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# Biographical narratives of immigrants: construction and intergenerational transmission of school experiences\*

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## Abstract

This article presents the major findings of an investigation whose general purpose is to analyze the representations around schooling in biographical accounts by migrants who reside in poor urban fringes, in order to explore the relationships between their own educational trajectories and those of girls and boys under their care. To construct data, a qualitative methodological strategy was devised with the use of semi-structured biographical interviews with adult migrants who live in a vulnerable neighborhood in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and who are parents or take care of girls and boys in elementary school. Data analysis was based on the guidelines provided by the grounded theory. This article develops the main results of the study, organized in three dimensions: educative experiences of the adults; schoolings of children; intergenerational transmission of experiences. Conclusion is that migrants from popular sectors construct and transmit intergenerationally their school experiences going through several social tests and identity discontinuities, in which changes occur in the meanings and the articulations of logics of action: integration, strategy, and subjectivation. The educational trajectory takes a central role as a primary element of support to the family migratory project, consolidated as a shared effort.

## Keywords

Migration – School – Individuation – Identity – Generation

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## Introduction

Since the late 19th century and the early 20th century, there are records in Argentina of the massive coming of European immigrants who were welcomed by the governments at that time, considering what these people brought along in terms of the honor of labor, values of civility, and their civic contribution. The school played a fundamental role since it enabled the transmission of the same history, geography, patriotic symbols, in a nutshell, basic knowledge and practices for the construction and access to citizenship in a society (BEHERAM, 2012). Over time several periods succeed which involve changes in migratory issues. From 1945 on, foreigners from the neighboring countries begin to register<sup>2</sup>, who performed agricultural tasks. In 1960, owing to the crisis in the field, such foreigners move to Buenos Aires looking for jobs in the industrial sector. In the absence of an adequate housing policy, they settle in the *villas* (shanty towns) of the city.<sup>3</sup> Material and sanitary deficiencies become apparent (CRAVINO, 2009; VACCOTTI, 2017).

From 1976 on, with governments of liberal economy, the *Videla Act* (nº 22.439/1981) is passed – according to which an undocumented immigrant is not allowed to access services of health, education, labor –; a migratory policy then develops based on police control. During the presidential administrations of Carlos Saúl Menem (1989-1999) conflicting actions take place, some of them for openness and some restrictive. The end of this period coincides with the crisis of the neoliberal model, immigrants are blamed for the socioeconomic failure and xenophobic perspectives go widespread. Until the end of the century, the migratory policies become restrictive, with greater constraints, impediments, and deportations which affect mainly the regional migrants. In the discursive context, both on the political level and on the communication media, “[...] the regional immigrant is seen as a phenomenon that is new, massive, uncontrollable, and dangerous” (HALPERN, 2007, p. 152).

Since then, similarly to what happens in other process of mobility South-South, a stigmatized image of the regional migrant is pictured (BARTLETT; RODRÍGUEZ; OLIVERA, 2015). The influence of the media, the statements by politician and other important persons, situates the foreign individual as an usurper, a thief, an opportunist, or a sick person (BEHERAM, 2012). These are phenomena of ethnicization, meanwhile the phenotypical traits are made hyper-visible and melted down with the residence aspects; thereupon Black people and shanty dwellers are grouped through the generic term Bolivians (GRIMSON; CAGGIANO, 2012; VACCOTTI, 2017).

According to the last census, the migrant population in Argentina represents today 4.5 percent in the total. They are mainly located in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. They perform mostly construction works, household chores, and sewing in textile

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**2-** In the following, without adhering to a gender ascription, we utilize the masculine term (in the original in Spanish) for the plural nouns, just to make reading easier.

**3-** *Villas* (shanty towns) are informally urbanized areas resulting from non-planned occupations of vacant urban land lots. They are characterized by high populational density and the presence of homes built with precarious and waste materials. Residents are usually informal workers or have low-skilled jobs who often are assigned with stigmatizing characteristics (CRAVINO, 2009; VACCOTTI, 2017).

workshops. In the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA) 163,587 people (5 percent of the total population) live in shanty towns. Out of this group, 34 percent are come from abroad. In turn, among head of families of regional origin, 69 percent of their children were born in CABA and 31 percent are foreigners (INDEC, 2012). Although most of the children who live in the shanty towns are Argentinean, they are treated – stigmatized and discriminated against – as if they were foreigners. The derogatory name “second-generation migrants” makes the subjectivity of all of them invisible, as they remain subsumed under the ethnical aspect (NOVARO; DIEZ, 2015).

This reproduction of the negative stereotypes inherited from the parents is one of the mechanisms that legitimates the inequalities, as unwanted children of migrants. A “ethnic tagging” is then produced for those children, teenagers, and youths which reinforces processes of otherness assigned to those perceived as different from other Argentinean natives. For that matter, as arises from the study by Di Leo and Tapia (2013), the feeling of shame in relation to the use of the language – or other central dimensions of the self – generates strong marks in the subjectivity of young migrants or children of migrants, especially when it is produced or deepens in their school experiences.

The approach to these complexities found in the social experiences of migrants requires a change in the sociological perspective. Even though the classical representations of the social still play an important role, more and more researches in this field focus on the individuals, their experiences, reflexivity, and identity constructions. The sociology of individuation by Martuccelli (2007) takes this perspective by for looking for the type of individual that is structurally manufactured by a society in a given historical period. This sociology makes use of two analytical operators which allow to study the links between the social and the individual. First of all, the notion of support has to do with the existential and social capacities of the individual to sustain themselves in the world. There is no individual without a very important set of emotional, material and symbolic supports which unfold along their biographical experience, through intertwined links with their social and institutional contexts. Secondly, the notion of test refers to those historical challenges that are socially produced, culturally represented, and unequally shared, which the individual usually go through in a society. Even if they also have similar resources, they do not overcome those challenges in the same way (ARAUJO; MARTUCELLI, 2012).

This perspective allows us to explorer analytically the social experience of the individuals, from a double movement: on one hand, it is a way of perceiving the social world (its conditionings and pre-existing situations), on the other hand, inasmuch as the social is not taken for granted, a priori, nor has it unity or coherence, it is necessary to construct it as well as to construct oneself. Thus, the experience is neither entirely determined nor entirely free. Dubet (2013) studies the social experiences drawing from three logics of action, which allow to understand how the subjects act and construct their personal and social world: integration, the subjects act according to external norms which have been internalized; strategy, refers to a set of resources mobilized in situations of particular social interchanges; subjectivation, which provides an

autonomous meaning to the actor's agency, an internal reflexivity that dialogues with the social marks assimilated. Regarding this, we recover the notion of school experience, defined as "[...] the way the actors, individually or collectively, combine the various logics of action which structure the school world" (DUBET; MARTUCELLI, 1998, p. 79). In turn, the school experience appears to the actor as a test, which impose the work of combining such logics.

In this article we present the major findings of a research conducted for the purpose of a master's thesis in Social Science with Orientation towards Education (FLACSO Argentina), whose main objective is to analyze the representations about school experiences in biographical narratives of migrants who live in popular neighborhoods in CABA, Argentina, exploring the links between their own educational trajectories and those of their children under their care. In the following section we summarize the methodological strategy utilized in the construction and analysis of data. Next, we develop the main results of the study related to three major dimensions tackled in the study: educational experiences of adults; schooling of children; intergenerational transmission of experiences. In the conclusion, we present a synthesis and articulation of the main categories and conceptual tools developed.

## **Methodological strategy**

For the research, we chose a methodological strategy of qualitative nature, as it allows to deal with the meanings given by the individuals as inherent to their actions, the social relations and structures (VASILACHIS DE GIALDINO, 2007). The biographical interview was chosen as the technique to investigate the meaning of the human experience shared in specific social environments, not conforming with truths of the lived facts, but rather with "[...] a possible version attributed by those who experienced the facts, drawing from data of their biography, their experience, their knowledge and the way they envisage the future" (MINAYO, 2009, p. 125). Revisiting the proposals by Leclerc-Olive (2009), in the first interview migrants were asked to identify the experiences they consider most significant during their time at school as well as their children's. The biographical events or turns allow to identify the moments where important branches or changes come up in the individual experiences. Such incidents are selected, described, and evaluated by the persons in the light of their subsequent experiences. For that matter, from this perspective the biographical account has a performative nature: it does not recover nor represents a history but rather establishes it from the present by virtue of the selection of the significant events by the interviewees.

It is important to clarify that in this study the children's school experiences are accessed through the accounts provided by their parents. For this reason, it is not possible to conceive the former without the latter. In some occasions, one explicitly turns to parents' experiences in order to better understand how the children's experiences are constructed. Here lies one of the core characteristics of the trajectories: "If a trajectory

is its account, the relations with time will be traversed by the very vicissitudes of the time narrated, of the narrator's time who, in turn, is traversed by their being in time" (NICASTRO; GRECO, 2009, p. 30). It is important to include the temporal dimension, in past-present-future, since the school experience of the children is in progress. They are the actual students in the elementary schools at the moment, and because of that it is not possible to see such trajectories are processes that are complete but rather they are constantly being constructed.

The field work took place along 2016 in a *villa* in CABA. Participants were contacted by means of a key informant who Works in health service in the area and then the snowball strategy was utilized. Each meeting lasted an hour and a half approximately. In some cases participants were interviewed twice, taking place in the health service facility which provided us with an office. Such encounters involved an approach to the representations that the individuals construct around their own life histories. To achieve that, there was an effort to keep all along the field work a constant reflexivity about the frontiers between the woman interviewer and the interviewers of both sexes, associated with their diverse origins and identities regarding class, profession, gender, race, and nationality (GUBER, 2001). The fact that the interviews were conducted in a health facility located in the same neighborhood made it easier to establish a relationship of confidence which, even if it did not annul entirely the symbolic frontiers, enabled to build bridges to support the involvement of participants during the subsequent encounters. In them, some individuals felt mobilized – weeping, laughing –, to the point that they brought new memories to the following meeting. As we have argued above, the account has a performative nature: in these narrations formulated in front of another person, meanings, presentations and projections are produced around the identities and experiences, both of the individuals and of the children under their care.

Before starting the interviews, each participant was explained about the research project (including purpose, duration, institutional framework). Participants expressed their willingness to take part in the study. They were also told that they could abandon the meeting at any time with no need to explain the reason why. They were assured complete confidentiality through the use of fictional identification data in subsequent transcriptions or publications. All of this was sealed with the signing of an informed consent form. Each participant was given a copy of such form with contact information of the researcher and her supervisor.

In the whole, 12 semi-structured biographical interviews were conducted with seven migrants who are in charge of children who go to the neighborhood's elementary school. Table 1 details the composition and the main characteristics of the sample of migrants and children under their care:

**Table 1-** Profile of migrants interviewed and children under their care

Interviewee pseudonym	Country of origin	Age	Maximum school level achieved	Reason why schooling was interrupted	School level of children under their care
<b>Mary</b>	Paraguay	32	secondary incomplete	Ran away from home.	A son in Elementary school a daughter in kindergarten.
<b>Ester</b>	Bolivia	41	secondary complete (dropped out then returned)	Left home. Where her situation becomes stable,, she goes back to school (in Bolivia).	Children going to elementary and secondary school.
<b>Richard</b>	Bolivia	41	secondary incomplete	"A young rebel who did not manage to take advantage of opportunities".	Children going to elementary and secondary school.
<b>Lorelei</b>	Bolivia	33	elementary incomplete	Had to work, situation of violence at home. Ran away.	Children in elementary school.
<b>Mario</b>	Bolivia	48	secondary incomplete	Father died, had to work with siblings.	Daughter in elementary school, sons in secondary school.
<b>Dominique</b>	Bolivia	56	Higher education incomplete	Incompatibility with household chores.	Sons over 18 y.o. (one resumed secondary, the other goes to another secondary school). Grandchildren under her care go to elementary school.
<b>Roberta</b>	Paraguay	60	elementary incomplete (dropped out in Paraguay and resumes in CABA)	No encouragement from her family. Women meant for household ambience.	Sons over 18 y.o. with secondary incomplete. Grandchildren and niece in charge in elementary school.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Interviewees are 30 to 60 years old, all of them are from urban areas. Roberta is the only one who was born and spent her childhood in a littler rural district, 70 km from Asuncion, Paraguay. To dimension how their places of origin look like, we retrieved some fragments from their testimonies, concerning the most appreciated aspects: "I led a free life, I was never locked in as here, where you need to put fences and grids all around. This never happened there. One didn't experience, didn't see this violence. Everything was peaceful, among neighbors, doors would remain open and nobody would steal, nothing was robbed from you [...]" (Ester). "I liked very much to ride a horse... I would hide from my mom because she had... eh.... many cows to milk and after milking the cows, eh, my elder brothers took her to another field" (Roberta).

Currently, all participants live in *villa* 1-11-14, located in Bajo Flores, a neighborhood in south area of CABA. The *villas* make up neighborhoods with diffuse urban plots, unthreatened layouts, deficient basic services and irregular land ownership (CRAVINO, 2009). There live 27,973 inhabitants. A quarter of these homes are not provided with sewage system, which is a sanitary jeopardy that also affects the environmental conditions of the *villa* (INDEC, 2012).



For data analysis, we turned to the criteria provided by the Grounded Theory, which proposes a constant coming and going between the theory and the data constructed along the fieldwork. Such articulation allows to develop the following instances, as well as the delimitation of the criterion of theoretical saturation, accounting for the exhaustion of new information provided by the participating individuals, to construct our categories. In parallel to the interviewees and observations, software Atlas.ti was used as an auxiliary tool to organize the interviews and conduct the first encodings thereof based on two complementary procedures:

- Top-down encoding: resuming the previous conceptual work and the major dimensions of the semi-structured interview guides, an initial list of codes was devised to which the documental *corpus* was applied to conduct an initial classification of the information.
- Bottom-up encoding: new codes are added or the existing ones are modified as important topics, information and meaning clusters are identified, from the reading and re-reading of the discursive *corpus*.

Once completed the encoding process for the entire set of interviews, in order to make the analysis easier, codes were grouped into families, according to affinities in the topics, the meanings or their links to concepts arising from the theoretical framework and the state of the art, whose final construction was done in dialogue with the data. With the purpose of identifying the central categories, parsimony criteria were applied – maximize the understanding of a phenomenon with the least concepts possible – as well as extent criteria – apply the field of analysis without disconnecting from the empirical base – in dialogue with the current state of the art and the conceptual framework (STRAUSS; CORBIN; ZIMMERMAN, 2002; VASILACHIS DE GIALDINO, 2007).

Next, we developed the central categories identified in the analysis, around three major dimensions addressed by the study: educational experiences of the adults; schooling of the children; intergenerational transmission of experiences.

### **Educational experiences of the adults: between family and school rules**

When narrating their experiences in elementary schools in their countries of origin, migrants highlighted the importance of order, discipline and respecting the rules and teachers.

In Bolivia, let's say... you were not demanded to wear clean clothes, but they should be well mended, clean, nails well cut, and you should not disrespect the teacher, you had to fulfill your duties from school or otherwise they would call your dad. It was very strict. If you misbehaved, they would put you in the pig position, as they say, in a corner with your feet up. (...) That is, the requirement to study, let's say, they gave a lot of homework. And, the next day you were supposed to have done it, to have fulfilled the task (Ester).



This type of dynamics fits a traditional institutional management that is peculiar of the modern society. The classical institutions (school, family, church) ensured the stability and reproduction of an order by transforming values into norms and these into individual personalities. Family and school are the main institutions in charge of socializing the actors by transmitting the appreciated moral patterns, uses and customs and providing order to the daily routines (DUBET; MARTUCCELLI, 1998). We see the primacy of the logic of integration, since the interviewees behave as students who, by learning the roles, reproduce the values of society.

Now, still with disciplining manners and unquestionable teachers, the interviewees place the school as a bearing in their biographies. They highlight that there they could play, have fun, be heard and held by the women teachers. It is important to mention that participants went through situations of violence, labor or household obligations and violation of their rights. In such contexts, the school consolidates as a shelter, which “[...] as a result of the scarcity of other material and symbolic dampers, they are established as bearings of life and produce at the same time changes in their spaces of sociability” (SUSTAS; TOURIS, 2013, p. 35).

On the other hand, for the interviewees attending class involves a challenge, in tension with other demands, which not always they can bypass successfully.

E<sup>4</sup>: ¿And were you able to study?

M: Yes, but I had two years more to get bachelor diploma. I could not because, the issue of ... the economy. Eh, my daddy died and my mom didn't know, say, how to support us. Because my dad was the only one who worked in the family. My mom, when he died, had no idea of what she had to do, that is, at the moment we had to go out and get a job (Mario).

In the testimonies, the family and economic tests prevail over the school duties: household or economic maintenance obligations are quite strong, to the point of threatening the continuity of schooling. Here we also observe the logic of integration traversed by gender rules as it is emphasized that the place of a woman is within the household and a man is the provider. The internalization of the social roles and rules is presented as the major driving forces of action: the father of a female interviewee considers that women do not need to study, while Mario's testimony mentions the need to provide economically for the family due to the death of the father.

The link between family and school is structured based on three great lines of meaning. The first one has to do with the parent's interference with the interviewees' schooling. A woman participant recalls: “My daddy didn't care if we studied or not [...] Children should study to the extent they are able to. If you are intelligent that is the way you will follow, if you're not then no” (Ester). All of them say there were not actively accompanied in their schooling, they got not help with the homework and were not encouraged to go on. As parents did not provide any active support to the schooling of children under their care, we observe the primacy of the logic of integration.

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4 - Interviewer

Secondly, it is possible to situate the relationship of interviewees' parents towards the school, mainly towards the teachers: "If my daddy ever went to my school, because a note or something was sent to him, my daddy allowed the teacher that 'if my daughter misbehaves, punish her'" (Ester).

Another line of meaning refers to the way teachers called on the families, along the school dynamics. Interviewees argue that their parents were summoned only when there was a problem related to misbehavior or academic achievement of the children under their care; the main communication medium was the communication notebook. Santillán and Cerletti (2011) consider that along the 20th century the need of family to be present in the formal practices of education was minimized, since the confidence in the school instruments prevailed (management of the time and space, the contents, the organization of the curriculum, and the notebook). A hierarchical preeminence of the school over the family can be observed. The family should participate in the times and spaces assigned, and the interviewees did not see this as a conflict.

### **Schooling of the children:** among affection, strategies, and demands

In this section, we develop the outstanding aspects regarding the schooling of the children under the care of the interviewees which, as we indicated in the section on methodology, are constructed based on the parents' representations, that is to say, they are narrated projections. First of all, they point out containment and affection as fundamental elements:

Eh, I took them out of the school, this one that was municipal at the time, because although I had since the elementary [grades], the religion, what I mentioned for this school is the containment. (...) that the teachers set the limits. (...) And always with affection. It was even noted at home, they way you eat, in being polite to ask to be excused, in all those things regarding us. I also liked was that well, if there was something to tell us, it might be a detail of the children or anything else, we could always speak in private, they used to tell us "Pay attention to this or to that" and after the meetings (Dominique).

Such affectionate condition and the containment reveals one of the forms of acknowledgement identified by Honneth (1997): the affectionate way or love. It is produced within the face-to-face relationships, contributes to self-confidence, self-assurance, and autonomy. The identities and personal experiences require intersubjective acceptance, respect to the to others<sup>5</sup>. Teacher occupy (and have occupied) the place of the significant other argued by Mead (1982), since the ones who embody this place play the function of providing personal validation for the achievements made, over and above the objectivation of the world.

Another important point is choosing a school, which is not the result of some planning but rather the decision is based on other reasons including: availability of

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**5-** The other forms of acknowledgment are: legal-moral, which involves the individual's struggle for the same rights y moral status that others are entitled to; and ethical- social or solidarity, which arises from the social valuations concerning the individual's capacities and forms of life that impact their self-esteem (HONNETH, 1997).

vacancies, proximity, recommendation, all children under care are supposed to go to same institution or facility institution or the functionality regarding their labor routines. Here the logic of strategic action prevails since the actors acknowledge several factors that affect the choice of the school and prioritize some factors instead of others, with the purpose of achieving the objectives proposed. In turn, the interviewees compare the schools in their home countries (during their own school experience) to that of their children in CABA. There are aspects that are no different, such as the school format, types of establishments, class hours, and the amount of students. In other characteristics the Argentinean school seems better than their own: free of charge, support with materials (school supplies and books) and the lunchroom. Finally, their home schools are seen as beneficial in regard of what was required from students: respect, tidy presentation, tasks, and learning. They think that here only the basics are taught, while there the topics were examined more deeply.

Drawing from this comparison we can see an institutional change. During modernity, the traditional institutions, through the institutional program, organized the path the actors should take. The teacher was preserved in their role and unquestionably obeyed (DUBET, 2007). This institutional configuration is what the interviewees have experienced in their elementary schooling, which remains in force as an ideal, which guides their perceptions and claims. As a result of the school massification, capitalism, the communication media, the poverty, among others, the alliance between school and society is broken. The individuals no longer identify entirely with the sacred, homogeneous and transcending principles; now they demand to be acknowledged in their singularities. Teachers are questioned by the families which seek to ensure equal treatment and training in tools valued in the labor market. In the present, schools have become less strict and disciplining. In view of this, migrants claim for greater authority, as was usual in their school experiences. Thus, a tension is created between what they wish and what they find, which is expressed in those aspects they deem disadvantageous in the schools of Buenos Aires. Faced with these institutional conditions, the adults behave in a committed manner toward the schooling of the children under their care: they demand reports, check notebooks, and help with the homework.

On one hand, the interviewees express they appreciate the education in Argentina, for the possibility of carrying on their studies, on secondary school and higher education, something that is hindered in their countries of origin. The attitude of active support is aligned with such expectancies of a school career (TENTI FANFANI, 2007):

E: If you could have the same quality of life, the same health service, the same education in the schools ... everything as you have here. Would you rather choose to live in Bolivia or to live here?

E: Eh... [Laughter first, then silence]

M: What a question.

E: Yes, some question. No, for me, I have always longed to go back there, to be there. The problem is that there is a ... it is not the same. Bolivia is a smaller country and there aren't so many opportunities as you have here for the young people, let's say, for my children because to seek a career or something here you have many paths in the area you intend to study. And there, there

aren't many. There are colleges but not so many to choose from. Then for this reason I wouldn't come back, for the sake of my children.

M: Any other reason in addition to the study of your children?

E: For the sake of my children (Ester).

On the other hand, the relationship family-school can be read in consonance with the institutional decline, which cause the institutions to lose the hegemonic power over the subjects. The school is dethroned as that institution capable of assign the direction the actors are to take. This decline is also reflected in the respect towards the authority of teachers (DUBET, 2007). It is possible to observe that in the present the authority is not legitimated in the traditional ideal or in the rational-bureaucratic type but rather fundamentally in the charismatic type (WEBER, 1983)<sup>6</sup>. This means that a person is obeyed inasmuch as they have some given traits in their personality. This accounts for some fragility and instability in the authority, since the subject or his/her traits may be promptly replaced (MARTUCELLI, 2009).

Participants observe the fragility of the teachers' authority and the decline of the school as institution, and that is why they watch it closely. That is to say, inasmuch this institution and its traditional representative no longer take the leading role in the social scene, they strive to ensure a successful career by means of an active presence in the schooling of their children. Now they develop their social experiences, overcome society's tests, making use of the supports they build. Consequently, we may think that migrants have as much concern for the school future of the children under their care because they no longer trust the school as they used to.

Thirdly, the interviewees thing today's teachers are more willing to provide parents with information than before, but only if they are requested to do so. That is to say, the school-family relationship is produced in a way similar to former times. The school summons parents through the communication notebook when there are complaints about the children under their care: "(...) during the time that they [the children] have been studying, it was two time that they called me. After that, there were no problems, of... that is, that we always communicate through the notebook. That's all" (Mario).

Tenti Fanfani (2007) observes that this relationship is produced drawing from a model that encourages individual participation, limited in its weight and which is expressed in an asymmetric situation of power, where the school plays the dominating role. Some current studies consider that schools often expect students' parents to cooperate with certain school tasks, however parents do not have time or have not been sufficiently schooled to respond. Thus, a disagreement emerges (CASTRO; REGATTIERI, 2012).

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**6-** According to the type of legitimacy that underlies it, Max Weber (1983) differentiates three ideal types of authority: a) Traditional: founded on the custom forces that leads to accepting the command of those who the tradition indicates; b) Rational-legal: based on the formal rules and established laws and on the rights to exercise the rules that these laws establish; c) Charismatic: derived on the recognition or attribution of extraordinary conditions or qualities to some individual who is obey by her or his followers.

## **Intergenerational transmission of experiences: among advances, merits, and efforts**

Another key category identified when associating the representations and projections around the school experiences of migrants and their children is the intergenerational transmission mediated narratively. Mario, when telling his son about his drop-out from school and its consequences, tries to convince him by saying “don’t make the same mistakes”:

M: I tell him “The first thing you have to do is to study”, I told him. I always say that to him. And tell them not to be like us

E: What do you mean by that?

M: I mean, to be working in sewing, there are times as I tell you, when I arrived I worked in sewing, I started working at 6 in the morning, rested at 1, 2, 3 am. That is, I had no rest. That’s why I tell them “Don’t be like that. Study so that you can get a bachelor’s diploma. You can have a profession. And from there, you want to work, otherwise no. But you will have a profession, a place to be, eh, more accommodated, including getting a job”, “Well, fine” they reply (Mario).

In such relationships a transmission is produced, which involves the passing of knowledge, ways of doing, cultures, traditions, histories. The recipients are not passive but they rather modify this legacy so that they are able to carry. This is to empower a different manner of doing drawing from the transmission of one’s own way (NICASTRO; GRECO, 2009). Interviewees expect the children under their care will not repeat their history but rather, by learning from it, they will be able to do something else.

Analyzing the school experiences of the parents – the former ones – and the expectancies regarding their children’s experiences – in the present –, a change of attitude stands out. As we have seen, when participants were students in elementary school, they did not rely on active support. At current time, instead, they are really there, they help and worry. One of the major meanings that is expressed in the new attitude is the belief that, through education, one can move forward and advance. Mario tells his children they should study, “[...] so you will not be like us”. He claims that his unskilled labor placement in the textile business results from this lack of study, and for this reason he insists that his children should not drop out from school. That is how education would foster an ascending social mobility.

Based on their research work with the population in Chile, Araujo and Martuccelli argue that education appears as an individual promise of social mobility:

Among the older people, among those whose educational formation took place from the mid-1960 and the 1970’s, the advancement in the educational system was indissociable at the same time from a singularity (to be a good student) and from a guarantee (achieving it ensured the entry into the middle classes). For them, and reading the current process of their own experience, their children are in an undeniable process of ascending school mobility. (2012, p. 86).

Even though in the past there was ascending mobility, today this can no longer be guaranteed. Markets become diversified and the school credentials overgrow, but they

do not keep pace with the jobs (TENTI FANFANI, 2007). “The lack of school qualification may then seem a ‘negative qualification’, it converts itself in something more than a deficiency, it is truly a handicap” (DUBET; MARTUCCELLI, 1998, p. 51). People from popular sectors – and especially the migrants – are confident in the promise of ascending social mobility, partly because they do not see any other way to reach that goal (ARAUJO; MARTUCCELLI, 2012; BARTLETT; RODRÍGUEZ; OLIVERA, 2015). The expectancy of ascending social mobility becomes central in the migratory projects, since it justifies, partly, the permanence –at least temporary – in the society that receives the family group (MUDANÓ; MOSCOSO; SÁNCHEZ, 2011).

Identity is a representation, a fiction of oneself, which is expressed in its symbolic narrative dimension (ARFUCH, 2002). It is constructed in discourse, for this reason it is necessary to consider the enunciative practices and the social interdiscursivity, since that is where displacements of meanings take place. Migrants prioritize the narrative construction of their parental identities above any other standpoints (as would be case to be individuals entitled with the right to education) or cultural or national traditions and identities. We may say that when the interviewees say they have decided not to go back to their countries of origin nor to resume their studies today for labor or family reasons, they fundamentally identify with the parental role –financial provision, care and support to the children’s academic trajectories – above their eagerness of returning to their countries or continue with their studies here.

Another emerging category, intertwined with the previous ones, which strains the school experiences of adults and children is passing from individual merit to family endeavor. In the past, when interviewees counted on their families’ support, academic success was the product of one’s own merit, an individual merit. An example is school drop-out, caused by domestic reasons (either situations of violence or the need to help with household chores) or labor reasons. However, they do not credit such dropout to their poor intellectual capacity or minimal efforts, nor they indicate social, structural or contextual causes. Richard argues that he left secondary school for hanging out with bad friends: “Bad friends who didn’t care about studying, just wanted to do nothing. [...] And that was how I lost this opportunity”.

In the present, academic success comes from the family efforts. Interviewees hold themselves responsible, as adults in charge of minors, for what happens to their children. The cause of their possible failure in the school test is relocated to the poor personal or familiar performance of the adults.

It is possible to examine in the interviewees’ narration that, based on what they experience and on the central value they assign the school, the individual merit becomes family endeavor in the academic achievement of their children. That is to say, migrants commit themselves to the school trajectory of the children under their care, they are there to talk and deal with teacher and to help with the homework (BARTLETT; RODRÍGUEZ; OLIVERA, 2015). The intergenerational relationship is mediated by the effort. Here the primacy lies in the logic of subjectivation, since the adults devise a way of being parents and support their children or grandchildren, which is unprecedented in their biographies.

Such endeavor takes shape, in part, as a result of staying in the city of Buenos Aires. Interviewed migrants come to Argentina due to economic reasons or personal



vulnerability. Nonetheless, coming here they long for some characteristics from their home countries, such the presence of relatives, living in quieter and safer areas. In contrast, one of the main reasons for which they keep on living in this country is the education of their children. Studies conducted in Spain on communities of migrants from Latin America also mention the sense of family ascent that education would allow. Integrating sons and daughters in the educational system “[...] turns into the grounds of the family migratory project and into the gate to participate in a space that is assumed as less excluding and more horizontal than those where the fathers and mothers take part” (MUDANÓ; MOSCOSO; SÁNCHEZ, 2011. p. 289).

## Conclusions

As we summarized in Table 2, the school experiences and tests (their own and their children’s) take a central place in the biographies of of migrants from popular sectors. The migrating condition involves several situations of disadvantage – family separations; prior schooling are often not accepted; difficulties with the language; problems related to housing, labor, social issues; bureaucratic processes to get documented; social stigmatization –, which become critical due to multiple deficiencies, vulnerabilities, and stigmatizations they go through in working-class districts. Nevertheless, far from reproducing models or norms of action socially homogeneous and biographically continuous, the actors construct and transmit intergenerationally their school experiences running into several social tests and identity discontinuities, in which the meanings and articulations of the main logics of action are constantly changing:

**Table 2-** School experiences of migrants

Logics of action	Adults	Children under care	Intergenerational transmission
<b>Integration</b>	Modern disciplinary educational institution. Reproduction of social rules in the school and family context. Dominating types of authority: traditional and rational-bureaucratic.	School as modern institution remains alive as an ideal of parents. Nostalgia when they find it today: criticisms for absence of discipline and authority.	Primacy of parental role in identity narratives, above personal projects (resume studies) and cultural traditions (return to the country of origin).
<b>Strategy</b>	School test: subordinate to economic-labor and family tests (especially for women). Rational evaluation of resources and obstacles, continuity/no return to their own schooling.	Valued aspects: free of charge, help with materials, lunchroom. Strategies to choose a school: vacancies, proximity, recommendation, functionality for labor routines.	School as an individual promise of ascending social mobility. Main reason to remain in Argentina: schooling of children under their care.
<b>Subjectivation</b>	School as a bearing: decent treatment, contention, affective bond. Occupies a central place as a subjective shelter.	Demands the school for contention and acknowledgment. Parents actively help and supervise the schooling of children, even if they have not received such support.	Narrative transmission of experiences of adults so that children will not repeat them. School test: passage from individual merit to family effort.

Source: Prepared by the authors.



In the school experiences of migrants in their countries of origin, taking place in the late 20th century, moralizing and disciplinary rules and authorities prevail which are typical of the modern institutions (logic of integration). However, the socioeconomic conditions of inequality and poverty experience by their families put the school test in a subordinate place regarding the financial-labor challenges and, especially for the women, the domestic reproduction of life (intertwined with gender rules). Hence, the interruption of their academic trajectories is signified by the individuals as a personal failure that they will not be able to reverse later on (even though many wish to do so) due to the priority given to their parental duties. At the same time, migrants value the decent treatment and bonds they had in their school experiences as genuine affective supports and shelters which characterized their processes of subjectivation.

Concerning the academic trajectories of the children under their care, the adults maintain the modern disciplining and integrating ideals of the school and its authority. For that matter, they criticize as weaknesses or absences the institutional practices and projects that do not meet such ideals. In this dimension, we have identified a strong influence held by the logic strategic action, since the actors prioritize in their representations and choices of a school the availability of a variety of resources which were absent or scarce in the school of their countries of origin, such as being free of charge, materials, lunchroom. They also prioritize when selecting an educational institution a number of factors which make it easier the continuity in the schooling of their children, articulated with family arrangements: vacancies available, proximity to their home, recommendation of close persons, functionality for the mobility to labor spaces. Here the logic of subjectivation also takes an outstanding place, both the fact that migrants require the school to contain and acknowledge all and every child, and in the personal commitment of the adults actively supporting and supervising the academic trajectories of their sons and daughters.

By linking up the other two dimensions indicated above, migrants see as a central hub the intergenerational transmission of their experiences, promises, and rules. As aforementioned, the actors subordinate their personal wishes, identities and projects (going back to school, return to their countries of origin) to fulfill their parental roles, focusing especially on ensuring the continuity of their children's academic trajectories. Thus, the intergenerational transmission of their experiences is branded with discontinuity since the adults re-signify and link them up narratively seeking that the children will not repeat them. Here the school remains associated with the individual promise of ascending social mobility (typical of the Welfare States in the 20th century), even when, today, such promise crashes the socioeconomic realities experienced especially by working-class/families from popular sectors in Argentina. Finally, we found a displacement in the actors in charge of accomplishing (or not) of meritocratic school rules: from the personal effort (associated with the school experience of the adults) towards the family effort, meant to be the main bearing of the children's school trajectories.

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