

Identity and Public Support for North American Integration

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Abstract

The majority of studies investigating the determinants of public support for regional integration have primarily focused on citizen attitudes in European Union member-states and candidate countries. A subset of this body of research has found that the intensity of an individual's sense of national and supranational identity has an effect on levels of support for the European Union. Yet, these studies were also conducted at a time when European integration was tangible and when a larger European identity was already generally salient. We seek to expand the debate on the role of identity in support for integrative policies by examining attitudes on integration in North America—a region with a much less salient sense of regional identity and a far less extensive integration project. In addition to providing a comparative perspective to the identity-support question, this paper investigates whether the priming of a supranational identity increases support for integration. Results from an estimation of World Values Survey data for all three North American countries lend support to the argument that national and supranational identity plays a role in citizen attitudes toward regional integration. In addition, while we find considerable support for the hypothesis that manipulating the salience of these identities impacts individual support for integration, we also uncover clear cross-national differences in North American attitudes and offer our thoughts on why these differences might exist.

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