


## History, Heritage and Identity: conceptions of Ibero-American history teachers about heritage and identities

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## History, Heritage and Identity. Conceptions of Ibero-American history teachers about heritage and identities

### **Abstract**

This paper analyzes the conceptions of Ibero-American secondary school teachers about the role of history teaching in creating collective identities, and how heritage can impact history classes. We applied a peer validated questionnaire to 283 history teachers from seven countries, analyzing their answers using a deductive-inductive method supported by IBM SPSS software (version 23). The analysis reveal that heritage continues to have little presence in lessons, mostly used as an example of historical narratives that highlight the national identity over others.

**Keywords:** heritage education; history education; cultural education; history teachers; collective identities.

## História, Patrimônio e Identidade. Concepções de professores de história ibero-americanos sobre patrimônio e identidades

### **Resumo**

Este artigo analisa as concepções de professores do ensino médio ibero-americanos sobre o papel do ensino de história na criação de identidades coletivas e como o patrimônio pode impactar as aulas de história. Aplicamos um questionário validado por pares a 283 professores de história de sete países, analisando suas respostas usando um método dedutivo-indutivo apoiado pelo software IBM SPSS (versão 23). As análises revelam que o patrimônio continua tendo pouca presença nas aulas, sendo usado principalmente como um exemplo de narrativas históricas que destacam a identidade nacional em detrimento de outras.

**Palavras-chave:** educação patrimonial; ensino de história; educação cultural; professores de história; identidades coletivas.

### 1. Introduction

History epistemology provides elements for history teaching such as why and how to analyze the past, implying that historians not only illustrate the past but also collaborate in empowering people to face the future. Historians are therefore ‘crafters,’ makers of knowledge about the past, while simultaneously helping to define the society they study and how it makes use of the past to respond to its needs. Instead of a discoverer, the historian is a maker who is capable of predisposing society towards actions (Bloch, 1968). History, in its very

essence, bears the relation between interpretations of the past and the creation of collective identities that project their needs onto the future while rooting their arguments in the past (Rüsen, 2004). Although not a collective memory, History must critically assess the interpretations of the past by mobilizing different substantive, epistemological, and ontological concepts (Alvén, 2021). Teaching history either as a scientific knowledge or as a memorialization of the past requires different pedagogical strategies, which impact student education differently.

### 1.1 Theoretical framework

History, collective memory and heritage are not synonymous, differing in how they approach the past. Issues arise precisely when history and collective memory are treated as synonymous, and the concept of heritage overlaps with the latter. Regardless, history teaching can be a context in which these three ways of interrogating the past interact to help generate further critical thinking about our identity and our managing of that past (Clark; Peck, 2018; Seixas, 2012, 2016; Straub, 2005). In this perspective, history teaching becomes an essential pillar in democratic education (Ercikan; Seixas, 2015; Friedrih, 2016), pointing out that memory frequently appeals to an emotional link with the past and exalts the facts considered transcendent to claim a present identity (Nora, 1996). The past is thus largely approached from present demands (Lowenthal, 2011) and its uncritical use offers the risk of converting present practices into those of the past, but not for the effects of the latter unto the former but for the very teleological mechanism of history. Collective memory, in turn, is a more expressive than explanatory concept, useful for appealing to forms of consciousness of the past apparently shared by a group of individuals (Candau, 2002). Conversely, history as a scientific discipline appeals to critical rationalism, searching for an 'explanatory' objectivity in which truth is not immutable but rather perfectible insofar as it is subjected to new evidences or revisions by the research community (Ricoeur, 2004; Seixas, 2016). In historical thinking, an interpretation of the past finds support not so much in historical relevance but in the existence of historical sources and the explanatory depth of the binomial cause-consequence, which largely depends on

a contextual analysis of the facts (Wineburg, 2001). A more interesting debate on historical memory as a mechanism of history was put forward by authors such as Le Goff (1992), Pierre Nora (1996) and Ricoeur (2006), who proposed to center historical analysis on how groups construct their collective memory based on their experiences of the past (Seixas, 2016). Doing so does not imply abandoning the past as an element of social cohesion or its usefulness to understand the present, but rather that revisionism—operating through critical rationalism—should enrich the quality of discourses (Alven, 2021; Seixas, 2016). Despite the potential presented by teaching history differently in formal contexts, overcoming the traditional educational curricula and teachers' assumptions and practices proves to be quite difficult. Certain changes in the history curricula envisaging more critical and interpretative discourses were target of protests for neglecting the discipline's supposedly traditional role of exemplifying community values, giving rise to the so-called "history wars" (Hutchins, 2015). A good example is the curricular modifications introduced by Britain in the mid-2000s: its attempt to introduce a less centralized vision of history was badly received by both the groups that were intended to be incorporated into the historical discourse (British from the Antilles, Asia or Africa), and the general population, some of which saw the reforms as excessively timid, while others considered them an attack on British national identity (Andrews; McGlynn; Mycock, 2010; Hawke; Prior, 2011).

Identity, therefore, does not exist in the abstract; rather, it is construed in specific historical, social, cultural, and institutional contexts (No; Mook; Schugurensky, 2016). And in the school context, History has been treated as a subject matter to create collective memory, what Van Sledright (2008) calls collective memorialization or teaching history as heritage and collective memory. In other words, instead of being treated as scientific knowledge, based on the critical interpretation of historical sources, history contents in school have been presented as a political construction, in reference to how post-hoc historical narratives (i.e., national biographies) are constructed (Ashworth, 1994; Levy, 2014). And it is done so because as a school subject, history teaching selects contents imbued with an important ideological-identity load from a one-dimensional perspective (Rieff, 2011).

Disputes concerning the goals and approaches to history teaching at schools is a worldwide phenomenon, and attempts to overcome teaching history as memorialization in favor of more procedural aspects and interpretation of discourse, as well as more complex and global identities, have also been carried out in Ibero-America, as seen in works by González and Pagés (2014), Arias Gómez (2015), Valle Taiman (2018) and Schmidt (2019).

Usually, the confusion between collective memory and history is exemplified by how heritage is used at school. Considered both a historical evidence and a catalyst of feelings, values and emotions, heritage provides, on the one hand, a framework for analyzing and criticizing visual and iconic discourses and, on the other, material or intangible symbolic elements to show the most significant socio-cultural features of a given group. Hence, heritage points to the foundational elements of a group rather than its existence in the contemporary (Vecco, 2010). While history speaks in universals, collective memory and heritage are community-specific (Lowenthal, 2011; Ricoeur, 2006). In short, heritage and collective memory produce a singular meaning, oftentimes unrelated to its potential as a historical evidence or a source of information. Heritage implies an existing legacy or inheritance, one that can be easily linked to a collective memory and is only definable in terms of how is put to use by its recipient. The question of who owns heritage determines what heritage is. This idea differs from history, which exists independently from the observer (Ricoeur, 2006).

At this point, we must define what is—or can be—considered as heritage. As an interesting and useful element, heritage is both a vestige of the past and an element of representation that expresses the feelings and ideologies unanimously (or so it seems) shared by a group (Epstein, 2009). It is this symbolic load, which refers to socio-cultural elements, that differentiates the mid-20th century concept of heritage (Vecco, 2010) from that of monument, more restrictive: a monument has value in itself due to its character of antiquity, whereas heritage has cultural value, a marked identity and the capacity to interact with memory. These elements explain why heritage only makes sense as a defining element of a group, and that its conservation derives not from the authenticity of its origins but from its current social value (Lowenthal, 2011). Hence, heritage conservation is understood only as an intentional preservation of something (Ashworth, 1994;

Vecco, 2010). When defining heritage we are no longer necessarily speaking of great historical monuments, but of elements integrated into the community. Considering that identity can move spatially (local, regional, national), defining such an identity will condition which elements are selected and used. Similarly, if we assume that since the late 20th century the modern nation states have been characterized by increasing individualization (Bauman, 2004), it is not surprising that the 21st century saw patrimonial elements proliferate under the protection of what is local, communal or ethnic. The shift from a solid modernity, and from a solid and hierarchical identity galvanized by the nation, to a liquid modernity brought with it the defense of a plurality of identities, cultural hybridization and more complex social interactions (Liu; Zala; Gallois, 2018; Neuliep, 2018).

When collective memory, history and heritage are mobilized in school the past is usually seen not as a historical evidence to understand present issues, but rather as an interpretation of that past, and any interpretation necessarily requires choosing which historical elements and facts should be taught. Our research problem therefore focuses on the role played by school teachers as the main agents of education (González, 2010) in maintaining or opposing the use of national biographies in our complex and dynamic current *glocal* societies, and in using heritage to reinforce emotional connections with the past.

## 1.2 Research goals

This article investigates the conceptions of Ibero-American history teachers about the relations between history and heritage and how these shape collective identities. Our goal can be unfolded into two specific objectives:

1. To describe how teachers understand the use of heritage in history teaching.
2. To analyze how teachers see history and heritage interacting in history teaching to shape collective identities.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Design

Since our goal is not to search for causal explanations but to interpret and understand the actions of teachers according to their meanings and intentions,

our interpretative research puts emphasis on personal and subjective reflection as defining elements of social reality. Effectiveness is not under study here, but rather the phenomena and processes that characterize classroom life. The design fits in with a descriptive mixed methods approach which, especially in education research, provide more powerful explanations by allowing to combine narratives and statistics.

Analysis of open questions is part of the descriptive phenomenological design, proper to qualitative studies, and allow us to investigate specific issues by unveiling the meanings conveyed by the participants' answers (Kim; Sefcik; Bradway, 2017). We chose this design to answer our first specific objective, as we intended to simply distribute the codes to understand the degree of diversity within the population. Two code sources were applied by means of an open code process. One was based on theoretical perspectives about the types of heritage and their possible use in history classes to create a collective memory. Starting from the classification conducted by Cuenca, Estepa, and Martín (2017), we paid special attention to the authors' categorization of the types of heritage present in textbooks and their formative and civic function. A systematic comparative analysis between the answers and the heritage categorization allowed us to elaborate ten final codes used in the research (Flick, 2007; 2019). Importantly, we had to introduce an in-vivo coding due to data particularity, and a tautological code due to the nature of the expressions used (see Table 2 for the codes used, justification and example). By comparing these codes with respect to their properties and meanings we obtained two categories: the idea of history teaching and dissemination (cat A), and the idea of heritage and identity building (cat B). To achieve our second specific objective, we performed a comparative and quantitative analysis of the answers.

## 2.2. Sample

Our sample included participants (n=283) from seven Ibero-American countries, namely: Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador and Chile (Table 1). Given our objectives, the countries and study population were chosen by an intentional sampling method. Our choice of countries obeys three criteria.

Firstly, they are Ibero-American and share a common cultural background (language, history, traditions...) that goes beyond common historical ties and includes the creation of a supranational community through institutional links (e.g., association of language academies, bilateral treaties on dual citizenship recognition) and socio-economic policies (e.g., Organization of Latin American States for Education, Science and Culture, Mercosur). Secondly, all the countries are democratic and have culturally diverse societies that uphold the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development) principle of promoting active, critical, and decision-making citizens. Thirdly, recent studies on history teaching in these countries reveal common guidelines regarding three basic elements (Prats; Valls; Miralles, 2015): 1) their curricula prioritizes the nation as the locus of identity, implying a history teaching based on national biographies; 2) approaches to the supranational context (Ibero-American) are limited to studying national histories that standardize and homogenize the past of diverse communities. Despite efforts to pay greater attention to either global phenomena (as in Mexico with discussions about the concept of Latin America) or regional or local histories (which broaden historical agency to include peasants, indigenous people, women and other marginalized populations), the national level continues to prevail. If, on the one hand, local histories have enriched historical agency, they ended up incurring in the same homogenizing logic: defending and highlighting the particular instead of seeking comparisons, analogies or similarities with other communities. Globalizing approaches, in turn, focused on juxtaposing regions (Acevedo, 2019); and 3) students show a very scarce knowledge of the historical background shared by Ibero-American peoples.

As for the participants, we selected active secondary schoolteachers (Table 2) with a degree in History and thus knowledgeable about historical science, its problems and historiographic formulation. Considering the wide geographical spectrum analyzed, the limited size of our sample more than satisfies our objective of sampling the diversity of valuations (Jansen, 2010).



**Table 1** - Grouping by country.

Country	Number of participants	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Spain	172	60.8	60.8	60.8
Portugal	20	7.1	7.1	67.8
Argentina	6	2.1	2.1	70.0
Mexico	21	7.4	7.4	77.4
Brazil	15	5.3	5.3	82.7
Ecuador	44	15.5	15.5	98.2
Chile	5	1.8	1.8	100.0
Total	283	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors, 2023.

Regarding sample profile, we included both novice teachers, whose pedagogical knowledge came first and foremost from teacher education, and more experienced teachers (Tuithof; Logtenberg; Bronkhorst; Van Drie, 2019). Participant invitation was achieved by means of international contacts made by previous participation in research projects. A total of 283 teachers participated in the study, of which 48.9% were male and 51.1% female, with mean age of 43 years (SD= 9.05) and average teaching experience of 12.19 years (SD= 9.17).

### 2.3. Data collection

Answers on the use of heritage in history teaching were collected by a validated questionnaire. A first questionnaire underwent validation by six experts: three social sciences professors specialists in heritage didactics from the University of Huelva, University of the Basque Country and University of Zaragoza (Spain), and three secondary school history teachers from three High Schools in the city of Murcia (Spain). Items were assessed by an instrument developed ad hoc (Molina; Felices; Chaparro, 2016). Following their recommendation, we reworded parts of the and added some identifications of scales (local/global).

The questionnaire was divided into two blocks—one focused on sociodemographic data such as origin, academic training and years of experience, and one consisting of two open questions regarding history and heritage. We concentrated our specific objectives—the role of heritage in history classes and the construction of collective identities—in two categories formulated as follows:

- *Teaching Dimension*: investigates the relations between history and national/local heritage and the curriculum through the question: “Do you consider that the regional/national curriculum pays sufficient attention to contents related to local and regional history and their associated heritage? Do you believe more attention should be paid? Why?”
- *Identity Dimension*: investigates the types of identity underlying the conceptions of history teaching where teaching about heritage is implicit through the question: “History teaching is generally considered to be a key element in creating collective identities. Do you agree or are there other more important elements? Why?”

We opted for this qualitative structure because it best fits our exploratory aim, unveiling the reference framework supporting the participants’ opinions. This type of semi-structured open question also fits well with our research sample—secondary school teachers with a high academic level who can provide a rich and more complex perspective to the study (Artino; La Rochelle; Dezee; Gehlbach, 2014).

#### 2.4. Data Analysis

Based on the above, we prepared a matrix to analyze the diversity of perspectives expected from the responses. It included the teaching (category A) and identity (category B) dimensions, as well as the ten codes created (Tables 2 and 3), illustrated by examples of responses identified with the letter F (form) followed by a number.

**Table 2** - Teaching dimension. Category A.

Category	Description	Example
A.1 Illustrative Perspective	Local/regional heritage is an exemplifying, illustrative element of a general history. Knowledge of it entails both conserving and protecting heritage in general and identifying these symbols with a history that is represented by a master narrative.	F65 – <i>Because they should know about heritage so that they can learn to value and respect it and because it is the most appropriate way to make the contents of both Geography and History attractive and experiential.</i>  F49 – <i>As a way of making more sense of the contents that they study and thus more sense to the students of the region in question.</i>

A.2 Conformist and/or Contradictory Perspective	Heritage is seen as important, but its inclusion is hampered by lack of time and difficulties in reconciling teaching local/regional heritage with the curriculum contents. Priority should be given to more necessary general matters.	<p>F73 – <i>Lack of time. Local and regional history are important but the general contents of the curriculum are too extensive.</i></p> <p>F55 – <i>The time given to the subject, which is incompatible with the vast extent of the existing programs, makes it difficult to include any extra contents.</i></p>
A.3. Dual Perspective	No explicit link between global and local history. Local history is a product of the general history; but unlike in Category A.2 there is no negative element (time/priority) hampering its teaching. Nor does it imply an illustrative character, as in Category A.1. Here, heritage is more of a complementary topic that broadens the students' knowledge and note exactly a source for studying history.	<p>F3 – <i>Because the content taught is incomplete without these topics.</i></p> <p>F10 – <i>The study of historical heritage should be intrinsically associated with the study of history as a “chapter” apart.</i></p>
A.4 Contextualized Perspective	Heritage/local history focuses on the context in which the learner is integrated thus enabling meaningful learning and fostering the feeling of community. At the same time, heritage is considered fundamental to understand the more general and abstract school curriculum contents.	<p>F35 – <i>It is part of what students are and the stimuli with which they have grown up. They can understand and comprehend, but also change things, for example the machismo that is deeply rooted in the region, but which is normalized.</i></p> <p>F48 – <i>Starting from an element close to us to learn about something makes it more appealing and interesting and stimulates our curiosity to learn more about the history of that and other regions.</i></p>
A.5 Analytical Perspective	Conception of local history/ heritage that collaborates with other areas of the curriculum and which, methodologically, aids historical thinking by using heritage as a historical source. Hence, local heritage contributes to building a historical knowledge that reconciles the local, the national and the global.	<p>F227 – <i>Local heritage is meaningful and useful for students in teaching Social Sciences. We need to know about both our own heritage and that of other cultures.</i></p> <p>F58 – <i>I think it is important to teach students to use the tools proper to History to give meaning to elements of local, regional, national and world heritage; otherwise they will learn stereotypes which are disrespectful to other cultures.</i></p>

Source: Authors, 2023.

**Table 3** - Identity dimension. Category B.

Category	Description	Example
B.1 Tautology	Response that uses other words to confirm the idea presented in the question.	F33 – <i>Of course. Knowledge of the country and its history is indispensable in creating a collective identity.</i> F52 – <i>There is no doubt that teaching History is a key element in creating collective identities, since it helps students to better perceive the collective identities related to the groups they belong to and, from these, move on to broader contexts and perceive a more comprehensive reality.</i>
B.2 Undefined identity	Unclear conception of history/heritage as a vector element in building collective identities. It appears as just another element of a complex process.	F 82 – <i>No, at least I don't see it like that in my case.</i> F47 – <i>Social media plays a big role in building collective identities nowadays.</i>
B.3 Exclusive historical identity	History and heritage define a hard, clearly hierarchical identity that imposes communal loyalty and referential elements that exclude other groups.	F250 – <i>Yes, because we need to know our history in order to value our own reality and thus identify with what is ours.</i> F60 – <i>I believe it is fundamental. It helps to forge bonds.</i>
B.4 Multiple dynamic identity	An open and more complex conception of multiple interconnected identities. A flexible contextualized identity that allows individuals to adapt to situations and avoid hierarchies or loyalties. Hence, it is inclusive. In terms of history teaching, it allows a plurality of perspectives.	F16 – <i>Clearly, history contributes to creating collective identities; however, it does not lead to a homogenization of identities. Quite the opposite: it fosters a mixture of interpretations about the past and consequently the development of various identities, representations and views.</i> F7 – <i>Yes, mainly when this is concerned with revealing hidden histories, memory and the daily lives of individuals and groups in the area. A teaching that focuses on how to approach, for example, History as a reasoning process that not only contemplates the individual but the collective, thus revealing the social relationships forged in a local reality, but which is not isolated from the rest of the world.</i>

B.5 Critical identity	In-depth analysis of cognitive processes. More than specifying the elements that influence one's identity, it pays attention to the educational processes underway in history classes which provide benefits other than building collective identities. It advocates for the development of critical and analytical thinking.	<p>F19 – <i>I believe that one of the purposes of history is to create collective identities. However, it often seems that this purpose is used mistakenly as it can lead to extreme nationalism. I also think that there are other more important aims of history, like developing critical thinking amongst students.</i></p> <p>F10 – <i>Studying educational processes and what goes on in schools as praxis is very important and compulsory throughout said process.</i></p>
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Source: Authors, 2023.

The ten codes (divided into two categories) allowed us to saturate all response data. While the first specific objective was analyzed by the open coding process, for the second objective we decided on a quantitative analysis. We thus compared the codes by means of non-parametric statistics (X2 and contingency analysis), using the IBM SPSS software (version 23).

### 3. Results

As discussed, our analysis focuses on the conceptions of secondary school teachers about the relation between history teaching and regional/local heritage. Firstly, some teachers (56.5%) argue that heritage—whether local or regional—is not used to its full effect because it lacks due presence in school curricula (categories A1, A2, A4 and A5), whereas 43.4% (category A3) claim explicit heritage teaching to be unnecessary. Similar worrisome figures can be seen when analyzing how history itself is discussed: one in three of the interviewees argued that the national elements of reference alone are sufficient when teaching history. These findings point to the need for changes in the curriculum design and/or teaching practice, as 65% of the teachers would prefer a greater explicit presence of heritage elements in general, whereas 21.9% do not consider their incorporation viable. However, this absence of local or regional heritage in the classroom may be explained by how teachers see the role of heritage in history classes.

Most teachers (43.4%, category A3) considered local/regional heritage as an element that merits being taught (Table 4 and Figure 1). From the responses analyzed and categories we established, we note that teachers use this type of heritage as an illustrations of uniform general processes (cultural and artistic movements, historical processes, etc.) to enhance student learning. Hence, they see heritage as complementary and never a vehicular knowledge to understanding history. Perhaps due to this dual and additive view of history and heritage, 19% of the respondents (category A2) consider that the curriculum design, which gives greater priority to general contents, hinders the inclusion of local heritage, while not denying a possible positive contribution (Table 4 and Figure 1). If we add the 20.8% of teachers (category A1) who see local/regional history as implicit in national history or master narratives and useful merely to illustrate historical processes to the two percentages above (categories A2 and A3), we arrive at an interesting conclusion: 83.2% of the respondents understand heritage and history as two related elements but answering to different educational realities. It is this conformist or contradictory perspective the responsible for condemning heritage to curricular ostracism, seen as an auxiliary to history in building knowledge about the past. Curricula design include an extensive list of historical contents which almost inevitably means that heritage is relegated to mere illustration or is completely absent. As stated, “there is a lot of information and the students would not assimilate it in the time allotted” (F25) and “any addition to the program would mean using time we do not have” (F40). Moreover, this subordination of local heritage to national heritage and its use to simply exemplify a certain historical process puts national master narratives as the driving force of history classes and heritage the tangible proof of a communal identity, an element “to go further into our cultural roots” (F105).

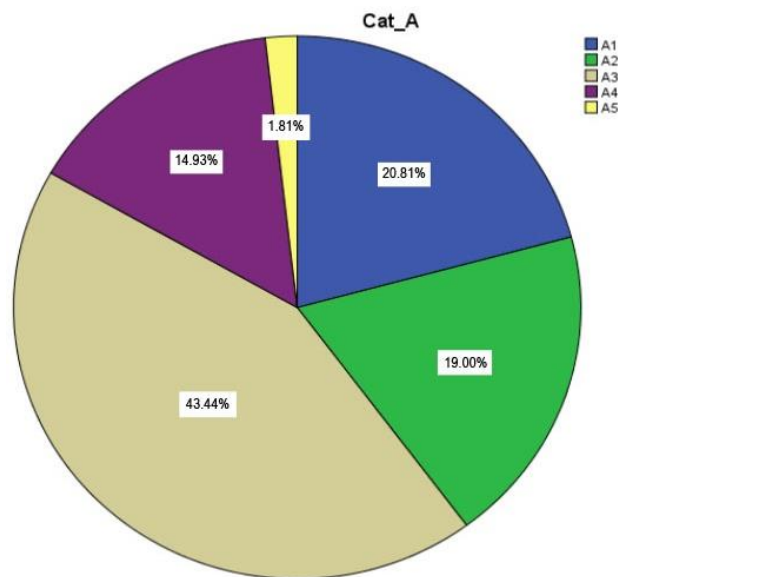
**Table 4** - Conception of secondary school teachers about the relation between history and local/regional heritage in the curriculum – frequency and percentage of the teaching dimension categories.

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
A1	46	16.3	20.8	20.8
A2	42	14.8	19.0	39.8

A3	96	33.9	43.4	83.3
A4	33	11.7	14.9	98.2
A5	4	1.4	1.8	100.0

Source: Authors, 2023.

**Figure 1** - Conception of secondary school teacher about the relation between history and local/regional heritage in the curriculum – distribution by teaching dimension categories (Cat. A).



Source: Authors, 2023.

Geographical scale appears a significant aspect in history teaching. Instead of a teaching resource or an element with emotional load that can help students establish links with lesson contents, heritage is an illustrative element that, according to the teachers, “helps to understand what has been explained, from the general to the particular” (F186). But such is an encyclopedic knowledge, “a universal, state, regional and/or local view that does not go beyond the anecdotal, and is generally presented from a biased or insufficient viewpoint” (F217). In other words, “there is a risk of overstressing the local and losing sight of the global, which is what gives the local its meaning” (F158).

Only 14.9% of the teachers (category A4) stated explicitly that using local heritage helped to contextualize and promote meaningful learning while fostering a sense of community (Table 4 and Figure 1). It is its characteristic of something known and accessible to students that makes heritage a resource for understanding more abstract and general historical concepts. Lastly, less than 2% of the respondents (category A5) considered that local heritage analysis could become a primary source in reinforcing proper historiographical procedures (Table 4 and Figure 1). The interest of including local heritage as a teaching tool for meaningful learning and for contextualizing global phenomena can be exemplified as follows:

Because it is the first point of connection and source of historical meaning for the individual. Since it deals with the individual's surroundings, these are given a historical meaning that goes beyond their mere existence and thus they provide greater elements for the individual's identity and greater depth to his historical awareness (F23).

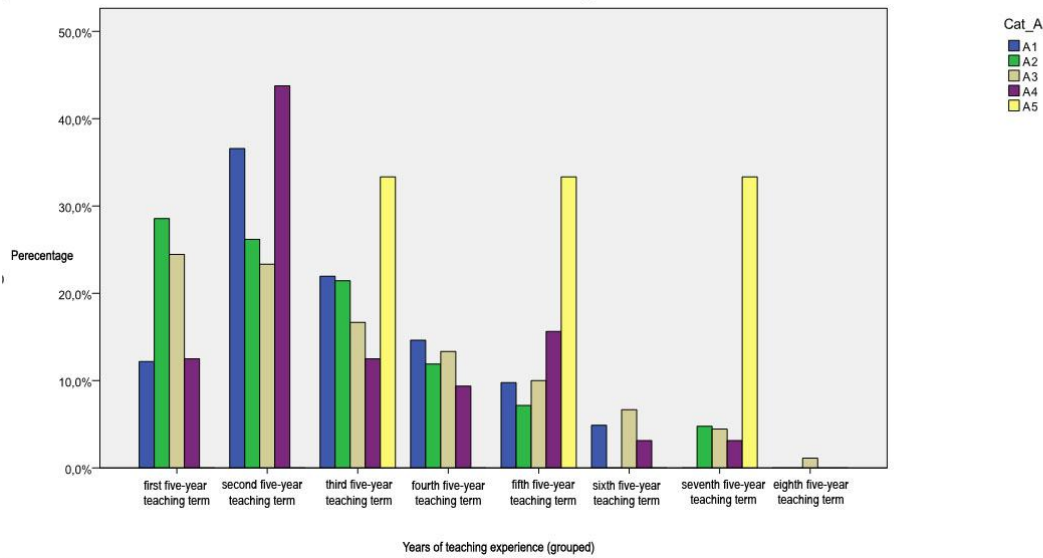
Such contextualized understanding of the past achieved by interpreting local heritage means that teachers choose to insist on the historicity of a given reality. Hence, this contextualized past can be understood by analyzing the different parts of a historical site (Pinto, 2016), and by hypothesizing about past functions of the in situ remains. Moreover, this contextualized perspective on the use of local heritage in history classes implies an interdisciplinary dialogue between history and other school subjects:

Local history, and especially its heritage, should be paid much more attention. Regional and community history has already received a lot of attention in primary education. Local heritage needs to be reinforced as it is what really motivates students and it should be related to other geographical and historical aspects, etc. (F149).

A variable that seems to favor greater awareness about the critical use of heritage in history classes is teaching experience. Category A5 (Analytical perspective) shows a slight increase for teachers with greater experience. Statistically, however, we found no significant relation between these two variables. When establishing fewer categories (e.g., teachers with more than 20 years of experience and those with less) the data point to a possible trend, but not statistically significant (Figure 2).



**Figure 2** - Relation between teaching experience and conceptions about the relation between history and local/regional heritage



Source: Authors, 2023.

As for our second specific objective, i.e., analyzing the role of history and heritage in creating collective identities, the statistical analysis show that almost half of the respondents (47.5%, category B1) see history as a key element in creating identification links (Table 5 and Figure3). The very wording of the question<sup>1</sup> implies this persuasive and defining character of history in forging identities. As Anderson (1983) argues, it is not a coincidence that history becomes a key element for collective identities in the 19th century. Regardless of the subject’s inclusion by the academic and teaching community, some of the responses show more of a desire to appear “interesting” for the researchers (category B1). More nuanced were the answers categorized as “exclusive historical identity” (category B3, 8.6%), which we can add to the conception of history as a forger of identity of the responses (Table 5 and Figure 3). But this group offers an interesting perspective in which history is used to distinguish oneself from other groups, thus favoring the creation of exclusive and restrictive identities rather than global and flexible ones. Our results show the prevalence of such trend: “I believe history teaching is key for political and cultural reasons, but also for territorial identity, through the use

<sup>1</sup>“History teaching is generally considered to be a key element in creating collective identities. Do you agree or are there other more important elements?”

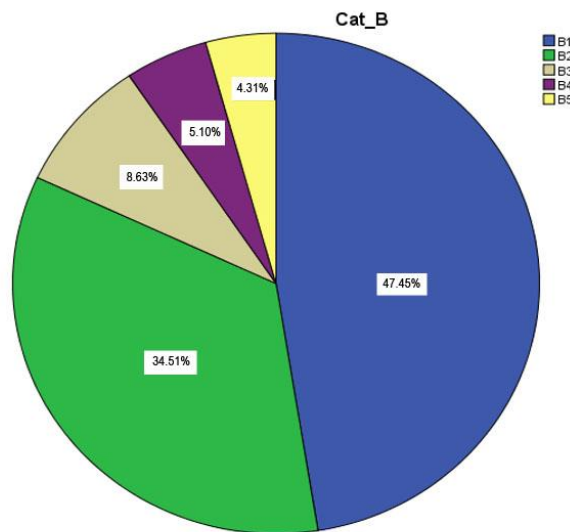
of material and cultural heritage (customs, traditions...). Knowing about the historical and cultural roots favors the creation of a group identity” (F227).

**Table 5** - Identity types underlying teachers’ conceptions of history teaching (heritage is implicit) – frequencies and percentages of the identity dimension categories (Cat. B).

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
B1	121	42.8	47.5	47.5
B2	88	31.1	34.5	82.0
B3	22	7.8	8.6	90.6
B4	13	4.6	5.1	95.7
B5	11	3.9	4.3	100.0

Source: Authors, 2023

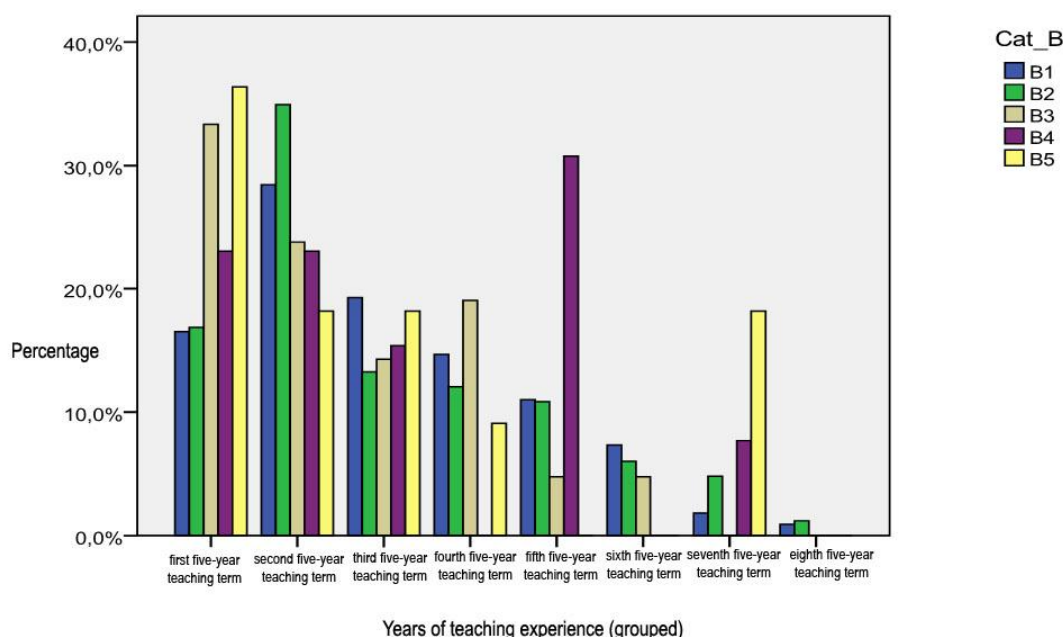
**Figure 3** - Identity types underlying teachers’ conceptions about history teaching (heritage is implicit) – distribution by identity dimension categories (Cat. B).



Source: Authors, 2023.

To test for possible relations between this type of conception of history, and its goals when taught in formal contexts, and other conceptions and teaching practices, we have investigated whether teaching experience resulted in any further nuances. Again, we found no statistically significant association when crossing these variables (Figure 4), although more experienced teachers tend to reduce the role played by history in creating critical and analytical identities.

**Figure 4** - Relation between teaching experience (by periods of 5 years) and the identity types underlying teachers' conceptions about history teaching (heritage is implicit).



Source: Authors, 2023.

We also found an association between the use made of heritage in history classes and the type of identity this use underlies by crossing the variables Cat\_A and Cat\_B using statistical Chi-square tests and p-value <0.05 (Table 6).

**Table 6** - Association of variables Cat\_A and Cat\_B by Chi-square tests.

Chi-square	Value	Gl	Asymptotic Significance (bilateral)
Pearson's Chi-square	60.195 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood ratio	49.041	16	.000
Linear by linear association	6.792	1	.009
N. of valid cases	207		

a. 16 cells (64.0%) returned a value below 5. The minimum expected count is 17.

Source: Authors, 2023.

Non-parametric testing (Table 7) showed moderate values for Phi (0.539), Cramer's V (0.270) and the contingency coefficient (0.475), thus pointing to a moderate correlation between both variables.

**Table 7** - Association of variables Cat\_A and Cat\_B by non-parametric tests.

Symmetric measures		Value	Asymptotic standardized error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.539			.000
	Cramer's V	.270			.000
	Contingency coefficient	.475			.000
Interval by interval	Pearson's R	.182	.076	2.644	.009 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by ordinal	Spearman's correlation	.111	.074	1.592	.113 <sup>c</sup>
N. of valid cases	207				

a. Null hypothesis excluded.

b. Use of asymptotic standard error which assumes the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Source: Authors, 2023.

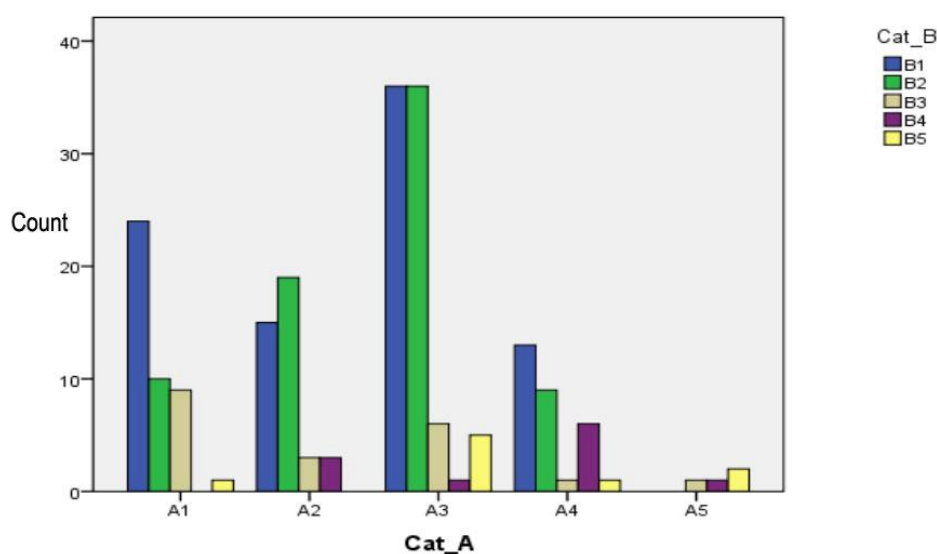
As Figure 5 shows, a conception of local/regional heritage as a useful methodological and analytical tool in history teaching to advocate for a multiple and critical identity does exist, but is barely appreciable percentage-wise when compared with those who see heritage as a merely illustrative element within master narratives. This dynamic and contextualized identity is open to the multiple connections experienced within one's environment and with other places and individuals, pointing to a more inclusive view of history as an element that "contributes to creating collective identities; however, it does not lead to a homogenization of identities. Quite the opposite: it fosters a mixture of interpretations about the past and promotes the development of different identities, representations and views" (F16). This conception aligns with researches, as Confino (2006), that emphasize how identity building is a two-way process in which local communities can play a decisive role in national and territorial configurations, rather than being mere passive receivers of an imposed national idea.

A smaller number of answers revealed a critical, more sophisticated type of identity to which "history teaching contributes to creating a common identity. It also fosters autonomous, critical, and reflexive thinking" (F124) as instead of paying attention to the specific, it focuses on building analytical thinking that

covers complex and intercultural identities rather than homogeneous collective ones:

Many nations and continents have always made an ideological and political use of History. Hence the dangers in teaching and learning this subject that helps to form critical individuals. For that is the nature of history—the search to understand, analyze, and interpret and to encourage men and women to act in society (F37).

Figure 5 - Correlation between variables Cat\_A and Cat\_B.



Source: Authors, 2023.

Despite the moderate effect between variables, the assumption of history teaching as a support to national biographies prevails.

#### 4. Discussion

Our data analysis, despite its restricted scope, does point out that History, like few other school disciplines, becomes a basic element of the hidden curriculum and tends to create collective identities in a manner that exceeds its study and the methods used to build historical knowledge.

The relation between history teaching, heritage and identity emerges with the birth of the 19th century liberal state. The newly born nation states, especially after the Napoleonic Wars, had to construct a collective *imaginary*—the “new” national bourgeois identities—, creating a discipline to justify “community

fellowship.” From the moment history and geography were included in 19th century school syllabuses their main function was to teach students that they belonged to an imagined national community which coincided unequivocally with an ethnic group, a “natural” political and territorial unit founded on a common culture (Anderson, 1983; Hutchins, 2015). But the political, economic, and social context has changed vastly since the 19th century, and the scientific discipline of History has evolved tremendously: history teaching and its shaping of values goes far beyond merely producing patriots. The disconnection between 19th century history teaching and the 21st century social liquid modernity generates disaffected classrooms, especially due to its complex and heterogeneous composition. In face of a changing, plural and dynamic world a univocal national view of history becomes increasingly problematic: those who do not identify with that national message will either ignore (or worse, despise) the contents to be learned. From the indifference of German students of Turkish origin toward the Nazi extermination camps (Von Borries, 1997), to the greater interest shown by Latin American students in contents related to their families’ countries of origin (Plá, 2016), the issue is one and the same: the students’ identity (tied to their country, but also tightly linked to their parents’ culture) clearly clashes with the official historical discourse taught by the curricula, in which the “other” is given little attention.

A possible solution to these challenges lies in teaching History as a science that advocates knowledge as an intrinsic value in for humankind’s development, a knowledge construed from formulating questions and answering those questions. In short, a teaching practice that enables the development of critical thinking to empower future generations (Levstik; Barton, 2011; Seixas; Morton, 2013). By linking history teaching, understood as a tool to promote critical thinking, and heritage, history teachers worldwide—in formal and informal contexts—have turned from master narratives toward how people consume history narratives, analyzing the wide range of cultural entities that offer access to the past (i.e., museums, memorials, commemorations, videogames, etc.) to trace its impact on contemporary society (De Groot, 2016; Van Boxtel; Van Drie, 2017). Integrated into popular culture, these cultural entities influence how individuals build their own

narratives and contextualize their own values. Using heritage as an evidence about the past, that can be familiar or meaningful to students due to emotional links, to construct discourses via historical methods have born fruits in educational contexts such as Canada (Seixas; Clark, 2004), the Netherlands (Van Boxtel; Grever; Klein; 2015), Portugal (Pinto, 2016), England, Spain (Gómez; Miralles; Fontal; Ibáñez, 2020), etc. But these efforts remain a minority in education, as exemplified by the comments analyzed.

Intersecting history and heritage contributes especially to raise awareness about common identities. And if both concepts are critically analyzed, it becomes clear that human history presents a continuous inter- and intra-cultural exchange and interaction. Using strategies that embrace conflicts and controversial issues allow us to unveil the dynamic, plural and complex character of societies in which the global and the local are constantly interacting (Levstik; Barton, 2011). Such a task is particularly urgent today and must give rise to a cosmopolitan identity, construed under democratic principles and with respect to freedoms, compatible with the various cultural realities (Bowden, 2003). This aims to achieve supportive coexistence within a single political framework while retaining one's original identity, and thus create a new, post-national identity based on constitutional heritage. However, when speaking of building original and critical knowledge rather than simply transmitting a closed message, one further element must be examined. The hyper-individuality proper to 21st century liquid modernity and the multiplicity of peer identification mean that each person is responsible for choosing their identity references once the master narratives and state supervision are undermined (Bauman, 2004). Thus, collective identity must be approached from such plurality of choices, and this conflict of multiplicity should be tackled by education.

As in the 19th and 20th centuries, history and heritage can play a crucial role in responding to 21st century society's demands, if associated with a critical, reflective and ICT-favorable education (Van Boxtel; Grever; Klein, 2016; Barghi; Zakaria; Hamzah, 2017; Islamoglu, 2018; Luna; Vicent; Reyes Cabrera; Quiñonez; 2019; Martínez-Rodríguez; Fontal, 2020; Ibáñez; Gómez; Fontal; García, 2020).

## 5. Conclusions

Regarding the use of local and regional heritage in history classes, our findings show that secondary school history teachers still see history as a hierarchical element. The discipline's analytical character remains ignored and local history is considered as tributary of master narratives. Consequently, history classes present heritage elements as national treasures, using it to differentiate one community (nation state) from others (Carretero; Asensio; Rodríguez-Moneo, 2012).

As for the role of history and heritage in shaping collective identities, while many teachers adopted a tautological approach, by simply rewording the question, or ignored the relation altogether, others espoused a rather "traditional" perspective (Rüsen, 2004; Seixas; Clark, 2004) defending cultural heritage conservation for no other reason than that old things should be preserved. Such a perspective seems to underline a respect for heritage based on traces left by the past on specific objects that should be preserved for use in the present, which seems to imply a commitment to a specific collective identity founded on ancestry and continuity. In fact, by analyzing the answers to how heritage fits in history classes, the types of identity that emerge reveal missed opportunities in using local heritage as a means to reflect on the various identity elements underlying a community or on how historical knowledge is construed. Few responses point to a more critical view of history and renewed methods for teaching history. Our analysis show that activities related to historical and cultural heritage can stimulate the learning of historical concepts at different levels of abstraction, which requires students to access historical facts presented by experts and also experience methodological procedures that allow to interpret different historical and heritage evidence (Molina; Ortuño, 2017). New technologies (e.g., websites, 3D online recreations, 3D printings) could be a useful tool in bringing heritage into history lessons, making heritage more accessible to students by providing virtual tours of monuments, artifacts, etc. (Ibáñez-Etxeberría; Gómez-Carrasco; Fontal; García-Ceballos, 2020; Luna; Rivero; Rivero; Navarro; Aso, 2020; Vicent, 2019). Such an approach also requires providing students with opportunities to explore questions about identity, allowing them to verify, validate



or refute the prevailing—and often myth-based—narratives and to understand identity as a complex and dynamic web of interconnections.

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History, Heritage and Identity. Conceptions of Ibero-American history teachers about heritage and identities

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