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Identity Construction and Language Use by Immigrant Women in a Microenterprise Development Program

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Identity Construction and Language Use
by Immigrant Women in a Microenterprise Development Program

by

Linda Eve Bonder

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Portland State University
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Abstract

Researchers have explored immigrant identity in various contexts, but few studies have examined identity in low-income immigrant women entrepreneurs. To address this research gap, I conducted in-depth interviews with eight low-income Latino immigrants who were starting their own businesses and receiving support through a local microenterprise development program (MDP). The study explored how participants' microenterprise efforts affected their identities and their investments in learning English.

The research found that entrepreneurship promoted positive identity construction by providing opportunities for participants to develop personal and cultural pride, strengthened parental roles, and interdependence with the community. These benefits helped participants decrease family stress and increase optimism for the future, regardless of the microenterprises' financial success. Participants reported that their families were healthier and their children were doing better in school, suggesting a broad impact beyond the business owner. This finding indicates that MDPs and other social service programs should have explicit goals related to increasing participants' symbolic resources. In the language-learning realm, this study introduced the construct *relationship with English*, extending Norton's (2000) notion of investment in language learning. The *relationship* construct encompasses the situated nature of immigrants' English use, investment in learning, and feelings about using English. The businesses helped most participants improve their relationship with English by providing motivation and

informal learning opportunities. The non-English speaking participants improved their relationship with English by finding ways to *use* English even without working on their ability to speak. This finding suggests that social service agencies, ESL programs, and employers should broaden their view of immigrants' capabilities to use English and to invest creatively in their own learning. Another significant finding was that participants demonstrated signs of internalized racism, which can make it hard for immigrants to see their own strengths. New research could help MDPs and other social service providers address internalized racism and decrease its negative impact on identity construction. Looking ahead, long-term studies of MDP participants could help optimize program design, extend learnings to other types of programs, and help providers, policymakers, and funders allocate resources for maximum effect.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	5
Immigration and the Promise of Microenterprise.....	5
Microenterprise Development Programs	7
Entrepreneurship and Concepts of Identity.....	11
Identity and MDP Participation.....	13
Identity and Investment in Language Learning.....	14
The Importance of Qualitative Research.....	15
Toward an Understanding of MDPs for Latina immigrants	16
Research Purpose and Questions	17
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	20
Context.....	20
Study origins.....	20
Fuerte: a non-profit organization.....	22
A critical worldview.....	24
Dialogues in Action (DIA) interview protocol.....	26
Procedures	28
Research participants.....	28
Data collection.....	30
Data analysis and interpretation.....	34
Trustworthiness.....	39
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion.....	41
Profiles of Research Participants.....	41
Constructs	44
The microenterprise journey.....	44
Community of practice.....	44
Intrinsic and emergent elements of identity.....	45
Intrinsic Elements of Identity	46
Passion for learning.....	47
Perseverance.....	48
Emergent Elements of Identity.....	51

Pride.	51
Relationship with English.	61
Self's roles.	71
Feelings about the Future	90
Optimism's link to identity.....	93
Answering the Research Questions	94
Chapter 5: Implications and Recommendations	98
Operationalizing Identity	98
The Role of Pride	99
The Importance of Giving Back	101
The Rewards of "Pink Collar" Businesses.....	101
Internalized Racism and the Immigrant Lens.....	103
A New Approach: "Relationship with English"	104
Capitalism and Critical Theory.....	107
Understanding MDPs' Long-Term Impact	108
Limitations	108
References	111
Appendix A: Intended Impacts and Indicators	117
Appendix B: Theory of Change	118
Appendix C: Interview Guide for MDP Participants	119
In English	119
In Spanish.....	120
Appendix D: Interview Guide for Fuerte Staff Members	122

List of Tables

Table 1. Studies Cited in this Literature Review.....	19
Table 2. Profiles of Research Participants.....	42

List of Figures

Figure 1. The Dialogues in Action triangle of human capacities.....	26
Figure 2. The complete Dialogues in Action “heart triangle”	27
Figure 3. Operationalized Model of Identity.....	36
Figure 4. Intrinsic and emergent elements of identity.....	46
Figure 5. Elements of participants’ relationship with English.....	69
Figure 6. Operationalized Model of Identity with identity elements demonstrated by participants.....	99

Chapter 1: Introduction

Why should we favor any immigrants, especially with the country's financial trouble? I think it is time for this country to focus its resources on the people who are born and raised in the country. Consider that over a third of people born here do not have health insurance, and that many are losing their homes and have no jobs. Why should we be concerned about immigrants? — Posted by M Dalton (*New York Times*, 2008).

The above question was posted by a *New York Times* reader in November 2008 to be answered by Jonathan Bowles, then director of the Center for an Urban Future. The post was part of an article about ways in which local governments could support immigrant-run businesses; the reader apparently disagreed with the premise that governments should support immigrant-run businesses at all. In a 382-word response, Bowles explained that immigrant entrepreneurs could revitalize cities, stimulate economies, provide jobs, and bring in badly needed tax dollars. In Bowles' words, immigrants could be “entrepreneurial spark plugs . . . transforming once-depressed neighborhoods into thriving commercial centers” (*New York Times*, 2008).

I found two things interesting about this approach to the question. First, as Bowles admitted in his answer to another reader, most immigrant businesses and in fact most businesses regardless of owner “never grow beyond the mom-and-pop stage” (*New York Times*, 2008, para. 9). Perhaps groups of mom-and-pop businesses could help

revitalize cities, but Bowles' spark plug metaphor seemed a bit overstated. Even more interesting to me was that the answer focused purely on benefits for the economy overall, without any mention of the impact for the immigrants themselves. While the economic focus was likely the right tact to take based on the tone of M Dalton's question, it was certainly not the first thing that came to mind for me. All I could think about were the individual immigrants, arriving without money and without knowing English. I did not understand how they could manage to start a business or how they could look after their families while doing so. It seemed to me that wage-based employment would be more straightforward and would provide a steadier paycheck than entrepreneurship. I thought that relying on income from a new business would be risky for someone trying to get a toehold in a new country.

What I learned from the current study was that, for many low-income immigrants and women immigrants in particular, starting a business may be the only viable option. Over the last 15 years, many researchers have found that low-income immigrant women in the US face considerable barriers to wage-based employment: general discrimination against women and immigrants, language and cultural difficulties, low education levels, and family responsibilities (Bowles, 2009; Duque, 2012; Edgcomb, 2003; Pearce, 2005; Pearce, Clifford & Tandon, 2011; Robles & Cordero-Guzman, 2007; Sanders, 2004; Smith-Hunter, 2004; Soto, 2002). As a result, these women often feel "pushed" (Duque, 2012) to start their own businesses despite the risks and uncertainty involved.

Given the challenges that aspiring business owners face, microenterprise development programs (MDPs) have emerged to provide training and access to resources (Aspen Institute, 2010; Banerjee, 2001; Catholic Charities, 2011; Dumas, 2010; Duque, 2012; Inaba, 2000; Kim, 2012; Raheim, 1997; Sanders, 2004; Strier, 2010). Servon (2006) found that there were over 550 MDPs in the US. A 2015 Aspen Institute study reported that, out of 134,000 individuals being served by 130 microenterprise organizations, 72% were women, 83% were from traditionally disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups, and 87% had family incomes at or below 80% of their local median income (“FIELD data highlights,” n.d.). These numbers suggest that low-income immigrant women form a significant participant base for microenterprise programs. However, as my literature review shows, only one prior study examined the impact of MDP participation among that population.

To address this research gap, I conducted in-depth interviews with low-income Latino immigrants participating in an MDP on the west coast of the United States. My goal was to explore how these immigrants expressed their identities as they talked about their experiences as entrepreneurs, interactions with their family and community, visions for the future, and use of English. My interview questions and analysis were guided by poststructuralist views of identity as dynamic, multiple, and constructed through social interaction.

This study adds to the field of applied linguistics in that today’s applied linguists are concerned with “language-based problems in real-world contexts” (Grabe, 2010, p.

10). Grabe (2010) discussed many real-world focus areas in the field including language inequality related to ethnicity, class, and gender. Similarly, other applied linguists have highlighted the importance of “contexts and experiences of language use” (Heigham & Croker, 2009, p. 4), and basic, day-to-day issues related to language use in the community (Perry, 2011).

The current study addresses real-life language use in three ways: by exploring the identities of immigrants who face language-based employment barriers and have started their own businesses, by examining how participants express their identities as they report on their lives, and by investigating whether and how microenterprise and MDP participation affect investment in language learning. The connection between language and identity is important; people use language to negotiate both their sense of self and their access to experiences that shape their relationship with the world (Norton, 1995).

This study begins with a review of the literature in the primary areas of concern: immigration, microenterprise, identity, and investment in language learning. The following chapters explain the research methodology, findings and links to theoretical constructs, and implications of this work for the study of identity and for MDPs and other social service programs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section reviews prior research related to a number of key concepts. First, I present data showing the importance of studying immigrant employment. I then explain how researchers portray microenterprise for immigrant women and review conflicting studies about the effectiveness of microenterprise development programs (MDPs). Next, I show how MDPs fit into feminist poststructuralist theory, present models of identity that guided my research, and explain how identity relates to language learning. Finally, I review prior works that argue for a qualitative approach to exploring identity, and I summarize the clear need for this investigation.

Immigration and the Promise of Microenterprise

Immigration from Latin American countries has garnered national attention as the U.S. Latino population has soared (Da Fina, 2003). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Latino population was 55 million in 2014 and was projected to reach 119 million, 29% of the nation's population, in 2060 ("FFF: Hispanic Heritage Month," 2015). Looking beyond the numbers, Da Fina (2003) pointed out that immigration "is important because of its economic, social and psychological impact" (p. 2), and that immigrant issues have become a prominent topic of debate in the media and in political arenas.

The increasing numbers of immigrants in the US have led to new research about employment barriers for foreign-born residents. Studies have shown that many U.S.

immigrants have been pushed to start their own businesses because language limitations, cultural misunderstandings, discrimination in hiring and pay, and family responsibilities have made steady, wage-based employment virtually unattainable (Bowles, 2009; Duque, 2012; Edgcomb, 2003; Pearce, 2005; Pearce, Clifford & Tandon, 2011; Robles & Cordero-Guzman, 2007; Sanders, 2004; Smith-Hunter, 2004; Soto, 2002). Pearce (2005) reported that “every decennial census taken in the US since 1880 has reported a higher level of self-employment among immigrants than among the native-born” (p. 24). As of 2013, there were 944,000 Latina-owned U.S. businesses, a 180% increase over 1997 (American Express OPEN, 2013). “Latinas” are women from Latin America; “Latinos” are men or mixed-gender groups of Latin Americans.

Very small businesses, such as those started by new immigrants, are often seen as an approach to alleviating poverty (Edgcomb, 2003; Kim, 2012). In 1996, when the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act limited the duration of cash welfare payments, policymakers, government agencies, and non-profits looked to microenterprise as a promising welfare-to-work strategy (Banerjee, 2001; Catholic Charities, 2011; Kim, 2012). Defined as businesses that employ up to five people (Edgcomb & Klein, 2005; Inaba, 2000, Servon, 2006), microenterprises have been hailed by policymakers, politicians, and researchers as a way to revitalize neighborhoods and energize rural areas (Bowles, 2009; D’Errico, 2003; Dumas, 2010; Duque, 2012; Pearce, 2005; Smith-Hunter, 2004). Bowles (2009) argued that support from government

agencies, non-profits, chambers of commerce, and business assistance groups could help immigrant-owned small businesses become economic growth engines.

Despite the promise of microenterprise, many challenges prevent low-income people and immigrant women in particular from accessing its potential. Language barriers, cultural differences, and limited access to capital, role models, and job training all affect immigrant business success (Edgcomb, 2003; Pearce, 2005; Raheim, 1997; Robles & Cordero-Guzman, 2007; Sanders, 2004; Smith-Hunter, 2004). Robles and Cordero-Guzman (2007) pointed to the irony that, while low-education levels often push Latino immigrants toward self-employment, those same low-education levels make it difficult for many Latino small businesses to succeed. These factors make the present study about Latina entrepreneurship important and timely.

Microenterprise Development Programs

Eager to deliver on the promise of microenterprise for alleviating poverty, government agencies and non-profits have attempted to address the challenges of low-income entrepreneurs through microenterprise development programs (MDPs). MDPs are based on the premise that people who might emerge from poverty by starting their own businesses often lack the skills, experience, resources, and support systems needed for success. To address these issues, MDPs provide a combination of small business training, mentoring, coaching, and networking, along with access to business loans, marketing support, and technical assistance (Aspen Institute, 2010; Banerjee, 2001;

Catholic Charities, 2011; Dumas, 2010; Duque, 2012; Inaba, 2000; Kim, 2012; Raheim, 1997; Sanders, 2004; Strier, 2010). Without such programs, “many immigrant business owners take bad advice from friends, family, or accountants, and make costly mistakes. Others turn to professionals who speak their language but who take advantage of them” (Bowles, 2009, para. 10). Although it is difficult to know the exact number of MDPs in the US, in March 2016, the Aspen Institute’s web site showed that nearly 550 microenterprise organizations had submitted data for Aspen Institute studies since 2008 (“FIELD data highlights,” n.d.).

Despite the interest in MDPs since 1996, there is disagreement about whether they are effective for poverty alleviation. Sanders (2004) studied female microenterprise owners (not specifically immigrants) by comparing business longevity and income levels of MDP participants and non-participants. She found that MDP participants were significantly more likely than non-participants to have businesses that were still running after five years. However, she also found that business longevity did not affect overall family income and likewise did not affect whether or not women moved out of poverty. Despite those disheartening conclusions, Sanders noted that longer running businesses may offer non-financial advantages such as continuous work history, autonomy, and flexibility. Her study was purely quantitative, however, and did not explore such factors.

Other studies have used qualitative research methods to look beyond the financial impacts of MDP participation. Raheim (1996, as cited in Banerjee, 2001) interviewed 120 participants in a five-state microenterprise demonstration project and found that

MDP participation produced both economic and psychosocial benefits such as increased confidence, self-esteem, and sense of control. Dumas (2010) also conducted qualitative research that revealed positive impacts of MDP participation in terms of self-esteem, empowerment, social network, and knowledge about business—in addition to increased income. Dumas concluded that, although the MDP she studied was in its early years and a larger sample size was needed to draw generalizable conclusions, the MDP was helping participants start their own businesses, move toward self-sufficiency, and advance Boston's inner-city neighborhoods.

In an Israeli study, Strier (2010) interviewed 15 low-income women entrepreneurs participating in an MDP. His participants were not specifically immigrants, however, two-thirds of them were ethnic Mizrahis, the Israeli majority group whose members earn 30 percent less, on average, than people of the Ashkenazi ethnic minority (Strier, 2010). Strier found that microenterprise provided a way around the barriers posed by wage-based employment and that MDP participants “perceived the microenterprise as a space for self-definition and as an outlet for expressing their oppressed identities” (p. 195). Despite these positive attributions, Strier concluded that family responsibilities, cultural expectations, and difficulties obtaining credit limited the success of women's microenterprise efforts. Nevertheless, Strier's interviews suggested a connection between microenterprise and identity development, a central issue for my study.

Ehlers and Main (1998) also drew negative conclusions about the MDP that they studied, although they articulated a different set of issues. Their primary concern was that the MDP reinforced woman participants' tendencies to choose "pink collar" businesses—small-scale, barely profitable, home-based businesses based on gender-specific work that they were already doing—such as childcare and food preparation—rather than businesses with more growth potential that would help the women make contacts and find resources beyond family and friends. Ehlers and Main found that the MDP they studied was not preparing women for the real challenges of business ownership nor for practically integrating business ownership with their personal needs and family roles. Other studies have echoed this criticism (Kim, 2012).

Unique among MDP qualitative researchers, Inaba (2000) focused on low-income immigrant women. Inaba found that women in the Mi Casa MDP that she studied were strongly motivated and dedicated to making their businesses successful. Inaba's participants talked explicitly about increases in self-esteem, control over their future, and ability to achieve their goals, especially as compared to their prior experiences on welfare. This was despite the fact that the women had not yet seen financial gains from their businesses and that even minimal business income caused them to lose welfare benefits related to childcare, health insurance, and rent subsidies. Inaba noted, "even as their businesses were failing, most of the women I interviewed praised Mi Casa for what they were doing and regarded their experience at Mi Casa as personally uplifting" (p. 138).

Entrepreneurship and Concepts of Identity

The exploration of MDPs as a response to immigrant women's employment barriers fits into the domain of feminist poststructuralism. As explained by Norton (2000), feminist poststructuralism "explores how prevailing power relations between individuals, groups and communities impact on the life chances of individuals at a given time and place" (p. 124). MDPs aim to limit the impact of such power relations by enabling participants to start their own businesses (Banerjee, 2001; Raheim, 1997; Strier, 2010). As discussed above, qualitative studies suggest that MDPs provide not only technical business tools but also psychosocial tools like self-confidence, feelings of control, and self-esteem. These factors are part of the feminist poststructuralist notion of identity.

Norton (2000) described identity as "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). In Norton's view, individual agency, social interaction, and structural conditions all play important parts in the dynamic construction and reconstruction of a person's identity. She concluded that identity is not a fixed feature of an individual but rather a characteristic that is continually adapting based on a person's interaction with the world. This poststructuralist concept of identity or one similar to it has become a central tenet for many researchers in applied linguistics and in sociolinguistics more specifically (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Darwin

& Norton, 2015; Morgan & Clark, 2009; Norton, 1995; Norton & Tooe, 2011; Sacklin, 2015; Tarhan & Balban, 2014; Wenger, 1998).

In addition to observing continual identity development (Norton, 2014), researchers have documented how individual immigrants often switch back and forth between multiple identities. Machado-Casas (2012) studied identity through in-depth interviews with 30 U.S. immigrants from indigenous communities in Latin America. She found that each of these mostly undocumented immigrants moved fluidly between and among three identities. First, at home with their families, they spoke their indigenous language and acted according to their indigenous culture and customs: “I feel that I cannot lose my Otomí language. It is the language I use to feel, love, care, and in many cases think” (p. 541). When interacting with the U.S. Latino community, the indigenous immigrants exercised a second identity, speaking Spanish and behaving according to mainstream cultural norms of their country of origin. This identity helped them avoid the marginalization of indigenous people by Spanish-speaking compatriots that exists in much of Latin America and in Spanish-speaking immigrant communities elsewhere. The indigenous immigrants adopted a third identity for interacting with English-speaking Americans; they purposefully used language and mannerisms to show that they were long-time U.S. residents to avoid attracting attention from immigration police. Machado-Casas found that “outside identities ensure physical and social survival; home identities ensure private cultural survival” (p. 547).

Seilhamer (2013) also found that immigrants exercised multiple identities related to language and social interaction. His study analyzed Internet blog postings made by individuals who had lived away from their country of origin. “I am a different person in each language, adapting myself to the culture of the people who speak it,” one person wrote. Another writer found that he was more self-deprecating when speaking Japanese than when speaking his L2 English, and a third person said that she was more outgoing in L2 English milieus than with Mandarin-speaking Taiwanese friends. Some bloggers had been told that their facial features and body postures literally changed when they switched languages. Seilhamer attributed these changes to accommodation, a partly conscious/partly unconscious attempt to decrease social distance. Although perhaps less dramatic than the survival needs of indigenous immigrants, Seilhamer’s findings echoed Da Fina (2003), Machado-Casas (2012), Norton (2014), and others who found that immigrants constructed and switched between multiple identities to interact successfully in their multiple worlds.

Identity and MDP Participation

The question of multiple and evolving identities is particularly salient for this research about immigrants and entrepreneurship. Da Fina (2003) found that “construction of a new identity is a vital process for immigrants” (p.143) as they experience the new and changing relationships that come with establishing a home in a new country. Rigg and O’Dwyer (2012) discussed the impacts that starting a business

had on an individual's identity. They described entrepreneurial aspects of identity as “emergent and relational, developed through dialogue with others—family, customers, employees, suppliers, competitors” (p. 324). Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop (2013) also found that entrepreneurship was an important factor in identity development. Their study of immigrant women in the Netherlands showed how individuals worked through intertwining identity issues dealing with gender, ethnicity, and small business ownership.

Participation in an MDP adds another dimension to immigrant identity development. By dedicating time to a formal business-training program, immigrants put themselves in a position to explicitly learn new skills and interact with new people: “Learning is viewed as a process of participation in a variety of social worlds, and the learner is seen as someone...whose changing knowledge, skills and discourse are part of a developing identity” (Rigg & O’Dwyer, 2012, p. 323). Similarly, Norton (2011) argued that learning increases a person’s cultural capital, often changing the way the person sees him- or herself. Norton proposed that people “place themselves by engaging in societal practices in innovative ways” (p. 427); those “innovative ways” could be read to include entrepreneurship. This suggests that participating in an MDP and starting a new business would impact an immigrant’s identity development.

Identity and Investment in Language Learning

Many researchers have seen an intricate link between a learner’s identity and his or her investment in language learning (Menard-Warwick, 2004; Norton, 2013; Sacklin,

2015; Tarhan & Balban, 2014). Norton (2013) discussed investment as “the complex relationship between language learner identity and language learning commitment” (p. 2). She argued that social power structures affect language learning opportunities and impact immigrants’ investment in language learning. Researchers have also found that a woman’s gendered identity as a mother can push her to invest more in learning English (Menard-Warwick, 2004; Norton, 2013). These issues were salient for the present study because my participants, low-income immigrants who were starting small businesses, had changing opportunities and needs to interact with English speakers. They experienced new perspectives on community power structures and may have sought new ways to advocate for their businesses and families by improving their English.

The Importance of Qualitative Research

As discussed above, qualitative studies have revealed psychosocial benefits of entrepreneurship for people in poverty (Dumas, 2010; Ehlers and Main, 1998; Inaba, 2000; Raheim, 1996, as cited in Banerjee, 2001). In fact, researchers with a critical perspective have often relied on qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, narrative inquiries, and ethnographies (Heigham & Croker, 2009; Norton, 2013). Critical theorists have used qualitative research to give voice to those who have been typically unempowered, underrepresented, and/or stereotyped by broad, statistical brushes (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Thus, qualitative research has helped grow our

understanding of individual experiences, perspectives, and dynamics (Da Fina, 2003; Inaba, 2000; Menard-Warwick, 2004; Norton, 2013).

Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for exploring MDP participant identity. Using Norton's (2013) concept of identity as dynamic, variable, and socially dependent, it would be difficult and inappropriate to attempt an understanding of identity through statistics and rigidly administered questionnaires (Da Fina, 2003; Inaba, 2000; Norton, 2013). In his discussion of prior research, Inaba (2000) found that "the use of quantitative close-ended questions provided descriptive statistics that are of limited value if one wants to understand what microenterprise means to the participants" (p. 43). Similarly, Strier (2010) and Da Fina (2003) both found that qualitative methods were important for learning about the inner lives and feelings of marginalized communities.

Toward an Understanding of MDPs for Latina immigrants

Servon (2006) described MDPs as being at a crossroads, requiring more study for providers and policymakers to increase MDP impact. Other researchers agreed, including Inaba (2000) and Strier (2010), both of whom called for more qualitative research to understand the non-economic effects of MDPs on identity, power relations, and microenterprise success. Robles and Cordero-Guzman (2007) decried the current lack of understanding about Latino small business owners in particular and recommended studies to evaluate the impact of community-based MDP organizations.

After searching databases of peer-reviewed journals, reading over 25 articles about microenterprise development, and scouring articles' reference lists, I concur with Inaba (2000), Robles and Cordero-Guzman (2007), Servon (2006), and Strier (2010) about the dearth of qualitative studies about MDP impact for low-income immigrants. Of studies published within the last 20 years, I found that only Duque (2012) and Inaba (2000) had researched immigrant-focused MDPs, and the Inaba study alone focused on an MDP for low-income immigrant women. Table 1 compares the parameters of all of the studies cited in this literature review; the Inaba study is listed in bold.

Research Purpose and Questions

In light of the research gaps described above, this investigation explored identity in low-income Latina women participating in an MDP specifically designed for their population. The program was run by a non-profit organization based in a town that is home to a sizeable Latino population on the outskirts of a West Coast metropolitan area. To protect the privacy of research participants, I have called the organization *Fuerte*, which means "strong" in Spanish. The MDP is part of Fuerte's portfolio of interconnected programs that promote empowerment and healthy living for low-income Latina women and girls. To support the broader Latino community, Fuerte allows men to participate in the MDP, although approximately 65% of participants are women. I interviewed six women and, for contrast, two of Fuerte's male participants.

Specifically, this study explored the following research questions:

1. How do participants in the Fuerte MDP express their identity as they talk about their personal abilities and interactions, newly developing businesses, contributions to the community, and visions for the future?
2. Do participants' stories and explanations suggest that their identities were affected by their entrepreneurship and MDP participation? If so, how?
3. Do participants' stories and explanations suggest that their investment in learning English was affected by their entrepreneurship and MDP participation? If so, how?

This study's research questions, methodology, and analysis were guided by Norton's (2000) concept of identity: "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5).

Table 1
Studies Cited in this Literature Review

Study	Year	What was studied	Focus on low income	Focus on women	Focus on immigrants	Qualitative study
Aspen Institute	2012	Data from 25 U.S. MDPs	31% low-income	56% female	no	No: examined mainly demographic data about participants
Banerjee	2001	1 Kansas City pilot MDP	yes	no	no	Yes: interviewed MDP participants, staff and partners
Dumas	2010	Center for Women & Enterprise, an MDP in MA	yes	yes	no (4% Hispanics)	Yes: interviewed 55 MDP participants
Duque	2012	ProMicro, an MDP serving NY/NJ	no	no	yes (all Colombians)	Mixed method, including 33 qualitative interviews
Ehlers & Maine	1998	MicroFem, an MDP in the western US	yes	yes	26% immigrants	Yes: interviewed 56 MDP participants
Inaba	2000	Mi Casa, an MDP in Denver	yes	yes	yes	Yes: interviewed 13 MDP participants and 4 administrators
Raheim	1996	MDP participants in 5 US states	yes	no	no	Yes: interviewed 120 MDP participants
Sanders	2004	7 U.S. MDPs	yes	yes	no	No: compared income levels of MDP participants and non-participants
Servon	2006	MDP providers & experts in the US	yes	yes	no	Yes: interviewed 35 people (MDP providers, researchers, experts, not MDP participants)
Strier	2010	Women in an MDP in Israel	yes	yes	no	Yes: interviewed 15 MDP participants and 15 non-participants

Note: This table shows MDP studies that I chose to cite in the literature review based on their recency (published within the last 20 years) and relevance to my research. Inaba (2000), bolded here, is the only study I found that was focused on low-income immigrant women.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter is divided into two parts: context and procedure. The context for this research was an American non-profit organization with a mission to empower Latina women and girls. The organization, which I call “Fuerte” to protect participants’ identity, ran a microenterprise development program (MDP) for low-income Latinas who owned a small business or were trying to start one. Fuerte allowed men to participate in the MDP to provide support for the entire Latino community. The study explored identity development and English language use by Fuerte’s MDP participants who were in various stages of their entrepreneurial effort. The Context section explains my relationship with Fuerte and provides background on the organization and on the staff members whose insight contributed to my findings. The Procedure section lays out the processes used for selecting participants, conducting interviews, and analyzing and interpreting the data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study’s methods with regard to trustworthiness.

Context

Study origins.

I learned about Fuerte in the spring of 2015 and was immediately interested in its mission of empowering low-income Latina women and girls. The organization’s target population was a great match for my passions, as I have spent considerable time and energy over the past 10 years learning Spanish, visiting Latin America, and becoming a

teacher of English for speakers of other languages. Therefore, when it was time to identify a thesis topic, I approached Fuerte to see whether they could use my help.

As it happened, Fuerte had recently received a charitable foundation grant that required a qualitative study as part of its evaluative component. The staff members' research goal was to examine the impact of MDP participation and small business ownership on the low-income Latina immigrants that they worked with. They were particularly concerned with understanding their program's real effect on participants' lives as opposed to simply counting numbers of participants and hours of training. I was interested in immigrant identity, and we all agreed that exploring identity in MDP participants would serve both their purposes and mine.

I was initially concerned that the Fuerte staff would want to see only positive findings, but they made it clear that this was not the case. Their organization was committed to qualitative impact assessments not only, as they put it, to *prove* that their programs were working but also to *improve* areas that were not working or not working well enough. Their investment was extensive. A trustee, the executive director, and their grants manager had completed a year-long program to learn and apply an interview protocol called Dialogues in Action (DIA; see the DIA section below for more information). Fuerte had conducted an organization-wide training on the protocol and had already completed two DIA-based program assessments. Learning about Fuerte's investments and their *prove/improve* mindset gave me confidence that they were looking for honest participant feedback.

Over the following nine months, I led a small team of Fuerte staff members to research the impact of their MDP on participant identity and language use. I conducted eight in-depth interviews and used the data both to write my thesis and to produce a separate report for Fuerte. My work was strictly as a volunteer; I did not receive any compensation or other benefit. The above-referenced grant paid for staff time in this effort.

Fuerte: a non-profit organization.

Fuerte was started in 2002 with a mission to help low-income Latina women and girls improve quality of life for themselves, their families, and their community. Since its founding, the organization has worked with over 3000 families on the outskirts of a West Coast city in an area with a sizeable Latino population. At the time of this study, 25 staff members and dozens of volunteers were serving over 650 families through programs for adult and early childhood education, youth development, community engagement, and microenterprise development. Of the organization's \$1 million annual budget, one third came from government contracts, one third from charitable foundations, and the remainder from business sponsors, individual donations, and program service fees.

The Fuerte Microenterprise Development Program (MDP).

At the time of this study, the Fuerte MDP was providing small business training and resources to approximately 65 current and aspiring Latino entrepreneurs each year, two-thirds of whom were women. The MDP had three main objectives, as articulated in its *Intended Impacts and Indicators* (see Appendix A):

- Primary: for participants to become engaged and capable entrepreneurs with the confidence and ability to run successful triple bottom-line businesses.
- Secondary: for participants to develop personal strengths such as self-confidence, resilience, optimism for the future, and self-advocacy that help increase their personal and family well-being.
- Tertiary: for participants to contribute to community well-being through leadership, collaboration, solidarity with others, and community participation.

Twice each year, the Fuerte MDP offered a 10-week business development course that covered fundamentals such as creating a business plan, setting prices, understanding costs, and marketing to customers (Fuerte business class handouts, 2015). The course was marketed through word-of-mouth and social media and was open to all comers; Fuerte charged \$50 per participant to help cover expenses and increase student commitment. All aspects of the program encouraged participants to develop a sustainable business focused on the notion from sustainability research of a “triple bottom-line”: people, profits, and planet. Course graduates could opt to continue their training by joining the Fuerte Business Network for \$100 per year. Fuerte provided Network members with comprehensive business development assistance including individual coaching, networking and marketing opportunities, and access to capital through outside partnerships. For members starting food-based businesses, the program also provided access to commercial kitchen facilities and food-based marketing opportunities.

Participants in this study were all Fuerte Business Network members who had graduated from the course and were running or planning to start small businesses.

Fuerte staff members.

I worked with a core group of five Fuerte staff members. My primary contact was the grants manager, a Fuerte employee for over five years who was involved in the organization's two prior impact studies. She was a native English speaker with advanced Spanish capability, having lived in two Latin American countries. The second core team member was the manager of Fuerte's MDP. He had emigrated from Mexico and worked in Latino-focused non-profits in the US for over 10 years. The third team member was an MDP business coach from Mexico who had worked at Fuerte for five years and had been teaching adults for 15 years. He was instrumental in the preparatory stages of this research but left the organization just before the interviews began. Upon his departure, two other staff members joined our research team; they were both native English speakers who were fluent in Spanish and had worked in the Fuerte MDP for four years. Unless otherwise noted, references to Fuerte staff members refer to these five people.

A critical worldview.

By its nature as a non-profit focused on empowering low-income immigrants, Fuerte brought a critical worldview to its work. The staff members clearly shared this worldview as did I: that low-income immigrants are disadvantaged by societal forces and that purposeful action is needed to counter those forces and to help immigrants build on their potential.

This position is fully articulated by the *Theory of Change* statement that I developed with the Fuerte team (see Appendix B). Theory of Change is a concept used by non-profit and governmental organizations to describe their guiding principles and the social changes they seek. At a basic level, Theory of Change statements explain how and why an initiative is expected to work (“Theory of Change,” n.d.). In an organization focused on helping people, a Theory of Change generally articulates key beliefs about program participants that propel the organization to design and evaluate their programs in certain ways.

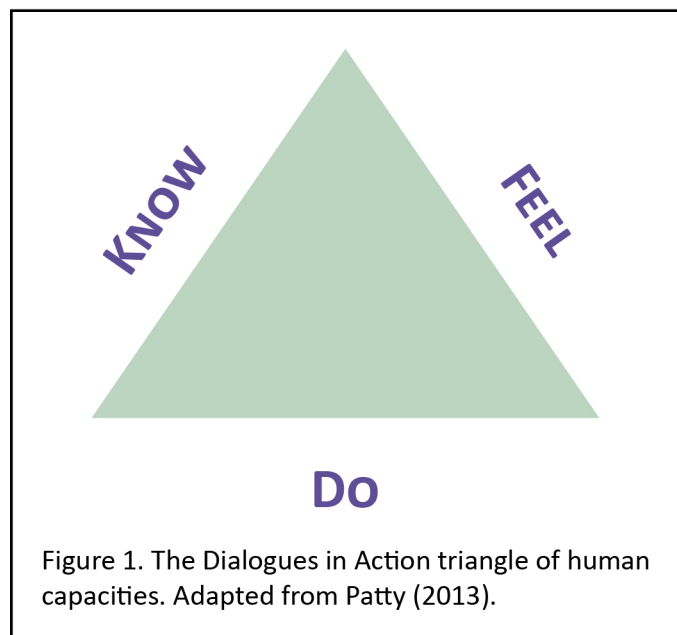
The Fuerte MDP Theory of Change asserted that the organization provided “culturally responsive services designed to help each participant build on his or her capacity and achieve success.” The statement articulated a belief that, through entrepreneurship, participants could gain knowledge and self-confidence, develop interdependence, and provide leadership for their communities.

I was interested in Fuerte’s work largely because I shared its worldview and believed in its approach. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of this study, I clearly held an outsider perspective. Although I was warmly welcomed by the Fuerte team, I did not have a desk in their office, did not know most of the faces I saw there, and had little insight into what my Fuerte teammates did on a day-to-day basis. Before I conducted my interviews, my only interaction with the Fuerte program participants had been at a distance: observing business training classes and attending the Fuerte farmer’s market to build my background knowledge for this study. I was not invested in getting positive

program feedback, was not being paid for my work, and had no commitment to Fuerte other than this research. This etic perspective allowed me to focus on what the data did and did not say. In fact, as we discussed the findings, Fuerte staff members commented that I was raising issues that they had not thought to articulate; those issues had become part of their scenery and yet were newsworthy to me.

Dialogues in Action (DIA) interview protocol.

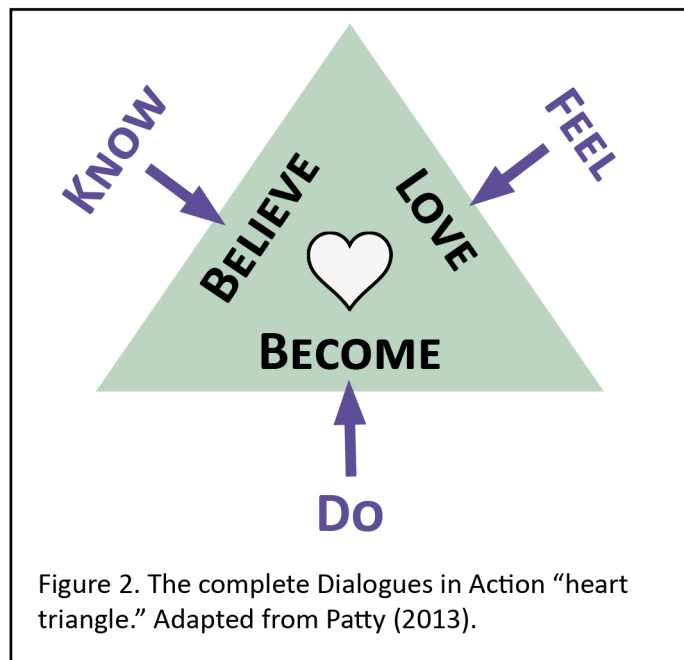
Fuerte wanted our team to use the DIA protocol because they had used it for two other impact studies and wanted a consistent approach. DIA was developed by Patty (2013) to help organizations evaluate the impact of their work through in-depth interviews. The protocol was based on the premise that human beings have three main capacities: mental (thinking, reasoning, reflecting), emotional (feeling, desiring, sensing), and behavioral (doing, acting, reacting). DIA represents each of these capacities on a side of an equilateral triangle: Know-Feel-Do (see Figure 1). The three sides together represent not only human capacities but also the ways in which humans react to their experiences—by knowing, feeling,



and doing. The triangle's equal, connected sides indicate that these reactions were all equally valid and could lead to or reinforce one another.

As important as Know, Feel, and Do are in the DIA model, Patty contended that they represent mainly superficial or short-lived reactions to an experience. DIA asks organizations to examine their more durable impacts, those that affect a person's inner core, passion, and motivation. The DIA model therefore shows the Know-Feel-Do capacities *outside* the triangle, each with a deeper desired impact *inside* the triangle (see Figure 2). Specifically, the model portrays that:

- When knowledge is deeply embedded, it becomes part of a person's belief system—Know on the outside leads to Believe on the inside;
- When feelings are deeply rooted, they grow into passion and love—Feel



- on the outside leads to Love on the inside;
- When a behavior grows into a habit, it changes a person's identity—Do on the outside is Become on the inside.

The model shows a heart in the center and is known as the *Heart Triangle* to emphasize that durable changes touch people at their core.

A DIA interview guide.

With any DIA-based research such as this thesis, the Heart Triangle's *outside* and *inside* capacities form the basis for sets of interview questions. The first question of each set focuses "outside the triangle," activating schemata for the participant and asking about Know-Feel-Do types of reactions. The next questions in the set go "inside the triangle," exploring Believe-Love-Become reactions such as motivations, feelings, and attitudes. Thus, each aspect of a participant's experience is explored through an *outside/inside* set of Heart Triangle questions. The interviews are semi-structured so that researchers may ask additional clarification and follow-up questions.

Procedures

Research participants.

This study used two groups of research participants. The main group consisted of eight members of the Fuerte Small Business Network. At the time of this study, the Network had approximately 40 members, 65% of whom were women. I felt that a sample size of eight would allow me to see a range of experiences while keeping the data quantity realistic for my timeframe and project scope. My goal was to interview participants with similar types of businesses so that I could compare how they talked about their products or services. Within those business types, I sought some variety of experience: participants

who received regular one-on-one coaching and others who did not; some whose businesses were well underway and others who were still in the planning stages. I also wanted to interview a few male Network members to potentially highlight any factors unique to the women entrepreneurs.

To recruit participants, the manager of the Fuerte MDP made personal phone calls to eight women and three men that he felt would fit our criteria and be willing to participate in the study. One woman did not respond, and one woman and one man scheduled interviews but did not show up. I completed interviews with six women and two men. Three of the women owned cleaning businesses; the three other women and the two men owned or were planning food-based businesses.

The second group of research participants consisted of my four Fuerte staff members: one Latino man and three Caucasian American women. All of these participants had at least advanced proficiency in both Spanish and English and had years of experience with the Fuerte MDP.

Participant protections.

This methodology was approved by the IRB at Portland State University, case #153587. As part of the consent process, each participant signed an informed consent in Spanish when he or she arrived for the interview; the Fuerte business coaches felt that all participants had strong enough literacy skills to understand a form presented to them in Spanish, and I saw no evidence to the contrary. In addition, I verbally emphasized to the participants that they could refuse to answer any questions, could end the interview at any

time, and would be represented only by pseudonyms in all notes and in this thesis. None of the participants cared to choose his or her own pseudonym, so I chose names that were common in Mexico in the timeframe of each participant's birth.

Data collection.

There were two main steps in the data collection process: interviewing MDP participants and interviewing Fuerte staff members. This section describes my procedures for each set of interviews in turn.

MDP participant interviews.

Developing the interview guide.

The Fuerte team and I jointly developed a guide for the MDP participant interviews. Working together helped ensure that the questions would be relevant to participants while supporting the research goals. Developing questions in advance also allowed us to discuss any difficult translation issues (see more on this below). As suggested by the Dialogues in Action (DIA) protocol, we developed interview questions in sets. Each set began with an *outside the triangle* question about an aspect of business or personal activities. This was followed by *inside the triangle* questions to explore feelings, motivations, and depth of personal commitment. For example, to examine optimism about the future, the *outside* questions asked about visions of the future for their business and their family. The related *inside* questions asked about opportunities and challenges they foresaw as well as how they felt when they thought about the future.

Once we had a solid draft of the interview guide and had integrated feedback from the Fuerte executive director, we used a multi-step process to translate the draft into Spanish. First, the Fuerte team and I—two native Spanish speakers and two native English speakers—discussed and got outside input on how to handle some of the difficult-to-translate concepts such as the term “to advocate.” I drafted a translation using this input, had a native Spanish-speaking staff member edit my work, and reexamined the language to ensure that the final translation communicated our group’s intended meaning. I then conducted a pilot interview with an MDP participant, refined several questions for clarity and research relevance, and revisited the translation with the team’s native-Spanish speakers. See Appendix C for the final interview guide in English and in Spanish.

Interview procedures.

With each MDP participant, I used the interview guide to conduct and audio-record a one-on-one, 45-to-75 minute semi-structured interview. I raised every topic with every participant and asked many follow-up questions as well. I often addressed topics out of order to follow the discussion’s most natural path. As each interview progressed, I adapted questions for relevance to participants’ varied businesses, stages of business development, and family situations. During the interviews, I focused on listening actively, working through the interview guide, and asking relevant follow-up questions. I took field notes afterward as I listened to and transcribed the audio recordings. This process was important since I was conducting the interviews in my second language; it

would have been difficult for me to take extensive notes and conduct fluid conversations at the same time.

During my interactions with the participants, I aimed to create as low stress an environment as possible. I believed this was essential for showing respect toward the interviewees and for producing reliable data that reflected the participants' true feelings. To that end, I conducted the interviews in Fuerte conference rooms that were convenient for and familiar to participants. I met each participant in the reception area, greeted them warmly, and engaged in small talk as we walked to the conference room. As we sat down, I continued establishing rapport with quips about the weather, a pretty sweater, children, or whatever seemed appropriate. I made sure that the participant and I sat at adjacent sides of the table rather than across from one another to encourage a feeling of friendly conversation rather than interrogation. I shared a little about myself and about the research project, asked whether they had any questions, and then went through the informed consent process. I also asked their permission to record the interviews, explaining lightheartedly that it would be difficult for me to listen and simultaneously take notes in Spanish. That explanation and the fact that I was clearly not a Spanish native speaker may have shown my willingness to be vulnerable and encouraged them to do the same.

I transcribed each interview within days of its occurrence. As I transcribed, I noted changes in participant tone, relative rates of speech, the apparent nature of pauses, repeated themes within each interview, and comparisons to prior interviewees. I wrote all

transcription notes in English, which made them easy to distinguish from the Spanish interview data.

Interviews of Fuerte staff members.

The interview guide.

My goal for interviewing Fuerte staff members was to gain additional context for understanding the MDP participant interviews. The staff members had extensive experience with low-income Latino entrepreneurs and understood a lot about their circumstances, culture, and motivations. I felt that the staff members would be able to provide background and additional examples that would enrich my data analysis and interpretation. Nevertheless, I wanted to ensure that my findings were based in the data and not overly influenced by the Fuerte staff members' ideological positions. To that end, I completed an extensive analysis of the MDP participant data and developed preliminary interpretations before interviewing the staff. My interview guide asked the staff members to think about specific elements of identity and whether or not they saw evidence of those elements in program participants. In several cases, after some initial discussion of a concept, I shared a preliminary finding or data point and asked the staff members to comment. See Appendix D for the interview guide used with staff members.

Interview procedures.

I met with the staff members as a group rather than one-on-one so they could discuss and either support or counter one another's comments. I conducted the interview in English since all of the staff members were either native or advanced English speakers.

I audio recorded the session so that I could be an active participant without worrying about notetaking. I listened to the recording two days later, took extensive field notes, and transcribed the elements that seemed most relevant. Since these participants were professionals and had a high level of interest and investment in the study, my first question on a topic often generated discussion that obviated the need for subsequent questions on that subject.

Data analysis and interpretation.

The MDP participant interviews yielded over nine hours of recordings and 82 single-spaced pages of transcripts. Throughout my analysis and interpretation work, I kept all participant speech in Spanish and made all interview and analysis notes in English. Using the two languages as such made it easy to ensure that participant speech did not get confused with my analysis and interpretations. Keeping participant speech in Spanish also ensured that I was analyzing actual participant statements rather than translated interpretations of those statements (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In addition, as I moved data into thematic categories, I kept all participant speech carefully coded with each speaker's pseudonym and transcript timestamps. With this system, I saw every piece of evidence in context, and it was easy to see where the evidence came from to support any particular theme.

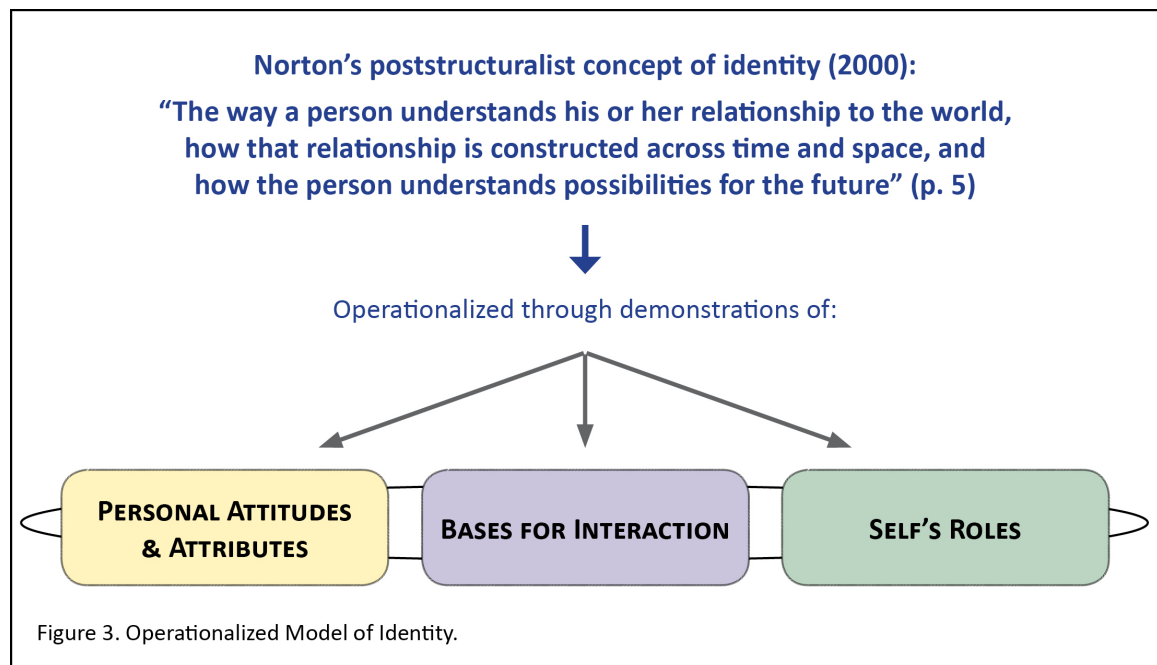
I used an alternating *micro/macro* process to analyze the data. *Micro* meant reading through the detailed data to look for evidence related to my research questions. *Macro* meant stepping back to create a model, look for connections between themes, or evaluate

the completeness of a theme or interpretation. The next section explains the primary macro model that I developed for finding identity-related evidence. Following that, I explain how I used the model and other techniques as part of my micro/macro approach.

Operationalized Model of Identity.

From the time I worked on the literature review through to my first read of the data, I felt the need for an operationalized definition of identity. Although other researchers had explored identity through participant interviews (Banerjee, 2001; Dumas, 2010; Duque, 2012; Ehlers & Maine, 1998; Inaba, 2000; Raheim, 1996; Strier, 2010), the link between poststructuralist identity constructs and interview-based evidence seemed vague. I wanted an explicit operationalized model that would help me identify evidence of identity development in the data.

To create the Operationalized Model of Identity (see Figure 3), I combined concepts from my literature review sources, the Duarte Theory of Change, the Duarte intended impacts, my first read through of the data, and my own research questions. The model is anchored by Norton's (2000) identity construct: "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). Under this construct, the model shows three categories of evidence for how people demonstrate their understandings. The categories are open, in that other researchers may find additional themes that fit into each one. The categories are also neutral, valuing both positive and



negative evidence. The model shows a ring linking the categories to indicate that they are interdependent, each one contributing to the others.

The first category shown in the model is Personal Attitudes and Attributes. As discussed in my literature review, personal attributes such as self-confidence and self-esteem are aspects of the poststructuralist notion of identity; people develop attitudes and attributes based on their understanding of the world and of how they fit into it. Those understandings also impact a person's view of the future, as suggested by Norton's definition. For example, a person who sees herself as successful relative to others seems more likely to express positive attitudes and optimism as compared to a person who sees herself as a failure.

The model's second category is Bases for Interaction. This relates to Norton's (2000) assertion that a person's relationship with the world is "constructed" (p. 5)

through interaction. In addition, Rigg and O'Dwyer (2012) postulate that “changing knowledge, skills and discourse are part of a developing identity” (p. 323). Those two concepts together suggest that knowledge, skills, and discourse form the bases for interaction that help a person construct his or her identity.

The model's third category is Self's Roles. This category reflects Norton's focus on an individual's perception of him- or herself with respect to others. The category heading is purposefully open-ended to encompass evidence of a person's role wherever and whenever he or she might interact.

Theme development.

I had read through the data set once before stepping back to create the Operationalized Model of Identity. Once I had the model in hand, I returned to my micro lens and worked my way through the data set multiple times. I used a “data first” approach, looking at each participant story and explanation and considering whether it fit into any of the model's categories or was otherwise relevant to my research questions. This allowed me to check the completeness of the model inductively and to identify emergent themes—several of them completely unanticipated—in each category.

For each theme that emerged, I brought together both positive and negative evidence and created a section called “Concepts” for my personal notes. I recorded similarities and differences between participants, connections between themes, and my emerging interpretations. With each read of the data, I went back to refine and clarify my Concept notes.

At this point, I shifted to a macro lens to organize and evaluate the themes that I had identified. I experimented with various types of concept maps and settled on one model of participant identity with a visual that helped explain the data. Placing my findings within the visual required me to create succinct headings and subheadings, which, in turn, helped me see connections and more clearly define each theme. Through this exercise, I found that two of my preliminary themes were best consolidated under a third, while one of my preliminary themes was best split into two.

Using the visual as a guide, I went back into micro mode, reorganized the data into my new thematic structure, and read through all the evidence one more time. This helped me see that one of the themes was not supported strongly and that its evidence was almost entirely represented in other places. I deleted that theme and readjusted the visual. Looking through a macro lens once more, I was able to tell an interpretive story about how the themes fit together and related to my research questions. (See the final visual and a complete discussion of the themes in Chapter 4.)

Triangulating findings.

With my visual model, thematic categories, and preliminary interpretations in hand, I developed the interview guide for meeting with the Fuerte staff (see Data Collection sections above). My goal was to understand the staff members' impressions of identity development in the participant population and to get their reactions to my preliminary findings. The staff member interviews bolstered most of my preliminary findings and provided new interpretations in a few cases. The staff members' perceptions,

examples, and clarifications were invaluable. Based on these interviews, I updated my Concept notes for each theme and recorded my interpretations.

For additional triangulation, I discussed my models and findings with an MA TESOL classmate who had been teaching low-income Latinas for several years and with another MA TESOL classmate who was an immigrant and an English language learner. Both of these classmates provided additional questions and perspectives to think about as I fine-tuned my interpretations.

After integrating input from the Fuerte staff, classmates, and professors, I finalized a set of themes and interpretations and selected quotes to illustrate each theme. I chose to include many extensive quotes to evoke the participants' rich, thick descriptions of their experiences. As I wrote up my findings, I translated the quotes into English with the help of the recently retired native Spanish-speaking Fuerte staff member.

Trustworthiness.

Several procedural steps ensured trustworthiness of this study. First, I worked with Fuerte staff members to develop and translate an interview guide that would be relevant to participants. A pilot interview helped me refine the interview questions to make them clearer for participants and more targeted for my research goals. To ensure consistency in data collection, I personally conducted the interviews, transcribed each interview within two days, and wrote extensive notes during transcription. To elicit and examine true participant feelings, I worked to create a low-stress interview environment, conducted all interviews in Spanish, and analyzed the data in Spanish as recommended

by Marshall and Rossman (2016). Throughout my organization and reorganization of the data, I always prefaced participant quotes with the speaker's pseudonym and retained the original transcription timestamps. My "data first" micro/macro analysis revealed a number of unanticipated themes, evidence that my findings were based in the data rather than in my own preconceptions. After modeling my preliminary findings, I triangulated the data through discussions with Fuerte staff members and experienced MA TESOL classmates. The timing of these discussions allowed me to incorporate context and additional perspectives while staying grounded in my dozens of hours of data analysis. When reporting my findings, I provided evidence in Spanish together with English translations that were created with the help of a recently retired native Spanish-speaking Fuerte staff member. Overall, I have been transparent about my worldview so that readers can evaluate my findings within a critical context.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

A number of interdependent themes emerged from the interviews. Together, the themes highlighted elements of participant identity and suggested that a number of those elements had been impacted by participants' microenterprise experience. This chapter explains which identity elements emerged, how participants talked about those elements, how the business experience appeared to contribute to identity development, and how the different elements were interconnected. I begin by introducing the participants and three constructs that help tell the story of their identity development. After that, I briefly explain the two identity elements that seemed innate for participants and then discuss in detail the three themes of identity development that were the most surprising and complex. The end of the chapter summarizes my findings in the context of my research questions.

Profiles of Research Participants

Table 2 shows research participant profiles based on information that participants shared during the interviews. The profile information provides context for the participant experiences and quotes discussed in this chapter.

Table 2
Profiles of Research Participants

	Daniela	Jazmín	Lorena	María
Age; Years in US	42 years old; 18 years in US	34 years old; 9 years in US	66 years old; 21 years in US	38 years old; 14 years in US
Family	Married to a Mexican; 3 children, ages 24, 20, and 14; two older ones in university	Married to a non-Latino American; 2 children, ages 6 and 4	Married to a Mexican; grown children	Married to a Mexican; 2 children, ages 16 and 4
Occupation in the US before starting the business	Worked in a Japanese restaurant; cleaned houses	Held professional office jobs before becoming a full-time mother	Preschool substitute teacher	Cook in her uncle's restaurant
When/why they started taking the Fuerte course	Was cleaning houses but wanted to set it up as a business and have access to a network of support	Had the business idea then took the course to learn the formalities needed to start a business	Started selling, then found out she needed a license and other formalities so she enrolled in the course	Heard about the class and started attending; that gave her the idea to start her own business
How long?	Took class 3-4 years ago; in business 14 years	Took class 1 year ago; Not in business yet	Took class 3-4 years ago; in business 4 years	Took class 4 years ago; in business 3 years
Why start a business?	Needed flexibility to look after her youngest child	As response to feedback about her salsa; to earn money for extras	To keep busy in retirement; to do something she enjoys; to earn extra cash	To have time to care for her children while earning money
Business	Cleaning homes	Making & selling special salsas	Making and selling pastries and empanadas in the Farmer's Market; some catering	Making & selling tamales in the Farmer's Market and through catering jobs

	Marisol	Ricardo	Rosa	Salvador
Age; Years in US	33 years old; 15 years in US	45 years old; 20 years in US	50 years old; 13 years in US	39 years old; 20 years in US
Family	Married to a Mexican; 3 children, ages 10, 3 and 1	Married to a Mexican; 2 grown children, one in university and one married	Single parent; 4 children, ages 23, 18, 10, and 5	Married to a Mexican; 2 children, ages 11 and 8
Occupation in the US before starting the business	Rose from cashier to store manager in a grocery store	Maintenance company employee	Worked in the fields for a nursery, then cleaned apartments as an employee	Cook in a restaurant (still working there)
When/why they started taking the Fuerte class	Started the business but had no idea how to manage it, so then took the class	Worked on the business concept then took the class to learn the rules and requirements	Wanted to work independently so took the class to learn how to set up her business	Took the class to learn how to make a business out of his salsa
How long?	Took class 2-3 years ago; in business 4 years	Took class 2 1/2 years ago; in business 16 months	Took class 5 years ago; in business 5 years	Took class 1 year ago; in business 2 weeks
Why start a business?	Spouse lost his job; needed money while having time for the children	To be in a business that he knows and to have control over his family's future	Didn't make enough money working as an employee; needed flexibility to care for her disabled daughter	To "be someone in this country"
Business	Cleaning offices	Running a Sonora-style Mexican restaurant employing family and 3 employees	Cleaning vacated apartments for apartment managers	Running a food cart downtown; also wants to sell his own salsa

Constructs

The microenterprise journey.

The construct of *the microenterprise journey* is important to all aspects of this discussion. This construct is based on my contention that all facets of a participant's experience interacted to impact that person in some way. Ideally, perhaps, researchers would like to separately assess the impact of the Fuerte program, family attitudes, and community support on participant identity. However, participants experienced all of those factors in combination, so I have not tried to tease out their individual effects. To avoid suggesting that a particular interaction or decision resulted in identity development, I refer to the sum of a participant's experience as his or her *microenterprise journey*.

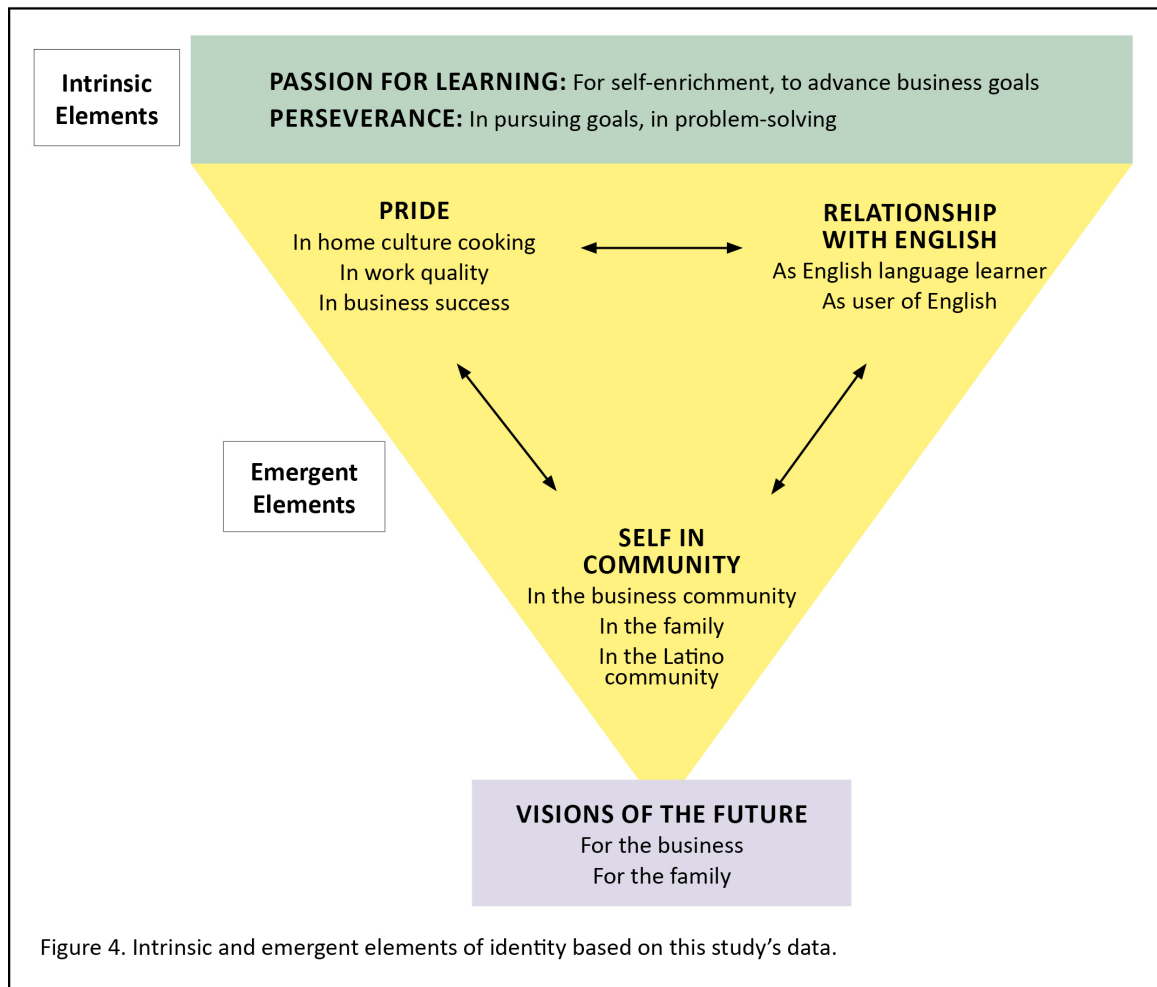
Community of practice.

Community of practice is a construct introduced to sociolinguistics by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet to focus on social groupings based on common endeavors (Eckert, 2006; Wenger, 1998). Rather than evaluating language use by ethnicity, geographic location, class, or gender, an analysis based on communities of practice examines groups of people who get together for a shared activity. The groups may be on-line or in-person, professional or personal, with voluntary or required participation. The key is that the participants share experiences and a commitment to understanding their endeavor over time. Through this sharing, community members develop common approaches, ways of thinking, habits, styles, and language.

In this study, I contend that my participants were part of the Fuerte MDP community of practice. This is a community where all members had graduated from the Fuerte business classes and attended Fuerte Business Network events. Even though each participant was starting his or her own independent business, they were all focused on similar endeavors and faced similar challenges. The Fuerte activities provided common vocabulary and reference points and helped members support and learn from one another. The community of practice of Fuerte entrepreneurs was a subset of the larger community of small business owners, which some of the participants tapped into as well. The Fuerte community had nested sub-divisions such as food-based businesses and cleaning businesses, within which members shared additional types of language and practice. “Communities of practice...play an important role in forming their members’ participation in, and orientation to, the world around them” (Eckert, p. 685), and thus are an important construct for understanding participant identity.

Intrinsic and emergent elements of identity.

My analysis suggests that the identity themes in this study fell into two categories, “intrinsic” and “emergent,” as shown in Figure 4. I define intrinsic elements as attributes that participants brought with them to their microenterprise journeys. In contrast, emergent elements were aspects of identity that appeared to develop significantly as a result of microenterprise-related experiences. Distinguishing between intrinsic and emergent elements is helpful for discussing the impact of MDP participation and business ownership.



The arrows in Figure 4 show that the three emergent identity elements are interdependent, a concept I will discuss at the end of this section. The bottom of the illustration shows participant *visions for the future*, an outgrowth of the identity elements above it.

Intrinsic Elements of Identity

Passion for learning and *perseverance* were themes that cut across all interviewees and many different parts of the interviews. The participants' stories suggested that they

have always been persistent and passionate about learning; their mothers, siblings, and childhood friends might have identified them as such. These attributes may have evolved somewhat during the participants' journeys, but they did not appear to change greatly. There were no noticeable differences between the men and women participants with respect to these themes.

Passion for learning.

The interview guide contained only one question explicitly related to learning: "What else do you feel you need to learn to move your business forward?" The participants all answered this question readily, sharing their need for accounting skills, marketing ideas, or human resources support. However, in addition to answering the business-related question, five of the eight participants spoke spontaneously about their overall love of learning. They used words and phrases like "siempre" [always], "nunca dejar" [never stop], and "seguir" [continue/persist] to signal a lifelong attitude toward learning that began long before their business journeys. For example, Salvador explained:

Me gusta estar aprendiendo cosas nuevas porque creo que es una puerta a andar para uno, aprender todo tipo de cosas. Cualquier trabajo es como una escuela. Nunca paro de aprender.

[I like learning new things because I think that it's a door one should walk through, to learn all kinds of things. Any job is like a school. I never stop learning.]

Like Salvador, most participants did not talk about classroom learning but rather about what they absorbed day by day through the world around them. Marisol and Rosa were exceptions. They loved learning so much that they wanted to go back to school:

¡A mí me encanta la escuela! Yo le he dicho, sí yo le sacara a la lotería, me dejaría a trabajar y yo me pondría a estudiar. A mí me gusta la escuela.

[I love school! I have said that if I win the lottery, I would stop working and would start studying. I love school.] (Rosa)

This passion for learning seemed innate, and some participants extended it to their business. María said that learning was important “para un negocio” [for a business] and that one should “seguir invirtiendo tiempo en aprender” [continue investing time in learning]. She used the business term “investing,” which she might not have used years earlier. Marisol wanted to learn for her own growth but “también para el negocio, lo beneficiaría” [for the business also, it would benefit]. This suggested that the business provided extra motivation and justification for the participants to exercise their passion for learning.

Perseverance.

Perseverance was another intrinsic identity element for many participants. The strongest evidence came from María, who began her business despite active opposition from her husband and her uncle. The following event happened so early in her business

that it was likely driven by an innate perseverance rather than by something newly developed. In this story, “la niña” [the girl] refers to the couple’s daughter:

Recuerdo que una vez, me tenía que cocinar a la cocina (commercial) a las 10 de la noche. Y [mi esposo] dijo, “Busca quién te cuide la niña porque yo no te le voy a cuidar.” A las 10 de la noche. Y le dije, “No me la cuides? Voy ahorita buscar quien me la cuide. No me voy a parar por eso.” El me estaba presionando porque no fuera. Yo me fui muy triste y llorando a cocinar. Me acuerdo que yo decía, no es justo lo que el hace porque lo que estoy haciendo es para la familia, no es para mí. Pero me fui, me fui a hacer todo, y mi hermana me ayudó, y otro día yo me iba a trabajar, y vendí todo, y ya. Maneje [el negocio] casi un año yo sola. Yo sola trabajaba, mercaba, cocinaba, y todo.

[I remember one time, I had to cook in the commercial kitchen at 10pm. And my husband said, “Find someone to take care of the girl for you, because I’m not going to take care of her.” At 10 o’clock at night. And I said, “You’re not going to take care of her? I’ll go right now and find someone to take care of her. I am not going to stop for that.” He was pressuring me not to go. It made me very sad, and I went to the kitchen crying. I remember saying, what he’s doing is not right because what I’m doing is for the family, it’s not for me. But I went, I went to do everything,

and my sister helped me, and the next day I went to work, and I sold everything, and that was it. I managed the business by myself for almost a year. I alone worked, shopped, cooked, and everything.]

More evidence came from Marisol, who said that persistence was her most important skill in the business' early days: "Tengas que ser persistente en lo que quieras lograr con el negocio. Básicamente es eso, la persistencia. No rendirse" [You have to be persistent in what you want to achieve with the business. Basically that's it, persistence. Not giving up].

Ricardo felt that he had always been persistent but that the business experience made him more so. When I asked whether he had learned anything from his business that was helping in his personal life, he answered swiftly:

Me está ayudando a ser más perseverante. En mis afanes que han salido mal y mal y mal, digo yo, wow, como no tengo otra salida, tengo que estar allí. Entonces he aprendido a ser paciente, personalmente, y he aprendido a ser perseverante.

[It is helping me be more persistent. In my efforts that turned out bad and bad and bad, I told myself, wow, since I don't have any other options, I have to be there. So I have learned to be patient, personally, and I have learned to be persistent.]

Emergent Elements of Identity

The data pointed to three identity elements that emerged in connection with the participants' microenterprise journeys. This section focuses on those three elements in turn: *pride, relationship with English, and role in community*. The end of this section discusses the elements' interdependence.

Pride.

Miriam Webster defined pride as “a feeling that you respect yourself and deserve to be respected by other people; a feeling of happiness that you get when you or someone you know does something good, difficult” (Miriam-Webster.com). In the academic literature, Sheff (1990) provided a similar definition, arguing that a person feels pride when positively evaluated by oneself or by others. From an identity perspective, increased pride in oneself and one's culture allows participants to see the world from a position of strength and increased emotional energy (Britt & Heise, 2000). In Norton's (2013) parlance, pride adds to a person's symbolic resources, which produces power and thus promotes positive identity construction. Such positive pride can be elusive for low-income immigrants, for whom common activities like buying groceries and needing a doctor can cause homesickness, humiliation, and alienation (Cleaveland & Ihara, 2012; Stewart, 2010). It is therefore notable that, in the current study, participants appeared to have developed pride in themselves and in their culture through their microenterprise efforts. This section explains three main sources of pride for MDP participants: appreciation of home culture cooking, feedback about quality work, and business success.

Appreciation of home culture cooking.

Through nearly five hours of interviews, none of the four participants with food-based businesses used any variant of the word “pride,” possibly for cultural reasons. Nevertheless, in interview after interview, the participants spoke with pride about their food. They used words like “auténtico” [authentic] and “saludable” [healthy] and made sure that I heard how their food was unique. María’s dishes were “nativa del estado dónde yo nací” [native from the state where I was born], Ricardo’s specialties were “de estilo Sonora y Baja California” [of the style of Sonora and Baja California], Jazmín’s salsa “es receta de la bisabuela” [is a recipe from the great grandmother], and Lorena’s empanadas were “de Jalisco. ¡Es a más de 30 años que yo sé esta receta!” [from Jalisco. I have known this recipe for over 30 years!]. After the third interview, I wrote in field notes:

They're all making food of the area that they're from. That seems natural because it is what they know, but it's not only that. They're proud of the food from their area, they love it, want to share it here.

In addition to explaining the origins of their dishes, the food-based participants all provided detailed accounts of what they made and/or how they made it. Ricardo described the uniqueness of his traditional Sonoran salsa with chocolate. He also explained that “nuestros frijoles no contienen ningún tipo de grasa ni manteca ni nada” [our beans don’t have any kind of fat, neither butter nor anything else]. Lorena carefully listed all the types of empanadas she made and the ingredients she used. Salvador

described how he cooked everything to order so that the food was always fresh and hot.

María went a step further, explaining that healthy food was part of her home culture:

Saludable porque, en realidad, en México, así cocinamos. Porque cuando vives en un pueblo pequeño, tú mismo siembras, tu mismo cosechas, y tu mismo consumes.

[Healthy because, in reality, in Mexico, that's how we cook. Because when you live in a little village, you are the one planting, you are the one harvesting, and you are the one eating.]

As the participants talked, it seemed that their long explanations and repetitive points did not reflect bragging; they were speaking from pride. My field notes from Ricardo's interview said:

He talks with a complete comfort level and sort of factual pride in the food. He doesn't use any superlatives but is taking care to describe the food clearly. These are types of recipes that he knows well from his upbringing. There are no question marks in his voice. He is very comfortable with and proud of the food that he is making and serving. He says a few times that what he's doing is different than other Mexican food you find around the area—that's clearly important to him.

In addition to their own assertions of quality, participants indicated that customer feedback was an important source of pride. For example, when I asked Lorena any

question about her food, she began her response with “no es que lo digo yo” [I am not the one saying it] and then went on to quote a customer: “Hay personas que dicen, ‘Oy, estas empanadas, solo en México. ¿De donde es usted?’” [There are people who say, “Oh, these empanadas, only in Mexico. Where are you from?”] For Jazmín, the whole idea to start a business came from Americans’ feedback about her crema habanera. She had served her grandmother’s recipe to some American friends and “empezaban a pedir y a pedir. ¡Nunca imaginé que los americanos realmente disfrutaran de algo picante!” [they started to ask for it and ask for it. I never imagined that Americans would really like something spicy!] She expressed her delight at this unexpected discovery multiple times during the interview.

Through customer feedback, participants received validation both from within and from outside the Latino community. María served many of her compatriots since she wanted to “seguir transmitiendo la comida mexicana a las personas mexicanas que viven aqui” [continue providing Mexican food to Mexicans who are living here]. All of the other participants had mostly non-Latino customers. Jazmín’s target customers had “un rostro americano” [an American face], Lorena said that 80 to 90 percent of her customers were “americanos,” and Ricardo’s restaurant was in an area where few Latinos lived. Thus, entrepreneurship gave these participants the opportunity to feel worthy of respect from their fellow Mexican immigrants and from non-immigrant Americans alike. I suspect that they also shared their customers’ feedback with family and friends in Mexico, potentially adding to their sources of respect. Validation of participants’ home culture

cooking may have been particularly meaningful because, among Mexicans, food reflects national identity and has strong cultural and commercial importance (Lopez, 2008).

Drawing on Norton's (2000) model, I contend that this validation functioned as a symbolic resource similar to friendship, which is noted by Norton as a contributor to personal power and positive identity construction.

Feedback about quality work.

Similar to the food-based entrepreneurs, the three participants with cleaning businesses talked repeatedly about positive feedback from clients. The clients for these businesses were all non-Latino, so their kudos provided external validation. From a practical standpoint, this validation led to recommendations and more clients. From a more personal perspective, as Daniela and Marisol explained, helping people and getting positive feedback simply felt good:

Tenemos varios clientes de la tercera edad. Mi esposo está que les ayuda mover cosas. Aunque le damos más cosas que no nos paguen, está bien. Nos sentimos bien de hacer algo extra por ellos.

[We have several clients who are senior citizens. My husband is the one who helps them move things. Even though we give them more services that they don't pay us for, it's ok. We feel good doing something extra for them.] (Daniela)

Me gusta cuando los clientes se quedan satisfechos. Al verlos ellos contentos, yo me siento feliz con mi trabajo. Me llaman, “Sabes que, el trabajo es excelente.” Y me hace sentir orgullosa. Muchas dicen, “Pues, es un trabajo de limpieza.” Pero creo que es importante porque, depende de como lograrse, es como la portada de uno.

[I like when customers are satisfied. When I see them happy, I feel happy with my work. They call me and say, “You know what, the work is excellent.” And it makes me feel proud. Many people say, “Well, it’s a cleaning job.” But I think it’s important because the way it is done reflects who you are.] (Marisol)

At the end of this quote, Marisol used the word “portada,” which generally means “front cover” or “title page” for a magazine or newspaper. This indicated that she saw her work as a visible reflection of herself. She worked hard and the feedback made her “sentir orgullosa” [feel proud]. Marisol, like several of the food-based entrepreneurs, talked about customer feedback using direct reported speech (DRS). Prior research has suggested that DRS “augments the authenticity of the scene being reported” (Berger, 2015, p. 791) by making the listener feel like a witness to the original event. My participants’ use of DRS suggested that the comments held authenticity in their eyes. Retelling the stories using DRS may even have augmented the comments’ authenticity for participants, contributing further to pride and personal power.

Rosa was another participant who used DRS to report customer feedback. Although she did not explicitly say that the feedback felt good, she used DRS to tell a story from several years earlier. The fact that the words were so clear in her mind, regardless of their actual accuracy, suggested that this feedback provided important validation:

Cuando yo fui empleada en la compañía de limpieza de la noche, mi jefe me decía, “Rosa, de todos los lugares, de todos los bancos o de lugares donde limpiamos, siempre tengo un complaint. Pero con usted era la única persona que no tengo.”

[When I was an employee at the nighttime cleaning company, my boss told me, “Rosa, in all the places, all the banks or places where we clean, I always hear complaints. But you are the only person that I don’t hear complaints about.”]

Business success.

The third source of pride that emerged from the data was related to business success. Most of the research participants were at early stages in their business ventures, but a few of them already felt successful. Daniela framed her feelings about success in terms of the difference it made for her family:

Me siento muy orgullosa de que tenemos nuestro propio trabajo, que podemos pagar todos esas cuentas, porque yo creo que (sin el negocio)

sería muy difícil en hacerlo. O decir que no puedo pagarlos, o no mandar nuestros hijos (a la universidad) por dinero. Tal vez nos falta, pero yo creo que nos va bien.

[I am very proud that we have our own business, that we can pay all of those bills, because I think that, without the business, it would be very difficult to do so. Or to say that I can't pay them, or not to send our kids to college because of the money. Perhaps we don't have everything, but I think we are doing well.]

María talked about her business success in the context of connecting to her native culture. She did not use the word “pride” the way Daniela did but spoke about the personal satisfaction, sense of usefulness, and control that the business provided. As Norton (2000) wrote, “identity references desire—the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation and the desire for security and safety” (p.8). In this light, the data suggested that the business helped María further construct a positive self-identity:

Para mi, el negocio que yo pude lograr me atreve mucha satisfacción. Es porque seguir con la misma patrón que yo tenía de vender comida en mi país, seguir con la tradición de mi familia con transmitir la cultura a otras familias, me siento útil. Tengo satisfacción en lo que yo hago, y eso te da mucha seguridad. Seguridad personal. Y más satisfacción en que está

haciendo lo que tu quieres hacer, no lo que otra gente quiere que tu hagas.

[For me, the business I have been able to achieve brings me a lot of satisfaction. It's because following in the same pattern that I had of selling food in my country, continuing my family tradition of bringing our culture to other families, I feel useful. I get satisfaction from what I'm doing, and that brings you a lot of security. Personal security. And more satisfaction because you're doing something that you want to do, not what other people want you to do.]

Salvador did not yet feel successful, but he hinted at a pride that he hoped to feel some day: "Mi visión es a crecer (el negocio). Ser alguien en este país" [My vision is to grow the business. To be someone in this country].

The Fuerte staff members agreed that the businesses gave participants an opportunity to feel proud of their work and of their culture. They also pointed out that this pride sometimes caused frustration and soul searching. The staff members cited two examples of food-based entrepreneurs who were being asked by customers to adjust their food for American tastes. These participants were getting requests to serve, for example, mole with beans and enchiladas with rice. However, in Mexico, mole is not eaten with beans, and enchiladas are not eaten with rice. For Americans, this might sound like a simple matter of putting rice on the plate even if it was not on the menu. However, for

these Mexican women who were proud of serving authentic Mexican food, the thought of tampering with home culture cooking appeared to be a much bigger deal. It seemed to represent a rejection of their culture and a requirement to change an important part of themselves in order to be successful in this country. The entrepreneurs said that they wanted to address cultural stereotypes and teach customers that Mexican culture included a wide and varied cuisine, far beyond rice and beans. Perhaps that is why my participants described their food in such detail and emphasized that it came specifically from their part of Mexico. As Ricardo explained, “Manejamos ingredientes un poco diferentes a los demás restaurantes mexicanos del área, que son más del sur o del centro de México” [we use ingredients that are a little different than the other Mexican restaurants in the area, that are more from the south or center of Mexico]. The participants shared such descriptions with me in Spanish, but I knew that most of them were selling to English-speaking customers. Fuerte staff members told of business owners who did not have the English and cultural skills to explain about their food and to do it in ways that were culturally appropriate for their clientele. As a result, MDP participants struggled to balance their cultural pride with their business income needs. The MDP manager said that he was trying to reframe the issue for participants. He wanted them to cast aside any notion that they were being asked to distort their culture and instead to think in terms of adopting a flexible business model.

Relationship with English.

Language is an important aspect of identity because people use language to negotiate and demonstrate their identities in various contexts (Norton, 1995). Norton's (2000) work focused specifically on immigrants' language learning investment as a signal of "the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language" (p. 10). To build on Norton's work, I began this study by asking whether the microenterprise journey affected the participants' investment in English language learning. I hypothesized that owning a business would increase participants' need for English and therefore cause them to increase their language learning investment. In fact, while my participants all recognized an increased need for English, only one of them was taking formal steps to improve her skills. It seemed that a more comprehensive model was needed to examine the issues at hand.

The data suggested that each participant had a personal *relationship with English*. These relationships were constructed socially and historically, as Norton (2000) indicated, as well as through individual practices and attitudes. Participants' relationships with English seemed to be much like the relationships that individuals have with one another. For example, my relationship with a colleague might reflect how we met, whether I trust the person, how I feel about myself when we're together (e.g. competent, inadequate, helpful), how often and under what circumstances we see one another, and what kinds of things we do together. Similarly, participants' relationships with English reflect how they learned the language, whether they can use it to express their needs, how they feel about

themselves when they use English, how often and under what circumstances they use it, and whether they use English in person, on the phone, in emails, or in texts. The concept of investment fits within this *relationship* metaphor. Just as people might choose to invest in certain friendships by going out of their way to keep in touch, they might invest in language learning by making purposeful efforts to use the language and to advance their language skills. All things considered, the strength of the relationship is independent of linguistic ability. Some beginning speakers may feel confident and happy to offer any English words they can cobble together, while more advanced speakers may be uncomfortable about making mistakes and hesitant to speak at all. As an element of poststructural identity, a person's relationship with English may also change over time and in response to different topics and interlocutors.

The following sections explore three elements of participants' relationships with English: initial English learning, English use for business, and further investment in learning English. I then step back to discuss the broader picture of my participants' relationships with English and their relative investments in language learning.

Initial English learning.

Of the eight participants, Rosa and Lorena were the only ones who said that they spoke almost no English at all: "muy poquitito" [a tiny little bit] (Lorena). These participants did have a relationship with English, as I will show, but it did not involve speaking. On the other end of the spectrum, Jazmín started learning English at age 11, when her parents enrolled her in special classes in Mexico. Jazmín said that she now

interacted comfortably in English and lived in an English-speaking world with her American husband and children.

The other five participants started studying English when they arrived in the US, one as a high school student and four as adults attending community college. The participants felt that those first classes gave them a start, although Daniela noted that her real learning happened outside of school: “Fui a la escuela por más de un año. Pero en ese tiempo, tampoco me acuerdo aprender” [I went to the school for over a year. But in that time, I don’t remember learning].

Using English for business.

Regardless of whether participants called themselves English speakers or not, it was clear that they were all *users* of English. For example, Rosa said that she did not speak English but used technology to get by: “Cuando yo me voy en entrevista, le digo, ‘O, yo tengo un problema, que mi inglés es muy malo. Pero si tu me mandas el trabajo por texto, te voy a entender más porque uso el traductor’” [When I go to an interview, I say, “Oh, I have a problem, my English is very bad. But if you send me the work information by text, I will understand you better because I use the translator”].

Technology would not have worked for Lorena, who, with continual references to her 66 years of age, shared that she struggled to use her new cell phone. Instead, Lorena found another MDP participant to be her partner: “Yo no manejo, yo no sé inglés, muy poquitito, entonces ella es la que sea encargada de esa mandado, los emails y todo eso” [I don’t drive, I don’t know English, a tiny little bit, so she is the one in charge of that

order, the emails, and all that]. The interesting thing about this arrangement was that Lorena's partner was María, who told me that her own lack of English was a problem for her business: "Este año, que ya me desenvuelvo un poco más (en inglés), pero me hace falta. Entonces por eso, yo no me he atrevido a crecer más mi negocio" [This year, I'm getting along a little better in English, but I need more. That is why I have not dared to grow my business more]. However, from Lorena's perspective, María's English was adequate and helped them both interact with customers.

Ricardo, Marisol, and Daniela found yet another solution to their English needs: just use it. This approach appeared to have strengthened Ricardo's relationship with English: "Al principio me sentía con vergüenza, pero ahora no, ya no. Pues lo hablo, y si lo hablo mal, pues digo que ni modo hay que intentarlo." [At first I was embarrassed, but now no, not anymore. I just speak it, and if I speak it badly, well, I say that the only thing to do is to try.] Marisol had a similar experience:

Me siento no muy cómoda todavía [en inglés], pero si, ya como que me desenvuelvo más, ya no me da pena. Antes me daba pena, porque van a reír de lo que voy a decir, no lo voy a pronunciar bien. Pero ahorita no. Yo sé que si cometo un error, va haber alguien que va decirme que así no se dice, me corrige. Yo tómallo de la buena manera porque es la forma de aprender.

[I still don't feel very comfortable in English, but yes, since I am getting by more than before, it doesn't bother me anymore. Before it bothered me, because I thought people would laugh at what I was saying, I wouldn't pronounce it right. But now, no. I know that if I make a mistake, someone will tell me that that's not how it's said, they'll correct me. I take it well because that's how to learn.]

The Fuerte staff members had also seen this pattern. When the businesses forced participants to use English, many participants eventually stopped being reticent and self-conscious. Regardless of the state of their English, they used it more readily and likely then increased their skill. In Norton's (2000) framing, the businesses increased participants' investment in using English and gave them access to English language opportunities. Once the participants started taking advantage of those opportunities, their English improved, and they gained more of the symbolic resource of language. This increased their power and helped them to further construct positive identities.

For some participants, this power was accessible only within certain contexts, consistent with the poststructuralist view of identity as variable. For example, María suggested that her English worked only within the community of practice of food-based businesses: "No sé hablar mucho inglés, solamente para vender la comida" [I don't speak much English, only for selling food]. Similarly, Daniela indicated that she spoke English

within the context of her cleaning business but did not know how she would fare in other situations:

No hemos tenido ningún problema de malentendido [con los clientes]. No sé si, en otro ambiente, tal vez no entendería con otras palabras que no uso, pero en el trabajo estoy bien. Incluso con algunas personas que tengo (como clientes) bastantes años, platicamos de nuestras familias, como están sus hijos, mis hijos, que hacen.

[We have never had a misunderstanding issue with clients. I don't know whether, in a different environment, maybe I wouldn't understand other words that I don't use, but for work, I do fine. Even with people who have been clients for a long time, we chat about our families, about their kids, my kids, what they are all doing.]

Further investment in learning English.

To the question of whether participants were investing more in English language learning, the answer depended on the meaning of the terms “investing” and “language learning.” From a formal education standpoint, María was the only investor; she had enrolled in Fuerte classes to study English and to get her GED. Her earlier attempts at community college had been unsuccessful because of work and family responsibilities, but, thanks to the business, she now had more control over her time and could resume her formal education. Marisol had plans to return to school the following year “para mí,

en lo personal, pero también para el negocio” [for me personally, but for the business also].

Ricardo and Daniela were investing in a less formal way, learning from those around them. Daniela said that her English now required “más práctica” [more practice], and she practiced often with her clients. Ricardo took advantage of various English opportunities such as “cuando escucho algún programa ... o mis hijas me van enseñando cosas, y así voy aprenderle poco a poco. Siempre estoy buscando a ver que opciones hay para seguir aprendiendo” [when I listen to some program ... or my daughters teach me things, and that way I learn it bit by bit. I’m always looking for options to continue learning]. Through these answers, Ricardo and Daniela showed their understanding that learning did not have to be a structured endeavor in a formal setting. With neither classroom nor certified teacher, Ricardo and Daniela were actively seeking and leveraging opportunities to learn.

The two participants with the lowest levels of English were investing the least. Rosa said that she would love to learn English and other languages too but that she would have to win the lottery to do so. Over the course of the interview, she shared that she had a disabled child, a son in jail, and thousands of dollars in credit card debt; it was clear that she did not have time to take classes. Nevertheless, Rosa could have been learning through informal means like Ricardo and Daniela were doing. Either she was not trying to improve her English in those ways, or she did not tell me about them possibly because she equated learning only with formalized instruction. Lorena also said

that she wanted to learn English, and she wanted to learn about her new smart phone too. She was thinking about checking out “discos” [records] from the library to do both. Like Rosa, Lorena did not appear to consider informal options for improving her English.

Relationship with English and language learning investment.

All of the participants were very conscious of the importance of English for their business success. In Ricardo’s words, “Si, si, necesito usar el inglés. No mucho, pero si, siempre. Siempre ha necesitado simplemente en estar aquí en EEUU, y siempre vamos a necesitarlo” [Yes, yes, I need to use English. Not a lot, but yes, always. I have always needed it simply by being here in the US, and we will always need it]. Like Ricardo, the other participants felt the need for English, and yet, they acted on that need in a variety of ways.

Figure 5 shows key elements of each participant’s relationship with English: initial English learning, current English use, reported feelings about using English, and current investment in learning English. The lightest shaded boxes show the most positive areas of the relationship with English, the darkest boxes show the most difficult areas, and the medium boxes show promise that could go either way. Both formal and proactive informal learning are shaded as equally positive based on Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory that second language acquisition takes place in interactive personal and institutional settings (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). The lack of a consistent pattern in the shaded boxes

	INITIAL ENGLISH LEARNING	CURRENT ENGLISH USE	REPORTED FEELINGS ABOUT USING ENGLISH	CURRENT INVESTMENT IN LEARNING ENGLISH	
<p>MOST COMFORTABLE ENGLISH USER</p> <p>↑</p> <p>↓</p> <p>LEAST COMFORTABLE ENGLISH USER</p>	JAZMIN	Classes as a child in Mexico	As needed without problems	Felt fine speaking English	Happy with her level; not investing
	SALVADOR	US community college	As needed without problems	Felt fine speaking English	Happy with his level; not investing
	RICARDO	2 years of US community college	As needed without problems	Had felt embarrassed; now felt ok	Actively learning through practice
	DANIELA	1+ years in US community college	As needed in her business context	Felt good using English within business context	Actively learning through practice
	MARISOL	3 years of US high school	As needed in her business context	Had felt embarrassed; now felt stable	Actively learning through practice
	MARIA	Sporadic community college	As needed in her business context	Lack of English restricted her business	Going to classes & learning through practice
	ROSA	Had not learned English	Only through texts & emails	Lack of English was "a problem"	Dreaming about studying in the future
	LORENA	Had not learned English	Only through a business partner	Lack of English was "a problem"	Thinking she might learn in the future

Figure 5. Elements of participants' relationship with English. The lightest shaded boxes show the most positive areas of the relationship, the darkest boxes show the most difficult areas, and the medium boxes show promise that could go either way.

suggests that there was no strict relationship between the way participants felt about using English and their level of investment.

It is interesting to note that both the most comfortable and the least comfortable speakers reported no current investment in language learning. The least comfortable speakers did not report learning through their daily interactions even though their English may have been improving. They either did not recognize their progress or did not think of their interactions as a way of learning. Ironically, this same explanation may apply to the *most* comfortable speakers. Jazmín and Salvador did not feel the need to invest in learning English because they were interacting capably in English every day. However, those very interactions were likely solidifying their capabilities and further improving their English. They either did not recognize their progress or did not think of their interactions as a way of learning.

Among those participants who did report some level of investment, María, who said that her lack of English was restricting her business, was the only participant investing in formal learning. This could have been because she felt the business need most acutely, or it could have been simply because she was the only one able to arrange her life around classes. Another possible explanation is that class-based instruction appealed to María's learning style more than it did for other participants. If María were attracted to class-based learning, that might also explain why she enrolled in the Fuerte business course without ever having thought about starting a business. She had simply heard about the course and was eager to learn more in that format.

Self's roles.

The third emergent element of identity involved the roles that participants played in their communities. I use the term “community” broadly to include the business community, family as community, and the community of Latinos. The data was full of examples of how participants interacted in those various communities and of how their interactions were affected by their microenterprise journeys. In this section, I begin by examining the participants’ interactions within the Fuerte business community of practice. I then look at the participants’ changing roles as parents, and finally consider their identification as part of the Latino community.

Self in the business community.

Receiving support.

To understand the importance of the Fuerte business community for participants, it is instructive to consider the experiences of Marisol and Daniela. Marisol and Daniela both started cleaning businesses on their own before they had heard about Fuerte. Marisol said, “Nada más yo que trabajaba. No teníamos ni idea de lo que es el negocio, y no veamos frutos” [It was just me working, nothing more. We didn’t even know what the business was, and we weren’t seeing any benefits]. Daniela’s experience was similar: “Antes, solamente limpiar casas y es todo. No salía a ningún lado. Estaba nomás trabajando yo sola” [Before, I was just cleaning houses and that was it. I wasn’t going anywhere. I was just working, alone].

Once Daniela and Marisol joined the Fuerte community of practice, their outlook completely changed. Marisol went from “nada más yo que trabajaba” [it was just me working, nothing more] to wanting to learn “nuevas estrategias de mercadeo, como llevar una buena contabilidad” [new marketing strategies, how to keep good financial records]. Daniela went from “solamente limpiar casas y es todo” [just cleaning houses and that was it] to “¡me siento como una empresaria!” [I feel like a business person!] The experience of being part of the Fuerte community was pivotal for these women, helping them to construct entirely new identities as business people.

Daniela and other participants indicated that the monthly Fuerte Network events were important in their development as entrepreneurs. In addition to the practical business advice that came from presentations and materials, the events encouraged participants to meet one another and share their stories. In Salvador’s words: “Cada vez que vengo, miro personas diferentes, platicamos de cosas diferentes, muchos de sus inquietudes, sus planes. Y yo a veces aprendo de eso porque me digo, si el lo puede, yo lo puedo hacer también” [Each time I come, I see different people, we chat about different things, many things that make them nervous, their plans. And sometimes I learn from that because I tell myself, if he can do it, I can do it too].

The head of the Fuerte MDP said that there is often supportive discussion at the events, and he can see the impact it has on participants:

I can feel it at the events when they are all together and sharing their challenges. They realize that they are not alone. One woman wanted to close her business because of challenges. But at the event, she heard that other people were having challenges too, and they were sticking with it. By the end of the event, she was like a different person.

For many participants, being part of Fuerte meant that someone was watching their backs. For example, Daniela received an offer to clean a large group of houses in the city. She was excited about the possibility but called her Fuerte business coach before responding. He told her that it was a fraud and that she shouldn't respond. "Sin su asesoramiento, yo diga, si, donde las encontramos (las casas). A lo mejor yo les mando dinero" [Without his coaching, I would have said, yes, where do I find the houses. I might even have sent them money]. Daniela felt that she was a bit naïve and trusted Fuerte completely: "Algún reto, siempre los llamo" [Any problem, I always call them]. Lorena echoed that feeling, saying that she would call Fuerte for anything she needed to learn. "Aquí mismo en Fuerte, nos ayuden mucho" [Right here at Fuerte, they help us a lot]. Rosa said that when she got the call from Fuerte about being interviewed for this research, she didn't hesitate: "Que me han llamado, y estoy aquí" [They called me, and I am here]. The feeling of being supported can be powerful, particularly for low-income immigrants who have had to struggle just to take care of their families. I contend that

Norton (2000) would call such support a symbolic resource, something that contributes to personal power and positive identity construction.

With the backdrop of the Fuerte business community, some participants had found other sources of motivation and support in their microenterprise efforts. For example, Lorena was motivated in her business because it helped her stay active and healthy in retirement. Ricardo connected with a restaurant chain franchisee and a chamber of commerce advisor who gave him ongoing advice and encouragement. Marisol learned that her clients cared about her wellbeing, something that came as a surprise to her:

Cuando tuve mi bebe, fue un poquito difícil - nació a los 7 meses. Todos mis clientes, todos, sin excepción alguno, estaban pendiente de mí. O sea fue algo bonito que yo aprendí, que son mis clientes, pero a la vez mis amigos. O lo siento así porque todos tuvieron atender de mí, incluso después de que tuve a mi hijo. Te das cuenta que muchísima gente que te aprecia, que se preocupa por ti. El negocio a la misma vez es un negocio, pero me está abriendo puertas para conocer más gente, para yo convivir con ellos.

[When I had my baby, it was a little difficult – he was born at 7 months. All of my clients, all, without exception, were asking about me. It was something really nice that I learned, that they are my clients, but at the

same time my friends. I feel like that because they were all looking out for me, even after my son was born. You realize that many people appreciate you, worry about you. The business is a business, but at the same time it's opening doors for me to meet more people, to be part of the same community.] (Marisol)

The data showed one negative case for community support. Salvador felt that many business contacts were not willing to help:

He andado buscando ayuda, buscando información, y no toda la gente te dan la información. Hay mucha gente que ya tienen sus negocios y solo te dicen un 10 por ciento de lo que ellos sepan. Nadie te quiere dar una clave de como hacer éxito.

[I have gone around looking for help, looking for information, and not everyone gives you the information. There are many people who already have their businesses, and they tell you only 10 percent of what they know. No one wants to give you the key to success.]

None of the other participants gave any indication of this issue, so it is difficult to explain Salvador's experience. Perhaps there were circumstances about his interactions with other entrepreneurs that made them not want to share their learnings. Alternatively, it could be that Salvador wanted others to share some magic key to success, something they could not share because it does not exist. Regardless of the reason, Salvador's words

are a good reminder that MDP participants may have a variety of experiences, and they may not all be able to depend on the greater community for support.

Offering leadership.

I did not use the word “leadership” in the interviews because I wanted to solicit examples of behavior without getting bogged down by labels and their various interpretations. Nevertheless, leadership examples cropped up when I asked participants whether other people could learn from them about starting a business. With the exception of Salvador, who had opened his food cart only two weeks before our interview, the MDP participants all said that they had been asked for advice and had been happy to share what they knew. Ricardo saw it like a chain of assistance: “Como yo aprendo de otra gente, pues otra gente puede aprender de nuestras experiencias” [Just as I learn from other people, other people can learn from our experiences]. Lorena went further, suggesting that passing on one’s knowledge was an obligation: “Yo pienso que uno siempre debe compartir lo poquito que uno sepa” [I think that one must always share the little that one knows].

In addition to offering advice, Ricardo and Marisol said that they wanted to provide jobs. This may have been partly about growing their businesses, but it was clearly also about “ayudar a más gente” [helping more people] (Marisol) and “dar la oportunidad a gente” [giving people opportunity] (Ricardo). Marisol articulated a vision that she would hire people who could learn and then start their own businesses.

As one might expect, sharing experiences and providing advice felt good for the participants. They wanted to thank those who had helped them by helping others. In the process, the participants realized that they had real skills and knowledge that was valuable in the community. In Marisol's words, "Es bonito porque, de esa manera, estas ayudando tu comunidad, a motivarlos, que sí se puede" [It's really nice because, in that way, you're helping your community, to motivate them, that yes, it can be done].

Advocating for the planet.

One of the ways that MDP participants were contributing to their communities was by taking care of the planet. Fuerte espoused attention to planet as well as people and profits in the classes and through the individual coaching. The data suggested that the participants' responses fell into two camps. The participants in one camp used a few environmentally sensitive business practices, but their actions were minimal, and they spoke dispassionately about the concepts. For example, when asked specifically whether environmental considerations guided their business decisions, Lorena and Ricardo both talked about providing paper bags instead of plastic and disposable utensils made from rice. They did not have much more to say on this matter. In the language of the Dialogues in Action Heart Triangle (Figure 2), these participants were positioned at the "do" stage, *outside the triangle*, with respect to taking care of the planet.

The participants in the second camp not only expressed passion and determination to do their part for the environment, but they also actively advocated and promoted planet-friendly practices. These participants were positioned at the "become"

stage, *inside the triangle*. For them, caring about the environment had become part of their identities, part of how they interacted with the world. On some level, these participants felt that they could make a difference by acting and advocating for the planet. María was a good example, as she not only recycled products from her farmer's market stand but also brought her compostables to local farmers to ensure that they would be reused. María even used pesticide-free ingredients despite their higher cost:

Por ejemplo, comprando los productos con los granjeros que no usan tan pesticidas. Para hacer los tamales en México, usamos manteca. Pero tú sabías que el animal tú mismo lo criaba, le dabas de comer y todo. Aquí, yo cambié la manteca por aceite de canola. Es que inviertes un poco más de dinero, pero estás vendiendo un producto con más calidad.

[For example, buying products from farmers who don't use so many pesticides. To make tamales in Mexico, we use butter. But you knew that you raised the animal, you fed it and everything. Here, I replaced the butter with canola oil. It's that you spend a bit more money, but you're selling a higher quality product.]

María promoted her environmental practices to such an extent that she won an award for entrepreneurial business design and execution.

The three participants with cleaning businesses were also *inside the triangle* on this issue. They all mixed their own planet-friendly cleaning solutions, conscious of the

personal health risks and the environmental damage from chemicals. Marisol felt that using organic products was a competitive advantage for her business cleaning offices: “los trabajadores quieren algo orgánico que no los daña a ellos y no daña el medio ambiente” [the workers want something organic that doesn’t hurt them and doesn’t hurt the environment]. Rosa went even a step further, showing leadership by teaching others how to care for the environment:

A mí me motiva lo siguiente: de que el cliente mira como trabajas. Y si el cliente tampoco no sabe, también lo educas. “O, Rosa, porque haces esto?” Y ya tienes tu que decir... Yo también lo hago para que mis hijos lo miren. Los pequeños se dan cuenta. ¡Mi mamá también aprendió el reciclaje!

[This is what motivates me: that the client sees how you work. And if the client doesn’t know either, you teach him. “O, Rosa, why do you do that?” And you have to tell him ... I also do it so that my children see it. The little ones realize. My mother also learned to recycle!]

The extent of Rosa’s passion was evident in a story that she told about a recent trip to Mexico. She was confounded at the amount of trash in the streets, something she had never noticed while living there. One day, Rosa had a wrapper left over from lunch. There were no garbage bins around, so she started putting the wrapper in her pocket. “Por que lo traes allí?” [Why are you putting it there?], her friend asked her. “¡Aquí tíralo!” [Just throw it here!] That made Rosa crazy. “¡No! ¡Por eso que estamos aquí!”

[No! That's why this place is as it is!]. Some of Rosa's environmental passion came from having worked in a recycling center. Nevertheless, she and all the other participants in both camps said that Fuerte had taught them about caring for the planet. "Después de las clases que tomé en Fuerte, vi que hay alternativas" [After I took the Fuerte classes, I saw that there are alternatives], María said.

Several participants linked environmental issues with health. When I asked about caring for the planet, the cleaning entrepreneurs all talked about how chemicals could have harmful effects for people. All of the food producers, even Lorena and Ricardo, who were *outside* the triangle on environmental concerns, spoke extensively about the importance of healthy ingredients and recipes. The Fuerte staff members felt that health concerns may be a gateway to planet-friendly practices. They felt that all participants could connect to health issues in some way and that any learning is "most powerful when it's connected to the personal" (Fuerte staff member). The staff members also felt that the environmental message got through to participants because it felt attainable: "It's something tangible that they are able to do to improve the world for their children or their community within the context of their business."

Self as a parent.

Of all the themes that emerged from the data, parental identity was the only one where there may have been a difference between the women and the men participants. On the male side, Salvador had children aged eight and eleven but did not talk about them or about his role as a parent. Ricardo's children were grown, so his role as a father

was not a daily concern. On the other hand, for the women with children at home, running a business completely transformed their parental identities. Significantly, this theme emerged even though I did not ask any questions about parenting or children of any of the participants.

The bulk of the relevant data surfaced in response to the following question: “Does your business make a financial difference for your family?” At a basic level, María, Marisol, and Daniela all answered that their finances were about the same, but that now they had time for their families. That simple statement answered the question, but the details that followed told the real story.

Like many new immigrants, María worked constantly when she first arrived in the US, and she left her two-year-old son with whoever would watch him:

Yo trabajé mucho cuando llegamos aquí. Trabajamos mucho mi esposo y yo, trabajamos, trabajamos. Era en un horario de seis días a la semana, siempre fines de semana, tardes, todo, horarios en la mañana, horarios en la tarde. Y el niño andaba con diferentes niñeras. Al final, le invierte más dinero a ese descuido. Porque el empezó con problemas en la escuela, en el kinder, y en terapias.

[I worked a lot when we arrived here. My husband and I both worked a lot, we worked, we worked. It was a schedule of six days a week, every weekend, evenings, everything, morning hours, evening hours. And the

boy went with different caregivers. In the end, we spent more money because of this negligence. Because he started having problems in school, in kindergarten, and in therapy.]

In contrast, once her business was underway, María was able to take control of her life and care for her family: “Aunque económicamente no tenemos más dinero, pero el tiempo, y emocionalmente también, estamos mejor. Emocionalmente no estamos presionada, estresada” [Even though economically we don’t have more money, but the time, and emotionally also, we’re better. Emotionally we’re not pressured, stressed]. For her son, she was no longer always worrying about “quién te lo cuida, quién te lo lleva, quién te lo trae” [who’s caring for him, who’s taking him, who’s bringing him].

Marisol had a similar experience. Before the business, she had to work all the time and had essentially given up her parenting role. This situation must have been painful; she still remembered exactly how old her children were when she went back to work:

Para mi niña y para mi niño, de diez y seis años, mi mamá era su mamá. Al mayor, cuando tenía un año, me fui a trabajar. Y a la niña, la dejé a 40 días, yo regresé a trabajar. A que ellos no vean más que a su abuela como a su mamá.

[For my daughter and for my son, ten- and six-years-old, my mother was their mother. When the older one was one year old, I went to work. And

the girl, I left her at 40 days, I went back to work. It was such that they knew only their grandmother as their mother.]

Once the business allowed Marisol and her husband to quit their other jobs, they started caring for their own children. It was a big adjustment for the whole family: “Le costó más a mí hijo de 10 años adaptarse a nosotros, a nuestras reglas” [It was most difficult for my 10-year-old to adapt to us, to our rules], because grandma had been fairly permissive. “Ahorita, ese es lo mejor que hemos tenido de esto negocio, es el tiempo con los hijos” [Now, this is the best thing we have gotten from this business, is time with the children].

The most distressing example of this issue came from an MDP participant’s story that a Fuerte staff member shared with me. The participant’s children had been physically abused by a caregiver while their mother was working multiple jobs. Once the mother started her own business, she was able to retake control of her family and be a parent to her children.

The microenterprise journey allowed these women to reposition themselves as mothers. In addition to taking back the basic caretaking for their families, they became teachers for their children. Rosa, whose daughter had cerebral palsy, was able to spend time trying to improve her daughter’s speech, hoping to help her become more independent. Marisol was able to review homework every night with her son. María used the business to help teach her children life lessons about work:

El negocio ha sido una manera de enseñar a trabajar a mi hijo, en enseñarle que si quieres hacer algo, lo puede lograr con mucho sacrificio. Mi hijo me ayuda en el mercado, me ayuda cobrar el dinero. Entonces, es algo que les puede enseñar a tus hijos, algo que no puedes hacer cuando tienes un empleo [trabajando por otras personas]. Porque nunca te ven tus hijos trabajando en tu trabajo. No les puedes llevar a tu trabajo para que te ven trabajar. Sin embargo, en tu propio negocio, tienes esa oportunidad de enseñarles a los hijos lo que tu estás haciendo y con que esfuerzos estás sacando el dinero para ellos.

[The business has been a way to teach my son how to work, to teach him that if you want something, you can achieve it with a lot of sacrifice. My son helps me in the market, he helps me collect money. So, it's something that you can teach your children that you can't do when you have a job working for other people. Because your children never see you working at your job. You can't bring them to your job so that they can see you work. However, in your own business, you have that opportunity to teach your children what you're doing and about the effort you put in to make money for them.]

In addition to allowing the women to see themselves as mothers and as teachers, entrepreneurship helped these women see themselves as providers for their families. As a

benefit of their businesses, María had enrolled her children in after school activities, Marisol was planning to send her children to private school, and Daniela had two children in university. The Fuerte staff members reminded me that not all of their participants were having financial success. Nevertheless, there were enough positive examples to show that it could be done. In the terms of Norton's framework, the extra money participants earned was an economic resource that added to their power. I contend that the feeling of being able to provide schooling and other goods for their families was an important symbolic resource that also provided power and fodder for identity construction.

Self as a Latino immigrant.

The first time I heard the phrase “nosotros los latinos” [we Latinos] was when my first interviewee, María, was explaining that street markets were well known in Latino culture. I saw “nosotros los latinos” as a marker of cultural identification, a sign that María saw her experiences through a lens of Latina identity. However, as it turned out, María had just gotten started about “nosotros los latinos.” She went on to share that “nosotros los latinos no estudiamos, no buscamos ayuda” [we Latinos, we don't study, we don't seek help], we don't write things down, we don't make plans, we are afraid. Next came Rosa: “Nosotros, como hispanos, ofrecemos una calidad ... para conservar nuestro trabajo” [We, as Hispanics, we offer quality work to keep our jobs]. I understood Rosa to mean that she *had* to provide better work quality *because* she was Hispanic and was therefore more at risk for losing her job. Even Ricardo, who generally came across as self-

confident and capable, offered that “Nosotros, como hispanos, nos cuesta trabajar aprender todo eso porque, pues no somos a la moda de la tecnología” [We, as Hispanics, we have to work hard to understand because we’re not up to date on technology].

When I brought up these examples with the Fuerte staff, they sighed almost in unison and said, “We hear that all the time.” The staff members felt strongly that negative comments starting with “nosotros los latinos” reflected internalized stereotypes and racism. An internalized stereotype reflects the belief by members of a group that typecasts accurately describe individuals within their group (Rueda de Leon, 2001). Since Mexicans in the US often see themselves denigrated in American media, politics, and individual interactions, my participants may have adopted negative stereotypes about Mexicans from their American environment.

The Fuerte MDP manager, himself an immigrant from Mexico, seemed most frustrated with his compatriots’ generalizations about their culture. He reported that, when he heard “nosotros los latinos,” he wanted to tell participants, “This is an opportunity to change. You can start doing [things differently], and you can share your knowledge with others. We can change these things [about ourselves].”

The staff members felt that there was a connection between the internalized racism and participants’ difficulty in seeing their own strengths. I had seen participants hesitate before identifying skills and abilities that they brought to their businesses. The MDP manager explained, “They just focus on their weaknesses. We try to get them to see their strengths and feel proud of that, then go to their weaknesses and start working

on that, but it's hard for them." One staff member told of a group of MDP participants who had started a cleaning business together. The business was gaining momentum but had a major limitation. The partners did not want to take jobs near downtown because they were afraid to drive on the highway. They finally found a way to conquer that fear but did not leverage it; they did not see their new ability as a strength. Only after a staff member pointed out how using the highway could help their business did the partners realize they could turn it into a marketable advantage. The entrepreneurs then started promoting that, no matter where you live, they could come and clean your house.

The discussion about "nosotros los latinos" energized the staff members to consider how they might address internalized racism more proactively. They wanted to call it out and help participants counter it. As one of the staff members said, "We need to move beyond the stereotypes and focus on our strengths as a community."

Other parts of the data also indicated that participants viewed their experiences through an immigrant lens. Such a claim may sound self-evident, especially for a study focused on immigrant identity. However, drawing on Harklau (2000), I believe it is important to be explicit about this finding. Harklau was researching identity of ESOL students and found that, "even though an identity label such as ESOL student may seem self-evident, its meanings are in fact constantly renegotiated and reshaped" (p. 37). In the current study, each participant had his or her own immigrant experience, which uniquely impacted and was shaped by the microenterprise journey. For example, Salvador talked a lot about "tener miedo" [being afraid]. Many entrepreneurs would likely have fear about

starting a new business, but Salvador, even though he had been in the US for 20 years, framed his fear in terms of his goal to “ser alguien en este país” [be someone in this country]. For María, who had emigrated to the US 14 years earlier, business success was especially sweet because of barriers she faced as an immigrant: “Cuando llegues a otra país, es algo muy diferente a lo que tu haces en tu país. Entonces te sientes que vas iniciar de nuevo, algo a lo que no estás acostumbrado.” [When you arrive in another country, it’s something very different than what you do in your country. So you feel that you’re going to start over, something that you’re not used to.] Jazmín, the only research participant who was college educated and married to an American, was also very conscious of her role as an immigrant. She praised the way governments in the U.S. funded small business assistance but was uncomfortable about their focus on immigrants:

Quizás los cursos son más dedicados por las personas extranjeras, pero, si vienen por parte del gobierno, yo creo que es para que (los americanos) también los aprovechen. No nada más uno que no es de aquí. Porque viene de los impuestos de que cada quien paga. Que no sienten que nada más uno que es extranjero, que uno está aprovechando nada más cosas del gobierno, de los impuestos, que los estamos robando.

[Maybe the courses are more dedicated to foreigners, but, if they come from the government, I think it’s so that Americans can also participate. Not only people who are not from here. Because it comes from taxes that

everyone pays. Americans shouldn't feel that just because one is a foreigner, that person is taking advantage of things from the government, from our taxes, that they are robbing us.]

Internalized racism and immigrant lenses have significant implications for identity development. People construct their identities at least in part by looking at the reflection of themselves projected by those around them. The evidence of internalized racism suggests that the participants not only saw racism from the dominant class reflected back at them but that they also believed the stereotypes to be true at some level. In addition, participants saw high barriers because of their immigrant status, something that was beyond their control. In Norton's (2000) framework, these factors would count as negative symbolic resources, which draw down power and spur negative identity construction.

The interdependence of emergent identity elements.

As Figure 4 illustrates, the three emergent identity elements each impact and are impacted by one another. For example, increased pride can encourage an immigrant to be less self-conscious about using English and to provide leadership in the community. Success with English can create pride and enable more interaction in the community. Positive feedback from the community can increase a person's pride and provide more opportunities for English use. These same dynamics work in a negative sense, where, for example, lack of personal pride and self-worth can hurt an immigrant's relationship with

English and his or her interactions with the community. Outside factors also affect each of these identity elements, so the elements do not necessarily improve or worsen in unison. In this study, the participants' emergent identity elements generally grew more positive through their microenterprise journeys, but there were also some negative influences, most notably internalized racism.

Feelings about the Future

Norton's (2000) model included a person's vision of the future as a key element of identity construction. I contend that perception of future possibilities is closely linked to all of the elements discussed above. If a person has passion for learning, perseverance, personal pride, a strong relationship with English, and a positive role in the community, he or she is likely to have a positive outlook for the future. Likewise, negative issues in any of those spheres may affect the possibilities one sees for oneself and one's family. Because of its importance, there were several interview questions related to this topic. I asked participants how they defined business success, what their vision was for their business' future, what their vision was for their family's future, and how they felt when they thought about the future. Their answers revealed several overarching themes.

First, none of the participants defined success in monetary terms. I believe that they had financial goals for their businesses, but none of them answered any of my questions in that way. We were well into the interviews by the time these questions came up and seemed to have a good rapport; the participants appeared to be speaking openly.

The visions that they shared were about providing quality products and services and doing something the community would appreciate. Ricardo was focused on “cada día trabajar con excelencia” [doing excellent work each day]. Jazmín wanted to see her crema habanera used by many people, “a la casas de los amigos de los amigos” [at the houses of friends of friends]. María said that she loved her products and wanted to share that feeling with customers. She also said that success came from “ser amable con la gente” [being friendly with people]. Marisol echoed that sentiment, indicating that being friendly created good relationships with clients, which made her enjoy going to work:

Ser amable con los clientes. Yo creo que es un gran punto. Si tu eres amable, ellos te van a recibir bien. Si cometes un error, ok, lo voy a componer y tratar de darle mejor. Hemos tenido muchos clientes que, al principio, han sido un poquito difíciles. Pero ya cuando ven como es uno, se ve el cambio. Vamos con gusto trabajar a ese lugar porque sabes que eres bien recibido.

[Being friendly with clients. I think this is an important point. If you are friendly, they will receive you well. If you make a mistake, ok, I will make it up and try to do better. We have had many clients who, at the start, were a little difficult. But when they see how you are, you see the change. We are happy to work at that place because you know that you are well received.]

The second theme relating to the future was that most participants had intertwining visions for their businesses and their families. This took many forms. Lorena envisioned her grown children helping in and then taking over her business if it was successful. Salvador also wanted to see his family join the business, in part so they could work together but also “porque tanto como uno como otro pueden cuidar de los intereses (del negocio)” [because one or the other can look after the business’ interest]. Ricardo always used the first person plural when talking about the business, indicating that he saw it as his and his wife’s joint enterprise. His big hope was that the business would grow to be stable so that his family could have a quality life together outside of work. For Marisol, María, and Daniela, the businesses were mostly about providing for their families. Marisol wanted to send her children to Catholic school, and all three women wanted to see their children in university.

The third theme was about the range of participants’ feelings about the future. María, Jazmín, and Daniela were on the positive end. All three felt that their businesses and families were or would be successful. When thinking about the future, María said, “Me siento segura, sé que lo vamos a lograr” [I feel secure, I know that we’re going to succeed]. The next group, Marisol, Ricardo, and Lorena, felt cautiously optimistic. When thinking about the future, Ricardo said, “Me siento un poco preocupado, pero a la vez, creo mucho en esto proyecto. Entonces son sentimientos de preocupación pero a la vez también de tranquilidad” [I feel a little worried, but at the same time, I really believe in

this project. So I am worried but calm at the same time]. Marisol voiced very similar feelings:

A veces, si, me da miedo porque que va a ser de nosotros más adelante.

Pero pues dije, no, yo tengo que soñar, pensar de que todo va salir bien, que el negocio va a seguir adelante. Miedo y optimismo a la vez.

[Sometimes, yes, it scares me because what is going to happen with us in the future. But then I said, no, I have to dream, to think that everything will turn out well, that the business will move ahead. Fear and optimism at the same time.]

Salvador was in a group by himself, focusing his answer on one thing: “miedo” [fear]. He seemed to be battling with two demons: fear of not having success on the one hand and fear of having too much success and not being able to deal with it on the other. “Yo pienso que mi vida cambiaría por completo [si tendría éxito] porque, cuando es uno persona que no tiene nada, uno tiene la libertad de hacer muchas cosas. Y teniendo dinero, es otro tipo de vida” [I think that my life would change completely if I became successful because, when one is a person who doesn’t have anything, one has the freedom to do many things. And having money, that’s a different kind of life].

Optimism’s link to identity.

It is notable that participants’ feelings about the future seemed more linked with their emergent identity elements than with the stage of their businesses. Jazmín, Daniela,

and María were all optimistic about the future, and they all had positive identity indicators: Jazmín and Daniela had strong relationships with English, and María was investing in hers; all three women also had strong positions in their families and communities. They had these commonalities despite the fact that their businesses were all in different stages: Daniela's was fairly mature, María's was developing, and Jazmín was not even close to selling her first product.

The participants in the cautiously optimistic group were similar in that they all had mixed strength in their emergent identity elements: Marisol and Ricardo had good but somewhat tentative relationships with English, and Lorena used English only through a partner; Ricardo and Lorena were still *outside* the triangle in terms of environmental care; Marisol had a strong family presence but had not been able to participate in the Fuerte Network events. Yet from a business perspective, these participants were all in different phases. Marisol was supporting her family, Ricardo was breaking even, and Lorena was losing money. Thus, for both the optimistic and cautiously optimistic groups, identity elements provided a better predictor of optimism than did the state or stage of participant businesses.

Answering the Research Questions

To summarize the study findings and discussion, this section addresses my research questions explicitly. I answer the first two questions together and then address the third.

1. How did participants in the Fuerte MDP express their identity as they talked about their personal abilities and interactions, newly developing businesses, contributions to the community, and visions for the future?
2. Do participants' stories and explanations suggest that their identities were affected by their entrepreneurship and MDP participation? If so, how?

The data highlighted two intrinsic and three emergent elements of participant identity. The intrinsic elements were *passion for learning* and *perseverance*, both of which appeared to be participant strengths before the microenterprise journeys. The emergent elements were *pride*, *relationship with English*, and *self's roles*, all of which evolved significantly with participant entrepreneurship and MDP participation. The microenterprise journey gave participants an opportunity to showcase their culture, hard work, and newfound business knowledge. The participants got positive customer feedback and developed a sense of pride, which contributed to positive identity construction.

The theme of self's roles was comprised of three subcategories. The first subcategory, *self in the business community*, demonstrated that participants both received support and provided leadership as part of the Fuerte Business Network community of practice. This community provided both practical and psychological backing, adding to participants' symbolic resources. The second subcategory was *self as a parent*, which was particularly salient for women participants who had children at home. There was clear evidence that entrepreneurship allowed these women to reclaim their identities as parents

in terms of general caretaking, teaching their children, and providing financial opportunities for their families. The last subcategory was *self as a Latino immigrant*. In this realm, the data suggested that many participants saw their business achievements and challenges through an immigrant lens and had internalized negative stereotypes about Latinos. These factors represented negative symbolic resources and may have made it difficult for participants to see and act on their own strengths.

Both the intrinsic and emergent elements were reflected in participant visions of the future. These visions appeared to be correlated with emergent identity elements such as pride and relationship with English rather than with specific business stage or success.

3. Do participants' stories and explanations suggest that their investment in learning English was affected by their entrepreneurship and MDP participation? If so, how?

The data indicated that participant investment in language learning was just one facet of each participant's relationship with English. Figure 5 shows the major elements of this relationship from this study's point of view: how participants initially learned English, how they used English currently, how they felt about using English, and what their current investment was in learning English. The participants all acknowledged that they needed English for their businesses, and they had all found ways to *use* English, whether or not they considered themselves able to *speak* English. The data also suggested that the most comfortable English users and the least comfortable English users did not recognize informal English interactions as a way to learn language. Overall, there was no

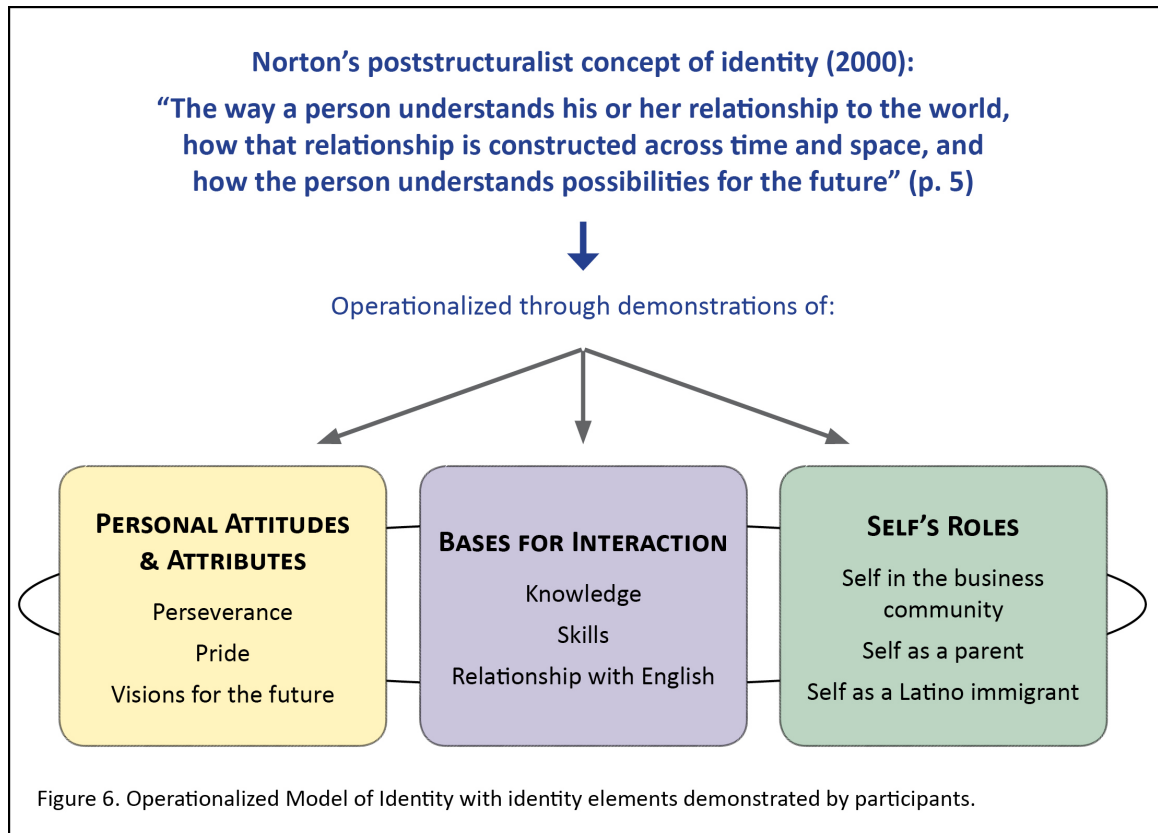
predictable relationship between the way participants reportedly felt about using English and their level of investment in learning more.

Chapter 5: Implications and Recommendations

This research has implications for the understanding of identity in general and of low-income immigrant identity in particular. The findings also have implications for microenterprise development programs (MDPs) and for other social programs that service low-income immigrants. This chapter discusses those implications together with directions for future research by topic area and then outlines limitations of the study.

Operationalizing Identity

Bell (2014) characterized identity as “one of the most used and least specified terms in sociolinguistic studies” (p. 306). I found that a number of researchers had put forth conceptual and theoretical definitions or frameworks of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Da Fina, 2003; Menard-Warwick, 2004; Morgan & Clark, 2009; Norton, 2000), but I did not find operationalized definitions that indicated how the authors had recognized evidence of identity or identity construction. In the present study, I found that an operationalized identity model was helpful for recognizing evidence of identity in the data. The model I developed clearly established my chosen identity definition and helped me link back to it throughout the analysis. As described in the methodology chapter, I used the model with a “data first” approach. This approach revealed several unanticipated themes and thus indicated that using the model had not predetermined my findings. Figure 6 shows this study’s findings in each of the model’s operational categories. The unanticipated themes in this research were perseverance, pride, relationship with English,



self as a parent, and self as a Latino immigrant. Other researchers may find different identity elements in each category; the categories are purposefully open and neutral to accommodate many varieties of research and evidence. Even if other authors disagree with my approach, the model can serve as a departure point for creating different operationalized definitions to facilitate additional research.

The Role of Pride

The near-ubiquity of participant pride was one of the unexpected findings in this study. I had not seen discussions of pride in prior identity research and had not anticipated it in any of my planning or interview questions. Nevertheless, the current

study identified three main sources of pride that appeared to play a part in identity development: appreciation of home culture cooking, feedback about quality work, and business success. The element of home culture cooking may play into stereotypes about Mexicans to some extent, but at least some of the participants were working toward a more expansive portrayal of Mexican cuisine. One implication of this is that business ownership can provide a platform for educating community members about the nuances of the owner's culture. A more educated community can benefit all immigrants and possibly even decrease discrimination. Another implication is that, although being prideful may be a negative attribute at times, symbolic resources such as pride can help bring about personal satisfaction, optimism about the future, and positive identity construction.

With this finding in mind, social assistance programs such as MDPs should consider how their participants might develop pride in themselves and in their cultures. For example, programs could provide opportunities for participants to share their cultures in a positive environment and to meet with successful role models from their countries. On the research end, studies could examine both positive and negative contributors to personal and cultural pride and look for connections between pride, other identity elements, and various kinds of program outcomes.

The Importance of Giving Back

People often think about what participants will *receive* from a social service program, but this study found that participants also benefited from giving back. All of the participants reported feeling good about providing advice and support to others, and several said that helping others was their way of thanking those who had helped them. Participants also saw caring for the planet as a way to contribute to the community and to improve personal health for themselves, customers, friends, and family members.

These findings suggest that MDPs and other social programs should incorporate opportunities for participants to contribute to the community. Programs looking to impact environmental consciousness should also consider connecting planet-friendly practices to personal health. Program impact analyses should examine the interdependence that participants develop in addition to assessing what participants learn and are able to achieve.

The Rewards of “Pink Collar” Businesses

In Inaba’s (2000) study, participants conveyed that increases in self-esteem, control over the future, and ability to achieve personal goals were more important than financial business success. My findings support that conclusion and take it a step further. I contend that the psychosocial benefits of entrepreneurship were transformational for female participants who had children at home. Before establishing their businesses, these participants had virtually given up day-to-day parenting responsibilities to relatives,

nannies, neighbors, or whoever was available. Several of the women explained that this lack of parenting time resulted in their children having problems in school and/or in the community. With the flexibility of business ownership, the women reclaimed their parenting roles and dramatically lowered the stress levels in their homes. They reported that their children were healthier and doing better in school as a result.

This finding provides an argument as to why the community as a whole should be invested in immigrant women's microenterprise success. Even people who do not care about the immigrants themselves, as discussed in this study's introduction, have a stake when children's problems manifest themselves in schools and beyond. This finding has significant implications for government policy and funding for microenterprise organizations. If microenterprise is seen as benefiting only the entrepreneurs themselves, related policies will easily take a backseat to other programs with larger perceived impact. However, if policymakers and funding organizations see the extended impact of healthy entrepreneurial immigrant families in schools and greater communities, microenterprise providers may be awarded more resources to help more people.

The current research also supports some of Ehlers and Main's (1998) findings, although with different implications. Ehlers and Main found that the MDP reinforced woman participants' tendencies to choose "pink collar" businesses—small-scale, home-based businesses based on gender-specific work that they were already doing, such as childcare and food preparation. Ehlers and Main and others (Kim, 2012) felt that those businesses were bound to be barely profitable and would not help the women make

contacts and find resources beyond family and friends. In the current study, the participants were engaged in so-called pink collar businesses: food preparation and cleaning. However, of the five female participants who were already selling products or services, three were earning enough money to make a difference for their families. All of my participants were working with contacts outside their immediate communities, and at least three of them were already thinking about how they would provide jobs to help others. These findings imply that microenterprises should not be judged based on the kind of work they entail but rather on the benefits they provide to the entrepreneurs and their families. This shift in thinking could help policymakers, funders, and MDP organizations evaluate program impact more broadly, which could impact funding, community support, and program design.

Internalized Racism and the Immigrant Lens

The immigrant experience provided a powerful and ever-present lens through which research participants viewed their experiences. Even though María had been in the US for 14 years and Salvador for 20, they still viewed their business goals and opportunities for success in terms of their status as immigrants. In addition, several participants used the language of internalized racism, which can stop people from seeing their strengths and make it hard to persevere through the inevitable challenges of entrepreneurship and other endeavors. These findings suggest that MDPs and other social service organizations need to explicitly address not only economic and knowledge

constraints but also the psychosocial barriers that immigrants face. Programs could help entrepreneurs better understand their personal social-emotional hurdles and the stereotypes that work against them; this could help participants address those issues proactively in their businesses. Future research could assist in this effort by exploring different ways that programs can help immigrants recognize and combat internalized racism.

A New Approach: “Relationship with English”

The current study began with a question about how the microenterprise journey may have impacted participants’ investment in learning English, drawing on Norton’s (2000) notion of language learning investment. The finding that “investment” was not the most relevant framework has implications for social service programs and English teaching as well as for studies of identity and language learning. With the broader construct of *relationship with English*, service providers and researchers could develop a more nuanced understanding of affective considerations related to acquiring a new language. This perspective could help both the applied linguistic and TESOL communities describe, explain, and address immigrants’ situated English use and investment in language learning.

An underlying contention of the *relationship* construct is that many immigrants who profess not to *speak* English or to speak English poorly may nevertheless *use English* and even use English extensively. In this study, Lorena and Rosa both repeatedly said,

“yo no sé ingles” [I don’t know English], but they both managed to *use* English to conduct business either through a partner or through technology. María felt that language limitations constrained her business options, and yet she managed to *use* English to manage catering jobs with multiple clients. These examples suggest that asking whether a person *speaks* English may, in many situations, be focusing on the wrong question.

In sociolinguistic terms, the labels *English speaker* and *non-English speaker* come from a structuralist functionalist worldview. This worldview attempts to assign people to categories regardless of the individuals’ practical abilities. Notably, the Internet is full of queries from people wondering how fluent one has to be to check a box marked “speaker” for any given language. Thus, the structuralist attempt at definitive categorization masks every individual’s interpretation of what the categories mean.

The concept of *English user* provides a poststructuralist approach to this issue. As shown in this study, individuals construct their English use based on their needs, creativity, and affective factors. English use is highly situated, such that what works for one person or one situation might not work for another. For example, texting and on-line translation worked for Rosa but were not options for Lorena, who struggled to understand her new cell phone. María considered herself an English user for selling food but not for other interactions. The concept of English user might be difficult to implement on job applications, but it could open doors for discussing, assessing, instructing, and supporting many types of immigrant activities. For example, social

services and English instruction could start by understanding the ways in which people are already using English, then help to build more skills from there. In job situations, managers and employees could work together to adapt the work environment to a person's English use. This would require extra time up front; however, by truly considering what each employee is able to do, employers could get increased productivity and benefit from a grateful and more satisfied workforce.

Another implication of *relationship with English* is that people do not always recognize the importance of informal learning opportunities. Class-based learning does not work for everyone for a variety of psychosocial and scheduling reasons, so it is particularly important that immigrants understand other ways to advance their language and cultural skills. In this study, the least comfortable English speakers did not feel they could take classes, and yet they continually referred to lack of English as a problem for their businesses. Social service providers should help such participants understand the benefits of informal English learning and encourage them to seek such experiences. Participants may be reticent and lack self-confidence to use their English with strangers, so organizations should try to provide non-threatening practice opportunities to help get them started.

Further research is needed to explore the components and implications of immigrants' relationship with English. It would be helpful to understand more about how immigrants construct their identities as English language users and what kinds of strategies they use to compensate for missing skills. Since identity construction also

reflects the responses that immigrants get from others, researchers could examine the kinds of reactions that language compensation strategies yield in various situations. This information could be used to coach both fluent speakers and language learners as they start interacting with one another.

Capitalism and Critical Theory

This research locates MDPs at the juncture of critical theory and capitalist practice. As discussed in the methodology context section, the Theory of Change that drove Fuerte's MDP was inherently critical; it portrayed low-income Latinas as disadvantaged by societal forces and in need of focused assistance to overcome systemic discrimination. Entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is often considered to be an essential element of capitalism in which each person fends for him or herself (Newbert, 2003; Schramm, 2004). As such, by promoting entrepreneurship as a solution to unequal power, MDPs bring capitalism and critical theory together. This concept supports Jeffrey and Dyson's (2013) assertion:

To disparage all references to the promotion of "entrepreneurship" as fundamentally tainted by their association with free market capitalist ideas and the pronouncements of the World Bank is to detract attention from the need to support – practically and ideologically – the types of enterprise being pushed forward by young [entrepreneurs]. (p. R2)

With this way of thinking, MDPs have the potential to create unlikely allies. If proponents of capitalist and critical methods each provide their expertise, they could help more immigrant entrepreneurs improve quality of life for themselves, their families, and the broader community.

Understanding MDPs' Long-Term Impact

Given the resources being devoted to MDPs (Servon, 2006), the promise of microenterprise for alleviating poverty (Edgcomb, 2003; Kim, 2012), and the conflicting results from MDP studies as shown in my literature review, it would be helpful to see more comprehensive research about MDP effectiveness. Using a longitudinal ethnographic approach, studies could optimally look at multiple kinds of programs to assess the impact of various MDP structures and other variables over time. Researchers could also explore MDP-related issues for men versus women, since there may be particular program designs that are relatively more important for one or the other. The insight gained could help target program resources and maximize impact for participants and their communities.

Limitations

This study had several limitations that should be considered when evaluating its findings and designing future research. First, although working closely with Fuerte was invaluable both for the staff members' insight and for access to MDP participants, the arrangement imposed certain constraints. Most significantly, I was always conscious of

needing to address Fuerte's research goals as well as my own. Our objectives were well aligned, but they were not identical. There were a few times during interviews when I might have delved more deeply into an issue or skipped a topic entirely except that I worried about unilaterally omitting an agreed upon question. Interestingly, this issue was a constraint, but it was also a benefit. Some of the questions that I might have skipped or never included to begin with, such as asking participants to describe the food they were selling, yielded significant findings for my research questions. Similarly, Fuerte would not have asked the questions about English language learning had it not been for my involvement, and they learned from those parts of the interviews as well. As such, the constraints of working together were not necessarily bad; they simply yielded different findings than what I would have come to on my own.

A second limitation was in participant selection. The Fuerte team and I discussed this issue at length and agreed on participant selection criteria. While working to satisfy the criteria, the MDP manager contacted MDP participants whom he thought would be likely to participate in the study. This approach may have brought his predispositions into the process. In addition, some participants self-selected out of the study by not responding to the MDP manager's calls or by not showing up to scheduled interviews. These factors may have introduced a bias that is difficult to characterize.

One further consideration is that all of my participants came from one MDP with a given structure, focus, and Theory of Change. My findings are inextricably linked to

those factors. The identical methodology with participants from a different MDP would possibly yield different results.

Overall, this research suggests that entrepreneurship within the context of the Fuerte MDP promoted positive identity construction for low-income Latino immigrants. By increasing symbolic resources such as pride in self and culture, improved relationship with English, and positive family roles, the microenterprise journey enabled participants to take control of their lives and look optimistically toward the future. This study also brought forth important issues to address, such as internalized racism and the importance of enabling pride, as well as new paradigms, such as operationalizing identity and *relationship with English*. These findings are significant for researchers and social service providers alike.

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Appendix A: Intended Impacts and Indicators

To set the stage for this research, I worked with Fuerte staff members in the summer of 2015 to formally articulate the intended impacts of their microenterprise development program (MDP). Under each intended impact statement, indicators describe target participant behaviors and attitudes.

Primary impact: Participants become engaged and capable entrepreneurs, as indicated by:

- a. Demonstrating and sharing passion for healthy food and sustainable practices
- b. Having the skills and the ability to continue learning so they can move their business forward
- c. Producing quality products and/or services
- d. Running successful triple-bottom-line businesses, with attention to people, profits and planet
- e. Having increased economic self-sufficiency and family financial stability

Secondary impact: Participants develop personal strengths to increase their personal and family well-being, as indicated by:

- a. Feeling self-confident and empowered to succeed
- b. Demonstrating resilience in the face of problems
- c. Advocating for themselves and for their families
- d. Being optimistic about the future

Tertiary impact: Participants contribute to community well-being, as indicated by:

- a. Demonstrating leadership, empathy, and solidarity with community members
- b. Engaging in a collaborative approach with family members, friends, suppliers, customers, and partners
- c. Serving as a role model and a resource for others
- d. Believing that they are contributing to the community

Appendix B: Theory of Change

This Theory of Change articulates the core principles that underlie Fuerte's microenterprise development program (MDP). During the summer of 2015, I worked with Fuerte staff members to develop this formal articulation of the principles that had guided their work for many years.

Fuerte programs are based on our fundamental belief that every individual has innate potential and capability. Systemically marginalized Latino community members are not always accorded this basic level of respect and find many opportunities continually out of reach. To promote a more just and equitable system, we provide culturally responsive services designed to help each participant build on his or her capacity and achieve success.

Within this framework, the Fuerte MPD provides intensive, wraparound services to help participants start and grow their own businesses. Flexible and dynamic, our services are grounded in participants' own lived experiences and are responsive to each individual's needs. The Fuerte MDP cultivates strong community partnerships to help participants achieve:

- **Personal growth.** With appropriate support from their families and from Fuerte, participants can gain knowledge and self-confidence, assume control of their lives and the lives of their families, and participate in creating solutions to the challenges they face.
- **Interdependence.** Personal and business successes grow through collaboration and solidarity between participants and their communities. Participants also recognize their interdependence with nature and work to sustain and protect the environment.
- **Community leadership.** As participants grow personally and experience business success, they can become effective community leaders and advocates for the values they believe in.

Appendix C: Interview Guide for MDP Participants

In English

1. First, I would like to learn a little bit about you.
Where were you born? How long have you been in the US?
Do you have children? How old are they?
2. Why did you want to start your own business?
How long ago did you start your business?
Why did you choose that business?
3. How would you describe your products / services?
Do you believe that you are selling (will be selling) quality products/services?
(If so) What makes (will make) your products/services high quality?
What motivates you to focus on quality?
4. How would you define “success” for your business?
Do you feel you will be able to achieve that success? Why or why not?
5. Do you focus on the needs of people and planet in (planning) your business?
(If so) What do (will) you do for them?
6. What skills and abilities have been most important for starting your business?
What else do you feel you need to learn to move your business forward, and how will you go about learning?
When you face problems or challenges in (planning) your business, what do you do?
Can you give me an example? When did that happen?
7. Do you need to use English for your business?
How have you learned English? How do you feel about using it?
Are you taking steps to improve your English or are you planning to? (If so) What are you doing / what are you planning to do?
8. Does your business make a financial difference for your family? (Do you think your business will make a financial difference for your family?) How? / Why not?
What do those changes mean for you?
9. As a business owner, have there been times when you have needed to defend your rights? Have there been times when you need to defend the rights of your family members?

- (If so) Can you give me an example? When did that happen? How did that make you feel?
10. Are there things that other people could learn from you about starting a business? (If so) Can you give me an example?
Have you been able to share what you've learned about starting (and running) a business? (If so) Can you tell me about that?
How did that make you feel?
11. What is your vision for the future of your business?
What is your vision for your family's future?
What kind of opportunities and challenges do you see for yourself and for your family?
When you think about the future, how do you feel?
12. Are there things that you have learned from running your business that help you in your personal life?
We have talked a lot about your abilities, feelings, thoughts of the future, and how you approach challenges. Have these changed since you started (planning) your business? Would your answers have been different years ago before starting your business?

In Spanish

1. Primero, quisiera conocerle mejor.
¿En dónde nació usted? ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene viviendo en los Estados Unidos?
¿Tiene hijos? ¿De qué edades son?
2. ¿Por qué quería iniciar su propio negocio?
¿Hace cuantos años lo inició?
¿Por qué escogió ese tipo de negocio?
3. ¿Cómo describiría los productos/servicios que está vendiendo (qué va a vender)?
¿Usted cree que sus productos/servicios son (o serán) de alta calidad?
(Si usted cree que sí) ¿A qué lo atribuye?
¿Qué lo motiva a usted a enfocarse en la calidad de sus productos/servicios?
4. ¿Cómo definiría el tener "éxito" en su negocio?
¿Cree que será capaz de alcanzarlo? ¿Por qué sí o por qué no?

5. Cuando hace planes para su negocio, ¿se centra usted en las necesidades de las personas y el planeta?
¿Qué hace (hará) por ellos?
6. ¿Cuáles talentos y habilidades han sido los más importantes para iniciar su negocio?
¿Qué cree que necesita aprender más para que su negocio prospere? ¿Cómo va a aprenderlo?
Cuando encuentra problemas o retos en su negocio, ¿qué hace? ¿Podría darme un ejemplo? ¿Cuándo ocurrió esto?
7. ¿Necesita usar el inglés para su negocio?
¿Cómo ha aprendido el inglés? ¿Cómo se siente al usarlo?
¿Está tomando medidas para mejorar su inglés, o lo está planeando? (Si es así) ¿Qué está haciendo / qué está planeando?
8. ¿Su negocio ha cambiado la situación financiera de su familia? (¿Cree que su negocio cambiará la situación financiera de su familia?)
¿En qué forma? / ¿Por qué no?
¿Qué significan esos cambios para usted?
9. Como dueño de un negocio, ¿Hubo ocasiones cuando ha necesitado defender sus derechos?
¿Hubo ocasiones cuando ha necesitado defender los derechos de miembros de su familia?
(Si es así) ¿Podría darme un ejemplo? ¿Cuándo ocurrió esto? ¿Cómo se sintió usted?
10. ¿Hay cosas que otras personas podrían aprender de usted para iniciar un negocio? (Si es así) ¿Podría darme un ejemplo?
¿Ha podido compartir lo que ha aprendido sobre cómo iniciar (y dirigir) un negocio?
(Si es así) ¿Podría contarme sobre esto? ¿Cómo se sintió usted?
11. ¿Qué visión tiene para el futuro de su negocio?
¿Y para el futuro de su familia?
¿Qué tipos de oportunidades y retos imagina para su familia, y para usted mismo, en los años venideros?
Cuando piensa en el futuro, ¿cómo se siente?
12. ¿Hay cosas que ha aprendido de su negocio que le hayan ayudado en su vida personal? Hemos hablado mucho sobre sus habilidades, sentimientos, pensamientos del futuro y cómo aborda los retos. ¿Esas cosas han cambiado desde que inició (planeo) su negocio? ¿Sus respuestas hubieran sido diferentes hace años, antes del negocio?

Appendix D: Interview Guide for Fuerte Staff Members

Please answer based on your experience working with the people in the business training program.

1. I'd like to start by talking about participants' feelings related to being Mexican immigrants in the US.
 - From what you have seen, how do you think participants feel about where they are from and their position as immigrants in the US?
 - (If needed) Do you feel that participants are proud of their origins, embarrassed, or do they have other feelings?
 - Do you believe that starting a business has affected their feelings about being Mexican immigrants in the US? If so, how?
 - Do you believe their feelings about being Mexican immigrants in the US affect how they run their business and/or the work that they do? If so, how do you see this demonstrated?
2. Think about the participants and their levels of perseverance and tenacity.
 - Do you feel that most participants are tenacious in general, from before they started their businesses?
 - Do you feel that starting a business has affected their level of tenacity?
3. Let's talk about participants and their use of English.
 - In general, do you feel that starting a business affects how participants use English? If so, how?
 - Do you think it affects how they feel about using English? If so, how?
 - Do you think it affect their commitment to learn more English? If so, how?
 - Some people say that every immigrant has a personal relationship with English in terms of how he or she uses it and how he or she feels about using it. Some relationships are good, some are not so good, and they change over time. Do you think that this metaphor applies to program participants? Why or why not?

4. Now think about the participants' interdependence with their communities.
 - Do you feel that participants develop interdependence with their communities? If so, how? (If needed) In what ways are they dependent and in what ways are they contributors? Do you have examples?
 - How do you think they feel about being leaders/contributors to the community? Do you have examples?
 - The classes put a lot of emphasis on the triple bottom line. Do you see participants proactively caring for the environment? If so, how?
 - Do you see them doing those things because they've been told or because they have come to believe in the importance of people & planet at a deeper level?
 - Do you feel that starting a business affects how participants see themselves as parents? If so, how? Can you give me some examples?
5. I'd like to ask you about something that I heard from participants. Several of the participants talked about themselves as immigrants and Latinos. They said, "Nosotros los Latinos," followed by various generalizations: we are used to commerce, we are used to small markets, we don't generally make plans, we wouldn't normally go to an organization for help. ... What do you think those comments are about?
6. I asked participants about their vision for the future of their business, then about their vision for the future of their family. Do you find that program participants have visions for business and visions for family that are linked in some way? Can you give me some examples?