Leslie Bash

International Association for Intercultural Education
Professor Emeritus, University College, London, United Kingdom
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The Self, the Other, and Identity in Collective Formations: Challenges for Intercultural Education

A B S T R A C T : The relationship between the self and the other is complex. This complexity is further magnified in the context of the collective self when observed in the context of culture, ethnicity and nationhood where collective historical events are frequently psychologised and mythologised.

In education this has significant implications for the assumptions which underpin national systems and curricula. Here, the collective self is frequently reified, being derived from historical settlements following conflict and, as such, it frequently seeks to maintain an exclusiveness based on the exercise of superiority.

As a corollary, the collective self can be seen as provisional in character It follows that the collective self which conventionally suggests stability and (mechanical) solidarity, is tacitly or explicitly employed as a tool of suppression against those who lie outside the boundaries of the collective self. It further follows that the collective self is as much about its othering character as it is about its internal defining features. The construction and dismantling of European nation-states since the mid-19th century illustrate the shifting sands of collective selves and others with the consequence that self and other experienced as a process rather than a product. The assumption of elision of the nation-state with the idea of a collective self was always flawed and was subsequently challenged by boundary changes resulting from war. Moreover, the existence of minority and transnational communities (such as those who might have identified as Roma or Jewish) which morph through history defy the notion of stable collective self with firm boundaries.

An alternative – educational – approach to the primacy of the collective self focuses upon viewing the collective self as the collective other with fluid and multiple identifications which change over time and from place to place. Such an approach requires more than empathy; it requires imagination, especially at times of tension, anger, conflict, and war. In this context we invoke the concept of collective agency in an attempt to bridge the apparent gap between self and other. Here, national education systems and curricular processes which are intercultural in orientation may be well placed to engage with the dysfunctional consequences of a focus on the rigid boundary between the self and the other.

K E Y   W O R D S : Self, other, identity, collective, intercultural, education.

Prologue

While not having personally known the late Hagit Mishkin, brutally killed with so many others in the massacre of October 7th, 2023, I humbly offer the following paper in tribute to Hagit and her educational work. I hope that the article is judged to be in the spirit of her pedagogy which focused on peace and harmony between individuals and groups of diverse origins and heritages. In so doing, the article seeks to demonstrate the educational importance of developing the capacity to view the self as the other, and thus offering some observations in relation to:

— the complexities involved in the relationship between the collective self, collective identity – and the construction of the other;
— the consequential challenges for intercultural education

Introduction

An emphasis on the primacy of the collective self offers both reassurance and significant challenges. The collective self provides reassurance because it seemingly affords comfort, empowerment and ontological security beyond the individual. At the same time, it is challenging because history informs us that an exclusive focus on the collective self can be temporary, disempowering and illusory.

It follows from this assertion that the very notion of the collective self remains problematic especially in how it inevitably entails a focus on the equally problematic notion of the collective other. Indeed, the very concepts of self and other have proved difficult in the contemplation of interpersonal relationships and, in that regard, relate closely with the equally problematic concept of identity.

Conventional dictionary definitions of identity are often less than helpful, taking us little further than elaborate tautologies. The concept of personal identity is mostly viewed as unproblematic: it provides an individual with a practical tool to distinguish him/herself from others – and at the same time provides a tool to enable an individual to make distinctions *between* others. Briefly, reference is made to the work of contemporary psychologists such as Erikson (1968) who judged individual or personal identity in dynamic terms. In short, he viewed identity as a process of formation with a crucial phase occurring during the period conventionally viewed as adolescence. Adolescence is, of course, a highly problematic category, not least because it is often viewed

as a product of Western modernity. However, its conceptual strength may lay partly in relation to identity formation where the process of child/adult transition (and, more latterly, in respect of gender and sexuality) is reified.

Elsewhere, developmental psychologists (e.g. Bowlby, 1969) began to focus on the separation process in infancy leading to the recognition on the part of the child of its individuality as distinct from its mother. We are nonetheless helped in the process by the existence of what appear to be natural boundaries between human beings as biological entities.[1]

The concept of a social, cultural, ethnic, religious or national identity is, I would contend, of a different order. Such 'identities' are constructed through space and time as *frameworks* to emphasize perceived distinctions among groups. Consequently, identity in these contexts indicates an active process of distinguishing those judged to be – or who judge themselves to be – members of an 'in-group' distinct from other groups. What follows is the establishment and reinforcement of relationships among members of the in-group, providing individuals with a sense of belonging within the collective – the formation of collective identity.

Yet, such framing of 'identity' in the context of culture, ethnicity and nationhood, has the tendency to psychologise and mythologise collective historical events. I take my cue for this from those who have critiqued the essentialism of human collective categorisation by those such as E. P. Thompson (1963) who, for example, considered the category of class as a historical event, a product of structural change, rather than as a container into which people can be poured. Furthermore, it can frequently eclipse what many would see as a much more fundamental dimension of existence, as illustrated by Erin Gruwell's reference to one American high school student's reflection on her own 'identity':

> I have always been taught to be proud of being Latina, proud of being Mexican, and I was. I was probably more proud of being a 'label' than of being a human being, that's the way most of us were taught (Gruwell 2007, 86)

At the same time, a 'label' should not be dismissed lightly. It frequently carries with it a degree of power which can be overwhelming. Educationists

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[1]   It can be less clear in the non-human world with the example of the 'Portuguese Man o' War', popularly perceived as a large, dangerous jellyfish with a powerful sting when apparently it is a collection of individual creatures acting together (National Ocean Service, 2018). If there is such a thing as a jellyfish self-consciousness we might not know whether it is individual or collective.

became increasingly aware of the potency of labels as indicators of levels of intellect on the part of learners and how such labelling could determine life chances in the form of self-fulfilling prophecies. In the context of the English selective ssecondary school system, based on judgements of intellectual ability, which prevailed until the latter part of the twentieth century a key identity was bestowed by the academic label of the institution (Ingram, 2011). Thus, 'grammar school' and 'secondary modern school' (let alone the fee-paying 'public school') were identities which were carried by their students well into adulthood, involving social and cultural status as well as occupational and financial prospects.

If an educational label had greater significance than individuality how much more so might be the significance of a national label. This is particularly significant in wartime when the label of country or nation has priority over the individual 'human being'. For the most part, as was shown in Britain, until its closing stages World War One recruitment to the armed forces was voluntary. However, the social pressure to enlist was immense, with individual identity subordinated to an expressed national 'need':

The European experiences of the final years of the twentieth and the first two decades of the twenty-first centuries are, arguably, testimony to the destructive potential of the renaissance of nationalism. This has been expressed in terms of reconstructed national identities rooted in collective imaginations employed for purposes of political positioning. It is against this backcloth, as well as experiences elsewhere, that I offer some observations in relation to the complexities of identity – and, more pointedly, of national identity.

Collective Identity, Construction and Reification

It should come as little surprise, therefore, that the construction and reinforcement of national identity has been viewed as a major dimension of national education systems (see Klerides, 2009, pp. 1225–1247). While this observation has been a cornerstone of conventional educational theorisation at the systemic level the relationship between the nation-state and collective identity demands further interrogation. Given historic assumptions of ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural homogeneity some nation-states appear to have approached this relationship as relatively unproblematic, while for others it has been fraught with some difficulty. Regarding the former, Japan is sometimes cited as a paradigm example with the Meiji Restoration (1868) viewed as the locus for the construction of a conception of a mono-ethnic national identity. This has been reinforced by John Lie who observes that

leading Japan scholars have in the not so distant past have described Japan in monoethnic and culturally homogenous terms. Indeed, Lie quotes one such scholar, who suggests that:

> …*race looms large in the self-image of the Japanese who pride themselves on the 'purity' of their blood.*

Importantly, Lie counters this (Lie, 2001) with the assertion that this conception has been widely contested with the heralding of a construction of a more heterogenous Japanese identity inclusive of those with Ainu, Chinese and Korean heritages.

Similarly, it is noted that France is:

> … *de facto, a multicultural country, but the notion has been much contested* (Vasoodeven and Wihtol de Wenden, 2006, p. 81)

As seen from the work of Wihtol de Wenden (2003), for most of its history, France has been characterised by multiple regional identifications bolstered by linguistic diversity – Breton, Catalan, Occitane, Alsation, Corsican, Basque, etc. along with many sub-divisions. Revolutionary France sought a philosophically-based unity around secularity and a single, dominant language. In addition, France appeared to experience an existential shock as its constructed singular post-Napoleonic identity began to be challenged by a 'multicultural' reality focusing on sectors of the population with North African heritage, a legacy of French imperialism. However, this new reality simply reinforced the deep, historically diverse nature of France which characterised it until relatively recent times.

Either way, the argument put forward here is that collective identities are frequently reifications derived from historical settlements following conflict and, as such, seek to maintain an exclusiveness based on the exercise of a degree of power manifested militarily, politically, judicially and ideologically. In short, it appears obvious that the assumption of collective identity is central to the pursuit of power (see Reicher and Hopkins, 2013), whether consciously or unconsciously. By the same token, it is also apparent that the construction of identity in pursuit of power can generate the construction of identity to counter the pursuit of power. This clearly occurs in the case of identity as a tool of resistance.

By way of illustration, and in the context of the current (December 2023) conflict, we may note the longstanding encounter between the two constructed identities of 'Israeli' and 'Palestinian', with each in a symbiotic relationship with

the other and each subject to varying degrees of contestation (see Bar-On, 2008). At the extreme, given the claims to the same territory, the legitimation of each identity necessarily entails the denial of the legitimacy of the other. At the macropolitical level, the identification process has been manifested in institutional terms over a lengthy period and characterised by a mix of historical fact, mythology, biological theorisation, and deliberate manufacture. Thus, the current identity of 'Israeli' is grounded in the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and is generally assumed to incorporate the very specific identity of 'Jewishness'. This poses an issue for those who are Israeli citizens but who are not ascribed a Jewish identity, the largest sector of whom also identify as Arab. Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, both those who identified as Jews and as Arabs residing in the territory of Palestine (then ruled by Britain) could identify as Palestinian. However, following the establishment of the State of Israel, once Israeli identity was adopted by the Jewish population Palestinian identity in time began to be adopted by the Arab populations of the West Bank and Gaza. While a Palestinian-Arab identity was arguably latent (or, some might suggest, entirely absent) during the period 1948 to 1967 when the west Bank was part of Jordan and Gaza was under Egyptian rule, it became manifest following the Six-Day War. Moreover, with the entrenchment of Palestinian identity over the fifty years since the Six Day War it also became increasingly adopted by Arab citizens of Israel. In more recent times, the legitimacy of Arab identity in Israel has come into full view with the passing of the Nation-State Law (Wootliff, 2018) and the apparent demotion of Arabic as an official language. It might be thought that the ramifications for education would be significant with children learning in an even more explicit manner that 'Israeliness' is to be equated with 'Jewishness'.

However, lest the Israeli-Palestinian context be thought simply an example of some kind of 'oriental', post-imperialist identity confusion, let us turn to the UK, a locus for diverse identification processes. While the country is officially termed the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland this does not provide the hook for an official identity. However, 'British' does, although other identities – English, Scottish, Welsh – are frequently given priority to the exclusion of 'British'. The exception may be Northern Ireland where a majority of the population will often – somewhat interestingly – emphasise their British (rather than UK) identity as against an Irish one. Of course, these are very much 'indigenous' identifications; in addition, migration has made the situation even more complex, with sometimes competing national, ethnic, linguistic and religious identification processes, dependent upon the extent of inclusion and exclusion.

This brief oversimplification masks a contested complexity which begs numerous questions regarding the very utility of identity. At the very least, identities need to be viewed as provisional, as metaphorical items of clothing which may be worn permanently or discarded when the necessity arises in exchange for those with a better fit. It goes without saying that clothing itself has been a literal identifier – either voluntarily or imposed. We need not dwell too much on the vagaries of fashion in time and space. Although some will recall from their childhood stereotyped images of national costume – kilts, clogs, bowler hats and sombreros – by its very nature fashion is changeable and therefore, is a conduit for provisional identification.

These are comforting ideas for those who wish to defend the notion of fixed identities. They appear to provide a neat explanation for the persistence of ethnic distinctions and, thus, underpin primordialism. The problem here is that a simple Popperian black swan discovery would undermine the entire primordialist premise. This is not difficult to find since there are many instances of adopted children favouring their adoptive families even when they eventually encounter their biological parents and siblings. In this regard, primordialism might be further challenged by the proponents of classic attachment theory such as Bowlby (1969), Harlow (1961) and Lorenz (1935). Consequently, the question remains as to the ways in which processes of identification are generated, maintained and challenged. In other words, how are we to make sense of the interactive processes which produce affective attachments conventionally viewed as collective identities?

For this, I shall turn to a paper by Ellor and Coughlan who dispute what would seem to be the underlying mystical assumptions of the ineffable nature of ethnic ties and the 'immaculate conception' of identity. Instead, they underscore socially interactive processes and practices which "invent, modify and perpetuate" what I term collective identifications. In citing Bourdieu, Ellor and Coughlan suggest that social scientists investigate

> …the cultural-symbolic practices from 'apprenticeship through simple familiarization' to 'extreme and express transmission by precept and prescription' … which produce and reproduce identity and attachment: the stories that are told, the objects that are displayed and revered, the history that is remembered, the activities that are engaged in (walking in parades, carrying banners or weapons, etc.), and any of an indefinite number of specific practices.

Shifting Identities and Nation-states

If any weight is to be given to what I have argued so far then the socially interactive character of collective identity has significant implications for the assumptions which underpin national education systems and curricula. Here, I move from micro considerations to the need to engage with a process of socio-historical analysis and deconstruction as we reflect on the ramifications of European state formation and decline since the early 19th century. Conventional narratives suggest that nation-states come and go on the basis of ethno-national self-determination – or, conversely, imperialist subjugation. It follows that identity is tacitly or explicitly employed as a tool of suppression against those who lie outside the boundaries of given identities – or as tool of resistance against imperialist oppressors. Consequently, it further follows that identity is as much about its exclusionary character as it is about its supposed internal defining features.

Against this view, Ernest Renan keenly puts forward a historical-constructivist argument for the process of state formation. In particular, he notes, in the case of France, that the creation of a nation was necessarily based upon a certain degree of forgetfulness and 'historical error'. Paradoxically, this 'forgetfulness' chimes with the institutionalisation of historical memory and has particular resonance for the Europe of one hundred years ago with the shattering: the illusions of harmony created and sustained by multinational empires. As conflicts and tensions arising from imperialist subjugation surfaced during the late 19th century and accelerated in the early years of the 20th century it was little surprise that, viewing events through a contemporary lens, the First World War finally resulted in the break-up of the old European empires. In their wake new 'old' states were constructed, reviving mythologised identities, frequently with ethno-national labels, based upon overt memorisation and memorialisation.

Moreover, in proclaiming that (national) unity was always brutal, involving 'extermination' and terror, it was important to recognise:

> ...*the violent acts that have taken place at the origin of every political formation, even those that have been the most benevolent in their consequences* (Renan, 1882, p. 3).

The construction and dismantling of European nation-states illustrates the shifting sands of collective identity with the consequence that it is experienced

as a process rather than a product. Furthermore, the manner in which such identity is conceptualised shifts with successive engagements in the context of warfare and armed conflict. At this point reference is made to a journal article written with Jagdish Gundara in 2012. Here, we attempted to problematise geo-political boundaries and borders insofar as they helped define collective existential realities. At the heart of this has been an assumption of what became known as Westphalian sovereignty. Briefly, The Peace of Westphalia which ended the Thirty Years War in Europe in 1648 is assumed to have established an international convention of state sovereignty based upon the supposed primacy of the nation in defining collective identity.

Furthermore, as we suggested,

> ...[such] *territorialised patterns of social relations and cultural narratives are reflected in education through the politicisation of institutional structures, curricula and pedagogy...* (Bash and Gundara, 2012, p. 383).

The judgement here is that the educational consequences of assumed, stable 'Westphalian' identities belie both the historical and contemporary realities of continual movements of populations, the precariousness of nation-states and the fluidity of identifications. I have on more than occasion cited the story of an elderly man from a town in central Europe observing that he had lived in a number of countries during his long life. When the interviewer remarked that the elderly man was much travelled he responded that he had never left the town in which he was born. Possibly, for this man identity had a tenuous connection with the nation-state, and, possibly, identity as such was not considered an existential necessity. Thus, the Westphalian assumption of elision of the nation-state with the idea of a collective identity was always flawed and was subsequently challenged by boundary changes resulting from war.

It is against this backcloth that I return to the complexities of identity. For children, identity may be seen as malleable and therefore provisional. Here, we might agree with Julia Chaitin (2003) that children's identities are always in the process of *becoming*. Part of that process of becoming is the continual enactment and re-enactment through narrative, myth and storytelling. At the level of parenting this is commonplace and generally regarded as an essential aspect of child development. Yet, state, nation, religion, and ethnicity are not unconnected as they are refracted and filtered through the processes of child-rearing.

Importantly, the complexities of identity are brought home and magnified in situations of manifest and latent conflict and war. For example, even a casual acquaintance with Northern Ireland suggests that it is still

in the process of recovering from what were euphemistically referred to as 'the Troubles'. While open hostilities are generally viewed as belonging to the past with Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland, enjoying an economic revival, the historic divisions are barely concealed with identity distinctions maintained and reinforced with explicit symbolism. These are encapsulated in the generally unchallenged segregated education system with Protestant and Catholic schools acting in a manner of proxies for the maintenance of different national identities. The system is further reinforced by permanent walls erected to separate the Nationalist and Unionist communities of Belfast, the partisan murals, the presence or absence of street names in Irish Gaelic – and, of course, the flags and the marches.

A simple anthropological view of Northern Ireland is less than helpful, as indeed it is in the case of Israel-Palestine and similar contexts of confusion elsewhere. Notwithstanding the highly politicised choice – or lack of choice – in the assumption of either a 'British' or 'Irish' identity, there is the added ingredient of alternative bases for identification in Northern Ireland. The presence of peoples with Roma and diverse transnational 'ethnic' and religious heritages are a clear complication in a context traditionally defined in binary terms.

It is important, however, to delve a little further to underline the complexities of identity. Schooling, in functioning to forge and reinforce national identities generally do so in a manner which superficially strives for unity, if only to maintain a status quo of social stability. Curricula – whether overt or hidden – are channelled through the conduits of the teacher-learner context, textbooks, classroom layouts, school traditions and school buildings. These are conventionally sites for the formation of stereotyped identities whether of the collective self or of others and consequently fail to acknowledge not only the inaccuracies of stereotypes but also the 'moving sands' of identity. Orthodox religious Jews are seen to conform with the stable identity model while 'cultural' or 'secular' Jews reflect a process of historical 'morphing' and identity fluidity. Those of Roma heritage who adhere to a traveller mode of existence are easier to identify than those who adopt a settled mode of existence. Palestinians who reside in the West Bank self-identify and may be identified as such while those who are Israeli citizens carry a more ambiguous mode of identification.

If we take a broader global view we might conclude that population movement has rendered the concept of collective identity somewhat challenging. Identity becomes a political tool for the maintenance of power or as a means of resisting domination and as such, it loses its essentialist character. It does, however, provide an opportunity for perspectives which focus on an approach

to identity which emphasises fluid and multiple identifications rather than on the assumed notion of fixed identities which frequently lie at the root of armed conflict. Such identifications vary over time and from place to place – and are brought into sharp focus in an era dominated by the politics of migration and the situation of refugees. Some governments appear to have given greater recognition to issues of identity fluidity while others have been more inclined to maintain identity barriers and, indeed, to construct sturdier walls in an effort to fix the imbalanced divide between identities.

Constructing Identity and Otherness

The argument thus far constitutes an attempt to signal the problematic nature of collective identity. At best, identity provides an anchor for those striving to exercise a degree of power in societies beset by social, economic and political inequalities. At worst, a focus on identity is socially dysfunctional, entrenches inequalities, and is a precursor to violence and war. We continue to observe the accelerating construction of nation-state citadels of ethnocentric reaction and isolationism in regions where it had formerly been assumed that international co-operation was on an upward trajectory.

For commentators on educational systems, an obsession with collective identity constitutes a cul-de-sac of boundaries and walls, real or imagined. Moreover, as we have observed, the powerful nation-states have been able to subordinate and camouflage diversity and fluidity with the imposition of a single collective identity. Here, it is not altogether remarkable that political rhetoric sometimes gives the appearance of an objective portrayal. Such has been the policy of assimilationism famously given voice in the American 'melting pot' ideal with the assumption of a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) identity as the norm and preferred state of being. More lately this has also been given prominence in China's seemingly more forceful approach in relation to the population of the western province of Xinjiang, the complexities of which have been recently examined by Yan and Whitty (2016).

In following these observations, attention is now turned to the construction of otherness, the mirror image of identity. It needs to be emphasised that otherness constitutes a cornerstone of identity construction, with the process of collective 'othering' possessing a seductive power which especially manifests itself in perceived times of crisis. In struggles to establish the legitimacy of collective identities the construction of otherness becomes an essential aspect of what might be viewed as the politics of superiority. Given that it is long taken as a given that national identity formation is a

legitimate function of publicly funded schools in most, if not all countries, it follows that the construction of otherness is also taken as a given. It is an inevitable consequence of the process of identity formation and is enshrined in explicit and implicit educational discourses. This is manifested in diverse contexts, from primary networks, through to the identification of cultures, religions, peoples and the imagined communities of nation-states. Benedict Anderson's (1983) thesis on nations as imagined communities focuses on what he portrays as fictions based on the perceived connections with people who have never met each other. The thesis has parallels with religious affiliation, especially where the symbolic focus is an invisible deity. It is possible that this makes such identities all the stronger, since both God and the nation are never quite within reach. Identity is thus a continual quest for unification between the individual and the larger, imagined entity, a process which, in the case of Nazi Germany, ended with catastrophic consequences.

Constructing Otherness, National Identity Formation and Schooling

Bar-On (2008), in providing some initial insights into the construction of the Other, draws on Said's (1979) view, noting that:

> …*The Other and self are fictitious representations intended to legitimize the elitism and hegemony of the collective self in order to continue to oppress and control the Other…*

Bar-On argues that in the context of the construction of Israeli – Jewish – identity othering has played a central defining role. Not only that, it is historicised to take into account the dynamics of demography, with the Nazis constituting an essentialised, evil Other for the Holocaust survivor generation in the early years of immigration to (the then) Palestine and the initial post-independence era. Overlapping with this was the othering of 'the Arabs', during the 1947–1949 Arab-Israeli War, as the collective enemy whose goal was to prevent the emergence of a separate Jewish state. Since that time, the process of othering in Israel has taken on the character of an internal/external war of attrition in relation to the Palestinians. More importantly, however, was the inevitable disintegration of the mythologised monolithic construction of Israeli society (Bar-On, 2008, 51–55), not merely in terms of Jew and Arab but also in relation to the diverse character of the Jewish population itself: Ashkenazi (European), Sephardic (Middle Eastern), secular, religious, ultra-orthodox, etc.

Israel-Palestine and Northern Ireland thus provide interesting examples of enduring struggles for superiority in the midst of a perpetual process of mutual ascription of otherness. In the case of the former, this can be seen partly as a consequence of nations:

> …*extricating themselves from difficult imperialist situations characterised by conflicts and tensions between competing subject populations…* (Bash & Coulby, 2012, p. 103)

However, it is in the dynamics of modern everyday life that the construction of otherness has gained a degree of prominence. The ascription of otherness in a globalised era of digitised communication is practically an instantaneous process with the rapid transmission of text and visual images. Social media in providing the means to establish friendship and peer networks in diverse contexts also provide the means to decide who is to be outside those networks. Racism and harassment in general have been hallmarks of the rapid communication process impacting upon individuals, mostly but not exclusively children and young people. The liminal world of social media disinhibits through a process which breaks previously established cultural rules of interpersonal behaviour. One writer has likened this to the permissible rule-breaking in social gatherings fuelled by a certain degree of excess alcohol consumption. On the other hand, 'Othering' in cyberspace may easily spin out of control as information spreads exponentially – and globally.

At the level of inter-communal tension and violence, the almost instant transmission of events, whether demonstrations, uprisings or open war, is accompanied by a demand for identification with the forces of righteousness and the ascription of evil to those deemed to be the Other. However, as we have seen from recent events in the Middle East the construction of otherness is a complex process. The search for identification with those considered to be 'like us' – and, at the same time, for those who are 'not like us' – has resulted in a good deal of uncertainty and confusion at the level of international relations. Yet, the failure to demarcate the two categories has also reinforced a sense of Western superiority as the entire Arab population is subjected to the othering process. This, of course, is Said's orientalist position: a romanticised view of the otherness of the Middle East, a region which is only good for supplying the West with oil and potential terrorists (Said, 1980). Orientalism is one of a number of imperialist perspectives employed in the ascription of otherness in the process of positioning for superiority in global politics. Sometimes this has been undertaken selectively and cynically, as in the case of South Africa under

the apartheid regime where for reasons of economics the Japanese, Taiwanese and South Koreans were treated as people 'like us' whereas the Chinese were not and were ascribed non-white status (see Time, 1962).

Imperialist nations and nations at war construct otherness in conscious and deliberate ways. The identification of subject peoples, or of enemies, is functional to the operations of empire or to the war effort. Both constitute attempts to minimise dissent and construct a veneer of national unity to pursue ends which signal political superiority. It is interesting to note that by 1900 the British Empire was at its zenith and, at the same time, British society had experienced an increase in cultural and religious diversity with immigration from Central and Eastern Europe (see Panayi, 2014). In addition, there had been a development in institutionalised political dissent and opposition with the growth of trade unionism and radical and reformist socialist movements (Barrow and Bullock, 1996). The seeds of internal strife and socio-political, if not revolutionary, change, were present in Britain, including the challenge posed by nascent feminism and the women's suffrage movement. On the other hand, the Empire represented a unified superior culture which sought to civilise the less developed peoples of those regions under British rule. These were the Others who could be perceived as possessing an even lower status than the domestic working classes. Thus, the construction of otherness provides a focus for cohesion and integration where diversity, inequality and power differentials threaten to undermine social solidarity, and may be focused both externally and internally. In all of this there is a quest for superiority which can be seen between peoples, regions and nations characterised by low socio-economic circumstances where social status is gained through division and discrimination.

The process of othering, while being a function of the dynamic interplay of interpersonal relations, is also reinforced through highly institutionalised stratification structures overlaid with the consequences of historical events and mythologies. Grant and Khurshid (2009, 405), in noting that the Other is frequently 'an unstated or stated idea' at the core of multicultural education in many countries, consider the varied treatment of the Sámi people in the Nordic states of Norway, Sweden and Finland. Whether the Sámi are educated in separate schools to preserve their 'culture', or whether they attend mixed schools – with a prohibition on the use of the Sámi language – in pursuit of assimilationism, the politics of superiority shines through. Either way, the Sámi are othered to ensure their disappearance as a minority which is recognised as being an authentic participant in the country as a whole i.e. that their language and customs are worthy of being seen as a dynamic constituent in dialogue with other constituents of the Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish societies.

We might also turn to the classic studies of race and class in the southern states of the US such as Dollard (1937) who demonstrated how caste-like ascription of otherness replaced master-slave relationships in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Here, superior and inferior groups were defined with the consequence of varying degrees of isolation for members of inferior castes (Dollard, 1937, 62–63). Positioning in the caste structure was relational, with the ascription of superiority and otherness dependent not only on assignment to a racial category but also on gender and class. In the midst of a good deal of structural poverty experienced in the southern states of the USA white Europeans were drawn into a process of othering, enabling them to adopt a position of superiority in relation to African-Americans who at least could be assigned to the lowest strata and, indeed for the politicised supremacists, constituted a semi-human category having been the descendants of slaves. Of course, an even more extreme form of othering lay not in the USA but in Nazi Germany where the Aryan *Volk* was constituted in opposition to Slavs, Roma and Jews, but this time justified on the basis of 'racial science' (Ehrenreich, 2007). Thus, the German National Socialist regime promised a thousand-year Reich (The History Place, 1997) premised on the supposed eternal, collective identity of the German *Volk*, as against the Other (primarily Jews, Slavs, Roma, etc,). Likewise, the Russian Bolshevik revolution heralded the triumph of proletarian, socialist identity, as against capitalists, peasants, etc. Assuredly, National Socialist and Bolshevik ideology emphasised the need for the reinforcement of collective identity, especially through non-formal as well as formal educational processes (the Hitler Youth, Young Communist League, Young Pioneers). However, it did not detract from a faith in its permanence.

On the other hand, the education system in a country such as the UK, has conventionally been less explicit in the process of national identity formation perhaps, partly, because of an absence of a revolutionary tradition, partly because of a supposed self-confidence born of a strong overseas imperialist history. Possibly, a more significant factor has been, until recent times, a lack of a coherent national education system, although this was apparently remedied with the introduction of a national curriculum, albeit in England and Wales only (Bash and Coulby, 1989). Scotland and Northern Ireland, although constituents of the United Kingdom, are characterised by separate education systems reflecting different, and in the case of the latter, contested histories. A corollary of this is the process of differential identity formation within a supposed unified nation-state. Northern Ireland has long been held to be an embarrassing, deviant sector of the UK, not simply because, through a segregated school system, a national identity – Republican Catholic – in

opposition to British identity was being fostered and reinforced. Rather, that a Protestant Unionist identity was also being fostered and reinforced which, on the surface was paraded as British but in reality was frequently viewed as something of a caricature and, thus, at variance with the understated identity of mainland citizens. Welsh and Scottish identities periodically surface as they are constructed and reconstructed through histories, mythologies, artistic media, and so on.

Overriding all of this, however, is the construction of otherness in the form of the hegemony of England and Englishness – a phenomenon considered especially in the context of the Brexit debate by James Meek (2018). Part of the emphasis on Welsh, Irish or Scottish identity is also the emphasis on the otherness of 'not English'. Likewise, identities elsewhere are partly constructed through a parallel construction of otherness, sometimes manifested in particular linguistic expressions. Minorities in various countries have constructed terms to denote not just the out-group but rather the 'Other' as a competitor for cultural power. Typically, the Yiddish/Hebrew word 'goy' has been employed in European Jewish circles as a term to deprecate non-Jewish, commonly assumed to be Christian, individuals. Whether or not minorities have social, political and economic power the use of particular linguistic constructions can confer a self-proclaimed cultural superiority and, in turn, assist the process of identity formation. Some might argue that in the context of the United Kingdom it is the English who have the greatest difficulty in forging their collective identity (Harris, 2014). As the majority community it has had the capacity to marginalise the Scots, Welsh and Irish as relatively insignificant Others. Only when such minorities apparently begin to wield influence out of proportion to their size do they become significant. Englishness, in fact, has traditionally been a difficult idea to grasp except in relation to Others; indeed, it could be argued that the core of being English lies, not in what it is, but in what it is not. Through the construction of otherness English identity has managed to embed itself within a hierarchical structure.

The construction of otherness is therefore an inevitable consequence of the process of identity formation and is enshrined in explicit and implicit educational discourses. This is manifested in diverse contexts, from primary networks, through to the identification of cultures, religions, peoples and the imagined communities of nation-states. Accordingly, radical change in the late modern era, unlike earlier times, appeared to entail not just the replacement of the *ancien regime* with a supposed innovative political system. Against the background of a reactionary otherness it also required a fundamental change in social and individual consciousness. The establishment of national education

systems could, in principle, enable nation-states to control or, at the very least, influence the process through the curriculum – both official and hidden – with the teaching of national histories, the invocation of national symbols, induction into new ideologies. We learned that this was especially the case with countries such as the United States, the erstwhile Soviet Union and post-Napoleonic France. The task of building the nation also entailed the construction of a new type of human being, a task made for schools, particularly in the light of the developing behaviourist orientation of psychology as it reinforced the commonsense views of conventional teachers. From the oft quoted Jesuitical claim through to the Soviet emphasis on the construction of the 'socialist' individual, schools throughout the world have conventionally attempted to mould the character of future generations. The stated national ideology might, therefore, be religious or secular, monarchical or republican, democratic or autocratic, imperialist or postcolonial.

On the other hand, the education system in a country such as the UK, has conventionally been less explicit in the process of national identity formation perhaps, partly, because of an absence of a revolutionary tradition, partly because of a supposed self-confidence born of a strong overseas imperialist history. Possibly, a more significant factor has been, until recent times, a lack of a coherent national education system, although this was apparently remedied with the introduction of a national curriculum, albeit in England and Wales only (Bash and Coulby, 1989). Scotland and Northern Ireland, although constituents of the United Kingdom, are characterised by separate education systems reflecting different, and in the case of the latter, contested histories. A corollary of this is the process of differential identity formation within a supposed unified nation-state. Northern Ireland has long been held to be an embarrassing, deviant sector of the UK, not simply because, through a segregated school system, a national identity – Republican Catholic – in opposition to British identity was being fostered and reinforced. Rather, that a Protestant Unionist identity was also being fostered and reinforced which, on the surface was paraded as British but in reality was frequently viewed as something of a caricature and, thus, at variance with the understated identity of mainland citizens. Welsh and Scottish identities periodically surface as they are constructed and reconstructed through histories, mythologies, artistic media, and so on.

Overriding all of this, however, is a construction of an 'internal' otherness in the form of the hegemony of England and Englishness. Part of the emphasis on Welsh, Irish or Scottish identity is also the emphasis on the otherness of 'not English'. Likewise, identities elsewhere are partly constructed through

a parallel construction of otherness, sometimes manifested in particular linguistic expressions. Minorities in various countries have constructed terms to denote not just the out-group but rather the 'Other' as a competitor for cultural power. Typically, the Yiddish/Hebrew word 'goy' has been employed in European Jewish circles as a term to put down non-Jewish, commonly assumed to be Christian, individuals. Whether or not minorities have social, political and economic power the use of particular linguistic constructions can confer a self-proclaimed cultural superiority and, in turn, assist the process of identity formation. Some might argue that in the context of the United Kingdom it is the English who have the greatest difficulty in forging their collective identity. As the majority community it has had the capacity to marginalise the Scots, Welsh and Irish as relatively insignificant Others. Only when such minorities begin to 'punch above their weight' do they become significant. Englishness, in fact, has traditionally been a difficult idea to grasp except in relation to Others; indeed, it could be argued that the core of being English lies, not in what it is, but in what it is not. Through the construction of otherness English identity has managed to embed itself within a hierarchical structure.

Concluding Observations: the Educational Challenges

As we have seen, if schools function to establish and reinforce the collective self they also institutionalise otherness. The significance of education should not be underestimated in this process. Schools institutionalise otherness in obvious ways – through history textbooks, for example – but also through practices which label and exclude those deemed to be inferior. History curricula establish boundaries between identities and otherness. Perhaps the most iconic date in English history is 1066, a moment of national identification, of ethnic and a curious kind of cultural fusion between the 'invaders' (the Norman French) and the 'invaded' (the Anglo-Saxons, Celts). Yet, at the same time, England saw the development of feudalism and the institution of highly stratified social system in which the process of Othering took on a different, internal character, but within a structure of mutual obligations (see: Bloch, 1961).

The idiosyncratic piecemeal manner in which the English national school system developed ensured the incorporation of religion, in a quasi-confessional manner, into the curriculum. It was assumed – and to some extent still assumes – that the collective self / national identity is intimately bound up with a loosely Anglican form of Christianity such that it has traditionally shaped the character of the mandatory daily collective act of worship and religious education (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010).

Parents, however, have long had the right to withhold their children from participation in the religious aspects of publicly funded schools in England and a significant minority, especially Jewish parents, have tended to take advantage of this option, again reinforcing otherness. Other parents have made the decision to have their offspring educated in separate, sectarian schools, some of which have a degree of tax funding while others are fully independent and fee-paying. In a somewhat understated manner, often seen as typifying English national culture, those who did not perceive themselves to be part of the prevailing Christian tradition were subjected to a process of othering. This had (and still has) implications for those children from other heritages who were not at sectarian schools. The author of this paper personally experienced this process with the consequence, not of reinforcement of collective identity, but rather of a reinforcement of 'outsider' status. Only the concession, for example, for Jewish children at some English secondary schools, that they might hold an alternative daily act of worship reflecting their religious tradition, mitigated the sense of otherness while establishing some kind of communal solidarity.

I have argued that the self in its collective – and specifically national – form, unless also viewed as the other, constrains the development of intercultural awareness, understanding – and, therefore, of positive interaction. It might be judged that there was a tendency in the past for many observers of education systems to take an implicit – or even explicit – cultural relativistic position premised upon fixed, frequently simplistic notions of collective identity. It is further concluded that such a position tended to reinforce common sense perceptions of collective, national identity, but did little to aid an understanding of the global dynamics shaping human movement and interaction. On the other hand, current thinking in intercultural education could lend itself to approaches which engage with otherness as a dimension of the self with the potential to promote a global perspective which challenges walls, boundaries and borders.

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