Citizenship and identity: the self-image of secondary school students in England and Catalonia

Introduction

This article compares the ways in which Catalan and English students approach the controversial relationship between ‘citizenship’ and ‘identity’. By unpacking students’ self-identifications and the role the school has in this process, we seek to gain knowledge about the extent to which ‘citizenship’ is perceived as a legal status as opposed to being a more subjective identification. We feel that the possibilities and challenges of each approach have largely been discussed in academia (see e.g. Mouffe, 1992; Kymlicka & Norman, 1997; Isin & Wood, 1999) and we wish to consider these matters empirically in England and in Catalonia in Spain.

The relationship between ‘citizenship’ and ‘identity’ is strongly contested in both England and Catalonia. There are complex histories (which have involved violent struggles within what are currently constituted as national states), contemporary relationships within the states and with others (including the transnational citizenship of the European Union), and demographic diversity that are relevant to citizenship and identity. To choose two examples, in England it is likely that someone might have simultaneously British, English, Muslim and Pakistani heritage identities (Ross, 2007); in Catalonia, someone could reasonably identify with Catalan, Spanish speakers, Latino and regional groups (Corona, Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2013). The first person would, perhaps, hold a UK Passport and the second a Spanish and Colombian passport, both being citizens of the EU. Although this complexity is evident in both cases, the school curricula emphasize the principal significance of England or Catalonia (Guyver, 2013; Pages & Sant, 2015).

Three differences in terms of citizenship and identity, in particular national identity, need to be acknowledged. First, although the location of the UK government is in London (and so in England), Catalonia is a peripheral nation within Spain. In this role, Catalonia may be compared to Scotland or Wales, for example with regards to the Referendum on Scottish Independence (Davies, Chong, Epstein, Peck, Peterson, Ross, Sears, Schmidt, Sonu, forthcoming) and the Informal Vote on Independence for Catalonia (e.g. Greer, 2012; Guibernau, 2014; Bourne, 2014). Second, although English identity may be exclusive, it has been argued that Englishness and Britishness can actually be used synonymously (Kumar, 2010; Kymlicka, 2011). In contrast, Spanish and Catalan identity were once viewed as complementary (Melich, 1986; Kymlicka, 2011) but now ‘Catalan identity’ defines itself in
opposition to ‘Spanishness’ (Sant, Pages, Santisteban & Boixader, forthcoming). Third, the links between national identity and political mobilization are more intense in Catalonia than in England. Englishness seems to be often characterized via the dominant role of England within the UK in the context of Eurosceptic political parties (Welling, 2010) and the right wing extremism of such groups as the English Defence League. In Catalonia, since 2010 there has been an intense nationalistic mobilization (Guibernau, 2014) which some have compared to the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union (Smith, 2013; Bourne, 2014). For this study we wished to select contexts in which issues relevant to citizenship and identity are contested generally and where the connections between these fundamental matters and education are explicitly raised. The similarities and differences between England and Catalonia are presented to illuminate and to gain a deeper understanding about each of them. It would, of course, have been possible to make other comparisons. We could perhaps have compared England with Castile if we had wished to consider dominance within a multi-nation state; or, perhaps Catalonia with Scotland or Wales if we wished to compare nations that have been less powerful than others within state borders. But in our comparison we have had an opportunity to reflect, at a time of change, on the nature of differences and similarities between two countries (one that has been represented as an oppressor and the other as oppressed) and to see how our respondents talk about their identities in the context of debates about citizenship where there have been varying degrees of nationalist mobilization.

We discuss the links between citizenship, identity and the school curriculum theoretically and in the particular cases of Catalonia and England. We then outline the research methods employed to collect and analyse data. The presentation of the results is followed by a discussion, an outline of the possible implications for citizenship education and some recommendations for research and practice.

**Citizenship, identity and school-based education**

The links between identity and citizenship are complex. Identity can be defined as the symbolic relationship between the individual and the social environment (Chryssochoou, 2003). Citizenship could also be defined as the relationship between the individual and the community, but whereas identity seems to have particularistic connotations, the notion of citizenship may, in some contexts, theoretically, be more universal (Isin & Wood, 1999). This connects with the liberal perspective that citizenship is an objective and usually legal status which is assigned by an external entity allowing individuals to hold rights within the state (Mouffe, 1992). However, citizenship can also be discussed in terms of a dialectical process which involves legal status as well as an identity which is subjectively assumed (Berger & Lukman, 1986; Kymlicka & Norman, 1997). The appropriation of this latter
identity, often seen as a sense of belonging, has an impact on individuals’ participation in their communities (Dahlgren, 2003; Zaff, Malanchuk & Eccles, 2008) and in the relationships individuals have with other members of the community (Conover, 1995). Identification by individuals and groups with a community relates both to intra-solidarity (Andreotti, 2011) and internal social cohesion (Conover, 1995), and, as a corollary, absence of identification can contribute to the dissolution of the community. More radically, Althusser (1972) depicts individual identifications with ideologies through *interpellation* that normally fail. Ideology shapes (interpellates) the subject, it does not distort a pre-existing subject. Meanwhile the discursively formed Foucauldian subject crafts a technology of self (Foucault, 1997). In this last case there are no universal rules to be located beneath the surface of human activity. Rather each individual is responsible for their own self.

Citizenship education and the creation and reinforcement of identities have always been seen as a principal aim and purpose of schooling (Lave & Wegner, 1998) as well as, more recently, a discrete school subject. The development of mass education is often viewed as a mechanism for developing nation states in the 19th Century (Falaize, Heimberg & Loubes, 2013; Smith, 1995) by incorporating ‘all individuals in a unified and progressive collectivity that would successfully operate in a real world as a nation-state, whether organizationally centralized or not’ (Meyer, Ramirez & Soyal, 1992, p. 131). It could be argued that if the citizenship purpose of education is unpacked, the notion of ‘good citizenship’ would traditionally imply some sort of loyalty and, perhaps, identification with the nation (Pages & Sant, 2015).

Beyond national-state identity, in a considerable number of countries, national curricula have also been seen as generating some sort of good citizenship identity (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Ross, 2007), European identity (Delanty, 2007), regional identity (Oller, 2013), religious identity (Cook, 2000) or school identity (Osler & Starkey, 2003). The generation of some or all of these identities is often connected to the purposes of Citizenship Education (Osler & Starkey, 2003; Misiejuk, Rubik & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2004; Torres & Esteban, 2005; Ross, 2007). Consideration of these approaches is essential for our consideration of our respondents’ views. Following Olssen (2004), three different approaches have been proposed to consider the relationship between Citizenship Education and identities. First, civic education may aim to create a single identity, usually nationally based, that is linked to a legal status. This model of Citizenship Education is based on a structural approach in which schooling is perceived as a mechanism to contribute to cohesive and peaceful intra-state societies (Durkheim, 1956). Although this model of citizenship has been often criticized for its contribution to violent international struggles (Buckley-Zistel, 2008) and for its attempt to impose the dominant culture’s ideology on minorities (Apple, 1979; Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 1989), forms of civic
education that aim to build a single national-state identity are still present in several European countries curricula (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr & Losito, 2010).

Second, the Crick Report, Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools (QCA, 1998) proposed the reconciliation of private multiple identities with a single public citizen identity. Based on the conception of citizenship developed by Marshall (1997), the Crick Report proposed that Citizenship Education would acknowledge individual identities (this could be, for example, related to various things including religion, gender and ethnicity) within a shared citizen, probably national, identity. This approach has been accepted by some (it was influential in England in the development of the National Curriculum for Citizenship Education 1998-2010) and criticised by others. Following I. Marion Young and her defence of the politics of cultural difference, it has been argued that in this process ‘minorities’ are marginalised and an exclusive form of citizenship identity has been created (Osler & Starkey, 2001).

A third approach involves the possible integration of Young’s politics of difference with citizenship education. In the UK, The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain produced the Parekh report (The Runnymede Trust, 2000). A model of citizenship was developed where people must be included in the construction of citizenship not only as individuals but also as part of the communities to which they belong. The report also describes the common components of this inclusive citizenship. Following Olssen (2004), all citizens should share certain rights, a common body of values which could be based on a human rights framework and aim to achieve a ‘minimal universalism’ in terms of creating a conception of community. This seems essential in terms of creating post-national identities in relation to global identity, (Davies, Evans, Reid, 2005) and cosmopolitan identity, (Osler & Starkey, 2003).

In England the National Curriculum applies formally to state maintained schools (approximately 50% of the total number of schools) and in practice to almost all schools including those recently introduced school types (e.g. Academies and Free Schools) that are part of the state system and entitled to greater autonomy. The whole curriculum is relevant to issues of identity. All school subjects obviously connect with issues of identity (and there are those such as history and English that perhaps relate more explicitly than others); and, within the National Curriculum subject of Citizenship Education there are clear references to particular identities with, for example, students being required to learn about ‘the precious liberties enjoyed by the citizens of the United Kingdom’ (Department for Education, 2013). These curricular issues connect with deep seated debates about national identity (including
fundamental matters that have been explored recently in several ways, including the Referendum on Scottish independence in September 2014).

The national curriculum in Catalonia has been constructed as an additional layer of the Spanish national curriculum. It applies to all schools (private and state maintained schools) with minor exceptions (e.g. international schools). Whereas the Spanish curriculum only refers to identity issues in the area of foreign languages (which are associated with the creation of European identity), the whole Catalan curriculum is relevant to issues of identity, in particular in the areas of Catalan language, geography and history and citizenship education. Indeed, one of the aims of the Catalan curriculum is to ‘Internalize the historical, cultural, geographical and social characteristics of Catalan society and reinforce a sense of belonging to the country’ (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2007). Until the existing curriculum modifications were introduced in the academic year 2014/2015, deleting citizenship education from the Spanish, and consequently the Catalan, curriculum, Catalan secondary students were expected to learn how to ‘identify and reject discrimination due to origin, gender, beliefs, ideology and affective orientation in societies, showing a respectful and empathetic attitude towards customs, values, feelings and ways of life different to their own’ (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2007). There are highly complex and contested issues about identity throughout Spain and across Catalonia with debates about competing nationalisms informed and influenced by the current economic crisis and the attempts of the national government to impact upon a range of groups of people (see Santisteban Fernandez 2013).

We seek to address three key research questions:

- What are the similarities and differences in the ways in which English/Catalan students identify themselves with communities/groups?
- What are the similarities and differences in the ways in which English/Catalan students identify themselves as citizens?
- To what extent and how do English/Catalan schools reinforce students’ self-identification?

Methods

Given that our main aim was wide ranging and that we wished to compare the potentially sensitive issues of how English and Catalan students perceive their identities and what role school plays in the generation of these identities, we felt that a mixed methods approach would be appropriate (e.g. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007; Miles & Huberman 1994; Bergman, 2008). Data were
collected in England (November 2012 - January 2013) and in Catalonia (March - April 2014) with simultaneous analysis during April - August 2014. The three English and six Catalanian schools that were invited to join the project were known for their commitment to citizenship education. We selected three English schools and six Catalan schools since the number of students per school was considerably larger in the English case (and as such we checked for variations in response both by student and by school).

In each school, citizenship or social studies teachers surveyed students aged 13-15 in classroom time. 587 students were invited to participate in the research with 583 supplying data. The schools were known to the researchers in relation to previously undertaken work on citizenship education and so were felt to be committed to it. We feel that this facilitated access as well as perhaps providing opportunities for thoughtful responses but there were no more precisely or explicitly developed criteria for including them in the sample. The schools were varied and were not seen as representative of national or any other orientation.

Table 1. Characteristics of the project teachers and their schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Size of the town (approx.)</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>198,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>198,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>189,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Catalonian</td>
<td>Central Catalonia</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Catalonian</td>
<td>Central Catalonia</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Catalonian</td>
<td>Metropolitana area of Barcelona</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Catalonian</td>
<td>Metropolitana area of Barcelona</td>
<td>89,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Catalonian</td>
<td>Metropolitana area of Barcelona</td>
<td>207,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Catalonian</td>
<td>Central Catalonia</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Semi-private schools, known as “escoles concertades”, are partially funded by the state and usually faith-based. The national curriculum applies to semi-private schools.

Semi-private schools, known as “escoles concertades”, are partially funded by the state and usually faith-based. The national curriculum applies to semi-private schools.
Table 2. Characteristics of the students who answered the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total Count (Valid Percent)</th>
<th>Gender Male Count (Valid Percent)</th>
<th>Gender Female Count (Valid Percent)</th>
<th>Age 13 – 14 years Mean Count (Valid Percent)</th>
<th>Age 14 – 15 years Count (Valid Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>244 (41.9)</td>
<td>95 (39.0)</td>
<td>149 (61.0)</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>213 (87.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalan</td>
<td>339 (58.1)</td>
<td>173 (51.0)</td>
<td>166 (49.0)</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>255 (75.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>583 (100.0)</td>
<td>268 (46.0)</td>
<td>315 (54.0)</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>287 (48.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean age of the students was higher in Catalonia (14.2) than in England (13.4) and the percentage of females in England was higher (61%) than the percentage of Catalan female students (49%). The difference of 0.8 years in students’ mean age was not considered to be relevant regarding the research aims. Taking into account previous research about students’ identities (Schulz, et al., 2010) we considered the difference of gender relevant. Therefore, we decided to weight each student answer according to gender. Table 3 shows the gender-weighted characteristics of the sample.

Table 3. Characteristics of the gender-weighted sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total Count (Valid Percent)</th>
<th>Gender Male Count (Valid Percent)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>244 (41.9)</td>
<td>122 (49.0)</td>
<td>122 (51.0)</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>218 (89.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalan</td>
<td>339 (58.1)</td>
<td>170 (50.0)</td>
<td>169 (50.0)</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>255 (75.2)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>583 (100.0)</td>
<td>292 (50.0)</td>
<td>291 (50.0)</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>287 (48.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty two of the total sample of 583 students participated in focus-group interviews. Eight focus-group interviews were carried out (two in school 1; one in school 2; one in school 3; one in school 5; one in school 6; one in school 7; and one in school 8). Whereas in England all schools surveyed participated in the focus-group, in Catalonia only four of the schools (selected only in relation to convenience) were asked to participate. In all cases, teachers selected the students according to the three criteria of students’ willingness to participate and debate; a range of academic ability; and gender
(with no assumptions that they would necessarily represent non-participants). The focus groups were equally divided between boys and girls (except, of course, in the girls’ school), and the students in each school were of mixed abilities.

A questionnaire survey was used with common issues covered between the two countries (although phrased in slightly different ways to ensure appropriate use of language, comprehension and the possibility of valid responses). Teachers were informed about the aims and the content of the questionnaires and they explained matters to students. Students were asked about their perceptions about identity and citizenship. The first 4 questions explored issues about groups and identities; this was followed by a question on the nature of their identification with citizenship, a question about a sense of identity and finally an opportunity to give their views about the connections between their group and individual identities and school activities. In all cases there were opportunities for students to explain their responses. One of the authors of this article conducted all the semi-structured focus-group interviews. Efforts were made to let students write openly and talk freely with no prompting for the written responses and very little or no prompting in the interviews beyond stating the questions.

Initial qualitative analysis (Creswell, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994) was completed using the software TAMSAnalyzer. English and Catalan data were analysed simultaneously (an initial analysis of English data was conducted in January 2013). Initial categories were developed followed by codification and re-codification and creation of matrix nets and schemes with subsequent testing of those analyses. Once qualitative data had been codified using this procedure, data from the surveys were quantified. Using the process of quantification called 1 (Present) versus 0 (absent) (Sandelowski, 2009), new variables were created for each code identifying whether or not the code was present in each student’s answer. The use of 1/0 quantification is controversial in mixed methods analysis as it may result in significant losses of variance (Sandelowski, 2009) but we proceeded with this approach in an attempt to enrich our understanding by means of triangulating quantitative analysis with a more explicitly interpretative analysis of the focus group data. In order to compare English and Catalan students’ data we used contingency tables and then triangulated the results from the quantitative analyses of survey and the results from the qualitative analyses of both the survey questionnaire and focus group data. The quantitative analysis was used to highlight the differences and similarities between both groups, and qualitative analyses were used to explain these differences and similarities of students’ perceptions.

Ethical considerations in this research were taken into account with matters explained to respondents and the signing of informed consent forms. All data were considered anonymously, questions were not
intrusive, participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any time and were informed about what would happen to the data they provided.

Results

We present below some of the results from our research project, organized in relation to our three research questions, highlighting the questions which were posed and including only some of the detailed data analyses that occurred.

*What are the similarities and differences in the ways English/Catalan students identify themselves with communities/groups?*

Students were invited to answer the question: ‘Do you identify yourself with more than one group of people?’ 92.4% of the English students surveyed identified themselves with more than one group of people but, by contrast, only 76.2% of the Catalan students did so. Catalan students who identify themselves with a single group usually do so with national/ethnic groups or with groups of friends. For example, a 15-year-old boy mentioned ‘I identify myself with the boys I play football with’, a 16-years-old girl mentioned “I identify myself with a single group and they are the Latinos” (ID182) or a 13-years-old girl claimed ‘I identify myself with Catalan people, I have spoken Catalan since I was a child. It is my language!’ (ID116). This phenomenon of single-identification with a national, ethnic or friendship group is rather different in English students’ answers. Only 3 students, for example, identified themselves exclusively as ‘English’. This is very interesting given that the question was asked in an open ended way and there was no conditioning such as a recent lesson on nationality for one group (but not others) that would have explained such stark differences.

When asked to name the groups to which they identified English students mentioned their identification with places (62.1%), gender (56%), hobbies (44.6%), age (39.4%), religion (26%) and friendship groups (16.4%). Catalan students mentioned their identification with age (58.3%), places (53.4%), hobbies (41.6%) and gender (37.7%).

Graph 1. Comparison of valid percent of groups mentioned by students.
Whereas English students identify themselves more frequently with religion, places, gender and friendship groups, Catalan students identify themselves with political and with age groups as well as with ‘the students’. 21 of the 25 Catalan students who identified themselves with a political ideology did so as supporters of Catalan independence. For example, a 14-years-old boy wrote: ‘I identify myself with the groups: Catalan, separatists, cule [a Barcelona football club supporter], teenager, basketball player’ (ID366). Age and ‘student status’ seems to be an essential element in Catalan students’ identification while the relevance of those factors is considerably lower among English students. 20% more of Catalan students than English students identify themselves with their age group, teenagers or young people, and approximately 5% more of Catalan students identify themselves with students.

English students mention religion and gender with more frequency than Catalan students. However, this is not always a strong process of self-identification with a gender or a religious group but simply an element they consider when they think about groups. English students identify themselves more frequently than the Catalans with people from a mix of different places including with people from another continent.

Students were also invited to answer the question ‘Why do you think that you identify yourself with these group(s) of people?’ We highlight in graph 2 some of the reasons given for young people’s identification with particular groups.
English students tend to highlight the relevance of sharing time, hobbies and activities whereas for Catalan students belonging is based principally around the intrinsic nature of each person. A typical response from an English student is shown by a 13 year old girl who commented: ‘Because they have the same interests and enjoy the same activities as I do. We know each other very well as we have been together for a long time’ (ID141). In contrast, the Catalan students justified their identification in terms of feeling a certain identity, liking a common element of the group, speaking a particular language or simply by ‘being’. The Catalan students do not entirely exclude reliance on common interests but are likely to emphasise more frequently nationality and being, rather than engagement in shared activities. For example, a 14-year-old Catalan boy wrote, ‘because I am Catalan …. And everything else because this is what I am’ (ID376), another 13-years-old Catalan boy wrote, ‘Because they identify what I am. They reflect my nationality and the homeland I belong to’ (ID390).

These results suggest to us that, compared with the English group, the narrower range of identifications by the Catalans and the stronger association they have with Catalonia means that there is a tendency for at least some of them to have a more legalistic interpretation of what they may deem to be an imposed citizenship. We cannot make this point so strongly as to deny any sense of wider citizenship identity on the part of the Catalans but we do feel it is appropriate to highlight this possible tendency for a particular interpretation that is not the same as that adopted by the English.
What are the similarities and differences in the ways English/Catalan students identify themselves as citizens?

Having being asked, ‘Do you think of yourself being a “citizen”? (of what group(s)?)’, most Catalan (88.6%) and English (86.9%) students consider themselves to be citizens. 53% of the English students who perceived themselves as citizens connected their citizenship to a particular place. Some of them also identified themselves being citizens of smaller communities (such as their families, school or their friendship group) and other with their hobbies (such as sports, music groups, etc.). Only 35% of the Catalan students who see themselves as citizens explained that in relation to a place. This contrasts with the 53.4% of the students who had previously expressed identification with a place.

Graph 3. Comparison of valid percent of groups of citizens mentioned by students.

Initially this was seen as a surprising result. We reported above that the Catalan students seem to regard their Catalan nationality as an important indicator of their identity and as such we expected them to highlight the significance of Catalonia in relation to citizenship. Hobbies and a range of activities including those occurring in particular places were important for the Catalan students (see graph 4).
A higher percentage of English students perceive themselves as British citizens and citizens of their towns and villages than our other respondents. Whereas the UK students seemed to see themselves as English and as British, most Catalan students do not seem to feel entirely comfortable with their Spanish citizenship. For the English sample, as shown in focus group data, the congruence between English identity and British citizenship was not seen as problematic.

Girl: Yeah, I think myself, like especially sort of being like an English citizen or a British citizen…
England. School 2
Girl: Myself, I like to consider myself, obviously British and English, the obvious ones…
England. School 2
Girl: Always I feel like a citizen like England… or UK…

It could be suggested that English students connect English and British citizenship without recognizing any potentially conflicting characterisations. It is not necessarily an indication of detailed understanding of the status and meanings relevant to those citizenships if they are used interchangeably, but it does indicate something distinct from the Catalan responses. In three of the focus groups conducted in Catalonia, students described themselves as being citizens of Catalonia but none described themselves as being Spanish citizens. Instead, these Catalan students described themselves as being citizens of a country, and when asked of which country, they asserted (with some force) their Catalan national identity.

Curiously, given the amount of attention given by commentators and the possibility of a more globalized citizenry developing among the young, there were extremely few indications of any sense of European or world citizenship (indeed, only 2 Catalan students of the sample of 583 mentioned their
European citizenship). Both the English and Catalan students are legally part of the European Union with many holding EU passports and it is likely that many will feel a part of global (or, at least international-western) culture. But if these feelings exist they were not expressed in response to questions about identity or citizenship. It is possible that more explicit prompting could have led to different responses but that sort of approach was not adopted for other possible characterisations and we felt it would have been inappropriate to do so for these matters. Some do, however, describe themselves as ‘young citizens’ or ‘student-citizens’ and in some ways it seemed that while this was not necessarily a second class status it was not deemed to be something that allowed them to go beyond being citizens in formation whether in relation to age, opportunity or time spent in the community.

When in the focus-groups students were invited to discuss the reasons behind their ‘sense of citizenship’, both English and Catalan students mentioned the importance for citizenship of feeling that there are some similarities with the other citizens from the same community. For example, a boy commented:

Boy: Well, I moved here just this year, so I haven't been that long, and I think to be a citizen, you kind of have to live there for quite a bit to get to know like the surroundings and everyone... So I feel like I am part of the community but not fully a citizen yet, if you know what I mean...
(England. School 1).

There were differences between the Catalans and English in relation to what these similarities might be. The English respondents place more emphasis on a feeling of belonging whereas the Catalans rely more strongly on a legal status. We show below 2 representative quotations:

Boy: You belong to that country, so belonging to a group of people, so much like small group of friends, you might feel, like a citizen of that group, or something like that…
(England. School 3)

Boy: Because we are registered in this country since we were children and we are part of the citizens of this country.
(Catalonia. School 7).

Some Catalan students connected citizenship explicitly with legally framed or constitutionally related rights and duties:
Girl: We are citizens and we share things. I feel I am a citizen because I have rights and duties to accomplish and I must be respected by different sorts of people.

(Catalonia. School 9)

Boy: Like… If, for instance, I have an opinion about something of my village, and I tell the City Council…. I think they will take it into account.

(Catalonia. School 5)

Again, our results seem to suggest different perceptions of citizenship and identity. For the Catalans there is, among some diversity of interpretation, a more precisely framed and more formal approach.

To what extent and how do English/Catalan schools contribute to reinforce their ‘self-identification’?

Students were invited to answer the question ‘Does any particular activity that you undertake at school (inside or outside classrooms) help you in having this “sense of belonging”?’ Surprisingly, given that we had already raised questions about various aspects of citizenship and identity, most students assumed that by this ‘sense of belonging’ we were referring exclusively to a ‘sense of belonging’ to their schools or to their friendship group. This would suggest that if the schools do contribute to reinforce student’ self-identification with wider groups or more formal status, students seem not to be aware of this process.

Students described several activities undertaken within the school that help them in having a sense of belonging. Concerning a sense of belonging to their schools, most students mentioned participation in sports’ clubs and PE classes, a few students (11) mentioned other activities (e.g., school celebrations, school council) and a few Catalan students (10) mentioned out of class activities organized by schools such as trips. Other important types of activity for creating and developing a sense of belonging were social activities such as spending time with friends and talking at break time. This would suggest the relevance of school in creating a ‘sense of belonging’ to friendships groups. In contrast, students did not consider the role of class subjects, such as Citizenship, History, Religion or Language, in creating identification with wider communities (such as religion, national, EU).

When comparing the responses from the English and Catalan students’ data (see table 4), we found that English students highlighted more strongly the value of sports clubs whereas the Catalan students highlighted often less formally arranged social activities. This could be interpreted to mean that for
English students, school contributes to create a ‘sense of belonging’ with the school, whereas for Catalan students, school contributes to create a ‘sense of belonging’ with their friendship groups. Perhaps in support of this point, Catalan students also mentioned more frequently class subjects and activities undertaken outside the school.

Table 4. Comparison of activities mentioned by students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>English</th>
<th></th>
<th>Catalan</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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Indeed, it could be suggested that the difference between both groups of students is not related to the activity itself but to the level of formal organization of the activity. Schools may need to consider this point if they wish to impact on students’ identities.

Boy: You can also bond because people you wouldn’t normally talk to, at a break or lunch, you wouldn't go out of your way to just go over to them, have a conversation, you would do in sport, cause sport kind of bounds everyone, and you have to work as a team. And so... Yeah, it just brings everyone together really….
(England. School 1)
Boy: Yes, because you also know people from other villages and you then feel comfortable with people you are not used to be with. And this is OK because you finally have friends, not only from your school but also from other villages
(Catalonia. School 5)

Girl: I go to music classes outside the school… In my class there we are few people and most of them from my school, but there are also some other people from other High Schools, and when I first met them I thought I would never go with them because they have a bad image, but sometimes we work together, in pairs, and when you spend some time with them, you see they are different than the rest of their school…
Interviewer: Do you mean that it helped you to break down negative stereotypes?
Girl: Yes!
(Catalonia. School 5)

As it can be seen, the three students above use similar arguments. However, whereas the English student considers that sports clubs contribute to the sense of belonging to the people within the school, the Catalan students mention that the outside-school sports club helped him to create an outside-school group. Furthermore, considering the girls’ arguments, it also seems likely that taking part in out-of-school activities can contribute to breaking down negative stereotypes regarding students from other schools. Of course, the differing nature of school curricula (including the emphasis on foreign language learning) and aspects of school organisation in England and Catalonia could explain many of the differences between groups. We are unsure why school trips and curricular activities other than PE seem to have made a greater impact on Catalan students. The relationship between type of activity, the process of the activity and the connection with identity and citizenship needs to be considered carefully by schools especially in light of the almost complete absence of comment about the school curriculum in either country.

Discussion

This discussion will be organised in 3 parts: the differences between the English and Catalan perceptions of their identities and citizenship; the similar responses across our full data set of all students regarding European and global citizenship; and the role of schools regarding students’ identities and citizenship in the context of recent relevant policy changes.
Firstly, our analysis shows that there are four clear differences in the ways the English and Catalan students in our sample identify themselves as members of groups and as citizens. We suggest that these differences relate to theoretical characterizations of identity and citizenship and are relevant to recent discussions about policy changes for citizenship education. Those four differences are concerned with the number of associations seen by respondents to be relevant to their identity; the relevance of undertaking activities with others and the strength of recognition of a fundamental personal or inner identity of ‘who I am’; the strength and nature of national identity; and, the connection between identities and legal or constitutional status.

The English students identify with a larger number of groups and perhaps see the multiple identities that emerge from these groups within a distinct framework. It is possible that for these English students a common identity can be constructed in relation to activity and friendship groups. This is, however, applied in what seems to be a fluid manner. Their self-recognition in terms of their activities is not cast exclusively. In other words, if a student is taking part in an activity with others then the likelihood of sharing a common identity with other participants is accepted. The English students do not place strong boundary lines around their identity in terms of emphasising the inner strength of their personality and individual being.

The members of the English sample do not see their nationality clearly or in fixed terms. Indeed, there is a good deal of loose expression. It is, of course, possible that were we to re-run the study now, following the socialising effect of the 2014 Referendum on Scottish Independence, there may be a stronger sense of the distinction between English-ness and British-ness among our respondents. But this did not appear in the data. It is possible that this tendency of the English sample to characterize their national identity loosely may continue. Some have suggested that a rapid decline in the expression of separatism seems already to be occurring in several parts of the UK, including Wales (Boon 2014). It is possible that this may also apply beyond the UK in light of evidence from Quebec in the mid-1990s following the outcome of the referendum which rejected secession from Canada. But, of course, the impact of the General Election of 2015 and subsequent actions currently seems to suggest that there is now an increased discrete national identification. Indeed these points are made cautiously. We are not making a simple assertion that other research has been simply confirmed or denied.

Our data, however, reveal willingness to share identities with those with whom one engages in shared activities and with those from different nationalities within the UK. Even if that identification were to become restricted to England it would still be possible to see it as distinct from a legalistic construct. These English students’ perceptions have certain
similarities with the ways in which Crick (QCA, 1998) and Parekh (The Runnymede Trust, 2000) characterise identity. Our respondents are forming or expressing identity distinctly from the legal and constitutionally-based and personal responsibility model (for volunteering and personal finance) envisaged by the new National Curriculum for citizenship (Sant & Davies, 2014). In contrast with the Crick Report, and especially with a constitutionally-based model of civic identification, the students who mentioned a common English/British citizenship identity may not connect common identity to a legal status. Rather, their responses to our questions suggest that they see that identity entails a communal ‘sense of belonging’. Citizenship for these English students is not seen in terms of a legal identity assigned by an external entity but as a subjective identity (Berger & Lukman, 1986; Kymlicka & Norman, 1997). For those English students who associated their common identity with friendship and activity groups it is not possible to argue that their sense of belonging necessarily connects to the wider community of the local or the national and they are unlikely to be immediately positively disposed to the newly introduced education for citizenship programme. We cannot know for any of the English sample if they share the ‘minimum sets of common aspects’ to ensure the survival of wider communities (The Runnymede Trust, 2000).

The responses of the English sample seem to be clearly different in some respects from those in Catalonia. It should be made clear that these distinctions might be due to linguistic rather than other matters. Perhaps the Catalan and English languages prompt particular responses. However, 1 of the authors is fluent in both English and Catalan; another is fluent in Catalan and has a working knowledge of English. Great care was taken to ensure an appropriately comparative process of data gathering and analysis. Although the Catalan and Spanish framework to citizenship education (e.g. Oñate, Jacott & Navarro, 2008; Santisteban & Pages, 2011), similarly to the English situation, establishes clear links between citizenship and identity, Catalan students do not seem to make these connections. Catalan students tend to recognize, explicitly, fewer identities than the English, and perhaps at times embrace a single identity. That single identity, usually linked to national or ethnic identity, is expressed in terms of what could be considered essential identities – an emphasis upon ‘who I am’. Our research suggests that among Catalan students, Spanish and Catalan identities are not complementary but exclusive (Kymlicka, 2011). Although from a structural approach, a single national identity may be desirable in terms of developing at least superficially peaceful intra-state societies (Durkheim, 1956), we argue that this may not apply in contemporary Catalonia. Rather than having multiple identities, our results suggest the existence of two dominant traditional identities (Catalan and Spanish) which seems to relate to a struggle for hegemony without considering the consequences for minority groups (Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 1989). By contrast, for some of our sample of Catalan students, rather than being a subjective individualized identity, citizenship seems to be a combination
of a legal status and a political activity that implies, at a certain point, political participation, rights and duties. Hence, this would explain why these students identify themselves in terms of their age, ‘student status’ or as ‘in process citizens’ or, ‘citizens in preparation’ since they have not assumed the full rights and duties they associate with citizenship. If, as our sample suggest, Catalan young people identify themselves with a single identity which does not match their citizenship that they perceive as being externally assigned, it could be argued that the future of Catalan society is uncertain. In Catalonia recent political mobilization has been framed by a Catalan identity that seems to be disconnected from other aspects of citizenship such as literacy and social and moral responsibility. The initial attempt by the Spanish government to introduce a model of citizenship similar in some ways to that promoted by Crick in England led to proposals for a stronger emphasis on constitutional matters which, when opposed, led to the current situation in which the area has simply been deleted. In this context it seems unlikely that contributions will be made to more inclusive forms of national identities or to more complex forms of multiple identities.

Secondly, and beyond these clear differences, certain similarities between the Catalan and the English data are interesting. Neither the English students, who assert their ‘multiple identities’, nor the Catalan students, who have more traditional and exclusive forms of identities, seem to have any strong sense of European belonging. Considering the relationship between having a ‘sense of belonging’, political participation (Dahlgren, 2003; Zaff et al., 2008) and community cohesion (Conover, 1995; Andreotti, 2011) it is perhaps not surprising that there are low levels of various forms of political participation in Europe. Indeed, as the results of the 2014 European elections demonstrate, there is a good deal of opposition to those who argue for greater European solidarity. It seems likely in light of our data (and in agreement with other sources such as Hoskins and Kerr 2012) that the EU is too distant and has not yet effectively made a convincing case for a European identity for these people who relate to place, friendship groups and activities. It is possible, of course, that Europeanism is implicit in our sample and that greater efforts by the EU to establish integration and solidarity might be counter-productive. But it seems that the nationally framed formulations of citizenship education (and their withdrawal) are unlikely to help young people develop commitment to or insights into what is their legally positioned and culturally framed identities and citizenship. It is also interesting that despite the obvious significant increase in everyday expressions of a global society seen in the use by young people of social and other media potentially involving interactions with peers and others from around the world and general increased international flows of people and goods, there was little explicit indication of global identity or citizenship.
Thirdly, it is within the contexts described above that schools make contributions to explore, create and strengthen identities. Some have claimed that the nature of English schools with a strong history of emphasising the school as a community (including extra-curricular clubs) and its role with the local and other communities means that there will be an impact on students (Osler and Starkey 2001). The students may see that schools are a key point for them to express - and be a key influence on - their formation of identity and citizenship. Catalan students, by contrast, also participate in clubs but these tend not to have any connection with schools. The English students identify themselves with their schools but this identification is considerably lower among the Catalan students. Whereas school identification can help English students to increase their participation within the school (Schulz et al., 2011), Catalan students’ participation in out-of-school clubs helps them to break down stereotypes about other schools’ students. We are not suggesting that loyalty to one’s school is necessarily better or worse than identification with wider groups of young people. We also wish to highlight that certain activities undertaken in schools seem to strengthen identities exclusively among the Catalan students. Participating in school trips and camps and taking modern languages courses are mentioned by the Catalan students as activities that help students to strength their sense of belonging with their own schools. Similarly, the ‘synthesis credit’, a final course team project, also seems to have an effect on these Catalan students. The special characteristics of these activities, we argue, could be compared further to the impact on identity of the activities undertaken by English students.

Conclusions and recommendations

Considering these similarities and differences between English and Catalan students and the roles of schools, what proposals could be made regarding the citizenship purpose of schooling?

First, from our point of view, given the lack of alignment between students’ and policy makers’ conceptions of identities and citizenship it seems unlikely that the new curricular reforms in England and Spain will contribute to the generation of common inclusive approaches and outcomes. In England, the new Citizenship Education curriculum promotes what some would see as a stronger emphasis on civics and, perhaps, a single national identity based on legal status. Our results suggest that English students, far from considering citizenship in terms of legal status and political forms, perceive citizenship as a subjective identity. In Catalonia, the removal of Citizenship Education from the curriculum seems unlikely to contribute to the generation of common inclusive identities. In the new curriculum, there is no place for debating the nature and role of different groups and identities or considering how minority groups can contribute to a common identity.
Second, it seems to us necessary to consider the work that needs to take place in relation to European and global citizenship. We are aware of the complex tensions in these areas. We have argued above that officially sanctioned curricula that do not align with students’ conceptions and characterizations are unlikely to be accepted. It would therefore not be reasonable for us to identify a lack of attention by students to European and global citizenship and suggest that therefore it must be taught. Students may be aware of these matters and have already rejected them or simply be unaware of them. However, we feel that European and global citizenship are, to some extent, areas of citizenship rather than perspectives on citizenship. In other words we feel that if areas are identified where there is a lack of understanding educators must seek to act. Our argument above about the consequences of introducing curricula that do not align with students’ views is essentially a point of opposition to what we see as the current specifically framed political or ideological approach to policy making. We make this argument cautiously. All educational policies are in some way ideological. We accept that for some merely mentioning European and global citizenship is in itself a political expression and we recognize the need to understand and engage as opposed to demand obedience to political norms. But there may be aspects of current policy that are so far distant from young people’s perceptions that a carefully formulated approach will be needed. In light of our data from Catalan students we propose that, perhaps, foreign languages education and language trips and exchanges could contribute towards the aim of improving understanding European and global issues. More focused research on this topic, following the line of research of Byram (2014) could be conducted to analyse how foreign languages and languages exchanges could help students to understand and, if they wish, practise their European and global identities. We feel that to be successful in reinforcing wider identities, these activities require more research, the maintenance of European/global projects such as the EU’s Comenius project and a clear commitment of national policies and curriculum.

Third, both Catalan and English students describe similar activities that help them to create some sort of ‘sense of belonging’. The activities described by students are those in which students work in groups towards a common goal, where the responsibilities are shared by the different members of the group, where students feel having the right and duty of participation and feel the efficacy of their contribution and where the students have opportunities to work in different environments. We consider that this set of characteristics described by students – and already recognized by some researchers - could be helpful in terms of designing activities, projects and courses which contribute to create and strengthen students’ identities.
REFERENCES


