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This proposal is based on empirical work undertaken in Catalonia (Spain). The aim is to analyse how students discursively construct their national identities in interaction with historical events included in the history curriculum.

Recent political events have fostered discussions on national identities. In Europe, the raise of a number of separatist movements (e.g. Scotland, Flanders, Basque country, Quebec) on one hand, and the increasing relevance of ultra-nationalist and anti-immigration parties (e.g. UKIP in the UK, FN in France, etc.) on the other, have encourage academic community to focus their efforts on the analysis of national identities (Chong et al., 2016).

Catalan national identity is here presented as a case study of a national identity. The Catalan identity is well-established with about 93% of the people living in Catalonia identifying as Catalan to some extent (CEO, 2014). Since the reintroduction of the democracy after Franco's death (1979), several discourses of Catalan nationhood have coexisted. Since the middle of the last decade, however, there was a shift towards a more secessionist discourse (Crameri, 2014). By the time this research was conducted, the discourse on independence had become hegemonic (Crameri, 2014) with more than half of those who identified as Catalan being supportive of a separatist process (CEO, 2014). Discourses on independence were also dominant in institutional educational resources, teachers' materials and students' accounts (author, 2016; Santisteban, 2013). The independentism discourse was articulated with other particular discourses including self-government, linguistic rights, popular sovereignty and economic prosperity and with more generic discourses on liberalism, market economy and freedom (author, 2016).

The purpose of this paper will be to examine how students construct their national identifications in interaction with the history curriculum. Numerous studies have explored how political identification emerges through educational processes, whether overtly (e.g. Delanty, 1997) or covertly (e.g. Christou, 2007; Reay, 2001). Research on national curricula and textbooks suggests that educational texts have a tendency to promote hegemonic national, ethnic, gender, religious and class-based identities (e.g. Tormey, 2006; Torsti, 2007; Wigginton, 2005). From studies conducted in the area of history education, we know that students' gender and ethnic identities (e.g. Christou, 2007; Levstik & Groth, 2005) seem to be essential in determining the ways in which students will or will not incorporate hegemonic identities. We know that discourses about the present (Seixas, Peck & Poyntz, 2011), teachers' discourses (Létourneau, 2006) and the collective or vernacular memory (Clary-Lemon, 2010; Létourneau, 2006) play an essential role in guiding students' negotiations of political reality and their political selves through the "polyphony" (Bakhtin, 1984) of voices that they encounter.

This paper will examine the underlying nature of such negotiations in the particular case of the Catalan national identity as discursively constructed in the history curriculum. In particular, I aim to address the following research question:

- Why students identify (or do not identify) themselves with a national identity?
- At what extent do students appropriate or modify the national identity as discursively constructed in the curriculum?

Method

Students' identification with the Catalan nationhood as discursively constructed in the history curriculum will be examined. Data was collected through open questionnaires and interviews. In the questionnaire, students were requested to discuss the groups with which they identified and their understanding of the Catalan nationhood in relation to a key event on the history of Catalonia. Secondary students (339) responded to the questionnaire. Data was initially analysed to examine students' identifications. Students were classified into three groups: (1) identification with the hegemonic discourse of the Catalan nationhood; (2) non-identification with the Catalan nationhood; and (3) identification with an alternative discourse of the Catalan nationhood. Fourteen students (3-5 for each group) were selected to gain in-depth knowledge of their accounts. I did not intend to obtain a representative sample but rather to examine in detail few cases.

Students' discourse, as evidenced in the questionnaires and interviews, was analysed using discourse analyses derived from Laclau's theory on political identifications (2007). In line with Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), Laclau's three logics were used to investigate why some students appropriate the hegemonic discourse whilst others reject it (logics of difference, equivalence and antagonism). Students' accounts were contrasted with the hegemonic discourse, and data was examined considering three guiding questions: (1) does the student feel that her particularities are accommodated within the national community?; (2) does the student feel that her aims are shared by the whole national community?; (3) does the student feel that antagonism within the national community is neutralized?

Expected Outcomes

The results of this study suggest that students will appropriate a political identity only if they feel that their own self is not compromised by this identity. Previous research has already pointed out that students seem to cherry pick those events that better match their a priori understandings (see Barton, 2008). In my analysis, the selection of these events is mediated by Laclau's discursive chains. Students only incorporate political identities that match –or at least, do not clash– with their other identities. If, students' gender and ethnic identities determine the appropriation of hegemonic identities (e.g. Christou, 2007), it can be assumed that there is something in these identities that might "clash" with students' interests as women, minorities, etc. The problem here is not in the risk of assimilation of students into hegemonic identities, but rather the possible social consequences of rejecting these identities. Indeed, as Keaton (2005) has pointed out a rejection of the national identity is likely to decrease students' opportunities to advance into further education.

There are opportunities for students to challenge the hegemonic construction of the national identity. In this study, one of the students identifies himself as 'Catalan' but he challenges the meaning of the 'Catalan nationhood'. This student's understanding suggests that either openly or covertly, voluntarily or involuntarily, we all participate in their political construction. The curriculum can be understood as a board of this political game where educators and students are among other players. The curriculum, in the case of national identities, can be understood (at least at some extent) as unavoidably democratic.

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