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Collective Identity in Greek Cypriots' Curriculum: The case of Primary Education's Curriculum.

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Abstract

The trouble history of Cyprus created different forms of identifications for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots and shaped Cypriots' collective identity through time. The collective identity of the people of the two communities has been a subject of interest for social scientists in the last years and many were those who supported a common identity, based on the model of citizenship (as proposed by Kohn, 1961; Smith, 2000) as a solution to the Cyprus Problem. Accepting the influence of education in the construction and formation of identity, the purpose of this study is to explore the collective identity of Greek Cypriots through the curriculum used in Primary Education. For the analysis of the Primary Education's Curriculum we used quantitative content analysis, descriptive and interpretive.

Theoretical Considerations

The term collective identity refers to a statement of membership in a specific group (Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughkin–Volpe, 2004; Chen, Chen and Shaw, 2004; Woodward, 2004; Arts and Halman, 2006) and is a multidimensional term that comprises of different identities. These identities coexist in a hierarchical manner that is determined from internal (Vural and Rustemli, 2006) and external (Yavuz, 1991) factors. Through history the collective identity of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots incorporated different types of identifications.

In the early Ottoman Period, the collective identity of the two main communities of the island was determined on the base of socioeconomic status (Pollis, 1973; Morag, 2004). However, in the late Ottoman Period there was a rotation to religious classification (Pollis, 1973; Yavuz, 1991; Pollis, 1998; Fisher, 2001; Morag, 2004; Yilmaz, 2005), as the members of the two communities were classified ether as Christians or Muslims. Some researchers claim that in the late Ottoman Period there was also an ethnic classification, but it was shared only by the elite of the two communities (Yavuz, 1991).

At the beginning of the British Era, the classification in religious terms remained the main policy in Cyprus due to the fact that legally Cyprus was under the control of the Sultan. In 1923, when the administration of the island was given to Great Britain, the British took some actions, especially through education (Pollis, 1973; Bryant, 2006), and created a new classification based on ethnic fundamentals (Yavuz, 1991; Morag, 2004; Bryant, 2006; Vural and Rustemli, 2006). This policy, combined with the desire of Greeks of Cyprus for *Enosis* (union with Greece) and the following desire of Turks of Cyprus for *taksim*, (partition of the island) created ethnic conflicts and led to an unwanted independence in 1960.

During independence (1960-1974) ethnic terms remained the core self - classification for both communities. According to the constitution of 1960, members of the Greek Cypriot community were those who were Greek in origin, spoke Greek; they were Christian Orthodox and shared a Greek culture. Similarly, members of the Turkish Cypriot community were those who were Turkish in origin, spoke Turkish; they were Muslims and shared a Turkish culture (Philippou, 2007b).

In all these critical periods of Cyprus history there were no efforts to create a common identity for the two communities. On the contrary, all efforts were directed towards enhancing two separate ethnic identities.

After 1974 and the partition of the island, there were some interesting shifts in the collective identity of the two communities. For the Greek Cypriots the only way of unifying the island was reapprochement and thus the enhancement of a common identity (Stamatakis, 1991; Mavratsas, 1997; Ramm, 2005). Therefore, in 1970s Greek Cypriots faced the dilemma of choosing between an exclusive Greek or an exclusive Cypriot Identity (Papadakis, 1998). In 1980s, the concerns of cultural extermination turned

Greek Cypriots to the adoption of a Greek Cypriot identity that promotes the Greekness of Cyprus within an independent state (Mavratsas, 1997; Calotychos, 1998; Peristianis, 2006).

On the other hand, Turkish Cypriots were more attached to Turkey as they saw it as a rescuer form the Greeks. However, the unsure economic dependence on Turkey (Fisher, 2004), the increase of Turkish settlers (Calotychos, 1998; Faustmann, 2003) and the inability of Northern Cyprus to be recognized as a formal state (Lacher and Kaymak, 2005) detached Turkish Cypriots from Turkishness. Thus, a Turkish Cypriot identity (Killoran, 1998; Lacher and Kaymak, 2005; Vural and Rustemli, 2006), similar to that of Greek Cypriots, emerged.

The European Identity as an option of self – categorization emerged when the Greek Cypriot community applied to be a member of the European Union. Greek Cypriots saw the European Union as a guaranty for security and human rights with some economic benefits (Calotychos, 1998, European Commission, 2006). On the other hand, the Turkish Cypriots saw the European Union as an opportunity to lessen economic restrictions and the influence of Turkey (Vural and Rustemli, 2006). Although positive attitudes towards the European Union exits in both communities, the attachment with Europe as an option of self – categorization is limited (UN Office of Services, 2001).

Table 1
Variables of partition and variables of unity

Variables of partition	Variables of unity
Religious Identity	**Civic Identity**
Is related with the use of religious significances in the process of someone self – categorization (Vural and Rustemli, 2006). It presupposes an entirety of symbols, that create respect or awe and is connected with a community participation in rituals (Giddens, 2002.) These symbols and rituals, which substantially constitute coding of values, fables and traditions; are the basis of religious identities (Smith, 2000). The sovereign religion in the Greek-Cypriot community is Christianity (orthodoxy).	*It "is the idea that Cyprus has its own character and therefore should be considered as an entity which is independent from the respective homeland of the two main communities (Mavratsas, 1997). Cypriot identity does not abolish the Greek and Turkish nationality of the residents of the island (Calotychos, 1998; Mavratsas, 1997; Vural and Rustemli, 2006), but it is refer to a common culture and a unique character of two communities, that separate them from the residents of Greece and Turkey. This form of identity rises in the frame of the western model of nations (Kohn, 1961; Smith, 2000) and thus does not include the existence of a Cypriot nation, (Mavratsas, 1997) but a common territory with accent in the person as a citizen (Calotychos, 1998; Mavratsas, 1997). In extension, Cypriot identity corresponds in civic identity (Kohn, 1961; Smith, 2000).*

Ethic Identity	**European Identity**
Was developed after 1974 and aided in establishing the Greekness of Greek Cypriots within the frame of an independent state (Calotychos, 1998; Mavratsas, 1997). The Greek-Cypriot identity corresponds to the eastern model of nations (Kohn, 1961; Smith, 2000) and thus includes all those elements of ethnic identity.	*Was created after the realization of the significance of the social and cultural aspect within the EU, not only the economical one. In Cyprus European identity made its appearance mainly after the beginning of the integration process in the European Union, which was combined with the solution of the Cyprus problem. However, there are indications of precocious presence of European identity in the years of the British domination (Bryant, 2006). European identity refers to the identification with Europe (Kuščer and Prosen, 2005) and its values.*

Therefore, we have four major types of self identification for the two communities: ethnic, religious, civic and European. These types were created through time and constitute the sub-identities of the collective identity of the people of the island. Although, these identities are neither inclusive or exhaustive nor stable and consistent, they work as variables of unity (Cypriot and European Identity) or of partition (Ethnic and Religious identity).

Methodology

On the basis of the above observations and accepting the influence of education in the construction and formation of identity, through 'social interaction (Scourfield, Dicks, Drakeford and Davies, 2006)' and 'socialization (Scheibe, 1995)', we formed our research question as follow: which one of the identities – ethnic, religious, civic and European – that constitute Greek Cypriots' collective identity is promoted through the Republic of Cyprus' Primary Education Curriculum?

To analyze the Republic of Cyprus' Primary Education Curriculum, we use quantitative content analysis, descriptive and interpretive. The categories for the variable 'Collective Identity' were systematically formed before being examined in the research material. As code unit we use the symbolic unit 'theme' (Holsti, 1969; Berelson, 1971) and as a content unit we use the 'paragraph' (Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 1980).

To establish 'Intercoder Reliability', besides the researcher, three more coders were used to code all material under examination. One of those was a primary teacher in Cyprus. Percent Agreement, Scott's Pi, Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960), and Krippendorff's alpha were all used to access Intercoder Reliability for each variable coded. A beta version of the software package PRAM was used to calculate the first three of these. Due to technical problems in calculating Krippendorff's alpha, Klaus Krippendorff run the data to an unpublished program[i]. For the coding of a variable to be considered reliable it was required that the indexes should be .895 or higher (Weber, 1990; Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 1998; Lombard, Snyder – Duch and Bracken, 2002; Krippendorff, 2004). The reliability results are reported in Table 2. The validity was establish through face validity and social or external validity.

**Table 2**
Reliability between and among coders

Variables	Coders						
	C1-C2	C1-C3	C1-C4	C2-C3	C2-C4	C3-C4	Average
Collective Identity							
Percent Agreement/Holsti*	.909	.954	.950	.864	.900	.949	**.921**
Scott's Pi	.887	.817	.941	.831	.967	.941	**.897**
Cohen's Kappa	.888	.817	.941	.831	.967	.941	**.898**
Krippendorff's alpha	95% Confidence Interval .907 to .945						**.927**
Greek Cypriot (Ethnic) Identity							
Percent Agreement/Holsti	.929	.971	**.950**	.928	.906	**.949**	.939
Scott's Pi	.916	.967	**.941**	.916	.890	**.941**	.928
Cohen's Kappa	.917	.967	**.941**	.916	.890	**.941**	.928
Krippendorff's alpha	95% Confidence Interval .907 to .945						.927
Religious Identity							
Percent Agreement/Holsti	.992	.992	.992	.984	.984	.985	**.988**
Scott's Pi	.991	.991	.991	.982	.982	.983	**.987**
Cohen's Kappa	.991	.991	.991	.982	.982	.983	**.987**
Krippendorff's alpha	95% Confidence Interval .979 to .995						**.987**
Cypriot (Civic) Identity							
Percent Agreement/Holsti	**.909**	.963	1.0	**.864**	**.900**	.960	**.933**
Scott's Pi	**.887**	.955	1.0	**.831**	.873	.952	**.916**
Cohen's Kappa	**.888**	.956	1.0	**.831**	.873	.952	**.917**
Krippendorff's alpha	95% Confidence Interval .881 to .974						**.931**
European Identity							
Percent Agreement/Holsti	.962	**.954**	.978	.947	.971	.964	**.963**
Scott's Pi	.957	**.948**	.975	.941	**.967**	.959	**.958**
Cohen's Kappa	.957	**.948**	.975	.941	**.967**	.959	**.958**
Krippendorff's alpha	95% Confidence Interval .947 to .974						**.961**

Results

The results (Giannaka, 2008) demonstrate that the curriculum promotes all four options of identification, ethnic, religious, civic, and European identity. These identities represent different frequencies of promotion, with ethnic identity to be the most apparent variety of identification.

Chart 1
Collective Identity's References
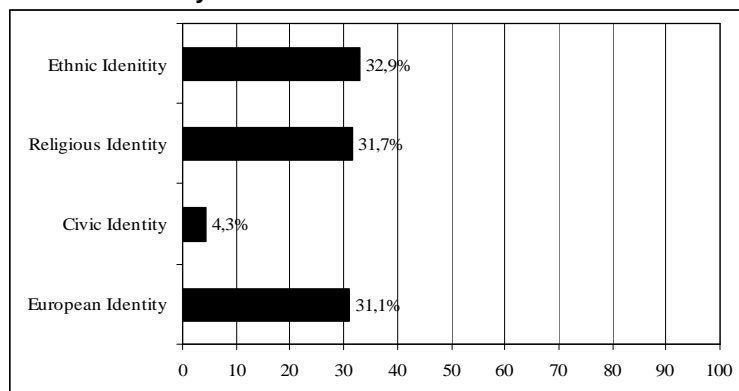
For the variable 'Collective Identity' 347 references access perfect agreement between coders (R=1). Ethnic identity is represented at 32.9%, religious identity at 31.7%, civic identity at 4.3%; and finally, european identity at 31.1%. The results should not be taken at face value. Although, the references of ethnic and European identity seem to be very close (1.8%), actually the percentage of ethnic identity is almost double (64.6%), because religious identity is an inseparable part of someone's ethnic identity (Smith, 2000).

Therefore, the Primary education's curriculum adopts an ethnic orientation that aims in the cultivation of the ideals that are important for the maintenance of the nation, thus, the cultivation of a strong Greek ethnic identity, the widening and preservation of Christian – Hellenic values; and the enhancement of a historical consciousness that proves the stability of the Greek nation (Koutselini - Ioannidou, 1997; Christou, 2006; Koutselini and Michaelidou, 2004). Thus, the current education curriculum would appear to represent an impediment to the creation of a common Cypriot identity for both communities, in which people give priority to the territory and not to nationality, religion and language.

On the other hand, independent documentation demonstrates that the purpose of education in the Turkish Cypriot's community was and still is the promotion of the Turkishness as an option of self – categorization (Navaro – Yashin, 2006; Vural and Rustemli, 2006). Education in Cyprus has previously played a significant role in widening the gap between the two main communities of the island (Pollis, 1973; Yavuz, 1991; Mavratsas, 1997; Calotychos, 1998; Bryant, 2001; Koutselini and Michaelidou, 2004 Morag, 2004; Peristianis, 2006), enhancing two dissimilar and opposing identities.

Furthermore, ethnic identity incorporates religious identity (Smith, 2000) which is promoted in a high percentage (31.7%) through the curriculum. This may be justified by the fact that religion has historically played an important role in the history of Cyprus and was many times connected with ethnic and natural survival of Greeks Cypriots (Mavratsas, 1997), as well as with the survival of the Greek nation.

References to citizen identity and thus logically to a common Cypriot identity between Greek and Turkish Cypriots are very few in the Primary Education Curriculum. According to the survey of UN Office Services (2001) there is confusion about the term citizenship in both communities. This survey explains that both Greeks and Turkish Cypriots incorporate in the term citizenship elements of ethnic identity such as the language, religion and nationality of their parents. This statement appears to explain to a great extent why a common civic identity has not yet developed between the two communities. Cypriot identity becomes possible when people give priority to territorial dimension rather than to membership in ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups (Smith, 2002; Peristianis, 2006; Vural and Rustemli, 2006).

Referring to the two communities, Faustmann (2003) states that Cypriotness was never the chosen majority identity. Most of them point out that they are Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots to distinguish themselves from their brothers on their respective ethnic mainland. Thus, most Cypriots

still think that they are a kind of Greek or Turkish that belongs, at least culturally, to their respective nations.

European identity is promoted in a significant percentage through the curriculum. There is a rationale for the promotion of a European identity which can be located to Greek culture, history, religion and political life (Flouris, 1998) that could be connected with the Greek Cypriot's education. The main values of Europe are considered by the Greeks and the Greek Cypriots as deriving from the Greek – Christian values (Bryant, 2006). Especially, in the case of Cyprus, since their everyday experiences with continuous violation of human rights leads to the need for establishment of human values, democracy, freedom and peace which are fundamental parts of a European identity.

Conclusion

The results of our research illustrated that the curriculum adopts an ethnic orientation. It continues advancing the legitimizing arguments for the right of Greek Cypriots to self – categorization as Greeks and legalising the place of religious studies via the connection between the Orthodox education and the formation of ethnic identity.

The enhancement of Greek ethnic identity constitutes one of the core objectives of Greek Cypriots' primary education curriculum (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007). Ethnic identity is one of the identities, which the acquisition of, could or should be included in the aims of education, with the condition, however, that the curriculum gives the students the possibility of developing a sense of their self as shareholders of a democratic way of life that includes the comprehension and the respect of other identities (Enslin, 2002). Moreover, the acquisition of ethnic identity constitutes a precondition for the development of a higher level of identification, such as European identity.

What we propose is the promotion of a European orientation aiming at the development of a European identity that will not replace but respect the particular national, religious and cultural diversity of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Through this European identity, we argue that the creation of a common Cypriot identity is feasible. This Cypriot identity will be common for the two communities, without the Greek and Turkish origin of two communities being erased. On the contrary, the two communities will learn to give priority to the territorial aspect and not in their national, religious and cultural differences. In this frame, the knowledge of history, religion and culture of the 'other' community is essential, so that students will understand that despite any differences, there are common elements, that is a common Cypriot reality.

Certain positive steps have been taken towards this direction, as the pre-text of the new curriculum focuses on citizenship (Curriculum Committee, 2008). The comparative analysis between the present curriculum and the new one has many to offer. All the above lead us to the conclusion that the role that education is called to play in the wanted reapprochement of two communities, is decisive. In the present study we tried to look at the role of the curriculum, without implying that the curriculum is the only source of message transmission for children at school. Other important factors are the school textbooks (Flouris, 1998; Philippou, 2007a) and the ideological background of the teachers (Spyrou, 2006). However, the examination of the curriculum constitutes a starting point.

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