Psychosocial Intervention

The voices of newcomers. A qualitative analysis of the construction of transnational identity

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, globalization is connected with the emergence and reconstruction of new identities. For instance, the migration process implies the generation of new forms of identity, questioning the traditional homogeneous and static notions of identity. In this regard, the term "transnational identity" or "bicultural identity" has been suggested for these people that live in between two cultural frameworks and has to establish a dialogue between the country of origin ("there") and the host country ("here"). This study shows the bicultural and multiple nature of ten immigrant life stories. These narratives illustrate how bicultural and multilingual skills become part of the self definition through the appropriation of cultural voices that manage the origin and host lifestyles, building hybrid and multiple identities that preserve certain ties with the origin society and take certain forms of life of the new culture and society. The novelty embodied in this work is the qualitative approach taken in the research. Most of the literature on transnational identity and transnationalism are based on theoretical discussions or quantitative data.

Las voces de los que vienen. Un análisis cualitativo sobre la construcción de la identidad transnacional

RESUMEN

En la actualidad, la globalización se asocia con la emergencia y reconstrucción de nuevas identidades. Por ejemplo, los procesos migratorios conllevan la generación de nuevas formas de identidad que cuestionan las nociones estáticas y homogéneas tradicionales. En este sentido, se ha sugerido el concepto de "identidad transnacional" o "identidad bicultural" para hacer referencia a las personas que viven entre dos o más modelos culturales distintos y deben, en consecuencia, mantener un diálogo entre la sociedad de origen ("allí") y la de destino ("aquí"). Este estudio muestra la naturaleza bicultural y múltiple de diez historias de vida de inmigrantes. Estas narrativas ilustran cómo las habilidades biculturales y multilingües devienen parte de la definición identitaria a través de la apropiación de voces culturales que establecen un diálogo entre la sociedad de origen y de destino, facilitando la construcción de identidades híbridas y múltiples. La novedad de este trabajo reside en la aproximación cualitativa llevada a cabo dado que la mayoría de estudios en la literatura sobre identidad transnacional y transnacionalismo se basan bien en discusiones teóricas o bien en estudios cuantitativos.

Globalization, on the one hand, and the demands of the so-called 'cultural minorities' – immigrants, stateless nations, indigenous peoples – (Kymlicka, 1995), on the other hand, have called into question the traditional homogeneous notions of identity whereby the state contains and ensures social ties and political agreement via the homogenization of citizenship based on the "one language, one territory, one identity, one nation-state" formula. For instance, by "stateless nations" it is meant an (ethnic, religious, linguistic) social group which is not the majority population in any nation state. The term implies that the group "should have" such a state, and thus expresses irredentism (Minahan, 2002).

Globalization, taken as a process of basically economic, but also political and social interconnection, has led to a *deterritorialization* of the centres of political and economic decisions (De Lucas, 1999). Thus the nation-state is no longer alone in regulating social control, since there are now other supranational, political, and economic institutions which dictate the rules of economic, social, and political organization. In this sense, the European Union, the International Mone-

tary Fund, the NATO, and the UN are agencies that regulate and constrain the decision-making capacity of countries such as Spain, France, Portugal, the USA, and Japan.

On the other hand, there are forces from 'within' the nation-states that question the nation-state's model of rationality. For example, minority groups of stateless nations that demand that the nation-state allows them the right to self-determination, ethnic groups of immigrants that seek recognition of religious rights or the right to vote in the new host society, or indigenous populations demanding territorial rights over certain areas.

International mobility – a result of the processes of globalization, of advances in information and communication technology, and of deterritorialization (Bauman, 2001; Castells, 1997) – has increased the linguistic, cultural, and identity diversity of countries such as Spain and especially certain areas such as Catalonia, which has in recent years received nearly a million foreigners, bringing the total up to 1,241,522 foreigners (16.4% of the total population) registered in Catalonia in the year 2010 (IDESCAT, 2011).

This leads, in terms of identity, to a proliferation of different frameworks of values and cultural repertoires placed within in the same context or situation. It also leads to demands for the rights of minority groups (indigenous, immigrant, or stateless) – the so-called 'cultural rights', 'minority rights', or 'group-differentiated citizenship rights' (Kymlicka, 1995, 1997). Such demands – now from the grassroots – call into question the organization and rationality of the traditional model of the nation-state. This illustrates the effects of linguistic, ethnic, religious, and identity diversity on Western societies as a product of globalization.

Thus, new social phenomena, globalization and the *politics of recognition*, produce new perceptions of the nation-state and the configuration of identities that results from it – what some have called 'the crisis of the nation-state' (see, for example, Villoro, 1998).

Tedesco (1999), for instance, advocates the need to articulate multiple identities that are able to develop a dual bond: the first being one of solidarity and identification with the human species, the second being one that preserves the sense of *belonging* at the local level.

With this solution – developed in response to the creation of 'murderous identities' (Maalouf, 1999), which propagate self-recognition based on denial and annihilation of one or more cultural groups – it is hoped that equality and social cohesion will be based on the recognition of a certain difference which allows one to recognize the cultural values of the groups that coexist in the same area so that some of what is 'them' can be recognized in the individual 'us' – in contrast to the traditional view that sees a common 'us' versus a strange and dangerous 'them' (Vila, 2006; Vila, Esteban-Guitart, & Oller, 2010).

Indeed, immigrants have always been at the boundaries of two cultures and this unquestionably determines the ways they construct identity. According to Stonequist (1937), "having a dual cultural framework can hinder the location of *here* and *there*, leaving them 'on the edge' of each culture, but not fully belonging to either" (p. 4). Immigrants can successfully enter a society and live out their lives, only to be recognized – through their accent, their family, their beliefs or their skin colour – as second-class citizens by the host society *and* by their society of origin (Esteban-Guitart, Monreal-Bosch, & Vila, 2013). Their new experiences have changed the filters through which they see the world and this can lead to discontinuities with their cultural group of origin. Thus they can be transformed into what Stonequist calls 'marginal man' in terms of identity, politics, and culture. Indeed, the concept of 'transnational identity' refers to the bicultural character of immigrants who must negotiate their two forms of cultural socialization.

The Concept of Transnational Identity

According to Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2003), in the case of immigrants, there are three strategies of constructing identity: ethnic flight, active opposition, and biculturalism. In the case of

'ethnic flight', immigrants identify so strongly with the dominant culture that they may even renounce the way of life and identity of their society of origin. Therefore, this assimilation results in a weakening of ties with their own groups – often perceived as 'inferior' or 'marginal' and one which they want to leave. In contrast, with 'active opposition' the construction of identity revolves around the rejection of the institutions of the dominant culture, usually after being rejected by them. This would be the case, for example, of certain gangs of youths such as the *Latin Kings*, who develop forms of social bonding and identity completely separate from the host society, which they feel rejects them.

However, according to the study by Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2003, p. 193), "the vast majority of immigrant children develop an adaptive style situated between the extremes of *opposition* and *ethnic flight*. Immigration leads them to construct bicultural identities." By *bicultural identity*, the authors mean the creative fusion between their family tradition and the new culture, combining the two systems through the development of multicultural and multilingual skills, which become part of their identity.

Their theory is that "the creation of transcultural identities is the most adaptive of the three styles. It preserves the affective bonds with the culture of origin, but allows the child to acquire the skills necessary to function successfully in the dominant culture (...) and in acquiring the skills that enable them to cope with more than one cultural code, young immigrants have an advantage" (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2003, p. 193-199).

Therefore, according to this line of reasoning, transcultural identities are the most adaptive because participating successfully in multiple social and cultural contexts becomes a necessary condition for one's development in the globalized and deeply diverse societies of the present day.

A number of studies empirically support the hypothesis presented by Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco (2003). The most important is probably the *International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth* (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006), an international study carried out in thirteen countries and involving over seven thousand young immigrants from different cultural backgrounds. They found four adaptive patterns or strategies: 1) the diffuse model, in which there is uncertainty and confusion about how to live between two cultures, 2) the national pattern, in which young people assimilate and identify with the national group of the host society, 3) the ethnic model, in which the orientation is mainly towards their own reference group of origin, and 4) the integration model, in which young people identify with both cultures, preserving the ethnic codes of their tradition and integrating the lifestyles of the host society.

In this study, they found that the integration strategy correlates best with psychological adaptation (personal wellbeing and optimal mental health) and sociocultural adaptation (academic performance, social integration, management of daily life). The diffuse model correlates with the lowest indicators of psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Berry et al., 2006).

Similarly, a study by Wangaruro (2011), made with Kenyan immigrants residing in the UK, suggests that transnational identity correlates positively with personal and family wellbeing, since maintaining links with the society of origin while developing new social connections with the host country increases the chances of support.

It is important to note that the concept of 'transnational identity' (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2013; Portes, 1997; Vertovec, 2001; Wangaruro, 2011) is a type of 'national identity' linked to at least two national referents: the society of origin and the host society – the national link with the society of origin being an aspect that cannot be wholly replaced by a possible national link with the host society, or, indeed, vice versa.

In this sense, the study by Vila et al. (2010) shows how the construction of identity by young immigrant students with different origins, mother tongues, and length of residence in Catalonia is based on the importance of the place of origin, on the one hand, and on the social

interaction they have with members of the host society, on the other. In other words, forming bonds between the place of origin and the host destination, while negotiating various forms of identity, is an adaptive strategy that responds to the demands of the original family tradition as well as the social and cultural traditions of the host society.

The Construction of Transnational Identity

Transnational identity, like any type of human identity, is a cultural phenomenon (Esteban-Guitart, 2014) which is underpinned by a learning process resulting from participation in educational activities and situations. In this sense, Coll and Falsafi (2010) have proposed a sociocultural approach to understanding 'learner identity' which underpins all other types of identity, whether they be ethnic, national, religious or, as in our case, transnational (due to emigration).

The 'learner identity' is understood to be the process, resulting from participation in formal or informal educational activities, through which people construct the sense of themselves as a learner. This definition is based on three aspects. First, identity is a semiotically-mediated act and is therefore a narrative product which is ordered, thus giving unity and purpose to the experience (Bruner, 1997, 2001; Wertsch, 1991). Second, it is intimately linked with actions or participation in scenarios of educational activity, whether in a school, through new information technologies, or within the peer group, family or the community in general. Finally, as argued by Taylor (1992), identity is constructed through recognition.

From a Vygotskian perspective, we might consider that the origin of identity is social and cultural, and in this sense its construction depends on the appropriation of certain 'cultural voices' available in a particular social space of communication and interaction (Wertsch, 1991). By *cultural voices*, we mean technologies of social origin which in the form of ethnic, national, and religious discourse and narratives are turned into the material and content through which people who live between two cultures or different frames of reference – the society of origin and the host society – experience the world and build their sense of self.

Although some studies have analyzed the hybrid nature of transnational identities (Basch, Schiller, & Czanton-Blanc, 1994) as well as the connections and ties between socialization with family and school and immigrant identity (Haller & Landolt, 2005), there has not been sufficient discussion regarding the identitary dialogues and narratives in trans-frontier situations in which the framework of self-recognition requires, on the one hand, a previous recognition of others, and on the other, a recognition of the different cultural sources. That is to say, considerable attention has been paid to the important socio-economic and cultural aspects of transnationality (Basch et al., 1994; Haller & Landolt, 2005; Portes, 2001; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008; Wangaruro, 2011) but what has not been studied sufficiently are the factors associated with the narrative construction of transnational identity. In other words, how, in the realm of meaning, do people negotiate their affiliation to two nations: the society of origin and the host society. Thus, the general objective of this research was to explore the configuration of transnational identities of ten people from different countries who immigrated to Catalonia (Spain).

Method

Participants

Our study involved ten people from different countries who, at the time of the interviews, in 2005, were living in Catalonia (Spain).

Table 1
Some Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants

	Age	Genre	Origin (years of residence in Catalonia)	Mother tongue	Other languages	Training and (profession)
"Petrarca"	27	Men	Italy (1 year)	Italian	Catalan Spanish English	PhD student
"Rifi"	30	Men	Morocco (4 years)	Amharic	Catalan Spanish French	Higher education interrupted (mason)
"Basketball coach"	45	Men	Uruguay (1 year)	Spanish	Spanish English Catalan	Higher education (waiter)
"Political exile"	40	Woman	Uruguay (1 year)	Spanish	English Catalan	Higher education (cleaner)
"Intercultural mediator"	35	Men	Senegal (1 year)	Fula	Catalan Spanish English French	Higher education (McDonalds)
"Interpreter"	29	Woman	Korea (5 years)	Korean	Catalan Spanish English French	Higher education (interpreter)
"Cook"	29	Woman	Romania (4 years)	Romanian	Catalan Spanish English German	Higher education (cook in a restaurant)
"Student"	23	Woman	Morocco (8 years)	Arabic	Catalan Spanish French English	University student
"Translator"	29	Woman	Switzerland (21 years)	German	Catalan Spanish French English	Higher education (translator)
"Evangelist preacher"	26	Men	Romania (1 year)	Romanian	Spanish Russian	Higher education (electrician)

Table 1 shows some of socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. There were 5 men and 5 women, with ages ranging from 23 to 40, with an average age of 31. The average number of languages spoken by the participants was 4. Their training and profession, origin, and years of residence in Catalonia were varied (see Table 1). Of the 10 participants, it was notable that 8 had completed higher education, while one, known as 'Rifi', had had to abandon his studies, and another, 'the student', is currently doing a higher education course.

Another important feature was the profession some participants exercised in their country of origin compared to their current employment in the host country. The 'basketball coach', for example, had his own small business, had been the owner of a supermarket, and had also been a teacher in Uruguay, but was now a waiter in a restaurant and a basketball coach. The 'political exile' had been a journalist and psychologist, but is now part of team of cleaners. The 'intercultural mediator' had worked in administration and now works in a fast food restaurant (McDonalds). The 'interpreter', whose pseudonym reflects his current employment, had previously been a professor of literature in Korea, while the 'cook' had been educated in economics and rural sociology in Rumania, and the 'translator' had worked in the hotel industry before leaving her country of birth. The 'Evangelist preacher' had been a teacher but in the year of the interview was working as an electrician.

The reasons why these people emigrated had to do, in each case, with developing a life plan. The 'basketball coach', the 'political exile' and 'Rifi' pointed to economic reasons, derived from the difficult situation in their countries and said they were trying to improve their living conditions. 'Petrarca' came to Catalonia to continue his studies, in particular to do a PhD course he liked, while the 'interpreter' came to live with her husband, who is Catalan. The 'translator', the 'intercultural mediator', the 'cook' the Evangelist, and the 'student' all came to Catalonia for reasons to do with family – for a change of scene (in the case of the translator's family), because they had a friend and family in Girona (the 'intercultural mediator'), or to reunite family members in the case of the 'student', the 'evangelist', and the 'cook.'

The Instrument Used

The instrument used is based on the life story interview model, developed by McAdams (available online at http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/instruments/interview/).

In our adaptation we have respected the overall structure of the original interview: dividing the life into chapters, key scenes, most important challenge, external influences, possible futures, personal ideology, and life theme. To this structure we have added a small section on demographic information (age, sex, religion, ethnicity, nationality, profession in the country of origin and host country, family language and other languages, and education), a question about their own emigration (motive, year, and emigration story), a question on identity ('If you had to define yourself or explain to someone who you are, what would you say?') as well as questions that are intended to identify the 'social identities' of the person ('Which groups of friends, which institutions, communities, nations, do you most identify with?' 'Which are most important to you?' 'What do they mean to you?' 'What do you feel you are?').

Procedure

The questions at the heart of this research were: What factors or mechanisms are associated with transnational identity? How, in the sphere of meaning, do people who have to struggle to position themselves among various cultural forces deal with the dual affiliation and dual cultural membership? In order to answer these questions, we performed a content analysis of the ten transcribed interviews

with the help of the Atlas.ti computer programme, version 5.0 (Muhr, 1994; Muñoz 2005).

Following the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the aim is to create and link different parts of the text (quotations) by creating and linking categories that are drawn up as the empirical corpus is analyzed – in relation to transnational identity. That is, what is analysed is when the interviewees, in telling their life stories, construct meaning (recognise themselves) around their identity, in answering the questions of who they think they are. Each quotation is accompanied, in brackets, by a reference to the participant's pseudonym (listed in Table 1), the page (e.g., page 3 of 15 or 3/15), the paragraph (P 'x') and line (L 'x') of the interview (for example, R4/18, P.5, L.10).

Results

In Figure 1, we show the factors linked to the transnational identity of the participants through different categories elaborated upon analyzing the empirical material.

As shown in Figure 1, four categories stand out that underlie the transnational identity of the participants. In the first place, the emigration itself, whether in terms of life transition or biographical disruption, supposes a life changing event in three main areas identified by participants: work, friends, and family.

For the participants, emigration requires them to rethink their identity. The 'basketball coach', for example, says that he bases much of his identity in his work ('For me, my profession is very important as an element that defines my personality' [EB3/16, P.4, L.7-8] 'Who am I? Well, I am a psychologist, a coach' [EB3/16, P.4, L.10]) so that in changing his job and becoming a waiter in the host society, there is a shift in his identity: '... in the host society, you stop being what you were, you stop working in what you used to work in ... then what are you left with? A plan? Well, yes ... the dream that tomorrow will be better' (EB4/16, P.4, L.7-11); 'I am a psychologist and I like to feel I am a psychologist. The problem is that I cannot work professionally at what I would like to do. I like sport as it is linked to psychology, improving people's quality of life, habits, and things like that. When you leave your country, you ask yourself these things: Who am I? What do I want?' (EB4/16, P.2, L.2-5).

Another example that illustrates how career change is a part of the redefinition of identity can be found in the case of the 'political exile': 'Sure, this is a problem for me ... I am always wondering about it, about who I am, what I am, because I feel here ... when I started working here, as a cleaner – I mean, when you've lost everything – I always ask myself this same thing, if I go into a place and someone asks me who I am and "Who are you?"... in Uruguay I'd have said well, I'm a psychologist, and I come from such and such a place and I spent 10 years in Cuba and well ... but now I find it really hard because "Who am I?", well ... I don't know ... eh ... I don't know ... I find it really hard to say... I am Rosana, I'm Uruguayan, I lived for many years in Cuba, I would say that. ... er ... and I don't know if I would say I am a psychologist and. .. I mean, I am, but I think now there are other things that define me ... ' (EP5/16, P.2, L.3-13).

In this regard, eight participants ('Rifi', 'the cook', 'the student', 'the interpreter', 'the political exile', 'the basketball coach', 'the Evangelist' and 'the intercultural mediator') say the biggest challenge in their lives, the most important decision they have had to take and face up to, is to emigrate, to leave their own country with the aim of developing certain life aims, basically to keep studying, to find a decent job and/or to be with their partner and/or family. Rifi says, for example, 'Yeah ... sure ... come here to study, but then you have to have money and, of course, work ... you have to work to live. Leave Morocco and you come here because you have to, your country is your country and you don't leave it because you want to, but you have to live, you have to work.' (R3 / 9, P.4, L.14-16). The interpreter also illustrates the difficulty of the decision: 'Come here to live ...
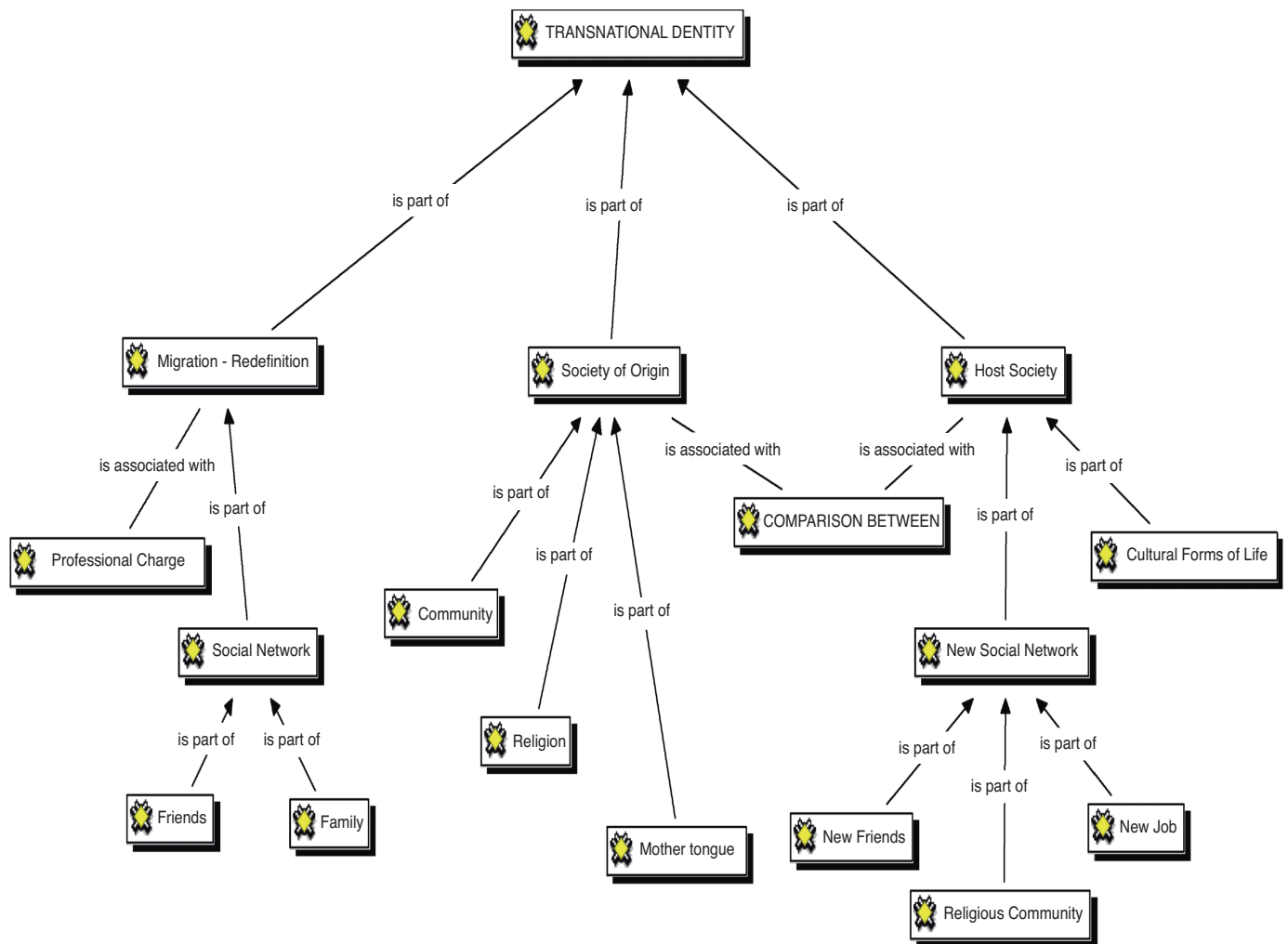
Figure 1. Some Categories Associated with Transnational Identity

yeah ... quite difficult. I didn't have to decide such a difficult thing. I had my plan. When I came here, of course I had a plan, come here, I'm going to live with him ... I don't know ... but nothing went as I thought it would ... a really new situation, a very difficult decision' (I7/13, P.3, L.7-10).

The participants say that it is a challenge since they have to face totally new and unknown situations: 'Maybe ... the fact we came here, yeah it was because ... it had never entered my head to come to Europe, to me, Europe had never appealed to me as ... a place to ... well it's true that in Uruguay and Argentina they always teach you that, you know, France and Spain and the mother country, but perhaps because I have lived in Cuba, I never felt that way. For me Spain represented colonization, conquest and ... the rest of Europe meant nothing to me, what's more ... I wanted to go to Mexico and Rodolfo, he did want to come to Spain and we eventually decided on Spain but ... for me, it was coming to the unknown, it was "who knows where we'll end up". It was all quite an eye-opener and the existence of Catalonia was another eye-opener (EP9-10/17, P.6-1, L.19-21 and 1-6).

Another subcategory associated with transnational identity is the reference to the society of origin as a source of identity. The participants do this in relation to the community of their birth, religion, and mother tongue. Here is a quote that illustrate this subcategory. 'I would say that I am Italian, that I'm from Florence, it's very important. [Interviewer: Why?] In Italy, there isn't a national feeling, but it's different being from Rome or Florence, not quite the same, there are

different ways of doing things, customs, each city has different rhythms, historical things. Florence is more like a small city, I wouldn't say provincial, but quieter. Rome is more government, more the capital, more speeded up, they shout more ...' (P2 / 9, P.6, L.11-18). 'Petrarca' defines himself as Florentine, describing the importance of this compared to other places in Italy, like Rome.

In fact, all respondents mentioned their country of origin in defining themselves. In addition, of the ten participants, six mentioned religion as a feature of their identity. Specifically, there are three muslims (Rifi, the intercultural mediator and the student), two Evangelists (the cook and the Evangelist preacher) and Catholic (the interpreter). The case that best illustrates the importance of religion in defining identity is the Evangelist: 'I come from an Orthodox country' (PE9/13, P.1, L.3). 'The theme of my life is that in every situation in life, I've seen the hand of God, you understand? In everything, like when I came here, for example, in all this, I see it in the past, present and future as well, I believe the hand of God is helping me so that things turn out well' (PE11/13, P.3, L 9-12).

Although all the respondents mentioned their mother tongue, the intercultural mediator uses it explicitly as a defining element of her identity: [Interviewer: If you had to define yourself or explain to someone who you are, how would it be? What would you say?] 'I'd say I was Senegalese, that I speak my language, which is Fula' (MI3/11, P.1, L.1-3).

Another recurring category of identity referred to by the participants had to do with various aspects of the host society, in this case

as a source of identity reconstruction after the biographical disruption of leaving their country of origin. These aspects include the new ways of life (customs, traditions, festivals) that one learns about in the new place of residence and the construction of a new social network (friends, work, religious community) that allows them to link certain practices from the society of origin with the lifestyles of the host society. The student, for example, says she feels Catalan because she appreciates the new traditions of the host country: 'Even though there are things that don't coincide with your own culture, you can really like them. Me, for example, I love the Flower Festival in Girona because it's so beautiful... Christmas, as well, because it's so... you don't celebrate it, of course, but it's something you carry inside of you and you love it and value it' (E3/14, P.1, L.1-4).

Other aspects that respondents valued in the host society are the new friends they make, work, and attendance at religious events. Regarding friends, for example, the translator says: 'The place I feel at home is here, now that I have new friends, my own friends, they are really important to me' (T2 / 9, P.2, L.2-3). Faced with the same question [With which groups of friends, institutions, communities, nations, ethnic groups do you most identify?], 'the cook' mentions his workmates: 'Well ... friend ... friends from work' (C11/12, P.7, L.14) and the church 'I don't know ... the church, I identify with the church community' (C11/12, P.7, L.14-15).

Finally, Figure 1 also shows the presence of a category called 'origin-destination comparison', which is related to the category of 'cultural identity' via the link 'cause'. In different fragments of the interviews, the participants expressed the new identity resulting from emigration through the contrast between the lifestyles of the host country and the country of origin, as if the latter would help them to understand and interpret the former – although this dialectic can be problematic.

The case of the student illustrates these conflicts of identity: 'My name is Raja, I'm Moroccan and I live in Spain. But ... I don't know ... I don't know, I'd like to say something, okay? You're Moroccan, right? That's what they've told you, you can't deny it, but there's also the other thing, that the people here remind you that you are Moroccan and that's it, but it's not true because you've been here for years now, you've started to love people and maybe the first person that you've started to like was here, in Catalonia and not Morocco, I mean, you've had your first happy moments here ... you've had bad times and some good memories, I mean, like, you also feel Catalan, because I've been here for ten years and I've lived more of my life here than there and that really affects you. Even though there are things that don't coincide with your culture, you love them' (E2/14, P.4, L.13-21).

The student says she feels discriminated against for being regarded by others as simply Moroccan, while in Morocco she is not treated as such because she lives elsewhere, namely Catalonia: 'Young people, for example, who've lived here all their lives and they still treat them as Moroccans, right? And this really is indiscriminate, because, you know, "poor people from Morocco, they've got nothing" ... I mean ... they are only Moroccan by name, they've spent all their lives here and still, if they go to their country they are treated as Spaniards. They don't feel good anywhere. If you go there, you're a complete foreigner, all you've got are some of the features, dark skin, dark eyes but nothing else and this is really, ... it's something that stays deep inside of you. "Are you Moroccan or Spanish?" no, you can't answer. For example, my brother, they say to him "You're Spanish." and he says "No, I'm Moroccan!", and he's seven years old, and when you're here you are a "moro" [Moor] "No I'm not a Moor, I'm Moroccan!". No, why can't we say "I'm Catalan". A Castilian speaker who was born in Catalonia can say "I am Catalan", why can't a Moroccan say it? I don't know... it's a question of discrimination' (E3/14, P.1, L.4-18).

What is evident from what the student says is the desire to construct a transnational, Moroccan-Catalan, identity, but also the difficulty that this entails, both in the host society as the country of origin.

Petrarca also reveals a kind of multiple identity by not renouncing his Italian (Florentine) origins or his current lifestyle in Catalonia, 'I like being ... you know ... I'm an Italian, from Florence, but not in the strict sense. I have a more open mind. I can live in Girona, integrated and not stop being from Florence. I'll simply be both things' (P9 / 9, P.3, L.4-6).

The interpreter also compares aspects of her culture of origin with the host culture in order to construct an identity between the two, specifically identifying herself with 'travellers': 'You have to be ... I've already told you, you have to be sincere, morally correct. Here I see a difference with Korea. In Korea, there are fewer sincere people than here but more people who are correct than here ... I don't know. People here are pretty sincere but correct? Really correct, I don't know. They're well-brought up, yes, also morally, ethically, politically ... and ... Say, for example, you are my partner and I'm honest with you: "I've been unfaithful" "I'm honest", but I don't know if that is morally correct, you know? Sometimes, I think the people here don't want to suffer and so "I've been unfaithful, so I tell you and that's me off the hook", because he doesn't want to suffer. In Korea, you wouldn't say that, there's a different character. In Korea, a lot of people prefer to suffer than to make other people suffer, people close ... you know? It's best to keep quiet' (I10/13, P.4, L.10-19); 'I identify very much with travellers. I like to live lightly. Many people like to travel but I think, all told, when you travel you live in another world, you leave the routine behind, you live lightly, I like it' (I12/13, P.2, L.3-7).

The Evangelist preacher also makes comparisons, in this case finding similarities: 'Another thing is that Catalonia is very similar to Romania, there are words that are very similar, for example, "foc" [fire] is "foc"; "mort" [death] is "mort", "cap" [head] is "cap". There are more words that are the same... on the other hand, it's ... there is a culture here, like there is in Romania' (PE2/12, P.3, L.7 -11).

In the case of the translator there is also a reference to her country of origin, Switzerland and Catalonia, where she had lived for 20 years. The option for this participant is an identity that encompasses both identities: the European identity, 'I would say that, originally I'm from Switzerland, but I've lived in Catalonia for 20 years. This is where I feel at home, but depending on which setting I'm in, I feel like I'm more from one place than from the other, although I'd really define myself as a European' (T2 / 9, P.2, L.3 -5).

To sum up, three issues relating to transnational identity stand out from among the ten participants in the study, namely: (i) emigration as a necessity in reconstructing identity; (ii) the inheritance derived from the society of origin and the new communities in the host or destination society; and (iii) there being a constant comparison between both socio-cultural settings in order to construct new identities that are made up of references to both societies.

Discussion

There are various studies that use the concept of 'transnational identity' to refer to the lifestyle (way of coping) that characterizes some immigrants who maintain ties of attachment and affection for their country and culture of origin while acquiring, at the same time, new roles, beliefs, and behaviour patterns characteristic of the host country (Berry et al., 2006; Esteban-Guitart et al., 2013; Haller & Landolt, 2005; Portes, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2003; Wangaruro, 2011).

The resulting creation of transnational identities allows the codes acquired in the host country to be linked to the ongoing pride felt for the community of origin (Basch et al., 1994). In this sense, transnational identity means recognizing the multi-geographical nature of immigrants who are from one particular country but live out their lives in another (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2013; Portes, 1997).

Vertovec (2001, 2004) argues that cross-border life leads to the formation of certain 'cultural repertoires' which translate into 'dual

identities'. That is to say, the mindset of immigrants ends up being the product of the combination of the insights gained in the society of origin and the new experiences in the host society. A process which, as we have illustrated in the case of the student, means a problematic coming-and-going since the identity is forged on the basis of recognition – or lack of it or devaluation of it – by others (Taylor, 1992).

According to Stuart and Ward (2011, p. 263): 'Migrant adolescents must negotiate and consolidate the values and behaviors prescribed by their ethnic and religious groups with those prescribed by the host culture, a task that is especially challenging when the values and beliefs of the ethnic culture differ significantly from those of the wider society'.

In the words of Vertovec (2001, p. 578): 'The transnational identities are the result of histories and stereotypes of local belonging and exclusion, geographies of cultural difference and class/ethnic segregation, racialized socio-economic hierarchies, degree and type of collective mobilisation, access to and nature of resources, and perceptions and regulations surrounding rights and duties'.

With this approach, identity cannot be regarded as a finished product, something homogeneous and timeless, but rather, and in the case of immigrants, it is emerging, subject to social, political and cultural scrutiny: Identity is never only about location, about shoring up a safe 'home', crucial as that task may be in certain circumstances. Identity is also, inescapably, about displacement and relocation, the experience of sustaining and mediating complex affiliations, multiple attachments' (Clifford, 1998, p. 369). This aspect is illustrated and manifested by all ten participants in our study.

In short, the construction of transnational identity, which is the product of globalization and the emigration associated with it, is a complex issue that cannot be explained by one simple factor, or by referring to one particular cultural and national reality, but rather, the concept of 'trans' means we need to consider the comparative nature of multiple factors operating in different nations.

In other words, the experience of learning to move around and situate oneself using one code acquired in the society of origin and another code acquired in the host society. Dealing with both realities, creating areas of understanding and reaping the benefits of the two social and cultural networks is the goal of transnational identity but, as mentioned above, this is not an easy road, psychologically, culturally or politically. In this context, our study indicates that transnational identity is the product of a dialogue between the society of origin ('prior knowledge') and the host society ('new experiences'), which begins with a 'life change' or 'biographical disruption', that is to say, emigration.

Emigration is a 'biographical disruption' (Bury, 1982), a 'life transition' or 'turning point', i.e., a 'moment when decisions must be made or processes of action must be initiated that will have subsequent consequences' (Giddens, 1997, p. 294). In the words of Bruner (2001, p. 31), it is a crucial moment: 'By "turning point" I mean those episodes in which, as if to underline the power of the agents intentional states, the narrator attributes a crucial change or stance in the protagonist's story to a belief, a conviction, a thought.' That is, a moment of rupture in which one reconfigures the sense of self through the construction of meanings that aim to restore a coherent sense of identity (Crossley, 2000).

It is important to emphasize here that migration is a process perhaps never resolved completely for some migrants. In other words, it can be distinguished moments in the migration process such as preparation, the turning point of the travel and the consequences of it. In that regard, Bagnoli (2007) has investigated the identities of young Europeans migrants. According to the author, young migrants refer to their condition as foreigners as an ambivalent process in which a dream of return is always dominant for them (Bagnoli, 2007).

In line with the research conducted by Bagnoli (2007), our study illustrates how this reconstruction of identity is achieved basically by comparing the legacy of the original community with the new experiences in the host community. Precisely in this sense, identity becomes transnational with the need to link new experiences with the repertoire of learning already acquired (the 'integration model' suggested by Berry et al., 2006).

However, as shown by the participants, this process can be problematic because, quite often, both the society of origin and the host society may not recognize the dual character of the people living between two cultures. This happens, for example, when policies of assimilation or cultural integration are implemented – with 'cultural integration' understood as the adhesion of immigrants to the national character of the host society while renouncing the national heritage of the society of origin ('ethnic flight', Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2003).

It also happens when it is claimed that any integration is impossible by means of an explicit rejection of the idea that the immigrant can be part of a particular society due to 'cultural incompatibility'. According to Sartori (2000), for example, some immigration in Europe represents a 'contra-nationality' since recognising their national culture of origin – in reference, basically, to Islamic culture – supposes the destruction of Western culture, in this case in Europe. Meanwhile, for Huntington (2004), the Hispanic nationalities are destroying the Protestant North American national identity. From this perspective, there can be no possibility of transnational identity as it presupposes a cultural incompatibility. However, our study, along with other empirical studies, has documented transnational identities among immigrants who, far from giving up their national culture of origin, maintain and proclaim it in the host society, without this leading to any incompatibility (Basch et al., 1994; Haller & Lanoldt, 2005; Portes, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2003; Vertovec, 2004; Vila et al., 2010; Wangaruro, 2011).

In the social and political field, this means overcoming the traditional notion of the nation state whereby only one expression of nation is possible within the limits of a particular state system – a notion that can easily translate into the politics of assimilation and cultural genocide and which is therefore clearly racist. The so-called 'multicultural citizenship' (Kymlicka, 1995), and the emergence of transnational identities, requires different more pluralistic notions of the state in which social cohesion is guaranteed by means of acts of recognition. To get there, in our view, we need to prioritize socio-political integration in cultural integration (Vila, 2006), as well as equality among difference. In other words, the development of the modern concept of transnational identity suggests the need to establish 'politics of recognition' (Taylor, 1992) based on deliberative and inclusive democratic participation of the various stakeholders in the community.

In this context, we begin with equality among people in terms of rights and duties, taking into account that integration is *not* tied to supposedly unbreakable, and often conflicting and inconsistent, cultural boundaries – a supposition that leads to conflict, rejection, and isolation rather than inclusion and social cohesion. Integration is, in our view, an exercise in social and political coexistence, in mutual accommodation based on common life aims strongly opposed to the mechanisms involved in exclusion, intolerance, racism, and social exclusion.

Obviously, in culturally diverse societies, it is far from easy to share values and attitudes that enable people to live happily and achieve their life aims. It is often the case that the *secondary identity* – ethnicity, gender, language, nation – contradict the *primary identity* – the one that recognizes the universal human potential – but this does not mean that respect for the primary identity and the universal similarities of the human species (equality, dignity, solidarity) should require a need to feel contempt for secondary identities or for differences in culture, nationality, or gender.

According to Stuart and Ward (2011), it is a matter of 'balance'. That is to say, migrants aspire to achieve success in personal, social,

material domains and seek to balance potentially competing demands from family, friends, the community of origin, and the wider society. In this process, for example in the case of Muslim youth in New Zealand studied by Stuart and Ward, young migrants aspire to balance multiple identities, retaining religious and cultural elements in the definition of self while endeavoring to integrate into the wider society.

On the contrary, appreciation of what is different is a rational decision related to understanding *otherness*, putting oneself in another's position, in order to engage others in dialogue and in social and political negotiation. The nation or society of origin – which provide the first ties of belonging – cannot be undervalued since, as this study has shown, it is the mechanism through which people configure and generate their transnational identity.

Instead of 'incompatibility' it is, in fact, the 'necessary compatibility' through which new aspects of identity construction can be integrated. Therefore, recognition of the society of origin may represent the best strategy to ensure inclusion and integration into a host society. This would lead, in the end, to reciprocal recognition among equals, based on fundamental respect for human dignity, through participatory dialogue in which diversity is seen as a form of wealth – a 'diversity' that obviously respects human dignity.

One example of this concept was the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, created in February 2007 in Quebec. The mandate of this commission was to consult the public on issues concerning reasonable practices of accommodation with regard to cultural differences (secularism, immigrant harmonisation models, intercultural relations, etc.). This was a social and political process which required extensive public consultation through public debate and was thus both a deliberative and participatory exercise (Sauca & Wences, 2009). To us this policy is congruent with transnational identity illustrated in our study because it recognizes cultural diversity, the 'voices of newcomers'. For instance, as a result of Quebec's Bouchard-Taylor Commission some recommendations were suggested in regard of reasonable accomodation of minorities in the province such as produce and distribute a multidenominational calendar that indicates the dates of religious holidays to institutions and public or private organizations or allowing patients to choose care from professions according to gender in health care. These topics are controversial but must be solved, according to the Bouchard-Taylor philosophy, dialogically taking into account all people who live in a particular region.

Regarding the implications of our findings to develop contextualized psychosocial interventions at different levels we would like to stress three ideas: 1) contrary to assimilation or cultural integration, we advocate for fostering bicultural identities among immigrants who, far from giving up their national culture of origin, maintain and proclaim it in the host society, without this leading to any incompatibility; 2) in our view, bicultural identities requires policies of recognition, that is, mutual accommodation based on common life aims strongly opposed to the mechanisms involved in exclusion, intolerance, racism, and social exclusion. This process involves what Colvin & Volet (2014) refers to 'positive intercultural interaction experiences'; 3) there is a need to overcome the traditional notion of the nation-state whereby only one expression of nation is possible within the limits of a particular state system.

To us, the Quebec's Bouchard-Taylor Commission represents a paradigmatic example of how to apply these ideas. Any policies of recognition suppose to facilitate 'operating spaces' (Stuart & Ward, 2011) in order to accommodate diversity and encourage participation rather than enforcing separation.

To sum up, this study provides empirical data that shows the biographical disruption resulting from emigration in terms of the re-definition of identity as one's references and cultural voices are transformed and changed. This is the case, for example, with job or career changes or when joining a new social network of friends and activities. The experiences, the life and the knowledge acquired in the country of origin are the platform from which immigrants learn to understand and explain situations they find themselves in – and to predict new ones – in the host society. This is evident in the way our participants contrasted and compared their countries of origin with their current country and situation.

Future research should look further into the mechanisms involved that enable this comparison between 'there' and 'here' to become creative forms of transnational identity, rather than deteriorating into mindsets of 'ethnic flight' and 'active opposition' which are much less adaptive in contemporary society (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2003) and more likely to hinder social cohesion in today's deeply diverse and globalized societies.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare no conflict of interest.

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