Languages, secessionism and party competition in Catalonia: A case of de-ethnicising outbidding?

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Abstract

This article explores party strategies in electoral competition in Catalonia in order to test the existence of ethnic outbidding (Chandra, 2005; Zuber and Szöcsik, 2015). We contribute with original findings on this case by addressing the evolution of political parties' discourses through a qualitative analysis of their manifestos for the last five regional elections campaigns (2006–2017), covering a period of strong territorial conflict between Catalonia and Spain. Our analysis aims to measure the impact of secessionism growth on parties' ethnic competition in Catalonia and compares the strategies of secessionist, federalist and centralist parties. In order to measure ethnicity, we focus on language, the most salient identity marker in Catalan politics, and link the evolution of parties' territorial positions to that of their treatment of national identities and the Catalan and Castilian languages – both official languages in Catalonia – in their manifestos. Our findings include diverse strategies that do not entirely fit in with ethnic competition theories. First, we find that territorial outbidding does not always imply ethnic outbidding: political parties generally do not use the main identity marker in Catalonia (language) for outbidding purposes. Second, we find some evidence of ethnic outbidding in majority nationalist parties, but not in minority nationalist parties.

Introduction

'Do you consider that Spain should remain a single nation in which all its citizens are equal in their rights and obligations, as well as in terms of access to public benefits?' In Spain in 2006, the Partido Popular (PP), in its campaign against the reform of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, proposed a country-wide referendum asking this question. This referendum never took place, but the PP collected more than four million pro-referendum signatures across Spain. It did so by using strong some anti-Catalan rhetoric including references to an alleged imposition of Catalan language onto Castilian-speakers in Catalonia (Atkinson, 2011). The PP's attitude towards the Catalan territorial reform mirrored traditional Spanish nationalism (Junco, 2017; Muñoz, 2009; Muro and Quiroga, 2005) and was part of a tough opposition strategy against the PSOE Government.[1] The negotiations on the Statute of Autonomy,

initially supported by 120 out of 135 MPs in the Catalan Parliament, finally led to its approval by the Spanish Cortes, although with the PP opposing it, and to its ratification in a binding referendum in Catalonia (Cuadras-Morató, 2016; Keating and Wilson, 2009; Nagel and Rixen, 2015). Immediately, the Catalan Statute of Autonomy was contested by the Spanish Constitutional Court in an initiative driven by the PP and its regional governments at that time (the Balearic Islands, the Valencian Community, Murcia and La Rioja), the Aragon regional government (PSOE) and the Spanish

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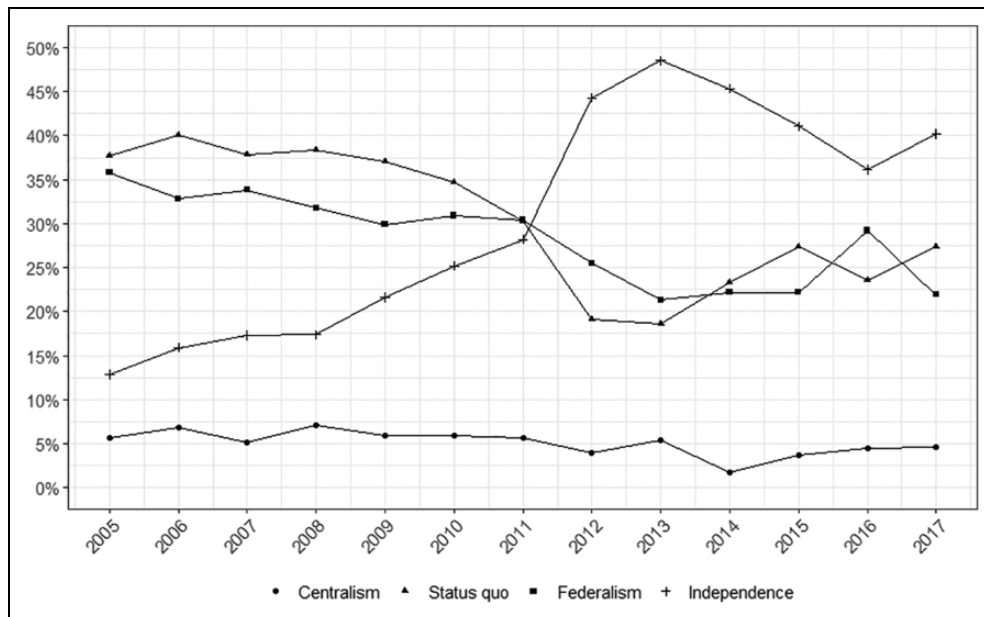
Figure 1. Territorial preferences in Catalonia 2005–2017. Question: In any case, how do you think this relationship [between Catalonia and Spain] should be? Do you think that Catalonia should be? 1. A region of Spain; 2. An autonomous community of Spain (status quo); 3. A state in a federal Spain; 4. An independent State; 98. Does not know; 99. Does not answer. *Source*: Own elaboration. Data: Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO). See: http://ceo.gencat.cat/ca/barometre//.

Ombudsman. The Constitutional Court's decision, significantly reducing the scope of powers of the Statute of Autonomy, was the most evident detonator of the rise of secessionism in Catalonia.

From 2012 onwards, subsequent elections to the Catalan Parliament showed a progressive increase in the secessionist initiatives of Catalan non-state-wide parties (NSWP[2]); these obtained sustained parliamentary majorities. In parallel, popular movements led by civil society associations in favour of independence gained strength, while public opinion polls showed a similar trend (see Figure 1). Both factors favoured the organisation of a unilateral referendum on independence on 1st October 2017, unauthorised by the Spanish Government and ruled unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. The mounting conflict between two nation-building projects, that of Catalonia and that of Spain, led to a symbolic declaration of Catalonia's independence on 27th October 2017, followed by the prosecution of secessionist leaders, with some going into exile and others into custody, and the suspension of self-government until a call was made for elections to the Catalan Parliament, held on 21st December 2017.

This article explores party strategies in territorial conflict contexts. More specifically, we aim to test the existence of ethnic outbidding strategies (Chandra, 2005; Horowitz, 1981; Rabushka et al., 2008; Zuber, 2012; Zuber and Szöcsik, 2015) in party competition in Catalonia. To do so, we perform a case study that addresses the evolution of political parties' programmes through a qualitative analysis of their manifestos

for the last five regional elections campaigns (2006–2017), covering a period of strong territorial conflict between Catalonia and Spain.

What has been the impact of this territorial conflict on parties' ethnic competition in Catalonia? Has it led to a dynamic of ethnic outbidding between Catalan nationalist parties and between Spanish nationalist parties? Are there differences between secessionist, federalist and centralist parties regarding ethnic strategies? Which factors can explain party strategies in this context?

In order to measure ethnicity, we focus on language, the most salient identity marker in Catalonia, and examine the weight and meaning that parties give to Catalan and Castilian – both official languages – as objects of 'ethnic appeal'. Our analysis stems from the assumption that languages, as communication tools, are not only ethnic markers but also social goods. Languages are linked to both social justice and ethno-cultural justice (Kymlicka, 1996; Kymlicka and Patten, 2003; Patten, 2014; Schutter, 2014; Schutter and Robichaud, 2017; Van Parijs, 2011): in terms of social justice, languages affect equal opportunities, inclusion and cohesion; in terms of ethno-cultural justice, they relate to autonomy, dignity and self-esteem. Therefore, in linguistically diverse settings language can impact both on national (or ethnic) and on social political agendas. At the same time, both aspects can have a prominent role in party competition. Their double condition makes languages a particularly informative object of study when analysing ethnicity in party manifestos, because parties can choose to

emphasise their ethnic side, their social side, none of them or both.

Catalonia is an interesting case study that could be used for a more general understanding of ethnic competition in liberal democracies. It provides a perspective, in terms of comparative politics, on party strategies relating to national identity used for obtaining electoral support. In addition, it is a case that can help us better comprehend the complex political role of languages in multilingual settings.

Although languages have not played a relevant role in the current territorial conflict between Catalonia and Spain, they can clearly be used as a potential instrument of 'ethnic appeal' in this context. In fact, language policies in Catalonia have been contentious for a long time: they were part of the debates on the Statute of Autonomy and are a recurrent object of institutional clashes, both within Catalonia and between the regional and the central governments. Catalonia's case is also linguistically relevant because both Catalan and Castilian are widespread languages among population in terms of knowledge, use and identity, and language groups are largely mixed.

Catalan nationalism is overwhelmingly considered as a form of civic sub-state nationalism by the literature (Conversi, 1990; Conversi and Jeram, 2017; Guibernau, 1997, 2004; Keating, 1996; McRoberts, 2001; Serrano and Bonillo, 2016). However, the rise of secessionism in Catalonia has been related to ethnic outbidding strategies (Barrio and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2017; Criado et al., 2018; Gillespie, 2015; Medeiros et al., 2015). In Catalonia, languages have been traditionally understood as the main ethnic markers (Keating, 1996; McRoberts, 2001) and, at the same time, language policies have explicitly addressed social justice concerns since the 1980s (Riera-Gil, 2011). This work explores this duality through its expression in party manifestos.

Our analysis is relevant not only because of the salience of Catalonia's case, but also because of its novel findings and its contributions to the literature on party competition. We observe a diversity of strategies which do not entirely match ethnic competition theories (Chandra, 2005; Zuber, 2012). In fact, during a period of strong territorial conflict (2006–2017) we observe 'de-ethnicising' outbidding, rather than the 'expected' ethnic outbidding dynamic (see the next section), between secessionist parties, in contrast with federalist and centralist parties. This finding is supported by several further indicators in addition to our analysis of manifestos.

This article contributes to a better understanding of party strategies in contexts of nationally motivated territorial competition in contemporary democracies. First, it provides a terminological and conceptual clarification regarding former theoretical approaches, by distinguishing territorial outbidding strategies (radicalisation of parties' political positions in the territorial axis) from ethnic outbidding strategies (radicalisation of parties' use of ethnicity). Second, it

provides evidence of strategies adopted by both majority and minority nationalist parties, in contrast with former analysis, mostly focused on the latter. Third, it reflects contextual evolutionary dynamics in party competition over a significant period (2006–2017). All in all, it contributes to refine existing theories (Zuber, 2012, 2013; Zuber and Szöcsik, 2015) with new evidence from the case of Catalonia.

The article is organised as follows. First, we provide a theoretical framework on ethnicity in party competition. Second, we offer an overview of the case of Catalonia, focused on political and sociolinguistic aspects. Third, we justify our data selection and methodology. Fourth, we present the data obtained through our analysis of party manifestos. Fifth, we provide our results and test their robustness. Finally, we conclude.

Theoretical framework and terminological remarks

In order to address the use of ethnicity in party competition, we draw principally on the theoretical framework on ethnic politics provided by Chandra (2005), expanded and refined by Zuber (2012, 2013) and Zuber and Szöcsik (2015). Chandra adopts a constructivist approach to ethnic identities and challenges two previous primordialist models of ethnic outbidding in party competition, those developed by Rabushka and Shepsle (1972) and Horowitz (1985). In turn, Zuber (2013) contributes an illuminating typology that helps distinguish between ethnic strategies and the territorial dimension of politics.

According to Chandra (2005: 236), *ethnic identity* refers to nominal membership in an ascriptive category (or group) determined by attributes inherited by descent, such as race, language or religion. A crucial point highlighted by this author is the distinction between attributes (which are difficult to change in the short term) and ascription to categories, which can and do change over time. Chandra sustains that identities can be fluid, multidimensional and endogenous to competitive politics: the degree to which identities are fixed or fluid depends to a great extent on the institutional context. Thus, ethnic divisions can be changed by political processes related to democracy, the economy, the organisation of state institutions, social policies, etc. (2012: 5). Politics can favour a reclassification of attributes and activate new identity categories. Such a reclassification is the principal mechanism that causes a change of ascriptions in the short term (2012: 15–19).[3]

If an ethnic group is a category of individuals that share some descent-based attributes, following Chandra, an *ethnic party*

> appeals to voters as the champion of the interests of one ethnic category or set of categories to the exclusion of others and makes such an appeal central to its mobilizing strategy. The key aspect of this definition is exclusion. (2005: 236)

Table 1. Ethnic party strategies.

		Positional criterion		
		More moderate	*No shift*	*More radical*
Appeal criterion	*Exclusive*	Ethnic underbidding	Static bidding	Ethnic outbidding
	Non-Exclusive	Lateral underbidding	Lateral bidding	Lateral outbidding

Source: Zuber (2011).

Consequently, a *non-ethnic party* is a party that appeals to voters irrespective of their ethnicity.[4]

By 'mobilizing strategy' Chandra mainly refers to parties' positions on the territorial dimension of politics, which is often called the *ethnic dimension* (Zuber, 2013: 760). However, here we make a terminological distinction in order to gain some clarity in addressing the relationship between ethnicity and territorial politics. In this work, the term 'ethnic' refers to descent-based approaches consistent with Chandra's concept of ethnic identity, while the term 'territorial' refers to parties' positions and demands on the centre-periphery axis.

As Zuber (2012: 929) and Zuber and Szöcsik (2015) note, both minority and majority nationalist parties can be classified as ethnic parties if they appeal exclusively to an ethnic identity category. In an outbidding process, their extreme territorial positions will be the opposite (secession in the first case and unitary patterns favouring assimilation in the second). Both positions are examples of radicalisation, understood as the contrary of centrism (Chandra, 2005: 236).

Against this framework, the ethnic outbidding model is a theory of ethnic party competition that argues that parties:

> (. . .) in ethnically heterogeneous societies appeal to voters on the basis of their ethnic identity rather than other social identities, such as class. Assuming that ethnic groups have mutually exclusive political preferences, parties seek to maximise votes by adopting more extreme positions *[on the territorial axis]* than their intra-ethnic competitors. (Zuber and Szöcsik, 2015: 784)

Accordingly, the radicalisation of territorial demands is seen as the inevitable by-product of an ethnic competition cycle fed by parties' ethnic discourses (Barrio and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2017; Horowitz, 1981, 1985).

A second terminological remark, about 'ethnic' and 'national', is relevant in addressing the case of Catalonia. We assume that society in Catalonia can be defined as ethnically heterogeneous on a linguistic basis; this is also true of society in Spain. At the same time, the existing territorial conflict between Catalonia and Spain has a clear national component and its political dynamics have been related to the ethnic outbidding model (Barrio and Field, 2018; Barrio and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2017; Chandra, 2005). However, we sustain that 'ethnic' and 'national' are only synonyms when the nation is conceived using an essentialist perspective that emphasises the fixed nature of

descent-based attributes and discourages its fluidity and evolution over time. When, instead, the nation is conceived as a political subject open to the evolution and the reclassification of its identity attributes, the term 'ethnic' is not applicable. On this basis, both NSWP and SWP can be ethnic or non-ethnic, depending on their discursive strategy regarding the (majority or minority) nation. Particularly, we point out that NSWP, although they tend to highlight national aspects because of their minority position (Kymlicka, 2001; Requejo, 2006; Taylor, 1992), are not ethnic parties per se, as the literature often assumes (Barrio and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2017: 1783; Zuber and Szöcsik, 2015: 785–786).

In addition, it is worth noting that, according to Chandra's definition, no ethnic parties *stricto sensu* existed in Catalonia in the period analysed. Parties (whether NSWP or SWP) did not exclude voters on an ethnic basis: more specifically, they did not exclude speakers of a particular language as potential voters; rather, they put more or less emphasis on languages as ethnic markers (descent-based attributes) depending on their interests in the political competition. It is in this sense that we can identify and measure ethnic appeal and talk about ethnic party competition based on languages.

Because of this, we use a nuanced version, adapted to Catalonia's context, of the theoretical framework on ethnicity in party competition provided by Chandra, Zuber and Szöcsik. In essence, we aim to test the ethnic outbidding model in Catalonia by analysing to what extent parties' ethnic appeal exists and is central to their mobilising strategy.

Zuber (2013: 760–761), drawing on Coakley (2008), provides a useful typology of competition strategies by combining the political position of ethnic parties in territorial conflicts (static, more moderate and more radical) and their appeal (exclusive and non-exclusive) (see Table 1). Although the ethnic outbidding model associates the territorial radicalisation position only with exclusive appeal, Zuber's typology also includes the combination of radicalisation with non-exclusive appeal as a theoretical category (hard to find in practice according to her); she calls this *lateral outbidding*. Through *lateral outbidding*, a party widens its appeal beyond the ethnic group and loses one of the defining attributes of ethnic parties, so that it becomes a non-ethnic party. It is worth noting that this category fits with the de-ethnicising strategy we observe in Catalonia. Finally, Zuber's typology includes *static bidding* or *lateral bidding* in the absence of

Table 2. Parties and electoral platforms with parliamentary representation 2006–2017.[a]

Party	Scope	Conception of Spain	Territorial organisation	Self-determination	Ideology
CiU-JxC	NSWP	Plurinational	Autonomist: 2006–2010 Secessionist: 2012–2017	Yes	Centre-right/Liberal-Conservative
ERC	NSWP	Plurinational	Ambiguous secessionist: 2006–2010 Secessionist: 2012–2017	Yes	Centre-left/Republican
ICV-CSQP-CECP	SWP	Plurinational	Federalist	Yes	Left/Post-communist
PSC-PSOE	SWP	Plurinational	Federalist	No: 2006–2010; Yes: 2012; No: 2015–2017	Centre-Left/Socialist
PP	SWP	Mononational	Centralist	No	Centre-Right/Liberal-Conservative
Cs	SWP[b]	Mononational	Centralist	No	Centre-Right/Liberal

[a]We only include parties and electoral platforms with parliamentary representation throughout this whole period. CiU-JxC and ICV transformed their political space through processes of party refounding and new alliances.
[b]Cs is a party that was born in 2006 in Catalonia as a NSWP. In 2015 it became a SWP with representation in the Parliament of Spain.

radicalisation, as well as *ethnic and lateral underbidding* in the case of moderation.

In addition, Zuber and Szöcsik (Zuber, 2013; Zuber and Szöcsik, 2015) challenge traditional theories of party competition in the territorial axis by relating their use of (ethnic) outbidding to two explaining factors: the goals of parties and the structure of competition (Zuber, 2013: 771–772). First, office-seeking and policy-seeking act as two moderating elements of territorial demands and ethnic approaches. Second, ethnic outbidding is attractive for new participants of intra-ethnic party competition. Third, when the importance of the socio-economic dimension of competition increases, parties become more moderate, provided that this dimension is ethnically cross-cutting. Finally, when parties compete both in intra- and inter-ethnic arenas (nested competition), they also tend to moderation. We draw on Zuber's theoretical framework in order to analyse the Catalan case.

Languages, national identity and party competition in Catalonia

Catalonia covers 6.3% of the State territory (32,106 km2) and is home to 15.7% of the total Spanish population (7,539,618 inhabitants). Catalan political reality is organised through its own party-system described below (see Table 2). The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia states in its Preamble that Catalonia is defined as a nation by a majority of its Parliament.[5] This fact is politically relevant because, besides the left-right axis of competition, the national dimension structures Catalan politics (Guibernau, 2014). Economically, Catalonia amounts for 19% of the whole Spanish GDP and is a relatively affluent region since the GDP per capita is 23.7% higher than the Spanish average and 15% higher than the EU average.[6]

Catalan national identity has been traditionally articulated through a form of civic nationalism, with the Catalan language as the main ethnic marker (Guibernau, 2004; McRoberts, 2001). In turn, Spanish national identity is associated with Castilian, the only official language of Spain recognised by the Constitution and one of the main symbols of its territorial unity. Spanish nationalism has witnessed a rapid modernisation process from the Franco dictatorship up to current days (Muñoz, 2009; Muro and Quiroga, 2005), but Castilian has remained the sole common language and has continued to be perceived as the only language that identifies Spain, unlike in federations such as Belgium or Canada.

In Catalonia, Catalan and Castilian are both official languages, and both are widespread languages among population in terms of knowledge, use and identity. Catalan and Castilian language groups are largely mixed and cannot be territorially delimited. More than 80% of the population can speak both Catalan and Castilian. Castilian is the L1 (first language spoken at home) of half the population (52.7%) and Catalan of a third of the population (31.5%).[7] However, data about L1 do not entirely reflect data about linguistic identity. When respondents answer about the languages they habitually use and the languages they feel identified with, percentages concerning the Catalan language increase (see Figure 2).

These data provide evidence of Catalonia's linguistic complexity. The current Catalan sociolinguistic situation is the result of at least two institutional and social factors:

(i) The linguistic organisation adopted by Spain, which establishes a single *common state language* (Castilian) used by central institutions and expected to be known by all Spanish citizens,[8] besides additional *local languages* in some regions, whose knowledge is legally optional for citizens. Accordingly, the state *must protect* Castilian, while regions *can protect* their own languages by establishing plurilingual regimes.
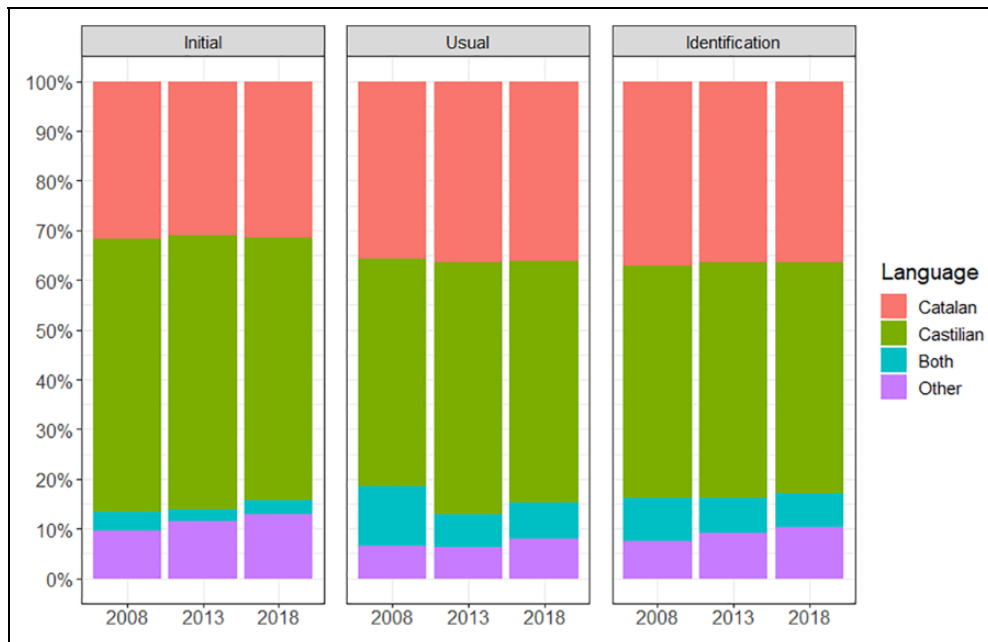
Figure 2. Languages in Catalonia. *Source*: Own elaboration. Data: Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya (Idescat). See: https://www.idescat.cat/.

(ii) The linguistic organisation of Catalonia's education system (*non-linguistically-segregated* system), intended to provide pupils with sufficient skills both in Catalan and Castilian by explicitly prohibiting the separation of students according to their language, and establishing Catalan as the main language of teaching. Such a non-segregated educational system design aimed to spread the knowledge of Catalan widely and at the same time avoid the social exclusion of non-Catalan speakers (many of them from disadvantaged social classes in the 1980s).

In addition, Catalan society has been shaped by several waves of immigration (Zapata-Barrero, 2009). In the 20th century this was from other Spanish regions and more recently it has been from abroad. In 2019, 35.7% of the population was born outside Catalonia.[9]

As a result, contemporary Catalan society is more porous, depolarised and open to pluralism than other Western societies (McAndrew, 2013: 9). Language groups' borders are weak (Boix-Fuster and Paradís, 2015; Pujolar, 2010; Woolard, 2008) and there is no group that publicly represents itself on the sole basis of a language.

Against this background, it is worth noting the evolution of arguments used for legitimating language policies in Catalonia since recovering its self-government after the dictatorship (1979). Spain's constitutional design favoured a competitive framework regarding language policies, in which the Catalan Government adopted a

defensive position to *protect* Catalan as its *own* language *vis à vis* Castilian, the *common* language promoted by the state (Vernet, 2003: 126). From this starting point (identity-grounded and rather monistic because of this defensive position), in recent years more social (communicative) arguments have been added and public discourses have started moving towards pluralist positions, including both Catalan and Castilian as the languages of Catalonia. In a nutshell, since the end of 1990s, a process of *linguistic de-ethnicisation* can be observed in the public discourse.

This process has been catalysed by the rise of secessionism. As secessionism evolved towards a mainstream movement, traditional defensive (ethnic) positions progressively turned into proactive ones, and the social agenda became crucial. The empowerment of the secessionist movement favoured a future-oriented approach: when the construction of a new country started being perceived as a feasible objective, social concerns gained priority over the defence of national identity (Cuadras-Morató, 2016; Guinjoan and Rodon, 2014; Rodon and Guinjoan, 2018).

This background seems to favour a moderate growth of Catalan exclusive identity (see Figure 3), consistent with a reclassification of descent-based attributes such as languages, as described by Chandra.

In fact, the protection of the Catalan language plays only a minor role among the arguments for secession (Sanjaume-Calvet, 2016; Serrano and Bonillo, 2016). In general, secessionist discourses reflect a society that is intrinsically multilingual and desirably intercultural, and show linguistic diversity in a positive way (Vila and
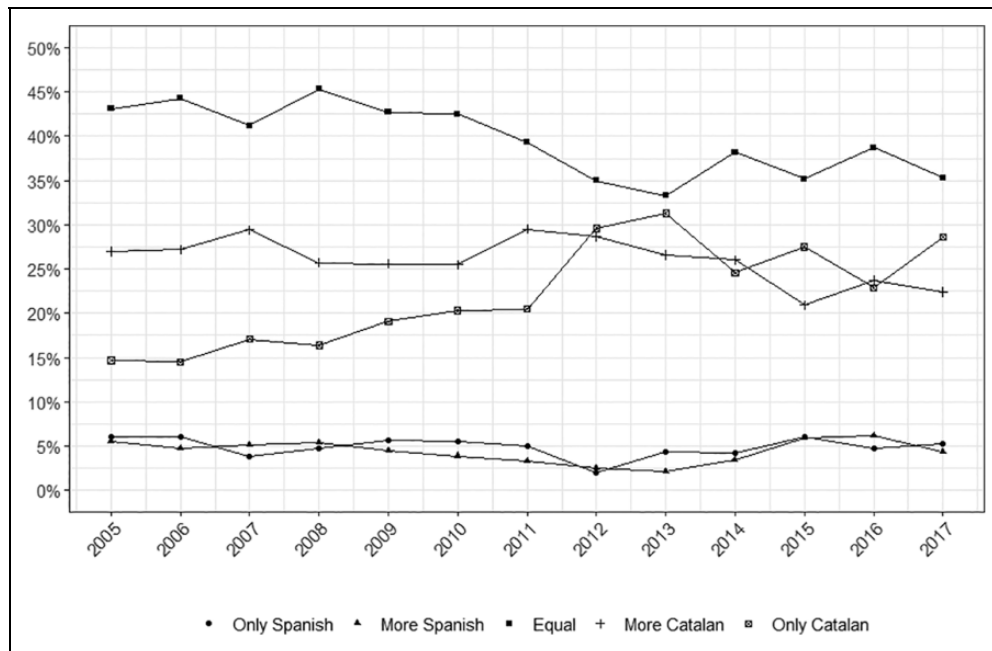
Figure 3. National identity in Catalonia 2005–2017. Which of the following sentences do you feel more identified with? I feel: 1. Only Spanish; 2. More Spanish than Catalan; 3. Equally Spanish and Catalan; 4. More Catalan than Spanish; 5. Only Catalan; 98. Does not know; 99. Does not answer. *Source*: Own elaboration. Data: Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO). See: http://ceo.gencat.cat/ca/barometre//.

Sendra, 2016: 34–36).[10] Vila and Sendra relate the success of this social turn to the influence of left-wing parties governing Catalonia in the period between 2003 and 2010. As we shall see below, this consideration fits in well with our analysis of party manifestos from 2006 to 2017.

Data selection and methodology

We analyse party manifestos for the last five regional elections in Catalonia (from 2006 to 2017) to test parties' strategies regarding the interaction between their territorial demands and their use of ethnicity. We draw on Zuber's typology in order to identify the following:

(a) Regarding the positional criterion, the existence of territorial outbidding. We understand that outbidding exists when parties radicalise their positions by challenging Spain's status quo, either towards more self-determination and secession, or towards recentralisation.

(b) Regarding the appeal criterion, the existence, orientation and weight of ethnic appeal. We measure ethnic appeal through the detailed analysis of two discursive elements: first, the emphasis on national identity, which can be defined in exclusive or plural terms (e.g. based on one or more languages); second, the ethnic or social approach to languages.

This section provides the criteria applied in data selection and treatment: period examined, parties selected, elements analysed, categories established and textual analysis procedures.

Regarding the period examined, it starts immediately after the approval by referendum of the current Statute of Autonomy (2006) and is a crucial period in Catalan politics, made up of several relevant political events regarding territorial politics such as: the limitation of the Statute by the Spanish Constitutional Court (2010); the subsequent popular mobilisation for the so-called 'right to decide'; Catalonia's president Artur Mas making a commitment to organise a popular consultative vote on secession (2012); the 2014 participatory process, and finally the organisation of the official referendum on 1 October 2017, followed by the suppression of autonomy by the Spanish Government, who called the December 2017 election (Cuadras-Morató, 2016; Elliott, 2018; Kraus and Vergés, 2017).

In 2006, secessionist claims were marginal in Catalan politics. Only one party (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, ERC) defined itself as pro-independence. That year a new majority nationalist party (Ciutadans – Ciudadanos[11], Cs) entered the political competition with an identity-focused discourse based on promoting the Castilian language and Spanish national identity. In 2017, one decade later, secessionism had already been the majority position in terms of parliamentary representation three times (2012, 2015, 2017) and in turn, Cs had become the party with the most votes in the most recent elections (2017).

Regarding the parties selected, our analysis compares the six parties with significant representation in the Catalan Parliament in the whole period.[12] We have categorised them according their national and territorial positions and other characteristics including their scope (state-wide or non-state-wide party), their conception of Spain as a mono-national or plurinational state, their proposals for Spain's territorial organisation (autonomic, federal, secession of Catalonia), their left-right position, and their positions regarding the suitability of holding a referendum on secession (see Table 2). For the sake of our research, we have grouped these parties according to their scope in 2017 (NSWP or SWP) and the territorial preferences they expressed, also in 2017: centralist (PP and Cs), federalist (ICV-CSQP-CECP and PSC-PSOE[13]) and secessionist (CiU-JxC and ERC).

According to Table 2, NSWP parties (CiU-JxC and ERC) conceive Spain as a plurinational state, defend the Catalan nation and over this period progressively shift from autonomist or ambiguous to secessionist political positions in their strategy.[14] Of the SWP, two parties (ICV-CSQP-CECP and PSC-PSOE) conceive Spain as a plurinational state and have a discourse in favour of a federal model with more self-government for regions and minority nations; ICV-CSQP-CECP supports the call for a referendum on secession while the PSC-PSOE rejects this possibility, except in 2012. Two other parties (PP and Cs) conceive Spain as a mononational state, that of the Spanish national majority, and reject both going any further than the autonomic model and the possibility of a referendum on secession (see Table 2).

Table 2 shows the complexity of the party system in Catalonia, which combines the classic left-right axis with the territorial dimension (Martí, 2013; Martí and Cetrà, 2016; Orriols and Cordero, 2016). As Guinjoan and Rodon highlight:

> The fact that two dimensions structure Catalan political competition implies two crucial aspects. First, elections revolve around the two dimensions, and certain parties are interested in emphasising the importance of one of them. Additionally, the centre–periphery dimension often structures the competition in Catalan elections, whereas the left–right dimension has more salience in Spanish elections. Second, despite the attempt of some parties to emphasise one dimension over the other, both dimensions are inextricably linked and all parties have a policy position regarding both the centre–periphery debate and the ideological debate. (Guinjoan and Rodon, 2016)

Our focus on the territorial dimension is consistent with its clear prominence in public debates and in regional politics over the period analysed.

Regarding data treatment, we use qualitative methods. We do not expect to find statistical evidence in terms of causal relations, but instead seek to understand underlying dynamics through the reading of documents and the categorisation of the main concepts found (Porta and Keating, 2008). Through a deep reading of party manifestos, we capture their explicit positions on national identities, languages and language policies.

Our deep reading process has included several steps: identification of topics analysed; collection and classification of relevant excerpts; elaboration of comparative tables with selected texts in order to visualise the evolution over time within parties and between parties; and synthesis of main messages in condensed comparative tables.[15]

We have categorised parties' positions on national identities, languages and language policies as follows:

(a) In the case of national identities, we analyse both their orientation (Catalonia – Spain) and their intensity, which we assess in terms of frequency and expressive strength. We have considered five categories for national identity orientation[16]:

   (1) only Catalan identity with a focus on Catalan language
   (2) only Catalan identity with a pluralistic focus (including Catalan and Castilian)
   (3) both Catalan and Spanish identity
   (4) only Spanish identity (Catalan identity is denied or fought against)
   (5) absent (national identity is not mentioned in the manifesto)

Regarding intensity, we have distinguished three degrees (0, 1, 2), in which '0' means that identity is absent from the manifesto and '1', '2' express a progressive increase of the relevance of the expression of national identity (low, high).

(b) In the case of the weight given to the Catalan and Castilian languages as ethnic markers and as social tools in order to legitimate their proposals, We have considered five categories of arguments[17]:

   (1) only identity-related arguments
   (2) both identity-related and social arguments (equal weight)
   (3) more social than identity-related arguments
   (4) only social arguments
   (5) absent (neither identity-related nor social arguments in the manifesto)

In the case of suggested language policies, we have identified two categories: *asymmetric bilingualism* Catalan-Castilian with preference for Catalan in the public sphere, and *symmetric bilingualism* (laisser-faire policy non-protectionist for Catalan).

In order to test the robustness of our findings, we have contrasted them with data from the Regional Manifestos Project (RMP).[18] We do not use RMP data to perform our analysis because it lacks the specific variable dimensions

Table 3. Parties' language policy positions.

Party	Scope and territorial model	Language policy position
CiU-JxC	■ Catalonia's NSWP ■ secessionism	**Asymmetric bilingualism** (protection for Catalan) **Education:** Catalan as main teaching language (+ Castilian and English)[a]
ERC		
ICV-CSQP-CECP	■ Spain's SWP ■ plurinational federalism	
PSC-PSOE		
PP	■ Spain's SWP ■ mononational centralism	**Symmetric bilingualism** (*laissez-faire*) **Education:** balanced weighting for Catalan and Castilian (+ English)
Cs		

[a]However, in 2017 the PSC-PSOE considered the possibility of adapting the schooling system to the 'sociolinguistic diversity of different places in Catalonia' (PSC-PSOE, 2017: 54).

we want to analyse in this paper (language, national identity, etc.). Instead, we do compare our findings to two aggregated indexes from RMP dataset measuring periphery and centre demands based on identity issues (variables Identy_Centr and Identy_Periph), in order to check the validity of our analysis.

A final methodological remark refers to the limits of manifestos as political documents. Indeed, manifestos are sources of content that each party considers appealing for their voters and politically correct in general. Consequently, potentially conflictive issues as ethnicity may not appear in manifestos and, instead, be object of a hidden discourse (Scott, 1992). However, precisely for this reason the presence of explicit references to ethnicity in manifestos is a valuable finding. As ethnicity does explicitly appear in manifestos analysed (in particular cases and moments), we consider them a valid and relevant source of analysis for our research aims.

Analysis[19]

In this section, we examine the treatment of national identity and language in party manifestos. When we examine national identity, we focus on both its orientation (Catalan, Spanish or both) and its intensity, meaning the weight that national identity has in a party's discourse. When we examine language, we focus on the weight that parties give to languages as identity (ethnic) markers and as social tools for individual promotion or collective cohesion. In other words, we test whether languages are presented as elements for the national (ethnic) agenda, for the social agenda or for both agendas. In this way, we can isolate two different elements, national identity and language (with its identity and communicative dimensions) and at the same time consider both elements together in order to characterise and measure ethnicity in party manifestos.

A party's treatment of national identity and languages relates to the language policies it proposes. Therefore,

before presenting our comparative analysis of their discourses, we will briefly describe the parties' general positions on language policy.

First of all, it is worth noting that between 2006 and 2017 these positions are considerably stable (summarised in Table 3). All parties assume a general framework of official Catalan-Castilian bilingualism as a starting point, from which two different options are defended:

(a) One option supports *asymmetric bilingualism* with preference for Catalan in the public sphere (e.g. in public institutions) and specific measures to support it, in order to ensure an effective equality between Catalan and Castilian; this is the principal option in terms of parliamentary support from 1979 onwards, defended by CiU-JxC, ERC, ICV-CSQP-CECP and the PSC-PSOE in the period we are examining, although in varying degrees and explicitness.[20]

(b) The second option advocates for *symmetric bilingualism* through a laissez-faire policy (non-protectionist for Catalan), and is defended by the PP and Cs.

Specific attention needs to be paid to the role of Catalan in the education system. This is an issue addressed by all parties in every election over the analysed period. There is a significant and sustained consensus (CiU-JxC, ERC, ICV-CSQP-CECP and the PSC-PSOE) to maintain the current model, which establishes Catalan as the main teaching language. However, the PP and Cs support a wider use of Castilian at school, either by determining quotas of teaching languages (Catalan, Castilian, English), or by invoking the freedom of teachers to choose the teaching language they prefer (the PP in 2006 and 2010). Political struggles around the linguistic model of the education system are one of the leitmotivs of this period.

In sum, despite the growing conflicts regarding the territorial axis over this period, the parties' language policy proposals did not change substantially. What changed was rather their use of the national identity and of languages in political discourse; we examine these aspects below.

As we specify in the methodology section, our analysis deals with the six parties' discourses grouped by pairs according their similarities on the territorial axis (see Table 3). We distinguish three categories, each one grouping potential *intra-ethnic competitors* (Zuber and Szöcsik, 2015): secessionists (CiU-JxC and ERC), federalists (the PSC-PSOE and ICV-CSQP-CECP) and centralists (PP and Cs).

Secessionist parties: CiU-JxC and ERC

Political remarks. CiU-JxC and ERC are both NSWP and we analyse their party manifestos for the entire period from 2006 to 2017. Nonetheless, this task is more complex than it might seem at first. First, in 2015 these parties formed a common electoral platform called *Junts pel Sí* (Together for the Yes) and put forward a joint manifesto. Second, the CiU-JxC coalition was a stable organisation until the 2015 elections.[21] However, in 2017 this coalition had already disappeared due to discrepancies between its two members, CDC and UDC, on plans for independence. In 2017 their political space was replaced by the *Junts per Catalunya* (Together for Catalonia) electoral platform, which included CDC and other pro-independence organisations and individual members. In any case, for methodological purposes, we perform our analysis on CiU-JxC as the same political label.

These parties clearly radicalised their territorial positions during this period and, according to the literature, were the most susceptible to using ethnic appeal in political competition. Both identified exclusively with a Catalan national project, from 2012 onwards shared a common objective (self-determination and independence) and from 2015 shared the regional executive in a coalition government. It is worth noting that while CiU-JxC is a centre-right party, ERC is a centre-left party and their electorates correspond to this scheme. While ERC has been a pro-independence party since 1980s, CiU-JxC was a regionalist pro-autonomy party until 2012, although it had always been in favour of Catalan self-determination. From 2010 onwards, this party gradually shifted towards pro-independence positions.

National identity: Orientation and weight. In both cases, the single national identity mentioned is Catalan. This is a feature related to the fact that CiU-JxC and ERC are NSWP. Between 2006 and 2017, both parties evolved from expressing a Catalan identity with a focus on Catalan language to linguistic pluralism. Both progressively reduced the relevance of national identity in their manifestos, to the extent that in 2017 this topic disappeared entirely. Particularly in the case of JxC, national identity shifted from being a highly relevant topic in the party's strategy in 2006 and 2010, to becoming absent.

In terms of national identity and territorial positions, ERC leads the change in secessionist strategy; from 2012 onwards, CiU-JxC converged towards ERC's positions. This strategy consists of both pluralising identity and minimising its importance, at least in manifestos. In 2012, CiU-JxC included references to diversity and pluralism related to national identity which were already present in earlier ERC party manifestos. Moreover, in 2015, the party manifesto of the common JxS platform included key references to the ideas of *(a)* the inextricability of national and social agendas; and *(b)* the willingness to build an open society with a common public culture.

Languages: Identity-related and social approaches. Here we also observe a convergence between the secessionist parties, although a more nuanced one. Over the period analysed, both parties referred to languages with communicative and identity-related arguments. However, their general trend was clearly towards focusing on the value of language as a communication tool, attached to plural identities, and downplaying its identity value. In the case of CiU-JxC, their initial manifestos clearly put forth a solely identity-based argument defining Catalan as 'our language' (CiU-JxC, 2006); at the same time, this party associated the linguistic model of the education system 'to the development of a sense of national belonging among young people' (CiU-JxC, 2010). In the case of ERC, ever since 2006 it had already presented a more balanced approach, combining identity (Catalan is defined as 'our language' and 'common language' and later as 'national language' and 'societal backbone language'), with communicative reasons relating to the usefulness of Catalan for social opportunities, participation, non-discrimination and integration. While JxC did not mention Castilian, ERC defined this language as 'an official language of the [Spanish] State'. Moreover, in 2012 ERC stated that an eventual independent Catalan Republic would establish the Catalan language as the national language of Catalonia but Castilian would also remain official.

Finally, both parties presented a clear trend towards emphasising individual rights and non-discrimination as a pillar of any linguistic policy. In their 2015 and 2017 party manifestos there is clear evidence of this trend, in statements such as: 'No citizen will be discriminated against for linguistic reasons' (JxS, 2015: 76); '(. . .) all citizens will have their individual linguistic rights respected and guaranteed, with special attention paid to the other official languages – Castilian and Occitan – without prejudice to the more than 250 habitual languages of the people who inhabit this country' (JxC, 2017: 74); and '[In the case of independence] Castilian should have the same linguistic rights that are recognised under current Spanish legislation' (ERC, 2017: 59).

As a whole, the more these parties focus on independence, the less they stress identity-related arguments and the more they emphasise both the social utility of the Catalan language and issues related to pluralism and linguistic rights.

Federalists: The PSC-PSOE and ICV-CSQP-CECP

Political remarks. These parties are regional branches of SWP organisations (the PSOE and Podemos, respectively), with which they have a peculiar relationship. Both experienced important tensions within this structure over the period studied and underwent important transformations, particularly in the case of ICV. The PSC is a Catalan socialist party associated with the PSOE but with its own electoral platform. ICV was a post-communist and ecologist party with representation in the Catalan Parliament until 2015. In 2015, its political space was included in the electoral coalition CSQSP together with the Catalan branch of Podemos and other political parties; this electoral coalition was transformed into CECP in 2017.

Both the PSC-PSOE and ICV-CSQP-CECP have federalist orientations and affirm the plurinational character of Spain. They also define Catalonia as a nation within Spain. However, whereas ICV-CSQP-CECP has always defended Catalonia's self-determination and right to hold a referendum on independence (the so-called 'right to decide'), the socialists only initially supported this option, but ceased to defend it (in the manifestos analysed they only mention this possibility in 2012).

National identity: Orientation and weight. The PSC-PSOE and ICV-CSQP-CECP present Spain's national identity as plural, overlapping or compatible with Catalan (and European) identities. At the same time, their references to national identity are scarce or absent in several manifestos (2006, 2015 and 2017 in the case of ICV-CSQP-CECP and 2010 and 2015 in the case of PSC-PSOE). However, when they do include national identity, ICV-CSQP-CECP stresses Catalonia's identity, while the PSC-PSOE focuses on both Spanish and Catalan identities. Finally, both parties refer to Catalan national identity in pluralistic terms, and consider the Catalan language a key element that is compatible with pluralism and other identities.

Languages: Identity-related and social approaches. References to languages in federalist parties' manifestos are less salient than in the case of NSWP. They use both identity-related and communicative arguments, but give significantly more weight to the latter.

ICV-CSQP-CECP presents a stable approach that defends the status quo of language policies mainly for social purposes. For instance, in 2017 CECP explicitly stated that 'defending the current [schooling] model based on linguistic immersion favours social coexistence and the balance between languages' (CECP, 2017: 17). At the same time, in 2010, 2012 and 2015 this party put special emphasis on the identity side of language and referred to Catalan as Catalonia's own language (2010, 2012) or 'common national language' (2015).

The PSC-PSOE had a different evolution. This party also defended the status quo of language policies and the linguistic model of the education system, as a way of 'guaranteeing a unique model of society with equal access to knowledge' (2010). Concerning the identity dimension of languages, in 2006 and 2012 it referred to Catalan as Catalonia's own language, but always highlighting that Castilian is also a language of Catalonia, 'the language of many Catalans' (2012) and that both languages are shared by citizens (2006). Identity is absent in 2010 and 2015, and rather blurred in 2017, when they stressed that 'language is identity and cultural heritage, but above all social coexistence, integration and equal opportunities' (2017: 52).

In sum, although federalist parties appear to vacillate somewhat regarding both ethnic issues and their territorial positions over this period, and did not show a straightforward evolution in their treatment of languages as ethnic markers and social goods, they clearly tended to avoid identity issues at the end of this period.

Centralist parties: The PP and Cs

Political remarks. The PP and Cs are SWP, and stand against both the independence and the self-determination of Catalonia. Their territorial positions oscillate between promoting the status quo and recentralising the territorial system. While the PP is a long-standing party in Spain's political system, Cs is a SWP – former NSWP – explicitly created in 2005 as a party that stood against the linguistic policies and Catalan nationalism in Catalonia. That is, before 2014 this party had been a Catalan NSWP, but at the 2015 general elections it was transformed into a SWP at both national and regional levels (Teruel and Barrio, 2016).

National identity: Orientation and weight. In terms of national identity, both parties refer exclusively to Spanish national identity, since they do not conceive Catalonia as a nation but as a part of the Spanish nation: 'Catalonia, a crucial element for the configuration of the Spanish common identity (. . .)' (PP, 2006: 110). Moreover, the Spanish collective identity and citizenship are generally presented as enlightened and non-nationalist identities. In fact, nationalism, according to these parties, is understood as a synonymous of regional (Catalan) nationalism: 'The real conflict is between nationalism and liberty (. . .). Catalonia is more plural than [Catalan] nationalist parties would like it to be' (PP, 2015: 4).

From this point of view, cultural and linguistic policies are seen as a sort of imposition against the freedom and equality of all Catalans (as Spaniards). This is particularly

Table 4. Main findings: Party strategies and trends.

Party	Territorial change[a]	Strategy[b]	Description
CiU-JxC	Autonomy → Self-determination → Secessionism	Lateral outbidding	From 2012 onwards, supports secessionism and shifts from strong exclusive references to Catalan identity and language to a pluralistic approach (Catalan + Castilian) that combines ethnic and social appeal.
ERC	Ambiguous secessionism → Secessionism	Lateral outbidding	From 2010 onwards, supports secessionism and shifts from rather exclusive references to Catalan identity and language to a pluralistic approach (Catalan + Castilian) that progressively emphasises social over ethnic aspects.
ICV-CSQP-CECP	Federalism → Self-determination	Lateral bidding	Mainly static positions with oscillations in both territorial position and appeal. References to self-determination and plurinationalism in Spain from 2010 onwards and to Catalan national identity in 2010 and 2012.
PSC-PSOE	Federalism → Self-determination → Federalism	Lateral bidding	Mainly static positions with oscillations in both territorial position and appeal. In 2012, references to Catalonia's 'right to decide'. From 2012 onwards, no references to Catalan as 'own language'.
PP	Status quo → Centralism	Ethnic outbidding (RMP)	Static positions with a tendency to recentralisation. Negative references to Catalan national identity (2010). Mostly identity-related arguments (minority versus cosmopolitanism) to justify opposition to language policies.
Cs	Status quo → Centralism	Static bidding (RMP)	Mainly static positions. Strong negative references to Catalan national identity (2006, 2010). Its opposition to identity and language policies (versus cosmopolitanism), a core issue in 2006, is progressively abandoned.

[a]In this column we summarise the evolution of each political party regarding its territorial demands in five categories from more centralisation to independence: centralism, status quo, autonomy, federalism, self-determination, secession.
[b]In this column we summarise the main parties' shifts following Zuber's categories (see Table 1).

stressed by Cs since this party promoted a form of *identity secularism* in its 2006 party manifesto:

> (. . .) in order to solve the problems to guarantee freedom and equality among persons instead of (. . .) imagined emotional symbolic and identity-related issues. Because of that, rational arguments should be used instead of obscure dogmas coming from a mythical past or supposed civil rights attributed to cultural nations (. . .). Ciudadanos claims that the State and the rest of the public powers should be secular from the point of view of identity. (Cs, 2006: 3)

However, this *identity secularism* is in fact an explicit denial of Catalonia's national identity and does not challenge Spanish identity in any way. According to the literature (Kymlicka, 2001; Requejo, 2005; Taylor, 1989), this explicitness regarding national identities is a feature of minority nationalism, because majorities do not need to defend their national identities explicitly. Interestingly, with its discourse against Catalonia's identity, Cs placed Castilian in a minority position and demanded the majority position that this language already had at the state level. This disguised a strong majority (Spanish) nationalism

promoted by this party and also by the PP, which adopted the discursive pattern of Cs in 2010. Spain is obviously taken as 'the' nation inhabited by free and equal citizens. The PP campaign against the Statute of Autonomy of 2006 that opens this article points to the same assumption.

Languages: Identity-related and social approaches. Against this background, PP and Cs tended to devote less attention to languages than federalist and secessionist parties, but with some exceptions. In 2006, as we have said, the birth of Cs was strongly justified by the need to fight against Catalonia's language policies, understood as national identity policies. Invoking its *identity secularism*, Cs was in fact maximising the identity side of language by using a negative mechanism intended to deny or dilute Catalonia's national identity. C's discourse then influenced the PP, which also gave salience to the identity side of languages in Catalonia: to 'its rich heritage of two languages' (PP, 2006). In 2010, both parties converged in championing internationalism and cosmopolitanism to (minority) nationalism, which they presented as closed-minded, monist, exclusionary, interventionist, assimilationist and contrary
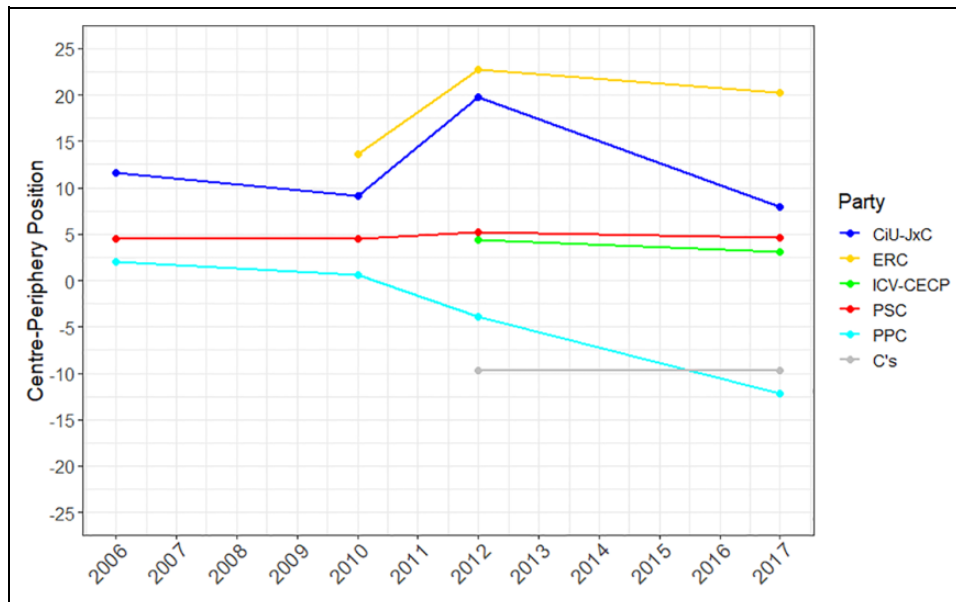
Figure 4. Centre-periphery positions in party manifestos. Variable: position in the scale centre(-) periphery(+), based on parties' territorial demands. *Source*: Own elaboration. Data: Regional Manifestos Project. See: http://www.regionalmanifestosproject.com/.

to economic progress (PP and Cs, 2010). Most of these adjectives referred to languages and language policies. From 2012 onwards, both Cs and PP tended to abandon the identity issue and we find few arguments relating to languages in their manifestos.

In sum, over time these parties combined a rather static territorial position defending the status quo (or recentralisation), with a significant change in their treatment of national identities and languages. At the beginning of this period, Cs expressed a strong defence of Castilian-based Spanish identity by calling for identity secularism and for cosmopolitanism, with the PP following this line in 2010. Afterwards, both parties progressively showed a decreasing interest in ethnic issues and language policies.

Main findings and discussion

In this section we provide a summary of our main findings, test their robustness by using alternative sources, and discuss their significance regarding our research questions and theoretical framework. See Table 4 for a specific summary of each party strategy in terms of territorial position and ethnic appeal over the analysed period.

Evolution of parties' territorial positions. We find a clear territorial outbidding strategy in the NSWP parties, which embrace secessionism during this period: CiU-JxC and ERC. In the case of SWP parties, federalists (the PSC-PSOE and ICV-CSQP-CECP) show quite steady positions in spite of some vacillating in favour of increasing self-determination when territorial conflict broke out (2010, 2012). Centralists (PP and Cs) also show steady positions

defending the status quo of the 'State of Autonomies', in this case with a tendency towards recentralisation.

Data from the aggregated Regional Manifestos Project index (RMP) support this analysis with some nuances (see Figure 4). This source reflects strong outbidding towards secessionism in NSWP manifestos in 2012 (the effect of Spain's Constitutional Court decision in 2010), which was modulated in 2017 by CiU-JxC but not by ERC. It also reflects progressive outbidding towards centralisation by the PP, to the extent that in 2017, this party overtook Cs on this axis. In conclusion, we can identify territorial outbidding in both NSWP and in centralist parties.

Evolution of parties' appeal. In this case, our findings are more diverse and nuanced. Our main finding is that NSWP, the parties that show the clearest outbidding in terms of territorial demands, do not adopt the ethnic appeal strategy that would be expected of them according to the literature. Instead, they undertake, in Zuber's terms, lateral outbidding. Despite the salience of languages and language policies in their manifestos, their approach is to increasingly emphasise the plurality of languages and their role as tools for equal opportunities, social promotion and inclusion. This evolution is particularly pronounced in the case of CiU-JxC, which at the beginning of the period used an ethnic appeal strategy regarding the Catalan language. As political competition with ERC became more intense, CiU-JxC moved towards ERC's positions both on the territorial and on the left-right axis, and the result is a progressive pluralisation and de-ethnicisation of languages. ERC outbids CiU-JxC regarding territorial positions by using a de-ethnicising strategy. This is a relevant finding that

Figure 5. Identity issues in party manifestos. Variables: Identity_Periph: indicators related to territorial demands based on identity issues for the periphery; Identy_Centr: indicators related to territorial demands based on identity issues for the centre. *Source*: Own elaboration. Data: Regional Manifestos Project. See: http://www.regionalmanifestosproject.com/.

challenges theories of ethnic party competition but is consistent with Catalonia's sociolinguistic and national context described before. This is also consistent with other analyses, such as that of Dalle Mulle and Serrano (2019: 18), who point to the existence of instrumental reasons for pro-independence parties to downplay identity issues. According to these authors, Catalan secessionism has developed an instrumental narrative (using the concept 'right to decide') including welfare policies and social issues. The Catalan secessionist project tends to de-ethnicise languages in order to gain popular support in a linguistically mixed society, so the strategy adopted by parties engaged in this project allows us to talk of *de-ethnicising outbidding*.

In the case of SWP, federalists express some oscillation in their use of ethnicity relating to languages and national identity, in parallel to the oscillations already identified regarding their territorial position. That is, when their manifestos showed more support for self-determination, they also emphasised identity aspects, particularly in the case of ICV-CSQP-CECP. Their approaches to identity tended to highlight the plurality of languages, as in the case of NSWP. However, in the case of the federalists' manifestos, identity alternatively appeared and disappeared, and tended to be silenced at the end of the period. This oscillation is consistent with episodes of internal instability and structural tensions with their central parties.

In contrast, centralists started the period analysed with a strong identity-focused discourse, led by Cs, which denied the existence of a national Catalan identity, called for a better status for the Castilian language in Catalonia, and opposed cosmopolitanism to minority nationalism. This identity-negative discourse was part of Ciutadans' foundational arguments in 2006 and led to the PP adopting a similar approach in 2010. In this way, in 2006 Cs started outbidding the PP and these two parties began to compete on an ethnic basis, by using a strategy of ethnic appeal. This ethnic appeal could be related to territorial outbidding regarding Spain's recentralisation, but our analysis of manifestos shows a decreasing interest of these parties in explicitly addressing language issues; they do not provide significant evidence of ethnic outbidding.

However, data from the RMP help to clarify this point by revealing a clearer and significant strategy in terms of ethnic appeal in competition between Catalan parties, as shown in Figure 5:

That is, according to this source, NSWP do indeed have an ethnic appeal 'moment' in 2012, but their common trend is to reduce identity issues in their party manifestos, as measured by the RMP in 2017.

Conversely, the RMP data reveal a substantial increase of an ethnic appeal strategy among the centralist SWP, Cs and PP, beginning in 2012. This finding is consistent with other cases analysed in which unionist parties strategically adapt their ethnic messages to the political context

Figure 6. Parties and voters' most-used language 2006–2018. *Source*: Own elaboration. Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO). See: http://ceo.gencat.cat/ca/barometre/.

(Gormley-Heenan and Macginty, 2008; Moore et al., 2014; Zuber and Szöcsik, 2015).

In sum, we can respond our research questions by affirming that the territorial conflict between Catalonia and Spain has evolved, on the one hand, with an outbidding dynamic towards secessionism between minority nationalist parties: but – surprisingly according to the literature – this is a territorial outbidding without ethnicism, which downplays the role of ethnicity in a sort of lateral outbidding (Zuber, 2013) or *de-ethnicising outbidding* that prioritises the social agenda as a political strategy (Dalle Mulle and Serrano, 2019). On the other hand, while federalist parties have remained in a rather static unstability, majority nationalist parties have embraced a moderated territorial outbidding towards recentralisation managed by a strategy of ethnic appeal. Therefore, we observe a diversity of strategies which do not entirely match ethnic competition theories.

First, and foremost, we identify a strategy of ethnic outbidding in majority nationalist parties, but not in minority nationalist parties, precisely those habitually considered ethnic and often referred to as ethnic by default (Barrio and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2017; Zuber and Szöcsik, 2015). Two contextual elements provide incentives to this: firstly, the sociolinguistic diversity of Catalan society; secondly, the 'deactivation' of defensive (ethnic) minority positions that were favoured by Spain's institutional competitive framework and are, perhaps paradoxically, blurred by the frame

of a future-oriented and empowered secessionist project. Party strategies in de-ethnicising languages relate to their aim of gaining support for secession and to a centre-left approach that stresses the social effects of languages (e.g. on equal opportunities and inclusion) over ethnicity. In the case on majority nationalist parties, again Spain's competitive institutional framework provides incentives to them, now towards ethnic outbidding: when the secessionist project makes them feel threatened with becoming a minority in Catalonia, they activate minority-defensive (ethnic) strategies in order to maintain the majority position they have in Spain as a whole.

Second, regarding the explaining factors for moderation in territorial demands and ethnic approaches contributed by Zuber and Szöcsik, we can also identify some of them in the Catalan context:

(a) NSWP parties clearly are office-seekers and policy-seekers. However, this fact have stimulated rather than downplayed their territorial demands. It has likely had a moderating effect in their use of ethnicity (appeal criterion), but not in their territorial political positions, probably because of the strong social support for secessionism in Catalonia over this period.

(b) In contrast, centralist parties have not been office-seekers in Catalonia. In addition, Cs precisely enters party competition in 2005. Both factors, according

to Zuber and Szöcsik, favour strategies of ethnic outbidding such as those we observe in Catalonia.

(c) Nested competition in intra- and inter-ethnic arenas could also explain the moderate position of ERC in its use of ethnicity, given that this party is competing within the centre-left space with ICV-CSQP-CECP and, to a less extent, with the PSC-PSOE. However, again moderation exists in the appealing strategy, but not in territorial political positions.

(d) Finally, the socio-economic dimension of competition deserves a more nuanced analysis, because for NSWP this dimension is in fact two nested dimensions. On the one hand, at the regional level managed by the Government of Catalonia, it is an ethnically cross-cutting dimension affecting all Catalans. On the other hand, at the state level managed by the Government of Spain, it is a territorially contested dimension deemed a source of social injustice for the inhabitants of the Catalan nation.

Indeed, economic factors have been related to the rise of support for secessionism in Catalonia (Barrio and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2017; Dowling, 2018; Muñoz and Tormos, 2015; Rico 2012; Rico and Liñeira, 2014). However, in a recent study using aggregate and individual data, Cuadras-Morató and Rodon (2018) found no relationship between the impact of the economic crisis initiated in 2008 and the rise of secessionism, but did find lower levels of secessionist support in areas with more population born in the rest of Spain. In general, the literature points out the importance of language, ancestry, political preferences and national identity to predict secessionist support; evidence on economic factors appears more mixed and unclear. In any case, our analysis in this paper has been focused on the relationship between parties' territorial positions and their ethnic (or non-ethnic) strategies. It is not intended to explain the rise of secessionism support in Catalonia, but to understand party strategies, and does not provide further evidence on this socio-economic dimension.

Third, regarding Chandra's theory on fluid identities and the capacity of politics to reclassify attributes and activate new identity categories, Catalonia's sociolinguistic context seem to favour a reclassification of identifications in which having Catalan language as a descent-based (ethnic) attribute is not a necessary condition for supporting secession. Our analysis does not address the relationship between party strategies and the linguistic composition of their voters. However, other sources provide evidence of significant changes regarding the voters' most-used language across time. As we show in Figure 6, between 2006 and 2017 the NSWP did not increase their proportion of Catalan-speaking voters. On the contrary, ERC increased the proportion of its Castilian-speaking voters from 12.4% to 38.6% and CiU-JxC also

showed a trend towards a more heterogeneous electorate. In other cases, such as the PSC-PSOE, Cs and PP, the evolution was towards a more homogeneous electorate with proportions of 86.7%, 87.2% and 87.1% of Castilian-speakers, respectively.

We cannot imply any direct causal effect of the parties' discourses and strategies on this evolution. However, we do observe some coherence between party strategies and the linguistic composition of their electorates over this period.

Conclusions

Our case analysis sheds light on party strategies in contexts of territorial conflict. We observe the existence of multiple strategies and our findings are only partially consistent with the existing literature. First, we find that territorial outbidding does not always imply ethnic outbidding: political parties generally do not use the main identity marker in Catalonia (language) for outbidding purposes. Second, we find some evidence of ethnic outbidding in majority nationalist parties, but not in minority nationalist parties.

NSWP adopt a strategy of mobilisation of all possible voters in Catalonia regardless of their ethno-linguistic attributes. In fact, over the period between 2006 and 2018 they increased the proportion of Castilian-speakers among their electorate. In their case, instead of ethnic outbidding, we find what Zuber calls a strategy of *lateral outbidding*, a radicalisation of territorial political positions based on appealing to a wider electorate. This salient and surprising empirical finding points to what we call a *de-ethnicising* trend in this period. In turn, centralist SWP adopted a reactive strategy to the rise of secessionism in Catalonia. Without a clear ethnic use of language, they appealed to national identity (often in a negative sense, by denying the existence of a Catalan national identity) and competed, using ethnic strategies, in outbidding progressively towards centralism. In this case, Cs started an ethnic appeal competition with the PP, which at the end of the period showed the most evident ethnic outbidding according to our data.

Several factors favour this evolution over the period 2006–2017, namely a strong social support for secession in a socio-linguistically diverse society that shows a reclassification of linguistic and national identities; a predominant centre-left approach in secessionism that gives priority to the social agenda over the national agenda; and the incentives provided by Spain's territorial design to both majority and minority nationalists. In the case of Catalonia moderating effects related to office and policy-seeking and to nested party competition, as suggested by Zuber and Szöcsik, only apply to parties' use of ethnicity, but not to their territorial political positions, since NSWP practice territorial outbidding without ethnic appeal. Finally, our analysis does not provide evidence regarding a possible

moderating effect of the economic dimension, which should be object of further research.

Also further research should explore at least three aspects of party strategies in territorial conflicts. First, why in some cases ethnic outbidding seems to be the dominant strategy, while in other cases we do not observe this phenomenon, even when territorial outbidding does exist. Second, why SWP seem to adopt a more ethnic strategy than NSWP in some cases: is their behaviour related to their position in the left-right axis? Both aspects would require a larger N comparative analysis. Third, to what extent these are electorally successful strategies. Answering these questions would help to better understand party competition through outbidding strategies in territorial conflicts.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Since the 2004 general elections, dramatically influenced by the al-Qaeda attacks in Madrid, Spanish politics had been overshadowed by the so-called *crispación* (tense, rigid atmosphere) between parties and political leaders (Gil Calvo, 2008). The PP had lost the 2004 elections and insisted on the hypothesis of the Basque armed group ETA being behind the bombings in Madrid. This hypothesis proved false.
2. For a definition of NSWP see: Winter and Tursan (2003).
3. Speaking a particular language is one of the criteria by which an individual can be included in a particular ethnic group, or excluded from it. For example, an English-speaker in Quebec and a Castilian-speaker in Catalonia can be included in or excluded from Quebec's and Catalonia's national groups respectively, and this mechanism of inclusion/exclusion can be reformulated over time. This kind of reclassification of identity has been studied extensively in Catalonia, where anthropologists and sociolinguists have described the existence of fluid linguistic identities as a broad phenomenon.
4. Note that Chandra's concepts are based on party discourses (their programmatic appeal) and not on ethnic characteristics of their voters.
5. 'In reflection of the feelings and the wishes of the citizens of Catalonia, the Parliament of Catalonia has defined Catalonia as a nation by an ample majority. The Spanish Constitution,

in its second Article, recognises the national reality of Catalonia as a nationality'. See: https://web.gencat.cat/en/general itat/estatut/estatut2006/preambul/.
6. See: *Catalonia* (by Mireia Grau and Marc Sanjaume-Calvet) in *Autonomy Arrangements in the World*. Available at: http://www.world-autonomies.info/tas/catalonia/Pages/default.aspx.
7. Enquesta d'usos lingüístics 2018. Generalitat de Catalunya. See: https://llengua.gencat.cat/ca/serveis/dades_i_estudis/poblacio/Enquesta-EULP/Enquesta-dusos-linguistics-de-la-poblacio-2018/.
8. The Spanish Constitution (1978) explicitly includes the duty of knowing the Castilian language in Article 3.1: 'Castilian is the official language of the State. All Spaniards have the duty to know it and the right to use it'.
9. For more details see public database at Idescat. Available at: https://www.idescat.cat/.
10. However, classic arguments, closer to the ethnicity of languages, do not disappear, and some tensions between the two approaches (ethnic and social) are expressed in the public arena. The most significant example is the document presented by the *Koiné* group, made up mainly of professors of Catalan language and literature, in March 2016. This document provoked a lively debate in the Catalan media.
11. Complete denomination: Ciutadans – Partit de la Ciutadania; Ciudadanos – Partido de la Ciudadanía.
12. We classify the political spaces of the former coalitions CiU (Convergència i Unió) and ICV (Iniciativa per Catalunya – Verds) as a continuity of their subsequent electoral platforms JxC (Junts per Catalunya) and CSQP (Catalunya Sí Que Es Pot), CECP (Catalunya En Comú – Podem). We exclude the leftist pro-independence party CUP from our analysis because it had no representation at all over the first part of the period.
13. PSC-PSOE: Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya – Partido Socialista Obrero Español.
14. ERC, despite its self-characterisation as a pro-independence party, does not include independence as an explicit political objective in its electoral manifestos in 2006 and 2010. In 2006, it appears to accept the autonomic framework by emphasising the plurinational, pluricultural and plurilingual character of Spain and calling for the use of the Catalan language in the common state institutions (ERC, 2006: 4). In ERC's 2010 manifesto, the state framework becomes blurred but no explicit claim for independence appears. This case is labelled as 'ambiguous separatism' by Massetti and Schakel (2016). Both JxC and ERC explicitly included the 'right to decide' for the first time in their 2010 manifestos.
15. We provide a sample of texts and comparative tables in the Supplemental material.
16. Categories are not symmetric because 'only Catalan identity' is expressed in manifestos through two different approaches (including or not Castilian language), while 'only Spanish identity' is always exclusively related to Castilian language.

17. Categories are not symmetric because we have found no cases of the theoretical category 'more identity-related than social arguments'.
18. For more details see: Regional Manifestos Project. Website: http://www.regionalmanifestosproject.com/.
19. For more details please see Supplemental material.
20. Exceptionally, an official monolingualism in Catalan was defended by ERC (2010 and 2012) and ICV (2012), with the project of an independent republic in mind. However, this position is rather inconsistent with the pluralist approach of their manifestos as a whole, and disappeared in 2015 and 2017.
21. In fact, it was a stable coalition between 1978 until 2001 and a party federation between 2001 and 2015.

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