Immigrant Children and Youth’s Narratives of Racialization in Educational Contexts

Inmaculada García-Sánchez
Temple University, USA

Given the global nature of contemporary migrations, scholars have called for greater attention to the educational trajectories of immigrant children and youth from a cross-national perspective, as well as for comparative frameworks that “attend to how global politics frame the identities and everyday experiences of immigrant youth” (Gibson and Koyama 2011: 401). This is particularly important for children and youth from historically racialized immigrant populations that enter schools up against a number of social and linguistic inequalities. Heeding this call, this paper examines narratives of educational experiences of Moroccan immigrant children in southwestern Spain and Latino youth in a US western mountain state. The narratives analyzed were told in the course of ethnographic interviews (Briggs 2005; De Fina and Perrino 2011), as part of larger studies about the social and educational lives of these children and youth. Narrative is a sense-making activity that people use to imbue lived experience with meaning (Bruner 2002; Ochs and Capps 2001), as well as to claim and negotiate identities and relationships (De Fina 2003; Wortham 2001). Little attention has been paid, however, to immigrant children and youth’s use of narrative for ordering lived experience in relation to their emerging educational identities and trajectories. This paper focuses on how Moroccan immigrant children in rural Spain and Latino youth in the rural U.S. trace their own experiences of social exclusion/inclusion as relational processes with teachers and peers in educational contexts. Using sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology’s rich traditions of narrative analysis (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012; Ochs 2004), this paper explores how these children and youth emplot educational language practices in relation to experiences of racialization in school contexts. Investigating immigrant children and youth’s understandings educational practices in relation to their own educational trajectories and experiences is crucial for building solid comparative frameworks for action.

Keywords: Racialization, Immigrant Youth, Narrative.