

## **Variability in patterns of national identity based on mother tongue: the case of Andorra**

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### **Abstract**

*Social psychology studies the psychological mechanisms involved in the construction of national identity. The theoretical framework of this study is based on integrating the main concepts of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1984), which states that individuals are members of different social groups and that they identify as members of some of these groups with varying degrees of commitment and feelings. This article analyses the relationship between family language and identifying with the national project in a group of young people socialised in the Principality of Andorra. The data were collected through a survey of 514 people with different backgrounds, family languages and nationalities. The results show that the family language is the variable that correlates the most strongly with national identity. Among the population of Andorra, there are different degrees of levels of identification with the country according to family language, and while some languages are constructed as exclusive categories, others are considered compatible and inclusive in relation to the country.*

**Key words:** family language, national identity, self-categorisation.

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## 1. Introduction

Social psychology explains how people come to consider themselves members of certain social groups and how this influences their inter-group relations. The theoretical framework of this study is based on integrating the main concepts of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1984; Tajfel & Turner, 1989), according to which individuals are members of different social groups (linguistic, national, etc.) and identify and categorise themselves subjectively as members of some of these groups with differing degrees of commitment and feelings.

According to Barrett, Lyons, and Del Valle (2004), a person's age, cognitive development, nation of origin and/or residence, national group, geographic location within the nation, ethnicity, language use, media consumed, attendance at a given school and family practices are all factors that generate and explain the existence of considerable variability in patterns of national identification.

Also, according to Barrett, Lyons, and Del Valle (2004), language use and national identity are closely related. In fact, one factor associated with the importance of how people identify nationally is the language they use to communicate. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the mere fact of speaking a language determines the degree of importance attached to a given national identity.

It seems more reasonable to assert that speaking a certain language is a consequence of a value system and a given ideology espoused by the family. Even though we know that constructing a national identity is diverse and complex, sometimes there is a mimetic relationship between knowledge of a language and the feeling of national identity associated with it (Vila, 2006).

In fact, there is a relationship between national identity and language, but national identity is not synonymous with knowledge of the language. That is, differences have been found in the importance attributed to national identity by people who use different languages with their families. People deliberately use a language to express or reaffirm their sense of national identity, such that national identification and the practices derived therefrom are key factors which predispose one to certain language usages (Vila et al., 1998).

The causal factor implied in language use, as well as the importance attributed to certain national identities, is associated with family ideologies, values and practices.

Nation states have used the language regulated by the state for the purpose of conveying certain dominant cultural representations. Through language, people are exposed to contents which prescribe certain national representations that are acquired when participating in the communication of a given community.

Therefore, in communities, the factors of language and sense of belonging play an important role in shaping the sense of national identity. Given that the balance between these factors can vary depending on the languages present in the context and the degree of belonging, considerable variability is expected in the construction of the sense of national identity among citizens.

The notion of citizenship and its concept associated with identity play a core role in socialisation processes. The notion of citizenship related to a *conservative* position stresses the creation of a model of free, equal citizen in order to improve the nation. This position stems from Romanticism and the Enlightenment. The

state is responsible for nationalising the territory and developing a national consciousness among its citizens. This conception has a one-way view of individual identity, focused on *private and particular factors*, such as language, ethnicity, origin, beliefs, religion and gender associated directly with the state.

In contrast, the *modern* notion of citizenship assumes that each individual, regardless of their language, ethnicity, origin, beliefs, religion or gender, has the same rights as any other person and is obligated by the same duties, expressed as laws, which are the outcome of the social contract and the commonweal. From this position, the state becomes a nation through the free association of individual wills as a guarantee of individual freedom. Therefore, identity affiliation is understood as a national affiliation where citizenship is detached from any private trait like language, gender, ethnicity, beliefs, religion or gender.

Based on the modern conception of citizenship, the construction of national identity is a *public, shared, unique* matter which is possible through acknowledgement of equality and individual freedom within society's diversity. Individual differences are a private matter which cannot be considered in the communal sphere, and therefore what is truly important is constructing a single identity associated with the citizenry and affiliated with the state-as-nation as a guarantee of social cohesion.

This study focuses on the sociopolitical and linguistic context of the co-principality of Andorra, a country in Europe with seven centuries of history, even though it is not a member of the European Union and is nestled between two states: France and Spain. The political and social events of the past 50 years have led to a high degree of self-governance and a heterogeneous demographic composition resulting from the arrival of an avalanche of foreigners, primarily from Spain, France and Portugal, who have considerably changed its identity status. According to recent figures from the survey on language knowledge and use of the population of Andorra, the languages that have a strong social presence in the country are Catalan, the official national language even though it is a minority language, which is predominant in administration, banking, finance and legal matters and is defended by Andorran public schools; Spanish, the language spoken by the majority of inhabitants and commonly used by the large population segment from Spain and South American countries; French, a language which is commonly known because of the proximity to and traditional political relations with the neighbouring country; and Portuguese, a language with rather low social prestige yet a strong presence on the streets, since Portuguese residents largely comprise closed group impermeable to integration.

The objective of this article is to analyse the construction of national identity in adolescents and adults living in the Principality of Andorra. Specifically, the relationships between self-categorisation, feeling of belonging and comparative identity are analysed in relation to family language.

This study seeks to describe the relationships between family language and the subjective dimension of national identity. To do so, three specific objectives are proposed:

- To study the impact of the main family language on national self-categorisation.
- To analyse the interrelation between main family language and the feeling of belonging to the land.

- To analyse whether comparative identity is influenced by the main family language in which the respondents were socialised. The hypothesis guiding this study is based on the idea proposed by Giles and Johnson (1981), which seeks to show how the official state language is used to mark a group belonging which is integrated into national identity.

Thus, this study seeks to show how in the Principality of Andorra, the Catalan language is used to mark a group belonging which is integrated into the national identity. In this case, the people who use Catalan in their families should describe themselves as Andorran, while people who use languages other than Catalan in their families would describe themselves first as something other than Andorran.

The fact that Andorra is a country with many languages is enriching for the population, since language is a very important means and medium of integration at all levels, as well as a way of reproducing national identity.

## **2. Methods**

### *2.1. Design*

The research methodology used in this study is quantitative based on a conclusive transversal design, as information was only collected once from a single sample.

### *2.2. Participants*

The population includes all residents of Andorra between the ages of 17 and 44 who have done all their compulsory education in one of the three education systems in the country, regardless of their nationality, citizenship status and language. Given the target and nature of this study, focusing on the population over the age of 16 living in Andorra was determined suitable. The justification of this choice is the consideration that at younger ages the national identity dimension may be present in people's lives but is much more confused and less crystallised than later, at ages when they should begin to have sufficient judgement to form a well-grounded opinion on this matter. On the other hand, 1984 is the year when the three educational systems started to coexist simultaneously with the creation of the Andorran school 32 years ago. The maximum age to begin compulsory secondary education is 12, and therefore we added these two values to obtain a maximum sample age of 44.

The sample was designed using stratified sampling. The population of 31,025 people was divided into four strata corresponding to the different kinds of education in Andorra: denominational Spanish schools, public Spanish schools, French schools and Andorran schools. The sample from private Spanish schools was not borne in mind because of the difficulty finding people who had been fully educated just in these schools.

Simple random sampling was applied within each stratum. Using the criterion of simple assignment, 125 subjects were chosen for each stratum. The sample error was 4.29% for a confidence level of 95%.

A total of 514 people participated in the study, 217 of whom were men and 296 women. The mean age of the participants was 27. The most common places of birth in the sample are Andorra (73.7% of the total), Spain (17.5% of the total) and

Portugal (5.6% of the total) and the mean amount of time they had lived in Andorra was 26 years. The entire sample did their compulsory education in one of the three educational systems existing in Andorra, which ensures socialisation within the same setting. The sample was divided by family language (Catalan, Spanish, French, Portuguese, bilingual). The participants' most common mother tongue was Catalan, followed by Spanish and Portuguese and Spanish/French and Catalan/French bilingualism.

### 2.3. *Instrument*

#### ***Sociodemographic and national identification questionnaire***

A questionnaire designed specifically for this purpose comprised of sociodemographic questions and questions on national identification was administered. It explores a group of young Andorrans' subjective identification through three tasks: a self-categorisation task, a feeling of belonging task and a comparative identity task. Within this article, the data from the questionnaire reveal the sociodemographic features of the participants as well as information on their family language.

### 2.4. *Tasks*

#### ***Subjective identification***

This task examines national self-categorisation through identity categories grouped into national categories, such as *Andorran*, *Spanish*, *Portuguese*, *French* and *Catalan*; regional categories such as *Pyrenean*; supranational categories such as *European*; age categories such as *young*; and geographic parish categories such as *Encamp*, *Canillo*, *Escaldes*, *Ordino*, *la Massana*, *Andorra la Vella* and *Sant Julià de Lòria*. The *young* category was included in case anyone found none of the categories of national identity important in their self-description.

#### ***Feeling of belonging***

The participants were asked to choose the options that best described their own feeling of belonging within Andorra. The three possible categories were *Andorran*, *Pyrenean* and *European*.

#### ***Comparative identity***

This task asked the subjects to choose the situations which best described their own feeling of comparative identity, establishing relationships between two different categories, the first option being *Andorran-European*, the second *parish-Andorran* and the third *Andorran-Pyrenean*.

### 2.5. *Procedure*

The questionnaire was administered individually and took approximately 5 minutes to fill out. The participants were told that the objective of the research was to ascertain their opinion on the issue of Andorran national identity, and their anonymity was guaranteed. In terms of the *self-categorisation* task, we used a set of 15 cards with words belonging to different categories written on them (national,

territorial, regional and supranational, and one category not belonging to the field of national identity) in which they could choose attributes like “young”, “Andorran”, “French”, “Portuguese”, “Catalan”, “Spanish”, “European”, “Pyrenean”, “Andorra la Vella”, “Escaldes”, “Sant Julià”, “Ordino”, “La Massana”, “Encamp” and “Canillo”.

The fifteen cards were spread out in front of the subject in a random order, and they were asked to choose three to describe and define themselves. The cards not chosen were set aside, and then the subjects were asked to order the three they had chosen from most to least important in order to determine the degree of importance they attributed to their national identity, with the first being considered the category with which they identified the most strongly. The cards were scored from 1 to 3, with 1 the most important and 3 the least important.

The tasks for feeling of belonging and comparative identity were closed-ended questions in which the participants marked a cross in the answer they considered the most appropriate.

In the *feeling of belonging* task, the participants had to choose one of four possible options to describe three kinds of feelings of belonging. The choices were presented in degrees of “very”, “fairly”, “not very” and “not at all”.

In the *comparative identity* task, they had to choose one of five possible options to describe three types of situations of comparative identity. The choices for the first situation were “Andorran”, “more Andorran than European”, “equally Andorran and European”, “more European than Andorran” and “European”. The choices for the second situation were “from my parish”, “more from my parish than Andorran”, “equally from my parish and Andorran”, “more Andorran than from the parish” and “Andorran”. The options for the third situation were “Andorran”, “more Andorran than Pyrenean”, “equally Andorran and Pyrenean”, “more Pyrenean than Andorran” and “Pyrenean”. The task is designed so that people from Andorra can define a specific feeling of identity by comparing the different categories *national-regional*, *national-territorial* and *national-supranational*. People who do not feel Andorran are expected to categorise themselves via the supranational, regional and/or territorial categories more than as Andorran.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Self-categorisation and main family language (MFL) task

The results on main family language and self-categorisation show that the Catalan-speaking group is the only one that identifies with the category *Andorran* as their first choice. The Spanish-speaking, French-speaking and Portuguese-speaking groups identify with other categories than *Andorran* as their first and second choices, even though *Andorran* does appear before any other national category. The category *European* never appeared in the French-speaking group. In contrast, the category *European* appeared before *Andorran* in the Portuguese-speaking group.

The contingency table (Table 1) shows that the relationship between language and the subjective identification task is significant.

**Table 1. Correspondence between main family language and self-categorisation**

MFL	Young	Andorran	Parish	Spanish	Catalan	Pyrenean	Portuguese	European	Active margin
Catalan	71	92	29	3	25	2	0	4	226
Spanish	88	39	21	23	3	4	0	2	180
Portuguese	39	2	2	0	0	1	5	0	49
Active margin	198	133	52	26	28	7	5	6	455

Source: Author

Thus, we can see that the family language in the *Catalan* category is directly associated with self-categorisation as *Andorran*, and the main family language in the other linguistic categories, Spanish and Portuguese, is associated with the self-categorisation *young* more than *Andorran*.

### ***MFL Catalan group***

In 84.5% of cases, the Catalan-speaking group identifies with the category *Andorran*, followed by the category *parish* in 66% of the cases and the category *young* in 60% of the cases.

**Table 2. Main family language Catalan and self-categorisation**

MFL	No. valid cases	Valid percentage		
Catalan	226	100%		
Subjective identification		No. responses	Percentage	Percentage of cases
Young		136	20.1%	60.2%
Andorran		191	28.2%	84.5%
Parish		149	22%	65.9%
Spanish		12	1.8%	5.3%
Catalan		87	12.9%	38.5%
Pyrenean		40	5.9%	17.7%
Portuguese		52	7.7%	23%
European		5	0.7%	2.2%
French		5	0.7%	2.2%
Total		677	100%	299.6%

Source: Author

### ***MFL Spanish group***

In 75% of cases, the Spanish-speaking group identifies with the category *young*, followed by the category *parish* in 69% of the cases and *Andorran* in 65% of the cases, even though the category *Spanish* appears in 45% of the cases.

**Table 3. Main family language Spanish and self-categorisation**

MFL	No. valid cases	Valid percentage		
Spanish	180	100%		
Subjective identification		No. responses	Percentage	Percentage of cases
Young		135	25%	75%
Andorran		117	21.7%	65%
Parish		124	23.%	68.9%
Spanish		81	15%	45%
Catalan		15	2.8%	8.3%
Pyrenean		41	7.6%	22.8%
Portuguese		19	3.5%	10.6%
European		5	0.9%	2.8%
French		3	0.6%	1.7%
Total		540	100%	300%

Source: Author

#### ***MFL French group***

In 100% of cases, the French-speaking group identifies with the category *young*, followed equally by *parish* and *Andorran* in 64% of the cases. The category *European* was never chosen by the French-speaking group.

**Table 4. Main family language French and self-categorisation**

MFL	No. valid cases	Valid percentage		
French	11	100%		
Subjective identification		No. responses	Percentage	Percentage of cases
Young		11	33.3%	100%
Andorran		7	21.2%	63.6%
Parish		7	21.2%	63.6%
Catalan		3	9.1%	27.3%
Pyrenean		2	6.1%	18.2%
Portuguese		1	3%	9.1%
French		2	6.1%	18.2%
Total		33	100%	300%

Source: Author

#### ***MFL Portuguese group***

In 92% of cases, the Portuguese-speaking group identifies with the category *young*, followed by *parish* in 71% of the cases and *European* in 47% of the cases, as well as by *Andorran* in 43% of the cases.

**Table 5. Main family language Portuguese and self-categorisation**

MFL	No. valid cases	Valid percentage		
Portuguese	49	100%		
Subjective identification		No. responses	Percentage	Percentage of cases
Young		45	30.6%	91.8%
Andorran		21	14.3%	42.9%
Parish		35	23.8%	71.4%
Spanish		1	0.7%	2%
Catalan		2	1.4%	4.1%
Pyrenean		8	5.4%	16.3%
Portuguese		12	8.2%	24.5%
European		23	15.6%	46.9%
Total		147	100%	300%

Source: Author

### 3.2. Task on feeling of belonging and main family language

In terms of the interaction between *main family language and feeling of belonging in Andorra*, the data show that the subjects who speak Catalan feel very Andorran and that those who speak Spanish feel fairly Andorran. The subjects whose main family language is Portuguese are between the categories of feeling “fairly” and “not very” Andorran.

The contingency table shows that there are significant differences in the relationship between feeling of belonging in Andorra and main family language.

**Table 6. Correspondence between main family language and feeling of belonging in Andorra**

MFL	Very Andorran	Fairly Andorran	Not very Andorran	Not at all Andorran	Active margin
Catalan	133	80	12	1	226
Spanish	51	86	31	12	180
French	1	9	0	1	11
Portuguese	6	28	11	4	49
Active margin	191	203	54	18	466

Source: Author

In terms of the *feeling of belonging in the Pyrenees and main family language*, the results show that the subjects whose main family language is Catalan are situated in the categories of feeling “fairly” and “very” Pyrenean. The subjects whose main family language is Spanish are between the categories of “fairly” and “not very” Pyrenean, and the subjects whose main family language is Portuguese are between the categories of feeling “not very” and “fairly” Pyrenean.

The contingency table shows that there are significant differences in the relationship between feeling of belonging in the Pyrenees and main family language.

**Table 7. Correspondence between main family language and feeling of belonging in the Pyrenees**

MFL	Very Pyrenean	Fairly Pyrenean	Not very Pyrenean	Not at all Pyrenean	Active margin
Catalan	60	105	49	12	226
Spanish	19	61	67	33	180
French	2	4	3	2	11
Portuguese	3	13	22	11	49
Active margin	84	183	141	58	466

Source: Author

There are no significant differences in the relationship between feeling of belonging in Europe and main family language.

### 3.3. Comparative identity and main family language task

With regard to *comparative Andorran-European identity and main family language*, the results show that the subjects whose main family language is Catalan are situated in the category of feeling “Andorran” and “more Andorran than European”. The subjects whose main family language is Spanish are situated between the categories of feeling “more Andorran than European” and “Andorran”. And the subjects whose main family language is Portuguese are situated between the categories of feeling “equally Andorran and European” and “more Andorran than European”.

The correspondence table shows that there are significant differences in the relationship between comparative identity Andorran-European and the main family language.

**Table 8. Correspondence between main family language and comparative identity Andorran-European**

MFL	Andorran	More Andorran than European	Equally Andorran and European	More European than Andorran	European	Active margin
Catalan	109	69	31	15	2	226
Spanish	46	57	41	18	18	180
French	3	4	2	2	0	11
Portuguese	9	11	17	6	6	49
Active margin	167	141	91	41	26	466

Source: Author

With regard to comparative identity and main family language, there are significant differences in the relationship between the comparative identities Andorran-European and Andorran-Pyrenean in the Catalan-speaking group and the Spanish-speaking group. The participants who speak both Catalan and Spanish feel Andorran first.

With regard to the *comparative identity Andorran-Pyrenean* and *main family language*, the results show that the subjects whose main family language is Catalan, Spanish and Portuguese are situated in the categories of feeling “Andorran” and “more Andorran than Pyrenean”.

The correspondence table shows that there are no significant differences in the relationship between the comparative identity parish-Andorran and main family language.

The correspondence table shows that there are significant differences in the relationship between the comparative identity Andorran-Pyrenean and main family language.

**Table 9. Correspondence between main family language and comparative identity Andorran-Pyrenean**

MFL	Andorran	More Andorran than Pyrenean	Equally Andorran and Pyrenean	More Pyrenean than Andorran	Pyrenean	Active margin
Catalan	113	67	34	7	5	226
Spanish	62	56	43	9	10	180
French	3	1	6	0	1	11
Portuguese	16	18	12	1	2	49
Active margin	194	142	95	17	18	466

Source: Author

#### 4. Conclusions

With regard to the hypothesis of showing how the Catalan language is used to mark a group belonging which is part of the national identity in Andorra, the data verify this solely in people who only use Catalan within their family milieu. People who use languages other than Catalan with their families describe themselves in other ways before Andorran, even though the category Andorran does appear before any other national category. One special case is the Spanish-speaking group, whose self-categorisation, feeling of belonging and comparative identity are more ambiguous, as this group does not categorise themselves as Andorran but do strongly relate their feeling of belonging with the Andorran group.

The impact of the Catalan language on constructing national identity and shaping the feeling of belonging to the Pyrenean Andorran region are factors that should be considered in the construction and social affirmation of a shared identity in Andorra. In Andorra, identity is constructed in reference to different belongings and different spheres, including social, linguistic, national, supranational, territorial and regional. In fact, the data show that one can have a multiple, plural,

composite identity which is easy to accept and can coexist in a totally harmonious, complementary and inclusive way.

Therefore, it is also worth noting the coexistence of multiple identities in this study, Pyrenean and Andorran in the Catalan- and Spanish-speaking groups and European in the Portuguese-speaking group, as well as the category of *parish* and *young* in the French-speaking group.

Language is one of the basic elements defining identity, and like the nation, it has been shaped over the centuries and is a fundamental component of culture. Andorra is the only state where Catalan is the sole official language. Catalan is identified with the territorial, regional and national identity and is the language of the Andorran public administration (government, communes and General Council), the national education system and the autochthonous inhabitants. Knowledge of Catalan provides access to certain jobs, is a means of integration and confers a certain national status. Even though it is a minority language, Catalan enjoys support from both the official institutions and the national media. The Catalan language is felt to be Andorra's own language and is a symbol of national identity.

This article is part of a broader study analysing the interrelation between the language and school variable and Andorran national identification. The data and results shed further light and greater detail on the factors involved in the process of constructing the national identity.

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