



This paper is taken from

*Reflecting on Identities: Research, Practice and Innovation*  
*Proceedings of the tenth Conference of the Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe Academic Network*

London: CiCe 2008

edited by Alistair Ross and Peter Cunningham, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 978-0-9560454-7-8

Without explicit authorisation from CiCe (the copyright holder):

- only a single copy may be made by any individual or institution for the purposes of private study only
- multiple copies may be made only by
  - members of the CiCe Thematic Network Project or CiCe Association, or
  - a official of the European Commission
  - a member of the European parliament

**If this paper is quoted or referred to it must always be acknowledged as**

*Köiv, K. (2008) Perception of national and supranational identity: differences between bullies, victims, and pupils who are not involved, in Ross, A. & Cunningham, P. (eds.) Reflecting on Identities: Research, Practice and Innovation. London: CiCe, pp. 243 - 248*

© CiCe 2008

CiCe  
Institute for Policy Studies in Education  
London Metropolitan University  
166 – 220 Holloway Road  
London N7 8DB  
UK

This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

**Acknowledgements:**

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- The CiCe administrative team at London Metropolitan University
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The Socrates Programme and the personnel of the Department of Education and Culture of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

## **Perception of National and Supranational Identity: Differences between Bullies, Victims and Pupils who are not Involved**

*Kristi Kõiv*  
*University of Tartu (Estonia)*

### **Abstract**

*Whether discussion national or supranational identity, today we are not allowed to forget the impact of social processes. Social identity theory supports the view that people's identity stems from group identification. If schools are to play a role in the development of identity we need to have some understanding of how different experiences of socialization in school may influence identity formation. In this context, we should understand the concept of national and supranational identity as a flexible mix of different local, national, regional, European and global identities. It is a challenge and under-studied question that in what way can bullying behaviour contribute to the sense of national and supranational identity in terms of territorial belonging.*

### **Introduction**

One of the main areas of education for active citizenship must address and include is the nature of individuals having multiple identities (Ross, 2007). Young people in Europe have an at least partial sense of European identity that they hold alongside their national identity (Lutz et al, 2006; Roland-Lévy, 2004; 2007). Despite globalization, most young people continue to identify themselves primarily with the environment in which they were socialized (Beauvais, McKay and Seddon, 2004). More specifically – in spite of positive attitudes towards Europe - pupils give relatively little significance to their European identity, whereas their national identities were extremely important (Cinirella, 2001; Philippou, 2005).

The changes towards multiple identities seen among modern-day youth are based on the changes seen in the whole population, with the simultaneous shifts from nationalism to Europeanisation and localism. In comparison with attitudes in earlier times (and particularly the sense of belonging to the nation), there are now prevalent (and thought to be increasing) senses of supranational identity and of national identity (Pollini, 2005).

If academic experience in schools is among the factors that play a role in the development of identity, we need to have some understanding of how pupils perceive themselves and how different experiences of socialisation in school may influence both their individual and their group identity formation.

However, there are areas in which some young people feel excluded and do not fully participate in academic or social school life, an example of which would be when bullying occurs in school. Previous research (Ojala and Nesdale, 2004) in this area shows that pupils' attitudes toward bullying were moderated by in-group norms. There

This paper is part of *Reflecting on Identities: Research, Practice & Innovation, Proceedings of the tenth Conference of the Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe Thematic Network*, ed Ross A and Cunningham P, published by CiCe (London) 2008. ISBN: 978-0-9560454-7-8; ISSN: 1470-6695

Funded with support from the European Commission SOCRATES Project of the Department of Education and Culture. This publication reflects the views of the authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained in this publication.

are social identity processes taking place when group bullying occurs, but there is no research about how this might influence individual identity formation processes. This under-studied question is a challenge: how do diverse pupils perceive national identity as coexisting with supranational identities? In what way does bullying behaviour contribute to senses of national and supranational identity?

The aim of the present research was to investigate differences between national and supranational identity in terms of territorial belonging among bullies, victims and those pupils who were not involved in bullying. This paper analyses the potential effect of the bullying behaviour on the pupils' perception of national and supranational identity. It is assumed that bullying behaviour might influence the perception of national and supranational identity of pupils in terms of territorial belonging.

## Method

### *First instrument: Selection of subjects*

The sample included students in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades from ten randomly selected comprehensive schools in Estonia. The whole sample consisted of 1,109 middle-school children, of whom 46.3 percent were male and 53.6 percent were female. The age distribution of children was as follows: ten years (0.2 percent), 11 (26.9 percent), 12 (33.3 percent), 13 (29.5 percent), 14 (9.9 percent), and 15 (0.3 percent). Bullies and victims were selected on the basis of peer nomination (the Peer Nomination Inventory (Perry, Kusel and Perry, 1988)), which consisted of 26 items: 7 bullying items, 7 victimization items and 12 filler items. Pupils were requested to nominate same-sex peers who best fitted the behaviour described in each item, excluding themselves. Peer estimates were based on judgments of a greater number of children in each bully-category. Teenage pupils were divided into three categories: bully, victim and not involved (all the rest).

From the sample, three groups were identified: 51 bullies (4.6%), 72 victims (6.5%), and 986 non-participants in bullying behaviour (88.9%) (Table 1).

**Table 1: Number and percentage of bullies and victims among the whole sample**

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Bullies	51	4.6
Victims	72	6.5
Participants in bullying behaviour	123	11.1
Nonparticipants in bullying behaviour	986	88.9
Total	1109	100.0

### *Second instrument*

The participants were asked to rank nine Likert-type attitude-scales related to feelings of territorial belonging and national and supranational identity on an eight-point scale (from Strongly feel disconnected (0) to Strongly feel connected (7)). The study explored attachment to units of different size: home, neighbourhood, town/village, neighbour town/village, region, country, neighbour country, European countries, and other

countries in the world. To measure the strength of belonging to different territorial units, these were arranged on a continuum, from the home at one end to the world at the other: national identity consisted of six items (home, neighbourhood, town/village, neighbour town/village, region, country) and supranational identity included three components (neighbour country, European countries, countries of the world).

## Results

Combining the nine categories of national and supranational identities of pupils, it was shown that they had at least some sense of a European element, but that national identity was dominant when compared with supranational identity (see Table 2; fifth row). Overall, these results showed which of national or supranational identity dominated among teenagers' pupils: they felt more attached to their home, neighbourhood, town/village, neighbour town/village, region, country than to European countries and countries in the world.

**Table 2: Basic categories of national and supranational identity in terms of territorial belonging among bullies, victims and not-involved pupils (mean scores) and *t* values**

Dimensions	Bullies (A)	Victims (B)	Control (C)	Overall	<i>t</i> value A - B	<i>t</i> value A - C	<i>t</i> value B - C
Home	6.37	6.02	6.04	6.14	1.93*	2.56**	-0.06
Neighbourhood	4.73	4.89	4.89	4.84	-0.59	-0.73	-0.03
Town/village	5.39	4.92	5.02	5.11	2.32**	2.41**	-0.65
Neighbour town/village	4.57	3.86	3.81	4.08	2.63**	3.49**	0.28
Region	5.00	4.65	4.58	4.74	1.96*	2.01**	0.91
Country	5.41	5.25	5.38	5.35	0.63	0.14	-0.75
Neighbour countries	4.35	3.60	3.77	3.91	2.60**	2.60**	-0.83
European countries	4.14	3.58	3.67	3.80	1.86*	1.99*	-0.40
Countries of the world	4.16	4.11	3.36	3.88	0.13	2.94**	3.15**

\* -  $p < 0,05$

\*\* -  $p < 0,01$

This analysis, completed with specific questions asked to the bullying and non-bullied participants, showed the sense of national identity in territorial terms (home, town/village, neighbourhood, neighbour town/village, region, country) and the feeling of belonging to supranational (neighbour countries, European countries, other countries in the world).

Using a *t*-test, several differences between the three groups were significant when comparing the basic categories of national and supranational identity and territorial belonging (Table 2).

Two clear tendencies are demonstrated from this analysis. Bullies were more attached to their home, town/village, neighbour town/village, region, country, neighbour countries and European countries when compared to both victims and non-participants. Overall, bullies attributed greater importance to their national and supranational identity in terms of territorial belonging (seven categories from all nine) when compared with victims and non-participants. This provides clear support for the hypothesis that bullying behaviour influences the perception of national and supranational identity of pupils in terms of territorial belonging.

Secondly, compared to the non-participants, those who are involved in bullying behaviour view themselves as significantly more attached to the countries of the world: bullies and victims perceive themselves more as citizen of the world than did non-participants of the bullying behaviour.

### **Discussion**

Whether we are talking about national or about supranational identity, we must not ignore the impact of social processes. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) supports the view that people's identity stems from group identification. If education influences the development of identity (both national and supranational), we need to have some understanding of how different experiences of socialisation in school may influence pupils' identity formation. We should understand the concept of national and supranational identity as a flexible mix of different local, national, regional, European and global identities. Previous literature has not examined the relationship between school bullying and individual identity formation, although bullying may have an important role in identity development. On the one hand, individuals who achieve secure identity formation will possess more self-certainty, social and self-assurance, psychological confidence, and a sense of well-being. On the other hand, severe identity confusion can manifest itself in overall shame and continual self-testing (Erikson, 1968), conduct and hyperactivity disorders (Adams et al, 2001) and delinquency (Adams et al, 2005). It is therefore important to investigate how bullying, as a social phenomenon, might play a role in the construction of pupils' multiple identities. Bullying involves repeated negative interactions between bully and victim, as well as an audience (Olweus, 1995). In relation to identity formation, people define themselves according to how they perceive others responding to them. Thus it is highly probable that bullying will play a direct role in identity construction, because it involves feedback from others, which is likely to become incorporated into an individual's sense of identity.

In considering the importance of social context in identity development, it is important to recognise the influential role that networks of peers play in developing identity. An argument can be made that bullying in school will influence multiple identity formation during the teenage phase. Data was collected from questionnaires using nine components of national and supranational identity as a continuum. The sample of pupils from 5th and 7th grades in comprehensive schools in Estonia was divided into three groups using peer-nomination questionnaires.

The results indicated that participating as a bully seems to be an important factor in forming national and supranational identities in terms of territorial belonging. Bullies seem to be faced with a choice of having both a dominant feeling of local territorial belonging (national identity) as well as towards a supranational (European identity), when feelings of belonging were compared to victims and non-participants.

Viewing these tendencies in the larger societal context, the process of globalisation seems to have changed the role of national identities, and has strengthened a supranational identity (Pinterič, 2005). In this global context, it seems important to take a more subjective-individual point of view and analyse how belonging to a specific social role category provides its members (bullies, victims and nonparticipants) with a sense of national and supranational identity. Our results reveal that the two simultaneous trends,

toward Europeanism and localism, were more characteristic for bullies than for victims or non-participants in terms of territorial belonging.

On the other hand, European identity is a component of national identity of teenage pupils, confirming previous studies in this area (Roland-Levy, 2004; 2006). Our results extend our knowledge in this area, indicating that the participant role of bullying behaviour influences the perception of one kind of supranational identity: non-participants of the bullying behaviour perceive themselves less as citizen of the world than did participants of the bullying behaviour.

Youth seems to be faced with a choice of having either a dominant feeling of local territorial belonging or a more global feeling of belonging, and one factor which may influence this choice is socialization experiences in the school context – participating or not participating in bullying behaviour.

Generally, the findings from this study represent that the perception of national and supranational identity of youth in terms of territorial belonging varies according to the participants' role of bullying behaviour - two simultaneous trends toward Europeanism and localism were more characteristic for bullies compared with victims and non-participants. Previous studies (e.g. Pollini, 2005) have also showed that these two trends toward greater diffusion are more characteristic today among whole population compared to the recent past.

At one side – research results enlarged our knowledge's about relations between schoolbullying and youth identity formation: bullying was an important social phenomenon that affects pupils' formation of national and supranational identity. At the other side – present results created basis for further work in the area of changing roles of national and supranational identities among diverse samples in the school context.

## References

- Adams, G. R., Munro, B., Doherty-Poirer, M., Munro, G., Petersen, A. R., and Edwards, J. (2001) Diffuse-avoidance, normative, and informational identity styles: Using identity theory to predict maladjustment. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*. 1, 4, pp 307-320
- Adams, G. R., Munro, B., Munro, G., Doherty-Poirer, M., and Edwards, J. (2005) Identity processing styles and Canadian adolescents' self-reported delinquency. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*. 5, 1, pp 57-65
- Beauvais, C., McKay, L., and Seddon, A. (2004) Youth and citizenship: Identity, belonging and independence. *Canadian Policy Research Networks*. September, pp 1-2
- Cinirella, M. G. (2001) Forever the reluctant Europeans? *Psychologist*. 14, 7, pp 344-345
- Erikson, E. (1968) *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton
- Lutz, W., Kritzinger, S., and Skirbekk, V. (2006) The demography of growing European identity, *Science*. 314, 5798, pp 425

- Ojala, K., and Nesdale, D. (2004) Bullying and social identity: The effects of group norms and distinctiveness threat on attitudes towards bullying. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*. 22, pp 19-35
- Olweus, D. (1995) *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell
- Philippou, S. (2005) Constructing national and European identities: the case of Cypriot pupils. *Educational Studies*. 31, 3, pp 293-315
- Pinterič, U. (2005) National and supranational identity in context of the European integration and globalization. *Journal for General Social Issues*. 14, 3, pp 401-420
- Pollini, G. (2005) Elements of a theory of place attachment and socio-territorial belonging. *International Review of Sociology*. 15, 3, pp 497-515
- Roland-Lévy, C. (2004) Genesis of societal representation of the euro. *New Review of Social Psychology*. 2, 4.
- Roland-Lévy, C. (2007). Before and after: National identity versus a European one. *REICE Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación*. 5, 4, pp 161-171
- Ross, A. (2007) Multiple identities and education for active citizenship. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 55, 3, pp 286-303
- Tajfel, H. (1981) *Rediscovering the societal group: a self-categorisation theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell