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Being heard?

Identifying Student Subject Positions in Research about School and Classroom Community

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The idea of re-thinking schools and classrooms as communities has a long-standing presence in education. Community is often seen as a counter-acting ideal to that of competitive individualism, which treats students as bearers of results (Slee, 2019). Several scholars have proposed the image of a community as a way to structure education and to develop a culture that can support diversity (Thomas & Macnab, 2019) and democratic citizenship (Fielding, 2012, 2013), and that can protect not only children, but also adults from alienation (Noddings, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1994a). However, the notion of community can be used in different ways and has acquired several meanings, and it has been studied from different perspectives and disciplines in educational research. Paradoxically, the term can even be used in ways that ultimately maintain instead of challenge the dominant individualistic educational paradigm (Fendler, 2006).

In a previous study, we identified four dominant metaphors in the meanings and uses of 'community' in relation to schools and classrooms in a corpus consisting of 50 influential educational papers focusing on 'community' sampled from the Web of Science (WoS) database (Patoulioti & Nilholm, 2023). Most of the papers (41 papers) were published in US-journals, and fewer (9 papers) were published in Europe-based or international journals. Community was found to be understood through the metaphors of the Idealized-Home, the Idealized-Polis, the Idealized-Academia,

and the Power-Resisting Space (Patoulioti & Nilholm, 2023). These metaphors were also related in the sampled articles to the theoretical traditions informing the articles and consequently to a range of intended changes in what schools and classrooms should be like if they are to be seen as communities. Our analysis revealed a diverse and multi-paradigmatic field. One of the most common features of this field is that understanding schools and classrooms as communities tends to be (at least at the surface level) contraposed to extreme individualistic understandings about the purposes of education. The rise of primarily individualistic purposes for educational systems in the West coincides with the introduction and domination of a neoliberal agenda that produces 'highly individualized, responsibilized students' (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248).

Neoliberalism, according to Harvey (2007, pp. 1–2) is more than a theory of political and economic practice, as it becomes a dominant discourse which elevates market exchanges to an ethics to guide human action. Thus, in educational discourses that encompass this ethics, students are subjected to techniques that position them as fully self-sufficient, but at the same time, self-centred and isolated (Brunila, 2012a; Brunila & Siivonen, 2016). On the other hand, progressive or emancipatory discourses, which are traditionally seen as resisting neoliberal values (Bingham & Biesta, 2010), prioritize socially oriented values and norms that are often materialised in the image of a school or classroom that is a community. In these counter-discourses, subject positions for students are created as well. However, as Bingham and Biesta (2010, p. 69) have argued, both progressive and even emancipatory educational discourses often offer close-ended views of how students ought to become, and the available positions for students are constructed based on psychological rather than political terms. Thus, a better understanding of how students become positioned within research about school and classroom communities can reveal existing alternative subject positions and enable a discussion of how these student-subjects can be related to other student-subjects within educational discourses. In this paper we analyse the ways in which students are constructed in educational literature about communities in schools and classrooms. For

coherence, we use the term 'student' to refer to all children and youth attending school at the preschool, primary, and lower and upper secondary level. However, we would like to note that in the sampled papers other terms are also used occasionally, e.g. 'pupils', 'children', or 'adolescents'. We intend to investigate the positions available for students and the consequences of such positionings for their possibilities of action. Following this aim, we conduct an analysis of subject positions (Foucault, 1982; Kendall & Wickham, 1999) in our sample of papers in which we have previously identified the four metaphors underlying the understanding of community.

Student positions in educational discourses

Locating the study

Subject positions are constructed in the intertwining of power and knowledge, and human action within discourse always takes place through these subject positions (Foucault, 1982; Kendall & Wickham, 1999). Power relations, as understood in the Foucauldian sense, differentially position subjects within discourse (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 54). Thus, power here does not refer to powerful groups or institutions but involves techniques or forms of power (Foucault, 1982, pp. 781-782).

Hamre, Fristrup and Christensen (2016) identify two large domains of studies of students' subject positions in education, namely, on the one hand, these departing from analyses of the discursive construction of ideal or desirable subjects (and their Others) in general education and, on the other, these focusing directly on the construction of the several deviant subjects. Seminal studies that identify ideal student-subjects in dominant educational discourses include Walkerdine's (1993, 1998) work on the 'developing child', related to a discourse (developmentalism) about natural development with a common close-ended outcome, the establishment of abstract reasoning. In coupling developmentalism with progressive or child-centred pedagogies that aim to support children's natural development in a social

context, the educational framework conceals how conduct deemed as natural development can actually privilege masculinity and whiteness (Walkerdine, 1993, 1998) and how flexible pedagogies can be subordinated to 'ironically predetermined' outcomes (Fendler, 2001, p. 16). At the same time, studies of the various ways in which subject positions of deviancy are ascribed to students who belong to marginal groups or special categories also reveal the ways in which subject positions are constructed. For example Youdell's (2006) thorough work about students' subjectivities and the multiple discourses in play that construct some students as 'impossible learners', gives access to 'the proliferation of discourses of the educational Other' (p.97). In that sense, this research demonstrates how discourses about what students are or ought to become serve as the basis for hierarchizing possible student positions, and in that creating the conditions for both inclusion and exclusion.

Recent analyses of subject positions in education have pointed to a discourse of individualization and responsibilization constructing the ideal student as competent (Sjöberg, 2014), self-regulated, and entrepreneurial (Bradbury, 2019; Brunila, 2012a; Hilt et al., 2019). On the other hand, the 'proliferation of educational Others' (Youdell, 2006) that is generated still includes specific categories that are 'at risk', related to ethnicity, gender, ability, etc, but also creates new ones, e.g. the resilient/non resilient student (Brunila, 2012b), perpetuating the targeting of the individual as the locus for tackling socially produced distress. Thus, in our endeavour to better understand subject positions concerning the student-in-community in educational literature, we aim to explore the available subject positions and the ways in which different positions are created in relation to the reasoning about community relationships and practices, and how community members should relate to each other.

Metaphors about community in influential educational research

Seeing school as a community where the importance of relationships is emphasized is not new in educational theory. Dewey's educational philosophy was closely related to his goal to develop democracy in education where schools were to him 'embryonic' communities of life in which education should be organically democratic and teachers and students were to be members of a community, aiming together to learn through meaningful experiences (Dewey, 1900/2017). However, although the notion of a community has frequently been used to describe educational settings, the ways in which it is conceptualized throughout studies is not universal (Fendler, 2006; Roth & Lee, 2006). In our previous study (Patoulioti & Nilholm, 2023), we identified four metaphors underlying the understanding of community in a sample of 50 highly cited articles in the WoS that focused on the notion of 'community'. Community was found to be described with the underlying metaphors of:

A. Idealized-Home: schools and classrooms that are attentive to and nurture children's as well as adults' social needs. Importance is placed on personal relationships, helping, and being supportive.

B. Idealized-Polis: a 'small republic' of democratic governance, with members who share certain ideals, and who discuss and co-decide about important issues.

C. Idealized-Academia: schools and classrooms seen through the image of existing knowledgeable communities and their co-operative and communicative practices to which students become enculturated, through collaboration.

D. Power-Resisting Space: schools and classrooms where teachers, and to some extent students, challenge power and create a space where multiple narratives can co-exist. Privileges and oppressions can be exposed and teachers, and to some extent students, actively work to interrupt the ways power shapes relationships and knowledge.

Overall, talking about schools as communities often emphasizes communicative practices, dialogue, sharing of ideas, and collaborations that allow for caring relationships to be formed between individuals beyond differences or identities assumed based on people's belonging to specific social groups. As such, the organization of schooling and even of society as a community encompasses for several scholars (e.g. Slee 2019; Thomas and Macnab, 2019) an alternative possibility that opposes the dominating ethos of competitive individualism, which underlies not only policies, but an overall culture that normalizes exclusion. This opposition can be seen as resistance towards a particular technique or form of power, that of subjection, which ties individuals to themselves, hence as an instance in which relations of power and their workings can be located (Foucault, 1982, p. 780). Based on this approach to power, subjects are shaped exactly through 'a double process of the actions of power in relation to selves, that is both negative and positive' (Heyes, 2010, p. 160), i.e. power not only restricts the subjects' possibilities for action, but also enables action that becomes thinkable and available from the particular subject position created. Thus, between oppositional attempts to define students and their appropriate education we aim at providing an analysis that can establish an image of the students as subjects within a discourse of schools-as-communities, as this discourse is used to oppose (or not oppose) how subjects are formed within school contexts formed as spaces of competition and individualization. In other words, our aim is to examine how students are positioned in influential educational research about school and classroom communities and how students' subject positions in a community discourse can be related to the subject positions constructed in other educational discourses.

Research questions

Based on our interest in identifying the ways in which students are discursively positioned as subjects in research within which they are seen as members of classroom and school communities, we approach our sampled texts with two analytical foci in mind. First, we are looking at the subject positions that are constituted and assigned to students within different understandings of community

(the four metaphors). Secondly, we are looking at the relationships between subject positions, and especially how students are positioned in relation to each other and in relation to teachers. By identifying how subject positions relate to each other, we discuss consequences related to assigned positions. Thus, the research questions guiding this analysis are:

- What subject positions are students ascribed within each metaphor about community?
- How are subject positions of adults and students within each metaphor related to each other?
- Which other subject positions could potentially be available?

Discoursive subject positions and potentials

Theoretical and methodological considerations

Our approach to discourse derives from an understanding of it as a corpus of knowledge statements, encompassing its own rules of statement production, the organization of which is regular and systematic, allowing for the constitution and recognition of various objects of knowledge (Kendall & Wickham, 1999). Educational research is but one of several sources of such statements about understanding schools and classrooms as communities. Hall (2001, p. 73) argues that when statements are about subjects, the discourses become personified and certain attributes of the subjects are discerned and emphasized depending on the existing knowledge about them. The notion of the subject 'captures the possibility of being a certain kind of person', a possibility understood as being historically contingent and not as a general truth about human nature (Heyes, 2010, p. 159), although from within the discourse this contingency becomes concealed. Subject positions are thus constituted within discourse, and Foucault (1982, p. 792) further argues that one's action upon the actions of others is permitted through a system of differentiations, i.e. relations between positions that are established through law or

status. These differentiations operate both as the conditions and results of actions, in the sense that the position functions as a vengeance point for speaking one's truth and for conducting oneself (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 117). Thus, subject positions in discourse are relational in the sense that their function and the possibilities and limitations of thinking about the self and being thought about by others is contingent on how the position is constructed in relation to other subject positions within the same discourse. Moreover, subject positions both enable and constrain action (Heyes, 2010, p. 161) in the sense that power not only works on the person in oppressive ways, but also allows us to be distinctive individuals (p.170). In order to examine these processes, the present study relies on discourse analysis guided by the notion of subject position (Foucault, 1982; Kendall & Wickham, 1999). In the creation of subject positions in discourse, power is exercised, in the sense that certain available knowledges and rationales – 'laws of truth'– define one's possibilities for action and the practices in which one is involved. In that sense, people become subjected to power – hence, that form of power is one of subjection -rather than one of domination or exploitation (Foucault, 1982, pp. 781–782). However, power always finds resistance, and from resistances, Foucault (1982, p. 780) proposes to begin empirical analyses. In other words, instead of solely focusing on internal rationalities, he suggests examining the strategies employed to dismantle them. For that, we turn to statements about the school that -at least at first appearance- depart from non-dominant discourses and offer alternative rationalizations, in which subject positions are also constructed differently.

One important issue to consider when conducting discourse analysis is the researcher's position, because we cannot step out of discourse to analyse it and it is only from within discourse that one speaks (I. Parker, 1994). The choices regarding how to conduct such an analysis reveal, to some degree, the position from which we approach the texts we are analysing, and we have remained reflective about both our personal and epistemological preconceptions throughout the process of the analysis (Willig, 2013, p. 10). To be more explicit, our interest in alternative student subjectivities stems from a concern about the continued

undermining of the relationship between school and democracy. Thus, from our perspective, understanding the subject positions that are made available and how they are constituted through discourse is important for the possibilities opening up, once these positions are understood, for re-constituting ourselves by engaging in alternative discursive practices, or as Foucault (1982, 785) puts it, 'to promote new forms of subjectivity'. Hence, the questions that arise in our approach concern the consequences of the ascribed subject positions in different metaphorical understandings of community and other subject positions that might be available given other discourses.

Turning to influential research as analytical material

The first step in our analysis of subject positions was to build a corpus of statements (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Hall, 2001; Kendall & Wickham, 1999) about the student in influential research about educational communities. The procedure followed the steps in the SMART methodology for reviewing research with a focus on mapping and analysing influential research (Nilholm, 2017). A sample of highly cited articles was thus searched for in the WoS database because of its recognition in the field as a database with high standards for selecting what research to include, as well as because it provides information about the number of times papers have been cited, which is our indicator of the influence of articles.

Searches were made in May and June 2021 in WoS with the words 'communit*' in the title AND 'educati* OR school OR classroom' in the topic of the papers. The results were listed from the most to the least cited. The first author then read through all the abstracts in the list, until the first 700 most cited papers were screened. Results in which schools and classrooms were referred to as communities and in which the focus was on preschool, primary, and/or secondary schools were included in the final sample. In contrast, results that referred to other kinds of classrooms, e.g., in higher education or at the post-secondary level, were excluded. That process led to a final corpus of 50 papers, the most influential of

which was cited 791 times at the time of sampling, while the least cited papers were referenced 26 times.

Identifying subject positions and common assumptions – A thematic approach

The initial coding considered key features of the papers, such as the date of publication, the journal, and the genre of the paper (empirical, review, or positional). The papers in the sample were published between 1989 and 2017 with 36 of the papers coded as empirical studies, 12 as positional papers, and 2 as reviews. The first round of analyses was reported in a previous article, and the analysis identified four metaphors about community in influential educational research and their relation to the main theoretical traditions that informed the papers (Patoulioti & Nilholm, 2023). A new round of reading and coding of excerpts took place for the purpose of the present study. This process took place between November 2022 and January 2023, almost a year after the previous analytical phase was completed. This time we were interested in creating a corpus of statements about the student in the community, thus the focus was on identifying and coding descriptive sentences concerning the position of students (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Hall, 2001; Kendall & Wickham, 1999).

All 50 papers were already uploaded to a folder in the Nvivo software for qualitative analysis. Moreover, each paper had been linked to a memo, in which contextualizing information was summarized, including the topic, aim, theoretical tradition, methodological approach, main findings, and understanding of community. These memos and each paper were read again in relation to the position of students in the community and large excerpts of the texts that were relevant to answering our research questions were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pp. 53–54), with a focus on descriptions of students-in-the-community. Subject positions were identified in excerpts of each text. These excerpts were coded and labelled with the subject position identified in their content, e.g. 'committed to the community' in Strike (1999, p. 69).

The selected excerpts were subsequently distributed in two categories related to our first two research questions. For the first research question, about the subject positions, excerpts were coded in a broad category labelled 'Elements constituting the position'. These excerpts could be read as answers to the question of how students are described in the paper. For the second research question, about the relationships between positions, descriptions of teachers and other adults involved in the descriptions of students and the relationships between students and adults were coded in the broad category 'Relations between subjects'.

As explained earlier, the relation between subject positions is not limited to direct descriptions of relationships between subjects. The descriptions of teachers and other adults were coded based on the theoretical assumption that positions are relational within a discursive system based on a system of differentiations between subjects (Foucault 1982, p. 792), where positions are constructed in relation to other subject positions within the same discourse (see section 'Theoretical and methodological approach'). Hence, each selected excerpt was labelled with a short sentence summarizing analytically the content captured in its coding (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 52), in relation to the main idea about the students (or the adults) that was expressed. Excerpts were always read in relation to the community metaphor to which they had previously been assigned. The subject positions identified in each paper of each category and the elements (assumptions) constituting the positions were then thematized (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and the most common underlying theme in each category is presented in the next section. These themes were the ones that we identified as assumptions underlying all the subject positions in the category and were considered the main findings of this study. The whole process was continuously discussed between the two authors of the present study, both in text and in direct communication, in a reflective and critical manner aiming at gaining more nuanced and richer insights and providing credibility checks (Willig, 2013, p. 207).

In the following section, we present our main findings about the subject positions that students are ascribed in influential research

about school and classroom communities, with examples of quotations that characteristically indicate the main assumptions that shape these positions.

Findings

Between vulnerability and liberation

In this section we answer the first and the second research questions of this study. Thus, the subject positions of students are analysed in relation to the previously identified dominant understandings of community, i.e. the four underlying metaphors. Moreover, we analyse the relations between the identified positions within each metaphor. The third research question will be addressed in the Discussion. Through our analysis of students' positions within school and classroom communities based on the four different metaphors about community, we have identified the student-subject and the main elements that constitute each position, as well as the ways in which students are also positioned in relation to adults within the community. Thus, subject positions are described in relation to the discourses that allow for the positions and the elements that constitute them to make sense. Regarding these discourses, the student-subjects with which research seems to be commonly concerned within each metaphorical category of community have been labelled as follows: the 'vulnerable developing person' in the Idealized-Home metaphor, the 'initiated-to-our-norms newcomer' in the Idealized-Polis metaphor, the 'collective meaning-maker' in the Idealized-Academia metaphor, and 'the student to be liberated' in the Power-Resisting Space metaphor. The main assumptions about students within each category are analysed, and the created subject positions are also sketched out. The excerpts presented in the following sections were selected because of clearly expressing the identified subject positions and discourses, as well as the contradictions and discontinuities within the category.

Idealized-Home: protecting the 'vulnerable developing person'

In the sixteen papers that were analysed in this category, research primarily focuses on the binary alienation/belonging and the impact of close, caring relationships on students' motivation and performance. The subject positions identified in this category of papers are described and related to an implied danger of unfulfilled potential and imbalanced development. Thus, we describe the main subject positions and assumptions that constitute the discourse in which students, also in relation to teachers, are ascribed positions related to an overall theme of the student as a 'vulnerable developing person'. In the descriptions of students in the papers of the Idealized-Home category, the dangers of alienation and the benefits of a sense of belonging are seen as influencing the process of social development. When cared for and learning to care for others, students are presumably given opportunities to smoothly develop both socially and emotionally and to avoid the dangers of alienation. Students who are alienated do not sense their own importance and cannot rely on other members of the school community, whether teachers or peers, to meet their needs. While they may have a shared emotional connection and recognize the group's importance to them, their needs to experience relatedness are not always addressed (Osterman, 2000, p. 360).

A contrary image is painted when students are described in the context of the school community: Students experience the school as a community when their needs for belonging, autonomy, and competence are met within that setting. Students in such a community feel that they are respected, valued and cared about by the other community members, and that they make meaningful contributions to the group's plans and activities (Battistich et al., 1995, p. 629).

In these two statements about students, emotional alienation at school is seen as a barrier, preventing students from accessing a valuable benefit that non-alienated peers enjoy, namely the experience of relatedness and significance with others. This concern, which is encountered in most of the papers in this category, is presented as particularly alarming because this

deprivation harms two important aspects: motivation for participation is educational activities and the development of students' social skills (Baker et al., 1997; Battistich et al., 1995, 1997; Felner et al., 2001, 2007; Osterman, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1994b). Overall, the ultimate benefit of a caring environment appears to encompass multidimensional development, with all aspects reaching their optimal levels. Particularly, the social and emotional aspects are emphasized, as their development is argued to be neglected in schools lacking a sense of community. This line of thinking opens a domain for interventions aiming at the training of social skills and the support of students' well-being through social activities.

Battistich et al. (1997, p. 138) provide a description of their guidelines of intervention to support social, ethical 'but ultimately also intellectual' development, positioning students-in-community as collaborating, helpful, reflective of and understanding each other's' experiences and behaviours, demonstrating prosocial values of 'fairness, concern and respect for others', developing social competencies and exercising autonomy in their participation in decision making about 'classroom norms, rules, and activities'. Here, a desirable form of sociability is introduced, as opportunities are offered to participate in practices seen as contributing to the ultimate goal of overcoming alienation. In this combination of techniques, a deep knowing of the other (the classmate, the student, or the group member) is expected to be achieved, pointing to a distinction between the student-member, who is personally known and understood by others and an alienated, disengaged subject, who can be misunderstood. Thus, the social development of the child is a central concern in this discourse, and it appears to be threatened by an imbalance in the process.

Regarding the position of students and teachers in the community, teachers are also described as benefiting from such an environment and as a result their sensitivity towards their students is presumed to increase, as in the example by McGinty et al. (2008, p. 366), where the quality of preschool education is related to teachers' sense of positive community. When students as members of a community are described as feeling they have found a home (e.g.

Grisham & Wolsey, 2006, p. 649), it is the teachers that are assumed to create it, as a safe and accepting environment. Affection is assumed to be self-evident as it becomes apparent in statements such as, '(c)hildren are accepted and loved because that is the way one treats community members' (Sergiovanni, 1994b, p. 222). Competition, which is rewarded in society but also in school in the way that it is traditionally organized as well as in school reformed by neoliberal policies, is understood as a barrier to intrinsic motivation, as in Ciani et al. (2010, p. 89) who point out the importance of researching 'how to maintain students' motivation to learn amidst performance pressures'. However, the danger of reduced motivation and, hence, unfulfilled potential lurks, for example when school fails to remove other 'developmentally hazardous conditions that may be present in the school context' (Felner et al., 2007, p. 210). This hazard-free, home-like space is created by teachers, but the expected outcome of the creation of such an environment for students can vary, as in the following example where Felner et al. describe the idea behind developing their project that fosters small learning communities in schools:

> How do we create educational contexts in which all students are nurtured and challenged in ways that lead them to be highly effective learners, to perform and achieve at high levels, and to be healthy, responsible, and successful citizens in our democracy? (2001, p. 190)

This sentence brings together categories that seem arbitrarily grouped and assembles them to depict a successfully completed development: academic achievement, health, responsibility, and success, jointly composing the educated citizen of 'our' democracy. What becomes apparent in this description is the discursive possibility of merging the two ideas about students' position that have been kept apart in other accounts about the importance of turning schools into communities, namely the individualistic idea that students' primary purpose in school is to perform vs. to grow up emotionally and socially balanced. These two discourses do not appear as oppositional in this context, but their merging becomes possible, when the close bonds emerging in 'small communities' are part of the techniques used to reach close-ended educational outcomes.

The discourse of community becomes often subordinated to a discourse about efficiency and achievement, thus the potential of forming schooling with an alternative organizing principle fades, as the students' individual, measurable development and performance remain the main objects of concern. One study in this category actually problematizes the use of the concept of community in schools that were promoted as both caring communities and excellence-oriented (Savage, 2011). In such contexts achievement ended up becoming a condition for belonging and receiving the support of the caring community, where 'underachievers' (used to) inhabit positions that (were) pathologized and symptomized as deficient and atypical (…), suggesting a school community in which performance is a prime ingredient for belonging and acceptance' (Savage, 2011). In general, students' positions in the community as Idealized-Home, are shaped in the intersection of experiences of collaborating and supporting each other in a family-like context created by teachers that also share a sense of community, while practices are commonly motivated on the assumed fragility of the process of development and the potential dangers of the process taking an unpredicted path.

Idealized-Polis: sharing a relatable morality with 'the initiated-to-our-norms newcomer'

Morality related to democratic schooling and future citizenship are the most central notions in the ten papers in this category, and one of the main foci in these papers is students' involvement in practices aimed at forming them as citizens. In this section we present excerpts that exemplify the most common theme related to the assignment of subject positions to students, namely the potential role of school in cultivating a certain type of democratic sociability that overcomes alienation through a shared 'mindset' offered by an Idealized-Polis school community. Adults are seen as responsible to invite students to embrace the values and ideals constituting their shared mindset, and based on that, students are constructed as 'initiated to-our-norms newcomers'. Alienation is problematized in this category, but the emphasis of the school's response to alienation shifts from extending the emotional family

bonds and supporting one's full development to providing a higher-order common ideal that is to be communicated to and internalized by students.

An emphasis on the need for coherent and relatable values and practices as a response to the fragmented experience of the alienating modern society constitutes the student as in need to share something valuable with everyone else in the community, that school and especially teachers can convey. As Strike (1999, p. 69) characteristically writes: 'When schools are communities … [t]heir members can see themselves as engaged in a shared project to which they are committed, and they can be committed to one another for this reason'.

Thus, in the Idealized-Polis relationships among members do not need to be direct but can be mediated through their relationship to the Polis itself, in this case the school. Moreover, the idea of moral coherence, which is also reflected in common goals, aspirations, and meaning making, is seen as central in the community and, hence, as central in shaping the subject as a newcomer whose commitment to the community is at stake.

Participation in decision making that includes the voices of as many members as possible is presented as preparing for regular democratic dialogue, which is considered to enable another kind of authentic relationships in the community – beyond kinship. This includes participatory school governance (Oser et al., 2008; L. Parker & Raihani, 2011; Power, 1988; Strike, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2004), often involving students' direct participation in decision-making processes about school affairs. That way, certain skills are to be exercised, the most emphasized among which being cooperation between members and understanding of decision-making processes, as students develop their democratic morality and are encouraged to practice it (Oser et al., 2008; Power, 1988). In this context, students' position is that of beneficiaries of democratically made decisions, even when they have not directly influenced decision making. Moreover, the student in a school community that provides a morally coherent context and invites participation is expected to develop into a person who behaves

according to what is considered good, not because they have to, but because they understand how to behave and find it reasonable to do so, e.g. developing self-regulation in accordance to a community they trust (Yowell & Smylie, 1999). However, during their school years, students' commitment to the overall community is seen as being negotiated, and it is the adults' responsibility to remain honest and open so that students' commitment will be earned (Yowell & Smylie, 1999). This process of negotiation is another element that constitutes students' subject position in the school community as newcomers. That is because the outcome of this process appears as potentially leading students to oppose their teachers, when for example the latter's moral teachings are proved untrue in relation to students' out-of-school experiences, and for that notions of adults' honesty and trust-worthiness become central in this research (Oser et al., 2008; Parker & Raihani, 2011, pp. 725–727; Power, 1988).

Educational practices are, therefore, supposed to be re-shaped to become engaging and to allow identification with group norms. However, although institutionalizing collective decision making at school is a re-emerging topic in most papers in this category, with varying degrees of influence assumed for students, little space is allowed for the group's norms to be questioned. In fact, the responsibility falls on adults to make sure that they are themselves engaged and 'inviting' enough to persuade the young about the value of what they want to share. Thus, students are positioned as innately capable of becoming moral citizens, but at the same time as 'at risk' of not becoming so, depending on the social context in which they will be educated and the ability of such a context to appeal to them. The main assumption that is expressed in this student position is that through education, not only will students build skills that will allow them to participate in collective decision making (as Habermasian 'competent speakers' in a universal dialogue in Strike, 1993, p. 266), but they will also acquire the capacity to see what is valuable in the world. This becomes visible in the following question that the author considers crucial: How can we help students to see the education they are offered as expressing a praiseworthy set of goals and values which they share

with us because they are the goals and values of communities of which we and they are members? (Strike, 2004, p. 219).

Adults are positioned as already inhabiting the world – as the hosts responsible for welcoming student-newcomers – and students need to find their place in the world presented. In two different articles, teachers in the school community are described as 'the first among equals', due to their experience and knowledge (Strike, 1993, pp. 168, 170, 171) and their role as consultants and not as authorities (Power 1988, 198). Further, much depends on adults' worldview, their honesty, and their passion, e.g., Wood (2014, p. 591) makes the point that the selection of specific topics by different teachers of citizenship education 'appeared to give certain topics/issues status and significance, thus reinforcing students' perceptions that they were "important"'. In that sense, although direct bonds are not a primary concern, the educational relation is still assumed to be emotionally mediated, as teachers' selection and presentation of content is presumed to reflect their own appreciation of certain aspects of it, creating a shared commonality in the group. Being a student in a school that is like an Idealized-Polis community, in other words becoming subjected to the processes that will persuade one to trust the larger community, is thus constructed as an indispensable part of avoiding the dangers of alienation.

Idealized-Academia: knowing for themselves by working together as 'collective meaning-makers'

The analysis of the 19 sampled papers with an Idealized-Academia metaphor identified subject positions constructed within a discourse about knowledge acquisition as a collective endeavour, in which students negotiate it through discussion and exercise it in practices that characterize knowledgeable communities. Students' willingness to become and remain engaged in classroom activities is described as awakened in such classrooms, in contrast to disciplined and monological classrooms that are described as having the opposite effect. Both students' and teachers' positions are constructed in this collective endeavour for meaning making, the first by participating in genuine experiences that can shape

them as 'collective meaning makers', and the latter by enabling the emergence of these experiences.

While in the previous two categories the focus is mostly on non-academic school outcomes, the main focus in this strand of research is on students' subject learning and knowledge acquisition. Students here are positioned as intellectuals in the making, capable of having sophisticated conversations about science and other academic subjects, also including intellectual activities such as reading literature (Cremin et al., 2009) or co-writing a musical (Kumpulainen, Mikkola and Jaatinen, 2014). For example, Roth (1995, p. 479), describing whole class discussions as part of an engineering project, writes: During this time, one of the teachers would point out features in children's joining or strengthening techniques that are also used by professional engineers; or students would present what they had done to date, the problems they had encountered, and how they had solved them.

Students do not appear just to learn something, but also to build a certain identity in relation to the knowledge and related practices and habits they are acquiring, e.g. the identity of the cultivated reader (Cremin et al., 2009), or the collaborative inquirer (Evnitskaya & Morton, 2011; Kumpulainen et al., 2014). As 'real issues [are] debated and discussed, and tough questions [are] always on the table' (Herrenkohl et al., 1999, p. 486), students are positioned as already interested and capable of dealing with real issues from a position of an emerging academic skilfulness.
That student-subject who is depicted as capable of understanding and using specialized knowledge in conversation with peers is characterized by a desire and willingness to participate in intellectual activities when given the opportunity, and to build habits that are central to already knowledgeable communities, such as scientists, engineers or literature readers. That willingness characterizes the relationship between students as well. What is at stake is students' engagement with the academic subjects, and their working together with tasks relevant to their lives and interests is presented as key to ensuring that engagement will persist. The identities that are cultivated derive from students' membership in newly shaped communities where members collectively research

and discuss issues to co-construct knowledge and meaning. Ultimately, desirable subject positions that are created concern persons entitled to the 'common' good of knowledge. Educational practices are being reshaped to prioritize dialogue over monologue, and that is seen as facilitating and cultivating a double entitlement for students, namely the ability to use knowledge instead of simply memorizing it, and the opportunity to engage in dialogue and action to test out ideas, promoting active participation. Meaning making is localized in 'dialogical activities rather than unilateral communication between student and teacher' (Kovalainen & Kumpulainen, 2005, p. 241). The 'collective meaning-maker' is contrasted to the passive student who memorizes de-contextualized information and repeats it in good time to demonstrate learning. Students are also positioned as becoming increasingly independent from teachers, as they achieve their goals cooperatively with their peers and with the knowledge available in the broader community of experts.

However, in some cases certain 'categories' of students can be seen as remaining in the 'waiting room' for the position of a 'collective meaning maker'. These students, described for example as second-language students (Hufferd-Ackles et al., 2004), exceptional/diverse children, or struggling (compared to advanced) learners (Tomlinson et al., 1997), can fully claim the position only after they acquire the necessary basic skills for participation. More specifically, it is accepted that there are prerequisites for entering the community, not in terms of rules or any authority deciding about it, but in terms of the very lay-out of the communal practices themselves. These practices are available for anyone to join as they gradually acquire at least the minimum capacity to participate and to contribute to the ongoing dialogues. However, this is not always the case, as, for example, in an intervention described by García-Carrión and Díez-Palomar (2015) in which all students in the studied schools were given opportunities to collaborate by participating in small heterogenous groups of students and adult volunteers from the community. Overall, though, the actual ability to speak becomes a central element in the discourse about students who are 'collective

meaning makers' and who are both seen as capable of using their knowledge in meaningful and relevant ways and expected to do so. Despite the obvious contrast of the 'collective meaning maker' to the traditional image of the passive student, when the teachers' position is considered more light is shed on understanding the position of the student. Teachers are described as facilitators of participation (e.g. Goos, 2004, p. 282), orchestrators of activities (Roth, 1995, p. 247), designers of educational experiences, and architects of communities of learners (Tomlinson et al., 1997). These metaphorical characterizations draw from a vocabulary of highly specialized professionals who can also be related to a sophisticated audience and can be responsive to very particular individual needs. On the other hand, in a few cases students and teachers are both positioned as collaborators, for example, when they are participating in activities with a common aim such as collaborating through on-line media to create a school musical, as described and analysed in Kumpulainen et al. (2014). There, the creative enrichment of the community is presented as equally important to individual gains from participating in the community, with the authors emphasizing 'the collaborative nature of the students' creative activity' (Kumpulainen et al., 2014, p. 67). Thus, two different patterns of relationships are constructed as opposing and replacing the traditional, unequal relationship between teacher and student: either a relationship between providers and users of services or a relationship between collaborative participants in intellectual activities.

The Power-Resisting Space: students 'to be liberated' are no one's others

In the five papers that were analysed in the category of community as a Power-Resisting Space, what is emphasized is the historical and situated production of student-subjects per se. Papers in this category position students as subjected to inequalities that influence the way they make sense of themselves and others. Much of the focus is on educators who are aware of and knowledgeable about the complex ways in which inequalities in society are reproduced and sustained. Education is seen as a context in which different norms can be established, and existing norms can be

challenged. In that sense, students are constructed as a diverse group representing different ways of experiencing the world and who are subjected to a universalizing process of meaning-making out of these experiences. The analysed papers in this category identify and expose underlying assumptions in education about the superiority of Western reasoning, whiteness, masculinity, intellectual and physical ability, and verbal communication. The students who are the focus of this area of research are schooled in contexts where educators are striving to resist these assumptions. All these and other norms can be seen as issues that communities need to consider if they are to become inclusive spaces – 'communities of difference' as Fine, Weis and Powell (1997) and Furman (1998) refer to these. In communities of that kind, educational spaces are represented as becoming more hospitable when existing norms that divide and marginalize are resisted. There, members can experience and experiment with different norms, such as when participation in common activities is normalized, without being dependent on predetermined expressive abilities (Berry, 2006; Kliewer et al., 2004). Thus, the subject in this kind of community is produced through practices of resistance that aim for liberation, i.e., students are 'to be liberated' in order to understand themselves and be understood as no-one's others.

Notions such as participation and belonging are not adopted uncritically in this strand of research; on the contrary, they become problematized. The community is seen as a locus for the examination of the relationship between macro-assumptions and the way these shape the group's existing practices and beliefs. For example, Fasheh (1990, p. 31), writing about the education of Palestinian children, criticizes the hegemonic imposition of Western-style education as superior and universal and argues for the importance of an education that can cultivate a communal feeling of self-worth and empowerment for a community that 'has been denied the value of their experience and robbed of their voice'. This problematization is based on two oppositional sides of the students' position that is shaped by power – the privileged and the marginalized student. In terms of existing norms, some students get to 'naturally' belong, while some tend to be understood as the

'Other'. In Fasheh's (1990) paper, for example, the criticized privileged position is that of the Western student, while the 'othered' student is the child of the oppressed non-Western community. For the latter, it is argued that an education relevant to their community can allow them to become empowered as students and as members of the overall community. Moving beyond the binary privileged/ marginalized is seen as the quest of a school or classroom community that is a Power-Resisting Space. The following citation demonstrates what situating certain students' marginalization can look like in this strand of research.

As was the case with particular social classes from previous centuries, children with construed significant developmental disabilities are today primarily considered to be naturally illiterate — cerebrally unable to master the sequenced subskills thought to precede literate citizenship. While the assumed natural literacy limitations ascribed in previous eras to slaves or agrarian workers have come to be understood as the cultural imposition of sub-literacy on one class by another more powerful group, the severely limited literacy skills associated today with children labelled developmentally disabled are considered to be organic and innate (Kliewer et al., 2004, p. 379).

This way of thinking about the norms around which education is organized is proposed as a way to re-shape school and classroom practices. Further, it is seen as dependent on teachers' awareness about and responsiveness to the historicity of social inequalities. Among the practices that should be contributing to the liberation of students are deep and difficult discussions and use of the subject matter to think from different perspectives (Fine et al., 1997), the inclusion of multiple narratives and ways of narrating (Kliewer et al., 2004), and a close examination of the way in which the curriculum and other discourses in school attempt to restrict the ways in which students can understand their selves and their experiences (Furman, 1998). In these practices, politically aware students are to be shaped, that can recognise as such theirs and others' oppression and marginalization, as well as their own and others' privileges.

The student within this educational discourse is presented as both being in a process of becoming socialized in a world falsely presented as meritocratic and fair and of being able to question this 'truth' and the norms that sustain it, if helped by adults who are dedicated to justice. This is achieved when educators 'throw their bodies' (Fine et al., 1997, p. 281) in front of the injustices that shape the educational system and defend their students' right to differ from the norm, by challenging the norm and not the student. The relationship between students is that of becoming allies and so is their relationship with their teachers, although the teachers are the ones who have the responsibility to address injustices. As Furman (1998, p. 319) puts it, both '[e]ducators and students need first to become critical theorists about the beliefs and practices that are barriers to acceptance of otherness'. Another way of producing the student 'to be liberated' is by enacting their right not to be defined negatively in relation to a norm but as a person in their own right. Thus, the school, through community and inclusion, becomes a space in which students can have the experience of living with different norms. However, it is acknowledged that achieving the goals of this work is not easy, as Berry (2006) observes, given that the classroom is only one among the many spaces in which social interactions and learning occur. There, teachers' and students' efforts can also be jeopardized by other discourses circulating at schools, e.g. concerning academic ability and gender norms (Berry, 2006, pp. 519–520).

Discussion

A fundamental joint assumption – Are students' being heard?

In this concluding discussion we will discuss the extent to which the subject positions ascribed to students in the different discourses complement or work against each other and how they relate to some prior student positions commonly identified in educational scholarship. Subsequently, to answer our third research question, we will attend to a fundamental joint assumption in the four metaphors having to do with the relation between the adult world and the world of students. In this context,

we will tentatively suggest that the metaphor of the Idealized-Agora, as an educational community allowing space for parrhesia (Foucault, 2001) on the assumptions of radical equality (Rancière, 1991, 1999), opens up for another understanding of student influence over the emergence of community.

Discourse analysis was selected for this study as a way to approach a socially constructed categorization, that of students, and to scrutinize the taken-for-granted ideas that support sub-categorizations. A discourse analysis focuses on texts, and for our study these texts were highly cited journal papers written in English. The focus of such an analysis is not on the intention of the authors of the analysed texts and the openly communicated meaning. On the contrary, with a close reading of knowledge statements about the students-in-the community we looked for the taken-for-granted ideas that make these positions possible. Returning to our aim, and to our third research question (about other potentially available subject positions), we will now look at oppositional attempts to define students and the education they should have in order to relate the identified subject positions of students-in-the-community to existing educational discourses.

To contextualize our findings and to examine them in relation to other potentially available subject positions, we turn to three co-existing dominant educational discourses to which we will refer to as the neoliberal, the progressivist (or student-centred), and the emancipatory. In relation to these three discourses, three respective positions of the student have been identified in the educational literature, which we will refer to as the entrepreneurial (based on Davies and Bansel, 2007), the humanistic (based on Biesta, 1998 and on Watkins, 2007), and the emancipated (based on Bingham and Biesta, 2010) educational subject.

The educational subject in neoliberal and progressivist discourses and the pursuit of self-realization

The entrepreneurial subject is one constructed in relation to notions of individual accountability and responsibility, as advanced in the neoliberal discourse (Davies & Bansel, 2007). The subject of

neoliberal discourse in general is the entrepreneurial subject, and education viewed from this perspective becomes an investment in human capital that can return individuals with increased abilities (Foucault, 2008, p. 229). Students in educational contexts in which they are expected to become skilled in maximizing every opportunity are praised to be 'entrepreneurial actors across all dimensions of their lives' (Brown, 2003). On the other hand, educational discourses that resist such a managerial understanding of the role of education tend to draw either on progressivist conceptions about schooling based on notions of liberal democracy and humanism (Biesta, 1998; Watkins, 2007) or to ideas about the emancipatory power of education, i.e. the capacity of meaningful knowledge to liberate the individual of the constraints of hegemonic forces. Progressivist pedagogical practices are driven by a student-centred ethos and a less intervening role for the teacher (Watkins, 2007, p. 301) in the assumption that this re-distribution of power will create a more equitable environment that values students' agency and freedom (Watkins, 2007, p. 314). In that sense, the humanistic subject of progressivist pedagogies is a self-motivated social being who benefits from an education that contributes to their full self-realization (Popkewitz, 2008).

Students of the Idealized-Home, Idealized-Polis, and Idealized-Academia metaphors seem to waver between the humanistic subject of progressivist discourses and the entrepreneurial, individualistic subject that is commonly constructed in neoliberal discourses. Vulnerable students whose development is threatened to be left incomplete or to take undesirable turns if alienation wins out over community and belonging can find a haven to develop their pro-social skills and self-esteem, with motivational benefits. At the same time, students who have opportunities to practice group organization, co-ordination, and collective decision-making, which are usually associated with democratic life, are presented as learning better, excelling, and thriving – and there the dimension of the collective shrinks. In that sense, the collective cannot be equated with the group, where individuals work on tasks with other individuals, and it cannot be assumed that any collective responsibility will be fostered besides the very specific one regarding the outcome of their joint work.

The emphasis on the individual has been noted by Watkins (2007), who identified a constellation she calls neoliberal progressivism, where the practices of progressive pedagogy are combined with a discourse of efficiency to produce a subjectivity of the teacher who does not teach but who promotes 'a form of "learning management"' (Watkins 2007, 314). Watkins attributes this appropriation of the characteristics of the humanistic subject by neoliberal discourses to the centrality that the individual holds within humanistic discourses, which emphasize individual autonomy, living up to one's potential, the fulfilment of needs, and the pursuit of meaning. While the tenets of neoliberal discourse differ significantly from the humanistic/progressivist, the notorious ability of neoliberalism to appropriate radical concepts has been observed both theoretically and empirically, e.g. in the ways in which the political concept of community has been used to advance neoliberal agendas (Rose, 2000), an issue that is also raised in Savage's (2011) article in our sample. In that sense, when Felner et al. (2001), for example, describe the aim of working in small communities at school as the creation of a robust future citizen of excellence, one can read between the lines and see a neoliberal subject that is combined with a democratic vocabulary. In that sense, student-centred approaches, which have been developed based on a completely different ethics, become objects of appropriation, and turn into individualized techniques that can increase individual performance (as a property and characteristic of the individual) while any importance for the community and for the development of coexistence is side-lined as more or less irrelevant.

The educational subject in emancipatory pedagogical discourses and students' limited voice

When it comes to emancipatory pedagogical discourses, Bingham and Biesta (2010) make a distinction between an emancipated subject understood in psychological terms and one that emphasizes the political character of the emancipated subjectivity. In brief, the difference lies in how one perceives equality between communicating beings, either as the outcome of a process where one part is made equal to the other, or as self-evident and as the

starting point of (pedagogical) interactions. Bingham and Biesta (2010) base their analysis on two examples, one taken from Paulo Freire's educational-philosophical work and one building on Jacque Rancière's political-philosophical work. Through these two examples, the authors demonstrate the qualitative difference between the two positions, as expressed through the figure of the child in the work of Freire and Rancière.

Based on their reading of Freire (2000), Bingham and Biesta (2010) describe students in emancipatory pedagogical contexts as deserving of an education that can liberate them from oppression and that can expose hegemonic ideologies and epistemologies that cultivate dependency between those who lack power and those who hold it. Freire (2000) contrasts these students to those that are produced in conventional schools, which work as 'banking systems'[1] and in which students are forced to internalize slogans that legitimize oppression and to receive the message that they need an authoritarian figure with immediate access to knowledge to communicate it to them. However, Bingham and Biesta (2010, p. 69) argue that students' emancipation in this view is still conceived of in psychological rather than political terms because it is mediated by an education based on Freire's 'problem posing' method, which Bigham and Biesta understand as another kind of 'psychological description', i.e. a need for explanation, before they become emancipated and able to speak with their own voice (2010, p. 71).

Among the four student positions in our findings, the students 'to be liberated' in the Power-Resisting Space metaphor occupy positions that point most directly towards the emancipated subject. In this research, however, it is broadly assumed that teachers have a responsibility to do this work in their classroom. Thus, the students' emancipation depends on teachers and on their bold move to take responsibility for doing this work. As we understand

[1] Freire (2000, p. 72) explains that in traditional schools education 'becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor'. Hence, in the banking system of education students are restrained to solely storing information.

this move, however, it seems to remain in the realm of an emancipation in psychological/individual terms according to Bingham and Biesta (2010). Teachers and students become a community in the eyes of researchers and, most often, through the efforts of teachers. Less attention is paid to the students' efforts to speak or to their efforts to have a say in what it is ultimately like to live together. Equality between community members is mediated by factors such as seniority, access to certain forms of knowledge, or assumed needs that require specialized services, and even democratic participation becomes possible only after one is enabled for it through education. However, if we think in Dewey's (1931/2011) terms, democracy predates its institutions as a logic that governs relationships.

The student who can speak and the school community as an 'Idealized-Agora'

Turning at last to the Rancièrian approach (1991, 1999), a political conception of emancipated students would recognize them as already capable of inserting themselves in the world and thus as perfectly capable of speaking. 'Speaking' here does not solely refer to the actual act of uttering words, but also to the introduction of oneself into the world, with the certainty that they must be heard, that they are not 'noise' in the ears of others (Rancière, 1999, pp. 29–30). Bingham and Biesta (2010), with Rancière, understand the educational subject in this context as one that is already able to participate. This conception of the student is seen as political rather than psychological because it recognizes that the child is in no need of explanation or of any method to learn how to be free (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 72). Thus, in this perspective, emancipation through education moves away from a conception of children as needing explanation of the world and of their place in it. This educational community is one where equality between parts is already presupposed before they enter the pedagogical relationship.

In Rancière (1999), democratic action concerns the moments at which various parts of the wider community, that have been positioned in their place through a 'partition of the perceptible'

which appears natural and self-evident, claim their entitlement to activities and places that are not theirs and that have not been granted to them. In other words, it is the logic that underpins their positioning and differentiation that is questioned and required to be dismantled and re-imagined, rather than just enlarged to include more individuals in the 'favourable' positions. In that act, the presupposition of equality is manifested, since one part questions the very system of criteria, despite not being entitled to do so, and the very action of granting is destabilized and bypassed. Then, potentially, a space that allows for parrhesia (i.e. speaking truth to power, Foucault, 2001) emerges, and the place where parrhesia used to appear in Athenian democracy is the Agora (Foucault, 2001, p. 22). So here we tentatively propose the metaphor of the Idealized-Agora, of a space or an instance of radical equality, as an addition to the other metaphors, but in which the ability to participate is presupposed and not awarded. We propose this metaphor as a starting point to think of the school as a common space and to be able to analyse communities in instances where they reclaim the dimension of the collective, and where their members act upon their freedom to challenge the logic that partitions the perceptible and to change the practices that shape their subjectivity. This metaphor does resemble that of the Power-Resisting Space in departing from an interest in emancipation, however, neither the outcome nor the process of liberation is pre-defined.

While the open-ended, collective processes of the community in the other four metaphors are intended to shape free and caring subjects, in the combination with close-ended criteria of what counts as such a subject – a comprehensively developed person and citizen, a knowledgeable collaborator or as a student in need of education to become liberated – the 'voice' that speaks can only be heard when saying something that is predictable, within the predefined limits of the desirable. From a place of presupposed equality, however, students are recognised as interested in learning about what-is, but also as both capable and allowed the space to influence their own subjectification (Biesta, 2020). However, it is important to note once again that educational research is one among several discourses available when people

involved in education organize their conduct and it is in students' accounts that one can better understand if and how the identified subject positions and discourses are actively shaping students' subjectivities. Consequently, for educational research we argue that departing from an Idealized-Agora metaphor can potentially contribute to a further theorization of educational communities, with a shift of the gaze to students' efforts of subjectification and to the formation of the collective by the community itself.

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