[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Right, we have a treat for you. Next week, we are having a two-hour discussion about Brexit. But right now, we're having a half-an-hour discussion about some aspects that touch on all of the things we're going to be talking about next week.

I'm delighted to welcome Eleni and Alison to the studio. Thank you so much for coming. We have what I think is the most interesting aspect, in particular right now, where we're looking at European identity and citizenship, and national identity and how we perceive it. A really, really topical hot topic, and one that, when we had our referendum discussion in July, in fact, last year about, was something that people were really interested in talking about to the chat.

So I'm hoping that there'll be a lot of discussion in the chat. Do put your views and your questions etc. in that, and we will feed those and integrate those into our discussion. But we've got some widgets for you that we'd like you to have a think about. Now, these are the interactive tools, and you can select on them and click what applies to you.

So we've got one about migration benefiting the economy, and this is a scale. So from not very far to too far, although migration has benefited the economy, has it gone too far now? So we'd like you to put your views there. Also, from not possible to possible, is it possible to be British and European. And the question, if you're a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere? Do you agree or disagree with that statement?

And of course, lots of questions and discussion in the chat. If you're in the watch and engage, you'll be able to enjoy all of that. If you're in the Livestream only, come into the watch and engage from the Student Hub Live website, studenthublive.kmi.open.ac.uk And you can also use the hashtag #studenthublive16 and our email studenthub@open.ac.uk.

So we have a very broad topic, and we have representatives from economics and psychology here to talk about identity. National identity is such a key thing, and we were talking before about the extent to which could be considered both European and British. How important do you think this whole thing is right now?

ELENI: Can I start?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, please.

ELENI: I think it is quite important, thinking about Brexit or then the whole discussion about the referendum and what should happen next. I think a key central issue is whether Britishness, the idea of what it means to be British, is part of European, and whether this identity encapsulates an idea of European within it or not. So I think that was a big discussion before the referendum vote.

ALISON: I think some of the statistical analysis as well that's been done of surveys since the vote has been quite interesting, looking at how people identify themselves. And a high proportion of the leave voters identify themselves either as English and British, or English. Mainly English and British, whereas the remain voters tend to vote either British or European.

So they saw themselves with this dual British/European nationality, whereas the leave voters saw themselves as a dual English/British, not a European identity. So clearly, there is something going on as to how people identify themselves in terms of their own nationality and identity. So I think it is key to what's happening. Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: You talk about the statistics. And I'd like to see the results of the first question that we asked people, which was about whether it's possible to be British and European, and see what people thought about that. Because sometimes we can say, well, yes. Of course it is possible to be both.

But it's quite a nuanced distinction. There's a lot going on, as you say, Alison, within those identity constructs. And also, we're using language and statistics and all of these parameters to look at things that maybe aren't necessarily what we're saying they are.

ALISON: I think it's true. I think identity is very complex. I mean, and Eleni's is more of an expert on identity. But it's a very complex thing and a very subjective concept as well. So how one person identifies as English is different to how another person would identify that factor.

KAREN FOLEY: Let's see what people said at home. So we'll have the results of this first widget here that we asked you about. So a lot of people are saying that it's very possible to be both British and European, with a few people saying sort of in the middle. So it's really seen as very much in agreement with that statement. What might an interpretation of that be?

ELENI: I think as Alison just said, I think it's a very contextualised issue, identity. So it's really hard to interpret those. I mean, you can say that people, yes, do think that there is identity with

European Brits and then they can be combined. But the question is how and to what extent.

And I think we perhaps need more nuanced, more qualitative measures to assess what people actually mean when they say British and what they mean when they say European. So for a person who voted remain and for a person who voted leave, perhaps what it means to be European may be very, very different things. And what it means to be British may be very, very different things as well. So I think we really need to explore in more depth those meanings around those identities.

ALISON: I agree. It's very easy to, as it was, to ask people to tick a box yes, no, leave, remain, it's very easy to say are you British, are you European. But actually getting what that actually means in practise, what does it mean to be British, what does it mean to be European, that is something much, much more complex, and much more contextual, and may differ geographically across Britain. Certainly the four nations within Britain, it will differ what British identity actually means to people.

KAREN FOLEY: And to pick up the points you've both made about what does this mean, and, Alison, you mentioned that sometimes when we're using statistics, we're using statistics to make interpretations of what people mean. But also, we're using those, then, as stereotypes about, I think you mentioned the remainers, and we're categorising people by the way that they voted. So in addition to putting identity markers in terms of the way that people choose them to be, we're also externalising those to some extent, aren't we?

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And that's a big, big issue in social science research, the way that we perhaps reconstruct and rehearse existing social categories. But I guess the answer is you have to be reflective about the way that we use those categories, and think a little bit about our own assumptions when we are using them.

ALISON: There's been quite a lot talked about the leave voters being racists, being working class, and being white men, and stereotyping them. And actually, it's much more complex than that. There's a whole diversity of people who voted for leave. And there has been some research, but it hasn't really been that nuanced and has served almost to reinforce that stereotype view that it's all about immigration, and leavers are all racists in some way.

And I don't think the press has been very helpful in that process. I mean, they were instrumental in fueling the anti-immigration vote in the first place. And I think subsequently,

they've reinforced that it's all about immigration.

KAREN FOLEY: It's an interesting idea. We've mentioned that you were both from various disciplines. And so from a psychology and an economics perspective, you're both approaching this using different methods and different ways of looking at things, and making different interpretations. And I think we'd all agree that stereotyping isn't necessarily useful or helpful.

But to some extent, there has been this categorisation of this demographic information that is used to make assumptions. And from a statistical perspective, that's done for a reason. And I guess the question then is, how useful is this, and what do we do with it if it is something that is happening?

ALISON: I mean, I think it is useful. I mean, there's data that suggests that the high proportion of the leave voters were from lower-income households. A high proportion were in rented accommodation. They stated that they were just about managing or not managing. That things were worse for them than for other people.

So there is some kind of sense that, for some of those people, there is something going on. But what statistical and broad information like that doesn't tell us is some of the reasons why they feel like that and what the reality is. Because a lot of the leave voters who may have said it's about immigration, and we want to take control and reduce immigration, came from communities that had very low proportions of migrant people in there.

So for example, in the Welsh valleys, they voted leave. But they didn't have some of the issues that some of the other communities in England that had high proportions of migrant workers had. But they still have the same demographic, and so they're stereotyped in the same pot. But actually, the issues must be different because they differ fundamentally.

KAREN FOLEY: Let's see what our students said. So we've had a look again collating around the middle, whether migration has benefited the economy. Very, very spread set of answers here, with some people saying not too far at all, some saying too far, and quite a lot in the middle. So a nice, normal distribution curve going on there.

I mean, we were talking, when we were preparing for the session, about national identity and what might a national identity be, and how that might change over time. And it's obviously very contextual. We were talking about ideas about class, which touch on what you're saying, Alison, and what it is to be British. And just thinking about grouping people together and how

we use these distinctions, is something like class and migration useful ways of looking at the them/us divide when we're looking at identity, or are we collecting around our in-group desire to be with like-minded people?

ELENI: I think that's a very good point, actually. Yeah, I mean, there is a value in using those categorizations and those social groups, like social class or like-- what was your other example? But yes, in-groups and out-groups.

But the real issue for me, as a social psychologist, is to look at the intersections of categories. So you can't just look at class without looking at race or ethnicity or gender. So being, for example, a poor white working man or a middle-class black woman may be quite different experiences. So we need to look at those intersections of social categories and social groups, actually, and, again, avoid those crude dichotomies between the working classes and the middle classes, or the poor and the rich, or all those kinds of things.

ALISON: I think that serves to polarise people when you start creating those in and out categories, and rich/poor. I think it's quite divisive to do that.

KAREN FOLEY: So in one extent, we're using a lot of these statistics, and that's happening. But actually what we're saying, really, is that there were a lot more complex issues. And some of these are about our desire to be British and also part of Europe, and we were asking people whether they think you can be both.

And also, this idea about a cosmopolitan culture. We aspire to integrate a lot within Europe, but then also there is this desire for people to want to support their national identity as well. Are these two ideas compatible in any sense?

ELENI: I think so. I think that's, I mean we would call that a dilemma, perhaps, in some of the social psychology theorising about this. I think that people are not just cosmopolitans or nationalists. I think people can understand both sides of the debate and they can relate to both sides of the debate.

And an example is, for instance, under referendum campaigning that the Brexit campaigning was campaigning for a global Britain outside of European Union. So you had a seemingly nationalistic argument, but embedded within a globalist framework, if you know what I mean. So again, I'm going to say this again, things are much more complex. I don't think it's an either/or distinction. I think it's both/and extinction.

ALISON: If you look at Scotland, I mean, they have a very strong Scottish identity. But they also have this desire to remain in Europe and to be cosmopolitan. So it's perfectly possible for the two to coexist. And I think if you're confident in your identity, then it's much easier to be open to other identities. That you don't see them as a challenge, because English nationalism is fairly new as a phenomena.

Perhaps it feels that it's being challenged by the presence of migrants. I don't know. What do you think as a social psychologist?

ELENI: Oh, wow. I think anti-immigration sentiments are also manipulated politically. So it's not just what people think or what people feel, but also the context in which those ideas are developed and the kind of political purposes that they serve. So we need to be attuned to the politics of those discourses.

KAREN FOLEY: There's a whole discussion about the impact internally in the UK, and the way that the various nations are going to be dealing with this. I believe similar to what you said about Scotland with Northern Ireland. But the Welsh identity is quite similar to the English one. So is there this split within the United Kingdom, in terms of identity and the way that we perceive a national identity?

ELENI: I would say yes would be [INAUDIBLE].

ALISON: But I'm not quite sure what the difference between English and Welsh identity is. Welsh people tend to identify themselves as Welsh and British. They don't identify as English, obviously.

But they do identify as British as well as Welsh, whereas the Scottish tend to either be British or Scottish. They don't tend to identify as dual, so there's obviously something with England and Wales that's quite similar. That is different to Scotland.

KAREN FOLEY: They, I guess, have certain legal things in common, et cetera, so that might hold. I live in Wales, and the Welsh have a very strong national identity in certain parts in particular. But they also voted to leave.

So it's not always quite as clear cut, is it? HJ and Sophie, what are people talking about on the Hot Desk? And are there any thoughts that have come through in terms of things like migration and class and the various sorts of categories that we've been using to try and look through this lens of identity?

HJ: I think some interesting comments have come about about the ideas, around own identity. Ben said, "To what extent can we determine for ourselves what role the national identity plays in our lives?" Which I think is something interesting to think about.

And Chantel as well. So she volunteers teaching English and finds that some people identify themselves as British, as well as their original nationality. And others just use their original nationality. So we've been thinking in the chat about how we put certain characteristics on different nationalities. So we view different nationalities in different ways, and whether that changes how we think about our own nationalities.

And Stewart says, "Am I Scottish? Am I British? Am I European? Am I just a resident of planet Earth? Who knows?"

KAREN FOLEY: There's this whole idea when we look at identity, isn't there, about singular identities, multiple identities, fluid and fixed. There were all sorts of debates and discussions around identity. But it does, this whole question about how can we, and what are we doing, is this identity enacted on us, with the whole idea of stereotyping, how much choice we have? And that whole discussion. And for what purpose this identity is serving?

ELENI: Yeah, I mean that's a good question. I think the identity feels very, very personal and very subjective because it's who we are. So it feels very subjective.

But at the same time, we also feel that we don't have too much power in defining what it means. So yeah, identity is a social construct. People collectively construct it, and that's what makes it very contextualised concepts. I would say, in response to that first question, that it is a fun, interesting, dynamic interplay between having individual agency in shaping what it means for you, for example, to be British, and being restricted by discourses that circulate about what it means to be British, which you don't necessarily have too much power on.

KAREN FOLEY: What about the impact, Alison, in terms of thinking about how much choice we have in this matter, in terms of some of these austerity measures and the impact of the economy on our identity? How much power we have, really, when there's this issue of us being British or being citizens of the world, or however we're wanting to construct ourselves. And then this whole issue of a government having a role in that formation of identity. So the austerity measures, really, and the impact that things like that would have on how we might feel about ourselves as British?

ALISON: I mean that, a lot of evidence suggests, not just in Britain but across Europe itself, that the times of austerity have resulted in a rise in far right parties in particular. But generally, when the economy is suffering, you get extreme groups, either to the right or the left, emerging. And what seems to be happening in Europe and in Britain is that the right and nationalistic parties seem to be coming to the fore, and they're feeding into that feeling of threat that outsiders pose to jobs, to access to welfare. That is feeding the far right on the rise of those groups.

And of course, the media are playing their part in feeding the populist debates around that. And I think it's very dangerous what's happening. I mean, we see in France the elections where, she doesn't say she's National Front anymore, but Marine Le Pen could quite possibly get elected. And she is quite far right.

KAREN FOLEY: I mean, is this just a European thing? Or even when thinking about the United States and the wall and the various things, is this a sign of the times and a sign of things that are wider than just Europe and the UK?

ALISON: I think it is. And whenever we have periods of austerity and economic crisis, you do see these groups emerging across the world. And it is a response to threat and trying to protect what few resources we have from outsiders.

So you see stuff like Trump building a wall to keep Mexicans out and trying to protect American jobs. And we're seeing the same sorts of discourses throughout politics. So I think it's a worldwide problem.

KAREN FOLEY: And of course these austerity measures have had massive political implications in the past, after periods of Great Depression, etc. But I guess this links to the point, Eleni, you were saying before, about how some of these statements are used for political reasons and how nationality can be sometimes a factor that is used by governments to try and deliver on certain things.

ELENI: Absolutely. Yeah, I mean, national identity is primarily a politicised identity. So, yes, political movements, governments, they might construct it in different ways to pursue their own aims. So I think this is happening, for example, now in Britain with the post-Brexit debates, and whether we should leave the single market or stay in the single market, and so on. And you can see that at the very core of all of those discussions is what is our vision for Britain, and what is our vision for what it means to be a British citizen. So, yeah, I think it's very, very important.

KAREN FOLEY: HJ and Sophie, let's take a quick trip to the Hot Desk and see what other thoughts students at home have got.

HJ: I think, well, one of the things that we're interested in is about how, as you say, class seems to be more of a theme emerging in politics. And there seems to be a lot more strong emphasis, and you mentioned the elections in France, and Le Pen did extremely well in the poorer working class areas, whereas Macron did a lot better in the rich, metropolitan areas, like Paris and Bordeaux. [INTERPOSING VOICES]

It's just me getting excited and just so-- thinking about it.

SOPHIE: Sylvia has been on. And she's Canadian, her mother is Italian. And her father was born in the UK.

So she identifies as a Canadian. So it's just interesting how people can come from all different places, and their parents can come from two different places you can still identify somewhere else. And I think that's quite nice. It's fluid in that way, which is nice that people can put themselves where they want to be, so to speak.

But, yeah, everyone seems to be having a really good time at the moment. We've just convinced Marion to go to Venice. So, Marion, I think you should do it.

Just go to Venice for the first time ever abroad. I think you should do it. And keep it updated.

HJ: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. I wanted to pick up on some other points that we were talking before about immigration, and in particular when we may be feeling under this economic threat, that we react in certain ways. And we were talking a little bit earlier about how, what we asked the audience as well, about the extent to which they thought immigration has benefited the economy. But has it gone too far right now?

So how has this become an important dialogue of the whole debate about Brexit? And, Alison, you were mentioning that there was a lot of evidence to support that immigration is a very good and positive thing, both for the economy and for a national identity. But it has been quite a main centre of the argument in terms of the leave campaigners.

ALISON: It has. And they have denied those economic benefits that immigration has brought to this

country. And what they focused on is it's almost those cultural threats that immigration poses to individuals. So I think the media's been very clever in the way they've presented the leave argument. So they almost ignored the economic arguments, when the remainers focused on the economic arguments and how immigration benefited and created jobs and created wealth. And people ignored all of that and looked at those cultural threats, and looked more at that argument for immigration than the economic ones.

But it is a fact that we have benefited from economic immigration. And there are huge problems that could emerge in particular sectors if we get rid of the free movement of labour. I mean, agriculture's one. And the other scale, the NHS could suffer if we stop having migrant workers. So I don't think people appreciate how much we actually rely on immigration.

KAREN FOLEY: So there's the economic aspect. But, Eleni in terms of the cultural aspect, does immigration add to this cosmopolitan identity that we often aspire to? Does it conflict with a national identity, or is it just something in the middle that that isn't really having an impact on either?

ELENI: I think it does have an impact. And I think British identity is enriched by multiculturalism, by diversity, and by cosmopolitan values. And if you ask people, that's one of the first things they say about Britishness, one of the most positive things about it, it is very inclusive.

And it is built on, Britain is weak on immigration, and British identity is built on influences from migrants and from the former colonies. So I think it's essential that we acknowledge that, and we respect that and nurture that as much as we can, really. So it is both economic and cultural

ALISON: Multiculturalism as a concept has declined in popularity. In the 1980s, the whole thing was about multiculturalism and welcoming people, and respecting their values and including them. And now that assimilation model is quite different since 9/11. I think that was the point.

And the rise of Muslim fundamentalism, this now is a kickback against multiculturalism. And it's almost like a bad word now, whereas it used to be a positive word. And now people are thinking, no, we don't want multiculturalism. So things have changed.

KAREN FOLEY: So again, maybe thinking about these stereotypical groups, that might be OK for that lot, but not necessarily that lot. So our ideas about things are changing. Also, this idea about us doing things or responding to surveys or saying certain things that we don't necessarily mean, or hold true in terms of what we actually want. And I think the point that you both made earlier about how we conceptualise and categorise certain things, we might say multiculturalism is a

good thing, you couldn't really say it wasn't and be politically correct and. I think a lot of people do. But as you were saying, Eleni, before these constructs in our minds about what it means to be within that category, are very much unexpressed and also unexplored.

ELENI: Unexplored for sure, I think, to their full extent. I mean, multiculturalism is a good example. Because for some people, it means extreme political correctness or something quite negative.

And for some other people, it means cultural richness. And then you can see again the politics of constructing identities and the concepts, because multiculturalism can be mobilised for very different political purposes. It was mobilised by Tony Blair to serve very different political purposes at a very different time for this country, and compared to the recent David Cameron, Theresa May governments

KAREN FOLEY: Do you think, in light of the election, that this whole idea about national identity will grow of more importance or less importance, bearing in mind all of these other issues that are so important in the overall Brexit debate?

ELENI: I think it's getting more and more important. I think it's a time now where national identity's being problematised, it's being discussed, it's being reflected upon. So now is our chance to really reshape it, reconstruct it in a way that we think suits us in our group, in our interests, in our affiliations. So it's a time when it's all up in the air in a way. So it our chance to shape it in a way that we think is best.

ALISON: A more negative perspective.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

I think Theresa May will cynically use national identity and nationalism to manipulate people to vote Conservative. And I think all those threats about immigration and what it poses to being British, I think they will all emerge and be aired. So I think that whole concept will be quite central to the election.

KAREN FOLEY: It's very dichotomous, isn't it? Because on one hand, we're saying we need to pull together. We need some sort of national identity.

And then everyone's going, yeah, but I can have eight identities. I can be this, this, and this. And there's this unbalance, really, between wanting one thing, but also recognising that may be a sense of reality or possibility, or even an aspiration.

ELENI: Yeah, I think we need to think about cosmopolitan is not in cosmopolitan identities and affiliation, not as something that's abstract that exists kind of above everything else, but something that is rooted and local as well. So we need to think about, again, not the binary between localism and cosmopolitanism, but rather how people can relate to particular identities, local identities, as well as being open to the world and open to diversity.

ALISON: I still think the Conservative government will milk this.

KAREN FOLEY: On that bombshell, I will thank you very much for being such lively, lively guests, and how interesting it is to take two different perspectives and really different ways of looking at things. Identity, I think, is one of those things we can never quite conclude with. But this whole idea about fixed and multiple identities is something that will permeate the discussions that we have in the various sectors next week, when we take a good hard look at the Brexit events that are going to be unfolding. So Eleni and Alison, thank you so much for coming along today. That's been great.

Well I hope that's given you a lot of food for thought. Because on the 3rd of May, from 10:00 until 12:00, we are going to be having a discussion about Brexit with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. That's available and open to anybody who would like to access, so I hope to see you there.

And that afternoon as well, we're going to have an Open Justice Event from the Open University Law School. So that will be very interesting to many of you as well. You can check that all out on the website. But before I tell you how to keep in touch with us and what to do, I'd just like to take a quick trip to the Hot Desk to see what Sophia and HJ have to say in summary.

SOPHIE: It's been a really good session. I've really missed it. It's nice to be back. Just want to end on a comment from Chantel, she says that people feel that British identity is being threatened by immigration, but forget that it was originally created by immigration when we were invaded in the past. Which I quite like. I like that thought of British identity being everyone involved so that summed things up quite well. Thanks, Chantel.

HJ: Yes. But we've had lots of great conversation today, and we've really enjoyed it. We've learned lots of new study skills, which we're very happy about. So hopefully my assignment won't go too badly.

If there's anything we missed, and I know some of you will be e-mailing us, just email studenthub@open.ac.uk. But I think we got lots of great discussion here as a primer for next week. So we'll be thinking about that till then.

SOPHIE: How they get on with all the tips. How you get on with your essay plans, how you get on with your EMAs. So hopefully we'll speak to you next week and catch up with everyone then.

KAREN FOLEY: Thank you, both. You've been absolutely fantastic. And thank you at home for all of your contributions in the chat. We've certainly covered a lot today.

What have we done? My goodness, we've been having a look at essay writing. We've been having a look at all of that wonderful advice Georgina and Matt gave us, for in particular the Level 1 students who have EMAs, but also looking at exam advice as well. So those were really good sessions you can watch on catch-up if you've missed them.

We then took a look at problem solving with David's 3W approach, and then the employabilities tool that you can access. Anybody can access. And then Jonquil told us some other additional ways that you could look at supporting your OU study with careers, aspects and employability links that are all available on OpenLearn, on the MOOCs, and on your qualifications and module websites.

So thank you very much for coming along today. As I said, we're back on the 3rd of May now. If you would like to be in touch with us, you can subscribe to our email newsletter, and then we'll tell you when events are on. You can go back to the website studenthublive.kmi.open.ac.uk. Give us your email address, and then we'll let you know when the next events are on.

And as I said also, we're going to be doing a special careers session on the 16th of May. And we'll also be doing another event for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, where we're going to be showcasing many of the new modules that are going to be coming out in September. So a sneak preview into some of the things that you could be studying then as well.

But thank you coming along today. As Sophie says, any questions, email us at studenthub@open.ac.uk. The chat room will be open for another half-an-hour.

Please do talk to each other, and we hope to see you next week. Thank you very much for

watching, and thank you for everyone who has participated in this event today. See very soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]