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POWER AND IDENTITY

Edited by Denis Sindic, Manuela Barreto and Rui Costa-Lopes

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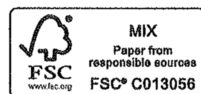

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1

POWER AND IDENTITY

The multiple facets of a complex relationship

Denis Sindic, Manuela Barreto and Rui Costa-Lopes

Anyone who seriously contemplates a world map for the first time cannot help but notice a striking disparity in the way some national boundaries are drawn compared to others. Whereas many defy all geometrical logic, others seem to have been traced with a ruler. This disparity is so readily apparent that for many of us it forms the basis of the first geopolitical fact we learn. Indeed, even children are able to surmise that perfectly straight boundaries cannot possibly correspond to natural features but must result from human intervention, and if they enquire as to how the straight boundaries came to be as they are, they will be told by more informed adults that they are the result of colonisation and its aftermath.

However, the impact of colonisation on the current delimitation of some countries is only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Not only the territorial boundaries of nations but also the contours of many of today's national identities are still bound up with the lines drawn by colonial powers. Many of the "unusually" straight borders originate from past arrangements between colonial powers or past internal administrative divisions within the territory of a single colonial power (Anderson, 1991). They were drawn with little to no regard for pre-existing groupings among the indigenous populations, and as a result, many who saw themselves as one people ended up on different sides of a divide, whereas others who saw themselves as different were joined together. In both cases, however, the end of colonisation did not necessarily entail a return to earlier patterns of group distinctions and group identifications. The sense of being one country (or of being different countries), fostered by living under arrangements created by colonial decision making, often persisted after colonisation. In time, many of the descendants of the first colonisers also came to see their particular colony as the prime focus of their sense of national loyalty (e.g. see Anderson, 1991). Colonisation, then, is responsible for the very creation of many of today's nations and their specific national identities. It also had dramatic effects on the specific nature and content of

those identities, through the dissemination of the colonisers' languages, customs and religions in colonised lands. Once again, much of this colonial heritage has survived the end of colonisation, despite possible alterations. For instance, Christian faith is nowadays deeply ingrained in large parts of Africa and South America, and it is still on the rise despite its steady decline in Europe, the home of those who spread the faith to those continents in the first place (e.g. Bellofatto & Johnson, 2013; Jenkins, 2002).

With such considerations, we have left the realm of pure geopolitics to enter the domain of "psycho-politics" that defines the general theme of this volume. Identity is primarily a psychological construct, since it concerns the particular way in which human beings define their self-concept and since it draws its strength as an engine of human thought and action from its psychological existence. One may of course argue (as the very contributions in this volume exemplify) that identities are also inherently social or political, insofar as the specific way in which identities are defined is entirely dependent upon social and political relations, but making that argument is precisely to stress the social or political constitution of what is fundamentally a psychological reality. Power, on the other hand, is primarily a political concept. In very broad terms that are meant to encompass a variety of approaches, it can be defined as the ability to act upon the human world to change it or to maintain it. To enquire about the relationship between power and identity is therefore to enquire about the ways in which the psychology of identity interacts with the political dynamics of power.

Some scholars, such as Foucault, have argued that actually there is no identity without power—and the reverse could also be advocated. If that is the case (and even if it isn't), one can wonder why a joint consideration of power and identity (and of their relationship) has not been more pre-eminent in the social sciences, given their status as key concepts in many areas of social research. Of course, it is in the nature of social research to be selective and to isolate a few dimensions for analysis among the infinite number that compose the social world. However, one might nevertheless be surprised at the fact that power and identity have not been jointly selected for examination more frequently, and that the two issues have generally been compartmentalised by being the object of scrutiny of different disciplines and/or of different research traditions within the same discipline. This is the case even within the discipline of political psychology, which, if the above definitions hold, should in principle constitute the natural home for the consideration of the interplay between power and identity. Those hoping to find a long and strong tradition of coupling those two concepts together in the analysis of empirical phenomena within the domain of political psychology will soon be disappointed. Rather, they will find that each has generally occupied a central place in separate lines of research.

Fortunately, these claims are slowly becoming a thing of the past, for the last decade has seen an increased interest both in identity issues among those studying power and in issues of power within identity research. This volume seeks to contribute to moving the field forward by bringing together varied examples of these analyses in a single collection of essays. The leading role that political

psychology would naturally be expected to play in this enterprise is reflected in the fact that the majority of the assembled contributions come from this field and/or from the sister discipline of social psychology. Nevertheless, as a way of resisting further compartmentalisation, they have been complemented by contributions from other highly relevant disciplines, namely history, anthropology and politics. Before outlining the details of these contributions, however, we will examine in more detail the general question addressed in this volume, i.e. what is entailed in an analysis of the intersection between power and identity within the perspective that is adopted here.

Power and identity: a two-way relationship

The questions raised by Foucault and Marx, as well as the limits in the scope of their enquiry, are helpful in circumscribing the general issues addressed in this volume. At the heart of Foucault's work, particularly in its later stages, is his pressing concern with the relationship between the self and power (Foucault, 1976/1998, 1982/2002a, 1984/1985, 1984/1986). For Foucault, the self is not constituted internally through the subject's own efforts, but externally by the multitude of social practices that are specifically dedicated to its moulding—practices that he coined the "technologies of the self" (Foucault, 1988/2002b). However, the Foucaldian self is more than just another variant on the idea of the social self, for the social practices that shape it are always the expression of strategies of power—they are always political, as well as social. As a result, the self is conceived as "a vital element in the networks of power that traverse modern societies" (Rose, 1999, p. 217); it is the fulcrum on which those networks rely to achieve their effects, defining people in particular ways in order to secure their alignment with dominant interests. The self is a political tool of subjection through "subjectification" (Foucault, 1976/1998), i.e. it turns people into subjects in the psychological sense for the purpose of ensuring their status as subjects in the political sense. What makes it such an effective tool in that regard is that the aspirations and imperatives of the self are generally deemed to come from "within", thereby hiding the power that presides over their constitution.

As our opening example suggests, the focus in this volume is on collective, social or group identities, i.e. identities that are derived from belonging to a particular segment of society, and are therefore both shared with others and limited in scope. At first sight this might appear to contrast with Foucault's approach. Indeed, as the title of one of his essays—"The political technology of individuals" (Foucault, 1988/2002b)—indicates, the practices on which he focuses often aim to construct human beings as individuals (e.g. through promoting the self-examination of one's sexual desires). At the same time, these practices are deemed to characterise Western society as a whole, rather than being specifically associated with any of its particular segments. Nevertheless, one of Foucault's important points is that the self-definitions engendered by the technologies of the self are also used to create, delimit and define particular social categories (e.g. sexual deviants). As such,

Foucault's insights into the relation between self and power can be, and have been, fruitfully applied to the analysis of group identities.

However, there is at least one fundamental way in which the questions raised in this volume go beyond a Foucaldian form of enquiry. Foucault's approach to the relationship between power and self is avowedly one-sided, with everything flowing from the former to the latter. By contrast, our goal is to consider the relationship between power and (group) identity as a two-way street, making room for the insight that the latter may constitute the basis through which human beings may, in turn, actively participate in the construction of power. In other words, identities can be more than the end result of strategies of power, and their effects on thoughts and actions can be more than a mere reflection of those strategies. Even when identities are initially imposed externally by dominant powers, those that are targeted by such impositions can actively reclaim the imposed identities by redefining their particular contours and content. What is more, they often do this precisely to regain power, at least over the definition of their own self. Foucault expressly denied that there was a single, coherent and dominant strategy of power in any society, suggesting instead that many diverse strategies are present as multiple vectors pushing in similar or opposite directions (Foucault, 1976/1998). However, his focus was definitely on the strategies that emerge as the winners in this interplay of power vectors. He did not provide a detailed account of how alternative strategies of resistance may develop, and in particular how they might develop around the very identities created by dominant powers. As a result, he failed to consider that identity might be a power resource (i.e. a source of power creation for the powerless) as well as a resource of power (i.e. a tool used by dominant powers).

In contrast, this dialogical relationship between power and identity can be found in Marxism with the twin concepts of "false consciousness" and "class consciousness"[1]—although the scope of these concepts is limited to one particular type of group identity, i.e. class identity (Marx & Engels, 1844, 1846/1978). In the exploitative relationship between the bourgeoisie and the workers, false consciousness is the means through which the submission of the latter is smoothly operated. Ideological and institutional resources are deployed by the bourgeoisie to shape the psychology of workers and mislead them into defining their wishes and wants in ways that do not correspond to their "real" interests. This operation creates a "false consciousness" that ensures the maintenance of the existing power structure based on economic differences. This includes promoting (illusory) group divisions among the workers. Achieving class consciousness, on the other hand, is one of the necessary steps in paving the way towards liberation from capitalist exploitation. According to Marxism, it is when the veil of false consciousness is lifted and workers realise where their real interests lie that they can become united by their joint interest in the fight against exploitation. In other words, it is through the development of a common identity as members of the working class that workers can overcome their internal divisions (promoted by the bourgeoisie) and gain the power to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, although Marx did not claim this would be easy, one could argue that he still underestimated the difficulties in achieving that result, notably by misjudging the hold that "illusory" class-alternative identities can have on social and political actors. Indeed, contrary to Marx's predictions, it has been argued that the development of an overarching class identity uniting all workers within the capitalist system never actually took place, mainly because of the interference of cross-cutting identities at the national level (e.g. Anderson, 1991). Revolutions that, rightly or wrongly, took their cue from Marx framed their fight in national terms: rather than fighting against *the* bourgeoisie, they insisted that the fight was against *their* bourgeoisie (e.g. Inder Singh, 2001; Nimni, 2001). Even more problematic for classic Marxist theory, this hold of national divisions has not been limited to workers; in many historical instances the bourgeoisie also did not act as if moved by a single, transnational common interest, but by what they perceived to be their country's interests. The lessons of history therefore make it difficult to dismiss national identities as mere ideological "illusions" concocted by the bourgeoisie with the sole purpose of dividing the workers. More generally, the role of identity in politics, national or otherwise, has so far proved to be resilient to any reduction to a tool of class warfare.

In one respect, then, Marxism comes close to the Foucaldian approach in that it tends to consider all identities, aside from class, to be little more than the effect of power. As a result, identities lose some of their substance as engines of human action. Their role is restricted to mere intermediaries between power and action. In contrast, the aim of this volume is to examine the bidirectional relationship between power and identity in a way that conceives of them as "equal partners" in that dialogue, i.e. as possessing the same conceptual "thickness" and explanatory power in the shaping of human action. As a matter of fact, one of the key lessons coming out of the contributions in this volume is that the two sides of the dialogue between power and identity are deeply intertwined. Looking at one particular side, be it the ways in which power dynamics shape identity or the ways in which identity dynamics constitute power, merely captures a static picture of what essentially constitutes a feedback loop with no independent starting point.

Outline of the chapters

Aside from this introductory chapter, this volume is comprised of seven chapters that analyse the issues of power and identity in specific empirical contexts, and a concluding chapter that comments on the earlier contributions and teases out some of the common themes and messages. Although both sides of the power–identity relationship can be found in every contribution, the seven chapters in the middle have been organised according to the side on which they place their main emphasis. Thus Chapters 2 and 3 focus mainly on how power shapes the contours and content of identities, whereas Chapters 6, 7 and 8 examine in more detail the role of identity in the constitution of power. In the middle, Chapters 4 and 5 operate as transitions since they address both sides in relatively equal proportions.

Chapter 2, by Xavier, illustrates the ways in which the identities of colonised populations can be shaped by the power of the colonisers. Xavier draws on the case of the colony of Goa under Portuguese rule in the sixteenth century to examine the contradictions in the "policies of identity" put in place to deal with indigenous populations. These contradictions can be traced back to an essential paradox that can also be found at the heart of contemporary debates on acculturation and multiculturalism. They flow from the fact that colonial power sought to assimilate Indians through religious conversion in order to extend the power of the colonial empire, but at the same time aimed to recreate differences to maintain the existing power hierarchy within the empire on which the whole colonial system depended. In that process, the "natives" found themselves in an "identity limbo": irremediably transformed, they could not go back to their original identity, but neither were they truly accepted as members of the colonisers' group.

However, while the role of power in the moulding of identity may be particularly apparent in the case of colonialism, it is by no means limited to that context, nor is it limited to the case of groups using their power to define the identities of those considered to be "others". Power can also be at play in the way groups define the identity of their own members. In Chapter 3, Sobral shows how the implementation of strategies and policies designed to affect identity can be seen as one of the key occupations of the State in its attempt to define and bind the nation. Debates are ongoing as to the modernity or antiquity of nations, but what is clear is that national identities do not "naturally" emerge in a simple bottom-up process. Rather, they need to be actively shaped (as well as continuously maintained), and one of the foremost agents in that process is the State itself. Sobral looks at the means through which this was historically accomplished in the case of Portugal and Portuguese identity. However, the particular means deployed (e.g. the designation of a significant other) are not limited to that specific case, since they can be found in many other instances of nation construction or identity formation in general.

Chapter 4 by Gao looks at the role of tribal identity in the civic life and electoral politics of Jordan, and in doing so provides a good example of how the two sides of the power–identity relationship can be difficult to separate. Gao argues that the persistence of tribal identities in Jordan is related to the persistence of tribal practices in spite of predictions that such practices would slowly disappear with the "modernisation" of Jordanian society. The fact that tribal membership is still the predominant factor in determining who gets elected at both the local and national level is obviously relevant to the ways in which identity impacts on power dynamics. Yet, as Gao stresses, acting in accordance with the wishes of the tribe is not always done out of mere subjective loyalty; it can also be the result of social pressure and of the high practical costs associated with ignoring those wishes. In other words, the pre-eminence of tribes means that they possess the practical power of shaping individuals' behaviour, and ultimately their identity, in tribal terms. What is more, the joint sustenance of tribal practices and identities also results from power strategies deployed by the State. In other words, identity results from power as much as vice versa.

Chapter 5 by Klein, Allen, Bernard and Gervais also deals directly with both sides of the power–identity relationship, since it explicitly contrasts the two vantage points in the context of stereotyping and sexual objectification. Both the ascription of stereotypes to disadvantaged groups and the sexual objectification of women can be seen as particular ways in which the identities of the powerless are defined by the powerful (e.g. by men in the latter case). Much research has been devoted to showing how these phenomena serve to maintain and legitimise the existing social and political hierarchy. However, as Klein et al. argue, this only represents one side of the story. Disadvantaged groups can also use stereotypes (including stereotypes about themselves) to pursue their own agendas, and so can women in relation to the sexualisation of their bodies. The authors illustrate their points through an analysis of the speeches of the leader of the movement for the independence of Congo, as well as the collective actions taken by the Femen movement. In both cases, it is through the reconstruction of the meaning of their (national or sexual) identity that the socially disadvantaged and politically subordinated aim to reclaim the power to shape their own lives.

Chapter 6 by Drury, Evripidou and van Zomeren can be seen as generalising some of the processes illustrated in Chapter 5. Indeed, the chapter provides us with a review of an extensive body of work investigating the empowering consequences of taking part in social movements and collective actions. The power that can ensue from collective as opposed to individual action builds on the development of a shared collective identity, a shared understanding of that identity, and a shared vision about how that identity should be actualised (or objectified) in practice. This creates expectations of mutual support among social actors and allows for the possibility of coordinating social action effectively to achieve the group's goals. Furthermore, through collective action, the identity of the ingroup can be redefined, and with it its specific goals as well as the perceptions of what can be achieved. Thus, it is through the transformation of identity that a more general sense of power (i.e. a sense that it is possible to affect and change the world) can develop.

In Chapter 7, Reicher and Haslam build on their work in the BBC prison study to examine how identity dynamics lead to the actual power or powerlessness to enact the vision of the social world entailed by that identity. As in Chapter 6, the crux of their argument lies with the formation of a shared identity as the medium through which the social coordination of cognitions and actions is made possible. However, where Chapter 6 shows the relevance of those processes in many real social movements and events, Chapter 7 takes advantage of the controlled environment of a week-long naturalistic experiment to examine the evolution of these processes over time, allowing us to appreciate how both identity and power dynamics shift in unison and dramatically affect the overall "system". Both the "revolution" that replaced the initial hierarchical system by a non-hierarchical system, and the reactionary counter-revolution that sought to re-establish it with a vengeance, can be explained by the (in)ability to build a consensual identity, and thereby to achieve the power to actualise the vision of social life it entails. The

chilling lesson that powerlessness paves the road to the acceptation of tyranny echoes an idea that, through the fascist experiences of the twentieth century, has become sadly familiar. However, it is also a call to question the modern mistrust of power, for the creation and exercise of collective power may be needed to preserve freedom even in its individual expressions.

Chapter 8, by Sindic, integrates the theoretical resources deployed in Chapters 6 and 7 with work in political philosophy, to offer a reflection on the nature of political power, questioning the adequacy of our existing conceptual tools to capture its specific group-based nature and thereby its intrinsic relationship to identity. Power can be social because of its target (power *over* others) or its means (power *through* others), but also because it depends on the support of others for its very existence (power *with* others). The latter idea would be familiar to the activists in Chapter 6 and is particularly relevant to the case of political power. This argument is subsequently illustrated by examining how the question of political power is addressed in political debates around Scottish separatism and European Union membership. More specifically, Sindic shows that the attribution and meaning of political power in those debates does not only depend on the question of who possesses the "objective" tools of power (i.e. the number of votes in the decision-making process), but is also tied up with the establishment of an identity relationship between political representatives and those they are deemed to represent.

Finally, in Chapter 9, Dovidio proposes an integrative conceptual model of the relationship between power dynamics and identity processes. While this model does not pretend or even seek to subsume every aspect of all the contributions into a single, integrative, overarching theory—an attempt that would threaten to reduce their intended diversity—the chapter nevertheless selectively draws on relevant aspects of every preceding chapter in building that model. By doing so, it therefore makes a significant contribution to the formation of a more coherent and inclusive picture of the issues at stake.

The empirical contexts of power and identity

Despite the disciplinary and methodological diversity exhibited by the various chapters, the above outline shows the strong continuity (and complementarity) that exists between them in terms of their contributions to our conceptual and theoretical understanding of the intersection between power and identity. However, a slightly different (but parallel) story that stresses the connections and commonalities between chapters in terms of their chosen empirical terrains of investigation could also be told. Indeed, several of these terrains appear more than once throughout the volume. This is the case for the issues of colonialism (Chapters 2 and 5), nationalism and national independence movements (Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 8), collective action (Chapters 5, 6 and 7), and electoral politics (Chapters 4 and 8). The relative convergence of the chapters at this level can be taken as an indication that these terrains constitute particularly fertile ground for a joint consideration of power and identity and of their interaction. Of course, there are many other

empirical contexts (such as work organisations) that are as important and potentially as fruitful, and to which future work should extend. Nevertheless, the contexts addressed in this volume are particularly suited to move the investigation of power and identity forward, and more generally to promote a due consideration of the interaction between political and psychological processes.

In relation to colonialism, it is no coincidence that we chose to open this prologue with an illustration of its impact on identity and the rest of the volume with a chapter that specifically focuses on this subject. There are good reasons why colonialism provides one of the most striking examples of how power can shape identity on a large scale (Chapter 2). Perhaps nowhere else in the history of mankind can we find a wider gap in power than the one which existed between colonisers and colonised. The effects of this power gap were truly global, since it ended up affecting the great majority of human populations in almost every corner of the world, defining them as colonisers, colonised, or soon-to-be-colonised. One can think of the Portuguese and the Spaniards dividing the world between them at the Treaties of Tordesillas (1494) and Zaragoza (1529), even before their colonising enterprises were fully under way, which for almost any previous government or ruler would have amounted to a delusion of grandeur. Yet the consequences of these treaties are still felt today. To take but one example, Latino identity in America would probably not exist without the particular pattern of colonial expansion the treaties helped create. Perhaps better than any other context, colonialism shows us that power not only moulds the content of existing identities; it can also be responsible for the creation of entirely new groups.

As a worldwide phenomenon, nationalism also shares the same grandeur of scale, but its effects on the constitution of identities can be somewhat harder to spot since we do not enjoy the same historical distance than with colonialism. Whereas colonial empires are from the past, we are still in the era of the nation-state as the primary political entity. We still have to fight against the mechanisms that push us to take for granted and regard as natural the demographic organisation of the world into distinct nations with specific identities, and its concomitant political organisation into nation-states as the mere expression of the right to self-government of those pre-existing national peoples. It takes special effort to reverse the relation and to uncover the ways in which national identities and the very idea of forming a nation can be shaped by the power of the State to justify its existence as a state. Looking into the past of nations and how they were historically constructed may help in this task, since with historical distance practices and patterns of identification that were taken for granted by those living in the past appear less self-evident to us living in the present (Chapter 3).

Another possible point of entry consists in looking at nationally-framed colonial independence movements (Chapter 5) or contemporary national separatist movements (Chapter 8). Indeed, national identities and their relationship with power are brought to the fore by the avowed goal of those movements to establish an alternative political structure based on claims of national identity difference. Since separatist movements strive for a change in the existing political order, their

particular versions of identity cannot be taken for granted but have to be openly expounded to legitimise that change. At the same time, the challenge that they mount against those identity versions that help maintain the status quo renders the latter versions less self-evident.

However, this point is not limited to the context of nationalism; it can be generalised to any form of collective action aimed at challenging a status quo that promotes a particular understanding of how the world (or some specific aspect of it) should be organised, as a function of what people are or are deemed to be (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Any movement seeking to achieve that result cannot afford to take identity for granted since it needs to develop its alternative vision of identities and explicitly link these identities to its version of how the world should be. Furthermore, in mounting such a challenge, collective actors often have no choice but to unpack the opposing identity claims and how they serve to sustain the status quo, in order to boost the credibility of their own claims. Part of the reason why collective action is another pre-eminent empirical theme of this volume, then, is because it allows us to observe the construction of alternative identities and its relationship with alternative political goals, and because it makes taken-for-granted identities and their hidden relationship with power structures (both as their effect and as their legitimising support) more apparent in contrast.

Finally, the interest of electoral politics for an investigation of power and identity should be plain. Electoral politics represent the paradigm of power struggle in democratic societies, and identity plays a key role in that struggle, both because we elect those to whom we can relate and because those seeking to be elected need to establish that relationship. However, looking at the role of identity in electoral politics, particularly in unfamiliar contexts where its operations are made more apparent by cultural distance (Chapter 4) and/or by identity contestations among the actors themselves (Chapter 8), can also serve to demonstrate that this role is larger than what is usually encompassed under the label "identity politics". The latter term assumes the existence of "non-identity politics", when in fact identity is ubiquitous within the political process.

Conclusions

We leave the elaboration of the specific messages as to the ways in which power and identity intersect (and the psychological, political and societal consequences of those intersections) to the individual contributions in this volume. Although many of their conclusions have far-reaching implications well beyond the specific empirical terrain from which they emerged, they are nevertheless more enlightening when considered in the context of the concrete issues that flesh them out. For now, we finish by focusing on the lessons that a study of the interaction between power and identity can teach us at a very broad conceptual level. Indeed, a coordinated analysis of power and identity may not only contribute to illustrate important phenomena in new ways; it may also lead to the mutual enrichment of those concepts.

Thus, on the one hand, the concept of power has often been considered either in individualistic or structural terms. In the first approach, power belongs to individuals (leaders, elites, politicians and other prominent figures, but also "ordinary" people), and/or is the net result of the combination or opposition of the ability of separate individuals to affect the world. Anyone who has ever had to deal with bureaucracy, the power of which can easily overrun even those enacting its rules (making them "victims of the system" every bit as much as anyone else), can see the limits of that view. In the second approach, power is an effect of system organisation and belongs primarily to collective entities (state, administrative and legal apparatus, businesses and other institutions). It is thus irreducible to individuals, but the consequence is precisely that all trace of the human agents exercising that power tends to disappear. One might wonder if power without agency is still power; at the very least, it becomes impoverished as a concept, encompassing too many things to be highly meaningful. What we are perhaps still lacking is a concept of power that is neither reducible to individuals and their agency, nor to structures and their impersonal imperatives—i.e. power as an emergent property of the relations between individuals that may in turn structure them. Since research on group identities had to deal with the same issue and developed fruitful conceptual resources to address it, those resources might be of use in the development of such a concept of power.

On the other hand, the conceptualisation of identity as simultaneously personal and social has often been operated through an emphasis on the ways in which social structures, knowledge and narratives critically shape individuals' self-understandings. In that perspective, identity is essentially a set of socially-saturated cognitions and affects that individuals hold about their selves—it is the social in the mind. Perhaps as a result of this, more emphasis has been put on the psychological function of identity as meaning-making (i.e. how self-understanding relates to understanding of others and the world) and less on its practical function as a guide to action. Yet, if identity matters, it is because it shapes what we do as much as what we think or what we feel. In that context, linking identity to the concept of power, which is essentially bound with action—it is, after all, the capacity to act upon the world—might be a way to restore the balance between cognition and action. It should lead us to consider identity as essentially embedded in practices, and in particular in practices of power. It may also be a way to go beyond the classic opposition between cultural and material factors in the shaping of human social and political behaviour, since identity has typically been associated with (and limited to) the first sphere and power with the second.

Note

1 Here we are glossing over the fact that Marx actually never used the term "false consciousness" in his writings; the term should correctly be attributed to Engels. For the sake of symmetry in the terms we use, we assimilate Marx's parallel criticism of ideology to the notion of false consciousness. Likewise, he rarely used the term "class consciousness" but spoke more readily of the working class becoming a "class for itself". The above

commentary may, if necessary, be seen as directed towards a common version of Marxism that may or may not faithfully reflect Marx's original writings, but it does serve our argumentative purpose.

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2

EMPIRE, RELIGION AND IDENTITY

The making of Goan people in the early modern period[1]

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Colonialism is certainly one of the privileged objects of analysis for the multiple ways power can shape identity. In colonialism it is frequent that a powerful minority (the colonisers), often coming from a very different social and cultural background, finds itself in a position to dictate the identity of a majority (the colonised). In fact, the identity labels that colonial power attributed to the colonised usually legitimised the way it could act upon them.

The motivations to dictate identity changes in the world of the colonised could be multiple. The tendency to converge the identity of the colonised towards that of the colonisers usually characterised colonial models based on the principle of assimilation, like the Portuguese in the early modern period and the French (Belmessous, 2013; Crowder, 1962; Diouf, 1998; Lambert, 1993; Silva, 2009; Xavier, 2008), while the tendency to stress the "racial" and cultural differences between the communities of the colonisers and the colonised characterised, in general terms, the British and the Dutch experiences (Bosma & Raben, 2008, McClintock, 1995; Salesa, 2011; Stoler, 2002; Taylor, 1999/1983).

In the context of the assimilationist model, the legitimisation of the process of identity transformation of the colonised could vary. In some cases, it referred to a more or less explicit discourse of a "civilising mission" (either religious, through conversion, or secular, through education). In other cases, it was part of a political culture based on the belief that homogenising society was a condition for building and conserving power. Finally, the adoption of inclusive policies could be a result of strictly pragmatic reasons such as the need for human resources, i.e. the need for more people to become soldiers to defend the colonial institutions.

However, had the equality of colonisers and colonised (theoretically, the ultimate goal of the model) been truly achieved, it would have threatened the dissolution of the imperial relation. Since colonialism is based on hierarchy and