

**MASTER'S DEGREE
FINAL DISSERTATION**

**Competing Conceptions of a “Swiss”
National Identity and their Effect on
Attitudes towards the “Foreign Other”**

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To my parents

Who taught me to be both critical and compassionate.

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Abstract

In Switzerland the issue of immigration and the status of the “foreign other” has been much debated at the national level, with recent policies becoming more xenophobic. Previous studies have shown that attitudes towards immigrants are influenced by the conception of the nation; therefore, this study uses a discourse analysis of the hegemonic narratives to analyze the competing conceptions of a Swiss National Identity and how these are mobilized in political campaigns. I find that besides the commonly accepted political conception of the nation, both cultural and ethnic constructions are also pervasive. The political far right has mobilized these narratives to support their anti-immigration political campaigns. Therefore, the Thesis recommends that there should be an effort to shift the discourse of a “Swiss” national identity to promote a culture of peaces. Furthermore, the concept of nationality should be questioned as a privileged identity and space should be opened for alternative frameworks.

Key Words: Identity, Migration, Switzerland, the Nation-State, Privilege

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

Walt Whitman, 1855
"Song of Myself"

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Introduction

My Story

I am Swiss - that is an identity I was born into,, but one that I have spent the last twenty years trying to understand. When I was living in Switzerland as a little girl, everyone around me identified with the same national identity, and I never thought about what being “Swiss” meant – I was living at point zero. But when I was six years old, my family moved to China, and all of a sudden my “Swiss-ness” became very salient to my daily life. I found myself in a place where almost everything was different, the climate, the food, the eating utensils, the toilets, and probably most importantly the language.

Since those days I have lived and traveled around the world, and the questions of what it means to be Swiss and how I fit into the world have followed me from place to place. The simple answer is that I am Swiss: I have a Swiss passport; I can trace my family tree back for generations in Switzerland; my hometown of Zeiningen has a significant population of other “Freiermuths.” However, like many Third Culture Kids, my identity is more complicated. I have homes all around the world, and I feel connected to many different places. Yet I do not have deep roots that tie me to any single place; in someway I am always on the outside – the foreigner. Moreover, I am open to the possibility of a “Third Culture,” a mixing of cultures that leads to a Third Culture that is not just a mix of other cultures but a step toward an entirely new consciousness.¹ Therefore, I am naturally drawn to topics of identity as well as migration. And in the context of Switzerland I feel that I have a unique perspective: I

¹ As David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken (2009) explain in their book *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, the “third” culture refers to an interstitial culture or “culture between culture” which contains elements of but does not resemble either the home nor the host culture.

am the insider-outsider, the local-foreigner, a walking paradox that has spent a lifetime learning to bridge the gap and to be comfortable living in ambiguity.

Furthermore, as a student of peace I am very interested in questions of privilege and power. The idea of intersectionality considers the interaction of various privileges associated with gender, sexual-identity, ethnicity/race, and class (Allen, 2011). Therefore, although I am a woman I am nevertheless quite privileged as I am able-bodied, white, heterosexual, and from a well-off family. However, what is rarely discussed, at least by theorists from the “center,” is the privilege of state/nation-hood.

Although many Swiss² people have a general sense of feeling lucky to live in Switzerland (an idea related to the Swiss concept of the *Sonderfall*)³, it is not until they leave that they realize the true power of possessing a little red passport. For one, having a Swiss passport makes crossing borders very easy. There are many countries that allow Swiss citizens to enter without a visa, and within the European Union it is even possible to live and work without any special permit. Even when a visa is required, it is usually considered a simple matter of formality. Given these considerations, the Swiss passport was recently ranked as one of the most powerful in the world (Linn, 2014). The reality of this privilege really hit me when I was working in China. There, I had many co-workers who dreamed of travelling or working abroad, but faced a lot of red-tape in order to do so. Even more revealing was a conversation about our futures with a Cuban friend. While I was free to look at universities and jobs anywhere I pleased, his freedom of movement was much more restricted. An intersectional analysis of his privilege based on race, gender and class

² I dedicate Chapter 2 of this thesis to problematizing and deconstructing what it means to be Swiss. In this section I use “Swiss” to refer to Swiss citizens (holders of a Swiss Passport).

³ The *Sonderfall* is a conception of Switzerland as a special or exceptional case, an idea I explore in more depth in Chapter 2.

would indicate that he should be quite privileged; nevertheless, his national identity greatly limited his freedom of movement.

Beyond the ease of movement, the Swiss are usually quite well received in foreign countries because most of the stereotypes/hegemonic discourses on being Swiss are quite positive. The most common perceptions I have encountered include that we are rich – we are bankers, good with money, and generally trustworthy. We wear Swiss watches and are accordingly punctual, detail oriented, and reliable. And of course, we are neutral. The only somewhat negative response to my “Swissness” I have ever confronted while travelling was when people pointed out all the “black money” that corrupt politicians were storing in Swiss banks. But even that was never held against me personally.

Finally, this idea of privilege also relates to the way we conceptualize people living outside their country of citizenship. Even though I pass through immigration at every airport, I have never perceived myself as an immigrant. Instead, I have been regarded by others and have viewed myself as an expat. However, although an expat is generally defined as a person who is residing in another country (either temporarily or permanently), it is actually a privileged status that is linked to socio-economic status, ethnicity, and country of origin (Dewolf, 2014; Koutonin, 2015).

Although I became aware of this privilege while I was living and travelling outside the Swiss context, the privilege of “Swissness” is also present in Switzerland, especially since more than a fifth of the population is considered as “foreign.” However, it is often quite difficult to recognize one’s privilege when living at point zero, and so far “nationalism” is rarely discussed in the same way as *racism* or *sexism*. Therefore, I believe that it is important to critically reflect on the power of a

“Swiss” identity within Switzerland. How do hegemonic discourses about being Swiss influence the relationship between the Swiss and the “other” within Switzerland? More specifically, how are these myths mobilized in political debates about migrants and the “other?”

Background

Immigration and Switzerland

Millions displaced by the war in Syria, thousands of Rohingya pushed around in South East Asia, boats filled with refugees sinking in the Mediterranean – the News headlines all over the world indicate that migration and refugees are among the central topics of our time. Moreover, globalization means that the world is becoming more connected than ever, and the flow of ideas, things, and people is reaching new levels. In 2013, there were more than 230 million migrants and 15 million refugees globally, with more than two million migrants, representing around a fourth of the total population, in Switzerland (UNDP, 2013). Therefore, it is no surprise that the issue of immigration is a hot political topic and that over the last few years there have been a number of popular referenda and initiatives relating to foreigners in Switzerland.

Switzerland is often considered as a model nation: the Better Life Index ranked Switzerland first in terms of Life Satisfaction, rate of employment and life expectancy (OECD, 2013); the Social Progress Index, which measures basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing and opportunity, ranked Switzerland third out of 50 countries analyzed (The Social Progress Imperative, 2014); and the country is ranked seventh (out of more than 150) in average life satisfaction by the World Happiness Report (Helliwell, 2013). Moreover, Switzerland is currently ranked fifth globally by

the Global Peace Index (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2014). However, the recent discussions and political debates have revealed some deep underlying tensions. Although direct violence against immigrants has been limited, structural and cultural violence do mark the lived experience of foreigners, usually in the form of discrimination. Of course the relations between the local community and the immigrants is highly complex and every individual has a unique experience influenced by a number of different factors. Nevertheless, it is useful to consider the general status of immigrants and foreigners in Switzerland.

Switzerland has one of the relatively highest immigrant populations in Europe, with over 1.8 million foreigners (representing 23 percent of the population) living in the country in 2013. According to the statistics released by the *Bundesamt Für Migration*⁴, the vast majority of foreigners entered Switzerland to work, about a fourth moved for family reunification, a tenth came for educational purposes, and 2.7 percent were recognized refugees. About 68 percent of foreigners originate from EU-28/EFTA states (with the largest numbers coming from Italy, Germany, and Portugal), benefiting from the free-movement of persons agreement between Switzerland and the EU.⁵ Furthermore, Switzerland is also a sought after destination for asylum seekers and in 2013 alone there were a total of 21,465 new asylum requests (BFM, 2013).

Despite this high level of immigrants, Switzerland does not recognize itself as an immigration country, and at the federal level has no real immigrant policy (European Forum for Migration Studies, 2001: 12). In 1970, the government did

⁴ Federal Bureau for Migration

⁵ In 2014 the Swiss people voted to limit this free-movement agreement.

create the *Eidgenössische Ausländerkommission*⁶; however, its function is purely consultative and has very limited resources (Mahnig and Wimmer, 1999). Since the 1990s many cities and cantons have developed their own *Intergrationsleitbilder*⁷, but also continue to lobby the federal government for a stronger commitment to immigration policy (European Forum for Migration Studies, 2001: 38). In 2000, the federal government finally issued the Decree on the Integration of Foreigners, which shifted the focus from assimilation to creating an adequate climate of equal opportunities (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006: 13).

Legal Status & Naturalization

Currently there are different ways to legally enter Switzerland. At least until the government implements changes in response to the 2014 initiative to limit mass-immigration, citizens of the European Union are free to enter Switzerland under the Free Movement of People agreement. Any stay over 90 days requires a residency permit, which can easily be obtained but is conditioned on either being employed or having the means to sustain oneself, enrolling in mandatory health and accident insurance, and not posing a security threat. After continuously residing in Switzerland for five years they are eligible to apply for a “Permit C” which grants them the right to permanent residency (FDFA, 2015).

Unlike nationals from EC/EFTA countries, citizens from so-called Third States have it a little more complicated. In order to obtain a work and residency permit, they must gain governmental approval. Authorization is only granted if quotas have not been filled and is generally only granted to managers, specialists, and other qualified workers as long as no one of equivalent qualifications can be found within

⁶ Federal Commission for Foreigners

⁷ Integration schemes

Switzerland or the EU/EFTA member states. Furthermore, they must continuously live in Switzerland for ten years before becoming eligible for a “Permit C” (Wise, 2012).

Finally, asylum seekers fall into a separate category. Once they apply for asylum, they are granted a “Permit N” which allows them provisional residency status and in some cases permission to work. Once a request is approved, they receive a short-term residence permit (“Permit B”), which must be renewed annually. After ten years they are then eligible for the “permit C” and permanent residency status (Wise, 2012). In general, very few asylum requests are approved. For example, in 1995, only 26 out of 4,557 (0.6%) cases were decided in favor of the applicant (Holzer and others, 2000: 253). The success of an application is largely dependent on the country of origin as well as the canton in which the request is processed (Holzer and others, 2000).

Whereas foreigners in Switzerland are generally given equal civil and social rights, they are mostly excluded from political rights. With the exception of the cantons of Jura and Neuchatel, which grant foreigners local voting rights, foreigners are completely excluded from the political decision making process (European Forum for Migration Studies, 2001: 96). Therefore, in order to obtain full rights as a citizen, foreigners must apply for naturalization as Swiss citizens.

The naturalization process is reflective of Switzerland’s unique federal composition. In Switzerland, there are three levels of citizenship – the municipal, cantonal, and federal levels. While the federal government issues the passport and sets the general parameters, citizenship is actually granted at the municipal level. At the federal level, the basic requirements are a minimum of twelve years of residency in

Switzerland⁸, social and cultural integration (which generally includes speaking at least one national language), respect for the law, and not posing a threat to both the internal and external security of Switzerland. Furthermore, Cantons can decide their own residency requirement, ranging from two to twelve years (Wise, 2012).

However, how these requirements are assessed is dependent on the municipality. Eligible immigrants need to apply for citizenship at the municipality in which they reside. Then, following a processing period which can last anywhere from three to five years their applications are put to a vote. Each municipality is allowed to set its own procedure; some prefer direct democracy in which the citizens of the municipality vote directly on individual cases, while others defer the decision to an elected municipal council. Some municipalities have had to change their process following a ruling by the Swiss Federal Court in 2003, which has made it unconstitutional to vote by secret ballot, as it denies the applicant a justification for rejection. Voting in town hall meetings remains a legally gray area (Hainmueller and Hangartner, 2014).

Economic and Social Integration

Foreigners in Switzerland are generally expected to assimilate to the local culture and integration in society is a key measure in determining eligibility for naturalization. In their analysis Mahnig and Wimmer find that at least in the 1970s “Swiss welfare organisations and churches remained aloof from any formal involvement with the predominantly Italian migrants” (1999: 21). However, the possibility to organize freely enabled migrants the opportunity to auto-organize,

⁸ The residency requirement can be modified for different applicants. Years spent in Switzerland for youths between 10-20 are counted as double, and marriage to a Swiss citizen also reduces this requirement.

which allowed them to create intermediary institutions between the country of origin and the country of settlement and eased the transition (1999: 21-22).

One of these organizations is Second@s Plus, which is a national group fighting for citizenship and equal opportunities for foreigners (Swiss Info, 2009). However, there are also a number of extreme right-wing organizations, such as the Party of Nationally Oriented Swiss, that are hostile towards all foreigners. In 2010 the police estimated that there were approximately 1,200 extremists in Switzerland, and in 2009 there were a total of 112 reported incidents against foreigners and minorities. The majority of these attacks were verbal and written, and most of the violent incidents occurred between right- and left-wing extremist groups (U.S. Department of State, 2010).

In terms of economic integration, the main factor is inclusion in the job market. Statistics measuring the actual annual work volume (measured in million hours) provide some interesting numbers. Foreigners contribute 32% of the total working hours, although they only represent 23% of the population. This indicates that on average they work more hours than their Swiss counterparts⁹ (BFM, 2013). An OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper on “The labour market integration of immigrants and their children in Switzerland” also finds that overall integration works well in Switzerland, with immigrant men, women and their children having a higher employment rate than in other OECD countries. This is in part due to the strong labor-market in general as well as Switzerland’s admission policy, which has resulted in a significant degree of over qualification for migrants from non-OECD

⁹ Although to verify this it would be important to take into consideration the percentage of foreigners of working age.

countries. The strong role of apprenticeships has also contributed to the inclusion of the children of immigrants (Liebig and others, 2012).

However, there are also a number of issues. Particularly immigrant women with young children and recent humanitarian migrants (refugees) have a hard time participating in the labor market. Furthermore, Switzerland lags behind other OECD countries in terms of anti-discrimination policies, and a number of studies have shown that certain immigrants (particularly those from former Yugoslavia) are being discriminated against in the recruitment process (Liebig and others, 2012).

Health Status

In an article entitled “Health monitoring of the immigrant population in Switzerland,”¹⁰ Weilandt and others (2006) find that migrants from Western Europe generally reported similar health to native Swiss, but that all other migrants reported worse health. They were more likely to feel “bad”, reported less emotional balance, and visited doctors more frequently. In their study on “Health Status Inequality among Immigrants in Switzerland,” Volken and Rüesch (2014) found that particularly nationals from Kosovo and Turkey are substantially more likely to report ill health. Furthermore, health is also a gendered phenomenon as there was no main effect of nationality for men, but there were some differences with women. In particular, Portuguese women were more likely to report ill health than Swiss women, whereas German women were less likely to do so.

Grossman and others (2010) looked specifically at cardiovascular risk factors in immigrants and Swiss nationals, and found that there were significant differences between the two. Besides differences based on individual countries, they found that

¹⁰ My translation. Original title: “Gesundheitsmonitoring der Migrationsbevölkerung in der Schweiz”

women from Italy, former Yugoslavia, Spain, Portugal, and Turkey were all more likely to show physical inactivity. These findings are consistent with a study by Caperchione and others (2012) who also found that physical inactivity was common in culturally and linguistically diverse migrants to Western society. These migrants were at increased risk of hypertension, diabetes mellitus, obesity and cardiovascular disease, yet they were less likely to be proactive in accessing health care or undertaking preventative measures. The researchers identify a number of challenges and barriers that limit participation in physical activity, including cultural and religious beliefs, issues with social relationships, socioeconomic challenges, environmental barriers, and perceptions of health and injury. Interestingly foreign women are less likely to utilize inpatient treatment in a mental hospital than both their Swiss and male counterparts. However, this gender inequality in the use of psychiatric services does not necessarily indicate that immigrant women are suffering from fewer mental disorders. Instead, it simply means that further research is needed to understand the reason why immigrant women are not using psychiatric services (Lay and others, 2007).

Gender

Migration is a gendered phenomenon: “It positions and affects men and women differently, and it produces new modes of gender power and disadvantage” (Hawkesworth, 2006: 2). In the previous sections, I noted how there are significant gender differences in both access to the labor market and in health status. Furthermore, a study on the social integration of immigrant women notes that migration has become increasingly feminized in Switzerland, especially for immigrants arriving from outside the EU. For example, in 2003, 64% of Latin

American immigrants were women, compared to 48% in 1980 (Riaño and others 2006). Riaño and her colleagues found that skilled women are still largely excluded from the labor market due to three main factors: government policies and regulations on immigration, the conditions of the labor market, and public discourses and social attitudes toward immigrants from non-EU countries. Specifically, employers tend to undervalue the personal and educational qualifications of non-EU immigrants and also harbor patriarchal attitudes regarding the role of child-rearing among immigrant women. Immigrant women are still being cast in a negative light, viewed as uneducated, victims of exploitation, or having migrated simply to improve the material quality of her and her family's life.

Beyond general gender discrimination, foreign women also face other gendered-specific issues. One of these is that women form the vast majority of sex-workers. Prostitution is legal in Switzerland and sex workers are supposed to register and pay tax, in return for which there are a number of measures to protect them. This situation, combined with the relatively strong economic situation, makes Switzerland quite an attractive destination for foreign sex workers; however, the reality is still very harsh and exploitation is quite common (BFM, 2014). Most vulnerable are the illegal immigrants who are generally excluded from the higher levels of the sex industry and are afraid to seek medical attention out of fear that their status will be discovered (Pierson, 2012). Also of particular interest is the Cabaret-dancer statute, which in the past years has granted about 1,000 women from outside Europe permission to work in Cabarets for eight months at a time (BFM, 2014). Finally, the Federal Police estimate that there are 2,000-3,000 victims of human trafficking (with the vast majority being women) in Switzerland, many being forced into prostitution while others work as domestic laborers (US Department of State, 2013).

A number of immigrant women also face the challenge of balancing competing gender norms, especially when they come from cultural backgrounds that dictate stricter gender rules than general Swiss society does. Of particular concern are the issue of forced marriages and honor killings. A 124-page study on “Effective Help for those Affected by Forced Marriages”¹¹ uncovered an estimated 1,391 - 1,919 cases of forced marriage, with over 90% of these affecting women. The vast majority of the victims were foreigners with approximately 20% having Swiss citizenship (either by birth or naturalization) (Neubauer and Dahinden, 2012). There have also been a number of reported honor killings, with two particular cases making national news (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2006; Neue Zürcher Zeitung 2012). Switzerland’s law enforcement and judicial system are slowly trying to adapt to the issue of honor killings, and in 2013 the federal court set a legal precedent by deciding that the killing of a woman in the name of family honor should be qualified as murder (instead of intentional homicide) (Felber, 2013).

Mass Media

In their study on “How Migrants Perceive Their Representation in Swiss Public Television” Trebbe and Schoenhagen find that all the participants in their six study groups felt that migrants were being marginalized in the media. In particular the participants stated that the “well-integrated migrants who have adopted the Swiss way of life and have been living in Switzerland inconspicuously for years” were under-represented on television (2011: 419). As one participant put it “we’re just no

¹¹My translation. The original in German is «Wirksame Hilfe für die Betroffenen bei Zwangsheirat»

sensation because we're ordinary, because we integrate ourselves or are integrated. That's why we're just not of interest for the media" (2011: 419).

Instead, the only migrants who are deemed newsworthy are those garnering negative headlines, and these are usually presented in the context of specific thematic frameworks. For example, immigrants from Turkish and North African origin felt that they were consistently depicted in association with Islam and often linked to fundamentalism or oppressive practices. Other Africans felt that they were usually discussed in connection to drugs or asylum seekers, and immigrants from the Balkans usually were linked to speeding and drugs as well as other criminal offenses (2011: 420).

Immigrants also noted a hierarchy in media representation, with migrants from outside the European Union generally being depicted in the most negative light. In this group people from the former Yugoslavia (in particular Serbs and Kosovo Albanians) were presented most negatively, followed by Turks and Africans. Immigrants from EU countries, in particular Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian people were presented in a slightly less negative frame. As such participants in the study "perceived a distinction between good (useful) and bad (less useful) foreigners and were aware of a hierarchy of ethnic groups" (2011: 422).

Finally a complaint across all migrant groups was the feeling of being objectified by the media: "the media would talk about them instead of allowing them to speak for themselves" (2011: 421). Being excluded from the media as a major form of communication means that immigrants are being excluded from "the collective construction of social reality" (2011: 412). Therefore, the most common request was

to demand the opportunity to actively participate in the media, by helping create TV programs both in front of and behind the camera (2011: 423).¹²

Identity and Immigration

While many factors affect the immigrant experience, one important factor is how people understand identity – both their own and that of the other. The situation currently unfolding in the Dominican Republic with the revoking of citizenship and potential deportation of thousands of Haitians illustrates how questions of identity can lead to violence (Stephen, 2015). In the case of Switzerland questions of identity are highly complex as people identify according to their language region, canton, political party, and along a myriad of other personal factors. The situation with “foreigners” may be even more diverse, as immigrants come from different world regions, countries, religions, language backgrounds, education, professional experience, and more. Furthermore, they differ in their legal status and in the length of time spent in Switzerland, ranging from those who have newly arrived to those who were born and raised in Switzerland.

Identity, particularly social identity, can be understood intersubjectively, meaning that representations (identities) are unstable and co-constructed; in other words “it is only through relations that meanings occur” (Dervin, 2011: 9). Gallagher (2014) draws on Husserl to explain how “certain forms of self-consciousness are intersubjectively mediated, and may depend on one's social relations to others.” This means that a “national” identity can only be understood in the context of the social relations with others, both those considered as part of the “in-group” as well as those

¹² It is important to note that despite these critiques, the Swiss media still had a good reputation among the participants. Since they in general felt well accepted, they did not want to criticize Switzerland and furthermore acknowledged that there were indeed “good” as well as “bad” migrants (Trebbe and Schoenhagen, 2011: 423).

perceived to be the “outsider.” My “Swissness” depends not only on my personal perception of myself as Swiss, but also on whether others perceive me to be “Swiss.” Moreover, the social construction of who “belongs” is manifested in (and reinforced by) hegemonic discourses. Therefore, I am interested in identifying some of these discourses and analyzing how they affect the relationship between the Swiss and the “other.” Once I have identified these discourses the next step is to find ways to transform the discourses contributing to a culture of violence in a way that they can promote a culture of “peaces”¹³.

Although I have chosen to explore Switzerland as a case study, the general findings can be applied in many other situations. Everyone has an identity and must come to terms with how they define themselves and how they are defined within their local context and the world. Especially with the increase in international migration, it is important to understand how groups imagine themselves and use that to define the “other.” Furthermore, our current world system is predicated on the notion of the nation-state; therefore, the question of national identity is of particular relevance. As Alfonso Alfonsi argues “The hostility of the governments and populations of many European countries towards immigrants from developing countries has made it imperative to again discuss the link, too often taken for granted, between citizenship and national identity” (Alfonsi, 1997: 64-65). Many of the conflicts in the world today, although not reducible to a solely nationalist agenda, do invoke nationalist imaginations and discourses. Therefore, if we are able to reimagine the nation in terms of a culture of peaces, perhaps we can transform the violence perpetuated by the current system.

¹³ Here I use the concept of “peaces” emerging from the Austrian School of Peace Studies to indicate that peace is not a stable, well-defined ultimate principle, but rather an ongoing process of transforming the omnipresent conflicts of daily life.

Research Question

The central research question guiding my thesis is:

How are the hegemonic discourses of a “Swiss” identity mobilized in political debates about immigrants in Switzerland, and how can these discourses be transformed to contribute to a culture of peaces?

Objectives and Structure

In order to answer this question I focus on a few related objectives. First, in Chapter One, I set the theoretical framework, considering both my peace studies lens as well as providing a theoretical overview of the nation, nationality, and nationalism. In Chapter Two, I deconstruct Swiss nationalism, exploring the different ways Swiss nationality has been constructed and identifying the dominant discourses that frame a “Swiss” identity. Then, in Chapter Three, I analyze the link between a “Swiss” identity and attitudes towards immigrants. In particular, I focus on a discourse analysis of recent initiatives related to immigration. Finally, in Chapter Four, I propose ways to transform this situation, either by re-imagining the national identity to contribute to a more peaceful culture or by taking a more radical stance and questioning some of the fundamental underlying assumptions of national identity.

Limitations

Given both time and space limitations, this research is primarily theory seeking, and the focus is not on providing new empirical data. Furthermore, my research is limited to German and English sources, and so it is possible that I may

miss some of the nuances expressed in French, Italian, or some other language spoken by immigrants. Moreover, it only focuses on one piece of a more complicated puzzle. Earlier, I mentioned that identity is best understood intersubjectively, meaning that identity is co-constituted by different subjects. While I try to include a multitude of voices, the focus of my thesis is mainly on the construction of a “Swiss” national identity within the Swiss context and how this discourse is used to define the other. Of course the “other,” the foreigners and immigrants living in Switzerland, are not passive subjects, but are also actively constructing their own identity and co-constituting the Swiss imagined community. Therefore, it would also be interesting to research the agency of the “other” and to study how they are negotiating and transforming the dominant discourse on their terms. However, an analysis of the subaltern response is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Methodology

As I am writing a thesis in the context of Peace and Conflict studies, my methodology is strongly influenced by this field of study. However, Peace and Conflict studies does not have a commonly accepted methodology per se, but rather is characterized by its interdisciplinarity. Therefore, I draw on sources as well as methodology from various fields, including International Relations, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, among others.

Critical in writing this thesis is a clear understanding of how I understand knowledge. In general I favor a constructivist, rather than an empiricist, idealist or rationalist approach to knowledge. Although I do not deny the existence of a “real” or “true” world, the fact is that knowledge about this world is produced by humans who are never completely neutral. Therefore, individuals interpret and explain the world in

a way that makes sense to them according to their experiences. Rather than understanding the world objectively, I understand it intersubjectively and relationally. This means that the world consists neither of universally true knowledge, nor is knowledge relative to each individual, but instead truths are established in relation to one another. This intersubjective understanding can take place between two individual, but often is based on “thought communities” which are connected by a common interpretation of the truth, such as religions, political parties, and nations.

As Alexander Wendt explains, constructivism is based on the two tenets that “the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature” (1999: 1). Such an understanding is crucial to this thesis, because it allows for the possibility of reimagining reality. This means that if we change our intersubjective understanding, we can change the very structure of human association. An intersubjective perspective also highlights the importance of both “knowledge that” and “knowledge how.” That is to say, I find it insufficient to simply know *that* a “Swiss” national identity is constructed, but it is also important to attempt to understand *how* this affects real world policies. Gaining access to this understanding of “how” can be quite difficult and is never complete, but I will at least make an attempt to integrate some “how” knowledge into my analysis.

Related to intersubjectivity is the concept of the “situated knower” an idea stemming from Feminist epistemology. According to Elizabeth Anderson (2011), ‘situated knowledge’ considers “how people may understand the same object in different ways that reflect the distinct relations in which they stand to it.” This

relationship is dependent on our emotions, attitudes, and interests, as well as our embodiment, first or third person perspective, personal knowledge, know-how, cognitive style, background beliefs, and relation to the other inquirers.

Both Feminist and Peace studies also highlight the importance of considering the nature of power in determining what knowledge is accepted. Here a poststructuralist perspective may be useful. Basing his insights on the writings of Foucault, Robbins (2012: 70) argues that:

Poststructuralism takes as its concern the instability of many of the categories we usually take for granted, including self, truth, and knowledge. Of Foucault's many influential theses, one of the most central was that truth is an effect of power, one that is formed through language and enforces social order by seeming intuitive or taken for granted.

If the truth is to be understood intersubjectively, then it makes sense that subjects (whether they be individuals or thought communities) with more power are able to promote their own truth as the only truth. Therefore, when examining knowledge, it is important not to just see who produced this particular knowledge but also to understand the power structure in which the knowledge is embedded.

In line with this understanding of knowledge, I am fully aware that what I am presenting here is based on my own "situated knowledge." As part of my methodology, I try to be as self-reflective as possible, and disclose my personal relationship to the subject matter. That is one of the main reasons why the very first section of the thesis is "My Story." However, I am sure there are subjective aspects that I will miss. Therefore, rather than claiming that I have discovered the ultimate answer, I am simply presenting my own perspective in the hopes of critically engaging with other subjects and thereby modifying the intersubjective understanding of the world I am a part of.

A constructivist, intersubjective approach to epistemology also influences my understanding of what entities exist and how they relate to each other or how they can be grouped. As such, I reject a realist ontology, as I believe that certain concepts (such as the Nation), do not exist independently of the imagination of people. Instead, I take a relativist approach to the subject within the context of this thesis. However, such an ontology makes defining clear cut categories a challenge.

Since I believe that neither the “Swiss” nor the “foreign other” are objective, real categories, I dedicate the first part of the thesis to teasing out how these terms can be understood from a relativist perspective. As simplified categories, I consider as Swiss those who belong both to the nation (perceiving themselves as part of an imagined community) and the state (having proof of juridically sanctioned citizenship) and the “other” as those who belong neither to the nation nor the state. Furthermore, I explore where and how those who are in-between (citizens who do not identify with the nation or those who imagine themselves as part of the nation while not having citizenship) fit. However, given the limitations of this thesis, I only consider residents of Switzerland and those seeking residency, for example, asylum seekers, and exclude temporary visitors such as tourists.

While I am discussing concepts such as “the self” and “the other,” I reject Descartes’ Cartesian certainty in their existence. Rather, I lean towards the claim made by Mead that “we do not assume there is a self to begin with. Self is not presupposed as a stuff out of which the world arises. Rather, the self arises in the world” (Mead in Hyde, 1994: 187). Furthermore, I also find some merit in Hyde’s argument that “to arise in the world is to arise in language,” and that the world as well as our selves are “created in linguistic interaction” (Hyde, 1994: 187). I do not follow

this claim to the same conclusion as Hyde, but I find it useful in understanding that the self is created in juxtaposition to the other (and vice versa), and that language and the stories we tell play a crucial role. Therefore, in examining the identity of the “other” in Switzerland, I start by looking at how the “self” is imagined. Furthermore, such an understanding justifies my focus on a discourse analysis in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Finally, Switzerland is an interesting case because as a direct democracy the line between the government and the people is very blurry. Although there is an elected government and officials that can be distinguished from the people in general, most major policy decisions are made by the voting populace. Therefore, I do not focus specifically on the government, but instead focus primarily on political acts of the state that are determined by the people - namely referenda and initiatives.

Given these philosophical considerations, I find myself drawn to a feminist research ethic. In their *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science* Ackerly and True (2010) outline the four key elements of such an approach: attentiveness to power, attentiveness to boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, attentiveness to relationships, and commitment to self-reflection. Since I explore the influence of different discourses in determining the relationship between the “Swiss” and the “other,” these are perfect guiding principles. Furthermore, a critical feminist perspective uses “critical inquiry and reflection on social injustice by way of gender analysis, to transform, and not simply explain, the social order” (Ackerly and True, 2010: 2). Although I do not focus directly on gender, the call for transformation (rather than simply explanation) fits well into my peace studies approach, which seeks to transform (rather than resolve or manage) conflict. Committing to a Feminist research ethic also provides guidance to my research tools and methodology.

First of all my research is dancing on the fine line between relativism and essentialism. In the hope of not falling off this tightrope, I am integrating what Ackerly and True call “deliberative moments,” which are moments of critical reflection based on the four guiding principles. Throughout the research process I return to consider the questions they have outlined (Ackerly and True, 2010: 51-52):

- 1) Consider the ways in which power makes apparent or conceals my considerations, enables or inhibits my ability to attend to these, and the power my epistemology exerts over my project.
- 2) Consider whether the boundaries, including the disciplinary boundaries related to the question, theory, research design, analysis, etc., are appropriate or if they inhibit or mask aspects of my research.
- 3) Consider the relationship between myself, the subject-participant, non-participants, and other researchers, as well as the intrasubjectivity of each
- 4) Consider my situatedness: how to others see me, how does my epistemological perspective influence my research.

Constantly questioning and returning to the foundations makes the feminist research methodology dynamic rather than linear, and I find this to be the case in my research as I find myself advancing in spirals rather than in a direct line. Moreover, although I am working within several broad theoretical paradigms, I do not have a specific theory I plan to test.

The focus of the first part of my research will be on a discourse/frame analysis of texts related to the understanding of identity in Switzerland. In line with a feminist approach, the discourse analysis is paired with a look at the practice (for example, i.e. the real life effect that the discourse has). Therefore, Chapter Three focuses on the political implications of the hegemonic discourses identified in the first chapters. In particular, I analyze how these discourses were used to frame the debate over two recent popular initiatives related to the status of foreigners in Switzerland. Finally, since a feminist research ethic is not satisfied with simply explaining, but also calls

for transformation, the final chapter is dedicated to possible ways of transforming and re-imagining the discourse and the frame.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

1. 1 Peace Foundations

Before I jump into the main body of my thesis, it is important for me to take a moment to situate my research within a Peace Studies context. Although, as I have noted earlier, Peace Studies is marked by its inter- and trans-disciplinarity and does not present a unified methodology. These are key concepts that strongly frame my way of thinking.

First of all, it is important to define what I understand by peace. However, to do so it is easiest to start with my conception of violence, which I understand according to Johan Galtung's postulation of three forms or levels of violence. The most obvious kind is direct violence, which is what is commonly understood as violence such as murder, rape, and abuse. Less visible but equally pernicious is structural violence which refers to the injustices built into our social systems. A person starving or dying of a curable disease has not been killed by a specific agent, but rather falls victim to a structure of exploitation and discrimination (Galtung, 1990). Finally there is cultural violence or the attitudes and beliefs that underlie and justify structural violence. Feelings of superiority and unrecognized privilege (based on gender, race, class, religion, etc.) are embedded in and perpetuated by culture and form the foundation for both structural and direct violence.

My conception of peace then mirrors this three-tiered understanding of violence. The most basic level of peace is often called "negative" peace, meaning the absence of direct violence. When a country is not at war, it is in "negative" peace. However, such a country may still be ravaged by poverty or discriminatory practices and its inhabitants may lack formal education, healthcare, and other tools for living up

to their full potential. Therefore, we must also work towards a “positive” peace, which according to Galtung (1967: 14) includes ten key ideas: cooperation, freedom from fear and want, economic growth, absence of exploitation, equality, justice, freedom of action, pluralism, and dynamism. The final step is to replace the Culture of Violence with a Culture of Peace, which is defined by the UN Declaration on a Culture of Peace (1999) as “a set of values, attitudes, traditions, modes of behavior and ways of life” based on a respect for all life and human rights, rejection of violence and a practice of non-violence, a commitment to full participation, promotion of equal rights, and devotion to a number of ideals including freedom, justice, tolerance, solidarity, and pluralism.

Although the idea of a “Culture of Peace” is a good starting point, the concept can be combined with the ideas of Francisco Muñoz and Wolfgang Dietrich to form a “Culture of Many Imperfect Peaces.” Francisco Muñoz coined the term “imperfect peace” as a means of expressing that peace is an unfinished, never-ending process. As such I do not believe in an ultimate, static world peace, but instead agree with Muñoz that “the future should be *desirable, lasting, just, peaceful*, but also *imperfect*.” Often times peace workers are thought to be idealists with their heads stuck in a utopian cloud. Therefore, I believe that the idea of imperfect peace:

could be used to provide an intermediary path between maximalist utopianism and conservative conformism: it is a matter of changing our reality based on our knowledge of human limitations and present scenarios (knowledge provided by the different sciences, forecasting and future studies), yet without having to renounce making plans for the future or having a goal. (Muñoz, 2001)

Moreover, I pair this understanding of an imperfect peace with Wolfgang Dietrich and Wolfgang Sützl’s call for “many peaces.” Similar to Muñoz, they also argue that the idea of “the one (perpetual) peace in the one world... is, at least, sheer intellectual violence vis-à-vis those who cannot share this idea” (1997: 15). Instead,

the world needs different peaces “for concrete societies and communities to be able to organise themselves” (1997: 15). Wolfgang Dietrich further explains that the key to many peaces is plurality, but that plurality cannot be understood as synonymous with ‘anything goes.’ Instead, while the plurality is too vast for human perception, it is nevertheless limited to the totality of human relations. Moreover, it is not a value that can or should be achieved (such as ‘reason’ or ‘truth’), but can rather be understood in the context of the post-modern idea that “many forms of morality always exist simultaneously and at the same place” (2011: 8). These considerations lead Dietrich to understand peaces as “trans-rational” meaning that they “transgress the limits of modernity and post-modernity by recombining the rational and modern with energetic elements and recognizing the importance of energy flow for the perception of peace” (2011: 13).

A trans-rational understanding of many imperfect peaces also denotes that peace cannot be “made.” Rather it fits with John Paul Lederach’s philosophy of “elicitive conflict transformation.” Unlike earlier approaches, which sought to resolve or manage conflict, “conflict transformation” does not view conflict as inherently negative. Instead, conflicts can present an opportunity for transformation that can lead to growth, development, and positive interactions. In his *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, Lederach (2003: 14) provides a brief definition of what he means by conflict transformation:

Conflict transformation is to envision and respond
to the ebb and flow of social conflict
as life-giving opportunities
for creating constructive change processes
that reduce violence,
increase justice
in direct interaction and social structures,
and respond to real-life problems

in human relationships.

Finally, as a student of the Master in Peace, Conflict, and Development at the Universitat Jaume I, I have also been influenced by the philosophy of the founder of the program, Dr. Martínez Guzmán. In talks he had with us in class he explained his alternative conception of who the “realists” are. Rather than accepting the dominant understanding of a “realist” perspective in the terms of international relations theory, he argues that the true “realists” are the ones who understand that people have the capacity to do bad as well as the capacity to do good. And because “doing good” is a capacity, it is something that can be fostered and promoted. While I am cautious with the idea of “doing” good or “making” peace (especially given my previous explanation of the many imperfect peaces), I nevertheless find his shift useful and consider myself a “realist.” I want to see and understand the world as it is – not to turn a blind eye to the ugly, not to turn away from bad. At the same time, I do not believe in a prescriptive “idealism.” Therefore, I want to engage in a process that continually seeks out peaces (rooted in their local and specific reality), and wherever possible to find ways to transform the negative into something more positive.

So how does all of this fit into my thesis?

The level of direct violence in Switzerland is quite low; however, that does not mean that Switzerland is free from structural and cultural violence. Unequal treatment of immigrants and discrimination based on nationality are a form of structural violence that is rooted in cultural violence. This cultural violence is ingrained in common myths and stories that are perpetuated by the media and fuel exclusionary hegemonic discourses. Therefore, in this thesis I focus on uncovering these elements

of cultural violence that form part of a Swiss national identity, and explore how these may be transformed to reflect a culture of peaces.

Especially important for this transformation is the idea that conflict is in fact an opportunity. As such the current tension between the “Swiss” and the “foreign other” does not have to lead to violence but instead has the potential to fuel a transformation toward something positive. However, I do not claim to know what this positive end is, and in fact question the idea that there even is a specific “end goal.” Rather, I hope to open up spaces where a variety of peaces can take root and flourish. Finally, while I believe that this thesis could be useful for analyzing identity and immigration in other contexts, I am also fully aware that peace cannot be exported: that “without being related to concrete places it will never have any social power and remain an abstraction in the brains of peace researchers” (Dietrich and Sützl, 1997: 15). Therefore, I will focus my research on a very specific context, time and place.

1.2 National Identity

In this thesis, I set out to uncover how a “Swiss” identity is used as a juxtaposition to create the “other” and how these concepts influence the political discourse surrounding foreigners in Switzerland. However, in order to analyze the discourse and to understand the relationship between these identities, it is important to first establish what is understood by the idea of being “Swiss.” To do that, I must first establish what I mean by a collective or “national” identity. Although the idea of “nationality” pervades our common understanding of the world, a critical reflection shows that it is a very complex and highly contested concept. Therefore, before I proceed, I first consider some of the existing theories and debates about the nation,

nationality, nationalism, as well as the state and citizenship, and use these to create a framework of analysis for “Swiss” nationalism.¹⁴

If I were to ask anyone on the street if there is a difference between a “Spaniard,” a “Brit,” an “American” and a “Swiss” person, then most would answer in the affirmative and base their answer on quite distinct images they have in their head. However, even though we have a sense of being different, it is quite difficult to define what being “American” or being “Swiss” actually means. We usually use these terms to describe our “nationality” and use them to identify ourselves as belonging to a specific group. But the term nationality is highly contested and often quite confusing, especially since it has been used interchangeably with citizenship to mean belonging to a “nation” as well as belonging to a “state”.

A state can be conceived of as a recognized political entity, which among many other powers has the power to recognize residents as citizens, usually on the basis of some form of social-contract. According to the *New Oxford American Dictionary* a state can be defined as “a nation or territory considered as an organized political community under one government.” Such a definition highlights the confusion between nation and state, as the concept of the nation is definitionally linked to the state.¹⁵ Rejai and Enloe (1969) try to clarify the distinction by noting that the state is primarily a political-legal concept, whereas the nation is primarily a psycho-social concept. Such a distinction is also reflected in Adrian Hastings (1997) differentiation between the state as a political unit and the nation as a self-conscious cultural community.

¹⁴ I am aware of the rich debate over the current relevance of the “nation” and the challenges from globalization, corporations and network dynamics. However, a full analysis of this debate is outside the scope of this thesis and I start with the assumption that while contested the nation is still significant in the world order.

¹⁵ It is important to note here that given the role of language in any nationalist project, dictionaries and how they define the world not only describes but also creates reality.

However, in many cases, the idea of citizenship and nationality overlap as people believe that the state corresponds with a nation, in what is commonly referred to as the nation-state. According to Hastings, “almost all modern states act on the bland assumption that they are nation-states” (1997: 3). However, there are many cases of states that include multiple nations and of nations without a recognized state. As Anthony Smith notes “the idea of one nation coinciding with one state in reality is almost non-existent” (2001: 15).

Having a clear understanding of what is meant by “nation” is not only an intellectually interesting question, but has very important real-life implications. As Tharailath Koshy Oommen explains, “The state is a legally constituted entity which provides residents protection from internal insecurity and external aggression” (1997: 33); however, he also admits that “it is not possible to extend measures of social well-being and the right to political participation to all resident of a state because they are of two types - citizens and non-citizens” (1997: 34). The important question then is who gets to be a citizen. According to Oommen, “residents who are nationals are invariably citizens” and non-national residents may also be citizens “although they encounter several problems in acquiring citizenship” (1997: 34).

1.2.1 What is a nation?

Given these considerations it becomes important to understand what is meant by the nation and by nationals. Are nations primordial entities that form the foundation of our world system? Have they always existed or are they a product of a certain era? What are the defining elements of a nation? What do we mean by nationalism? Different scholars and theorists answer these questions quite differently.

Although the exact meaning of the nation is highly contested, scholarly opinion can be generalized into four broad understandings of when and how nations originated (Smith, 2001). The first of these paradigms is the primordial conception, which views nations as “existing before all things and originating everything” (Smith, 2001: 51); even if nations have sometimes been hidden or suppressed, it is simply a matter of the nationalist uncovering these roots and reminding compatriots of this past. Smith identifies three strands of primordialism, namely: organicist nationalism, which views nations as organic or natural; socio-biological nationalism, which argues that nations can be traced back to the genetic reproductive drive of individuals; and cultural primordialism which is based on the belief that attachments are formed according to ‘primordial givens’ such as the actualities of blood, language, locality, religion and tradition. Smith qualifies this view by noting that contrary to popular perception, this view in reality emphasizes people’s *belief* in the primordality of these factors.

A perennialist perspective is similar to a primordialist approach as it also argues that nations have always existed, even if nationalist ideology may be new. This view was quite popular before the Second World War, and still is widely reflected in popular public opinion. Perennialism generally comes in two varieties. Recurrent perennialism claims that particular nations may come and go, but nations in general are ubiquitous and perennial. On the other hand, continuous perennialism highlights the longevity of particular nations. Adrian Hasting (1997) argues for a largely perennial conception of the nation in *The Construction of Nationhood*. Although he does not argue that nations are primordial, he traces the origin of England (which according to him is the original nation) as far back as medieval times. David Miller also argues that the nation is an old concept based on a sense of belonging to a distinct

group and having a homeland. However, he concedes that the concept has changed and in modern times has come to encompass the idea of a nation as an active political agent, which is the source of legitimate authority (1995: 29-31). In this way he falls in the middle of a perennialist and a modernist understanding of the nation.

Modernists argue that the past is largely irrelevant and that the nation is a thoroughly modern phenomenon, both chronologically recent and qualitatively novel. Miroslav Hroch sums up this position in his assessment that "the nation is not, of course, an eternal category, but was the product of a long and complicated process of historical development in Europe" (1996: 79). However, modernists vary significantly in their interpretation of what these complicated historical processes were.

Smith (2001) divides modernist interpretations into five broad categories. Ideological modernists trace the nation back to the enlightenment and the emergence and manipulation of the ideology of self-determination. Social-economic modernists trace the nation back to industrial-capitalism, direct rule and relative inequalities. The most well known socio-cultural modernist is Ernest Gellner (1996), who argues that the origin of the nation can be traced back to industrialization. Scientific and economic changes have transformed the world since the seventeenth century and have changed the role of culture in human life. In agrarian society, culture embedded humans within a relatively complex, stable and hierarchical structure that provided them with status and identity. On the contrary, in the modern world of high mobility and anonymity, individuals belong to more superficial and temporary professional bureaucracies and looser family associations. Therefore, what really matters is the membership and acceptance in a "high culture," making the nation a contingency of public education.

The fourth category consists of political modernists, who are sometimes also considered as instrumentalists. This position is based on the claim that the nation emerged from the professionalized state, and is a political tool useful in a modern context. Liah Greenfeld (1995) makes an instrumentalist argument for nationalism, although she is not a traditional modernist as she traces the nation all the way back to sixteenth century England. Based on her analysis presented in *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Greenfeld concludes that members of the new Tudor Aristocracy were the founders of nationalism. Originally the word “nation” had referred to a political and cultural elite, separated from the commoners, but then the Tudors changed the concept of “nation” to include all English “people.”

The final strand of modernism argues for a constructionist understanding of the nation, and is represented by two of the most influential scholars of nationalism, namely Eric Hobsbawm (1992) and Benedict Anderson (2006). Hobsbawm views the nation as socially constructed with invented traditions that mainly serve the ruling elite. He agrees on many points with Gellner, especially on “the element of artifact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations” (Hobsbawm, 1992: 10); however, he disagrees with Gellner’s emphasis on a top-down process, noting that it is also important to consider the view from below. Benedict Anderson views the nation as an imagined political community, taking root in the eighteenth century. He argues that “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it...with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against - which it came into being” (Anderson, 2006: 12). These previous cultural systems where the religious communities and the dynastic realms, and nationalism was able to replace them in large part due to the combined emergence of print capitalism (which took advantage of the trend of vernacular languages replacing old

sacred languages) and a changed conception of time which introduced the notion of “meanwhile” (i.e. the idea that people are doing things at the same time and are therefore somehow connected).

The fourth paradigm, as defined by Smith, is his own ethno-symbolic approach, which is based on a socio-historical and cultural analysis. Smith’s main argument is that modern nations are generally based on much older groups called “ethnies,” which define the boundaries within which modern nations can develop (Smith, 1986). In other words, “an ethno-symbolic approach directs attention to the ways in which earlier forms of collective identity may influence the rise of nations” (Smith, 2001: 58). Furthermore, an ethno-symbolic approach emphasizes the “subjective elements of memory, value, sentiment, myth, and symbol” (Smith, 2001: 57). However, while he recognizes the work of nationalists in shaping a nation, Smith disputes that their work is all unfounded fabrications:

nationalists have a vital role to play in the construction of nations, not as culinary artists or social engineers, but as political archaeologists rediscovering and reinterpreting the communal past in order to regenerate the community. Their task is indeed selective - they forget as well as remember the past - but to succeed in their task they must meet certain criteria. Their interpretations must be consonant not only with the ideological demands of nationalism, but also with the scientific evidence, popular resonance and patterning of particular ethnohistories. (Smith, 1999: 181)

In comparing the different approaches, Smith notes that neither modernists nor perennialists have sought to enter the inner world of nationalism (Smith, 2001: 60). Therefore, an ethno-symbolic approach is needed to understand both the collective passion and attachment to the nation as well as its persistence and possible transformation. Furthermore, Smith criticizes modernists for being weak on history, and calls for a more long-term analysis. Finally, Smith accuses modernism of being

an exclusively elite-oriented analysis, and instead promotes ethno-symbolism as stressing the link between the elite and the common people.

Given my constructivist epistemology, I personally favor a modern constructivist understanding of the nation. I disagree with Smith that modernists are weak on history, but would argue that they simply interpret history differently. For example, Anderson traces the historical roots of the nation all the way back to the preceding dynastic and religious communities, while placing the birth of nations in a solidly modern context. Simply because modernists draw different conclusions from their analysis of history, and do not place the same emphasis on ethnic groups, does not justify dismissing them as ahistorical. Furthermore, Smith's argument that modernists solely focus on the elite may be valid against Gellner, but, as noted above, Hobsbawm voices the same concern. One of his main contentions is that the nation "cannot be understood unless also analyzed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people" (Hobsbawm, 1992: 10).

Nevertheless, I agree with Smith that there is a need to try and understand the inner world of nationalism. While I do not view any element of the nation as natural or inherent, I do believe that both supposedly objective as well as subjective attributes have been invoked in the imagining of the nation. In this regard, I lean towards a fifth conception of the nation. A post-modernist interpretation is based on the idea that:

Nationalists who want to disseminate the concept of the nation will make liberal use of elements from the ethnic past, where they appear to answer to present needs and preoccupations. The present creates the past in its own image. So modern nationalist intellectuals will freely select, invent and mix traditions in their quest for the imagined political community.

(Smith, 1994: 18-19)

While Smith argues that the post-modern perspective is still too fragmentary to be considered a paradigm of its own (Smith, 2001: 57), I find it to provide a useful lens.

Such an approach acknowledges the nation as the product of modern cultural conditions, yet looks to the past as a source of cultural elements that are selectively used to create an imagined political community. A post-modern approach also fits with my ontology that questions the existence of a single Truth. Moreover, it conceives of the nation as incomplete or in process, always re-formulating itself, which fits with my framework of “imperfect” peace and transformation.

1.2.2 Building Blocks

While I agree with Anderson that nations are imagined, that does not mean that they are not real. A constructivist understanding simply means that we have created it, but does not deny that our creation has important real-world implications. The easiest way for me to understand this is to use the analogy of a house. When we build a house, there are literally endless possibilities of how to construct it - what and how many rooms to include, how to arrange them, how many floors, etc. We have to make choices and decide what elements to include and what material to build with. These choices may be guided by what resources (mud, bricks, logs, or cement) are easily available and are also influenced by both the architect (who has the vision) and the laborer (who decides where each brick ends up). In addition, once a house is built, it requires constant upkeep to prevent it from falling apart. Finally, there are certain rules over who is allowed in the house, either to live or simply to visit.

Nations are very similar to houses. They are constructed by humans according to the times they are living in and to suit particular needs. There are different elements that can be used to construct a nation: language, territory, ethnic ties, history, myths, symbols, etc. Which ones are relevant partially depends on their availability, but is also influenced by the elites (the architects) as well as the masses (the construction

workers). And once nations are built, they form a strong part of our identity and at least partially determine our relationship with our neighbors. However, acknowledging nations as constructs also allows them to be deconstructed or reformed. In a house, rooms can be repurposed, walls torn down, windows enlarged, and rotten foundations can be replaced. But before one can get started on either a renovation or demolition, it is important to understand all the elements involved.

The building blocks of nationalism can roughly be divided into two types, objective and subjective. Richard Handler notes that the boundaries of nations are permeable and vague. To avoid a problem of “fuzzy boundaries” he distinguishes between two kinds of boundaries. Objective boundedness is when a human group is bounded by “attributes or characteristics that each of its members ‘possesses’” even if what is objectively shared are “subjective states of mind of the group members.” On the other hand, subjective boundedness is “the sense that group members themselves have of forming a group” (1988: 7). These two perspectives are evident in Gellner’s two makeshift definitions of the nation:

1. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.
2. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. (Gellner, 1983: 6-7)

Gellner refers to the first definition as cultural and the second one as voluntaristic, but the distinction fits with the general understanding that nations can be viewed either objectively (considering factors such as language, religion, customs, territory, and institutions) or subjectively based on a sense of belonging (Hroch, 1996; Smith, 2001: 11). Although there is widespread acknowledgment of these two elements, scholars disagree on which ones are the most salient.

A subjective understanding of the nation is perhaps easiest understood by Ernest Renan's claim that a nation's existence is "a daily plebiscite" and although nations presuppose a past, in the present they are summarized by consent (Renan, 1882). Most theorists include at least some aspect of this subjective nature of the nation; however, there is significant variability in the more objective factors that are considered to be relevant to the nation.

Renan argues that two things constitute the nation: one is "present-day consent, the desire to live together" and the other is "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories." Therefore, a heroic past, great men, and glory are the "social capital upon which one bases a national idea" (Renan, 1882). He is by no means alone in viewing a shared history as crucial to a nation. Smith (2001) also notes the importance of a shared history, and Miller (1995) includes the idea of historical continuity (linked to a community of obligation) as one of his five characteristics of national identity. Hroch (1996) identifies three irreplaceable ties in the nation-building process, the first of which is the memory of some common past, viewed as the 'destiny' of the group.

It is important to note that while some authors do speak of a common history, most refer to common memories. Whereas historians tend to view history as factual, the idea of memory is more subjective and allows for the possibility of myth. Anderson (2006) notes that European nationalism in the 1800s was largely based on the idea of an awakening or a return to an aboriginal essence, making history a central pillar of nationalism. Out of this process developed the practice of speaking on behalf of the dead and filling in the past with stories. Anderson reasons that the history of a nation is a lot like our childhood: we do not really remember it, but instead use

pictures and documents to tell a story. However, history is not only a matter of remembering, but is equally affected by forgetting. “All profound changes in consciousness by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias” (Anderson, 2006: 208). This leads to the paradox of often having to “already have forgotten things” one is constantly being reminded of (Anderson, 2006: 204). For example, the memory of a glorious battle may be important in the national imagination, but the memory also requires one to forget that in fact it as a war between brothers and sisters and that the losers have long since been integrated into the nation. Such oblivion allows narratives to spring out of specific historical contexts.

Therefore, the idea of shared history is closely tied to the idea of common myths. As Miller argues, national identity contains a considerable element of myth (both in the form of re-writing history and the invention of languages) (Miller, 1995: 35). However, he warns that these myths or beliefs should not necessarily be discarded even if they are, strictly speaking, false as “they can be shown to contribute significantly to the support of valuable social relations” (Miller, 1995: 36). He bases his argument on George Orwell who asserts that “the belief that we resemble our ancestors...may be unreasonable, but by existing it influences conduct. Myths which are believed in tend to become true, because they set up a type of ‘persona’ which the average person will do his best to resemble” (Orwell in Miller, 1995: 37). Therefore, much like the nation itself, it is not really important whether the shared common history is “real” or represents actual events, but rather is important because it is believed in.

Another commonly cited characteristic is a common vernacular language and literature. According to Hastings the most important and widely present factor in the

development of nationhood is the presence of a widely used vernacular literature (Hastings, 1997). Oommen also views a common language as crucial for the sustainability of nations as the people need to be able to communicate with one another (1997: 33). Benedict Anderson presents perhaps the most comprehensive argument for the importance of language. In *Imagined Communities* (2006) he traces the origins of the nation back to print-capitalism and the shift from sacred religious languages (such as Latin) to standardized vernaculars. He contends that “print language is what invents nationalism” and that language is not just an emblem of nation-ness. Instead, “the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities” (2006: 136). Therein lies a crucial distinction between the importance of a particular language per se, and the imaginative power of a shared language. Hroch makes a similar assumption when he notes the need for higher social communication, regardless of whether it is facilitated by linguistic or cultural ties (Hroch, 1996). Miller also notes the critical importance of communication and sharing beliefs: “what holds nations together are beliefs... but these beliefs cannot be transmitted except through cultural artifacts which are available to everyone who belongs - books, newspapers, pamphlets, and more recently the electronic media” (Miller, 1995: 32). Therefore, the modern communication revolution may be changing the importance of a common vernacular. Even Anderson admits that “multilingual broadcasting can conjure up the imagined community to illiterates and populations with different mother-tongues” (2006: 137).

Besides a shared history and language, many scholars claim that the existence of a homeland or other bounded territory plays an important role in defining the

nation (Hastings, 1997; Miller, 1995). Oomen puts it most frankly when he states that “the nation is a territorial entity to which people have an emotional attachment and in which they invest a moral meaning, it is a homeland - ancestral or adopted” (1997: 33). Furthermore, he argues that “the dissociation between a people and their homeland denationalizes them; they become an *ethnie*” (1997: 34). Smith (2001) likewise uses the distinction between occupying (rather than being linked to) a homeland as one of the factors distinguishing a nation from an *ethnie*.

Such reasoning highlights another important factor: ethnicity. As noted above, an understanding of “*ethnies*” as the basis for nationhood is foundational to Smith’s ethno-symbolic view of the nation. However, he is by no means alone in such an interpretation. For example, Miller agrees that “typically, though not always, a nation emerges from an ethnic community that furnishes it with a distinct identity” (1995: 19). Oommen takes a slightly different approach by placing the nation between the state and *ethnie*. While territory is common to the state and the nation, culture is common to the nation and *ethnie*. Therefore, he views the nation as common culture in union with a territory (1997: 34). In this way he expands or replaces the idea of an *ethnie* with a common culture.

The term culture is very broad and can be linked back to the elements of language, history and myth already discussed earlier. However, there are also other components of culture that may be salient to the nation. Hastings observes that religion is “an integral element of many cultures” and goes on to argue that religion, particularly Biblical Christianity, “both undergirds the cultural and political world out of which the phenomena of nationhood and nationalism as a whole developed and in a number of important cases provided a crucial ingredient for the particular history of both nations and nationalisms (Hastings, 1997: 4).

Finally, culture is also heavily rooted in symbolism. There are a number of symbols which are common to most nations and which are important in building the imagined community. Perhaps first and foremost is a name, a collective proper noun used to refer to the nation. As Shakespeare noted, a name by any other name could never be as sweet (Smith, 2001: 7). Also of great importance is the national anthem. Anderson contends that the power of the national anthem lies in the simultaneity of the experience of singing together, creating a connection between people by the imagined sound (Anderson, 2006: 146). Perhaps of equal importance is the flag, an easily identifiable visible symbol of the nation. Beyond such obvious symbols are institutions that also have important symbolic power. According to Jean-Jacque Rousseau, “it is the national institutions that form the genius, the character, the tastes, and the mores of a people...which inspire in it this ardent love of the fatherland” (Rousseau in Smith, 2001: 34). These institutions may include the national assembly, the capital city, national academies, national holidays and the military (Smith, 2001: 7).

Symbols have also been influenced by advancements in print media. Anderson describes how maps, which were originally simply designed to show the extent of the domain, were transformed into logo-maps. Once territory was drawn on a map it created a specific shape that even out of context came to be identified with the nation. Over time people become attached not only to the actual territory but to the image of their homeland as represented in a logo map (Anderson, 2006: 179). Therefore, any change in national boundaries can be viewed as a direct attack on the logo-map and the national imagination.

The map is not the only object that has been turned into a symbol. As mentioned above, history and a sense of continuity and authenticity are often very important to the national imagination. Nations can try to claim legitimacy by proving local ancestry, and therefore “museums and museumizing imagination are both profoundly political” (Anderson, 2006: 182). Here print media has also allowed for the reproductability/commercialization of symbols of authenticity (such as historic buildings, artifacts, and natural phenomenon) in the form of stamps, postcards, names, etc. (Anderson, 2006: 182).

All of these symbols, along with the myths, vernacular language, and history help shape a very distinct national identity. In *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions*, Gertjan Dijkink (1996) notes that these two concepts are difficult to separate, and therefore, a consideration of national identity is linked to an understanding of geopolitical vision. Geopolitical vision is influenced by the continuous stream of discourse as well as the experience of real events, which combine together to create an ‘imaginative geography’ of the world. Dijkink thereby argues that real world events also play an important role in creating the nation. How we judge these events is based on cognitive features developed at an early stage in life: “the daily impact of events and human activities create, what psychologists have called an ‘adaptation level,’ an unconscious standard for style, sounds, quantities and solutions” (Dijkink, 1996: 3). This leads him to conclude that national identity is “continuously rewritten on the basis of external events” and that nations states need foreign policy to define what is ‘us’ and ‘them’ (1996: 5).

Returning to the earlier metaphor of the nation as a house, it becomes clear that there are many different ways of imagining/constructing it, depending on the building blocks being used. Some nations have foundations based on historical myths,

others on a common vernacular language or a shared ethnicity, and so on. On top of these foundations there lie an endless possible combination of symbols, cultural elements, and myths all contributing to the formation of an imagined community with which the individual can identify. Moreover, just like a house a nation can also be imbued with a myriad of emotional qualities and perceived as a “home.” Therefore, a nation is based on both objective and subjective components; objective elements alone are not sufficient but they can be mobilized and form part of the subjective imagination of the nation.

1.2.3 Nationalism

The last consideration, before turning to the specific case of Switzerland, is the concept of “nationalism.” According to Smith (2001: 5) nationalism can mean a number of different things:

1. a process of formation, or growth, of nations
2. a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation
3. a language and symbolism of the nation
4. a social and political movement on behalf of the nation
5. a doctrine and/or ideology of the nation, both general and particular

Other scholars, such as Hastings (1997), simply distinguish between ‘nationalism’ as a theory and a practice. Hobsbawm and Gellner use the term to primarily mean a theory or the principle which holds that the nation and the state should be congruent, whereas Breuilly (1985) takes nationalism to refer to a political movement. In creating a typology of nationalisms, Michael Hechter (2000) bases his analysis on the idea of nationalism as collective action designed to make the boundaries of the nation coincide with those of the state.

Within these political movements, there are different types. Both Smith and Greenfeld differentiate between an eastern, ethnic form of nationalism based on

common culture, and a western, civic, voluntary nationalism based on rational/civic law (Smith, 2001: 36-42; Greenfeld, 1995). Hobsbawm agrees with Hroch's division of the history of national movements into three different phases. The first was purely cultural, literary, and folkloric, while the second phase marked the emergence of political campaigns lead by a group of pioneers and militants. Finally, in the third phase national movements gain (at least partial) mass support (Hobsbawm, 1992). Anderson also presents different waves of nationalism, but bases these on different criteria. Unlike many of his peers who locate the origins of nationalism in Europe, Anderson argues that the first wave of nationalism emerged from the creole communities in the new world where the nation was the creation of something new. This was followed by old world nationalism, which was portrayed as the awakening or return to an aboriginal essence and which created a model of the nation-state based on republican institutions, common citizenship, and popular sovereignty. The third wave consisted of official nationalism, in which existing empires and dynasties tried to make their populations into a nation. Finally, there was the last wave of nationalism, which was dominated by post-colonial nationalism and consisted of a mix of popular and official nationalism based on the pre-existing models of the nation state (Anderson, 2006).

Although these categories are useful in a historical analysis, they say little about nationalism in the twenty-first century. In current popular use, nationalism is most often used to signify state-building nationalism and right-wing extremists (for example the neo-Nazi). However, Michael Billig takes issue with this conception, which he finds to be misleading as "it always seems to locate nationalism on the periphery" and thereby "overlooks the nationalism of the West's nation-states (1995: 5). To counter this misconception, Billig coins the term "banal nationalism" to signify

“the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced (1995: 6). The survival of the nation is dependent on a continual ‘flagging’ of nationhood, which provides the background for political discourse and cultural products. These reminders are so common and so familiar that they are not consciously registered but instead are taken for granted.

Chapter Two: Constructions of a “Swiss” National Identity

2.1 A Swiss National Identity?

Having reviewed the relevant literature to establish a theoretical framework of analysis, it is now time to turn to the case of Switzerland. In the following section I will provide my own answer to the question Ernest Renan (1882) asked more than one hundred years ago: “How is it that Switzerland, which has three languages, two religions, and three or four races, is a nation?” Although ethno-nationalists like Oommen would argue that “Switzerland (like Belgium) is a case of parts of different nations coming together to constitute a state” (Oommen, 1997: 36), my constructivist perspective identifies a distinctly Swiss imagined community. Although I do not agree with the emphasis Smith places on *ethnie*, in general I agree with him that in Switzerland different groups coexist in a federal state but all claim a common national identity (Smith, 2010: 15).

The claim that Switzerland in fact consists of multiple nations is largely based on an ethno-linguistic argument dividing the Swiss into German, French, and Italian elements. This divide is strengthened by Switzerland’s federalism, which allows cantons to decide their own educational and mass media. Therefore, there is limited space for a shared experience on which Anderson based his imagined community. Others negate the existence of a national Swiss identity by arguing that the Swiss are more attached to their cantons than their nation (Eugster and Srijbis, 2010: 5). For example, in a letter to historian Denis de Rougemont (who has argued for the existence of a Swiss nation), the Swiss novelist Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz wrote that “we Swiss do know that we are not ‘Swiss’, but Neuchatelois, as you are, or Vaudois, as I am, or Valaisans, or Zurichois, that is inhabitants of genuine little lands which have truly authentic characteristics” (Ramuz in Chollet, 2011: 739). This idea that

cantons are their own mini-nations is not completely uncalled for, especially since they all have their own constitution and flag, and some even have their own anthem, cantonal days, and historical myths and figures (Chollet, 2011: 751).

Antoine Chollet (2011) from the University of Lausanne presents a slightly different vision of Switzerland as a “fractured nation.” While not arguing that Switzerland is multinational, Chollet contends that the Swiss nation is unfinished and incomplete. As challenges to Swiss nationalism, Chollet highlights the importance of other imagined communities such as the cantons and language regions, as well as the deep divide caused by the animosity between Protestants and Catholics, and finally the weakness of the central state. These have all contributed to the creation of a “fractured nation,” which is defined by “neither genuine unity nor irreducible diversity” and which is “variously united and diverse, depending on the object” (Chollet, 2011: 749).

However, the existence of cantonal identities does not necessarily negate a national identity. The canton of Ticino would arguably be the most likely candidate for an independent national status. There is a strong alignment between language and cantonal cleavage, as the canton contains approximately 60% of all Swiss Italian speakers. Furthermore, it is the only canton south of the Alps and therefore is physically isolated from the rest of Switzerland and was long marked by economic peripherality. Nevertheless, the political party *Lega dei Ticinesi*, which is characterized by a populist “cantonalism,” is not demanding independence from the Confederation (Mazzoleni, 2005: 215-216). Similarly in the case of Jura, the newest Swiss canton established in 1979, Jurassians had fought for independence from Bern but not from Switzerland (Smith, 2010: 15).

Part of the reason that sub-national identities have not superseded a national identity can be attributed to the fact that there are multiple cleavages – cantonal, linguistic, religious – and these borders rarely overlap. Therefore rather than reinforce each other they neutralize the power of any one cleavage (Mazzoleni, 2005: 225). Oscar Mazzoleni supports such a perspective by arguing that the Swiss national identity was constructed in such a way that its federal structure has allowed the survival of sub-national, cantonal and communal identities while re-modeling them in order to integrate them into a fundamentally non-conflictual co-existence (Mazzoleni, 2005: 212).

Therefore, while individual cantons may be resolutely independent they still view themselves in the context of the Swiss nation. Tracey Holzhueter explores this interesting dynamic between nation and canton in her paper “Finding (In)Visible Regional & National Cultural Boundaries in the *Historisches Museum Basel*¹⁶ and the Swiss National Museum in Zürich” (2014). She finds that the museum in Basel positions its regional identity as a separate entity, which had developed before the Confederacy of Switzerland. On the other hand, the Swiss National Museum shows off important historical events, particularly focusing on shows of military power and specific hegemonic images (such as Swiss Cheese, the Alps, and Heidi) intended to bond Swiss people over a shared culture and perpetuating Swiss myths and legends as the foundation of a national Swiss identity.

Holzhueter concludes that while cultural regional boundaries are apparent at the cantonal level, they are rendered invisible when confronted at a national level: “When situated against other cantons, regional culture and identity is set on display,

¹⁶ Historic Museum Basel

but as soon as Switzerland engages with others, foreigners or Eurozone politics, the country demonstrates a solid ‘Swiss’ identity” (2014: 6).

The claim for an overarching national identity is supported by survey evidence, which has demonstrated that Swiss linguistic communities do not perceive themselves as separate nations and identify primarily with Switzerland in general rather than with their linguistic group. In addition, a survey found that over 85% of all Swiss, regardless of language group, feel at least close to Switzerland (Eugster and Strijbis, 2010: 7). However, the question remains of what kind of national identity the Swiss share.

Many scholars, including Anderson (2006), view Switzerland as a prime example of a civic or political nation. That is to say that Swiss identity is “based upon a common appreciation of political values such as direct democracy, neutrality and federalism” (Eugster and Strijbis, 2010: 3). Such civic nationalism is linked to the Swiss concept of being a *Willensnation* or a nation based on the will of the people. Switzerland as a political nation also fits with the idea of Constitutional Patriotism popularized in the mid-1980s by political philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Jan-Werner Müller. Constitutional Patriotism promotes the development of an identity based on attachment to the values of the constitution and civic responsibility rather than ethnic or other cultural factors (Gordon, 2008). As such the idea of Switzerland as a civic nation conforms to a more subjective conception of the nation, in line with the idea of a daily plebiscite expressing the will of the people to be a nation.

Although I agree that the civic element is particularly strong in the case of Swiss national identity, I also find that there are other factors at play. Eugster and Strijbis note that despite the fact that Switzerland is widely perceived as a political

nation, one of the “main dimensions of political conflict in recent years has been about ‘cultural demarcation’” (2010: 3). This leads them to question why in a *Willensnation* the biggest political fights are about whether to be culturally open or not, and they eventually conclude that “Swiss national identity not only contains a political, but also a cultural dimension” (2010: 13). Chollet also argues that the case of Switzerland falls short of Renan’s conception of the ‘spiritual principle’ and instead proposes that “Switzerland fits neither the ethnic definition nor the liber-universalist one, but borrows from both of them to a very peculiar extent” (Chollet, 2011: 748).

Therefore, any exploration of Swiss national identity must take into consideration both the more subjective voluntaristic/civic element as well as more objective ethno-cultural variables. Furthermore, although national identity is a collective identity, it is experienced and understood at the individual level. This means that even if the majority of the people subjectively consider themselves as part of the Swiss nation, they may have very different understandings of what that means.

While it is essentially impossible to assess the conception of the nation of every individual within a nation, it may be possible to consider general trends in the conception. As noted earlier, the most common distinction is between a civic or political understanding and an ethno-cultural understanding. However, I find that a further distinction made by Eugster and Strijbis (2010) can be very useful. They distinguish between a political, an inclusive-cultural and an exclusive-cultural identity. The first of these refers to “constitutional patriotism” in which the community is imagined around shared political institutions. An inclusive cultural identity is based on cultural elements that are not inherent but can be acquired (such a specific values, language, and religion), whereas an exclusive cultural identity is

based on inherited cultural markers. Such a classification is also reflected in the three major types of narratives of national identity identified by Veronique Mottier (1999) - the *Staatnation* narrative, the *Kulturnation* narrative, and the *Volksnation* narratives¹⁷. Each of these elements can be found in different conceptions of the Swiss nation, and have been more important at different times in Swiss history. In their study Eugster and Strijbis find that “Switzerland reached a national consensus about what constitutes the political identity of the nation, but that the country is divided concerning its cultural identity” (2010: 4). In the following sections, I analyze the construction of each of these imagined communities.

2.2 The Political Nation – the *Staatnation*

Using data from the Swiss Barometer 2003, Eugster and Strijbis found that three concepts of the political nation – direct democracy, neutrality, and federalism are considered important by Swiss citizens. Out of these direct democracy was rated as most important, with about two-thirds of the respondents stating that it is ‘very important’ and over 90% supporting it. Neutrality and federalism were ranked as ‘very important’ by 43.9% and 29.3% respectively and were valued as at least fairly important by about 80% of the respondents (2010: 11,13).

The importance that Swiss votes give to these three institutions is also evident in a number of popular votes. In 1986 Swiss voters decided against joining the United Nations on the grounds that it could undermine Switzerland’s neutrality (Sheehan, 2002). And even though the government had submitted a request to join the European Economic Area in 1992, the Swiss people voted against it in a popular referendum

¹⁷ These three concepts loosely translate to “state-nation,” “cultural-nation,” and “people/folk-nation”

(with 50.3% of voters and 16 out of the 23 cantons voting against it) (Müller, 1994). However, since the end of the Cold War, there have also been voices calling into question Switzerland's stance on neutrality; some question against whom the Swiss militia army would have to defend the country and others have proposed that Switzerland's sovereignty could actually best be defended by using multilateral policies (CHC, 2010:15).

This slight shift in attitude is evident in the yes vote to join the United Nations in 2002, as well as in the fact that Switzerland has joined the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Switzerland also signed bilateral economic agreements with the EU as well as the Schengen & Dublin Conventions (CHC, 2010:16). However, despite these overtures at loosening the conditions of Swiss neutrality, Swiss voters still closely guard their neutrality and federalism, as is evident in the continued refusal to join the European Union. Especially during the last few years, there has been a move back towards greater isolationism. In the following section I explore the roots of these institutions, how the discourse of a political nation has been constructed and how it is manifested within the daily forms of "banal" nationalism.

2.2.1 Myths and Memories

The current state of Switzerland has evolved over centuries and therefore it makes sense to start with a historical perspective. However, myths and even historical "facts" can be framed to tell different stories, and in Switzerland one of the main frames is based on the three institutions of democracy, neutrality, and federalism. Although in popular culture the birth of Switzerland is traced back to 1291, most scholars agree that in reality the Swiss nation is a relatively modern invention. As Hughes (1975) notes in his history of Switzerland, the Helvetic Republic did not exist

until the French occupation by Napoleon in 1798 during which time Swiss citizenship, direct male suffrage, and an end to internal tolls and customs were introduced. Furthermore, Ticino was not added until 1803, and only after the treaty of 1815 were the cantons of Valais, Geneva, Neuchatel, Graubünden, St. Gallen, and Aargau included in Switzerland. As Swiss historian Hans Kohn notes:

The greatest diversity and inequality prevailed among various territories, forming the extremely loose structure of the Confederation. But even the individual cantons were in no way uniform or logical in their internal organisation. Many cantons represented loose confederations of frequently unequal communities. Though historical liberties were jealously guarded, neither national unity nor democracy characterised Switzerland before the French Revolution. (Kohn, 1956: 19)

Therefore, modern Switzerland was not born until after the *Sonderbundskrieg* of 1847 (civil war between the Catholic and Protestant cantons) with the acceptance of the Federal Constitution in 1848. During the following decades the new country faced a lot of external pressure to justify its existence in a world based on the nation-state, and Switzerland and its people started to imagine themselves as a nation.

In the 1860s Federal Councilor Jakob Stämpfli noted that if the common principle of the nation were accepted, then Switzerland's existence would be destroyed (Tanner, 2011: 40). Around the same time, the legal scholar Johann Caspar Bluntschi, stipulated that Switzerland needed to justify its existence in order not to endanger its very survival (Tanner, 2011: 38). This led to the development of a unique conception of the Swiss nation as a *Willensnation*, with Swiss philosopher and lawyer Carl Hilty formulating the new credo "We have a strong will to be a nation"¹⁸ (Hilty in Tanner, 2011). In 1875 he expanded on this credo by explaining:

¹⁸ My translation. The German original is "Wir haben einen starken Willen, eine Nation zu sein"

Not race or ethnic community, nor common language and customs, nor nature and history have founded the state of the Swiss Confederation... What holds Switzerland together... is an ideal, namely the consciousness of being part of a state that in many ways represents a more civilized community; to constitute a nationality which stands head and shoulders above mere affiliations of blood or language. (Hilty in Zimmer, 1998: 650)

The imagining of a political nation needed to be reinforced by a conscious revival and development of historical images and myths. Therefore, it was a political decision made in modernity that 1891 was declared the 600th anniversary of Switzerland, retroactively assigning great importance to the *Bundesbrief*¹⁹ of 1291 (Hughes, 1975, Tanner 2011). There had been several agreements between the original cantons prior to the *Bundesbrief* of 1291 and it was later reaffirmed and expanded on in 1315, but a political decision elevated the *Bundesbrief* of 1291 to the status of Foundational document and August 1st was named a national holiday (Tanner, 2011).

This framing of the Swiss nation was supported by a number of historical myths and stories; probably most famous is the legend of William Tell. According to the story William Tell was forced to shoot an apple on his son's head as punishment for an act of defiance against the ruling Habsburger dynasty. Despite successfully shooting the apple, Tell gets caught with a second arrow, which he admits was intended for the Austrian Vogt Gessler in case Tell had missed and hit his son. Because of this, Tell is imprisoned but manages to escape when a storm hits the boat in which he is being transported. He gets to land, tracks down Gessler, and shoots him in the Hohlegasse (Hug and Stead, 1890; Acherman, 1972; Reinhardt, 2014).

The story of Tell is often combined in popular lore with the supposed founding of the confederation. The story says that in 1307 Walter Fürst von Attinghausen, Werner Staufacher, and Arnold von Melchtal (from Uri, Schwyz, und

¹⁹ Federal Charter

Unterwalden respectively) met on the Rütli meadow to swear allegiance and mutual self-defense (Hug and Stead, 1890). Both of these stories posit noble alpine men against the evil Austrian Habsburger. However, there is no historical record of Tell's existence, and most of these stories are based on historical accounts written centuries after the fact. Nevertheless, regardless of the factual nature of the stories, their symbolic value is uncontested. For example, importance of these origin myths is evident in the most successful Swiss movie ever, *Die Schweizermacher*²⁰ (1978). In the movie an Italian seeking Swiss citizenship proudly shows of his portrait of William Tell to an immigration officer and claims that without honoring Tell it is not possible to understand what it means to become Swiss.²¹

Of course, a historical analysis calls into question some of the underlying assumptions. For example, the Swiss Confederation is always presented as a pact of resistance against the overbearing Habsburger. Conversely, some historians note that the *Bundesbrief* of 1291 may not have been signed in 1291 and may not have been directed specifically at the Habsburger (Reinhardt, 2014: 12). According to Hug and Stead (1890: 129) the league of allegiance was actually established following the death of Rudolf III of Habsburg-Austria in a moment of hope for emancipation. Furthermore, even though the Habsburgers are considered Austrians, they had their origins and home within what is today part of Switzerland. Therefore, viewing them as the foreign enemy takes an act of 'already having forgotten' something of which one is being constantly reminded.

Nevertheless, these stories of Tell and the Rütli pact have been framed by popular culture and the political elite as the beginning of Switzerland's political

²⁰ The Swiss Makers

²¹ My translation

institutions. The confederation can be interpreted as the origins of federalism. Furthermore, Tell and the Eidgenossen's will for independence and rebellion against an occupying power can be framed as a root of modern armed neutrality (Reinhardt, 2014: 8). Without too much imagination, direct democracy can also be traced back to the *Landesgemeinde*. These were the assemblies that oversaw the use of the *Almend*. The *Almend* or the commons, were a stretch of land common to all, including "the free and the unfree, rich and poor, noble and serf" and everyone was brought together for deliberation (Hug and Stead 1890: 126).

Switzerland's will for self-determination is furthermore cemented by the tales of several key battles. The first of these "triumphant victories" was at the Battle of Morgarten in 1315 in which the *Eidgenossen*²² strategically used their territory to defeat the army of Duke Leopold of Austria. It is often viewed as first proof that the young Confederation was able to defend itself and was the beginning of two centuries of victories on the battlefield. The second battle of major significance in Swiss lore is the Battle of Sempach, fought in 1386 against Duke Leopold III. The battle started out in favor of the Austrians, who had formed themselves in a compact phalanx and protected themselves from the Swiss attack with their long lances. According to the myth, the fate of the battle only changed when Arnold von Winkelried stepped out from the Swiss ranks and used his body to catch as many spears as possible in order to break a hole in the Austrian defense. His famous last words are said to be "take care of my wife and children" (Hug and Stead 1890: 171-172; Reinhardt, 2014: 24). Of course, the Austrian version of the event was quite different, telling of Leopold and his men as innocent victims attacked on their own territory on official business by a group of traitors. Interestingly, at that time this version resounded not just with the

²² Confederates

Austrians but also with pro-Austrian groups in Zürich, indicating the contested nature of the early Confederacy (Reinhardt, 2014: 24).

The Swiss National Museum in Zürich also highlights the battles of Murten and Marignano, part of the exhibit in the Ruhmeshalle, as important factors in Swiss history and identity (Holzhueter, 2015: 4). The Battle of Murten (1476) was part of the Burgunder wars and was an overwhelming victory by the Swiss federal army against the forces led by Charles the Bold of Burgundy (Hug and Stead 1890: 214; Reinhardt, 2014: 42). This victory further established the Confederates as a force to be reckoned with and as a significant military power in the center of Europe. The Confederates' military success continued and at one point had such strong control over Milano that even Niccoló Machiavelli is said to have stated that the Confederates might expand their rule over all of Italy (Reinhart, 2014: 47). However, in 1515 the Swiss troops were defeated by the French at the battle of Marignano, a defeat that marked the end of the Confederates' military exploits outside and was arguably the first step toward neutrality.

As Hug and Stead note, “whilst no one thinks of taking these beautiful old-world stories literally, yet few of us would care to toss them contemptuously and entirely on one side” (1890: 124). Furthermore, they “represent and illustrate a long epoch during which a high-spirited people were engaged in establishing a confederation, and maintaining it against a powerful enemy” (1890: 125). Not much has changed in the last one hundred years to change Hug and Stead's assessment of the role of these historical myths in Swiss identity. They are stories that most Swiss children grow up with and are seen as the foundation of the three most important political institutions.

2.2.2 Territory

In 1875 Johann-Kaspar Bluntschli contended that a national identity simply based on volunteerism and political institutions, even if backed by references to a mythical past, would not suffice to maintain the Swiss nation. Therefore, he proposed, “If the Swiss possess a particular nationality, then this feeling derives above all from the existence of their beautiful homeland... which unites its inhabitants as sons of the same fatherland, even though they live in different valleys and speak different languages” (Bluntschi in Zimmer, 1998: 651). This started a process Oliver Zimmer has dubbed the “naturalization of the nation,” and which was set to the backdrop of mounting ethno-linguistic nationalism in the neighboring states, as epitomized by Germany’s *völkisch* nationalism (1998: 649). As part of this process there emerged three prominent portrayals of the Alps – as unifying force, defensive fortress, and as a purifying force (1998: 645).

The Alps were portrayed as a unifying force by connecting them to the cornerstones of Swiss national identity – namely its democratic institutions. According to Kilian Elasser (2008), the importance of the Alps is epitomized by the Gotthard Mountain. The Gotthard pass is the main connection between northern and southern Europe and therefore is strategically of crucial importance. Therefore, the opening of the Gotthard railway line in 1882 was a significant event for national identity. For example, in 1897 Carl Spitteler (who later won the Nobel Prize in Literature) wrote a travel guide called “Der Gotthard,” in which he wrote “The Gotthard railway line takes us right to the heart of Switzerland, through two of the three most important founding cantons of the Swiss confederation (Schwyz and Uri). Tell and Stauffacher, Rütli and Hohle Gasse, Altdorf and Bürglen are familiar names”

(Spitteler in Elasser, 2008: 3).

As such the Gotthard and the Alps became the physical manifestation of the national myths. Furthermore, they became known as a defensive fortress and a symbol of Swiss neutrality: Switzerland “made of peasants, craftsmen, hunters became the neutral keeper of the most important transit line through the Alps” (Elasser, 2008: 1). This link between the mountains and Swiss neutrality culminated during World War II, during which Switzerland’s entire national defense strategy rested on the national redoubt – the fortification of the Gotthard and surrounding mountains to which the Swiss military would retreat in case of a German attack. Thus the Alps were considered Switzerland’s only hope to retain its neutrality, and to this day many credit the fortified Alps as one of the main reasons why Germany never invaded Switzerland (Elasser, 2008, Zimmer, 1998).

2.2.3 Language

Another important component of national identity is language. In this Switzerland is somewhat unique as it is one nation with four national languages. However, this multilingualism can also be framed in the context of the dominant political institutions. Basing his claim on the work by Hughes (1975), Anderson notes, “today’s multilingual Switzerland is a product of the early 19th century” (Anderson, 2006: 139). Unalterably-denoted linguistic zones only emerged in the second half of the 19th century, and attempts at standardization arrived very late, so that there remained a large variety of sometimes mutually unintelligible German idiolects (Anderson, 2006). During this time period, most other emerging nation-states were solidifying their national identity by promoting a single standardized national language; however, Switzerland was somewhat precariously caught in the

middle of different powerful neighbors. Furthermore, since Switzerland had earlier established its neutrality, it could not be seen favoring any of its neighbors by promoting one language over the others. Consequently, there was no attempt at Germanification, and as Anderson argues, “legal parity between German, French, and Italian was thus the obverse side of the coin of Swiss neutrality” (2006: 141).

Moreover, the decision to accept Romansh as the fourth national language was based in a large part on a defense of Switzerland’s independence and neutrality. In the 1930s both Germany and Italy were intent on uniting all German and Italian speakers within their respective states. Italian politicians not only had their eye on Italian speaking Ticino, but were also interested in annexing Graubünden, arguing that Romansh was in fact nothing more than a Lombardy dialect. They even went so far as to circulate maps using Italian names for all the towns in Graubünden. Therefore, elevating Romansh from a neglected dialect to a national language also served the purpose of making it clear that the language was fundamentally Swiss, and clearly different from Italian (Amrein, 2013). Similarly, it could be argued that the maintenance of Swiss German (in all its dialects) as distinct from High German, helps bolster Swiss neutrality by clearly demarcating it as different from Germany and its policies.

Furthermore, multilingualism cannot only be framed in the context of neutrality, but also in the form of federalism and direct democracy. To this day, language policy remains largely a matter of the canton, reinforcing the federalist nature of Switzerland (even while occasionally leading to tensions between the different cantons and language regions). The democratic element is evident at the national level, as it was through a direct popular vote that the fourth national language, Romansh, was accepted by an overwhelming 92% of voters in 1938

(Amrein, 2013).

2.2.4 Economics

Even when discussing other elements of the Swiss nation, such as its current economic standing, it is possible to frame the topic in the context of federalism, democracy, and neutrality. For example, in “An Economic Theory of Switzerland” Charles Blankart (2011) uses a geographic foundation to develop a federalist argument for Switzerland’s wealth. He claims, “a consideration of the initial, exogenous geographical situation of Swiss territory provides a better understanding of the country’s development” (Blankart, 2011: 74). His theory is that the fractured geography of Switzerland prevented the formation of a strong centralized government, so that Switzerland developed as a federal state. Referencing Bean’s Law, Blankart argues that in a small fractured state (such as Switzerland) migration costs to the borders are quite low and comparative competition from neighboring states is quite high. Therefore, the cost of repression and taxation by a federal body are comparatively high and taxes remain correspondingly low. In addition, Switzerland was widely considered difficult to conquer, and the one time that the Swiss were conquered by the French in 1798, it was so difficult to tax the federalist cantons that Napoleon had to resort to enforcing a non-monetary tax of 12,000 troops instead of normal taxes.

According to Blankart, this combination of federalism and neutrality has contributed to Switzerland’s economic success. For example, he argues that Switzerland’s strong federalism is the reason for the federal government’s no-bailout policy (every Canton is responsible for its own finances and the federal government has no jurisdiction to intervene). The lack of a national safety net in turn forces each

canton “to conduct a solid budget policy and thus to establish a good reputation in the minds of the financial market actors” (Blankart, 2011: 79).

In his study on “When Did the Swiss Get so Rich” Roman Studer draws a different conclusion but still operates within the same political institution framework. He views Switzerland’s current prosperity as the dividends of political neutrality and stability during the twentieth century, which especially boosted the finance/banking industry. Based on findings that Swiss real wages were actually by far the lowest in the sample up until the 1880s and then did not match those of other European countries until after the First World War, Studer concludes that today’s affluence is primarily a dividend of stability and neutrality during the 20th century.

These economic theories fit into the discourse of Switzerland as a political nation by attributing much of Switzerland’s present day prosperity to its federalism, democracy, and neutrality. However, they also require a fair amount of what Anderson (2006) has called the “characteristic amnesia” of the nation-state. While Switzerland for a long time has imagined itself as a model nation in terms of peace and humanitarianism, it has recently been faced with a number of issues that had long been suppressed from popular memory. One of these issues is Switzerland’s involvement in the global slave trade. For example, Swiss banks owned significant shares of slave trading companies and trading houses financed and did business with slave traders (Janka, 2003). In the 1990s Switzerland also faced international criticism for its handling of Nazi gold as well as the accounts of Holocaust victims, an issue that has yet to be fully resolved (Picard, 1997b).

2.2.5 Flagging Political Institutions

Reinforcing a national Swiss identity based on political institutions is relatively simple since all citizens are exposed to them on a daily basis. The system of direct democracy allows citizens to propose initiatives and referenda, which get voted on about four times per year. That means that politics, whether in the form of a campaign poster, a political debate on TV, or a discussion among friends, is never far away. Even symbols of nationalism, such as the national anthem, are up for debate. The current anthem, the “Swiss Psalm” has been quite strongly criticized for not resonating with a significant number of the Swiss, and so in 2014 the *Schweizerische Gemeinnützige Gessellschaft*²³ launched a popular competition for a new anthem. The only criteria for the competition was that the anthem should reflect the ideas present in the preamble to the Swiss constitution. After receiving 208 submissions, a jury deliberated and eventually selected six entries to be presented to the people at large. Then in April and May of 2015 online voting combined with the expert opinion of the jury determined the three finalists, and finally the winner will be decided by popular vote and then proposed to the relevant Federal authorities in the fall (CHymne, 2015).

Another important national institution that marks the lives of at least half the population is the military. Barring a few exceptions, all Swiss men are required to serve in the Swiss army once they turn 18. This means they become an integral part of armed neutrality, as they are taught to serve and defend Switzerland in case anyone threatens its neutrality. In my family, there is a standing joke that we cannot have other (male) Swiss guests over for dinner without the conversation at one point turning to the Swiss army, in particular to where the men at the table had been stationed, which division they had served in, and so on. As such, the experience of

²³ Swiss Charitable Society

serving in the army serves a two-fold purpose: it promotes the idea of armed neutrality and at the same time provides a shared experience among at least half the population.

The presence of the army is also fairly common in daily life and fits in with Billig's idea of banal nationalism. It is not uncommon to see a recruit in full uniform and assault rifle slung over his shoulder riding the train for his weekend leave. Therefore, it is also not surprising that one of the best-known symbols of Switzerland is the Swiss army knife, an item that has reached the level of one of Anderson's iconic logos.

2.2.6 A Note on Gender

While rarely being explicitly acknowledged as part of the national discourse, it is important to note that Swiss national identity is a clearly gendered construct. Possibly the most obvious example in terms of neutrality is the gendered nature of the army. That the nation is defended by men is also evident in the historical myths – the heroes are men like Tell and Winkelried. Admittedly, there are some celebrated female characters, such as “Mother Royaume” who helped defeat a surprise attack on Geneva by pouring boiling soup over the city walls (Mottier, 1999: 7). Another example is Bertha the “Spinning Queen” of Burgundy who was celebrated as a model of industry and economy (Hug and Stead, 1890: 70-72). However, these are mostly second-tier and regional figures, and are notably connected with traditionally female tasks such as cooking and spinning, and are missing from the institutional discourse.

At the national level the only notable female character is the Helvetia, the personification of Switzerland present on everything from post-stamps to Swiss coins, and featured in a prominently visible statue in front of the *Bundeshaus*.²⁴ The Helvetia

²⁴ Federal Government Building

is generally interpreted as either a geographical representation of Switzerland, which emphasizes agricultural productivity and abundance, or as a symbol of the nation and the state, which shows off various weapons and virtues such as vigilance, intrepidity, freedom, peace, love and unity (Kreis, 2014). However, unlike mythical male figures, the Helvetia has no real backstory and thus serves as a canvas upon which the desired qualities can be projected according to the times. The extremely gendered nature of Swiss politics is also evident in the fact that at the federal level women did not gain the right to vote until 1971, and thus have been excluded from direct democracy for the majority of Swiss history.

2.3 The Culturally Inclusive Nation – the *Kulturnation*

While Eugster and Strijbis (2010) acknowledge that there is a general consensus on the imagination of Switzerland as a political nation based on the three central institutions of democracy, federalism, and neutrality, they also argue that there are other factors at play as well. One of these alternative conceptions is based on culturally inclusive elements, which are cultural factors that are not inherent, but which a person is able to change. These are sometimes simply referred to as the “national culture.” For example, Dominik Müller (1994: 7) claims that for him “it would be more convincing to explore Swiss identity in the details, in daily attitudes and behaviors, in the way daily political decisions are made.”

Although I am proposing the existence of a national culture, I by no means claim that all elements of such a culture are homogenous across the country. Beyond individual differences, there are also differences between the linguistic groups, cantons, and perhaps most notably the *Röstigraben*. The term refers to a cultural and

linguistic divide between the German and French parts, using *Rösti*, a potato dish typically associated with German-Switzerland, to mark the *Graben* or ditch (Espersen, 2012: 59). The difference is often evident in voting patterns, with the French-speaking community tending to be more positive towards the EU and foreign policy proposals (Espersen, 2012). Dominik Müller illustrates this divide when he notes that many of the French Swiss seem to have less tolerance for all the laws regulating the environment and traffic safety, and that they find the German Swiss to be too serious and detail oriented. On the other hand, the German Swiss find that “the French Swiss ideas of personal freedom and liberalism are perhaps too simple” and that they focus more on the general rather than examining the details of what the administration is doing (Müller, 1994: 5-6).

Despite these differences a “Swiss Culture” is evident in the dominant discourses regarding national values. While some might dismiss these as nothing more than stereotypes, they can actually be quite illuminating. The pervasiveness of the image of the Swiss as simple, hard working, and responsible is further reflected in everything from official documents to the narratives about the economy and the Alps. These values are also closely related to the concept of the Swiss *Sonderfall*, which underlies Swiss political culture. The idea is that Switzerland’s combination of pragmatism, consultation and consensus building, balance between equality and difference, and focus on the local and human dimension has made it a unique or exceptional case. Finally, both language and religion are also important for the culturally inclusive nation. Although both of these are discussed in the context of plurality, this plurality is still limited to the four official languages and the two main branches of Christianity. I discuss each of these elements in more detail in the following section.

2.3.1 Swiss Stereotypes: A Two-sided Coin

As the *Röstigraben* indicates, Swiss culture is not homogenous but in fact quite complex. In particular, the outsider perspective on Swiss culture shows a marked bifurcation of what is considered Swiss. According to the prominent Swiss historian Jakob Tanner (2011), the perception of Switzerland has long been split, with many referring to it as an earthly paradise or an Arcadia in the mountains, while others present the Swiss as an ugly, greedy people. For example, Switzerland has alternatively been called a model and a rogue state.

This divided opinion is very clear in considering different portrayals of Switzerland's role in the Second World War. Some hail Switzerland's heroic feat of remaining neutral while being completely surrounded by axis forces, while others have argued that Switzerland was not so innocent because the country helped bank-roll the German war machine and turned approximately 10,000 refugees back at the borders (Picard, 1997a: 23). The debate over Switzerland's role and moral standing has continued until today, especially with regard to how the banks handled the accounts of victims of the Holocaust and Nazi-gold, (Picard, 1997b: 30-38). When discussing the Swiss banks' reaction to criticism that they were still harboring money from victims of the Holocaust, Cowell argues that the decision to create an investment portfolio to compensate the victims was "an interesting symbiosis of avowed philanthropy and hard-nosed self-interest that is not atypical of the Swiss" (1997: 135). As is often the case, this combination of interests allows for different interpretations, with some lauding the banks' action while others denounce them as self-serving.

Of course the reality is much more complex because humans and societies rarely (or I might even dare say never) fit into neat boxes. However, these stereotypes are examples of the competing discourses regarding a “Swiss Culture.” Moreover, while often understood as having negative connotations, stereotypes are simply “a set of beliefs about the characteristics of a social category of people” and “human and social sciences have preferred to emphasise their constructive functions as ... discourses that lay boundaries between groups” (Dervin, 2011: 6). Therefore, studying stereotypes can “constitute a sound basis for understanding intergroup behaviours” (2011: 6).

Stereotypes can generally be divided into two categories: auto-stereotypes (which stem from members of the in-group) and hetero-stereotypes (which originate from the “other”) (Dervin, 2011: 6). Since I am studying how a Swiss national identity is imagined by the Swiss themselves, I am much more interested in the auto-stereotype. However, auto- and hetero-stereotypes are often mutually reinforcing so it can also be informative to consider how outsiders view the Swiss.

In his discussion of Switzerland, David Hampshire (a British National) provides some insight into the hetero-stereotypes about Switzerland. He somewhat ironically creates a long list of adjectives in an attempt to highlight the paradox of being Swiss. For example, he notes that the Swiss are perfect yet insecure, intelligent and arrogant, polite yet unfriendly, obedient and obstinate, thrifty, materialistic, and affluent, conventional and inventive, liberal and conservative, virtuous and xenophobic (2007: 386).

In particular the concept of a “Swiss” work ethic is a common theme among commentators. In an interview regarding life and work in Switzerland, Irish national David Ryan noted both the Swiss people’s “penchant for precision and perfection” as

well as their work ethic. As an example he shares a story of how on occasion he used to stay out on weeknights until the ‘ungodly’ hour of 11pm only to return home and find all his neighbors fast asleep (2003: 36-37). On a similar note, Cowell comments that “Switzerland is a nation that supposedly thrives on efficiency: Punctuality, expensive precision watches, and trains that run on time are all part of the Swiss national persona” (1997: 141).

2.3.2 Auto-stereotypes: *Die Schweizermacher*

In general the hetero-stereotypes I just mentioned fit quite well with the dominant discourses about a “Swiss culture” within Switzerland. A first impression can be found in the film *Die Schweizermacher* (1978), the most successful Swiss film ever. The film portrays the work of two immigration officers evaluating foreigners trying to gain Swiss citizenship. While “The Swissmakers” is a comedy, it derives much of its humor from highlighting (and often poking fun at) stereotypical cultural elements. For example, during their training to become immigration officers, the trainees have to list the characteristics for attaining Swiss citizenship; prime among them are being modest, hardworking, upright, reliable, honest, and simple.

Moreover, on their home visits they note the order and cleanliness of apartments and expect absolute punctuality and conformity. In the film, an interview with the neighbor of one of the applicants reveals the scandalous fact that the applicant is shamelessly deviating from all acceptable norms: instead of hanging up the standard white curtains, her kitchen window presents a gaping black hole, and she even dares to put out her trash in a brown rather than the normal grey trash bag. And of course all applicants are expected to learn Swiss German.

One could argue that these are over-generalizations and stereotypes, and it is

true that they do not necessarily apply to all Swiss. Nevertheless, they attain their comic value because they hit all too close to home. For example, I have heard my own grandmother complain that a lot of the foreigners living in her town have the audacity to put out their trash bags for Thursday trash collection on Wednesday night, instead of at 7:00am the next day. Other than being unsightly, it is true that leaving out trash overnight might attract unwanted scavengers; nevertheless it is an example of how these stereotypes manifest themselves in the lived experience.

Although the idea of a “Swiss Culture” may have started in the realm of discourse, discourses can be quite powerful and eventually get translated into action; in other words they are performed in daily life. It would be interesting to further consider the performative nature of national identity by considering Judith Butler’s analysis of gender performativity, but unfortunately that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I share a personal anecdote to help illustrate the basic point.

During the first class of the masters program (before we knew each other very well) the professor asked that we select a class timekeeper to make sure that we went on break and finished on time. One of my classmates looked over at me and half-jokingly stated that I was Swiss and that we Swiss are good with time - after all we make Swiss watches and our trains run on time. I had no objection to his suggestion, so I became the timekeeper. However, from that moment on, I no longer just felt responsible for myself but also to the entire class. I started paying more attention to the time and making sure that I was punctual. Without giving it too much thought, I started acting/performing in accordance with (and thus perpetuating) the stereotype.

Therefore, stereotypes are not constrained to the realm of the imagination but get enacted in real life. For example, that a “Swiss” work-ethic is more than popular myth was shown in a national referendum in 2012, in which 66.5% of the voters

decided *against* extending annual vacations from four to six weeks (SwissInfo, 2012). Moreover, Ryan was struck by the apparent lack of widespread abuse of very generous unemployment benefits (2003: 37). The importance of a strong work ethic is also related to a sense of personal responsibility. One simple example of this sense of individual responsibility (as well as respect for public order) is dedication to the recycling of waste. In 2003 the Swiss recycled 47% of all urban waste, recycling 70% of paper, 95% of glass, 71% of plastic bottles and, 85-90% of aluminum cans (Swiss World, 2014). While the push to recycle has been backed by a number of cantons taxing waste production (often in the form of a fee to be paid per bag of waste collected), the success of the program nevertheless depends on people acting on an understanding that everyone must do their part.

That being law-abiding and “scrupulously honest” are also not just meaningless stereotypes is evident in the fact that the Corruption Perceptions Index currently ranks Switzerland as tied with Norway in fifth place (Transparency International, 2014). On a similar note, “Swiss cautiousness” is reflected in the general deference to the precautionary principle. One recent example is the moratorium on GMO products in Switzerland. In a 2005 referendum, 55.7% of voters cast their ballots in favor of a five-year moratorium against the commercial cultivation of both GMO crops and animals. The ban was extended in 2010 and again in 2012, currently set to last until 2017 (GMO-Free Europe, 2014). In the meantime, the government is supporting more research on the impacts of GMO plants and animals.

These are just a few examples of how stereotypes relate to the national consciousness. When certain discourses about self-perception reach hegemonic status,

then the effect can be felt in real life political decisions as well as individual behavior. While it is very informative to consider how these discourses manifest in popular culture and are acted out in daily life, their true power is evident in the extent that they have been adopted as official values.

At the federal level, cultural nationalism was made a pillar of state policy during the 1930s, most prominently with the publication of the 1938 White Paper on Swiss culture. This so-called *Kulturbotschaft*²⁵ was soon seen as the Magna Carta of Swiss cultural policy, and highlighted the three principles of decentralized political structure, reverence for human dignity and liberty, and Switzerland's affiliation with three different European cultures (Zimmer, 2004: 20).

In 1999 there was a general revision of the Federal Constitution, and the resulting document reflects the values deemed of national importance by political elites as well as the voting public. Of particular interest when considering the values that supposedly underlie current Swiss policies and behavior is the preamble. Especially noted are responsibility, respect, solidarity, and consideration of the future.

In the name of Almighty God!
The Swiss People and the Cantons,
mindful of their responsibility towards creation,
resolved to renew their alliance so as to strengthen liberty, democracy,
independence and peace in a spirit of solidarity and openness towards the
world,
determined to live together with mutual consideration and respect for their
diversity,
conscious of their common achievements and their responsibility towards
future
generations,
and in the knowledge that only those who use their freedom remain free,
and that the strength of a people is measured by the well-being of its weakest
members;
adopt the following Constitution

Swiss Federal Confederation (2014)

2.3.3 Swiss Values: The Alps and the Economy

²⁵ Cultural message

In the previous section on political nationalism, I noted how a discourse based on the three national institutions has been used to frame historical myths, the Alps, and even the economy. The same is true for cultural elements. For example, I previously discussed how Switzerland's economic success can be presented within the framework of federalism, neutrality, and democracy. However, there are also alternative explanations for Switzerland's current wealth. One popular position, especially in public discourse, is to emphasize Swiss education, entrepreneurship, and most of all the Swiss work ethic. Roman Studer explains how such an argument contends that "these characteristics have enabled Switzerland – a country poorly endowed with natural resources and in former times known as one of the 'sick men' in Europe – to rise to unexpected heights" (2008: 2).

Equally, the Alps can also be framed in both institutional as well as cultural terms. In his article "In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation," Oliver Zimmer demonstrates how for the one hundred years prior to 1870 there was a "nationalization of nature" in which the Alps reflected what was considered to be authentically Swiss. This not only involved popular historical myths and memories but also supposed national virtues, which were projected on the Alps in an attempt to lend more continuity and authenticity to Swiss national identity (Zimmer, 1998: 643). Moving from a classical utilitarian perspective to a more romanticized conception, the Swiss Alps and their inhabitants came to stand for simplicity, purity, honesty, and liberty. For example, the Helvetic Society (founded in 1761) portrayed the Alps as the center of the country's national virtues (Zimmer, 1998: 647).

After the 1870s there emerged a process of naturalizing the nation, previously

discussed in the section on the political nation. This process developed a deterministic framework, which linked the Alps with the idea of democracy and neutrality, but in its third strain also naturalized the link between the Alps and a pure national character. The Alps were seen as the genesis of a simple life and a pure peasantry, which is “the best bearer of Swiss characteristics...untiring in his diligence, strict in his economizing, simple and sober in his way of life” (Ernst Laur in Zimmer, 1998: 655). Furthermore, just as the Gotthard Mountain became central to the perception of the Alps as a bastion of neutrality and national defense, the building of the Gotthard Tunnel came to be associated with key Swiss values. As Elasser explains in his article on the mythological meaning of the St. Gotthard Railway line, “Swiss values survived the transition to modernity and they materialised in the tunnel, especially those themes central to Swiss national identity such as freedom, Christianity, social solidarity, love for the Fatherland and work ethic” (2008: 13).

2.3.4 Switzerland’s National Political Culture: the *Sonderfall*

So far I have focused on Swiss values, especially the work ethic, responsibility, simplicity and prudence. In this section, I focus in particular on Switzerland’s national political culture. As explained in the section on the political nation, Switzerland’s institutions play a significant role in determining national identity. However, any political system needs to be grounded in a system of references, in other words the specific culture of a given society (Chevrier, 2009: 171). Consequently, the specific form that national institutions take is influenced by political culture (Chevrier, 2009: 172). Not all people within the same cultural context will give the exact same meaning to a given situation nor will they necessarily act similarly; however, hegemonic discourses provide them with “templates and references to make sense of their experience and action” (Chevrier, 2009: 171).

Therefore, in order to understand Swiss national identity it is important to understand its political culture.²⁶

According to Sylvie Chevrier, this common political culture is “based upon attachment to local communities and institutions, to government through consensus and to conflict solving by resorting to arbitration and pragmatism” (Chevrier, 2009: 169). In many ways this idea is linked to the understanding of Switzerland as a *Sonderfall* or exceptional case. The general idea of the *Sonderfall* emerged from the 1930s onward, largely as a result of the Swiss experience in World War II and then due to its peace and growing prosperity in the post-war years (CHC, 2010: 2). Since then, “the conviction that Switzerland has become, and remains, a very special case, remains a fundamental, albeit contested, element in modern Swiss political culture and life” (CHC, 2010: 1).

While some credit the Swiss *Sonderfall* to the historical elements of neutrality, federalism, and direct democracy (in line with the discourse of the political nation), others varyingly stress the importance of political stability, moderation, consensus, a supportive political culture, prosperity, national economic models fostering efficiency and reliability, social cohesion, and unusual welfare patterns based on personal responsibility, voluntarism, and local provisions (CHC, 2010: 2). As such, the *Sonderfall* is not just a matter of successful institutions, but rather is a way of thinking about them (CHC, 2010: 4).

In other words, it is the way things are carried out that matters, and not just the institutions themselves. Hence a political culture of civic engagement, the militia approach and self restraint and moderation are also essential elements of the *Sonderfall*, making it even more an identitarian concept. (CHC, 2010:8)

²⁶ Here I also use Chevrier’s understanding of culture as a frame of meaning rather than values

The idea of the *Sonderfall* is particularly potent because it is not viewed as an act of providence but rather rests on the “Swiss conviction that they themselves were the authors of their success” (CHC, 2010: 6; Chevrier, 2009: 175). This has encouraged a fair amount of self-satisfaction, with some Swiss claiming that Switzerland is the only true democracy and that the Swiss are “more moral/humanitarian, more democratic and better organized” (CHC, 2010: 8). More importantly, “acceptance of the concept and the institutions and practices on which it is said to rest is seen as a necessary qualification for being a true Swiss” (CHC, 2010: 14).

Of course, the *Sonderfall* has not been without criticism, and as early as the 1960s there were claims that Switzerland was “an introverted, petty bourgeois society” (CHC, 2010: 8). The use of the concept declined a little in the 1990s, with one minister even claiming that he never wanted to hear the term again (CHC, 2010: 16). Since then the *Sonderfall* has remained a highly contested idea, but the underlying ideas still serve as a good framework for analyzing a Swiss national political culture.

Chevrier (2009) identifies four fundamental elements of the *Sonderfall*: the importance of the local and the human dimension of the community one belongs to, the tension between respecting difference and the pressure for equality, the importance of consultation and consensus building, and finally a sense of pragmatism. This last element is relatively easy to understand as it is the “mistrust towards abstract principles and systemic approaches which tend to make positions irreconcilable” (Chevrier, 2009: 176). Instead, pragmatism calls for the conciliation of differences by making compromises that fit the complex reality, even if that means abandoning more systematic solutions.

Thus, the idea of pragmatism is directly related to the idea of consultation and consensus building. As Gabriel Aubert notes, “Political relations in Switzerland are founded entirely on respect for the minority: because of the deeply held conviction of the value of compromise the majority shares the daily exercise of power with the minority” (1989: 381-382). This need for the political elite to respect the minorities and the will of the people is largely related to the threat of a referendum which “hangs over the lawmakers’ heads” as a “powerful incentive to compromise (Aubert, 1989: 382). Since any decision by the government can be called to a national referendum by the collection of 50,000 signatures, lawmakers need to work toward a general consensus prior to passing a law if they hope to get it implemented and not delayed or even rejected by a popular referendum.

In the case that consensus building and compromise fails, then there is a strong tradition of arbitration as a means to address conflict. In the popular imagination, this practice is traced back all the way to the *Bundesbrief* of 1291. While some have associated the pact of allegiance between Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden with the beginning of the national institutions (as I explained in the previous section), another interpretation highlights the process for arbitration outlined in the pact as a root of modern political culture. According to the treaty, the ‘conspirators’ not only promised to help one another against outside attack but also agreed to go to independent arbitration whenever a conflict arose between them. The ‘wisest’ members of the Confederation were supposed to mediate and solve conflicts, while the rest of the members were responsible for enforcing the judgment (Chevrier, 2009: 174).

Consensus building and arbitration have been of particular importance in the creation of the Swiss industrial peace, and thereby is linked to Switzerland's prosperity. During the interwar period Swiss industry was plagued by a number of significant strikes. However, starting in the 1930s there was a marked shift away from strikes towards signing collective agreements. In 1933, the Federation of Metalworkers and Watchmakers stopped regarding strikes as the best option for obtaining concessions from employers, and in 1936 the Federal Council mandated that collective disputes concerning pay should be submitted to compulsory arbitration (Aubert, 1989: 374). Nevertheless, in 1937 there was a major strike regarding wages and paid leave in the watchmaking industry. Rather than facing state arbitration, the workers chose to submit their dispute to a private tribunal and ended up signing a collective agreement, a move that was soon repeated by the metalworking industry (Aubert, 1989: 375). Not content with general agreements, the unions started pushing for more detailed agreements, and then in 1945 the chemical industry managed to secure a complete collective agreement fixing working conditions (Aubert, 1989: 376). Since then both arbitration and fixed working condition agreements have imposed a peace obligation on all parties. The peace agreements are generally respected due to a combination of a strong work ethic, the presence of foreign workers who do not wish to risk their job security, economic conditions and the political system (Aubert, 1989: 380).

The need for consensus and arbitration is particularly important in an egalitarian context, in which "conflicts cannot be solved with one part imposing its solution to the other" (Chevrier, 2009: 176). However, the pressure for equality is often in conflict with the need to respect differences. This tension between "the rejection of hegemony and the preservation of peculiarities is part and parcel of the

Swiss culture” (Chevrier, 2009: 176). For example, in his evaluation of the position of “Switzerland in a Changing Europe,” William Rappard notes that “Swiss national unity is based on the federation of autonomous units, each glorying its diversity” and that “Switzerland has ever been the home of political individualism.” At the same time, “the Swiss are so hostile to every form of hero worship that they are disinclined even to accept the temporary leadership of elected presidents, preferring instead to be governed by anonymous committees” (1938: 690).

This hostility toward hero worship and desire for equality is often interpreted as the need for individuals to act alike, which leads to mistrust and intolerance toward anyone unusual. As Chevrier explains:

Any great person who breaks out of the traditional frame would necessarily stand above the law and create new references, which would inevitably lead to a clash with a tremendous coalition of resisting forces.... The safety of the community requires that the people behave in conformity with the norms and that all offenders be severely punished. To some extent, the quest for egalitarianism implies strict discipline. (Chevrier, 2009:176)

Since Switzerland’s official policy is to respect diversity, this push for conformity normally does not manifest itself in overt authority. Instead it is based more on what Erich Fromm has termed “anonymous authority.” As Fromm explains, “Nobody makes a demand, neither a person, nor an idea, nor a moral law. Yet we all conform as much or more than people in an intensely authoritarian society would” (1954: 148). The only authority comes from an undefined “It” which can be varyingly interpreted as “profit, economic necessities, the market, common sense, public opinion, what ‘one’ does, thinks, feels” (1954: 148).

Beyond the pressure to conform to Fromm’s “anonymous authority,” the desire for equality also manifests itself at the economic, social and political level. The structure of the Swiss government is designed to promote a relatively equal society.

Switzerland is a Confederation in which power is distributed between the federal, cantonal, and municipal governments. Furthermore, it is a direct democracy in which all citizens over the age of 18 have the right to vote for their representatives in parliament as well as directly vote on issues. Through a system of referenda and initiatives, the Swiss people have the right to bring legislation to a national vote, thus insuring that the people have the final say in all policies.

One of the few things that the Swiss people do not vote for directly is the Federal Council (the executive head of the federal government). The Federal Assembly votes for the seven council members, and according to Article 175 of the Constitution “care must be taken to ensure that the various geographical and language regions of the country are appropriately represented.” Beyond the legally binding regulations set in the Constitution, the four major political parties have also developed a “Magic Formula” which has no binding legal status but is nevertheless generally respected. The Formula uses voter support for each party to determine the number of seats each party gets in the Federal Council and also reinforces the linguistic representation mentioned in the constitution (Swiss Info, 2006). All of these mechanisms are supposed to ensure that there is a diffuse distribution of power and that no one group dominates the others politically.

The desire for basic equality has also influenced economic and social policies. For example, the Social Insurance policy of Switzerland covers a number of different aspects including retirement, disability, unemployment, family allowances, maternity leave, accident and health insurance. All of these are supposed to function together to ensure that everyone receives at least enough to be able to live a decent life. However, the policy combines the value of equality with the value of personal responsibility. For example, retirement insurance is divided into three pillars. The first pillar is the

state pension plan, the second is an occupational pension plan, and the third is a private option, often in the form of a retirement savings account. This is an example of a pragmatic solution that attempts to balance the tension between equality and personal freedom: the state will guarantee a minimum, but there is also individual responsibility to plan for the future (Swiss Info, 2014).

Finally the Swiss people also exhibit a deep mistrust “of majorities, of strong political personalities, of charismatic leadership” (Müller, 1994: 2). For example, while each canton has its aristocrats, their privileges are confined to the private sphere and generally do not play a role in public life (Chevrier, 2009: 176). Furthermore, there is a tendency to appreciate humbleness over aggrandizing behavior. Although there are many rich Swiss, people spending too much money on status objects or seen as flaunting their wealth are often viewed quite negatively. This attitude is reflected in the general anger with top executive pay, which has led to numerous initiatives. In March 2013, 68% of voters supported the so-called “Fat Cat” initiative which gives shareholders a veto over top manager payments, bans big signing bonuses and golden parachutes. In the same year, the 100,000 signatures necessary to present a national initiative were also gathered in support of the “1:12” initiative, which intended to limit the pay of the top executive to no more than 12 times the amount of the lowest paid employ. This initiative ended up not receiving the majority support it needed to get passed, but it nevertheless illustrates the concerns regarding equality within the Swiss population (Stephens, 2013).

These examples illustrate how the importance of equality is manifested in Swiss politics and daily life. However, as the *Sonderfall* argues, what makes Switzerland so special is the ability to balance equality with plurality. While not

including it in their study on Swiss identity, Eugster and Strijbis nevertheless hypothesize that Swiss pride about cultural pluralism may be relevant to a cultural understanding of national identity. The idea is that “the Swiss are simply proud of being able to live peacefully together despite cultural fragmentation” and that “citizens appreciate Switzerland’s large variance between cantons and language regions” (Eugster and Strijbis (2010: 20).

Antoine Chollet (2011) argues that one of the defining characteristics of Swiss nationalism is the twisting of factors that should divide the nation into the essence of nationalism. Presenting Swiss identity as based on unity through diversity, allows factors such as linguistic diversity and federalism based on cantonal independence, to be re-framed to fit a national self-image. This glorifying of diversity is particularly relevant when considering the final two factors important in an inclusive cultural understanding of Swiss national identity, namely language and religion.

2.3.5 Multilingualism

Switzerland has four official languages: German, French, Italian, and Romansh. German is the majority language representing about two-thirds of the population. French is spoken by approximately 20% of the population, and Italian and Romansh are the minority languages spoken by 6% and less than 1% respectively (Espersen, 2012). This linguistic diversity was a challenge to traditional nation building. However, Anderson argues, “The appearance of Swiss nationalism on the eve of the communications revolution of the twentieth century made it possible and practical to ‘represent’ the imagined community in ways that did not require linguistic uniformity” (2006: 141). Besides being aided by developments in communication, Swiss nation-builders also decided to replace the idea of one unifying national language with a discourse celebrating linguistic diversity as a fundamental

characteristic of Swiss nationalism. The success of this project is evident in the fact that despite not having one single national language to rally around, more than 90% of respondents in the Eurobarometer 2003 considered speaking at least one national language as important to national identity (Eugster and Strijbis, 2010).

Of particular note was the addition, by overwhelming popular vote, of Romansh as the fourth national language in 1938. For many years, Romansh had been considered an obsolete language of no particular importance and without any official recognition. Then, in the 1930s, Switzerland faced increased pressure from its neighbors, which were pursuing totalitarian language policies. Therefore, the acceptance of a minority language as part of Swiss multilingualism was considered as the ultimate *geistige Landesverteidigung*²⁷, or as Federal Councilor Philiipp Etter noted, the vote had been nothing less than the defense of Swiss national thinking (Amrein, 2013; Zimmer, 2004: 18).

At the federal level, there are a number of measures in place to protect language diversity. In 2007 the Swiss federation enacted the *Sprachengesetz*²⁸. The purpose of this language law is to strengthen multilingualism as an essential feature of Switzerland, to solidify the internal cohesion of the country, and to promote the use of multiple national languages at both the individual and institutional level.

The *Sprachengesetz* augments the already existing sections on language policy in the Swiss Constitution. The federal government allows the Cantons to decide their own official language. However, it also states that, “In order to preserve harmony between linguistic communities, the Cantons shall respect the traditional territorial distribution of languages and take account of indigenous linguistic minorities.” (Swiss

²⁷ spiritual national defense

²⁸ Language law

Federal Constitution, 1999: art. 70, para. 2). Furthermore, there is a division between the territoriality and the personality principle. In communication with the federal government, all citizens are free to choose in which official language they wish to communicate. However, at the cantonal level, all residents must respect the official cantonal language(s) (Espersen, 2012: 62-63).

That means that residents must adjust to the linguistic environment of the canton. This not only affects foreign immigrants, but also Swiss citizens who are moving to a canton with a different official language. In other words, the linguistic freedom of all migrants (including the Swiss) is restricted to the extent that they are “expected to acquire for themselves a sufficient knowledge of the local language and to enroll their children in the local schools” (Espersen, 2012: 62). This territoriality principle is viewed as the main guarantee for the security of the minority language groups and as the foundation of Swiss linguistic peace.

Also important to language diversity is the continued use of the vernacular, especially Swiss German. While it is the majority language, it has never been standardized and therefore is not seen as posing a threat as a dominating language (Espersen, 2012: 70). The continued use of the vernacular is particularly significant since language standardization was crucial to the development of the nation-state (Anderson, 2006). For example Nebrija’s original Castilian grammar was conceived of as a pillar of the nation-state (Illich, 1980).

Julia Slater (2008) notes that Swiss-German is based on a paradox: the German-speaking Swiss are strongly attached to their spoken language, but at the same time do not take it entirely seriously. There is no official written form of the vernacular, it is not considered part of education, and it is relegated to the private sphere. Nevertheless, there is quite a lot of pride and interest in the various Swiss

dialects, including an impressive project to create “The Swiss *Idiotikon*” or a comprehensive Swiss-German dictionary, which has been in the making since 1862 and so far consists of 15 out of the 17 planned volumes. While dictionaries are invariably national projects, the Swiss *Idiotikon* is a combination of a dialect and historical dictionary that does not offer any standardization. According to Walter Haas, professor of German Studies at the Fribourg University, the enthusiasm for the project is based in a combination of a defense of cultural history, scholarly interest, and the nationalistic “desire to display something that belonged specifically to Switzerland” (Slater, 2008).

3.2.6 Christianity

The study by Eugster and Strijbis found that compared to other factors, (organized) religion was deemed as much less important, with only 39% of respondents stressing its relevance to national identity (2010: 11). Nevertheless, religious references remain central to symbols of the Swiss nation, and any review of Swiss history would not be complete without considering the role Christianity has played in the formation of the modern Swiss state.

As shown above, the first line of the preamble to the current Swiss Constitution starts with “In the name of Almighty God!”²⁹ Furthermore, the Swiss flag prominently features a white cross. To top it all off, the current national anthem is called the “Swiss Psalm” and not surprisingly has a very religious foundation. It calls upon all free Swiss to pray, as their pious souls already sense that God dwells in the Fatherland. Interestingly it also makes a lot of reference to nature, with specific

²⁹ This phrase was already present in the original Constitution in 1848 and has remained the opening line in all revisions since then.

mention of the Alps, reinforcing the central role of the Alps in Swiss national identity. Combine these three together and it becomes difficult to deny the fact that Christianity is still relevant in Swiss national identity.

A look at history also shows the important role religion has played in the formation of modern Switzerland. Being home to both Zwingli and Calvin, Switzerland played a major role in the reformation, after which there were rising tensions between the Catholic and Protestant cantons. These tensions came to a head in Switzerland's civil war, the *Sonderbundskrieg*, which was fought between the Catholic and Protestant cantons (Reihnhardt, 2014). Although relatively bloodless, it nevertheless demonstrates the importance religious identity has in Swiss identity. At least until 1848 the ancient religious cleavages were politically more important than linguistic ones, as some of the Catholic cantons went so far as to outlaw Protestantism and vice-versa (Anderson, 2006).

Since then, tensions have abated somewhat and the rhetoric has changed to demonstrate just how well the two sides can live together in a religiously diverse Switzerland. For example, one of the central questions explored by the Swiss National Museum is "Why do Protestants and Catholics live in close proximity to each other in Switzerland?" (Holzhueter, 2015: 5). However, although the coexistence of Protestants and Catholics is presented as another facet of Switzerland's diversity, this plurality is generally only accepted within the confines of the Christian tradition.

2.4 The Culturally Exclusive Nation – the *Volksnation*

Unlike a political or culturally inclusive identity, the conception of a culturally exclusive national identity is mostly based on the idea of race and ethnicity. Eugster and Strijbis (2010) acknowledge that both race and ethnicity are social constructs and as such are malleable. However, since they are concepts passed down through generations, change happens slowly and cannot be effected by the individual without the consent of society. Therefore, these concepts can be used to exclusively define the nation. For example, the Chinese nation is quite strongly predicated on a politico-ethnic understanding, which means that even if I gained Chinese citizenship, spoke perfect Mandarin and followed all customs, my nose, big eyes, and blond hair would always mark me as the other.

In the case of Switzerland the existence of an ethnic Swiss has been proposed in the past, but currently the trend is to make this part of Swiss identity less explicit. Nevertheless, the idea of a *Volksnation* formed a “crucial dimension of the construction of the national order” (Mottier, 1999: 8), and there are still some interpretations of history and myth that focus on the imagined ethnic origins of the Swiss.

The earliest signs of settlements in the area of modern day Switzerland, were discovered in 1853 when workmen happened upon the remains of an old lake settlement created by the *Pfahlbauers* (pile-builders) (Hug and Stead, 1890: 3). These lake-dwellers are said to have left their pile buildings and started to be absorbed into other groups (most likely into some Celtic tribes, particularly the Helvetians) around 600-700 BC (Hug and Stead, 1890: 11). Since then, the territory has been inhabited by a number of different peoples, most notably the Celts, the Rhaetians, Alamanni, Burgundians, and Franks.

Although most modern Swiss are likely descendants from the Alamanni and the Burgundians (Hug and Stead, 1890: 45), Swiss mythology is still strongly tied to the Helvetians. Switzerland was referred to as the Helvetian Republic under the rule of Napoleon and to this day is officially known as the Helvetic Confederation (usually used in the Latin Confoederatio Helvetica). However, such a conception requires historical forgetfulness on a number of levels. First of all, there is no direct lineage from the Helvetians. Furthermore, the Helvetians are not indigenous to the territory since they previously had lived between the Rhine and the Main and only settled in Switzerland after being pushed out by the Germans. Finally, historical accounts indicate that during the reign of Cesar the Helvetians actually attempted to leave their harsh homeland and settle in Gaul. However, the plan of the hundreds of thousands of migrating Helvetians was foiled by Cesar's army, and the Helvetians were forced to return to Helvetia, which was integrated into the Roman empire as the state *Civitas Helvetiorum* (Hug and Stead, 1890: 14, 21-24,34).

It was after the founding of the *Eidgenossenschaft* (the Confederation) that the name *Schweiz* (Switzerland) eventually took hold. The original oath was sworn between Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden, and at first the inhabitants of these areas called themselves by the names of their own communities, or simply as *Eidgenossen* (Confederates). However, during the various wars, the opponents often did not differentiate between the different *Eidgenossen* and referred to them collectively as *Schwyz*, a term that has morphed into the modern day *Schweizer*. Even the Swiss flag resembles the flag of the canton Schwyz, which is red with a small white cross in the corner.

It is important to remember that at that time the foe usually were inhabitants of regions which now belong to Switzerland (Zürich, Bern, etc.) and hence even the

name of the nation requires a very specific ability to have already forgotten things one is constantly being reminded of. In this way the Swiss imaginary is based on the concept of a very specific people; however, the term has been re-imagined in such a way that currently *Schweizer* also includes Italian speakers in Ticino, French speakers in Geneva, and Romansh speakers in Graubünden.

Despite this complex and diverse genealogy, some historians have tried to construct the idea of a pure Swiss ethnies. Especially during the early 20th century, when the Swiss nation was being pressured from all sides by its more homogenous neighbors, some scholars argued for a Swiss *Wesengemeinschaft*³⁰ based on organic nationalist ideals (Zimmer, 2004: 12). Such a view focusing mostly on the pre-modern past was championed by groups right of the center, ranging from the Catholic conservatives to the fascist right (Zimmer, 2004: 13).

Organic nationalists differed from civic nationalists by emphasizing the genealogical descent from the medieval ‘founders’ rather than viewing them as early representatives of republican ideals (Zimmer, 2004: 13). Although such a line of argument was not widely supported by the mainstream political parties or newspaper, it was fairly well developed in the margins. Karl Keller-Tarnuzzer was a proponent of a culturally exclusive Swiss *Volk* and defended his views in an article titled “*Die Herkunft des Schweizervolkes*”³¹ in the Thurgauer Newspaper in 1936. His argument was that the centuries and millennia of the development of the Swiss Confederation resulted in “Swiss blood” based on the unique intermingling of various groups. While he acknowledged the various groups that have inhabited Switzerland he nevertheless contended that the *Pfahlbauer* (who had lived in Switzerland from at least 3000BC)

³⁰ Community based on being

³¹ “The Origins of the Swiss People”

had a unique adaptive advantage and that therefore their resiliency forms a key ingredient in the evolution of the “Swiss race”. His conclusion was that “It is high time... that the widely held theory that we are nothing but Alemanni, Frenchmen and Italians gives way to a consciousness that we Swiss form a distinct race based upon the original population of this country, the Pfahlbauer” (Keller-Tarnuzzer in Zimmer, 2004: 15).

These days such an argument may seem a little absurd, but nevertheless the ethnic or genetic relationship among the Swiss is still a topic of research. For example, in 2012 a study by Buhler and others looked at “The Heterogenous HLA Genetic Makeup of the Swiss Population.” Although their main purpose was to determine possible regional differences in order to optimize donor recruitment strategies in hematopoietic stem cell transplantation, they nevertheless also used their data to gain a better understanding of the genetic background of the Swiss. Using data from more than 20,000 subjects, they compared both geographic and linguistic subdivisions in Switzerland. Not surprisingly, they found a heterogeneous genetic makeup, with pronounced differences evident in Ticino, Grisons, and Wallis corresponding to a highly significant differentiation between the Alps and the Plateau/Jura as well as between linguistic groups.

Related to this interest in Swiss genealogy are the eugenicist discourses of the *Volksnation*, which were highly influential in Switzerland from the late 1800s to the end of the Second World War (Mottier, 1999: 8). While today the idea of eugenics is popularly declared as “un-Swiss,” at that time, Swiss scientists were instrumental in the field’s development and the ideas were considered scientific orthodoxy. Widespread interest in the field of eugenics led to the foundation of the Julius Klaus Foundation for Heredity Research, Social Anthropology and Racial Hygiene in 1922.

The foundation's first president, Otto Schlaginhaufen, was particularly concerned with identifying the racial origins of the Swiss. As part of his quest to document the "Homo Alpinus Helveticus" Schlaginhaufen and his team measured over 35,000 male army recruits. They found that according to their analysis the majority of Swiss are a mix of six different races and only 8.7% of Swiss were "pure" race. Of these, only 1.4% were considered pure "Homo Alpinus" (Mottier, 1999: 11).

The quest for a "pure" Swiss race was linked with the work of psychiatrists and sexologists concerned with the idea of *Volksdegeneration*, mostly attributed to hereditary mental illness (particularly in the Jews), narcotic poisons (including alcohol), and reproduction with "inferior" partners. The "inferior other" included "criminals, prostitutes, alcoholics, immoral people, the mentally ill, haemophiliacs, people with tuberculosis, drug addicts, gypsies, vagrants" and a strong line was drawn between the white and "inferior" races such as the Jews, Chinese, and "Negroes" (Mottier, 1999: 12).

Beyond teaching sex education focused on discouraging sex with such "degenerate" partners, eugenicists such as Auguste Forel called for their sterilization, a practice first put into action in 1892. During the following decades, Switzerland maintained the top position in terms of sterilizations and various cantons legalized the practice of forced sterilizations (Mottier, 1999: 13). While the practice of forced sterilization lost its popular appeal following the Holocaust, the idea did not disappear completely. Possibly the most striking example is the project *Kinder der Landstrasse* (Children of the Road). The project was organized by the children's charity Pro-Juventute (but supported by federal institutions) and between 1926 and 1973 organized the kidnapping of over 700 Jenisch (gypsy) children in an attempt to

eradicate vagrancy. The founder of the project, Alfred Siegfried, is supposed to have said the following: “We must say that we have already achieved much if these people do not start a family, do not reproduce without restraint and bring new generations of degenerate and abnormal children into the world” (New, 1997: 108).

Although the idea of the *Homo Alpinus Helveticus* has been discarded by most in favor of a more pluralistic understanding of ethnicity in Switzerland, the attachment to the idea of an indigenous mountain people still holds sway in Switzerland. For example, the adoption of Romansh as the fourth national language was arguably largely driven by the political situation of the time, but part of the reason that the population so easily accepted Romansh was that it appealed to the popular self-image of a rugged mountainfolk (Amrein, 2013).

In addition, the continued significance of genealogy is reflected in the importance of family names in the popular understanding of what it means to be Swiss. Like certain dialects, some names can be traced to particular regions or even villages, and exotic last names are often used to peg someone as a foreigner. In his satirical work “*Schweizen*”³² Charles Lewinsky plays on various Swiss fears in creating 24 different visions of Switzerland’s future. One of his stories is based on a police investigation of the murder of journalist Sven Söderholm. In the short story Commissioner Ramakrishna takes the lead and is aided by his assistant Dragan Pavlovic, police photographer Juan Gomez, coroner Dr. Abdelkader, and the Chief of Police Li Chung. The investigation eventually leads them to the Director of the AONS (the Action for Original Swiss Nationals), who had murdered the journalist in an attempt to hide the fact that his family tree was not purely Swiss but at one point had also included some Germans (Lewinsky, 2013: 83-90).

³² Switzerland

While taking the issue to a satirical extreme, Lewinsky nevertheless touches on an important point, also mentioned in the movie *Die Schweizermacher* (1978). In the movie one of the immigration officers has trouble pronouncing a surname and comments that it should be possible to require that foreigners first change their names before applying for citizenship.³³ Moving from popular culture to real life, David Hampshire also notes that Swiss with foreign names may become victims of xenophobia (Hampshire, 2007: 387). Therefore, although most people would not argue that there is one Swiss ethnic group, blood lines and links with a particular people still form an important part of the imagined Swiss community.

A genealogical framing of national identity is also evident in Switzerland's citizenship laws. Unlike the United States, which follows the principle of *jus soli*, meaning that everyone born within the territory is a citizen, Switzerland follows the principle of *jus sanguinis*, which means that a child born in Switzerland only gains citizenship if at least one of the child's parents is Swiss. While these two legal concepts can be traced back to Roman law, they acquired new and decisive importance following the French Revolution. Citizenship no longer simply implied a generic subjugation but came to identify the "members of the sovereign" (Agamben, 1998: 76)

Furthermore, it is quite difficult to become a naturalized citizen in Switzerland, as it takes at least ten years of residency in addition to a number of other

³³ In an interesting twist Second@s Plus Aargau, part of a national group fighting for citizenship and equal opportunities, has called for the right of naturalized Swiss to change their last names without any problem. Ivica Petrusic, the president of Second@s Aargau admits that simply changing a name will not solve the integration issue, but argues that it is a pragmatic idea based on the desire of naturalized citizens who want to adapt their names to the cultural context (SwissInfo, 2009)

factors. Therefore, Swiss citizenship is still strongly associated with the concept of having “Swiss blood.” According to one study, 81% of respondents stressed the importance of having Swiss citizenship as part of national identity, thereby, indirectly supporting a more exclusive conception of the nation. However, when directly asked if having Swiss ancestors was important, only 42% of the respondents responded in the affirmative (Eugster and Strijbis, 2010: 11).

2.5 Negative Identity and the “Other”

Finally, apart from the three positive conceptions based on politics and both inclusive and exclusive cultural elements, it may be useful to consider the idea of Switzerland as a nation defined in the negative by what it is not. Chollet notes that his concept of the “fractured” nation can also be understood in terms of negative nationalism. For example, consensus is actually the absence of conflict; neutrality is the absence of a political stance; and federalism is not meddling in other’s business. In such a conception, Switzerland is “what remains when one has removed every possible characteristic” and therefore leads to a constant reference to the non-Swiss other (2011: 749).

Such a negative conception can be useful when considering the plurality of Swiss culture. While the Swiss like to imagine themselves as a heterogeneous and plural nation, a negative conception reveals that this plurality is quite limited and restricted to certain elements accepted as part of a Swiss national identity. Being Swiss does not require the presence of one specific language or religion; however, the plurality is generally imagined as limited and it is possible to speak a language or follow a religion that is popularly considered to be “non-Swiss” and reason for exclusion. Similarly, although there is no unique Swiss ethnies, there is still a

relatively widespread imagination of the Swiss as being a white (and ideally mountain-dwelling) people. Therefore, it is possible that certain groups may be excluded because they do not fit into an ethnic perception of the Swiss, even if ethnicity is imagined in plurality.

Moreover, the idea of a negative identity is related to a Derridean conceptualization of identity boundaries, predicated on order derived from binaries (such as man/woman, black/white, us/them). The negative part of the binary functions as a “constitutive outside,” which gives content and meaning to the positive half (Mottier, 1999: 5). However, as Veronique Mottier points out these binaries often overlap and crosscut each other. These crisscrossing boundaries are constantly threatening the desired order by creating a lot of ambivalence. Therefore, a negative construction of Swiss identity is closely tied to discourses based on threat and fear.

For example, Mottier argues that war has been of particular importance in the construction of Swiss identity, and that rather than being based on a common cultural heritage, Swiss national identity is founded on (real or perceived) external threats. She continues, “Swiss national identity has consequently been described as *negative*, emerging through ‘difference’ and in particular through the demarcation of external enemies” (1999: 5). Such mechanisms of “othering” are centered on the “foreign” (especially immigrant workers and asylum seekers), who are used to juxtapose the identity of the “us.”

Mottier’s analysis fits with Gertjan Dijkink’s theory on national identity (discussed in the theoretical framework). According to Dijkink national identity is constantly influenced by external events, and perceived threats are particularly important in shaping the discourse on national identity. He explains that all humans

yearn for a kind of world order, “a sensible pattern of people things and behaviour” (1996: 15) and that the nation is the “most relevant recourse for those who wish to restore order when they are faced with a serious disturbance” (1996: 16).

In the past the most significant source of fear was a threat to territorial boundaries by traditional war. However, changes in military technology and geopolitics have shifted the main source of fear to issues related to identity/culture as well as economic and environmental security (1996: 144-145). This serves to highlight the connection between national identity and the “foreign other” (most importantly immigrants). In the next section, I further explore this connection, focusing primarily on how the popular conceptions of a “Swiss national identity” described in this chapter influence attitudes and policies regarding the “other.”

Chapter Three: Immigration and Identity

In the previous Chapter, I looked at the various conceptions of what it means to be Swiss as expressed in hegemonic discourses. In Chapter Three, I take a closer look at the issues of immigration and foreigners in the context of national identity.

3.1 A History of Immigration

While the issue of immigration has been a central part of political and public discussions since the founding of the modern nation, Yvonne Riaño and Doris Wastl-Walter (2006) have identified four main phases of immigration in Switzerland. During the first phase, prior to World War I, Switzerland underwent a process of industrial expansion and foreigners were seen as crucial for the country's development. Foreigners, especially Europeans, were welcomed into Switzerland as long as they behaved 'properly.' Bilateral agreements gave foreigners equal rights as citizens (except for the right to vote) and could be naturalized after only two years of residence. However, the increasing presence of foreigners resulted in a conservative backlash that claimed Switzerland was being invaded by uncivilized 'barbarians.'

This shift in perception became dominant with the outbreak of the First World War and the development of the notion of *Überfremdung* (the idea that excessive foreigners were threatening Swiss identity). In reality, the number of foreigners had actually decreased during the war, but the level of perceived threat and a discourse of *Überfremdung* outweighed the facts. In 1932, the government issued the Federal Law on the Settlement and Residence of Foreigners (ANAG), which restricted the civil rights of foreigners and limited the possibility of becoming a permanent resident. In many ways, this was a turning point for immigrants in Switzerland, as they were no

longer considered immigrants but were conceptualized as foreigners. The law was intended to protect the Swiss labor market and identity by requiring officials to consider the intellectual and economic interests of the country as well as the degree of *Überfremdung* before granting permits to foreigners. This culture of threat continued into the Second World War and was central to *Geistige Landesverteidigung* (a program of spiritual defense of the nation).

During the post-war era Switzerland benefited from rapid economic expansion and once again experienced labor shortages, particularly for un- and semi-skilled labor. To address the opposing desire to protect Switzerland and the need for foreign workers, the government devised a system of seasonal and temporary workers on a rotation system. Seasonal workers were allowed in Switzerland for up to nine months before they had to return home. Some workers received one-year permits, but the renewal was contingent on Switzerland's economic situation. As such the government used a laissez-faire approach in terms of number, but designed the system to serve as an economic buffer in case of a recession. Since foreign workers were seen as seasonal, little effort was made to integrate them into society. There were limited family reunifications, and in 1952 a new citizenship law increased the number of years of residency required for naturalization to twelve.

In response to high prices and growing inflation during the 1960s, a number of decrees were passed with the intention of reducing the number of foreign workers. However, these were not successful and so in 1965 there was the first popular initiative against *Überfremdung*, which demanded that the percentage of foreigners could not exceed 10% of the population. The government successfully called for the rejection of the initiative, but was still forced to accommodate the mounting pressure by issuing further decrees limiting the presence of foreigners. Still not satisfied, the

National Action Committee launched a second initiative in 1969. The initiative, named after its main proponent Schwarzenbach, was even more extreme than the first and demanded that no canton could have more than 10% of foreigners and no Swiss person could be laid off as long as there was a foreigner working within the same branch of an enterprise. Once again, the government fought against the initiative, but only by issuing a compromise decree to implement annual quotas on immigration.

Despite the government's attempt to stabilize the foreign population, the number of foreigners continued to grow. However, the defeat of a third *Überfremdung* initiative seemed to indicate a weakening of xenophobic attitudes. Moreover, the economic recession of the 1970s drastically reduced the number of seasonal-workers. In 1981, there was even an initiative to improve the situation of foreigners by supporting automatic family reunions and automatic renewals of yearly permits; however, it was rejected by an overwhelming 84% of voters.

The beginning of the 1990s marked the start of a fourth phase in immigration discourse in Switzerland. After the end of the Cold War, Europe became increasingly integrated, and while Swiss voters rejected membership in the European Economic Area, there was nevertheless a spirit of rapprochement with the rest of Europe. For example, in 1989 and 1990, the governments of Spain and Portugal negotiated reduced residency requirements for their citizens and in general there was an increase in the number of permanent residents. As the previous model of seasonal workers became untenable, the government created a commission to develop a new policy. The solution came in the form of a "three-circle" policy in which foreigners were conceptualized according to "cultural proximity." The first and closest group consisted of members of the European Union, which were followed by nationals

from the USA and Canada in the second circle. Finally, the third circle consisted of all the rest.

Given widespread criticism of the policy, both as racially prejudiced and limiting needed skilled-immigrants from the third circle, the government created a second commission in 1997. The recommendation was to introduce a point system (based on the Canadian and Australian model); however, the system was never put into practice. Instead the three-circle model simply morphed into a two-circle model, which came into practice with the 2001 bilateral agreement on the free movements of persons in the European Union. The agreement gave EU nationals the same rights as the Swiss (except for the right to vote) and thus discursively removed them from the concept of the foreigner. Therefore, foreigners are mostly imagined as those who come from outside the EU, and their entry is strictly limited to skilled personnel who are thought to be necessary for the economy.

3.2 Attitudes towards Immigration

This brief historical overview of immigration in Switzerland indicates that public and elite opinion has changed over time. The idea of *Überfremdung* forms a central theme, with both economic and cultural fears influencing official policy. This fits well with the two major theories used to explain people's attitudes towards immigration: one is based on interests and the other on ideology (Wilkes and others, 2008; Malhotra and others, 2013; Sides and Citrin, 2007). This division is common across most studies even if authors use different names to indicate the same division; for example, Sides and Citrin (2007) refer to these two theories as 'rational' and 'symbolic.' They also add a third category of "information" which refers to the information (or lack thereof) regarding the actual size of the immigrant population.

With regard to this last category Sides and Citrin (2007) find that contextual factors are mostly unrelated to opposition to immigration. These findings are supported by Wilkes and others (2008), who also found that attitudes are not significantly affected by the rate of immigration. However, while contextual factors generally have little impact, misperceptions about the size of immigrant populations are prevalent and have a significant impact on popular attitudes towards immigration (Sides and Citrin, 2007).

The effect of large immigrant populations can be interpreted according to two theories – threat theory and intergroup contact theory. In their article “The More the Merrier,” Green and others (2010) found that contact generally reduced exclusionary immigration attitudes; however, this effect was dependent on the type of immigrant. The presence of North and West European immigrants generally reduced perceived threat, while a larger proportion of Muslims was related to an increased perceived threat. Their study is particularly notable because it highlights the different attitudes towards different immigrant groups. Popular discourse in Switzerland often distinguishes between various categories including culturally similar versus culturally distant, ‘old’ and ‘new,’ adaptable versus inadaptatable, and legitimate versus illegitimate immigrants (Green and others, 2010: 187).

The idea that interests determine attitudes is predominantly based on the concept of economic interests, and particularly the labor-market. The theory is that native-born people fear that immigrants may either take their jobs or at least depress their wages. Furthermore, the validity of the threat may not be as important as the perception of such a threat (Wilkes and others, 2008: 303). Mahotra and others distinguish between “prevalence” and “conditional” impact, and find that “when labor

market threat is present, there is a significant association between labor-market competition and views on immigration” (2013: 392). This theory is supported by the findings of researchers in Canada: in a study of 17 national Canadian Gallup Polls, Wilkes and others (2008) found that the state of the economy influenced attitudes toward immigration.

Furthermore, an economic theory generally distinguishes between the attitudes of low-skilled and high-skilled workers who should feel threatened by different types of immigrants (Wilkes and others, 2008: 304). Basing her analysis on two sets of survey data covering a wide range of countries, Mayda (2006) finds empirical support for this theory. When moving from consideration of attitudes (and thus perceived threat) to actual impact on wage distribution, Favre (2011) finds that recent immigrants in Switzerland are overrepresented at both the top of the high-skill and at the bottom of the low-skill occupations. While there is no significant effect on natives in the low-skill bracket, Favre finds strong evidence for the notion that high-skill natives whose skill set is similar to that of immigrants lose (2011: 21). This should indicate that high-skill workers in Switzerland should feel threatened and therefore oppose immigration. This could possibly help explain why exit polls at the Swiss national elections showed that the majority of people in the high-income bracket had voted for the conservative/anti-immigrant Swiss People’s Party (Skenderovic, 2001: 7).

In contrast, a study by Hainmueller and Hiscox found that a positive attitude towards all migrants (including high-skilled immigrants) was significantly correlated with higher education and skill level. They conclude that rather than being linked to economic factors, skill and education level is linked with cultural values and beliefs,

as “more educated respondents are significantly less racist and place greater value on cultural diversity” (2007: 399).

While the influence of economic interests remains widely contested as an explanation of attitudes towards immigration, there is a general consensus on the importance of ideological concerns – especially national identity (Hooghe and Marks, 2004). For example, Sides and Citrin note that “Public opinion is not insensitive to the economic consequences of immigration, but more important are deeply held symbolic attitudes, such as beliefs about cultural unity or homogeneity” (2007: 501).

In the past national identity was often used as a single category to explore the role of identity in forming attitudes towards immigration. However, that obscures much of the story. Pehrson and others argue that the relationship between national identification and anti-immigration prejudice depends on how national groups are defined by their members. They find that anti-immigration attitudes were in general stronger in countries in which national identity was based on language and weaker in those where the nation was defined in terms of citizenship. Interestingly, these effects were seen at the national rather than the individual level, and cannot be explained as the aggregation of individual-level effects. As such, “the identification-prejudice relationship depends on being in a nation in which these criteria are generally considered important, rather than being an individual for whom they are important” (2009: 33). In contrast, support for an ancestry-based perception of the nation was only linked to prejudice at the individual level (2009: 24). Finally, they somewhat contradictorily find that having co-nationals who strongly identify with the nation may actually make individuals more tolerant of immigrants. One possible explanation

of this is that having strong national identification may decrease the perceived threat to the nation (2009: 34).

In their study on “Nationalism and patriotism as predictors of immigration attitudes in Switzerland,” Green and others distinguish between nationalism as the “uncritical and blind attachment to the nation” and patriotism as “pride in national democratic institutions” (2011: 369). They further associate nationalism with the conception of the nation on the basis of a common cultural heritage or ancestry, and find that such an exclusionary conception of the nation is linked with anti-immigration attitudes.

Finally, Hooghe and Marks argue, “the way a citizen conceives her national identity is decisive”; in particular it is important to distinguish between national identities conceived in exclusive versus inclusive terms (2004: 415). As Andrea Haenni Hoti (2006: 235) puts it:

In the Swiss society there are competing patterns of identification with the nation: one type is based on a constructed common ethnicity and is strongly related to the idealization of the in-group and, at the same time, to xenophobia. Another pattern of identification is based on the concept of citizenship and focuses on equal participation of immigrants in all societal domains.

Therefore, understanding how a Swiss national identity has been constructed and to deconstruct the various competing discourses is not just an intellectual activity, but one with important political implication. Eugster and Strjabis understand this when they argue, “the content of the national identity impacts on the definition of national interests. It determines, for example, who should be included and who excluded from policies, and what is seen as good or bad for the national community” (2010: 13). However, in order to fully understand the political implications of identity, it is not enough to simply understand how identity is constructed but also how these conceptions of national identity are mobilized. In Chapter Two, I explored how a

Swiss national identity has been constructed; in the following section, I explore how it has been mobilized in debates over immigration.

3.3 National Identity, Politics, and Immigration

I ended the historical overview of migration in Switzerland with the two-circle model and the bilateral free movement of persons agreement with the EU signed at the beginning of the 2000s. However, that is not the end of the story. In 2014, many observers were shocked when a majority of Swiss voters cast their ballots in favor of setting limits to immigration, in effect revoking the free movement of persons agreement. Following the passing of a popular initiative, the government now has to find ways to practically implement the will of the people. This means that currently Switzerland stands at another crossroads with regards to immigration, and recent decisions likely mark the transition into a fifth phase of foreigners in Switzerland.

Therefore, understanding how a Swiss national identity has been mobilized in these debates is not only interesting from an academic or intellectual standpoint, but also for better understanding the mechanisms at work that may influence how people respond to and transform the dominant discourse. Switzerland is an interesting case because the mechanisms of direct democracy, particularly popular initiatives, allow for the assessment of proposals by specific interest groups, the governments' official stance, and finally the popular opinion as expressed at the ballot box. Since the implementation of the popular initiative, there have been hundreds of initiative proposals. However, some never make it onto a ballot, and of those issues that have been voted on very few have been approved. With regards to immigration and foreigners there have been quite a few proposals, and in accord with other initiatives

the majority have been rejected. However, in the last few years, three initiatives have been approved by popular vote. This seems to indicate a significant shift and is worthy of further exploration.

Year of Vote	Name (Committee)	Purpose	Yes/No
1970	<i>Überfremdung</i> (National Action)	Leveling off of foreigner population in Switzerland (limited to 10%)	No – 54%
1974	Against <i>Überfremdung</i> and the overpopulation of Switzerland (National Action)	Annual naturalization limit of 4,000 Number of foreigners to be limited to 500'000 Cantonal max of 12% of population	No – 66%
1977	<i>Überfremdung</i> (Swiss Republican Movement)	Foreign residents limited to 12.5% of population	No – 70%
1977	Limitation of Naturalization (National Action)	Limitation of annual naturalization to 4,000 as long as the total population is more than 5.5 million	No -66%
1981	<i>Mitenand</i> (Working group for a new foreigner policy/Catholic workers movement)	End of seasonal worker status Consideration of foreigners in political decisions	No – 84%
1988	Limiting Immigration (National Action)	Limit population to 6.2 million, limit border-crossers to 90,000 and no more than 100,000 seasonal permits per year	No - 67%
1996	Against illegal immigration (SPP)	Asylum seekers have neither the right to enter the country nor free residency and work permits	No – 54%
2000	Regulation of immigration (Committee for limited immigration)	Limit foreigners to no more than 18% of the total population	No – 64%
2002	Against the misuse of asylum (SPP)	If an asylum seeker enters from a secure third-country, his or her request should be denied	No – 50%
2008	Democratic naturalization (SPP)	Naturalization should be the decision of the municipality, in any way they see fit	No – 64%
2009	Against the building of Minarets (Committee against the building of Minarets, supported by SPP)	Ban of the building of more minarets	Yes – 58%
2010	Deportation of Criminal Foreigners (SPP)	Certain crimes as well as the misuse of social services leads to automatic deportation from Switzerland	Yes – 53%
2014	Against Mass-immigration (Committee against mass-immigration, SPP)	Switzerland is independent in determining its foreign population. The number of permits should be limited to yearly maximums and subject to quotas	Yes – 50%

Table 1: List of Initiatives related to immigration (data collated from Hofer, 2015).

Given that Swiss national identity is highly political, Eugster and Strijbis hypothesized that how national identity is imagined is linked with party affiliation.

They found that the data supports their hypothesis that the Greens tend to be less attached, while members of the Swiss People's Party are more attached to a cultural nation. It is possible that this could be explained by other factors. For example, people in urban areas and those with formal higher education give less importance to cultural dimensions of the nation, whereas age and religiosity are positively correlated with a cultural identity (Eugster and Strijbis, 2010). How this plays out in the political context is evident in the voter analysis of the decision on whether or not to join the EEA in 1992. While the overall vote was no, the yes votes were predominantly from French speakers, the inhabitants of larger cities, and voters with higher education (Müller, 1994). However, even when taking these control variables into consideration, a difference based on party lines is still evident (though less prominent) (Eugster and Strijbis, 2010).

This link between political parties and the different conceptions of the nation provides a reasonable foundation for exploring attitudes towards immigration along party lines. Moreover, while anyone can launch a popular initiative, they are usually promoted by a specific committee and backed by a given political group. Most recently, the Swiss People's Party³⁴ (SPP) has been the main champion of limiting the rights and presence of foreigners (and of backing up a cultural conception of the nation). Therefore, understanding the current political climate is predicated on an analysis of the rise to power of the SPP.

3.4 The Radical Right in Switzerland

³⁴ In German the name is Schweizerische Volkspartei - SVP

While there has been a recent rise in right-wing populist politics, many still consider Switzerland as an exceptional case compared to its neighbors (Skenderovic, 2001). As Skenderovic outlines, there are five main arguments to explain the limited success of radical-right politics in Switzerland. The first is a historical argument predicated on the fact that Switzerland did not have a fascist or national socialist regime in the 1930s and 1940s, which is supposed to be indicative of a very low tolerance for an anti-democratic, right-wing stance. A second argument is based on the ‘consociational system’ and contends that the strong integrative capacity and coalition basis of the Swiss party system does not leave room for radical politics. A third argument stresses the importance of direct democracy as a means for marginal groups to advance their interests by means of initiatives on particular issues without having to be officially represented in parliament. The next argument is based on the notion that since Switzerland is commonly conceived as a civic nation founded on political will, there is little room for ultra-nationalist discourse based on a homogenous ethnic and cultural nation. Finally, the last argument is based on the assumption that widespread respect and tolerance toward minorities has limited the spread of a radical agenda (2001, 2-3).

However, a more in-depth analysis shows that many of these arguments do not represent the whole picture. At the historical level, recent research has shown that discrimination (particularly anti-Semitism) were more widespread than has commonly been depicted (Skenderovic, 2001: 4; Erlanger, 2012). Furthermore, the consociational argument has lost some of its persuasiveness as the political system in Switzerland has become more polarized in recent years. Of particular note here is the breaking of the “magic formula” in 2003, when the traditional balance in the Federal Council was disturbed for the first time in decades (Wise, 2012: 13). Furthermore,

long-standing notions of concordance and consensus have been increasingly challenged by parties taking on an oppositional role in the government (Skenderovic, 2001: 4).

While direct democracy has often been heralded as a useful safety-valve allowing people to make themselves heard, it also allows specific interest groups (such as the radical-right) to influence popular opinion through public campaigns. Skenderovic goes so far as to argue that “direct democracy provides opportunity structures which are of great importance and favorable to the emergence and mobilization of the radical right” (2001: 5). On a similar note, Erlanger notes that democratization “does not always herald positive change; at times it helps sustain old prejudices” and perpetuates inherent conservatism (2012: 3).

The final two arguments are predicated on the conception of Switzerland as a multi-cultural civic nation. However, as I have demonstrated in the previous section, constitutional patriotism is only one of several competing discourses and while plurality is important to the Swiss identity, it is contained to rather strict predetermined parameters. Skenderovic provides a nice summary when he states that “indigenous multiculturalism” in Switzerland is often seen as being fairly limited and has failed “to develop open attitudes toward new minorities and has not resulted in the establishment of inclusive opportunity structures for recent migrants” (Skenderovic, 2001: 6). Instead, an ethno-cultural framing of Swiss national identity presents an opportunity structure, which the radical right can use as a counter concept to the political nation. This analysis indicates that Switzerland is not uniquely immune to radical right wing politics, and that in fact its system of direct democracy can serve as a mechanism to take advantage of various opportunity structures. While these

structures have been part of the system for a long time, the recent success of the radical right shows that there has been a marked shift in the mobilization of these opportunities.

Prior to 1990, the radical right in Switzerland consisted mostly of small, often competing fringe parties (such as Republican Movement, National Action/Swiss Democrats, Vigilance, and the Automobilst/Freedom Party) (Skenderovic, 2001). Then, during the 1990s, the Swiss People's Party shifted its focus towards an anti-immigration stance and started to unite many of the previous fringe parties. The SPP grew out of the Party of Farmers, Traders and Independents, which had been a cooperative part of the national government since 1929 and then fused with the Democratic Party in 1971 to form the SPP. The transformation of the SPP was largely linked to Christoph Blocher, a successful businessman and president of the SPP Zurich. He proposed a more radical right-wing agenda, focusing specifically on issues of immigration, and his influence helped double the number of cantonal branches until the SPP was represented in all cantons.

The success of the Party's strategy was evident in the 1999 election results, as the SPP gained 22.5% of the popular vote, thus becoming the strongest party in Switzerland. Then in 2003 the party was able to break the "magic formula" by gaining an extra seat in the Federal Council, forcing out one of the CVP (Christian-Democratic People's Party) representatives. Although there remains a significant amount of infighting (to the extent that in 2007 one of the SPP councilors broke from the party to create her own party), the SPP has become one of the most powerful political forces in Switzerland (Skenderovic, 2001; Wise, 2012).

Many attribute the SPP's success to its three-part "winning formula," which combines neoliberalism, exclusionism and nationalism to gain voter support (Wise,

2012: 16). Initially, it may seem counterintuitive that a radical-right party is running on a neoliberal agenda. However, the party has combined liberalism with nationalism to suggest the reduction of the negative impact of a liberal market by emphasizing the national components; in essence they propose excluding one portion of the competition (Skenderovic, 2001: 15). Therefore, much of their political focus is on immigration policies and exclusion. Since the ideology of racism has been largely disparaged, the SPP relies instead on a form of ‘neoracism,’ which exalts the ‘right to be different.’ While this may sound positive, its interpretation supports racist ideologies.

From this viewpoint, culture, whether attributed to nation, ethnic identity or *Volk*, is viewed as a static and natural category, and becomes the determining feature of differentiation. Cultural and social phenomena are naturalized and thus acquire an essentialist connotation. (Skenderovic, 2001: 14)

Furthermore, the party platform is strongly rooted in a populist appeal to the ‘common man’ and presents the SPP as the defender of the ‘people’ by running against the more established parties (Skenderovic, 2001: 15). In order to exploit this populist base, the SPP is often seen as “a notorious example of the successful strategy of the professional marketing of political campaigns in order to reinforce the effects of their political actions” (2001: 16). That the media can play an important role in politics is not a new concept; however, in the case of Switzerland the SPP has stood out in its marketing strategy and its use of emotional media campaigns (2001: 15).

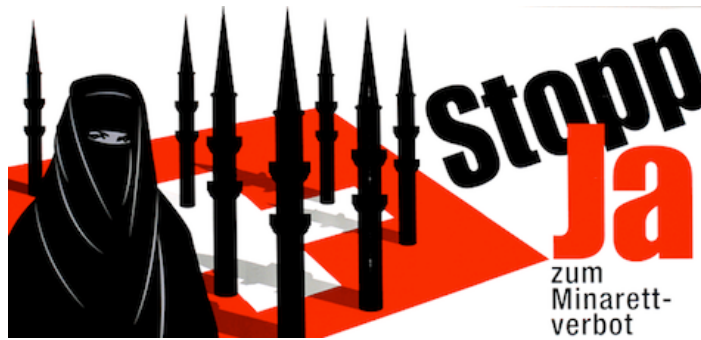
While politics permeate all forms of media, one of the best places to analyze the political message of the SPP is in its campaign posters. As Christelle Maire de Bellis explains in her paper “Illegal Migration and Asylum Abuses: Constructing New Figures of Speech in Political Posters,” posters are an important communication tool in political debates. As such, “they bring to life representations that are produced by

discourses and ideologies” (Kretchmann, 2009). Therefore, I critically deconstruct the discourses and ideologies represented in the campaign posters of two of the popular initiatives regarding immigration that have recently been approved.

3.4.1 The Minaret Ban

The first exclusionary and anti-immigrant initiative that was approved by the Swiss public was a ban on building minarets. While initially polls showed that the majority opposed the initiative, once all the ballots were counted a surprising 58% voted in favor. The campaign committee argued that minarets should be banned because they are symbols of religious-political power and that they are lighthouses for jihad (Hofer, 2015). Most legal experts argued that the proposal violated human and constitutional rights regarding the freedom of religion; however, while the federal government (including both chambers of parliament) rejected the initiative, they did not find grounds to dismiss it on binding human rights concerns. That left it up to the public to decide the issue.

A significant part of the debate over the initiative focused on the controversial campaign poster designed by Alexander Segert, pictured on the next page. The highly controversial poster was effective because it gained a lot of media and public attention (even if it was negative attention) and because it was framed within several discourses central to Swiss identity and the threat thereof. It depicts a Swiss flag, seemingly pierced by seven minarets that are made to look like missiles and throwing dark shadows across the flag. In the forefront is a woman covered in a black chador, with only her eyes visible. Next to this image are the words “STOP – Yes for the minaret ban.”



A number of elements are at play in the poster. First of all, the style, graphics, font, and color scheme are reminiscent of the WWII era. As such it is very backward looking, recalling the idea of a former Switzerland in all its glory. However, more importantly, it combines the two concepts of “threat” and “Islam”. As I explained in the previous section on Swiss national identity, Switzerland has long been constructed in the negative, largely in opposition to external threats. During the First and Second World War as well as the Cold War, it was quite easy to maintain a threat narrative. However, recently that narrative has had to change to find a new threat.

Furthermore, although many like to believe that Switzerland is the poster-child for civic nationalism, my previous analysis shows that other cultural elements are also very important for the national imagination. In particular, the conception of the Swiss as a white, mountain folk rooted in a Christian heritage remains very salient. As Wise (2012: 22) explains:

The construction of the Swiss identity through the reification of “us” vs. “them” boundaries between immigrants and natives would seem to make Switzerland particularly sensitive to ethnic threat from immigrants, especially those such as Muslims which may not conform visually to the “us” ingroup.

It should thus not be a surprise that the category of “foreigner” is increasingly being associated with Muslims in both the media and in public debates. The increasing importance of religion in the context of immigration is mostly a

³⁵ http://boingboing.net/images/stopp_poster.png

phenomenon of the 21st century. For example, in their study of immigrants in the media, Lindemann and Stolz found that in 2004 religion was mentioned in 23% of coded core sentences, compared to only 1% in 1970 (2014: 47). At the same time, there has been a corresponding decrease in the use of generic terms to designate the “foreign other.” Moreover, general media discourse fails to distinguish between Swiss Muslims and non-Swiss Muslims, simply equating Muslim to “foreigner.” As such, “the mere allusion to religion is sufficient to set a boundary between the Swiss *in-group* and the *out-group*” (2014: 48).

Even more interesting is the fact that in sociological reality, Muslims represent only a minority of immigrants, but they represent a massive majority in the media discourses regarding religious affiliation (Lindemann and Stolz, 2014: 52). The resulting fear may in part be explained by Daniel Hopkins “politicized places hypothesis,” which is based on two core assertions:

1. While levels of ethnic heterogeneity might escape notice, changes in the levels are less likely to do so.
2. Salient frames which “define what the problem is and how to think about it” increase the likelihood that changing levels of ethnic heterogeneity will lead to political conclusions. (Wise, 2012: 23)

The theory would predict that it is not the number of Muslims in Switzerland, but the fact that the number is growing that is cause for alarm. This seems plausible since the Muslim population in Switzerland has grown from 16, 350 in 1970, to 152,217 in 1990, 310,800 in 2000, and an estimated 433,000 in 2012 (Erlanger, 2012: 4). This recent increase in numbers is largely due to the elimination of the seasonal worker program, family reunifications, and an influx of refugees from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia. In fact, Switzerland currently has the largest community of Kosovo Albanians outside of Kosovo (Erlanger, 2012: 4)

Right-wing news media is feeding this fear and setting the tone for the debate.

One prime example can be found in an article published by *Le Temps* entitled, “Muslims soon the majority?” Contrary to official predictions by the Federal Bureau of Statistics, it claims:

No other religious community increases as fast as the Muslim one. In 1970, 4000 inhabitants of the canton of Zurich declared belonging to Islam. It represents one inhabitant out of 280. In 1990, Muslims were already 30,700 in the canton of Zurich. This number has doubled until 2000 where approximately 67,000 Muslims were registered in the canton. [...] on the Swiss level as well, we notice that the number of Muslims doubled in a lapse of time of ten years. If this evolution continues, Muslims will soon be the majority in the country.

(*Le Temps*, Sept. 19, 2004, quoted in Lindemann and Stolz, 2014: 48)

This same exaggeration is evident in the campaign poster. While the poster shows seven minarets completely domineering the Swiss map, at the time of the ban there were only four existing minarets in all of Switzerland (Hofer, 2015).

The fear of the growing Muslim population is largely linked to two distinctive threats. One is the idea of terrorism and extremist violence, which has never been an actual threat in Switzerland but still haunts the public’s imagination. According to Erlanger, much of popular unease is centered around young Muslim men who “are seen as clinging to a macho culture complete with car racing, petty crime, sexual harassment, and violence” (2012: 5). Therefore, it would have made sense for the poster to use the image of a jihadi fighter to represent the threat against Switzerland.

However, even more prominent is the fear that Islamic traditions in the form of Sharia law could challenge Switzerland’s political institutions and culture. In their argument against the initiative, the Federal Council made the wise observation that if it was really a matter of security then banning minarets was not really the way to go: the ban would not actually prevent extremist acts of violence as their planning was not dependent on any specific building (Hofer, 2015). However, proponents of the

initiative countered such logic by quoting Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan who had said that "Minarets are our bayonets" (Soukup, 2009) and argued that minarets are symbols not of Islam as a religion but of the advance of an Islamic way of life. The fear is that if left unchecked the growing Muslim presence could eventually challenge Switzerland's independence, neutrality, and entire political process.

This argument helps explain why the poster depicts a Muslim woman, rather than a young man in the foreground. During political debates over the issues, members of the SPP repeatedly presented the minaret ban as a symbolic stand against forced marriages and honor killings (Arena, 2009)³⁶. As such, the poster presents an even more insidious image; rather than presenting Switzerland as being threatened (with the possibility to fight back), it shows the country as already defeated. During a political debate, Ulrich Schlüer (SPP member of parliament from Zürich and one of the initiators) argued that the minaret is a symbol of political victory by citing how after the fall of Constantinople the conquering forces built minarets on the Hagia Sophia to mark their victory (Arena, 2009). Similarly, the poster shows how the national logo of the flag and the white cross have been pierced by the minarets, which resemble the flags of a conquering army. At the same time the woman is not so much a threat as a vision of Switzerland's future under Sharia law.

Islam as the threatening other is so effective because it can be interpreted in two ways – as a religion and as a form of social order. The poster cleverly makes use of this double-sided coin by posing Islam as simultaneously threatening two conceptions of Swiss national identity. It is able to connect an cultural notion based on religion with the concept of the nation based on a specific political culture and

³⁶ As I mentioned in the background information in the introduction, there had recently been two cases of honor-killings that had shocked the nation.

national institutions. If Switzerland indeed were purely a civic nation based on constitutional patriotism, then the poster would not have emotionally resonated with the majority of the general public. As Erlanger notes, “While mostly secularized, large parts of the population still regard a common Christian heritage as the foundation stone of Swiss political culture and social cohesion” (2012: 6). Equally, if the poster had solely appealed to the public on a religious foundation it would most likely not have swayed many of the voters who are more concerned with the preservation of Swiss national institutions and political culture. The combination of the factors was the winning formula.

3.4.2 Automatic Deportation of Criminal Foreigners

Shortly after voting to approve the ban on minarets, the Swiss public made another controversial decision mandating the automatic deportation of any foreigner found guilty of certain crimes or of the misuse of social services. Prior to the decision deportation was always an option; however, it was decided on a case-by-case basis rather than an automatic sentence. The campaign against criminal foreigners was launched in 2007 and was voted on in November 2010, with 53% of voters approving the measure (Hofer, 2015). Just like the minaret ban, the focal point of the campaign was also a very controversial poster designed by the same advertising agency. The “Black Sheep” poster was a strategic success for the SPP as it prompted a lot of publicity. It depicts three white sheep standing on a Swiss flag, while one of the sheep uses its hind legs to kick a black sheep off the flag. In big letters it says “Create Security.”



Taking another look at the poster, it is interesting to note that nowhere does it specify anything about criminals. Nor does it explicitly mention foreigners. Instead, the power of the poster and its message is derived from the mythology behind the “black sheep.” According to SmartMeme, the importance of a myth is not about whether it is true or false, but rather in how much cultural meaning it can carry. These stories or myths are “powerful in that they give people a lens for interpreting and understanding the world” (Canning and Reinsborough, 2009: 8). The term “black sheep” can be found in many languages and generally signifies someone who does not fit in with the rest. Often it has negative connotations implying a disreputable, wayward, and undesirable character. As I explained in the previous chapter, Swiss culture is still deeply rooted in the principle of conformity as a means to balance the competing interests of equality and plurality. Therefore, the black sheep can be understood as everything that does not fit with Swiss political culture.

At the literal rather than the symbolic level, black sheep are often considered less desirable because black wool cannot be dyed, whereas white wool can be processed into many different colors and is therefore more profitable. The origins of the idea can be traced back all the way to the Old Testament when Jacob separated out the spotted goats and the black sheep from the herd (Schmid, 2013). In this way the term provides an intertextual link with the Judeo-Christian tradition. In addition to

³⁷ <http://www.nebostoopeth.com/content/images/2015/03/SicherheitShaffen.jpg>

these religious undertones, the image of the black sheep is linked to a larger narrative that differentiates between the “dark” foreigner as undesirable and of the pure, white Swiss. Finally the poster strategically uses the idea of “creating security” to mobilize the idea of the nation under attack. By leaving the details of the threat unspecified, it allows everyone to fill in the gaps according to personal preference. The genius of the poster is that it conveys its message in a simple image without ever having to mention the words “foreigner” or “criminal.” Instead it artfully combines many of the main elements of various conceptions of a Swiss identity – conformity, equality, peace, Christianity, ethnicity, and the need to defend against an enemy.

As I have explained, these two posters and the affiliated campaigns have been so successful because they have been able to mobilize the various conceptions of what it means to be Swiss and use these to frame the debates to fit specific political objectives. These competing conceptions are widespread and in theory anyone can mobilize them for different purposes. What has made the SPP campaigns so effective is that they have combined the dominant discourses and have used them to tell a story. According to Canning and Reinsborough (2009) the most important elements of a story are conflict, characters, imagery, foreshadowing, and assumptions. In the SPP story, the conflict and characters are simple – the “Swiss” versus the “foreigner other” (the white sheep versus the black sheep) with nothing other than national security at stake. Since the entire story is captured in a single poster it relies heavily on its ability to show rather than tell. It can convey so much by playing on underlying cultural assumptions. White is good, black is bad, the Swiss flag represents us and all that is good, we need to defend ourselves, and our security is paramount. And finally the poster uses powerful foreshadowing – if you vote in favor of the SPP initiative, then

the threat will be eliminated and you are guaranteed security and the safety of your identity.

However, this is not the only story that can be told. Narratives, discourse, and frames can all be shifted and transformed. If one wants to move away from racist or exclusionary discourses, then there are two options. The first one is to change the story, to shift the frame. Alternatively, it is possible to question the very existence of a framework and to call for a re-imagination and new consciousness. I explore both options in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Changing the Story or Reimagining the Framework?

So far I have explored what it means to have a “national” identity, how this identity is being imagined in the case of Switzerland, and finally how this discourse is affecting Swiss politics, particularly the policies regarding immigration. In this final chapter I consider two possible approaches to the question of how to transform the relevant discourses to promote a culture of “peaces.” The less radical approach consists of “changing the story,” whereas a more radical approach requires the re-imagination of the entire framework. As I explained in Chapter Two, there exist competing conceptions within the concept of a “national” identity that can be mobilized to fit specific political agendas. Therefore, it should be possible to mobilize different elements to “change the story” of what it means to be Swiss to better fit a culture of “peaces.” Furthermore, our identities are socially constructed and derive their power from hegemonic discourses. Therefore, if identities are not bound to any essential characteristics, then it is possible to reimagine the very concept of identity and to question the concept of the nation.

4.1 Changing the Story

Culture and identities are not static but change and evolve over time. For example, Arai (2006) explains that in conflict situations different elements of culture can be made relevant as the conflict progresses. Similarly, Bar-Tal and Nahhas (2013) argue that cultures evolve and that given the right circumstances cultures can change. While they analyze how intractable conflict situations can transform previously peaceful cultures into cultures of violence, it stands to reason that the process can work both ways.

This process of reconstructing national identity fits with Zimmer's (1998) idea that modern nations alternate between "settled" and "unsettled" periods. During settled periods, "the values, symbols, and myths that make up the nation as a cultural order are more or less taken for granted, so that they form, as it were, a cultural tradition or common sense" (1998: 643). On the other hand, unsettled periods are characterized by a questioning of the authenticity of the national identity and by attempts to redefine national identity.

These "unsettled" periods are often triggered by a disturbance to the status quo. Dijkink claims that the ideal reaction would be to eliminate the disturbance. However, since this is not usually possible, the alternative is a symbolic response: the changed order is given new meaning by reconstructing national identity (1996: 16). Nowadays, the most significant challenge to the status quo is immigration, and just as Dijkink predicted there is no reasonable way to eliminate this disturbance. Therefore, the logical conclusion is that "creating more favourable attitudes towards immigration may require re-imagining national identities" (Sides and Citrin, 2007: 478).

Given that identities are dynamic, how is it possible to change dominant myths and discourses? Once a myth exists, it is essentially impossible to completely destroy it. As Tanner (2011) puts it, there is no rational hammer that can remove myths from the world. However, myths are elastic; they can be broken ironically and can be given a different meaning when applied in a different context. As Mottier explains, discourses are reproduced and transformed by both individual and collective narratives. Moreover, these "narratives do not simply express a pre-given national identity but function as *performatives: speech acts* which bring into being that which they name" (1999: 5). Therefore, re-imagining national identity is a matter of changing these narratives.

4.1.1 Smartmeme: Changing the Story

In today's world the average adult in urban and suburban America is exposed to approximately 3000 commercial messages a day (Canning and Reinsborough, 2009: 11) and the presence of radio, TV, computers, the internet, mobile phones, and now smartphones makes it almost impossible to disconnect from receiving endless media messages.³⁸ Given this inundation of messages, the stories we are told and the picture of the world they paint often seem so set that it is hard to imagine an alternative. However, a historical overview of the evolution of these stories can help highlight the possibility of change and to explore what factors facilitate such change.

The stories that currently surround us usually feature some key characters – the hero, the villain and the victim. However, these characters have not always been the same, and some are relatively new inventions altogether. For example, Applebaum notes how the idea of the hero changed within a few decades from the conquering soldier and the noble martyr to someone “performing groundbreaking work that was not war and that might contribute indirectly to peace,” and eventually to a “new” hero who “worked intentionally for peace, both international and interpersonal...” (2009: 98). Equally the idea of the “victim” has not been consistent. Simone Weil (1940) explains how the objectification of what we classify as the “victim” of force in classical texts such as the *Iliad* cannot be understood in the way that we currently conceptualize a victim. Historian and Communication theorist Vicente Benet even writes about the “invention of the victim” as a concept that

³⁸ Switzerland has some of the highest rates of internet and smart phone use. In 2013 87% of the population were using the internet (compared to 84% in the US) (ICT union, 2013) and smart phone use is sky rocketing (Curtis, 2013).

emerged from the enlightenment and the pacifist movement following the First World War (2013: 392-393).

How violence is presented has also changed over time. Our understanding and experience of war has been greatly influenced by changes in technology, especially the development of photography and film. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag (2003) follows the development of news-coverage of war. She moves from the first photographic documentation of war in the Crimean War, where subjects were mostly staged and photographed after the action was finished, to the largely televised Vietnam War. These changes in the mediation of war have had a direct impact on how the general public perceives war, and therefore the stories we tell each other about war. Finally, Steven Pinker (2012) questions some of the most fundamental stories that we have come to accept as unquestionable. If slavery and duels have mostly become things of the past, then is it not also possible that violence that is currently socially acceptable and even institutionalized can also be changed?

I am not here to engage in the debate over which stories are “right” or “true,” but cite these examples to highlight that stories can change: war is noble and glorious, war is devastating and should be avoided; soldiers are heroes, scientists are heroes, pacifists are heroes.... Our world is not static, and the stories we tell ourselves are changeable. Therefore it is also possible to change dominant stories of immigrants: foreigners are a threat or immigrants are an asset to the community.

The creators of SmartMeme have understood the power of the story, and have developed a story-based strategy for social change. They accept that the world we live in is a world of stories, and contend that we as humans understand our world in the framework of these stories. So if we want to change the world, we have to start by changing the stories we tell (Canning and Reinsborough, 2009). The SmartMeme

campaign model is based on four major steps: the narrative power analysis, strategy development, action, and reflection. The entire process is refined into eight cyclical action steps. Once an issue has been identified the first step is to develop a vision and concrete goals. Next it is important to identify the targets – whether these are institutions, decision makers, or the general public – and the role that each plays. Once the targets are identified then the “Battle of the Story” can begin. This consists of identifying and deconstructing control stories and then constructing a more positive alternative story. In order to win the battle, the campaign needs a synthesized narrative that can be spread using specific tools such as memes and viralization. It is also important to be strategic in picking the points of intervention (either physical or ideological). And as with any campaign, the final step is to ascertain results and evaluate the level of success (Canning and Reinsborough, 2009).

While the members of SmartMeme are not the first to try to change the world by changing the stories we tell, they do provide some useful concepts and tools to analyze campaigns and to understand why some campaigns are so powerful and how we can make others more effective. In particular their story-based strategy provides a framework to understand the current “battle of the story” taking place on the topic of immigration and immigrants in Switzerland. In the previous chapter I analyzed how the SPP has successfully mobilized elements of national identity to create a powerful control story regarding immigration in Switzerland. In the following section I explore how these stories are being countered and how alternative narratives can compete with the control story.

4.1.2 The Black Sheep and Minarets

Although the Black Sheep campaign for the deportation of criminal foreigners proved a success at the ballot box, it was not uncontested. There was significant backlash against the poster and the simplified depiction rightfully was accused of being racist and led to much outrage both within Switzerland and in the international press. Even Doudou Diene, the UN special rapporteur on racial discrimination, called for the Swiss government to provide an official explanation of the campaign and wanted to have the poster banned (Foulkes, 2007).

One of the most popular response tactics was to try to subvert the meme by culture-jamming. Culture-jamming is “a technique to subvert dominant culture narratives... by coopting slogans and images and recontextualizing them to create (usually subversive) new meanings” (Canning and Reinsborough, 2009: 53). One of the first cases was when the SP (the Social Democratic Party) responded to the original poster with their own version in which the black sheep was replaced with a goat. The goat, the mascot of the SPP, was given the face of Blocher, the leading figure of the SPP. In this way the SP tried to use the SPP’s campaign against them.



SP counter-poster

³⁹ Rhetorik.ch, 2007

Soon there were dozens of other versions popping up all over Switzerland. Most played with the idea of color and multiculturality while expelling the SPP or racists from the symbolic Switzerland.



(Left) A poster for the expulsion of the SPP by a multicultural Switzerland⁴⁰
 (Top) A poster for the expulsion of racist Swiss⁴¹
 (Bottom) A poster to create solidarity and expelling the SPP⁴²

Others drew comparisons between the SPP politics with the racist practices of Nazi Germany. Some posters were original creations, while other protestors made creative use of spray paint to alter the message of the SVP posters.



Spray painted posters

⁴⁰ <http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/26/26366/1.html>

⁴¹ <http://www.woschod.de/2007/09/29/6-oktober-in-der-schweiz-svp-nicht-willkommen-ganz-fest-gegen-rassismus/>

⁴² <http://ch.indymedia.org/de/2007/08/51830.shtml>

⁴³ http://www.rhetorik.ch/Aktuell/07/10_20/index.html

<http://ch.indymedia.org/de/2007/08/51830.shtml>

Beyond these counter-images, a group of outraged Swiss who opposed the SPP politics founded the “Black Sheep Committee.” This group organized a counter protest to a SPP political demonstration held in Bern. It was supposed to be a party against racism. Unfortunately the counter protest lead to clashes and turned violent, with rocks thrown, property damaged, and the police responding with tear gas (Sciolino, 2007).

In the end this attempt at changing the story was relatively unsuccessful. One of the reasons is because the counter story was not part of a coordinated campaign. Although those opposed to the SPP agenda made use of some of the tactics involved in a story-based strategy (such as culture-jamming), it was never a fully developed strategy. More importantly, the SPP campaign was mostly a “story of the battle” as it was a story based on certain shared assumptions (such as the myth of the black sheep and a specific understanding of Swiss identity), whereas a proper counter campaign would have had to be a full on battle of the story.

According to SmartMeme, “since an audience’s existing stories will filter new facts or information, change agents need to offer a new story” (Canning and Reinsborough, 2009: 20). However, most of the culture-jamming attempts simply modified the existing story without offering an entirely new story. They tried to change the story without changing the larger frame, and most of the posters still operated within the us-versus-them framework (simply changing who is “us” and who is “them”). In the end someone is being kicked out. Only one poster that I have found went beyond this framework. Rather than showing sheep being thrown out, it shows white sheep in Switzerland eagerly rolling out the red carpet for some shiny gold sheep.



In this way it tries to present the “foreigners” in an entirely different light. The story here is one of welcome guests that will contribute to Switzerland’s prosperity. However, even this poster is still open to criticism as it arguably serves to perpetuate the original poster. Any subsequent depiction of sheep and the Swiss flag will always be a reminder of the original SPP poster and in this way prolong its power. I do not agree with the SPP tactics and posters at all and believe that people are right to protests. However, what would have happened if everyone had simply ignored the poster?

Although the poster was already made public in July 2007 and was part of a mass-mailing to all households on August 1st, it did not receive much attention until the SP came out with their counter poster on August 18th. Then during August and September the critics got louder and more visible, in turn making the poster one of the most talked about political subjects in Switzerland and even attracting the attention of international media from the BBC to the New York Times. In this way the opposition helped fuel the power of the poster, which the SPP initially had worried was too inconspicuous (Rhetorik.ch, 2007).

⁴⁴ Rhetorik.ch, 2007

This highlights one of the main difficulties with changing the story, namely how to change the story without inadvertently supporting the control story? The question is whether it is possible to transform the image of the black sheep in a culturally efficient and ethical way? Eloísa Nos Aldás (2013:79) describes “cultural efficiency” as

a cultural responsibility for any message uttered by a sender working towards a nonkilling society. This means that the actors... will always have to take into account long-term education as a cross responsibility of any of their messages or actions in spite of their immediate goals.

Simply changing the configuration of the characters/sheep without changing the larger framework proved to be ineffective and culturally inefficient. More promising was the poster that portrayed the “foreign” sheep as valuable additions to Switzerland, but even that perpetuates a clear distinction between “us” and “them”. Now they are valuable rather than criminals, but it is still overly simplistic.

There were some other creative responses that moved a little more in the direction of changing the story. Particularly humorous is a prank phone call to the SPP hotline⁴⁵ by The B1 radio station in Bern. The prankster claims to be a sheep farmer just down from the Alps and is outraged by the SPP proposal to kick-out all of his black sheep. He says he is one of the few black-sheep farmers in Switzerland and this campaign would take away his income. The response of the bewildered spokesperson is of course entertaining, but more importantly the farmer’s concerns highlight some of the issues at play. For one, the black sheep are critical to his livelihood. Moreover the SPP spokesperson specifically has to state that all sheep are the same, no matter the color (Ladygoodmood, 2007). Although making people

⁴⁵ I was not able to ascertain whether this was a real prank call to the actual SPP hotline, or whether it is simply a comedic sketch. However in either case it does not lose its value as a call to consider alternative stories.

question some of the underlying assumptions of the SPP story is a step in the right direction, an isolated prank phone call is not enough to stop a well coordinate media campaign.

For any critique of the SPP Black Sheep campaign to really have been effective, there needed to be a coordinate story-based strategy. Rather than simply trying to tear down the SPP campaign and point out how racist it is (which granted is an important step), there also needed to be an alternative story. An alternative story would have to be much more culturally effective and take care to promote a culture of peace. It should provide a much more nuanced picture of immigration in Switzerland and move away from dichotomies as well as from using sheep to represent people. Instead there needs to be an effort to humanize the “other.” In her discussion of “Public Discourses for Nonkilling Societies”, Nos Aldás (2013) provides a few strategies that would be useful in this case. Particularly valuable would be personalizing using witness testimony, polyphony and dialogism, irony, defamilirazation, and playing with the grammatical person (the construction of “I”, “we”, “them” etc.).

As I explained in Chapter Three, questions of identity are central to people’s attitude towards immigration, and in Chapter Two I showed how there are competing discourses on what it means to be Swiss. Therefore, one possible strategy for changing the story would be to mobilize different elements of “Swissness.” The SPP has focused on a few specific elements, in particular combining an exclusive ethno-cultural conception of Switzerland with a narrative of threat. However, there are other elements that could be used to tell a more inclusive story, especially the idea of Switzerland as a multicultural nation. As I explained earlier, plurality (of languages,

religions, cantons, etc.) is an important component of the Swiss national identity. While the concept of plurality so far has been limited, the general acceptance of the basic concept provides an opening for pushing these boundaries.

The counter campaign against the minaret ban was moving in the right direction with a poster claiming “The sky above Switzerland is big enough.” The image removes the dichotomy of “us” and “them” and completely removes dehumanizing and racist elements. Instead it presents a plurality of religions all on equal ground. Furthermore, it moves away from a message of fear to a message of hope using the powerful symbolism of light.



History and myth have also proved to be important in imagining national identity; therefore, it is also possible to put current events in a historical context that explains why religious plurality is so important. A poster by the liberal FDP attempted exactly that by calling for “Religious freedom instead of Culture War” and urges voters to vote no to the dangerous minaret ban. The idea of *Kulturkampf* (Culture War) refers back to the tension and violence between Protestants and Catholics and the civil war fought between the two in 1847. Rather than instigating fear, the historical reference tries to highlight that religious freedom and acceptance is a cornerstone of the Swiss nation.

⁴⁶ <http://www.printmag.com/wp-content/uploads/poster3.jpg>



Unfortunately, these attempts to defeat the minaret initiatives were not successful at stopping the initiative. One possible explanation is that the posters only engaged in half the “battle of the story.” As I explained earlier, Islam was in part such a great target because it could be presented alternatively as a religious and as a civil threat. The counter campaign mostly focused on the idea of religious freedom, but did not address the fears of oppression by Sharia law that the image of the burka-clad woman had aroused. It seems that not enough attention was drawn to the irony of trying to prevent an oppressive regime by becoming a more oppressive regime. For many the minaret ban was not so much about the minarets themselves rather than taking a symbolic stance against the perceived encroachment of a legal and civil system presented as contrary to the Swiss way of life. The poster by the Society of Minorities was one of the few attempts to highlight this hypocrisy by comparing the minaret ban to bans on religious freedom in other countries.



⁴⁷ <http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/minaret-campaign/7822626>

This poster is an example of how, besides highlighting the importance of plurality, it is also possible to subvert the idea of Switzerland as a *Sonderfall*. Since the SPP and other right wing forces have taken over the concept of the *Sonderfall*, they have reinvented it as a political weapon. As such the SPP “has refused to see changes in the *Sonderfall* as the result of anonymous outside trends but as the work of unpatriotic, spineless and left leaning elites” and the *Sonderfall* has become a sort of golden age which is “regarded as something fixed and static” and in need of protection (CHC, 2010: 17). However, that need not be the case. It is also possible to use the idea of the *Sonderfall* to set Switzerland apart from the general trend towards xenophobia in Europe and of repression in the world in general. It is possible to argue that openness, tolerance, and inclusion of all voices in a democratic system is what needs to be protected. In any case, the studies discussed in Chapter 2 indicate that strengthening the notion of Switzerland as a civic or political nation rather than advocating an ethno-cultural conception could go a long way in reducing racism and xenophobia.

4.2 Reimagining the Framework

Until now I have questioned the various ways that nationality can be conceptualized, but I have not problematized the fundamental concept of nationality and citizenship. Although I have considered various definitions of the “nation” as well as the contested history of the concept, I have not delved deeply into the ethics of nationality and citizenship. Since the nation is a constructed concept, an imagined

⁴⁸<http://www.swissinfo.ch/blob/433888/a622891d90f4c446b7aa4551d9297150/sriimg20091014-11350977-0-data.jpg>

community rather than a primordial entity, it is important to question both the usefulness and the ethics of the nation-state.

Back in 1882, Renan already recognized the fact that “nations are not something eternal. They had their beginnings and they will end.” However, he notes, “at the present time, the existence of nations is a good thing, a necessity even. Their existence is the guarantee of liberty, which would be lost if the world had only one law and only one master.” He even predicted that a European confederation would “very probably replace” nations in the future. Not long after him, Sidgwick wrote that the cosmopolitan ideal was the ideal of the future, but agreed with Renan that at that time national and patriotic sentiment had to be “reckoned with as an actually powerful political force, and which appear to be at present indispensable to social well-being.” Therefore, “We cannot yet hope to substitute for these sentiments, in sufficient diffusion and intensity, the wider sentiment connected with the conception of our common humanity” (Sidgwick in Miller, 1995: 64). Since then, more than a century has passed and Renan’s prediction is starting to fulfill itself in the form of the European Union. Therefore, it is time to once again assess whether nations are still a good thing and a necessity for our times, or if perhaps the world order needs to be re-imagined.

Hungwe an Hungwe note that “The idea of a nation has enabled postcolonial societies to invent a self image throughout which they could act to liberate themselves from imperialist’s oppression (2010: 35). However, even though nationalism was critical during decolonization, “the nation and nationalism are problematic in post independence” (2010: 34). Acharaya and Buzan draw on Robert Cox’s argument that “theory is always for someone and for some purpose” to question the role of the

nation-state in International Relations Theory (2010: 3). Moreover, they argue that the nation-state system is not a given since there are alternatives to western International Relations Theory.

For example, Tadjbakhsh argues that the idea of the Western “state” is problematic within an Islamic worldview, which views the state as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Strong sub-state and super-state identities compete with the state for loyalty, and the state has only been accepted as a passing means to work towards social cohesion and progress towards a moral good in the current state system (Tadjbakhsh, 2010). On a similar note Muhammad Iqbal said that “tribal or national organizations on the lines of race or territory are only temporary phases in the unfoldment [sic] and upbringing of collective life, and inasmuch as I have no quarrel with them; but I condemn them in the strongest possible terms when they are regarded as the ultimate expression of the life of man- kind” (Iqbal in Hashmi, 1993: 61). Besides the alternative offered by an Islamic worldview, Qin presents a Chinese perspective as a counter to the nation-state system. The idea of *Tianxia* (space under heaven) was one of the guiding concepts of the tributary system, which lasted for 2,000 years. As a holistic concept, it does not define entities with finite boundaries, nor does it consist of “like units.” Instead, it is based on the Confucian concept of “family” and the relations among states are seen as relations among people (Qin, 2010).

Despite the existence of alternatives and numerous voices calling the concept into question, the nation-state has maintained its power as a hegemonic discourse. In his book *On Nationality*, David Miller defends the concept of the nation and argues that national identities are a valid source of personal identity and that people are justified in recognizing special obligations to co-nationals. Furthermore, it is

justifiable to use nationality to pose policy limitations (1995: 3). He refines his argument a little by distinguishing between “nations formed largely by political imposition and those created by input from all sections with open competition” and arguing that only the latter civic-nation has a claim to a “legitimate” or “authentic” national identity (1995: 4). While he makes a distinction between imposition and choice at the national level, he dismisses the same argument at the individual level. He acknowledges that “valid identities are those that are freely chosen” (1995: 43) and at the same time recognizes that “one is forced to bear a national identity regardless of choice, simply by virtue of participating in a way of life” (1995: 41). He then tries to dismiss this paradox by arguing that even with “unchosen” identities one can choose how to react and the level of importance one gives to said identity (1995: 43). I am not convinced by this distinction, and thus will return to the issue of lack of choice in the matter of national identity later on in this chapter.

Miller then turns to the issue of ethical universalism and particularism based on the inclusion and exclusion of relational facts (1995: 49-50). He admits that a universalist cannot justify national allegiance (1995: 64) and that “the consistent ethical universalist ought to be a cosmopolitan” (1995: 79). Instead, he argues that ethical particularism is compatible with the recognition of universal human rights, as the obligation to respect and fulfill these rights falls primarily on co-nationals (1995: 79). Furthermore, being particularist does not mean being partial, as it is a matter of “applying the rules and the criteria appropriate to the context in a uniform way... without allowing personal prejudice or interest to interfere” (1995: 54). As he explains, treating different groups according to different standards is not being partial:

If I am a member of group G, then I must act towards all the other members of group G in certain ways, and that will require me to be impartial even if I

happen to like Elizabeth more than John; and so forth. But I am not required to act in the same way to people who are not members of G. (1995: 54)

While Miller is talking within the context of nationality, applying his logic to other groups highlights how problematic it is. For example, one could define group G as being male, or as being white, or as heterosexual, and the problem with his logic becomes self-evident. Therefore, I find his argument for the impartiality of particularism as convincing as his dismissal of the involuntary nature of national identity.

The last issue to consider is his discussion of a universalist ethic and a cosmopolitan world view. He explains the idea of a cosmopolitan “international ideal” as the argument that

if we could persuade people to discard ideas of nationality and to regard themselves simply as members of the human race, perhaps with cultural affiliations to a particular group but nothing more than this, the world would be a freer and more peaceful place. (1995:13)

However, he rejects this idea as being unrealistic since the ethics of nationality rests on “well established facts about human identity and human motivation” (1995: 80). Therefore, he claims that “the onus is on the universalist to show that, in widening the scope of ethical ties to encompass equally the whole of the human species, he does not also drain them of their binding force” (1995: 80).

4.2.1 Nationalism, Choice, and Power

After these preliminary considerations, I would like to return to the issue of choice in national identity. I started this thesis with the bold statement that I am Swiss and that I was born with this identity, a claim that it is time to examine a little more closely. As I have explained earlier, a Swiss identity can refer to both Swiss citizenship and Swiss nationality, but in the case of Switzerland these two concepts

largely coincide with each other. First of all, Swiss citizenship laws are predicated on being or having become a member of the Swiss nation, and nationality is at least in part defined in political terms predicating nationality on the democratic right to vote granted by citizenship.

Since Swiss citizenship is based on *jus sanguinis* and national identity also contains a genealogical undertone, the fact that I was born to Swiss parents automatically granted me a Swiss passport and all the rights associated with citizenship. Furthermore, I was born within the territory of Switzerland and, at least until I was six, was raised in a society that promoted the ideals of a Swiss cultural identity: I spoke Swiss German; I went to Sunday school; and I imagined myself as part of the community. All of this explains *how* I was born into a “Swiss” identity, but it does not explain the *why*. Why was I born in Switzerland and why was I born to Swiss parents?

Perhaps if I believed in reincarnation, I could argue that my behavior in a prior life determined the level of privilege I was born with. However, to me that is not a satisfactory answer. Therefore, I am left with the simple answer that I did nothing - it is an identity I was born into and one I had no control over at the time of my birth. As such, my nationality is very similar to my sex, gender, and skin color, which are not a matter of personal choice, but which nevertheless have a profound effect on a person’s level of privilege. Later in life, when I fulfill my civic responsibilities by voting, paying taxes, and respecting the law, then I might have a better claim for the privileges associated with citizenship. However, all of these rights and responsibilities (and even the ease with which I could get naturalized as a citizen in a different state) are predicated on which nation-state I was born in.

Given these considerations, I propose an additional definition of “nationalism.” So far nationalism has been understood mainly as either the ideology that the nation should be politically sovereign and therefore coterminous with the state or as a political movement to achieve this goal (Breuilly, 1985; Hobsbawm, 1992; Hastings, 1997; Smith, 2011)⁴⁹. However, I propose that *nationalism*, should also be understood and evaluated in the same way as *sexism*, *racism*, and *heterosexism*. The nation, just like race and gender, is a socially constructed and imagined concept, which has been imbued with enormous social and political power. I can determine my nationality or in which country I am born in to the same extent that I can decide the color of my skin, my sexual organs, my gender, and my sexual orientation. Over the last centuries we have come to question the right to discriminate based on race, gender, and to some extent even sexual orientation, but our entire international system is still based on distinguishing people based on their nationality.⁵⁰

I understand that like sex, gender, and race, the nation and the state are concepts that will not disappear any time soon. Nevertheless, it is important to critically deconstruct the concept and to examine the power behind the construct. The first crucial step in this process is to recognize the privilege inherent in nationality and citizenship. Here it is very useful to turn to the work of Devon Carbado who suggests a “privilege-centered” understanding of discrimination based on “the notion that taking identity privileges for granted helps to legitimize problematic assumptions about identity and entitlement” (2005: 190). Carbado further argues, “we cannot

⁴⁹ At least by mainstream International Relations Theorists

⁵⁰ Voices from the periphery, particularly postcolonial thinkers, have been questioning the role of the “nation” for a while. However, since Switzerland does not consider itself to be part of colonial history, these voices have not really been heard within a Swiss context.

change the macro-effects of discrimination without ameliorating the power effects of our identities” (2005: 191). While he focuses particularly on outlining the privileges associated with race, gender and sexual orientation, a similar list can be made for the privilege of belonging to a certain nation-state. Nationality and citizenship is associated with two kinds of privilege, one is the privilege of being part of the “in-group” which every national has within his or her own territory and the other is a privilege that is linked uniquely to a certain nationality and transcends national boundaries. Although by no means exhaustive, here is a sample list of what could be called “Swiss Privilege” and is granted to all those recognized as Swiss.

As a Swiss person:

- There are many countries for which I do not need a visa to enter.
- It is usually easy to get a visa when I need one.
- I am free to move about, live and work in the entire European Union.
- When I travel most people assume that I am honest and generally trust worthy.
- I can vote in Swiss elections and referenda
- I am neither being excluded nor targeted by the media
- I can expect that my job application won't be rejected due to my nationality
- I can expect to get paid the same as my co-nationals
- I won't be denied an apartment based on my nationality
- I am not the target of negative stereotypes and I am not blamed for increases in crime
- If I get into legal trouble, I won't be deported
- I am not targeted by right-wing extremists
- I do not have to make a daily effort to integrate and fit in with cultural norms that may be different from what I am used to
- I do not have to balance a bi-national identity and I am not forced to chose between two cultures

Of course this privilege has to be understood in the context of other privileges by considering the idea of intersectionality. This means that every individual stands at the crossroads of many identities, which interact to determine how the individual fits into societal power structures. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,

intersectionality originally arose from a critique by feminists of color who argued that power had to be understood not only in terms of gender but should also consider race and class (Allen, 2011). Since then other power axes such as heteronormativity and disability have been proposed; however, so far the issue of nationality has largely been ignored from the “center.”

4.2.2 Transcending Duality

One of the major challenges of talking about privilege and the nation I have struggled with while writing this thesis is not to inadvertently strengthen the very concept I am trying to critique. The problem is that it is very difficult to escape what Foucault terms a “regime of truth.” Like I explained with the black sheep counter posters, they were largely ineffective. Although they were intended to critique the SPP campaign, they actually served to magnify it.

This issue is not unique to the debate over nationality, and has become a central issue within feminism. For example, even though Vandana Shiva critiques the Western dualistic conceptions of gender, she cannot seem to escape the discourse of man/woman and feminine/masculine (Shiva, 1988). As Judith Butler explains:

As feminists, we have been less eager, I think, to consider the status of the category itself and, indeed, to discern the conditions of oppression which issue from the unexamined reproduction of gender identities which sustain discrete and binary categories of man and woman. (1988: 523)

This is the same criticism faced by proponents of the “Dialogue” or “Alliance of Civilizations” which were proposed as alternatives to the idea of the “Clash of Civilizations.” As Adib-Moghaddam points out, “the idea of a ‘dialogue of civilizations’ is as dependent on the myth of undisturbed civilizational entities as the ‘clash of civilizations’” (2011: 25). On a similar note, Dacey notes that the Dialogue

of Civilizations only rejects Civilization as “Ethos” but not as “Methodology” (2008: 9).

Another danger which applies equally to discussions of the “foreign other” as well as to women is that in the “effort to combat the invisibility of women as a category feminists run the risk of rendering visible a category which may or may not be representative of the concrete lives of women” (Butler, 1988: 523). Nevertheless, Butler also acknowledges that it “remains politically important to represent women” as long as it is done in a way that does not reify the category that the theory is supposed to emancipate (1988: 530).

Therefore, I have tried to discuss politically important issues regarding identity and immigration without essentializing the categories. I argue that although the concept of a “Swiss national identity” does exist because it is part of a collective imagination, it is by no means an uncontested category. Every individual imagines the concept a little differently and the concept evolves over time. It is a concept steeped in power that is mobilized for different political ends. Furthermore, while I have focused on a “Swiss national identity” and how it has been constructed in opposition to the “other,” I also do not claim that the category of “other” exists independently of the hegemonic discourse.

While analyzing the power behind the concept of the nation is of particular importance in the current political context, it is equally important to look for ways to transcend these particularities and the dualistic categories of “us” and “them.” The idea of duality is often traced back to Rene Descartes’ theory of the mind and has become a central pillar of modern day science. For example, scientific classification systems generally depend on a dichotomous key, which consists of a list of two

mutually exclusive options to identify objects in the natural world. However, the world is not always so black and white. As Mottier explains, crisscrossing, mobile and permeable boundaries make the construction of order a never-ending process. Moreover, “the mechanisms of classification, inclusion and exclusion that construct identity can never fully eliminate *ambivalence*”(1999: 5),⁵¹ which is the possibility that an object could be assigned to more than one category. Therefore, “ambivalence is the unintended consequence of classification efforts” and ironically calls for more classification (1999: 6), resulting in an ongoing war against ambivalence which is ultimately non-productive and self-destructive (1999: 6). As Bauman explains:

Among the multitude of impossible tasks that modernity set itself and that made modernity into what it is, the task of order (more precisely and most importantly, or order as a task) stands out – as the least possible among the impossible and the least disposable among the indispensable.

(Bauman in Mottier, 1999: 6)

Rather than going down this rabbit hole of exclusion and inclusion, the world is in need of a “new consciousness,” a new way to imagine identity that does not depend on dualities and that is comfortable with ambivalence.

A post-colonial view of identity offers one alternative in the form of a reformulated notion of “hybridity.” Omar appropriates this traditionally ‘negative’ term and transforms it into a positive sign that recognizes the “hybrid and interconnected nature of individual and collective identities” (2009: 13). As such it proposes difference to be seen “as an interactive and dialogical space that could prompt exchange and inclusion not exclusion” (2009: 14).

This idea of “hybridity” also fits with Amin Maalouf’s understanding of identity. By considering his own identity, Maalouf concludes that “identity can’t be compartmentalized,” which means that people do not have several identities but rather

⁵¹ Stress added by Mottier

just one made up of many components (2000: 2). This idea echoes the claim by French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas that diversity and plurality are not something outside the ‘self’ but rather a dimension categorically inherent in the self (Behr, 2012: 243). While Maalouf acknowledges that different components of our identities can vary in importance over time and in different contexts, he does not argue that any of these identities are essential or that one is inherently more important than the other. Instead Maalouf scours his memory to find “as many ingredients of my identity as I can” and then he assembles and arranges them without denying any of them (2000: 16).

Conceiving of identity in this plural or hybrid manner opens the door to a more inclusive understanding of identity. Rather than by looking for differences to separate us, it is possible to use each puzzle piece as a bridge to other identities:

Through each one of my affiliations, taken separately, I possess a certain kinship with a large number of my fellow human beings; but because of all these allegiances, taken together, I possess my own identity, completely different from any other. (Maalouf, 2000:19-20)

Therefore, my Swiss identity connects me to other Swiss; as a woman, I can identify with other women; as someone raised in the nineties, I am connected to everyone in my generation; as a dancer, I can relate to all other dancers; as a lover of Harry Potter, I share common ground with millions of fans around the world. Such an inclusive understanding of identity is very different from an exclusionary stance which would state that if you are not Swiss, and not a woman, and not a dancer, and not from my generation, and not a lover of the same books then you are the “other” that needs to be excluded from my life.

While at a theoretical level this shift is quite easy to make, the reality is a little more complicated. As Maalouf explains, “every individual is a meeting ground for

many different allegiances, and sometimes these loyalties conflict with one another and confront the person who harbours them with difficult choices” (2000: 4). Therefore, it is also important to look for tools and concepts to deal with contradictions and ambiguities.

In the following section I draw on elements of the theoretical and philosophical positions of a number of thinkers to find ways to live with these ambiguities. These theorists approach the issues of identity and peace from different directions and may disagree with each other quite strongly on certain points. Nevertheless, in the spirit of looking for points of congruence rather than focusing on differences and contradictions, I find that they each make useful contributions to the discussion.

John Paul Lederach presents one possible way to deal with the issue of contradictions in his sociological and peace studies principle of paradoxical curiosity. As he explains, “the gift of paradox provides an intriguing capacity: It holds together seemingly contradictory truths in order to locate a greater truth” (2005: 36). Such a stance is fundamentally based on the capacity to mobilize the imagination and calls for the suspension of judgment “in favor of exploring presented contradictions, at face and at heart value, for the possibility that there exists a value beyond what is currently known that supersedes the contradiction” (2005: 36). He does not suggest abandoning opinions or the capacity to assess, but rather proposes that we have to simultaneously accept the realness of appearance as well as the realness of the lived experience and how perceptions and interpretations may point to hidden realities:

Suspending judgment refuses to force complex social histories and constructed realities into artificial dualistic categories in favor of the seeking of understanding that breaks the hold of social polarization. Far from being paralyzed by complexity, paradoxical curiosity as a quality of the moral imagination relies on complexity as a friend not an enemy, for from complexity emerges untold new angles, opportunities, and unexpected

potentialities that surpass, replace, and break the shackles of historic and current relational patterns of repeated violence. (2005:37)

Lederach developed the idea of paradoxical curiosity as part of his elicitive conflict transformation strategy and does not focus exclusively on issues of identity. Nevertheless, the idea can easily be applied to expanding our understanding of identity and finding ways to imagine something beyond the us/them divide.

As a lesbian, Chicana, feminist, Gloria Anzaldua experienced personally the challenge of living with identities that at times are hostile towards each other. Her idea for a new consciousness is very similar to the idea of hybridity, but is personified in the form of *la mestiza*. Just like Lederach's paradoxical curiosity, *la mestiza* is a way to transform contradictions and ambiguity into something new:

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity.... She learns to juggle cultures... She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode - nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. (2007: 79)

Therefore, Anzaldua proposes an integration of all parts in which opposing ideas are somehow combined in a creative new whole. In this way “*la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another.” (2007: 78). She does not deny or try to eradicate the source of the tension or conflict, but rather tries to integrate them into a new consciousness governed by new myths and a new culture: “I seek new images of identity, new beliefs about ourselves, our humanity and worth no longer in question” (2007: 87).

La mestiza is predicated on the break down of the “subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner” (2007: 80), which can only be achieved if we recognize that

“todos las partes de nostoros valen⁵²” (2007: 88). According to Anzaldua, nothing - not the good, the bad, nor the ugly - should be rejected, because these are just constructions. Any normative evaluation begs the question: according to whom? Which culture gets to define the good and the bad? By not rejecting anything, she is taking away the normative power of any one culture. However, contrary to what it might initially seem like, she does not advocate for anything goes. Rather, she argues that the *mestiza's* first step should be to take inventory. In this process, “she puts history through a sieve, winnows out the lies.... This step is a conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all culture and religions” (2007: 82).

Moreover, Anzaldua does not limit her *mestiza* consciousness to a single path. Her main argument is to move away from a counterstance, which she says “locks one in a duel of oppressor and oppressed... [in which] both are reduced to a common denominator of violence” (2007: 78). Her first suggestion is that “at some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank... so that we are on both shores at once” (2007: 78). This follows her argument of embracing contradictions and ambiguities – of rejecting neither of the sides but learning to balance the two and live on both sides simultaneously.

Anzaldua concludes that “in our very flesh (r)evolution works out the clash of cultures... [and] if the center holds, we’ve made some kind of evolutionary step forward” (2007: 81). However, the entirety of the new *mestiza* consciousness is dependent on whether this center will hold, which is a challenge given that the *mestiza* needs to hold together a myriad of conflicting and opposing parts. Therefore, she needs something universal that ties them all together. It may therefore be useful to combine *la mestiza* with the insights by Jiddu Krishnamurti.

⁵² “all of our parts matter”

While Anzaluda's *mestiza* calls for the integration of all parts, "for Krishnamurti, a radical transformation of consciousness/mind requires one to abandon one's identification with a particular culture, system of ideas, religion and with the expectations built over a lifetime" (Kumar, 2011: 505). He believes that, religion, culture, politics, and nationality are the very factors that divide humanity and are the source of conflict and war:

Humanity... has built images as a fence of security – religious, political and personal. These manifest as symbols, ideas, beliefs. The burden of these images dominates human's thinking, his/her relationship, and daily life. These images are the causes of our problems for they divide human from human. (Kumar, 2011: 505)

Although Krishnamurti did not identify himself with any group or ideology, understanding his teachings as simply a call to reject all of our identities greatly misrepresents him. As Kumar explains, "his teachings stress universal spiritual values, personal insight and autonomous self-knowledge, synthesizing both Indian and Western philosophical and psychological thoughts" (2011: 503). Therefore, Krishnamurti is not like post-modernists who focus on simply deconstructing everything. Rather than making everything relative, he looks for universal truths found in lived human experience, rather than in external identities. As Kumar expresses, "he believed it was unproductive for life to even acknowledge the existence of such borders [as regional and cultural boundaries]" (2011: 505). So while he calls on us to abandon these externally constructed identities as unproductive in the search for truth, he also believes that there are universal truths found within each of us and our lived experience.

Rather than combining the existing to create something new, he approaches the journey "completely denuded, especially of knowledge" for "if you are to discover

for yourself what is the new, it is no good carrying the burden of the old, especially knowledge - the knowledge of another, however great” (Krishnamurti, 1949). Furthermore, he cautions against accepting or rejecting anything too quickly: “as most of us are inclined to accept something eagerly, without true understanding there is a danger, is there not, that we may accept without thought or investigation, without looking deeply into it” (Krishnamurti, 1949).

So he believes that there is something to discover, but dismisses knowledge and thought as always limited and limiting. Instead, he believes we need to find a “totally different kind of energy to comprehend... an energy that is whole, non-fragmented, not broken up... which is not the energy of conflict, of separateness, of division, the energy of the movement of thought” (Krishnamurti, 1975). His answer to this difficult question of finding an alternative to knowledge and thought, which he believes is inherently divisive, is the idea of attention. According to Krishnamurti, “in attention there is no border, there is no centre from which you are aware, from which you are attentive” (1975). In paying close attention, there is no division between the individual and the response, for the individual is the response. Therefore, the person becomes “totally completely aware of the irrationality of thought and the rationality of thought and the reality of both” (1975). This awareness and acceptance of multiple realities mirrors both Lederach’s paradoxical curiosity and Anzaldua’s tolerance for ambiguity. Moreover, this realization of the finiteness and limitedness of thought provides the springboard to look for universal truths. And these universal truths derived from deep self-reflection and attention are exactly what will allow Anzaldua’s *mestiza* to stand on both shores at once.

Finally, the concept of trans-rational peaces may offer another way to reimagine identity. Rather than focusing on the plurality of identity, a trans-rational

approach focuses on the interconnectivity of everything. As I explained in Chapter One, a trans-rational approach transgresses “the limits of modernity and post-modernity by recombining the rational and modern with energetic elements and recognizing the importance of energy flow for the perception of peace” (Dietrich, 2011: 13). Such a conception is based on three key insights:

- a. There are no things but only networks and interrelations. The universe is an interwoven net of connectivity
- b. The Cartesian distinction between mind and matter, observe and observed is no longer upheld. We can never speak about nature without speaking about ourselves.
- c. In nature, no static structure exists. Peaces are a dynamic equilibrium.
(Dietrich, 2011: 14)

In the context of human identity it means that people can no longer be understood as distinct entities, but rather as part of a web that connects them to the rest of the universe. Moreover, it becomes clear that to speak about the other is to speak about the self, thereby breaking down the Cartesian duality. Such an understanding of human relations is not just coming out of the field of philosophy and peace studies, but is also increasingly a subject of interest in quantum physics. Recent experiments and theories seem to indicate that the idea of distinct entities (such as organisms, cells, atoms, etc.) may not be able to explain the reality of the universe. Instead an understanding of the world based on energy and interconnectivity seems to be more accurate. As O’Murchu explains, “at the heart of the quantum vision is the conviction that all life forces are interdependent and interrelated” (1998: 78). This goes hand-in-hand with the idea of quantum holism, or the idea that “the world is a seamless, indivisible whole” (Rosado, 2003: 9).

4.3 Conclusion

The current trend towards xenophobia and negative messages, which undermine a culture of peace, need to be tackled on two levels. At a more superficial level, politicians, the media, and the general public should critically engage with the concept of national identity by challenging the dominant exclusionary narratives and replacing them with more inclusive stories. Beyond that, it is also important to question the nationalist framework that the world has been operating in for the past centuries. While the nation-state may at one point have been a politically useful concept, this does not mean that it is the best option forever. Instead, we need to find new ways to imagine our identities that do not lend themselves to discrimination against any group. However, it is important that the quest for equality does not lead to conformity and homogeneity. Therefore, a central aspect of a new consciousness has to be the ability to be comfortable with plurality and ambivalence. Both the concept of hybridity and the *mestiza* offer valuable ideas for reaching this “new consciousness,” which has the potential to transform and transcend the current dominant conceptions of the nation and the self. Moreover, the emerging field of quantum theory and transrationality have the potential to help reformulate the current conceptions of identity by emphasizing the inherent interconnection between all beings.

Conclusion

Answer to the research question.

I started this thesis by asking how the hegemonic discourses of a “Swiss” identity are mobilized in political debates about immigrants in Switzerland, and how these discourses could be transformed to contribute to a culture of “peaces.” In order to answer this question, I first had to justify some basic underlying assumptions, most importantly the idea that there is such a thing as a “Swiss national identity.” While I disagree with scholars who claim that the nation is a primordial or a perennial entity, I nevertheless accept that at this point in time the concept of the nation remains very powerful and highly relevant in the political decision making process and in everyday lives. Therefore, I find Anderson’s (2006) concept of the “imagined community” very useful in understanding how the nation is both imagined (i.e. not real) and real at the same time.

Pehrson and others similarly contend that “while noting the historical contingency of the nation and the nation-state, we can also acknowledge that nations have a reality for the individual” (2009: 25). More importantly, they go on to claim that “an account of the social identity processes that operate within this reality is important if we are to understand, for example, the implications of identifying with a national group for one’s attitudes towards immigrants” (2009: 25). Pehrson and others studied this issue at the international level and concluded that the relationship

between national identification and anti-immigration prejudice depends on how national groups are defined by their members. However, what has been missing from the literature is an in-depth analysis at the country level that explores how the discourses on identity affect attitudes toward immigration not only at a theoretical but also at a practical level.

By analyzing the discourse about a Swiss national identity at both the official/elite as well as the popular level and by combining my analysis with the findings of other scholarly research, I have been able to identify three main conceptions of the nation, namely the civic/political nation, the cultural nation, and the ethnic nation. The most popular and least contested of these is the conception of Switzerland as a civic nation based on the three institutions of democracy, federalism and neutrality. However, in reality cultural elements also play an important part in the construction of a “Swiss” national identity. Of particular note is the conception of Switzerland as a *Sonderfall* as well as an understanding of Switzerland as a multicultural nation. However, this plurality is generally imagined in limited terms as white, central European (mostly in connection with the German, French, and Italian language and culture), and Christian. Finally, there are also strong undertones of an ethnic conception of the nation. Although in recent years this is rarely stated explicitly, the continued importance of an ethnic conception is evident in the continued application of *jus sanguinis*. Besides these three main strands of nationalism, the concept of a negative identity defined in opposition to the “other” is also crucial in understanding “Swissness.” In particular this negative conception is important to a culture of fear that is constantly defining the nation in terms of an outside threat.

Understanding these competing discourses regarding a “Swiss” national identity then allowed me to analyze how they are linked with attitudes and policies regarding immigrants. In general a civic/political conception of the nation is related to a more open and positive attitude towards foreigners, while ethno-cultural conceptions are linked to more negative attitudes. In the case of Switzerland, the political right has been able to exploit this connection by promoting an ethno-cultural conception of the nation in order to boost support for exclusionary and xenophobic policies. In particular the SPP has successfully used a series of posters using ethno-cultural symbols to sway public opinion in favor of more restrictive policies regarding foreigners.

The last part of my thesis is dedicated to exploring ways of transforming these discourses. Given the link between conceptions of national identity and attitudes towards foreigners, it is logical to conclude that refuting an ethno-cultural conception and promoting a more civic conception of the nation should lead to a decrease in xenophobia. However, this may only be a superficial solution. Regardless of how it is defined, the nation-state is inherently boundary defining and cannot overcome the “us” versus “them” mentality. The boundaries can be more liberal or conservative, more permeable or restrictive, but without boundaries the nation-state loses all meaning.

Therefore, it may be time to start considering alternative ways of conceiving identity all together. While different scholars have proposed both supra-national and regional alternatives, these all simply expand or reduce the frame of reference without significantly changing it. Although I have no definite answer, I argue that considering

a new consciousness based on paradoxical curiosity, *la mestiza*, and attention could offer a potential alternative to the current hegemonic discourses.

Practical Implications and Future Research

Since the world is currently experiencing an unprecedented movement of persons (both voluntary migration as well as forced displacement), my findings can potentially be applied in a wide variety of contexts. In the case of Switzerland, it is important that those who are working against xenophobia and campaigning for a more open-Switzerland understand the power of the rhetoric surrounding national identity and that they can strategically apply my findings when designing a political campaign. In particular, there is the potential to subvert the discourse portraying Switzerland as a multicultural nation and use it to promote a more inclusive conception of the nation. However, before designing such a strategy it would be interesting to go beyond my theory-seeking analysis to an empirical study. I think that it would be especially interesting to test to what extent emphasizing different elements of a national identity can influence attitudes towards immigrants.

While changing the story of the nation would be a good start, ideally these counter narratives would not only promote a more open nation, but eventually serve to question the very concept of the nation. While I do not see the nation-state disappearing any time soon, I do believe that it is important that it is subject to critical analysis and not accepted without question. Since nationality is a privileged identity, the study of *nationalism* could greatly benefit from theories emerging from the fields of feminist and critical-race studies. For example, as I mentioned earlier, it would be interesting to further analyze the performative nature of national identity. Moreover, in my last chapter, I offered one possible alternative for a “new consciousness;”

however, I am sure that there are numerous other ways of reimagining the framework. Therefore, it would be interesting for future research to focus on other post- and trans-national theories and how they relate to the issue of immigration.

In this thesis, my goal was to explore how the Swiss imagine themselves as a national community and how this impacts policy. However, that leaves out two other important dimensions: the construction of the “other” as well as the perspective of the “other.” Although I have discussed how the “foreign other” is portrayed in political campaigns about immigration, that only shows part of the picture, and I have not focused on a deeper analysis of how the “other” is imagined. For example, it would be interesting to study how the “other” is represented in the mass media, in popular culture and in school curricula. Perhaps even more important would be to study the agency of the other. While my research has focused primarily on the Swiss, which does not mean that the “others” are not also defining themselves as well as the Swiss. In particular, I would be interested in exploring how the “foreigners” in Switzerland are mobilizing and appropriating the various nationalist discourses to serve their own purpose. Are they trying to define themselves within the discourses of being Swiss? If so, are they identifying primarily using a civic-political or cultural conception? And if they are engaging with a cultural conception, are they trying to fit into the current discourse or are there attempts at reimagining these cultural elements to be more inclusive?

Obviously, there remain a lot of questions regarding the nation, the “Swiss,” the “other” and the relationship between them. However, I hope that this thesis can provide a solid theoretical foundation for my own future research and others.

Moreover, I hope that within Switzerland if not beyond, it will serve as an inspiration for a conceptual shift away from a xenophobic conception of the nation.

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