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## **“You live in the United States, you speak English,” decían las maestras How New Mexican Spanish speakers enact, ascribe, and reject ethnic identities**

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**Title:** ‘You live in the United States, you speak English,’ decían las maestras: How New Mexican Spanish speakers enact, ascribe and reject ethnic identities

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Abstract

New Mexico’s unique linguistic and ethnic heritage is the result of a complex history of colonization characterized by oppression. This chapter examines how, in this context of oppression, New Mexican Spanish speakers negotiate ethnic identities through bilingual talk-in-interaction. The study takes an ethnomethodological approach to identity as something that people ‘do’ (Widdicombe, 1998) and analyzes how New Mexican Spanish speakers ‘do’ ethnic identities. The present analysis is based on a subset of the New Mexico and Colorado Spanish Survey (Vigil & Bills, 2000), including 30 fully transcribed audio-recordings of semi-structured interviews with New Mexican Spanish speakers. A positioning analysis of these narratives reveals how New Mexican Spanish speakers enact, ascribe and reject ethnic identities. Three significant and repeated themes in the corpus include the voice of the oppressors, changing linguistic realities of younger generations of speakers and practices of crossing or passing as monolingual English speakers. The study reveals how New Mexican Spanish speakers construct and re-construct social structure, and in particular enact multiple shifting ethnic identities.

## 1. Introduction

The New Mexican Spanish variety has a unique linguistic history. It has been referred to as the oldest surviving Spanish dialect (Lipski, 2010) and the oldest variety of European language in the U.S. (Bills, 1997). Spanish has been spoken in New Mexico since 1598. In their overview of language policy in New Mexico, Travis & Villa (2010) review three influential periods. During the Colonial Period, New Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, and the official language was Spanish. In 1850 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, New Mexico entered the Territorial Period. During this time there was no official language policy, although the “de facto” official language was English, and Spanish was subordinated. In 1912, New Mexico became a state, and although the state never had any legal bilingual status, there were certain protections for non-English speakers, such as providing translators for jurors.

Travis & Villa (2010) posit that the introduction of public school during this time played a major role in the loss of Spanish in New Mexico. In 1912, universal English education was instated. Before and after the First World War, public education policy was to eradicate Spanish, and there are many reports of how children were punished for speaking Spanish in school (Espinosa, 1975, p. 101; Gonzales, 1999, p. 2). Narratives reporting these incidents are a recurring theme throughout the New Mexico Colorado Spanish Survey corpus, the data for the present study (Bills & Vigil, 2008). In the southwest, Spanish-speaking students were routinely segregated in different schools. After the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, Spanish-speaking students were integrated into schools. However, many schools continued to stress the acquisition of English as a “means of assimilation of American values” (MacGregor-Mendoza, p.356), and “no Spanish rules” in classrooms endured, prohibiting the use of Spanish (Acuña, 1988).

While this is changing with the instatement of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 and a current resurgence of interest in dual language education, the history of these linguistic policies has left a clear impact on New Mexican Spanish speakers and the New Mexican Spanish variety. Investigations into personal narratives in New Mexican Spanish speaker interviews allow for a deeper insight into these processes and their long-lasting effects, especially given the strict oppression and punishment inflicted upon students in public education. In particular, these narratives reveal the performance of ethnic identities through code-switching, crossing, and passing.

### *Performance of Ethnic Identity*

Any discussion of the performance of ethnic identities must inevitably address the complicated issue of “what constitutes ethnicity?” Attempts to define ethnicity have not always been complementary; in fact, in some cases, they are competing (Fought 2006). For example, Barth (1969) states that ethnicity “makes up a field of communication and interaction.” However, Zelinsky (2001) purports the exact opposite, suggesting that ethnicity is “an imagined community *too large* for intimate contact among its members.” (p. 44). For the present chapter, we will use the working definition of ethnicity as set forth by Fought (2006) as a construct “that is highlighted most clearly where ingroup/outgroup boundaries are part of the context,” and we will seek to situate the discussion of language and ethnicity within a particular community’s ideologies about such boundaries (p.13).

In the present chapter, this working definition of ethnicity is rooted in the theorization of identity as performance. The performance of identity is based in the critical theorization that identity is not something we have, but something that we “do,” or more specifically “something people do which is embedded in some other social activity, not something that they ‘are’” (Widdicombe, 1998, p. 191) Thus, identity is a product, not a source, of linguistic practices. We do not speak a certain way because of any fixed identity; instead, the manner in which we speak create multiple and shifting identities. In this respect, our identities are “talking into being.” Language plays an important role in the performance of identity, and the concept of performance is significant, as it implies an audience. The audience interprets the performance of linguistic features, such as gestures, tone, and pitch. The performance of identity is perhaps especially important in the context of interviews, since it recognizes the role of the interviewer and the co-construction of the dialogue. For this reason, the present chapter analyzes the language of both the interviewee and the interviewer, in order to clearly identify the performance aspects of narrative and the interview as a communicative context (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; see also Wortham, 2001).

### *The Performance of Ethnic Identity through Code-Switching, Crossing, and Passing*

Several studies have investigated the performance of ethnic identity through code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages within the same utterance or conversation (Gumperz, 1982). For example, Myers Scotton (1993, p. 104-5) demonstrates how speakers in Kenya use Kikuyu to index ethnic pride, Swahili to index urban identity and English to index education. In a later study, Myers-Scotton (2000) finds evidence that mother tongue indexes African ethnic identity while the ‘official’ language indexes a multi-ethnic elite” (p.146). Bailey (2000b) cites examples of how Dominican American teenagers alternate between Spanish, AAVE and code-switching depending on context, such as whether they are talking with family or friends. In a study on African American drag queens, Barrett (1999) finds the use of stereotyped “Women’s language” in a display of femininity and low pitch and taboo words for heightened masculinity. Thus, this body of research demonstrates that code-switching constitutes an important tool that speakers employ in order to perform their identities. This point is particularly well articulated by Jamila Lyiscott’s (2014) “Three ways to speak English”, in which she performs her identities using three dialects: Standard English, Caribbean English, and African American English.

Crossing, also called ‘language crossing’ or code-crossing’ is defined as “the use of language varieties associated with social or ethnic groups that the speaker does not normally ‘belong’ to” (Rampton, 1999). Crossing arises because people generally speak like those they want to be like (Hewitt 1982, 1986). Among adolescents in South London in the 1980s, Hewitt (1986) finds evidence of ‘crossing’ by white Anglo-descent adolescents who use creole or ‘patois’. Similarly, Rampton (1995, 1999) finds instances of ‘crossing’ by Anglo adolescents performing creole identities in Britain. In addition, he finds speakers of

Asian origin crossing by adopting the creole variety of English, and Afro-Caribbean speakers crossing by adopting stylized Asian English and Panjabi in the South Midlands of England.

Passing is a similar albeit distinct phenomenon, as it requires validation from the outside. Bucholtz (1995) defines passing as “the ability to be taken for a member of a social category other than one’s own”. Based on this definition, other factors such as gender and skin tone play a role in passing. Research on passing has analyzed negative views of individuals’ attempts to pass as a member of the dominant ‘white’ group (McCormick, 2002a), which is often criticized as ‘pretending to be white’ (Urcioli, 1996). However, Bucholtz (1995) argues that social motivations and meanings for passing are more complex than has been assumed, and that passing serves a number of functions, not necessarily signaling a rejection of one’s ‘real’ identity.

The present study stands to make a significant contribution to the literature as a first analysis of the construction of ethnic identity through code-switching, crossing and passing among New Mexican Spanish speakers. Specifically, this analysis addresses how New Mexican Spanish speakers enact, ascribe and reject ethnic identities through code-switching.

## 2. Data and Approach

The New Mexico and Colorado Spanish Survey (NMCROSS) project, initiated in 1991, documents the Spanish language spoken throughout the state of New Mexico and sixteen counties of southern Colorado (Bills & Vigil, 1999). The NMCROSS corpus was collected by trained field workers, who tape-recorded interviews with 350 speakers employing both controlled elicitation and free conversation (Vigil 1989). Each NMCROSS interview averaged three and a half hours in length, beginning with compilation of personal information regarding the consultant and followed by specific linguistic elicitation and free conversation. Currently, about ten percent of the interviews have been orthographically transcribed.

The dataset for this study was created from the free conversation portions of the interviews. A subset of 20 interviews were selected at random from the NMCROSS study corpus. After inspecting all 20 interviews, ten were chosen for close analysis based on their relevance to the performance of ethnic identity through code-switching, crossing and passing. These interviews included six female and four male interviewees with an average age of 61.5 and were conducted between January 1992 and June 1993. The following table depicts the specific participants, the regional location of their homes, sex and age.

Table 1.1 Participants

Participant	Alias	Date	Location	Sex	Age
1	Alejandra	1/9/1992	Española, NM	F	88
2	Eva	4/25/1992	Questa, NM	F	82
3	Juan	1992	Albuquerque, NM	M	48
4	Margarita	2/24/1993	Albuquerque, NM	F	65
5	Ricardo	6/28/1993	Albuquerque, NM	M	56
6	María	6/3/1992	Mountainair, NM	F	47
7	Laura	6/17/1992	Roy, NM	F	74
8	Tomás	6/15/1992	Albuquerque, NM	M	45
9	Antonio	7/14/1992	Chamisal, NM	M	48
10	Ana	1992	Bernalillo, NM	F	62

Interviews are unique social encounters (Briggs, 1986; Cicourel, 1964), which should not be analyzed as spontaneous conversation. It is imperative that we recognize the context-embeddedness of narratives in

interviews as discourse that is co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee. Without considering context, we run the risk of neglecting the performance aspects of narrative and the interview as a communicative context (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; see also Wortham, 2001). Perhaps the most important limitation to consider is that one interview cannot accurately describe the entirety of experiences of that individual. As Rampton (2005) writes, people “express their group identification in inexplicit, non-propositional ways, for example through style, activity and accent, and so some of the most important ethnic processes can be missed in studies that rely on the answers given in questionnaires and interviews” (p.20). Yet, interviews constitute situations in which individuals make sense of their experiences, specifically through the re-elaboration of ideologies and common sense understandings (Worthman, forthcoming). In particular, narratives within interviews are powerful sites for the performance of identity (Baynam, 2003; Bucholtz, 1999; De Fina, 2003; Georgekoupoulou, 2007; Schiffrin, 1996). Narratives within interviews reflect and shape social realities and relationships (Baynam, 2003; De Fina et al, 2006; Maryns & Bommaert, 2001; Wortham, 2001). We follow De Fina & King (2011) in positing that a close analysis of how these participants negotiate identities through narratives in these interviews can “yield deeper understandings of people’s sense-making about social issues” (p.167).

From the close analysis of the narratives within these interviews, three themes related to the performance of ethnic identities emerged: 1) the voice of the oppressors, 2) the changing linguistic realities of younger generations, and 3) instances of crossing and passing. “The voice of the oppressor” is defined as any instance in which the participant distinguishes the voice of another as an individual of oppression. In many instances, these situations coincided with code-switches. The participant would switch into another language to describe or quote the language of the other/the oppressor. “Changing linguistic realities of younger generations” was the second common theme throughout these narratives of ethnic identity performance. Within this theme, the participants described how older generations spoke Spanish while many younger generations, often in their own families, did not speak Spanish. Finally, narratives of “crossing” and “passing” (defined above) were ripe with references to the performance of ethnic identity, often depicting how individuals were taken as members of another group such as “monolingual English speakers.”

Our examination of the narratives pays close attention to *positioning*, which explores how narrators manage the interaction of identities in storytelling (Bamberg, 1997; Davies & Harré 1990; Wortham, 2001). Three domains are typically explored in analyses of positioning: a) communicative event, b) storytelling world, which is the world in which the interlocutors are communicating at the time of narration, and c) storyworld, which is the world described by the narrative (Young, 1987). Bamberg and Georgekoupoulou (2008) describe positioning as existing in the interplay of three levels: the first analyses how the narrators manage the interaction of characters identities in the storyworld; the second analyzes how narrators position themselves with interlocutors in the story-telling world; and the third explores how the storyteller “positions a sense of self/identity with regards to dominant discourses or master narratives” (p. 385) and how he/she makes them relevant to the interaction.

### 3. New Mexican Spanish Narratives and Analysis

Here we will analyze three narratives that demonstrate aspects of the performance of ethnic identity. The analysis will include one excerpt for each of the aforementioned recurring themes: the voice of the oppressors, the changing linguistic realities of younger generations, and crossing/passing.

#### *The Voice of the Oppressors*

The first dominant theme in the interviews was that of the voice of the oppressors. In the following excerpt, Juan, a 48 year old from Albuquerque, discusses the language policy enforced in school. The interviewer begins by asking how Juan learned English. Juan responds that he learned in school and expounds upon that experience following the promptings of the interviewer.

(1) “You live in the United States, you speak English.”: Juan (J) and Interviewer (I)

- 1 I: ¿Y cuándo aprendiste inglés?
- 2 J: Pues en las escuelas públicas de a la edad de seis años. El, el primer día que yo fui a la escuela no
- 3 sabía ni una palabra de inglés. Fue una:, un viaje, cómo se dice aquí.
- 4 I: “*A real trip*”. Y qué hiciste o que pasó? Cómo fue?
- 5 J: Pues allí había una fuerza uh día por día, año tras de año se fue aprendiendo lo básico del inglés
- 6 para entender, que se estaba de que se trataba la escuela.
- 7 I: ¿Cómo te pareció eso?
- 8 J: Pues fue algo, algo, algo nuevo, algo estran uh extranjero. Algo de que fue necesario. Importante.
- 9 Es creo que lo que hace uno uh bilingüe.
- 10 I: Pero tú crees que la forma en que te, en que aprendiste era, fue necesario?
- 11 J: No, no, no, no uh, fue me fue uh fue el asunt uh, un en, un enseñó a ver forzado. Abajo de
- 12 amenazen de castigo. “*You live in the United States, you speak English,*” decían las maestras.

#### Translation

- 1 I: And when did you learn English?
- 2 J: Well in the public schools at the age of six years old. The, the first day that I went to school I didn't
- 3 know a word of English. It was a, a trip, as you say here.
- 4 I: “*A real trip*”. And what did you do or what happened? How did it go?
- 5 J: Well there there was a push day after day, year after year, one learned the basics of English to
- 6 understand, what it was what school was all about.
- 7 I: How did that seem to you?
- 8 J: Well it was something, something something new, something strang- something uh strange.
- 9 Something that was necessary. Important. It's that I think that it's what makes one bilingual.
- 10 I: But do you think that the way in which you learned was necessary?
- 11 J: No, no, no, no uh, it was, it was, it was the thing- a forced teaching. Under the threat of
- 12 punishment. “*You live in the United States, you speak English,*” said the teachers.

Our analysis begins by examining first two levels of positioning, focusing on how Juan manages the interaction of characters identities in the storyworld and how he positions himself with interlocutors in the story-telling world.. In Line 1, the interviewer asks when Juan learned English, a question that prompts the following narrative sequence. In lines 2-3, Juan responds that he learned English in public school, which he began at 6 years of age. He elaborates that he “didn't know a word of English” on that first day of school and comments that it was ‘un viaje’ [a trip]. At this point, in line 4 we note the interviewer's role in the co-construction of the narrative, and as a bilingual Spanish-English speaker: the interviewer translates ‘un viaje’ [a trip] with the phrase ‘a real trip,’ positing that this is the expression Juan was seeking to reference with ‘como dicen aquí’ [as you say here]. Juan does not correct the interviewer's rendering of this phrase in English, and thus it becomes reified as a part of the storyworld. The interviewer then prompts Juan to further expand on his experiences, and in this way the interviewer is actively engaged in prompting the storytelling and the elaboration of the characters in the narrative. In lines 5-6, Juan describes learning English as a ‘fuerza’ which literally translates to strength but here means something closer to effort or push. In doing so, he ascribes agency to the main character, 6-year-old Juan, who makes a deliberate effort to learn English and understand school. Notably, he does not

recognize anyone else as teaching him, but rather emphasizes his own effort. When prompted to elaborate again in line 7, Juan describes the experience with three adjectives, which construct a situation in the storyworld that is “strange,” “necessary,” and “important” (lines 8-9). Finally, he justifies the “necessary” and “important” nature of the experience by finishing the argument sequence with an exemplum that “it’s what makes one bilingual” (line 9). In doing so, Juan reasons that the experiences he went through to learn English were important, perhaps because it shaped his bilingual identity. In line 10, the interviewer poses his interrogative statement in such a way that it questions Juan’s previous exemplum. It is here that we note the crucial and distinct aspects of the interactional relationships in narratives in interviews. The question “But do you think that the way in which you were taught was necessary?” has a very specific effect, as it calls into questions Juan’s own description of the event, in which he described his experience as ‘necessary’. The interviewer’s prompting yields Juan’s response (lines 11-12): he replies ‘no’ several times, thereby negating his previous remarks. Only then does Juan introduce the teachers as characters in the storytelling world who employ “forced teaching” and “threat of punishment.” Juan not only narrates the teachers’ teaching styles, but he also directly quotes the teachers. The last line, “ ‘*You live in the United States, you speak English,*’ said the teachers” is powerful, and it is significant that Juan quotes the teachers as a collective group, which suggests that this was a pervasive discourse or school language policy followed by the teachers. He constructs this statement as one that the teachers would often say, through the use of the imperfective past tense ‘decían.’

Now we delve into the third level of positioning to consider the position of Juan’s sense of self in relation to dominant discourses and master narratives. In line 12, Juan switches into English for the voice of the teachers: “You live in the United States, you speak English.” In this code-switch, Juan ascribes an identity of arbiter of proper language use and oppressor of language choice to the teachers. In this switch, Juan also constructs his own ethnic identity as tied to the Spanish language. By code-switching, he depicts a social distance between himself and the teachers, as well as a distance from the ideology invoked (Mendoza-Denton & Osborne 2009). Also, by code-switching into English, Juan uses the oppressor’s discourse for his/her own purpose, with new intention. This is an example of ‘double-voicing’ (Bakhtin 1984) in the sense that Juan repeats the teachers’ words “You live in the United States, you speak English,” but the repetition is in order to demonstrate their attitudes, actions and ideologies. The words he is speaking do not reflect his own language ideology.

By aligning himself with Spanish and aligning the teachers with English, Juan’s narrative exemplifies the Herderian ideology of “one nation, one people, one language” (Hobsbawm 1990; Bourdieu 1991; Woolard 1998). Since speaking English is tied to American nationalism, the act of speaking Spanish constitutes a type of “sovereign betrayal” and “a symbolic threat to the social order” (Santa Ana, 2002, 237). Consequentially, the quoted language policy requiring people to speak English in the United States illustrates how “dehumanizing and marginalizing discursive practices ...devalue immigrant and ethnolinguistic minority languages, denaturalize nonethnic identity claims, and in general limit the types of identities available to ethnolinguistic minority subjects” (Carter, 2014, p. 236). Through the teachers’ quoted speech, Juan depicts English Only as the school policy, which is constructed as reflecting the nation’s linguistic policy, “You live in the United States...”. Santa Ana (2002) has argued that “English Only” is a linguacism, “an ideology and a set of institutional operations used to legitimate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources among groups... on the basis of language” (p. 237). Unfortunately, the reproduction of this power dynamic has actual far-reaching effects, including the intergenerational loss of Spanish in the U.S. (Zentella, 1997, p. 148).

*The Changing Linguistic Realities of Younger Generations*

The second recurring theme in the corpus is the “the changing linguistic realities of younger generations.” In the following narrative the interviewer asks Margarita about her children and whether they understand or speak Spanish. Margarita replies with a narrative about Johnny who learned the “pledge of legiance” in mexicano [New Mexican Spanish].

(2): “Pledge of Legiance”: Margarita (M) and Interviewer (I)

- 1 I: Y este, tiene .. hijos?
- 2 M: Oh yeah.
- 3 I: hijos que entiendan el .. español. que hablen español.
- 4 M: El -- uno de ellos es -- entiende poquitito. no mucho. el Lucas... Él le -- él le -- sabe dijir
- 5 la .. pledge of legiance to the flag in mexicano. ... En la escuela le enseñaron and he learned it. ..
- 6 and he knows it.
- 7 I: It's too bad that all they -- that's all they teach them.
- 8 M: That's all. Mhm.
- 9 I: Nada -- nada más de -- de su lengua, de su cultura.
- 10 M: De su lengua. Ojalá que les enseñaran más.

Translation

- 1 I: And um, do you have children?
- 2 M: Oh yeah.
- 3 I: Children that understand .. Spanish. That speak Spanish?
- 4 M: He – one of them is – understands a little bit. Not a lot. Lucas. He – he – knows how to
- 5 say the -- .. pledge of legiance to the flag in Spanish. ... In the school they taught him and he
- 6 learned it. .. and he knows it.
- 7 I: It's too bad that all they -- that's all they teach them.
- 8 M: That's all. Mhm.
- 9 I: Nothing – nothing more of – of their language, of their culture.
- 10 M: Of their language. I wish they would teach them more.

In this excerpt, the storytelling world and storyworld are framed by the prompting of the interviewer in lines 1 and 3, asking a question about whether Margarita has children, and then the follow up question of whether those children understand or speak Spanish. Margarita responds in line 4-6, narrating a storyworld that includes Lucas as a character. Lucas is described as knowing a little bit of Spanish, not a lot. Specifically, Margarita states that Lucas knows how to say the “pledge of legiance [sic].” The school is introduced as having taught this to Lucas, but Lucas is depicted as having an active role in learning and retaining this knowledge: “and he learned it... and he knows it”. The interviewer responds to the narrative in line 7 with a negative evaluation, suggesting that the school should teach more Spanish. Here again we note the role of the interviewer in co-constructing the narrative. Without the interviewer’s thoughts and opinions here, it is likely that the ending exemplum of the story could have been a positive note, pride in Lucas’ understanding. The interviewer’s expressed negative opinion of this learning as limited impacts Margarita’s subsequent turns of talk. In line 8, Margarita confirms that was all the school taught, echoing the interviewer’s words “That’s all.” The repetition of the interviewer’s exact words is an element of cooperative dialogue and suggests that Margarita’s style of speech prefers high engagement and interaction, and it may also signal a willingness to be influenced by her interlocutor. In line 9, the interviewer reiterates the negative evaluation of the school teaching of Spanish. In stating that they teach nothing more of their language, of their culture, perhaps the interviewer is checking that it is true that the school taught nothing beyond the pledge to Lucas. In line 10, Margarita again confirms that is the case by echoing the words of the interviewer “of their language.” Then, Margarita espouses a final exemplum to end the narrative, a wish that the school would teach more. Though phrased in an elided sequence here, it



is likely that Margarita means she wishes the school would teach more ‘of their language’ meaning Spanish or perhaps a combination of language and culture.

Throughout the interviews, families frequently referred to language shift, the use of less Spanish by younger generations. Often, the individuals would code-switch when quoting speech of younger family members. For example, Margarita notes that despite limited Spanish, Lucas “*knows how to say the pledge of legiance to the flag in ‘mexicano’ . In school they taught him. And he learned it... and he knows it.*” (Italics denote Spanish.) First, we note that it is common for New Mexican Spanish speakers to refer to the language they speak as ‘mexicano,’ which they often distinguish from Spanish that is spoken in the border areas or in Mexico (Dowling, 2005; Dolores González, 2005). Margarita’s switching to English to refer to the Pledge of Allegiance may reflect the association of the pledge with English-speaking American culture and the English language itself.<sup>1</sup> Even though Lucas learned to say the Pledge in Spanish, the Spanish version is a translation from English. Moreover, due to the child’s limited Spanish language proficiency, it is possible that Lucas did not understand the individual Spanish words he was taught, but was solely memorizing and repeating sounds.

Margarita’s narrative and the recitation of the Pledge in Spanish offers a particularly striking example of Bourdieu’s (1991) symbolic capitul, as Spanish gains capitul only when it is learned through school and for the purpose of the majority language and culture’s pledge of allegiance. At the same time, an analysis of the 2006 ‘Nuestro Himno’ controversy may offer an alternative perspective. Thirteen years after Margarita’s interview took place, Spanish became a national controversy when a Spanish version of the Star Spangled Banner gained popularity. At that time, President George W. Bush stated, “people who want to be citizens of the United States should learn English and ‘ought to learn to sing the national anthem in English’” (Vandehei, 2006). Carter (2014) aligns the ‘Nuestro Himno’ controversy with the Latino Threat Narrative (Chavez, 2008), depicting “U.S. Latinos as disinterested or unable to sing the national anthem in English” (p.213). In one case, New Mexican teachers instruct Hispanic heritage speakers to memorize a translated Spanish version of the pledge of allegiance, which is still common practice in New Mexico, and in the other, then President of the United States George W. Bush condemned a Spanish translation of the Star Spangled Banner. In both cases, though, it is clearly a top-down mandate of linguistic policies. Although the United States does not now and has never had an official national language or language policy, symbolic domination of English (Zentella, 1997) and "pressure against Spanish is a ubiquitous fact of American life" (Hill, 2008). Since Spanish is iconic for Latino ethnicity (Urciuoli 1996; Barrett, 2006), statements that link speaking Spanish to lack of respect, suspicious behavior or other negative traits, concomitantly link those traits to Latinos.

This narrative speaks to the fact that knowing Spanish is culturally valuable for non-Latinos, although it is often associated with costs for Latinos. In fact, linguists have long noted that schools in the United States undermine immigrant languages, although they also simultaneously struggle to teach these languages to non-native speakers (Fishman, 2004). Spanish in particular figures as a productive resource for Anglos and as cultural baggage for Latinos (Urciuoli, 1996; Zentella, 1997; Hill, 2008). In this excerpt we see this troubling reality play out among both Margarita and Lucas in the storyworld and the story-telling world. In the story-telling world, Margarita describes Lucas as understanding ‘a little,’ ‘not much.’ Based on the surrounding societal values for Latinos, this boosts Lucas’ status. It limits his ‘cultural baggage’;

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, many elementary schools in New Mexico continue this practice of reciting the Pledge in both English and Spanish. Thus, even children who do not speak any Spanish are familiar with both versions. This suggests that there may be an ongoing shift in how New Mexicans perceive the Pledge and the associations formed surrounding this ritual. Perhaps whereas it was previously associated solely with the English-speaking American culture, younger New Mexicans will associate it with a bilingual ritual.

after all, we assume if he doesn't know much Spanish, he must be quite fluent in English. Yet it is immensely unfortunate that in order to gain higher status, Latinos must lose a valuable and productive resource. As Zentella (1997) writes: "Why is the bilingualism of the well-to-do a source of linguistic security and a sought after advantage while the bilingualism of the poor is a source of insecurity and a disadvantage? How do we explain the fact that bilingual education is looked down upon as remedial program while many mainstream adults pursue second language studies?"

### *Crossing/Passing*

The final repeated theme in this subset of interviews was crossing and passing. These related yet distinct concepts are again defined as follows. Crossing is defined as "the use of language varieties associated with social or ethnic groups that the speaker does not normally 'belong' to" (Rampton, 1999), while passing is "the ability to be taken for a member of a social category other than one's own" (Bucholtz, 1995). Excerpt (3) is a narrative by Ricardo, a 56 year old from Albuquerque, relating his experiences with crossing and passing.

(3) "Ya casi no sabía que era mi idioma": Ricardo (R)

- 1 R: So me, yo orgullos ya comencé, ah, a trabajar pero cuando llegaba a Kansas allí por eso  
2 rumbos uh tuve- Me [sic] contaba que todos mis amigos eran gringos? Pues no, siempre andaban el  
3 camino con los gringos y ya aprendía su acento y aprendía hablar co- como ellos. Y ya despe-  
4 después uh, entraba ya un restaurante allí, ahí a la gente pues, uh, ya ya casi ya ya no sabía que que  
5 era, que era mi idioma mía. Y luego era mediogüero y muy blanco en ese tiempo pues también en  
6 esa aspecta pues también me los se equivocaban y no no sabía ni lo que era yo. Cuando llegué ir a  
7 México también allí querían hablarme en inglés los mexicanos poquito a poquito. No no crea pues  
8 está que me están hablando eh, en inglés. Pues yo soy mexicano. Pues, como es tan güero y como  
9 está tan blanco él, pero....  
10 I: No, no cara de gringo o algo. Y este allí, su español pues.

### Translation

- 1 R: So I I was proud I had begun, ah, to work but when I arrived to Kansas there in those parts uh I  
2 had- Did I tell [you] that all my friends were gringos? I always was going out with the gringos  
3 and I learned their accent and I learned to speak li-like them. And then aft- after uh I entered a  
4 restaurant there, there the people, well, uh they almost they they didn't know what what I was,  
5 what was my language. And then I was half- 'light-skinned' and very white at that time well  
6 also in that aspect well also I they made a mistake and they didn't know what I was. When I  
7 got to go to Mexico also there they wanted to speak to me in English the Mexicans little by little.  
8 Don't don't believe, well, this that is speaking to me eh in English. Well, I am Mexican. As he is  
9 so 'light-skinned' and as he's so white, but ...  
10 I: No, no face of a gringo or something. And that, your Spanish, so.

Narrative (3) is distinct from several of the others with regards to the involvement of the interviewer. Ricardo does most of the speaking; however, we must acknowledge that even without talking much, the interviewer plays a role in the construction of this narrative. As mentioned previously, all narratives are performed, especially in the context of an interview. The attitudes that the interviewer expressed earlier in the interview, facial expressions and gestures and many more contextual features may influence Ricardo's story-telling world. For example, earlier in the interview, the interviewer mentioned the fact that discrimination may exist in a different way today. This may impact the willingness of the narrator to approach the topic of race and skin color in this narrative.

The narrative quoted above is preceded by a story in which Ricardo recounts how he was given his job driving a truck up north, entrusted by a friend who had hurt his hand. For this reason he starts the story “yo orgullos” [I was proud] (line 1). His truck driving took him up to Kansas, which is the setting for the storyworld in the narrative quote above. In this storyworld, he situates not only himself but also ‘all’ his friends who he describes as gringos (line 2). In lines 2-3, Ricardo accounts that he learned ‘their’ accent and how to speak like ‘them,’ which can be interpreted as crossing: Ricardo learned to use a language variety that he himself describes as belonging to the gringos. By designating the accent as ‘theirs’ and the ways of speaking to ‘them,’ Ricardo distances himself and sets himself apart from his gringo friends’ ethnic/linguistic identity. He constructs contact and proximity always ‘hanging around’ or ‘going along’ with his gringo friends as a reason for his successful crossing (line 2-3). In line 3, Ricardo describes having learned ‘aprendía’ this accent and way of speaking (line 3). It is a skill which storyworld Ricardo purposefully enacts, rather than an accent that he has picked up. This demonstrates another key aspect of crossing as ‘the use of’ a certain language variety. It is not a site of language change or accommodation but a purposeful adaptation by an agentive speaker.

In lines 4-5, Ricardo switches to an account of passing. The setting is a restaurant. Ricardo mentions that the people didn’t know “what I was, what was my language.” In line 5, he constructs an explanation for their inability to judge his ethnicity, that he was half-light skinned and very white in the storyworld. In line 6 Ricardo describes the people in the restaurant as making ‘a mistake’, which is the moment of the narrative that provides confirmation that Ricardo indeed passed as a monolingual English speaker.

In line 7, Ricardo provides another example of passing. This time the storyworld is Mexico, and he recounts that the people in Mexico wanted to speak to him in English (line 7). Here Ricardo insists on his own identity, “Well, I am Mexican” (line 8). Then Ricardo changes stance and adopts the voices of the people in Mexico as they describe him and explain their confusion: “As he is so light-skinned and as he’s so white.” This explanation echoes Ricardo’s own justification for his ability to pass as a monolingual English speaker. In line 10, the interviewer responds by reaffirming Ricardo, stating that he doesn’t have the face of a gringo and he speaks Spanish. With these reasons, the interviewer suggests that others should know he is Mexican. The reasons provided are also significant as they point to language and phenotype, the exact same characteristics which Ricardo references in his story as enabling his incidents of passing.

In this quote, we see examples of both crossing and passing. First, the participant describes crossing, “learning how to speak like them”, followed by the instances of passing in which native English speakers mistook the participant’s identity, and the participant passed for a native speaker of English. The participant constructs a reason for this, stating that he was half-güero (referring to a person with light complexion or blond hair) and very white. However, he does not change his ethnic alignment but still maintains that these groups were mistaken; this suggests that despite several instances of passing, the participant continues to retain his identity as a Spanish-speaking member of the New Mexican community. This narrative, then, corroborates the importance of the Spanish language to Mexican American identity (Fought, 2010).

Ricardo’s experiences illustrate what is referred to in mixed race studies as the “incident” (Wallace, 2002): “a situation in which a mixed individual is challenged to defend or perform one of their affiliations or is confronted with an attempt to erase one of them” (Potowski, 2016, p. 153). Ricardo does not refer to himself as mixed race, but as he describes Ricardo from the storyworld, he highlights his light-skin and whiteness. Whether or not Ricardo is a mixed individual, Ricardo in the storyworld is presented as having potentially mixed race characteristics, which bring about the “incident.” In these two cases, Ricardo is confronted with an attempt at erasure, and he defends his ethnic identity.

Ricardo explicitly refers to an ideological link between language and ethnicity in order to justify his ethnic identity. Many scholars have examined this powerful association and how individuals may pass as group members solely based on their linguistic practices (Bucholtz, 1995; Bailey, 2000a; Fought, 2006; Potowski, 2016). In these “incidents,” language can be used as “a tool that can either reinscribe or subvert the ethnic identities assigned by outsiders (Potowski, 2016, p.357). In fact, Ricardo in the storyworld setting of the restaurant uses this very notion to explain why he passed as a monolingual English speaker in that context. The interviewer also uses language to defend Ricardo’s status and subvert the ethnic identity of a non-Mexican ascribed by Mexicans in the Mexico storyworld setting: “And that, your Spanish, so” (line 10).

Another important aspect of this excerpt is how Ricardo describes his physical features as a reason for his ability to pass. In these stories, we see examples of “lookism,” the act of an individual being defined by others’ perceptions about one’s physical features. The people in the restaurant who ‘didn’t know what [he] was’ and the Mexicans who ‘tr[ie]d to speak to [him] in English’ are practicing “lookism.” In fact the Mexicans espouse disbelief when Ricardo defends his ethnic identity ‘I am Mexican.’ This attempt at erasure is reminiscent of previous descriptions of “the incident” in which people challenge an individual’s own assessment of his or her ethnic identity (Potowski, 2016, p.174). Similar situations are especially common among Dominican Americans based on their phenotype and linguistic practices. Bailey (2000a) explains that the “everyday enactment of a Dominican American identity involve[s] negotiating disparities between self-ascription and other-ascription of identity, and resisting phenotype-racial categorization, a fundamental form of social organization in the U.S.” (p.556). As Bailey (2000a) notes, phenotype racial categorization is so fundamental to the social structures of the United States, that “incidents” such as those described by Ricardo are very common, especially in cases where an individual has a phenotype which does not match main stream society’s association with a certain linguistic or ethnic identity. These individuals are faced with frequent “lookism,” and in the face of these situations, they may choose to accept other-ascriptions of identities and the potential conflict site this creates with their own perceived ethnic-linguistic identity, or they may actively resist the others’ phenotype-based ascription, as Ricardo does when he states ‘I am Mexican’ (line 10).

#### 4. Conclusions

The close analysis of the performance of ethnic identity in New Mexican Spanish speaker narratives demonstrates how New Mexican Spanish speakers enact, ascribe and reject ethnic identities through code-switching, crossing and passing. Recurring and dominant themes related to the performance of ethnic identity in these narratives included a) the language of the oppressors, b) the changing linguistic realities of younger generations, and c) crossing and passing. The positioning framework from narrative studies (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 1997; Wortham, 2001; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) enabled the analysis of the multiple embedded contexts of the narratives: how narrators negotiate the identities of the characters in the storyworld; how the narrators position themselves with interviewers in the story-telling world, and how the storyteller positions the identity with regard to dominant discourses and national narratives in the broader societal context.

While similar in demonstrating the performance of ethnic identities, these three narratives are distinct. For instance, the narrators co-construct understandings with the interviewers to different extents. In (1), we see the interviewer as encouraging elaboration of the story and possibly influencing the final coda or exemplum. In (2), the interviewer and narrator are highly participatory in their dialogue with a quick succession of turns and repetition of the interlocutor’s phrasing. In (3) however, the interviewer responds at the end of the story only, while the narrator holds the floor for two narratives in succession. The narratives also differ with respect to the ethnic identities represented. In (1), Juan distances himself from

the discourse of the oppressor through code-switching, self-ascribing an ethnic identity as separate from the teachers and the espoused ideology: 'You live in the United States, you speak English.' In (2), Margarita portrays her grandchild Lucas as knowing a little Spanish, suggesting a loss of a language that is very closely linked to ethnic identity among Hispanics in the U.S. In (3), Ricardo describes instances of crossing and passing, which he attributes to his 'light-skinned' and 'very white' phenotype. Yet, here Ricardo rejects the identity of an English monolingual speaker which is ascribed to him through "lookism" by others.

The ethnic identities narrated in the storyworlds are also contextualized within national narratives and dominant discourses in society. In (1), Juan quotes the teachers as perpetuating the classic one-nation, one-language ideology, commonly referred to as English-only within the United States (Hobsbawn 1990; Bourdieu 1991; Woolard 1998). In (2), Margarita references the symbolic domination of English, the pressure against Spanish as well as the contradictory state of Spanish as 'cultural baggage' for Latinos but a resource for non-native speakers (Uriciuoli, 1996; Zentella, 1997; Hill, 2008). Last, Ricardo's (3) narrative amplifies the strong link between ethnicity and linguistic practices which allow for passing as well as how individuals with a phenotype that does not stereotypically match their ethnic identity confront "lookism," or an imposed ascription of a different ethnic identity by others.

These interviews demonstrate the longstanding impact of ethnically and linguistically charged conflict sites, especially since some of these narratives are remembered events from the past. Yet, in confronting these conflict sites, New Mexican Spanish speakers are figured as empowered to reject identities that are ascribed to them by others and enact ethnic identities on their own terms, often through the use of language. In doing so, the New Mexican Spanish speakers represent the characters in the storyworlds and themselves as active agents in the performance of their own ethnic identities. In these narratives, code-switching, crossing and passing are seen to be especially powerful resources for the performance of ethnic identities.

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