

# Privileging masculinity in the social construction of Basque identity

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**ABSTRACT.** Following a framework developed by Susan Gal and Judith Irvine (1995), this article illustrates how Basque-medium schools promulgate an androcentric vision of the Basque nation. First, male privilege is upheld in textbooks through the *erasure* of women's contributions to Basque language and culture, so that men appear as the quintessential Basque speakers and cultural agents. Secondly, language ideologies about Spanish and Basque recursively construct Basque ethnic identity in such a way that it centres on vernacular Basque, whose primary marker is a second person pronoun, '*hi*', which indirectly indexes male speakers and masculinity. An *iconic* relationship is thereby created between authentic Basque identity, Basque culture, Basque linguistic forms and masculinity. However, I also show that women have challenged this male privilege in various domains, thereby opening up the possibility of a Basque nation that embraces its female as well as its male members.

## **Introduction**

Scholars of nationalism identify education as an important conduit for the generation and perpetuation of nationalism (e.g. Gellner 1983); most studies focus on the purpose nationalism serves for elites (Brubaker 1992; Greenfeld 1992). But scholars who study nation-building curricula in schools – such as John Meyers *et al.* (1979) and Deborah Reed-Danahay (1996) – have shown that the success of nation-building curricula depends to a large extent on the vision of 'nationhood' that curricula project and how that vision is (re)interpreted by its various recipients.

This article examines how Basque ethnic identity is represented in Basque-medium secondary schools in San Sebastian (Donostia), Spain. It is by teaching people Basque that Basque nationalist pedagogy hopes to 'nationalise' them – transform them into Basque people. I will show that, while Basque nationalist pedagogy explicitly promulgates an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) composed of Basque speakers, it implicitly privileges male speakers as well as male contributions to Basque language and culture.

Following Gal and Irvine (1995), I will illustrate how three semiotic processes – erasure, recursiveness and iconicity – perpetuate an androcentric

vision of Basque nationhood. First, male privilege is upheld in textbooks through the *erasure* of women's contributions to Basque language and culture, so that men appear as the quintessential Basque speakers and cultural agents. Secondly, language ideologies inhabiting Basque schools *recursively* construct Basque ethnic identity in such a way that 'authentic' Basque identity is associated with vernacular Basque, of which the most 'pragmatically salient marker' (Errington 1985) is the singular second-person pronoun, '*hi*'. *Hi*, in turn, is deemed most appropriate for native Basque speakers who are male. In this way, an *iconic* relationship is created between authentic Basque identity, Basque culture, Basque linguistic forms and masculinity. Thus, the vision of the Basque person and nation that is propounded in schools is one which privileges masculinity. However, I will also show that women in Basque society have challenged this male privilege in various domains, thereby opening up the possibility of a Basque nation that embraces its female as well as its male members.

### Speaking Basque, being Basque

Basque nationalism emerged a century ago, during a time of rapid industrialisation and accelerated immigration. Founded by Sabino de Arana in 1895, the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV) espoused complete separation from these newcomers (Conversi 1990). One could attest to the purity of one's descent by pointing to the number of one's Basque surnames. One could not 'earn' admission to this community; those of non-Basque descent were irrevocably excluded from it.

This primordial definition was replaced with a linguistic definition with the rise of ETA (*'Euskadi 'ta Askatasuna'*: Basque Homeland and Freedom) in the 1960s. Gershon Shafir (1995) explains how such a shift occurred, despite the fissures within ETA itself. The socialist-nationalist faction of ETA framed their struggle in class terms: since 'the working class holds the key to the future ... [t]he logic of class struggle demanded that Basques join forces with other Spanish parties and recognize that the majority of the workers in Euskadi itself were Spanish' (*ibid.*: 113). As such, the primordial (and racist) orientation of Basque nationalism had to be abandoned. In contrast, the nationalist-socialist faction of ETA disavowed alliances with Spanish forces, and instead 'preferred to conduct class struggle through a Third World-type guerrilla strategy that did not require the active involvement of large masses' (*ibid.*). But this faction, too, rejected the racism of early Basque nationalism. While it continued to distance itself from immigrants who spoke only Spanish and supported all-Spanish political parties, it welcomed those who learned *euskera*. Thus, once it rejected descent as the defining criteria of Basque identity, ETA ultimately replaced it with language.

Shafir goes on to show that yet another definition of 'Basqueness' has come to the fore in the last several years. Based on surveys conducted by

Linz in 1985 (Linz 1986), Shafir shows that 61 per cent of all respondents espoused a 'civic' definition of Basque identity; they considered all those who live and work in the Basque Country to be Basque. Surprisingly, respondents who self-identified as 'Basque' were most likely to accept this civic definition; 44 per cent compared to only 19 per cent of those who self-identified as Spanish (Shafir 1995: 125). Further, most respondents who self-identified as Basque 'qualified' as Basque based on their descent and language ability.

My research indicates, however, that schools continue to define Basque identity primarily in linguistic terms; I will refer to this school discourse as 'ethnolinguistic pedagogy'.<sup>1</sup> Textbooks emphasise the importance of *euskera* to Basque identity by describing it as 'our language' and Spanish as just one of many other languages. One example of many is shown in Figure 1. It shows a flower inside a cage, whose branches take root elsewhere. Verses from Basque writers – from various provinces – accompany its blooms. Xabier Amuriza, a male writer from Bizkaia, writes: 'What would the Basque Country be, if it loses its language, too!' Itxaro Borda, a female writer from Zuberoa, writes, 'We are Basques. We aren't indebted to anyone. Basque is our language. All of us Basques need to know and transmit Basque.'

### The erasure of women's cultural work

This section will show that, in promoting a language-centred vision of the Basque nation, ethno-linguistic pedagogy highlights the efforts men have made to promote Basque language and culture. That is, textbook images portray the typical Basque speaker and cultural agent as male by erasing the contributions women have made to Basque cultural life. *Erasure* involves 'the process by which ideology, in simplifying the field of linguistic practices, renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible' (Gal and Irvine 1995: 975). Basque women have played important roles in transmitting the Basque language. They organised the first *euskera* classes in the 1930s, and taught the first clandestine classes under Franco (del Valle 85/7: 14). In the 1996–7 school year, 78 per cent of all elementary and secondary school teachers were women (EUSTAT 1999).

But women are given little public credit for their efforts: 'the activities and institutions related to *Euskera* that have had the most social prestige have been those led by men; none of them is associated with the home, with children, or with primary education' (del Valle 1994: 21). One such institution is the Basque Language Academy, the *Euskaltzaindia*. Since the 1960s, the *Euskaltzaindia* has focused on creating a unified written standard that can compete with Spanish language hegemony and demonstrate that *euskera*, too, is a modern language. But even though women comprise a majority of the people who hold the Basque proficiency certificate (EGA), only one woman has ever been appointed to the *Euskaltzaindia*. Miren Azkarate currently occupies the place vacated at the death of Jose Miguel Barandiaran, a

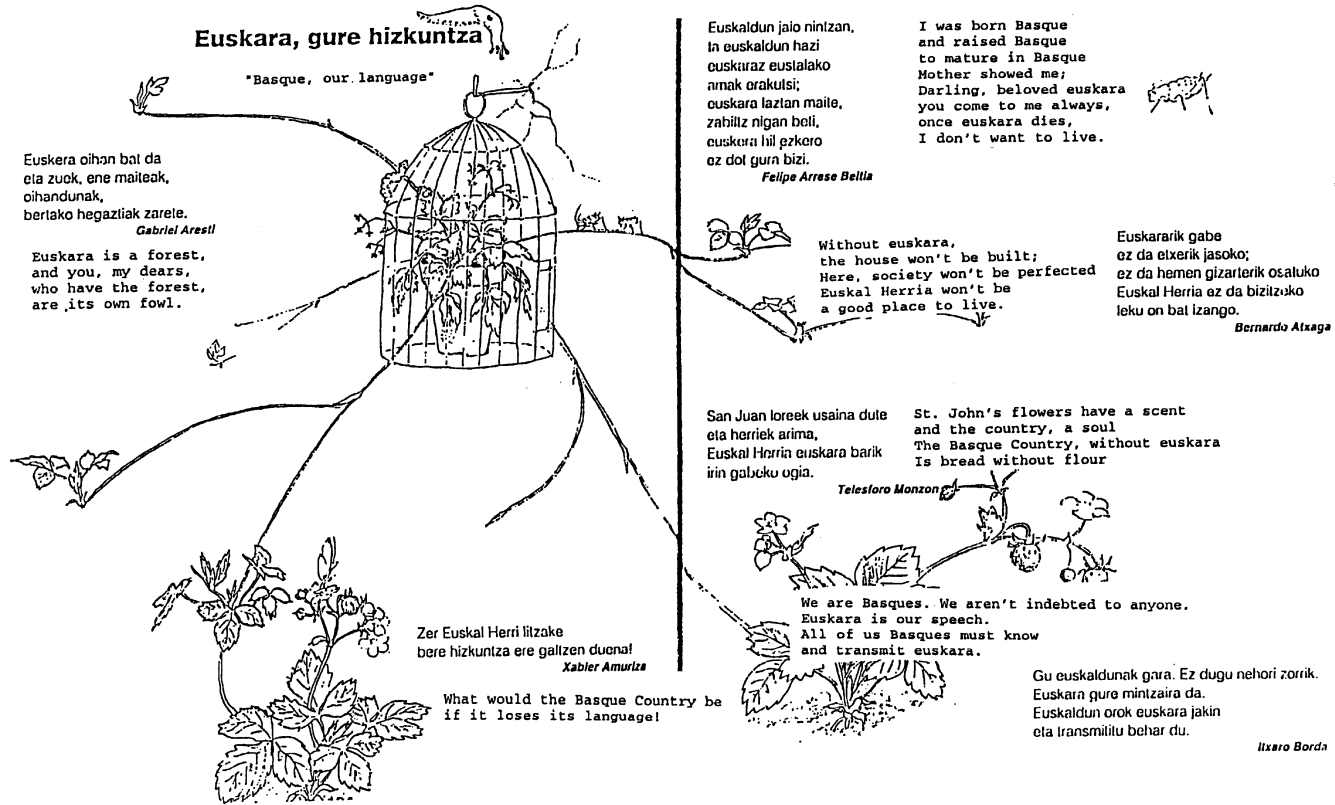


Figure 1. Basque as 'our language'

Source: 5 *Irakurgaiak* 1997: 124-5.

renowned ethnologist and linguist. That a woman replaced such a legendary figure was quite controversial (del Valle 2000: 41).

Women have also had more difficulty than men in being accepted into another prestigious domain, the literary canon. Linda White has argued that 'a visit to a bookstore in the Basque Country is an exercise in female invisibility' (1998: 12). Although 18 per cent of Basque writers are women, only six are regularly included in histories of Basque literature (*ibid.*). Women were often not accepted into the canon unless they wrote more than one work in a literary genre, while many male authors were included just for writing one work in Basque, regardless of genre (*ibid.*).

Reflecting this, textbooks portray men as the primary linguistic resources. The text in Figure 2 reads: 'Basque is our language, but we don't always speak Basque. We also know how to speak other languages. Let's think about this a little bit.' Thus, students are asked to reflect on their own language behaviours – perhaps in the hope that they will make more of an effort to speak Basque – and the icon for this lesson is a Basque grandfatherly figure with the 'traditional' Basque beret.

Figure 3 shows an example of *bertsolaritza*, or ritual verbal duelling. Famous *bertsos* have been passed down from one generation to the next, and they comprise a significant portion of the Basque literature that is taught in schools. *Bertsolariak* perform at major public events and a competition is held every year, which is broadcast on Basque television and radio. Some women do participate in *bertsolaritza*; indeed, in 1997, a woman made it to the finals of the *bertsolaritza* championship (where she came in last). But it remains primarily a male domain.

Another source of prestige in Basque society can be found within the concept *indarra*, which 'combines tremendous stamina, determination and energy with great strength ... sometimes it is a quality of a relationship; at other times a force that acts upon the natural world' (Ott 1990: 194). *Indarra* also has a symbolic dimension in that it connects the house with its tomb, as well with its living and dead members (*ibid.*: 196). Preserving *indarra* is crucial to the spiritual unity of the family, and becomes accessible to the heir of the house. *Indarra* also informs relations within the church: 'as the ultimate form of efficacious *indarra*, the *indarra* of God is the most persuasive, irresistible and compelling; through the mediation of priests, it controls human lives and events on Earth' (*ibid.*: 203). While *indarra* is admired in both men and women, it is related most closely to men of action ('*ekintza*'), who engage in tests of physical strength (Ott 1990: 194; del Valle *et al.* 1985: 178). Textbooks frequently represent men displaying their *indarra* in the public sphere in activities such as rock-lifting (Figure 4).

Taken together, the image of the Basque male that emerges from these images is the very embodiment of the '*Plaza Gizona*' ('Plaza Man'), which 'signifies a man who stands out and knows how to act in public' (Fernandez 1997: 83). This is not to say that everyone will view these images positively; after all, one might just as easily deride as admire men who regard lifting

(Basque and Me)  
Euskara eta ni



Euskara gure hizkuntza da, baina ez dugu beti euskaraz hitz egiten. Badakigu hizkuntza gehiagotan ere hitz egiten. Goazen honetan pixka bat pentsatzera.

Euskaraz norekin, noiz eta non hitz egiten dugu?		
(With whom, when and where do we speak Basque?)	Gal / Ez Yes/No	Zenbat? askotan/gutxitan/inoizez How much? Often/Seldom/Never
<b>Nrekin?</b> (With whom?)	- Aitarekin (Father) .....	.....
	- Amarekin (Mother) .....	.....
	- Anai-arrebeekin (Siblings) .....	.....
	- Eskolako lagunekin (School friends) .....	.....
	- Beste lagunekin (Other friends) .....	.....
<b>Non?</b> (Where?)	- Eskolan/gelan (Classroom) .....	.....
	- Eskolan/gelaz kanpo (Outside classroom) .....	.....
	- Etxean (At home) .....	.....
	- Kanean (On the street) .....	.....
	- Dendan (At the store) .....	.....
	- Astialdiko tokietan (Recreational areas) .....	.....
<b>Euskara aukeratzeko al duzu . . .</b> (Do you choose Basque)		
... Telebista ikusteko? (To watch television?) .....	.....	.....
... Irakurtzeko? (To read?) .....	.....	.....
... Irratia entzuteko? (To listen to the radio?) .....	.....	.....
... Zinema ikusteko? (To watch a movie?) .....	.....	.....

"Basque is our language, but we don't always speak Basque. We also know how to speak in other languages. Let's think about this a little bit."

Figure 2. Men as Basque language socialisers

Source: 3 Euskara Hizkuntza 1997: 133.

heavy rocks as a sport. None the less, the men in these images are actively engaged in Basque cultural life.

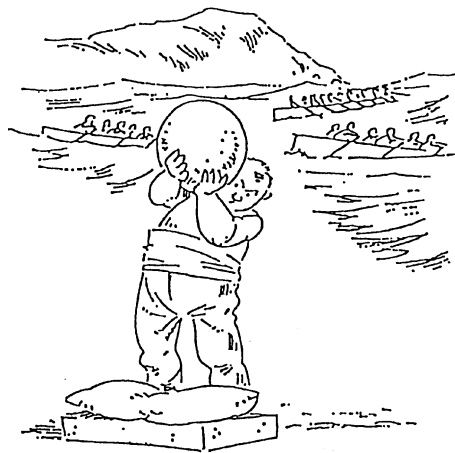
In contrast, textbook images of women focus not on how much they accomplish in the public sphere, but how well they tend to the needs of others in the private sphere, such as the housewife depicted in Figure 5. These traditional images of women are consonant with Basque nationalist ideology



**Figure 3.** Men as cultural protagonists

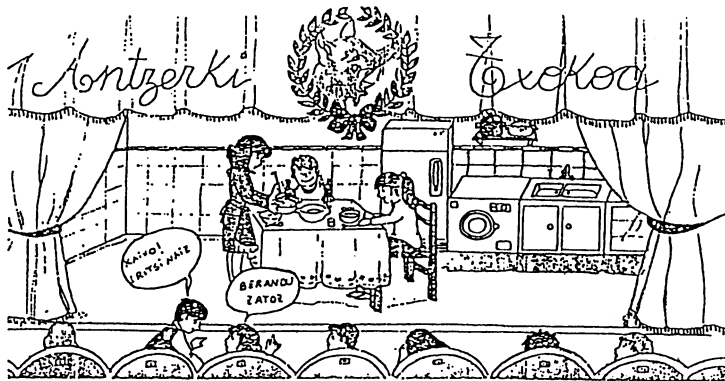
*Source: 6 Ingurunea 1997: 98.*

Harrijasotzailea (Rock-lifting)



**Figure 4.** Male participants in Basque culture

*Source: 6 Ingurunea 1997: 102.*



**Figure 5.** Women in traditional roles

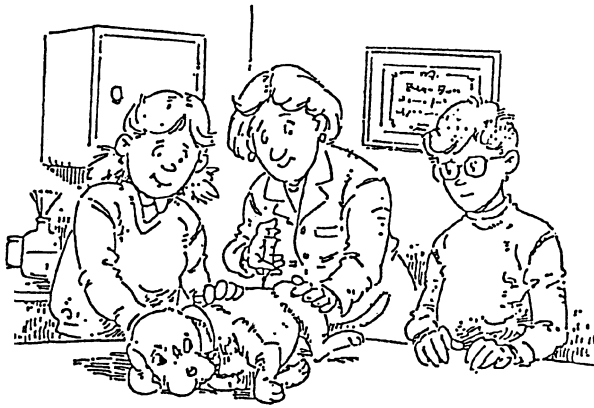
Source: *3 Euskara Hizkuntza* 1997: 28.

more generally: 'Basque Nationalist political ideology has elaborated a unitary vision of the Basque woman, based on the rural woman, which focuses on her role as a mother, and as the transmitter of the Basque language and culture' (del Valle 2000: 40). But the evidence so far suggests that the same is true of the Basque man; while he is assigned a variety of roles within Basque society, they are circumscribed to the rural life.

This idealisation of rural life and the traditional men and women within it is a way for Basque nationalists – of many stripes – to project a unitary vision of the Basque people and Basque nation to the world (del Valle 2000: 38). These efforts can be seen as part of the nation-building process that R. D. Grillo calls the 'ethnization of the polity', whereby a 'self-conscious social and cultural unity is created within established political boundaries, in distinction to others outside the boundaries' (quoted in Woolard 1989: 10). Would-be nations often point to a certain language, culture or other symbol that in-group members share that outsiders do not. While ethno-linguistic pedagogy privileges *euskera* as the main symbol of Basque identity, *euskera* continues to be spoken only by a minority of the population. Like other European nationalists, then, it seems that Basque nationalists have drawn on traditional Basque culture more generally as yet another way to emphasise that Basques are not like other nations.

This preoccupation with drawing distinctions between Basques and other nations is also reflected in the prominent role Basque mythological figures – where female figures predominate – play in imagining the Basque nation. Textbooks frequently feature witches or fairy-like creatures called *laminas*. Scholars such as Caro Baroja and Ortiz Osés have posited that women in ancient times played important roles in public life. Not only did women till the land and act as priestesses, the heredity system was matrilineal and





**Figure 6.** Women in non-traditional roles

Source: 6 *Ingurunea* 1997: 54.

goddesses were worshipped ('Matriarcado' 1990: 188–9). Mythological imagery, then, could be seen as an acknowledgement of the powerful roles Basque women purportedly played in ancient Basque society. But others have argued that the evocation of an ancient matriarchy primarily functions as a cautionary tale; it perpetuates the idea that since women could not handle the power they once yielded, they should submit to men's subsequent domination over them (*ibid.*).

Several generalisations can be made about the images seen so far. First, the image of the Basque nation that emerges is decidedly not modern; while I reproduce only a few of these images here, images of traditional Basque life abound in textbooks. This would seem to contradict the efforts of Basque language planners to refashion *euskera* itself into a modern language. Secondly, textbooks' imagery of traditional Basque culture emphasises men's work in the public sphere and celebrates their contributions to Basque cultural life. Women are most often portrayed playing supportive or mythological roles, suggesting that they do not contribute as much as men to Basque cultural life.

Even so, I did encounter a few images of women which ran counter to these patterns. Figure 6 shows one such woman playing a non-traditional role: the veterinarian. Images such as these suggest that the modern, urban woman can also be an acceptable part of the range of Basque womanhood. Indeed, Figure 7 suggests that under certain circumstances, so too can a woman cross-dressing as a man. The only clear example of what Judith Butler (1990) would call 'gender trouble', Katalina de Erauso, was one of four examples (the rest were men) featured under the title, 'These people, too, were Basque.' Erauso escaped from a convent and travelled throughout Spain and America, dressed in men's clothing. She became quite a good soldier, and it

## RESPECT FOR WOMEN . . . IN MEN'S CLOTHING

Katalina Erauso

Donostian jaio zen 1592.urtean. Bere gurasoek monja sarrarazi zuten, baina 1607an komentutik ihes egin zuen eta Espainian zehar ibili zen gizonezkoz jantzita. Barku batean sartuta Mundu Berrira (Ameriketara) joan zen. Han soldadu egin zen eta oso borrokalari ausarta izan omen zen. Borroka batean zauritu zutenean jakin zen emakumezkoa zela. Monja alfereza ere deitu izan zaio.

. . . was born in Donostia in 1592. Her parents put her in a convent, but in 1607, she escaped from the convent and traveled throughout Spain dressed as a man. She got in a boat and sailed to the New World (America). There, she became a soldier and reputedly was a very courageous one. It was when she became injured that they learned she was a woman. They call her "The Lazy nun."



Figure 7. Respect for women ... in men's clothing

Source: 5 *Irakurgaiak* 1997: 146.

was only when she was charged with murder that it was discovered that she was a woman.<sup>2</sup>

### Contestation ... and consequences

Figures 6 and 7 notwithstanding, textbook images overall privilege male contributions to Basque language and culture. These notions have not gone uncontested, however; women have used the public sphere as a site for challenging androcentric gender ideologies. We have already seen that cultural activities such as *bertsolaritza* and rock-lifting are considered male terrain. The same is true of traditional Basque dance; even though many dances feature female characters, they are usually danced by men. One such dance, originating in Zuberoa, is the '*Maskarada*'. A ritual in which the '*Gorriak*' ('Reds') fight the '*Beltzak*' ('Blacks'), the *Maskarada* is tied to notions of life, death and fertility. The *Gorriak* represent regulated *indarra* (strength and discipline), while the *Beltzak* represent unregulated *indarra* (spontaneity and vulgarity). Many villagers consider the *Maskarada* a 'masculine event, [which] should only be acted out by men' (Fernandez 1997: 5). Villagers said it would be especially ugly ('*itusia*') for women to play the *Beltzak*, who spend much of their time swearing and drinking. Even so, a group of women performed the *Maskarada* in 1991, indicating that even the

traditional women idealised in Basque nationalist discourse are creating more visible roles for themselves in Basque cultural life.

While some women have found ways to contest traditional gender roles within existing cultural forms, others have created new social spaces in which to make their mark. Sometimes the mark is quite literal; women have, for example, used graffiti to deface sexist imagery and advertising. The 'International Day of the Woman' (8 March), is another occasion on which women contest the secondary roles relegated to them. Women have marched under banners such as '*Zutik Emakumeok!*' ('Stand up, women!'), which contrasts sharply with images of women staying quietly within the domestic sphere (del Valle 1997: 215). Further, since 1990, many women have participated in an all-female footrace, the '*lilaton*' (*ibid.*: 237). These activities not only encourage women to participate in spheres traditionally closed to them, they challenge traditional gender roles in more fundamental ways. They encourage women to define themselves in relationship to other women rather than to men, and provide women new opportunities to mobilise around political issues (*ibid.*: 238).

However, not all sectors of Basque society are ready to accept women playing such innovative roles in public life: 'women who compete with men on their own terms ... [are denigrated as] "mari-gizonak" ["Masculine Women"]' (Ugalde 1994: 190). The consequences that can befall such women is illustrated in how fervently the gender borders were policed during the '*Alarde*' parades in two towns, Hondarribia (Fuenterrabia) and Irun. In these commemorations of victorious battles against the French, men dress up as soldiers and women dress up as '*cantineras*' (serving girls). Originally, *cantineras* represented the women who served food and tended to the injured soldiers, but it has devolved into a beauty contest: "to be pretty" emerges as the decisive requirement for being a *cantinera*' (Bullen 1998: 19).

Between 1996 and 1998, women attempted to march alongside the men as soldiers: they were insulted and even physically attacked in Irun, and were prevented from proceeding – by a group of traditionalist women – in Hondarribia. Events such as this show that large segments of the population reject the idea that women should play prominent roles in the public sphere. Indeed, women are often the most vociferous defenders of the Basque tradition which sometimes explicitly excludes them. Given the limits put on them, 'sometimes women attempt to enact nationalism through traditional roles assigned them by nationalists – supporting husbands, raising (the nation's) children and serving as symbols of national honor' (Nagel 1993: 252).

### **Recursiveness: authenticity as male domain**

Thus, in its attempt to promote Basque identity, Basque nationalist pedagogy foregrounds male contributions to Basque language and culture by erasing the efforts of their female counterparts. This androcentric pedagogy reflects

and reinforces the gendered nature of Basque society in general. In this section, I argue that ethno-linguistic pedagogy also contributes to a gendered language ideology, which links 'authentic' Basqueness with vernacular Basque, whose most pragmatically salient marker is an informal form of address (*'hika'*), which indirectly indexes male speakers and masculinity. I follow Judith Irvine in defining language ideology as 'the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests' (Irvine 1998: 52).

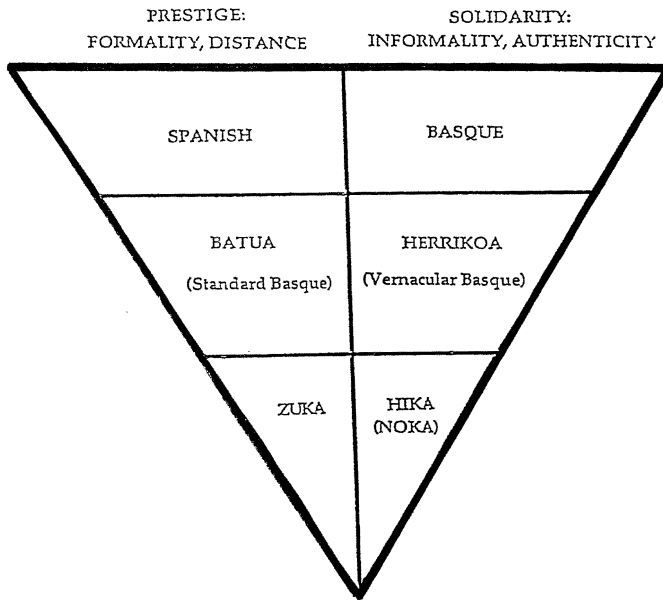
### *Language ideologies: Spanish and Basque*

We have seen that textbooks attempt to construct a link between being Basque and speaking Basque. In order full to understand how students interpret this message, we must examine how students perceive the other language they speak – Spanish. We will see that students portray Basque as the language of solidarity and Spanish as the language of distance, but that there is no straightforward relation between what students say about these languages and what they do with them.

In institutional terms, *euskera* is in the best position it has ever been. Students today are the first generation to benefit from an official Basque language policy; their parents and grandparents grew up in a time when speaking Basque in public was forbidden and speaking it at school was punished. Speaking Basque was usually associated with peasants, who were often denigrated as uneducated. Parents and students agreed that Basque fares better today both in affective and institutional terms. They presented Basque as the language of solidarity, as 'our language', the language key to integrating into Basque society.

In contrast, they associated Spanish with distance and prestige, as the language used with strangers or authority figures. These views reflect, in part, the institutional hegemony Spanish continues to enjoy over Basque. While Basque is the sole language used for one newspaper, one television channel and several radio stations, most newspapers, television and radio stations are in Spanish – which is also the language of choice when dubbing the seemingly ubiquitous American blockbuster movies.

But this greater affective value for Basque does not usually translate to greater use of Basque. My observations showed that, even though most students had attended Basque-medium schools since the age of three, Spanish was the language used most often among them outside the classroom or whenever the teacher was not looking. These findings support Kathryn Woolard's contention that 'authority is established and inculcated most thoroughly not in schools and other formal institutions, but in personal relations [and] face to face encounters' (Woolard 1989: 121). That is, the economic power and prestige of Catalan speakers was more influential than state policy in establishing linguistic norms. While Basque language planners have attempted to use public institutions to increase the prestige and use of



**Figure 8.** Recursiveness in language ideology

Source: Echeverria 2000: 199.

Basque, this has not yet happened, in part because Basque speakers do not come from economically powerful or socially prestigious positions.

*Language ideologies: standard and vernacular Basque*

Even though Basque language schooling has not yet accomplished its explicit goal to revitalise use of *euskera*, it could still transform *euskera* into a symbol of Basque identity, even if it is not spoken everywhere. This would be similar to the Irish case, where schooling in Irish has not increased use of Irish, but has helped transform the language into a symbol of Irish identity (Fasold 1988: 184). But if we look at the ideologies about different varieties of Basque, we see that the dichotomy between prestige and solidarity involves a process of differentiation and boundary-making that Gal and Irvine call *recursiveness*, or the ‘projection of an opposition, salient as some level of relationship, onto some other level’ (Gal and Irvine 1995: 975). The inverted pyramid in Figure 8 illustrates this point.

The opposition between prestige and solidarity – initially represented by the Spanish and Basque languages – recurs when students and parents discussed standard (*Batua*) and vernacular Basque (*Herrikoa*). *Batua* is the standardised variety of Basque designed by the Basque Language Academy for use in schools, government and the media. Both parents and students lauded *Batua* for its utility; they considered it essential for education, and for ensuring

mutual intelligibility across dialects. Further, they considered *Batua* more prestigious and refined than *Herrikoa*. But both students and parents criticised *Batua* for its artificiality, especially the pedagogical emphasis on ‘correct’ grammar. Several native-Basque-speaking parents had abandoned their efforts to learn *Batua* precisely because the verb forms were so difficult to master.

In contrast, students and parents described *Herrikoa* as more authentic than *Batua*, as the variety of Basque that was spoken spontaneously with friends. Further, *Herrikoa* was characterised as the variety of Basque spoken by ‘*Euskaldunzaharrak*’. This term means ‘Old Basques’, and refers to native Basque speakers. In contrast, *Batua* was associated with ‘*Euskaldunberriak*’, or ‘New Basques’, those who learn Basque as a second language. It is generally assumed that *Euskaldunberriak* will only understand *Batua*, since that is the variety of Basque taught in schools.

#### *Gendered language ideologies: Zuka and Hika*

Thus, the distinctions between prestige and solidarity that appeared in discussions about Spanish and Basque reappear in discussions about standard and vernacular Basque. This recursiveness continued in discussions about two forms of address: *zu* and *hi*. And this is where we see most clearly how Basque ethnicity is in fact a gendered category. An explanation of these pronouns follows.

#### The gendering *hi*

There is no grammatical gender in Basque, except for the second-person familiar pronoun, *hi*. The second-person formal pronoun, *zu*, is gender neutral; it can be used by either gender in addressing either gender.<sup>3</sup> But ‘the second person singular familiar forms of address (*hi*), [sometimes] requires a gender marker on its accompanying verb forms’ (Aulestia 1989: a48–a49). That is, when the addressee is the subject of an intransitive verb, the verb does not carry a gender marker. However, when the addressee is the subject of a transitive verb, or is the indirect object, the auxiliary verb marks the addressee’s gender (‘-k’ if male, ‘-n’ if female)<sup>4</sup> (see Table 1).

A more unusual property of *hi* is its allocutivity, which means that the inflected verb agrees with the addressee’s gender, even when the addressee does not appear in the sentence (Oyharcabal 1993: 90) (see Table 2).

In this example, ‘you’ does not appear. Even so, when using *hi*, the auxiliary verbs mark the addressee’s gender (‘-k’ for males, and ‘-n’ for females).

For our purposes, the use and social meanings of these pronouns are most important. In the mass media, *zuka* is normally used; *hika* is sometimes used in stories about sports and occasionally in radical left publications. Because I conducted my fieldwork in an urban area where *hika* use is rare, television was often the main arena through which students were exposed to *hika*. For example, Basque television covers *pilota* games and other sports, and the commentary of these – by men – is very often in *hika*. Many students said that

**Table 1.** *Zuka and hika forms*

<b>ZU</b>		<b>HI</b>
	“You are”	
Zu z-a-ra You 2sg-Pres-AUX		Hi h-a-iz You 2Sg-Pres-AUX
	“You have done work”	
Lan egin du-zu Work do AUX-2SgErg		Lan egin du- <b>k</b> Work do AUX- <b>2sgMascErg</b> Lan egin du- <b>n</b> Work do AUX- <b>2sgFemErg</b>
	“It happened to you”	
Gertatu ø-zai-zu Happen 3Abs-AUX-2sgDat		Gertatu ø-zai- <b>k</b> Happen 3Abs-AUX- <b>2sgMascDat</b>  Gertatu ø-zai- <b>n</b> Happen 3Abs-AUX- <b>2sgFemDat</b>

Source: Oyharcabal 1993: 95.

**Table 2.** *Allocutive forms*

	“A friend sees me”
<b>ZU</b>	Laguna-k ikusten n-a-u-ø Friend-Erg sees 1SgAbs-pre-root-3SgErg
<b>HI</b>	Laguna-k ikusten n-a-i- <b>k</b> -ø Friend-Erg sees 1SgAbs-pres-AUX- <b>ALLOCmasc</b> -3SgErg  Laguna-k ikusten n-a-i- <b>n</b> -ø Friend-Erg sees 1SgAbs-pres-AUX- <b>ALLOCfem</b> -3SgErg

Source: Oyharcabal 1993: 91.

they heard *hika* on the Basque soap opera, *Goenkale* (‘High Street’). They were also likely to hear *hika* when listening to contemporary folk and, especially, radical Basque rock music. Radical rock groups routinely use *hika* in their lyrics, as way to create ‘an imagined community of “horizontal comradeship”’ – a way of rejecting ‘the traditional status hierarchies that have dominated Basque society including much of nationalist political culture’ (Urla 1995: 255).

But *hika* is used very rarely in Basque instruction. Students in Basque-medium schools are not taught the entire range of *hika* forms until they are about sixteen; students in Spanish-medium schools are not taught them at all. Textbooks explain that *zuka* is the pronoun of respect and *hika* the pronoun of intimacy. But the implicit lessons about *hika* are gendered; most exemplars use the male rather than the female forms. I observed one Basque

class in which students were expected to conjugate *hika* forms on the spot; the answers they gave were overwhelmingly the male forms.

The explicit notions held by informants closely followed the explicit messages mentioned above about respect and solidarity. Students and parents described *zu* as the pronoun of respect, as the pronoun used with authority figures, strangers and *Euskaldunberriak* ('New Basques'). On the other hand, parents and students described *hika* as the key marker of solidarity, as the pronoun used in close relationships, as something used by '*euskaldun-euskaldunak*', people who are 'really, really Basque'.

My observations corroborate these views: among Basque speakers in Donostia, *zu* is indeed the pronoun used in almost every context. This was also true in schools, although I did observe teachers and students use *hika* on occasion. For example, I observed teachers using *hika* on about a dozen occasions – i.e. '*Bukatu dek?*' ('Are you finished?') – as a way to keep students on task. In only one case was the teacher using *hika* a woman; in only one case was the student addressed a girl.

Students also exhibited a gendered usage of *hika*: it was used almost exclusively by boys in addressing other boys. In Text 1, students are summarising a section of their Basque literature book. Jose Angel is trying to get someone to read aloud (*girls' names* are italicised; **hika** is in boldface; ZUKA is capitalised; Spanish is underlined; words in parentheses are implied) (see Text 1).

### Text 1: Group 1

Line 1	Jose Angel	Irakurri (ZAZU). Read.
Line 2	<i>Gurrutxe</i>	Baino ez tego dena kopiatuko. But I won't copy it all.
Line 3	Antton	Utzi. Irakurri et. Leave it. I'll read it.
Line 4	Antton	'Erromanizazioa, erromatar kolonizazio aztertuz ...' 'Romanization, studying Roman colonization ...'
Line 5	<i>Gurrutxe</i>	Tokatzen ZAIZU idaztea, nik lengo egunean idatzi nuen. It's YOUR turn to write. I wrote the other day.
Line 6	Antton	Aurrera. Go on.
Line 7	Antton	Baino ez tut nai. But I don't want to.
Line 8	Jose Angel	Antton, tontua al <b>haiz?</b> [slow, deliberate] Antton, are <b>you</b> an idiot?
Line 9	Antton	Bai! [high pitched voice] Yes!

[Everybody laughs]

Source: Echeverria 2000: 225.



Initially, Jose Angel makes his request politely (line 1). It is only after staying quiet for six turns of talk that he re-enters the conversation in another attempt to get the group on task and he uses *hika* when he does so. In doing so, he also slows down his voice, so that he sounds simpleminded. This is an example of Erving Goffman's 'say-for', which is the 'practice of projecting mimicked words into the mouths of figures that are present' (Goffman 1974: 535). Jose Angel is mimicking the voice often associated with the use of *hika*: the country bumpkin. Several (male) students said that they sometimes used *hika* when joking around 'pretending to be peasants'.

This association between *hika* and joking is evidenced in Text 2:

### Text 2: Group 1

Line 1	Jose Angel	Antton, <u>venga</u> , ZU bertan. Antton, <u>come on</u> , you.
Line 2	Antton	<b>Hi!</b> Nik lengo eunin in nun e! <b>You!</b> I did it the other day!
Line 3	Jose Angel	Ze in tzenun? What did you do?
Line 4	Enrike	Kaka in tzenun! You took a crap!
Line 5	<i>Gurrutxe</i>	Onek ez ta idatzi. That's not writing.

Source: Echeverria 2000: 231.

This time, Jose Angel tries to get the students on task by using both Spanish formal (*venga!*) and Basque formal (*zu*) forms. But his attempts at civility are rejected: using *hika*, Enrike mockingly protests that it's not his turn to read (line 2). That it is said only in mock anger is clearly indicated by the fact that Enrike follows it up with a scatological joke. While Enrike does not use *hika* in making the joke – he does not know the *hika* forms – Antton's use of *hika* clearly changes the frame of the interaction from serious to playful.

But another striking – and gendered – feature of this exchange emerges when it is compared to Text 2 above:

### Text 3

**Text 1 (excerpt):** *Gurrutxe*

Tokatzen ZAIZU idaztea,  
Nik lengo egunean idatzi nuen.

It's YOUR turn to write.  
I wrote the other day.

**Text 2 (excerpt):** Antton

**Hi!** Nik lengo eunin in nun, e!

**You!** I did it the other day!

Source: Echeverria 2000: 232.

Thus, even though both students say almost exactly the same thing, Antton employs *hika* forms, while Gurrutxe does not. It seems that boys – but not girls – can use *hika* with impunity, even when doing so can invoke a negative stereotype – the country bumpkin. This phenomenon is consonant with other minority language communities, where playing the peasant or telling the off-colour joke constitutes part of a masculine persona. In Brittany, Breton ‘has become a kind of “masculine chic”’, while French is inextricably linked to sophistication and femininity. (MacDonald1989: 280) Similarly, Jean Pujolar I Cos found that men enacted their masculinities by swearing heavily and affecting an Andalusian accent, which is associated with the ‘common people’ (Pujolar 1997: 96). In contrast, women were more open to using Catalan, as they were more committed to the the more sophisticated lifestyle it facilitated.

*Zuka* is seen in similar terms: as formal and artificial, but conducive to social mobility. Thus, when boys want to get their point across in a ‘manly’ fashion, they do so in *hika*, if they are linguistically competent to do so. Clothed as it is with the air of formality and social mobility, girls use *zuka* for all their communicative functions – or resort to Spanish. In Text 4, MaIsabel and Jon are taking turns dictating from the book:

#### Text 4: Group 2

- |                       |                 |   |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---|
| Line 1                | <i>MaIsabel</i> | ‘Beskoitze 1560–1601, Leizarragaren bizitzaria buruz ...’<br>‘Beskoitze, 1501–1601, about the life in Leizarraga ...’ |
| Line 2                | Jon             | Itxoin <b>zak!</b><br>Wait!   |
| [break in transcript] |                 |   |
| Line 3                | Jon             | ‘Apaiz Katolikoa izan zen, Protestantua ...’<br>‘He had been a Catholic priest, a Protestant ...’                     |
| Line 4                | <i>MaIsabel</i> | Isildu (ZAITE)! <u>Jode!</u><br>Shut up! <u>Damn!</u>   |

Source: Echeverria 2000: 233.

Thus, when MaIsabel directs Jon, not only does she use *zuka* instead of *hika*, she tacks on a Spanish expletive to get her point across (line 4). In contrast, Jon directs MaIsabel by using *hika* (line 2). Further, Jon uses the male *hika* form (*zak*) instead of the female form (*zan*) when addressing her, indicating an unfamiliarity with the female address forms.

These uses of *hika* clearly show a gendered pattern: *hika* is used primarily by males when addressing other males. But *hika* remains pragmatically salient even to those who did not use *hika* themselves, especially when they were native Basque speakers. Most agreed that men and boys speak *hika* more often than girls and women. While *hika* usage varies greatly from town to town, and even from house to house, a gendered pattern emerged. Aitor’s

mom reported that she spoke *zuka* to her brothers, but that they used *hika* with each other. She has two sons and two daughters. She uses only *zuka* with her daughters and sons. Her sons, however, use both forms with each other, but only *zuka* to their sisters; her daughters use only *zuka* with each other.

That *hika* is primarily a male reserve is also evident in the voices students employed when discussing *hika*.

### Text 5

Es que, hika da kolo – sea hizkuntza kolokiala bezela, ez? Da lagunen artean ta  
<Q Eh!! Aizu! **Hi!** Q> Esaten dutena, ez? <Q **Hi!** Aizak! Entzun! Q>

Well, *hika* is collo – um, like a colloquial language, right? It's between friends  
<Q Hey! Listen to me! **You!**> That's what they say, right? <Q **You! Listen to me!**  
Listen! Q>

Source: Echeverria 2000: 229.

While Iñaki did not overtly state that *hika* was used more often by male than female speakers, his use of *hika* here ('aizak') is the male form rather than the female ('aizan'). Further, when I asked him for specific examples of people he had heard use *hika*, all his examples involved male speakers addressing other males.

### Iconicity: *hika* as male domain

The above statements, voicings and uses of *hika* indicate that there is a sense in which using *hika* is appropriate for boys and men, but not for girls and women. In Gal and Irvine's terms, there is an iconic relationship between *hika* and masculinity. *Iconicity* 'involves a transformation of the sign relationship between linguistic practices, features, or varieties and the social images with which they are linked' (Gal and Irvine 1995: 973). Joel Kuipers refers to this process as *essentialisation*, and adds that as a 'linguistic feature that indexes a social status, group, or category comes to be seen as essentially or naturally linked to it' (1998: 20), other linguistic features are pushed to the periphery, where their meanings become more ambiguous or uncertain. Thus, as *hika* becomes associated with masculinity, *hika* usage by and to women occupies a more ambiguous social space.

Why should this be the case? Following Elinor Ochs, I contend that *hika* 'sounds' more appropriate for use by and between male speakers because *hika* is associated with certain 'social meanings (e.g. stances, social acts, social activities), which in turn help to constitute gender meanings' (Ochs 1992: 339). We have seen that textbooks, like Basque society more generally, celebrate male-dominated cultural forms such as *bertsolaritza* and *pilota*. The implicit form of Basque associated with these activities is *hika*; since these activities are male dominated, *hika* is primarily a marker of male–male solidarity.

We also saw above that *hika* usage is common among radical Basque rock groups. Most of these protagonists, too, are men. Perhaps unwittingly, they imagine primarily a male audience: the *hika* forms they employ are usually the male forms (Urla forthcoming: 20). Indeed, *hika* usage is associated with nationalist militancy more generally, and most of the protagonists here, too, are male (Alcedo 1996; del Valle *et al.* 1985). Mainstream newspapers will not publish interviews with avowed ETA members, but such an interview was published in a leftist publication, '*Sabotaia*' ('Sabotage'). While the interview itself was conducted in *zuka*, the ETA member used *hika* in challenging the journalist's credentials and demanding that no photographs be taken (*Sabotaia* 1995). Similarly, Zulaika (1985: 309) recounts that, immediately before killing a fellow villager whom they perceived to be a traitor, ETA members said to him in *hika*, 'You are a dog!' ('*Hi txakur bat haiz!*') Finally, Begoña Aretxaga points out that *bertsolariak* routinely sing verses at the funerals of militants; these, too, are very often in *hika* (Aretxaga 1988: 80).

The argument that traditional Basque cultural forms have connotations of masculinity was corroborated in interviews. Many parents described *hika* as '*brutoa*' and '*indartxua*' – brutish and forceful. These adjectives have clear connections to masculine displays of *indarra*. One parent said that *hika* was not a concern for girls, because *hika* is used when expressing anger or swearing – as if expressing these emotions is simply not ladylike. Another said that she thought it ugly for women and girls to use *hika*. Similarly, most of the students' examples of *hika* involved boys getting angry or making a joke – not girls. One boy said he used *hika* when arguing with his brother as a way to 'score points'.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in Gal and Irvine's terms, I have demonstrated above that there is an iconic relationship between *hika* and masculinity. As *hika* comes to be seen as essentially linked to male speakers and masculinity, use of *hika* by women is pushed to the periphery where its social meanings become much more ambiguous. Certainly, these associations with *hika* and *zuka* are socially constructed and continually negotiated. Just as Basque women have challenged traditional gender roles in other cultural spheres, it is possible that they can reappropriate the social meaning of *hika* in such a way that it can express a 'feminine' as well as a 'masculine' voice. But Mikhail Bahktin has argued that 'not all words submit equally to [such] appropriation ... many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien [or] sound foreign' (1981: 294). Ochs adds that gender is among the factors that impacts whether one can 'own' the words one uses, as 'gender may generate its own set of voices' (1992: 338). Whether or not one can 'own' *hika* depends, in part, on one's gender.

My research demonstrates that *hika* usage is overlain with masculine voices – which are positively valued because they connote masculinity and are employed in celebrated traditional Basque cultural forms. There is no equivalent, positively valued, traditionally female cultural form that is tied to female use of *hika*. In fact, I only found one textbook image of women using familiar forms of address (Figure 9). The song 'Tomorrow's Celebration' ('*Besta*



–Hago, Maria, otoi, ixilik,  
 Ez duN ikusi nere keinurik?  
 Xorta bat edanez geroz,  
 Begiak fūr-fūr; zer, ez duN ahalke  
 Edan nezaken azkarren hortatik,  
 Gatilua, gatilua beterik.

–Stay, Maria, remember, to be quiet  
 Didn't you see my wink?  
 After you drink a little,  
 Your eyes start blinking,  
 Shamelessly,  
 I could drink all that, quickly,  
 From a full glass.

Figure 9. Women using *noka*

Source: 3 *Euskara Hizkuntza* 1997: 49–50.

*Biharmuna*<sup>7</sup>) portrays four women playing a Basque card game, *mus*, which involves bluffing and passing signs (such as winking) to one's partner. One of the women is chastising her partner, Maria, that she is too drunk to pass or read signs correctly – and she uses familiar address forms when doing so. While this might seem to be a portrayal of women's joking fun similar to the images of men we have seen so far, this image is significantly different: it turns out that the women are actually witches, who have transformed themselves into women.

Certainly, it is possible that some female Basque speakers would positively view such representations. But, unlike images that show men using familiar address forms, they are not unambiguously positive cultural images. In Kuipers's terms, as male use of *hika* is solidified as an essential part of their being, use of *hika* by women occupies a more ambiguous social space (Kuipers 1998).

## Conclusion

Because ethno-linguistic pedagogy creates an iconic relationship between speaking Basque and being Basque, the Basque speaker becomes synonymous

with the Basque nation. I have argued that Basque schools promote an androcentric vision of the Basque nation and Basque speaker. Textbooks present men as the exemplary Basque speaker, in part by erasing the contributions made by women to Basque language and culture. Further, schools contribute to a gendered ideology that links ‘authentic Basque-ness’ and solidarity with vernacular Basque, of which the most pragmatically salient marker is the familiar form of address (*hika*). *Hika*, in turn, indirectly indexes male speakers and masculinity, thereby creating an iconic relationship between authentic Basque identity, Basque culture and masculinity.

The male privilege inscribed in ethno-linguistic pedagogy is not surprising, given the androcentricism of Basque society more generally. In this article, I have attempted to contextualise Basque gender ideologies in relation to Basque nationalist discourse, especially as it is enacted in Basque-medium schools. While issues of equality versus hierarchy operate in social relations, previous scholarship has identified an ideological discourse about the strong power exercised by women in Basque society. But this article shows that this power is not reflected in ethno-linguistic pedagogy, which, instead, remains fixated on traditional, hierarchical gender roles.

The androcentricism of pedagogies used to teach Basque is especially problematic in that *euskera* is at the core of the prestige system in Basque society and culture. Thus, the relegation of men and women to separate spheres – with men occupying the prestigious positions in public life – strongly reaffirms and reifies the place men and women occupy. Despite this, many women have carved out more visible roles for themselves in Basque cultural life, even when they have been met with resistance. As women continue to participate in cultural domains traditionally reserved for men, the language associated with those domains, too, might become imbued with ‘authentic’ female voices alongside the male ones Basque nationalism has privileged so far.

## Notes

1 This article focuses on Basque-medium schools, as their students have the linguistic competence to enact the vision of a Basque-speaking nation if they so choose. In these schools, all instruction is carried out in *euskera*, and Spanish is taught as a subject. The opposite is true in Spanish-medium schools; Spanish is the medium of instruction and *euskera* is taught as a subject. Bilingual education is also available at the primary and elementary levels, after which time students must continue their education in either Basque- or Spanish-medium schools.

2 Of course, Basque nationalist pedagogy is not alone in the gendered notions it conveys. Spanish pedagogy in the nineteenth century was also predicated on gender differences (*cf.* Nash 1999), as was educational policy throughout Franco’s regime (*cf.* Morcillo Gomez 1999).

3 The terms *zu* and *zuka* (the pronoun and nominal forms, respectively) will be used interchangeably, as will be *hi* and *hika*. Readers should also be aware that there are two other second-person singular pronouns in Basque. *Xu* is used only in eastern dialects; *berori*, used to show great deference, had traditionally been used in western dialects, but has largely disappeared (*cf.* Alberdi 1995).

4 Technically, the male addressee forms are called 'toka', while the female addressee forms are called 'noka'. But in everyday parlance in Donostia, 'hika' is used to refer to both forms. As a shorthand, I will follow this convention.

5 The different employment patterns followed by rural Basque women and men might also account for the greater use of *hika* by men than women. Men have traditionally found work in timber companies or factories, where their fellow workers were very likely to be Basque speakers (cf. Douglass 1976). It is precisely in such working-class occupations that we would expect vernacular forms to be retained. In contrast, women usually worked in the service industry where a modicum of elegance would be required. As such, they would be more likely to avoid the *hika* forms that epitomised the 'peasant language' that had been stigmatised.

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