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## Gendered Identity and Investment in Language Learning: A Case Study of Heritage Spanish Speakers

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# Gendered Identity and Investment in Language Learning: A Case Study of Heritage Spanish Speakers

## Abstract

Much of the existing research in second and heritage language acquisition (S/HLA) takes a traditional approach of focusing on the cognitive processes involved in S/HLA, as well as the resulting outcomes. A relatively recent approach that has emerged in S/HLA scholarship, however, relates the learner to the social world in terms of how sociocultural contexts may shape an individual's language learning experiences and their personal investment in the process. This emergent approach also challenges traditional categorical conceptions of identity, positing that it is dynamic, fluid, constructed, and negotiated in social contexts. Following this approach, my objective is to demonstrate how identity plays a role in heritage Spanish speakers' investment in language learning. Specifically, I rely on learners' narratives to look at how distinctive gendered identities and social expectations interact with heritage identity, and how they collectively may be contributing factors that shape heritage language learning in and outside of the classroom.

## Keywords

Heritage speakers, Spanish language, gender, mixed identity, higher education

## Disciplines

First and Second Language Acquisition | Spanish Linguistics

## Comments

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# Gendered Identity and Investment in Language Learning

A Case Study of Heritage Spanish Speakers

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# Overview

- Overview:
  - An examination of how identity plays a role in the learning experiences of heritage Spanish speakers
  - Gendered and heritage identity
- Motivation for study:
  - While many language acquisition studies focus on the cognitive and psychological aspects of acquisition processes and outcomes, only recently has there been a shift in focusing on the role of identity; in the 70s and 80s these studies approached identity as fixed, individual traits (Schumann, 1978, 1986)
  - Sociolinguistics - among other disciplines - has challenged the traditionally categorical approach to identity, proposing that it is more dynamic than it is invariant, and social contexts play a role in its construction and negotiation. In recent years, this approach to identity has made its way into research in second and heritage language acquisition (S/HLA) (Norton, 1999, 2000, 2013; Block, 2007; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2003; Menard-Warwick, 2009)

# Background: Identity and language learning

- Investment (Norton, 2000)
  - Investment is “the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language” and the extent to which they wish to learn and practice it
  - Norton argues that investment in acquiring a (second) language is also an investment in the learner’s identity, an identity that is always changing in time and space
  - Although Norton focuses on second language acquisition, the notion of investment is also relevant to heritage language learners, because regardless of how their language skills change, it involves a degree of - or lack of - investment in the heritage identities

# Background: gender and language learning

- Language learning is a social practice that - like all other social practices - can involve power inequities that stem from an individual's identity (gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.)
- These inequities can place learners in positions that silence or marginalize them, or exclude them in the classroom
- Gendered identity and language learning:
  - Classroom context: Menard-Warwich (2009): participants' narrations indicated that their gendered identities played an important role in their investment in learning English and in their classroom learning experiences
  - Outside of classroom: Ehrlich (1997) cites that there are differences in expectations regarding gender roles that pertain to language maintenance and linguistic traditions
  - For that reason, distinct identities and social expectations in terms of gender can play a role in learners' experiences, especially in the case of a heritage learner, who may carry an expectation of language maintenance

# Background: What is a heritage speaker?

- Valdés (2000): heritage speakers are individuals who:
  - Are raised in homes where a language other than the socially dominant language (English in the U.S.) is spoken
  - Are to some degree bilingual in the dominant language and the heritage language
  - Acquired the heritage language before or along with the dominant language, but did not “completely” acquire it because of the individual’s increased exposure to the socially dominant language
  - Demonstrate any degree of proficiency in the heritage language; significant variation of skill level among heritage speakers

# Present Study

- Research questions:
  - For heritage learners, what is the extent of investment in the heritage language?
  - How are their identities related to this investment in the heritage language?
  - How do different aspects of gendered identity interact with learning?



# Methodology: Participants

- Heritage learners enrolled in an intermediate level course specifically geared towards heritage Spanish speakers at a university in upstate New York
  - 10 participants
    - 4 males (2 of whom partially completed tasks)
    - 6 females (1 of whom partially completed tasks)

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Birth/move to U.S.</b>	<b>Heritage</b>	<b>Level</b>
Beatriz	female	18	U.S.	Dominican/Honduran	intermediate
Nico	male	18	U.S.	Salvadoran/Honduran	intermediate
Tania	female	19	Argentina; 4 years	Argentine	intermediate
Victoria	female	18	U.S.	Dominican/German	intermediate
Shana	female	20	U.S.	Peruvian/Mexican	intermediate
Juan	male	19	Peru; 2 months	Peruvian	intermediate
Lola	female	19	U.S.	Dominican	intermediate
Navarro*	male	21	U.S.	Dominican	intermediate
Danilo*	male	18	DR; 6 years	Dominican	intermediate
Marcela*	female	19	Colombia; 3 years	Colombian	intermediate

# Self-reported Spanish skills

Participant	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
Beatriz	9	8	8	8
Nico	9	9	8	9
Tania	6	6	8	9
Victoria	8	6	5	9
Shana	8	8	8	8
Juan	7	7	8	9
Lola	10	7	6	10
Navarro*	8	6	6	8
Danilo*	7	5	6	10
Marcela*	9	8	10	10

# Methodology: Tasks

- Interviews (2) and writing prompts (2) that involved discussing their heritage identities, how gender fits into and interacts with heritage identity, their linguistic investment, progress and experiences in the heritage language course
  - Interviews and writing prompts were initiated in Spanish, however participants were told that they could use English whenever it felt necessary or natural to them
- (Not included in analysis) Classroom observations (5)
  - Goal: examine how learners interact and participate
  - Not included in analysis: observations were made on days where lessons involved grammar, stylistics, readings from the textbook (other classes were dedicated to debates and presentations, which were graded assignments; did not want to interfere with student performance with recordings)

# Methodology: Analysis

- Emic approach: focusing on learners' varied perspectives on their language learning/use, and relying on their own understanding of what they are doing
- Individuals grouped based on similarities:
  - Nico, Juan, Danilo, Navarro (all male participants)
  - Beatriz, Victoria, Lola (all female participants, U.S. born and of Dominican/Dominican + other heritage)
  - Tania, Shana, Marcela (all female participants, Argentine, Peruvian/Mexican and Colombian heritage - all of which are less common in upstate New York)
- Comparisons and contrasts across participants - focusing specifically on gendered differences - in order to link these individual experiences to larger social structures

# Methodology: Analysis

- Thematic coding:
  - Upbringing and exposure to Spanish
  - Notable experiences in upbringing that shaped identity, attitudes, and beliefs
  - Family dynamics and expectations
  - Learning Spanish formally
  - Current motivations and attitudes

# Nico, Juan, Navarro\* and Danilo\*

- Exposure to Spanish:

- "Creo que la mayoría de mi pueblo era de...El Salvador, o hispanos...de mi escuela...mi *high school*...60% era hispano. Como yo jugaba fútbol mucho, conocían, (y) por la iglesia, yo hacía servicios comunitarios." (*sic*) Nico, Interview 1

I believe that the majority of my town was from...El Salvador, or Hispanic...from my school...my high school...60% were Hispanic. Because I played soccer a lot, I knew them, (and) through church, I used to do community service.

- "*Quando yo vine aquí*, like, I lived in a Spanish neighborhood, so like I didn't really...got exposed to an American culture...it was just like a Spanish community...it was *dominicana...puertorriqueños*, those two." Danilo, Interview 1

When I came here, like, I lived in a Spanish neighborhood, so like I didn't really...got exposed to an American culture...it was just like a Spanish community...it was Dominican...Puerto Ricans those two.

# Nico, Juan, Navarro\* and Danilo\*

- Notable experiences that shaped identity and attitudes:
  - "Cuando yo viajaba a Perú...no sabía español, y todo mi familia..me burlaba de mi...mis primos decían 'no puedes hablar español' y me sentía mal porque yo quería comunicar con ellos." *Juan, interview 1*

When I would go to Peru...I didn't know Spanish, and my whole family...they'd make of me...my cousins would say 'you can't speak Spanish' and it made me feel bad because I wanted to communicate with them.
  - "Entrando al país, no sabía nada de lo que se trataba de la español...me sentí avergonzado y sentí que no pertenecía." (*sic*) *Juan, essay 1*

Entering the country, I didn't know anything about Spanish...I felt ashamed and felt that I didn't belong.
  - "I feel like in other people's eyes you wouldn't be considered a true Peruvian just because you don't speak the language." *Juan, interview 2*
  - "Me sentía muy estúpido...soyo evité hablar el español...ellos me burlaban mucho...me sentía...diferente, porque ellos me llamaron el...americano...como insulto." *Navarro, interview 1*

I felt stupid...I avoided speaking Spanish...they'd make fun of me a lot...I felt...different, because they called me the...American...as an insult.



# Nico, Juan, Navarro\* and Danilo\*

- Family dynamics and expectations

- "Como mi padre ya está un poco viejo, mi hermano y yo hemos tomado el cargo de la casa...digamos, cortar la grama...nosotros lo hacemos ahora y eso nos ayuda a madurar mucho."  
*Nico, Interview 1*

**Since my dad is a little old, my brother and I have taken charge of the house...let's say, mowing the grass...we do it now and that helps us mature a lot.**

- "La única presión que quizás tengo es..aquí, en la universidad. Yo tengo que sacar mis notas porque....lo único que quieren ellos (padres) que lleve buenas notas a la casa." Nico, *Interview 1*

**The only pressure I perhaps have is...here, at the university. I have to get good grades because...the only thing that they (parents) want is that I bring good grades home.**

- "I feel like, the guys always have to be the ones to, you know, be upfront, like have the *pantalones*. (pants)" *Danilo, Interview 1*

# Nico, Juan, Navarro\* and Danilo\*

- Learning Spanish formally: motivations and experiences

- “Yo no podía traducir la letra medica a mi tía mayor. Yo no sabía como traducir las oraciones en español. Yo me sentía muy malo porque no podía ayudar...eso me motivó a mejorar me español.”  
*(sic) Navarro, Essay 1*

I couldn't translate a medical letter for my older aunt. I didn't know how to translate the sentences in Spanish. I felt very bad because I couldn't help...that motivated me to improve my Spanish.

- “Cuando hay una actividad que tiene que ver con...alguien de clase, como *partner*, y él sabía más español que mí...yo tenía vergüenza porque yo estoy en una clase de español...él piensa que yo debo saber...todo esto.” *Juan, Interview 1*

When there's an activity that has to do with...someone from class, like partner (work), and he'd know more Spanish than me...I'd feel ashamed because I'm in a Spanish class...he thinks I must know...all of this.

- “Si yo tengo la respuesta de una pregunta de la profesora..también quiero dar *chancea* los demás, pero si yo tengo la respuesta...yo siempre estoy disponible a responder.” *Nico, Interview 1*

If I have the answer to the professor's question...I also want to give a chance to the others, but if I have the answer...I'm always available to respond.

# Nico, Juan, Navarro\* and Danilo\*

- Current attitudes and motivations

- “Quiero aprender hablarlo mejor, para hablar con mi familia, para conversar con ellos, con mi familia en El Salvador...y también tengo deseo de ser maestro de español.” Nico, *Interview 1*  
**I want to learn to speak it better, in order to speak with my family, to converse with them, with my family in El Salvador...and also because I have a desire to be a Spanish teacher.**
- “Mi mantenimiento de mi lengua/cultura de herencia es importante porque *it gives me the ability* a comunicarme con mi familia y otras personas que hablan español.” Juan, *Essay 2*  
**My maintenance of my heritage language/culture is important because it gives me the ability to communicate with my family and other people that speak Spanish.**

# Beatriz, Victoria, Lola (U.S. born, Dominican)

- Exposure to Spanish:

- "Yo hablaba más en español y era con mi madre y mi papá. Porque hasta este día mi papá no habla mucho inglés...él entiende pero yo hablo con él en español todavía." *Beatriz, interview 1*  
**I spoke more in Spanish and it was with my mom and dad. Because even now my dad doesn't speak a lot of English...he understands but I speak with him in Spanish still.**
- "I feel like I lost a lot of like, my connection with that (Dominican culture) because I moved...after kindergarten to a much like, whiter part of the city, so most of my friends were white and like, my parents spoke to me in English because they didn't want me to like, fall behind um...in school. So...I forgot a lot of my Spanish, like, maybe between the ages of like, 6 and like 10, I mainly only spoke English, like I forgot a lot of my Spanish...So now..I don't know, I feel less connected to..like being Dominican, than when I was younger." *Victoria, Interview 1*
- "I spoke (Spanish) with my dad - until I was like, 4...he doesn't have like, someone in the house to talk Spanish to...and I kind of lost it." *Lola, Interview 1*

# Beatriz, Victoria, Lola (U.S. born, Dominican)

- Notable experiences that shaped identity and attitudes:
  - “All my cousins speak very good Spanish and like, I don’t...and they like to make fun of me...also, like, not being being fully Dominican...like...I don’t know, it just makes me more insecure that I don’t have like, that full identity or experience that all of my family did...like, all of my cousins heard it (Spanish) from both of their parents.” *Victoria, Interview 1*
  - "Yo conozco a muchas personas que dicen...que cuando ellos van a sus países...(I know a lot of people that say...that when they go to their countries...) they'll never be Dominican enough, or they'll never be Honduran enough...because they come here and...we've assimilated to American culture, so it's like we have part of that culture and then, because of that we won't be 100% like them." *Beatriz, interview 1*
  - “Mucho gente que hablan español ‘proper’ dirían que yo no puedo hablar español porque yo hablo como una dominicana. No pronuncio mis ‘s’ en algunas palabras, porque esto es la manera que yo *learned* español. También alguien me dijo que yo soy muchísima blanca y no puedo ser una dominicana según el color de mi *skin*.” (sic) *Lola, Essay 1*

A lot of people who speak ‘proper’ Spanish would say that I can’t speak Spanish because I speak like a Dominican. I don’t pronounce my ‘s’ in some words, because this is the way I learned Spanish. Someone also told me that I am really white and I can’t be a Dominican because of the color of my skin.

# Beatriz, Victoria, Lola (U.S. born, Dominican)

- Family dynamics and expectations

- "Like growing up, if like my legs were open, my mom would be like " *cierre las piernas*" you know, girls aren't supposed to sit like that...it's things like that, like girls aren't supposed to do this." *Beatriz, interview 1*
- "They're stricter with the girls than they are with the guys, like they let them do whatever they want, and all this stuff, and it's like encouraged for you to have a girlfriend if you're a guy and stuff like that. I know my cousin, like she came home one time and told them that she had a boyfriend and they like, lost it, like they don't want you to be doing anything, like be a little saint." *Lola, interview 2*
- "There's definitely an expectation for being macho for men, and like an emphasis on masculinity, but like, I don't think there's as much of an emphasis on femininity for women...men don't express emotion...men are like, the providers for the family...girls...you have to cook...cleaning, I guess..." *Victoria, interview 2*

# Beatriz, Victoria, Lola (U.S. born, Dominican)

- Learning Spanish formally: motivations and experiences
  - "Como no es mi primer idioma me cuesta hablar a veces y no quiero que eso me pare de enseñar a mis hijos." *Beatriz, essay 2*

Since it's not my first language it's hard for me to talk sometimes and I don't want it to stop me from teaching my children.
  - "We're also dealing with things that like...that like we can relate to...this is stuff that we like, experience, that we've witnessed, that we've lived through...like, they talk about immigration a lot and..like...the majority of us know people who have - who are immigrants, or who have parents who are immigrants, or even are immigrants...so like, that's a topic that's very like, important to us." *Beatriz, interview 1*

# Beatriz, Victoria, Lola (U.S. born, Dominican)

- Current attitudes and motivations

- “Yo creo que es importante a mantener su lengua y cultura de herencia...es importante para mucho gente, especificamente hijos e hijas de inmigrantes, porque ellos tienen un connecion muy fuerte a su país de herencia, debe a sus padres. Es muy importante para mi, porque yo quiero que mis hijos hablan español, y tienen un identidad dominicano.” *(sic) Victoria, Essay 2*

**I believe it's important to maintain one's heritage language and culture...it's important for a lot of people, specifically children of immigrants, because they have a very strong connection to their heritage country, due to their parents. It's very important for me, because I want my children to speak Spanish, and have a Dominican identity.**

- “Espero que cuando soy mayor, puedo hablar en español con mis hijos...es muy importante a mi que yo puedo pasar mi lengua y herencia *to the next generation*. Espero que ellos no necesitan aprender español en escuela y entienden todo...porque yo hablaba con ellos.” *Lola, Essay 2*

**I hope that when I'm older, I can speak with my kids...it's important for me to be able to pass my language and heritage on to the next generation. I hope that they don't need to learn Spanish in school and understand everything...because I spoke with them.**



# Shana (Peruvian/ Mexican, U.S. born), Tania (Argentine), Marcela\* (Colombian)

- Exposure to Spanish

- “Mi primera lengua es español, pero una vez que empecé a ir a la escuela...aprendí el inglés, pero en casa siempre, siempre se habla el español...bueno, con mi hermano pequeño, entre nosotros hablamos inglés, pero mis padres no me dejan hablar con ellos en inglés, siempre tengo que hablar español.” *Tania, interview 1*

**My first language is Spanish, but once I started to go to school...I learned English, but at home, Spanish is always, always spoken...well, with my little brother, between us we speak English, but my parents don't let me speak English with them, I always have to speak Spanish.**

- “La mayoría era español en la casa...hasta...la edad de 5, no, 7...cuando era niña...no me gustaba mi español, porque... *well*, la única razón era mi acento americano.” *Shana, interview 1*

**The majority was (in) Spanish at home...until...the age of 5, no, 7...when I was a girl...I didn't like my Spanish, because...well, the only reason was my American accent.**

- “Yo solo usaba español en casa...mis padres hablan español, mi mamá casi no habla el inglés, así que la única forma de comunicarme con ella es con el español, y mi papá, él puede hablar los dos, pero es mejor hablar en el español.” *Marcela, interview 1.*

**I only used Spanish at home...my parents speak Spanish, my mom almost doesn't speak English, so the only way to communicate with her is with Spanish, and my dad, he can speak both, but it's better to speak in Spanish.**

# Shana (Peruvian/ Mexican), Tania (Argentine), Marcela\* (Colombian)

- Notable experiences that shaped identity and attitudes:
  - “Creo que hay mucha ignorancia...primero porque no me veo como la típica hispana, o no es que hay un...*look*...no hay una típica hispana pero mucha gente, cuando me ve, nunca va a pensar que no soy...americana...cuando se enteran que soy judía, y dicen que ‘no eres de Argentina’ y digo, ‘sí..y también soy judía.’ Y no entienden que puede ser las dos cosas...me pasó en secundaria que...en clase nativos...entra una maestra de *substitute* y pregunta, “ *Oh what are you, the gringa of the class?*”  
*(sic) Tania, interview 2*

I believe there’s a lot of ignorance...first because I don’t look like a typical Hispanic, or it’s not that there is a...*look*...there is no typical Hispanic but a lot of people, when they see me, they’ll never think that I’m not...American...when they find out I’m Jewish, and they say that ‘you aren’t from Argentina,’ and I say, ‘yes...and ‘I’m also Jewish.’ And they don’t understand that you can be both. It happened in high school that...in this class for natives...the substitute teacher comes in and asks, ‘Oh, what are you, the gringa of the class?’”
  - “Acá soy diferente de los americanos, y allí soy diferente de los argentinos...estoy en dos cajas..”  
*Tania, interview 1*

Here I’m different from Americans, and there I’m different from Argentines...I’m in two boxes.

# Shana (Peruvian/ Mexican), Tania (Argentine), Marcela\* (Colombian)

- Notable experiences that shaped identity and attitudes (cont.):
  - “Cuando yo fui a Peru con mi madre y abuela en 2016, y todos decían que mi lengua no era el mejor... todos del lado de mi madre criticaron porque yo tenía un acento americano. Me siento como una desconexión con la cultura peruana porque había una frontera y la frontera era mi español. *I felt upset*. No podía comunicar con mis primos como antes porque *I was frustrated all the time*... cuando el resto de mi familia *made fun of my Spanish*, ya no quería hablar español” (*sic*)  
*Shana, essay 1*

When I went to Peru with my mother and grandmother in 2016, and everyone said that my language wasn't the best... everyone from my mom's side criticized because I had an American accent. I feel a disconnection with Peruvian culture because there was a boundary and that boundary was my Spanish. I felt upset. I couldn't communicate with my cousins like before because I was frustrated all the time... when the rest of my family made fun of my Spanish, I didn't want to speak Spanish anymore.

# Shana (Peruvian/ Mexican), Tania (Argentine), Marcela\* (Colombian)

- Family dynamics and expectations

- “La edad para um, tomar...es diferente para los hombres...*and I'm like*, por qué?..porque a 18 años, ellos pueden tomar cerveza con la familia, pero si yo tomo cerveza a 21, me miran como *like, what are you doing?...I'm like*, los chicos pueden tomar, pero yo no...eso es la parte mexicana, *like, I don't know*. Yo no sé por qué ocurre, porque estamos en los Estados Unidos y también tiempos están cambiando...oh, y la mujer sigue el hombre. *Like always. Terrible*...no debes ir a una fiesta sin tu novio o sin tu esposo... *like*...si no tienes tu novio *or* esposo a tu lado, *like*...es una...*like*, soltera *or...a really bad one though*...por qué? Y...si sales con muchos amigos...pareces como una *slut type...it's just like, no*. Son mis amigos, pero...los hombres pueden salir hasta la mañana y no hay un problema.” *Shana, Interview 2*

The age for drinking...it's different for men...and I'm like, why?...because at 18 years old, they can drink beer with family, but if I drink a beer at 21, they look at me like, what are you doing?...I'm like, the boys can drink, but I can't...that's the Mexican side, like I don't know. I don't know why it happens, because we're in the U.S. and also times are changing...oh, and women follow the men. Like always. Terrible...you mustn't go to a party without your boyfriend or without your husband...like...if you go out with a lot of (male) friends...you're like a slut type...it's just like, no. They're my friends, but...men can go out until morning and there's no problem.

# Shana (Peruvian/ Mexican), Tania (Argentine), Marcela\* (Colombian)

- Family dynamics and expectations (cont.)
  - “Mi papá es como machista, él cree mucho en que los hombres tienen más poder que las mujeres y todo eso. Um, yo soy más como feminista, entonces él y yo peleamos bastante sobre eso porque él dice que...como mujer, tengo que estar en casa, cocinar, y cuidar a los niños...pero yo creo que yo puedo ser...no tengo que ser ama de casa solamente porque soy mujer, yo puedo salir, tener mi propia trabajo *full-time*, y el..mi marido puede cuidar a los niños. *Like*, yo no creo tanto en *gender roles* así, *I just think of what's fair, what's good for both, what works*...mi hermano no gusta cuando yo hablo de feminismo, porque dice que "*it's annoying, shut up.*" (sic) *Marcela, interview 1*  
**My dad is like, macho, he believes that men have more power than women and all that. Um, I'm more of a feminist, so he and I fight quite a bit about that because he says that...as a woman, I have to stay at home, cook, take care of the kids....but I believe that I can be...I don't have to be a housewife just because I'm a woman. I can go out, have my own full-time job, and the...my husband can take care of the kids. Like, I don't believe so much in gender roles, I just think of what's fair, what's good for both, what works...my brother doesn't like it when I talk about feminism, because he says that "it's annoying, shut up."**

# Shana (Peruvian/ Mexican), Tania (Argentine), Marcela\* (Colombian)

- Learning Spanish formally: motivations and experiences
  - “So, yo quiero um..(ser) una abogada de inmigración y después de eso quiero ser una juez, *a judge*, soyo quiero perfectar mi español para poder ser..*bilingual lawyer*.” (sic) Marcela, interview 1  
So, I want to (be) um...an immigration lawyer and after that I want to be a judge, a judge, so I want to perfect my Spanish in order to be...a bilingual lawyer.
  - *Yo creía tal vez(I thought maybe)*...like, we'll talk *más de identidad(more about identity)* and like, how you associate with yourself with the Spanish world, or like how maybe like, um...like you get made fun of for being a bit more of this culture than that, you know? – Shana, interview 1

# Shana (Peruvian/ Mexican), Tania (Argentine), Marcela\* (Colombian)

- Learning Spanish formally: motivations and experiences (cont.)
  - “Como mis antepasados son de Europa, me veo más americano y no como una hispana o latina. Muchas veces me ha pasado que alguien no confiaba en mis habilidades en español, o que una maestra o profesor pensaba que no debería estar en su clase por la manera en como me veo.” *Tania, essay 1*

As my ancestors are from Europe, I look more American and not like a Hispanic or Latina. A lot of times it's happened to me that someone doesn't trust my abilities in Spanish, or that the teacher or professor thought that I shouldn't be in their class because of how I look.
  - “Hoy tuvimos que leer un...era un cuento de comunión, entonces, *like*...no puedo participar en esta parte, porque no tengo...experiencia...o hablamos de... la Pascua, y la Pascua judía, él habló de las dos fiestas, pero después...tuvimos que leer artículos y solamente puso el Pascua, y no de la Pascua judía...no me sentí mal, pero...no podía asociar con las otras.” *Tania, Interview 2*

Today we had to read a...a story about communion, so, like...I can't participate in this part, because I don't have...experience...or we talk about...Easter, and Jewish Easter. He talked about both holidays, but afterwards we had to read articles and he only posted Easter, not Jewish Easter....I didn't feel bad, but...I couldn't associate with the others.

# Shana (Peruvian/ Mexican), Tania (Argentine), Marcela\* (Colombian)

- Current attitudes and motivations

- “Es importante para mantener el español y mi cultura de herencia porque quiero que las generaciones siguientes recuerdan de su lengua/cultura de herencia. También, es una cosa que se da algún identidad, es algo que da una diferencia. Lengua/cultura de herencia da una historia y es un recuerdo de donde eres/un origen.” *Shana, Essay 2*

**It's important to maintain Spanish and my heritage culture because I want the next generations to remember their heritage language/culture. Also, it's a thing that gives one some identity, it's something that makes a difference. Heritage language/culture gives a story and it's a memory of where you are from/an origin.**



# Common Themes

- Not identifying completely with heritage group: “not pure”/ “not 100%”
  - Because of language skills
  - Because of having more than one (heritage) identity
- Motivations:
  - Wanting to improve productive skills - speaking/writing. None of the participants express having difficulty understanding
- Double identity:
  - heritage identity + American identity
  - Those who have more than one heritage identity tend to relate to one more than the other (due to exposure)
    - Beatriz, Nico, Victoria, Shana  
Tania (Argentine and Jewish)

# Gendered Contrasts

- Nearly all participants identified contrastive gender roles for males and females - particularly within a context of heritage culture
  - Some of the female participants contested these roles, though Shana was the most vocal
- While all participants discuss the value of heritage language maintenance, only the female participants (almost all) refer to language maintenance in relation to children and their future as mothers

# Pedagogical implications

- What does this mean for heritage language programs?
  - While heritage language learners can be contrasted against L2 learners in terms of their linguistic differences, heritage learners as a group also come from diverse backgrounds (linguistic and sociocultural), which shape their relationship with their heritage identity and heritage language
  - Unequal social processes (gender, race, etc.) can place learners in positions that silence them or exclude them in the classroom
  - As educators, we need to be mindful of these differences and inequities in order to create inclusive learning environments

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