Morlan, Marguerite. Under review. “Accounting for Differing Prominence of Catalan Identity Across the France-Spain Border.” *Catalan Review*.

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Accounting for Differing Prominence of Catalan Identity Across the France-Spain Border

Introduction

Shortly after being elected mayor of Perpignan in 2020, Louis Aliot of France's far-right Rassemblement National Party changed the city logo from *Perpignan la catalane* ("the Catalan city") to *Perpignan la rayonnante* ("the radiant city"). Aliot also removed bilingual road signs in Catalan from the entrance to the city and sabotaged the plan to add a second Catalan-immersion secondary school to the region's *Bressola* network.[1] Perpignan is the most populous city of Northern Catalonia, the term commonly used to refer to the region within France that has historically been identified with Catalan culture and ethnicity.[2] Aliot's actions provoked outrage among Catalans throughout the region, an area where Catalan identity is still strongly felt and claimed despite scant usage of the Catalan language and near non-existent support for Catalan nationalist political parties.[3] As Peytaví Deixona describes, Northern Catalonia is the "birthplace of Catalonia, this land at the foot of the Canigó mountain, where one feels Catalan but one expresses it in French".[4] Spain lost this portion of the Catalan-speaking lands to France in an arbitrary territorial division that was part of the 1659 Treaty of the Pyrenees.[5]

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[1] The *Bressola* is a system of Catalan immersion schools in Northern Catalonia.

[2] Northern Catalonia corresponds approximately to the French département of Pyrénées-Orientales, which forms a border with the Autonomous Community of Catalonia in Spain. Though the territory was known as Roussillon during the *Ancien Régime*, regions were reorganized during the French Revolution according to topography, not cultural or linguistic lines. For this reason, the département of Pyrénées-Orientales also includes Le Fenouillèdes, a wine-growing region that is historically Occitan-speaking, in addition to the historically Catalan-speaking counties of Roussillon, Cerdagne, Vallespir, Conflent, and Capcir. Laia Balcells, "Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 19, no. 4 (November 2013), 469; Robert Blackwood and Stefania Tufi, "Policies vs Non-Policies: Analysing Regional Languages and the National Standard in the Linguistic Landscape of French and Italian Mediterranean Cities" in *Minority Languages in the Linguistic Landscape*, ed. Durk Gorter, Heiko F. Marten, and Luk Van Mensel, (New York, 2012), 110-111.

[3] Balcells, "Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism."

[4] Joan Peytaví Deixona, "Catalan language in French Catalonia today: a case of revernacularisation? A path between identity recovery and linguistic heritage," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 42, no. 10 (2021), 971-972.

[5] Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (California, 1989), 2.

Across the France-Spain border in Catalonia, one finds another area where many inhabitants claim an entrenched Catalan cultural identity, but this area manifests much stronger Catalan linguistic and national identities.[6] While it is common for residents to feel but not speak Catalan in Northern Catalonia, Woolard has identified use of the Catalan language as the most legitimizing factor for claiming Catalan identity in Catalonia.[7] In addition to significantly higher levels of knowledge and usage of the Catalan language, Catalonia also presents a Catalan identity with a historically nationalist dimension that has evolved over the past decade into calls for secession from the Spanish state. While the political aspect of Catalan identity achieved such strength in Catalonia that a referendum for independence was called in 2017, a Catalan national identity has found little resonance north of the border.

The present research compares the salience and dimensions of Catalan identity between Northern Catalonia and Catalonia. Catalan is additionally spoken in the independent state of Andorra, the city of Alghero in Italy, and three other Autonomous Communities of Spain: the Valencian Community, the Balearic Islands, and an area of Aragon known as La Franja. This work focuses exclusively on Northern Catalonia and Catalonia because they historically belonged to the same political entity, the Principality of Catalonia, until the Treaty of the Pyrenees. The marked contrast in Catalan linguistic and national identity between the two areas despite their shared border and history makes for a worthwhile comparative examination. Moreover, notable variation in the language policies and sociohistorical contexts of the other Spanish Autonomous Communities where Catalan is spoken has resulted in a weaker Catalan

[6] Throughout this article, Northern Catalonia will be used to refer to the historically Catalan territory within France, and Catalonia will be used to refer to the Autonomous Community of Catalonia within Spain. These naming conventions are in line with standard usage in English translations of these toponyms.
[7] Kathryn A. Woolard, *Double Talk: Bilingualism and the Politics of Ethnicity in Catalonia* (California, 1989), 40.

national identity and lower usage of the Catalan language in these areas as compared to Catalonia.[8]

What might account for the vast differences in Catalan usage and Catalan national identity between Northern Catalonia and Catalonia? Prior scholarship has considered the relative strength of the French and Spanish states, the impact of mass schooling, rates of economic development and migration, and the importance of cultural movements. After presenting an overview of Catalan identity in Northern Catalonia and Catalonia in the contemporary context, the remainder of this paper will offer evidence pertinent to how each of the aforementioned factors has contributed to present distinctions in Catalan identity across the France-Spain border. This investigation offers a unique contribution to the historiography of this topic by incorporating perspectives from recent interviews with inhabitants of Northern Catalonia and Catalonia, by synthesizing prior theories that have often been considered separately, and by highlighting self-interest as a theme that aptly threads across these theories and has rarely been discussed explicitly as a motive for claiming identity in Catalan contexts.

Catalan Identity in Northern Catalonia and Catalonia in the Contemporary Context

Catalan identity in the modern era will be considered from three vantage points: linguistic identity (knowledge, usage, and attitudes toward the Catalan language), national identity (support for Catalan nationalist political parties and a sense of belonging to a Catalan nation distinct from the French or Spanish state), and cultural identity (expressions of Catalanness not tied to language or politics).

[8] For a thorough discussion of the 21st century state of Catalan in the various Autonomous Communities where it is spoken throughout Spain, as well as a thoughtful consideration of the factors and policies that have influenced its development in each area, see F. Xavier Vila i Moreno, "Catalan in Spain" in *Multilingual Europe: Facts and Policies*, ed. Guus Extra and Durk Gorter (Berlin, 2008).

On the Spanish side of the border, Catalan enjoys widespread usage and privileged status as the vehicular language of instruction in all public schools. As of 2018, over a third (36.1%) of the population aged 15 years and over identify Catalan as the language they use most habitually, and over 80% speak Catalan.[9] In contrast, Catalan linguistic identity in Northern Catalonia can best be described as "still alive but in a poor oral condition".[10] Baylac-Ferrer found that Catalan was the most usual language for just 1.3% of Northern Catalonia's population, and only 5.8% use Catalan in a "normal and fluent" way.[11] As of 2015, one third of Northern Catalonia claimed to be able to speak it, with higher percentages in rural areas and among the oldest generations.[12] Intergenerational transmission in families began to decline rapidly in the mid 20th century, and subsequent generations began to grow up 100% in French. Almarcha París reports, "Northern Catalan saw itself flanked by an image of lack of culture, rurality, uselessness and a language of lesser category. Thousands of people have… agreed not to pass on their language, the language of their ancestors, to their children. They decided this out of fear that their children would not progress or be integrated into the French community" (author's translation).[13]

Younger generations in Northern Catalonia have shown an increasing interest in recovering their ancestral language, even if they do not speak it. Recent surveys have shown that 70% of parents want their children to receive Catalan language instruction.[14] Despite this, Baylac-Ferrer found that only 6% of primary and secondary students participate in bilingual or immersion classes.[15] Public aid from the French government to develop bilingual education has

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[9] Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya, *Territori: Banc d'estadístiques de municipis i comarques*, 2018, http://www.idescat.cat
[10] Peytaví Deixona, "Catalan language in French Catalonia today," 975.
[11] Alà Baylac-Ferrer, *Le catalan en Catalogne Nord et dans les Pays Catalans: même pas mort!* (Perpinyà, 2016), 19.
[12] Peytaví Deixona, "Catalan language in French Catalonia today," 976.
[13] Míriam Almarcha París, "Les marqueurs de l'identité catalane en Catalogne Nord: Perceptions et parallèles depuis l'andorranité," *Dalhousie French Studies* 113, (Winter 2019), 55.
[14] Alà Baylac-Ferrer, "Sociolinguistique et enseignement en Catalogne Nord," *Langues et cité: Bulletin de l'observatoire des pratiques linguistiques*, no. 21 (November 2012), 5.
[15] Alà Baylac-Ferrer, *Eléments pour un rapport sur la situation de la langue catalane*, Document sent to the

not kept up with demand.[16] Furthermore, participation drops markedly between primary and secondary schooling. A secondary teacher of Catalan in Northern Catalonia informed the author, "I always struggle to have enough students to maintain the classes, because even if the smaller ones learn it, they later abandon it… We always suffer from the little motivation of French [people] to learn other languages" (interview 25 July 2023- author's translation).

It thus appears that the importance of language for Catalan identity differs between the two areas. In the case of Catalonia, Juarez Miro claims, "For Spanish and Catalans it is clear: language is political. And language matters to the point that Catalan language is central for a Catalan identity."[17] In Northern Catalonia, on the other hand, "Catalanness takes a different form. Inhabitants openly call themselves 'Catalans'. Not speaking the Catalan language does not undermine the identity built on the basis of other criteria" (author's translation).[18] This notion was confirmed by interview participants, such as one who told the author, "It's interesting that I consider that [my children] don't speak Catalan, but they feel Catalan. They are Catalan more than French, absolutely. So there is a Catalan identity which exists without the language" (interview 2 July 2023- author's translation).

There is also an absence of Catalan nationalism in the political arena. Balcells claims, "while Catalan national identity is politically and socially relevant in Spain, it is almost nonexistent in France".[19] In the 2019 EU parliamentary elections, for example, Catalan nationalist parties received half of the votes cast in Catalonia (49.8%), but received no electoral support at all in Northern Catalonia (down from less than 1% in 2004).[20] Catalan nationalist

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Direction Générale à la Langue Française et aux Langues de France (DGLFLF) (Perpinyà: unpublished, 2019), 5-7.
[16] Peytaví Deixona, "Catalan language in French Catalonia today," 975.
[17] Clara Juarez Miro, *Identity Discourses about Spain and Catalonia in News Media: Understanding Modern Secessionism* (Maryland, 2020), 155.
[18] Almarcha París, "Les marqueurs de l'identité catalane en Catalogne Nord," 51.
[19] Balcells, "Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism," 467.
[20] Source for Catalonia: Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de Governació, "Eleccions al Parlament Europeu 2019," https://eleccions.gencat.cat/ca/resultats-electorals/#/dades?tipusProces=E&proces=E20191#resultats Source

sentiment in Catalonia turned secessionist after a 2010 ruling from the Spanish Constitutional Court that declared parts of Catalonia's updated 2006 Statute of Autonomy to be unconstitutional, including all articles that defined Catalonia as a nation.[21] Secessionist fervor reached a climax in 2017 with an independence referendum in which over 90% of voters expressed their desire to separate from the Spanish state, though the referendum was declared unconstitutional and the Catalan parliament was then dissolved. Dell'Orto (quoted in Juarez Miro) posits that "dramatically escalating tensions" of the past decade have solidified "the construction of distinct, irreconcilable, even inimical identities" between Spaniards and Catalans.[22]

While organizations such as the North Catalonia Pro Autonomy Association advocate for greater regional autonomy within France, as of the time of writing there have not been any formal calls or movements in Northern Catalonia to secede from the French state. That being said, multiple interviewees informed the author that many Catalans in Northern Catalonia marched in solidarity to support their neighbors' independence initiative. One mentioned that around the time of the referendum, "some [Catalans in Northern Catalonia] said that if the southern part gets independence from Spain, I will move to this part" (interview 13 July 2023-author's translation).

How, then, does Catalan identity manifest itself outside of speaking Catalan and supporting Catalan nationalist parties? Almarcha París details common practices and affinities among many Catalans in Northern Catalonia, such as placing a sticker of the Catalan donkey on their cars, painting their house shutters red and yellow (the colors of *la senyera*, known as the

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for Northern Catalonia: République Française, Ministère de l'Intérieur, "Réesultats des élections européennes 2019," https://mobile.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Europeennes/elecresult__europeennes-2019/(path)/europeennes-2019/011/095/index.html

[21] Juarez Miro, *Identity Discourses about Spain and Catalonia,* 8.

[22] Ibid., xii, xi.

flag of the Catalan nation and culture), sporting Catalan flags outside homes and businesses, and cheering on rugby teams including Perpignan's Catalan Dragons with Catalan chants and slogans such as "*Jo soc català!* (I am Catalan!)".[23] Interview informants provided similar commentary. One explained, "[Catalans] here identify, for example, with rugby. It's very important, I would say, the rugby" (interview 5 July 2023- author's translation). Other displays of cultural identity that are shared across the border include the *sardana* dance, gastronomy, and participation in Catalan cultural associations.[24] One informant expressed that the Catalan community in Northern Catalonia can feel insular at times:

> The Catalans have the reputation that they are very, you know, their symbol is the donkey. The Catalan donkey- they have one idea, and they want to do it, and they will do it. They don't change their mind. So, the Catalans, they have this reputation, and they also have the reputation, and I feel it a little bit in the country, that they want to stay just Catalans. They are very nice with the other Catalans, and they don't really like the people coming from elsewhere because they feel it like a kind of menace, that they have to speak French with them and they have to change their way of being (interview 4 July 2023- author's translation).

This investigation will now turn to various factors that have been identified as contributing to the differing prominence of Catalan linguistic and national identity across the border.

Strength of Centralization of the French and Spanish States

[23] Almarcha París, "Les marqueurs de l'identité catalane en Catalogne Nord," 58.
[24] Daniel Cetrà, *Nationalism, Liberalism and Language in Catalonia and Flanders* (Switzerland, 2019), 68.

Linz and De Riquer posit that strong Catalan nationalism in Catalonia resulted from the weakness of the Spanish state.[25] Even after the unification of Castile and Aragon under the *reyes católicos* in the 15th century, the regions of the Iberian peninsula retained their own customs, privileges, laws, and political traditions, and were not merged into a unified political entity.[26] This stands in contrast to the French state, often touted as the pinnacle of the centralized state model. Sahlins notes,

> There was no legal concept of a "Spanish" nationality in Spain during the early modern period… the different political entities which made up Spain were composed of different "nationalities": Navarese, Aragonese, Castilians, Catalans, Portuguese. In France, where the crown subsumed and defined nationality, the provinces were rarely identified as nations; in Spain, by contrast, there was no national monarchy, and peripheral provinces were juridically distinct nations.[27]

The Spanish state remained weak throughout subsequent centuries. After Felipe IV tried to consolidate power in the central monarchy in the mid 17th century, Catalonia revolted, leading to over a decade of conflict that resulted in the loss of part of Catalonia to France and "the division of Catalan-speaking lands forever" in the 1659 Treaty of the Pyrenees, but with Catalonia's autonomous privileges restored by the Spanish crown.[28] Spain was then engulfed in war and political turmoil for much of the 19th century. Berman mentions a scholarly estimate that between 1814 and 1874 there were 37 coup attempts, twelve of which were successful. The

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[25] Juan Linz, "Early State-Building and Late Peripheral Nationalism Against the State: The Case of Spain" in *Building States and Nations*, ed. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Stein Rokkan (London, 1973), 32-109. Borja De Riquer, "Reflexions entorn de la dèbil Nacionalització espanyola del Segle XIX," *L'Avenc* 170 (1993), 8-15.
[26] Sheri Berman, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe: From the Ancien Regime to the Present Day* (Oxford, 2019), 259.
[27] Sahlins, *Boundaries*, 113-114.
[28] Berman, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe*, 260.

first half of the 20th century did not fare much better- the short period from 1917-1923 witnessed over a dozen governments in Spain with an average life-span of about five months.[29] As Berman explains, "lacking a strong state or sense of national identity made dealing with the political, economic, and social challenges of the period very difficult."[30] This idea is in line with Linz, who explains that Spain's ruinous position prevented it from establishing key foundations that aided nation-building in the French case during this time, such as conscription and compulsory education. In turn, cultural differences between Spaniards and Catalans became permanent.[31]

According to Sahlins, earlier scholarship generally identified the French Revolution as the formative period for French unity. In 16th and 17th century France, the French state was largely unbothered by linguistic diversity as long as subjects remained loyal to the king.[32] As Weber explains, linguistic diversity became significant when regional languages started to threaten the new, national ideology propagated in the later years of the Revolution."[33] Tolerance of multilingualism ended after the Talleyrand report of 1791 and a sociolinguistic study done by the Abbot Grégoire in 1793 which confirmed that many Frenchmen were ignorant of the national language and unable to speak it. These observations resulted in a 1793 law that established state primary schools in every commune to teach all children French. Oakes recounts, "Teachers became known as *instituteurs* as their task was to 'institute' the nation. In this way, France could truly become *une et indivisible* (one and indivisible), in accordance with the predilection for centralisation which came to define Jacobin ideology."[34]

Though the seeds for linguistic centralization had been sown, they were unable to grow at the time of the Revolution, partly because of a lack of teachers in the provinces. Furthermore,

[29] Ibid., 265.
[30] Ibid., 282.
[31] Linz, "Early State-Building," 32-109.
[32] Leigh Oakes, *Language and National Identity: Comparing France and Sweden* (Amsterdam, 2001), 90.
[33] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (London, 1977), 88.
[34] Oakes, *Language and National Identity*, 59-60.

Robespierre fell one week after the decree of 2 thermidor an II (20 July 1794) was passed, which had ordered that French was to be used in all public and private acts. The decree was later suspended and never implemented. Due to these circumstances, regional languages were still used for 80 percent of communication at the start of the 19th century.[35] Weber points out that even as late as 1863, one fifth of the population still spoke no French.[36]

For these reasons, recent scholars contend that France really became a unified nation during the early Third Republic (1870–1914). It was in this era that the French state demonstrated its prowess as a strong, centralized entity. During this time, extensive road and railway networks were created that connected peasants in the provinces with the rest of France. Additionally, successful implementation of compulsory primary education policies and universal military conscription meant that it came to be in citizens' self-interest to substitute their regional language with French to successfully participate in these Frenchified spaces. According to Weber, these are the practices by which peasants in France became Frenchmen.[37]

Shapiro sees language purism as representing a desire to strengthen national identity against the threat of the Other: "the Other is located most fundamentally in language, the medium for representing selves and other. Therefore, any move that alters language by centralizing… alters the ecology of Self-Other relations and thereby the identities that contain and animate relations of power and authority"[38]. By this account, the Catalan language represented an "Other" that threatened the force of French national unity. The strong French state maintained a stringently centralized language policy to eradicate this threat into the latter decades of the 20th century, when Mitterand's socialist government promised greater devolution

[35] Henriette Walter, *Le Français dans tous les sens* (Paris, 1988), 124. Cited in Oakes, *Language and National Identity*, 35.
[36] Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 501.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Michael J. Shapiro, "A political approach to language purism," in *The Politics of Language Purism*, ed. Björn H. Jernudd and Michael J. Shapiro (Berlin, 1989), 28. Cited in Oakes, *Language and National Identity*, 53.

of authority to the regions of France and empowerment for their languages (with lukewarm success). France (unlike Spain) was one of the few European countries to not sign the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1992. Though it finally signed in 1999, it still has not ratified the charter as of time of writing. Regional languages were not recognized in the French Constitution until 2008. Even after inclusion, these languages are not named.[39]

Balcells explains that the Spanish state was by no means more tolerant with minority languages than the French state. Various regulations since the 18th century had prohibited the use of Catalan and other minority languages in education (for example, the *Real Cédula de Aranjuez*, [1768], the *Ley Moyano* [1857], and the *Real Decreto* [1902]), with the vision of shaping a cultural homogenization across the Spanish territory.[40] As part of the *Nueva Planta* decree in 1716, Spain also established Spanish as the only language of public acts and administrative documents in Catalonia.[41] Added to this is that use of the Catalan language was forbidden in Spain during two dictatorships that consumed nearly half of the 20th century. Therefore, the difference in salience of Catalan linguistic and national identity across the France-Spain border does not owe to differences in the attitude of the central state toward those identities, nor the policies it enforced, but rather to the effectiveness of implementation permitted by each state's strength, as well as other factors considered below.

Education as a Tool for Nation-Building

Balcells points to the timing of mass schooling in France and Spain as key for understanding the salience of Catalan identity in both places. In Gellner's theory of nationalism, the motor of cultural homogenization is the education system.[42] By the end of the 19th century,

[39] Blackwood and Tufi, "Policies vs Non-Policies," 113.
[40] Balcells, "Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism," 476.
[41] Bernard Cerquiglini, *Les langues de France* (Paris, 2003), 82.
[42] Cetrà, *Nationalism, Liberalism and Language*, 39.

this system was well-developed in France and mass literacy had spread throughout Northern Catalonia. Indeed, by 1894 the rate of illiteracy in Northern Catalonia was down to 21.43%, whereas in Catalonia illiteracy was still high in 1900 at 53%.[43] During the period when this spread of literacy occurred, Catalan was prohibited in French schools, and over a third of teachers in French Catalonia were not native to the region. This allowed for a greater introduction of French in schools because many teachers did not know Catalan. Importantly, France also had a state-wide system that promoted the standardized formation of schoolteachers and the dissemination of a uniform education throughout the country. A publication issued by the Ministry of Education to all teachers in France in 1921 stated: "Our teachers [...] are well aware that the teaching of French is not only about working for the maintenance and spread of a beautiful language and literature, it is also about strengthening national unity."[44] In turn, the result of the 19th century wave of mass education in France, "by which children of illiterate parents were taught in French and in the values of the French Republic and Patrie—was their adoption of a French national identity. This French identity was then reproduced within the families and therefore persisted."[45]

In contrast, the 19th century anti-Catalan regulations for education in Spain mentioned in the prior section could not be enforced because the Spanish state school system was in extremely poor shape. Significant increases in literacy did not take place in Spain until the first three decades of the 20th century, when pro-Catalan educators were at the peak of their influence. In 1914 *La Mancomunitat* (the Commonwealth of Catalonia) was created, an autonomous

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[43] Source for French figure: ICPSR Study Num. 48, "Social, Demographic, and Educational Data for France, 1801–1897," Datasets: 95, 162, 165; source for Spanish figure: Mercedes Vilanova and Xavier Moreno, *Atlas de la Evolución del Analfabetismo en España de 1887 a 1981* (Madrid, 1992), 218. Both cited in Balcells, "Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism," 478.

[44] *Le Bulletin officiel*, issued by le Ministère de l'Éducation de la République Française (1921). Cited in Oakes, *Language and National Identity*, 62.

[45] Balcells, "Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism," 475.

institution in Catalonia that once again made Catalan an official language and created schools and institutions with Catalan as the main language. The private sector, which was either apolitical or confrontational of the Spanish state, also created schools that promoted education in Catalan. Moreover, there was no homogeneous teacher training program in Spain as there was in France, lowering the likelihood that teachers in Catalonia felt connected to the Spanish state. In fact, a School of Pedagogy (*Escola de Mestres*) was created by the Catalanist movement that trained teachers in Catalan pedagogy and imbued them with Catalan patriotic values.[46] This momentum continued during the Spanish Second Republic (1931–39). Public schools were under the purview of the regional government of Catalonia (*La Generalitat*) and had a Catalan curriculum. Inspired by republican ideals of mass literacy and fair education, more Catalan schools were created. They socialized a first generation of literate citizens with values of either suspicion against the Spanish state or love for the Catalan nation, which contributed to the spread and endurance of a Catalan national identity.

While the first generation with mass literacy in France became literate under French rule and instruction, the lack of a scholastic revolution in Spain prior to the 20th century allowed for a strong Catalan national identity to take hold, as well as the maintenance of a Catalan linguistic identity via the development of literacy in that language. The French language slowly came to serve the self-interest of Northern Catalonians over the 19th century. As Weber describes, it became more useful than Catalan because it was tied to the skills learned in schools and to the ability to communicate during obligatory military service.[47] During the advent of mass schooling in Catalonia, Catalans benefitted from maintaining their Catalan linguistic identity, and were encouraged to be proud of their Catalan national identity.

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[46] Ibid., 477-478.
[47] Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 314

Economic Development and Mass Migration

There were economic motives behind differing identity claims across the border as well. In the 18th century, Catalan-speaking landowners on the French side of the Cerdanya valley identified with Spanish nationality so as to gain tax exemptions. Village disputes over pasture lands and access to canal water similarly factored into advocating for the national identity that best served local interests.[48] France industrialized earlier than Spain, leading to a decline in employment in agriculture. This meant that the civil service, which required fluency in French, became Northern Catalonia's main employer.

Additionally, Northern Catalonians seeking economic migration turned to France rather than Catalonia, partly because France's more advanced road and railway networks reached Perpignan by 1862 but did not cross the Pyrenees.[49] As a result of both factors, linguistic substitution of Catalan for French came to serve the best interest of many from Northern Catalonia. Moreover, there has historically been a marked contrast in the economic positions of Northern Catalonia and Catalonia relative to their respective states. Sahlins explains: "The French and Spanish sides of Catalonia ran counter to the more general opposition of France and Spain: [Northern Catalonia] remained largely rural and underdeveloped compared with both France and with Catalonia, the most industrialized and wealthiest region of an otherwise underdeveloped Spain."[50] To this day, the département to which Northern Catalonia belongs remains one of the least wealthy in France (81st out of 96 in terms of GDP per capita).[51]

This is in contrast to Catalonia, which historically has been one of the best-performing regions within Spain.[52] Related to this, Solé-Tura, Gellner, and Anderson have all posited

[48] Sahlins, *Boundaries*, 145.
[49] Robert Blackwood and Stefania Tufi, *The Linguistic Landscape of the Mediterranean: French and Italian Coastal Cities* (United Kingdom, 2015), 89-90.
[50] Sahlins, *Boundaries*, 280.
[51] Blackwood and Tufi, *The Linguistic Landscape of the Mediterranean*, 90.
[52] Berman, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe*, 269.

theories of Catalan nationalism based on economic development.[53] Catalonia's superior economic performance further fueled Catalan nationalism and a desire to seek distinction from Spain, whereas Northern Catalonia's relatively weak economic development fostered a greater reliance on France and the French language. Sahlins recounts a telling anecdote related to this idea. During a heightened era of Catalan nationalism in the early 1930s, a *catalanista* from Barcelona named Joaquim Cases Carbó had asked a landowner in a rural valley of Northern Catalonia about why Catalan nationalism had not spread throughout the region. Speaking in local dialect, the peasant ostensibly replied:

> You all, you can be catalanistes! Your government in Madrid treats you very badly. We cannot be [catalanistes] since our government in Paris treats us very well. We ask for a road, they build it right away. We want a telegraph, they put one in. We ask for a school, they give us one. We can not be catalanistes, but you all, you can be catalanistes.

Cases Carbó reflected that the peasant "said it with remorse, as if he were jealous, the ancestral spirit filling his heart."[54] In this sense, identity became a function of local interests. By fulfilling the needs of its citizens, the French state offered an incentive for Northern Catalonians to define their national identity as French instead of Catalan.

Peytaví Deixona posits a related idea regarding identity as a means of differentiation. He states that Northern Catalans up until a quarter century ago experienced a superiority complex, "that of being Catalans of France, i.e. citizens of a major power, unlike the Catalans of Spain. This kind of superiority derived from being first-class Catalans because they were French,

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[53] Jordi Solé-Tura, *Catalanisme i Revolució Burgesa: La Síntesi de Prat de la Riba* (Barcelona, 1967); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 1983).
[54] Joaquim Cases Carbó, *Catalunya françesa* (Barcelona, 1934), 30. Cited in Sahlins, 291.

although in fact they were second-class French."[55] Sahlins similarly believes that in the century after the Treaty of the Pyrenees, national identity was used across the border as an instrument for distinguishing otherness: "In the eighteenth century, French village communities had identified their counterparts as 'Spaniards' while not yet describing their own nationalities."[56]

The impact of economic development on migration patterns impacted Catalan linguistic and national identity in different ways across the border. Cabré estimates that by the end of the 20th century, over 60% of Catalonia's population descended from migrants who came to Catalonia from poorer regions of Spain during that same century.[57] Over a million and a half of these migrants arrived during the Franco dictatorship. Use of Catalan among autochthonous Catalans during this time was thus marginalized two-fold because of linguistic contact with a massive influx of Spanish-speaking migrants and because they received schooling in Spanish.

Peytaví Deixona remarks on a similar mass migration to Northern Catalonia in the later 20th and 21st centuries. Between 1990-2013, the population of Northern Catalonia swelled by over 100,000 people (a 27% increase), most of them French speakers. He also cites 2011 data claiming that only 41% of the inhabitants of Northern Catalonia were born there. He contends, "it is a well-known fact that these newcomers arrive here speaking the only official language – French – and that any form of integration or assimilation are out of the question".[58] Despite mass migrations on both sides of the border that diluted autochthonous Catalan populations, the aforementioned economic motives, and most crucially education language policies in Catalonia, created greater incentives for integration and assimilation of Catalan identity among migrants and their descendants south of the border. A brief look into the cultural movements that were

[55] Peytaví Deixona, "Catalan language in French Catalonia today," 970.
[56] Sahlins, *Boundaries*, 229.
[57] Anna Cabré, *El sistema català de reproducció: 100 anys de singularitat demogràfic* (Barcelona, 1999).
[58] Peytaví Deixona, "Catalan language in French Catalonia today," 973

coterminous with the political and economic developments discussed in this paper will shed further light on why this was so.

Cultural Influences: Romanticism and the *Renaixença*

"Ma patrie c'est la langue française"- this statement from Algerian-born French writer Albert Camus during his 1957 Nobel Prize acceptance speech reflects the profound impact that language has on one's identity and sense of belonging, as well as the complicated relationship that exists among language, national identity, and a political entity. Oakes points to the French Revolution as the point from which the idea of a truly national language can be considered.[59] The notions of nation-state and national language were further developed through 19th century Romanticism, which originated in Germany. Romantic philosophers such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte laid the groundwork for linguistic nationalism in Germany. Fichte saw language as the key characteristic of nations or peoples.[60] In the words of von Humboldt, "the concept of a nation must chiefly be founded upon [language]... the *character of a nation* (...) is primarily disclosed in *language*" (emphasis in the original).[61]

While German linguistic nationalism was rooted in anti-French sentiment of both a political and a cultural nature, the French were just as eager to express their conviction that the French language and nation were superior.[62] It was in this era of the 19th century that French identity shifted from a civic to an ethnic conception, inspired by romanticism and with the Gauls as the original ancestor.[63] However, Oakes points out that national languages remained

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[59] Oakes, *Language and National Identity*, 21.
[60] Cetrà, *Nationalism, Liberalism and Language*, 33.
[61] Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: The Diversity of Human Language-Structure and its Influence on the Mental Development of Mankind* translated by Peter Heath; introduction by Hans Aarsleff (Cambridge, 1988), 153, 158. Cited in Oakes, *Language and National Identity*, 23.
[62] Guus Extra and Durk Gorter, "The constellation of languages in Europe: an inclusive approach," in *Multilingual Europe: Facts and Policies*, ed. Guus Extra and Durk Gorter (Berlin, 2008), 7.
[63] Oakes, *Language and National Identity*, 21-22.

semi-artificial constructs, in the sense that average citizens did not speak the national language, nor did they consider themselves part of the nation.[64] Anderson finds the origins of national consciousness in a combination of language with capitalism and print-technology. He believes that print-languages allowed for exchange and communication below the elite. According to Cetrà, "This produced an association between linguistic distinctiveness and national culture, to the extent that language was often taken as the root and expression of such culture."[65]

Though linguicidal policies are often attributed to the romantic nationalist idea of "one nation, one language", Vila i Moreno states that in the case of Spain, linguicidal policies were implemented more often in the name of unity and progress than any kind of Volksgeist.[66] He notes that ethnolinguistic activism has been successful in resisting the Spanish state's efforts to wipe out languages other than Spanish. In the case of Catalan, this success can be partially attributed to the resurgence of the language's prestige during the *Renaixença* (1833-1880). This was a cultural and literary movement in Catalonia inspired by Romanticism. The works and associations that came out of the *Renaixença* renewed Catalan cultural awareness and eventually laid the foundation for a Catalan political consciousness.[67] The *Renaixença* served to counteract the forces of the *Decadència*, the term commonly used to refer to the previous three centuries of literary decline after Catalan's golden age in the 14th and 15th centuries. During this time, the political and economic center of Spain moved to Madrid.[68] The *Decadència* had been characterized by linguicidal policies that imposed Spanish in schooling, public acts, and cultural productions. The *Renaixença* witnessed resistance to these policies and linguistic activism via a bountiful production of literary works and other cultural products such as popular theater. Cetrà

[64] Ibid., 23.
[65] Cetrà, *Nationalism, Liberalism and Language*, 37.
[66] Vila i Moreno, "Catalan in Spain," 178.
[67] Cetrà, *Nationalism, Liberalism and Language*, 58.
[68] Cerquiglini, *Les langues de France*, 84.

explains that many of these works "helped to convert a vernacular Catalan language into a modern literary language and contributed to the national 'remembering' of Catalonia."[69] Since then, Catalanism became characterized by "a diffuse common identity built on language, culture and history."[70] Northern Catalonia also participated in the *Renaixença* and continued to produce cultural works in Catalan beyond that time, though to a much lesser extent. However, Northern Catalonia was a land of welcome for exiles from Catalonia during the repressive Franco regime that Cerquiglini equates with ethnicide.[71]

These cultural influences, which were much more prominent in Catalonia than in Northern Catalonia, allowed for the nationalization and politicization of Catalan identity in the former region. Catalan national identity in Catalonia was fomented by developments such as the First Catalan Congress (1880), the development of the bases for a Catalan constitution (*Las Bases de Manresa*) in 1892 by a union of different Catalanist associations (*l'Unió catalanista*), and the establishment of a Catalanist conservative political party, *La Lliga Regionalista*, which was hegemonic in the Catalan political sphere from 1901-1923.[72] *Les Bases de Manresa* also proposed that Catalan be the only official language in Catalonia.[73] Catalan newspapers, youth organizations, and cultural associations also flourished in Catalonia during the early decades of the 20th century. As mentioned in the previous section, a Catalan self-government institution called *La Mancomunitat* was also created in 1914. In addition to developing pro-Catalan education initiatives as described earlier, this institution made major advancements in infrastructure, railroads, and telephone systems, and also raised the prestige of the Catalan language and culture through the creation of various cultural and scientific institutions.[74] One of

[69] Cetrà, *Nationalism, Liberalism and Language*, 58.
[70] Ibid., 59.
[71] Cerquiglini, *Les langues de France*, 85.
[72] Balcells, "Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism," 473.
[73] Cetrà, *Nationalism, Liberalism and Language*, 67.
[74] Balcells, "Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism," 473.

these was *l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, which from 1913-1918 standardized Catalan spelling norms and established a Catalan National Library, dictionary, and modern grammar.[75]

While the post-*Renaixença* political spirit was ingraining a national Catalan identity throughout Catalonia during the first three decades of the 20th century, Northern Catalonia was experiencing a period of relative political stability. Balcells explains that Catalan intellectuals and regional elites in Northern Catalonia "did not make political appeals similar to the ones made by intellectuals south of the border, and [Northern] Catalonia never achieved any sort of political autonomy within the French state."[76] Catalans in Catalonia were being educated in Catalan, their infrastructure was being built by Catalan institutions, and they saw the Catalan language be prominently featured in news and popular culture. It was in their best interest to maintain or adopt a Catalan linguistic and national identity, since the benefits and enriching aspects of society were being provided by Catalan institutions. In Northern Catalonia, the opposite was true- all of these things were provided in French by institutions associated with the French state. Catalans in Northern Catalonia had nothing to gain by turning away from a French linguistic or national identity, even if they still felt culturally Catalan.

Conclusion

The aims of this examination were first, to explain similarities and differences in the salience of Catalan identity across the France-Spain border, and second, to review historical developments associated with the various facets of this identity. A consistent assertion throughout this analysis has been that adopting an identity can serve to enhance one's status or position in society. When the best employment opportunities require an official state language and citizens' needs are met by the state, it behooves them to embrace the associated linguistic

[75] Cerquiglini, *Les langues de France*, 82.
[76] Balcells, "Mass Schooling and Catalan Nationalism," 473.

and national identities, without necessarily having to betray a distinct cultural identity. This has historically been the case for Northern Catalonians. On the other hand, Rendón points out that high Catalan proficiency offers a premium in Catalonia's labor market.[77] Depending on the "Other" that Catalans have sought to distinguish themselves from throughout history, differing tendencies of cultural, linguistic, and national self-identification have resulted on either side of the border. While a Catalan cultural identity is clearly felt by many on both sides of the Pyrenees, those who strongly identify with the Catalan language and nation are much more likely to be found within the limits of the Spanish state.

It is important to note, however, that past tendencies may be reaching an inflection point in both regions. Many interviewees revealed to the author that much of Catalonia is currently suffering from a *ressaca política* (political hangover) in the wake of the failed 2017 independence referendum that has replaced secessionist fervor with political apathy. Coupled with this is a recent court ruling ordering that 25% of instruction in schools in Catalonia now take place in Spanish. Given how important the Catalan education system has been for acquisition, usage, and attitudes toward Catalan in Catalonia, this mandate could have detrimental effects on all three areas.[78]

Meanwhile, attitudes toward Catalan and a desire to learn the language have been growing in Northern Catalonia, as have more favorable attitudes toward regional languages from French politicians. In 1999, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin declared, "regional languages are one of the treasures of our cultural patrimony. The time is indeed gone when the State could consider

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[77] Silvio Rendón, "The Catalan premium: language and employment in Catalonia," *Journal of Population Economics* 20, no. 3 (2007), 669-686.

[78] Marguerite Morlan, "The Importance of Catalan-Medium Instruction for Language Attitudes in Catalonia," in *Language Attitudes toward Spanish and Related Languages and the Pursuit of Social Justice*, ed. Mara Barbosa and Talia Bugel (Oxfordshire, in press), 29.

the teaching of these languages as threatening for national unity."[79] In 2007, the département of Pyrénées-Orientales adopted the *Charte en faveur du Catalan* (Charter in Support of Catalan), "which calls for local actors to promote the Catalan language, whilst not challenging the position of French in Northern Catalonia".[80] Catalans from Northern Catalonia have also participated in marches to show solidarity with their Catalan counterparts in Spain, as can be seen in Figure 1 from the 2022 march for *la Diada* (Catalonia's National Day). Finally, many Catalans in Northern Catalonia have advocated for the renaming of the French administrative region to which they belong from *Occitanie* to *le Pays Catalan*. In 2016, the French parliament reduced the number of regions from 22 to 13, and Northern Catalonia was combined with additional non-Catalan speaking territories. The desire to distance themselves from Occitan culture and align themselves with Catalan culture in formal state nomenclature shows a potential step toward national activism.

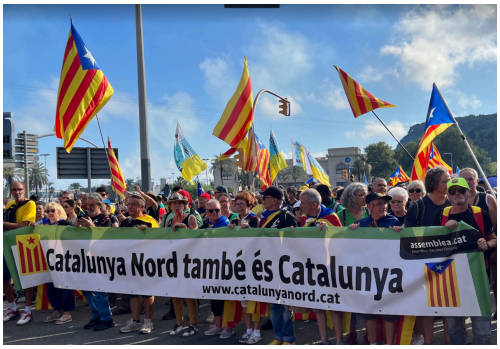

Figure 1. "Catalunya Nord també és Catalunya" (Northern Catalonia is also Catalonia), author's photograph.

At the same time, however, it is likely to be multiple generations before any kind of leveling of Catalan linguistic and national identities could occur across the two regions. There is a very weak news and media presence of Catalan in Northern Catalonia, and most Catalan media

[79] Haut conseil de la Francophonie, État de la Francophonie dans le monde: Données 1997-1998 et 6 études inédites (Paris, 1999), 36. Cited in Oakes, *Language and National Identity*, 121.
[80] Blackwood and Tufi, *The Linguistic Landscape of the Mediterranean*, 92.

is consumed from producers in Catalonia.[81] For a language to thrive, it must be necessary, and Peytaví Deixona contends that, "In the time of the global economy, there is no room in Northern Catalonia… for identity or culture, and the Catalan language is, unfortunately, not strictly necessary."[82] Without the linguistic foundation, one is hard-pressed to imagine a Catalan nation within the bounds of the French state. The strong allegiances to the French nation and language that Northern Catalonians have demonstrated for over a century lower the incentive to claim a second national membership among the Catalan nation that exists across the border.

[81] Cerquiglini, *Les langues de France*, 88-89.
[82] Peytaví Deixona, "Catalan language in French Catalonia today," 971.

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