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Children of Chinese Migrants in Spain: New Expressions of Dual Identities and Identities in Between

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Abstract. Migration scholars have consistently referred to the cultural identities of migrants and migrant children as constructed out of elements from both their host and heritage cultures. They have drawn on cultural dichotomies and described these identities as dual, bicultural, hyphenated or in-between. Through a case study of three children of Chinese migrants living in Spain, this article questions the accuracy of using these categories to describe the cultural identities of the participants. Results show that the expressions and manifestations of dual or in-between identities of the participants were grounded in a biographical intersectionality that resists categorization and that is much more complex and diverse than what previous literature on the topic has suggested.

Keywords: *Chinese migration, children, Spain, identity*

Introduction

Chinese migration to Spain began in the 1980s and has traditionally been composed of a majority of people from low socio-economic backgrounds originally from China's Southeastern province of Zhejiang. Since the 1990s, however, the exponential growth in the Chinese migrant population has resulted in a great diversification of migration profiles which includes migrants from different regions and socio-economic backgrounds, as well as business people and international students.

One important aspect of this diversification has been the coming of age and increasing visibility of children of first generation migrants who were either born in Spain or arrived in childhood or adolescence through family reunification processes. Besides a few studies which have documented the difficulties encountered by this migrant children community in terms of language and academic adaptation, cultural and intergenerational clashes with their families, or issues with discrimination (Beltrán Antolín and Sáiz López, 2001; Sáiz López, 2006), little is known about their life experiences and their sense of cultural belonging.

The present study seeks to address this gap by asking two main questions: first, what are what are the life experiences and cultural identities of children of three children of Chinese migrants in Spain? And, second, can these experiences and identities be inscribed within dominant scholarly discourses and theories on migrant children's identities? I will try to argue that although the participants refer to their identities as dual or in-between, the form of dualism or in-betweenness that is suggested by their narratives is much more complex than what previous literature has suggested.

Dual and In-Between Identities: Overview

By virtue of their condition as individuals who live in a country different from where their ancestors were born, children of migrants may be said to be located at the interface of cultures. They are expected to comply with the socio-cultural norms of the society where they live while at the same time maintain a degree of closeness with their families and ethnic communities and meet their different expectations (Min and Kim 2000; Wang and Collins, 2016). This is true of individuals who were born in the host society, but even more of those who migrated in childhood or adolescence, because they retain memories of their country of origin while simultaneously beginning their socialization in the host society. This cultural dichotomy has consistently been adopted in the literature to describe the life experiences and cultural identities of migrant children. The term "in-betweenness" has been used by scholars to refer to the "dual living realities (two cultures, two languages and identities)" (Wang and Collins, 2016, 2780) of children who migrated in childhood or adolescence, and different manifestations of this duality or "in-betweenness" have been identified in their everyday realities, such as their roles as cultural brokers for their parents (Bartley, 2010).

The literature on transnationalism has also emphasized the idea of dual practices and dual identities, and although transnationalism has been widely used to refer to the lives of first-generation migrants, the extent to which children of migrants engage in transnational practices and embrace dual identifications has long been the subject of scholarly debate. Some studies have observed that children of migrants are often not even fluent in their parents' mother tongue and sustain minimal or no ties with their families' country of origin (Kivisto 2001; Levitt and Waters 2001; Portes 2001; Kasinitz et al. 2002; Rumbaut 2002; Levitt and Schiller 2004).

Other studies, however, have stressed that by being exposed to the values, goods, memories, ideas, patterns of human interaction and transnational practices of their parents in their households on a daily basis, migrant children's identities also become transnational (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Ngan 2008; Somerville 2008).

Moreover, children often establish contacts with other Chinese children recently arrived from China, or, with the expansion of Chinatowns, develop life practices in increasingly multicultural landscapes. In the Spanish context, Sáiz López (2015) for example has observed that the plurality of Chinese networks established in Spanish society played a vital role in the development of cultural identities that were no longer located in the heritage country but rather in a symbolic transnational space. Masdeu Torruella (2014) has also described the transnational identities of second generation Chinese who make use of the cultural capital acquired in the host society and return to their homeland to open businesses. It has also been noted that transnational connections follow a pattern of ebb and flow and acquire different intensities depending on individual life stages (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004; Somerville 2007). In all these respects, the experiences of children of migrants in school and within the family are "rarely monocultural" (Davidson 2000, 139) and develop out of local, global and ethnic influences.

The notions of dual identification and in-betweenness have also been given positive and negative meaning. Rumbaut and Ima (1988) were the first to use the idea of living in between to talk about the experiences of young South East Asian refugees in the United States. They referred to them as "marginal to both the new and old worlds, for they straddle both worlds and they are in some profound sense fully part of neither of them" (22). Other studies have described these migrants as "partial insiders in two distinct cultural worlds" (Ryer 2010, 74) or have stressed their position of liminality as individuals trapped between two worlds (Roberge 2009) but "not fully belonging to any" (Buster and Baffoe 2015, 16).

Other social scientists, however, have underlined the dynamic and negotiated character of identities (Jaspal and Cinnirella 2012) and stressed the positive aspects of dual identification, such as the flexibility to function in different cultural settings and environments (LaFramboise, Coleman and Gerton 1993; Hutnik and Bhola 1994), and the ability to perform different identities in order to meet different cultural expectations (Ballard 1994; Song 1997; Liu 2015).

In general, the literature on migrant children's identities has tended to emphasize the dichotomy between host and heritage cultures and societies, local and transnational, here and there. By doing so, it has tended to establish cultural identity as exclusively determined by the interplay between cultural and linguistic aspects. However, as the next section will demonstrate, this approach does not always illuminate the depth and complexity of migrant children's cultural identities and the importance of engaging with these identities "in relation to the ever-changing situations and contexts where they emerge" (Ehrkamp 2006, 348).

Methodology

The three participants of this case study were drawn from a larger ethnographic investigation aimed at exploring the cultural identities of 12 children of Chinese migrants in Spain. The main reason for their selection was that they were children of Chinese migrants who defined their cultural identities as dual or in-between. The design is a case study largely based on in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted among three children of Chinese migrants living in Spain. The participants were one female and two males, aged 17, 23 and 26. The female participant was born in Spain, while the others arrived in childhood through family reunification. Their families were all from China's Zhejiang Province, more specifically from the region of Qingtian.

Participants were recruited via casual encounters in Madrid's Chinatown district of Usera, through the Facebook page Chiñoles, (aimed at sharing information among Chinese children of migrants in Spain), and via previous contacts that I had in the community. Participant consent was obtained before the process of data collection as well as parental consent for the participant under 18.

The interviews were conducted in cafes, restaurants and via WhatsApp between January and October 2017. They followed a life history approach, where participants were asked to freely talk about their life experiences, and lasted between two and three hours. The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. The analysis involved manual coding and categorization according to themes. Having worked for three years as a community interpreter and cultural mediator for Chinese migrants in Spain, and having conducted interviews and informal conversations with a large number of Chinese living in Spain, I was able to contrast and triangulate the data with previous information I had about the community.

Sara: Fluid Identities

In his essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", Stuart Hall (1990) challenges the idea of a stable, unchanging and continuous self. Instead of "one experience, one identity" (225), he argues that cultural identities are fluid, never finished or completed, and that their meaning is in a perpetual process of transformation. Cultural identity is thus:

> …a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending time, place, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything that is historical, they undergo constant transformation (225).

The majority of studies having documented the dual identities of children of migrants have referred to them as a given outcome stemming from these children's position at the interface of cultures. In general, these studies have asked *why* their participants feel in between cultures or have adopted dual identities, but few have examined in depth the processes through which these identities came into being. Some studies have signaled that the intensity of individuals' transnational, dual or in-between identities follow a pattern of ebb and flow and changes according to the particular events and circumstances of one's life course. However, while acknowledging temporal changes in intensity, these studies have failed to document the changes in the meaning that individuals attribute to these identities.

Hall (1990) stresses not only the temporal evolution of cultural identities but also, borrowing from Derrida's notion of *differance*, the constant self-repositioning of meaning that cultural identities undergo as they shift across circumstances and space. This section will draw on these two ideas to argue that the in-between identities of my participants could not be accurately captured by the largely static and one-dimensional category of in-betweenness that has been widely used in the literature. Sara's life history, in particular, will describe the internal and external processes that shaped her in-between identity and the diversity of overlapping meanings and connotations that in betweenness acquired as these processes unfolded.

Sara (26), worked as a journalist in Madrid. Her parents, rural people with no formal education, migrated from Qingtian to Spain in their early twenties and met at a Chinese restaurant where they both worked. The most determinant aspect of

Sara's life, and the one that dominated her narrative, was that she had spent the first 11 years of her life with a Spanish family in Alicante and separated from her biological parents:

> In the beginning, and for many years, my parents saw the Spanish family as a baby-sitter, but the truth is they were more like a foster family, because my parents worked a lot, and then they had to leave Alicante because they began touring different cities to sell products in street markets, so the fact is I was raised and totally immersed in the life of this Spanish family for quite a lot of years. I spent my childhood with them, and when my parents' situation improved, I went back to them… I stayed with the Spanish family because they got attached to me, they saw me as a member of the family and they didn't mind looking after me just as if I was another sibling in the family.

Sara emphasized the strong emotional connection that she had developed with her Spanish family and insisted on the fact that she had "two families": "I don't see them as my foster family, I call them my family, same as my Chinese family, I don't see it as my Chinese family, but as my family as well".

Sara stressed the sharp contrasts that existed between her life with her Spanish and Chinese families and the difficult transition she had experienced when she reunited with her Chinese family at the age of 11:

> I was totally Spanish until age 11, I mean I hadn't had any contact with or received any influence from Chinese culture, and then suddenly, at age 11, I moved into a Chinese family, with a way of life, a type of upbringing that had nothing to do with what I had experienced so far… I had a period, I would say a transition period, where I had to come to terms with the fact that all the frames of reference in my environment had changed… It took me a lot of time to feel that I was at home again and to feel that this was my family and that was my reality… I think I reached adolescence with all those identity issues, with that conflict of family belonging, with that sense of vital disorientation…

Sara's in between identity gradually emerged from her inability to conciliate her two family experiences and the conflicting identities they generated:

> I have had this inner conflict for many years, in terms of saying, I am Spanish, but I have a Chinese family, so I am Chinese as well, but I don't speak Chinese… I have felt very self-conscious and insecure and had huge identity clashes as a result of being in between two families, in between two cultures, and in my case, it was literally in between, it's not like other Chinese, young people, who have had baby-sitters,

> nannies, foster families as well for a while, but not as extreme as my case, because I was with them until age 11.

Besides identity conflicts and adaptation struggles, she was also confronted with more practical communication hurdles because her biological parents only had basic Spanish language skills, while she in turn did not speak Chinese.

Despite all these difficulties, at the time we met, Sara spoke positively about her dual identity as both Spanish and Chinese. However, she stressed how this position had been the result of many years of inner conflict and emotional upheavals:

> For a very long time I've said straight out that I was Spanish, and I've said it very convinced, and I've said it even with anger at people for even dare doubt that I was Spanish and, I was even offended that people considered me Chinese, because it was sort of, don't you see that I have grown up here, don't you see that I speak Spanish, don't you see that I don't speak Chinese and I am telling you that I don't… and this has evolved into thinking that, damn, I do have a Chinese family, and no, it can't be this way, this is not fair to my parents, my grandparents, regardless of the little contact that I've had with my Chinese family… So I've shifted my identity to "I am Spanish but I have Chinese parents".

This passage illustrates the evolution of Sara's cultural identity. It shows her progression from a denial of her Chinese identity, to a gradual recognition of her Chinese origins, a struggle to conciliate her Spanish and Chinese selves, and finally a positive reaffirmation of her dual identity. Throughout this time evolution, her individual perception of her identity acquired different intensities and meanings as her context and circumstances changed.

Sara's narrative also suggests how the attitudes and perceptions of Spanish mainstream society were to a large extent responsible for her identity conflict. First, looking at her phenotypical traits, people expected her to "be" Chinese. Second, they assumed that being Chinese, she would also be able to speak Chinese and know about China. Sara's feelings of inadequacy arose out of being unable to live up to those standards and projections and out of considering herself as not sufficiently or "authentically" Chinese. It was also this situation that triggered her denial of her Chinese identity as a reaction and stance towards people's expectations. In this sense, she explained:

> It turns out that I don't speak Chinese, and this is the sort of thing that has also made me feel really self-conscious, it's the typical innocent question that you are asked by people who don't know your context, but that makes you feel insecure and

> uncomfortable. In my case, every time someone asked me "do you speak Chinese?", and I said no, they would say "what a pity, your parents should have taught you", and, in the beginning, I would give a generic reply, "oh, yes, we didn't spend much time together", and so on, but deep inside, I felt annoyed, in terms of saying, damn, so maybe I am a bad Chinese, after all?

When she began to come to terms with her Chinese origins, Sara made great efforts to substantiate her Chineseness based on the standards imposed by society and to live up to that essentialist idea of being Chinese. Thus, she made several attempts at learning Chinese. She also traveled to China, read Chinese novels in translation, tried to learn about Chinese history from books. She also expressed regret and a sense of loss because her parents, working-class people with little education, lacked the time, competences and resources to pass on to her what she conceived of as "Chinese culture":

> Unfortunately, and I really see this as a misfortune, I have missed a lot, and also my parents have missed a lot, because they come from a village, they don't have a high cultural profile, they are working-class people and as a result they haven't been able to pass on to me knowledge about what China is like, about Chinese culture…

Eventually, after many years and a long process of reflexivity, she accepted that her Chinese identity was not and need not be substantiated or legitimized by her ability to speak Chinese or her knowledge about Chinese culture, but rather by a positive embracement of her personal circumstances, a rejection of society's stereotypes, and a strong belief in the idea that it was possible to be Spanish by simultaneously being Chinese.

This narrative has revealed how Sara's in between identity was constantly being shaped and reshaped, questioned and contested throughout her childhood and adolescence years. Following this time evolution, in-betweenness emerged as a changing position in a continuous and dialogical process of self-transformation and not as a two-directional back and forth movement between China and Spain, between here and there. Sara's feelings of in-betweenness were thus present throughout her life, but with different value and significance. In the beginning, she was assertively Spanish, but her Spanishness was dependent on a strong rejection of her Chinese identity, and therefore evidenced a form of in-betweenness. Subsequently, in-betweenness took the form of a dualism between not feeling completely Spanish as a result of experiences with racialization, and developing a sense of guilt towards her "lost" Chinese identity. Later, in-betweenness manifested

as a strong desire to go back to her origins and simultaneously a downplay of her Spanishness (she was proud of having retained her Chinese passport and Chinese nationality, for example). Finally, at the time we met, her in-betweenness had taken the form of a balanced and more harmonious coexistence between what she perceived as her Spanish and Chinese selves. In betweenness for Sara was also not only a matter of being in between cultures and languages, but also in between families, cities, lifestyles, parenting styles, in between guilt and self-acceptance, in between retrieval and loss, and in this sense could be understood as the product of a biographical intersectionality where many aspects of her life besides language and culture came into play. Moreover, her cultural identity at the time we met was only a specific positioning in between past and future with the potential and likelihood to change again. Thus, she spoke of her identity crisis as "more clear and resolved" than in the past but "by no means concluded". She also acknowledged "the need to know, to reconnect, to keep reconstructing the [identity] puzzle". In this sense, cultural identity (and in this particular case feelings of in-betweenness) must be understood not as an outcome, but as a web that moves across multiple elements in a non-necessarily linear progression and in an endless process of becoming.

Yun: New Patterns of In-Betweenness

The literature has often described the dual or in between identities of children of migrants as a simultaneous identification with two cultures, estrangement from both cultures, or as a blend of "cultural permeability and vulnerability" (Ang 2001, 194) that suggests an ambivalent tension between both. All these descriptions tend to emphasize the relationship between host and heritage cultures and societies, between China and Spain. For Yun, however, who was caught between the incompleteness of his Chinese identity and a longing to be "more Chinese", an identity in between cultures meant none of the above.

Yun (23) moved from Qingtian to Spain with his mother and younger sister at the age of 10. Yun's father was waiting for them in Madrid, where he had migrated four years earlier. Overall, Yun had an easy adaptation to school in Spain: there was a positive atmosphere with classmates and teachers, and he did not have much difficulty learning Spanish or adjusting to the academic curriculum. However, his childhood was subordinated to the demands of the family business and marked by constant residential mobility. The family spent one and a half years in Madrid, where

Yun's parents took up different types of paid employment, two years in Mallorca, where the family tried their luck with several businesses, then four years in Málaga, before finally moving back to Madrid, where Yun began his degree in Engineering.

Yun also described close ties with his family during childhood and adolescence. He helped at the family business from an early age, and regularly acted as translator for his parents who had very limited Spanish language competence. During his time in Málaga, the family opened two grocery stores. Yun would spend most of his free time with his father in one of the shops, while his sister helped his mother at the other. When he moved back to Madrid to start his university degree, his parents sold their two businesses in Málaga and the whole family settled in the capital again. Yun had never traveled back to Qingtian or other parts of China since migrating to Spain.

At the time we met, Yun had just finished his university degree and had recently taken up his first job at a Spanish consulting company, where he was in charge of finances. The idea was to gain a couple of years of experience before looking for a different job.

One of Yun's first comments after we met was that it was "strange" to be a second-generation Chinese. Later, when we met at a Chinese hot-pot restaurant where he had worked part-time as a university student, Yun explained –in flawless Spanish— that he did not feel Spanish, but that he did not feel completely Chinese either: "it is a complicated balance, because in the end you don't totally belong to either side".

Yun possessed strong intercultural competences and was able to comfortably navigate different cultural contexts: he was perfectly fluent in Spanish, he had worked for both Chinese and Spanish employers, he had translated and mediated between his parents and Spanish society on a regular basis. However, this did not translate into an in-between identity, as he made clear from the very beginning of our conversation that he did not feel Spanish.

On the one hand, Yun explained that the specificities of his growing-up experience, in particular his responsibilities towards the family business, conditioned by his family's socio-economic status, had generated feelings of distance from Spanish peers and Spanish society:

> Spanish, no, I don't feel Spanish, but Chinese, maybe half Chinese, generally, yes… Spanish, not really, almost never, only perhaps when I watch football and I support Spain, but not really, because in the end, it's very different. For example, judging

> from my own personal experience up to now, teenagers here, high school students and so on, 17, 18 years old, their main entertainment is go out drinking [*ir de botellón*], and chatting, and so on, and I've never had that, because at that age I had to be in the shop, doing things, so it is quite different…

On the other hand, his feelings of non-belonging to Spanish society were also determined by aspects related to his family's socio-economic status. In particular, it was his residential mobility as a child, driven by the family's need to look for the best opportunities for the business, that had generated his lack of attachment to any specific place and his general sense of rootlessness within Spanish society. He described these moves as "funny periods, because you end up not really adapting to any place…". He added:

> In the end, in my case, you don't really have any roots here, right? So you can afford to leave… I don't have any important relationships… and my parents, they don't even plan to stay here.

Residential mobility is in fact a common phenomenon among Chinese migrants from low socio-economic backgrounds, especially in the first stages of migration, when families have to endure hardship and enjoy little economic stability (Villarino 2012).

Traditional values acquired during his childhood years in China also accounted for his feelings of difference from Spanish peers:

> Yun: In the end, even though I have only spent four years in school in China, but the values you are taught there, it makes a really big difference, for example in terms of effort, the strong value that is placed on effort, here, it's like, it is not valued that much…
>
> Author: you mean, this is something that has stayed with you?
>
> Yun: yes, yes, a lot, in terms of having to work hard, Spanish people, I would say, they don't have that, they are more, I would say, spoon-fed…

While failing to identify with Spanish people, Yun also felt "only half Chinese". His perception of the partiality and incompleteness of his Chinese identity stemmed from the fact that he equated a "real" Chinese identity with conventional identity markers such as Chinese language proficiency and knowledge of culture, which he crucially did not possess.

This was hinted at during our first meeting at the hot-pot restaurant in Madrid. We chose a quiet table at the very end of the restaurant. As I was watching

him write the order on a small piece of paper, I noticed how he paused for a moment and looked at me in hesitation. Then he took out his cell phone and confessed, embarrassed, that he needed to look up some words because there were several characters he was not able to write in Chinese.

Later in our conversation, when comparing himself with other Chinese people born and raised in China and with Chinese children of migrants having arrived in Spain in late adolescence, Yun described himself as lacking some of the competences they possessed:

> They [Chinese having migrated to Spain in late adolescence] know more about Chinese celebrities, and you just stare at them, hum… I, for example, am not much into celebrities, but if you ask me about Chinese celebrities, well, maybe I know some, but very few, whereas those who have come out a few years later than me are very interested in those things and follow them a lot… and for example, I don't know much about Chinese history, and I am very interested in it, but it is a lot to study, and I don't really have such a good memory…

These examples reveal how Yun regarded language and knowledge about China as core components of a Chinese identity. Chineseness was thus seen by him as a measurable attribute, something that you may have more or less of, that you may possess (Louie 2002). According to Louie (2002), this view is common among Chinese children of migrants, and is often the product of essentialist images and definitions of Chineseness that are spread by the media and popular culture both in and outside China. This phenomenon places Chinese children like Yun in a difficult and ambivalent position. On the one hand, they regard themselves as not having as much Chinese culture and as less authentic than other Chinese having grown up in China or migrated in late adolescence. On the other hand, they would be expected to "have more Spanish culture", for having migrated earlier, but their Chineseness in the host society complicates their "authenticity" as Spanish and makes them not Spanish enough. They thus see their practices as "diluted and inauthentic versions of 'real' traditional Chinese culture" (Louie 2002, 239), yet at the same time they cannot fully identify with Spain and feel inescapably Chinese.

Perhaps as a result of this feeling of incompleteness, Yun yearned for a connection with China. He longed to learn about Chinese history and culture, and to visit his hometown in Qingtian. In fact, the main reason why he had taken up his current job –he had received several offers from other employers—was that the company was setting up an office in China, and that there would most probably be

opportunities for him to travel.

On the other hand, while Yun made a clear distinction between himself and Chinese people born in China or having arrived in Spain in late adolescence, he also established boundaries between himself and Chinese university students living in Spain, because he regarded their lives as totally estranged from his own life experiences:

> … a lot of them, they are well off, because if they could afford studying in a Western country, so they've been well provided for, when someone calls them names, they make a big deal, they feel harassed, victims of racism, but in our case, we have grown up in the family shop, and we've seen these things all our lives, this is a normal thing… but they just don't understand it.

All this suggests that in-betweenness for Yun was not a simple matter of feeling between Spain and China, but rather an internal struggle to find his personal way of being Chinese. He felt caught between his own imaginative perceptions of Chineseness and the representations of Chineseness circulated by media and society. He felt different from other Chinese communities (Chinese university students in Spain and Chinese born in China), and in this sense also in between. He also experienced a more emotional form of in betweenness, as he was caught between the insecurity for not being "Chinese enough" and a longing to be "more Chinese". All this suggests that Yun experienced a very specific form of in betweenness that did not fit into the conceptualizations of in-betweenness that previous studies have proposed. Although his circumstances, in particular his cultural and linguistic competences and his professional integration in Spanish society, partly indicated a life in between China and Spain that matched the notions of in-betweenness previously documented in the literature, further exploration of his life history and narrative suggest a greater deal of nuance that resists such clear-cut binaries and categorizations.

Moreover, contrary to what previous literature has suggested, culture and language were not the only categories that shaped his cultural identity. In this sense, Yun's in-betweenness must be understood as multi-layered and intersectional. It emerged from an interplay of external and personal elements that crucially included socio-economic background (in particular his family obligations and residential mobility) and conflicting images and representations of Chineseness, all of which further demonstrates the uniqueness of his in-between experience.

Qi (17) was born in Madrid, but was soon sent back to China where he lived with his grandparents before returning to Spain at the age of 5. His family owned a Chinese bazaar and lived in a working-class neighborhood with a fast-growing Chinese population at the outskirts of Madrid. Qi had a difficult adaptation after moving back to Spain with his parents and sisters, two years younger and eight years older than him. He attributed this to his difficulty to learn Spanish and to establish meaningful connections with people. He was the only Chinese student in his class and it took many years for him to begin interacting with peers:

> In the beginning, when I first arrived, I couldn't understand anything. I didn't speak or hang out with anyone, it was just from home to school and from school back home. Then, in fourth grade, I began to play football, and I could understand a little… but there was still a distance, in the sense that they were all friends and I was on the side. I was almost 10 years old at that time.

It was only at the age of 12-13 that Qi began to gradually engage in interactions with Spanish peers. According to him, his parents were largely responsible for his difficulties to integrate:

> I would say that the reason for this difficulty to integrate, besides the language, were my parents… If I had been allowed to go to the park and socialize, I would have been able to make friends more quickly.

In general, Qi reported a strong parental discipline and described his parents as "very traditional". He was never allowed to go out and was given a lot of housework responsibilities. His parents worked long hours. He was mostly in charge of a Chinese baby-sitter who dropped him at school in the morning and with whom he spent most of his hours after school.

Qi repeatedly stressed his disapproval of the strict parental education he had received. He also, in several occasions, mentioned that he supported a more liberal parental education. Talking about his parents' attitudes towards her elder sister, for example, who was forced to move out of the house at the age of 18 because her parents forbid her to have a boyfriend, he said: "if I had children, I would say you have to be careful with this, this and that, instead of forbidding".

He referred to his relationship with his parents as "not good":

> We don't understand each other and I don't approve of their traditional views. My dad always said, "this is my house and if you want to live in my house you need to do what I say".

At age 17, due to his family atmosphere, Qi decided not only to leave school (which he found too difficult) but also to leave his parents' house and earn his own living. At the time we met, Qi rented a small room in the district of Usera, where he also worked 12-hour shifts at a small recently opened café. The café specialized in Taiwanese bubble-milk tea and had a small menu written only in Chinese.

Qi visited his parents twice a month and spent a few hours with them. Since leaving school, and before taking up his job at the café, he had previously worked at a luxury Chinese restaurant, where they had over 100 clients every evening and only four waiters, a situation that had motivated his decision to quit.

Qi felt both Spanish and Chinese. However, this statement seemed to contradict his life circumstances and experiences. Unlike other participants in this section, he had not received a very strong direct influence from Spanish society or developed ties with Spanish peers. At the time we met, and after having lived in Spain for 12 years, he had only established superficial Spanish friendships. Talking about his parents' prohibitions, he mentioned for example how he was only very occasionally and in special circumstances allowed to sleep at a Chinese friend's house. "What about Spanish friends?" I asked, to which Qi replied that "there has never been a strong friendship with Spaniards to the degree of being invited to their place". Moreover, Qi had experienced difficulties learning Spanish, had dropped out of school, and this had limited his contact with Spanish society and his opportunities for insertion in the Spanish labor market. He now lived in Usera with Chinese people and worked for a Chinese employer at a café especially targeted at the Chinese community. His practices and his social relations were dominantly Chinese.

When questioned about his dual identity, Qi did not regard it as the product of any specific circumstance, but simply as the passive result of his cross-border mobility, which had shaped his receptivity towards what he identified as Spanish and Chinese mentalities. "Well, in my case, I feel both Spanish and Chinese, I can be with both… I can understand both sides well", he said. Later, he added: "I think if I had grown up in China I would not be like this, I would probably have the same mentality as my parents".

However, his cultural identity could also be read as a response to his individual circumstances. In this sense, Qi's Spanish identity may be understood not

so much as the passive result of his cross-border mobility, but instead as a reaction to the traditional mentality of his parents, that he greatly opposed, and which he negatively identified as Chinese.

This more nuanced reading of his identity is what his life practices, process of adaptation, and continuous reference in conversation to his negative feelings towards his parents seemed to suggest. This reading is also more able to account for the paradox between his Spanish identity and his general disconnection from Spanish society and provides a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the process through which his dual identity was generated.

To sum up, Yun, Qi and Sara all straddled different worlds. At both material and symbolic levels, their lives unquestionably blended elements from Spain and China, host and heritage cultures. And yet, their narratives have shown a dynamic interaction between different elements of their life histories that suggest a more multilayered and open-ended form of in-betweenness that was the product of an intersection between many different aspects connected to their social environment and their individual biographies. Approaching their dual identities as a form of biographical intersectionality rather than from the perspective of linguistic and cultural binaries provides a richer and much more nuanced understanding of their identities and allows to see the participants as embedded in their personal life situations and relationships with others. This perspective also sheds some light on the intricate *processes* through which their dual identities were established and negotiated.

Conclusion

This study has examined the narratives of three participants who claimed a dual identity or an identity in between. It has tried to argue, from different perspectives, that existing conceptual frameworks of dual and in-between identities, which have commonly been conceived of in terms of fixed categories, binary oppositions and symbolic or material back and forth movements between host and heritage cultures, fail to capture the depth, complexity and contextual constraints of the participants' identities and experiences.

As pointed out by Menjivar (2002), in order to "fully assess the analytical power of a concept one must also take into account circumstances where it does not apply fully or the factors that may in some way limit it" (549). In this sense, I have

tried to raise questions that refine and more clearly describe what is meant by dual and in-between identities in different contexts. These questions have revealed that the dualism and in-betweeness of the participants emerged more as a form of biographical intersectionality where a multiplicity of social, cultural, contextual and individual aspects converged rather than as a cultural and linguistic dichotomy.

In the first section, Sara spoke of her in-betweenness as a shifting, malleable condition that acquired different shapes, meanings and intensities throughout one's life history and that was in this sense endlessly produced and never resolved in a definitive way. The second section argued that Yun's identity did play out as feelings of dual belonging, dual exclusion, or as an ambivalent position between belonging and marginality, but rather as a simultaneous desire and inability to be Chinese. Besides, his particular form of in-betweenness encompassed a wide range of elements that reached beyond the cultural and linguistic in-betweenness that previous research has tended to focus on. These elements included residential mobility, socio-economic status and a conflict between external and internal perceptions of what it meant to be Chinese. Finally, through Qi's narrative, the third section proposed to look at dual identities as physical or symbolic spaces of belonging dynamically constructed and negotiated out of the participants' need to engage with different aspects of their personal circumstances and environment.

Like any other ethnic community, children of Chinese migrants are a heterogeneous group with different personal and social characteristics (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). There are different stages in their lives, different migration and adaptation processes, different class and socio-economic backgrounds and therefore the potential and possibility for dual and in-between identities to manifest in different ways. The narratives thus suggested the importance of approaching the participants as individuals rather than as children of migrants. In other words, although one cannot dismiss the fact that the participants inhabited dual realities and articulated dual identities, migration was sometimes not the central or most fundamental element of their experiences, or was simply embedded in other aspects of their individual trajectories, hence the need to consider their biographies.

Conventional notions of in-betweenness have also been criticized for their underlying ideological assumptions and power relations. Benesch (2008), in this sense, has insisted that the two polarities that constitute the discourse of in-betweenness (in this case native and non-native, Spanish and Chinese) have been created from a monocultural and monolingual perspective. Positioning individuals as

not belonging (or belonging) to the normative categories of native or non-native, Spanish or Chinese, pathologizes their identities and ignores the creative processes and social interactions through which alternative identities may originate. Similarly, the discourse on dual or transnational identities proposes to embrace the multiplicity and creativity of cultural identities that blend multiple elements. However, it paradoxically does so through an abstract and homogeneous celebration of the liberating character of these dual identities, and by framing this discourse within the categories and dichotomies that it is trying to reject.

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