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Framing collective identities in Swedish and Spanish left-leaning parties' intra-party education

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ABSTRACT

This article sets out to uncover the role that educational activities for members play in the construction of identities in political parties. Guided by a framing perspective, the study focuses on five left-leaning parties in Sweden and Spain and their intra-party education, and interviews have been conducted with party representatives and study leaders. The analysis reveals that the educational activities provided by the parties for their members are intended to create a sense of belonging and connect the members to the parties. Three different tendencies for creating a sense of 'we-ness' in the parties unfold – (i) Welcome!, (ii) Get in line! And (iii) Unite! – which mirrors how identities are constructed within the education to reinforce the members' relationships with their parties. Emphasising these three identities serves to distinguish how frames are integrated into educational settings and how the parties motivate their members to become engaged in the party collectives.

KEYWORDS

Party education; collective identities; framing perspective; Sweden; Spain

Introduction

In a 2015 essay for *New Left Review*, the now former party leader and professor of political science Pablo Iglesias discussed the success story of his newly founded party Podemos (in English: 'We can'). In less than one year, Podemos had entered the European parliament and the Spanish political system, and Iglesias explained how Podemos had managed to take the leftist project into the 2010s. 'The key to its [Podemos'] success was its ability to focus on the central issues of social dissatisfaction,' Iglesias writes (2015: p. 18), 'creating – whether consciously or not – a new discourse that crossed political boundaries'. According to Iglesias, Podemos built a new discourse centred around a collective identity stemming from 'the people' – a concept that conveyed the social dissatisfaction and could be contrasted with those in power (Errejón and Mouffe 2016). Although the success of a political project relies on multiple factors, Podemos' main achievement was to formulate political slogans that people could identify with, which collective identity scholars stress as being crucial for understanding the success of political movements (e.g. Snow and McAdam 2000; Melucci 1995; Flesher Fominaya 2010).

In another corner of Europe, 3138 km north of Madrid, the Swedish Social Democratic Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, formed a government in 2015 after winning the 2014 election, succeeding eight years of right-leaning governments in a country that is often characterised as a Nordic welfare state (Kautto 2010). In his government declaration, Löfven – a former union leader for industry workers – told the Swedish nation: 'I believe in a Sweden that we create together, which is something

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bigger than just an association of people on a geographical surface, which is a community where we feel responsible for each other'. He stresses the feeling of being part of a community that is not defined by geographical or material boundaries, and where there are no lines of conflict. Instead, Löfven implies that a sense of community already exists, which he as head of government will continue to nurture. The Social Democratic Party's long history of governance in Sweden has previously been studied in relation to its ability to construct a solid identity built on its experience as a governing party and taking responsibility for the country (Linderborg 2001; Arriaza Hult 2020).

In both these examples, the party leaders suggest that they represent the people, which indicates how political parties construct a sense of 'us' in their political narrative. When considering how parties form collective identities and how these party identities are disseminated in their political messages, it is a surprising discovery that the subject of how political parties construct identities remains passably unexplored. The focus on collective identity formation to strengthen movements often stems from the contexts of social movements or extra-parliamentary opposition (Van Stekelenburg 2013), which is an argument for giving prominence to how the process of identity construction transpires in political parties. de Nardis (2020) has tried to understand parties in general and claims that 'through the production of collective identities, they [parties] are able to reaffirm their *raison d'être*, elaborating ideologies and preparing programmes that they hope gain them the citizens' support.' (p. 315). Taking parties' perspectives as the focal point shifts the emphasis from how movements reach participants to how parties tie their members to the party collectives. By turning the spotlight on the role of education within party membership, parties influence what and how their members learn, and how their members are socialised into the party. Party education has received sparse attention in academia (Nordvall and Pastuhov 2020), even though it is a context where parties organise various educational activities for their representatives, members or potential voters that have shown to have vast implications on democratic participation and governance in multi-party political systems (Bladh 2021).

In taking party education as a point of entry, this study demarcates itself to study left-leaning parties in Sweden and Spain. Seeing that previous studies emphasise that educational activities have historically been implemented within labour-oriented organisations and the labour movement to form a shared sense of belonging that creates movement unity (Ambjörnsson 1993; Jansson 2013; Andrade Blanco 2012), it is relevant to examine if education can play a similar role with the organised left today. To scrutinise how parties socialise their members into the parties using educational activities, five parties will be analysed: (i) the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP), (ii) the Swedish Left Party (V), (iii) the Spanish Social Democratic Party (PSOE), (iv) the Spanish United Left (IU) and (v) the Spanish Podemos (P). Without ignoring academic commentators who have argued that voter support for left parties in Sweden and Spain is declining and that the countries' social democratic parties are turning to the right (e.g. Bailey 2016; Birnbaum 2010; Belfrage and Kallifatides 2018), these two countries, amidst a few others, distinguish themselves on the European electoral map as having several left-leaning parties in their national parliaments. Studying parties from these countries in the outer parts of Europe and emphasising the role that education plays in identity construction provides an insight into how meaning-making processes come about in parties' education, highlighting traits of political parties that are often neglected in party research. Thus, this article sets out to uncover how party education yields a party identity within these parties, by taking a framing perspective on interviews with party representatives and study leaders.

The labour movement and party education in Sweden and Spain

With its cross-country sampling, this study aspires to scrutinise the intersection of education and the construction of party identities in five left-leaning parties. The aim is to accentuate the ideational relationships between party education and party identities. Using empirical material from five parties in two national contexts helps to highlight patterns in how the parties frame identities within their education, offering valuable insights for understanding the organisation of education in parties more

generally. Considering the flexible research design, which considers five cases of empirical data comprising views expressed by party spokespersons with profound knowledge about the purpose and implementation of party education, the study rationale can be reproduced to study parties outside of the scope of this article.

The reason for scrutinising five left-leaning parties in Sweden and Spain is because both Sweden and Spain have several such parties in their national parliaments, even though the organised left has suffered a general set-back in Europe during the 2010s (Bailey 2016; Birnbaum 2010). In contrast to, for example, Portugal, which is often emphasised as a country with a strong left, Sweden and Spain also share the experience of rather dramatic changes to their party systems in recent years (Möller 2020; Feenstra et al. 2017). Sweden has long had one of the most stable party systems in the world, with the same five parties in the party system for almost half a century (Möller 2020). However, since the 2010 election, there are now eight parties in the national parliament, resulting in a new landscape where parties from across the political spectrum tend to have difficulties forming governments. Notably, studies on electoral behaviour show that Swedish voters have historically voted according to a traditional left–right scale, but that in the latest elections voters were more likely to vote in relation to cultural and identarian values (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2016; Elgenius and Wennerhag 2018). Since the transition to democracy in 1978, Spanish politics has been dominated by two parties. However, the financial crisis of 2008 had a significant influence on Spanish politics; the popular discontent with the political situation and austerity measures resulted in social movements taking power and forming new political parties (Feenstra et al. 2017; Ordóñez, Feenstra, and Franks 2018). Corresponding to the trend of augmented party systems, having several new parties within the party system has resulted in difficulties forming governments and Spain holding four elections in as many years between 2016 and 2019 (Rodon 2020). Studies on the most recent elections in Spain also show a shift whereby voters are keen to vote in relation to cultural and identarian values, even though they have historically voted according to a left–right dimension based on economic policy (Fraile and Lewis-Beck 2012). Knowing about the current political situation in the two countries is crucial when scrutinising the parties and their education, since studies show that national politics affects how members become socialised into the parties and how political narratives are implemented into an educational situation (Bladh 2021; Arriaza Hult 2022). One purpose of education within parties is to prepare members for the assumed tasks that they will pursue within the political system.

All parties in Sweden organise member education. Bladh (2021) has interviewed representatives from all eight parties represented in the Swedish parliament, and has analysed the educational situations that parties provide as communities of practices. Educational situations are referred to as conditions and environments that promote the process of learning, acquiring skills, values, morals, beliefs or personal development. Bladh (2021) claims that '[p]arty education may also constitute a context where participants are integrated into the party community while ensuring the commitment of members to work for the party competently' (p. 2), which shows how education can be understood as creating an attachment between the party and its members. In another study scrutinising the Social Democratic Party and the Left Party and their education for new members, the analysis reveals that the parties use the educational situation to tie their members to the party and make them feel engaged (Arriaza Hult 2020). Furthermore, Nordvall and Pastuhov (2020) have also studied party education within the Social Democratic Party and the Left Party, and categorised the training as fulfilling knowledge-oriented or relationship-oriented roles. They also stress the influence of popular education in the Swedish parties' organisation of education; this can be contrasted with the Spanish parties, which do not have the same ability to cooperate with state-funded popular education associations. In the Swedish context, studies on education within the labour movement tend to emphasise the rich history of popular education in the country (Nordvall and Fridolfsson 2019; Gougoulakis 2016). The labour movement – together with the temperance movement and the free-church movement – is regarded as a leading force for the development of state-funded popular education (Gougoulakis 2016). Both the Social Democratic Party and the Left

Party are members of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), the largest of ten national educational associations that make up Sweden's publicly funded popular education system. Taking labour education into account, Jansson (2013) has studied how labour organisations implemented a collective identity through educational efforts in the Swedish labour movement in the 1920s. Jansson stresses that labour education was a direct information channel in the 1920s, where the education that these labour organisations provided was sometimes the only education that workers received and thus represents a process of steering from the top-down. The circumstances for party education in this study are different in that members have more or less free access to information channels for searching beyond the educational situation, but Jansson's study still supports the argument that education can play a crucial role in forming individuals. For example, Jansson claims that the form of education plays an important role in identity building, where seminars, talks and circle pedagogy have a more profound impact on identity formation than lectures.

In the Spanish context, Andrade Blanco (2005, 2012) has studied the Social Democratic Party (PSOE) and the Communist Party (PCE) (the biggest party in United Left, which is an amalgam of left-wing parties) and the inner lives of the parties during the transition to democracy. He notes that training was used to implement norms, attitudes and values – similar to how Jansson (2013) argues that the Swedish national labour organisations aimed to construct a collective identity. Andrade Blanco also shows how organisational structures, such as the way in which members receive training, have major effects on how the parties adapt to changes in the political landscape. He notes that educational activities have the capacity to form and socialise members into the party culture. In another study, the Social Democratic Party, the United Left and Podemos, together with their weekend schools, are analysed in order to understand how education is structured within the parties (Arriaza Hult 2022). The parties run national courses for their members where different pedagogical tendencies can be detected, ranging from a heavy theoretical focus to a more practical, technical, policy-oriented focus. When widening the scope to analyse educational activities within the labour movement or other social movements in Spain, the research tends to take a historical perspective and study popular educational initiatives or workers' education from the 1930s (Otero-Urtaza 2011; Ferrer 1996). Like the case of Swedish popular education, the education that workers received at that time influences how the workers' movement evolved in the country, since this was often the only education that working people received. A more recent study on popular education in Spain shows that popular educational projects have historically been oriented towards teaching participants a vocational occupation. There are, however, several examples of bottom-up initiatives inspired by a Freirean method of learning dialogically from learners' experiences (Guimaraes, Lucio-Villegas, and Mayo 2018). Since these previous studies tend to have a historical perspective, this study contributes knowledge about the role of education in left-leaning parties at the present time.

In sum, research from Sweden and Spain shows that educational activities can play a crucial role in creating attachment to a party or an organisation. Building on this existing knowledge, this study will go deeper into how educational activities intersect with the construction of a party identity in the five scrutinised parties.

Party identities and framing

When studying how movements mobilise members and participants, social movement scholars often depart from an understanding of collective identities as an element to consider in order to explain why individuals suddenly become engaged in a movement (Melucci 1995; Snow and McAdam 2000; Flesher Fominaya 2010; Jämte, Lundstedt, and Wennerhag 2020). For example, Jämte, Lundstedt, and Wennerhag (2020) argue that 'a collective identity is central for all types of social movements – providing them with a common conception of the past, the present, and the future, as well as a sense of we-ness – while simultaneously acknowledging that a movement's identity is constantly renegotiated and thus evolves over time' (p. 1). It is when a movement's

members have a shared understanding of who they are that they can decide on strategic choices, their motives and goals that lead to collective action. In this article, I argue that the creation of collective identities should be equally important in political parties, as it urges a party to articulate a sense of 'we' and engage members to participate in the party's work. Consequently, the concept of party identity refers to the collective identities articulated by the interviewees. In the process of understanding the construction of identities, one fundamental step is to figure out how the outer boundaries of the identity are formulated. In other words, it is central to grasp how a collective identity is formed in relation to how 'others' are defined, and how boundaries are drawn vis-à-vis those who have been identified as others. Identities are understood as dynamic and constantly reforming, whereas these outer boundaries are fluid and based on constant negations and refusals of what the collective identity consists of (Flesher Fominaya 2010, 2015b; Jämte, Lundstedt, and Wennerhag 2020).

In order to understand how the construction of collective identities in parties transpires through education, the analysis is inspired by a framing perspective (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and McAdam 2000). The framing perspective emphasises how meaning is construed when movements mobilise participants and members, and how they i) identify problems, solutions and relevant actors (diagnostic framing); ii) find strategies, goals and alternative visions (prognostic framing); and iii) formulate emotional and logical motives that can spread to adherents to make them act collectively (motivational framing). For example, Benford (1993) demonstrates how the nuclear disarmament movement of the 1980s framed the nuclear question in relation to the severity of the problem, the sense of urgency, and the efficiency and propriety of taking action. Hence, political entities (parties, movements and organisations) use framing mechanisms to inspire people to take collective action. Snow and McAdam (2000) claim that framing is inherent to constructing collective identities, since it identifies problems, articulates solutions and finds motivations for why this is necessary. As part of the process, actors also identify who 'we' are and who 'they' are. Jämte, Lundstedt, and Wennerhag (2020) argue that the framing perspective 'allows for an analysis of how the "we-ness" of a movement is continuously constructed and transformed' (p. 5). By applying a framing perspective, the analysis acknowledges a more inductive approach, where identities are understood not only in contrast to how boundaries have been drawn vis-à-vis 'others', but also in terms of identifying how different constructions of 'we-nesses' are discursively framed. Accordingly, a framing perspective becomes a fine-tuned instrument for categorising tendencies within the construction of collective identities. In this study, the analysis is guided by the assumption that educational activities are situations where parties or movements can implement, strengthen and reform collective identities (Jansson 2013). Therefore, a framing perspective is applied to interviews with party representatives and study leaders in order to comprehend how these actors understand party education and how party identities are constructed and integrated into these educational situations.

Method and material: Interviews

The analytical objective of this article is to contribute to the understanding of how important voices within the five analysed parties intend to socialise their members through the use of educational activities. Since previous studies on labour movement organisations have established that education can be used to create a movement identity (Ambjörnsson 1993; Jansson 2013), this study aims to explore if education has a similar role in left parties. The study's analysis is built on interviews with party representatives and study leaders from the five analysed parties. Interviewing one party representative and one study leader from each party thus gives ten interviews in total. The party representatives were asked to participate in the interviews in relation to their responsibility for party educational activities, but in most cases they also held other important roles within their parties. The party representatives have the overall responsibility of providing member education in the parties and therefore have knowledge about why education is structured in certain ways. The study leaders were

identified after receiving their contact details from the interviewed party representatives, or by contacting educational organisations that cooperate with the parties and asking for experienced study leaders. The study leaders come closer to the education and can contribute with their perspectives about what happens in the educational situation. Since the interviewees were interviewed as spokespersons for their parties with the aim of understanding the relationship between party education and party identities, the interviews were semi-structured to allow for additional questions and to follow up on what the interviewees expressed in the moment (Brinkmann & Kvale 2008). The interviews concern the organisation, structure and purpose of party education in general, but in this specific article the answers that involve themes relating to the construction of party identities have been separated from the rest of the interviews and analysed according to the framing perspective. The interviews were carried out in Stockholm or Madrid, or via Zoom, between 2019 and 2021. Since the interviewees were interviewed as representatives of their parties and not as private individuals, they are recognised as voices of their parties. The study, which is linked to a wider research project on education in political parties, has undergone ethical vetting. The interview guides were similar for both national contexts but were translated into Swedish and Spanish so that the interviewees could express themselves in their mother tongue. The interviews lasted for 20–109 minutes and were transcribed verbatim. All quotations used in the findings section have been translated from either Swedish or Spanish into English by the author.

In terms of analysing the data, the interview material was first categorised according to the themes that the interviews concerned, such as, organisation, structure, purpose, identity, etc. When separating the answers that concerned identity, the analysis was guided by determining differences in how the interviewees expressed the community that exists in their parties' education. The search for differences in the boundaries of the identities shaped the categorisation of the three identities – (i) Welcome!, (ii) Get in line! And (iii) Unite!. The reason for drawing lines between these three tendencies was the objective to understand how different constructions of 'we-nesses' are discursively framed and how these differences imply variation in how the members comply with a party culture. To ensure that the three identities had bearing on how the interviewees understood that the education constructed a sense of community, the identified tendencies were tested according to the framing perspectives by identifying the underlying diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing that guided these categorisations. The empirical material has been combined in order to see patterns in how party identities become integrated into parties' educational activities. Therefore, the analysis does not demonstrate the parties' differences but sets out to make sense of the relationship between educational activities and the construction of identities in these five parties. The study's focus is directed towards identifying how these identities are expressed rather than finding answers to how identity constructions transpire in left parties in general. By emphasising different tendencies in the party identities, the study shows how parties accentuate different motives for becoming engaged in a party collective. Even though the categorisation uncovers these different tendencies, I want to elucidate that the study departs from an understanding of identities as fluid and difficult to draw clear boundaries between. Having several interviewees from different parties gives several answers that demonstrate how identities can be shifting, complex and even contradictory, yet still create a sense of 'we-ness' that forms ties between the members and the parties. Accordingly, the identified tendencies are understood not as different identities that the members have or do not have, but as different communities that exist parallelly, to which members can adhere to simultaneously.

Findings

Welcome! (Come as you are)

Collectively, the parties provide a picture of where an identity is constructed instantly when the members come to the educational situation. The interviewees stress that arranging circumstances where members connect with other members and the party is a significant reason why parties provide educational activities. For example, the party representative from the Swedish Left Party says:

Above all, the big courses, the election schools, this party organisation school that we had a few years ago and the ideology courses are identity-bearing in different ways, but most of the time they create opportunities where you get together and discuss politics or the organisation of the party. (Left Party representative, interview)

The party representative explicitly states that they understand the party's courses as 'identity-bearing'; the courses carry the party identity and create a sense of 'we-ness'. The parties' educational situations have the potential to bring people together; they meet and discuss politics, and realise that they share the same values and ideas. In this quotation, the educational situation plays the part of a meeting place between equal peers where they share their thoughts and learn together. When the study leader from the Spanish Social Democratic Party is asked how education can create a collective identity, they said:

I think it is essential that members feel, feel that they are part of something. (The Spanish Social Democratic Party study leader, interview)

The emphasis on the word 'feel' relates to literature on mobilisation that stresses the role of feelings in developing collective action (Denzin 1984; Flam 2007, 2015). It is when a person feels strong emotions that they engage and take the step to become caught up in a movement. Within the parties' education, members are assumed to already agree with the party's politics; what remains is to persuade them to feel a certain way that engages them to take collective action. The educational situation could therefore be understood as a situation where the party creates emotional ties to the other members and persuades them to act collectively, which – according to the framing perspective – could be read as a part of the motivational framing: formulating emotional or logical motives that create the motivation to do something. The study leader from the Swedish Social Democratic Party also draws on the topic of feeling like part of something, but sees this from another perspective. They argue that if they succeed in creating this sense of belonging, the educational situation could develop into something else, a situation where members engage in political discussions free from pointing sticks. If the members feel that they can rely on a strong collective party identity, they also feel safe to be different:

Community is important for one to dare to think differently. To really dare to say that you might not agree ... While having this community, feeling that we are the same team, we have the same history. Then you do not have to be so afraid to think differently. (The Swedish Social Democratic Party study leader, interview)

Here, the study leader argues that there is something positive in the educational situation allowing for differences and having different opinions. Flesher Fominaya (2015a) has suggested that identities are constructed in continuous negations and refusals of the outer boundaries of the identity. Seeing this from the framing perspective implies that allowing for discussions in the educational situation acknowledges the members' ability to define the diagnostic framing – what the main problems and solutions are and how 'we' should fix the problems. Thinking differently is then accepted, because 'we' have already established that 'we' are the same. The study leader thus stresses that discussion is important for establishing and cultivating the feeling of same-ness. The study leader also pinpoints that one way to create a feeling of belonging is by using history:

There will really be a community in the room, because people are so different. It is very important. And to not only create a community with each other in the present, but also a community through history. That we are the same party that has done and achieved so much. You get this pride, what we as a movement have achieved in the world and in Sweden. (The Swedish Social Democratic Party study leader, interview)

This quotation pertains to Jämte, Lundstedt, and Wennerhag (2020) definition of collective identity: 'providing them with a common conception of the past, the present, and the future, as well as a sense of we-ness – while simultaneously acknowledging that a movement's identity is constantly renegotiated and thus evolves over time'. (p. 1.) The collective identity that is created in the educational situation is situated on a historic timeline that creates feelings of pride, gratitude and longing for being part of that community. This can be seen as analogous to Linderborg's (2001) of the Swedish Social Democratic Party's historiography, in which she demonstrates that the party writes and re-writes its history to create an image of the party as synonymous with the Swedish state. The members are therefore invited to this historical narrative, and are given educational content that frames diagnostic relationships of who 'we' are and what 'we' have achieved, motivating collective action.

Thus, when members attend party training, one of the main purposes is to create a sense of 'we-ness' that binds the collective together. In order to do so, the education puts the emphasis on the individual members present in the room and their feeling of belonging. Even if discussion is encouraged and can vitalise the collective feeling in the room, the interviewees give the impression that they see how the members have a strong, solid party identity that makes them feel connected to each other. The focus is on inviting the members to the collective, rather than on establishing who 'the others' are and what constitutes them. From a framing perspective, the interviewees concentrate on the motivational framing, using the educational situation to frame emotional and logical rationales to connect the members to the party.

Get in line! (Fight with us)

Not only do the interviewees discuss how the members are welcomed to the party, they also emphasise an identity that situates the member within the party organisation. This party identity entails tendencies to emphasise that the members need to learn how to become party members. When asking the party representative from the Swedish Social Democratic Party whether party education yields a collective identity, they answer:

It [the education] is normative, saying that when you are a representative of our party, you have to be your values. You cannot talk about all people having equal values or equality and then act like shit because it is not a private matter; you have to wear this [the party identity], it is a basic principle we have. (The Swedish Social Democratic Party representative, interview)

Being a social democrat entails views about equality that cannot be violated, and on becoming a party representative one has to think about how one presents oneself. As shown in the previous section, members were invited to come as they were, but once they become a member, there are established ways to follow. Seeing that education has the objective of teaching members how to be representatives relates to previous studies about identity building in organisations in the Swedish context, such as Ambjörnsson (1993) and Jansson (2013). Their findings show that labour organisations in Sweden used education to implement norms and attitudes because it was an effective tool for re-forming an organisation. When the labour movement grew significantly in the early 1900s, there was a need to integrate the members into some sort of same-ness, whereas having a strong collective identity made members less keen on going against the party organisation. The quotation above frames education as an approach to make the members feel responsibility for the party. The member's individual identity and the party identity consolidate, so that the member feels obliged to always wear the party identity. When these identities become intertwined, they establish the rationales for the motivational framing as being the member's responsibility.

In terms of learning how to be a party member, the party representative from the Spanish United Left stresses that they understand their members as already theoretically skilled and that they come to the educational situation to discuss politics with other members (United Left's party representative, interview). The party representative sees that education yields a political culture:

That is why I was talking about political culture. Yes, it is one of the elements. This is seen in the training schools which are also meeting places between members, between people who do not know each other but have a common identity. Yes, and that reinforces their ties a lot, a lot. (United Left's party representative, interview)

Seeing that the representative from United Left understands education as a situation in which to create common ground echoes what the Swedish Social Democratic representative said in the foregoing quotation about how education gives tools to learn how to represent the party. The quotation from United Left's party representative also emphasises how education could be interpreted as part of the prognostic framing, since the training is framed as a strategy for the party to achieve its political goals. Education is understood as a way to create a feeling of belonging and to build networks, which creates a political culture that influences the party organisation. The party representative also implies that the members are already part of the collective identity before receiving training, but that the meeting place offered by the educational situation helps to create networks between members. The study leader from the Communist Party, which is part of the United Left, discusses how their party education has changed in relation to political developments since the transition to democracy in Spain:

The focus now for both the left and the right in Spain is to get into public office ... Interestingly enough, when the party was clandestine, it was not like that ... but then it was the workers' cadre, and for the intellectuals, that was the central axis of the party. And now it has been lost and finally institutionalised, because of historical culture, because of rhetoric, because of identity. (United Left's study leader, interview)

The study leader indicates a shift in the collective identity and in the party's framing, which has had implications for the party's political strategy. The study leader sees that when the party was illegal during the Spanish dictatorship, the party identity emphasised the intellectual and the workers' cadre, which presumes that the members are theoretically skilled. Now, the members are trained to take on roles as public officers. The quotation thus implies that the strategies and the organisation of education go hand-in-hand with the framing of the collective identity, which suggests that if the party strategies change, the framing of the party identity must also be reformulated.

The study leader from Podemos also stresses that the educational situation is a place where the members get to know each other and strengthen their role within the party collective. The study leader discusses different forms of training and especially what they call a 'classical structure' of party training:

Well, it had good points and bad points. I'm not saying it was wrong at all, because in fact in everything that has to do with generating identity, it is about what works ... It also depends a bit on a lot of things. It wasn't just the training you did there, but what you then did with it. We insist a lot on how to continue from the training: on action, learning by fighting, I don't know all the slogans of that time and surely they continue to circulate now, but for example: later when? (Podemos' study leader, interview)

Although the study leader highlights that there are different forms of education, they say that all training has benefits and disadvantages and the only thing that matters is if it works. They frame the education not only as something that happens in the actual educational situation, but also as something that the members take with them on their journey. The training is supposed to initiate engagement, which they exemplify with the slogans 'learning by fighting' and 'later, when?', which could be interpreted as suggesting that the education should integrate taking collective action into the members' sense of being part of the party identity. The training has the objectives of making the members want to work for the party and teaching them how to do it.

Hence, after the members have been invited and welcomed to join the party identity, the education is organised with the aim of teaching the members useful skills and teaching them to feel responsibility. The party identity is focused on the well-being of the collective rather than the individual members. Analysing the indicated party identity from a framing perspective implies that party training

becomes part of the prognostic framing – a strategy that is put in place to achieve the political goals of the party. Still, the education is understood as having the potential to link this party identity with a rationale for motivational framing that stresses the values of loyalty and taking responsibility.

Unite! (Something bigger than us)

While seeing that party training should connect members to the party and teach them how to represent it, the interviewees also emphasise how a party identity is closely related to the feeling of being part of something bigger. The Swedish Left Party's study leader discusses the party's relationship to the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), which is the labour movement's educational association in Sweden:

You need expertise and WEA organises education for the parties, but of course it is an important element for the whole movement, the labour movement, that popular education exists and creates conditions for citizens to participate in democratic work (The Swedish Left Party study leader, interview).

The quotation pinpoints how the study leader perceives that the party exists within the labour movement and that cooperating with other worker's organisations is a natural part of that. The Swedish Social Democratic Party's representative also discusses how their party is related to a broader labour movement:

Because I want a framework in which we within the labour movement – which is broader than just the Social Democratic Workers' Party – carry out training . . . It creates networks and relationships that are important in the movement that existed before, but that no longer exist and that we benefit from, we strengthen each other, we create opportunities. (The Swedish Social Democratic Party representative, interview).

When the Swedish Social Democratic Party representative discusses the movement that the party belongs to and identifies with, the somewhat confusing frames of the party and the movement are revealed. It is unclear where the movement ends and where the party starts. The party and the movement coexist in parallel, and stabilise and energise each other. The same vague relationship between what the party and what the movement consist of was evident in a study of the Swedish Social Democrats and the Left Party and their study material (Arriaza Hult 2020). When the parties introduced new members to their parties, the study material often welcomed the members as part of a movement, rather than a party. This far-reaching understanding of whom the party turns to is evident when the Spanish Social Democratic Party's representative discusses whom they are trying to target with their education:

Obviously, a right-wing person is not going to be interested in us either, nor are we going to reach out to them . . . There are people that I think are, well, maybe a little indecisive or confused within the Spanish political landscape, which has been changing so much. Well, perhaps it is important to reach those people who may be undecided or have ideas that are a little centrist and may be close to approaching the right-wing ideology person. (The Spanish Social Democratic Party representative, interview)

Education can be interpreted as a strategy for reaching those who are not yet defined as part of the collective identity. The 'others' are framed as right-wing people, and there is no sense in making them become one of 'us'. The indecisive centrists, however, are not clearly categorised as 'the others', but are invited to join the collective identity if they participate in the party's training. The party representative thus clearly frames diagnostic relationships of 'us and them' and the political landscape into the educational situation. They continue:

I think that there are no disadvantages [with implementing a collective identity through education]. [. . .] Our ideas are, for me, the best. Sure, I am not objective. Maybe I am my subjective opinion because I want a progressive, socialist society. So, I don't think there are any downsides. On the contrary, I think that it will always be good that our ideas reach as many people as possible. (The Spanish Social Democratic Party representative, interview)

The party representative speaks to a clearly identified collective identity with defined motives for how society should be organised in order to create change. Education is framed as 'our ideas reach[ing] as many people as possible', which makes it ambiguous what the education consists of. The educational situations could be understood as places to invite individuals who are not yet members, but who can hopefully be persuaded to join the party through the frames of education.

The unclarity regarding what the education consists of also becomes distinct when Podemos' party representative talks about their party education. Podemos distinguishes itself from the other scrutinised parties by identifying itself as a populist party. In the quest to understand populism, Gidron and Bonikowski (2013) illustrate a conceptual understanding of populism as an ideology, a discursive logic or a strategy to gain political power. Populism can therefore be understood as a sort of political narrative that can come from both the left and the right, but with the aim of clearly identifying a political enemy. Podemos has been interpreted as using a populist strategy and discursive logic (de Nadal 2021; Sola and Rendueles 2018; Zarzalejos 2016; Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Furthermore, Podemos has made it clear that even though it pursues left-leaning politics, it wants to broaden the social class that the party identifies with to include not only workers, but also citizens who care about other issues or identify with identities other than their economic class. When the party representative is asked about how to construct a collective identity, considering that the party communicates to a wide member base, they answer:

I, more than collective identity, would speak of a political subject. Why? Because it has to do with a process of subjectivation. That is, the conflict itself generates a political subject. But how is the subject constructed? It is important. We have an experience that had not existed before, and that is that of a pre-existing discomfort, because you do not invent people's pains, but you translate them, interpret them, they have symptoms and the symptoms were already there long before. (Podemos' party representative, interview)

Rather than talking about forming a collective identity, the party representative wants to identify a process of political subjectification (sometimes called subjectivation or subjection) that comes into existence when a person sees themselves as a political subject. Van Dam, Duineveld, and During (2015) have studied how citizen initiatives lead to a process of political subjectification because citizens adapt to overarching discourses and act strategically to form collective action. The party representative sees that the material conditions that create political discomfort have been there for a long time, but that Podemos manages to create a structural understanding and a feeling of same-ness based on these societal circumstances. Starting an educational journey from people's existing experiences could be read in relation to a popular education approach, whereby one learns dialogically about the world from one's own lived experiences (Guimaraes et al.). In the interview, the party representative exemplifies this with the following words:

When you see a very good guy like Pablo Iglesias or Íñigo Errejón [the founders of the party] on primetime TV five years ago, you don't care and you are at home, you are screwed because you are precarious, because they have taken your dependency subsidy, because you are an intern and they do not pay you and you see there is a guy who looks like you. He is quite like you, he tells harsh truths and when he says that you identify with this guy. [You feel] that guy is one of us, which in the end is the whole game. I mean, that guy is legit and he's one of 'us'. And you must have been a political subject all along. (Podemos' party representative, interview)

This quotation helps to explain how the process of subjectification and identification takes form. The party representative shows how an individual becomes aware of structures in society and places oneself in the middle of that structural understanding. Davies (2006) has studied the process of subjectification in education. She claims that educational situations offer a place for individuals to become vulnerable, and it is in that vulnerability that one can see oneself and others as subjects. Even if the party representative frames this process as political subjectification, the framing perspective puts the emphasis on how this understanding of a 'we' creates a collective identity that reaches out to an undefined wider movement without clear boundaries. The identity is not restricted to members or the party, but creates a far-reaching community with everyone who feels or thinks the same way. If these individuals who are invited to join the collective identity participate in the party

education, it is possible to frame the diagnostic relationships of who 'we and they' are, the problems and solutions that initiate collective action. The framing of the educational content can create agency that makes the members want to act for themselves and in solidarity with their movement.

Therefore, in the last identified party identity, the identity unfolds from the party and reaches out to an undefined mass without geographic or organisational boundaries. The educational situation creates feelings of being part of something bigger, which is construed in a structural understanding of society and by identifying diagnostic relationships of problems and solutions. Similar to the first identity (Welcome!), this identity creates emotional rationales to the party (and its movement) that function as motivations for collective action.

Concluding discussion – constructing identities in party education

Since all interviewees stress that their party's education plays an essential role in the construction of party 'we-ness', it is noteworthy that the intersection between party education and the construction of party identities has not been studied more thoroughly in previous research. The party representatives and study leaders do not dwell on describing who 'the other' is and how they are different from 'us'. Instead, the interviewees reside in their party identities and in the feeling of being part of the same political project. The educational situation becomes a meeting place where members can join different party identities by becoming engaged in feelings of belonging and being part of something greater than themselves.

In the first identified party identity (Welcome!), the feeling of belonging is constructed in the party education, where the members learn collectively and create networks with other members. This identity relies on the members feeling welcomed and invited to join the party. The study leaders tend to emphasise this identity, as they give prominence to creating a safe educational situation in order to encourage the members to come back to other educational activities. The construction of this 'we-ness' relates to what was found in new-member education in the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Left Party (Arriaza Hult 2020), where the study guides that instructed the study leaders emphasised creating a good atmosphere in the educational situation. Hence, rather than identifying problems and solutions or 'the others', the collectiveness is based on feeling accepted as one is.

In the second identified party identity (Get in line!), the members are made to feel responsibility for the party through the educational content, where they learn useful skills with the aim of becoming party members who can represent the party. This could be interpreted as a form of fostering and teaching from the top-down, but could also be seen as the party organisation trying to invite the members into the party, by including them in the party identity and teaching them skills that they will need to work for the party. Previous studies that have accentuated educational activities in the labour movement have departed from an organisational perspective (Ambjörnsson 1993; Jansson 2013; Andrade Blanco 2005), with an emphasis on how the educational situations can establish boundaries in an organisation, for example by implementing attitudes and norms that favour the organisation. Since this study takes inspiration from analytical tools used in social movement theory to emphasise how parties engage their members, the study better captures the duality and interaction between top-down and bottom-up that lies in the educational situation and its effect on identity formation.

In the third identified party identity (Unite!), a far-reaching feeling of we-ness is constructed in the educational situation that connects the members with a broader political movement. To construct this movement identity, the members learn from each other and from lived experiences, which are seen to create widespread solidarity. The members are also assumed to develop their analytical thinking to be able to connect all the dots of how society is structured. What is supposed to attract them is the possibility of being part of something greater. The intersection between this expansive we-ness and the party educational situation relates to ideological training and constructing political or class consciousness (Jansson 2013), where the framing of members' experiences can create a structural understanding and a feeling of solidarity.

In conclusion, this study reveals that relevant actors within political parties perceive that their educational activities offer a platform to formulate diagnostic and prognostic framings and to construct the motivational framing needed to engage members in the parties' politics. The members are invited to learn these relationships of what to do and how to do it, and the educational situation provides circumstances for creating logical and emotional rationales that link the members' individual identities to a collective identity. The educational situation can, however, also be interpreted as an invitation for the members to reformulate and renegotiate current diagnostics and prognostics, while at the same time instigating collective action and tying the members to the parties. Accordingly, party education could be understood as a bridge between the parties and their members, which calls for the topic to be further explored. This study shows that important individuals within party education intend to use the educational situation to create party identities that cause members to become engaged in the party collectives. Consequently, there is reason to test how a similar research design translates when studying other parties. Do left-leaning parties in other countries understand their intra-party education in a similar way? What happens when studying the same processes in parties with other ideological strands? Future research should also aspire to come closer to the members and their experiences in order to better understand the process of identity construction in party education in the making. When interviewing party members and observing party educational situations, it becomes possible to explore how the three observed identities prevail in different settings. Do the members feel as part of several identities, or do they adhere to one identity? Are there differences between different members, educational situations, parties, or even countries? Since this study has just started to interpret how education ties members to their parties, the questions that still require answers are manifold.

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