

But, I'm Not Catholic: Religion and identity on the island of Gozo

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A B S T R A C T

There are many events and ideas in our lives that influence the formation of identity. Religion is a force that can greatly influence how we identify and relate to one another. In some places, religion can be a powerful actor in the formation of identity, and this power can be evidenced not just through religious spaces such as churches, but schools and community events as well. Drawing upon research conducted on Gozo in the Republic of Malta, I am to demonstrate how religion can play a role in identity formation for residents of Gozo. I also show how the values associated with this identity can be resisted in favor of other values. I also raise questions about the influence of globalization on identity and how globalization can lead to the formation of hybrid identities as people have more and more access to alternative ideas and ways of thinking.

Introduction

Identity is not simply just something that people are given or take upon themselves. It involves processes of acquisition of ideas that can be accepted, rejected, or altered to fit the needs and desires of different people. It is my aim in this paper to discuss how religion can play a role in the formation of identity, and how this influence can be seen not only in the church, but local community events and schools.

This paper draws upon research conducted on Gozo, which is part of the Republic of Malta. I will give a short history of the country and how Roman Catholicism came to play such a prominent role in the culture there. I will then discuss how religion influences the school environments and how people who may not identify with the values the school has resist these values in favor of their own. The church itself and community events also influence identity, which will be shown as well. I also raise questions about tourism and global communication and how these might affect the formation of identity in an increasingly globalized world.

Methodology

The research for this paper took place over a three week period during July of 2011. Almost all of my research took place on Gozo, though I did have the chance to talk to residents of both Malta and Gozo. My data was gathered through both observation and interview. I observed several community events, went into different churches and schools, and had conversations with local residents. Most of my conversations took place in an informal setting, though I did conduct one interview where I came prepared with questions to ask. I also attempted to keep a few basic questions in mind to ask people with whom I had extended conversations when I did not plan on taking notes. All of the names within this work are pseudonyms, and any details about these individuals have been changed in order to protect confidentiality.

The primary limitation of this research was time. I was only on Gozo for a short while, which inhibited my ability to interview and talk to as many people as I would have liked. Finding people who would be willing to sit and talk to me was difficult in the short period of time I had. Although I was new to the field, this did bring some advantages. I came to Malta with an open ended topic, which allowed me to open myself to different experiences. If I came to the field with high expectations and extreme focus, I may have been distracted from interests and details that could prove valuable. Since this was my first experience in the field, I was eager to go out and find people and observe, despite the unknown responses I might receive. While the work appeared daunting, I was willing to dive in and try to learn all I could in the time I had.

Malta's Placement in History

The Republic of Malta is located in the center of the Mediterranean Sea. The two islands that make up the bulk of the population are Gozo and Malta. Gozo is a smaller island located north of Malta, and has a much more rural environment than Malta, and a much smaller population. Because of its placement in the Mediterranean Sea, Malta has functioned as an important settling point throughout history (Castillo 2006). Malta has been used as a port for trade, as well as for military advantage. The islands were settled in prehistoric times, when many temples were built that can still be seen today. As time went on, various groups invaded and controlled the islands, including the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Normans.

In the year 60 CE, it is said that the Christian apostle Paul came to be shipwrecked on Malta. During this time, Apostle Paul allegedly performed several miracles and converted

the people of the island to Christianity. Most importantly, Paul converted the leader, Publius, who later became the first Bishop of Malta (Castillo 2006: 27). This event is very important to Maltese history and identity because it allows the Maltese to trace their religion and faith back to the beginnings of Christianity two thousand years ago.

During the medieval period, Malta was under the control of numerous kings. In 1530, Malta was given to the Knights of St. John to govern, whose defense against a large Ottoman siege is still known to this day (Castillo 2006). The knights play a prominent role in Maltese history and tourism. One can find model knights, helmets, pens, clothing, and other paraphernalia related to the knights in almost any shop geared towards tourists in Malta. The Knights were also great influences on infrastructure, investing in large building projects. One of these projects was the construction of Valletta, the current capital city of Malta.

After the Knights of St. John, the French came to control Malta during the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon was not received in open arms on Malta, and the people's opinion of him only worsened as he attempted to implement many reforms in a short period of time. Although reforms such as the implementation of free schools was a well liked idea, decrees limiting the power of the Church were not as popular. Napoleon abolished Church weddings and replaced them with civil ceremonies, as well as attempted to sever the ties between the Church and the global Catholic community (Castillo 2006: 111). After a short two years, Malta gave themselves over to British rule. Although the European powers of the time aimed to give Malta back to the Knights of St. John, this idea was resisted and the Maltese asserted that they should choose the power that would rule them. Eventually, British rule in Malta was affirmed and formalized through the Treaty of Paris, and Malta remained a part of the British Empire until the middle of the 20th century. Malta played an important role in World War II due to its proximity to the Axis Powers. By launching air raids on Axis ships, Malta stopped supplies from reaching Italian fronts. The islands also helped reinforce the North African fronts to aid the Allied Powers in the Middle East. On September 21, 1964, Malta gained independence from the British and became a sovereign nation. In 2004, Malta joined the European Union, and in 2008 adopted the Euro as their form of currency.

Malta's geographic location has made it a strategic center throughout history. Because of the multiple cultural groups who have moved in and out of the islands, Malta's culture and history has been greatly influenced in many ways. Particularly, the Arab populations in earlier history, and later the British, have influenced the languages spoken in Malta. With the Arabs came the Arabic language, which

is part of the same language group as the current language, Maltese. Maltese and Arabic are Semitic languages, though Maltese is also heavily influenced by languages like Italian and French (Castillo 2006). The British brought the English language with them, and today, English is the second national language of the country. The Knights had a strong influence on the history of Malta, which is also very prevalent in the present as well. Both language and religion play a strong role in the Maltese educational system, where schools may be places where the Church has sway, as well as influencing community events. These historical aspects of Malta are important in understanding how Gozitan identity is influenced by religion, and how this can be evidenced in schools and local community events.

Schooling the Maltese

There are three types of schools in Malta. There are public schools and church schools, which are funded by the government, as well as private schools. The schools of Malta are heavily based on the British model, with students progressing through primary and secondary school before taking their O-Levels, which are subject based examinations. Students may opt to take more courses and sit for A-Level Examinations, where afterwards students may continue to study at a university. The courses students take for their A-Levels can be either academic or vocational and prepares them for work or university studies after college. All education is compulsory until age 16, with school beginning at age 5. Kindergarten, which is not compulsory, is available to all children who are over the age of three at no cost.

According to a 2006 survey by Freedom House, 98% of Maltese people identify as Roman Catholic (Freedom House 2006). This makes Malta one of the most Catholic nations in the world. According to Article 2 of Malta's Constitution, Roman Catholicism is the official religion of the republic, and "religious teaching of all Apostolic Faith shall be provided in all State schools as part of compulsory education" (Constitution of Malta). Even though religious education is a mandatory aspect of the curriculum, Article 40 of the Constitution also allows freedom of religion and worship in Malta, and students can opt out of religious instruction if they do not identify as Roman Catholic.

Schools can be said to have two educational processes. There is the overt curriculum, which is the direct teaching provided by teachers in the classrooms. The over curriculum is disseminated through lessons, tests, projects, and presentations about various subjects. There is also what can be referred to as the "hidden curriculum." This curriculum consists of the values and beliefs that are conveyed through the school, its faculty, and the lessons (Giroux 1983). Both of these curricula are important in the

formation of identity as they provide students and parents with the tools to fashion it. The values of an identity that is disseminated through schools can also be resisted by students and parents in favor of a different identity based on various differences such as culture or religion.

According to the website of a primary school located on Gozo, religion is a key component to the education of the town's youth. One of the aims of the school is to help students understand what being a Christian means and understanding the Christian message and how it is spread and expressed through history (Sir Arturo Merciera Victoria Primary School). This is another example of official statements declaring the importance of religion in Malta and its schools. The school directly transmits the idea that being Christian is important to students through these lessons, making it a part of the overt curriculum. The ideas are not hidden or conveyed subtly through other processes. Part of being Gozitan is being Catholic. Engaging in religious lessons and religious events allows locals to feel a common identity as Gozitan and Maltese, and as Catholic.

The school calendar is another piece of evidence that indicates the influence of religion on local culture. Like many schools, Maltese schools cancel classes on days of various public and national holidays. According to the school calendar for one public primary school, there are several holidays for which school is closed. Some of these are for national holidays, such as Independence Day or Labor Day and others coincide with religious events, such as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception or the Feast of St. Paul's Shipwreck. When one includes the breaks from other holidays such as Christmas and Easter, many of the holidays on the school calendar are religious ones. The Feast of St. Paul's Shipwreck celebrates the coming of St. Paul to Malta, and thus the beginning of Malta's Catholic history. The celebration of this feast allows the Maltese to trace their religious roots back in time, and helps to reaffirm their identity as a Catholic nation.

The inclusion of religious holidays could be considered to be part of the hidden curriculum. Closing school states that these holidays are important and that it is not a time for students to be sitting in class, as it may be a time for worship and family. From a deeper perspective, schools are placing religion as an important factor in their schedule of class time. The school needs to build their schedule around these holidays and does so to accommodate the needs of teachers, administrators, and students. The presence of these holidays on the calendar also shows what is not important. There is no space for Jewish holidays on the calendar, nor is their space for holidays important in Islam. This is to be expected, as there is

only one mosque on Malta, as well as only one synagogue (U.S. Department of State: 2003). The calendar represents the religion of the vast majority of Malta and seeks to fulfill the religious needs of their Catholic students and families. A Jewish student would have to schedule their school time around holidays they may celebrate, but are not officially recognized as an important time away from school according to the administration. This is opposed to a Catholic student, whose school work and lessons are built around these holidays and may even include instruction as to why a holiday is important to Malta and the community. Most children also attend some form of separate religious education as well. By age 8, many children have their first communion, and several years later, they have their first confirmation. One woman told me that even people who consider themselves secular send their children to these lessons. Despite the fact that some families might identify as secular, they still believe these lessons to hold some value to their children. I believe that these lessons are one way in which children are socialized into a Maltese identity. One woman I interviewed, named Suzanne, is a small business owner on Gozo. She is an expatriate, who has lived in various places in Europe, and settled in Malta several years ago with her husband and two children. Both of her children attend a public primary school on the island. Through Suzanne, I have gained an understanding as to the role of religion in public schools on Gozo, as well as how she resists the values the school system attempts to impart upon her children.

Suzanne considers Gozo to be more religious than Malta. The classes at school have a larger focus on religion, and mass is held daily in school. Since Suzanne does not identify as Roman Catholic, she had her children pulled from religious lessons during the day. Additionally, the family does not attend the parish church and her children are not required to attend any religious services held during the school day.

The placement of religious education within public schools is very different from the models of European countries, such as France. The French state took the opposite stance by instituting a standardized, secular education for all children (Reed-Danahay 1996: 110). This was accomplished through the Ferry Laws of 1881 and 1882, but the tension between church and state is still an issue today, as seen through the banning of the headscarves worn by Muslim girls in 2004 (Reed-Danahay 1996: 127). Suzanne's dislike of religion in the public schools might stem from this model of education and church and state relations.

Suzanne also considered the schools to be very academically oriented, but with a focus on only four main subjects: math, religion, English, and Maltese. According to a school

website², social studies is also a subject, along with art and physical education. The social studies curriculum it includes learning about "Malta's most important historical periods and events, Maltese folklore and traditions, and different sectors of the Maltese economy" (Sir Arturo Merciera Victoria Primary School). Schools are institutions which can be used to transmit ideas of national identity, as evidenced by this school curriculum (Reed-Danahay 1996: 3). This curriculum is a very overt statement on the importance of understanding local history. By including ideas of Maltese tradition, schools convey the idea that understanding Maltese tradition is important and is something that all children must know in order to be fully socialized and learned.

Homework is a topic that came up in my conversations with both Suzanne and another woman whom I spoke to over the course of my research. They both revealed to me that students in Maltese schools receive a lot of homework. This applies to children in primary schools as well, who may receive up to 2-3 hours of homework a day. This seems to be a significant amount of time when looked at through a wider lens. In comparison, a popular trend on homework in the United States is the "ten-minute rule. This rule states that ten minutes of homework is given for every grade the student progresses through. A student in first grade receives ten minutes of homework, which would increase to twenty in second grade, and so on. Although this rule is not always followed, many teachers and graduate students in education I have talked to agree with it and try to structure homework around it.

Homework is not just the completion of various assignments and tasks outside of the school environment, but a complex social practice with various meanings that shift depending on context (Scharf and Stack 1995). From an anthropological perspective, homework is full of specific values and meanings that a particular teacher and school find important to impart upon students, such as uniformity, as every student receives the same assignment. The ways in which students complete assignments also relate to whether they agree with the teacher's purpose and intentions (La Casa et al. 2002). I would argue that homework is a way for the school to extend its reach into the home and attempt to influence the home environment, as it influences the activities that children and parents do and how their time is structured. In this way, the school can send their values home with the children, where, especially among younger children, they are made to share it with the family through completion of the assignments. When doing homework, parents must try to negotiate what the teacher wants from the assignment and the best way of completing it with their child. The schools use of

home assignments forces families to structure their time around school and homework completion and places the school as a high priority in family life. The ways in which parents approach these assignments is also based on their own disposition to school and homework (Delgado-Gaitan 1992). Suzanne claimed that the amount of homework given was excessive, which might say something about her educational past and disposition to school. The intentions of the teacher might not always be understood or transmitted clearly, and the student and the parent must try to discern the meanings. These intentions do not always need to be followed either. Parents may complete the assignment for their child or fill in blank answers in order to ensure a better grade or favor with the teacher. Homework is part of both the overt curriculum and the hidden curriculum. From the surface, homework is about practicing and integrating skills a child has learned during school through various assignments in the home. However, the hidden curriculum of homework is about the values that the teacher and school find important to instill in the children. Through homework, the school can extend its reach into the home and create discussions about the value and meaning of education, as well as important cultural topics. Ariana Mangual Fugueroa wrote how homework brings up ideas and views of citizenship among immigrant families in the United States (2011). An assignment about the history of Malta, for example, may raise discussions about the families own placement in that history and culture. If Suzanne's children were to receive an assignment on Maltese history and culture, it may cause evaluation about what it means to be a foreigner. Would they view this as learning the history of a culture they belong to? For Suzanne, it probably would not. For her children, who are continuing to grow and socialize in Malta, the answer would probably change as they grow. As they learn their placement in Maltese culture, they may grow to accept aspects of Maltese identity as part of them.

School is not an emphasis for Suzanne's children. She did not move to Malta for their school system. In fact, she doesn't consider the schools on Gozo to be very adequate. As such, she supplements her children's education with informal learning at home. For example, Suzanne disliked the art curriculum done at school with her children. She claimed the only thing done was coloring, which frustrated her. For her, coloring was not creative. To compensate for this, Suzanne is creative with her children at home, engaging in art projects and other activities. She also sets up informal lessons for her children to supplement what she deems as a lack of education in the public school. She managed to have her children attend lessons with an artist during the summer, and also tries to send them abroad to other countries or summer schools.

Resistance is one of the ways in which members of various cultural groups can exist in societies where they are not members of the majority culture. By resisting the norms one group might try to press onto another group, through both formal institutional and informal social means, minority groups can maintain their identity while existing in a multicultural society, or even fashion new identities that allow them to absorb elements of one culture while still retaining important values of another. Deborah Reed-Danahay, in her research in rural France, gave a perfect example of how families in a rural area resisted the values of the secular state schools in order to retain a regional identity, and how families also socialized their children to hold and manage multiple identities (1996). Suzanne also engages in acts of resistance to the schools. The difference here being that Suzanne represents a secular minority, while the majority is very religious. However, the application of resistance is still relevant. Because her own family values conflict with the values of the school, she aims to resist these values and impart upon her children the values she deems appropriate.

Resistance can appear in various forms such as tacit, passive, overt, or active resistance (Reed-Danahay 1996). Suzanne uses more active, overt strategies of resistance in order to achieve her goals. She manipulates the rules of the school system in order to ensure her children are not socialized religiously. Since the Constitution of Malta allows freedom of worship, and thus exemption from religious education classes, Suzanne can use this legal power to have her children exempted. By missing these classes, the children are not actively engaging in religious socialization with other students, which is an aspect of identity formation for Gozitans.

Suzanne also seeks to ensure her children receive extra education at home. She actively educates and does activities with them, and find ways for them to learn informally both in the local community and abroad. Since Suzanne is in control of the lessons and work done at home, she is in a position to socialize her children with values deemed important to her, such as creativity. Suzanne takes an active role in resisting Maltese religious and educational values.

Suzanne also resists a Gozitan identity by not learning the local language. I was told that gossip was a common activity among the close-knit families on Gozo. Locals who would participate in gossip would do so in Maltese. Suzanne, a resident who doesn't speak Maltese, was thus excluded from gossip discussions. Gossip can be said to be the transmission of apparently privileged information to one person or group concerning other people who are absent (Bell 2008). Max Gluckman also noted that the

right to gossip is a privilege that is only given to someone who has been an accepted member of a group (1963). Suzanne is not able to participate in local gossip because she is not considered an intimate member of the local community. Her inability to speak Maltese is an indicator that she is not a member of the gossiping groups. However, she felt this to be a freeing aspect of life there. Since she could not understand or participate in gossip, she did not have to worry about it. This does not mean she could not be a topic of discussion among locals, but the language barrier assures that gossip will not reach her ears.

There have been many theories about gossip and its uses from Gluckman's idea of group solidarity (1963) to Robert Paine's idea that gossip is about transmission of information that focuses on the individual (1967). David D. Gilmore attempts to create a blended definition of gossip and wonders "how does individual behavior transmute to a collective action" (1987: 58)? Gossip seems to be based on linguistic differences on Gozo, as locals can gossip about foreigners and non-Maltese speaking residents with relative confidentiality. It can be used to reinforce group solidarity and used to denote who is Gozitan and who is not. Though, locals probably gossip about each other as well. In Kathryn Bell's study of Irish political journalists, the journalists would gossip as part of the same group (as collaborators) as well as to demonstrate their access to journalistic material (as competitors) (2008). As gossip has multiple uses for journalists, it can have multiple uses for Gozitans. It can be used to reinforce group solidarity, as seen in the exclusion of non-Maltese speakers and foreigners, as well as to demonstrate competition among locals. In Kathleen Hall's research with Sikh youth in Britain, she found gossip was used to discuss which teenagers was acting "too English," or who was not adhering to Sikh family traditions in public (2002: 181). On Gozo, gossip can be used to discuss who is not adhering to local cultural norms and also to ensure that norms are followed, in fear of being talked about or discovered.

This freeing feeling Suzanne feels comes as a result of her being treated as a foreigner. Even though she has lived on Gozo for a number of years and that her children attend a local school, she is not considered a local. She is a member of an alternative group, and is not subject to the same social pressures that a local Gozitan might feel. This creates the feeling of freedom because it is a liberation from some local social expectations, such as speaking Maltese. One might expect this situation to create a feeling of isolation and marginalization, but Suzanne communicated the opposite. Whether or not this feeling of liberation applies to her children as well is an important question, as they are attending the local school, a place where socialization can

occur. I was told that Suzanne's children do miss sleepovers, something that local children do not participate in. The children might feel upset or isolated from other children because they cannot participate in a social activity they are used to doing.

An important thing to note is that just because Suzanne takes an active role in resisting some aspects of Gozitan culture, specifically the aspects of religious socialization, it does not mean this is an outright rejection of Gozitan culture as a whole. Reed-Danahay points out this distinction as a drawback of focusing solely on resistance as a method of identity formation, as "the maintenance of one cultural identity does not always entail the complete rejection of, or resistance to, another" (1996). Suzanne expressed that many parts of the Gozitan lifestyle appeal to her. She feels safe and secure, due to the low crime rate on the island. Suzanne's previous jobs required her to spend a lot of time working and away from her children. Moving to Gozo allows her to spend more time with them, which she loves. The use of informal education with her children at home is just one way she can spend time with them, while simultaneously working to diminish what she views as the negative effects of the local school system.

Several questions came to mind during my writing of this research in relation to the effects of schooling on identity. Specifically, what are the effects of this school system on the identities of Suzanne's children? Do her children feel pulled between two different cultures due to their upbringing? At home, Suzanne's children participate in activities that are not Maltese, or cater to her own educational and creative preferences. Through acts of resistance to the school system, Suzanne and her husband subvert the values of the school system in favor of their own. Yet, when the children go to school, they are placed in spaces that are culturally different. It is up to the children to navigate these differing social environments and to create their own identities with the tools they are given. The question is: Do these children feel torn between two dichotomous cultures? Kathleen Hall wrote about such questions in her work with Sikh youth in Britain (2002). She found that Sikh youth feel pulled by two different, dichotomous ways of life. They tend to refer to see themselves as "acting Sikh" or "acting British," where to be one is to exclude the other. However, these youth live and act in ways that demonstrate cultural hybridity, the blending of various elements from multiple cultures, even though they evaluate their lives in dichotomous terms (Hall 2002: 148-149). Hall noticed that the Sikh youth would engage in certain behaviors and follow certain norms according to the different "cultural fields" they were practicing in (2002: 150). Suzanne's children probably do the same. They may learn there is a time to "act Gozitan."

or local when engaging in classroom activities and other community events. When at home, they may learn to “act foreign,” and subscribe to the cultural attitudes their parents transmit to them. As they grow, they will learn to navigate the different communities they live in and learn when it is appropriate to “act locally.”

I believe that Suzanne’s children will fashion identities based not just on one idea of culture, such as Maltese or mainland European, but on a multitude of cultural concepts. These children could be what “third culture kids.” This term was coined by Ruth Hill Usem and has been expanded upon by other researchers. Ruth E. Van Reken and David C. Pollock define a third culture kid (TCK) as:

“a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background” [2001: 19].

Suzanne’s children could grow up as third culture kids. They are growing in a culture that is not that of their parents, and are navigating their lives in terms of the values and identity from their parents and the culture they are growing in. Suzanne likes to send her children abroad and this helps to develop ties to a home culture. But, since these children are living, working, and playing in the Maltese culture they will also develop ties to Maltese culture. They have the values and ideas that their parents try to impress on them, as well as the school and local environment. However, with increasing use of communicative technologies such as the Internet, access to the lives and realities of other people is easier. The addition of Malta to the European Union in 2004 and the switch to the euro in 2008 also allows access to information through tourism. Joining the European Union and utilizing the euro makes Malta a more accessible area. Tourism, a very important industry on Malta, not only allows for monetary gain, but for exchange of cultural information. Thus, the amount of tools and sources people have for identity formation allows for the making of increasingly hybridized identities.

The simple question of “Where are you from?” might not be so simple for these children. How will they answer? Are they Maltese or Gozitan? Would they call themselves French or European? I think the answer will depend on their disposition to their growth in Malta, as well as to their audience. When I am asked that same question, I tailor the answer to the person who asked it. If a European asked me

where I was from, I would say the States. If an American asked me where I was from, I would say New York, and a New Yorker would receive a more specific answer. These children might learn to do the same thing. Since Malta joined the European Union, they might consider themselves European, in relation to Americans. They also may learn to distinguish themselves as Gozitan, as opposed to just simply Maltese. This only leads to the realization that identity formation is a complicated process built upon multiple factors. It is not as simple as it may seem.

Churches in the Streets

Local community events are also a location where religion helps to formulate identity for Gozitans. Each year, a village holds a feast to celebrate the patron saint of the local church. According to Jeremy Boissevain (1965), these feasts are not just important religious ceremonies, but a way for villages to establish prestige. The festa is a way for people to establish a connection to their village and church and reaffirm their identity in relation to members of other villages, who have their own saint to celebrate and identity to reaffirm.

During my research, I attended two festas, one in the village of Kercem, and one in Victoria, the largest city on Gozo. The festa of Kercem celebrated St. Gregory, while the festa in Victoria celebrated St. George. During the festa, the village is highly decorated. Tapestries are hung up and statues are brought out, and the churches are beautifully decorated with thousands of lights. Many people attend the festas, especially the one in Victoria, which was the largest. Vendors sell food and drinks, and one can find carts full of toys and games for children to pester their parents to buy for them.

The festa is usually a three-day event, with multiple religious and social gatherings happening throughout (Boissevain 1965). The village also takes time to physically prepare the village for the festa, as decorations need to be hung, statues need to be brought out for display, and fireworks need to be made. This does not even include the planning that must occur throughout the year for the feast for the patron saint, a very important event. I attended the parts of the festa that occurred on Saturday evening. During this time, many people attend the festa. Two marching bands play in a procession, one is the band from the celebrating village, and the other a band from another village on the island. They play in an alternating procession that leads through the village and past the local church.

The church is a very important marker of village identity. Not only is the Church a center for community worship and events, it is a source of local history and pride (Boissevain

1965). To be a member of a church is to be a member of the history of the village it resides in, as well as a member of a national religious identity that can trace its history back two thousand years. The church is a space of cultural tradition, and using tradition allows for ideas of cultural unity and historical connectedness (Hall 2002). The church is both a symbol of a single Catholic identity that unites all Maltese, and a symbol of a village identity that differentiates one village from another. Decorating the church during the festa allows the villagers to show off how beautiful and unique their church is, and shows how the appearance of the church is a matter of village pride.

Another example of this idea was seen when I visited the Rotunda Church on Gozo. The church is very large and towers over the village of Xewkija. Spatially, the church lies in the central square of the village. When I entered the church, the parish priest handed me a pamphlet describing the history of the building, including how and when it was built and rebuilt and altered and what the stone was made of. He was very open and loved talking about the history of the church to visitors. In the back, some women who helped with running the church sold souvenirs. For a few euro, I also bought a ticket to see the view of the island from the top of the church. From the roof, I could clearly see the rest of the island and how the church is much taller and dominates the other buildings of the town. For the residents of Xewkija, the church is clearly a source of public pride. Showing it off to foreigners allows them to boast of their accomplishments, as well as use it a source of revenue due to tourism.

The church building is an example of the presence of the hidden curriculum in everyday life. The church attempts to place itself within many spheres of Maltese culture and is a source of identity for residents. The importance of religion in the hidden curriculum is contrasted with the stark presence of a large church right in the town square. It would seem that the evidence of the hidden curriculum is hidden in plain sight. The Xewkija church is not something that is easy to miss spatially and one is always aware of its presence when in town, and I used it to orient myself when walking around, as I could see it from almost any street. As the church could be said to dominate the town with its presence, it could symbolize how religion is dominant in Gozitan identity and important to life.

During the festa, the church is a central location for village identity. It is shown off through decoration, and people flow in and out both to gaze at the aesthetics and to attend religious services. The band has processions around it and statues are paraded around and then eventually into the church. The church occupies both, physically and culturally, a place of central importance in Maltese culture, and is a place of influence in local identity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through examining the ways in which the Roman Catholic religion permeates culture in Malta, it is clear that it has a very important effect on the formation of identity. Being Catholic is a very important facet of what it means to be Maltese. This is seen through their legal Constitution, their public schools, and the local community events such as the festa. The church is both physically and culturally an important place in the establishment of both a national identity, and a local village identity. The values and ideals associated with the church can be seen through the overt and hidden curriculum of the schools, but they can also be resisted and subverted as seen through the actions of Suzanne, an expatriate who does not identify with the religious, national, or local culture. This combined with increasing globalization and tourism results in formation of identities that consist of cultural ideas from various locations. What will be interesting to see is how these identities themselves will change over time as communication becomes faster and easier, as well as how third culture kids such as Suzanne's children will identify themselves as adults. As contact between peoples increases, new ways of thought will be introduced. How will places of socialization such as schools react to these technologies and ideas and incorporate them into not only their teaching methods but their methods of disseminating a possibly changing local identity?

The Maltese people have shown themselves to be capable of maintaining a unique identity, despite the various powers that have come and gone from their shores over the years. They are able to trace their religious roots back to the time of the Apostles, and Roman Catholicism plays a strong role in their identity to this day. Identity is something that can be changed and refashioned, and only time will tell how the people of Malta will fashion new identities, while still holding on to what they believe makes them truly Maltese.

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