

Potential Social Benefits of Catalanian Independence:

Immigrants and their Integration

Within an increasingly globalized society, immigrants can migrate greater distances. As immigrants travel greater distances, the country or region becomes less homogenous. The ease of transports leads to immigrants traveling, not just within a continent, but throughout the entire world. Catalonia is a region in the broader context of Spain with a large population of immigrants adding to the cultural diversity of their region. With the knowledge of Catalonia's increasing diversity, Catalonia must proactively find ways to incorporate the immigrant population into their society. Integration begins with legislation and political stances on the commitment to inclusion and diversity in the region.

However, legislation affecting immigrants and actual social integration of these immigrant communities are not equivalent. In Catalanian society, the discrepancy between positive political policy on immigration and negative social implementation exposes an alarming disconnect. So why is there this disconnect? I argue that part of the issue with immigrants' social integration stems from the dual identity of Catalonia, being both Spanish and Catalan. This dual identity adds a layer of complexity for immigrants to understand. The challenges of Catalonia being a stateless nation within a nation-state causes the discrepancy between politically progressive policies and socially regressive treatment of immigrants. Therefore, taking away a social obstacle for immigrants and opening up the path to unhindered integration can be achieved through independence. First, I will assess the current state of the migrant within Catalonia,

demonstrating that a simpler social atmosphere will assist in integration. Then I will display the plausibility of independence for the Catalanian nation, showing that the remedy for a complex Catalanian cultural identity is possible.

Two Migrant Communities: Spanish Nationals and Immigrants

Catalonia experienced three waves of immigration along with the Spanish state: “1900-1940 period, 1940-1970 period, and the 2000-2010 period” (Climent-Ferrando 2012, 4-5; Pujolar 1995). The first two waves of migrants were largely lower class Spanish citizens from other Spanish regions (Climent-Ferrando 2012). The 2000-2010 period marked a distinct increase in foreign immigration, with 15% of all Catalanian citizens now being from other regions outside Spain (Climent-Ferrando 2012, Statistical Institute of Catalonia 2009). With this sharp influx in immigration, both Catalonia and Spain must sort out the best methods to integrate foreigners, along with who bears responsibility to administer this integration. It is important to flesh out the demographics of the foreign immigrant population before addressing the social sphere of immigration. The Spanish migrant community, in contrast to foreign immigrants, faces a lower degree of adaptation and social concerns within the large context of Catalonia as Catalonia is still a part of the Spanish nation. Indeed, Serra points out that “very few [migrants] of Spanish origin and their descendants view themselves as [other] or consider their integration into Catalan society to be in any way comparable to that of the new immigrants” (2004, 435). Therefore, the group that faces discrimination and social isolation, the foreign immigrants, needs further exploration.

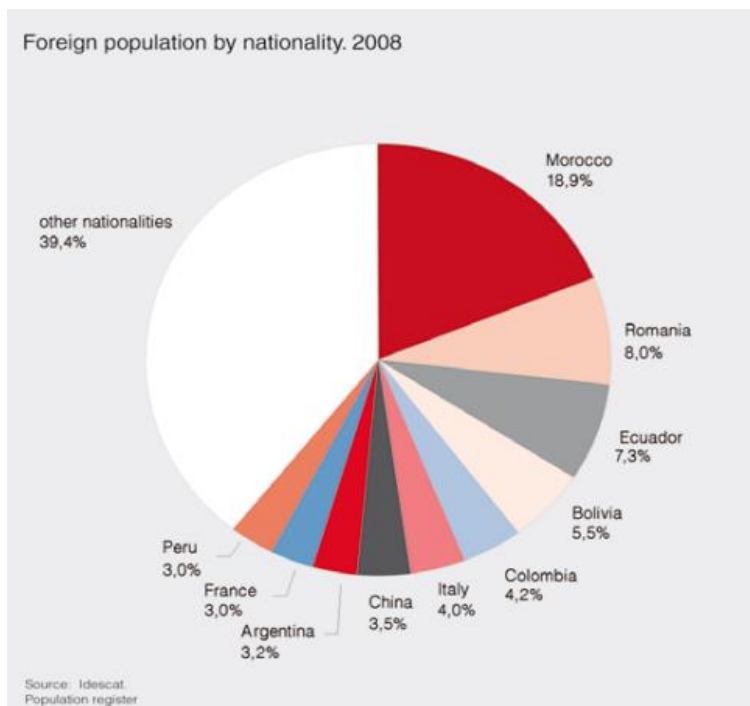
Figure 1 (below) shows the breakdown of each foreign nationality entering Catalonia and the percentage of the total foreign population the nationality represents. Moroccans make up almost 20% of the total immigrant population. This large percentage most likely stems from

Morocco's relative proximity to Spain. It is important to note that according to the CIA World Factbook, 99% of Moroccans are Islamic (The World Factbook N.D.). As the immigrants enter a traditionally Catholic European state, this religious distinction carries high importance.

Discrimination based on their religious background, namely the anti-mosque campaigns, affects the experience and integration of these groups (Astor 2016).

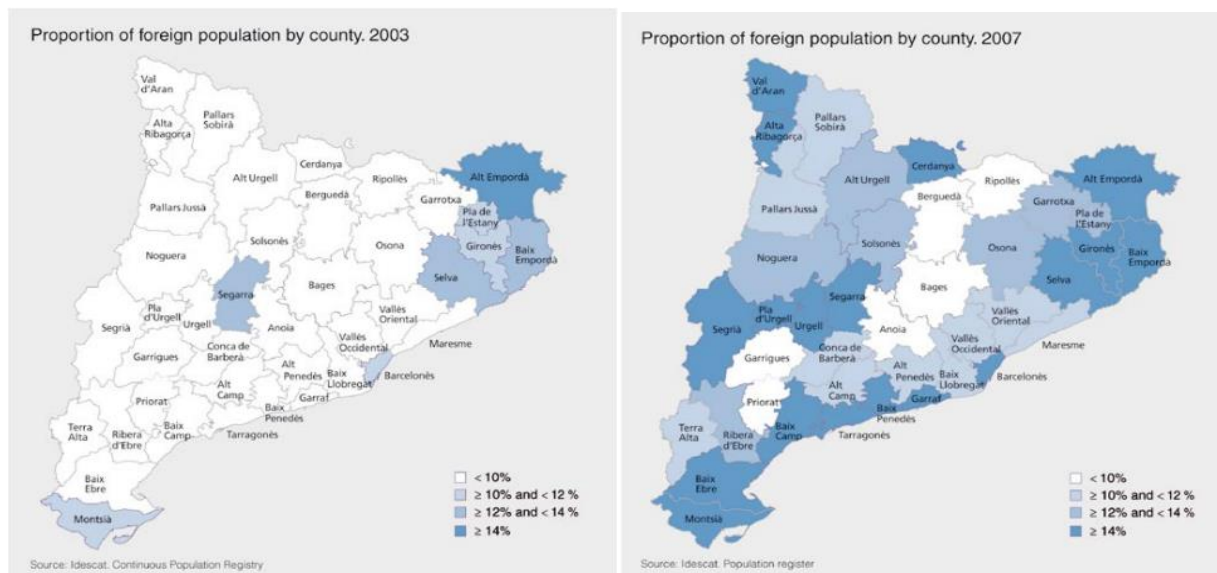
Romanians are the next largest group entering Catalonia, making up 8% of all immigrants. Romanians adhere to Romanian Orthodoxy. Romanian immigrants face a degree of discrimination through seemingly benevolent Catalonian integration policies, as laid out by Ioana Vrabiescu and to be discussed in depth later (2017). The difference in religion and culture for both the Moroccan and the Romanian immigrants highlights a gap that causes a variety of social obstacles for immigrants in their attempt to integrate into Catalonian society.

Figure 1 (Statistical Institute of Catalonia (2009) *Immigration Here and Now.*)



It is important to note how rapid the influx of immigrants was; Catalonia had to quickly accommodate this wave. (Climent-Ferrando 2012). Between 2003 and 2007, “the number of counties with [a foreign population of more than 10%] went from eight to thirty-five” (Statistical Institute of Catalonia 2009). Climent-Ferrando attributes this escalation in immigration to “major economic growth which [attracts] predominantly young, unskilled migrants” for labor needs “not met by the local population” (2012, Pujolar 1995). A visual aid can illustrate the significance of the increase in immigration experienced between these four years. Figure 2 (below) shows the proportion of the foreign population by county in Catalonia through two choropleth maps. The two maps illustrate the challenges for a society that needs to integrate these individuals into the community. As shown in Figure 2, Catalonia faced a massive wave of immigration, not in an isolated location, but throughout the entire region.

Figure 2 (Statistical Institute of Catalonia (2009) *Immigration Here and Now.*)



One of the main concerns with a growing immigrant community is their social well-being. Since the fall of Franco’s regime in 1975, both Spain and Catalonia have passed measures to ensure the inclusion of immigrants in the broader context of Spanish and Catalan society.

An example of a policy that aims to include immigrants is the Plan for Citizenship and Immigration 2005-2008 (Regional), which stresses the integration of immigrants into Catalanian culture (Villarroya 2012). Spain is a political federation, meaning that Catalonia can legislate on matters specific to their region as long as it does not violate national law. Laws will be referenced as “national” or “regional,” in order to distinguish the origin of the legislation. Managing immigrant policy between nation and region proves difficult, especially when Catalonia requires a distinct integration plan based on the region’s specific needs (Climent-Ferrando 2012). These policies, though well intentioned, still do not close the gap of inequality between the two migrant groups. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the disparity between Spanish nationals and foreign immigrants. Figure 3 shows the unemployment rate for both communities. This unemployment rate is much higher for foreigners , totaling about 30% higher for men and 20% higher for women. Figure 4 displays both average annual income and poverty rates. On average, international immigrants make about 7,000 euros less than Spanish migrants and are about 20% more likely to live in poverty.

Figure 3 (Statistical Institute of Catalonia (2009) *Immigration Here and Now.*)

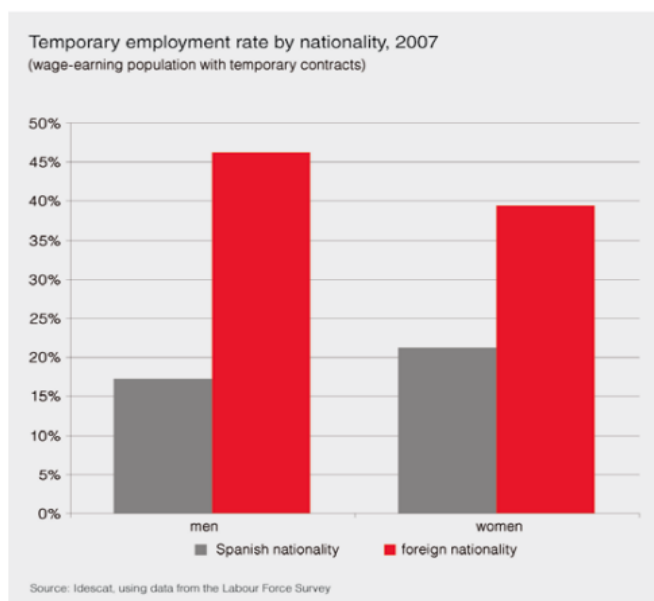
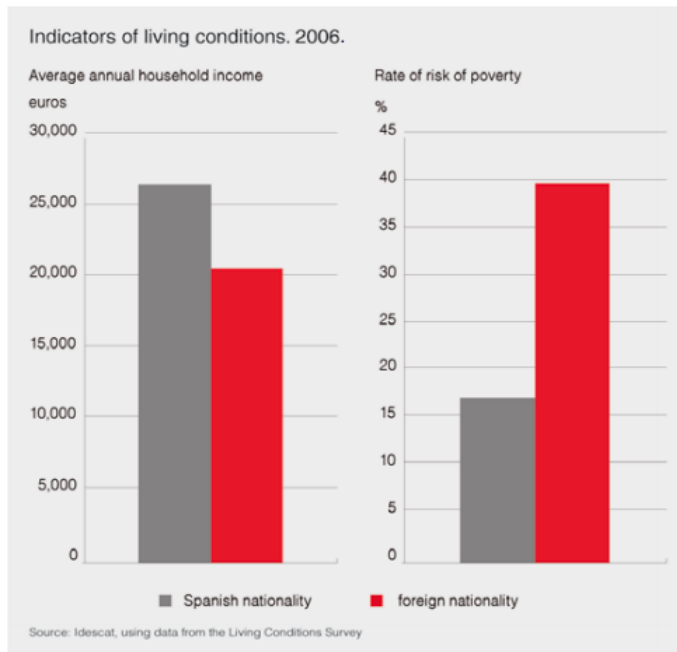


Figure 4 (Statistical Institute of Catalonia (2009) *Immigration Here and Now.*)



With the social predicament of immigrants rapidly changing since the mid-2000s, an independent Catalonia now has a large population of immigrants (15%) who do not speak Catalan and face various social disadvantages when attempting to integrate. Therefore, migrants from Spain and immigrants from other countries face vastly different obstacles when trying to become a part of Catalonian society.

Social Barriers Foreign Immigrants Face

Fierce nationalistic sentiment courses through Catalonia. The strength of this political sentiment for autonomy might lead a bystander to think Catalonia's strong national identity inherently excludes the immigrant population (Rodon and Franco-Guillen 2014). However, Catalan nationalist discourse expresses positivity towards immigrants and a desire to include them in their society (Rodon and Franco-Guillen 2014, Astor 2016, Pujolar 2010). The comprehensive effort of inclusivity appears explicitly in the "Plan for language and social

cohesion” which Catalonia renewed in 2007. Some of the critical elements, listed below, demonstrate Catalonia’s progressive approach toward immigration (Pujolar 2010).

(1) integration is given priority over language learning, as it is integration that facilitates language learning and not the other way around; (2) the teaching of the language does not primarily seek to protect Catalan identity but to promote social cohesion in a plurilingual society; (3) the learning of the language cannot be promoted in isolation from the general social conditions and relationships in which students live, which means that it involves families, the teachers of all disciplines and other local actors; (4) the learning of the language (or the languages) is not a precondition for participation in the school system; but a process taking place throughout the student’s academic life, and finally (5) intercultural education does not apply only to schools with significant numbers of foreign students, but becomes a constructive feature of the system and a key element in the curriculum (Pujolar 2010, 233-34).

This plan demonstrates the commitment to provide an inclusive society for the foreign immigrant population. The Catalanian government recognizes the social disadvantages of foreign immigrants and attempts to combat these problems through additional policies such as free education and healthcare (Dowsett 2017). But the implementation of these inclusive policies proves problematic. The Catalanian case proves particularly complicated. Despite the effort by the government to include immigrants through the public school system, adult immigrant aid, and basic societal courtesies and norms, social woes of foreign immigrants in Catalanian society persist. One aspect that hinders immigrant integration is the complex social situation of Catalonia, being both Spanish and Catalan. This duality is one of the reasons positive political policy fails in its implementation, which ostracizes the immigrant population.

Educational System:

As mentioned before, immigrants receive free education regardless of their legal status. This provision intends to integrate immigrants from a young age into the Catalanian school system so that they might learn Catalan and other societal norms (Edwards 2016). Catalonia’s leading tactic for integration is “language acquisition” through “education” (Rodon and Franco-

Guillen 2014). The Catalonia language acts not only as a tool through which immigrants integrate into society, but also as a mechanism to achieve socio-economic mobility (Hoffman 1999, Pujolar 1995). Therefore, immigrants see language as a means to further their social status, both for themselves and for generations to come.

However, a young student of foreign descent experiences high levels of “racist violence” in the public school system (Serra 2004, 433). To understand the complexities of Catalonia’s educational system, this analysis of two studies will explore the vastly different results within Catalonia. Carles Serra’s study contrasts with Catrin Edward’s research and provides an interesting dichotomy of the Catalonian schools and how these regional policies work at the local level (Serra 2004, Edwards 2016). Through teasing out the social integration of immigrants in two cities, it is revealed that the determining factor of immigrant integration is the number of Spanish nationals within the region.

Serra studied the social groups formed in Guillem d'Efak school in El Villar (2004). Serra uncovers deep-seated racist ideology in the students, both Spanish and Catalonian nationals, that points to the poor integration of cultural minorities in contrast to the political push for inclusivity. Although there are “palpable tensions among” these students around the Catalan-Spanish divide, it lacks racial animosity (Serra 2004, 439). These migrants speak a different, yet familiar, language, explaining the position that Spanish migrants have over foreign immigrants. Additionally, the Spanish migrants complicate the situation for foreign immigrants. The Spanish students and their parents, in some regions, request for classes to be taught in Spanish rather than Catalan. In reaction to these requests, the Supreme Court of Spain ruled that 25% of all classes in Catalonia can be taught in Spanish (Catalan News 2015). This new rule complicates the integration of immigrants who participate in schools where Spanish students demand access to

classes in Spanish. With the confusion and mingling of the two languages in the school system, immigrants' integration suffers at the hands of this dual identity.

Not only do immigrants enter a socially complex school system, the Spanish and Catalan students saw immigrants as outsiders and isolated them based on their racial identity (Pujolar 2010, Serra 2004). Serra exposed students' tendencies to generalize, stereotype, and isolate the immigrant population, and the rhetoric of these students verifies these tendencies (Serra 2004). One student went as far to justify her rationale for not associating with immigrants by merely stating that "they don't interest [her]" (Serra 2004, 443). The general disinterest in and violent treatment of the foreign immigrant demonstrates that the political advocacy for multiculturalism and inclusivity does not reach social implementation. Even teachers perpetuate the problem of social isolation by separating students by nationality for different classroom activities (Serra 2004).

The dissemination of inclusive policies might take time, and Edwards showed the already improving integration of immigrants into the Catalan school system. Edwards studied the city of Vic, a center-right leaning region where a large immigrant community lives (2016). One difference between Edwards and Serra's study is the period in which they were conducted. Serra studied the racist patterns of Catalan and Spanish school children towards immigrants in 2004, while Edwards focused on the integration of immigrant school children in 2016. Within the twelve year gap, Catalonia's policy to include immigrant populations improved. The city of Vic recognized that the segregation of immigrant school children based on their neighborhood acts as another barrier to the integration of these children and their families into Catalan society (Edwards 2016). Therefore, Vic coupled *model* and *ajuntament* policies to first create a quota of immigrants per school, and then increase the quota when the immigrant community

continued to grow (Edwards 2016). For the benefit of the immigrants, the local government created "language classes" in the community center. "Theatre workshops" and "cultural workshops based on Catalan tradition," which include both locals and new immigrants, provide a safe learning environment for integration (Edwards 2016, 537-38). All of these showed that regional policy adopted and expanded at the local level aided in social integration for immigrants. However, the cities studied adds nuance to their comparison. Vic, while center-right, is also nationalistic and is considered the "traditional Catalan city" (Edwards 2016, 531). El Villar, the site of Serra's study, has a pluralistic identity containing both Spanish and Catalonian nationals, in addition to the foreign immigrants. While the findings of Edwards prove promising for the future integration policies in Catalonia, the differentiating factor, the number of Spanish nationals, distinguishes the two cities, and therefore, the two studies. Because of Vic's less socially complex profile, the immigrants found integration easier.

Social Services:

Social services are the direct application of governmental policies to aid the immigrant community, as well as others. Politicians directly legislate these programs in response to "newly arrived immigrants" who "lack an understanding of the legal culture and social norms of the host society and its institutional system and protocols" (Agustí-Panareda 2006, 410). While immigrant children have the opportunity during their formative years to matriculate in school (Edwards 2016, Serra 2004, Pujolar 1995), the education of adult immigrants poses a different set of problems regarding social integration. The Catalonian government created several programs, like the intercultural mediators (Community Mediation Service of the Province of Barcelona - Regional Policy created within the National Policy), to help mitigate the complex Catalonian society (Vrabiescu 2017, Agustí-Panareda 2006, Pujolar 2010). Despite good

intentions, this policy proves problematic in the face of immigrant needs because of the disconnect between legislation and legislative reality. (Vrabiescu 2017 and Agustí-Panareda 2006). Mediators inevitably interject themselves into the immigrant's situation, often overstepping the bounds of the job (Vrabiescu 2017) and taking critical social decisions into their own hands (Agustí-Panareda 2006). By stripping the immigrants of choices, such as which language to learn first or how to best raise their children, the policy renders the immigrants' native culture obsolete in the face of assimilation. Catalonia must reconcile the difference between assimilation and cultural pluralism. These tactics point back to the dual-culture of Catalonia, and the clash between Catalanian and Spanish identities as Catalanian civil servants attempt to help immigrants integrate into this complex society.

In the case of Romanian immigrants, Catalanian officials "under the guise of institutional benevolence" break apart families (Vrabiescu 2017, 1664). As mentioned before, Romanian immigrants make up the second largest immigrant population. These families take on low paying jobs and maintain a low socioeconomic status as they begin the integration process (Climent-Ferrando 2012, Vrabiescu 2017). For this reason, Catalonia provides institutional aid (National Policy) in the form of "civil servants and social workers" who "activate the child protection mechanism to ensure the immobility" of Romanian families (Vrabiescu 2017, 1664). These lower-level governmental workers often subjectively seize mistreated Romanian children. This process appears logical. The Catalanian government employs people to check on immigrant families to ensure their children receive proper treatment. But the cultural difference between the Catalanian and Romanian immigrants causes issues that can be viewed subjectively as the government seizes children by parental "lack [of] legal documents, residential status, or . . . [registration status] in the educational or health system" (Vrabiescu 2017, 1671). These reasons

cause unnecessary checks on the immigrant community and destabilize the Romanian familial structure.

The shortcomings of Romanian immigrant integration show a level of institutional insensitivity and misunderstanding that ruptures Romanian families. The Catalonian government will have to work to assuage the social missteps with the Romanian community while the Romanian community must embrace interculturality. Vrabiescu mistakenly associates the term assimilation with the Catalonian government's mission to have a culturally pluralistic society. The Vrabiescu's implication that the Catalonian government expects full-scale assimilation from the immigrant community exaggerates the Catalonian government's treatment of the immigrants. The Catalonian government wishes to respect immigrants' culture and to aid them with integration into society. Assimilation, as Vrabiescu describes it, implies that the government expects the immigrants to forsake their culture and fully assimilate with the culture of Catalonia. While some integration is required to make a cohesive society, the government makes their intentions clear as to the extent to which they expect integration. Therefore, the disconnect occurs at a lower-level implementation of policy.

The civil servants have unusually high expectations for Romanian immigrants exposing a significant flaw in the integration process. These high expectations could range from thinking the immigrant should assimilate faster or that the immigrant's practices contrast too greatly with the other Catalonian government policy. With either of these in mind, the governmental employee inspecting the family could have a warped view of what their integration process should look like, subverting Catalonian policy. However, the Catalonian government "has taken a leading role in supporting initiatives that promote the rights of religious minorities, homosexuals, undocumented immigrants, and other groups that have faced discrimination" (Astor 2016, 97-8).

Even though the Romanian case of social service shows the discrepancy between political policy and social implementation, the Catalanian people still maintain positive intentions regarding immigrants, as evidenced by legislative action.

The civil servants interacting with the Romanian immigrant community are not the only group who subvert the intentions of governmental policies. The intercultural mediators, who help immigrants in the process of integration into Catalanian society, often have a “one-sided approach [which] might be deemed adequate within a framework of assimilation, but . . . does not fit with the immigration management [discourse] of local governments and non-state actors in Catalonia” (Agustí-Panareda 2006, 410). The disconnect between the government’s mission and the attempts to integrate appears through Agustí-Panareda’s interviews of these mediators. The mediators often have misconceptions of their duties and take an active role in the integration of the immigrant. While the job of the mediator is to provide information and answer questions objectively, many see it as their duty to “[persuade]” and give “clear arguments” for certain issues of socialization (Agustí-Panareda 2006, 418). When the intercultural mediators lose objectivity, they fail the political mission of the Catalanian state to respect the validity of other cultures. This failure of intercultural mediators to remain objective undercuts the transition of immigrants, shifting the job of mediator to decision maker.

When the immigrants’ decisions are taken away, the individuality of the immigrant is also taken. This leads to the treatment of immigrants like “students with physical or cognitive disabilities or with social deprivation of a different kind” (Pujolar 2010, 233). The main issue stems from local governments hiring mediators from independent programs (Agustí-Panareda 2006). Although mediators are usually previously integrated immigrants (Agustí-Panareda 2006), their use of personal experiences makes their advice subjective. The issue for these

mediators lies again within the use of assimilation instead of integration. Immigrants need to maintain aspects of their culture, and the process of integration should be a give-and-take. Therefore, the Catalanian government's stance on immigrants is undercut by the misuse of social integration.

Nonetheless, the advice of these mediators seems to guide the immigrant through rigorous social processes. Whether they assimilate or move toward intercultural integration, Catalanian society proves exceptionally complicated for the immigrants and their family. The complexity in part stems from the need to understand not only Catalanian culture but also Spanish culture. By exploring specific societal norms, the complex issue of social integration comes to light and helps explain why policy to aid immigrants and social treatment of immigrants differs so much.

Societal Norms:

The issues immigrants face with adapting to Catalanian society stem from daily interactions. Two main problems surface in the quotidian life of immigrants: the choice of a social language, Spanish or Catalan, and the confrontation of negative sentiments toward immigrants and demonstrations of these sentiments. With Catalonia touting two distinct identities, both Spanish and Catalan, the issue of which language to learn becomes problematic for the immigrant. For Spanish migrants, the transition between the Spanish and Catalan languages is simple (Serra 2004). But, when an immigrant enters Catalonia, the decision of which language to learn first becomes crucial. Without a clear choice of which language to learn, immigrants will be unable "to build a sense of belonging and . . . meet their ordinary, communicative needs in everyday life" (Pujolar 2010, 229). The Catalanian regional government takes a clear stance on what language immigrants should learn, Catalan, by integrating it into

schools and community activities (Edwards 2016). For example in 2005, the regional government passed an Audiovisuals Act that requests audiovisual communication services use Catalan (Villaroya 2012). However, the expectation of immigrants to speak Catalan and the practice they get in the context of society are incongruent. During the 1970s and 1980s, many native Catalonians used “speech accommodation,” speaking to immigrants in Spanish, assuming the immigrant would know Spanish (Pujolar 2010, 230). The social courtesy of the Catalonian native to accommodate the immigrant with the assumption they know Spanish seems harmless. But, when the immigrant continues to only interact with other speakers in Spanish, rather than Catalan, it adds to the distance between the Catalonian community and the immigrant community. Joan Pujolar artfully points out that no one took the time to explain the “sociolinguistic situation” of Catalonia to the immigrant (2010, 236). Based on the Catalonian courtesy towards immigrants, immigrants will only come into contact with Catalan through the “mediation of Spanish” (Pujolar 2010, 237). This social phenomenon perpetuates the lag of immigrant integration despite the government’s attempts to educate the immigrant with Catalan.

As in the school system, negativity surrounding immigrants flares up within the community. Gema Rubio-Carbonero and Ricard Zapata-Barrero conducted a study which monitored discriminatory conversations in the political sphere and found that political discourse in Catalonia is positive, but even small levels of discrimination pose massive threats to the integration of immigrants into society (2017). Namely, because immigrants do not feel welcome. One way in which discriminatory behavior affects the social integration of immigrants is the anti-mosque protests (Astor 2016). In many Catalonian counties, anti-mosque groups launch petitions against the construction of mosques in their area (Astor 2016). With high numbers of Islamic immigrants who desire to build traditional houses of worship, anti-mosque sentiments

prove detrimental to this sizable immigrant community. These actions craft a culture of exclusion, perceiving the immigrants' deviation from social norms as a threat to the integrity of the regional identity (Astor 2016). Most anti-mosque sentiments originate in "neighborhoods with large numbers of internal migrants from other Spanish regions" (Astor 2016, 107). People still see immigrants as "[heightening] crime and insecurity, monopolizing plazas and other cherished public spaces, littering the streets with trash, living in over-occupied apartments, looking scandalously at women, and failing to integrate into the culture of the community" (Astor 2016, 113). Just as some discrimination stems from Spanish nationals, racism can also be found within Catalanian nationals.

Catalonian racism is seen through negative political sentiment toward immigrants stemming from far right anti-separatist parties like *Platform for Catalonia* (PxC) (Rubio-Carbonero and Zapata-Barrero 2017). Examples of negative dialogue toward immigrants coming from this group paint immigrants as a threat to the job security of the greater Catalanian state (Rubio-Carbonero and Zapata-Barrero 2017). This group, while holding no national or regional seats, jumped from 17 to 67 city councilor seats between 2007 and 2011, demonstrating that their presence in local elections continues to grow (Rubio-Carbonero and Zapata-Barrero 2017). The small yet growing number of PxC members proves to threaten the social stability of immigrant communities as PxC continually vilifies them. Negative discussion about immigrants, even if miniscule, causes social discomfort for the immigrant population. Although the general political conversation around immigration is both positive and productive, this small minority generates a substantial impact on the overall social well-being of the immigrant. In these ways, social niceties and large-scale racist ideological beliefs within Catalonia add barriers to social integration of immigrants.

The Possibilities an Independent Catalonia Provides for the Foreign Immigrant Community

The educational system, social services, and societal norms evidence the disparity between the greater political goals of Catalonia and the ground-level social implementation of these policies. Often, the complexity of Catalonian society, being both Catalan and Spanish, builds social barriers that immigrants must hurdle to integrate and participate in Catalonia. So why would an independent Catalonia improve the integration of immigrants? An independent Catalonia eliminates the problems generated from a dual identity. In the sphere of education, schools would only teach in Catalan instead of both Spanish and Catalan. In the sphere of social services available to immigrants, a freed Catalonian state could hone the integration process to focus on the Catalonian identity. While social services can still improve across the board, the simplification of the process by a less complicated social situation will streamline immigrant integration. And finally, instead of dancing between languages, immigrants in a newly independent Catalonia would only be expected to speak Catalan. “Speech accommodation,” which reinforces immigrant exclusion by talking to immigrants first in Spanish, vanishes in the face of an independent Catalonia.

Immigrants face discrimination on a daily basis. And while social prejudice will not vanish under an independent Catalonia, separatist groups see a niche group of support in immigrants as these political parties advocate for their concerns (Pratka 2017). Separatist groups call out to immigrants promising advocacy and citizenship under an independent Catalonia (Pratka 2017). Therefore, if Catalonia gains independence, the political party in charge will have immigrant needs in the forefront of their action plan. Freedom for Catalonia translates to one less social obstacle for immigrants to overcome. Catalonian independence begins to bridge the rift between immigrants and society at large by eliminating the second degree of social isolation.

Catalonia has claims to sovereignty through a thriving economy, unique language, and distinct history. However, Catalonia must continue to operate under the rule of the Spanish state. This creates additional hardships for immigrants integrating into Catalonian society. Therefore, an independent Catalonia will create a less socially complex place for immigrant integration. But just how feasible is independence?

Catalonian Case for Independence

The Catalonian struggle for independence continues to surge in Catalonian society (Burchianti and Zapata 2014, Rodriguez 2018). In the 2017 elections for Catalonia's parliament, candidates supporting Catalonian separation won seventy of the one hundred and thirty-five seats, gaining a slight majority within the chambers (Guàrdia 2018). Tipping the scales in the separatists' favor demonstrates the growing sentiment for Catalonian independence. The political demonstration of defiance against Spanish rule manifests deep-seated economic, cultural, and historical distinctions, pushing the Catalonian people to feel foreign and inherently different from the government which rules them. The issue of independence causes political polarization. The rhetoric behind autonomy attempts to strip away political bias. In an attempt to alleviate the political connotations of this argument, facts, figures, and hard data will compose the historical, economic, and cultural case for Catalonian independence. The case built for independence will illustrate how an independent Catalonia can be achieved, resulting in one step towards smoother integration of immigrants.

With independence gaining momentum, it is important to note the other option. If the solution to seamless social integration of immigrants is a less complex identity, why not embrace the Spanish identity and relinquish the Catalonian identity? In part, their case for independence answers this question. Should they abandon their culture, many people's identity would be lost in

the process. Additionally, Spain has already granted the Catalonians many socio-cultural freedoms. In order to shift back to the Spanish identity, Spain would have to strip the Catalonian people of these freedoms. Amending their constitutional right to a unique linguistic identity would cause an uproar resulting in backlash towards the Spanish state. Therefore, the case for independence seems to be the more achievable simplification of the region's social complexity.

Unique Historical Arc

Spain's history as a nation born out of regions remains integral to the current division between Catalonia and Spain. With a distinct regional past predating the unification of the Spanish state, Catalonia crafts a historical arc different from that of Spain. Catalonia's separate history proves essential to the argument for independence and shows another facet of why Catalonians feel such strong differentiation between their culture and Spanish culture.

The origins of Catalonia date back to 988 with the invasion of the Romans and Visigoths (Llobera 1998). In the Middle Ages, Catalonia established a political system with the combination of Federalism, Feudalism, and Pactism (Llobera 1998). In the 1400s, with the marriage of Ferdinand (Aragon) and Isabel (Castile), Spain became a semi-unified nation with extremely independent regions (Llobera 1998). In the seventeenth century, Catalonians engaged in their first battle to protect their "political, administrative, and judicial" freedoms. Even though Catalonia lost to Spain and relinquished some of its lands to France, this marked the first instance of a collective fight to protect its national identity (Vicente 2004, 120). In 1716, King Felipe V removed Catalan as the official language of the region through a degree called *Nueva Planta*. This loss of freedoms sent a clear message of initial Catalonian subjugation to the Spanish crown. However, the following centuries begin to establish Catalonia as a prominent region economically and a distinct region culturally.

Although stripped of some freedoms, Catalonia blossomed as an economic region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, expanding with the Industrial Revolution (Vicente 2004). Without this period of prosperity, the Catalanian identity would have been jeopardized. After two centuries of economic success, Catalonia gained even more autonomy with the freedom of the Spanish colonies in 1913, as this loss represented the diminishing global powers of the Spanish monarchy (Vicente 2004). Catalonia's brief independence, awarded under *Mancomunitat* (1914), vanished under the leadership of Primo de Rivera in 1923 (Vicente 2004). Catalonia again tasted political autonomy under the Second Republic in 1931-1939, but Franco crushed this freedom when he took power in 1939 (Vicente 2004). Franco repressed the Catalanian identity during his dictatorship, but this repression only fueled the Catalanian people's already strong sentiments of their differences from the Spanish state (Vicente 2004). The oscillation of Catalonia from freedom to subjugation only added to the Catalanian dissent toward the Spanish government. Finally, at the end of Franco's regime, the new Spanish government drafted a constitution in 1978 and Catalonia regained a measure of freedom (Villarroya 2012).

This new constitution provides provisions for "historical nationalities" separate from the overarching Spanish nationality (Vicente 2004, 120). The recognition of nationalities solidifies Spain as a nation with a pluralistic identity and fuels ethnic rifts throughout the country. Spain legalized the divisions already felt within the states and armed these divisions with constitutional backing to determine their unique historical and cultural identity. Although the Spanish government gives rights to each nationality, many nationalities, including that of Catalonia, do not find these provisions to be sufficient. Therefore, Catalonia continually chips away at the Spanish identity and moves toward a stronger regional identity. Yet, the unified region of

Catalonia faces problems with multiculturalism. In the 1980s, even within the region, “the political map of Catalonia reflects the complexity” of this region’s approach towards separation, with multiple political parties, with only some leaning towards independence (Vicente 2004, 122). Since Catalonia obtained regional autonomy, the movements that emphasize aspects of Catalanian culture all stem from language and economics, which manifest in political actions resulting in legislation.

In Catalonia, the current conversation about separation and multiculturalism stand at odds. This opposition most distinctly appeared in the national elections of 2010-2011, where the notion of *convivència*, the advocacy for a peaceful pluralistic state, emerged as the leading subject of regional debate (Burchianti and Zapata 2014). These statements of unity color the post-Franco Catalanian conversation. The candidates used the idea of *convivència* to engage voters, especially those from non-Catalonian backgrounds, who want to find their new home within the Catalanian region. And since the 2010-2011 election, separatists’ movements only gained strength. The Catalanian nationalists passed three referendums demanding independence from the Spanish state. These referendums took place in 2013, 2015, and 2017 respectively, and each time the push for independence gained more momentum (Rodriguez 2018). But, separating from Spain is illegal according to the Spanish Constitution. Therefore, with the increased action of Catalanian separatists, Spain passed a military measure to seize Catalanian police and finances to avoid any violent moves towards separation (Rodriguez 2018). The seizure of these assets signals a new level of escalation in this dialogue. An independent Catalonia surfaces logically through the entirety of Catalonia’s history since their first clash with Spain and continues to influence today's separatists’ movements.

Flourishing Economy

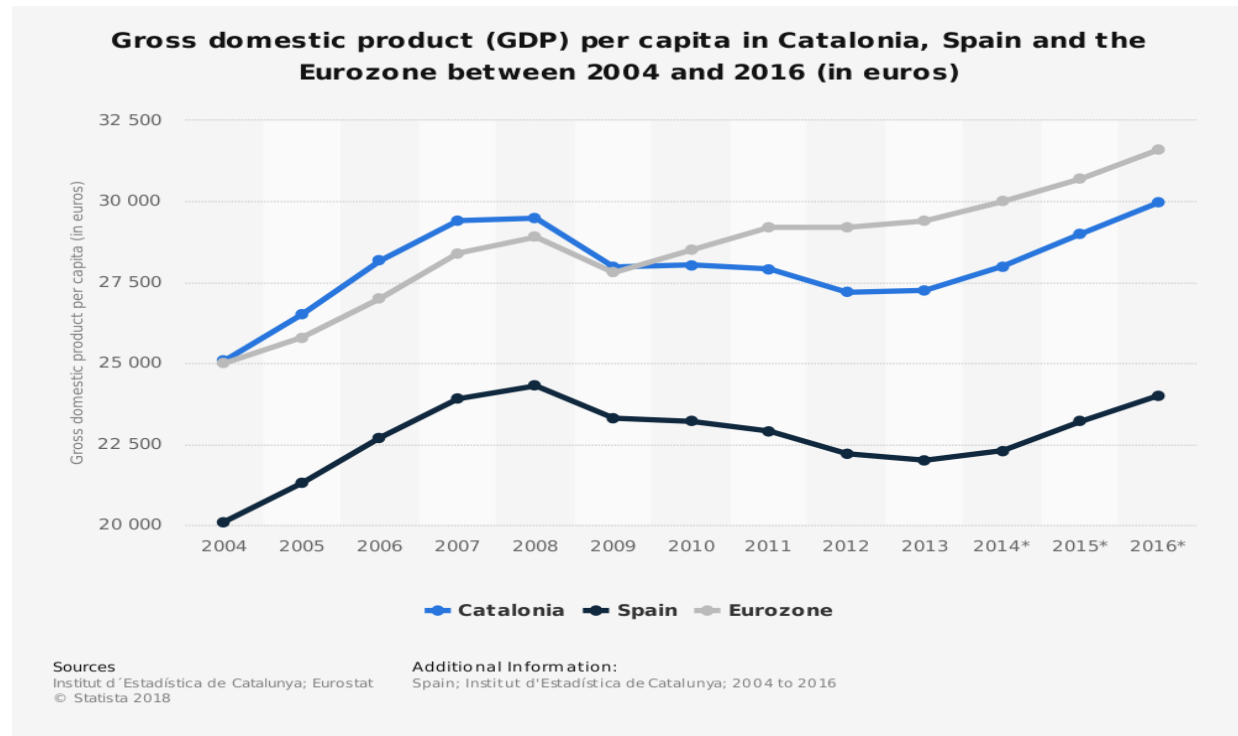
Regarding both Spanish and European Union regions, the Catalanian economy thrives (Hoffmann 1999, Özkirimli 2000, MacInnes 2006). One major factor working to sustain the Catalanian economy is the vast middle class. In the 1900s, Catalonia provided an environment for an urban middle class that “was enterprising and liberal in outlook” (Hoffmann 1999, 52). These workers, who took on the role of “land-owning farmers, artisans, shopkeepers, workshop owners, and merchants,” invested in the economy of Catalonia, driving the grassroots movement towards Catalanian success that is evident today (Hoffmann 1999, 54). In this way, Catalonia’s healthy economic environment becomes attractive to immigrant populations who view the move to Catalonia as a strategic step to engage in upward social mobility (Hoffman 1999). The influx of people creates a perfect pool of lower to middle-class workers and allows the region to sustain their prosperity.

To understand Catalonia’s continual quest for economic prominence, it is important to understand the economic hardships Catalonians faced under fascist rule. When the Franco regime was accused of corruption, Catalonia’s attitude became skeptical towards the central government’s management of money. This general distrust permeates into post-Franco Spain where Catalonia’s regional government, the *Generalitat*, protects the “regional industry elites, no doubt in reaction to . . . [Franco’s] maladministration and corruption” (Hoffmann 1999, 64). As the Catalanian economy continues to grow, the attitude of self-preservation crafted during Franco’s regime becomes a driving factor of the region’s economic success. These actions display Catalonia’s defense against the national government as necessary for Catalonia’s survival. The Catalanian separatists argue about the “fiscal unfair treatment by the state, which . . . [returns] an insufficient share of Catalan revenues” to Catalonia and is a crucial aspect of

Catalonia's move towards independence (Serrano 2013, 534). The statistics of the Catalonian economy explain this sentiment of unjust taxation.

Catalonia markets itself as “one of Europe's most successful economic regions” (Hoffmann 1999, 65, Özkirimli 2000, MacInnes 2006). The current European Union economic profile of Catalonia states that “in 2016, Catalonia reached a gross domestic product (GDP) equivalent to 211,915m (euros), the highest registered by far, becoming the [leading] economy” in Spain (European Commission, 2018). Not only does Catalonia have the fourth highest GDP per capita in Spain (29,936, only behind Madrid, País Vasco, and Navarre), but they also rank fourth in “wealth of its citizens, above the Spanish and EU average” (National Institute of Statistics, 2018; European Commission, 2018). The unemployment rates in Catalonia in contrast with Spain also illustrates the relative wealth of their citizens, where only 12.2% of Catalonian citizens are unemployed in comparison to Spain's 16.7% (Economic Country, 2018). Catalonia also welcomes industry contained within their borders, touting “20% of [all] companies located in Spain” (European Commission, 2018). This large amount of industry is equitable to Catalonia's population. Catalonian houses 16.2% of the total Spanish population, only producing a little more than their population accounts for (European Commission, 2018). This fact shows their prosperity in relation to their region's size. Figure 5 below shows the GDP (in euros) of Spain, Catalonia, and the Eurozone between 2004-2016. Catalonia surpassed even the Eurozone regarding GDP until 2008 when Spain went through a massive recession. And even then, Catalonia maintained about a 5,000 euro advantage on the remainder of Spain.

Figure 5 (Statistica (2017) “Gross domestic product per capita in Catalonia, Spain and the Eurozone between 2004 and 2016” <https://www.statista.com/statistics/327120/gdp-per-capita-in-catalonia-spain-and-eurozone/>)



Based on these statistics and the way the Spanish government structures taxes, Catalonians pay more in taxes than they receive back in governmental funding. From the Catalonian viewpoint, this means the Catalonians foot the bill to make up for less economically successful regions of Spain (Mount 2015). Considering these statistics, the Catalonians pay a high monetary value of taxes in contrast to other regions in Spain, comparable with other wealthy regions in the whole of Europe, but the returns are what differentiate Catalonia and bolster their argument (Mount 2015). With statistics demonstrating enormous economic success, Catalonia proves itself to be an excellent addition to the global market economy, should they gain independence.

As Catalonia's economic status and relationships build within the worldwide community, Catalonia defines itself as an increasingly distinct region. The more deals they broker out of the region, the more other countries in the world entangle themselves in the Catalonian national argument for independence. Also, economic development and engagement in the global market economy lead to Catalonia taking on attributes of other European nations (Hoffmann 1999, 66). As Catalonia becomes like other prosperous nations in the EU, the more attractive they become as an independent nation to these countries. And the more their identity becomes integrated with European economic thought, the further away Catalonia moves from the Spanish nationality. In addition to these factors, Catalonia is an active participant in the European Union's "Committee of the Regions" (Hoffmann 1999). This committee's primary purpose is to argue for regional issues in the EU as most legislative matters apply at this level. Catalonia leads the charge to make this committee the second chamber of the EU Parliament (Hoffmann 1999). With Catalonia at the forefront of the global and regional stage, its economic influence may drive other countries to accept its fight for independence.

Distinct Language

Catalonia distinguishes itself from Spain not only as an economic powerhouse, but also as a culturally unique region. Catalonians speak their own language, participate in different holidays, and practice different traditions than the rest of the Spanish state. In this way, language, literacy, and historical memory become central aspects of the debate for Catalonian independence. The unique linguistic identity of the Catalonian region fosters a "historical memory" fundamental to the "contemporary Catalan identity" (Llobera 1998, 333, Cattini 2015). Historical memory is "the collective memory of a specific group" (Llobera 1998, 332, Cattini 2015). Josep Llobera argues that historical memory is crucial to the national identity of stateless

nations such as Catalonia (Llobera 1998, 340, Cattini 2015, MacInnes 2006). This memory crafts a uniting thread through all Catalonian peoples. Language harbors this historical memory as Catalonia's primary communicative method. Oral tradition passed through generations of Catalonian families weaves a collective narrative through their language.

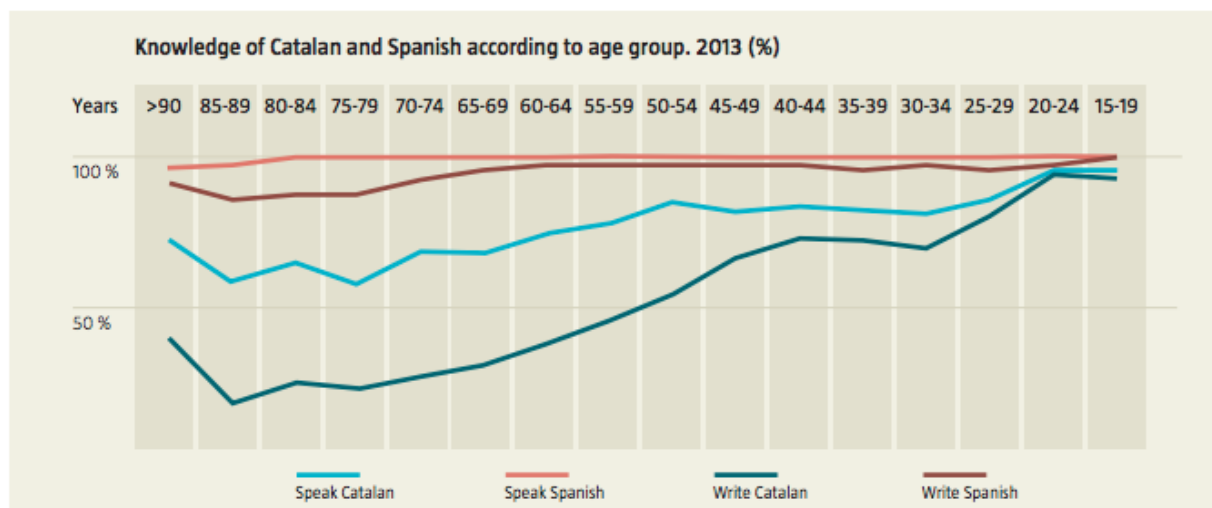
Therefore, when Franco threatened their language, it was not simply a frustration to both learn and speak Spanish, but an attack on the historical memory of the Catalonian culture. In contemporary Spain, each "individual region [can] formulate [its] linguistic policies and [is] free to engage in measures aimed at recovering their languages" (Hoffmann 1999, 49, Villarroya 2012). This new policy created under the Constitution of 1978 contrasts with Franco's regime where "Catalonia's language and culture were deprived of recognition and independence previously [enjoyed]" and often "stigmatized as a mere dialect with its speakers humiliated" (Hoffmann 1999, 53, Vicente 2004). In this period of oppression, the Catalonian people clung to the historical memory of their language and moving forward utilized this memory to recreate their culture. Spain's linguistic difference became a fundamental issue after Franco's death, where "it has become difficult to disentangle the linguistic and cultural from the parochial and political" (Hoffmann 1999, 50).

To further complicate the pluralistic state of Spain, about "a quarter of all Spaniards speak a regional language in addition to the official language of the Spanish state, Castilian Spanish" (Hoffmann 1999, 51). The issue Spain faces today is the multitude of cultures and languages it harbors within its borders. Regions like Catalonia, which felt oppressed under Franco and find new freedom in the post-Franco society, charge head first into ensuring the recovery and sustainability of their languages. By allowing Catalonia to pursue the recovery of

their language, Spain, perhaps inadvertently, pushed Catalonia along to discover and act upon their desire for independence.

In the spirit of embracing their new linguistic freedom, Catalonia engaged in a language planning process “aimed at language recovery” and “linguistic normalization” (Hoffmann 1999, 57-58). Catalonia implemented this new policy in two ways. First, citizens would use Catalan for all public activities. And second, the policy encourages the immigrant population to find a new sense of home in the region by learning the language (Hoffmann 1999). While some embraced this policy, many fought against it by citing their “constitutional rights to use [Spanish]” (Hoffmann 1999, 59). In the Spanish constitution, it states that Castilian Spanish is the national language with the toleration of other regional languages. This language planning policy proves effective despite Castilian Spanish remaining the official language of the country. Figure 6 (below) shows speakers of Catalan by age in 2013. The figure has separate lines for both speaking and writing skills in either Spanish or Catalan. The figure demonstrates that Catalonian citizens have a working knowledge of the Spanish language. The implementation of the language planning policy took place roughly thirty years prior to 2013. People who were children during this policy, ranging in age from 15-40, see a sharp uptick in knowledge of the Catalonian language (Government of Catalonia 2013). Not only that, but those born well after the starting stages of the language planning policy demonstrate a knowledge equal to that of their knowledge of Spanish.

Figure 6 (Government of Catalonia (2013) *Language Use in the Population of Catalonia: Key results of the survey on Language Use in the Population*)



This apparent success of the language planning policy points to the post-Franco resistance to any form of linguistic repression and the Spanish acceptance of a pluralistic society (Hoffmann 1999, 62). Spain's preservation of its unique cultural facets enables policies such as Catalonia's language planning to flourish. Spain feels the repercussions of its pluralistic identity as the Catalanian people base their argument for independence in something that the Spanish government legalized and promotes. In this way, many Catalanian people draw boundaries based on language lines, pointing to theoretical borders at the change of language.

The region implemented a set of new laws in 1998 (Law of Catalanian Language - Regional Law) attempting to reconcile the issues surfacing around immigrants who speak other languages. This law states the importance of the "bond between language and national identity, while at the same time [tries] to be as inclusive as possible of all those who live in Catalonia" (Hoffmann 1999, 68). Any region attempting to depart from their mother country would need to both maintain cultural cohesion and not ostracize a significant portion of their population. For Catalonia, this balancing act manifests in the Law of Catalanian Language (Regional), which

points to the historical memory in the use of their language and invites the newcomers to be a part of this narrative. In this way, the “language policy [strengthens] national identity, [contributing] to the nation-building process,” and attempts to “create a common bond between individuals stemming from very diverse backgrounds” (Villarroya 2012, 38). The romantic sentiment here shows why language is a successful argument for independence. Language represents a tangible difference from Spain and a growing unifying factor among Catalanian citizens.

Conclusions

Catalonian independence is not just possible, but it is at the forefront of the current political conversation. In 2018, Catalanian separatist leaders who were incarcerated in Germany were set free to return to Catalonia. The question becomes what is the next step for Catalonia, and what does this next step look like for immigrants? The current Spanish government, under the rule of the *Popular Party*, strongly opposes independence and even working with the Catalanian government. This disinterest in compromise was evidenced in 2012 when the Catalanian right wing separatist group, *Convergence*, attempted to make an economic deal with the central government, of which they backed out. Spain’s other political parties, such as the rising *Podemos* party, seem to be interested in reconsidering the Spanish constitution to accommodate regions like Catalonia (Delclós 2017). Should Catalonia break away from Spain, the Spanish state could dissolve as the Basque Country and Galicia also have strong pushes for independence. So, the Catalanian push for independence could have national consequences for the whole Spanish state. With their independence gaining momentum, the scales could tip either way. But should the region gain independence, the social implications for immigrants are positive.

Throughout this paper, I analyzed the immigrant population, making the case that if Catalonia gained independence, immigrants would integrate into society quicker and with less difficulty. This ease of integration stems mainly from language learning and sociocultural adaptation which will be simplified with a singular identity. With independence up in the air currently, the immigrants' condition should be considered. Even if Catalonia does not gain independence, the integration process for the historic nationalities within the Spanish state needs to be reassessed. While the ease of integration does not bolster the argument for independence, it does demonstrate one positive impact independence would have on a newly formed Catalanian state. Catalanian independence would help to resolve the disconnect between policy and implementation and start to mend the alienation of the immigrant population.

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