

Black Africans in Barcelona, Spain: An Exploration of Integration into Catalan Society*

Chinyere Osuji

Abstract

By examining the experiences of both newly arrived and long-term African immigrants, it is possible to give an account of Sub-Saharanans in Barcelona, the urban center of the autonomous community of Catalonia and second largest city in Spain. Using snowball sampling, I conducted a total of twenty interviews, twelve formal interviews with an open-ended questionnaire and eight interviews without the use of a questionnaire. Through their responses, it is possible to infer that a racial identity among Black Africans is not formed upon arrival into a white society. It is also possible to deduce their ideas on their own integration process into Spanish (specifically Catalan) culture, on the way this culture is practiced in their lives, as well as on social issues affecting them.

*This essay is based on research conducted in Barcelona, Spain from September 2001 to August 2002. Many thanks go to Cárloa Solé who gave me a lot of feedback and guidance as I conducted this research project. Research for this project was funded by the IIE/Fulbright Commission (2001-2002).

Introduction

Foreign immigration to Spain is an increasing phenomenon that has begun to gain attention in recent years. Until the 1970's, Spain was noted for its outward migration to other countries in Western Europe as well as to Latin America. However, tighter immigration policies in other European countries, as well as the rising status of Spain's economy, resulted in an influx of immigrants from developing countries (Colectivo IOÉ 1999).

The issue of African immigration into Spain is distinct from other former colonial powers, such as France and Great Britain. Unlike these and other Western European nations, Spain does not receive the majority of its African immigrants from its former colonies. In spite of prior Spanish holdings in the Spanish Sahara and Equatorial Guinea, many immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa come from other areas such as Senegal, Gambia, and Cape Verde.

Catalonia is an autonomous community spanning the northeast corner of Spain with its own language and culture. Catalan and Spanish are the two official languages of the region, although Catalan is the first language of the majority of the people in Catalonia. Partly due to its central location as a gateway to the rest of Europe, Catalonia has a history of receiving people from different cultures. Within the past 50 years, this region has become a major destination for immigrants from other autonomous communities within Spain such as Andalusia, Extremadura, and Galicia. According to the Colectivo IOÉ, today Catalonia is the autonomous region that receives the largest number of foreign residents and more specifically, the largest number of black Africans (1999).

The primary reason for conducting this study was to fill a gap in the lack of recent research focusing on black African immigrants and their experiences in Spain in general, and specifically in Catalonia. Through interviews conducted with nineteen black African immigrants living mostly in Barcelona, it was possible to have an initial look at the ideas they have concerning racial identity, and how it is affected by settling in a majority white host society. This study was also intended to examine the process of integration of Sub-Saharan Africans into Catalan society, explore the issues that immigrants face living there, and to overall document the experiences of African immigrants in Spain. By investigating the issues surrounding the experiences of black Africans in Barcelona, it is possible to add a new dimension to immigrant research in Spain. Due to the large numbers of black Africans living in Barcelona compared with the rest of Spain, Catalonia was chosen as the region in which to conduct the study. In order to conduct research comparing urban centers in the future, the capital of Catalonia, Barcelona, was chosen as the research site. This study was conducted from January to July 2002.

The original hypothesis was that living in Barcelona, a racially homogenous society, would have an effect on the black identities of the African immigrants who came there. Since Catalonia is a bilingual region, it was thought that there would be difficulty in learning Catalan and interacting with the autochthonous people. In addition, it was assumed that a lack of legal status and documentation on the part of many immigrants, as well as racism on the part of the autochthonous society, would prevent total integration into the host society. For the purpose of this study, I refer to African immigrants as the people born and raised in Africa who were living in

Spain at the time. This classification included both people who come to Spain due to economic as well as political reasons. This classification does not include the children of immigrants born in Spain, the second generation. Also, for clarification, the term Spanish is used to refer to the language spoken in Spain and many countries in Latin America, also known as Castellano. This differs from Catalan, the language spoken in Catalonia.

Literature Review

The initial presence of Africans in Catalonia began in the 15th century where they came as military personnel, free labor, and more commonly, slaves. These blacks came mostly from the area known today as Senegal and Gambia, as well as other countries in West Africa. After the abolishment of slavery in the 19th century and until the end of World War II, the few blacks that came to Europe arrived either as servants for colonizers returning from Africa or as students being trained in a religious order to serve in their home countries (Sepa 1993).

The first group of black Africans to reside in Spain after World War II came in the 1960's from Equatorial Guinea, previously a Spanish colony (the only one in Africa). These Africans were the elites of their country and usually arrived on scholarship from either the Guinean or Spanish government in order to study in Spanish universities. While many Africans returned to Equatorial Guinea to replace the positions of Spanish colonizers, many stayed in Spain and were among the first nationalized black Africans in Spain. Africans that came to Catalonia from other countries in Africa used Spain as a springboard to go to other countries in Europe (Sepa 1993).

Later, waves of black immigrants to Spain came in the 1970's from a variety of countries such as Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Equatorial Guinea. By this time, many African countries had declared their independence from European colonial rule and were in a period of political crisis in their new democracies (Sepa 1993). The political and economic situation in Africa, compounded with tighter immigration policies in other European countries, led to the beginning of a significant African presence in Catalonia.

In 1997, Catalonia received 34.1% of all African immigrants, more than any other autonomous community in Spain (Colectivo IOÉ 1999). In 2000, there were 14,848 legal residents living in Catalonia from countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Gambia, Senegal, Mali, Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of Guinea, and Nigeria (Generalitat de Catalunya 2001). However, it is important to keep in mind that the large number of black African immigrants, among others, that enter Catalonia are undocumented and are therefore difficult to enumerate completely in official statistics. Also, while Moroccans are the largest group of immigrants in Catalonia and throughout Spain, these statistics show that there is a significant sub-Saharan presence in the region.

In his book on immigrants in Spain, Vicente Gózálvez discusses surveys that were conducted all over Spain, including Barcelona, and describes the experiences of Moroccan and Senegalese immigrants. According to the author, these immigrants are usually single males between the ages of 20 and 34 years old. The majority of men who immigrate to Spain do so not only for economic reasons, but also to experience a new way of living and for a sense of adventure. Barcelona offers immigrants the opportunity to blend in with the variety of people who

reside there, even to the point of integration, he argues, and provides low cost housing, particularly in the older area of town, although usually of low quality (1995).

The hard voyage to Spain as well as few job possibilities puts a limit on the number of women immigrants. The usual paradigm is that of the male who works in Spain to send money to his family back home or is saving for a marriage dowry, possibly sending for his wife later on (Gozálvez 1995). Although Gozálvez says that there is no demand for African women in the job market here, there is a strong presence of African prostitutes, primarily in the center of Barcelona, including those found along the Las Ramblas, a large promenade in the center of town.

Within Catalonia in particular, there is a need for unskilled labor in fishing, agriculture, construction, and manufacturing that act as a pull factor for immigrants. In accordance with the history of Catalonia, Barcelona's close location to the French border makes it an ideal site for immigrants who are passing through Spain in order to go to another country in Europe (Gozálvez 1995). Clearly these are all strong pull factors for immigrants.

For this same reason, Catalonia increasingly receives many African immigrants coming from other countries in Europe. Large numbers of these undocumented immigrants have lived in other areas of Europe and come here due to negative experiences elsewhere. These experiences vary from difficulty in finding work, problems with integration, and the perception that the people of Spain are seen as being less racially hostile as in other European countries. Yet, Gozálvez found that the primary reason that these immigrants chose Spain was because they had family members there (1995).

The integration of immigrants into Spain is an important theme when discussing their presence. Carlota Solé's research on Spanish immigrants from other areas of Spain into Catalonia provides a useful tool in understanding the integration of immigrants into Catalonia. According to Solé, for many people, the ideas of being Catalan and speaking the language are associated with the idea of integration and are many times even seen as being equivalent (Solé 1982). However, she describes it as "union in diversity and not fusion or uniformity" (Solé 1981). For Solé, integration is the final step in the trajectory from the home country to the new one and is a "process towards the collective identity of the Catalan people" (1982).

Garreta provides a cultural pluralist definition of integration where it is defined as "the equal incorporation of conditions in the socio-economic politics and structure of the community without the existence of discrimination." In this form of integration, people are seen as equals in public, but in private, they can celebrate their culture and identity, if they decide to do so at all (Garreta 1999). Garreta's definition is extended by Will Kymlicka's idea that people want to identify themselves as members of an ethnic group in public and to see successful members of that group (1995).

While there has not been much research done on patterns of integration among recent black African immigrants into Catalonia in particular, Gozávez provides a useful study that discusses the experiences of Senegalese immigrants in Spain. According to Gozávez, there are several barriers towards their integration. He says that there are personal difficulties such as not knowing Spanish, a basic requirement towards the integration and social elevation of immigrants, as well as their general

low level of education. In his study, only 34% of Senegalese could speak Spanish well and less than half of the people interviewed said that they could understand it. Ironically, he says that it is mostly in Catalonia where the immigrants there learn Spanish (1995). Unfortunately, Gozávez does not discuss the impact of the Catalan language in the integration of these immigrants.

In his article, Garreta stresses the importance of interpersonal relationships in the process of integration (Garreta 1999). In terms of personal relationships, Gozávez claims that the Senegalese usually interact with people of their own nationality and that less than a fifth of them have relationships with Spaniards. The immigrants themselves place a high value on having relationships with Spaniards because it is a sign of prestige and integration amongst them. In spite of this, Gozávez detected the discriminatory manner in which the immigrants talked about Spaniards that was based on bad treatment they received in the past (1995).

Methodology

I interviewed a sample of twenty people using mixed methods of interviewing. I conducted twelve formal interviews with a questionnaire and eight informal ones without a questionnaire. I used the snowball method of sampling and also found people to interview through African associations in Barcelona, two African hair salons, where I encountered several hair stylists and their customers, and on the street in the center of town. The Africans that I met through associations were older immigrants who had been there for at least five years. The other people that I met in the hair salons and on the street were usually more recent immigrants who had been

in Barcelona generally for less than three years. I tried to keep as close as possible to my questionnaire while conducting the informal interviews.

The questionnaire I used had thirty-two questions, both closed and open-ended. I chose this type of questionnaire in order to allow the people being interviewed more freedom in which to describe their experiences. The questions were grouped in terms of the themes that they dealt with such as demographic information, language, and integration. I conducted my interviews in either Spanish or English, depending on the level of the respondent's fluency in one of the languages.

Being of Nigerian descent gave me increased access to the African communities here in Barcelona. Almost everyone with whom I spoke with saw me as a "sister," not only because I am black, but also because my parents have Nigerian roots. My background made it easy to gain the trust of the people whom I interviewed. Since I am a woman who was talking with mostly single males, it was difficult to convince them that I was strictly interested in interviewing them, an issue that I am sure many female researchers face. It was difficult to establish a boundary between my work and my personal life, yet at the same time, it provided a way for me to meet several immigrants.

I met Christopher on Las Ramblas, a pedestrian walkway in the center of town. He was a single, twenty-six year old man who originally came from Nigeria. He had lived in Canada as well as several other countries before deciding that Spain was a good place for him to settle. His father was a military leader in Nigeria before he died, but Christopher could not collect his inheritance until he turned thirty years old. He eventually wanted to become an entrepreneur selling German cars in Africa

and stressed the fact that he wants to run a "clean" business, despite all of the corruption in businesses in Nigeria.

Samuel was a Senegalese man that frequented an African bar near the Old Town of the city. He was on a two-year leave from his job teaching psychology in a middle school in Senegal where he teaches kids from ages eight to thirteen. He was thinking of going to Germany or another country in Europe, but he was not quite sure. He was interested in stressing the fact that all people are different and that not only race or skin color that separates us. He studied Spanish in Senegal for five years in high school before he came here.

Jacob was a twenty-five year old from Benin in Nigeria. I met him in the center of town near Plaza Catalunya where many immigrants gathered and socialized. He spoke English, Benin, and a little Spanish. He had been living in Spain for a little over a year. He lived with his sister in a neighborhood in Barcelona with very few immigrants and has relatives in Madrid as well. He said that presently Nigeria was unlivable for him because "If you're talented, you will be frustrated" because your talent will go unused there. He used to work with a French petroleum company in Nigeria and lived in Cote d'Ivoire for a couple of years working in the car-buying business. He originally wanted to go to Australia, but because he did not have enough money to go and did not know anyone there, he decided to come to Europe instead. He came to Spain on a visa that he obtained through a travel agency.

Lauren was a woman from Cameroon who lives immediately outside of Barcelona, like many other Africans. She was twenty-one years old and had a son. She left school in Cameroon when she was sixteen and

moved to France where she lived for two years. She did not like it there because she felt that there were too many *extranjeros* or foreigners like herself there so she did not feel like she was gaining any new experiences. She came to Barcelona with her son's father and had been living there for two years. She was a homemaker and braided hair to make some extra money. She could neither read nor write very well. She had a sister who was studying multi-media communication. She was in the process of working with a lawyer to regularize her immigration status. She spoke French and Spanish. I met her through a friend of hers whose hair she had braided.

Charles was an Igbo man from Nigeria that I met near the center of town. He spoke Igbo, English, a little Spanish, but has no knowledge of Catalan. He lived with four other single men in San Andreu de la Barca, right outside of Barcelona where he stated that no other immigrants lived. He had visited Brazil, Hong Kong, and Singapore in import-export business trips. He lived in Morocco for one year and nine months. He said that during his time there, he had heard of almost 2,000 deaths of people who died trying to cross the Strait of Gibraltar in fishing boats, called *pateras* in Spanish. He does not plan on staying in Barcelona for a long time- only for five or ten years. Afterwards, he said he would like to conduct business between Nigeria and Spain.

Terrence was a twenty-four year old Ghanaian who works in an African hair salon close to the center of town as a barber. He has lived in Barcelona for 1 year and 5 months. He came to Spain, like many immigrants, originally in a fishing boat, after having spent years saving money to make his trip from Ghana to Spain. He has a brother living in Belgium. Besides the language of his ethnic group, Brongbe, he also spoke English. He

understands French and Spanish, although he cannot spoke either very well. He said that he has no friends in Barcelona and that he felt very isolated and alone living there.

Mohammed was another man in his mid-twenties who I spoke with in the center of town. He had just arrived in Spain from Senegal after coming by fishing boat as well and said that if he had known about the lack of employment, he would not have come to Spain. He also felt very isolated there without close friends and family and was very anxious to leave Barcelona. I also spoke to two other men on the benches near Plaza Catalunya. One of them had been in town for one year and a half and had lived in Amsterdam prior to coming to Barcelona. He left Amsterdam because he could not get residence there. The other man had lived in Catalonia for eight months but used to live in Almeria, a town in the south of Spain. They both spoke a little Spanish and were unsure as to whether they would spend more time in Spain.

Isaiah was a thirty-five year old Nigerian man from the Urhobo ethnic group. He spoke the language of this group as well as English, Spanish, and a little Catalan. He was single and had lived there for five years, and was living in a neighborhood where there were very few immigrants. He left Nigeria in 1995 to go to England where he has several relatives, including his mother. However, his previous studies and work experience in cartography were not recognized in England, and while there met a Spanish woman with whom he fell in love. For these reasons, he decided to come to Barcelona with her and learn a new trade. At the time, he was working in construction and restoration.

Jamal came from French Guinea and spoke English as well as French and Spanish. He was working in his native country until he was transferred to Las Palmas

in the Canary Islands, a Spanish territory very close to Africa. He indicated that he was imprisoned in a Spanish jail for two years because of false drug charges against him brought on by a friend's jealous ex-girlfriend. He stated that he had come to Barcelona because of the trial and decided to stay there. He was still waiting to receive a compensation of 8 million pesetas from the Spanish government. He articulated that while in jail, he saw many black Africans imprisoned there. He received special treatment while in jail because his father was a diplomat who intervened on his behalf. He was single and worked in a discotheque near the center of town.

Maria was a fifty-five year old woman from Equatorial Guinea. She spoke Spanish, Ndowne, the language indigenous to her ethnic group, and Catalan. She lived in the Eixample, a middle class neighborhood, with her husband, who was also Guinean. Her husband is a lawyer and they have three children, two daughters and a son. She said there are very few immigrants in her neighborhood. She originally came to Spain to work as a steward, but when her country declared its independence from Spain, she was not able to pursue her vocation and had to return home. In 1971, she fled the dictatorship in her country (that still exists today) to go to Spain. She studied nursing there and was a practicing nurse at the time of the study. She was the contact person for a Guinean association in Barcelona.

Sonia was a fifty-one year old woman, also from Equatorial Guinea. She was of the Bubi ethnic group and was the owner of an African hair salon that specializes in braids and extensions. She spoke Bubi, Spanish, Catalan, and a little bit of English. She was married to a Guinean man and had four daughters. She lived in Zona Franca

where she indicated that there were many immigrants and that there had been a boom in the number of immigrants living there since she arrived twenty years before. She also came, like many Equatorial Guineans, because of the dictatorship in their home country. She originally studied teaching but then decided to buy the hair salon from its previous owner.

Michelle was a forty-four year old woman from Gambia. She spoke Wolof, Spanish, French, Mandinga, and a little English. She came to join her husband who was already living in Barcelona. She was a volunteer at a community health program that works with primarily black African prostitutes and informed them of safer sex methods and the health issues that they face in their profession. She also worked as an intercultural social worker between Africans and Catalans. I met her through a recommendation from another woman whom I had interviewed.

Dolores was a sixty-year old woman from Equatorial Guinea who spoke her mother tongue, Bubi, as well as Spanish and Catalan. She was a friend of Michelle and accompanied her to the interview. Like many Equatorial Guineans, she came to study to become a teacher but with rise of the dictatorship in her home country, she decided to stay in Spain. She lived with two of her nephews and volunteers in the same community health program as Michelle. She was a high school literature teacher.

Thomas has lived in Barcelona for ten years. He was married to a Spanish woman and was the contact person for the Nigerian Association in Catalonia. He was of the Ibibio tribe of Southeastern Nigeria. He spoke Ibibio, English, and Spanish, but refused to learn Catalan and had very negative feelings towards the language. He

lived in the United States before coming to Spain, where he said that he did not notice any problems with race. He originally came to Barcelona to learn Spanish and to see the Olympics in 1992. He had visited several countries in Europe such as England, Italy, and Germany where he had family members. He was teaching high school English in an all-boys school. His contact with more recent black immigrants through the association made him more aware of the racism that blacks faced.

Joseph was a thirty-seven year old Senegalese man of the Mandinga ethnic group who has been in Spain for fourteen years. He was part of a grassroots association that helps Senegal by sending school materials there. He spoke Mandinga, Wolof, Bambara, French, Spanish, and a little Catalan. He said that he came to learn new ways of living and not to make a living ("*cambiar la vida, no para buscar la vida*"). He used to live in Paris, but because of the large African population there, he did not feel as though he was learning anything different. For this reason, he came to Barcelona where the pace of life was better. He was married to a Spanish/Catalan woman.

Lorenzo was a member of the same association that Maria was a part of. He also was from Equatorial Guinea and spoke Ndowe, Fan, Spanish, brook English (a pidgin of English spoken in West Africa), a little French, and a little Catalan, although he does not spoke it fluently. He was in his fifties and has eight other family members that live in Spain as well. He originally came to Madrid to study and then went on to Barcelona to further his studies in Engineering. He ended up staying in Spain because of the dictatorship in Equatorial Guinea.

Phillip was a 59-year-old male who has lived in Barcelona for 34 years. He was from Equatorial Guinea and spoke Spanish and English fluently, as well as some

French and Catalan. He used to speak Igbo and Efik, two languages of Nigeria, but his time in Spain had diminished his knowledge of the two languages. He was married to a woman from Murcia, a southeastern province of Spain, who was raised in Catalonia. They had three children and lived in Gràcia, a neighborhood of Barcelona with a small immigrant population.

Results

Most of the people whom I spoke to said they did not feel that race was relevant to their identity when they were in Africa and that it has not changed upon living in Spain. For example, one respondent said that he lives his life the same way that he would back home- working hard, being a decent person, and a good citizen. However, two respondents admitted that their arrival in Spain created a change in how they saw themselves as black people. One respondent said that he was made conscious of his race because people stared at him a lot, especially when he was with his wife, who was white. Nonetheless, he commented that did not bother him and that he "just keeps on minding his own business."

Only 10% of the people felt that being black had relevance in their life in Africa as well as in Europe. In one case, a subject claimed that colonization and the segregation between Africans and Spaniards created an awareness of a black identity. Furthermore, some claimed that they were well aware when they were in their home countries that "God is white" and "the Virgin is white." In another respondent's case, it was knowledge of his country's history that produced in him a race consciousness. Both of them also said that they carried this awareness with them while they are in Europe.

Through the interviews, it was possible to see that the immigrants who had been there for less than five years did not have much interaction with Catalans. Most of them barely spoke Spanish, did not have interactions with Catalans as friends or in the workplace, and did not speak Catalan. Furthermore, twenty percent of the respondents, all of them newer immigrants, lived either with other African immigrants or in neighborhoods where they believed there was a strong presence of other immigrants. Two of the newer immigrants admitted that the idea of integration had no importance in their lives and that they were not interested in the idea. One respondent inferred that this was because very few Africans are interested in the integration process and that "most want to leave to go to Australia or the U.S."

On the other hand, the immigrants who had lived in Barcelona for five years or more had the opposite experience. Almost all of them spoke Spanish and at least a little Catalan, had professional relationships with or participated in associations with Catalans, and had Catalan friends or acquaintances. Four of the male respondents that I spoke with were married to Spanish/Catalan women whereas only one of the more recent immigrants admitted openly that he was interested in romantic relationships with autochthonous women. Only one of the older immigrants lived in a neighborhood with other immigrants. The rest of them lived in areas where there were few or no other immigrants living there.

Of the eight subjects who mentioned integration, about half of them described it as a mutual process where there is a mutual respect of cultures between Catalans and the immigrants. For example, one respondent gave a definition where true integration is "to adapt oneself to the characteristics of the society, being accepted by it,

having your culture respected, and respecting the rules of where you are." Very few mentioned that integration was a process that was only on the part of the immigrant.

However, many immigrants thought Catalans believed in a more assimilationist form of integration in which a person must "do as I do, live as I live" (*"que haga como hago yo, tu vive como vivo yo"*). Some respondents said that the idea corresponds to the idea of forced assimilation and colonization of Africans in Africa. Many people also mentioned that Catalans did not understand African ways of life such as the concept of the large, extended family. Because of this, one respondent reflected, Africans experience housing discrimination.

Many people mentioned that Catalans were very closed, xenophobic people, even when it comes to people from other parts of Spain, such as the Andalusians who are seen as carefree and lackadaisical. It was also said that the Catalans especially dislike people who did not work hard because working hard is a cultural trait Catalans want to uphold. At the same time, many Black Africans said that not only were the people in Barcelona kinder than in other places in Europe, but also that once they got to know immigrants, they were very accommodating. It was said that this differed from other areas of Spain, like Madrid, where it was thought that people maintain more superficial relationships with immigrants.

One recurring theme in the interviews was the menace of police constantly asking for documentation proving their legal status. One respondent explained that this had happened to her in front of her place of business, her neighbors, her children, and that the police had even asked her black Spanish-born children for their documentation. Another respondent implied that black

immigrants were often victims of unnecessary arrests and that the Catalan state uses police to be brutal.

Many of the people that I interviewed, particularly the older immigrants, mentioned that they had experienced racism in Barcelona first hand. One participant commented that you can see how people feel about you based on how they treat you when you enter a place, such as a bar. Chants of "Blackie," or "Nigger, go home!" ("*Negro, vete a tu país!*") and physical attacks by groups of young men (unaffiliated with hate groups) were occurrences mentioned among the subjects.

More specifically, many participants from the sample also mentioned that job discrimination was rampant. Ten percent of the respondents complained about how several places such as banks and large department stores did not hire black people, because they feared that they would lose clients. One respondent asserted that in other countries, "If a black person is learned, they can work in a bank, but here in Spain this does not happen." Another participant who works as a nurse said that there are times when the doctor working with her would rather give orders to white people who worked under her rather than give them directly to her. She also reported that there are times when patients refuse to allow her to treat them because she is black.

Several respondents believed that racism is worse in Spain than in the United States because in Spain they have a "hidden enemy" ("*enemigo oculto*") that was always claiming to be non-racist and saying things like "We are not racists, there is no racism here" ("*No somos racistas, no hay racismo aquí...*"). Other Black Africans interviewed claimed that in the U.S. people were used to seeing intelligent black people but that "here the feeling is still very backward."

However, one respondent commented that the word racist was overused, particularly on the part of the newer Nigerian immigrants who usually do not speak or understand a lot of Spanish. He felt that the language barrier due to their purely economic focus of making money makes them jump to conclusions of racial discrimination and that it impedes their integration. For this reason, this respondent felt that they should require a language requirement in order to get papers to work.

The older immigrants held that being black in Spain was different from being black in other European countries. They commented that the notion of a Black French person or a Black English person exists. However, a Black Spanish identity does not exist, not even for their children who were born and raised there. They are simply seen as immigrants.

In the conversations with the older immigrants, the majority of whom were a part of Barcelona's middle class, several of them emphasized their differences from the newer, usually poorer immigrants. At least two respondents (10%) explained that they did not immigrate for economic reasons and that they were not poor, like the newer immigrants (*"los inmigrantes de antes no eran económicos... no eramos pobres"*). One subject stated of the older immigrants that "we have demonstrated we are cultured and respectful... we work very hard to demonstrate to them that we can [co-]exist, respect their law" and that "we are cultured and learned." This is at odds with the newer immigrants who are seen as people who are "uncultured," "don't know their place," and "copy the negative habits" of whites. One respondent compared the older and newer immigrants by saying they have begun to "lose quality" in the types of African immigrants that come to Barcelona. Still others commented that the

presence of newly-arrived, undocumented Africans have led to police asking them for documentation proving legal status more than ever before and have reinforced the image of Africans being poor, downtrodden people.

Conclusion

For the majority of the people with whom I spoke, the experience of being in Europe did not create in them a "black awareness." Many of the people whom I interviewed were aware of their race and were even proud to be black. However, they generally did not feel that it affected the way that they saw themselves, even though they found themselves in a predominantly white, homogenous society. For some respondents, the idea of a belonging to a black culture was more important.

As seen through this study, there were two obstacles that threatened the integration of recent immigrants Barcelona society. First of all, their undocumented legal situation placed them on the margin of society. According to Solé, a regularized legal situation would allow immigrants to enter the labor market and have a better quality of life in Barcelona. This would be one of the first steps towards their integration into Catalan society.

Secondly, language was a major barrier to the integration of the recent immigrants. Many could not understand nor speak Spanish, much less Catalan, making it hard for them to interact with natives and generally live comfortably in Spain. However, integration was not a concern for the majority of them. Thirty-five percent of the immigrants did not see themselves staying in Spain for much longer, partly because of the insecure legal situation and the issue of language.

For the older immigrants, it was obvious that the process of integration was a real part of their lives as seen through their regular interaction with Catalans and their adopting Spanish/Catalan culture. However, although they did not have the same problems as the newer immigrants, they were not completely incorporated into Catalan society. When considering Garreta's definition, it is possible to see that demonstrations of racism in the form of frequent stops for documentation, job discrimination, and other racist acts prevented the older immigrants from being completely incorporated into society.

According to Gozávez, it is easier to integrate where there were fewer immigrants (1995). Furthermore, in *The Philadelphia Negro*, W.E.B. DuBois' (1967) analysis of black populations in Philadelphia at the turn of the century, the author comments that disassociating oneself from "lower members" of their race can be seen as a form of integration. In the case of black Africans in Barcelona, these ideas may explain why many Africans with a longer time span in Barcelona try to distance themselves from the newer, lower class immigrants. The presence of these newer immigrants is a possible threat to the integration process of Africans with a longer time in Barcelona.

One way to smooth the progress of the integration of all black immigrants into Barcelona society would be to provide residency and work permits to the more recent immigrants. This would improve the quality of life of all immigrants by allowing the newer immigrants to work in a regularized situation and would eliminate the need for police harassment of both regularized and undocumented citizens, decreasing some of the tension on the part of the older immigrants towards newer immigrants. A regularization of the newer immigrants would also give

them the incentive to learn the languages and Spanish/Catalan culture, eliminating culture clashes and problems of communication between immigrants and the autochthonous people. Furthermore, the elimination of racial discrimination in the workplace and the acknowledgement of a Black Spanish identity would aid in the integration of both present and future immigrants and their offspring.

Further research on a comparison between the older immigrants and the newer ones, especially focusing on class, would add a great deal to the small body of literature that exists on sub-Saharan immigration to Spain. It would also be interesting to examine the rhetoric used by Africans to describe themselves, whether it is in terms of race, ethnic group, or country of origin, and in which contexts this may change. In addition, examining the impact of interracial relationships on the integration process as well as the presence of African women in the sex trade would give a more accurate account of the presence of Black Africans in Spain.

By exploring the idea of black identity upon arrival into Spain as well as ideas of integration into Catalan society, this study provides another dimension in which to document and view the immigrant experience. This study also brings the study of black Africans in Barcelona up to date by factoring the more recent immigrants. In the end, this research provides a glimpse of the Black experience in Spain, adding to the study of Blacks in a global context.

References

- Colectivo IOÉ. 1999. *Inmigrantes, Trabajadores, Ciudadanos: Una visión de las migraciones desde España*.
- DuBois, W.E.B. 1967. *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. New York: Schocker.
- Garreta I Bochaca, J. 1999. *La integració en l'estructura social de les minorèis ètniques*. Lerida, Spain: Universitat de Lleida.
- Generalitat de Catalunya. 2001. Pla interdepartamental d'immigració 2001-2004. Catalunya, Spain: Grinver, SA.
- Gozálvez Pérez, V. 1995. *Inmigrantes marroqu'es y senegaleses en la España Mediterránea*. Picanya (València), Spain: Generalitat Valenciana.
- Makom, I.-vi-. 1990. *España y los negros africanos*. Barcelona, Spain: La Llar del Llibre.
- Sepa Bonaba (Kopesese), E. 1993. *Els negres catalans*. Barcelona, Spain: Fundació Serveis de Cultura Popular and Editorial Alta Fulla.
- Solé, C. 1981. *La integración sociocultural de los inmigrantes en Cataluña*. Madrid, Spain: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.
- 1982. *Los inmigrantes en la sociedad y en la cultura catalanas*. Barcelona, Spain: Ediciones Península.
- Kymlicka, W. 1995. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford, Great Britain: Oxford University Press.