‘I’m from Barcelona’: Boundaries and Transformations Between Catalan and Spanish Identities

By
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2017

MASTERUPPSATSER I KULTURANTROPOLOGI
Nr 71
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¹ The title refers both to the complexity of introducing oneself when more than one cultural identity is involved, as well as the implication that being from Barcelona entails both Catalan and Spanish cultural associations. Many informants have used this phrase in conversation to summarize these two points and simplify the answer to an otherwise complicated, and often politically charged, question.
‘I’m from Barcelona’:
Boundaries and Transformations Between Catalan and Spanish Identities

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June 2017
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Abstract

In the last decade or so, the multiple political factions in Catalonia have adopted pro-independence initiatives in their platforms following the 2008 financial crisis. Catalonia’s position as representing a minority culture in the face of the centralized administration of Madrid presents a contentious history of fighting for the right ‘to be’, culminating in what today is viewed by many as an identity crisis.

Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Barcelona, this thesis examines how informants construct and transform their socio-cultural identities in the framework of the independence movement in Catalonia. It places informants’ experiences in the theoretical realm of ethnic boundaries, analyzing central issues of Catalan language normalization vis-à-vis the historical imposition of Spanish as the national language. These themes are broadened in light of the recent upsurge of Catalan secession, and explores identity politics within the background of Spanish and Catalan nationalisms.

Key words: identity, Catalonia, Spain, ethnic boundaries, minority language, nationalism
Acknowledgements

I’d like to begin by thanking my advisor Vladislava Vladimirova for guiding me through a challenging experience, and for heightening my analytical skills significantly. Her counsel has been invaluable.

Secondly, I want to thank my informants for their time, stories and friendship that made this thesis possible. In particular, Yuting Chu for leading me to most of my informants in the field, your enduring presence and moral support were and are precious.

Third, to my friends and family who have boundless faith in me. To Valeria Melchor Maciel, an inextinguishable light when things seem most bleak, I am most grateful.

Fourth, I want to thank my peer Andrés Gómez for tireless encouragement, presence of mind, and unflappable resilience in the face of hysteria. I am thankful for your friendship and cool intellect.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this work to the memory of Gigi Bertsch Naggatz, underwater archaeologist, sea turtle conservationist, and second mother.
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1 Introduction

Political claims for recognition of cultural minorities and their identities now-a-days are turning towards problematizing the acknowledgement of an individual’s or group’s status precisely because this status is rooted in inequality and oppression. The relevance of the recognition of Catalan identity in Catalonia, including the region’s movement towards self-determination\(^2\), is internationally comparable to independence movements in the Québec province of Canada as well as Scotland. As a distinctive community within Spain with its own language, culture, and collective consciousness that dates to the Middle Ages, the Catalan independence movement has in recent years taken up economic aspects following the 2008 financial crisis\(^3\). Along with issues such as Catalan language maintenance and its contestation by conservative parties of Spanish parliament, the ‘right to decide’ Catalonia’s political future and the legitimacy of independence are currently debated. Protests erupted in 2010 in response to the rejection of certain articles of the region’s Statute of Autonomy by the Spanish Constitutional Court, which included the status of the Catalan language, the reference to the region as a historical ‘nation’\(^4\), the management of its finances, and the implication to establish its own system of justice according to the Catalan Supreme Court.

Research Questions

The question this thesis seeks to answer then is: what elements and features do the people interviewed in this study see as making someone Catalan or Spanish; and what are the processes through which such meaning is attached to people? In Barcelona, Catalonia, a region where identity is highly politicized, forcing social identities, or “that part of an individual’s self-concept

\(^2\) Many referendums on independence have been held, most notably the one in November 2014 which was unofficially called by President Artur Mas and was non-binding. The vote received 80% support from a voting body of less than 50% of the population, but was labeled unconstitutional by the Spanish courts.

\(^3\) Some of these aspects include that Catalonia pays considerably higher taxes to Madrid than the other autonomous regions owing to the higher revenue that Catalonia generates. Madrid’s control of the distribution of these taxes towards the infrastructure and development of other regions is contested by certain independence platforms, calling for the increased power of Catalonia to manage its own GDP. These economic considerations are important for explaining the increase in independentist support in the last few years but economic components will not be significantly analyzed in this thesis.

\(^4\) Many Catalans consider Catalonia as its own nation and often refer to it as such.
which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel 1974, 69), into complex positions that affect the sense of belonging of its inhabitants. This thesis will address the broader field of construction of Catalan identity, but not necessarily all its aspects. More specifically, the present text attempts to analyze the following questions:

- What linguistic and political elements do informants employ in order to mark boundaries separating a Catalan from a Spaniard identification?
- How do narratives about how the independence movement is presented become part of my informants’ identity politics?
- How does Catalan as a historically negated identity either 1) accommodate others into an inclusive, modern identity or 2) present instances of exclusivity through essentializing discourses?

I argue that people can be flexible in their expressions of Spanish or Catalan identity relating contextually to one or the other, or simultaneously to both. In other contexts though, exclusive identification can occur: ‘only’ Spanish and ‘only’ Catalan. These preferences emerge from a history of resistance to hegemonic attempts to quash linguistic and cultural diversity for the latter group, and resistance to political and institutional manipulations of the resulting official Catalan image for the former group. Both instances of flexible and exclusive identification are based on the capacity to empathize with cultural-historical narratives as framed by important spheres of socialization: private and public relationships and their individual and social use. *Feeling* Catalan is often at odds with *being* a singular type of Catalan\(^5\). By this I mean that certain Catalans feel they are ‘only’ Catalan due to their cultural and social upbringing, but this identity is not recognized by the Spanish state since Catalans are officially considered Spanish citizens. The socio-cultural context of these identities deserves more attention in the form of a brief historical review to follow, situating both cultures as national identities.

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\(^5\) These terms of ‘feeling’ vs. ‘being’ will be elaborated in chapter 5 Identity Politics.
Relevance and Purpose

The cultural identities explored in this thesis attempt to represent my informants’ constructions of these very identities. These representations will further attempt to show how they feel they belong in their own country, nation, and city where identity can quickly enter into political dialogues of us vs. them. Moreover, I hope to show how political manipulations of identities is relevant within a relatively small ethnic group in Western Europe. The timely nature of the us vs. them dichotomy is simultaneously a way of categorizing ‘others’, and presents a space of engagement for anthropologists to challenge assumptions about the nature of ethnic boundaries and ethnic conflicts. By necessitating a deeper investigation into the nature of culture difference, the Catalan/Spanish dichotomy is situated to problematizing individual, conscious experience of these identities and their boundaries by nature of Catalan’s status as a minority culture group.

Due to a long history of Spanish centralist politics and their interactions with a region possessing its own political and cultural institutions, the development of both nationalisms alongside each other merits attention with regards to how national identities have been constructed (see also Hargreaves 2000). Manuel Castells’ The Power of Identity particularizes the fate of Catalonia in the origin and making of nations without states, specifying the failure of certain states to produce nations, the conditions of why nations exist, and the processes of their ‘(re)constructions’. He notes that the contemporary widespread use of Catalan “against all odds” as a powerful indicator (2010, 46). Regarding agency, David Block (2013, 126-128) discusses the theoretical friction between structure and agency among intercultural communications researchers, with structure being most commonly expressed with regard to emerging globalization and transnational phenomena in the contemporary movement of people. Though this thesis does not directly engage agency as a theoretical concept, the stories my informants tell about themselves and their own relationship to Spanish and Catalan culture and politics provide a base for conceptualizing identity from an individual narrative perspective.

In this sense, this thesis attempts to make a small contribution addressing these Catalan/Spanish identities from a narrative point of view (Block 2006). It will seek to elucidate the processes by which my informants make sense of the meanings attached to their identities, as well as their own sense of control in explaining which aspects of these identities apply to them.
Furthermore, ethnicity and culture being uniquely tied, advancements in ethnic studies run parallel with advancements in theories of culture, including critiques of the idea of culture. Changes in thinking about either theory will necessarily involve and affect the other with important extensions to identity politics, as well as nationalism and group processes of social ideologies (Verdery 1994, 41-42). Finally, the importance of looking at the process of the construction of social realities through experience, the stuff, or “content of cultural practices, symbols, and traditions” (Hummel 2014 53), that identities are made of and the importance of possessing identities cannot be overvalued (ibid, 47). As some of my informants do not feel they fit in with official or essentialist discourses of what it means to be Catalan or Spanish, these experiences, brought out through interviews, are useful for attempting to understand how individuals navigate these constraints. The purpose of this thesis is to engage conscious experiences of identity formation as my informants engage with political elements of social life, including their reflections on how they contribute to these identities.

The Anthropology of Ethnicity

Of the many issues that Catalan independence presents in its relationship with Madrid, the group’s status as a minority presents an important opportunity for serious anthropological consideration of minority identities and their relation to state processes of centralized cultural homogenization. I will limit this short review with selected works that draw on some characteristics of ethnicity and its development alongside anthropology.

Over the last several decades, anthropologists have been attempting to define ethnicity and the processes that lead to the categorization of various identities (Williams 1989, 401). Williams explains that political changes have caused a redrawing of boundaries around traditional cultures and the populations they encompass. Contrasted with race and class, ethnicity has become a more popular phenomenon to not only consider methodological and theoretical redefinitions, but also to offer lay people to build their own social and moral value (ibid, 401). Barth’s influential work Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, to be discussed more extensively in the theoretical section, provided a new direction to consider ethnic relations and their formation.

Ronald Cohen had elaborated that ethnicity suddenly became “ubiquitous” (1978, 379) and began to phase out what had been referred to in the past as “cultural” or “tribal.” Ethnic
“titles” (ethnic groups, ethnic boundaries, ethnic politics, etc.) were being given to many different types of cultural-social units. Drawing on Kroeber, Cohen problematizes this development as a possible trend for anthropologists to achieve “posture” in their work by invoking meaning to words like ‘ethnicity’ while discarding anthropological traditions in doing so (ibid, 379).

However, Lillian Trager notes the recent downturn in focus on the centrality of ethnicity and identity in anthropology as well as other social sciences, although interest and concern for both terms have increased significantly (1999, 110). In this sense, it is important now more than ever for anthropologists to consider what purposes ethnicity serves (an ethno-nationalist one for example) including why and when certain identities are invoked; both from a minority group’s perspective as well as the perception of these minority groups by those in the majority. At this point I will limit this short review of some of the developments in ethnicity that anthropology has taken up, and state that a definition for identity will be provided and discussed in more detail drawing on Stuart Hall in the theoretical chapter of this work.

### 1.1 Historical Background

The beginning of the Catalan nation finds itself in the Frankish conquest of Girona in 785 and Barcelona in 801 where a protectorate of Carolingian counts, appointed by the Frankish kings, assumed functions of representation, administration, military and justice. The first count of Barcelona (Bera) was followed by a succession of appointments made by notable local families and others of Frankish origin. The Muslims of al-Andalus (Andalusia) considered this community as independent of the Carolingian Empire since at least 940 (Fontana i Lázaro 2014, 12-13). By the year 1000, the counties that made up Catalonia had no political unity but were united by a common identity of language and a common acceptance of Barcelona’s preeminence, the beginnings of a nation without a state (ibid, 16):

There was no state but rather the foundations of a nation, in the sense that Azar Gato poses which, contrary to theories about imagined communities and invented traditions, claims the original importance of what lies behind them: the reality of national identities based in kinship, ethnicity, language and a shared culture, which, far from being purely arbitrary, are deeply rooted, and which, while always evolving, ‘are among the most

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6 Translations from Catalan and Spanish are my own.
enduring of cultural forms.’ This is corroborated in this case by Bisson when he argues that in Catalonia ‘the concept of nation passes before that of State’ and that ‘there is no doubt that in some sense the Catalan nation dates back to the first century.’ (ibid, 16-17)

As the above quote demonstrates, the origins of this discrete community lay the groundwork for what distinguishes Catalan culture from a Spanish one, both ethnically and linguistically, and underlines the Catalan nation’s ‘ancient past’, what many rely upon and refer to explain and legitimize their claim to an independent state that existed long before Spain became unified. The reference also points to the importance of family ties, a unique lineage of people that emerged long ago and who cultivated their own customs and institutions. Later in history, after the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), the Nueva Planta decrees (1707-1716) dismantled the separate Catalan legal system (the Corts Catalanes) bringing Catalonia under direct rule from Madrid and abolishing the administrative use of the Catalan language.

The early form of a sense of Catalan nationhood is critical to its defense today, especially concerning its relationship with the Spanish state. The aftermath of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) left Catalonia in need of workers to fill the labor vacuum, causing a migratory flux of around 250,000 poor, mostly illiterate, Spaniards from the south of the country to fill industrial and construction positions, making Barcelona the most important workforce concentration in the country (Riquer i Pernanyer and Culla 1989, 27, 30). As the victor of the war, Franco established a counterrevolutionary regime to restore a conservative social order and culture by officially abolishing any heterogeneous political, ideological, social or cultural manifestation. The regime based its principles on the Spanish extreme right’s ‘new’ ideology (largely inspired by the fascist movements during World War II) to eliminate national division or diversity and consolidate a Spanish national unity (ibid, 33-34).

The language and culture shared by Catalans is often contrasted with conceptions of what a Spanish identity means, specifically its position as a socially conservative, Catholic monarchy that attempted to unify all of Spain under the paradigm of ‘one culture-one nation’. Notably, the latter is more difficult to pinpoint based on the literature of Spanish nationalism, which has largely been ignored for political reasons. Those reasons most notably include the Franco dictatorship from 1939-1975, where all regional identities, including the Basque country, Catalonia, and Galicia were repressed to promote the centralization efforts of the regime via the “Catholic-conservative version of Spanish identity.” The Basque Country and Catalonia in
particular produced prominent clandestine and public resistance to the dictatorship, particularly the Basque terrorist group ETA which became a symbol of anti-fascist heroism (Álvarez-Junco 2011, 2). It is important to note that many Spaniards, along with the regional minorities, fought against the dictatorship and died at the hands of the fascist regime.

After Franco’s death in 1975, the transition to democracy (1975-1978) resulted in “a redoubtable backlash not only against the dictatorship, but also against any form of Spanish nationalism, whether or not it coincided with the particular Francoist vision. Accordingly, Spanish identity rapidly became synonymous with Francoism, especially in its militaristic and fascistic dimensions. Even today any manifestation of Spanish nationalism is regarded in many regionalist and certain progressive circles as inherently reactionary and untrustworthy.” The social repression experienced across Spain from this period motivated studies on its regional nationalisms, many of which treated Spanish identity with hostility (ibid, 2).

It is necessary at this point to explain the origins of this so-called ‘Spanish identity’ in order to trace the ways in which it was formed, expressed, and reproduced. In Álvarez-Junco’s book *Spanish Identity in the Age of Nations*, the formation of Spanish national identity began with the uprising against the French army in the 18th century, later described in history books as the ‘War of Independence’ (1808-1814). Loyalty to the patria (fatherland or homeland) could be found in patriotic songs and plays that evoked a romantic, emotional, and moral allegiance to Spain. This national rhetoric was reproduced by the Spanish monarchy, characterizing the rebellion as a defense of “‘what is ours’, ‘what is Spanish’, as well as the dignity and freedom of the ‘patria’” including important religious references to “a ‘holy Spanish insurrection’, ‘our sacred struggle’” which reinforced a “sacralized collective identity”. Resistance to foreign domination could then be tied to a remote past and identified with a ‘Spanish character’ in opposition to invaders, the nature of this character later transforming itself from loyalty to the crown to loyalty to the nation (ibid, 9-10).

Furthermore, language, myths, art, and religion served a symbolic purpose in constructing Spanish identity (ibid, 3), especially mythic heroes and commemorations to martyrs in form of public statues to reinforce nationhood as self-evident which, consequentially, undermined serious efforts to educate the public on the matter of nationhood. To sum up, “It is one of the many contradictions of nationalism that its proponents consider nations to be *realities* or *natural* entities, while fully aware that a genuine effort has to be made in order to consolidate
or to shape them.” (ibid, 113). This statement problematizes the primordial conception of nations as ‘existing since the beginning of time’ as separate entities. The social reproduction of shared and symbolic national realities informs public consciousness (see Anderson 2006). Having explained the nationalist sense to Spanish identity, I think it fitting to briefly develop the ethno-cultural standpoint to it.

During the 19th and first half of the 20th century, nationalism in Europe was reaching its highest point and it was widely believed that “there had been ‘Spaniards’ in ‘Spain’ since virtually the Creation” despite the fact that “Spanish identity…was not an invention of the nineteenth century” (Álvarez-Junco 2011, 13). Furthermore, no administrative or political unit encompassing the Iberian Peninsula nor “‘Hispanic’ personality” emerged after 500 years of Roman rule, making references to ‘ancient Spain’ “unwarranted distortions of the remote past” aimed at constructing a “modern national identity…which lack any historical meaning” (ibid, 14). However, a strong, united Spain still plays a role in the public consciousness today especially concerning Spanish territories and the precarious position the unified Spanish national identity is placed under when threatened by peripheral nationalisms, such as the Catalans and the Basques, that demand greater autonomy economically, culturally, and linguistically.

The beginnings of Spain (and Catalonia) are found in a flux of conquests of Roman, Frankish, Moorish and Visigoth rule, so attempting to place ‘Hispania’ historically has resulted in liberties taken by historians in defining its national identity. In Álvarez-Junco’s chapter *Ethnic patriotism*, the origin of the creators of this ideology is explained:

> It was only with the arrival of the Visigoths in the fifth century AD that ‘Hispania’ began to acquire an ethnic meaning in addition to its geographical one...The nationalist ideologues of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were to magnify this change to the point of transforming the Visigoths into the creators of a political entity that was defined as ‘Spanish’, partly because it coincided with the peninsular territory, partly because it was independent of ‘foreign’ powers and partly because, following the conversion of king Reccared in 589, its inhabitants could collectively be identified with the Catholic religion. (2011, 14)

The beginnings of a ‘Spanish nation’ were solidified at this point, setting religious, geographical, and ethnic boundaries. The author points out that this assumption is misleading since other ethnicities, languages, cultures, and religions inhabited the peninsula such as the Moors of al-Andalus; i.e. there was no national character based on Visigoth ‘culture’ but rather, “The formation of the ‘Spanish’ identity was centered upon the monarchy in a fashion similar to
practice in France or England, the two classical examples of State nationalism in Europe” (ibid, 40). Furthermore, the beginnings of ethno-racial distinctions can be noted here that serve to inscribe an ethnically diverse Spanish identity within a Visigoth (Germanic) one.

Having described a brief historical construction of the two identities in terms of their political manifestations, it is important to note here that Spanish identity is often conceived of as an essentialist phenomena that transcends the individual while, as mentioned previously, peripheral nationalisms such as the Basque Country and Catalonia are mere curiosities of secondary importance to the creation of the Spanish empire. The rapid increase of scholarly literature dedicated to peripheral nationalisms in Spain in recent years is, as Álvarez-Junco points out, counterproductive in that it conceives of the ‘Spanish state’ as inherently oppressive whereas the disproportionate studies of Catalan and Basque nationalisms “is due to their very exceptionality.” In other words, “The overriding focus on the Basque country, Catalonia and Galicia might indicate that these cases merit research precisely because they are ‘oddities’, while the Spanish one does not require the same scholarly dedication as it is a ‘natural’ phenomenon.” (ibid, 2). When culture enters the realm of the political, the complexity of these constructions is important to bear in mind. I now turn to a brief outline of the theoretical, methodological, and ethnographic chapters to follow and their purpose in elucidating the complexities of these identities.

1.2 Outline

To guide this thesis I review the ideas of Barth’s *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* that will later help to explain how my informants engage certain limits of accommodating Spanish and Catalan identities, showing how and why they identify with key elements relating to either one or both. Using Stuart Hall’s sociological subject (1992) I examine the formation of self as a reflexive process of conscious experience (Cohen 1994a) that is also influenced by processes of state-making that seek to essentialize ‘national identities’, including processes of government that attempt to make culture shared (Verdery 1994).

Language being the most obvious factor of division between the two, I begin chapter four by providing an example of a life history that accentuates the complexity of speaking one or more languages at different points in a lifetime and how this informs the emotional beginnings of
individual identity. As an affective process of symbolic attachment to Catalan identity, language will be the focal point of this chapter. Against the inclusive nature which two Catalan women attribute to the identity, I will contrast it with a view that claims certain limits to self-ascription. These limits are not only influenced by language but engage with political discourses prevalent in the media as it covers the surrounding independence movement.

Chapter five attends to identity politics and engages key elements as my informants reflect on their identities as pre-conceived anomalies. ‘Anomalies’ is a word expressed by an informant to describe the Catalan identity as something that ‘didn’t fit’ and ‘needed to be fixed’. Both at home and abroad, their experiences reveal transformations of their ‘selves’ during formative years of identity reflections. This chapter engages the independence movement in a discussion of identity politics that highlight important commonalities and contradictions between the Generalitat (Catalonia’s autonomous government) and the Spanish state to frame the complexity of political interpretations of identity.

Chapter six brings further empirical discussion of the impositions and contestations that have emerged from the subordination to, or homogenization of, local identities, again, as engaged by my informants. In this way, this thesis does not seek to provide a comprehensive overview of all the possible bones of contention that independence seeks to resolve, but rather deepens the issues, such as the race to independence and Spain’s interference in Catalonia’s language policy, that my informants have employed. Just as prevailing forms of conservative Spanish nationalism exist, an exclusionary Catalan identity appears as a construct of essentializing discourses to combat a perceived threat. The common ground of exclusion that both identities are capable of producing will be compared in this chapter to frame the concluding remarks concerning identity processes and their conscious interpretations and transformations.
2 Theoretical Background

The theoretical basis for this thesis will incorporate Fredrik Barth’s (1969) seminal work *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* which produced a vast literature in its wake, building upon tenets from Leach’s *Political systems* (1954) that ethnic identities are flexible, variable, and adapt to various social situations (Verdery 1994, 35). Due to limitations of space, certain works have been chosen to develop a brief outline of similar and contrasting theoretical directions and their adequacy for analysis in this thesis. To attend to this, I draw upon *The Anthropology of Ethnicity* (Vermeulen and Govers 1994) which places a renewed and updated emphasis on the relationship between ethnicity and culture since Barth’s (1969) introduction on the social organization of culture difference. To deepen the discussion on how boundaries have been conceived since this introduction, two principal frameworks have been chosen: consciousness of boundaries and boundaries of consciousness (Cohen 1994a); and ethnic boundaries from the perspective of nationalism and state-making, essentially what makes culture shared (Verdery 1994). These frameworks will incorporate Stuart Hall’s sociological subject position to explicate a continuous dialogue of identity formation. The reasons for choosing these principal frameworks will be explained respectively in sections 2.2 and 2.3. For now I will address why the sociological subject has been chosen.

Stuart Hall (1992) addresses the ‘crisis of identity’ in modern cultural identities, describing them as decentered and fragmented as compared to the previous conception of identity as stabilizing the social world. Outlined are three concepts of identity: the Enlightenment subject, the postmodern subject, and the sociological subject (ibid, 274). The Enlightenment subject has an inner core at birth, unfolding over time but remaining essentially the same. The center of this individualistic core was a person’s identity (ibid, 275). This center is, nowadays, considered to be changing according to the postmodern subject. The contradictory and ambiguous nature of many identities in flux presents the notion that identities are no longer fixed, especially due to structural and institutional change, and that their formation as a subjective response to the objective needs of culture is problematic (276-277).

For the purposes of this thesis, the sociological subject has been chosen to explore language as a discursive element of both Catalan and Spanish identities. The sociological subject is “formed in the ‘interaction’ between self and society. The subject still has an inner core or
essence that is ‘the real me’, but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the
cultural worlds ‘outside’ and the identity which they offer” (ibid, 276). In this sense, the subject
retains an individual character that is molded by relations to the outside world and the elements
continuously exchanged between self and other. This inner core contrasts with the unified
Cartesian subject of the individual that the Enlightenment concept proclaims (Barker 2012, 226),
molding the subject from a self that has autonomy over her own reasoned decisions and identity
rather than being formed by outside influence. Therefore, the ‘real me’ or who my informants
believe themselves to be will be analyzed in reference to the influences of their native languages,
the nationalistic discourses they engage, and the socio-cultural aspects of their upbringing.

Though a postmodern definition offers an important complement by specifying the
conflicting nature of our own multiple identities, it does not successfully discredit the scientific
method (Spiro 1996) and its anti-theoretical stance is essentially a theoretical position (Rosenau
1992). In his seminal work The Postmodern Condition (1984), Lyotard defines postmodernity as
an “incredulity towards metanarratives” (xxiv), something that does not align with a theoretical
approach that takes the narrative as a representation of subjective reality. Identification involves
a process of internalizing meanings and values as we place ourselves within cultural identities.
As they become ‘part of us’, these identities help to organize our subjective feelings according to
our own objective place in the social and cultural world (Hall 1992, 276). The sociological
subject is then formed “interactively” between the individual’s own world and the social world
that communicates the meaning of culture– through values and symbols– to the individual
(Barker 2012, 224). As Barker contends, the sociological subject is formed through difference
“as constituted by the play of signifiers”, that in turn defines who we are based on who we are
not (ibid, 226).

This *us vs. them* model can be problematic with regards to identity formation, however.
A. Cohen claims that this presents the formation of identity as a process based simply on
reflexive negation of what we are not (1994a, 61). He explains with an example: “If I identify
myself as Saami rather than as Norwegian I do not necessarily mean to suggest that I am just like
every other Saami. I do not have to sublimate myself in an ‘anonymising Saaminess’ in order to
suggest that Saami have something significant in common which distinguishes them from
Norwegians.” As a matter of autobiography, he claims, it is rather a process of what we know
about ourselves, and who we believe ourselves to be as a symbolic expression of ethnicity. This element is what makes ethnicity multivocal (ibid, 61).

Since it became an independent concept in the social sciences in the 1960s, ethnicity has transformed from a static approach tying each ethnic group to one culture, to an interactionalist approach that considers analyzing the social aspects and organization of ethnic groups while distinguishing ethnicity from culture. Considered by Barth to be a postmodern conception of the relationship between ethnicity and culture, Vermeulen and Govers give a threefold distinction of this relationship to address the original theory’s lack of systemic analysis of the distinction between ethnic identities and social identities: ethnicity entails a consciousness of “(ethnic) culture”, it involves the use of culture, and simultaneously is part of culture (1994, 2-3). Identities formed by boundaries are not necessarily ethnic ones, but considering ethnicity as an element of social organization (or “regulated interaction”) means ethnicity could also be considered an element of culture, viewing boundaries in interactional terms as well as ‘boundaries of consciousness’ (ibid, 3-4). Since the study of ethnicity is related to cognitive systems (Chapman et al. 1989) and ideology (Vermeulen 1984), ethnicity becomes part of culture (ibid, 4). To examine the ideas that led to this distinction, I will now turn to its origins with Barth’s original conception of ethnicity as a boundary and the intention of its use as a limit.

2.1 The Nature of Boundaries

At a significant turning point in social anthropology, Barth moves from the previously accepted canon of defining the content of ethnic groups as discrete units with a corresponding culture enclosed by territorial boundaries to, instead, the nature of the boundaries between these groups and their persistence and maintenance over time. The analysis of these boundaries involves conceptualizing ethnic groups as categories of ascription and identification by the actors who make up an ethnic group and serves to order interaction between people (1969, 9-10). More precisely, generally accepted definitions of an ethnic group within the anthropological community implies four principal points: 1) an ethnic group is biologically self-sustaining, 2) shares rudimentary cultural values achieved through a unity of cultural forms, 3) has a sphere of communication as well as interaction, and 4) contains a membership both defined by its
members and those outside of the group that distinguishes it from other groups classified by the same features (ibid, 10-11).

However, Barth problematizes these definitions by addressing the need to understand how and why ethnic groups emerge as a phenomenon, including their place in society and culture that calls for an empirical rethinking of the origin, structure, and function of these groups. From this critique, Barth contends that boundary maintenance does not follow from groups forming their own cultural and social forms in isolation (ibid, 10-11). As described in the historical introduction, Catalan and Spanish cultures have emerged over time through contact with Moorish, Visigoth, Frankish, Roman, and Jewish cultures and continue to adapt to a constant influx of migrants from other international communities today, especially in Barcelona.

In the same time as Barth, Moerman (1965) also points to identifying ethnic groups in isolation as problematic in his description of the traits of the Lue alongside their Northern Thai counterparts. In the same text, he remarks the complications of making these units comparable as a standard of reference for anthropologists, i.e. that language, culture, and political organization do not always correspond harmoniously and that ethnic groups as “culture bearing units” (Naroll 1964, 283) cannot be delimited with clarity if they cannot be applied to groups of the same order, using the same criteria (Moerman 1965, 1215-1216). Many people identify both as Spanish and Catalan, so describing their ethnicity as a single “culture bearing unit” would indeed over-generalize their cultural identities which encompass two spheres of influence in constant contact.

It is important here to attempt to differentiate culture from ethnicity in order to avoid their equation. Barth responds to this lack of engagement in the original theory reverting to the notion that empirical variation in culture is globally continuous, and that neatly differentiated wholes (cultures) are not accurate models to analyze populations that are often incoherent and contradictory (1994, 14). Instead, it is necessary to look at the experiences of acting and interacting in the world and with others (ibid, 14).

This signals both a need to engage the individual as the locus for experiencing and, in turn, forming ethnic groups as social realities that form part of the “precipitate” (ibid, 14) of our own identities accumulated as social beings. Using a Pakistani family in Norwegian society as an example, Barth deepens this distinction by pointing out that even as an ethnic unit, a family is a “crucible of cultural difference” with children receiving different cultural funds from Norwegian society than their parents. In this respect, culture has gravitated toward a description of a state of
flux, with change as a continuous feature in culture. Examining the processes that display relative discontinuity, one can better model the basis for ethnic identity i.e. determining what cultural differences ethnicity organizes (ibid, 15). Persons who accommodate an ethnic identity (ibid, 11) that is originally not their own are profitable ethnographic examples to explore the implications of ethnicity in organizing social interactions, and one that appears in a life history of an informant.

Returning to Verdery’s comments on the situated nature of ethnicity and how this can be used as an analytical tool, she problematizes what is often taken for granted in anthropology: that ethnicity is culture and culture is shared (1994, 40). Rather than applying a concept of shared meanings of culture, to think of culture as a zone of disagreement or contest opens its application to the politics of culture, especially nationalism and its relationship and manipulation of ethnic movements (ibid, 42). In this context, it is important to consider how Catalans, including those from Spanish backgrounds, view the dichotomous relationship between the two identities and how nationalism “writ large” (ibid, 42) is configured between them according to their own experience. In other words, “What is the relation between ethnicity and forces that seek to reify and homogenize culture – to make it ‘shared’?” (ibid, 43). Language plays a large role here, not only as the point of access to crossing between both identities, but also as the origin of identity formation starting from verbalization and realization. Returning to a basic definition of ethnicity as a continual process, with dimensions in time and space, language is a necessary component to observing contestations at different stages of life, both within an individual and as he or she interacts with society. As an ethnic group that defines itself largely with its own language the analytical basis of these experiences will be explored shortly through a deeper discussion of Cohen’s ‘consciousness of boundaries/boundaries of consciousness’ tenets.

To sum up, ethnicity will be referred to in this thesis as 1) a form of social organization 2) placing the focus of analysis on the boundary the group creates rather than the cultural material enclosed within it, and that 3) requires ascription by the individual and ascription by others (Vermeulen and Govers 1994, 1).


2.2 Language, Nationalism and Ethnicity

A more contemporary analysis that stands on the shoulders of the previously mentioned authors is Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s *Ethnicity and Nationalism*. In this volume Eriksen engages the ambiguities of contemporary society and media in their usage of terms like ethnicity, ethnic conflict, and nationalism. Noting that Max Weber predicted that the utility of ethnicity and nationalism would diminish as societies became more industrialized, individualistic, and globalized, he draws the important conclusion that ethnicity, especially after World War II, is more important than ever and has developed significant implications for identity politics and nationalist movements around the world (Eriksen 2010, 2-3).

As mentioned in the introduction and to be further developed in chapter five, Catalan identity as the banner and mechanism for mobilizing a political campaign for independence has serious implications for the cohabitation of peoples of various backgrounds living in Catalonia. Although he addresses the “fields of contestation” produced by the upsurge in recent years of ethnic and national identities on behalf of labor migrants and refugees and their influx into Europe and North America (ibid, 3), the same concept of contestation can be applied to Catalonia and Catalans who feel their identity and institutions are negated by the Spanish state. The growing support for independence is seen as a necessary step in order for the Spanish state to recognize their identity as well as their entitlement to their territory (ibid, 3).

Spanish and Catalan identities share many cultural similarities and customs that make drawing ethnic distinctions between the two difficult and sometimes ambiguous. However, they are often at odds politically and linguistically. My informants represent a limited sample of perspectives that range from occupying both identities to negation of one in preference for the other. Their subjective experiences, as will later become evident, draw their own boundaries at crucial points of contestation, e.g. rejecting Spanish identity as an historically imposed identity of the state, or relating more to a ‘progressive’ Catalan identity that outlaws bullfighting on grounds of animal cruelty (this cultural tradition is a Spanish one). Furthermore, focus will be placed on the idea of both identities as two different culture groups with language as the most obvious boundary between cultures, including the implications of a distinct Catalan nation alongside the Spanish state.
Cohen’s synopsis of the volume based on a 1996 conference on ‘Boundaries and Identities’ highlights that, “...the definition or ascription of a group’s identity may be the subject and outcome of a cross-boundary struggle for control; that the social identity of a group may also be contested within the group itself...that discourse about identity within the boundary tends to focus on its absolute character...”, meaning that the identities described in the volume are self-referential but informed by the presence of the ‘Other’ to describe their own “integrity, the truth of their religion, their creativity and ingenuity, their ‘authenticity’ etc.” (1999, 1-2). Cultural difference is not only a question of degree or relativity, but of kind in that each party sees different issues as being at stake (ibid, 2). These concepts will be applied to explain how Catalans delimit their culture as a group, especially with regards to the ubiquitous reference to the Spanish state as a limiting and imposing force that automatically necessitates contestation of certain values that are placed upon them.

In the same volume, Barth’s definition of a boundary as “a particular conceptual construct that people sometimes impress on the world” as well as the need to ask when this happens based on an individual’s experience is useful for this thesis. To culturally analyze boundaries, he argues, anthropologists must “demonstrate that the particular conceptual construct of a boundary is indeed being employed by a group of people” and is not simply “a series of logical constructs that will produce a simulacrum of the pattern observed in people’s actions.” In other words, the ethnographer can “lay bare the concepts that people are actually using, and the connections that people themselves make, when they perform such actions” (1999, 19-20). This will be developed in more detail in the methodology section on how interviews were used to bring this about, especially regarding the individual as locus for storytelling.

Verdery offers the idea that national identities produce the structure that gives rise to ethnicity as difference. She draws on Brackette Williams (1989, 1990, 1991) who devotes considerable attention to this question in the salience of state-making and nationalism as linked processes of cultural homogenization (ibid, 43-44). Homogenizing culture by way of nationalist ideologies, as Verdery puts forward, creates the homogenous culture as a standard “against which all others will be rendered visible – rendered in other words ‘ethnics’ or races”, making ethnicity a product of state-making, not something prior to it. The same applies to national identities, they are rather the “frame” which gives rise to ethnic identities, or the social significance of ethnicity as difference. The relationship then, as Verdery explains, among culture,
state, and ethnicity culminates in the practices of government involved in producing difference while instituting it under the guise of ‘identities’ (1994, 47). Official constructs of a Catalan and Spanish identity by both national governments is later engaged to address how these practices affect my informants’ cultural identities and concept of self.

To explore the question of how culture is shared, it becomes useful to consider how individuals imagine their communities, by problematizing consciousness. Barth’s original conception of the boundary includes its interactional quality of maximizing advantage and minimizing disadvantage, which the individual is supposed “to accrue to them by taking the role of the collective other, and presenting their ethnic identity accordingly.” (Cohen 1994a, 60). Cohen criticizes this assumption by placing greater emphasis on the individual and his or her own experience, as opposed to ethnicity as generalized to the members of a group which ignores self-consciousness and symbolic expression of ethnic identity (ibid, 61).

2.3 Consciousness of Ethnic Boundaries

Cohen underlines the centrality of boundaries as the core task of anthropology, the result of which is to “extend our own limited consciousness in order to comprehend another’s” (1994a, 65). His theoretical basis intertwines with Chang’s (2008) methodological approach using autoethnography of conscious experiences to guide an advance to understanding ourselves through others.

To understand others, and the relationship between self and society, Cohen (1994b) maintains that it is necessary to consider the self at the center of questioning how social groups are possible, or even the overarching question, “How is society possible?” (ibid, 8). Sökefeld (1999, 417-418) comments on the lack of attention to self since it has mostly been considered separately from identity in anthropology, resulting in the denial of others’ selves. How can groups speak as a unified whole to others and the world at large when individual difference is rampant and largely unmeasurable in its diversity? Cohen asks (1999, 22). To remedy this lack of attention, and taking the self conscious being as a focal point and single representative of a much larger group, anthropologists can employ this alternative approach, “not in order to fetishise the self but, rather, to illuminate society.” (ibid, 22). As will become evident, I attempt to represent my individual informants accounts through conversation to cast light on the larger social issues they themselves take up.
Without exploring all the tenets that self-consciousness entails, which are diverse and complex as they gravitate toward cognitive theory, I will instead engage selfhood as a self-reflexive process. As Cohen (1994b) points out, it is impossible to know what ‘the anthropologized’ is thinking and our representations of others rely on our own knowledge of self as anthropologists (ibid, 3). On the other hand, assuming that the anthropologist and ‘the anthropologized’ are not alike is problematic because it eventually leads to the construction of their difference (ibid, 4). Furthermore, treating individuals as socially or culturally driven ignores the authority of ‘self-driven’ aspects of behavior that go beyond ‘sociological roles’ which focus on what an individual ‘does’ rather than who the individual ‘is’ (ibid, 7).

In his postmodern conception of culture, Barth paid special attention to the organization of diversity, reexamining the relationship between the individual and the collective, and offering a rethinking of the notion of ‘society’ as well as the very definition of ethnic identity (Vermeulen and Govers 1994, 5). This poses the questions: “If cultures are not clearly delineated, homogeneous entities, how can we expect people to agree on what that culture is, or who they themselves are?” Cohen explores this question by thinking of an ethnic group as “an aggregate of selves”, each one of which “produces ethnicity for itself.” (1994a, 76). I will attempt to show these ‘aggregated selves’ either as informants feels they are denied by a culture group, or otherwise forced to promote it in order to avoid its repression and loss of cultural distinctiveness.

I will limit the theoretical discussion at this point and conclude by stating that this thesis can be considered as an anthropology of self-conscious experience, engaging not only culture groups within nationalism, identity politics, etc. but also individuals as they navigate their own conscious choices, developing reflections on their place within society through past and present experience in light of their own awareness of cultural/ethnic boundaries.
3 Methodology

I had first arrived in Barcelona in late August of 2015 to take an intensive Spanish course for five months. As time went by I became more curious about how certain people chose to define themselves, accommodating a double identity or rejecting one or the other outright. The motivation to pursue my research question also intermingled with my own personal experiences with identity questions, touching on the paradoxes of nationality, place of birth, and belonging. In that vein, I wanted to gain a deeper knowledge of how others address these very personal questions, if in a different geographical and political setting.

How does it feel to occupy two identities at once and what are the justifications we tell ourselves, and explain to others, to describe this feeling that is often troubling? How does one define his/herself to others when identity is located and informed in and by multiple places and contexts? How does culture configure our perceptions of self and, consequently, how do others perceive our unique relationships to culture? I acknowledged early on, before the start of my fieldwork, that these musings were influencing the types of questions I asked and the answers I was looking for. However, I found that my informants were equally interested in engaging these questions and often had similar doubts and epiphanies that were revealed in the time we spent together.

The principal aim of my fieldwork was to gather the most important indices of Catalan and Spanish identities in Barcelona, Catalonia. I was most interested in which characteristics separated the two realms and which points converged close to the boundary between the two. My focus also widened by the end of the fieldwork period to include how identities had evolved across lifespans and the circumstantial and temporal factors involved in these evolutions as indicators of identity change, formation and boundary contestations, these factors being ongoing processes throughout a lifetime.

With this brief introduction of my ethnographic intentions, I want now to reinforce the concept of reflexivity, both as a personal attribute and methodological component of my fieldwork.
3.1 Reflexivity

Heewon Chang describes the rising interest in autoethnography, or the use of the ethnographer’s autobiographical experience to inform research questions in the field and with the specific intention of understanding self to make a connection with others (2008). Although this ethnography is in no way a self-narrative, Chang’s insights into this type of method are helpful in acknowledging the importance of inter-subjectivity and locating shared identity questions, even if they cross-cut cultural boundaries (ibid, 57). This is a valuable form of cultural analysis for the ethnographer and has been used in more experimental forms of writing (see Nash 2004 and Bochner & Ellis 2002). According to Chang, one of the benefits of autoethnography includes allowing researchers “easy access to the primary data source from the beginning because the source is the researchers themselves.” (ibid, 52). An opponent of this approach, Salzman (2002) decries the rampant enthusiasm on behalf of anthropologists in welcoming this postmodernist form of self-reflection (or self-reports as he refers to them) with little critical reflection for what remains for the case of objective reality. However, what is considered objective is up for debate and is not easily confined by any one method.

For the purposes of this thesis and the questions it seeks to answer, subjective emotions play a vital part in relaying the experiences my informants have shared. Though objective reality may be called into question when, for example, my informants talk about the Spanish state as an external (some might say imagined) enemy, their accounts of having their identities negated (whether it be linguistically or politically) is subjectively meaningful. People often act on information that they perceive is real even if, objectively, it is not. Therefore, the accounts of those who do are equally part of the identity narrative as a whole and subjective engagement with their stories should not be ignored in order to attempt to remain comprehensive. On the other hand, Salzman makes an important distinction that for the sake of anthropology retaining objective, qualitative, and scientific rigor, the ethnographer must be careful to avoid self-indulgence as the primary point of data collection that disregards cultural analysis from the perspective of others (Salzman 2002, 810-811).

My own positionality of coming from Swedish and North American cultural backgrounds has prompted me to ask how others accommodate multiple identities, especially when and where, as well as teasing out individual responses to difference and being perceived as different
by others. In this way, these self-reflexive questions inspired an autoethnographical method. Having provided a brief window of the importance of reflexivity from an anthropological perspective, I would now like to discuss my experience and methodological relevance of language study and preparedness.

### 3.2 Language Course

My first week in Barcelona, I focused on finding a language school to enroll in an intensive Catalan course. The purpose of this was to better integrate myself while I was there, to perhaps conduct interviews in Catalan and be able to understand conversations around me in public spaces, or with future informants in a variety of situations. Keenly aware of the fact that some people prefer to be spoken to in their native language for reasons of comfort, I expected my limitations with Catalan to be problematic in terms of access to certain informants. Since code-switching\(^7\) is a commonplace practice in Barcelona and most people are virtually bilingual, I learned by the end of the language course that my misgivings were unfounded, that most had no problem speaking Spanish even if Catalan was their ‘own’ language.

After the month-long language study came to an end, I did gain valuable insights as to my classmates’ reasons for taking the course, providing me with information on what kinds of personal situations motivated them to actually learn Catalan, especially considering its status as a minority language. Whether the reason was love, a university course taught in Catalan, or the desire to integrate better in the city, their lifestyle choices pointed to motivations for entering Catalan life, where language was a necessity for moving forward. These motivations would later come up in conversations with my informants, so the Catalan course was a practical way of getting my feet wet in a field that would later prove itself to be very complex.

The course helped to reveal characteristics of Spanish and Catalan circles and spaces as ones that contain a practical use (Spanish) and one that goes beyond practicality to introduce the speaker into spaces and people that are normally closed off to non-Catalans. From this observation, I began to think of Spanish speakers as separated by a glass wall from the Catalan speaking population. Both languages are mutually intelligible for most, but speaking Catalan is

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\(^7\) Alternating between two or more languages, or varieties of language, in conversation.
the key to opening the door in the glass wall where it otherwise remains closed to those who cannot fully understand the muffled speech acts occurring beyond their reach.

Language confidence, preparedness, and efforts made to relate to someone in their native language was a crucial step before beginning my interviews. The importance of being linguistically prepared when researching contentious or intimate issues was clear at the outset since English was not an option with certain informants. One of my informants even stated that she would have switched to Spanish if I began the interview in English.

Both my teachers proved to be useful fountains of information, giving us names of Catalan authors, journalists, and popular musicians as well as their own viewpoints on the identity situation. I was able to take notes here and there when lessons digressed into the cultural aspects of Catalan life. A fellow classmate also happened to be conducting his doctoral research on Spanish nationalist narratives surrounding the mythology of heroes embodied by soldiers during war time, and I could have short chats after class about his criticisms of the political aspects to the emergence of the ‘identity crisis’, and exchange recommendations for references about Spanish nationalism.

Language being uniquely tied to culture, both of my teachers unanimously noted on several occasions how sensitive the topic of identity was in Catalonia, the changes they’ve seen in independentist sentiments in recent years, and how they conceived of themselves as both Catalans and Spaniards. I used this information as a springboard to begin planning my interviews, which I describe in the following section.

### 3.3 Interviews and Limitations

As a highly accessible method, recorded interviews became my method of approach. I later termed the overall experience as an ‘ethnography of conversations’: interviews that were both structured to produce comparative evidence, and unstructured to allow the chance for key informants to reflect freely on what came to mind after structured questions had been asked. Bernard reflects on choosing between these styles of interview as a measure of control for types of data the researcher is looking for, describing unstructured interviews as a chance for informants to “let them express themselves in their own terms, and at their own pace” (2011, 157). The intention behind choosing interviews was to use conversations as the center for data
collection, creating a narrative description of a cognitive, uninterrupted (sometimes monologue) expression of all areas of contention that come to mind when speaking of Catalan and Spanish identity. The flow that ensued allowed me to trace patterns of similarity between informants to inform prevalent, shared social conceptions of identity; when patterns diverged, individualistic identity constructions appeared, creating useful delimiting points of inference about individual and group identity formulations.

Finding informants was my biggest challenge, but a challenge that was quickly remedied thanks to a friend who fast became a sort of field assistant. After explaining to her the purpose of my research and that I was specifically looking for Catalan/Spanish people or strictly Catalans, she became the person responsible for finding and introducing me to most of my informants. Ten individuals were involved in the interview process to varying degrees over the four months I spent in Barcelona, mostly individually with two groups of 2-3 people. Interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to 1.5 hours and were conducted in Spanish or English. They can be treated as 10 different landscapes in which opinions diverged and met with difference and similarity to reveal personal accounts of how identities are formed in a unique cultural milieu and the associated political reflections that derive from group identification. Since speaking of Spanish and Catalan identity immediately incites political overtones concerning the ongoing movement for independence of Catalonia, the current temporal landscape also situates the informants’ insights within a specific stage of identity politics in Barcelona: the nationalist sentiment in Catalonia, the political discourses this provokes with Madrid, and reflections on a European identity as a solution to inclusivity.

At this point, it is important to point out that identities change across life histories. The point in time at which I interviewed my informants can be seen as a locus for collecting data about a particular reference point with regards to the history lived before and the future that is imagined after. To begin, I usually started by asking my informants about their origins, their first memories of identification throughout childhood, adolescence and major life events that pushed questions of who they are to the forefront. How do they introduce themselves to other people? Are they Catalanists? Do they identify as Spanish? Do they want independence and for what reasons? How do they feel the two identities are reconcilable or problematic? Their attractions and repulsions to various phenomena in the course of their lives provided a way to

8 A person advocating Catalonia’s status as a nation and the unity of the Catalan culture.
examine the value significance they placed on the importance of identity and how this configured their everyday well-being. I would also comment that transcribing interviews is a highly time consuming process, with an hour-long interview taking six times as long to transcribe, especially considering my non-native ear and noise pollution of recorded files in public spaces. As a result, much of my time was taken up in the field attempting to comb over the details of life histories.

Having elucidated my general approach and types of questions I asked my informants, I now turn to how I examined these identities while attempting to avoid the pitfalls of interpretation in my position as an investigator.

3.4 Judging Identity and Storytelling

The method used to measure\(^9\) these values requires problematizing how the ethnographer is able to make judgements about identity. The concept of situated knowledge implies that the data do not simply exist “out there”, being hidden or revealed by informants in response to the researcher’s presentation of self, but rather that the data themselves are a product of the relationship between the researcher and her informants (Adams 2009, 326). Some of my informants were one time acquaintances, others were friendships I’d developed over the months before fieldwork began. I believe that having a more intimate relationship with informants allowed me to notice when clichés or stereotypes became the mode for explaining difference, helping me to discriminate what could be considered useful data. This idea inspired a narrative approach to allow my informants to become the storytellers in order avoid speaking on behalf of others especially as an outsider.

Michael Jackson (2002, 11) discusses storytelling through Hannah Arendt’s idea that it “is never simply a matter of creating either personal or social meanings, but an aspect of ‘the subjective in-between’ in which a multiplicity of private and public interests are always problematically in play.” This interchange between public and private lives can be seen as a balancing act between my informants and I, carefully exchanging information between each other according to vested interests. In this vein, I attempted to make my intentions clear, that I was there to do research, record interviews, and use the transcribed text for analysis.

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\(^9\) “Measuring” is a term used by Adams (2009) but I will employ ‘judging’ to distinguish that I will not attempt to ascribe quantifiable values.
Laura Adams (2009, 319) engages the specificities of identity research by defining what needs documenting: “Ethnographers often look for three kinds of indicators when researching identity: boundaries (what’s inside or outside as well as the boundary’s permeability); changes in and contestation over boundaries and the content they encapsulate; and narratives that express implicit or explicit cognitive content of a group’s identity.” Boundaries and their contestations are expressed through the narrative that underlies them, which will be used to identify elements of Catalan and Spanish identity. By comparing the data from interviews of my informants I will attempt to represent how they conceive of themselves according to predominant nationalist discourses as it intermingles with the independence movement. This comparative method was intended to avoid a homogenized, static view of group identity when discussing boundaries (ibid, 322).

Furthermore, the material produced in this thesis is a product of extensive quoting which Adams also addresses in her discussion of ethnographic methodology in approaching identity (ibid, 330). Anderson (1999, 54-63), for example, quoted his informants’ interviews in their entirety which allowed readers to interpret and analyze the evidence for themselves. Adams (2009, 330) addresses this last point succinctly:

With good ethnographic writing, we do not just learn what the ethnographer and his informants experienced but get a sense of how we ourselves would experience the same situation, giving us a much more sophisticated understanding of the data the author is relaying to us than we would get from a narrative that tried for reasons of objectivity or academic style to distance the reader from the social milieu being described.

From this perspective, a degree of transparency evolves between ethnographer and subject while allowing the reader to draw their own conclusions alongside the ethnographer. Finally, this way of doing ethnography was chosen as a technique to “understanding the ‘cognitive content’ of identity...the aspect of identity that structures the story of the group, how they see themselves in the world and how they see the world in relation to themselves” (ibid, 323). Following this method of approach means that I was not only able to attempt to construct the story of the group, but employ Jackson’s notion of storytelling as an intersubjective space of engagement between myself and my informants.

As Law (2004) reminds us, attempting to capture the multiplicity of the everyday realities that fieldwork tries to address, especially when questions involve individuals and their relationships to broader institutions, requires ethnography to take a chaotic and often improvised
approach. Along with Hugh Beach (2013), concepts of a time-stop approach to thinking about ethnicity and identity can be reached through examining specific moments of identity expression as if they were on a continuum of evolution, similar to the biological evolution of species. According to Beach:

My suggestion is that the relation between genes and evolution in the biological world is structurally homologous to the kind of relation between the relatively ‘set’, seemingly ‘essentialist’ form determining group ethnicity, on the one hand, and the changing ‘constructivist’ content defining cultural identity. I mean that this relation of relations is not merely one of analogy. The essentialist versus constructivist oscillations which persist in our human identities are in fact continuations and transformations of our biological realities. (ibid, 130)

The same approach to transformation and continuations is used by attempting to observe them as they emerge in the narratives, as essential group characteristics interplay with culture.

Addressing Catalan and Spanish culture in a multicultural city like Barcelona posed its own unique challenge. Referring to Gupta and Ferguson (2012, 375), “‘Multiculturalism’ is both a feeble acknowledgement of the fact that cultures have lost their moorings in definite places and an attempt to subsume this plurality of cultures within a framework of a national identity.” Although this thesis is mainly about, but not limited to, conceptions of Spanish and Catalan identity, recalling problems of multiculturalism was important during fieldwork that involved speaking with people whose families came from such diverse places as Andalusia, France, and even Taiwan. Their conceptions about national identities between Spain and Catalonia are not isolated to their geographical place at the time they were interviewed. Knowledge is coming from many different places in this context. Drawing on Gupta and Ferguson, “Both the ethnological and the national naturalisms present associations of people and place as solid, commonsensical, and agreed-upon, when they are in fact contested, uncertain, and in flux” (ibid, 379). As described in this section, methods were catered to attempt to address these uncertain areas of contested, fluctuating knowledge: by following patiently behind the flows.10

The structure of chapter four involves discussing other linguistic origins of identity and their relation to the Catalan language. The chapter will proceed with what makes someone Catalan, including Catalan language as expressing a ‘way to be’ or cohesive element of being. Furthermore, emphasis will be placed on how an informant with a Castilian speaking background

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10 ‘Following patiently behind the flows’ is an expression borrowed from Richard Kernaghan (University of Florida) whose mixed graduate-undergraduate course I took, entitled Ethnography and Illicit Flows.
has accommodated the language, and finally how language choice offers access to Catalan social circles, as well as how Catalan social circles (i.e. in the workplace or at university) accommodate Castilian speakers.

In summary, I have employed Adam’s principles of judging about identity at the boundary between cultural narratives with storytelling as ethnographic approach. I now turn to the ethical considerations of bias, situated inquiry, and the ramifications of collecting and revealing the stories of others.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

A classmate posed an important question after my return from fieldwork: “Considering your own personal emotions related to your nationalities, how did your emotions affect the way you engaged with certain informants?” My own thoughts on nationalism, as I mentioned previously, skewed the types of questions I decided to ask, specifically concerning how people introduced themselves or tried to explain themselves to others. At one point during my interviews, I noticed a sort of conditioned bias towards Catalans as the ‘underdogs’. In hindsight I was able, to a certain extent, to prevent myself from empathizing with narratives that were not my own. As Law (2004, 3) puts it: “Perhaps we will need to rethink how far whatever it is that we know travels and whether it still makes sense in other locations, and if so how. This would be knowing as situated inquiry.” Considering this reflection, I wondered to what extent I could compare my own identities (i.e. nationalities) to ones I have no identification or experience with in order to write a thesis that will satisfy not only my informants but myself. This is not a question that is readily answered, yet it is significant with regards to having enough presence of mind to avoid confounding our own self narratives with the lives of others, as Salzman (2002) cautions.

In their discussion of relational ethics surrounding autoethnography, Ellis, Adams, and Bochner comment upon the ethical considerations of implicating others in the stories we tell about them. The more intimate my relationship to certain informants was, the greater the concern for relational ethics became (2011, 281). The nature of the details of certain interviews touch upon childhood insecurities, stories that were told willingly to me because of my relationship to the informant. Retelling them in the course of scholarship is another matter and deserves careful
consideration in *how* and *what* is being told. Some of my informants were friends before fieldwork began, others I got to know through the course of my interviews, and hearing their stories placed us on a heightened level of intimacy. As Ellis et al. explain: “Participants often begin as or become friends through the research process. We do not normally regard them as impersonal ‘subjects’ only to be mined for data.” (ibid, 281). This is especially true for my close friends. To protect my informants’ anonymity I avoid any physical descriptions and stick to first names only. Participants were fully aware that I was recording the interviews and intended to transcribe them and use the information in the course of writing this work.

Having explicated the methodological approach, ethical considerations, and style of my interviews, I believe it suitable to delve into the first ethnographic chapter: the contentious and intimately constructed boundary that is language.
Linguistic Map of Catalan’s Expanse

(Image taken from Balcells 1996, xviii)
4 Language

This chapter will focus on establishing language as the primary departure point for ‘self-ascription’ to a Catalan identity. I will begin by discussing an informant with a different linguistic origin, and how this person accommodated the Catalan language upon her migration to Barcelona. The chapter will proceed with what makes someone Catalan from the point of view of two women who are native Catalans. This will build up to considering Catalan language as expressing a ‘way to be’ or cohesive element of being. I will then explore the linguistic reflections of an informant whose native language is Castilian, and who has accommodated the language but not necessarily the Catalan identity in what he regards as its official form. These three informants will serve to frame how language choice offers access to Catalan social circles, as well as how Catalan social circles (i.e. in the workplace or at university) accommodate Castilian speakers. At this point, I will provide a short linguistic background of Catalonia and a limited development of the relation between language and national identity.

After Catalonia became an autonomous region in 1979, Catalan became introduced in schools throughout the 1980s. The beginnings of the transition of the language into school curricula was marked by a period of resistance by Castilian speaking pupils with immigrant origins. Woolard’s study (2013, 211) employs literary theorist M.M. Bakhtin’s (1981) chronotope, or a ‘time-space’ configuration that formally differentiates and constructs literary genres. Chronotopos problematize ‘scale’ in providing a basis for thinking about different frameworks of time and space that produce a particular narrative according to their social and geographical landscapes (Woolard 2013, 211). Changing stances towards Catalan language and identity address the issue of ‘self-ascription’ as mentioned above. She follows up with some of these pupils 30 years later to trace attitudes of positive and negative adaptations to the language (ibid, 210-211).

The article confirms that after decades of Catalan linguistic policy, certain informants who learned Catalan as a second language viewed it as presenting possibilities and a language that helped them to develop personally. Another informant rejects Catalan based on its ethno-nationalist component (ibid, 221-222). According to Roller (2002) this ethno-nationalist component is the main driving force behind Catalan nationalism. In her account (ibid, 274) she traces the link between language, linguistic policy, and nationalism in Catalonia, defining two
main ways to interpret the centrality of language within the Catalan nationalist movement: a cultural pluralist tradition and a cultural-historical determinist tradition. A cultural pluralist view (defined by historical developments) has resulted in a romanticist tradition that uses language to express the Catalan collective experience. The latter nationalist discourse has been present since the 19th century in Catalonia which invokes the “soul” or “essence” of the llengua pròpia (own language) to the one nation which reinforces the collective identity and shared history to which its speakers belong. The historical repressions and struggles that accompany the emotive symbolism of the Catalan language signifies a particular linguistic nationalism.

Belief in this nationalism is reproduced by the language and its use as a marker of these struggles, reinforcing the uniqueness of the culture and its values. Language is central to the mobilization of the Catalan nationalist movement, using cultural values, symbols, and myths as key elements of nation-building (Roller 2002, 274). The second view of the centrality of language in Catalonia’s nation-making takes identity as a social construct and language as the glue.

With language as a symbolic boundary of identity, maintenance of national identity and citizenship is ensured by creating an ‘us vs. them’ narrative of a shared history. The nation is then imagined through language and used to accommodate specific socio-cultural objectives. Language protection, for instance, is used by Catalan nationalism to justify nation-building processes that rely on language policy to strengthen the national character rather than limiting language to an ethnic distinction alone. In this view, elites use cultural and historical determinism as a reaction to perceived state interference, the substance of which underlies mainstream ‘Catalanism’ (rejection of secession but reinforcing the nation-building process) (ibid, 274-275). This political strategy is based on the historical use of the hecho diferencial, loosely translated as the notion of a ‘distinct society’ (used in Québécois nationalist discourse) that differentiates Catalans from the rest of Spanish society and serves to protect this singularity from eroding in the face of the larger group (ibid, 275, 287-288). These characteristics of Catalan nationalism elaborate a lens through which to consider cultural integration especially since the 1980s, when linguistic policy served as a unifying force among political parties bent towards the nationalist movement (ibid, 276).

This article aids in framing how the origins of linguistic associations play a primary role in accommodating Catalan as a language that feels authentic and natural to use, rather than
politically divisive, a dichotomy that is present among my informants with Catalan speaking origins (Anna and Belen) vs. one that is from Andalusia (Raúl). To give a brief introduction of the linguistic complexity of the Iberian Peninsula and the relevance of language origins and their social organization, I turn to Milagros who problematizes identity from a multilingual perspective.

4.1 Linguistic Origins of Identity

I enter the café where Milagros is waiting at a table on a glassed-in patio. She is the mother of one of my informants and one of my last conversations in Barcelona. By that point, I gained a more cohesive, emic, subjective picture of the emotionality of the Catalan language through my informants. We get quickly to the point as soon as the word ‘identity’ is mentioned with ‘language’. The latter is something that I couldn’t escape with any of my informants: in this field, identity begins with language.\(^1\)

Milagros is an Editor-in-Chief at *El País* and Professor at the University of Pompeu Fabra, both in Barcelona. Born in the small town of Benasque in the highest peaks of the Aragonese region of the Pyrenees mountain range and neighboring Catalonia to the left, she begins by describing her earliest memories of her mother tongue *patués*, the colloquial name given to the language by its speakers, otherwise known as the Benasquese\(^2\) dialect and the regional language of the circumscribed Benasque Valley. As such it has a unique evolution as an archaic language with little contact with other languages for many years, birthed as a transitional dialect that shares features with Gascon, a dialect of Occitan, and possesses characteristics that are transitional between Aragonese and Catalan. Today it is influenced by French and Spanish, especially since the advent of radio and other forms of communication that penetrated a valley that is otherwise difficult to reach by travel. Due to its transitional similarities to these languages it is difficult to classify (“Benasqués” 2000). Milagros describes the language as one that formed her emotional identity as a child and evokes the memories she associates with the landscape of the valley, the earliest principal lexicon having its roots in agricultural activity. In what follows

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\(^1\) Again, I want to specify the use of my informants’ emic conceptions in close relation to language rather than a strict theoretical application of language to identity.

\(^2\) Minority dialects like Benasquese are not officially recognized.
she explains how the power of Catalan, Spanish, and patués peaked and diminished throughout her lifetime.

After a stint in Zaragoza (Aragon) she moved to Barcelona, “the most dynamic city in Spain at that moment”, to study journalism in 1975 where she was introduced to the city’s fervent political life through friends she met as a writer for a clandestine, left-wing magazine. At this point, both Francisco Franco’s dictatorship and health were diminishing as well as the ubiquitous fear of speaking Catalan in public spaces, a practice outlawed at the beginning of his regime. Today she is vice-dean of the Catalan Journalists Association and has collaborated in the past with the Catalanian government’s television network TV3 entitled ‘Bon dia, Catalunya’ (‘Good morning, Catalonia’).

As she begins to explain the transformation of her languages and the changes in their meanings and utility, she raises her index finger to bring my attention to an important point in her story: after her mother passed away, she stopped speaking patués with her sister as the maternal language and Catalan was established as the emotional language of her family, as well as her sister’s family. Her mother’s absence seemed to signal an abrupt halt in its utility and meaning, the origin of the very language having ceased to exist. Spanish, she says, is reserved for the workplace and when she speaks at conferences. It is the language she was taught in school at the age of seven in the Benasque Valley and was the vehicular language of public life.

In this sense, her languages are public and private manifestations of herself, a cycle of under and over communicated features of her personality and identity that change according to the presence of place and people. “It [patués] was a language of an affective area that was formed by childhood impacts...we spoke it with our mother, cousins, or the people who lived in the mountain.” Geographical, territorial, sensorial, and memorial associations with patués are now a thing of the past. “I ask myself now if I would have the same interest and association with the valley if it weren’t for my family connections, the memories of my grandmother doing housework in our country home.” She returns every year to visit her relatives but her current state of being, after all this time, has changed into something very different.
It is important to note here that people’s choice of lifestyle and place, such as Milagros’ migration from the countryside to the city, has also influenced the language and ethnic identities she engages with, especially Catalan. Her association with *patués* as the maternal language, a language of a close community of people, is put forward in her association with Catalan as a language that is less patriarchal. For example, she emphasizes her early Catalan social connections in Barcelona as a ‘clandestine’ and perversive group that sought social justice against the dictatorship. She also tells me that the first television station in Spain to feature a program starring a lesbian couple was featured on the Catalan network, which she regarded as a socially progressive step towards normalizing ‘othered’ sexualities. In this way, she constructs Catalan identity as one that is more open and inclusive, one that seeks to eliminate discrimination while integrating what can be considered as ‘othered’ identities.

After integrating into Catalan society, the Catalan language soon became her own, reflecting an interesting capacity to move between languages and, eventually, adopt and feel identities inherent to them. “We incorporated Catalan as our own emotional language,” she
affirms. The emic conception of the language for many has been associated with its relation to private spaces such as the home (especially during its ban from being spoken in public), a feeling of freedom, a way ‘to be’, and a source of resistance against Spain. According to Milagros, who has lived her entire adult life in Barcelona, the great identity question in the region centers around one question: “What do you feel?”

In order to more deeply engage these feelings, an overview of the origins of the Catalan language is necessary to situate it geographically and politically, as well as in terms of its historical significance and expanse.

4.2 The Catalan Language

The Catalan language (català) is a Romance language spoken by about nine million people in Spain, including Valencia, Catalonia (about six million), and the Balearic Islands. The language also finds itself in the Roussillon region of France (125,000 speakers), hails as the official language of Andorra (30,000 speakers), and reaches as far as the city of Alghero, Sardinia, Italy (40,000 speakers). A charter and six sermons date back to the 12th century followed by a proliferation of poetry by the 13th century. After a period of decline, the Catalan Renaixança (Renaissance) emerged in the late 19th century and produced a wave of Catalan writers and poets (Posner and Sala 2015). It transitioned from years of institutional repression to its co-official status with Spanish since the 1979 Statute of Autonomy confirmed it as the “native language” of Catalonia (Miller and Miller 1996, 123), and later became implemented as the vehicular language in schools with the 1983 Catalanian Linguistic Normalization Law (Rees 1996, 313). Having provided a brief historical evolution of the language and its status in Catalonia, I now turn to an analysis of how Castilian speakers have accommodated the language.

Kathryn Woolard’s (1989) Double Talk: Bilingualism and the Politics of Ethnicity in Catalonia examines the language maintenance of Catalan in Barcelona, especially regarding its survival of the Franco regime and its attempt to make Spanish the only working language. According to the author, “The contemporary vitality of Catalan as a vernacular language despite centuries of institutional inferiority is unique among the minority languages of western Europe, and especially noteworthy in light of the repression of the Franco years” (ibid, 3). At this point, a symbolic connection can be made between the Catalan language and resistance, and establishes
the premise that, for many, the identity connected to the language has always been a question of resisting attempts to eradicate it in order to culturally homogenize Spain. Furthermore, its symbolic power given its status as a minority language is a unique feature of the endurance of the Catalan language and the culture surrounding it.

In documenting the political significance of Catalan and why there is prestige associated with it, Woolard traces the resurgent use of Catalan to the 1960s as a symbol of political protest. According to her analysis, “This political symbolism has led younger, intellectual, and politically progressive sectors of the Castilian-speaking population to accommodate linguistically to Catalans…this as often constitutes a move toward identification with Catalan ethnicity as it does the courteous use of Catalan as an intergroup language.” (ibid, 77). Hence, political resistance in the form of freedom fighting is not only a symbolic marker of the Catalan language and identity, the intellectual prestige placed upon it signifies it as socially positive for some.

Another of Woolard’s studies conducted in 1980 reiterates Catalan’s association with positive values that include leadership and intelligence. This is especially noteworthy considering the dominance of Spanish in the region and the extent to which the language is politically enforced (Fishman and Ofelia García 2010, 43). This phenomenon of linguistic prestige is rooted in the regional economic dominance of the Catalan bourgeoisie, which prompted many Castilian-speaking immigrants to the region to make efforts to learn the minority language. From Woolard’s analysis, the maintenance of Catalan depended largely on “face-to-face everyday reproduction of the language among the Catalan speakers, who highly valued their language as an expression of solidarity.” (ibid, 43-44). Catalan is therefore an indicator of a united community that draws its legitimacy from an ancient past, a history of resistance to various moments of oppression, and can imply class distinctions. However, as one will see in the following chapter, opinions concerning class are downplayed by some, with certain informants claiming that language and residence in Catalonia is the only necessary factor to being welcomed by their community. As a side note, many people in the field stated that they are proud to be Catalan, indicating that their pride originated from the association of this identity with its resistance to hegemony.

Admittedly, this overview is limited in an important sense. Even those who have grown up in Catalonia but have Castilian speaking families might not feel fully incorporated within a ‘Catalan identity’ as those who have Catalan families and speak the language at home. The
purpose of the normalization law was not only to promote Catalan as a vehicular language of public life, but to offer children who are surrounded by a Castilian dominated media, and a Castilian speaking family, the opportunity to exercise the language on the way to becoming fully bilingual. This does not mean, however, an automatic identification with Catalan as an identity and reflects the complications of attempting to instill a national identity within an educational policy. To illustrate the problems and complexities that arise from the current language policy, I turn to the next section and my discussion with two Catalan women, Anna and Belen. This section will also address what makes someone feel Catalan in order to begin to differentiate not only the linguistic boundary of Catalan, but its social and educational implications for informants of specific origins.

4.3 Being Catalan

Unlike other cultures that have an identity, Jews for example, language is fundamental in Catalonia as a distinctive, cohesive element of being. Language gives them a way to be. For me personally, this way of being in the world, which is distinct, I can tell that between the progressive people of Zaragoza, Spain, and Catalonia there are no ideological differences. I feel comfortable with progressives from Spain and from Catalonia. I share cultural, ideological, literary and all types of reference points with them. But then there’s the culture of the state, the way of perceiving the country, the countryside, the way of being. It’s a thing that’s a bit indescribable which makes me feel more comfortable with Catalans right now that with the rest of Spain. (Milagros)

Near the middle of my fieldwork I sit down to talk with two of my informants, two Catalan women who identify themselves strictly as such. In light of the previous discussion on the symbolic markers of Catalan, I focus on the part of our conversation that touches on what makes them feel Catalan and not Spanish. I begin by asking, what makes someone Catalan? Anna\(^\text{13}\), in her early 30s, born and raised in Barcelona, responds, “I think that you’re Catalan if you want to be Catalan. In this sense, I think we are pretty open. If you’ve learned Catalan, for me, if you remain living here now you are Catalan. It’s not as if you have to show a lineage or your last name.” She portrays Catalan identity as inclusive, the only requirement to join the

\(^{13}\) Anna is the partner of one of my previous Spanish language course classmates. Belen is originally from Valencia and was brought along to the interview by Anna.
group being knowledge of the language and residence. Her friend Belen, originally from Valencia, quickly adds, “There are also few people whose parents and grandparents are Catalan.”

Both women balked at my reference to Catalan as an ethnicity, correcting my impression with the affirmation that it is not an exclusive identity in that sense. What they meant, including Belen’s comment about last names and lineages, is that Catalan does not, or should not, provide membership based on genealogical heritage of the culture. It should not matter that one’s parents or ancestors are not Catalan for a person to be considered Catalan, both from within and without.

Barcelona today is an infusion of many different cultures and boasts a heavy flow of tourists throughout the year. The city is in constant contact with multiculturalism and difference, something that causes a great deal of anger and mistrust between Catalans and tourists and what I noticed as heightening their exclusivity as a group. From some scribblings in my field notes, I’ve compiled a rough, tourist-length glimpse of the city:

‘Tourists go home’ is spray painted on some walls in the Gothic quarter, other notices remind people to be quiet after hours in what is a very noisy city. Based on casual conversations I had, this is a reaction to people who come, drink, jump off balconies into swimming pools, and leave the city like a garbage can instead of the home it is to those who live there. I began to sense that Catalan culture is invisible compared to the homogenous representations of ‘Spanish culture’: flamenco dancers (an Andalusian style of music and dance with Romani influence) and Mexican sombreros can be found walking along La Rambla, the main avenue of Barcelona that starts at the statue of Christopher Columbus pointing to ‘America’ and ends at Plaça de Catalunya in the city center. Prostitutes, drug dealers, and pickpockets intermingle with tourists, residents, theaters, fine dining, hotels and every type of street vendor and artist imaginable. The difficulty of finding a Catalan course and the ubiquity of ‘Learn Spanish in Spain!’ advertisements online and in the city further point to the fact that you must really look for Catalan culture to see and experience it.

The way my informants engage these representations of culture, including language, and difference is worth noting. Anna addresses the difference directly:

I don’t consider myself very different from Spanish people. It’s simply that I am Catalan, I want my state, and I want to be recognized. Every time I have to fill out a form online and write that I’m Spanish, it bothers me because that’s not me and that’s it. I want to put Catalan, but not because it’s better than Spanish or very different – not at all at the level of personality, culture, and such.
Her comment reaffirms that Catalan and Spanish culture do share many similarities at the social and cultural level but, as Anna explains, the historical context of her growing up included the defense of her identity, defining who she is based on what she is excluded from. For her, creating a state is the next logical step to be officially recognized. She has never felt Spanish because her subjective reality has always been negated by, and does not fit in with, the conservative ‘Spanish’ model.

Catalonia’s relationship with the rest of Spain, in particular Madrid, is full of political tensions and ones that will be explored in the next chapter on identity politics. For now, I will attempt to give a brief glimpse of how language relates to the identity situation in Barcelona. To do that, I will start with an informant who is suited to problematizing Spanish and Catalan and their value according to his experience. In contrast to Anna and Belen’s conception of Catalan as a inclusivist, unifying group, Raúl feels that his origins are irreconcilable with what he perceives as a normative representation of Catalan identity.

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14 Conservative Spanish politics will be engaged in greater detail throughout chapter five in a discussion of the developments of Catalan and Spanish nationalisms.
4.4 Being Catalan and Spanish

Raúl is one of my last informants and distinguishes an important point between the social conception of Catalan identity and restrictions to employing it in everyday life as a language that matters:

To verbalize, to speak, means realization. In other words when someone speaks, including inside their head, they’re putting their thoughts in order and constructing a thought, and when one says ‘I’m Catalan’ or ‘I’m Spanish’ it’s something that you have constructed–because you’ve learned a language, because at the same time you’ve adjusted to a culture, so you begin to feel this way.

In his view, he had already formed a stable part of himself that could not change: Castilian is his native language and is uniquely tied to his Andalusian background. I ask him about his relationship to Catalan identity knowing that he speaks the language but does not identify himself as such. The question is complicated because he must consider his childhood, an uncomfortable time of navigating two identities that did not appear to be reconcilable. “Many people in my situation with a family like mine, who were born here and have lived here and speak Catalan, they feel Catalan. I don’t feel Catalan. I feel it but not according to the image that people have of what it means to be Catalan, which is also a construction.” He maintains that this construction extends to a normative image of what a nationality should be, including a Spanish one. People don’t hold up Spanish banners because it is facha, a reference to right-wing nationalism. This stereotype of Spanish identity is a conservative, austere one and is colored by historical memories of an archaic past.

According to Raúl these identity associations are still present and reproduced today in different forms of media as an official image or the common way of thinking about an identity. In other words, he claims there is a way in which people understand being Catalan and a way in which people understand what it is to be Spanish. Raúl defines himself as Spanish when I ask him. However, introducing himself to others is more complicated, especially in Barcelona: “I don’t understand how, in this place, they conceptualize what it is to be Spanish nor do I understand how being Catalan is defined here. Therefore, if they ask me here I don’t say I’m

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15 Raúl is a PhD student and research fellow at the Department of Literature, Autonomous University of Barcelona, and one of my former ELE teachers (Spanish as a Foreign Language).
Spanish, I say ‘I’m not from here, I was born here but my family is from Andalusia.’” To form a construction of himself that makes him comfortable means transgressing what Catalan and Spanish social identities represent to him in Barcelona. In the privacy of conversation, his individual frustrations with the two groups comes to light in a way that does not fit the everyday reality that exists around him, his ‘true’ self that is constructed of many different locations inside and outside of Catalonia does not align with the imagined, normative, social collective of what he perceives is modern-day Catalanism. I begin to wonder where he has accumulated this image. Luckily, the conversation turns toward language again, both in the privacy of the home and the social field of the schoolyard.

In Raúl’s experience, the first memory of reflecting on oneself emerged on the playground, returning not only to language but to where that language came from. Woolard affirms this as language authenticity (2005, 2). He explains that according to some, if you don’t speak Catalan at home you’re not Catalan. With regard to official discourses, ones that can be seen and heard on the autonomous community’s TV station TV3 as well as in educational curriculums, an environment is created that my informant felt excluded from. “They don’t allow me to feel Catalan. My way of being Catalan, my identity, this construct does not fit in.” Raúl feels its incongruent that the majority language is not present in public spaces, on the placards of plazas (all written in Catalan). He feels that Catalan, Basque, and Galician should be offered in public schools as a more inclusive linguistic educational model that offers immersion in the cultures of Spain and to counteract the barriers and preconceived ideas surrounding minority culture groups in the country. He believes Catalanists promote their culture as a closed unit with little possibility for outside influence: “This is the way it is, this is ours, and that is all there is, and everything else does not belong to our culture.” The sense of exclusivity rears its head again, and I wonder what an inclusive identity would ideally mean.

His cigarette burns as he takes another invigorated puff, hesitating and picking up again at a rapid pace, with slight dissatisfaction at the inexactness in his own self-description. He begins to give an analogy of standing next to a Portuguese man, who he can understand but cannot speak to. Yet, he feels almost as if a Spanish man is expressing himself since he speaks a variety of other Romance languages. He starts to focus on the bodily form, to gestures of communication and closeness when speaking. He explains this ‘melting pot’ metaphor through a
broader definition of his identity that also extends to, and is created by, his way of communicating others:

‘Mediterranean’ solves my identity problem and now I realize that identity is almost a question of borders because it’s the way of behaving, the history, and the history of languages that is much larger than two or three centuries. We’re talking about 4,500 years since Aristotle, Plato, democracy, if we put it that way. But it wasn’t just the history of the democracy...olives, the Mediterranean Sea, this air, this manner of speaking closely with someone, of communicating with people that today still exists.

His solution is to broaden the geographical, historical, and cultural boundaries that delimit what it means to be Spanish or Catalan. His consciousness of his Catalan identity is more ambiguous than his conception of himself as a Spanish speaking person with Andalusian descent. The latter is more definite while the former is more finite. He seems to have surpassed an ‘institutional dictation’ (Cohen 1994a, 69) of Catalan identity that was revoked by his negative experience of this identity’s representations through television and public spaces. Furthermore, his enactment of the word ‘border’ seems to suggest that there is a limit to his conscious application of himself to the Catalan culture, even though he speaks the language perfectly. His identity is more Mediterranean (in fact, he now lives in Greece). “To verbalize, to speak, means realization,” Raúl mentioned earlier. He tells me that he learned early on that his native language and Andalusian heritage precluded him from adopting Catalan identity as his own.16 Clearly, language is not the only criteria for accommodating a Catalan identity. The discomforts of trying to define himself as Spanish or Catalan means he must widen and rework their very definitions, reaching to the past to solve his identity problem. In his view, he has his own conception of who he is as a Spanish speaking person.

Having described some of the reflections surrounding Catalan language and identity, its reverence and its problems, I now focus on language choice as a door or barrier to social circles.

16 These reasons will be explored more deeply with regards to their political engagement in chapter five.
4.5 Language Choice

Woolard (2005) addresses the linguistic authenticity of Catalan as both private and particular as a minority language in terms of its value to its speaking community. She contrasts this with the linguistic anonymity of Spanish as a public language that is common or general in its voice. To convey this difference, I speak with Albert¹⁷, 25, also born in Barcelona.

Albert makes distinctions about when he knows to speak Catalan and when not based on appearances. If people seem like tourists or foreigners he approaches them in English but also with the intention to practice the language with others. Normally he chooses Catalan at first and if the person does not follow, he has no problem switching to Spanish. When asked whether my informant expects to be received in Catalan when interacting with shopkeepers, ordering something at a restaurant, or performing his daily activities, he responds with indifference but says that it bothers some of his friends:

For me it doesn’t matter much, but there are people who complain about it. If someone has lived here a long time and doesn’t learn the language...I have a lot of friends who are bothered by this...I think that speaking Catalan in Catalonia opens many doors for you and there are circles that you cannot enter if you don’t speak Catalan. If you don’t speak it then you have to get on with your circles and you will never really be included in getting to know our ways, because I think it’s the only way...There are people who arrive here and complain because they are asked to learn Catalan saying, ‘On top of this I have to learn Catalan, but Spanish is spoken here!'...There are people who say, ‘You should speak Spanish because this is Spain...If the kings here spoke in Catalan why should we now have to speak Spanish? There was a long period in this region when they only spoke Catalan. Why do we have to change this now?

He describes this tension between the public dominance of Spanish as a global language and one that dominates the rest of Spain, and the private importance of Catalan for everyday life in the city. Many Castilian speakers can understand Catalan but cannot speak it (or were not required to according to their job). Spanish is then the common and generally most efficient vehicle of communication of public life in Barcelona.

Anna and Belen note that most tourists or people who arrive in Catalonia to stay or to visit learn Spanish as the most ‘useful’ and efficient way to integrate themselves. I’m reminded

¹⁷ Albert, who studies and works near Barcelona, is an informant introduced to me by Yuting. Albert’s mother Juana is an example of someone who, with origins in Andalusia, integrated with Catalan circles and crossed the ethnic boundary. She now goes by Joana and considers herself Catalan.
of my own decision to come to the very same city to improve my Spanish only last year, anxious
about whether it would be enough or if I would need to learn Catalan at some point. As many,
including myself, can attest to, Spanish is sufficient to get by. However, there are those who
welcome the gesture to learn the language, the ones who will give you a different regard if you
speak to them in Catalan, the ones who are responsible for opening the door to other social
worlds that one would otherwise walk by as if they were invisible. Even the students in my
Catalan language course were there because of a course requirement, a significant other who was
Catalan, or a desire to integrate better after years of living in the city.

Anna stated that learning Spanish is more useful in large cities like Barcelona that are
centers for commerce, a hub for tourists, a place where people pass through with the need to get
in and out in the most efficient way. This does however mean that in business life where
efficiency is key, Catalan takes a backseat as Belen explains with regards to her work: “I work in
Barcelona and my colleagues are Catalan. If a department of 20 people has just one person who
is Spanish speaking, the entire team will speak Spanish unless you are addressing someone
personally, then it’s in Catalan.” Anna relays a similar anecdote with her university course; one
Spanish speaking student in a classroom of Catalan speakers asked the professor to switch
languages because he could not understand. The professor refused, stating that the university
offers about 80% of its courses in Spanish, making a point of the necessity for his course to be
taught in the autochthonous language of the region.

Belen has never been asked to prove Catalan proficiency in any job interview, only
Spanish and a part in English. Anna later explains that mostly local businesses use Catalan in
working life. Since Catalan is co-official with Spanish it is not necessary for many jobs.
Although it is normalized, Belen explains that the negative side of the lack of Catalan use in the
public sphere is that it will disappear, and that a normalized language should appear in all sectors
of public life. Anna also claims at one point that ‘they are trying to get rid of me’. This implies
that her identity is not only produced from her social experience growing up in Barcelona, but as
a conscious reaction to vindicate a part of her that she feels is slowly being homogenized by the
ubiquity of the Spanish language and culture in everyday spaces.

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Normalization is a type of linguistic policy aimed at the generalized use of a language, in this context
with the added intention to preserve and encourage the use of a minority language.
Consciousness of Self and Language

This chapter has ventured through the origins of the Catalan language, and my informants’ personal relationships to it in the course of everyday life. The dominance of Spanish as the common national language is salient in the face of Catalan as a historically underrepresented language. The emotional attachment to it is not guaranteed, however, as Raúl claims. Belen (Valencia), Anna (Barcelona), and Milagros (Benasque Valley) on the other hand, describe the language as a central feature of their will to be.

Drawing on Cohen’s tenets of consciousness, these opposing points of view can be considered as having a ‘high degree’ of conscious difference (Vermeulen and Govers 1994, 4). As interaction between Spanish and Catalan cultural groups have increased, and as the Spanish language became the dominant one of efficient communication in Barcelona public life, Catalans such as Belen and Anna present their language and identity as one in need of promotion against the encroachment of Spanish language and traditions. On the other hand, there is the women’s’ insistence that knowledge of the language and residence in Catalonia are the only requirements for ‘becoming’ Catalan, and that the identity does not seek to be exclusive. This is problematic for Raúl, since his impression of ‘becoming’ Catalan means that you must speak Catalan at home; his native language posed not only a linguistic barrier of communicating naturally in Catalan, but the cultural associations and experiences he accumulated towards Catalan identity, such as TV3 and his educational experience, presented a limit to his connection with the identity as his own. Catalan language as a ‘shared feature’ of the culture was, in this sense, limited. He was not able to be his ‘Andalusian self’ when presented with a Catalan identity that seemed to suggest that he fell outside of what was considered as ‘belonging’ to the culture.

More of these elements will be explored shortly, but the purpose of this chapter is to show how language is a decisive factor in identity formation. It is an affective process that is experienced from within and without. Milagros attests that it is the ‘will to be’ that defines the specific Catalan character. Her upbringing in the Benasque Valley, through a minority language of the mountain that was lacking in institutional power, guided her towards Catalan as a language that fought and fights against this power in order to ‘vindicate’ it as Anna and Belen put forward. Her Benasque self falls under the umbrella of her Catalan self, but not necessarily under her Spanish self. Her references to Catalan television’s normalization of ‘othered households’ (i.e.,
in which a lesbian couple might be featured) as well as the identity’s greater sensitivity to questioning patriarchal frameworks of thought are elements that differ from what she conceives of as the ‘Spanish’ model of identity, that is rather more conservative and socially homogenizing.
5  Identity Politics

If I feel profoundly Catalan and it forms a part of my emotional identity and I can’t renounce that because I’m me...Many Catalans say, ‘I’m only Catalan, I’m not Spanish but I’m European.’ Why is there this equation? (Milagros)

The brief excerpt above gives a summary that raises questions and complications. Some Catalans have moved so far away from what they consider Spanish identity, akin to the ‘Castilian mentality’ described in the introduction that is now associated with the Spanish right-wing, that they feel they can participate more seamlessly in a European or Mediterranean identity. Milagros believes this is changeable if there is a change in the identity politics surrounding what some define as an identity crisis, if only Spain were more inclusive. She also notes that austerity politics from Germany and the fact that Europe is trending toward becoming less inclusive have exacerbated feelings of mistrust toward Spain. A European identity alongside a Spanish/Catalan identity is further developed in chapter six.

The purpose for this is to show how the mobilizing processes of prevailing forms of nationalism and state-making are geared towards a homogenized view of ‘shared’ culture. Returning to Verdery’s original question, “What is the relation between ethnicity and forces that seek to reify and homogenize culture – to make it ‘shared’?” (1994, 43), I will attempt to show how Catalans experience and perceive of their own nationalism, and the logic to its development, as a response against conservative forms of Spanish state-making. This will include how peripheral identities are then considered as ‘anomalies’. Following Verdery (1994) and B. Williams (1989), the state creates as significant “preexisting ‘differences’” of kind, whether it be ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. (Verdery 1994, 45-46).

I will proceed to show how, in turn, certain forms of Catalan nationalism have led to their exclusionary nature, moving from language as an affective process to its politicization and essentialism that is often found in independentist discourse. For this last point, I will engage Raúl’s experience of this ‘essentializing’ Catalanism, and how it has led him to believe that in order to be a ‘good’ Catalan you must also be an independentist. For now, I turn to deepening the understanding of Spanish and Catalan nationalism, with a brief international contextualization, through the eyes of three of my informants.
5.1 ‘The Empire on which the Sun Never Sets’

The identity situation in Catalonia cannot be separated from the independence process and nationalism which has a long history dating back centuries. Muro and Quiroga (2005, 10) summarize that “Spanish political life is often marked by an exchange of attacks between Spanish and regional nationalisms”. They hold that there is a dichotomy of ethnic and civic Spanish nationalism discourses that have changed according to political circumstances (ibid, 25):

The emergence of peripheral nationalist movements at the turn of the 20th-century introduced a new variant into the Spanish nationalist discourse that led to further changes in the concept of the Spanish nation. The conservative canon went through a process of further ethnicization, adopting previously liberal features such as the promotion of the Castilian language, and radicalizing Catholic bigotry as hallmarks of national identity. The liberal idea of Spain, in turn, increasingly adopted a democratic and multicultural nature, in an historical process that had much to do with the opposition to the National Catholic canon and the political alliances progressive forces reached with peripheral nationalists during authoritarian periods.

Peripheral nationalist movements refer mainly to the Basque Country, Galicia and Catalonia and play an important role in the beginnings of the independence process including its status today. The above quote further illuminates the division of the generally more progressive nature that characterize political life in Catalonia versus the essentialist, religious, conservative politics that extend to the ethnic quality of Spanish nationhood.

With reference to Catalonia, Llobera (1994, 214) claims that a “reservoir of ethnic potential” is necessary to legitimize a claim to nationhood. To deepen further the interplay of ethnic and civic nationalisms, Rogers Brubaker takes up these two forms of nationhood by explicating civic nationalism as defined by its “liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive” nature, and ethnic nationalism as “illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive.” (2004, 133). Certainly at this point, one can draw the link between the exclusivist, ethnic nationalism that is one variety of Catalan nationhood. The civic sort I will explain with reference from an informant to a comment made by Jordi Pujol, the first President of the newly formed Generalitat. My informant explains: “Our first democracy – the Generalitat – with Jordi Pujol, he said once, ‘People who work and live in Catalunya are Catalan’ – and that made a huge impact on people –

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19 The phrase comes from an informant, Biel, to describe Spain as one of the global empires that was so extensive that there was always at least one part of their territory in daylight.
we needed the people, we didn’t have the workforce. We had the lowest birthrate in Spain and Europe…his own wife somehow said that we’re an open community.” The civic nationalism that the president invoked was apparently successful to an extent, however the ethnic nationalism that is purported to be the essence of the independence movement certainly presents a boundary of exclusion and does not guarantee that people will feel Catalan just because a politician minimizes their identity to their potential as citizen workers.

To address this point more deeply, I refer to my first interview in the field where Eze\(^{20}\) describes the origins of independence:

The independence movement began as a kind of Spanish nationalist movement against the French…fostered by the French invasion (Peninsular War 1807-1814). It was a partial triumph to oust the French – so the attitude of the right-wing movement even in the army from the beginning of the 20th century and now can be explained as an attempt to prevent at all costs that from happening: the independence of part of the territories of Spain – the Basque country or Catalonia.

His friend, Biel\(^{21}\), responds, “I would say prevalent forms of Spanish nationalism seem to have these kinds of essentialist, territorial, possessive conceptions of populations in a certain territory – if you are there you must be Spanish whether you want it or not. It’s a very primitive [form of] political thinking.” My informant does not neglect to mention that the democratic record of Catalan nationalism, what he describes as freedom fighting, will not take long to become tainted by forms of extreme nationalism as an indication of Catalan identity. For informants like Raúl, this seems to have already happened. In this way my informants who can’t fit into the official image of Catalan identity, and the ones who reject a Spanish identity, can find common ground in their self-perception as an anomaly if for different reasons and pressures.

Biel engages the idea of identity as an anomaly with regard to the ‘one nation-one culture’ doctrine imposed on peripheral nationalisms throughout Spanish history:

I don’t think Spanish nationalism is that different from any of the others. We tend to think it is because we have been the victims historically – as we belong to a culture that has suffered especially, because we were the part that didn’t fit – we had to be

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\(^{20}\) Eze is a postdoctoral researcher in Philosophy of Law at the Department of Law, Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona. He is a longtime friend of Biel and showed up by Biel’s invitation to our interview.

\(^{21}\) Biel is a doctoral student at the Department of Law, Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona. I met him through Yuting and he is also the son of Milagros.
fixed...This is a debate we’ve been having our whole lives, not because of independentism because it was not a popular front option, so it was not something necessary to address as a relation between Catalonia and Spain…Catalan political life is always about the relationship with Madrid.

For the last 300 years. (Eze)

For Biel, independence is a position he can understand, but one that he sets aside for the time being once nationalism enters the picture. Catalan politicians have occupied a number of parties along the political spectrum, further complicated by the addition of identity politics which divides the spectrum further. Although the independence process is important to discuss when engaging identity, the sheer number of political parties makes this difficult to develop fully in this context, especially since many parties added independence to their platform to gain popular support. Jordi, an informant I will introduce shortly, weighed in on the complexity of the sheer number of political parties working for independence: “I don’t think there is any other country in Europe where you have so many factions working on the same scenario – meaning left wing and right wing, monarchists and Republicans, Catalans and Spanish – all of them have to somehow make it fit.” Though this thesis does not attempt to analyze each political party’s role in pushing for independence, it is important to note in order to visualize the multiple positions and political divisions that are attempting to incorporate and realize independence. Furthermore, Biel, Jordi, and Eze’s comments frame what one of my informants, Rai, describes as a ‘political theater’ to be described in chapter six.

For now, I return to my informants’ conceptions of self within the nationalist discussion and turn to Yuting, Biel, and Eze.

5.2 Deconstructing Identity at Home and Abroad

My next conversation has all the traces of fluid interactions, one that happens to produce the most informative and comprehensive conversation of the transformative power of nationalisms over identities. My friend Yuting, a woman from Taiwan residing in Barcelona, reflects on her own identity as principally Taiwanese rather than a Chinese identity that resulted

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22 For a critical view of the independence process, see: http://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/Victoria-Camps-independentista-visceralidad-discernimiento_0_295720717.html
from the fascist rule of Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), homogenizing Taiwanese language and culture under its rule with similar undertones to the fascist rule of Franco in Spain. We touch upon subaltern themes of language repression and homogenization. She tells us that some, such as her father, consider Taiwanese to be an improper language to treat certain subjects. Eze immediately identifies with her lived experience of having one’s identity subordinated: “That happened with Catalan like 40 or 50 years ago,” Eze says. “It’s very famous,” adds Biel, “a language that is not fit for high culture, for commerce or anything too sophisticated.” The value of Catalan identity today is quite the opposite and survived many attempts to erase the culture. Yuting confirms that she was made to believe that her Chinese identity was more legitimate growing up than her Taiwanese one until she reached university. There she found other young people who felt oppressed by this definition and she began to reflect on why exactly Taiwanese identity or language should still be placed in this position.

As many of these interviews go, when my informants hesitate or struggle to explain their Catalan identities alongside a Spanish one they revert to how they introduce themselves to other people. Eze sheds light on how far his conceptions of Spanish nationalism travelled, especially the need to distance himself from the empire surrounding it:

The first time I really had to choose how to introduce myself to others was last year when I made a one month trip to Chile for work related reasons and I met lots of people and they asked me if I was Spanish or where I came from. I found myself saying, without reflecting too much about, ‘I’m from Barcelona.’ And those who understood what the situation was they quickly saw what I meant by that, that I didn’t want to define myself as a Spaniard and I was surprised because of the views about Spain given the colonial past. They were quite ready to accept it and understand it.

The reason for this understanding he attributes to a shared experience of what independence from Spain would mean in Catalonia, as well as Spain’s colonial past in Latin America:

...I find that it’s quite helpful as a heuristic device to explain to them the relationship between Catalonia and the rest of Spain and the attitude that most Spaniards had regarding the independence of Catalonia appealing to the colonial past. I think that it’s the same mind frame for them that to lose a piece of peninsular Spain for most people is something as inconceivable and cathartic as the loss of the last of the colonies was for

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23 After the Republic of China relocated its capital to Taipei in 1949, Chiang Kai-shek attempted to Sinicize the Taiwanese people in order to create a unified national sentiment as imperial subjects, essentially to make them Chinese.
those who lost them in the 1800s—it’s the same sort of strategy and they fight against it with the same offense because it was a catastrophe to lose the last of the colonies for the self-image Spaniards had of themselves…it traumatized the whole generation.

Clearly there are no strict definitions of Catalan or Spanish as static, uniform truths. In that sense it would be useful to talk of identities plural to identify a flux of engagement depending on the situation. Eriksen (1993) draws on Erving Goffman (1959) in his chapter *Ethnic Classifications: Us and Them* refers to this engagement as under- or over-communication of specific aspects of ethnicity in a given situation, i.e. ‘showing off’ or ‘playing down’ certain traits. Through contact with others, ethnicity can begin to construct itself based on what it is not (ibid, 10). However, as Cohen points out, the *us vs. them* model of ethnicity is simplistic in a sense and disregards self-consciousness (1994a, 61). In order to explore this idea it can be useful to consider how prevailing forms of Spanish and Catalan nationalisms begin to imagine their communities.

### 5.3 Resisting Against What We Are Not: Divergence of Spanish and Catalan Nationalisms

Scotland resembles the Catalan situation in that the identity debate overlaps with the left/right debate so there is always this traditional way to situate Catalan political parties and anything political in Catalonia which is according to the left/right axis and the national axis which is Spanish and Catalan, allows you to situate different combinations of positions. Catalan nationalism has been less associated with Catholicism and traditionalism than Spanish nationalism. My guess is that they had to distinguish themselves somehow. (Biel)

Eze offers the explanation that people had to fight against the dictatorship to be different in some way from the Spanish nationalism. We then enter into ideologies dedicated to Catalan and Spanish associations. “Catalan nationalism benefits from and they have a record of freedom fighting...Catalan nationalism has this democratic record which Spanish nationalism can’t claim,” Biel adds. Historical freedom fighting is then associated with Catalan independence.

Biel offers a simpler explanation to account for this discrepancy, “The identity axis...splits the whole political spectrum, divides it further and then parts of it wouldn’t have the same weight, relative weight, that they have in Spain as they have in Catalonia.” Due to the
divisive character of the identity, left wing ideologies and parties like the CUP\textsuperscript{24} are more prevalent and hold more political influence in Catalonia than the rest of Spain. Eze describes post Franco Spanish nationalism as tormented and regarded with contempt and explains the sensitivities associated with either form of nationalism. One can immediately be imposed with a facha label for identifying as ‘only Spanish’ while Catalan nationalism is backed by the legitimacy of freedom fighting to an extent.

I will now situate the brief analysis my informants provide surrounding the two nationalisms vis à vis the responses concerning identity and the independence movement. The following discussion will serve to illuminate my informants’ feelings about their own identities as situated within politics. Furthermore, it will point to why certain informants feel their identities are not recognized.

5.4 Identity as a Political Struggle for Recognition

If you don’t feel it you cannot understand it [the Catalan sentiment]. In general people don’t see past their own world. Their own world is all there is...Some don’t understand why they [independentists] want to leave – why there is this sentiment – and the others don’t understand why their counterparts don’t feel as they do. Why don’t they feel Spanish? What don’t they feel? (Rai)

My informants often describe themselves, their identities, as feeling like or being. For some Catalanists such as Anna and Belen, feeling Catalan, what for them is a state of being, does not automatically register as existing for the rest of Spain. By existence I mean they are legally only recognized as Spanish citizens, which is quite different to their cultural affective attachments to, and experience of, their language and collective Catalan ‘nation’ as a state of being. Anna and Belen claim that because they are not recognized, they are not allowed ‘to be’. ‘Free’ (lliure in Catalan) is a word that is manipulated a fair amount in public demonstrations for independence.

For this reason, they claim their identities as automatically and unnecessarily linked to a political struggle to defend it against a Spanish state that has historically attempted to erase any indication of diversity. “Since Catalan identity is not formally recognized and because we don’t have a country that protects us, because of this it is a political struggle. But identity should not

\textsuperscript{24} Popular Unity Candidacy is a left, socialist and pro-Catalan independence party.
have to be a political struggle because it should already be recognized,” says Anna. Belen clarifies:

If it had been recognized it wouldn’t be defended as much. For example, I have an estelada\(^{25}\) hanging from my balcony but if Catalonia were its own nation I wouldn’t have this banner displayed... In our case it’s necessary because we don’t exist, we are defending the right to exist... The crisis has presented the fact that at the political level there are economic arguments so a lot more people have joined in, but really at the identity level – a nation as an identity outside of the economic framework – there are a lot of people for many years who feel Catalan. We’ve made claims and the sort but without the economic component. It’s a national theme that’s different from the one that existed during Franco’s time. The causes are different. In those days it was a cultural repression and now there’s an economic theme. Right now, both causes coexist. One that brings about this national sentiment simply due to identity, and the one that’s claimed for economic reasons.

Anna adds that many political parties that were not separatists a few years ago have now added independence to their platforms. Vindicating oneself as a minority identity is a theme that is not only unavoidable in Catalonia but to other globally negated identities that fall outside of the socially normative ones. Milagros addresses this point by reflecting on the current global climate surrounding political claims to recognition that are based on themes of inequality, equal opportunity, and access to goods. She notes that these claims are now turning towards problematizing recognition of your status i.e. feminism, LGBT recognition, indigenous identity movements, and cultural minority movements.

Catalan identity is powerful but is also an effect of having to resist a persistent attack against the culture for many years which has made the affirmation of their identity even more salient. When they want to be recognized as Catalans both culturally as well as politically and linguistically, Milagros explains, what they encounter is that they are not recognized, they are negated. The reaction to negation becomes: “You do not recognize me in my singularity, I can’t feel like I’m a part of something that includes me but doesn’t accept me. I can’t feel or participate in a Spanish identity that is based in negating myself and my identity.” Those who have a strong identity, she continues, don’t have a problem in participating in other identities as long as they (the identities) accept them (the individuals). Building upon the quote above and with respect to the ‘right to identity’, Cohen (1994, 179) implores anthropologists to insist that

\(^{25}\) The *estelada* is the flag displayed by Catalan separatists, most visibly hanging from apartment balconies around the city.
identity and ensuing difference are a matter of self-consciousness and not of political license in recognizing various identities. His appeal aligns with Anna’s insistence that identities are a matter of subjective choice, something that should not be handed down by official proclamations resulting in a struggle to be.

To provide a balanced picture of informants who exist on the opposite side of this debate, I focus now on the commonalities and contradictions inherent in Catalan nation-building and my informants engagements with official discourses. This discussion will serve to underline how Catalan culture is promoted and how this can be an exclusive construct that certain informants feel they are denied access to.

### 5.5 Promotion to the Point of Exclusion?

Is Catalan the main criteria for uniting a nation? Is it what binds people together? Most people that want independence want it on the basis of a sense of threat. My father calls it agony. (Biel)

The domination that has been contested by the Catalan community and the response to hegemonic attempts to eliminate their culture has resulted in what, for some, is an equally hegemonic, official identity of what a Catalan must be. To address this I sit down to speak with Santiago²⁶, a professor at the Communications department at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). Originally from Colombia and having moved to Barcelona in the 1980s to study, he possesses a unique, outsider’s perspective on the identity situation in Catalonia, specifically the image that is communicated through TV3 and the government that backs it: “The Catalan culture promoted from the Generalitat has been closed off a bit to the rest of the world. They are close-minded concerning what real Catalanism is, that everything external to this real Catalanism is unimportant, uninteresting especially with regards to Spain.” Again, as many of my Catalan informants would attest to, Catalan identity is open and inclusive. However, Santiago sees the official discourse of Catalanism as one that promotes a certain type of Catalan. This certain type is exactly the one that Raúl rejects because he feels he must negate his Andalusian heritage. This form of imposition that is felt from both sides is a contradiction, an attempt to

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²⁶ A former roommate in Barcelona who took one of Santiago’s communications courses suggested his name to me as a reference person concerning the independence process.
fight fire with fire that leads to exclusionary conceptions of both national identities where people are forced to choose.

In Catalonia, cultural integration, even from people who were born and raised there, has its problems. People like Raúl who have other cultural origins through family or through place find it difficult to accept the official Catalan image of identity since it feels they must negate their own identity in the process. “You need to speak Catalan and think of the Catalan culture as your own. It doesn’t seem to add up, it seems that everything should be separated...it’s almost like having the sensation that you must reject your roots.” He explains with an analogy: to be a good French person you can’t be Muslim or wear a burka. To be a good Catalan you can’t like flamenco or feel that you’re Andalusian or that you like bull fighting. There is a dichotomy between Spanish and Catalan culture that ‘this culture is one thing, and the other culture is another thing’. They are fiercely separated in the official discourse of Catalan identity, and you must reject what it means to be Spanish in order to be a good Catalan. The Catalan flag is accepted but the Spanish one is considered too nationalistic according to its history and representation as a culturally homogenizing force. For Raúl, Catalonia has given him a sense of apprehension about flags and nationalism. They seem to equate being a good Catalan with being an independentist.

He goes on to compare the cliché of a group of 16 year olds wearing Che Guevara t-shirts to young Catalan independentists wearing the estelada like a cape. He identifies this group as the beginnings in a young person’s life in Catalonia of developing an intense, nationalistic Catalan sentiment. Raúl, initially participating in groups like these, later felt a certain uneasiness about his participation. Eventually he found that he could not be Catalan and Spanish at the same time, or that he could not be Catalan in Catalonia. He feels that the official construction of both identities is placed on him in ways that force him to negate his own construction of himself and his unique person.
Campus/Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
(Photo credit: Liesl Drew, 2016)
Albert (25 years old), a self-proclaimed Catalan and Spaniard, addresses the same concern:

At the moment I’m not an independentist. I don’t think that it’s the solution that Catalonia should be independent. I think the solution is to resolve the problem on board as a whole with Spain...The problem that we have in Catalonia, which is a crisis, it’s at a level of many people saying, ‘Ah if we were independent…’—it’s like the solution. For me this is not the solution and since I also feel Spanish, for me I don’t think we will resolve anything nor do I have the need to separate myself [from Spain].

This view can be contrasted against Rai’s, who defines himself as only Catalan:

I think of Catalonia as its own state...You see that your culture has fought so much and is proud of itself that you also feel this way. Because it’s like you belong to a select group. A group that fights for what it wants, that takes pride in itself, that doesn’t need this idea of belonging to a larger whole. In the end the things that maybe characterize Catalan culture is this implication that makes you want to be a part of the group. It’s like a heritage. You feel linked to a group that fights for the entire group and therefore you say, ‘I’m like that’. And when people outside the group – the Spanish – want for poor reasons to make you part of their group well then you close yourself off even more.

‘Closing yourself off’ as a reaction to an important injustice resonates as exclusion for those who feel they cannot participate as Catalans as described by Raúl’s testimony. The above comment not only expresses group solidarity with Catalans, it also highlights the significance of group imaginings which will be discussed at the end of this chapter. For now, I want to highlight the significance of individual imaginings for the group and how they are seen as compatible or not with a Spanish or Catalan identity. I return to Belen, who expresses her discontent with the political parties in Catalonia to adequately deal with social welfare in their platforms:

I consider that Catalonia is not recognized because from the Spanish state and in Europe in general they have brought politics to a capitalist and imperialist point. From this base, for me a political party that only wants independence without proceeding with a social ideology does not make sense. There are political parties in favor of independence but they don’t have anything in their electoral platform that deals with the social matter.

Belen’s comment makes a further distinction of how political parties have separated their independence discourses from the social and cultural aspect of what people like her consider to be important in daily life. For her, a solidarity that exists to promote social welfare cannot be seen at the political level, the social ideology separated from the political one, creating a chasm.
between the two. She continues, “For me this factor is a priority in order for there to be a change in Europe and in Spain; that nations are recognized a lot more in general, and not so much for the fight for independence in terms of economic reasons that are in the same boat that capitalism exists.” She is critical that independentism is driven by imperialistic means, something that does not align with her vision of a Catalan state.

Anderson (2006, 11-12) describes nation-states as “widely conceded to be ‘new’ and ‘historical’, the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny.” The destiny imagined by my informants differs widely, considering that about half the population is in support of independence while the other half deems it unnecessary.

Furthermore, Gramsci (1997, 57) defines hegemony as “‘domination’ and ‘intellectual and moral leadership.’” Hegemony is addressed by informants as mostly originating from a traditional Spanish nationalist discourse and a combination of conservative politics. However, at this point one can conclude that the Catalan nationalist discourse is not entirely inclusive, perceived by at least one of my informants as exclusive. The intellectual and moral leadership of Catalan political leaders and their obsession with independence has obscured the finer work of addressing how identity politics have led to an exclusionary Catalan identity.

This chapter has attempted to show state-making processes of Catalan and Spanish nationalisms as prevalent discourses in the independence debate, as they are both explained and experienced by my informants. I have presented how each form of nationalism attempts to make culture shared, including the resulting perception of peripheral nationalisms as ‘anomalies’, or subjects who “failed to have something in common” with the state administration (Verdery 1994, 45). This has rendered more emphatic the Catalan culture and feeds certain nationalist discourses of the independence movement. The contradictory nature of these two nationalisms produce different social pressures for my informants. Their experiences in the following chapter will serve to illuminate not only what these pressures are but how they lead to the negation of individual identities, illustrated through various contested notions of certain linguistic and political boundaries between Spanish and Catalan ideologies.
L’estelada. Vila de Gràcia, Barcelona.
(Photo credit: Liesl Drew, 2015)
6 Impositions and their Contestations

This chapter will attempt to clarify and bring together language, nationalism, and identity politics to observe how imposing boundaries through notions of ‘shared’ culture leads to their contestation. Experiences related to Catalan linguistic policy and their consequences are elaborated, including impressions and problems with the independence movement. Catalonia’s relationship to Europe is discussed in the framework of a discourse analysis of major daily newspapers in Barcelona, especially with regards to democratic ideals.

Finally, the polarizing effects of linguistic policy as well as the independence movement culminate in a debate between impositions from both Spain and Catalonia and their contestations by my informants as Catalan, Spanish, and Catalan/Spanish persons. The back and forth of this debate converge directly at the boundary between Spanish and Catalan identities as my informants engage with their own experiences of political and social realities. As a recurrent and indispensable theme, language is the origin and runs through all of these issues in a way that creates a division of attitudes in a very complex identity issue. The final ethnographic chapter will engage the theme of imposition and contestation to bring the focus back to these linguistic and political boundaries and their disagreements in order to frame the concluding discussion.

6.1 Linguistic immersion: Equilibrating Catalan and Spanish

Catalonia’s linguistic policy, based on full immersion in the Catalan language, is favorably received by my informants, even the informant who feels excluded by the Catalan singularity. Its rise from a minority language that has survived between France and Spain, as well as the other localities mentioned previously throughout the Mediterranean, to a recognized, working language of public life in Barcelona is particularly remarkable. Returning to Biel, he gives a succinct overview of the successes of its linguistic development, but also the challenges of competing with the global, common language of Spanish:

The current model is linguistic immersion which is approved of and supported by UNESCO, by international organizations, by committees of experts that are supposedly independent that have regarded the Catalan situation...let's say it makes sense for educational institutions and for perhaps public media to privilege Catalan – it's a kind of positive discrimination in order to counterweight the inertia let's say of the fact that we
are exposed to the Spanish public sphere which is in Castilian. So the choice of language is motivated on economic grounds which is that: 'I want to have fluid communication and if you are not going to understand me 100% I prefer to speak our common language and because of these criteria then [there is] Castilian everywhere. (Biel)

To counteract the fact that Castilian is virtually everywhere in the public sphere, many of my informants agree that Catalan is a necessary protagonist in the educational system as well as the public media. Anna, the self-proclaimed Catalan, explains why this is important to her:

We are raised according to a system that puts Catalan in a higher position\(^{27}\) because Spanish is already very strong. You will learn it whether you want to or not. It’s on TV, it’s everywhere you look. Catalan needs a bit more of an impulse and it’s a system that works. What the PP\(^{28}\) does is put Catalan at the same level as Spanish. This is detrimental to the Catalan language. Catalan is a language that’s surviving between France which is a country that more strongly defends itself as ‘one nation-one language’ and Spain that has Spanish, one of the most highly spoken languages on the planet. So wouldn’t you give Catalan more of a protagonist role, more of an impulse to help it a little? Otherwise it’s going to disappear especially in a context of globalization. So, I don’t understand why, in a system that is working in which we are enriched by learning two languages, they [the PP] would want to change that.

Her comment comes down to what many perceive as a real threat to their linguistic choice and representation. Minority languages that have faced devastating attempts at elimination from public life, she affirms, are in need of more promotion, to make them as visible and included in everyday life in the public sphere as possible. Again, conservative politics cling to prioritizing the common language of the patria to make it the principal language of communication. Anna explains the detrimental effects to Catalan of this type of policy and the underlying analogies of the imbalance this presents in real life: “...it’s because it’s a minority language, a language that’s been subordinated, that it needs more support. It’s the same as gender equality policies that seek to place more women in management positions.” For Anna, the PP’s stance represents a real threat to the vitality of her language. Central to her identity and form of expression, she puts linguistic oppression on par with the social subordination of women to specify her point, to explain how her everyday reality might otherwise be subordinated and negated by conservative politics. To provide a more concrete example of how this has been done, I turn to a controversial

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\(^{27}\) By ‘higher position’ Anna is referring to the general system of education in Catalonia, in which the Catalan language is the language of instruction for core lessons.

\(^{28}\) Partido Popular (Popular Party) is a conservative, Catholic, economically liberal major party in Spain.
incident in parliament between the Spanish and Catalan ministers of education. Milagros referred to this incident specifically in conversation and suggested I look it up in order to better understand how language is politicized.

The Minister for Education, José Ignacio Wert, expressed to Congress in 2012 the prime minister’s (Mariano Rajoy, leader of the People’s Party) endeavor to ‘Spanishize’ Catalan students in order to make them “just as proud to be Spanish as they are to be Catalan”, as well as to ensure a balanced experience of both identities because they “enrich and strengthen” students. This was the impulse behind the drafting of a reform law to produce better school results and improve the teaching of Spanish as a language by subsidizing private schools that taught their lessons in Spanish. The minister for Education of the Generalitat condemned this as an attack on their system of education and rejected claims by the Minister for Education that the Catalan education system encouraged independentism in its curriculum (Aunión 2012). According to the article, it seems that language is invoked as a guise to reinforce Spanish nationhood and is consistent with my informants’ accounts of an aggressive pro-Castilian approach that undermines plurinationality and reinforces a culturally homogenous state (Roller 2002, 283). On the other hand, ‘Spanishizing’ students under the smokescreen of being enriched or strengthened by a nationalist sentiment that seeks to find common ground has the ulterior, dual motive of subduing secessionist sentiment. The intensity to which this sentiment is felt depends largely on experiences of the past as my informants have explained.

Albert frames some of these past experiences, ones learned in school or through shared family memories of members who have been affected by the dictatorship:

I think that history has left a mark on us and has caused us to act the way we act now. And part of the story has been Spain or Franco reprimanding Catalans. For example, there was a period of time in which you could not speak Catalan in public spaces. If the police caught you could be sent to jail. There was a repression of Catalan people that was pretty significant, and what’s happening now?

He continues to discuss the fact that right-wing political parties in Madrid have continued their attacks on Catalan pedagogy and language teaching. He quotes one of the education ministers asking, ‘Well, but what do they use Catalan for in Catalonia?’ For many of my informants this is still a recently perceived threat to the status of their language. Historical transgressions of banning Catalan and making its utterance a punishable offence have, in the ethnographer’s view,
been perceived and transformed by the people into a new sense of identity. In other words, the force used against Catalan identity is rejected as a strategy of resistance against transgressions.

Recruitment to the Catalan ethnic group as a growing population rests on rejecting impositions. Operating against this force of cultural homogenization has become a key identity characteristic of Catalans and Catalan sympathizers/empathizers in promoting their proper culture and language. As Rai puts it: “If they tell us, ‘No we are all such and such, we are all fine [together].’ Well ok, we will be fine together. But if it’s more, ‘No, no we are all fine but you have to be fine in the way that we want,’ this generates a bit of anger and I think it’s normal that people fight for their rights.” This ‘stronger together mentality’ attempts to overlook important differences in society that politicians seek to desperately avoid in order to steer around identity conflicts. Rai doesn’t consider himself radical, nor an independentist. This, however, does not mean that he considers himself Spanish.

Tracing this independentism, to break from frustration, Biel comments:

I think that independentism was formed from the entire history of the past. They think this way, that the Spanish government will never change, will never help us, due to our history. They [independentists] say, ‘If they haven’t changed after all these years, now they must change, so let’s leave!’ I think that our culture and the way we see things has been marked by the history that’s been lived here. Perhaps that’s what differentiates us a bit from the other communities in Spain.

The past is often articulated by those whose families were directly affected by Franco, Spanish and Catalans alike. Albert explains the restrictions imposed upon daily life during Franco’s era. The street names were changed from Catalan to Spanish, parents could only give their children Spanish names such Juan instead of Joan. Gerona was called Girona. He goes on to tell me about the aftermath of Franco’s rule, how no formal trial was held to condemn Franco’s supporters and that nothing was done to identify the bodies of victims of the dictatorship, their families prevented from interring them. He is quick to clarify the assumption that only Catalans suffered from the dictatorship. Many Spaniards opposed to his ideas suffered the same repression and desolate outcome as the Catalans did:

Rai is an informant I met via Yuting. He is 25 years old and a current psychology student as well as a self-identifying Catalan.
Have you been to Madrid? There is a monument of the fallen that Franco wanted built for him. A lot of the workers were his prisoners, who didn’t share his views, they worked to build this large monument and many died there and are buried there. And since Francoism is still very powerful in Spain – there is still a webpage dedicated to Francisco Franco and no one has closed it down, the Francisco Franco Foundation – no one can go there to excavate and look for the bodies. They’re untouchable.

He is referring to the _Valle de los Caídos_ (Valley of the Fallen), a Catholic basilica and memorial of the Spanish Civil War. He continues to explain how much money and influence that Francoism still has in Spain today, and that the last judge who attempted to exhume the bodies so their families could lay them to rest was removed from his post. Evidently, loyalty to the _patria_ is still a powerful force in Spain that seeks to erase any vestige of difference or dissent.

### 6.2 The Two Catalanias

As we go deeper into the topic of language teaching Anna describes the effect that private schools have caused in allowing children, if their parents so wish, to be educated only in Castilian. Belen notes that this has produced two linguistic communities, Catalan/Spanish speakers and Spanish speakers only:

In Catalonia this has generated that even today there exist two Catalanias. Of course there are people who are perfectly integrated but there is also a separation between people who have been educated only in Castilian. If you go to certain determined areas, although a school is supposedly bilingual, if your family doesn’t speak Catalan and the mass media does not report in Catalan, and in your surroundings no one speaks Catalan, you should have a community on behalf of your school that equilibrates this for you. Otherwise you are a part of the Spanish-speaking only sector and for this reason there are two Catalanias.

As many of my informants put it, you will learn Spanish whether you want to or not; it’s the vehicular language of the streets, of public life in areas not specifically dedicated to Catalan enterprise and culture. There exists an option in private schools to be taught only in Spanish for example. Though this is rare, according to my interviews, the intention behind it is a danger to integration in Catalonia. What’s the use of learning a minority language? they ask. Coupled with a Catalan who chooses not to speak Spanish as the ‘language of the empire’, the language of the enemy, an ideological divide based on language choice is being made. According to Santiago,
Professor of Communications, the limitation of language to one’s political or ideological leanings is a mistake:

If you could decide in economic terms, to give your child two or three languages you wouldn’t think twice. Why would someone who is educated in two languages immediately decide to eliminate one of them? I think it’s completely absurd; at the cultural level, at the level of complexity of thought, the educational point of view including political...the more languages you speak the better. Here you have to negate, it’s a complete contradiction. There was an intention to promote Catalan culture so much that it was as if nothing else existed. It’s a bit like homogenization, a bit boring. You look at the Catalan media for example and it’s impossible to see anything else that doesn’t have to do with Catalonia.

Catalan media and education are two of the most important factors, according to Santiago, that have a role in negating Spanish identity in today’s current climate of constructing the identity of Catalanism. In the effort to protect one culture, another is being negated as the historical and present enemy. A sort of anti-intellectualism, more specifically the rejection of speaking the Spanish language because it is ‘other’ and ‘theirs’, is cropping up on the left extreme, what many see as a contradiction to fighting an alleged hegemonic conservatism. Language as the basis of identity soon moves into the political again through the independence movement. At this point it is difficult to distinguish and trace where the personal, public, and political constructions of identity start and stop. Clearly, they have made their way into what are supposed to be rational approaches to resolving inequalities. Santiago explains:

History can justify both sides [of the independence movement]. I think they’ve manipulated that historical narrative of the Catalan story as always being a victim to something external. This type of history can justify anything in Europe, anything that the Islamic State does these days...in this case how you tell the story determines a vision of a generation. It’s because of this that I feel that the Catalan educational system has done a very good job constructing this imaginary collective that has an enemy, that has always been the victim. And now is the time to decide that we don’t identify with them [Spain].

Many have personally accepted this boundary by attempting to close themselves off to Spanish culture, and undermine its presence in Catalonia, by refusing to speak the language as a political statement. Santiago tells me he sees this radicalism in his students on campus at UAB. They refuse to speak or engage with the ‘language of the empire’. However, as Santiago counters, what empire are they speaking of? They consider themselves Catalan and European, where
regional nationalities are incorporated and recognized, but not Spanish because they do the exact opposite. Catalonia within a European ideology is considered in the next section to address this question.

6.3 Catalonia in the Context of Europe

Giordano and Roller review the Catalan political parties and their movements towards a ‘Europeanized’ political discourse, “viewing Europe both as an alternative institutional channel to promote their objectives and as an example to follow of socio-economic and political modernization” (2002, 99). This is especially relevant to those of my informants who conceive of themselves as European but not Spanish, a need for an officially recognized identity that is accepted and not negated. Santiago counters that they seem to ignore and negate the fact that Europe can be considered an empire as well:

I think it [independence] is a mistaken choice. If independence was meant to protect the rights of the citizens, it’s something that they can already do...borders worry me because the problems that people have here, poverty that’s increased in Catalonia, educational problems, high university fees, the political decisions are isolated from these problems. They’re waiting to create this dream state when they already have the economic possibilities to do it. Why must they wait to become independent?

Many criticize the independence movement on economic grounds. Since many Catalans for independence cite the fact that Catalonia must pay higher taxes to Madrid to pay for infrastructure outside of Catalonia, the automatic rebuttal is that Catalonia lacks solidarity towards poorer, developing regions and the democratic model this falls under.

In their discourse analysis of different Catalan and Spanish language editorials using Bakhtin’s development of speech genres, Laitin and Rodríguez Gómez conclude that selected Castilian language editorials construct an image of the modern Spanish state “based on a conceptual foundation of gobierno, España, and ciudadanía” or government (the centralized administration), Spain, and citizenship. On the other hand, selected Catalan language editorials reflected a core concern for “the relationship between the peoples of Catalonia and Europe in reference to the Spanish state.” Furthermore, the authors contend:
Democracy is connected to the European enterprise and the Generalitat is portrayed as an institution in Spain better qualified to interrelate with a new European nonstate reality. Citizenship reflects political and ideological connection to Catalonia and Europe, both seen as historically and culturally constituted communities as opposed to the ‘artificial’ construction of the Spanish state...This discourse style is legitimated in the historically constructed value of seny, a feet-upon-the-ground pragmatism that Catalans embody and reproduce in order to differentiate themselves from ‘Spaniards,’ based on the criterion of efficiency. (1992, 28)

Many Catalans envision this form of democracy and citizenship as a more suitable place to begin idealizing an independent state that is disconnected from the essentialist, centralizing administration that Madrid represents. Also, different representations of nationality are disseminated depending on whether a reader chooses a Castilian language or Catalan language newspaper, connecting the reader’s choice of language to differing political positions in the media including the realities they are exposed to.

6.4 ‘Whose Side are You on?’

According to Raúl, Spanish needs more of a presence on the Catalan channel, TV3. Catalan is prioritized as the minority language in danger of regression. He agrees that its promotion in school and on TV is important to ensure that people continue speaking it and have the option to use it in everyday life, at home or in public. He does however criticize the impression that there are a lack of prestigious models that include Spanish. He relates that even books that Catalans have written in Spanish are less promoted or not at all. They are not promoted on TV3 or in the Catalan media that is dominated by the Catalan language. Almost all first-class politicians have Catalan last names. He views it almost like an apartheid. The media does not seem to promote multiculturalism but a determined way of being Catalan with little space for media outside of this framework of thought because they are seen as ‘anti-Catalan’.

Even my Catalan teacher, a self-proclaimed Spaniard and Catalan, took issue with a TV3 advertising campaign that referred to the station as la seva (theirs), or the station that belongs to the independentists (see Carreras 2015).

Ironically, this image is exactly the one the official discourse attempts to separate itself from when the central government’s attempt to homogenize and ‘Spanishiize’ minority culture groups, imposing a specific language and a specific culture on everyone. He feels that artists are
marked by a language, and that within the idea of a nation it shouldn’t fail to recognize its own artists. Right wing Catalans are accepted, right wing Spaniards are negated, considered ‘facha’ or extremely conservative and nationalistic. In Raúl’s view there is a lack of nuance on both sides, there is not a lot of thought put into constructive criticism or open-mindedness which results in what many feel is a political circus towards independence.

Victoria Camps (2014) highlights two reasons for the race towards independence: “the repeated disregard of the Spanish state for Catalan uniqueness, which has failed all attempts to obtain recognition of political power and sufficient funding for Catalonia” and the fact that within the ‘right to decide’ discourse lies the notion that Catalans have capacities that the rest of Spaniards lack in their desire to create an independent country that is more free, more democratic, more egalitarian, and without corruption. This sets the stage for exclusion of those living in Catalonia who do not share in the ideals of this ‘Catalan singularity’. “Ara és l’ara” (Now is the time) is the political banner used to evoke the immediacy of independence, that no other solution has worked, that Spain continues to reject Catalonia, and now is the time to act. Rai states that political self-consciousness is highly important in Catalonia today. When identity enters into the political he recognizes the corruption that has taken place on both sides of this debacle:

To know what I think about it means informing myself about the reality of what is happening. If you don’t implicate yourself politicians will be able to sell you easily, because the only thing they’ll tell you is the positive side of things...Look at what’s happening now, they’re cutting back in education and health, they’re cutting back in areas to keep people sick and without the ability to learn, to think. If people don’t think and the only thing that worries them is not to fall ill and they have their football and their beer in the afternoon, what are these imbeciles going to think?...Politicians will continue to dumb people down and the people will continue being dumbed down. It starts with education...if what we do is the same as before, dumbing people down and saying ‘Yes, yes, independence, independence!’, we are not contemplating independence, we won’t achieve anything. What kind of country will we have? What sentiment will remain? A sentiment of emptiness. A feeling that’s not yours, a feeling that was taught to you, that you’ve learned.

This feeling seems to be imposed according to Rai and the only way to objectively position yourself in the debate is to avoid the political manipulation of the independence ‘theater’. He feels the Catalan ‘uniqueness’ referred to by Camps (2014) is being corrupted, reformulated in order to gain mass support, and imposed in the race towards independence. Some of the demonstrations or celebrations (such as September 11th, Catalonia’s National Day) filled with
independentists, young and old, now make up much of what Rai sees as people who “just want to go out in the streets, protest, and feel good.” The juxtaposition of legitimate claims for independence and the people who have joined in out of a sense of threat is neatly packaged into what Rai explains is a pure psychological analogy:

Imagine that you like chocolate and you eat a lot of it. One day someone tells you that you shouldn’t be eating that much chocolate, it’s too much. You disagree and ask, ‘Why shouldn’t I? I like it. You aren’t the one who’s allowed to tell me what I should do.’ This is called escalation in psychology. You want me to do something but you tell me in a bad way, so I close myself off to you and continue doing what I do. And the more you tell me not to do it, the more I’m going to do it. I think that’s what’s happened here. In terms of the independence movement, it’s very in fashion right now and the political parties have joined in on it, corrupting it, and now it’s like a theater.

Though his example is simplistic, I feel it is also analogous to what Raúl was trying to explain in his criticism of Catalan culture and independence as lacking any real critical reflection of the consequences of a pro-position. It also summarizes Victoria Camps’ analysis of the lack of political wisdom in racing forward with the independence platform in order to avoid “wasting time” (2014). Emotions have boiled over in this respect creating a sense of imminent decision making, but Rai also believes that eventually people will forget about independence since no concrete proposal has been reached, or will ever likely be reached.

I turn now to linguistic proposals from a Catalan group called Koiné to show how imposition is not only a Spanish construct.

6.5 Koiné Manifesto

There has been a manifesto of the people defending the independentists that said that in a Catalan independent state the language, the default language in administration and every aspect of life, should be Catalan. We have had a democratic state for 40 years that is very recognizing of linguistic and cultural diversity perhaps not perfect, perhaps not as we should hope for, there is much to improve but I find it worrying that they want to apply the same model that we condemned as illegitimate, as unfair to the other linguistic half of the country...it's crazy. (Biel)

Many found this manifesto to be an example of reverse cultural homogenization. Eze, someone who leans more towards a Catalan identity in terms of his liberal ideologies, comments: “This

30 For an English translation of the manifesto see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p50K6CFC1VY.
proves right those that always claim that the only reason that Catalanists fought Franco is because he was imposing the wrong culture and the wrong language, not because he was imposing something.” His comment highlights the criticism that due to its repressed history, the nature of Catalan identity should be open and inclusive to other realities that are not strictly ‘Catalan’.

Though Anna’s self-conception as a Catalan woman does not allow for any hint of Spanish identity, she reiterates the importance of what she considers must be part of Catalan ideology:

I don’t think that imposition [of Catalan] should be the solution either. People who come here to live, at some point will have to realize that they must learn Catalan. Either because they are tired of the fact that people must change languages for them at a dinner party, that all of a sudden they don’t understand what’s being talked about when the language changes back, that they don’t understand certain television channels in Catalan, or that there’s an interesting article in the newspaper that they aren’t able to read.

However, she makes the distinction between people who realize they must learn Catalan to integrate themselves better and the error that would be imposing the language on people who arrive. She views Catalonia as a state, where Catalan is spoken, and you should learn to speak it. She stops short of imposing this idea however, as she reflects on the fact that she comes from a history of impositions, she does not want to use the same mechanism as the imposer to bring about this change, no matter how crucial it seems to be for her vision of Catalonia as a state. Many have crushed the idea with the ideology that ‘Always imposing is yours!’ i.e. The history of cultural imposition from the Spanish state is a characteristic unique to them, something that does not characterize Catalonia.

6.6 ‘Castilian should be Castile’

Many people whose family speaks Spanish at home chose Catalan as the language that has far greater cultural capital in Barcelona, some even changing their names from their Spanish forms to Catalan forms, i.e. Juana to Joana, Pablo to Pau. Name changes in the other direction could be perceived as an insult. “They don’t accept it from the outside but they do it from the

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31 This is an expression I heard in the field and one that sums up a radical Catalanist view.
inside”, as Raúl says. He only spoke Catalan at school growing up, and Spanish in everyday life and at home. He felt a strong opposition towards Catalan and little by little throughout his childhood realized that he wasn’t Catalan in Catalonia. He didn’t accept or recognize that his parents were from Andalusia and closed the windows of the living room as a child whenever his father played “Los Chichos”, a Spanish Gypsy band, so no one would hear them in a 1993 upper-class Catalan neighborhood.

To summarize the exclusivist side to Catalan identity and its implications within a wider framework of the EU and the world, Llobera (1990, 23) refers to the Catalan cultural revitalization as creating a ‘weapon’ with which to defend itself from outside influence or attack:

...the viability of Catalonia as a nation will depend, in the final instance, on the ability to develop a cultural and political identity that, while appearing to preserve the essence of the past, will allow the possibility of a common future for all those who live in Catalonia. In this context, we have seen in the past few years a number of attempts at redefining Catalan culture with the aim of forging a weapon with which to face the challenge of the post-modern era...a cultural model should provide not only a way of mediating in the contradiction of Catalan society sensu stricto, but also a means of relating to the Catalan Countries, the Spanish state, the EEC, and to the world at large.

Santiago was my informant who verbalized his impression of the representation and reproduction of Catalan identity through the media and education as a weapon designed to resist Spanish influence that has essentially devolved into a double edged-sword or ‘catch-22’ situation. There is a delicate balance between imposing as a sense of Catalan identity to counteract impositions from the outside, and the repercussions this imposition entails within the Catalan community.

Returning to the boundary as limit between these two ethnic groups I can remember, like Raúl, hiding certain parts of my nationalities or over-communicating them as a young person. In the US, my Swedishness became the obvious difference while the opposite was true in Sweden. The issue of identity in this case is often a question of feeling comfortable within group identities, something that is difficult to pull off at the level of the individual. From my informants’ perspectives they choose the parts that apply to them and leave the rest. Some occupy both identities simultaneously, or broaden them to larger identities that blur or go around complications that ‘Spanish’ or ‘Catalan’ might present. National identities have become manipulated by political parties to mobilize popular Catalanist movements, while Spain is seen
as the homogenizing force, creates two groups that present real discomforts for my informants. Social identity has become a political identity that requires individual agency in navigating around this discomfort.

On a concluding note, I want to mention an anecdote that Jordi\textsuperscript{32} presented in our discussion of ethnicity, problematizing an essentialist, ethnic conception of Spanish identity and national pride:

I was playing video games online with a friend, a \textit{facha}, and this guy was trying to educate me on his genetic past telling me that he was red-haired so he came from the Northern Vikings, had no trace of Arab blood, he was pure Iberian and Northern (so proud). I was telling him that Iberians were invaded by the Celts from France, then by the Romans, and we don’t have any pure shit at all. Still people are hanging on to this proud of being ‘pure white Europeans’, \textit{again} in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

Jordi’s incredulous tone at this man’s self-concept is an interesting one. There is still a vehement denial of Arab influence in this idea of Iberian ‘pure bloods’. It is apparent that thought surrounding ‘ethnic purity’ is still alive and well, and concurrently underscores the fallacy of prevalent notions that, in the United States for example, racism and implications of racial thinking are ‘dead’. It is also perceptible that the Spanish ethnic construction described in the historical introduction was effective and enduring at the level of its social permeation and reproduction.

I move now to the concluding discussion that will address the ethnographic chapters with final remarks in light of the theoretical directions of chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{32} Jordi is an informant I met at a language exchange, and is one of the main organizers of the group. As a self-claimed Catalan, he mentioned in our interview that he would feel ‘ashamed’ to be labeled as Spanish in Spain.
Panorama from Park Güell/Anarchist Occupied Building
(Photo credit: Liesl Drew, 2015)
7 Conclusions

At the outset I aimed to explore what elements and features my informants identified as making someone Catalan or Spanish, including the processes through which such meaning is attached to people. The first three sub-questions posed to address the principal thesis asked which linguistic and political elements my informants employ in order to mark boundaries between the two identifications. To begin with this first question, I addressed language as an affective process, its use, formation, and transformation as a determining factor in guiding identity formation. So far, I have attempted to show that language as a formative process of identity involves conscious reflection on a critical self. Language cannot be separated from political discourses and my informants’ engagements with them, but for now I want to review how my informants placed boundaries between the two languages and their associated cultural experiences.

Language as a marker of a collective identity based around the llengua pròpia (own language) is problematized in this study as having an important link to linguistic policy in Catalonia as well as nation building processes. These processes in turn affect if a language feels authentic to use. Certain values placed on it, such as a ‘real Catalan’ needing to speak the language at home, raises the question of who can identify with such a construct. In other words, for someone like Raúl, his attachment to Catalan culture was not organic because he did not speak Catalan at home or evoke any emotional significance to wanting to be part of this ‘Catalan nation’. Having a more limited sense of himself as a Catalan beginning as a young person, he was discouraged from participating in Catalan culture the way he saw it represented to him. These representations of Catalan culture, however, retain a different value for Catalans who claim the right ‘to be’. To address this political being of Spanish citizens versus sentiment of the Catalan ‘nation’ I turn to the second sub-question, how do narratives about how the independence movement is presented become part of my informants’ identity politics?

As Biel noted, ‘freedom fighting’ and the democratic record of Catalan nationalism won’t take long to be corrupted by the same essentializing rhetoric that prevalent forms of conservative Spanish nationalism espouse. The ‘anomaly’ of Catalan identity that Biel described may well be the legitimizing force behind Catalan secession but it does not explain why an identity that
supposedly fights against normative conceptions of the good, does not feel natural to adopt for someone who speaks the language.

To explore this last point, I wish to engage Anna and Belen’s linguistic and political accounts alongside Raúl’s since their self-conception as Catalan persons was the most definite, as well as the fact that all of them were both responding to essentializing aspects of Catalan (Raúl) or Spanish (Anna and Belen) identity discourses that led them to feel negated. Albert for example, who has no problem identifying as a Spanish/Catalan person, tends to be more fluid in his representation of both selves and considers them mutually inclusive. He presents a relatively ‘low consciousness of difference’ (Vermeulen and Govers 1994, 4), with no pronounced ethnic ideology or need to separate himself from Spain. Rai possesses a more defined concept of himself as a Catalan person that must fight against political corruption and parties that take advantage of an independentist sentiment. He is more invested in the Catalan cause and is not ambiguous about his rejection of a sort of ‘Spanish’ identity. He feels that he is part of a community of people with certain values who ‘fight for the entire group’, and do not feel they need to form part of a larger group.

On the other hand, people like Anna and Belen are demanding ‘cultural rights’ precipitated by a ‘high degree of conscious difference’ and fear of losing their cultural distinctiveness (ibid, 4). The history of the divergence of Spanish and Catalan nationalisms have in turn produced essentializing forms, a conservative Spanish model that seeks further linguistic and cultural homogenization, and a Catalan nationalism that seeks to counteract this effect. In turn, both forms are experienced by certain informants as a negation or repression of the self through the imposition of certain values (‘Spanishizing’ or independentism for example), usually in which each identity poses a threat to the other. Identity in this way is presented to my informants as a choice, a ‘time to decide to be free’ campaign, and a ‘whose side are you on?’ rhetoric as my informants demonstrate. Biel in particular expresses this us vs. them climate that has descended on the independence movement, and the implied sense of threat that encourages votes for independence. A ‘good’ Catalan in these times will vote for independence, extending a moral obligation of a civic Catalan to keep the best interests of the ‘nation’ in mind. In this way, narratives surrounding the independence movement, as my informants present them, become part of the way they form their political selves in their critical reflections on how they function and act politically. A linguistic ethno-nationalism that the Koiné manifesto supports is a proposal for
an independent Republic of Catalonia where Catalan is the only official language. According to Biel this is the same form of supremacy that Catalans deemed as illegitimate: to impose a language on the other linguistic half of Catalonia would be unfair.

My informants’ conscious experiences have been explored alongside national identities that attempt to emphasize the social significance of ethnicity as difference under the guise of ‘identities’ (Verdery 1994, 47). They have also served to illuminate the contradiction of the inclusive view of a Catalan as ‘a resident of Catalonia who speaks Catalan’. Raúl is exemplified to illustrate this contradiction, as he feels that the Catalan language is not his own. As has been pointed out, this is not for lack of learning the language. As a speaker of Catalan, Spanish, Italian, and Greek, his ‘Mediterranean’ identity supersedes his Catalan one because it allows him to express more of his ‘aggregate selves’ that produce ‘identity for themselves’ (Cohen 1994a, 76). His consciousness of his own difference with regard to Catalanism growing up was a significant part of his identity formation. In order to explore the consciousness of difference it becomes useful to address the third sub-question: How does Catalan as a historically negated identity either 1) accommodate others into an inclusive, modern identity or 2) present instances of exclusivity through essentializing discourses?

**Consciousness of difference**

Having two or more identities is explained by my informants as socially and politically problematic. A Spanish identity is either adopted in a straightforward fashion due to its anonymity and homogeneous position as the common language, or polarized as an oppressive construct that has and continues to attack the Catalan singularity. What some see as a necessary step to reasonable cohabitation between people, others see as a complicated political entanglement that will not resolve any of the issues at hand, but rather deepen political instability and create an impossible financial burden in the creation of a new state. Furthermore, many informants express a lack of clear consensus among political parties to address independence in a way that is socially significant for them.

Anna, Belen, Albert, Rai, and Milagros view their Catalan identities as a primary part of their ‘real’ selves, placing particular emphasis of the importance of the community as a form of social solidarity especially in terms of the private use of Catalan at home, serving as a ‘protection
from the vacuum of loneliness’ as Milagros confided to me. As an inclusive, modern identity Catalan identity has been attributed with descriptions ranging from its anti-patriarchal, progressive support of ‘othered’ sexualities and identities to the freedom-fighting qualities of its many historical battles with a central administration that did not recognize this ‘distinct society’ that has existed for many centuries. The values that my informants place on the language are made important by their reference to the educational and political institutions and traditions that support these values of Catalan culture.

In developing Raúl’s experience, an essentialism he found in Catalan identity led him to initially negate certain features of his Andalusian heritage as they did not ‘fit it’ with a normative conception of a ‘good Catalan’. His distaste for young people who don the estelada at independence rallies, an example of an ethnic conception of Catalan nationalism, did not allow him to participate in a Catalan identity in a way that made sense to him. It is not so much a defense of who he is not, but rather his awareness of his own thoughts as he comes across these problems. Raúl’s eventual exasperation with the political circus of identity politics and his notice that more young people were being led to support a nationalism he found questionable led him to leave the city for another country, returning only for university meetings and family reunions.

As many of my informants have expressed, there is a choice to be made when engaging these nationalisms as independence positions, and not all ‘selves’ fit into those discourses.

Language can be seen as the most obvious barrier to identity, in that “personnel” can flow through (Barth 1969, 21) a permeable social construct of Catalan identity and participate in various social circles. In this way, the boundary between the two identities is fluid, but its permeability is based on the positive or negative values and experiences my informants have placed on it; in turn, the Catalan identity they expressed to others when introducing themselves was a direct reflection of these experiences and the limit for defining themselves as such a person.

Barth defines a boundary as “a particular conceptual construct that people sometimes impress on the world.” (1999, 19). People that are impressing their boundaries on the world by consciously continuing certain elements, such as language promotion policy are, to a certain extent, exerting them with conscious intention. In other words, certain boundaries are non-negotiable. On the opposite spectrum of this continuum, one can find those who emphasize these impressions by contesting them as forced negations of their own ‘true self’. In this way, I
have attempted to show that symbolic attachments to either or both identities are a matter of continuous self-reflexive adaptations to various social pressures.

**Final Remarks**

Through this thesis I attempted to present the idea that socio-cultural identities and their boundaries are consciously contested, and more specifically that these identities are sometimes forced into uncomfortable positions according to nationalist developments and their use in political demands. Although there exists a diversity of opinions surrounding independence, and the various political factions operating within different strains of nationalist ideologies, it is evident that the process has impacted the lived experiences of my informants. Independence has not only put into question their self-concept as Catalan and/or Spanish persons, it has necessitated essentialist conceptions of identity that are not personally relatable. It remains to be seen what will become of independence, but it is certain that the cultural identities present in this thesis remain a potent force in debating its legitimacy.
References


