**Opting for opt outs? -
Untangling the role of identity in shaping support for
differentiated integration**

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Abstract.

A large literature investigates support for European integration. However, only recently have public opinion scholars turned their focus to public perceptions of differentiated modes of integration. This article contributes to this growing literature by investigating whether exclusively national identities lead to a demand for more differentiated integration at the EU level, regardless of individual views of the question of EU membership. Using survey data from 2020, I show that solely identifying with one's nation-state does not generally increase support for differentiated integration. However, both exposure to voluntary differentiation and politicization of national identity seems associated with an increased propensity to support functional differentiation, also among culturally exclusive supporters of the EU. This suggests that while differentiation's capacity for overcoming a constraining dissensus may be overstated, exposure to voluntary forms of it may increase demands for differentiation in the longer run.

Introduction

The issue of the legitimacy of future models of integration has become increasingly important to the post-Brexit EU. One model posited as a possibility for the future EU is that of differentiated integration, which generally can take two forms: It may be temporal, which lets countries arrive at the same level of integration, but at different speeds, or it may be functional, by allowing some member states to opt out of certain instances of policy integration (European Commission 2017; Leuffen *et al.* 2013). However, we still know little about what drives individual-level support for such models of the EU.

Whereas previous literature into this question (de Blok and De Vries 2020; Leuffen *et al.* 2020; Leuffen *et al.* 2021) has focused on liberal values and Euroscepticism as important drivers of support for differentiation, this article examines whether exclusive identification with the nation-state, also known as culturally exclusive identities, can increase individual support for differentiated integration even among supporters of the EU. A large literature already investigates the link between such identities and Euroscepticism (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Karstens 2020b; Schoen 2008; Verhaegen and Hooghe 2015). Whether and how national identity, which is increasingly seen as important also to the broader political behaviour literature (Bornschier *et al.* 2021; Sobolewska and Ford 2020), shape support for a differentiated EU is however under-examined by the literature.

A frequent argument for differentiated integration is that it offers better protection of national autonomy than the uniform integration that is the current ideal for today's EU (Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2020; Schraff and Schimmelfennig 2020; Thym 2017). This may make it more attractive to those identifying solely with their nation-states, who have been found by previous literature to be more concerned with the EU's potential threat to

national sovereignty (Hooghe and Marks 2005). However, despite previous literature touching upon exclusively national identity as a predictor of support for differentiated integration (Leuffen *et al.* 2021), it has not investigated whether this increases support for differentiated integration even among those want their countries to remain EU members. This article departs from previous literature by treating culturally exclusive identities as something other than a synonym for Eurosceptic sentiments, but rather as something that can co-exist with support for EU membership and increased probabilities of supporting differentiated integration.

Using data from 2020, I make a threefold empirical contribution to the literature on public support for differentiation: First, I find that support for differentiated integration is only marginally greater among culturally exclusive supporters of EU membership than those whose identities are more inclusive. Culturally exclusive identification does, however, increase support for differentiated integration among Eurosceptics. Finally, I find that the effect of identity seems contingent upon exposure to both differentiated integration and the existence of national discourses that frame attachment to the nation-state as either congruent or incongruent with support for European integration.

Given the small effect of culturally exclusive identities, differentiated integration may, even though it has frequently been used to advance integration in highly salient policy areas (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2016) be insufficient to overcome increasing popular dissent to ever-more salient policy integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009). However, local variations in support for differentiation among supporters of EU membership with exclusively national identities suggest that exposure to voluntary differentiated integration can increase support for it in the long run.

This latter implication is of importance to the EU as it enters into further deliberations about its post-Brexit future. It is also of interest for future regional co-operations seeking to use the EU as a benchmark, by suggesting that differentiation is not necessarily more likely to be acceptable to those identifying most strongly with their nation-states.

Conceptualizing support for differentiated integration

A large literature investigates support for uniform European integration and the individual drivers of such support (see Basile and Olmastroni 2020; Gabel 1998; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Hobolt and Wratil 2015; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Karstens 2020a; Lutz and Karstens 2021 for examples).

Broadly speaking, this literature distinguishes three mechanisms that shape support for European integration. One is utilitarian, with individuals supporting integration because they believe membership will benefit them or their country (see Gabel, 1998; Gabel and Palmer, 1995 for early contributions to this literature). Secondly, the literature identifies a cueing mechanism, where citizens make up their mind about integration using cues from national elites and mass media (de Vreese *et al.* 2011; De Vreese *et al.* 2016; Harteveld *et al.* 2013; Hooghe and Marks 2005). Finally, the literature distinguishes an identity-based contestation of integration, where individuals oppose integration due to the perception that it will threaten national sovereignty (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hooghe and Marks 2018). Such opposition is particularly prevalent among those that identify only with their nation-states. The utilitarian and identarian dimension also intersect, with economic conditions galvanizing collective identities (Foster and Frieden 2021).

This article turns its empirical gaze to a comparatively under-theorized phenomenon: public opinion for differentiated integration, and how it is shaped by different configurations of national identity. A large literature investigates differentiated integration conceptually (Leuffen *et al.* 2013; Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2014; Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2020), normatively (Bellamy 2019; Fossum 2015; Nicolaïdis 2004) and empirically (Malang and Holzinger 2020; Winzen 2020). However, save for some very recent contributions (de Blok and De Vries 2020; Leuffen *et al.* 2020; Leuffen *et al.* 2021), we still know little about the drivers of individual-level public support. This article contributes to the literature on the differentiated post-Brexit EU (Gänzle *et al.* 2019) by investigating how exclusively national identities shape preferences for differentiated EU integration.

The first contribution this article makes is to investigate whether exclusive identification with the nation-state increases support for differentiated integration even among those not sharing the same group's well-established opposition to EU membership (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Karstens 2020b; Skinner 2012). The correlation between exclusiveness of national identities and opposition to EU integration is posited to stem from how exclusive identification with the nation-state makes it more likely for individuals to perceive nation-states as the legitimate locus of political activity. As differentiated integration may theoretically combine stronger protection of member state autonomy with functionally beneficial integration (Leuffen *et al.* 2013), it may be more attractive to supporters of EU membership who identify solely with their nation-states than to other supporters of the EU. This is because they, much like culturally exclusive Eurosceptics, are likely to perceive the EU as a possible threat to member state autonomy.

While the likelihood of such support is greater where the respondent's country would benefit from differentiation, the concern for national political autonomy and the correlation between identity and support for differentiated integration that it gives rise to, is likely to be independent of utilitarian evaluations. Understanding whether identity increases demand for differentiated integration among supporters of the EU with culturally exclusive identities thus strengthens our understanding of the extent to which it can allow the EU to overcome a constraining dissensus (Hooghe and Marks 2009).

Evidence exists of a connection between culturally exclusive identity and support for differentiated integration (Leuffen *et al.* 2021: 16–17). However, previous literature has not sufficiently investigated whether this support is found even among those that identify as supporters of the EU. Support for EU membership is more likely to co-exist with support for a more differentiated EU among those with culturally exclusive self-identification due to how it arguably allows for strong protection of national sovereignty. I hypothesize the following:

H1a: That even when controlling for their views of EU membership, those who identify solely with their nation-states will be more supportive of differentiated integration.

This is arguably particularly likely for functional differentiation which allows countries to opt in and out of EU integration on a policy-by-policy basis (Leuffen *et al.* 2013; Leuffen *et al.* 2020). The reason is that it may allow for opt-outs from policy integration perceived as particularly threatening to national sovereignty. A contribution of this paper is thus to establish whether exclusively national identities increase support for differentiated integration even among supporters of EU membership. I hypothesize the following:

H1b: The effect is greater for support for functional differentiated integration.

Euroscepticism can itself predict support for differentiated integration, both on its own or in interaction with ideology (de Blok and De Vries 2020). We are likely to see a similar interaction effect with identity: Literature indicates that the Euroscepticism of those identifying only as national is primarily motivated by concerns over sovereignty (Hooghe and Marks 2005). Individuals who reject EU membership while identifying only with their nation-state may thus be more likely to support differentiation than those with more inclusive identities, as it better protects the sovereignty that is the likely source of their Euroscepticism. The second contribution of this paper is thus to investigate whether Eurosceptics who identify exclusively with the nation-state are more likely than other Eurosceptics to support differentiated integration. I hypothesize the following:

H2a: That expressing opposition to EU membership will be correlated with support for differentiated integration.

H2b: This effect will be stronger for those expressing both opposition to EU membership and exclusive identification with their nation-states.

This article further advances the literature by using country-level analyses to investigate how national contexts influence the strength and direction of the connection between identity and support for differentiated integration. Leuffen *et al.* (2020) find a regional component to such support. However, they do not investigate how the relative salience of important variables differs by national context. This is important because support for differentiated integration may be influenced by citizens' exposure to it. For instance, differences may exist between among citizens exposed to constitutional differentiated integration, where countries opt out of policy integration they perceive as particularly threatening to national sovereignty (Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2014), versus those that have had differentiation imposed upon them. This was particularly common in countries such as Poland and other Eastern

enlargement states (Cianciara 2014). It is likely that support for functional differentiation will be greater among culturally exclusive supporters of the EU in countries where opt-outs from policy integration have been entered into by states themselves. However, endogeneity may be an issue here, as those countries where differentiation has been entered into voluntarily may also be those where support for differentiated integration is strongest. This may lead to overestimation of the effects. I hypothesise the following:

H3: That support for differentiated integration among those with exclusively national identities will be greater where citizens have previously been exposed to voluntary differentiated integration.

Previous literature also suggests that support for uniform integration predicts support for temporally differentiated integration. The same applies to support for free trade and higher levels of education (Leuffen *et al.* 2020). Conversely, other literature finds that Euroscepticism predicts support for differentiated integration, but that it is contingent on the mechanism of differentiation (de Blok and De Vries, 2020).

This article thus advances the rapidly emerging literature on support for differentiated integration in three important ways: First, it investigates whether exclusive identification with the nation-state increases support for differentiated integration even for supporters of EU membership. Second, it examines how identity shapes Eurosceptic preferences for differentiated integration. Finally, as exposure to varying manifestations of differentiated integration may shape support for it, it investigates how exposure to either externally imposed or constitutional differentiated integration shapes preferences for differentiation among supporters of the EU who only identify with their nation-states.

Methods and data

To investigate the hypotheses I use data from a survey fielded by Yougov in April 2020 (Genschel *et al.* 2020). It asks a representative sample of European citizens from 13 EU countries questions about both diffuse and specific support for EU integration. Two of the questions deal with support for an EU that is differentiated either temporally or functionally.

A limitation of this data is the period in which the survey was fielded: April 2020 represented an early phase of the COVID-19 crisis, which may have increased support for trans-European solidarity (Cicchi *et al.* 2020). However, as Cicchi *et al.* show, solidarity still seems to reside primarily at the national level. This suggests that the conclusions may be generalizable beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I must still account for how the COVID-19 crisis may have created different baseline levels of support for differentiated integration in each country. I do this by specifying random country intercepts for each country.

Another challenge is possible omitted variable bias, such as the absence of data on the respondent's education and knowledge of the EU in the survey, previously found to correlate with support for differentiated integration (Leuffen *et al.* 2020). However, my model includes two variables, support for the EU and left-right orientation, that is frequently found to correlate with both of these variables. This means that some of the bias is likely reduced due to these variables. I also implement a sensitivity analysis (reported in A5 and A6), which shows, using Euroscepticism as a particularly relevant variable against which the importance of potential confounders should be judged, how much variance of both Euroscepticism and support for differentiated integration potential confounders must account for in order to nullify the effect of exclusively national identities (Cinelli and Hazlett 2020). The analysis shows that the omitted variables need only account for 1.9% and 2.4% of the remaining

variance of both Euroscepticism and support for temporal and functional differentiated integration to bring the lower bound of the confidence interval to zero. While this may not seem that problematic, particularly given that omitted variables together must explain this percentage of residual variance for both support for EU membership and differentiated integration, it shows that omitted variable bias is still a concern.

Dependent variable

The first dependent variable is a variable with a five-unit response scale that asks respondents whether they support a functionally differentiated EU (“Please tell us how far you agree or disagree with the following statement: Member states should be allowed to opt out of specific areas of European integration...”). The response categories are ordered from 1-5, with 1 being Strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree. I reverse code the variable, so that the scale goes from full disagreement to full agreement. By not asking about the more technical “functionally differentiated integration”, the question is made easier to understand.

The second dependent variable asks respondents whether they support a mechanism that allows for temporally differentiated integration of EU policies: “Please tell us how far you agree or disagree with the following statement: The EU should allow countries to integrate at multiple speeds...” The question then makes explicit that the same level of integration should still be the goal, despite such differentiation allowing for different speeds. The response categories go from Strongly agree to strongly disagree. I recode these in an identical way, with 1 coded as Strongly disagree and 5 Strongly agree.

Independent variables

I use variables previously found to predict individual-level support for European integration and specific EU policies. The most important of these is a variable asking individuals whether

they identify exclusively with their nation-state or not. I also use a broad range of control variables previously found to correlate with support for differentiation, to isolate the effect of identity on such support to the greatest extent possible.

Variable of key interest

I operationalize identity through a widely used question that asks respondents to rank the inclusiveness of their identities. I then construct a dummy where those who answer that they identify solely with their nation-states are coded as 1 and everyone else as 0. While nested identities that combine a national and European component are very common (Risse 2003; Starke 2021), previous literature has found that the distinction between exclusively national and partially inclusive identities is more important for predicting Euroscepticism than variations between different nested identities (Hooghe and Marks 2005).

I make the assumption, supported by a large literature (Bruter 2003; Foster and Frieden 2021; Kuhn and Nicoli 2020; Strth 2002; Verhaegen and Hooghe 2015), that European identity is galvanized by both economic threat and political ideology. This means that European identities are shaped by such factors, rather than vice versa. They do, on the other hand, precede Euroscepticism by contributing to a shaping of opposition to integration (Bremer *et al.* 2020; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Hooghe and Marks 2018; McLaren 2002). This makes it necessary to analyse the effect of identity with or without controlling for Euroscepticism.

Support for free market policies and economic variables

I operationalize support for free market policies, a relevant control variable (Leuffen *et al.* 2020), with a question that asks whether respondents want to live in a Europe that “stresses economic integration, market competition and fiscal discipline”. This is opposed to “a global Europe that acts as a leader on climate, human rights and global peace” or “a protective

Europe that defends the European way of life and welfare against internal and external threats”. I create a dummy with all those saying that they prefer a primarily market-oriented Europe coded 1 and others 0. While the question is highly multi-faceted, by asking about both fiscal discipline that may be described as austerity as well as more general market integration, I believe all elements of the question measure aspects of underlying liberal economic views.

I also include an equally weighted index of questions measuring the respondents’ perceptions of the national economy and local job market. These questions are found by a factor analysis to measure the same underlying phenomenon (see A 7). Previous literature finds that positive evaluations of the national economy correlate with support for both uniform and differentiated integration (see for instance Gabel, 1998; Harteveld et al., 2013; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Leuffen et al., 2020: 12). While the same variable may not correlate with support for both modes of integration, it must nevertheless be included as control variables.

Euroscepticism and support for national government

The second set of variables measure support for the national government and underlying Euroscepticism. Both have been found to be relevant for explaining support for either uniform and differentiated integration (Armingeon and Ceka 2014; de Blok and De Vries 2020; Harteveld *et al.* 2013). I add a dummy indicator of Euroscepticism that codes as Eurosceptic all those who respond that they would vote to leave the European Union in a hypothetical referendum. Such Euroscepticism is an important predictor of support for differentiated integration (de Blok and De Vries 2020). While this is a particularly strong form of Euroscepticism, appendix items A3-5 show that the patterns of support for differentiation are largely similar when using an indicator of a more specific form of Euroscepticism, namely dissatisfaction with EU democracy.

I use a dummy that asks whether respondents *believe that their government is doing a good job* to operationalize the respondent's support for their national government.

Socio-political indicators

I furthermore use *ideology* and *gender* as socio-political control variables meant to isolate the effect of identity. These are found to predict support for both integration in general and support for integration of specific policies (for examples of this, see Carrubba and Singh, 2004; Hobolt and Wratil, 2015; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Schoen, 2008). The measure of ideology is a 11-unit scale, where 0 represents far-left and 10 far-right positions. Previous literature finds a curvilinear correlation between ideology and support for the EU, with both left- and right-wing ideology correlating with Euroscepticism (van Elsas and van der Brug 2015). I therefore add a squared indicator of left-right ideology which captures the curvilinear relationship established by the literature.

Variable	N	Mean/ prop.	Std. Dev.	Min	Pctl. 25	Pctl. 75	Max
Support for functional diff.	17640	3.951	0.72	3	3	4	5
Support for temporal diff	16281	2.622	0.996	1	2	3	5
Support for free-market Europe	20055						
Not support	16731	83.4%					
Support	3324	16.6%					
Perception of economy	19588	3.115	1.087	1.5	2.5	4	6
Support for government	18800						
No support	7792	41.4%					
Support	11008	58.6%					
Left-right	16201	3.786	1.432	1	3	5	6
Euroscepticism	16349						
Not Eurosceptic	11715	71.7%					
Eurosceptic	4634	28.3%					
Left-right (sqr.)	16201	16.382	10.97	1	9	25	36
Gender	21779						
Male	10323	47.4%					
Female	11456	52.6%					
Exclusively national identity	20401						
Not exclusively national	12379	60.7%					
Exclusively national	8022	39.3%					

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for all modelled variables.

Model and standard errors

Support for differentiated integration Y for individual i in country j thus becomes a function of a constant (β_{0j}), one's preferred vision of Europe (β_1), support for national governments (β_2) and Eurosceptic beliefs (β_3), gender (β_4), ideology (β_5), a dummy for exclusively national identity (β_6) and an error term ε . The multi-level model of support for differentiated integration can be formulated as such:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta X_{0j} + \beta X_{1ij} + \beta X_{2ij} + \beta X_{3ij} + \beta X_{4ij} + \beta X_{5ij} + \beta X_{6ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

H1 assumes that the effect of β_6 will be larger than zero, and greater for functional than temporal differentiation. *H2a* presupposes that the effect of β_3 will be greater than zero, and *H2b* that the effect of an interaction between β_3 and β_6 will be greater than the isolated effect of β_3 . The interaction model assumed by *H2b* can be formalized as:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0j + \beta X_{1ij} + \beta X_{2ij} + \beta X_{3ij} + \beta X_{4ij} + \beta X_{5ij} + \beta X_{6ij} + \beta_{7ij} * X_{3ij} * X_{6ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad (2)$$

The single-level models used to investigate *H3* are identical to the model posited by equation 1. *H3* supposes that the effect of β_6 will vary according to national context and be greater for countries where citizens have had exposure to voluntary constitutional differentiated integration. The standard errors of the single-level models are heteroscedasticity-robust. This minimizes the bias introduced by the likely violation of the assumptions of homoscedasticity in these models (Zeileis *et al.* 2020).

I investigate my hypotheses in two steps. I first implement a linear multilevel regression analysis to compare the effect of individual variables on support for differentiated integration through temporal or functional differentiation in all EU countries included in the survey. As appendix tables 1 and 2 show the results do not differ substantively between the ordinal and linear multilevel regression. I then analyse support for permanent functional differentiation in France, Italy, Denmark, and Poland. Using these country-level analyses allows me to gauge the variation in the effect of exclusively national identities between countries with different kind of exposure to differentiated integration: Whereas France and Italy have little experience with differentiation, Denmark has voluntarily opted out several policy areas, while Poland has experienced externally imposed differentiation.

Assessing citizen preferences for a differentiated EU

I first show the results of the multi-level model comparing support for temporal and functional differentiated integration, as well as the interaction between Euroscepticism and exclusively national identity. I then present the results of the single-level analyses of support for functional differentiated integration in France, Italy, Denmark, and Poland.

	Support for temporal and functional differentiation			
	Temporal (no EU variable)	Temporal (Full)	Functional (no EU variable)	Functional (full)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	2.81*** (0.10)	2.69*** (0.09)	4.32*** (0.06)	4.24*** (0.06)
Support for free-market Europe	-0.09** (0.03)	-0.09** (0.03)	-0.001 (0.02)	-0.0000 (0.02)
Perception of economy	-0.11*** (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.01)	-0.001 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Support for national government	-0.15*** (0.02)	-0.12*** (0.02)	-0.005 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Left-right	0.08 (0.04)	0.10* (0.04)	-0.23*** (0.03)	-0.21*** (0.03)
Left-right (sqr.)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03*** (0.004)	0.03*** (0.004)
Gender	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)
Eurosceptic		0.22*** (0.03)		0.16*** (0.02)
Exclusively national identity	0.11*** (0.02)	0.05 (0.02)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)
Observations	8,957	8,957	9,433	9,433
Akaike Inf. Crit.	25,531.25	25,469.71	20,829.01	20,767.96

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 2: Support for temporal and functional differentiated integration. Random country intercepts.

Figure 1 (below) shows the predicted support for differentiated integration among those identifying either exclusively with their nation-states (A and B) or as Eurosceptic (C and D) for the full multilevel models of support for temporal and functional differentiation.

Figure 1: Predicted main effects of exclusively national identity (H1) and Euroscepticism (H2a)

Results of analysis 1

As figure and table 1 show, evidence for *H1a*, the identity hypothesis, is inconclusive: While exclusive identity does somewhat increase support for both forms of differentiated integration even among supporters of EU membership, the effects are small. The same applies to *H1b*, as support for functionally differentiated integration is only marginally greater among this group

than its temporal counterpart. The group of exclusively national supporters of EU membership constitute an N of 1328. This suggests that the cultural exclusiveness of one's identity, even though it is likely to correlate with a greater concern for sovereignty, is not the primary driver of support for differentiated integration. Indeed, as table 1 shows, the magnitude of the correlation decreases once Euroscepticism is controlled for.

This suggests that Euroscepticism will most likely be more important for driving demands for differentiated integration than identifying solely with your nation-states. It also suggests that supporters of EU membership are largely equally likely to want differentiated integration, regardless of the exclusiveness of their identities. Euroscepticism, on its own, does however consistently increase support for both functional and temporal differentiated integration. This supports *H2a*.

While I complement the results of de Blok and De Vries (2020) by finding that Euroscepticism and support for differentiated integration strongly correlate, their contribution does not explore how identity shapes Eurosceptic support for differentiation. As the literature review indicates, one cannot rule out that different configurations of national identity may lead to heterogeneous support for differentiation among Eurosceptics. The most theoretically obvious path through which this would manifest itself is by exclusively national identification interacting with Euroscepticism to increase support for differentiated integration. I therefore expand the models shown above with an interaction term between these variables.

	Support for temporal and functional differentiation	
	Temporal (1)	Functional (2)
Constant	2.69*** (0.09)	4.24*** (0.06)
Support for free-market Europe	-0.08** (0.03)	0.001 (0.02)
Perception of economy	-0.10*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Support for national government	-0.11*** (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Left-right	0.10** (0.04)	-0.21*** (0.03)
Eurosceptic	0.13*** (0.04)	0.12*** (0.03)
Left-right (sqr.)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03*** (0.004)
Gender	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.01)
Exclusively national identity	-0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)
Excl. national identity X Eurosceptic	0.20*** (0.05)	0.08* (0.04)
Observations	8,957	9,433
Akaike Inf. Crit.	25,461.25	20,769.45
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001		

Table 3: Multilevel model of support for temporal and functional differentiation. Random country intercepts.

As table 2 shows, identity increases support for differentiated integration among Eurosceptics, but to varying degrees. For instance, the interaction increases support for temporally differentiated integration to a greater degree than either main effect alone. The interaction effect is, on the other hand, smaller than the independent effect of Euroscepticism in the case of functional differentiation. However, as figure 2 makes clear, support for differentiated

integration is in both cases greater among those who identify as both Eurosceptic and exclusively national than among those who solely identify as Eurosceptic.

Figure 2: Predicted effects of interaction between Euroscepticism and exclusively national identity (H3).

Results of analysis 2

The existing literature on public support for differentiated integration does not sufficiently reckon with how the salience of independent variables differs across national contexts. This is particularly problematic for a context-sensitive variable such as national identity. For instance, it may be the case that those identifying as culturally exclusive are more likely to support functionally differentiated integration where it is explicitly framed as a measure for protecting sovereignty, such as in Denmark (Schraff and Schimmelfennig 2020), compared to

where it is externally imposed as in Poland (Cianciara 2014), where it may be considered an imposition on national sovereignty.

Comparisons of the magnitude of effects requires a shift from cross-sectional to country-specific modelling. I analyse popular support for opt-outs in France, Italy, Denmark, and Finland. These span the regional breadth of the EU, and are also interesting from the perspective of differentiated integration: Whereas France and Italy are founding members of the European Union, who are core members of most EU policy integration, Poland has been subject to a large degree of discriminatory differentiation by being exempt for many years from policy integration that the EU deemed it to lack the capacity for (Cianciara 2014). Conversely, Denmark has voluntarily opted out from the EU's monetary, defence and justice policies (Adler-Nissen 2014). The differences in the Polish and Danish cases may lead those supporters of the EU who identify only with their nation-states to view differentiation through particular lenses in each country.

	Support for opt-outs							
	France (no EU)	France	Italy (no EU)	Italy	Denmark (no EU)	Denmark	Poland (no EU)	Poland
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Constant	3.90*** (0.21)	3.71*** (0.23)	4.60*** (0.17)	4.59*** (0.19)	4.34*** (0.18)	4.13*** (0.19)	4.00*** (0.22)	3.92*** (0.22)
Support for free-market Europe	-0.06 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	0.13* (0.07)	0.15* (0.07)
Perception of economy	-0.01 (0.02)	0.003 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.003 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Support for national government	-0.03 (0.06)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.15 (0.08)	-0.12 (0.08)	0.13* (0.07)	0.14* (0.07)
Left-right	0.08 (0.11)	0.15 (0.12)	-0.24** (0.09)	-0.24* (0.09)	-0.21* (0.09)	-0.17 (0.09)	-0.19 (0.11)	-0.16 (0.11)
Eurosceptic		0.21* (0.09)		-0.02 (0.06)		0.27*** (0.06)		0.12 (0.11)
Left-right (sqr.)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Gender	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	0.13** (0.05)	0.13** (0.05)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)
Exclusively national identity	0.04 (0.06)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.07)	0.19*** (0.05)	0.14** (0.05)	0.17 (0.10)	0.13 (0.10)
Observations	793	699	1,061	950	1,073	997	585	557
Adjusted R ²	-0.0001	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.04

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 4: Country-level analysis of support for differentiation through opt-out. HC0 heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors.

Here the number of those identifying as exclusively national and supporters of the EU are 64 (France), 67 (Italy), 209 (Denmark) and 49 (Poland). Once again, I plot the predicted values

of support for functional differentiation for someone in each country whose identity is either exclusively national or inclusive. The coefficients are shown by figure 3.

Figure 3: Country-level plots of predicted values for non-exclusive and exclusive identity in France (A), Italy (B), Denmark (C) and Poland (D).

The coefficients for Euroscepticism are consistently large across all relevant countries, despite the R^2 indicating poor model fit with the French and Italian data. By showing the clear correlation between Euroscepticism and support for differentiation at the country level, my results confirm the robustness of the results of de Blok and De Vries (2020). Most importantly, an interesting picture emerges from the cross-sectional results: There seems to be a stronger connection between exclusively national identity and support for functionally differentiated integration in Denmark and Poland than in Italy and France.

The strong and persistent support for functional differentiation even among Danish supporters of the EU may be explained by the kind of differentiated integration chosen by Danish governments. This has been a constitutional differentiated integration (Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2014), with differentiation an active choice taken to preserve sovereignty. It thus contrasts with what has frequently been the case for differentiated integration in Poland, which has been temporary and imposed by the EU rather than an active choice on the part of Polish authorities.

However, contrary to what we would expect, support for functional differentiated integration is strong even among Polish culturally exclusive supporters of the EU, despite Poland having had differentiated integration imposed upon it. A reasonable assumption is that this would lead to less positive views of differentiated integration among culturally exclusive supporters of the EU, who could potentially perceive it as a tool for imposing upon sovereignty. The strong effect may instead be attributed to how leading right-wing politicians in Poland have framed European integration as incompatible with European integration (Börzel and Risse 2020), thus providing powerful cues to culturally exclusive individuals that may drive support for differentiated integration.

This paper nuances the existing literature on public support for differentiated integration in three important ways: First, it suggests that exclusively national identities primarily influence support for differentiated integration by increasing support for it among Eurosceptics. Second, it shows that differentiation is not substantially more attractive to exclusively national supporters of EU membership than to those whose identities are more inclusive. Finally, it shows that exposure to voluntary differentiated integration or discourses framing identity as incongruent with an attachment to a greater European whole can lead to greater demands for

differentiated integration among the most culturally exclusive supporters of the EU. The lack of a broad effect of identity on support for differentiated integration calls into question whether it can be used to increase legitimacy of integration among those most likely to be sceptical of it. However, it suggests that such an effect may appear as a result of exposure to constitutional and voluntary differentiated integration.

Discussion

Whereas previous literature has focused on support for uniform integration of the EU, this article focuses on an emerging field of study, namely what explains public preferences for differentiated integration. However, it departs from previous literature (de Blok and De Vries 2020; Leuffen *et al.* 2020; Leuffen *et al.* 2021) by taking as its focus the question of how identification solely with the nation-state can increase support for differentiated integration. I am thus particularly interested in how culturally exclusive self-identification with a nation-state impacts support for differentiated integration among supporters of EU membership and alters structures of Eurosceptic support for it. Finally, I am interested in how exposure to either voluntary or externally imposed differentiated integration contributes to increased support for differentiated integration among those who only identify with their nation-state. These relationships are, even with existing literature hinting to an effect of strongly national attachments (Leuffen *et al.* 2020; Leuffen *et al.* 2021), so far understudied. The same can be said for how these demands will vary by mechanism of differentiation, given how temporal and functional differentiation may differ in their implications for national autonomy (Leuffen *et al.* 2013; Ott *et al.* 2017).

The results generally indicate that pro-EU citizens identifying solely with their nation-states are no more likely to support differentiation than other supporters of EU membership. This

suggests that culturally exclusive identities, in the absence of Eurosceptic sentiments, do not substantially increase support for differentiated integration. Identity thus seems to play its main role in shaping support for differentiated integration among Eurosceptics. The greater support for both forms of differentiation among culturally exclusive Eurosceptics is most likely attributable to how they are more likely to oppose EU membership due to a concern for sovereignty, and thus to want any form of integration that allows for greater national heterogeneity. That the effects are not larger among culturally exclusive supporters of EU membership, however, suggests that differentiated integration may be less effective than assumed by the literature for increasing the legitimacy of integration in the face of constraining dissensus arising from particularly salient policy integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009). This is evident from how it is less likely to meet the assent of a group, culturally exclusive supporters of EU membership, that is theoretically among the most likely to want such differentiation.

However, the results indicate that local contexts play a powerful role in shaping the direct link between culturally exclusive identities and support for differentiated integration. As the Danish example shows, there is much to suggest that the exposure to voluntary and constitutionally based differentiated integration may make those supporters of the EU that identify only with their nation-states more likely to support functionally differentiated integration. Similarly, the politicization of national identities as incongruent with support for the EU that has been a feature of Polish Law and Justice's discourse especially in the context of the refugee crisis (Börzel and Risse 2020) may help explain why support for functional differentiated integration is almost equally strong in a Poland that has primarily had differentiation imposed upon it by the EU.

Finally, the results show why we need models that better capture the drivers of support for differentiated integration, which may differ from those producing support for uniform integration. For instance, more research is needed to understand why exclusively national identities, one of the strongest predictors of opposition to uniform integration, is not as relevant for explaining support for differentiated integration. One possible explanation may be that it is difficult to evaluate theoretical alternatives to current integration: While the sovereign debt crisis has made the constraints on sovereignty implied by uniform financial integration clear (Blyth 2015), it may be difficult to imagine how it would play out under different schemes of cooperation.

A broad convergence of opinion regarding differentiation seems to exist among those with similar views of EU membership. Conversely, opinions are likely to diverge within countries. This is theoretically interesting because accounts of why member states opt out tend to treat decisions about differentiated integration as the unitary preference of a populace (Adler-Nissen, 2014: 36). However, the results suggest that national decisions made about European differentiated integration are likely to be controversial. What this means for the legitimacy of *demos*-cratic (Bellamy 2019; Nicolaïdis 2004) and cosmopolitan (Eriksen 2020; Fossum 2015) models of the EU is beyond the scope of this article. However, normative theory must account for diverging domestic preferences for differentiated integration when analysing whether differentiated integration is a legitimate form of future European integration.

Conclusion

This article makes three important contributions to the literature on public support for differentiated integration: First, I find that sole identification with the nation-state is not generally an important driver of support for differentiation among supporters of the EU.

Rather, the general rule seems to be that such identification mainly drives increased support for differentiation among those identifying as Eurosceptic. Finally, I find that the effect of identity on support for differentiation is contingent on national context. This illustrates the importance of accounting for such contexts when seeking to understand the drivers of individual support for differentiation.

Differentiated integration thus seems unlikely to be perceived by those who identify both as exclusively national and supporters of EU membership as a much more preferable form of integration, even if it better protects the autonomy that the same individuals are more likely to perceive the EU as threatening (Hooghe and Marks 2005). Despite this, the strong independent effect found in Poland and Denmark suggests that either exposure to voluntary differentiated integration or particular discursive frames surrounding identities may increase support for differentiation in this group in the longer run.

It thus appears that future deepening of the EU's policy remit cannot reliably lean on differentiated integration as a "quick fix" for overcoming potential constraining dissensus. The results also suggest that regional co-operations outside of Europe, modelling themselves on the EU, cannot necessarily take for granted that more differentiated integration will be a solution for pre-empting an emerging constraining dissensus to salient policy integration arising from those concerned with national sovereignty, even if they are supportive of increased cooperation on a utilitarian basis.

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Appendix

	Functional (no EU)	Functional (full)	Temporal (no EU)	Temporal (full)
Support for free-market Europe	−0.005 (0.051)	−0.001 (0.052)	−0.167** (0.051)	−0.164** (0.051)
Perception of economy	−0.002 (0.020)	0.018 (0.020)	−0.221*** (0.020)	−0.205*** (0.020)
Left-right	−0.626*** (0.077)	−0.578*** (0.077)	0.250** (0.078)	0.288*** (0.078)
Support for national government	−0.017 (0.045)	0.041 (0.046)	−0.268*** (0.046)	−0.217*** (0.046)
Eurosceptic		0.446*** (0.053)		0.380*** (0.053)
Left-right (sqr.)	0.083*** (0.010)	0.076*** (0.010)	−0.023* (0.010)	−0.028** (0.010)
Gender	−0.160*** (0.040)	−0.145*** (0.040)	−0.043 (0.040)	−0.032 (0.040)
Exclusively national identity	0.249*** (0.045)	0.115* (0.048)	0.187*** (0.045)	0.075 (0.048)
Num.Obs.	9236	9236	8767	8767
AIC	19018.2	18949.1	23430.9	23380.6
BIC	19089.5	19027.5	23515.8	23472.6
Log.Lik.	−9499.113	−9463.535	−11703.446	−11677.297
edf	10.000	11.000	12.000	13.000

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01,

*** p < 0.001

A1 : Ordinal logistic regression for functional without Euroscepticism (1) and with Euroscepticism (2), and temporal without (3) and with (4) Euroscepticism. Coefficients are log-odds.

	Functional	Temporal
Support for free-market Europe	0.002 (0.052)	−0.160** (0.051)
Perception of economy	0.020 (0.020)	−0.203*** (0.020)
Left-right	−0.571*** (0.077)	0.296*** (0.078)
Support for national government	0.047 (0.046)	−0.209*** (0.046)
Eurosceptic	0.323*** (0.071)	0.210** (0.071)
Left-right (sqr.)	0.075*** (0.010)	−0.029** (0.010)
Gender	−0.145*** (0.040)	−0.030 (0.040)
Exclusively national identity	0.034 (0.057)	−0.038 (0.057)
Exclusively national identity X Euroscepticism	0.265** (0.102)	0.370*** (0.102)
Num.Obs.	9236	8767
AIC	18944.3	23369.4
BIC	19029.9	23468.5
Log.Lik.	−9460.162	−11670.708
edf	12.000	14.000

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

A 2: Ordinal logistic regression for functional and temporal differentiated integration. Coefficients are log-odds.

	Support for temporal and functional differentiation	
	Alternative temporal (1)	Alternative functional (2)
Constant	2.23*** (0.09)	4.06*** (0.06)
Support for free-market Europe	-0.09*** (0.02)	0.003 (0.02)
Perception of economy	-0.07*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Left-right	-0.02 (0.02)	0.05*** (0.02)
Support for national government	0.12*** (0.04)	-0.20*** (0.03)
Eurosceptic	0.06*** (0.004)	0.03*** (0.003)
Left-right (sqr.)	-0.01* (0.005)	0.03*** (0.003)
Gender	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.01)
Exclusively national identity	0.10*** (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)
Observations	10,443	11,064
Akaike Inf. Crit.	29,525.55	24,290.92

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

A 3: Alternative conceptualization of Euroscepticism

	Support for opt-outs			
	France (1)	Italy (2)	Denmark (3)	Poland (4)
Constant	3.35*** (0.26)	4.39*** (0.20)	3.94*** (0.20)	3.91*** (0.23)
Support for free-market Europe	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.06)	0.12 (0.07)
Perception of economy	0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Support for national government	0.09 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.08)	0.13 (0.07)
Left-right	0.14 (0.12)	-0.22* (0.09)	-0.20* (0.09)	-0.18 (0.11)
Eurosceptic	0.06*** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Left-right (sqr.)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Gender	-0.06 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.05)	0.14** (0.05)	-0.03 (0.06)
Exclusively national identity	0.01 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)	0.13** (0.05)	0.14 (0.09)
Observations	789	1,055	1,047	578
Adjusted R ²	0.02	0.02	0.08	0.04
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001			

A 4: Alternative conceptualization of Euroscepticism

A 5: Interaction between exclusively national identity and alternative conceptualization of Euroscepticism

Treatment	Est.	S.E.	t-value	R²Y~D X	RV_{q=1}	RV_{q=1,α=0.05}
Exclusively national identity	0.043	0.024	1.78	0%	1.9%	0%

A 5: Sensitivity analysis of exclusively national identity to confounding (support for temporal differentiated integration)

Treatment	Est.	S.E.	t-value	R²Y~D X	RV_{q=1}	RV_{q=1,α=0.05}
Exclusively national identity	0.041	0.017	2.398	0.1%	2.4%	0.4%

A 6: Sensitivity analysis of exclusively national identity to confounding (support for functional differentiated integration)

Variable name	Factor loading	Explained variance	Uniqueness
The economic situation	0.72	0.51	0.49
Local employment opportunities	0.72	0.51	0.49

A 7: Factor analysis of factor “Perception of economy”