National Identity

Definition:

National identity is the *shared* identity of people from one nation. For example, through culture, language, and traditions.

Key concepts:

• Despite (or even because of) globalisation creating a continuously more interconnected and interdependent world (and hybrid identities) identification with a particular nation remain powerful for many people.

• National identity may be a way to define and even exclude others who do not hold the same nationality, based on physical or social boundaries, borders and differences.

• Media representations, and many other aspects and objects of daily life are responsible for forming and upholding this imagined identity such as national anthems, commemorations and even greeting gestures.

Nationalism

Nationalism is an ideology that tries to transform national identity into some form of a political state to achieve political goals. There are two forms of nationalism:

'Civic' nationalism is concerned with citizenship, laws, rights

'Ethnic' nationalism is concerned with ethnicity, culture and belonging.

National identity has been considered an **'imagined community'** because you will only ever meet or even be aware of a tiny proportion of your fellow nationals, yet you have a strong sense of shared belonging (Anderson, 1983)

Case study: diverse places

Sometimes personal and national identity may clash:

• In 2011, the French government banned wearing burqas in public.

• French Muslim women felt their religious identities were being repressed.

• The government declared that the aim was to preserve French national identity of "living together".

Case study: London Olympics opening ceremony 2012

London Olympic opening ceremony 2012 © Maykal, Flickr

In 2012, globally the Olympic games was watched by around **4 billion people**

• Danny Boyle's opening ceremony for the London 2012 Olympics took the viewers through pivotal moments in Britain's modern history that have shaped the nation.

• The performance portrayed the creation of the National Healthcare Service (NHS) and the post-war Windrush mass-migration and the industrial revolution (The Guardian, 2012).

• The mega-event itself became an important part of the national and international place-branding of Great Britain.

Case Study: Catalonia

When a region within a nation feels that they have their own identity that differs from the rest of the nation's they may wished to be recognised independently. This can lead to a 'separatist' group forming who campaign peacefully or violently for recognition as their own

- Its history also differs from the rest of Spain. Before the 15th Century, Catalonia was an independent state with its own language, laws and customs. It only became part of Spain with the marriage of both regions' royalty (BBC, 2016). Therefore Catalan residents feel they have a different national identity from Spain and want to regain their independence.

- Catalonia has its own language called Catalan.

- Catalonia also has is its own parliament which grants it a significant amount of autonomy from Spain.

- Since Spain's economic crisis of 2008-2016, separatist support in Catalonia has grown significantly. It is one of the wealthiest regions in the country, accounting for **one fifth** of Spain's GDP, and therefore separatists believe they would be more economically powerful independently (The Guardian, 2014).

Can Catalonia break up with Spain?

- An informal vote held by the then Catalan President in 2014 found **80%** of voters were in favour of independence, however the Spanish government ruled it illegal.

- Catalan officials involved in organising the 2014 ballot have since faced sanctions or trial by the Spanish government (BBC, 2015).

What is the European Union?

- Some individual nations are part of larger supranational governmental institutions, like the European Union.
- Some believe that this unification of nations results in a loss of national identity, and becomes a more general identity, such as being "European" rather than "English" or "French" (Arts and Halman, 2006)

Case study: Brexit

- The British population was significantly divided in the 2016 referendum on whether to leave or remain in the EU.
- This led to contrasting representations and imaginations about what it means to be 'British'.
- Voters had contrasting ideas about the role of multiculturalism and migration in Britain's national identity. These ideas were based around notions of social cohesion, security, economic prosperity and diversity.
- It was reported that the majority of people who identified as British voted to remain, while the people who identified as English were strong supporters of Brexit (The Independent, 2016).

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