Friend or Foe: An Analysis of the Contribution National Identity Hegemony Plays in the Acceptance of Asylum Seekers in Australia, Spain and Catalonia

Amanda Collins

Abstract:

With the vast number of people currently seeking asylum, this research sought to understand what determines the reception of asylum seekers and rationalises the treatment of asylum seekers by a nation. This is important to gain insight into how and why displaced people are dehumanised and criminalised when seeking asylum. The national identities of Australia, Spain and Catalonia are analysed, as is the influence of each national identity on public perceptions of asylum seekers. To achieve this, Benedict Anderson's understanding of nationalism being an imagined national community has been adopted. A literature review examining the construction of each national identity, and its influence on public perception of asylum seekers was carried out. Findings were then compared with empirical data gathered during observation in Sydney, Australia and Barcelona, Catalonia. It was hypothesised that sentiments held towards asylum seekers by members of a national community could be attributed to the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion created by a national identity. This was confirmed, as a difference in attitudes towards asylum seekers was evident in Australia, Spain and Catalonia resulting from the processes governments have chosen to develop such an identity.

Keywords: national identity, asylum seekers, othering

Introduction

The world is currently in the midst of a refugee crisis. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (2017), in 2017 there were 65.6 million forcibly displaced people in the world due to conflict or persecution; or 28,300 people per day. With this volume of people requiring assistance, a responsibility lies with all eligible nations, such as Australia and Spain, to accept displaced people into their national community. Unfortunately, despite international agreements including the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, and 1967 Protocol relating to the status, protection and resettlement of refugees, these nations are not providing the assistance they have agreed to (Casimiro, Hancock & Northcote, 2007; Davies, 2013; Fullerton, 2005). To justify these actions (or lack thereof), and the punitive treatment of asylum seekers, both governments have used language which dehumanises and criminalises those seeking asylum. During this process, the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of the national community are moulded and reinforced.

This body of work will examine the "framing" of asylum seekers by governments and media in Australia and Spain. "Framing" is the process of presenting an issue in a particular way to encourage a desired reaction by the audience (Cohen, 2011). The extent of which these representations have created moral panic within each community and an anti-asylum seeker discourse will then be examined. Spain provides a valuable area of research due its "dual" identity, comprised of autonomous regions, which hold individual nationalistic values. Taking into consideration the influence of the central Spanish government, this paper will compare the national identity of Australia with that of Catalonia. It can be hypothesised that sentiments held towards asylum seekers by members of a national community are attributed to the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion created by a national identity. There should therefore be evidence of a difference in attitudes between members of the national community in Australia and Catalonia resulting from the processes governments have chosen to develop such an identity.

Methodology

For this body of work, a critical literature review was conducted to examine previous research on the national identities of Australia, Spain and Catalonia. Focus was directed on the differing views of the Australians and Catalans towards the diaspora who wish to settle in their lands. The literature review examines existing data on the representation of asylum seekers by governments and media in Australia and Spain. The influence of these representations on shaping national identities and public perceptions are critically analysed. This brings an understanding of how and why people are criminalised and dehumanised when seeking asylum, and illustrates the justification process of punitive processing procedures. By comparing contrasting national identities and their influence on perceptions of asylum seekers, it is possible to extrapolate new connections between the role of government, a national identity and public opinions. By identifying contrasting and supporting features within the literature, new connections and possibilities for analysis can be explored (Bouma & Ling, 2010), which allows for greater understanding of the influence of nationalism on populations to be discovered.

Observation was carried out in Barcelona and Sydney to gather empirical information surrounding national identities and asylum seekers. Observation was chosen for the purpose of gathering first hand qualitative data which would either support or oppose the findings in the literature review (Denscombe, 2010). By directing attention during observation to

instances of intentional or unintentional social inclusion or exclusion, trends within populations became evident and open to examination (Bouma& Ling, 2010). Expressions of nationalism and ethnic grouping could be witnessed firsthand (Denscombe, 2010). This contributes to the development of a critical understanding of zeitgeist that the present-day population of these countries have towards those seeking asylum.

Theoretical Framework

A number of social theories were drawn upon to guide this study. Firstly, nationalism was understood from Benedict Anderson's (1983) perspective as an imagined community (cited in Haralambos, 1996; Padawangi, 2016). A nation is essentially a shared identity which has been socially constructed using mythologies and symbolism by the political elite (Haralambos, 1996; Klocker, 2004). It is imaginary in the sense that most members will never meet one another but are bound by a deep sense of comradeship and belonging. The media is therefore an essential tool for governments to fabricate and reinforce these binding factors of a national identity across vast distances (Haralambos, 1996). While a national community is sovereign, with membership determined by the political elite (Haralambos, 1996; Padawangi, 2016; Stephenson, 2007), it is concomitantly limited, as it is spatially bound (Archiles & Marti, 2001; Haralambos, 1996; Padawangi, 2016). The political elite being the "spatial managers" (Klocker, 2004) use maps to draw imaginary boundaries (Delanty, 2003), which work as "symbolic representation of spatial realities in legitimising power, domination and subordination" (Padawangi, 2016, p. 330). This simultaneously penetrates the imaginations of community members, and functions as a visual guide to structure communities (Padawangi, 2016). A perceived threat to a nation, therefore, may not only be in the guise of a physical attack, but an attack on what a nation and its members perceive the national identity to be.

The second theory to influence this research was moral panic. Moral panic is achieved by "framing" a problem in a way which generates an emotional response within a community (Finlayson, 2007) by members who may not be directly affected (Cohen, 2011). The political elite are highly influential in shaping attitudes within an imagined national community, not only as they draft and administer policies and laws, but by having greater access to the media (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a). Government representatives, acting as "moral entrepreneurs", share in the ideologies and values of the general public (Roach Anleu, 2006). Issues surrounding asylum seekers are "framed" in a particular way to encourage an interpretation of events and the subsequent audience's response (Cooper et al., 2016). The political elite "control flows of information" (Cooper et al., 2016, p. 79), determining media reporting, and influencing prejudicial attitudes of the public. This redefines boundaries of behaviour and opinion (McRobbie, 1996). The use of moral panic surrounding a "national discourse" is a pervasive and effective way of discussing issues or race, ethnicity and immigration (O'Doherty & Augoustinos 2008). For this reason, asylum seekers have long been regarded as a feasible cause for moral panic (McKay, Thomas, & Blood, 2011). Once something has been "framed" to threaten the nation, extreme measures can be taken to protect the nation's sovereignty (O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008), security and identity (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b).

Finally, the theory of "Othering" contributed to this research. Othering is the process by which a group who share a sense of commonality (Williams & Korn, 2017) identify and segregate those who are different from the mainstream (Johnson et al., 2004). The mainstream group then rejects those who are different. This creates a binary construct of the

"self", being the dominant group, and the "other", who is seen to pose a threat to the "self" (Klocker, 2004). The "self" then asserts domination or subordination (Johnson et al. 2004) against those without power, suggesting that the "other" must conform to pre-existing defining qualities or be excluded (Klocker, 2004). Othering, therefore, can lead to marginalisation as a part of identity formation (Williams & Korn, 2017).

Australia's National Identity

"In Australia, 'whiteness' permeates the national imaginary" (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b, p. 577), and as such, Australia's national identity cannot be seen to exist outside of the common discourse of race and racism (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). A distinctive Anglo-Celtic (Haralambos, 1996; Klocker, 2004) Christian core dominates Australia's imagined national community (Castles et al., 1992), despite being a religiously and ethnically diverse (Melleuish, 2015) "classical immigration country" (Castles, 1987). There is an imbedded fear of racial invasion within Australia, which threatens the nation's identity, sovereignty, security (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Leach & Zamora, 2006; O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008), order and control (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Papastergiadis, 2004). The fear of the non-white "other" has been perpetuated throughout Australia's history (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Firstly, the "White Australia" policy openly promoted its racial aspect (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Leach & Zamora, 2006), selecting immigrants based on racial, linguistic and cultural similarities (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007). This was followed by an assimilation policy throughout the first half of the twentieth century, which demanded that Indigenous and ethnic minorities dissolve existing ties with their culture and be absorbed into the "host" Anglo-Celtic Christian culture (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Haverluk, 1998; Jureidini, 2002; Marchetti & Ransley, 2005). This position had obvious inherent flaws due to the racial and ethnic foundations of Australia's national identity, so immigrants were selected who were more readily able to achieve the outcome of a homogenous Australian community (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007). In 1988, then Prime Minister John Howard continued this concept with the "One Australia" policy, which, like the "White Australia" policy and the Assimilation policy before it, aimed to reduce non "white" immigration (Stephenson, 2007). Historically in Australia, the threat of "yellow peril" brought with Asian immigrants has been the primary cause of fear (Castles et al. 1992; Jureidini, 2002; Leach & Zamora, 2006; Stephenson, 2007), though the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion have shifted and changed across time (Delanty, 2003). In the current era fear has been reinvigorated (Every &Augoustinos, 2008b), particularly since 2001 (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a), of being "swamped" (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote ,2007; Every & Augoustinos, 2008b) by "fanatic" and "terrorist" asylum seekers (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007) "flooding Australia's borders" (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Papastergiadis, 2004). The development and effectiveness of this discourse will be examined and compared with findings in Spain and Catalonia.

The Spanish Civil War

The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) had an enormous impact on the Spanish community at large. The war was one of political ideologies, class, religion and nationalism (Holguin, 2015). Dictator Francisco Franco campaigned to annihilate all forms of regional cultural expression through the creation of a drastic form of centralism (Conversi, 2002). As Holguin (2015) explained that, when looking at historic events, it is easy to trivialise real trauma inflicted on human beings, and when taking a rigid perspective on civil war, to forget that conflict continues after the war presumably ends. During the Civil War and early post war

years, tens of thousands of Spanish civilians were executed by paramilitaries and dumped into unmarked mass graves (Dacia, 2013). There were as many as 200,000 lives lost during this time (Alfredo, 2012). People were denied their rights to burials and public mourning (Holguin, 2015). Over half a million people were placed in concentration camps and subject to forced starvation, beatings and torture, of which 90,000 people died (Alfredo, 2012; Holguin, 2015). Women were raped, and thousands of babies were stolen from "socially undesirable" women between 1939–1950 (Holguin, 2015), sharing similarities with Australia's "Stolen Generation" during this time (Marchetti & Ransley, 2005). These acts meet the definitions of inflicting terror, conflict and persecution (Holguin 2015). During the Civil War and following dictatorship, Spain was a refugee producing country, rather than a "host" country, producing over three million refugees (Jubany-Baucells, 2002). The shellshock of the terror inflicted by the Franco regime continues long after Franco's death in 1975 (Holguin, 2015) with the denial and suppression of this past, particularly by the right wing Partido Popular (PP) political party (Humlebæk, 2010).

The Case of Spain and Catalonia

Spain is made up of many nationalities which function within the visible Spanish boundaries (Conversi, 2002). Therefore, like Australia, Spain is ethnically pluralistic, the primary difference being ethnicity is regionally bound, with each state maintaining individual traditions, language and culture (Villarroya, 2012). The central Spanish government must therefore appear to promote multiculturalism and multilingualism, especially in the post Franco era (Hoffmann, 1999). Spain's transition to democracy (1975–1986) sparked unprecedented nationalist regional mobilisation, transforming it from one of the most centralised regimes (Conversi, 2002) to a decentralised system with autonomous states (Schech, 2013). This raises the geopolitical issue of whether the Peninsula is federal or confederal, which "threatens the cohesion of the state" (Maiz, Caamano, & Azpitarte, 2010, p. 63). Madrid's reservation to endorse the change from centralism was met with mass uprising across most Spanish cities. Catalonia was the largest region to mobilise (Conversi, 2002). In September 1977 one million people marched in the streets of Barcelona under the banner of "liberty, amnesty, Status of Autonomy". This was the largest demonstration in post-war Europe (Conversi, 2002; Jimenez, Sanz, & Lopez, 2016). Catalonia, which held autonomy prior to the Civil War (Holguin, 2015), was the first to be granted autonomy under the new decentralised government (Martinez-Herrera & Miley, 2010).

The national Catalan identity was first seen to have emerged throughout the nineteenth century, gaining recognition as an alternative identity to that of Spain around 1900 (Archiles & Marti, 2001). Described as a "dual" identity (Conversi, 2002; Villarroya, 2012), the current conflict surrounding Catalonia's independence indicates that the Spanish/Catalan case is rather one of "competing" identities (Etherington, 2014). Smith (1991) identifies two types of nationalism which can be applied to both Australia, Spain and Catalonia's national identities: "ethnic" nationalism and "civil" nationalism (as cited in Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). "Ethnic" nationalism can be described as establishing unity and commonality through cultural and ethnic origins, such as that seen in Australia and Spain (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Fernando, 2010; Haralambos, 1996; Leach & Zamora, 2006); while "civil" nationalism creates unity though common values, rights and political systems, such as that in Catalonia (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Schech, 2013; Villarroya, 2012). "Ethnic" nationalism can easily foster xenophobia and racism, while "civil" nationalism is far more inclusive and liberal, promoting ethnic tolerance and acceptance of immigrants (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Catalonia focuses on "civil nation building", with living and working

within the region being requisites of inclusion, rather than race or ancestry (Schech, 2013; Villarroya, 2012). The Catalan identity is predominantly linguistically structured (Hoffmann, 1999; Villarroya, 2012), the language first being recorded in 1176 and recognised as the official language of the region until 1716. Catalan is taught in schools and there is a language test for civil servants, this being the language used by all official bodies (Hoffmann, 1999). 50% of radio and audio-visual broadcasting must be in Catalan, and since 2010, by law a wide variety of films should be dubbed or subtitled in Catalan (Villarroya, 2012). This ensures the survival and promotion of the language (Hoffmann, 1999), and reinforces the "Catalan identity by giving greater visibility to its symbols" (Villarroya, 2012, p. 42).

Catalonia has deliberately created an inclusive national identity. This accommodates the wider community and the social integration and assimilation of migrants to the region (Olivieri, 2015; Villarroya, 2012). In 2008 16.4% of Catalan residents had been born outside of Spain (Villarroya, 2012), and in 2010, 60% of the population were born outside of Catalonia, or had parents born outside of Catalonia (Martinez-Herrera & Miley, 2010). The linguistic and cultural aspects of the identity deter political and social divisions between ethnolinguistic members of the community (Strubell i Trueta, 1998). Asylum seekers' individual and cultural rights are promoted, even when these sometimes conflict with the Catalan identity (Schech, 2013). Measures such as the 2004 "Language and Social Cohesion Plan", have been designed "to promote and consolidate the Catalan language as the key element in a multilingual, intercultural education model" (Villarroya, 2012, p. 42). The "Plan for Citizenship and Immigration" in 2005-2008 had similar objectives. It recognised cultural diversity and promoted social cohesion by outlining a set of programs, objectives and priorities, while defending the importance of the Catalan language to the region (Villarroya, 2012). On a community level, a cultural group named the Association of Castells maintain and promote the traditional cultural festivity of building human towers (Vaczi, 2016). The "Together we make a team" project was launched in 2009 to promote immigrant integration by encouraging them to taking part in popular cultural traditions (Villarroya, 2012). These measures, have however, been opposed by the central Spanish government (Olivieri, 2015).

Shaping Perceptions of Asylum Seekers

Australia and Spain have been represented as countries under threat, particularly since the 2000 election in Spain (Jubany-Baucells, 2002; Leach & Zamora, 2006) and the 2001 election in Australia (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Every &Augoustinos, 2008a; Leach & Zamora, 2006; O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008). Immigration policies designed to restrict asylum seeker's rights and to keep irregular immigrants out (Schech, 2013) were central to both campaigns (Klocker, 2004; Leach & Zamora, 2006). The Spanish Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol (PSOE) promised to "work intensively to stop the flood of illegal immigration that assaults Spain", while the conservative Partido Popular (PP) promised "to armour-plate the Strait". They argued that legalising some "inmigrantes sin papeles" (immigrants without papers, that is, "illegal immigrant") "would provoke chaos and an uncontrollable process of illegal migration" (Leach & Zamora, 2006, p. 57). In Australia, the Coalition government led their election campaign under the slogan "We decide who comes to this country and the circumstances under which they arrive" (Papastergiadis, 2004, p. 9). Popular public debate surrounded the objective of how to "keep them out" (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Inevitably this worked to create moral panic within the communities and reconstituted racial boundaries (McRobbie, 1996). Simultaneously, more overtly exclusionary, aggressive and oppressive asylum seeker processing procedures were justified (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Leach & Zamora, 2006). The Spanish government has

adopted "fast tracked" processing (Fullerton, 2005) and "push backs" (Spanish Commission for Refugees, 2017), while Australia began "off shore processing" (McPhail, Nyamori, & Taylor, 2016). These are not due processing practices and they violate international agreements by avoiding international obligations and violating human rights (Davies, 2013; Fullerton, 2005; Spanish Commission for Refugees, 2017).

The use of strategic "loaded" language (Cooper et al., 2016) since these elections has penetrated the Australian psyche, and to some lesser extent the Spanish and Catalan communities. Asylum seekers have been "framed" as "illegals" (Cooper et al. 2016; Every & Augoustinos 2008a; Klocker 2004; Leach & Zamora 2006; Schech 2013), and "economic migrants" by both Australian and Spanish governments and their media (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a; Leach & Zamora, 2006). There are obvious connotations which accompany the term "illegals", these being that asylum seekers are linked to criminal activity (Van Acker & Hollander, 2003), the act of seeking asylum itself incorrectly "framed" as breaking the law. The term "economic migrant" has been similarly effective as it perpetuates a distrust of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are perceived as deceptive, trying to enter a nation under false claims of escaping terror, conflict or persecution. They are "framed" as making a "lifestyle choice"; "stealing citizens jobs" (Every &Augoustinos, 2008a; Leach & Zamora, 2006); or "milking the system" (Jubany-Baucells, 2002). This makes asylum seekers' objectives questionable and to be seen with suspicion, along with their advocates (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a). In Spain, the moral panic surrounding asylum seekers generated during the 2000 election was evident and extended beyond "inmigrantes sin papeles". A wave of unprecedented violence against immigrants occurred in Andalusia, Spain with the killing of two farmers and two youths, and at least twenty people injured in retaliation. This was sparked by the belief that asylum seekers were a long-term problem and would corrupt the morality and customs of Spanish society (Jubany-Baucells, 2002).

In Australia, the "queue jumping" (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a) analogy has been very effective. The queue represents a rational and fair democratic order for reception of asylum seekers, "framing" boat arrivals as trying to beat the system (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Australia identifies itself as the land of the "fair go" (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b; Haralambos, 1996), with generous, tolerant and empathetic characteristics (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). Despite the lack of any "real" queue, the idea plays on the notion of fairness and orderliness (Leach & Zamora, 2006). Thus, "queue jumpers" are "stealing" the rightful place of "genuine" refugees, are "untrustworthy" (Leach & Zamora, 2006; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003), and taking advantage of Australia's national principles (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b). This creates a binary construct of the "fair Australian" and the "unfair asylum seeker" (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Every & Augoustinos, 2008b), or the "deserving" and "undeserving" asylum seeker (Leach & Zamora, 2006; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). Punitive treatments (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b) and the need to "send a message" to those planning to arrive by boat are then justified (Van Acker & Hollander, 2003).

The "boat people" analogy has been similarly compelling (Cooper et al., 2016; O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008). The concept of a "boat person" describes these asylum seekers as not belonging to "this land" or "this soil", and therefore they remain outsiders to a nation's imagined boundaries (O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008). Jupp (2002) argues that the use of lies, evasions and innuendos consistently demonise "boat people" and increases public hostility (as cited in Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). Most unnerving was the Australian government's portrayal of "asylum seekers as serial child-abusers" (Leach & Zamora, 2006,

p. 58) during the 2001 election campaign. The "children overboard" incident is the most well-known, where "boat people" were wrongly accused of throwing their children overboard when confronted by the Australian navy (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a; Leach & Zamora, 2006; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). Additional unsubstantiated allegations during this time included a child's mouth being forcibly sewn shut, and the attempted strangulation of a child by "a potential illegal immigrant" (Leach & Zamora, 2006, p. 58). It is evident that these allegations serve the political agenda of creating moral panic within Australia's imagined national community. "Boat people", in this instance, were portrayed as abhorrent, hostile people with complete disregard to their children's wellbeing, and lacking all sense of decency (Leach & Zamora, 2006). By tactfully using "story telling" techniques (Finlayson, 2007) to shape a holistic narrative of the characterised asylum seeker, a sentiment was generated within the population. Asylum seekers, and particularly those arriving by boat, were dangerous and would disrupt the harmony and safety of Australia's community (Leach & Zamora, 2006). This makes their marginalisation not only conceivable, but potentially desirable (O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008).

Asylum seekers have been associated with "terrorists" (Every & Augoustinos, 2008a), accused of causing civil unrest (Leach & Zamora, 2006), and carrying out an "invasion" or an "assault" on both Australia and Spain (Agirre, Ruiz, & Cantalapiedra, 2015; Leach & Zamora, 2006; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). Both nations have portrayed asylum seekers as "threatening" and "burdensome" (Every &Augoustinos, 2008a; Klocker, 2004; O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008) to social, cultural and economic stability (Cooper et al., 2016; Every &Augoustinos, 2008b; Leach & Zamora, 2006); to the nation's sovereignty, security and identity (Cooper et al., 2016; Leach & Zamora, 2006; Schech, 2013; Van Acker & Hollander, 2003). A kind of siege is mentally evoked whereby a nation is portrayed as being vulnerable to the aggressive asylum seekers (O'Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008). This strange role reversal represents asylum seekers as a dangerous homogenous group (Leach & Zamora, 2006). Thereby, violence, inhumane and harsh treatments are sanctioned as legitimate responses to the threatening "other" as a part of a nation's defence system (Every & Augoustinos, 2008b).

Effectiveness of Asylum Seeker Representations

It appears that the effectiveness of creating a social discourse excluding asylum seekers has been more effective in Australia than in Spain or Catalonia. There are a number of reasons which this may be attributed to, the first being the Spanish Civil War. Spaniards still recall family and friends who fled the Franco dictatorship (Fullerton, 2005) and the terror inflicted during that time. In the 1990s interest rose to exhume the bodies buried in unmarked graves. This was demonised by the Spanish government as trying to bring up ghosts of the past (Holguin, 2015), and breaking the "pact of silence" established by the political elite after Franco's death (Dacia, 2013). In 2006 tempers flared and the "War of the Death Notices" began, with community members competing for obituary space describing how and when their loved ones died (Holguin, 2015). Resulting from this, the Law of Historical Memory was passed in 2007. This included financing the exhumation and reburial of people buried in mass unmarked graves (Dacia, 2013; Holguin, 2015). The remanent of terror inflicted on the Spanish people evidently still resonates across the broader community, with the exhumation of bodies continuing into the 21st Century (Dacia, 2013). This works as a continuous reminder to the Spanish people of the conditions those seeking asylum are fleeing, making their reception to asylum seekers more amicable.

Another differentiating feature is the lack of media coverage surrounding asylum seeker issues in Spain. While, as previously discussed, asylum seekers have been negatively represented by the central Spanish government, these issues are not as readily broadcasted (Agirre, Ruiz, & Cantalapiedra, 2015) as they are in Australia. Manuel Castells (2004) deduced the reason to be that the Spanish political players are trying to shape opinion, not through explicit messages in the media, but through the absence of certain content (Agirre, Ruiz, & Cantalapiedra, 2015). Thus, the government is implicit on "blanketing" issues surrounding asylum seekers. Agirre, Ruiz, and Cantalapiedra (2015) found job insecurity and a lack of interest or expertise of journalists to be contributing factors for the absence of media attention surrounding asylum seeker issues. There is also a lack of transparency, with no media access to detention centres. While carrying out research in Barcelona there was no media content on asylum seekers. This may, however, have been attributed to the media focus on Catalonia's independence.

In Australia it has become evident that the anti-asylum seeker discourse has been further developed. Asylum seeker issues have been a "hot topic" within the media for over a decade (Cooper et al., 2016; McKay, Thomas & Blood, 2011). As such, asylum seekers as the "other" has been continuously reinforced in Australian's daily lives (Wade, 2011). This has created ingrained boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. While conducting observation in Sydney, statements about asylum seekers such as "we don't want them here"; "they'll just steal our jobs"; and "they'll kill us all" were overheard in conversations. Speaking in support for asylum seekers was often met with people rolling their eyes, turning away or making scoffing noises. It became evident in Sydney, that discussion of asylum seekers only spiked interest if the subject was about speaking out against the threatening "other". In Barcelona this was not the case. There was a genuine interest in the wellbeing of asylum seekers, and a desire to discuss the challenges faced by those seeking asylum.

Lastly, Catalonia's desire for independence from Spain is a contributing factor for a difference of perceptions within the Catalan community. Catalonia distinguishes itself as being different from Spain, with many Catalans considering the Spanish to be foreign imperialists (Brandes, 1990). With overtly exclusionary language used to describe asylum seekers by the central Spanish government, in attempts to differentiate themselves from Spain, the Catalan people seem to have rejected these negative stereotypes. In saying this, their conflicting perceptions from that of the Spanish community may simultaneously contribute to their desire of independence in the first place. Observational findings support this conjecture. The struggle over independence in Catalonia can be interpreted as an identity crisis in which each identity is asserting their ideologies and values. While this strengthens identities and the bonds between those who belong, it simultaneously segregates the "other", rejecting the attitudes, values and beliefs which they carry. Throughout December 2017 in Barcelona, banners and graffiti for or against independence filled the streets. Yellow ribbons were spray-painted on sidewalks and walls, and yellow plastic bags were tied to fences in support of freeing the ministers still imprisoned following the referendum. People in the region showed discontent towards the Spanish government. The actions taken over the referendum were perceived as an insult to the vast history of the Catalan people. A majority of the public opposed the Spanish government and with this the Spanish identity.

Strubell i Trueta (1998) formed the opinion that the illegitimate suppression of the Catalan language and culture by the Franco regime fostered powerful links and inner strength within the Catalan community. This suppression may have sparked the desire for independence from Spain well before the current debate began. Olivieri (2015) identifies the year 2010 as the

beginning of major change within the region for support of independence. This was the year the Spanish Constitutional Court made a number of amendments to the Catalan Status of Autonomy. This included interpreting the term "nation" in the preamble to hold no legal standing. This made any true measure of self-determination for Catalonia devoid of legal status (Olivieri, 2015). In the same year Spain won the world cup, and with seven key players being Catalan, the state took this as a victory for Catalonia. Bull fighting was made illegal in the region as an act of rejecting the Spanish identity (Black, 2010; Olivieri, 2015), and the Catalan government created legislation requiring films to be dubbed or subtitled in the Catalan language (Villarroya, 2012). Another indicator of the shift away from the Spanish identity within the Catalan population is seen by the number of national flags hung in the region. Olivieri (2015) noted a 1:1 ratio of Spanish and Catalan flags in 2010 following the World Cup.This rose to 2:1 in favour of Catalonia in 2012 at the start of the European Championships. The conflicting nature of the Spanish and Catalan national identities reached a climax during this research following the referendum. In December 2017 observation accounted for 8:1 Catalan flags throughout the centre of Barcelona city.

The effectiveness of creating an anti-asylum seeker discourse within each nation can be measured by the volume of support generated within the populous for asylum seekers. To assist with the Syrian refugee crisis, in May 2015 the European Commission proposed a refugee reception quota, which was not received well by the Spanish government (Agirre, Ruiz, & Cantalapiedra, 2015). Of the 17,337 refugees Spain pledged to offer asylum to by September 2017, as of July 2017 only 744 had been granted asylum (Bris & Bendito, 2017). On February 18, 2017, a grass roots organisation named after the title of a Catalan song, Casa nostra és casa vostra (our home is your home) organised a rally in support of asylum seekers. Between 160,000 and 300,000 people marched in the streets of Barcelona. They called for the Spanish government to allow more refugees into Spain (Rosen, 2017; Wilson, 2017). In contrast, on June 17, 2017, 8,000 people marched in Madrid for the same purpose, wanting the Spanish government to keep its commitment to the European Relocation Plan (Aljazeera, 2017). The vast difference between the support generated in Barcelona and Madrid reaffirms the inclusive nature by which Catalonia's identity has been formed. Efforts to promote diversity and acceptance by structuring the Catalan identity linguistically and culturally has fostered welcoming sentiments within Catalonia's population towards asylum seekers. It was observed that there were minimal ethnic divisions within the Catalan community. In contrast with Australia, people of different race and ethnic backgrounds mixed together with no evident prejudicial attitudes. Women wearing hijabs and men wearing turbans blended into the Catalan community without even the slightest glance. During observation in Sydney the racial aspect of Australia's identity was evident. While it is a multicultural city, there is clear segregation between ethnic groups. Minorities such as Aboriginals, Chinese, Arabs and Indians have congregated in areas across the city. When catching trains prejudicial attitudes were visible, particularly to Muslim women wearing hijabs and men wearing turbans. They were often looked upon with suspicious glances and avoided. People asking questions or striking up conversation primarily happened between members with the same racial features. The largest demonstration in Sydney was held on August 27, 2016, where 3,000–5,000 people protested for the closure of Nauru and Manus Island Detention Centres (Davidson, 2017). This demonstrates the extent to which the anti-asylum seeker discourse has penetrated the Australian culture, and the success of the Australian government and media manipulations. One could say that supporters for asylum seekers within Sydney are a minority group in themselves.

Limitations and Further Research

This research had a number of limitations. Firstly, as an undergraduate research project, ethics approval was not available. Collecting information was therefore restricted to a literature review and non-participant observation. Data was collected by watching and listening to conversations in Barcelona in December 2017 and Sydney between 2015 to 2017. Findings were also limited due to language barriers. The ability to speak Catalan or Spanish while in Barcelona would have been greatly beneficial to this study. A lack of time in conducting observation additionally contributed to limitations in this area. Additional qualitative research may be carried out to further develop findings on perceptions of asylum seekers in Australia, Spain and Catalonia. By conducting interviews with people granted asylum in each nation, knowledge of their individual experiences of social and cultural integration would be gained. By interviewing members of each community, a more holistic perspective would be developed of people's attitudes towards asylum seekers and the motivations behind these feelings. These finding could then be compared to discover if there is continuity between the experiences of asylum seekers and the sentiments of the population.

Conclusion

Comparing contrasting national identities has achieved a greater understanding of the influences affecting the reception of asylum seekers, and the subsequent treatment of asylum seekers by a nation. Australia and Catalonia's national identities have been shaped around different boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. From my observations it has become evident that many discourses in Australia are racially and ethnically structured, which has led to asylum seekers being "othered", and negative representations effectively permeating much of the Australian psyche. While Spain shares similarities with Australia, Catalonia has used its own language and culture to form an imagined national community. This has allowed for a more racially and ethnically inclusive identity. Compared with other regions of Spain, efforts of "framing" asylum seekers as the "other" by the Spanish government have been less effective in Catalonia. Catalonia thus illustrates that it is possible to create a national identity with the inclusion of asylum seekers.

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Corresponding author: Amanda Collins
Contact email: a.collins.35@student.scu.edu.au