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One of the major contributions of the 'new sociology of childhood' is that it has provided a welcome attention to childhood for its own sake, rather than as a transitory period of becoming. This shift away from an unthinking developmentalism (Burman, 2004) has produced exciting work, showing the complexities of childhood lives in diverse contexts, situations, activities and relationships (Alanen, Brooker and Mayall, 2013; James, 2010).

However, attention to experiences of "childhood" may at times implicitly and unwittingly reproduce the binary between adulthood and childhood, despite recognition that these are constructed categories with messy and inchoate boundaries (Valentine, 2003). Childhood processes are sometimes seen as left behind when childhood ends, wherever that boundary is marked. Yet, the fact that what happens in childhood impacts on adult functioning underpins dynamic approaches ushered in by Freud and so the burgeoning area of psychosocial studies. Various scholars attempt to study the influence of childhood on adulthood by considering continuities and discontinuities (Rutter et al., 2006; Rutter, 2013). There is, however, little work that focuses on the multiple processes by which childhood features and experiences are taken into adulthood.

Our paper aims to do this, by analyzing narrative interviews at four points with one adult daughter of immigrants from Mexico to the United States. We consider how the meanings of childhood experiences get re-interpreted in relation to unfolding life events – not as episodes that are simply reworked in the service of adult themes, but actively taken along into adult lives. Rather than viewing temporality as linear, it leaves simultaneous and continuing traces of the past in the present. Andrews (2013) has helpfully shown how re-interviewing adults over a 20 year period produces an understanding that

We are forever rescripting our pasts, making sense of the things that happened in light of subsequent events. This is true not only as narrators of our own lives, but also as narrators of the lives of others. This process of reinterpretation of events is one which is ongoing throughout our lives, as different parts of our pasts reveal themselves to hold increased importance, or to be void of meaning, depending not only on who we are, but critically, on whom we wish to become.
(Andrews, 2013: 215)

“Non-normative” childhoods: Child language brokering

We center our analyses around a particular childhood experience, one that may be seen as “non-normative” in the sense that it diverges from mainstream, Western, middle class notions of what children should be allowed or expected to do: the work of child language brokers. Author A’s extensive research on this topic

points to the ubiquity of children's invisible work using their knowledge of two languages to speak, read, write, listen and do things for their families as well as for representatives of dominant cultural institutions (schools, clinics, stores, and many other places) (Author, 2009). The practice shapes children's lives, yet remains largely invisible to the public eye (Kwon, 2014).

While such practices are for the most part seen by immigrant families as "just normal" (Bauer, 2015), they often evoke great anxiety for contemporary adults. Reactions to presentations of our research make this evident; more often than not, people ask about the burdens on children and the strain children must surely feel as they represent their families to doctors, lawyers, teachers and other public officials. A growing body of research has offered more balanced assessments of both benefits and burdens of language brokering. (See for example Acoach & Webb, 2004; Author, 2001; 2009; Author et al; 2015; Buriel et al, 1998; Buriel, Love and DeMent, 2006; Chao, 2006; Dorner et al, 2007; Garcíá Sánchez, 2010; Guan et al, 2014; Guan & Shen, 2014; Hua & Costigan, 2012; Love & Buriel, 2007; Kam, 2011; Katz, 2014; However, the overall thrust of work on child language brokering indicates the anxiety it provokes for adults about children somehow being "out of place:" in danger of being exposed to things beyond their years, and carrying burdens that children should not assume. There is also an implicit blaming of parents for putting children into such positions, evident in the labeling of the practice as a form of "adultification" or "parentification" (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Some researchers have tried to determine how children feel about this work (e.g. Kam, 2011; Weisskirch, 2007; Wu & Kim, 2009). But evidence suggests that

feelings evoked by language brokering vary across tasks, relationships and circumstances (Author A, 2010; Author B et al., 2013). Further, the overall valence as well as the meanings attached to child language brokering seem to change as children grow older and begin to compare their “non-normative” childhoods to the “normal American family” (Pyke, 2000). Older youth may also be called upon to engage in more public displays of brokering, exposing them to judgment by non-family members, and leading them to have to reconcile and make sense of a practice that previously seemed unremarkable. Thus, even within the presumed borders of childhood/adolescence, views of the practice may change.

In this paper, we look at how the feelings attached to language get re-interpreted in relation to unfolding lives and experiences. This reinterpretation parallels the re-scripting of narratives and emotions about the past that Andrews (2013) identifies as a common feature of everyday life and narratives. Narrative interviews and analyses thus provide a key means of gaining insights into adults’ (re-)interpretive processes of childhood language brokering.

Narrative analyses

There are two main reasons for our approach to looking at four narratives told over a span of thirteen years. One is that it allows rare insight into the process of reconceptualization of childhood experiences over time. The other is that this process in itself is central to narrative theory since one of the key features of narrative is its mutability, the fact that the past is subject to change and re-interpretation as people’s life circumstances change. One of the reasons that

narrative research has proliferated in recent years is that it draws on the everyday practice of meaning making in which almost all humans engage. The task for speakers telling stories about their lives is to select what they want to say from elements that are not in themselves meaningful, but given significance through interpretation and presentation in a particular sequence for particular audiences (Bruner, 2000; Riessman, 2008). Since any story could be told in different ways, and many are told differently to different audiences, narratives are stories of experience, rather than transparent, accurate representations of events. They are constructed in particular personal, social and historical contexts (Squire, 2013). As Squire (2013, p. 40) puts it 'They may seem to be 'personal', but they enact personhood as a changing social strategy, rather than as a single, stable formation.' One of the functions of narrative is, therefore, 'to "make present" life experience and interpretations of life in a particular time and space' (Schiff, 2012). The 'making present' of past experiences is crucial to the narrative process. Since people tell, and re-tell, stories connected with their lives throughout their lives, the stories themselves shift and change as the process of telling comes to be located in what was the future. A further, crucial part of narrative theory is, thus, that everybody reconceptualizes the past over time in a process of narrative transformation. Molly Andrews suggests that:

'Even our senses of objects and space are inflected with an ongoing revision of perception and evaluation. We read a book that we have not seen since our childhood, and are surprised at the racist imagery of which we, in our youth, were oblivious. How could we have missed

that message, one which so offends our current set of values? Or we revisit a place and are surprised that it is so different from the way it was in our memory... In all that I have been describing here, the role of imagination cannot be emphasized enough. Even when our memories are accurate...the meaning which we attribute to those experiences, in other words the reason they are important to us, is highly influenced by the imaginary world we weave around them. ...It is the drive of the imagination which impels us to ask 'if only' of our past, and 'what if' of our futures. When we revisit the past, as we do when we tell stories about our lives, it is our imaginative urge which gives us the ability to contemplate a world that might have been, as well as one which might still be.' (p.4)

Memory

Recent work on memory is helpful in indicating that there are contrary possibilities for the impact of remembered events on adult lives, suggesting both that while things are forgotten over time, some are re-constructed and so gain fresh salience. For example, the pivotal work on cognitive memory processes done by Elizabeth Loftus (2005) shows that memories can be suggested to adults because they are constructed, and not solipsistic, but open to collective influence. In keeping with earlier work by Nelson (1993) and others, Thompson et al., (1996) suggest that childhood amnesia for events before about three years of age occurs because children in early childhood have not yet learned how to tell their life stories as

narratives and that it is narrative that allows children to retain their memories in a recoverable form. From a longitudinal study of autobiographical memory that compared people's recollections over time with their contemporaneous diary entries, Thompson et al., (1996) argue that memory for the content of events changes over time from being 'largely reproductive to being largely reconstructive' (p. 5). It remains to be established, however, how the deployment of memories in narratives affects the childhood memories taken into adulthood and how particular ways of remembering and narrating them change over time and affect both how childhood experiences are re-constructed and experienced in adulthood, to what effect. It is, therefore, important to understand adult retrospective narratives of childhood, not as transparent truths, but as constitutive parts of the lifelong reconceptualization of childhood meanings.

A few studies make some contribution to thinking about how childhood experiences feature in adult lives and memories. For example, two longitudinal studies tracing children's lives to adulthood have examined shifts in identities over time and how young people engage with reflexive projects of self-making (e.g. Henderson et al., 2007; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2004). Their primary concerns are not, however, with how meanings of earlier experiences are reworked over time.

Frances Waksler (1996) invited students to write accounts of things they found hard in childhood: little trials, rather than extreme hardship. She asked them to attempt to bracket off their adult assessments of the experiences. She found that

adults commonly remembered episodes that they as children found difficult that adults had frequently found them amusing or trivial. Waksler presents a brief discussion of how some of her participants recognized that, from an adult perspective, they revised their views on such episodes to make light of them. However, the focus of the book is on adult misrecognition of children's emotions, rather than the ways in which childhood becomes part of adulthood. Ruthellen Josselson's (2009) longitudinal study of 'Maria' (from 21-56 years), that has so far recorded four times her account of a relationship in her teenage years provides insights into the different ways in which the same episode is interpreted in a participant's life. Josselson suggests that

... we can see in this longitudinal accounting the many uses to which a single autobiographical episode can be put. This episode holds various, shifting aspects of self. Like a kaleidoscope, the same elements are recombined to show a different pattern, all in the service of the dominant selves of the moment. The story ...is variously a story of independence, principle, rebellion, and passion and is differently used to help her define her relationship with her husband, then her daughter, then with herself... her remembered self evolves along with her (pp. 661-2).

Josselson's analysis is helpful in illuminating that the same episode can simultaneously hold different meanings for a participant depending on which aspects of her identity are currently of importance in her life.

This paper aims to make a complementary contribution to Josselson's analysis. We look beyond the recount of a single episode, instead considering what aspects of the multi-dimensional practice of language brokering were salient, and what meanings were ascribed to them at different points in one woman's life.

Methodology

We focus here on transcripts of four interviews with one person over a span of thirteen years. Eva (a pseudonym) is the oldest of four siblings in a family that migrated from Mexico to Chicago in the early 1980s. Her father worked in a steel mill for thirty years. Her parents at one point ran a family restaurant. They also owned and managed an apartment building. Eva was the first in her family to go to university.

The first interview took place when Eva was nineteen years old and enrolled in a college that was located about an hour from her family home. She participated in a mixed-method study examining language brokering (Author A 2009). The second interview took place eight years later and 2000 miles away, when Eva had relocated to California, and was recruited for an interview as part of Author B's study of adult recollections of child language brokering. Eva had married a first language English speaker and was the mother of three children. She had completed a Masters' degree in public policy and worked part time as an independent contractor, often using her bilingual, bicultural, and translation/interpretation skills in her work. A few months after that, Eva participated in a third interview in a related study (Dorner et al, under review), looking at how language brokering was implicated in emerging senses of identity especially around notions of "citizenship"

and belonging. Five years later, we contacted Eva once again and conducted a third joint interview focusing on her understandings of how this practice had shaped her life.

All four interviews entered the topic of language brokering with an open-ended question, inviting Eva to share her reflections, recollections and feelings. In the first two she was asked to recall early memories; the third and fourth focused on her reflections on the practice at that point in time. In each, she produced narrative accounts of specific language brokering events, including recounts of salient memories. All four interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis.

Our analyses center on how Eva conceptualized and reconceptualized her experiences over time. This includes how she oriented herself to the story; what was salient and invisible in each; the network of relations that she constructed; the cast of characters that populated her stories; the values she associated with the practice; and the meanings she took from her experiences. We were especially interested in transformations and reconceptualizations in the stories over this time period. How did Eva make sense of her childhood language brokering experiences in relation to her unfolding life? How did she see her life at that time in relation to these experiences?

Our approach involved a close reading of the opening narrative in the four interviews. Martine Burgos (1991) draws on the work of Paul Ricoeur to emphasize that the narrator of a story has the difficult task of unifying heterogeneous material. It is, therefore, a struggle to start telling a story, particularly since locating oneself as the narrator also constructs identity positions for the teller. As a result, conflicts are

often evident at the start of stories, as are the key issues that animate the life story. In addition, narrators have to take up subjective positions in relation to their stories. According to Burgos, it would therefore be wasteful to pay attention only to explicit content, rather than also attending to how the story is told, since there is a difference between what is said and what is told.

Narratives of language brokering

Across all four interviews, Eva told a similar story; we found nothing contradictory in the overall meanings she ascribed to language brokering in her life at these different points in time. The central story was for the most part a positive one: of feeling needed, especially by her mother, and gaining a sense of importance and competency through this work.

Even as the overarching arc of Eva's stories did not seem to change, some of the details did. She remembered things in slightly different ways; different events were salient in each account; and while there was a similar cast of characters in all of the stories (her mother, father, and three siblings) different ones entered into the spotlight and faded from view across renditions. In particular, her sister seems to appear and disappear. The overall valence that she attached to the practice also shifted, as did the salience of particular memories.

These similarities and differences may become clearer by looking closely at the way Eva begins her language brokering narratives.

First account - Age 19

The first interview began with Eva telling the story of her family's move to Chicago. She offered background information about her family and their early

experiences as immigrants: her parents' work, the opening of a family restaurant, and their later purchase of an apartment building. Eva talked for forty-one minutes before the interviewer (a graduate student on Author A's study) asked her to speak specifically about language brokering: "So then, can you remember when you started translating – for your mom?"

This may be the first time Eva had been asked about her earliest memories of language brokering. She seemed to search her memory, reconstructing her family history, and locating herself within this family history as language broker, presumably because we had highlighted that identity for her:

Well, I don't remember, like the *first* time I ever had to do it, but I remember when we used to live in the first building, when we first came back from Mexico after having lived there for a bit. I remember having to go to the store with my mom, and having to look for certain items. As far as, like, well, maybe I'm not explaining that right. She would say, "okay, um, go to, go get a pound of cheese" or "Go get a pound of ground beef" or something. So I remember having to do that, but I don't remember what exactly was involved. I'm assuming I had to use English (laughs), because they spoke English at these stores. But that wasn't very frequent because most of the time we did our shopping in the community, so you didn't need=

In other words, rather than speaking specifically about language brokering, Eva told a story about her family and her place in it. She highlighted her role as a helpmate to her mother, speaking in generalities about the kinds of things she did

rather than recalling specific incidents. The most salient memories in this iteration seemed to take place out in public spaces, specifically grocery stores. Eva signaled uncertainty about these memories when she said that she didn't remember "exactly what was involved," and when she acknowledged that her family shopped mostly within their community, where there would presumably be no need for language brokering. She guessed that she was "about four and a half" when "once or twice we did venture out to Dominick's or Jewel" (chain grocery stores outside her community) where she "did have to do that." The fact that Eva remembered these particular stores, and the buying of cheese, bears consideration, because these may be inter-textual references to an account by another adult language broker that was reported in Author A's (2009) publication and that Eva may have read. This points to the unreliability of memory and the fact that memories are reshaped by ongoing life experiences, including exposure to others' life stories, a point that we will return to later in the paper.

After struggling to begin the story of her life as a language broker in her first interview, Eva homed in on a second early memory. Again she was at her mother's side, but sharing a child-centered experience with her at home, not in public: watching Sesame Street on television. Eva explained that sometimes her mom would watch the show and "ask my sister and me what the cartoon characters were saying, or what the people on the TV show were saying. So I would tell my mom what it is that they were doing. Or what activity they had asked the children to do at home."

In a similar early memory, Eva recalled making signs with her mom for their restaurant: “I remember she had bought these bright construction paper and lots of thick, permanent markers.” The details that Eva named – bright paper and thick markers – again suggest this was a pleasant, non-threatening memory of being safe in her home and at her mother’s side, with a sense of importance to the task: Eva was helping to make signs that would be displayed in public in the family business.

Later in this first interview, Eva did talk about translating in some difficult situations. Both involved her sister: a trip to the emergency room when her sister cut her thumb, and a parent-teacher conference when her sister was being held back a grade. The parent-teacher conference situation is a story that appears in a later interview and that we examine in more detail below. But these were not the most salient memories in the first interview and they were not at the heart of the story that she told.

Thus, in her interview at age 19 – just after she has left home for the first time to attend college - Eva’s earliest memories of language brokering seemed largely untroubled. They were mostly set in the safety of home and community, with only a vague and generalized recollection of ventures into the English-speaking world that lay beyond home and community (at grocery stores). In this first narrative, Eva presented herself as secure in her role as the family language broker (a position that she held through high school and even into college at that time of the interview), and suggested how this gave her a sense of identity as a helper to others, particularly her parents. This was an identity that she would carry through the whole period of the interviews.

Eva at 27

Eva's second interview, at age 27, took place at a restaurant near her home. Eva managed to escape for a few hours from her responsibilities as the mother of three young children. Both authors were present as an audience for Eva's story, though Author B took the lead in the interview. While waiting for soup that she had ordered to arrive, Eva began retelling her story of life as a language broker. This time, she did not begin with any specific memories. Saying that she remembered translating at a "very early age," she gave a general gloss to these early experiences. In seeming contrast with her first interview, this gloss was largely negative:

Um, yeah, well, I remember doing it a lot. I remember translating for my parents at a very early age. I have memories of things that were pretty si-significant experiences, usually (.) in the bad light (*laughs*). And in terms of having positive experience with translating, well, everything else that I did for them, I think, outside the uh, those experiences that (.) they (.) they didn't traumatize me (*laughs*), but the ones that are very significant that stand out, are the ones where I had a very difficult time dealing with or they were things that I considered very important or significant. Like I said, not traumatizing, just significant because I remember that they were very important, and outside of that, everything I think for the most part, was pretty positive."

In this narration, Eva seemed to be searching for an overall evaluation of her language brokering experiences, and struggling to find a positive story to tell. Yet her memory was drawn to “traumatizing” events. The troubling memories that entered into Eva’s story only late in the first interview (at age 19), and without too much focus, seemed to have superseded the memories of helping her mother as some of her earliest memories now, giving an overall negative spin to her language brokering experiences. Eva began by calling these experiences “significant,” adding, seemingly a bit nervously, “usually (.) in the bad light.” She later used the word “traumatizing” (ostensibly claiming she was *not* traumatized, but belying that claim with the word, and some nervous laughter).

We may wonder why, in contrast to her first interview, Eva introduced her second narrative with memories of these difficult encounters: “the ones that are very significant, that stand out, are the ones where I had a very difficult time,” when in her first interview the ones that stood out seemed to be warm and comfortable ones. The answer to this may be illuminated by what Eva told us in the rest of this second interview. She recounted in considerable detail some *recent* work she had done helping her father with his retirement plans and both parents with a serious case of identity theft – work that she considered “bigger ticket items” than what she had previously done, and “kind of stressful.” The identity theft case “required (an) endless amount of phone calls and letters and faxes, every account under my parents’ name, if you can imagine, any credit card, any bank account, any utility, anything under my parents’ name required a letter, a fax, a phone call, a phone call to make sure the fax had been received to follow up with the letter that had been sent.” These

recent events seemed to weigh heavily on Eva, and she spoke of her responsibilities as both a mother and a daughter, living so far away from her parents. Indeed, after the interview, she emailed a two-page document to the authors discussing her dissatisfaction with having had to help her parents with both these things.

In summarizing her earliest experiences at home with her mother, Eva explicitly distinguished them from her more recent experiences: "I wasn't making phone calls, I wasn't setting up things for my mum at that point, but I was definitely looking at the forms and trying to make sense of the forms." This reveals how the present served as a frame for understanding the past. Eva's memories of her early experiences may have been colored by this more recent and particularly troublesome language brokering work.

Third account - Age 28

The third interview took place just a few months after the second. Eva had just turned 28. After telling the interviewer about her present life circumstances, she responded to the prompt to explain "how (her life as a language broker) all started"]. As in the first interview, she indicated that she "(was)n't quite sure," and she seemed to search in her early memories. She mused about how much English her parents were likely to have known at that time, remembering going to kindergarten herself without much knowledge of English, and some high school students who used to help her with her homework. Eventually she settled on a parent-teacher conference that she located in second grade. She explained, "I think how if I had to say one thing that started it, I would have said the parent teacher

conferences.” She also recalled her mother later giving her “small tasks: calling the doctors, making appointments, going through the mail.” In this interview, Eva was very explicit in saying that she “didn’t really remember”, but that “the one thing that sticks out are the parent teacher conferences.” We might note that while just a few months earlier she did recall language brokering to be somewhat “traumatizing,” she did not claim that parent-teacher conferences were the most salient of these traumatizing episodes. Nor, in the first or second interview, did she name these as her *first* experiences.

What seemed most salient in this third account was interpreting for her *sister’s* parent-teacher conferences, and the one conference in particular that preceded her sister being held back a grade in school that she had mentioned in her first interview as potentially “traumatic.” The memory no longer seemed quite as traumatic as it had just a few months earlier, though Eva said she “felt pretty lousy” about her sister having to repeat first grade. Significantly, however, this time she criticized her mother more than herself:

I think it was faulty of my mom not wanting to challenge the teacher or to challenge... to challenge her. Because I remember () my mom saying... “Well...” not... not... she was trying to be nice and respectful but really saying like, “Well who does she think she is?” [laughter]

This move suggests that Eva was once again reconceptualizing her earlier experiences from a new vantage point, and in so doing making quite different sense of them. She seemed to be speaking from her now-established perspective as a parent herself, comparing how *she* would respond to a

parent-teacher conference like this today: “If I was to go in with my daughter and they were... they were going to tell me that she needed to repeat the... the school year, I’d be furious.” This is the first time in her narrations that Eva stepped away from her own child perspective to take on her mother’s, This is also the first time she expressed any criticism of her parents at all.

Both the second and third interviews took place during a significant time in Eva’s life – not long after she had moved to California and started a family of her own. She was both metaphorically and physically moving away from her family of origin and creating a new sense of family for herself. Her narratives suggest underlying tensions in this individuation process with mixed emotions surfacing: some guilt for not speaking up on behalf of her sister in that parent-teacher conference long ago, for not being as readily available to her parents as she had been in the past and for feeling divided in her own loyalties – to her children and her parents. Along with the guilt, Eva expressed some annoyance ,at the fact that her parents needed her in these ways. At the same time, there was a sense that she *liked* being needed, and took pride in the special role she had had in her family all these years. And finally, there was this new emergence of critique, with Eva suggesting that her mother was lacking as a mother, in comparison to how she would behave in similar circumstances. This illustrates Andrew’s (2013) point that *‘new experiences, and new understanding of old experiences, bring with them a new perspective not only on our own lives – our present, as well as our pasts – but*

on the way in which we make sense of the lives of others.' (Andrews, 2013 p.205)

Final account - Age 33

The final (fourth) interview with Eva took place via phone. The first two authors were together on one end of the line. Author B began by referencing Eva's prior interview experiences, inviting her to share "anything (that has) been going around in your mind since then in the last five, six years since we saw you together...around language brokering." With only a brief hesitation, Eva jumped in, explicitly framing her reflections around her current position as a parent, and observer of other parent-child interactions in the suburban California community where she now lived:

I think um what's been really interesting for me is that in the community that I live in, there's a, a growing Latino population and I, I think more and more I, I see the children that translate for their parents and now as a parent with children it really um I think touches me and it it reminds me of the work that I did for my parents and even five or six years ago I was still translating for my parents and for phone calls and mail that they would send it to me but I do so little of it now because um my sister who still lives at home and I feel like they don't need me anymore."

True to what would be expected from narrative theory (Squire et al., 2014), this opening sequence takes us to the heart of Eva's story at that point: the fact that she did not feel needed anymore by her parents. She considered that her sister, who lived with her parents in Chicago, had stepped in to take her place. Eva saw other children in her community occupying the coveted (albeit complicated) role that she had held in her own family throughout her childhood and even into college – a role that she gradually lost as she moved away and got busy with her own life. This seemingly triggered some nostalgia.

Eva noted that until a few years ago (around the time of the third interview) she had still performed this work long distance, by telephone, but even that had now changed: “I just don't do for them anymore. I, I don't translate the mail for them, I don't make phone calls for them and really I think it's because my sister lives with them and, and whatever they may need, my sister can help them with that.” Eva did not seem to remember that at the time of our prior interview she had expressed considerable *annoyance* at her parents' dependency, and *frustration* about the work she had to do. Her focus now was instead on seemingly having been displaced by her sister who had stayed close to home and now lived there.

In this final interview Eva did note that she still occasionally helped her parents with “a few larger things” –specifically, their wills

and trust. She experienced this as “kind of sad because they are thinking about death,” explaining:

So I’m helping them look into, um, getting everything done on paper and, and taking inventory of everything that they have and how they want that to, I guess to, to be recorded in writing and, and working with the attorney and what not, so I moved on from helping with all the small stuff to a couple larger things that they need my help with.”

At this point in the interview, Eva made a connection to her relationship with her own children and her current life positioning that constituted a key narrative (Plummer, 2001) constructed as much from what she did not say as what she *did* say. She did *not* step into her children’s perspective to imagine how they may someday feel about *her* growing older. She did *not* create a story about how perhaps her children should help *her* now (as she did her own parents, or as the children she observed in her community were needed by their immigrant parents), or in the future. Instead, she wanted to be needed by *them*, as well as still to be needed by her parents. She said: “It feels um in a very odd way, the way I think one day my, my children will grow up and they won’t need me in the same way. They won’t need me.” This underscores the recurring theme across all of Eva’s narratives – that she derived meaning, purpose, and a sense of identity from *being needed*, and from being a helpmate to others. She

hoped now that her children would “need me hopefully for advice on those (everyday) things. My parents don’t need me for the little things anymore.” With this wistful description of the present and anticipation of the future, Eva’s retrospective narrative brings her childhood into the present as melancholic nostalgia.

Discussion and conclusion

One of the main findings from the longitudinal analysis of four narrative interviews on childhood language brokering detailed above, is that, over the course of each of the long interviews, Eva presented a picture of having been pleased to be a language broker for her parents and having gained a lot from it, in terms of the closeness of her relationship with her parents and the expertise she developed in business and financial matters. Yet the episodes Eva selected as signifying her experience of language brokering varied over time, as did the valence she attached to them. The analysis of her narratives has suggested that the things that Eva identified as salient were related to her positioning in her life course at the time of the interview and how she understood the meaning of particular childhood episodes in relation to her current preoccupations. The employment of narrative analysis is particularly helpful here in that it enables analysis of how the past, present and future are aligned in the stories people tell. Rosenthal (2006) explains that:

When reconstructing a past (the life history) presented in the present of a life narrative (the life story) it must be considered that the presentation of past events is constituted by the present of narrating. The present of the

biographer determines his or her perspective on the past and produces a specific past at times. In the course of a life with its biographical turning points new remembered pasts arise at each point. This construction of the past out of the present is not, however, to be understood as a construction independent from the respective experienced past. Instead, memory-based narratives of experienced events are also constituted through experiences in the past. So narratives of experienced events refer both to the current life and to the past experience.

In her longitudinal study of one woman's life narratives, Josselson (2010) found that the same episode recounted four times was always recounted differently depending on her participant's current life experiences and relationships. We similarly found that Eva's current life circumstances were central to her narrative. Our addition to Josselson's theorizing is to emphasize this as a way in which childhood was brought into the present and was relational, depending on her current relationships with her parents and her children. Her generational positioning was psychosocial in that she was deeply emotionally invested in being needed both by her parents and her children. That desire and commitment meant that she experienced her language brokering as having more traumatic elements in the second interview - when she was 27 years and struggling to disentangle her parents' problems with identity theft from a distance, while looking after her very young children - than in the first, when she had just recently moved from home into the relative independence of college. The fact that she felt that responsibility so keenly is itself psychosocial and relational in that she was also struggling to maintain her vision of herself as the

child who did most for her parents and was closest to them. That struggle entailed imagining of herself, now a mother, in her mother's place during the third interview (at 28 years) and finding her mother 'faulty'. This reconstruction of a difficult episode when she had to interpret for her mother that her sister would be held back a year at school gave her permission to stop blaming herself for what was an unhappy and shocking event for the family. Childhood themes were being reworked in the present at each of the interviews and in anticipation of future identities. In this sense, Eva's childhood was still very much alive as she grappled with the meanings of childhood language brokering. Those meanings were very much in process and were contingent on current circumstances.

Eva's narratives also make it clear that the search for a definitive answer to the question that many researchers have engaged in - about how language brokers feel about this work - is futile, given the complex psychodynamics bound up in the task and the family relationships that shape it, the ways both the tasks and the relationships change over time, and the ways in which they are reinterpreted in relation to ongoing life dilemmas. The longitudinal analysis of Eva's interviews shows the power of narrative as a sense-making device and the value of analytically interrogating these tensions.

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