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y profesorado en formación**

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Trainee Teachers**

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## Narrativas nacionales históricas de estudiantes y profesorado en formación

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### Abstract

This article deals with the views on national identity and the models of national narrative which are assumed by secondary school pupils and trainee history teachers. We examine the degree to which the participants' opinions correspond either to a social representation/master narrative or to a narrative which understands national identities and nations as social constructs. We analyse the influence of history teaching and extra-curricular dimensions of socialization (the media) on the construction of these opinions. This is a qualitative study of a phenomenological nature, based on open questionnaires and the writing of texts on the subject of history, carried out on samples of university students and trainee teachers. The study was carried out in two separate phases. The initial phase consisted of exploring the subjective representation of national identity by analysing differences according to age, whereas the second stage looked closely at the discourse of students undergoing initial teacher training regarding the history of Spain in order to investigate what elements were predominant in their narrative. The qualitative methodology is set in the context of grounded theory

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and employs discourse analysis. The results show the predominance of essentialist representations of national identity and the influence of a master narrative. No significant differences were found as far as age or the level of training in history is concerned. The predominant model reflects similarities with those shown in historically-based television series.

*Keywords:* History education, national narrative, national identity, teacher training, primary education, secondary education.

### **Resumen**

Este artículo aborda las visiones de la identidad nacional y los modelos de narrativa nacional que asumen estudiantes de secundaria y docentes de historia en formación. Se examina en qué medida los modelos de los participantes corresponden a una representación social o narrativa maestra, o bien a una narrativa que entiende las identidades nacionales y las naciones como construcciones sociales. Se analiza la influencia de la educación histórica y de dimensiones de socialización extraescolares (medios) en la construcción de estos modelos. Se trata de un estudio cualitativo de corte fenomenológico basado en cuestionarios abiertos y producción de textos históricos sobre muestras de estudiantes y docentes en formación. El estudio se realiza en dos fases diferenciadas: una primera para explorar la representación subjetiva de la identidad nacional analizando diferencias por edad; y una segunda etapa que profundiza los discursos del profesorado en formación sobre la historia de España para indagar qué elementos que predominan en sus relatos. La metodología cualitativa se enmarca en la teoría fundamentada, empleando análisis del discurso. Los resultados muestran el predominio de representaciones esencialistas de la identidad nacional y el peso de una narrativa maestra. No se han encontrado diferencias significativas relacionadas con la edad ni con el nivel de formación histórica. El modelo predominante refleja similitudes con los de las series de televisión de contenido histórico.

*Palabras clave:* Educación histórica, narrativa nacional, identidad nacional, formación de profesorado, Educación Primaria, Educación Secundaria.

### **Introduction and theoretical bases: the teaching of history and national narrative**

There is a relative consensus in the field of Social Sciences that nations are socio-cultural constructions linked to modernity (Archilés, 2015;

Muñoz, 2012). This idea coincides with the psychological theory on contemporary social identity which defends their constructed or *performative* nature: social identities are not only essences which are assumed naturally but can be created and represented in socialization practices in which group, gender, religious and national, etc. *discourses* are in operation (Atienza & Van Dijk, 2010). As is the case with any other collective identity, national identity is a construction which is learnt via the repetition of a certain kind of discourse or specific narrative. Learning to think historically<sup>2</sup> regarding nations and national identity itself implies demythologizing them. However, this understanding becomes difficult outside of the academic context. «Common sense» in everyday life is based on representations which explain the world according to a world order of *nations*. There are beliefs, practices, rituals and representations, known as banal nationalism (Billig, 1995), which bring to life and reproduce the idea of one's "own" nation and "others" as timeless natural realities. A variety of research projects have been carried out in Spain on the idea of Spanish nationalism and its relationship with the public usage of history (Álvarez Junco, 2016; Muñoz, 2012; Ruiz, 2015; Saz & Archilés, 2012 and Taibo, 2007). Some of these studies highlight the less banal and implicit nature of Spanish nationalism due to the fact that it coexists with alternative nationalisms. Discourse on Spanish nationalism continues to be hegemonic in areas of everyday socialization, both curricular and extra-curricular. Students experience this reality and reflect it in their representations of both the present and the past. They consider it to be natural to explain *their* national history from the point of view of their connection to that identity.

Barton and Levstik (2004) have shown that learning history at school implies that students activate different instances or uses of history which coexist, at times in conflict: disciplinary-rational, moral, descriptive (based on memory) and identity-linked instances. It is inevitable that students will establish links of identity with characters and events from the past (due to gender, social class, etc.). Among these factors, the hegemonic identification is with the nation itself, which, even today, reproduces the function of school history as an agent of nationalization, both in terms of

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<sup>(2)</sup> The concepts of "historical thought" and "history teaching" are used in line with international research on the teaching of history reformulated, among others, by Clark (2011), Lévesque (2008), Seixas (2011) and VanSledright (2008) and in Spain by Domínguez (2015).

the organization of the curriculum and in the assignation of historical content to the nation-state. This would not be a problem if the identification was made with a model of a civic nation made up of a citizenship which was open to differences. However, the hegemonic discourse of banal nationalism maintains as its master narrative a *national narrative* which has its own characteristics (Carretero & Bermúdez, 2012): the subject is the nation, its main characters, events and key stages, the narrative is of “us” against “them”; the nation has an essential and timeless dimension; emotional judgements generally appear towards it; the nation and its nationals play out a destiny or have a goal, be it independence, modernization or progress. The continued existence of this national narrative is dominant in Spanish nationalism, as well as in the alternative sub-state nationalisms. In students’ and trainee teachers’ representations of the past there is a mediation of this master narrative which has essentialist and emotional characteristics. Here, we resort to the notion of “mediated action” (Werstch 2004), which explains how representations of the past derive from the use which people make of pre-existing historical narratives, like a box of cultural tools or implicit theories. These socially shared narrative frameworks can be assimilated to national narratives, such as the official version of history disseminated by a nation-state. National narratives influence representations, uses or discourse regarding the past, which, as specific narratives, are generated by different people and groups, including students and teachers. Basic education in history should limit the influence of the national narrative. Teachers should provide their students with the intellectual tools to give meaning to the past, whilst avoiding romantic and essentialist identifications with the Spanish (or Catalans, Basques, Valencians or Galicians) of the past.

It is considered necessary to teach and learn a Spanish national narrative which is far-removed from traditional and essentialist stereotypes. Here, we present a qualitative study of a phenomenological nature, which explores, based on open questionnaires and the writing of texts on the subject of history, the subjective representations of national identity and Spanish history produced by pupils at the end of their secondary education and by university students training to become history teachers. We analyse whether they take nations to be socio-cultural constructions and whether they assume, or not, a Spanish national narrative as their master narrative.

As far as Spanish national identity as a hypothesis is concerned, it is predicted that some cognitive grading of meanings may be found, depending on age or level of education and according to understanding and use of concepts such as citizenship and nationality. The possibility was considered of identifying a group assuming a more complex meaning, referring to juridical-political requirements marking national identity. This would imply an inclusive citizen view of national identity. This group was predicted to be predominant among the older students as they had overcome the limitations of national identity related to fixed elements (place of birth, language, traditions) and an essentialist and cultural vision, which is the first aspect to develop among children and adolescents (Barret, 2013).

We shall take into account three perspectives of national identity. First of all, we shall examine an essentialist view, which conceives the nation as an organic entity defined by elements of ethnicity (people, language, culture, history, etc.). Secondly, we shall look at a citizenship which represents the nation as a community with a shared political will, via the fulfilment of pre-established legal requirements. Finally, a mixed view will be taken into account, which integrates elements of both of the aforementioned points of view. We are aware of the fact that there are no exclusively civic visions compared to cultural ones, they are always interrelated. However, we consider that it is analytically pertinent to evaluate them as far as the nature of their responses is concerned. It is predicted that the citizenship vision will be prevalent among older students. The essentialist vision would demonstrate an insufficient level of learning about history and an incomplete understanding of the way that democratic states function, as well as the impact of banal nationalism. Other studies have proved the influence of essentialist representations in common and school-based knowledge (Sáiz & López Facal, 2012; Muñoz, 2012).

We also investigated the opinions of trainee teachers regarding the relationship between education and national identity and national identity and the teaching of history at school via an open questionnaire. We expected majority opinions on the close relationship between education, the teaching of history and the formation of national identities. We were especially interested in determining what type of arguments would be used. It was considered probable that future primary education teachers, in particular, would point towards that link and defend it with general

educational arguments. On the other hand, we expected students training to be secondary education teachers, the majority of whom were graduates in History, to fall back on cultural-historical arguments, due to their higher level of education in history. In both cases, finding out the percentage of those relating education and formation of national identity would provide us with clues on the possibilities of prior epistemological reflection.

Last of all, we hoped to discover to what extent the future teachers reproduced part or all of the items (periods, facts, characters, dates) of the traditional *Spanish national narrative*, taking back the genesis and formation of Spain as a state or as a nation to periods prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (López Facal, 2000 and 2009). This was carried out by examining texts on history and open questionnaires on the origin of Spanish and Valencian identities. The aim was to discover whether the future teachers questioned this essentialist-romantic vision and what degree of influence this Spanish national narrative, the continued existence of which can be noted in the curriculum and textbooks of the secondary education system (Sáiz, 2015), still holds.

The traditional Spanish historical narrative was established at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and reached its highest degree of diffusion during the Francoist dictatorship. It is an account which reproduces essentialist stereotypes dating national unity and the origin of the Spanish to pre-contemporary periods (López Facal, 2009; López Facal & Sáiz, 2016). Some notable highlights of its contents include: the mark of the Iberian past, the Romanisation of Hispania as a political unit in the Peninsula, the Visigoth kingdom as the embryo of the unity of Spain, the loss of that kingdom due to Muslim domination, the Christian Reconquista (reconquest) as the construction of the unity of Spain, its completion with the Catholic Monarchs and its splendour and peak with the Habsburgs. The essentialism of this national narrative remained hidden during the transition to democracy. However, since the end of the 1990s, it has regained public recognition originating from a Spanish nationalism concerned with spreading an exemplary version of history, as a way of normalized progress towards modernity whilst not forgetting to base memories of Spain and the Spanish people in remote periods of history. Characters and scenes from this traditional narrative live on in popular knowledge and are present in cultural products for the masses, for example in television series such as *Isabel*, *Águila Roja* and *El Ministerio*



*del Tiempo*. If we consider the transversal influence of this national narrative, both in the world of education and in the mass media, it is foreseeable that it is also present among future school teachers. It is also interesting to note any challenge to the remote origins of Spain as a state and as a nation, and whether this grows or not according to the individual's prior level of education. It is predicted that the future secondary education teachers would be the ones to question this idea the most, as they are aware of certain modernist and constructionist theories regarding nations and nationalism.

In addition, an attempt has been made to identify interpretations of national identity in accordance with the four categories proposed by J. Rüsen (2005: p.12 and p.29): Traditional; Exemplary; Critical and Genealogical (which he terms "Genetic"). Applied to Spanish identity, the *traditional* narrative would favour foundational myths which create identities: For example, the birth of Spain during the Christian Reconquista and its unification under the Catholic Monarchs, or the pre-existence of the Spanish and of Spain from ancient times. Although these ideas have disappeared from school textbooks following the end of the Francoist regime, they live on in the minds of the generations brought up during the dictatorship and are still present in a broad sector of the population.

The *exemplary* narrative stresses the importance of points of reference as abiding models, such as the wars of "resistance" (or of "independence") and periods of international relevance for Spain. Events, institutions and artistic-cultural creations are evaluated positively, for example the Spanish Empire of the Habsburgs and its presence in America and the Golden Age. Even more recent events are appreciated, such as the exaltation of the Constitution of 1812 as a model of liberal unity and modernization and a history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Spain crowned with the "happy ending" of the transition to democracy, the recovery of a constitutional monarchy and overcoming the division of the "two Spains". This point of view is present in the current formal education system, its curriculum and in the majority of both primary and secondary textbooks.

The *critical* narrative has an approach which questions the previous (traditional and exemplary) historical models for offering a false univocal and standardized view. It sets up the narrative of cooperation and exemplary unity against the legitimacy born of the will of the population in each historical moment. Therefore, it analyses and contextualizes the



creation of a single Spanish national narrative and opens up the way for alternative options. This critical interpretation is in a clear minority.

Last of all, a *genealogical* narrative must be taken into consideration. This is the model which implies the highest level of historical knowledge and conscience. The nation is contextualized as a dynamic process in constant change with the present being influenced by a bygone history and projected towards the future taking into account those historical experiences. The presence of this narrative is extremely limited and can be considered more as an objective in the learning of a Spanish identity oriented towards democratic co-existence from a point of view which is dynamic, open and inclusive, accepting the co-existence of frequently conflictive alternative identities.

Above all, it was expected that evidence would be found of an exemplary narrative of the history of Spain, due to the importance of this type of narrative in the school curriculum. The presence of critical narratives was expected to be lower and concentrated mainly in future secondary school teachers. A significant presence of contents of the traditional narrative was considered improbable, especially given its limited explicit presence in the curriculum and in school textbooks. However, references to characters or traditional events were not discarded, due to their wide presence in banal Spanish nationalism. References to Spain and the Spanish in the past and the use of the first person of the plural (“we”, “our”, etc.) as a way of national identification were taken as relevant textual markers in the identification of the implicit assumption of the traditional narrative.

A wide range of responses was expected regarding the origin of Spanish and Valencian identity. However, we did not expect many responses about the genesis of Spanish identity mentioning traditional markers, such as the Reconquista and the Catholic Monarchs. In accordance with the content of the school curriculum, it was probable that the Bourbon centralism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century would be mentioned, possibly along with explicit mention of the construction of the liberal state of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As far as the origin of Valencian identity is concerned, it was expected that the Christian conquest of Valencia by James I of Aragon would be considered as a significant event, given its broad curricular and extra-curricular presence (Sáiz, 2013a and 2015). No critical views of the formation of Valencian identity in later periods were foreseen.

## Methodology

This qualitative research of a phenomenological nature was carried out between 2012 and 2014. The selection of the participants was made according to the criteria of theoretical sampling (Flick, 2007). An intentional or convenience sample was selected on the grounds of its accessibility to the lead author. A total of 284 teenagers and young people of both sexes were selected as participants, taken from future teachers of the social sciences (150) and secondary school pupils (134). The latter were from different academic year groups: In 2012, eighty pupils were selected from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of baccalaureate (typically 17-18 years of age), whereas in 2013, 23 pupils were taken from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of secondary education (typically 13-14 years of age) and 31 from the 4<sup>th</sup> year (typically 15-16 years of age). All of these pupils were from a state-run secondary school in the metropolitan area of Valencia. In 2014, 150 university students took part: 38 were studying a Master's degree in secondary education, specializing in geography and history and 112 were in the fourth year of a degree in primary education. All of these university students were from the University of Valencia. The tools designed for the study (open questionnaires and texts on history) were completed by the participants in class time of their respective university subjects ("Social Sciences" or "The History of Spain" for the secondary school pupils and "The Teaching of Social Sciences" or "Innovative Teaching and Initiation in Educational Research" for the university students). In order to carry out these tasks, collaboration was sought from teaching colleagues of the lead author.

The study was carried out in two clearly differentiated phases. The first phase consisted of exploring the subjective representation of national identity by analysing differences according to age among the secondary pupils and university students, whereas the second stage looked in more depth at the arguments and discourse of trainee teachers regarding the history of Spain in order to investigate which elements were predominant in their national narratives, differentiating between future teachers of primary and secondary education. Via the use of these tools, it was possible to gain access, in all cases, to the participants' discourse and representations of history and national identity in the form of narrative, making use of text as the empirical material (Flick, 2007).

In the first phase, the following *open questionnaire* was conducted on Spanish national identity: *What do you think it means today to be Spanish? What does it mean to you to be Spanish? Do you think it is possible today to stop being Spanish?* This final question was substituted for another for the trainee teachers: *Do you think that national identity is present in the primary/secondary education curriculum? Why / why not)? What relation does it have, or could it have, with history and social sciences?*

Only the group of trainee teachers took part in the second phase of the study, which combined the production of texts on the subject of history with another open questionnaire. First of all, one hundred future teachers (62 from the final year of the primary education degree and 38 from the Master's degree in secondary education) were asked to respond to the following question: *Which events, characters or national historical problems should primary/secondary pupils know about? Describe them briefly.* In order to avoid biasing their texts, no substantive content or formal orientation was provided. In a subsequent teaching session, the same group carried out the following exercise: They were given a list of historical events<sup>3</sup> and were asked the following question: *Nowadays, many people in this country are and feel Spanish and/or Valencian. From all of these periods, when do you think people started to feel Valencian and Spanish? Why do you think this?*

From a theoretical point of view, text or narrative was considered to be the ideal tool for analysing degrees of knowledge and historical awareness, especially regarding national history, and for establishing individual processes of national identification (Sáiz & López Facal, 2015). The choice of tools demanded, therefore, an open coding of discourse markers, in accordance with the strategies of *Grounded Theory* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The qualitative information was gathered and processed in the Filemaker Pro database, thus enabling us to improve the formulation of the categories and the limits between them. For the texts on historical issues, the following analytical criteria were applied: First of

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<sup>(3)</sup> Hispania as a province of the Roman Empire; the fall of the Roman Empire and the establishment of a Visigoth kingdom; the Muslim invasion of the Visigoth kingdom (711, 8<sup>th</sup> century); the Christian conquest of Muslim Valencia under James I (1238, 13<sup>th</sup> century); the reign of the Catholic Monarchs and the discovery of America (1492, 15<sup>th</sup> century); the Spanish Empire in Europe and America with the Habsburg dynasty (between 1500 and 1700, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries); the arrival of the Bourbons and the reforms of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the construction of the liberal state in 19<sup>th</sup> century; the crisis of the liberal state, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic, the dictatorship and the return of democracy.

all, the *form* of the writing was taken into account (whether it was written as statements or as a narrative, the presence, or lack thereof, of a chronological order, especially the flexible use of historical tenses (present-past). Secondly, the contents were considered (the mention, or lack thereof, of events or characters considered representative of a traditional, exemplary or critical narrative, reference to, or questioning of, the Spanish or Spain in periods prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Finally, recognition of national diversity in Spain was taken into account, along with any references made to the complexity of the national problem.

### Analysis of Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the data on the interpretations of Spanish identity.

TABLE I. The view of Spanish national identity among students and trainee teachers

	Pupils from 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> years of secondary ed.	Pupils from 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bacc.	All secondary pupils	Future primary teachers	Future secondary teachers	All future teachers
Essentialist	48.0 %	61.2%	75 (55.9 %)	66.0 %	47.0 %	92 (61.3 %)
Citizen	16.6 %	22.5 %	27 (20.1 %)	8.9 %	21.0 %	18 (12.0 %)
Mixed	9.2 %	16.2 %	18 (13.4 %)	18.7 %	26.3 %	31 (20.6 %)
No answer	25.0 %	0.0%	14 (10.4 %)	6.2 %	5.2 %	9 (6.0 %)
Total	54	80	134	112	38	150

First of all, a high percentage of essentialist responses can be observed, both among students and future teachers. The most repeated marker is

that which classifies Spanish identity as a characteristic belonging to a person born in Spain or to Spanish parents, a permanent identity associated to people. Feeling Spanish out of proximity, emotion, a shared feeling of belonging to a Spanish community or, in some cases, the explicit appeal of the *Spanish nation* also stand out as other fundamental expressions of Spanish identity. Expressions of Spanishness are equally related with ethno-cultural elements, such as language, culture, customs, gastronomy and local festivities.

The essentialist interpretation does not diminish with age or with academic level and remains high (around 60%). Responses in accordance with this view can be observed among secondary school adolescents of 14-15 years of age and among university students of 21-24 years of age. An increase can even be observed among students in the final year of their primary education degree (66%) compared to pupils finishing their baccalaureate (61.2%). The influence of this essentialist vision may be derived from the impact of the explicit discourse of Spanish nationalism in public extra-curricular processes of socialization. A national identity is assumed which is widely disseminated as social and political “common sense” (Muñoz, 2012). The vast majority of the population shares a latent Spanish identity, disseminated in many spheres of daily life, but which only becomes visible when called upon. This view does not incorporate legal criteria, nor does it resort to the concept of *citizenship*. Rather, it encloses Spanish identity in an essence of the person with their birth, way of life and feeling in and of Spain.

A significant exception was observed among History graduates, future secondary school teachers, in whom this interpretation, although it continues to be high, descends to 47%. This could be attributed to their education which refutes the romantic-traditional national vision and appeals to historical processes of social and cultural construction.

The *citizen* interpretation of national identity, which comprises processes of nationalization and political citizenship, only obtained results of 12-20% of the sample.

The *mixed* conceptualization of national identity increases with age, ranging from 13% among secondary school pupils to 20% among future teachers. They manifest and understand the process of nationalization but also assume essentialist characteristics. They consider that Spanish

identity can be obtained in both ways “*you can belong to the country of Spain either through birth or through citizenship*” (R5, male, 23, Master’s degree in secondary education).

Negative value judgements on Spanish identity were also documented. These are transversal responses which show indignation, rejection of the political system and the effects of the crisis (unemployment, corruption, exile of young people, etc.). In this way, feelings of disillusionment with Spanish identity emerge, although this affects only a minority of responses (between 13% for secondary pupils and 16% for future teachers).

Table 2 shows the data for the second field analysed in the first phase of the study: the relationship between education, the teaching of history and the formation of national identities.

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**TABLE 2.** Opinions of future teachers on the relationship between education, the teaching of history and the formation of national identities (n= 150)

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	<b>Total</b>
Type 1 A relationship exists	128 (85.35 %)
Type 2 No relationship exists	17 (11.35 %)
Type 3 No answer	5 (3.3 %)

As was to be expected, the majority confirmed the existence of such a relationship. However, it is of more interest to note the categorization of the arguments to defend this point of view (Table 3).

**TABLE 3.** Arguments of future teachers on the relationships between education, the teaching of history and the formation of national identities (n= 128)

Nature of the arguments	Total
Type 1: The relationship is recognised but no arguments are given	21 (16.4 %)
Type 2: An implicit relationship exists: a hidden curriculum and a transversal presence	15 (11.7 %)
Type 3: An explicit relationship exists in the curriculum of specific social and cultural subjects on a national scale, in the role of textbooks and/or celebrations and cultural activities held in the school context.	61 (47.6 %)
Type 4: The specific influence of the teaching of history at school is recognised in the construction of national identities: the obligatory content of Spanish history from primary education.	30 (23.4 %)

Almost half of the responses mentioned general educational motivations (type 2 and type 3), which can be explained, as predicted, by the weight of future primary teachers in the sample. They receive extremely basic teacher training as far as history is concerned and an extremely limited historical, epistemological and disciplinary culture. Out of these general arguments, one category corresponds to those referring to the implicit relationship between education and the formation of identities by way of the theory of the hidden and transversal curriculum (type 2)<sup>4</sup>. Another category emerges from responses relating it explicitly to the organization of the school curriculum: the presence of national contents; the orientation of the textbooks and the holding of festivals relating to identity (type 3)<sup>5</sup>. Last of all, other arguments emphasize the

<sup>4</sup> *National identity does not exist as a content but it is developed implicitly via other contents of a hidden curriculum* (R20, 21 years old, female, primary education)

<sup>5</sup> *National identity is present on every page of primary textbooks, especially in Social Science, which is all about the history of the national identity* (R55, 21 years old, female, primary education). *Work done in class promotes a feeling of belonging to a national identity or creates identifying marks, either by commenting on recent events or celebrating festivals which promote Spanish nationalism, such as the national day of Spain or Constitution Day* (R9, 26, female, primary education).



importance of the teaching of history in the social and cultural construction of contemporary national identities. As predicted, the majority of these responses were given by graduates in history training to become secondary teachers<sup>6</sup>.

The analysis of the responses confirms that the majority of trainee teachers assume the link between education and the formation of national identity. However, it seems to be more a general understanding of the role of education in the formation of identities than an epistemological reflection on the function of history teaching as a creator of identities, assumed by only a small percentage of respondents (20%). This group is able to question the role of the teaching of history in schools in the construction of national identities, being able to consider it as a learning problem.

Tables 4a and 4b summarize the responses regarding the question of the historical origin of Spanish and Valencian identity respectively. Tables 5 and 6 present the typology of the proposals relating to the history of Spain as learning content suggested by the trainee teachers. Table 5 shows the form of their answers, indicating whether they were given in the form of statements or narratives, whether they followed a chronological order or not, whether content from the traditional narrative was present or not and whether other subject matter or problems were brought up. Table 6a and 6b show the frequency with which mention was made in the written texts of periods (6a) and characters (6b) of the history of Spain. Table 7 assesses the degree to which the traditional narrative was questioned: how many texts assume it by referring to the Spain or the Spanish people of remote periods of history; how many question it with a critical assessment of its significant events (the Reconquista, the Catholic Monarchs, etc.); how many people value, and how they value, the complexity of the problem and/or how many claim a contemporary construction of the Spanish nation.

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<sup>6</sup> (The national identity) *is always present: it is a question of showing that Spain as a whole has always existed, although in practice this is not the case* (R 29, 28, male, secondary education). *It (national identity) is so present. What does it represent apart from the 19th century History of Spain? A certain history, told in a certain way, with extremely clear and specific interests. Where is it taught? In the second year of Baccalaureate as a compulsory subject* (R35, 24, female, secondary education).

**TABLE 4.** Views of trainee teachers on the historical origin of Spanish identity and Valencian identity (n= 150)

<b>4a. The origin of Spanish identity</b>	<b>Total</b>
Type 1 Permanent identity: it has always existed	18 (12 %)
Type 2 Traditional origins: Hispania, Visigoths, Christian conquests against Muslims, unification under the Catholic Monarchs	56 (37.3 %)
Type 2a Roman Hispania                      5 (3.3 %) Type 2b The Visigoth kingdom                4 (2.6 %) Type 2c The Christian conquests and James I    16 (10.6 %) Type 2d The Catholic Monarchs and the unification of the Peninsula    31 (20.6 %)	
Type 3 The Bourbon Dynasty and the centralism of the 18 <sup>th</sup> century	19 (12.6 %)
Type 4 The contemporary period of the nation -state: 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries	22 (14.6 %)
Type 5 Does not know and/or assumes the complexity of the issue	28 (18.6 %)
Type 6 Since the moment the territory has been known as Spain	7 (4.6 %)

<b>4b. The origin of Valencian identity</b>	<b>Total</b>
Type 1 Permanent identity: it has always existed	15 (10 %)
Type 2 Traditional origins: The Christian conquest of James I or other periods (Roman Valentia, the Catholic Monarchs)	82 (54.6 %)
Type -2a Roman Valentia                      2 Type 2b the conquest of James I                77 (51.3 %) Type 2c the Catholic Monarchs                3	
Type 3 The Bourbon Dynasty and the centralism of the 18 <sup>th</sup> century	4 (2.6 %)
Type 4 The contemporary period of the nation-state: 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries	17 (11.3 %)
Type 5 Does not know and/or assumes the complexity of the issue	32 (21.3 %)

**TABLE 5.** The way in which the History of Spain is presented as a learning proposal by trainee primary and secondary teachers (n= 100)

Type 1 Simple statements regarding traditional characters or events with no chronological order	39
Type 2 Basic or descriptive statements of traditional events in chronological order	42
Type 3 Essays explaining or selecting events with a flexible use of chronology	14
Type 4 Essays giving priority to historical themes or problems rather than traditional events with critical evaluations on the construction of the nation-state and national identities	5

**TABLE 6A.** Contents for the History of Spain as proposed by trainee primary and secondary teachers (n= 100)

<b>Contents of the Spanish national narrative</b>	<b>Number of texts in which they appear</b>
Pre-Roman peoples: Celts, Iberian s	39
Roman Hispania.	54
The Visigoth kingdom	20
The Muslim invasion and Al-Andalus	64
Christian expansion and conquests	61
The Catholic Monarchs	59
The discovery and colonization of America	52
The Spanish Habsburg Empire	33
The War of Succession and Bourbon centralism	42
Stages of the Spain of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century	51
Stages of the Spain of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century	72

**TABLE 6B.** Characters of the *History of Spain* as proposed by trainee primary and secondary teachers (n= 100)

<b>Characters according to historical periods and the number of texts in which they are mentioned</b>	<b>Number of texts in which characters are mentioned according to historical periods</b>
<i>Ancient history:</i> Viriatus (1) Hadrian and Trajan (1)	2
<i>Middle Ages:</i> The Visigoth kings, Reccared (2), Pelagius (1), El Cid (4), Alfonso X (6), James I (26), the Catholic Monarchs (59)	64
<i>The Modern Age:</i> Columbus (15), The Habsburgs (6): Charles I/IV (2), Philip II (1); The Bourbons: Philip V (2)	31
<i>The Contemporary Age,</i> -19th century (10) : Napoleon (8), Ferdinand VII (5), Isabel II (7) -20th century (42): Primo de Rivera (17), Azaña (4) Franco (39), Juan Carlos I (8)	44

**TABLE 7.** Degree to which the traditional national narrative is questioned by trainee teachers (n= 100)

Type 1. Explicit references to “Spain ” or the “Spanish nation” in the past	25
Type 2. The national problem is not mentioned but reference is made to characters or events of the traditional narrative (“the hidden nation”)	61
Type 3. Significant events of the traditional narrative are critically evaluated: The Reconquista, unification under the Catholic Monarchs, etc.	8
Type 4. The complexity of the national problem is raised and/or the idea of a contemporary origin of national identity is defended	7

The discussion of these results enables us, first of all, to identify the *views of teachers regarding the historical origin of Spanish and Valencian*

*identities*, as can be seen in tables 4a and 4b. It is surprising that 50-65% of the trainee teachers assume traditional or essentialist origins, including those that defend a permanent identity (49% for Spanish identity, as seen in table 4a, and 64% for Valencian identity, as seen in table 4b), including traditional origins and permanent identity in both cases. In the case of Valencian identity, an essentialist view of the conquest of James I, assumed by more than half of the sample of 150 trainee teachers, can be highlighted. As far as Spanish identity is concerned, there were also frequent references made to traditional origins, such as the Christian Conquest (James I created both identities) and, above all, the political unification achieved under the Catholic Monarchs, which was the most cited reference<sup>7</sup>. In the sample regarding the history of Spain, the Catholic Monarchs proved to be the nominal content with the highest number of mentions (table 6b: 59 out of 100). The importance attached to the Catholic Monarchs can be explained by the limited level of prior history education and, perhaps above all, by the place of importance attributed to these characters in the media, particularly in recent television series such as *Isabel*. The majority of the trainee teachers assuming this essentialist view of the traditional origins in national identity (59 out of 74) were future primary education teachers, in other words, those with a lower level of education in terms of history. On the other hand, a higher number of History graduates (half) argued for a recent origin of the Spanish nation and identity (the Bourbon centralism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and/or the liberal state of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). It is among this group that responses can be found more in accordance with modernist views on nations. The students training to be primary education teachers who defended this point of view merely limited themselves to allusions to the idea of a contemporary origin (in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and also during the Franco regime)<sup>8</sup>. The influence of prior education in the area of history when answering this question is confirmed by noting that practically all of those who did not answer (29 out of 32) were future primary teachers.

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<sup>7</sup> *From the Catholic Monarchs as they were the ones who unified the kingdoms which existed, at that time, in the Iberian Peninsula and formed the Spain which we know today* (R20, 21, female, primary education); *from the creation and unification of the Kingdom of Spain following the marriage of the Catholic Monarchs* (R27, 21, female, primary education).

<sup>8</sup> *Like all national feelings, Spanish and Valencian nationalism are historical constructions which appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century* (R12, 25, male, secondary education); *they appeared relatively recently, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of the European nation-states* (R62, 21, female, primary education degree).

Secondly, regarding the model of national narrative as a learning proposal, the results confirm the influence of the traditional narrative among future teachers. This can be noted in the way of answering and in the contents of the 100 written texts analysed. As far as the way of answering is concerned, as can be seen in table 5, statements listing traditional characters and periods are predominant (81), either in a disjointed or unchronological way (table 5, type 1, 39) or chronologically (table 5, type 2, 42). The contents were, on the whole, contemporary, mainly from the 20<sup>th</sup> century (table 6a, 72) and specifically refer to Franco (table 6b, 39), albeit closely followed by the medieval period (table 6a, 59-64), with the Catholic Monarchs being the most cited characters.

The contents and the way in which they are presented seem to resemble the school curriculum. This fact is more noticeable among future primary education teachers, who may recall it not so much for its history education but more for the way its contents relating to social sciences in primary education are usually dealt with. However, this morphology is also apparent among future secondary teachers, who also make reference to the same narrative, albeit with a greater degree of rigour and wealth of information. The national history content which the future teachers consider should be learnt seems to be a sequenced and ordered narrative of periods and characters, probably as a result of the educational model which they received as children. The references made are noticeably traditional in nature. This corresponds to the historical narrative which is probably assumed by the vast majority of the population; a chronological framework of traditional facts and characters, a powerful national narrative which acts as a schematic narrative and intercedes in the most widespread representation of “our” history. This is backed up by recent successful television series dealing with historical events, which lean on this traditional narrative and, at the same time, reinforce it within the framework of banal Spanish nationalism.

This profile coincides with the group which did not question this traditional content (table 7, types 1 and 2, 86 texts). These participants implicitly assume this content by making no reference at all to the problem of national identities (table 7, type 2, 61) constituting a kind of “hidden nation” (López Facal, 2000), which is a feature of the school curriculum and history textbooks but which also originates in the group with textual markers of a past-present continuity of the Spanish and Spain (table 7, type 1, 25), especially direct references to an eternal Spain from Prehistory to the present day.

The most critical written texts, in both form and content, are almost token in number. They do not enunciate but simply write, selecting periods with a flexible use of chronology and even assuming historical problems as learning proposals. In this small group (table 5, types 3 and 4, 19), traces of a critical narrative can be found (either in the mention of political problems or even gender as a guiding principle<sup>9</sup> or in the questioning of significant events/characters of the national narrative<sup>10</sup>, or in mentioning the contemporary construction of national identities<sup>11</sup>. These few texts are those which contest the traditional narrative (table 7, types 3 and 4, 15) and, therefore, can be highlighted as being critical narratives. With the exception of one case, all correspond to History graduates training to be secondary education teachers, in complete contrast to those studying to be primary teachers who even admitted to a limited level of education in history:

After thinking about the question, I have realised that my knowledge of history is insufficient. Given this situation, I would not be able to establish what my primary pupils should know upon finishing that stage of their education. Therefore, I must inform myself and gain a more in-depth knowledge of the curriculum (R15, 21, female, primary education)

This person recognizes the fact that her knowledge is insufficient but, in order to enrich it, does not resort to better knowledge of and about history but rather to educational arguments, namely greater knowledge of the curriculum. This is perhaps the difference marking the possibilities for thinking historically about the national issue; the solidity of the teaching of history in terms of contents and methodology.

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<sup>(9)</sup> ...not focus on historical characters, but rather on men and women who may not seem important (in textbooks) but are those who made history. Recognize their role and importance, especially women at certain crucial moments... (R35, 23, female, secondary education); as a future primary education teacher, I believe that the most recent history is what should be taught in the primary classroom. Perhaps from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or even from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, having previously been contextualized. They should know what republics, monarchies and dictatorships are and what the differences are between them. They should know how Spain went from being a monarchy to a republic and then a dictatorship (R62, 20, female, primary education)

<sup>(10)</sup> The use of the term 'Conquest' instead of 'Reconquista' to refer to the end of Al-Andalus (R35, 24, male, secondary education); the mythology of the Reconquista; put an end to the idea that it was a positive event for our society (R9, 28, male, secondary education); by explaining clearly that Spain did not arise here [with the Catholic Monarchs] but that it was merely the union of dynasties (R28, 23, male, secondary education).

<sup>(11)</sup> Given that our current situation is derived from the construction of the nation-states during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, I think that one of the national historical problems is the construction of a national identity built by those in power, from above and not from social foundations (R3, 25, male, secondary education).



## Conclusions

This research provides evidence of the weakness of basic history teaching in order to question essentialist views of the nation and the influence of the traditional national narrative.

First of all, the majority of adolescents and young people lack the basic intellectual tools to think in historical terms about national identities and nations. They do not show evidence of understanding these ideas as socio-cultural constructions and non-essential realities. The teaching of history in the secondary education system does not prepare people to critically evaluate the representation of their own national identity, which is perceived to be natural. This essentialist view is reinforced by banal nationalism and, therefore, continues to exist among trainee teachers. No significant changes could be observed with age, only with an increased level of education in history. This is the case with some, but not all, of the trainee secondary teachers who are History graduates. But with school history learnt, no changes occur here. In basic education, there is no deviation (in the content of the curriculum, in textbooks or in methods of evaluation) from what is apparently a disciplinary code for history teaching at school; the learning by heart of the contents of a national narrative (Sáiz, 2013b; Sáiz & López Facal, 2015 and Gómez & Miralles, 2015).

Secondly, the mediation of the traditional narrative can be observed as far as what trainee teachers consider that their pupils should learn is concerned. This is in spite of the changes which have taken place in the curriculum since the end of the dictatorship and the hiding of this traditional narrative in curriculums and textbooks. This traditional narrative lives on in the collective memory of popular culture. We consider that it derives from the revival of Spanish nationalism since the 1990s, which is becoming less and less implicit. A good example of this is the importance given to the History of Spain in the school history curriculum originating with the '*Decreto de enseñanzas mínimas*' (the decree of minimum standards for education) of 2001 and continuing with the current education law (LOMCE) (López Facal, 2014). However, it can also be attributed to the omnipresence of aspects of traditional Spanish history in different spheres of everyday socialization, from sport to television series. The results concerning what future teachers consider to be essential knowledge for their pupils in terms of national history are

worrying for those of us that believe that history teaching at school should provide pupils with the appropriate tools to promote civic and democratic values rather than forge irrational loyalties. The history taught in primary and secondary schools should provide pupils with criteria for understanding current problems, such as the issue of national identity, teaching them to denaturalize nations and to question any essentialist identity. Therefore, an improvement in the level of education among teacher training students as far as history is concerned must be treated as a matter of utmost importance.

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