The identities of both Scotland and England are problematic and contested. The Union of 1707 brought together their two parliaments at Westminster, but allowed Scotland to maintain key institutions of civil society. The new institutional configuration was mirrored in the development of identities, and the British and English identities became confused, while in Scotland, the autonomous institutions of civil society helped to maintain a separate Scottish identity, which outlasted the British one superimposed upon it.

In the post-war period, European integration and challenges to the Union settlement from within the UK have threatened the existing configuration of institutions and identities. Globalisation has suggested that nation-states are at once too large and too small to solve the political, social and economic problems of interdependent society, and the European Union has assumed certain former state tasks, while regions have reasserted their identities in demands for greater autonomy. Within the UK, devolution and integration have combined to underline the tensions within the multi-national state. Scots have reasserted their identity, while for the first time, the English are considering the nature of their identity which has long been confused with the British one.

The thesis seeks to address the contested nature of these identities by considering how they are developed through education and culture policies. These may be expected to shed most light on identity, being those most explicitly concerned with socialisation and common values. The process is by no means linear, and by examining some of the debates in contemporary policy formation, it is possible to discern some of the major lines of contest in modern Scottish and English identities. Focusing on several specific initiatives, and using policy and related documents and interviews with key policy actors in England and Scotland, the thesis seeks to distil some of the markers of national identity in the two cases. A central element of this in the context of European integration is a consideration of how the emerging Scottish and English identities relate to Europe, and specifically how the European context is taken into account in policy-making. While the English heart-land is overwhelming associated with Britain’s Eurosceptic stance, Scots are keen to portray themselves as outward-looking and European. The thesis considers to what extent these claims are justified by, and how they are reflected in, policy action.