

LATINO NARRATIVES OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE GREATER
CHARLOTTE AREA

by

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ABSTRACT

MICHELLE ANNE GRAY. Latino narratives of educational experience in the greater Charlotte area. (Under the direction of DR. ELISE BERMAN)

In analyzing interviews with ten Latino participants who have attended or are attending public school in the Greater Charlotte area using narrative discourse analysis, I found significant connections between identifying as self-motivated with regards to education and perceiving one's agency in educational decision-making as having an internal impetus and positive results, and correspondingly between not identifying as self-motivated with regards to education and perceiving one's agency in educational decision-making as having an external impetus and negative results.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
IDENTITY, NARRATIVE, AGENCY, AND EDUCATION	6
Identity Performance	6
Education and Identity	7
Narrative and Identity	8
Narrative and Interviews	9
Agency and Decision Making	10
ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING	13
Latinos in Greater Charlotte, NC	13
Participants	16
DATA ANALYSIS	19
Methods of Analysis	19
Categories of Analysis	19
NARRATIVE EXCERPTS	26
Transcription Conventions	26
Excerpt 1: Victoria's Narrative	27
Excerpt 2: Cesara's Narratives	29
E Excerpt 3: Solana's Narrative & Renaldo's Narrative	35
TRENDS	41
CONCLUSIONS	43
REFERENCES	47

INTRODUCTION

Alonzo: [The] first year was really rough, you know like, 'cause, like I said I couldn't talk to anybody, you know, even when you were in class, you're sitting there, you don't understand anything they're saying so, you can't ask questions, you know what I'm saying, like, you don't wanna raise your hand, you're like, what's goin' on? You know, so you just sit there, and you're kind of like, oh, ok. But, so yeah, then I said, the, the, the first year you know, was kinda the acclimation process was, was a little rough, but then, one-, once, you know, you got over that hurdle it just kinda took off and, that thing, I started meetin' people, and you know that kind of became part of the whole.

Geovany: [Starting middle school] was, I mean it was alright, but, um, a lot of people there, not all of them, but a lot of them were, or you know, doin' all the racist stuff. Doin' racist jokes, that caused me to get into a lot of fights. [...] It got to the point that, I was about to get to, put in juvi, and they told me that if I got caught fightin' at school one more time that they were gonna take me.

Hector: I got my license, and I was like, I'm gonna go to school, me and [my girlfriend], we went to, uh, RCCC to get myself enrolled, we had all my classes, my schedule, we were ready to pay, then they tell me that I still couldn't go to school because I was still technically an illegal immigrant. So I still couldn't, they said you can go to school, but you gotta pay out-of-state tuition, which was like, for my schedule it was like 6000 dollars a semester. Yeah, so it was, it was, it was heartbreaking, I busted out of there crying like a little baby. But then, you know, we're just like, we're just gonna save back a little bit, I'll just wait it out a little bit more, and do a couple classes at least.

As the Latino population in the United States has increased in the past few decades, so has research into the educational outcomes of Latino students increased. The majority of studies concerning language, Latinos, and education have taken place in geographical areas with historically high percentages of Latino students, such as Texas and California, yet the rapidly growing Latino population of North Carolina has remained relatively understudied, particularly with respect to education (Cashman and Williams 2008, Dávila 2008, Dick 2011, Farruggio 2010, Fuller 2007, Galindo 1996, Mendoza-Denton 2008, Monzó and Rueda 2009, Potowski and Matts 2008). The local Latino population has grown over 1,000% in the past 25 years, creating an ideal environment for examining the experiences of Latinos in public school systems with a limited history of serving Latino students.

In examining the educational experiences of Latinos in the Greater Charlotte area, rather than focusing on the correlations between language use and success or failure in schools, I have used narrative discourse analysis (Deppermann 2013, Hymes 1996, Ochs 2004, Ochs and Capps 2001, Sanchez and Orellana 2006, Wortham 2001) in conjunction with identity performance theories to examine the ways in which Latinos in the area perform and position their identities and their decisions in relation to their educational experiences, ranging from impressions when they were first introduced to local school systems (as in the introductory quote by Alonzo), to social difficulties in local schools (as expressed by Geovany), to attempts to pursue higher education (as exemplified by Hector).

In the context of discussing language and educational experiences, narrative discourse analysis allowed me to identify key characteristics of the stories participants

told about their experiences in education, and compare them across participants with differing ages, backgrounds, immigration statuses, and education levels. These characteristics include attribution of agency, statements evaluating outcomes of actions or decisions, and the positioning of or assigning of attributes and value judgments to self and others. Positioning family, teachers, and school experiences in positive terms correlated positively with an individual framing his or her narrated self as self-motivated and having made decisions with positive educational consequences, attributing agency to themselves with regards to their academic achievements, and discussing their family and teachers in terms of support. Additionally, this correlated with an increased likelihood of the individual representing his or her experiences in unsolicited narratives, rather than producing narratives only in response to elicitation.

Those who positioned their family, teachers, and school experiences in neutral terms (avoiding evaluative statements or framing relevant narratives only in terms of their own actions) or negative terms tended to position their own decision-making as having negative outcomes with regard to their education, and they were more likely to attribute causality or agency to others. The five participants with lowest current education levels had correspondingly negative evaluations given of the outcomes of what they talked about as being their actions, with the inverse true for the five participants with the highest current education levels.

Narrative discourse analysis demonstrates the ways in which stories of educational experience reveal trends in the representation of self and others through interactional positioning, which correlate positively to story-tellers' education levels. These trends have significant theoretical implications in terms of the way people talk

about their previous actions in narrative discourse, with positive outcomes of self-agency typically attributed to self-motivation, and negative outcomes of self-agency tending to either lack attribution of causality, have a vague causal attribution, or to be causally attributed to another character.

There are also policy implications to these findings, with regard to reducing drop-out rates in the local Latino population and increasing the number of Latino students pursuing higher education, through a greater understanding of the way Latinos understand and relate their experiences in local educational systems.

While the majority of narratives in all cases were elicited, all participants provided unsolicited narratives, with the number of unsolicited narratives correlating positively with the participants' education level, indicating that those with higher education levels were more willing to share stories beyond what was explicitly asked, and/or that there were more confident that their experiences were meaningful to the topic at hand than were their counterparts with lower education levels.

While this supports the findings of Heath (1983) and Phillips (1972) that language socialization affects schools' interpretation of educational performance, it indicates that not only do public schools value certain ways of producing narrative over others, but that schools also strive to socialize students (or value students who have been socialized) into the ways of narrating their experience shown here as correlating with higher levels of education.

Participants who most consistently framed their family, teachers, and school experiences in a positive manner were most likely to also frame their educational decisions as self-motivated, to frame their decisions as having a positive outcome, to

report that they had started considering college at a young age, and (in the case of those who are already out of high school) to have graduated high school and attended college.

Thus, this study demonstrates that among these participants, positioning one's narrated self as having had agency (in this context, to have made a decision and to represent one's self as having been responsible for that decision), corresponds to the attribution of impetus for exercising that agency, with that attribution of impetus either being to one's self (in the case of the self-described self-motivators), or to others, either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, this study reveals that these differences in attribution of impetus for agency correlate strongly with both narrative positioning of characters and the participants' education level. This approach differs significantly from the aforementioned studies of Latinos and educational experience, in that I am focusing on the narratives Latinos produce regarding their educational experiences and their positioning of these experiences, rather than on their success or failure in school as per the schools' standards, and the results are significant in terms of assessing these experiences as well as theorizing the joint roles of agency and positioning in narrative.

Additionally, these results are significant in demonstrating the complexity of factors that Latinos in the Greater Charlotte area indicate are influential in their educational experiences, an understanding of which is necessary for both conceptualizing the reasons for the high drop-out rates of Latino students in this region and for designing policies intended to reduce this drop-out rate. For instance, the trends in narrative production shown here correspond to education level, indicating that the local schools value certain types of narrative production over others, with implications for language socialization practices both in the school systems and in the Latino communities.

IDENTITY, NARRATIVE, AGENCY, AND EDUCATION

This study is founded in the concepts of 1) identity as performative and emergent in interaction, 2) identity performance as consequential with respect to an individual's attitude toward and behavior in school, 3) narrative as a locus of identity performance and emergence, 4) positioning as a means for narrators to structure and make sense of their experiences as they narrate stories, 5) agency as control over behavior, and 6) language socialization. These concepts allow for the analysis and interpretation of narratives produced in the context of interviews concerning educational experiences and language, in terms of agency, its impetus and outcome, and positioning of the narrated self, the narrating self, and other characters in the narratives. With regard to these concepts, this analysis demonstrates that identity is performative and emergent in narrative, both in the sense of current identity in interaction and in the sense of the participant's description of previous self, and that participants talk about their previous attitudes toward school in patterns of agency and positioning to which they have been socialized and which public schools value differently.

Identity Performance

Identity, when seen as performative and emergent in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall 2004:588), is a useful feature of language for analyzing the ways in which individuals present themselves in terms of and in relation to those with whom they interact. As such, examining the various aspects of identity which are performed in Latinos' interactions with members of their family, community, and schools will reveal the ways in which individuals position themselves in terms of others in each of these situations. Not only does identity performance affect decision making in the moment, in that one's concept of

identity in relation to others impacts their view of each interaction, and thus their decisions concerning if, how, and when they will choose to interact, but the positioning through narrative of one's own identity performance at a prior point in time, as seen in this study, can elucidate both the individual's self-perceived rationale for making a given decision and their current stance regarding the impacts of that decision, which will be shown to be indicative of characteristics relating to their ultimate education level. Furthermore, an interactional and emergent view of identity allows for the analysis of shifts in identity positioning over time, either in a literal sense, or across the time span represented in a narrative, which in this case allows for correlation of identity to narrative positioning of others.

Education and Identity

Fuller states that "a salient aspect of identity in the classroom, be it a bilingual or monolingual one, is the orientation the student has toward achievement and comportment in school" (2007:109). This indicates that not only do students construct their identities through their interactions in educational environments, but also, I argue, that those identity constructions affect their potential decisions regarding those environments. This study reveals that the students' orientations toward school, expressed through the positioning of self and others in narrative, and the factors which influence these orientations (family, teachers, experiences at school, self-motivation, etc.), correspond to expressions of agency, which participants talk about in terms of decision making.

This study makes a significant contribution to the literature concerning the effects of identity construction on education among Latinos by identifying the identity category of self-motivation as particularly relevant to the likelihood of an individual attaining

higher levels of education. Specifically, talking about one's self as being or having been self-motivated appears to be an effect of a language socialization which is associated with higher academic achievement. Furthermore, previous studies have focused on aspects of language use in identity performance, such as code-switching (Fuller 2007) and dialect features (Potowski and Matts 2008), whereas I have focused on narratives for the analysis of identity performance and the educational implications of socialization to different forms of narrative.

Narrative and Identity

Narratives, as a common conversational component, constitute “a form of social practice in which individuals draw from their experiences to construct certain kinds of self in specific social contexts” (Cho 2014:682). As such, narrative serves as a means of identity performance. However, narrative goes beyond uni-dimensional identity performance in a given context, as “most narratives presuppose at least two interactional events: one described as part of the narrated event and one enacted in the event of the storytelling itself” (Wortham 2001:19-20), allowing a narrator to utilize “the double temporal logic or chronology of narrative: that of the told world [...] and that of the telling world, i.e. the here-and-now of storytelling” (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012:164) to simultaneously position their narrated self in terms of particular identity characteristics and perform their identity interactionally in response to their narrative.

The positioning of the narrated self, which may or may not actually represent the narrator's identity performance at the time in question, has power in autobiographical narratives “by foregrounding one particular description, despite other possibilities” (Wortham 2001:5). Thus, not only does a given positioning of the narrated self have

implications for the interpretation of the narrative, but also for the identity performance of the narrator at the time of the storytelling. An analysis of narrative and positioning then requires that one attend to three levels of positioning: (1) that of the narrated self in the context of the “story-world”, (2) the positioning of the narrator in terms of listeners and/or co-narrators during the story-telling, and (3) the narrator’s self-positioning with respect to “dominant discourses” (De Fina & King 2001:169). This self-positioning to dominant discourses, such as cultural templates, may be an effect of language socialization, through which narrators may personalize these discourses to greater or lesser extents, depending on their perception of and association with such a discourse (Ochs & Capps 2001:221).

This study expands upon these idea of narrative by revealing the ways in which the narrative process allows narrators to not only discuss their experiences, but to claim responsibility for their decisions (recognizing their own agency) while simultaneously attributing causality to internal or external forces.

Narrative and Interviews

While the same foundational tenets of narrative form hold true in a research context as they do in a conversational narrative, additional aspects must be taken into account during analysis when a narrative arises in the context of an interview. First, interviews frequently produce elicited narratives, which may take the form of “accounts”, or “narratives (including justifications, excuses, and explanations) that represent recapitulations of past events told in response to a ‘why’ or ‘how’ question by an interlocutor [...] have a strong explanatory component, and are inherently ‘recipient designed’” (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012:113).

In addition to eliciting such evaluative accounts, semi-structured interviews also allow for the production of unsolicited narratives, which (while they tend to relate more to the topic at hand) are more likely to be distinct from the surrounding conversation and involve longer conversational turns. Furthermore, longer and/or more complex narratives may be divided into episodes, which are cast as an ordered set, constituting a “multiepisodic tale” (Ochs & Capps 2001:169). These differing forms of narrative produced during interviews are here analyzed in terms of their associations with educational level, demonstrating the educational value attributed to certain forms of narrative production over others.

Agency and Decision Making

Building upon research into agency from a variety of fields, Duranti developed the following definition of agency:

“Agency is here understood as the property of those entities (i) that have some degree of control over their own behavior, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities’ (and sometimes their own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation (e.g. in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome)” (Duranti 2004:453).

For the purposes of this study, I have derived from this definition an alternative, with specific focus on the perceptions people express in narrative regarding the exercise of their own agency. In relation to the categories of Duranti’s definition of agency, the perception categories progress as follows: (i) that while accepting control over their own behavior, (or being socialized to think they should have control) people can express the impetus for an action as having either an internal or an external locus, (ii) that exercising

agency has recognizable results, and (iii) that those results can be identified as positive or negative.

Furthermore, I have found that in expressing these perceptions with regard to past events in narrative form, there is a tendency to both refer to exercises of agency in terms of making decisions, and to evaluate these agentic decisions as having positive results when the impetus is positioned as internal, and negative results when the impetus is positioned as external, as demonstrated in the following examples.

In explaining why he dropped out of high school shortly after re-enrolling (he had previously been expelled), Renaldo positions teachers (“they”) and the principal negatively (1) and attributes the causality (2) for his action (3) to these other characters.

“Well, (1) *they were just givin’ me hell, uh, the principal was not gettin’ along with me, (2) he really didn’t want me there, and he kinda made that clear to me, so, (3) I just you know. Stopped goin’.*”

In Luna’s comments regarding dropping out of high school, she attributes negative consequences to her own actions (1), recognizes her own agency (2), while attributing causality to a confluence of factors (3), summed up in her introduction to this narrative (4):

“(4) *Shit happens, and I don’t know, (1) it was just a bad decision, like I was about to graduate, I had like three months to graduate. And (2) I was just like, fuck it. I gotta drop out. (3) I just couldn’t deal, with like, goin’ to work, and then goin’ to school, and then, it was just too much. So, it was easy for me just to be like, ok, fuck school. For now. I always thought that I was gonna go back.*”

These patterns indicate language socialization practices occurring in the local

Latino community and in the public schools are both socializing students into different ways of producing narratives of agency with regard to education, and are being valued differently within the school system, lending more weight to certain types of narrative in educational contexts.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING

Latinos in Greater Charlotte, NC

The Latino population of North Carolina has been growing rapidly over the past twenty years, faster than the rate of growth in any other state. (Dávila 2008:356, Ko and Perreira 2010:467) While efforts have been made by both North Carolina Public Schools and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (and surrounding county school systems) (<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/>) to meet the needs of this relatively new population through interventions such as improved ESL curriculum and access to interpreters, there is still significant room for improvement. Additionally, having a relatively under-studied Latino population, Charlotte, North Carolina will be an ideal site for the study of educational decision-making among bilingual Latinos. The rapidly growing local Latino population allows for a cross-section study, as seen here, wherein individuals who were the first Latina/o to attend a given school and/or to require ESL classes are participating in the study alongside those who have attended or are attending the same schools (in some cases less than a decade later), with significant Latino populations and established ESL programs. This range allows for an understanding of factors and influences that continue to affect Latino students' progress (positively or negatively) through the local school systems.

In the early years of Latino migration to North Carolina (the early 1990s), migrants were mostly young working men (Cravey and Valdivia 2011:258), and “58 percent of recent Mexican immigrants living in North Carolina were unaccompanied adult men” (Perriera 2011:1486). Early migration to North Carolina primarily involved jobs in poultry disassembly factories (Cravey and Valdivia 2011:189), on hog farms, or

in tobacco, cucumber, or sweet potato fields (Popke 2011:896). These workers were welcomed in North Carolina during a period of economic growth, but the families that later came to join them were viewed by the existing population as a burden to the state (Perreira 2011:1973). Between 1990 and 2010, the Latino population of North Carolina grew 944 percent. As of 2010, 52.5 percent of Latinos in North Carolina were foreign born (Perreira 2011:1322). The majority of adult Mexican immigrants to North Carolina between 2000 and 2010 were from Central or South-Southeastern Mexico (Perreira 2011:1443). As of 2010, 65 percent of Mexican immigrants in North Carolina read and spoke only Spanish (Perreira 2011:1700). Estimates indicate that as of 2010, the Latino population of North Carolina was over one million, including the undocumented migrants not included in the US Census (Deguzman 2011:2534).

In 1990, Charlotte's Hispanic population consisted of about 5,500 people – 1.6 percent of the city's total population (US Census 1990). In the year 2000, the census-recorded Hispanic population in Charlotte increased to 39,800. (U.S. Census American Factfinder). The U.S. Census Bureau 2012 American Community Survey 1-year Estimates reports indicated approximately 104,913 people in the Hispanic/Latino population of Charlotte, or 13.5 percent of the total city population. The majority of the Hispanic/Latino population of Charlotte are of Mexican origin (45,527 people/5.9 percent of the total Charlotte population) with the second largest group being Puerto Rican (10,570/1.4 percent) and the third being Cuban (4,368/0.6 percent). The census estimates that an additional 44,448 people (5.7 percent of the total Charlotte population) are Hispanic or Latino of other national origins.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system reported a total of 24,055 Hispanic students enrolled in Kindergarten-12th grade in 2011, which constituted 17.4 percent of all students. In 2012, the number of Hispanic students rose to 26,020, or 18.4 percent of all students, an increase which reflects the changing demographics of the city. In the state of North Carolina, dropout rates have declined since 2008, yet the dropout rate of Hispanic students, while similarly declining, has consistently been higher than that of most other ethnic groups, as indicated in the following table, taken from the 2011-2012 Consolidated Data Report from the Public Schools of North Carolina State Board of Education.

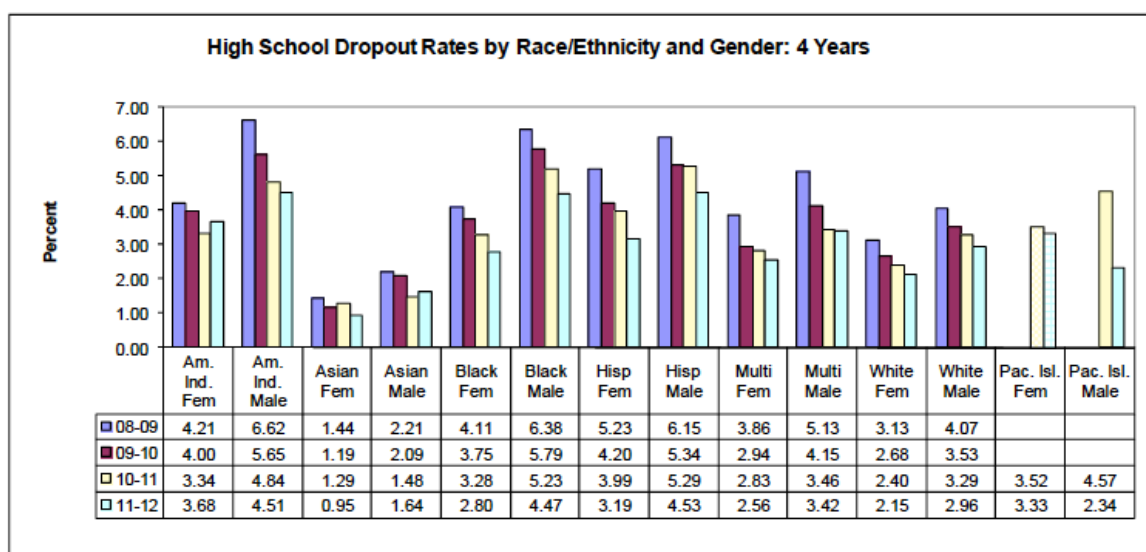


Figure 1: High School Drop-Out Rates

Dropout rates for Hispanic students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg have been decreasing, but are consistently the second highest in the school district, following the dropout rates of Black students. For the 2009-2010 school year, Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools reported that 311 Hispanic students dropped out, with this group representing 18.99 percent of all dropouts for that year. In the 2010-2011 school year, 292 Hispanic

dropouts were reported, representing 20.8 percent of all dropouts. In the 2011-2012 school year, 306 Hispanic dropouts were reported, representing 23.9 percent of all dropouts. This trend indicates that while the number of Hispanic dropouts has been decreasing, the rate of decrease is slower than that of other groups.

Participants

Ten participants took part in this study, with ages ranging from 13 to 32. I recruited these participants via snowball sampling, asking that each participant recommend one other. The median age of the participants is 24, and the mean age is 20. Eight of the participants self-identify as Mexican, and two self-identify as Puerto Rican. Five of the participants are male, and five are female, including three brother-sister pairs of siblings. All have attended or are attending public schools in the greater Charlotte area, including Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Cabarrus County Schools, and Rowan County Schools. Each participant took an initial survey to collect background demographic data and self-reported preferences between and comfort levels with English and Spanish. I gave participants the option to complete the survey in English or in Spanish. Luna chose to complete the survey in Spanish, and all other participants completed it in English.

Seven of the participants were interviewed individually, and the remaining three were interviewed in a group, for which the wife of one of the participants was present and participated, particularly when discussing their children's educational experiences. While her participation was considered in the interactional portion of the analysis, she is not included as a participant, as she is not of Latina heritage. I observed all participants in social settings with their friends and family.

	Victoria	Alanzo	Geovany	Renaldo	Luna
Age	26	32	15	27	24
Sex	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	High School Diploma	In High School	Dropped Out of HS	Dropped Out of HS, GED in Progress
Immigration Status	Naturalized Citizen	Naturalized Citizen	Native Citizen	Native Citizen (PR)*	Undocumented
Immigration Generation	First Gen. (Age 3)	First Gen. (Age 10)	Second Gen.	First Gen. (Age 9)	First Gen. (Age 9)
Country of Birth	Mexico	Mexico	USA	Puerto Rico	Mexico
Heritage Country	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Puerto Rico	Mexico
First Language	Spanish	Spanish	English/Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Second Language	English (Age 3,4)	English (Age 11)	-	English (Age 10)	English (Age 9)

Figure 2: Participant Demographic Data, 1-5

	Solana	Cesara	Marcela	Hector	Dario
Age	26	24	19	21	13
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
Education Level	Dropped Out of HS, Completed GED	Bachelor's Degree	Associate's Degree, Bachelor's in Progress	Graduated HS, Associate's in Progress	In Middle School
Immigration Status	Native Citizen (PR)*	Native Citizen ***	Native Citizen	Undocumented with **Deferred Action	Native Citizen
Immigration Generation	First Gen. (Age 8)	Second Gen.	Second Gen.	First Gen. (Age 3)	Second Gen.
Country of Birth	Puerto Rico	USA	USA	Mexico	USA
Heritage Country	Puerto Rico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico, Panama
First Language	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	English
Second Language	English (Age 9)	English (Age 7)	English (Age 5)	English (Age 3)	Spanish (unsure)

Figure 3: Participant Demographic Data, 6-10

*Native Citizen (PR) indicates that a participant is legally classified as a citizen of the United States, but was born in Puerto Rico, and therefore will also be classified as a first generation immigrant.

**Deferred Action refers to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, colloquially referred to as the Dream Act, which allows undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children and meet a set of criteria to receive a legal work permit and (in most states) a legal driver's license for a two-year period, with the ability to renew every two years.

***This participant, while a native citizen of the United States, lived in Mexico from the age of two to the age of 6, and so technically qualifies as a second generation immigrant, but did not being school in the United States until second grade.

	Victoria	Alanzo	Geovany	Renaldo	Luna
Speaking Spanish	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Muy Bien/ Fluidez
Speaking English	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Muy Bien/ Fluidez
Primary Language At Home	Spanish	English	Spanish	English	Ingles
Spanish In Public	Very Comfortable	Very Comfortable	Completely Comfortable	Not Too Comfortable	Muy Comoda
English In Public	Very Comfortable	Very Comfortable	Completely Comfortable	Very Comfortable	Muy Comoda
Importance of Spanish	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Muy Importante
Importance of English	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Muy Importante
Attended ESL	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Si

Figure 4: Reported Language Use, 1-5

	Solana	Cesara	Marcela	Hector	Dario
Speaking Spanish	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Just Ok
Speaking English	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently	Very well/ fluently
Primary Language At Home	English	Spanglish	English	Spanish	English and Spanish
Spanish In Public	Very Comfortable	Very Comfortable	Very Comfortable	Very Comfortable	Not That Comfortable
English In Public	Very Comfortable	Very Comfortable	Very Comfortable	Very Comfortable	It's normal for me
Importance of Spanish	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important
Importance of English	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important
Attended ESL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Figure 5: Reported Language Use, 6-10

DATA ANALYSIS

Methods of Analysis

I coded transcripts of all interviews for current educational level, elicited and unsolicited narratives, positioning of self, family, school, and teachers, references to motivations and support, agency, expressed results of narrated self's actions, references to jobs held while in school, and the age the narrator indicated they first began considering attending college. I then organized each category into a continuum (for example, ordering "family positioning" from "all positive framing" to "all negative framing") and cross-referenced these coded category continuums for correlative data.

Categories of Analysis

The following quotations represent a sampling of the ways in which participants positioned themselves and other characters in their narratives. I drew these statements from both elicited and unsolicited narratives, which were produced in the context of discussing personal experiences with language and education, and was interpreted in consideration of this.

1) Self-Motivation

Marcela: "Honestly, my mom never had to tell me to do my homework. I always did it on my own."

While some participants explicitly positioned themselves as "self-motivated", others used statements such as the above to position themselves this way. In this example, by saying "my mom never had to tell me to do my homework", Marcela simultaneously positions herself as self-motivated concerning her homework and positions her mother positively (through the use of the phrase "had to") as willing to tell

her to do her homework, but never finding it necessary. The presence or absence of statements positioning the narrated self as self-motivated is, I found, a critical factor in participants' likelihood of viewing the outcome of their exercises of agency as having positive or negative outcomes.

2) Considering College Young AND Motivation

Marcela: "I started thinking about college and stuff like that and, from a very early age, I knew that I wanted to go to college, I knew that I wanted to further my education, so, I think that kind of drove me."

Here, Marcela had previously positioned her narrated self as a self-motivated student, and this example was drawn from the explanatory sequence that followed that positioning. She positions her narrated self as aware of and interested in college from "a very early age" (later stated as third grade), and then proceeds to explain her understanding of how this internal force (desire to attend college) fueled her self-motivation.

3) Positive educational outcome of narrated self's actions

Victoria: "I planned out the days that I was going to skip, when I knew it was gonna be like a, like a study hall day or something, not important. [...] 'Cause I knew there wasn't a test, I knew there wasn't anything important happening, I wasn't gonna miss anything big."

In this example, Victoria talks about herself as having had the agency to skip school (and skip methodically), which she talks about having exercised due to an internal impetus, and which she positions as having a positive educational outcome. Victoria, having previously positioned herself in the role of "good student", then admitted that she,

on rare occasion, had skipped school her senior year of high school. In the segment present here, she explains the way she skipped, positioning her narrated self as responsible and maintaining the position of “good student” while presenting herself as engaging in a behavior typically counter to this positioning. This segment is classified as representing a positive educational outcome of her narrated self’s actions because she positions herself as being practical and judicial in her skipping, so as not to negatively impact her education, as opposed to some of her friends, who she positions as skipping indiscriminately, with no regard to the impact on their education.

4) Negative educational outcome of narrated self’s actions

Renaldo: “I hung out in the streets and started seein’ drug-related shit, seein’ people makin’ money on drugs, so, I went to school and they’re teachin’ me about Christopher Columbus and this and that, and I didn’t want to hear it, because, I was already in the mind-state of hey, I can make money without this.”

This statement serves as an example of a narrator positioning his narrated self as having agency and making a decision he positions as having a negative educational outcome, and for which the impetus was a confluence of external events. In a previous narrative, he had said that he began “hanging out in the streets” because of a difficult family situation at home, framing this experience as the catalyst (or external impetus) for the decisions he describes making here. Renaldo positions his narrated self as choosing not to pay attention in school, situation this decision temporally as the result of his previous decisions and his positioning of school as irrelevant and unnecessary. I.e., a) “I hung out in the streets”, therefore b) I saw “drug-related shit”, therefore c) I learned that

you can make money from drugs, therefore d) what they were teaching in school no longer seemed important, therefore e) I chose not to pay attention.

5) Positive positioning of school AND Negative interactional self-positioning

Luna: “I liked school, so I was good in school all the time. So. I did-, really didn’t have a problem with teachers, I was just, I would just show up and do my work, and, just, I liked school, I really did. I just, I didn’t, I enjoyed every minute of it, once I got the hang of it. But then, yeah, I sound retarded, don’t I, but I really did.”

In this example, Luna first positions her narrated self as a good student, positions teachers and school positively, and hints that while she may have had difficulties at first, she “got the hang of it”, further positioning herself as a good student, and capable of handling school. However, she next interactionally positions herself negatively, saying “I sound retarded, don’t I”. The causality of this positioning is ambiguous in this context, as it could either be a recognition of the differences between her own positioning in relation to school and those expressed by the other participants in the group, which were predominantly negative, or it could be an interactional reflection on her narrative-self positioning as a good student who enjoyed school, in recognition of the shared knowledge that she had dropped out of high school in her senior year. This excerpt of Luna’s narrative served to preface her explanation of dropping out, wherein she positioned the impetus for the decision to drop out as externally motivated. This preface emphasizes the external nature of the impetus for this decision by positioning her narrated self as having enjoyed school, with implications that she would have had no impetus to drop out if not for the external factors.

6) Negative positioning of school AND Attribution of Causality

Dario: “I, I was bullied, bullied around that time, so I learned things quicker than before, and um, I didn’t want to go to school, at like [that school] was like a horrible year for me, to start off. So I never wanted to go back to that school, so I guess that’s the reason why we moved.”

In this example, Dario is narrating his experiences in his first elementary school, in comparison to his second elementary school. He positions his narrated self as bullied and miserable (“a horrible year for me”), positions school as a negative environment (“I never wanted to go back”), and ascribes this experience a causal relationship to his family’s moving to a different school district. While he doesn’t frame himself as directly agentic in the move, he positions of the move to a different school district as caused by his desire to not return to the school where the bullying took place, talking about it in such a way as to indicate that his internal state was impetus for an exercise of agency. This includes an implicit positive positioning of his family, indicating that he felt that his well-being was important to his family, and therefore prompted a move to a more favorable environment. The line “so I learned things quicker than before” is ambiguous in this context, as it could either indicate that he attributed learning quicker to his narrated self’s negative position of bullied, or it could serve to refer to learning quicker after moving to a new school “than before”, when he was in the first school and being bullied.

7) Positive positioning of a teacher AND Motivation

Dario: “There was an assist-, um, student teacher that helped me out a lot.”

Michelle: “Ok, what were they like?”

Dario: “Her name was [--], and she’s the, she’s the one that like, helped me, motivate myself, because when I was, um hitting rock bottom in fifth, she was the one

that helped motivate me and like, trying to get my grades up, and she was always like so calm with me.”

The participant here was responding to an elicitation regarding any particularly good or bad teachers he may have had. He first positions the student teacher as helpful, and then positions her as motivating and calming, further positioning her as particularly positive in relation to other teachers through the use of the phrase “the one”. Throughout this segment he also positions his narrated self as desirous of being a good student, and being motivated to improve his grades after “hitting rock bottom” in fifth grade, which alludes to a previous narrative he had told. The phrase “helped me motivate myself” helps Dario position his narrated self as in the process of developing self-motivation, while the statement “she was the one that helped motivate me” helps clarify this positioning, indicating that Dario feels that at the time of the narrated event his motivation (or impetus to exercise agency to benefit his education) was predominantly external. As Dario is currently in middle school, and therefore temporally closer to his narrated events from early years of education, the idea that he sees the impetus for motivation as shifting from external to internal is significant, as this type of shift is noticeably absent from the older participants’ narratives, indicating that either their temporal distance from these early experiences may affect memory of some shifts, or that this type of shift is uncommon.

8) Negative positioning of a teacher

Marcela: “I had a couple teachers when I was little tell me, you know, when I was uncomfortable speaking English, yet, and I would speak Spanish with my peers, they’d be like, Oh, speak English, it’s America. [...] It felt very, I mean, it made me

upset, just because I felt like why would you say that to somebody? Even now, looking back, I feel like I'm more upset now than I was then.”

This narrator positions these elementary school teachers as unpleasant and upsetting, with possible implications of racism. She positions her narrated self as upset by this recurring event, and in a later segment of this narrative explains that her brother had been treated the same way, and the repeated incidents had prompted her mother to go to the school to intervene. The narrator further interactionally positions her current self as upset by this event.

NARRATIVE EXCERPTS

I have selected three excerpts for close analysis as examples of different ways in which participants framed family members, teachers, and/or school experiences in different ways, and how they positioned themselves simultaneously with regard to the other actors in their narrative and with regard to me, as the interviewer, and/or other members of an interview group. These three selections include narratives from four participants, with each of the four representing a different current educational level, and correlating trends toward positioning self and others in positive, neutral, or negative terms.

Transcription Conventions

-	abrupt break or stop
—	(underline) stress
(1.0)	pause, to the nearest tenth of a second
=	utterances connected with no pause between
:	preceding phoneme lengthened, proportionate to number of colons
word	overlapping speech
@	laughing
@@	extended laughing
@=word	laughing while talking
word´	rising intonation during preceding syllable
´word	word started at higher intonation than previous syllable
´´word	word started at a significantly higher intonation than previous
syllable	
word`	falling intonation during preceding syllable
word``	intonation rising and falling in same syllable

Excerpt 1: Victoria's Narrative – "I got my first B"

The narrator of this excerpt is a 26 year old female with a bachelor's degree. Over the course of her interview, she consistently positioned family, school, and teachers positively, positioned her narrated (and current) self as self-motivated, responsible for her own actions (which she positioned as having consistently positive outcomes). She positioned characters in her narratives, particularly family members, as supportive, and positioned herself as having begun considering college at a young age.

1. Victoria: I' was` (0.5) a teacher's pet` (0.3) up until like (0.5)
2. the end of middle school
3. I always' did my homework`
4. I always (0.5) passed all of my tests an:d quizzes and everything=
5. =I remember: in the: 8th kra- @=grade
6. um
7. I got my first B:' on my report card`
8. and I:' literally'(@)
9. I'm` not even joking`
10. I:' sat there and cr:`ied my eyes out` (0.8)
11. in:` school=
12. =|in' cla:`ss|
13. Michelle: | @@ |
14. Victoria: when I got my report` card
15. Michelle: Oh`
16. Victoria: Cried my` eyes out
17. I had=
18. =the teacher was like tryin' to conso:`le me`
19. Ca`me ho`me
20. 'di:dn't want` to` tell my` mo:m (0.5)
21. but `ob`viously I had to show he:r (0.4)
22. cried my eyes @=out @=again`
23. @
24. @=She' cri`ed with` me`
25. Michelle: Aw`
26. Victoria: Like it was` a bi::g to-do:`
27. Michelle: So`-
28. wa- was she upset` abou`t it`
29. or` was she upset `cause` `you` were` upset`
30. Victoria: I think she was mo`re upset because `I was` upset
31. I think (0.4) my` stan`dards are hi`gher `than::
32. what she could have put` on me`

The positioning of familial characters in narrated events as supportive of internally motivated agency recurs among narratives by participants who positioned themselves as self-motivated. This use of “support”-type positioning rather than “motivation”-type positioning (as used by participants who do not characterize themselves as self-motivated with regards to education) reinforces the significance of self-motivation as a key factor in these narratives, while allowing for recognition of familial roles and positive positioning of family.

Victoria begins her story by positioning herself in the role of “teacher’s pet” during her school years (line 1), and validates this positioning by ascribing behaviors to her narrated self that are associated with “teacher’s pets”, such as doing homework and passing quizzes and tests (lines 3 and 4). She then indicates a story is beginning with the phrase “I remember” (line 5). As the story begins, the phrase “I got my first B on my report card” (line 7) expresses an unexpected event, to which she describes her narrated self as having a strong emotional reaction (“I sat there and cried my eyes out” (line 10)), but she laughs while narrating, and prefaces her narrated self’s emotional reaction with the phrases “I literally” and “I’m not even joking” (lines 8-9), positioning herself interactionally as simultaneously giving an honest account of this event and finding it laughable. As she describes the teacher trying to console her (line 18), she both positions the teacher as sympathetic and reinforces the positioning of her narrated self as a teacher’s pet.

When she said “Came home” (line 19), she was narrating a change in setting as well as alluding to a previous story, wherein she described herself as always telling her mother about her day when she got home from school. The statement “obviously I had to

show her” (line 21) is relatively ambiguous in this context, as it could either indicate that the sharing-with-mom time that had been alluded to precluded the omission of such an event, or it could refer to the interactionally shared knowledge of report cards, namely the requirement that they be returned to the teacher with a parent’s signature. In either case, the term “obviously” (line 21) serves to position her narrated self as feeling she had no choice in the matter. She laughs again as she describes crying about the event when she told her mother, and laughs as she says “she cried with me” (line 24), positioning her mother as sympathetic to her narrated self. Upon my request for clarification, she again positions her mother as sympathetic and supportive (line 30), then concurrently positions her narrated self and present self as having high standards independently of her mother’s expectations of her, which she accomplishes by a brief shift to the present tense in the final line (lines 31-32).

Excerpt 2: Cesara’s Narratives – “And then I got help” and “My dad pretty much locked me up”

Cesara is a 24 year old female with a bachelor’s degree. Throughout the interview, she positioned family in positive, neutral, and negative terms, with her mother being positioned most positively, some neutral positioning of her parents as a pair, and her father being positioned in predominantly negative terms. She tended to position her school and her teachers in negative terms, with a few exceptions. She positioned her narrated self as self-motivated, and as receiving little support from family (with regard to continuing her education), despite positioning herself as having started considering college at a young age.

This excerpt contains two episodes of a multi-episodic tale explaining the process of applying to and starting college. In the preceding episode, the narrator had described her high school guidance counselor initially declining to help her apply to college and find scholarships, quoting the guidance counselor as having expressed prejudicial expectations of Hispanic students (i.e. “I was told, that, Hispanic people didn’t go to college, so they couldn’t waste their time on one individual when they had all these other kids who they knew that were gonna go”).

1. Cesara: And so::, in' the end' they:
2. um: (0.3)
3. I ha:d to: si:t outsi:de (0.3) her' office'=
4. =or: the co`-=-
5. =guidance counselor's office=' for a week straight
6. dur'ing my lunch' (0.4)
7. to have' her realize
8. 'oh' 'this 'girl is being 'serious'
9. And 'then' I got' help'
10. And the:n she recomme:nded' me to Chapel' Hill'
11. And the:n she: uh=talked to Camp`bell and sa:id
12. 'oh' this gi:rl's goin' through a lo:t' of things at' home'='
13. =because I was 'kicked' out' of' my' house'='
14. um=
15. =because I deci:'ded' to' 'go' to' co`llege'='
16. =a:nd 'not just get' en`gaged' and get' married'
17. Michelle: Right
18. And I'm assuming that was your father's' decision'
19. Cesara: It was'
20. A:nd my' mom' had' no' 'say' in' it=
21. =So two:' weeks' before I gra`duated (0.3)
22. I' got kicked out'
23. a:::nd
24. um::
25. my::' gui'dance cou`nselor actually spoke'
26. to' Camp`bell' Uni'ver'sity'
27. they:
28. they agreed' to pay` a se`mester' for` me'
29. If I' would show` 'up to the school'
30. they would pay a seme`ster for` me
31. a:::nd I could go::
32. and i:::f I did well'

33. they` would` keep paying` for school
 34. Um:: (0.7)
 35. but` (0.7)
 36. M- My pa`rents`
 37. who right after:
 38. um:
 39. right after` gradu`a`tion`,
 40. they had a big party for` me`
 41. a::nd my` dad pretty` much` lock`ed me` up`
 42. Took` my` phone` away`
 43. took` every`thing` away`
 44. um
 45. my
 46. my: ex`-fia`ncé
 47. which` (0.3) was my fiancé at the time
 48. ended up having to ask` for my` hand`
 49. He had said that `if` I` would` get engaged
 50. he would allow` me to go to co`llege
 51. and` he` did`n`t`
 52. He made me` go` and live with my: um: ex-fiancé
 53. after: a couple months (0.5)
 54. So (0.3)
 55. `yeah`
 56. So` pretty much I | lo:st out on |
 57. Michelle: |Campbell fell through`|
 58. Cesara: Yes`
 59. And` I wasn`t able to contact them
 60. and let them know=
 61. =`hey`=
 62. =`this is what`s going on:`
 63. I have no` way` to get there`
 64. I real`ly want` to be` there`
 65. You know
 66. I had nothing`
 67. Because of
 68. kind of the abuse` at that time`
 69. there was no way for me to:
 70. to com`mun`icate with` them` and let` them know` (0.6)
 71. So` (0.5)
 72. `Yep`

The first episode contained in this excerpt describes the way in which Cesara convinced the guidance counselor to help her. In this episode she positions her narrated self as determined and self-motivated (reprising an previously explicitly stated

positioning), but also as confined by circumstance to taking actions that she felt (and feels) should not have been necessary. By stating that she “had to” sit outside the office (line 3), she positions her narrated self as forced to behave in this way due to the combination of the guidance counselor’s unwillingness to help and her own determination. “For a week straight” and “during my lunch” (lines 3 and 4) serve to emphasize her narrated self’s determination, as well as to refer to the strength of her previously stated desire to attend college. She quotes the guidance counselor as saying “Oh, this girl is being serious” (line 8) with exaggerated intonation and stress in a sing-song pattern, positioning the guidance counselor as frustrating and dense. However, she then shifts to a matter-of-fact tone and describes the way the guidance counselor proceeds to help (lines 9-11), simultaneously shifting her positioning of the guidance counselor to helpful and sympathetic, again quoting the guidance counselor (“Oh, this girl’s goin’ through a lot of things at home” (line 12)), this time without the sing-song intonation.

She then mentions, still in a matter-of-fact intonation, that she had been kicked out of her house (line 13), a statement which serves to explain the previous quotation of the guidance counselor, as well as to position her narrated self as independent and actively resisting cultural expectations, alluding to a previous story concerning her father’s refusal to support her mother’s decision to attend nursing school due to his adherence to cultural gender norms, whereby women were expected to marry and have children, and not to pursue higher education. When I requested confirmation of my interpretation of this reference (line 18), she confirmed that her father was responsible, (line 19) and with the subsequent statement “and my mom had no say in it” (line 20), she simultaneously positions her mother as powerless to defy her father, and implies a

sympathetic relationship between her mother and her narrated self. This segue between episodes also serves to foreshadow the upcoming unexpected event by interactionally cueing the shared knowledge of the strength of her father's ideological stance.

She then reprises the previous episode, positioning the guidance counselor as helpful (lines 25 and 26), although this positioning is qualified by the modifier "actually", alluding to the previous episode entailing the guidance counselor's persistent refusal to help her. In describing the financial aid offered to her as a result of the guidance counselor's help (lines 26-33), she qualifies the offer with the phrase "if I would show up to the school" (line 29), foreshadowing the event which would prevent this.

Next, she refers to both of her parents being involved in throwing her a party in celebration of her graduation (lines 36-40), positioning them as a cohesive unit and as celebrants of her success. Yet in the following statement, "and my dad pretty much locked me up" (line 41), she refers only to her father, positioning him once again as responsible for impeding her educational advancement, and by omitting reference to her mother in this statement, she reaffirms her previous positioning of her mother as sympathetic to her struggle, but powerless to defy the decisions of her father. In the explanatory sequence following this event (lines 42-53), she positions herself as powerless, having been forcibly stripped of independence and agency.

She proceeds to introduce the next character as "my ex-fiancé" (line 46), interactionally positioning him as a character in the narrative, but not in her present life. In the narrated event he is positioned as complicit in playing a role in her father's plans for her life, both proposing and taking her into his home as mandated by her father (lines 48 and 52). Throughout this segment of the narrated event, she positions her narrated self

as powerless, attributing each action or change in circumstance to a character other than herself. In the final segment of this episode, she explains that this sequence of events had caused her to miss the opportunity to attend Campbell University (lines 56-70), interactionally positioning her narrating self as frustrated by this episode, delivering this segment rapidly, with repeated and rhythmic stress. She reiterates her positioning of her narrated self as powerless in the situation but adds an additional position of her narrated self as unhappy and abused, saying, “I had nothing” (line 66) and referring to “the abuse” (line 68), and desirous of change, quoting her narrated self as saying “I really want to be there” (line 64), in reference to the University.

This episode ends with extended pauses, and a succinct “yep” (line 72), interactionally positioning herself as having accepted this episode of her life for what it was. The subsequent episodes affirm this positioning, standing in stark contrast to these episodes, with her narrated self being positioned as increasingly independent as she worked, purchased a computer, and attended college online, despite her father’s and fiancé’s wishes. In the context of the larger narrative, the episode presented here served to set the stage for the following events, foreshadowing her shift to independence by reaffirming the positioning of her narrated self as self-motivated but having minimal agency due to oppressive home and school environments.

Despite the difficulties that Cesara faced in entering higher education, she has succeeded in not only completing her associate’s degree online, but also her bachelor’s degree – all while working full time. She explained that she intends to continue her education, hoping to specialize in immigration law and to one day help increase the opportunities available to local Latino youth.

Excerpt 3: Solana's narrative – "When I was in fourth grade" and Renaldo's narrative – "I didn't get that"

This excerpt contains two concurrent narratives. The two narrators of these stories are siblings, with Renaldo a year older than his sister, Solana. She begins her story first, after the two respond to an elicitation, and he narrates his own story in parallel with hers, interspersed with co-narration of his sister's story. Solana elaborates on her story in several places after Renaldo makes evaluative comments, but she never directly engages with him either in response to his narrative or in acknowledgement of his co-narration of her own narrative.

The first narrator, Solana, is a 26 year old female with her GED. While she referred to her family only occasionally during the interview, when she did she positioned them in neutral terms. She positioned school positively and negatively, notably positioning the school as not having been responsible for her decision to drop out, stating that there was nothing the school could have done differently to prevent her action. While this led her to position her narrated self as responsible for her actions (as she was loath to attribute causality for her dropping out to anyone but herself) she was simultaneously positioning her narrated self as making decisions with negative outcomes, and attributing causality to situational forces (increased difficulty of schoolwork, frustration, social associations, pregnancy, etc.), rather than to her own impetus. This contrasts to those who positioned themselves as self-motivated, attributed causality to this internal force, and positioned their narrated decision making as having positive outcomes.

The second narrator, Renaldo, is a 27 year old male who dropped out of high school. Throughout the interview he positioned his family in predominantly negative

terms, with some neutral positioning. He positioned school in mostly positive or neutral terms, but positioned teachers negatively. Renaldo consistently attributed his motivation to family, but positioned himself as being responsible for his own actions. Like Solana, this corresponded to expressions of his decisions having negative consequences. At no point did he mention having support with regard to his education, and he never mentioned considering college.

1. Michelle: When y'all first started school
2. were there a lot of other Spanish-speakers
3. i- in your classes' and |stuff|
4. Renaldo: [No:::]
5. Solana: Well there was a few'
6. I mean as far as I remember
7. yeah |there was|
8. Renaldo: [Not in | my grade
9. Three
10. Michelle: There were three in your grade
11. Renaldo: Yeah
12. |Counting me |
13. Solana: |Cause when I | was in fourth grade =
14. =let me tell you what ha:ppened=
15. =I was in fourth grade
16. eight years old (0.6)
17. didn't speak a lick of English (1.2)
18. and what the teacher made me do (0.8)
19. This is what she: made me do=
20. =ok there was this Hispanic girl that worked-
21. that (0.2) was there too (0.3)
22. she made me copy everything from this girl
23. we had a test
24. get the answers from her
25. we had a quiz
26. get the answers from her
27. Renaldo: Lucky |bitch |
28. Solana: |We did| some assignment
29. get the answers from her =
30. Renaldo: |I didn't get that|
31. Solana: =And |this bitch got | A-B honor roll
32. that's why I passed fourth grade
33. Renaldo: Yeah
34. Michelle: | Wow |

35. Renaldo: |That's| why I'm sayin`
 36. lucky` bi'tch
 37. Solana: Like
 38. I'm dead-ass` serious`
 39. this is what happened`
 40. Renaldo: |I didn't get that`|
 41. Solana: | So that's | how I passed` with A-B honor` roll`
 42. knowin``, |knowin` that, it- |=
 43. Renaldo: |You know what I got`|=
 44. Solana: =|It wasn't` thanks to me`|
 45. Renaldo: =|you know what I got`|
 46. Solana: y'all`=
 47. =it was thanks to this |'girl` |
 48. Renaldo: |I got`| asked` questions` in English`,
 49. |and had to` write` in Spanish`|
 50. Solana: |I had` I had` no` English` |
 51. Renaldo: Because I` didn't know` English`
 52. Solana: I mean it was just (0.2)
 53. it was just (0.4)
 54. weird`=
 55. =like` I didn't understa:nd` how I was even
 56. supposed` to `learn` you know what I mean`=
 57. =like if I'm` copying` somebody else`=
 58. =but (0.4) `it was just so weird`
 59. you know`
 60. that a teacher` would allow` that`
 61. you know what I mean`
 62. Michelle: Right`
 63. an- or even encour'age` it`
 64. Solana: Right`=
 65. =and I got A`-B` hon'or` roll`
 66. like I said`
 67. Renaldo: That's` wrong`
 68. Solana: |I didn't` speak` a|z
 69. Renaldo: |She li'ed` |
 70. Solana: lick of E:ng'lish`
 71. and I got A-B honor` roll`=
 72. =like that don't make no da:`mn se:`nse
 73. Renaldo: It don't
 74. Solana: Unless I'm smart` as fuck`
 75. |@=`'you know what I mean`| @
 76. Renaldo: |you're not | @
 77. Michelle: So that was fourth grade`
 78. Solana: Ri:ght`
 79. so I pa:`ssed
 80. went to fifth grade`

81. and you know when I was in fifth grade
82. that's when I learned a lot more`

The two narrators, Solana and Renaldo, begin with responses to my request for information about the number of Spanish-speakers in their classes when they started school (lines 1-12), prompted by their previous assertions that they had started school in North Carolina in late elementary school (one grade apart), with no prior knowledge of English. Renaldo reports that his class was lacking in Spanish-speakers with an elongated “no” (line 4), and Solana counters that “there was a few” (line 5) in her own class. As Renaldo attempts to elaborate upon his elicited response (lines 8-12), Solana interrupts, claiming the floor with the statement “let me tell you what happened” (line 13), interactionally positioning herself as both having a story to tell, and as diverging from the elicited response by stating that something “happened”.

She introduces the setting of the story by restating “I was in fourth grade” (line 15), and adding “eight years old, didn’t speak a lick of English” (lines 16-17). This positions her narrated self as young and unable to communicate, and indexes her previous characterization of starting school in North Carolina as “horrible”. She positions the teacher as having had power the situation to make her do something (lines 18-19), then interactionally asserts background information relevant to the story (“there was this Hispanic girl that worked, that was there too” (lines 20-21)). Again she positions the teacher as in power (“she made me copy everything from this girl” (line 22)), and positions herself and the other girl as having no choice but to comply. As she proceeds with an explanatory sequence (lines 23-29), her brother interjects with an evaluative judgment of the narrated event, “lucky bitch” (line 27), indicating that he would have found such a scenario favorable. Solana continues the narrative without response to this

comment, while Renaldo introduces his own narrative with the statement “I didn’t get that” (line 30). When Solana attributes her passing grades to the teacher’s actions, her brother again asserts an evaluative judgment, “that’s why I’m sayin’, lucky bitch” (lines 35-36). While not directly responding to him, Solana then interactionally positions her current self as incredulous of the narrated event while affirming its veracity (lines 37-39). Renaldo then re-introduces his story, “I didn’t get that” (line 40), and while she reiterates her narrated self’s lack of control (lines 41-47), he narrates his own experience, “I got asked questions in English, and had to write in Spanish” (lines 48 and 49), positioning his narrated self as similarly lacking control, and positioning his experience as negative in relation to hers.

At this point, Solana frames her narrated event explicitly as a negative experience, interactionally positioning her current self as counter to Renaldo’s evaluative judgment with statements such as “I didn’t understand how I was even supposed to learn” (lines 55 and 56), and “it was just so weird, you know, that a teacher would allow that” (lines 58-60), which also served to negatively position the teacher. As she repeats the result of the event, “I got A-B honor roll” (line 65), her brother abandons his own narrative and interactionally positions his sister as a liar, saying, “That’s wrong. She lied.” (lines 67 and 69). She does not respond to this, but continues her own evaluative judgment of her narrative, “that don’t make no damn sense” (line 72), which he agrees with (line 73). She laughs as she qualifies that statement by saying “unless I’m smart as fuck” (line 74), and he laughs after saying, “you’re not” (line 76), and in the process she finally looks at him and acknowledges his teasing.

Finally, she concludes her narrative by contrasting the “weird” experience of fourth grade that “don’t make no damn sense” with her transition to fifth grade, stating “that’s when I learned a lot more” (line 82), which serves to reposition the entire preceding narrative as describing a time when she didn’t learn much in school.

TRENDS

Several clear trends arose throughout the analysis of the narratives recorded in this study. First, two categories yielded perfect correlations: High number of references to supportive characters correlated to positive positioning of teachers (and low/no references to supportive characters correlated to negative positioning of teachers), and current educational level corresponded to the number of unsolicited narratives, with those with the highest current educational producing the greatest number of unsolicited narratives. These correlations correspond to Dell Hymes' concept of narrative inequality, where socially stigmatized students tend to feel their narratives are less worth listening to in an academic setting (1996). Furthermore, this narrative inequality supports the idea that public schools value certain forms of narrative over others, and that those who are socialized to produce the valued form of narrative are more likely to proceed to higher levels of education. These results indicate that those participants in my study with lower educational levels were socialized to produce other forms of narrative, and thus were less likely to feel that they had stories beyond those directly elicited that would be relevant to a study regarding education.

Furthermore, positioning of family, school, and teachers in positive terms correlated positively with participants positioning their narrative selves (and in several cases, their current selves) as self-motivated and likely to make positive decisions regarding their education. One particularly interesting component of this correlation is that the positioning of family varied with no respect to the composition of the family. In other words, there was no correlation between the presence of single parents, two-parent homes, or homes with extended family and the negative or positive positioning of family

in these narratives. Nor did family in the home correlate to education level of the narrator, with single-parent, two-parent, and extended family-inclusive homes evenly distributed across education levels, counter-indicating folk theories of single-parent homes negatively impacting children's educational prospects.

Finally, producing narratives of considering college at a young age had a strong positive correlation to current educational level. This is particularly relevant in that these categories each correlated strongly with self-motivation and framing the narrated self's decisions as having positive outcomes, although it is uncertain whether considering college early increases the likelihood of identifying as self-motivated, or if the inverse is true.

CONCLUSIONS

In analyzing interviews with ten participants who have attended or are attending public school in the Greater Charlotte area, I found that those participants who, while narrating their educational experiences, shared more unsolicited narratives, positioned family, school, and teachers positively, and reported having considered attending college at a young age were significantly more likely to have graduated high school and pursued higher education. Furthermore, these trends continued along a continuum, with respectively fewer unsolicited narratives, neutral and negative positioning of family, school, and/or teachers, and later or no report of consideration of attending college corresponding accordingly with lower current educational levels, such as completing the GED, being in the process of completing the GED, or dropping out of high school with no further education.

It is possible that having positive relationships with family and teachers and positive experiences in school encourage students to consider attending college at a young age and motivate themselves to attain such a goal, resulting in higher educational levels, or it is possible that attaining higher educational levels encourages students to talk about their prior educational experiences in a positive manner, and affords them the confidence to take credit for their positive decisions. In either case, it is evident that the socialization to narrate one's educational experiences in terms of individual agency with positive results (corresponding to the dominant discourse within public schools regarding "success" in school), whether such socialization occurs in the early or later years of education, is valued within the educational system.

Concerning the two participants who are still in the educational process, there is no data to examine concerning their ultimate educational level. However, because their narrative positioning of family, teachers, and school corresponds with their reported age at the time they first began considering attending college and their positioning of their narrated self's degree of self-motivation and the outcomes of their decisions, it is likely that the socialization toward school-valued forms of narrative production begins prior to their current levels of education.

Of the four participants who are not native citizens of the United States, only two referenced their legal status as having impacted their consideration of college. The first of these, participant 2, initially had made no reference to legal status, but upon elicitation recounted that his undocumented status at the time he graduated high school had caused him to discount the possibility of attending college without significant consideration. The other, participant 9, explained in an unsolicited narrative that his undocumented status has impeded his desire to attend college, primarily due to financial considerations, leading him to attend community college, and to take no more than two classes at a time due to the expense. He is also currently in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which offers no assistance with regards to education, but does allow him a legal work permit and driver's license. The two participants who are or were undocumented but did not refer to this during the course of their interviews appear to have done so for significantly different reasons. The first, participant 1, because she received her legal residency at the age of 13, and so it did not impact her prospects for higher education. The other, participant 5, is currently undocumented, and made neither mention of her legal status while discussing her education nor mention of considering college. It is

possible that she, like participant 1, discounted the possibility of attending college due to her status.

Because the majority of participants in this study reported (both in the survey and during the interviews) fluency in both Spanish and English, high comfort levels speaking both languages in public, and having Spanish as their first language and English as their second (learned at a young age), there was insufficient data to draw conclusions regarding any correlations between perceptions of language use, actual language use, and education-related data. Additionally, there was no significant correlation between any of the aforementioned categories and the gender of the participants. However, it is possible that a larger sample size might reveal gendered differences not evident here, as well as correlations to actual and reported language use.

The results of this study indicate that the experiences that Latino students have as early as elementary school, particularly interactions with teachers, experiences within the school environment, and interactions with parents in reference to education (such as hearing parents talk about their own education or the benefits of education more generally, or having their parents available to supportively discuss their school experiences) may significantly impact their degree of self-motivation and perception of their own decision-making, and ultimately affect their educational prospects.

Furthermore, I found a common discourse among participants concerning ESL programs in the local school systems – of the participants who participated in ESL classes (9/10) all but one stated that they were kept in the ESL program far longer than they say they felt was necessary. The one who did not, Alanzo, was the first student at his school to need ESL, and a teacher was brought in to work with him one-on-one, and he

described this as a positive experience. Interestingly, while Dario stated that English was his first language, and that he has very low proficiency in Spanish, he stated that he spent two years in ESL programs, one in late elementary school and one in middle school, which he said he felt was due to his problems with spelling. This discourse indicates a need in public school systems in the greater Charlotte area for a reassessment of the ESL programs' curriculum and procedures for evaluating students for removal from the program.

Finally, the correlations between the positive and negative positioning of others in narrative, the expression of one's agency as internally or externally motivated, and the evaluation of the results of agency indicate the significance of self-motivation as an important category for consideration in the study of identity in education, particularly in terms of how school systems value the production of this form of narrative over others. This also suggests a framework for the analysis of socialization to expressing agency in narrative.

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