GENDER NORMS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY REPRESENTATION: AN EXPLORATORY DATA ANALYSIS[1]

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ABSTRACT

As the Cultural Studies paradigm has proposed and continuously shown, identities and representations are built at the intersection of multiple identification referents, between the personal and the social. Our histories, our social class, our race, our nationality, all of these factors come into play in our social and personal existence. Gender, in particular, is a pivotal axis of identification processes. When exploring how national identities are represented, considering how different identification nodes play an important role, gender is expected to be one of them. This article aims to explore how a group of strategically selected respondents, Portuguese immigrants in Germany, represent the own and the other's (German) national identity in relation to their gender identification. Exploratory survey data indicates that binary gender norms seem to shape respondents' representations of national identity, whether their own or of their origin country, as well as of the others', their host country.

KEYWORDS

National identity, Gender, Europe, Representation, Cultural Studies.

Representation and Identity

In the current academic, social, political and even economic global context, issues of identity play an unprecedentedly central role. The growth and intensification of connections at a global scale are seen as originating a crisis of identity, part of a general destabilizing of social referents. Theoretically, socially and even personally, identity has moved past its original definition, of something based on essentialist commonness, and is now seen as an unstable and never completed construction (Hall, 1996, Bauman, 2000). In the construction of identity, one draws on resources, such as history, language and culture, "in the process of becoming rather than being" (Hall, 1996, p.4). One constructs a narrative which is constantly in the process of transformation and rearticulating and is thus never stable.

One of the most groundbreaking contributions to the questioning of identity has been made by Judith Butler (2004, 2009), through the concept of "performativity". Butler's concept of performativity, focused on gender identity, is based on the idea that discourse has the power to produce people's identities. It is highly regulated by social norms which constrain the possibilities of identification, as is the case with gender norms. So, one's identity is a process of making oneself, but restricted by social norms. Gender, as a pivotal axis of identity, is not fixed, neither biologically nor socially, it is performed (Butler, 2004).

Power is another key concept regarding issues of identity, as the growing knowledge produced in the context of Cultural Studies has continuously shown. In Cultural Studies, culture, and identity, are seen as operating in many and often overlapping or even contradictory

levels, from Nations to race, gender or class (Frow & Morris, 2006). In order to understand the dynamics of representation that occur in and between groups and individuals, it is absolutely crucial that there is attentiveness to these issues of power, and these are expected to be present in peoples' discourses about identity, in what Foucault designates as the ""discursive regime,"" (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984, p. 55).

Hence, one of the expectable power dynamics and one of the issues that most stand at the center of identity is that of gender (Butler, 2004, 2009). As Hall (1996, p. 15) put it, it, when it comes to identity, sexual difference has a 'paradigmatic function (…) in relation to other axes of exclusion'. As such, gender is the focus of this article, which aims at contributing to the body of work that tries to explore to what extent, according to which dynamics and in what ways the experiences of auto- and hetero-representations of national identity are gendered, i.e. framed, altered, influenced by the respondents' gender identity.

National and European Identities

This study focuses on the point of intersection between two national identities: German and Portuguese – within the context of European identity. As such, it focuses on Portuguese immigrants living in Germany in order to explore representations of one's own and the other's national identity in this specific point of intersection.

The European context is a strategic one in which to explore the concept of national identities. The important role played by the hegemony of the Nation-State in constructing discourses and practices which gave shape to imagined National communities in Europe coexisted with, or was challenged by, an idea of Europeanness. Crisis moments, such as the recent global financial and economic crisis, have a profound impact on this idea of Europeanness. With some (Southern) countries on the side of the defaulters, and other (Northern) countries as the creditors, the potential for the construction of discursive identity division between Northern and Southern European countries, in general, and Portugal and Germany, in particular, is expected (Chalániová, 2014, Macmillan, 2014).

The position of the migrant is the one most fruitful in terms of building, deconstructing and questioning representations about National identity. Identities, especially collective, are increasingly deterritorialized, and migrants live this situation to the fullest (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). Not only that, but the migrant's relation to National identity is expected to evidence processes of strategic essentialism (Frow & Morris, 2006), when it comes to the context in which identity referents are drawn.

Femininity and Masculinity as Performances

The dichotomy between femininity and masculinity is a binary representation of gender identity, which is, however, the overwhelmingly accepted normative context currently, even though, theorists, most prominently Judith Butler (2004, 2009) have questioned this twofold view of gender. Butler's theorization allows us to move beyond a mere binary and be open to forms of performing one's gender that go beyond it, which presently are often portrayed as transgressive. Acceptance of different gender performances beyond this binary is, according

to Butler (2004, 2009) and to the perspective adopted in this study, the only possible path to creating communities of recognition and allowing for individuals and societies to thrive.

However, even though in academia as well as social movements, and even at the individual level, the gender as binary norm has increasingly been questioned and challenged, it continues to be an extremely solid social reference, rooted in the (opposing) concepts of masculinity and femininity, even if seen merely as social identifications. According to Stets and Burke, as exposed in Encyclopedia of Sociology (2000), gender roles (expectations of behavior according to one's gender), gender stereotypes (shared views of personality linked to each gender), and gender attitudes (as views associated to either males or females), all influence gender identity, which, in turn, "involves all the meanings that are applied to oneself on the basis of one's gender identification" (2000, p.2), not biologically but socially. This could be linked to Butler's concept of performativity, however there is one extremely significant difference: the limitation imposed by ideas such as "either male or female" – the gender as binary norm.

Examples given by Stets and Burke (2000) indicate, whether based on roles, stereotypes or attitudes, masculinity as rooted in the worker role, instrumentality and of thinking in terms of justice, whereas femininity is usually presented as domestic, expressive and thinking in terms of care. The findings in this study support this dichotomy. Results indicate that respondents who identified as female had a larger emphasis on concepts related to affective relationships and positivity, whereas male respondents had a higher degree of negativity and emphasis on political-economic, i.e. instrumental, factors. This falls exactly into the description of prevalent social norms regarding binary gender roles, stereotypes and attitudes.

Portuguese Immigrants in Germany

Based on an exploratory data collection, through surveys applied to Portuguese immigrants in Germany, it was possible to identify one main trend that serves as a point of departure for future exploration of this topic: that people who identify as female and male tend to reproduce normative performances of the female gender as affectionate and positive and male as instrumentive and negative. Although these gender performances (Butler, 2004, 2009) have to be seen as exactly that – performances, with the ability to be transgressed and transcended – when exploring issues of national identity, findings point to the importance of taking into consideration how gender norms may influence representation processes of both ourselves and the "other".

In order to explore issues of identification and gender, an online survey was created and applied by strategic selection and snowball method, by contacting a few known respondents who fit the characteristics, and, from them, gain access to other respondents who fit the criteria. Another way of using this method was by sharing the online survey with social media groups with a large number of members that fit the criteria, including the Facebook groups "Portuguese in Germany", "Portuguese in Berlin" and "Portuguese in Köln"[4].

The survey was also applied to German nationals living in Portugal and people with substantiated contact with both cultures (such as people with both nationalities and/or who

[4] Original names:"Portugueses na Alemanha", "Portugueses em Berlim" and "Portugueses em Köln"

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have studied in German schools, former migrants etc.). For the purpose of this exploratory study, a clipping was made, considering the responses of Portuguese Immigrants in Germany. The intent of this survey is not to produce quantitative statistical data, but to take the collected data and analyze it qualitatively, since this research is made on the basis of the idea, not only that the positivist model is not applicable to the social world, but that it may even destroy the essence of social reality, since it tends to ignore the freedom and individuality of the human (Goldenberg, 1999, p. 18).

All respondents identified as either male (cis) or female (cis), even though other gender identification possibilities were presented (agender, non-binary, trans, other). Because a snowball strategy was used and the survey in question was open to the public, it was not possible to achieve a 1:1 ratio of female and male respondents. After an initial filtering, due to survey responses with missing answers, and a selection of only those immigrants who have been in Germany for at least 10 months (thus avoiding temporary short-term experiences), the ratio of female to male response was that of 1,56:1. 25 female respondents and 16 male respondents. However, although potential gender differences were at the root of this analysis, considering that it is not its purpose to seek statistical significance but to identify and explore themes and categories associated with identification processes, this is not considered impairing to the analysis. As this is an exploratory data analysis, further research would benefit from a case by case exploration of answers, as well as additional data collection which would allow for more in depth data, through focus groups and interviews, for example.

The answers of respondents who identified as male (cis) and female (cis) were analyzed separately, so as to explore potential gender issues when it comes to processes of identification and national identity. It is important to note that there are some social-demographic differences between male and female respondents[5]. The average age of men (34) is slightly superior to that of women respondents (30). When it comes to the average number of months each group has spent in Germany, men's number is larger than women's: 80,6 (almost 7 years) compared to 50,3 (around 4 years). As for level of education, there is a higher percentage of more qualified women than men. Female respondents are comprised of 54% people with superior education (Bachelor's, Master's and PhD) and 46% with secondary education, whereas male respondents have mainly secondary education (53%), 41% have superior education, and one respondent (6%) has basic education.

In the pivotal section of the survey, which was explored for the purpose of this article, each respondent was asked to write down three words they associated with the following concepts: Portugal, Portuguese, Germany, Germans, Europe, Europeans. Unfortunately, as the form did not make any of these questions of mandatory response, there were too many blank answers in the last two categories, so the focus at this point will be on representations of Portugal/Portuguese (origins) and Germany/Germans (hosts). This may be an interesting finding in itself, worth of taking into consideration in further data exploration: is the fact that European concepts are less prone do awaken word associations a reflection of the weakness of European identity (Pieterse, 1993).

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[5] The names "men" and "women" will be used from this point on as synonyms for male and female respondents, respectively, for purposes of language fluidity and linguistic style, but always considering that these are gender identifications.

Even though there were social-demographic differences between female and male respondents, it is still considered that an exploratory comparison between female and male responses as such is possible and fruitful. Nonetheless, further studies of this particular or other similar data sets would benefit from a differentiated analysis based on other possible identity referents, such as education and social-economical status.

After listing all the word associations made by each respondent, based on the collected data, categories were created following the type of answers given. The categories, and examples of words included in each one, are the following:

Emotions: affective relationships, emotions, feelings (Family, Friends, Comfort, Demotivation etc.)

Political-Economic Factors: related to working conditions, Economy and political climate (work, wealth, corruption, opportunities)

Climate (Sun, Rain, Cold, Warm)

Activities: Food, Drinks, Football, etc.

Attributes and features: adjectives, characterizations, features (hospitality, honesty, laziness, language, cities, proud, different)

Aside from these categories, word associations which were susceptible to classification as negative or positive (attributes, emotions, political-economic factors) were marked as either positive (e.g. comfort, richness, hospitality) or negative (demotivation, corruption, laziness).

The Results

Portugal

When it comes to "Portugal", there are two main differences: female respondents have a much more significant weight when it comes to words associated with "Emotions" than male respondents (65% to 40%), and male respondents' third most frequent category is "Political-Economic Factors" (15%), which for female respondents is almost non-expressive (2%). On the male side, word associations were grouped in the following manner: Emotions (40%), Activities (28%), Political-Economic Factors (15%), Attributes and Features (13%) and Climate (4%). Whereas on the female side 65% of words were inserted in the "Emotions" category, followed by Activities (17%), Climate (12%), Attributes and Features (4%) and Political-Economic Factors (2%).

Another expressive result is that of negative categories. While women only had two negative word associations, which correspond to 3% of answers, and both under the category "negative political-economic factors"; male respondents had 11 word associations which were negative (23%), including one negative emotion, 6 negative political-economic factors and 4 negative attributes. This is a very significant dissimilarity, pointing to how differently male and female respondents represent their country of origin.

Portuguese

In relation to "Portuguese", the order of categories is the same in female and male respondents, with a difference in the weight of each category, especially, again, in the case of

"Political-Economic Factors", which has more than double the frequency in male (11%) than in female (4%) respondents. The order and respective ratios are: Attributes and features (63% in female responses, 55% in male); Emotions (30% for females, 28% for males), Political-Economic Factors (4% for female respondents, 11% for male), Activities (3% for females 6% for males).

As for positivity/negativity, in this section, men gave an identical 30% positive and 30% negative answers (making the majority of 40% non-classifiable), whereas women gave 44% positive and 34% negative answers, again, favoring positive associations with the co-nationals of origin.

Germany

Political-Economic factors are clearly the main representatives of Germany for respondents in general, but with a difference in intensity: 50% for female and 38% for male respondents. The biggest difference occurs in the second most important category for each group, in the case of female respondent's Emotions (21%), and in the case of male respondents, Attributes and Features (32%), which is the third most frequent category for women, together with Climate (both with 11%), and Activities as the least significant (7%). Whereas, for men, the third category is Emotions (13%), followed by Activities (11%) and Climate (6%).

Another difference may be signaled when it comes to negative and positive word associations. Female respondents gave 67% of positive answers and only 5% negative, while male respondents gave a similar ratio of positive responses (62%), but more than double negative (13%).

Germans

Answers given regarding Germans also vary between male and female respondents. In this case, female responses were overwhelmingly grouped in the category "Attributes and features", with 85%, which was also the most frequent category in male responses but with a lower, if also somewhat significant, impact (63%). In this case, men had more words association with "Emotions" than women, being the group's second most frequent category with 18%, while women had 6% of words in that category, and had Political-Economic factors in second place, with 8%, followed by Activities with 1%. Male respondents had a bigger slice of words connected to Political-Economic factors (14%), followed by Activities with 5%.

As for positivity/negativity, again, when it comes to Germans, male respondents seem to have an almost equal distribution, but with a higher degree of negative associations, with 37% negative and 35% positive words. Women, on the other hand, have more than half of positive word associations (51%) and 34% negative ones.

Origins and Residence

Grouping by word associations related to the country of origin (Portugal/Portuguese) female responses are 28% positive and 18% negative (mainly neither 54%), and regarding the country of residence (Germany/Germans) responses are extremely positive (59%) and 20% negative (only 21% neither). On the other hand, men gave slightly more negative (27%) than positive responses (24%) when it comes to the country and nationals of origin, and, like

the female respondents, had much more positive word associations (49%) than negative ones (24%) when it comes to the country of residence.

In total, each category has the following distribution between female and male respondents:

Emotions: 31% Female; 25% Male
Attributes and features: 40% Female, 40% Male
Political-Economic Factors: 16% Female, 20% Male
Climate: 6% Female, 3% Male
Activities: 7% Female, 12% Male

Positive Affection / Negative Instrumentality

The main difference between male and female respondents seems to be:

Women give much more positive responses (43%) than negative (19%) ones. While men, although also privileging positive responses, have a less significant difference: 36% positive and 26% negative.

1.1 The difference comes mainly in relation to the country of origin, regarding which male respondents had more negative than positive word associations.

2. Men give slightly more importance to Political-Economic factors than women, especially when it comes to their country of origin. While women give more importance to Emotions than men.

Gender and national identity

The exploratory data analysis conducted in this study allows us to draw significant guidelines to the study of representations of identities, specifically, national identities. It is clear that gender norms shape how even national identity is represented and, as such, must be taken as an important contributing factor.

Female respondents appear to put more importance into affective relationships and positive representations than male respondents. However, just as immigrant respondents were strategically selected as being "in-between" identities, and, as such, able to contribute with a richer account of these processes, the same could be done regarding gender. In this particular data set, all respondents identified as cisgender, but it would be of great social and academic significance to explore how respondents who identify as transcending gender norms – non-cisgender or non-binary – would respond to the same issues so as to draw a more accurate image of how different identity referents, in this case in particular, gender, molds, shifts and influences processes of representation of national identity.

Differences identified in this particular group between female and male respondents' word associations, whether regarding category as theme or positivity/negativity, seem to be in line with theory regarding the adoption of particular gender preferences in accordance with gender roles and norms. Further research should be carried out, in scope as well as in depth, so as to explore how and according to which processes these identifications take place. Word association is a good exploratory tool to detect tendencies and themes, but

must be accompanied by subsequent data collection that allows for the richness of identification processes to be revealed.

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