ABSTRACT

This paper argues that identity is not the result of an unproblematic exercise of self-definition, but must be seen as the result of a two-step process: first, the characteristics of the identity are defined as a kind of knowledge through a discourse which puts in place power mechanisms; and second, people ascribe themselves to that identity induced by the power mechanisms. However, it is claimed that it is possible to exercise a certain degree of agency so people can ascribe themselves to alternative identities. In order to prove this point, the case of the Indigenous identity in Chiapas since the Zapatista uprising is analysed. This identity is characterised as one which encompasses all the indigenous peoples of the region, who share a communitarian and democratic way of life inherited from their pre-colonial ancestors, and who are represented by the EZLN in a fight against neo-liberalism. This identity is said to become predominant through a series of power mechanisms, but some evidence of the exercise of agency is shown through the portrayal of the existence of alternative identities to which some groups ascribe.

The Construction of Indigenous Identity in Chiapas, Mexico: Discourse and Power since the Zapatista Uprising

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Introduction

On January 1st, 1994, in the Mexican Southern state of Chiapas, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) introduced itself to the world by starting an armed insurrection and declaring war to the Federal Army and the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The rebels, who had a strong yet ambiguous Indigenous component, claimed to speak in the name of the dispossessed of Mexico who, after 70 years of dictatorship and decaying living conditions, were decided to struggle for the achievement of 11 goals hitherto denied to them: work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace.

In the last eight years, much attention has been devoted to the Zapatistas and Chiapas, and special emphasis has been put in the Indigenous character of the uprising. However, in much of what has been written Indigenousness is often presented as an homogeneous and unproblematic category which has very rarely been interrogated. Thus, many important questions have seldom been asked: How and when did this idea of Indigenousness appear? What does it say about Indigenous people? Does it correspond to the actually existing conditions of Chiapas? Are there any further implications of using such category in this context?

The aim of this paper is precisely to answer these questions by studying the construction of Indigenous identity in Chiapas since the Zapatista uprising and the consequences occasioned by this process. I will try to prove that identity does not

emerge as a straightforward exercise of self-definition, but is the outcome of power relations resulting of the interaction of various forces within a complex discourse.

In order to do so, I will organise the paper in two sections. First, I will sketch a theoretical discussion in which the terms identity, discourse, knowledge and power will be examined and linked together in order to provide a framework from which to undertake the subsequent analysis. Second, I will study the case of the construction of Indigenous identity in Chiapas by presenting: a) the basic characteristics of the Indigenous identity as it appears since the uprising; b) the power mechanisms in place that have helped promote this identity; and c) the effects of these power mechanisms seen in alternative, silenced discourses.

Theoretical framework

Identity and the creation of meaning

The concept of identity is widely used nowadays in several social sciences, each of them emphasising one of its many aspects. The New Social Movements literature, for instance, places identity at the core of mobilisation as the element that allows the movement's members to recognise themselves as a group and act as such (Foweraker 1995, p.2). In psychoanalysis, Freud used the term identification to refer to the child's situation of itself as a sexed subject at what he called the Oedipal stage (Woodward 1997, p.14). These examples show the use of identity at very different levels, from the numerous group to the individual. I would argue though, that underlying in both cases there is a depiction of identity as the definition of the individual or the group in relation to other individuals and groups. In other words, identity implies the allocation of meaning to a relational definition of the self.

I would like to stick to the idea of ‘meaning’ in relation to identity in order to be able to draw on some of the concepts used in the field of cultural studies. Hall (1997, p.1) argues that culture is about ‘shared meanings’, and goes on to present the ‘circuit of culture’ of which identity is one of its main elements. He says that culture is a representational system, a system that uses symbols (for instance language) in order to undertake a representation of the world through which we give meaning to it. One of the key stages in this process of representation is giving meaning to ourselves, defining who we are and helping us make sense of our experience, which is precisely the acquisition of identity (Woodward 1997, p.14). It turns out, then, that achieving an identity is a necessary cultural step in order to be able to be and act in the social world. The relational nature of this process makes ‘difference’ one of its crucial elements. In order to be able to identify with something, which implies the perception of some similarities, it is necessary to apply a principle of difference in a way that permits the division of a population and all its characteristics into distinct groups (Woodward 1997, p.29). Thus, the idea of a classificatory system which provides the grounds from which to make this separation is intrinsically linked to the notion of identity.

Seeing identity as a cultural process of allocation of meaning also obliges us to understand it as fluid and changing. In a particular culture there is a certain variety of symbolic representations available at any given moment, and also specific social relations that determine the collective outcome of the process of assigning meaning (Woodward 1997, p.15). Thus identity will always depend on the actual symbolic representations and social relations, and therefore will change with them. But this argument has still a further consequence, because as Bourdieu argues (1990, p.123), we live in a diversity of social contexts (what he calls ‘fields and groups’), and these can engage us in different social meanings, so we position ourselves depending on the context where we are acting (Woodward 1997, pp.21-22).

Therefore, identity is not only fluid and evolving, but it can change for a given subject or group depending on the environment where the action takes place.

Finally, I would also argue that this process of allocating meaning to the self which I have called identity, in order to be properly understood, must be seen as comprising two stages. The first one is the construction of the definition of the identity (e.g. what it is being English, Indigenous, or even a specific individual). The second, complementary and necessary step, is the ascription of the individual (or group) to that definition of identity, so that she recognises herself as English, Indigenous, or as that particular individual. Althusser called this second step interpellation, and although he recognised the strong relationship between both stages, he insisted in distinguishing between them (1969). This distinction, as I will show, is also crucial for the development of my argument.

The Role of Discourse: Identity as Knowledge

I have already presented identity as the result of a two-stage process of allocation of meaning to the self. I would like to turn now to the issue of how this process takes place, for which I will draw on some of the concepts developed by Foucault, mainly discourse and knowledge.

Foucault used the term ‘discourse’ not in its common linguistic sense as a stretch of language larger than the sentence, but as a group of statements and events which provides a language for talking about a particular topic at a specific historical moment (Hall 1997, p.44; Bevir 1999, p.348). By setting the way in which we can speak about a particular issue, he goes on to argue that discourses cannot be reduced to the language and to speech, but must be seen “as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972, p.49). Thus, Foucault is telling us that

discourse produces knowledge, that which gives meaning to the objects of our experience, and hence creates and defines these objects, while at the same time determines how we can act and talk about them (Hall 1997, p.44).

Foucault focused his work on the human sciences, which he saw as the discourses that in modern culture are considered to hold the 'truth' about knowledge (Hall 1997, p.43). However, I believe that his philosophy can be interpreted in the terms of my previous discussion about identity. In this sense, the result of the first step of the process of acquiring an identity, its definition, can be understood as a kind of knowledge. It is the knowledge about a particular individual or group which delimits and describes it, and which is created through a discourse made up of all the statements and events that refer to that individual or group. Seeing the definition of identity as the product of a discourse implies that it is not the result of an exercise undertaken by the group or individual in isolation, but it is the social outcome of a collection of statements and events in which many social actors intervene (Jenkins 1994, p.219).

Power and knowledge

In order to be able to introduce the second step of the process of achieving an identity, interpellation, in this framework, I have to refer to the close connection that Foucault perceives between knowledge and power. Indeed, for Foucault power and knowledge are inseparable. It is precisely because knowledge confers meaning, which is the basis to understand the world, relate to it and be able to act, that it regulates conduct and thus exercises power (Hall 1997, p.44). Conversely, the relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, by determining what can be said and done, produce discourse and knowledge (Foucault 1980, p.93). In practical terms, social actors act influenced by discourse and

knowledge giving place to powerful ‘discursive practices’, which in turn complete the cycle by concretising and reproducing discourse and knowledge. It is this continuing cycle which brings about the fluidity and contingency of discourse.

In Foucault’s scheme, power should not be seen as something that some people have and use to submit others who do not. It is rather something which circulates and permeates the whole of society, affecting all of its members who become the vehicles of power rather than its points of application (Foucault 1980, p.98). In this de-faced and de-centred notion of power (Hayward 1998), Foucault argues that it is necessary to analyse power in an ascending way, from its

> infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been –and continue to be– invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc. by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination (Foucault 1980, p.99).

Thus, for Foucault, power operates at the grassroots through many mechanisms, and these reflect, and at the same time recreate, specific discourses and knowledges (Hall 1997, p.47).

Going back to my discussion of identity, and considering its definition as a kind of knowledge, it can then be argued that the definition of identity through discourse has power effects in society that can be perceived in concrete mechanisms and techniques. These serve as the instruments which make that definition of identity ‘true’, which elevate it to the category of knowledge through which the people characterised by that identity are thought about and acted upon. I would argue, then, that these power mechanisms, in promoting the definition of identity created by

discourse, *are instrumental in fostering the ascription of people to this particular identity*, that is, they determine up to a point the result of the second step in the process of acquiring identity, which I have called interpellation. It is in this sense that Foucault maintains that through this process the subject becomes one of the prime effects of power (1980, p.98).

One interpretation of this argument could be that the power mechanisms that are put in place by the discourse on identity *necessarily determine* the ascription of individuals and groups to that identity. However, I would contend that even if the power apparatus set by discourse advances a certain definition of identity, it is possible for some people not to ascribe to it, and thus they can exercise a certain degree of agency. Moreover, I noted above that people shift identities depending on the specific environment in which they are situated at a given moment, and in this context allowing for agency means that it is possible for individuals or groups to use identities strategically in the pursuit of certain objectives.

In practical terms, the preceding argument implies that, through an exercise that Foucault called genealogy[1], it is possible to find silenced identities, in the form of alternative discourses, throughout the social body which are subjugated by the power mechanisms of the predominant one. These alternative identities, which are less visible, can be located, for instance, by looking at what Scott calls ‘hidden transcripts’; the covert, ordinary ways of expressing resistance used by the dispossessed (1990).

[1] A kind of research activity which "entertain[s] the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge” (Foucault 1980, p.83).

It can then be concluded that identity is a form of knowledge which is the result of a two-step process: the establishment of a definition through discourse; and the ascription of the individual or group to that definition (which is fostered by the power mechanisms put in place by discourse) or to an alternative one (also set through discourse, but one which is subjugated by the power mechanisms of the predominant one). It is then possible to sketch a methodology to study concrete identities in three steps: 1) an analysis of the discourse that defines the dominant identity; 2) an examination of the power mechanisms that make it predominant and silence other identities; and 3) an investigation of the hidden transcripts which point to silenced discourses and identities.

The construction of Indigenous identity in Chiapas

In this section I will undertake the study of the construction of the Indigenous identity in Chiapas since the Zapatista uprising using the three-step methodology that I have outlined above.

The Discourse on Indigenousness

The Zapatista uprising was the result of more than two decades of deteriorating conditions for the indigenous, landless peasants who make up most of the population of the Altos (Highlands) and Selva (Jungle) regions of Chiapas. Their mobilisation started in the 1970s with the help of two different groups of actors; Catholic missionaries, and Maoist revolutionaries, who had been repressed in the towns by the government and who identified themselves with the communitarian characteristics of Indigenous peasants. With the help of these two groups several very active organisations were created, and it was from them that, as living

conditions deteriorated in the 1980s and early 1990s, the decision to take up on arms was made and the EZLN was born (Harvey 1995).[2]

In all this process of increasing mobilisation, Indigenousness, although present, was never a key element. The demands of the population were mainly related to living conditions, and the movement was largely characterised as 'peasant' (Tejera Gaona 1997, p.16). It is true that since the 1970s, and with the help of the Catholic Church, several Indigenous organisations were created, but they remained in the local scene, and focused mainly on cultural issues which had little relation to the wider mobilisation centred on living conditions.

In the same way, the Zapatista uprising of 1994, which responded to the neo-liberal measures taken by the Salinas government at a moment where the conditions of the population were extremely precarious[3], did not emphasise Indigenousness as one of its major aspects (Gledhill 1998, p.94). The EZLN defined itself as 'Indigenous', but its main goal was a radical change in the whole of the Mexican society that would bring an amelioration of living conditions. In that sense, its leaders were afraid that, if they stressed too much their ethnic character, their demands would be pigeonholed as 'Indigenous' and thus not representing broader problems (Pollack 1999, p.42).

However, the insistence of external actors such as the Mexican government and the international public opinion in seeing the insurrection as an essentially Indigenous phenomenon led the EZLN to make of Indigenousness one of its central features. Gradually, the communiqués and documents issued by the EZLN, along with the contributions of intellectuals, academics, and politicians, began to establish a

[2] Among the elements that brought about this deterioration can be found the debt crisis and its subsequent economic crisis, the fall of agricultural prices in the international markets, and the neo-liberal measures taken by the Mexican government.

[3] The date chosen for the uprising, January 1st, 1994, was also the first day of life of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

discourse that gave form to a notion of Indigenous identity associated to Zapatismo and Chiapas. An analysis of some of the texts that make up this discourse shows what I would see as the three main characteristics of this identity.

First of all, and although the EZLN always refers to the '*pueblos indios*' (literally Indian peoples[4]) in plural, the constant use of this expression as the denomination of the people who suffer the conditions against which they fight, creates the idea, not existing before, that there is a community encompassing all the people of Indigenous origin. Moreover, this way of presenting things establishes a direct link between the EZLN and these 'Indigenous people' for which they struggle, creating the idea that the EZLN's fight is the same as that of all the Indigenous people. This is obvious, for instance, in the Fifth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (EZLN 1998), in which the EZLN assumes the task to claim for the "recognition of the rights of the Indian peoples", and calls for a national consultation on the matter. In this document, the term 'Indigenous peoples' is used 23 times, all of them referring to the Indians as a homogeneous category for whose rights the EZLN is fighting.

Secondly, Indigenousness is associated with several elements which are attributed to a historical Indian tradition stemming from pre-colonial times (Tejera Gaona 1997, p.101). Indigenous people are presented as rooted in the culture of the community, where commonality and democracy are the principles that guide collective life. This can be seen, for example, in EZLN's *Comandante* David address to the Congress of the Union on March 28th, 2001, when he refers to their "first parents and grandparents" who had to face the Spanish invasion and who "governed with

[4] The category '*indio*' (Indian) was a label originally imposed by the Spanish colonisers, with negative connotations which the term '*indígena*' (original inhabitants of a territory, Indigenous) sought to transcend. However, the rise of an Indigenous movement in the last few years has brought about a positive revalorisation of the '*indio*' label, that being the reason why the EZLN, for instance, uses it in its communiqués (Gledhill 1997, p.92). Although the original distinction between both terms must be acknowledged, in this paper I follow the actual convention and use 'Indian' and 'Indigenous' interchangeably.

Indigenous intelligence and wisdom". He also talks about the Indigenous people "for whom collectivity and coexistence and sharing give life" (EZLN 2001). In this respect though, the contribution to the discourse on Indigenousness by external intellectuals and scholars is even more important. Many of them have seen in the Indian features of democracy and commonality something to be praised and used as an example for the whole of society. Thus, Cunninghame and Ballesteros Corona trace the foundations of the EZLN to the "indigenous traditional practices of the direct participatory democracy and the autonomy of the community assembly" (1998, p.15), and Esteva, also talking about the Indigenous people in general, affirms that "in the community, the social order is not based on the rights of the individuals ... but in mutual, common obligations, which give an effective foundation to the exercise of power" (1999, p.166).

Finally, and related to the last point, Indigenousness is portrayed in this discourse as opposed to free markets and liberal economics, which are grouped under the term neo-liberalism, and whose pursuit by the Mexican government is the source of the problems of Indigenous peoples. The First Declaration of La Realidad, which is titled "For Humanity and Against Neoliberalism", contains sentences such as: "the power of money has presented a new mask over its criminal face"; or: "neoliberalism, the historic crime in the concentration of privileges, wealth and impunities, democratizes misery and hopelessness"; or even: "by the name of 'globalization' they call this modern war which assassinates and forgets" (EZLN 1996). With this and other similar declarations, a definite link between indigenous people, their way of life and their fight through the EZLN against neo-liberalism is made.

From this account of texts, although necessarily fractioned and limited, a discourse which presents a concrete and new idea of the Indigenous identity in Chiapas can be ascertained. This is characterised by encompassing all the Indigenous peoples of the

area, who share a communitarian and democratic way of life inherited from their pre-colonial ancestors, and who are represented by the EZLN in a fight against neo-liberalism, which is primarily embodied in the practices of the Mexican government.

The Mechanisms of Power

I will now move on to try to identify the main mechanisms of power through which the definition of identity that I have just outlined has been able to acquire a predominant position and be regarded as truth. Following the idea presented above that discourse puts in place power mechanisms, which in turn influence and reinforce discourse, I will search for these mechanisms in the discursive practices undertaken by the main actors who shape the discourse.

First, I believe that the EZLN has occupied the place of the state in using a mechanism that Foucault calls ‘pastoral power’. Pastoral power “requires individuals to internalize various ideals and norms so that they both regard an external body as concerned with their good and strive to regulate themselves in accord with the dictate of that external body” (Bevir 1999, p. 351). My argument here is that in Chiapas, because of the liberalising economic measures taken by the government, the state is no longer perceived as an agent which will provide well-being. This cuts the emotional links between the people and the state, and thus it stops being regarded as a source of identity. The EZLN stands now in the space left by the state as it is seen as the actor that fights for the well-being of the poor Indigenous peasants of the region, and this leads many of them to recognise themselves in the identity presented by the insurgents.

Another of the mechanisms of power that Foucault identifies in the modern state, disciplinary power (Bevir 1999, p.351), is also used by the EZLN to advance its

identity. Its constitution as an army allows the EZLN to exercise physical threat and violence, and it has indeed done so in many communities where its opponents have been silenced or even expelled (de la Grange and Rico 1997, p.410). I believe that this mechanism has been primarily used for political reasons, but by repressing and displacing opposing views it has definitely helped to promote its depiction of identity.

A third mechanism of power would be that achieved through the communicative forces of the EZLN, the Church and both Mexican and international intellectuals and academics. I believe that there is an ideological alliance between the EZLN and leftist intellectuals who see in some of the features of the Indigenous identity presented by the Zapatistas (community, democracy) the main elements of a model of society that they want to promote in the world. Besides that, the compromise of the Catholic Church with the dispossessed has been reflected in an explicit support to the EZLN as the representative of the Indigenous cause (de la Grange and Rico 1997, p.240). Thus, the strong communicative ability and means of all these actors have been instrumental in presenting to the world, including the Indians of Chiapas themselves, the predominant Indigenous identity that I have outlined above.

Lastly, the Mexican government can also be seen as having acted powerfully towards the promotion of the Indigenous identity by recognising the EZLN as an actor with which to discuss Indigenous issues, thus associating Indigenousness with the definition of identity that I have outlined above in all public manifestations (Pollack 1999, p.42). This role of the government obeys, I believe, to three different reasons. First, a single Indigenous category allows the Mexican state to negotiate with only one group, instead of having to engage in endless partial negotiations. Second, identifying Indigenousness with an armed group allows the government to accuse the movement of lack of legitimacy, which can be used to delay its compromises, as has been the case with the implementation of the San Andrés Agreements. Finally, the

Mexican government has had to acknowledge and negotiate with the EZLN in order to defend its public image as a democratic and sensible actor in front of the international community.

Although probably not encompassing all the power mechanisms in place, I would argue that these examples show that the discursive practices that present a certain definition of identity also work as power mechanisms that promote this identity and induce people to recognise themselves in it. However, as I will show in the next section, this does not mean that all the Indigenous people in Chiapas have to necessarily and exclusively ascribe to this identity.

The Silenced Discourses

Effectively, it is possible to find in Chiapas examples of people who do not ascribe themselves to the predominant identity sketched above. This exercise of agency, which is undertaken by adopting an alternative identity, implies a refusal that often brings confrontation with the powerful mechanisms that promote the prevalent identity. Thus its expression will only be found in discursive practices which are not usually visible, and which often take the form of silent practices of resistance (hidden transcripts) or low-intensity conflicts that do not attract much attention. These discourses do not have access to powerful mechanisms to disseminate and promote their identities, and they are hard to perceive without proper fieldwork and direct contact with them. However, it is possible to locate some examples in the literature that confirm the existence of such alternative discourses and show their forms of expression.

One example comes from the Mam Indigenous communities of the highlands of Chiapas. Hernández Castillo (2001) recounts how some sectors of the Mams have

been able to collaborate with productive projects promoted by the government. This activity in itself implies a break with the discourse of the EZLN, resulting in direct confrontation because of the Zapatista's total opposition to cooperate with the state. This element leads to other ruptures in the unity of Indigenous identity. The Mams, for instance, insist in their "need to work on the construction of a democratic communitarian culture" (Hernández Castillo 2001, p.115). With this, they deny the idea that Indigenous customary law is democratic and based on consensus, and leads them to undertake actions of resistance in front of the Zapatistas (such as cooperation with the state, or looking for alternate ways of resolving conflict).

Another testimony is provided by Tejera Gaona's (1997) study of two different groups of Indigenous people in the highlands of Chiapas. He reports that each of these groups constructs its identity within their own communities, which makes it difficult to leave any space for any encompassing Indigenous identity (Tejera Gaona 1997, p.64). Moreover, he alludes to the division that is present in many communities, and the conflicts that are brought about by oppressive practices of *caciquismo*[5] (Tejera Gaona 1997, p.101). Internal conflicts which mirror undemocratic practices are, then, another way in which ascription to alternative identities is made visible in Chiapas.

In another study, de la Grange and Rico (1998, pp.407-415) give an account of the 'abuses of the EZLN', and present several testimonies which illustrate the division that the uprising has brought about in many parts of Chiapas. One of them, for instance, writes in a letter to the authorities: "We ask for your support, don't let the Mexican army leave the area until the Zapatistas have handed over their weapons"

[5] *Caciquismo* is a form of repressive 'bossism' that can be found in many indigenous communities in the Central Highlands of Chiapas. The *cacique* exercises a high degree of dominance over a given territory, and in exchange he has to protect and provide security to the population of the area. Such a system has been promoted in Mexico by the PRI by giving privileges to the *caciques* so they, in turn, force the population of their region to vote for the PRI (Ouweneel 1996, p.91)

(de la Grange and Rico 1998, p.410; my translation). This, again, exemplifies the case of groups who, by opposing the EZLN, do not conform to the latter's Indigenous identity, and thus suffer the effects of power mechanisms in the form of marginalisation or expulsion from their communities.

Finally, Ouweneel shows the interesting case of the leader of an Indigenous organisation who, in answering a question about the identity of the EZLN in a lecture in the USA, said: "No, we do not know who they are. They came, made their list of demands and then they left. But we are with them because those demands are ours too. It is why I am here now. Without them, we would not have a voice." (1996, p.101). I think that this statement illustrates the possibility that I considered above of a partial ascription to an identity. Even if this individual may not know anything about the EZLN, he is able to use its identity strategically to 'gain a voice' that otherwise he would not have.

Although necessarily brief, I believe that this collection of accounts reveals the possibility of the exercise of agency by individuals and groups who do not conform with the prevalent notion of Indigenous identity in Chiapas. This exercise is often difficult and conflictive, but I have shown that it can also be done with positive and strategic goals.

Conclusions

The construction of Indigenous identity in Chiapas since the Zapatista uprising has served to present identity as a fluid and contingent concept, one which is equated to a kind of knowledge which is the result of a complex discourse in which many social actors intervene. Moreover, I have shown how this discourse puts in place power mechanisms that induce people to identify with it. However, I have also argued that

social actors can exercise a certain degree of agency. That is the reason why, alongside the predominant discourse on identity, I have been able to locate alternative discourses that, mainly in a hidden and often conflictive way, but also using it strategically, portray different identities to which people ascribe.

It is precisely the flexible character of identity, its power consequences, and the possibility of exercising agency that make this concept controversial. Can, for instance, the political goals of the EZLN be de-legitimised under the claims that it is imposing an 'invented' identity upon the Indigenous people of Chiapas? To what extent can the external actors who intervene in the construction of discourse be held accountable for this? Would it be possible for the EZLN to pursue a political strategy that, without undermining its political effectiveness, would permit the emergence of a more nuanced and diverse set of discourses about identity? All these questions deal with the limits of the exercise of agency in the establishment of (and the resistance to) the power mechanisms set by discourse, and they do not have an easy answer. I believe with Foucault that power is not something that people have, but it permeates the whole social body influencing both those who are usually regarded as powerful and powerless. However, allowing for agency complicates the issue and requires a closer in-depth analysis. This paper has pretended to be only a first approximation that sets the basic lines on which to focus the study of this very exciting topic, and further research is definitely needed in order to fully apprehend the workings of power in the creation and promotion of identity.

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