government in December 1994 and was formally established in July 1995. The program was allocated a total amount of €500 million (approximately £340 million) by the EU for the period 1995–1999. Some 80% was spent in Northern Ireland and 20% in the Border Counties of Ireland (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, and Sligo). The PEACE program was designed to involve people at the grassroots level and to focus on those areas and sections of the population most affected by the conflict. It was given wide scope for action, covering social inclusion, economic development and employment, urban and rural regeneration, and cross border cooperation. PEACE I funded more than 13,000 projects across Northern Ireland. A large part of the funding was delivered through local partnerships, voluntary and community groups.

Acknowledging the success of PEACE I and the continuing special needs associated with the peace process, the European Council in March 1999 decided to extend the program for an additional five years (2000–2004). Due to its success and positive impact in Northern Ireland, PEACE II was again extended by the European Union through 2005–2006. The most recent extension added over €144 million in additional funding to the PEACE II project. Total EU funding for PEACE II over the years of 2000–2006 totaled more than €796 million with approximately 80% of the funds allocated to projects in Northern Ireland (€565.6 million). The resources provided by the EU are in addition to other public expenditure in Northern Ireland. Together with match

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6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.
funding provided by the Government the total value of the program is worth around £425 million to Northern Ireland.8

PEACE II is managed by the Special EU Programs Body (SEUPB), one of the six North/South Implementation Bodies set up under the Belfast “Good Friday” Agreement. The specific aims of PEACE II are to assist Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland to

- Address the legacy of the conflict;
- and take advantage of opportunities arising from the peace process.
- Within the overarching priority of promoting peace and reconciliation, the PEACE II program has five main themes:
  - economic renewal;
  - social integration, inclusion and reconciliation;
  - locally based regeneration and development;
  - outward and forward-looking region;
  - cross-border co-operation.

The European Commission is currently examining the possibility of extending PEACE II through 2008 following a request from the European Council. At this critical juncture, it is important to analyze the success of the PEACE II initiative and how the EU has contributed to moving Northern Ireland towards peace and stability through the creation of a common EU identity. Since the PEACE II goal structure set out by the EU is purposefully broad for purposes of implementation, we will identify specific language within the mission statement that is mostly likely to address the social, or identity, aspects of the conflict. Taking the stated goals in their entirety would require a detailed study of all aspects of the conflict. In an effort to break this paper down into a more manageable analysis we will only address Priority 2: social integration, inclusion and reconciliation.

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8 Ibid.
It is these concepts of social integration, inclusion and reconciliation that will become a starting point for our analysis as we try to determine if the EU included collective identity building as a goal under PEACE II, Priority 2. In recent decades, the EU has not only become a powerful economic force in Northern Ireland but “a formidable supranational political lever that [has] swayed the attitudes and behaviors of all parties to the conflict”\(^9\). These activities may include various economic and social projects and possibly the construction of a common EU identity. As the EU becomes a key player in the conflict, this community involvement may directly or indirectly foster a shared sense of “European-ness.” Deliberately fostering the creation of an EU identity could play a role in shifting identity associations from Protestant and Catholic and British and Irish to EU citizen—which could be classified as reconciliation, integration and inclusion between the two communities. As the drive towards European unity and integration erodes national borders and the notions of sovereignty that underpin them, it leads us to ask: To what extent did the EU conceptualize Priority 2 to include the construction of a European identity as a solution to the conflict?

My analysis will focus on an examination of primary PEACE II data, specifically the PEACE II Operation Manual, as it is the primary instrument of the Commission with respect to the PEACE II initiative. In addition to the Operation Manual, successful PEACE II grant proposals will also be examined to determine if the creation of a new identity is reflected in funding requests which were ultimately accepted under PEACE II. Through an in-depth discourse analysis, we will seek to ascertain if the EU has interpreted social integration, inclusion and reconciliation to mean the promotion and

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creation of a common EU identity in Northern Ireland. The analysis of the Operation Manual and the accepted grant proposals will be broken down to determine if and how EU involvement is conceptualized in the PEACE II initiative and whether it includes a significant discourse regarding identity policy building. For, it would logically follow, that if the EU defines social integration, inclusion, and reconciliation as a common European identity then they will encourage EU involvement and identity policy building as well as the funding of grassroots organizations who comply with similar objectives. This investigation will ultimately reveal that despite general references to identity building in the PEACE II Operation Manual, the same language is noticeably absent from the grant proposals that were ultimately accepted under PEACE II, Priority 2.
CHAPTER 2
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS THEORY AND
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST UNDERPINNINGS

The language of Priority 2 was left vague for purposes of implementation, giving grassroots recipients of PEACE II funding ultimate control over projects to bridge sparring Protestant and Catholic communities. The EU Special Programs Body defines Priority 2 as “measures that target opportunities and needs in both urban and rural areas across the region, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups and those most affected by the conflict”. In order to establish a more definitive understanding of what the EU meant by Priority 2, and more specifically whether this definition includes a common European identity, it will be important to explore the rhetoric that surrounds discussion of reconciliation, integration and inclusion. Here the key question is neither the prevalence nor the empirical demonstrability of reconciliation, inclusion and integration in the current debates but rather the extent to which these terms are defined by the construction of a common EU identity in the context of the PEACE II priorities.

Discourse theory is an appropriate starting point for our analysis as it seeks to determine not what people say but rather how people engage in dialogue. This is a useful approach as we will be trying to determine how the EU Special Programs Body has talked about integration, inclusion and reconciliation and to what extent this conversation encompasses rhetoric about a common EU identity. The underlying assumption of discourse theory begins with the contention that things do not have meaning in and of themselves, instead, they only become meaningful in discourse. Objects and subjects of

knowledge such as “man,” “reason,” “sovereignty” and “civilization” change over time as they enter into human, social life. In other words, integration, inclusion and reconciliation conjure up different meanings depending on the context and present communicative environment. In order to understand the meaning of these words in the context of PEACE II we must cut into these webs of meaning and the discourse surrounding them.

Discourse can take a variety of forms but for the purposes of this study we will be analyzing EU documents such as operating and oversight manuals and grant proposals. These aspects of discourse can be classified as text “or moments when language connected to other semiotic systems is used for symbolic exchange”.11 All texts are located in key social institutions including families, schools, churches, workplaces, mass media, government, and so on. Discourse consists of recurrent statements and workings across fields of knowledge and belief and they can develop to serve institutional purposes and projects. Discourse is pervasive and permeates all aspects of international institutions such as the EU. Analyzing the discourse of these EU programs help to remind us that institutions, while usually having some material presence (buildings, records) are also congealed discourses (norms, beliefs, standard operating procedures).12

A task of contemporary discourse analysis is to theorize and study the micro-politics of discourse, to examine actual patterns of language use with some degree of detail and explicitness but in ways that reconnect instances of local discourse with salient

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political, economic, and cultural formations. That is, the task of a critical sociological discourse and power are manifest in the everyday aspects of texts in use. Discourse is not a linear process and the results are not top-down ideological manipulation. Rather, communities participate in discourse in local, often idiosyncratic ways, both resisting and becoming complicit in their own moral regulation. In other words, discourse encompasses the “study of how texts are constructive of social formations, communities, and individuals’ social identities”. Human subjects use texts to make sense of their world and to construct social actions and relations required in the labor of everyday life. At the same time texts position and construct individuals, making available various meanings, ideas and versions of the world.

Discourse is constructive by nature as it defines and positions human subjects in broad social formations and in local sites. Discourse constructs truths about the social and natural world, truths that become the taken-for-granted definitions and categories by which members of communities define themselves and others. Through stories, text and dialogue, individuals as well as institutions use discourse to highlight who they are, who they are not, and their place in society. Since discourse plays a key role in constructing identities it is important to examine what identities are so we can recognize them in EU documents and text.

Social constructivism suggests that identities may be an important starting point in understanding human interactions, which is particularly relevant in the context of ethnic rivalries. Conflict usually suggests the presence of two competing identities; the

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“self” and “the other” help distinguish between these two interests. Identities perform three necessary functions in a society: they tell you who they are (they define the “self”), they tell you who others are (they define the “other”) and they tell others who you are.\textsuperscript{14} In telling you who you are, identities usually imply a particular set of preferences with respect to particular actors. In any sense, identities are usually created by a shared set of preferences, norms and historical experiences.

Identities belong to that potent set of social arrangements in which people construct shared stories about who they are, how they are connected, and what has happened to them. Such stories range from the small-scale production of excuses, explanations, and apologies when something goes wrong to the large-scale production of peace settlements and national histories. Whatever their truth or falsehood by the standards of historical research, such stories play an indispensable role in the sealing of agreements and the coordination of social interaction. Stories and identities intersect when people start deploying shared answers to the questions “Who are you?” “Who are we?” and “Who are they?”

Identities can be built on many different levels as individual citizens interact with a vast number of social institutions including but not limited to governmental, religious and social constructs. In order to fully analyze the question of whether the creation of a common EU identity was a goal of PEACE II we must determine what a common EU identity would look like so we can recognize it in relevant PEACE II discourse. The idea of a European identity is a relatively new concept and scholars generally agree that if Europe is to become a European State, an alternative model of democracy and a new

conception of identity is necessary. The construction of a European identity would suggest that there is a change in the way EU citizens view national political identity. The EU’s international identity is not a multiplier of difference that merely exaggerates the dissimilarities between the EU and the rest of the world through a new European supranational identity “but functions solely on the basis of addition by adding an EU element to Europeans’ complex and multifaceted identities”.15

Allegiance is not necessarily limited to one particular entity such as the nation-state. Often times “citizens’ identity in contemporary polities is formulated by multiple affiliations to different social groups on the basis of diverse factors such as gender, political conviction, ethnic or cultural particularities”.16 Just as a citizen of the United States, for example, can hold allegiance to her city, state and country, the same can apply true to the citizens of the EU. We all “live with multiple, dynamic and shifting identities, loyalties and commitments”.17 Individuals can belong simultaneously to two different bodies on the grounds of different factors of identification. One can be a “member-state national in the sense of organic-ethnic identification and an EU citizen in the sense of transnational affiliation to a different set of values: those transcending ethnoculturalism”.18 In other words, a common identity can develop at all levels of social organization, whether sub-national, national, or transnational. The essence of the


European collective identity theory is that these levels are not mutually exclusive—all of the aspects of identity formation and identification are necessary in a multi-level system such as federal state, or the EU. Multiple identities and loyalties “are required for the existence and effective functioning of a multi-level system of collective organization. If social identities and identifications operate entirely at one level, the overall structure is likely to be unstable”.19

The EU and its institutions are vital elements that facilitate the creation of “community of fate identities” that operate at the transnational level. Since an EU identity is likely to evolve in ways which do not directly replicate the experience of a state-based national citizenship, we must understand how and through what processes EU identities are created. This is important to establish because it is unlikely that EU identity building will be explicitly named in discourse, so we must be able to recognize the channels through which EU identity building occurs. In the most basic sense, EU identity must comprise “both a notion of identity which enables the members of the community of the EU to identify each other within the political processes of European integration”.20

Contemporary scholars such as Jo Shaw have suggested two primary ways in which transnational entities, such as the EU, can foster identity formation. One way to do this is through EU governance structures that offer something with which individuals can identify, such as the Euro or the European Space Program. These structures work as a means of inspiring loyalty and a sense of identity with the fate of the EU, while at the same time avoiding the replacement of established national or regional identities. The

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socio-psychological process whereby particular social structures or institutions become meaningful objects of identification by individuals “is part of the creation and elaboration of new social systems which are becoming ever more common phenomena in contemporary life”.\textsuperscript{21}

The second way to encourage identity formation is through EU law and policy structures. There are a number of ways in which a collective organization such as the EU can shape individual and social identities—that is, people’s conceptions of themselves, the other, and of the groups to which both belong. In addition to actual collective entities such as the EU, “processes of identity formation linked to the policy activities of transnational polities provide vital tools for a closer empirical examination of citizenship rights and duties (so far as they exist) in the EU”.\textsuperscript{22} In other words, policy activities can also be a useful mechanism in the construction of a common EU identity whether implicitly or explicitly. The EU, for example, acts globally as an entity when it distributes foreign aid, converses on policy issues with the United States, or when it represents EU countries as part of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Such activities are just three tangible examples of joint law and policy actions that allow the EU to appear as one entity and thus give Europeans specific illustrations of European activity with which to identify.

Sovereign nation states were once the defining factor in foreign policy decisions and actions. In the past decade, however, there has been a movement towards the creation of a separate identity for Europe. While this identity does not replace the identity of the member states, it is beginning to carve out a place in the global arena.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.} p. 311.
Policy actions and the prevalence of EU institutions are working to shape old identities and foster the creation of new, collective identities. In doing so, interplay between supranational organizations such as the EU and individuals is creating a two-way street in which there are mutual effects and impacts.

22 Ibid. p. 312.
CHAPTER 3
DISCOURSE LANGUAGE IN THE MAKING
AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PEACE II

An Overview

In order to determine whether EU identity formation was a goal of the PEACE II program we will turn to the PEACE II Operation Manual and subsequently, PEACE II grant proposals, to unveil whether EU institutions and the formation of a collective identity was a relevant part of the discourse surrounding the creation and implementation of the initiative. When the ceasefires were called in 1994, the European Commission immediately sought ways in which it could help the new situation. A special task force was established and, after wide-ranging consultations, it produced the proposal: A Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland. This body “argued that to exploit fully the economic and social opportunities created by the end of violence and to push the region nearer a permanent peace, a package of financial assistance was required from the EU”.23 Known inside Northern Ireland as the European peace package, the initiative resulted in a 300+ page Operation Manual that outlined the goals and structure of the PEACE II Program as well as selection criteria for the grassroots organizational funding of PEACE II. Due to the fact that the Operation Manual and subsequent grant proposals serve as the primary vehicle through which the Commission communicated information regarding PEACE II, it proves a solid candidate for an in-depth discourse analysis of the peace initiative.

While not explicitly stated as a goal of the PEACE II program, our discourse analysis will reveal that the Commission may be fostering EU identity formation through EU institution building and by encouraging multiple-identity policy initiatives. The usefulness of EU institutional involvement in Northern Ireland is prevalent throughout conflict literature. Since they have endured most of the violence, many communities in Northern Ireland have developed a deep sense of political and social alienation, as well as experiencing considerable economic hardship. By targeting money on such areas, the EU may start a process of reconciliation and help lift the cloud of despair from those communities. Scholars contend that EU institutional involvement will be beneficial to the peace process because to “weaken engrained nationalist and unionist beliefs requires a recasting of the economic and political foundations of Northern Ireland”.\(^{24}\) The EU standing once removed from the conflict, yet growing in authority and competence, has been viewed as a suitable institution for the promotion of peace.

The second way in which the Operation Manual may be affecting identity formation is through policy initiatives set forth by EU institutions that encourage identity building. Policy preferences and development, in particular, “can implicate the role of normative processes in the evolution of identities or relationships”.\(^{25}\) In essence, specific EU policy directed at adding an EU allegiance to preexisting British Protestant and Irish Catholic identities is a more focused element of EU institution building. Institutions and policy decisions reinforce a sense of community, thereby strengthening relationships and making the existence of a form of membership more meaningful within Northern Ireland.

\(^{24}\) Ibid. p. 552.

Both institution and policy, when working together, can result in the creation of a new, transnational identity.

Even if the PEACE II Operation Manual does recognize that a common European identity plays an important role in ameliorating the conflict, this discourse is only relevant to our analysis if these notions of identity are operationalized in funded PEACE II projects. The Special EU Programming Body which is responsible for the implementation of PEACE II highlights a comprehensive list of 1,965 successful PEACE II grant applicants. These grant proposals provide valuable insight into whether identity-building initiatives were an integral element of projects that were ultimately funded under PEACE II. Following an in-depth analysis of the PEACE II Operation Manual it is then necessary to examine a sampling of successful grant applications to complete this dichotomy. If European identity building initiatives were in fact contemplated in the PEACE II Operation Manual it would follow that the projects chosen for funding by the Commission would reflect such goals.

Through discourse analysis, we will be able to establish whether institutions and policy-building measures within the PEACE II Operation Manual and accepted grant proposals foster the creation of a common EU identity. This analysis offers a perspective on how identity formation at various levels may work through the agency of the activities of a transnational polity. Following the theory of EU identity, the remainder of this paper will embrace an in-depth discourse analysis by examining first, the prevalence of EU involvement within the Operation Manual followed by an examination of identity initiatives within the document and finally, an analysis of successful grant applications that invoke these specific initiatives. In the case of Northern Ireland, both the prevalence
and context of the discussion surrounding these concepts will allow us to fully answer the question of whether EU identity was conceptualized during the construction and implementation of the PEACE II documents and beyond.

**The PEACE II Operation Manual: Emphasis on EU Involvement and Identity Transformation**

The first step in understanding whether a common EU identity was a goal of PEACE II involves a determination of whether EU involvement was conceptualized as having a role in the peace process. The Operation Manual begins by recognizing the challenge of supporting and reinforcing progress towards a more peaceful and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. It then establishes the importance of the European Union’s role in addressing the legacy of the conflict and the necessity of allowing the EU to take full advantage of the opportunities arising from the peace. Despite the fact that much of the PEACE II funding was to be allocated to grassroots organizations for implementation purposes, the Operation Manual goes on to outline specific channels for EU involvement, calling PEACE II an “innovative program not only in a UK and Irish context, but also at the level of the European Union as a whole”.26

The role of the EU as a central figure in the peace process is critical, because building a European identity can be jump-started by recognition of broader European, rather than regional issues. The PEACE II discourse suggests that the conflict is not just and Irish problem but a wider European problem. In some ways, particularistic, competitive, and conflicting Irish identities have generalized this conflict. The EU, therefore, offers alternative identities and norms under the guise of social inclusion,

integration and reconciliation. The PEACE II Operation Manual recognizes that the EU has shown continued commitment to maintaining the momentum for peace and reconciliation and preserves that role for the future. As the stated Rationale for PEACE II, the document goes on to explain that it is not merely for the benefit of bringing peace to Northern Ireland but “for the wider benefit of the European Union as a whole.”

Rather than creating a narrowly tailored community initiative, the PEACE II Operation Manual stresses a need for greater European involvement to alleviate the conflict. The Manual even goes on to state that in the context of PEACE II, the Special EU Program Body plays a central role. The Operational Manual explicitly states that “it will be the Managing Authority of the new PEACE II Program…and will be involved in the administration of the cross-border elements of the other Community Initiatives Program on the island of Ireland”.

Aside from recognition of the importance of general EU involvement, the Operation Manual also established significant oversight capacities. Although significant autonomy and flexibility was given to grassroots organizations during the implementation phase of PEACE I, the Operation Manual’s discourse focused on reining in grassroots organizations in an effort to maintain oversight capacity to synchronize peace initiatives. Once of the specific problems that the Operation Manual specifically named with PEACE I was problems with coordination and implementation of grassroots programming. Excessive local control “caused confusion in that sometimes calls for project applications were similar to those within other program measures and [PEACE I funding] was not


28 Ibid. p. 10.
being administered on a wider regional thematic basis”.

The Program discourse goes on to highlight remedial measures to increase the involvement by the EU in the management and implementation of PEACE II including:

- The need for formal coordination procedures between all relevant EU Programs offering similar forms of assistance in the same areas covered by PEACE II.

- Funding bodies should have a clear understanding of their role and area(s) of responsibility and of their relationship with other relevant organizations both within PEACE II and other EU Programs.

- Meaningful and consistent financial and other information needs should be coordinated electronically and, where appropriate, form part of a wider shared database in order to facilitate the coordination with other relevant EU Programs or forms of assistance.

In addition to ideas outlined above, the Commission established the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) as an oversight body specifically created to ensure EU involvement in the PEACE II initiative. The discourse within the Operational Manual explains that the role of the NSMC is “to bring in the European Union dimension of relevant matters, including the implementation of EU policies and Programs and proposals under consideration in the EU framework”. The Manual discourse also made arrangements to ensure that the views of NSMC are taken into account and represented appropriately at relevant EU meetings. While some may contend that these changes were a conscious effort by the EU to increase efficiency, maintain control, and heighten fiscal responsibility, none of these contentions were actually outlined as reasons why the NSMC was implemented. The primary stated reason for the implementation of the NSMC was simply to increase EU involvement in the PEACE II process.

29 Ibid. p. 16.

30 Ibid. p. 9.
This change in emphasis from the original PEACE I program to include a European element to PEACE II is strategically significant. As the EU establishes a presence within Northern Ireland, peace and community building efforts will simultaneously be attributed back to the EU. More importantly, the visible presence of EU within the community will foster a greater spirit of unity among those in Northern Ireland. The European element is particularly important with respect to PEACE II, as the majority of the programmatic funding goes to individual grassroots organizations. Without the European emphasis, PEACE II has the possibility of becoming highly fragmented and compartmentalized as individual organizations pursue their own initiatives. If the Operation Manual discourse remains contextualized by the EU, it seems to suggest that the presence of a European element is of central importance to the creators of PEACE II.

The PEACE II Operation Manual: Emphasis on Multiple Identity Formation

In addition to the Operation Manual’s insistence on EU involvement and strengthening oversight, there is also a significant discourse on combating the single identity formation through policy initiatives. The document explains that increased polarization of settlements has reduced opportunities for building cross-community relationships with 87% of Northern Ireland communities being classified as “single identity”. Northern Ireland is, for the most part, single identity and work on capacity and confidence building has traditionally been restricted to activities within individual communities. The Manual explains that for a growing number of community groups,

“the challenge lies in encouraging them to take the next step towards a more inclusive society”.32 After decades of conflict the rural community is increasingly segregated and polarized. At the local level, village centers and rural roads are often “marked out” with flags, emblems and graffiti with the purpose of defining territory and making members of the other community feel unwelcome. As well as increasing social division and tension, these activities have been in direct conflict with community building.

The discourse of the Operation Manual outlines action, projects and policy supported by the PEACE II program in order to alleviate these single identity problems. In choosing grassroots programs for PEACE II funding, the Operation Manual explains that irrespective of whether they are region-wide or locally based, originating from grassroots or higher levels “cross-community or identity projects financed under the PEACE Program should facilitate in one way or another cooperation or joint action between different communities and parts of the community or build cohesion and confidence within a community with the perspective that this is a first step in breaking down community divisions”.33 While not distinctly outlining the creation of a European identity per se, discourse surrounding the goals and rationale of supported grassroots organizations should emphasize identity building. The Program will support projects “in favor of one single community insofar as they contribute to confidence or capacity building in identity with an explicit aim at reconciliation between communities in Northern Ireland or across the Irish border”.34 PEACE II will benefit, in particular, if

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32 Ibid. p. 111.
33 Ibid. p. 31.
34 Ibid. p. 34.
those projects are in favor of groups, areas or sector/activities that engage in the process of reconciliation and mutual understanding.

The Manual offers several ways in which this can be accomplished. By “supporting environmental projects which involve the entire community, especially socially excluded groups, the Measure will contribute towards creating rural areas that are welcoming for residents and visitors and which contribute to peace building at a local level”.35 Northern Ireland is fortunate to have a significant number of village/community halls in rural areas. However, many of these are owned and managed by single identity organizations and the halls are often perceived as for use by one element of the community only. The Operation Manual explains that the “maintenance, conservation and enhancement of the environment can provide a means of enhancing local community identity and serve to bring divided communities together with a common non-controversial goal”.36

Although there is conversation in the Operation Manual focused on breaking down single identities and reconstructing new ones, it is still unclear from my limited research whether the EU meant to build a common EU identity through the implementation of the PEACE II program. PEACE II discourse does reflect policy formation and support of grassroots organizations who work to combat the problem of single identities. This suggests that the PEACE II program may, at the very least, have the building blocks in place that are necessary to begin identity building projects. Further research into committee notes, working papers or accepted grant proposals would be necessary, however, before definitively concluding that the EU is indeed working to

create a common European identity thereby adding a new element to the conflict in Northern Ireland.

**Implementation and Exploration of Successful Grant Applications**

The true test of whether a common EU identity was indeed contemplated by the authors of PEACE II is whether identity building projects were a component of applications ultimately chosen for funding under PEACE II. If a common EU identity was a goal of PEACE II, it is likely that the European Commission would look favorably on projects that promote identity building. An in-depth examination of grant proposals will corroborate the analysis of the PEACE II Operation Manuel and will help us determine whether identity building concepts were in fact contemplated by the EU Commission and if so, how such goals were translated and ultimately operationalized in order to begin the process of change. By exploring a random sampling of successful grant applications and the discourse surrounding each proposal, we will be able to determine whether the building blocks for a common identity are present not only in the PEACE II Operation Manual but also in the PEACE II funded programs.

The Special EU Programming Body (SEUPB) outlined a database of approximately 1,965 successful applications under PEACE II, Priority 2 during the time frame of 2000–2006. These projects were classified under one of eleven measures aimed at achieving the goals set forth under Priority 2. Upon examining each grant proposal to determine their placement under the appropriate measure, the projects were distributed as follows:

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Table 2-1. Project classification of funded projects under PEACE II, Priority 2. Compiled from a list of grant proposals of the Special European Union Programs Body.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project classification</th>
<th>Total number of projects under PEACE II, Priority 2 (2000–2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure 1: Reconciliation for sustainable peace</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 2: Developing children and young people</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 3: Building the social economy</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 4: Pathways to inclusion, integration and reconciliation</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 5: Investing in childcare</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 6: Promoting active citizenship</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 7: Developing weak community infrastructure</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 8: Accompanying infrastructure and equipment support</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 9: Renovation and development of villages</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 10: Encouragement for tourist and craft activities</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure 11: Area-based regeneration</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the measures, on their face, specifically pinpointed identity building. In order to obtain a full understanding of the types of projects approved under each measure of Priority 2, I took a sample of the first 10 projects listed under each of the eleven measures in order to explore project descriptions and grant application discourse. A more scientific sampling would have consisted of a random sampling of all 1,965 combined projects or, ultimately, coding each of the 1,965 projects in order to pinpoint specific discourse in a scientific content analysis. Due to constrains of time and manpower, for the purposes of this research analysis, the first ten projects under each measure will serve as the foundation for determining whether building a common EU identity transcended the Operation Manual and was in fact present in projects that were ultimately funded under PEACE II, Priority 2.
Upon a careful reading of the project descriptions and goals of 110 PEACE II, Priority 2 funded projects none of the sampled projects explicitly mentioned EU involvement as a primary objective nor did the projects explicitly emphasize the creation of a common EU identity. The majority of the discourse focused on embracing differences, finding new ways to bring Irish and British citizens together, and building community infrastructure. One project did, however, make a broad reference to identity. The Rural Development Counsel of Cookstown, Northern Ireland explained, as part of their project description, that their mentoring and training services will facilitate the development of the capacity of groups to implement local culture, heritage and identity projects in a manner, which maximize their contribution to peace and reconciliation. While just a brief mention of identity, it is indicative of the fact that identity projects are not completely foreign to the PEACE II, Priority 2 framework.

Despite one broad reference to identity, the project discourse was noticeably absent of specific references to EU involvement and EU identity building. Without further research, it is impossible to decipher what the EU meant by “social integration, inclusion and reconciliation” under the language of PEACE II, Priority 2 and whether or not Priority 2 encompassed a vision for a wider EU identity. The lack of specific identity discourse does still allow us to make preliminary conclusions based on rudimentary data. The first possible conclusion is that the EU did not intend to include the creation of a common EU identity under PEACE II, Priority 2. In the alternative, the second possible conclusion is that the EU did intend to include identity building as part of PEACE II, Priority 2 despite the absence of specific references to identity. Without evidence of identity building discourse in accepted grant proposals, it is difficult to say that the
European Commission definitively intended to support the creation of a common EU identity under PEACE II. There are, however, several reasons why EU involvement and identity discourse may not have been more readily apparent throughout the grant proposal discourse.

The absence of projects aimed at building new identities is not necessarily reflective of the absence of a true intent to build a common identity. More realistically, this deficit is possibly the result of the EU’s lack of implementation capacity. PEACE II, just a small segment of the EU’s overall structural readjustment and economic policy programs, is representative of a minute fraction of the thousands of individual grassroots programs that fall under the jurisdiction of the European Union. Priority 2, one of four priorities under PEACE II, is home to over 1,965 projects alone. This is just a small indication of the magnitude and sheer number of projects that fall under EU supervision. The failure of the EU to translate their perceived goals from the PEACE II Operation Manual to ground projects is perhaps indicative of the lack of implementation capacity. The various committees under the SEUPB who are charged with granting applications are several steps removed from the Commission who envisioned the purpose of the PEACE II project. Disconnect between the hierarchy and a lack of direction by the EU may also have resulted in projects that strayed from the original PEACE II goals. Furthermore, the grant criteria outlined by the Commission is short and lacks rigid guidelines for prospective applications, giving grassroots organizations the ability to freely interpret the broad language of any of the four outlined priorities under PEACE II.

Secondarily, but of equal importance, are the inherent difficulties associated with reconstructing identities in an area with a history of civil conflict. Contemporary
scholarship on the notion of a common identity in Northern Ireland highlight why definitive references to EU identity building may be problematic in this context. Academics contend that the building of a European identity, if more explicitly encouraged, might be met with resistance from the local community. Reflecting a widely held nationalist expectation, scholars have suggested that the closer cooperation between Northern Ireland and the EU will induce the unionist community in the north to shift its loyalties away from Britain and towards the Irish Republic. The literature suggests that once different national political and economic elites decide to deepen cooperation between themselves, even in fairly prescribed policy areas, they will find that the scopes of boundaries are quickly expanding. As a result of this gradual process, the “political foundations will be laid for the unification of Ireland”.37 This view has typically been described as the rolling integration scenario which explains “the process whereby political actors in separate national settings are persuaded to shift their traditional loyalties, expectations and activities from a well-established political formation towards a new constitutional order”.38

In other words, large scale identity rhetoric is especially dangerous for the EU’s relationship with the British government. The Irish unionists have consistently sought to internationalize the conflict in Northern Ireland, primarily because it highlights the problems in Northern Ireland and “alert[s] people to become aware of the situation in Europe”.39 The British government, who has always tried to label the Irish conflict as an


38 Ibid.

internal challenge, may not take well to a deliberate attempt to meddle in domestic affairs. Unionists in Northern Ireland have often objected, in the strongest terms, to any outside interference in the province. An overt focus on identity building would perhaps result in backlash, further entrenching divides. National sensitivities are, perhaps, one reason why a common EU identity is not more obviously encouraged within the Operation Manual and therefore the reason they are not more obviously present in the accepted PEACE II, Priority 2 accepted grant proposals.

Even if the EU was to focus more openly on identity building, the EU would likely find that constructing identities is both a complicated and delicate process. In the case of Northern Ireland, it consists of strengthening old identities while at the same time fostering the creation of new ones. An effort aimed at the eradication of the Irish Catholic and British Protestants associations would only cause further divide and a distrust of the EU. The EU is therefore faced with the challenge of amplifying this diversity while at the same time encouraging those diverse identities to take on a new association with a new constitutional order. In particular, the EU faces the challenge of “creating a framework for European identity that makes the cost of conflict…too high to continue and that feed[s] . . . the recognition of shared needs and the creation of a common identity”.

In order to embrace a new identity, individuals must be comfortable with existing identities. British Protestants must be challenged to recognize and accommodate Irish Catholic national and cultural identities, and vice versa. It is only when the sparring cultures are able to work together and accept each other that the formation of a new,

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40 Ibid. p. 262.
common EU identity will even be possible. Once a new identity association is formed, it would be the hope that a common European tie would win out over other conflicting identities. Just as members of the United States shares differences based on state and regional identities, a common tie to a greater nationality unites individuals despite their differences. In the same vein, the EU “does not seek to replace or construct [identities], but instead reiterates them through the formalization of dual state involvement”.41

Fostering a new level of identity formation while embracing cultural difference is a difficult task, but the final obstacle is operationalizing identity building. Despite an in-depth analysis of constructivist theories on identity formation, a determination of exactly what consists of identity building projects still remains unclear. Due to the climate of Northern Ireland, specific references to EU institutionalism and the creation of a common EU identity may not be appropriate. In such a situation, the rhetoric may be toned down and thus harder to recognize. Many of the funded projects, despite their absence of specific rhetorical references to EU identity building, could perhaps be conceived as paving the way for such goals. Since the theory is unclear as to how identity projects are operationalized, many of the PEACE II projects could be interpreted as fostering identity building. In particular, projects under Measure 6, Promoting Active Citizenship, Measure 8, Accompanying Infrastructure and Equipment Support, and Measure 5, Investing in Childcare.

Project 001350 or the Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, for example, explained in their proposal that the purpose of the group was to “promote diversity of mixed communities, identify and highlight issues relevant to mixed communities, lobby for the recognition of the need for policy in relation to mixed

41 Ibid. p. 263.
communities and develop a specific approach to working with these communities”. 42

Citizenship projects may be the first step towards building tolerance and acceptance of conflicting identity groups. Some scholars have noted that “if citizens vote for parties that most strongly represent and defend what they see as their identity and interests (defined along British unionist or Irish nationalist lines) . . . the institutionalization of this difference can lead to an impasse on issues that are of significance to the identity of both groups”. 43 Close cooperation on political issues, with the EU at the helm, can only serve to bring together two traditionally sparring populations under a European flag.

In the same light, project 00893 or the Lisburn Mens Education Network, is another example of the citizenship building initiatives that fall under PEACE II, Priority 2. The aim of the Lisburn Mens Education Network is to help people understand the rights and obligations of citizenship as well as the process of government, political ideologies and the various electoral processes in order to become more active in civic society. While not overtly outlining the prospects of building a loyal European citizenry, this initiative could be classified as an identity building project. Acknowledgement and encouragement of the two governments could improve the prospects for progress to take place with the active participation of all law-abiding parties in Northern Ireland. By fostering active citizenship through EU funded programs, both British and Irish alike can peacefully express their national identities while simultaneously working to build allegiance to the EU.


Finally, Project 001622, the OPELS First Steps Playgroup, is just one of the hundreds of playgroups focused on the socialization of young people. As the second highest funded measure under Priority 2, this is perhaps the most overt step in European identity building as all of these projects focus on the integration of British Protestant and Irish Catholic children. The stated goal of the OPELS First Steps Playgroup was to “[provide] 40 places to pre-school children in a non-denominational Early Years Care and Education setting”.

The proposed curriculum included learning about cultural differences, equality, diversity, tolerance and acceptance. The project explicitly states that they “welcome and include children with special needs and from ethnic minorities regardless of their religious backgrounds”. Socializing children and encouraging them to build a common identity through interaction and tolerance is an important step in deconstructing barriers. Children in America, for example, come together each day in classrooms across the nation to pledge their allegiance to the flag and to sing patriotic songs. These activities occur despite their differences in religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. If both British Protestant and Irish Catholic children are given the opportunity to come together in a safe environment created by the European Union, it is possible that they will begin to build a common identity from an early age. Just like children in America, differences will perhaps be surpassed in light of a new and common ground.

It is impossible to say, without further research, exactly why EU involvement and EU identity building discourse was not mentioned in the PEACE II accepted grant

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proposals. We can, however, conjecture as to why these initiatives were notably absent. The political dynamics of Northern Ireland, the difficulties of inculcating tolerance for diversity while simultaneously working to build new identities, and the challenges of operationalizing such initiatives makes the concept of a common EU identity increasingly difficult in Northern Ireland. Recognizing these challenges, however, is the first step towards the peaceful expression of national identities in Northern Ireland.

The European Parliament once stated in the Haagerup Report, the first major initiative taken by the EU on the situation of conflict in Northern Ireland, that it is “aware that the conflict, deeply rooted in British-Irish history, is less one of religious strife than of conflicting national identities in Northern Ireland.”46 To some extent, the EU’s approach to the conflict is the belief that it is caused by historical antagonism between British and Irish nationalisms and identities. The very concept of conflicting identities paved the way for this research and led us to ask: To what extent did the EU conceptualize Priority 2 to include the construction of a European identity as a solution to the conflict? In an attempt to inculcate identity I examined the SEUPB’s PEACE II Operation Manual and successful PEACE II, Priority 2 grant applications. Through an in-depth discourse analysis of both materials, the research revealed a somewhat surprising conclusion: Despite my initial assumption that these documents would clearly demonstrate a desire to build a common EU identity, clear discourse to that effect was noticeably absent from the PEACE II documents.

One could conclude from the data that building a common EU identity was never a contemplated as part of the PEACE II project. Identity building may be too lofty of a goal for a new constitutional order or it is perhaps something that the EU believes will come in time as a natural result of economic integration. In the same vain, however, the data may also suggest the very opposite. The EU may have intended a common EU identity to be a crucial part of the PEACE II programming despite its absence from the

Operation Manual and grant proposal discourse. Neither conclusion, however, can be made with any sort of preciseness, quite simply, because the examined data was insufficient to draw any sort of robust conclusion. The data that was sampled was a just a small indication of the European Commissions goals for PEACE II. In addition to the Operation Manual, the SEUPB archives are home to dozens of PEACE II reports and publications. These documents include monitoring committee papers, extensive implementation reports, and monitoring and evaluation working group minutes, just to name a few. A far more detailed study is required before a definitive conclusion can be reached.

In addition to the challenges associated with researching such extensive bodies of data, there were also theoretical challenges as well. Discourse and constructivist identity theories explained identity basics and how multi-leveled allegiances are built. The problem, however, is with how operationalizing such projects. The scholars that address EU identity building focus, only generally, on two elements: that EU institutions and EU law and policy play a critical role in facilitating the creation of transnational identities. In the case of PEACE II, the project is funded and administered by the SEUPB, an EU institution, thereby meeting the first element of successful identity building. The problem begins, however, with identity policy structures. The theory never addresses what identity policy looks like or how to recognize them, especially in the context of sensitive national situations where identity projects transcend the obvious. Future theory should work to close the gaps and pinpoint specific identity structures so that identity building bodies, such as the EU, will be better positioned to implement such objectives.
The strengths and weaknesses of this research are clear. The discourse analysis was notably narrow for the purposes of this study, and a more well-rounded examination would provide stronger evidence with which to answer the proposed question. If this topic was to be expanded into a possible dissertation, future studies may seek to determine if grassroots organizations are working to implement collective EU identity building on the ground, despite the lack of clear identity language in their grant proposals. A comparative case study with similar conflicting cultural identity groups, such as the Basque in Spain, could also be done to determine if the EU is working on identity building in other parts of the Union.

The strengths of this paper, however, lie in its implications. Regardless of how explicit the formulation of an EU identity is within the text of PEACE II, examining EU identity in this way allows us to see citizenship not only as a symbolic flag waved from time to time by actors such as the Commission, the European Parliament and even the Member States, but also as one facet of the day-to-day policy-making activities of all those institutions and entities. In Northern Ireland, EU policy is not just an exercise in codification or consolidation, but also recognition of identity as an integral part of the EU polity. Although in the context of Northern Ireland, the analysis may seem excessively idealistic or utopian, in terms of the presumed benefits to be derived from European integration, the building of a common identity may be a new and innovative solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland. A common European identity may have the ability to shift or at least build upon current relationships—Irish and British, Protestant and Catholic—to create a shared notion of EU identity.
It is still unclear exactly what the contributions of the EU will be towards peace in Northern Ireland but it would be naive to believe that identity building will automatically cause political discontent to wither away. The EU, however, may indeed have an important role to play in the conflict in Northern Ireland. Seeking innovative solutions to the age-old troubles may include the formation of a common identity—one that fosters community and one that extinguishes sharply divided borders in favor of a united Europe.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Lauren A. Fackender was born on June 1, 1981 in Tallahassee, Florida. The oldest of three children, she grew up in Tallahassee, graduating from Leon High School in 1999. She earned her B.A. in political science and history from the University of Florida (UF) in 2003. In 2006 Lauren graduated with a joint degree in law and political science.