Mexican Immigrant Fathers and Their Children: An investigation of Communicative Resources Across Contexts of Learning

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Mexican Immigrant Fathers and Their Children: An investigation of Communicative Resources Across Contexts of Learning

Abstract
Situated in a recently established Mexican immigrant community in Pennsylvania, this dissertation investigates naturally occurring interactions in homes and school to reveal how Mexican immigrant fathers' participation shapes and is shaped by their young children's schooling. Drawing upon ethnographic and linguistic anthropological methods, I investigate participants' communicative repertoires, or how they deploy language and literacy resources in Spanish and English to meet their educational goals. This research examines three critical issues. First, how Mexican immigrant fathers' orient to models of fatherhood and married life from their upbringings in Mexico as well as their journey into family life in the US. Second, how participants' semiotic resources travel, are recognized, and are built upon across home and school contexts. And third, how Mexican immigrant men's positioning as certain social types, by teachers in schools and immigration officials in the community, affect their children's schooling. The findings indicate that racialization of the category of Mexican men makes them visible as potential "illegals" and invisible as caring husbands and fathers. These data challenge the gender bargain that Mexican immigrant couples are assumed to maintain and highlight the traditional and innovative ways that fathers are engaged in childcare, parent involvement, and other tasks that are often considered "women's work." My findings also highlight how Mexican adult males are oftentimes targeted for minor infractions under current immigration practices, which leads to family separations and educational challenges for their children, a younger generation of DREAMers and U.S. Citizens. In addition to contributing to theoretical and methodological insights regarding Mexican immigrant fathers and their children's schooling, this study illustrates how a communicative repertoires approach can reveal participants' range of real-world languaging, parent involvement, and biliteracy practices. Only by first understanding the contextualized realities of what Mexican immigrant fathers and their children are already doing can we envision new policies and pedagogies that build upon these dynamic practices to support children's schooling.

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MEXICAN IMMIGRANT FATHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN: AN INVESTIGATION OF COMMUNICATIVE RESOURCES ACROSS CONTEXTS OF LEARNING

Sarah L. Gallo

A DISSERTATION in Education

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy 2013

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Stanton E.F. Wortham, Professor of Education
I would first like to thank the families and educators in Marshall\textsuperscript{1}, Pennsylvania who so openly welcomed me (and my video cameras) into their lives, homes, and classrooms. Un agradecimiento especial para Abi, Mateo, Alexis, Daniel, Benjamin, Evaristo, Emily, Cristian, Gregorio, Julio, Martina, Ignacio, Princess, y Federico—me inspiran todos los días. My deepest gratitude to my mentors—Betsy Rymes, Kathy Hall, Nancy Hornberger, Kathy Howard, and Stanton Wortham—your guidance and support throughout this entire journey have shaped me as a researcher and scholar. I hope to emulate such mentorship with my own students one day. I would also like to thank Holly Link, Elaine Allard, Katherine Mortimer, Miriam Fife, and my other fellow Marshall researchers for your collaboration and feedback on all of the work that contributed to this study. A special thanks to my research assistant, Selenia Tello, for all of her help with transcription and translation. For funding support that enabled me to research and write, I thank the National Science Foundation and the Spencer Foundation. Finally, I would like to thank my (un-pseudonymed) Emily and Mateo for your patience, enthusiasm, and laughter. You have all helped and challenged me to interweave the scholarly with the lived and have generously reminded me of the importance of humanity in all that we do.

\textsuperscript{1} All names of study participants (e.g., Abi) and places (e.g., Marshall) are pseudonyms. All other names in the Acknowledgements are not.
ABSTRACT

MEXICAN IMMIGRANT FATHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN: AN INVESTIGATION OF COMMUNICATIVE RESOURCES ACROSS CONTEXTS OF LEARNING

Sarah L. Gallo

Betsy R. Rymes

Situated in a recently established Mexican immigrant community in Pennsylvania, this dissertation investigates naturally occurring interactions in homes and school to reveal how Mexican immigrant fathers’ participation shapes and is shaped by their young children’s schooling. Drawing upon ethnographic and linguistic anthropological methods, I investigate participants’ communicative repertoires, or how they deploy language and literacy resources in Spanish and English to meet their educational goals. This research examines three critical issues. First, how Mexican immigrant fathers’ orient to models of fatherhood and married life from their upbringing in Mexico as well as their journey into family life in the US. Second, how participants’ semiotic resources travel, are recognized, and are built upon across home and school contexts. And third, how Mexican immigrant men’s positioning as certain social types, by teachers in schools and immigration officials in the community, affect their children’s schooling. The findings indicate that racialization of the category of Mexican men makes them visible as potential “illegals” and invisible as caring husbands and fathers. These data challenge the gender bargain that Mexican immigrant couples are assumed to maintain and highlight the traditional and
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Chapter 1

Introduction

It was a wintery Sunday afternoon in Marshall, Pennsylvania as 7 year-old Abi (A), the child of Mexican immigrants, stood talking with her father Mateo (M) and mother Susana (S) in the kitchen of their small two-bedroom apartment. As her father prepared dinner, Abi hit the large red button on the Flip video camera and began to record the following interaction.

Excerpt 1

1. A: ¡Pa! Sorry, lo vas a tener que repetir.
2. S: ¿Qué piensas que los hombres—
3. M: —A ver hija…
4. S: ¿Qué piensas que los hombres deben de hacer en la cocina?
5. M: ¡Abi no está grabando bien! Así no, no me quiero—
8. A: ¿¡Yo!? 

2 All participants’, schools’, and towns’ names in this dissertation are pseudonyms.
3 All ages that I cite throughout this dissertation are from 2010 – 2011, my Fieldwork year. See Appendix A for a full roster of family members from this study.
4 For smoother reading, I include the English translation of most excerpts and quotations in the body of the chapter. All italicized direct quotes occurred originally in Spanish and are followed by Q (for quotation) and a number. The original quotation can be found in Appendix C, which is organized in chronological order. If there is a significant amount of translanguaging (drawing upon semiotic resources in English and Spanish) in the original excerpt, I include both the original excerpt and then an italicized English translation directly underneath. I also bold direct quotes that originally occurred in English. This occurs within Excerpts (line 49 here) as well as direct quotations in the body of the dissertation.
5 See Appendix B for the transcription conventions.
Entrevista a tu papá como si fueras una reportera [xxx]. Dile que qué piensa sobre lo que hace.

Agarra el micrófono. Lo debes tener así, "¿y qué opina?" Así. ((M hands A a bottle of Tapatio hot sauce after he models how to do it. A laughs))

Jaja. ¿Y qué opina Usted?... ¿Qué opina Usted señor?

M: ¿De qué? No me debes—me debes de poner así el micrófono así como cuando yo te hago, “A ver niña, ¿Usted qué opina?”

((M models how to hold the microphone.))

[De que está cocinando.]

Necesito—todo el tiempo así con el micrófono. Así se agarra el micrófono. Así....

A: ¿Qué opina señor? ¿Qué opina señor?

M: ¿De qué?

A: De que está cocinando.

((A laughs, and M puts his arm around her to turn her towards the camera, lovingly.))

Chido ¿no?... Pues, nada. Bueno, ¿no? ¿Cocinar?

Sí.

¿Qué piensas sobre los hombres que cocinan en sus casas?

Nada. Así debe de ser.

¿Por qué?

M: ¿Por qué? Porque no todo el trabajo es para las mujeres.

¿Pero si yo te quiero como sirviente?

(Shaking head in agreement) Me pagas.

Disculpe señor, no lo oí. ((A holds hand to ear in dramatic gesture.))

Me pagas, y yo cobro.
34. A: ¿Disculpe?
35. S: Mira. Qué te explique que es lo que va a hacer de comer.
36. A: Explíqueme qué es lo que vas a hacer de comer.
37. M: Está fácil, unos bistecitos a la mexicana.
38. A: Guácala, yo no soy mexicana, yo soy americana.
39. M: ((Makes farting noise into ‘mic’)). Oyes la gabacha⁶, ¿no?
40. ((Laughter))
41. M: Es que la gabacha—
42. A: —Disculpe señor, no soy gabacha. Por favor, no lo quiero ofender.
43. M: No, no me ofendiste. Gabacha.
44. A: Ay, disculpe pero yo no soy gabacha. Yo no soy como los mexicanos que no se
45. bañan—
46. M: Bueno, qué es entrevista— ¿o uuuu? ¿No se bañan? Huele mi axila. ((M pulls A
47. close to his armpits in a hug))
48. A: ¡Guácala, Señor respéteme!...
49. S: Es así la vida de mi familia. Everyday it’s the same.

---

*English Translation: ORIGINAL ENGLISH IN BOLD*

1. A: Dad! Sorry, you’re going to have to repeat it.
2. S: What do you think that men—
3. M: —Let me see daughter...
4. S: What do you think men should do in the kitchen?
5. M: Abi isn’t videotaping correctly! If it’s like that, I don’t want to—

⁶ A white person from the United States, carrying a somewhat derogatory connotation.
A: —There.

M: You have to videotape from over here, you have to get our faces. Give it to your mom.

You come with me because you should be in the video.

A: Me!?

S: Interview your dad as if you were a reporter [xxx]. Tell him what he thinks about what he does.

M: Hold the microphone. You have to hold it like this, "and what’s your {formal} opinion?" Like that.

(M hands A a bottle of Tapatío hot sauce after he models how to do it. A laughs)

A: Haha. And what is your {formal} opinion? What is your opinion Sir?

M: About what? You shouldn’t—you should put the microphone like this like when I say, “Let’s see little girl, what is your {formal} opinion?"

((M models how to hold the microphone.))

A: [That you’re {formal} / he’s cooking.]

M: I need the microphone here all the time. This is how you hold the microphone....

A: What’s your {formal} opinion Sir? What’s your {formal} opinion Sir?

M: About what?

A: That you’re {formal} cooking.

((A laughs, and M puts his arm around her to turn her towards the camera, lovingly.))

M: Cool, right?... Well, nothing. Good, right? Cooking?

A: Yeah.

S: What do you think about men who cook in their homes?

M: Nothing. That’s how it’s supposed to be.

S: Why?
29. **M:** Why? Because not all of the work is for women.

30. **A:** But what if I want you as my servant?

31. **M:** ((Shaking head in agreement)) You'll pay me.

32. **A:** Excuse me {formal} Sir, I didn’t hear you. ((A holds hand to ear in dramatic gesture)).

33. **M:** You’ll pay me, and I’ll charge you.

34. **A:** Excuse me {formal}?

35. **S:** Look. Tell him to explain to you what he is going to cook for dinner.

36. **A:** Explain to me {formal} what you’re going to cook for dinner.

37. **M:** It’s easy, some Mexican style steak.

38. **A:** Eww, I’m not Mexican, I’m American.

39. **M:** ((Makes farting noise into ‘mic’)). You hear the white girl, right?

40. ((Laughter))

41. **M:** Because the white girl——

42. **A:** —Excuse me (formal) Sir, I am not a white girl. Please, I don’t want to offend you {formal}.

43. **M:** No, no you didn’t offend me. White girl.

44. **A:** I’m sorry (formal) but I’m not a white girl. I’m not like the Mexicans who don’t bathe——

45. **M:** —Well, what is this an interview— or ooohhh? They don’t bathe? Smell my armpit.

46. ((M pulls A close to his armpits in a hug))

47. **A:** Eww! Sir, respect me {formal}!...

48. **S:** This is what my family’s life is like. **Everyday it's the same.**

This interaction represents a typical educational activity in Abi’s household in which she expands her communicative repertoires, or “the collection of ways individuals use language and literacy
and other means of communication (gesture, dress, posture, accessories)” (Rymes, 2010, p. 528)
to achieve their interactional and educational goals across home and school contexts. In this
interaction, Abi’s father Mateo and mother Susana worked together to expand Abi’s repertoires in
several areas, such as filming techniques (lines 5 – 8) and a finessed knowledge of an interview
genre (lines 10 - 48). Mateo in particular followed his daughter’s cues as he taught her about
interviewing, simultaneously performing the roles of knowledgeable teacher and caring father as
he modeled and instructed Abi on the nuanced semiotic resources required for a successful
interview. For example, he instructed Abi on how to best hold the impromptu microphone, a
Tapatío hot sauce bottle (lines 12 – 13, 15 – 19) and like a skilled teacher he offered interview-
appropriate linguistic forms such as “y qué opinas?” (line 12) [and what is your {formal} opinion?]. Such forms draw upon politeness structures through the choice of “Ud.” rather than
the informal “tú” as well as precise lexical items such as “opinar” [to be of the opinion] rather
than the everyday “pensar” [to think], which Abi accurately embedded as she enacted the
interview in Spanish. Like a caring father, Mateo built a relationship with his daughter through
the intimate and jocular nature of their interaction: He lovingly pulled her in closely during this
exchange (line 23) and both he and Abi creatively drew upon their semiotic resources within the
frame of the interview to gently tease one another (lines 30 – 34, 38 – 48).

Through this exchange, Abi’s positioning of her father as a knowledgeable expert is
clear. This was a common occurrence for the seven Mexican immigrant fathers from this
ethnographic study who, like most Mexican immigrant fathers I knew, were deeply engaged in
their children’s lives and schooling. This engagement, however, tended to be largely overlooked
within larger circulating discourses that positioned Mexican immigrant men as “machista”
“uninvolved” “illegal” and “criminal” (Campos, 2008; Chavez, 2008; De Genova, 2002; Dick,
2011a; Hill, 2005; Mirandé, 2008). In educational settings, such as the focal elementary school
for this study, such overtly negative discourses did not prevail. Instead, despite welcoming attitudes toward Mexican immigrant students and their families, Mexican immigrant fathers were often invisible and their contributions to their children’s lives and schooling went unrecognized. Through a focus on the two-way movement of semiotic resources (from home to school and school to home), this research documents the multiplicity of communicative resources fathers and children draw on across highly flexible contexts of learning and examines how these resources are understood and built upon by others. By carefully tracing the deployment, recognition, and refashioning of these multilingual resources across contexts, this dissertation explores Mexican immigrant fathers’ engagement in their children’s schooling and the processes that often make their engagement unrecognizable in schools.

**Research Questions**

In this study I explore the following question: How does Mexican immigrant fathers’ engagement in their children’s lives shape and get shaped by their children’s schooling? More specifically, I investigate:

1. How do Mexican immigrant fathers draw upon models of fatherhood and married life from their upbringings in Mexico as well as their journeys into family life in Marshall?
   a. How are they engaged in their children’s schooling?
2. How do fathers’, students’, and teachers’ communicative repertoires change over time and how do these changes shape their participation in schooling and the family?
3. How does Mexican immigrant fathers’ positioning as certain social types affect their children’s schooling?
   a. How are Mexican immigrant fathers recognized, overlooked, or positioned in certain ways by their children’s teacher over the course of the school year?
b. How do immigration practices affect Mexican immigrant fathers’ lives and their children’s schooling?

**Chapter Outlines**

This opening interaction between Abi and her parents also helps illustrate the central themes discussed in the chapters of this dissertation. In Chapter 2 I situate this study within the field of Linguistic Anthropology of Education and introduce the frameworks through which I explore Mexican immigrant fathers’ engagement in their children’s lives. I present the central frame of communicative repertoires to explore how participants draw upon linguistic resources (e.g., ¿y qué opina?, line 12) and paralinguistic resources (e.g., M models how to hold the microphone, line 17) to achieve their interactional and educational goals across contexts of learning. A communicative repertoires framework explores participants’ histories of experiences of doing different types of things with semiotic resources as well as how they apply those resources in flexible and comprehensible ways. For example, Abi clearly had some familiarity with an interview genre prior to this interaction, as demonstrated by her addition of the dramatic gesture toward her ear when she pretended she could not hear what her interviewee was saying (line 32) and deployment of uncharacteristically hyper-polite wording as she feigned not wanting to offend her guest (line 42). This excerpt also underlines the centrality of understanding participants’ goals from a repertoires approach. Mateo and Abi’s educational and interactional goals were not just about “correctly” conducting an interview in Spanish. They were also about building rapport through their teasing and contesting the values of varying social types such as “mexicanos,” “americanos,” and “gabachos” (lines 38 – 48). In the second chapter I then present the concepts of trajectories and social domains to explore how these semiotic resources travel, get recognized, and become refashioned to contribute to children’s schooling. I use these same
concepts to explore how individuals came to be positioned as certain social types (such as involved or overbearing fathers), sometimes in surprising ways, based on the deployment and evaluation of their semiotic resources over time.

In the third chapter I present the methods and setting for this discourse analytic ethnographic study. Like Susana’s metacommentary about the recorded footage in line 49, “this is what my family’s life is like. Everyday it’s the same,” I focused on routine interactions in order to reveal the nuanced ways that Mexican immigrant fathers’ participation shapes and is shaped by their children’s schooling. In this chapter I articulate the methods I employed, which included a combination of ethnographic methods (participant observation, interviewing) and discourse analytic methods (analysis of videotaped naturally occurring interactions and playback sessions from families’ self-filming with Flip cameras, such as the footage in Excerpt 1 seen above) for data collected across home and school contexts over the course of a year. I then present the town that I call Marshall, Pennsylvania, a community of the New Latino Diaspora, and the focal elementary school and second-grade classrooms for this study.

In the fourth chapter I introduce each of the seven focal families in depth. This chapter explores the perspectives of a new wave of Mexican immigrant fathers settling in New Latino locations like Marshall in order to understand how they drew upon models of fatherhood and romantic partnerships from their upbringings in Mexico as well as their journeys into family life in the US. Like the central topic of Abi’s interview in Excerpt 1 regarding men’s roles in household responsibilities (lines 4 – 29), in this chapter I examine how participants’ background experiences shaped their day-to-day realities, gender relations, conceptions of fatherhood, and understandings of machismo. This study differs from pathological studies of masculinities of color, that, for Latino men, often center on notions of machismo. It instead highlights voices of
Mexican immigrant fathers, voices that are usually rendered silent in the research literature as well as the media.

In the fifth chapter I explore trajectories of students’ semiotic resources across home and school contexts. I provide a taxonomy to analyze aspects of students’ repertoires, which are larger than semiotic elements and smaller than entire repertoires, that emerged as relevant for successful communication regarding schooling. In the second part of the chapter I explore the various ways that English school-based elements traveled and took on meanings within students’ homes, shaping home-based interactions and relationships in the process. I then examine the flow of repertoires from home to school by focusing on the metacommunicative strategies that fathers taught their children in order to navigate highly diverse contexts. For example, I examine the ways that Abi developed strategies to creatively manage interpersonal interactions through her semiotic choices, such as her jab at Mateo in referencing Mexicans who do not bathe (lines 44 – 45), an on-going joke about him in their household despite his hyper-cleanliness. I examine differences in how students’ metacommunicative strategies were sometimes recognized and incorporated into their school-based learning and imagine schooling possibilities that more deliberately build upon immigrant students’ real-world languaging and literacy repertoires.

In the sixth chapter I draw upon the concept of trajectories of socialization to illustrate the ways that two Mexican immigrant fathers came to be positioned in surprising ways in terms of their involvement in their children’s schooling. I begin this chapter with an overview of models of parent involvement and elaborate upon what I have called, through my work with Stanton Wortham, a repertoires approach. In my analysis I focus on how individuals, such as Mateo, aligned themselves and came to be positioned by educators as certain kinds of “involved fathers.” I argue for the utility of a repertoires approach to parent involvement, as it provides a toolkit to understand home and school based involvement practices that are more nuanced than traditional
models and illuminates the importance of accommodation in parent-teacher interactions. Such an approach provides a framework to envision and enact more flexible parent involvement practices that build upon the diverse resources that non-traditional parents bring to their children’s schooling.

In the seventh chapter I examine the implementation of current immigration policies and how the shifting enforcement of these policies in Marshall, which overwhelmingly targeted Mexican immigrant men, affected their children’s lives, schooling, and biliteracy development. In this chapter I trace two cases of “undocumented” biliterate lives of Mexican immigrant fathers and their children. In the first case I explore how one father’s deportation during the spring of his daughter’s second grade year sparked his daughter’s biliteracy development. In the second case I present Abi and Mateo’s co-narration of an incident in which police officers came to their door in search of a Mexican-looking criminal. During this incident Abi had to draw upon her translation skills to negotiate this interaction, an example of biliteracy practices that hold great promise to contribute to students’ school-based literacy development. In the discussion I highlight how targeting Mexican adult males, especially for minor infractions, is likely to create educational challenges for their children, a younger generation of DREAMers (those who would benefit from Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act if it were passed) and U.S. Citizens.

In the concluding chapter I highlight how I have sought to make the invisible visible in terms of Mexican immigrant fathers’ engagement in their children’s schooling and reflect upon how a communicative repertoires approach best helps us capture and build upon innovative approaches to communication, family-school relationships, and literacy development. I then explore how the findings from this study can inform pedagogical approaches to best prepare students like Abi for potential futures in the US or Mexico. In the final section I discuss how
these findings point to areas for future research in the fields of multilingual education, gender and migration, and immigration and schooling.
Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

It was Sunday morning in Marshall, Pennsylvania as 8 year-old Emily (E) ate breakfast with her father Cristian (C), mother Paloma (P) and Uncle José (J). This was the one day a week Cristian was home from work, and as part of their weekend routines he was preparing an extensive breakfast for the entire family. Emily lived with her parents, baby brother, and her mother’s two brothers and sister. The family was discussing the logistics of renting a hall for Emily’s annual costume birthday celebration, which falls on Halloween, and Paloma brought up their “compadre” [close family friend] who allegedly had five “fincas” [estates] back in Mexico. Emily was not sure of what a “finca” was and the family collectively drew upon an array of semiotic elements from their repertoires to help Emily understand.

Excerpt 1

1. E: ¿Qué es una finca?
2. P: ¿Qué es una finca?
4. E: I want one daddy.
5. C: ¿Has visto la novela de “La Dueña?” Ella tiene una finca.
6. P: Ella no ve la novela de “La Dueña.”
7. C: ¿Oh no?
8. P: La vio una vez, pero no no sabe.
9. C: Es una casa muy grande que tiene muchas cosas.
10. E: Como el de la Federica que tiene un parking, la esa cosa, ¿cómo se llama? No sé como
11. E: Como el de la Federica que tiene un parking, la esa cosa, ¿cómo se llama? No sé como
12. se llama la que tiene una grandota cosa, una mediana y luego una pequeña.
13. C: ¿Pequeña? [xxx]
14. E: Sí pero luego que cae algo de ahí. ((Does hand gestures to show water spurting))
15. J: ¿Una fuente?
17. P: Cuando estes grande y termines de estudiar y te pongas a trabajar, te la compras.
18. E: ¿En serio?
19. ((P nods her head))

English Translation: ORIGINAL ENGLISH IN BOLD
1. E: What is an estate?
2. P: What is an estate?
3. C: An estate is a house with a lot of land. It has a farm, areas for planting, it has horses. A lot of things.
4. E: I want one daddy.
5. C: Have you ever seen the soap opera of “La Duena?” She has an estate.
6. P: She doesn’t watch “La Dueña.”
7. C: Oh no?
8. P: She saw it once, but she doesn’t know.
9. C: It’s a very big house that has a lot of things.
10. E: Like Federica’s that has a parking lot, and that thing, what’s it called? I don’t know.
11. What do you call that one that has a big thing, then a medium one, and then a little one?
12. C: A little one? [xxx]
13. E: Yea but then something falls from it. ((Does hand gestures to show water spurting))
15. **J:** A fountain?

16. **E:** Ahh, fountain. They're pretty. I want one. But they cost a lot. **They're**

17. **P:** When you're big and you're done studying and you begin to work, you buy it for yourself.

18. **E:** Seriously?

19. **((P nods her head))**

Immediately apparent in this interaction are the dynamic ways that participants drew upon language resources to achieve their communicative goals. Here, as with most Mexican immigrant children and parents from this study, successful communication across home and school contexts was achieved by drawing upon all of the semiotic resources at their disposal. This includes paralinguistic resources such as gesture and clothing as well as linguistic resources in traditional languages such as “English” and “Spanish” that are deployed in hybrid, dynamic, and creative ways. As Grosjean (1982) highlights, bilinguals are not two monolinguals, and speakers can do different types of things based on previous experiences in different languages. Forms from both autonomous languages are often drawn upon within the same interaction. Throughout this dissertation I examine students, parents, and teachers as translanguagers, or what Ofelia García describes as bilinguals who access “different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential” (2009, p. 140). García (2009) highlights how translanguaging includes practices such as code-switching, yet focuses on language resources in-use rather than taking autonomous languages as the point of departure. Interactions such as this one were extremely typical for immigrant families in Marshall, and García (2011) emphasizes that for many people around the world translanguaging practices are unmarked, everyday occurrences.
In this study I seek to understand how participants use the array of semiotic resources at their disposal to achieve their interactional goals across home and school contexts. Below I describe how this study fits within the larger field of Linguistic Anthropology of Education. I then use Excerpt 1 from this chapter to illustrate how I have adapted communicative repertoires as an analytic approach. Finally, I close with an explanation of the two ways that I track students’ and fathers’ semiotic resources across trajectories and domains over the course of a school year. One of these approaches centers on the travel and interpretation of semiotic elements. The second focuses on how individuals’ deployment of semiotic elements solidify into certain social types, such as “good father/student/child,” over the course of a year. I carefully track the linguistic and semiotic resources of Mexican immigrant fathers and their children across home and school contexts to better understand how participants’ repertoires shift over the course of a year, how their semiotic elements are interpreted and redeployed across contexts, and how their deployment of semiotic forms accumulate, over time, into being read as certain types of people.

Linguistic Anthropology of Education

This study is situated within the field of Linguistic Anthropology of Education (LAE) and draws upon the concepts of communicative repertoires (Rymes, 2010), recontextualization (Blommaert, 2005), social domains (Agha, 2007), and trajectories (Blommaert, 2005; Wortham, 2005) to explore how language use presupposes and creates social relations among Mexican immigrant fathers, children, and teachers in a community of the New Latino Diaspora. LAE draws upon the tools of linguistic anthropology to advance understandings of how contextualized language uses influence educational processes. Unlike researchers in linguistics, linguistic anthropologists are centrally concerned with language-in-use. They investigate naturally
occurring language and how language users make sense of it in their everyday lives (Wortham, 2008a). As Blommaert (2010) emphasizes, “our focus of analysis should be the actual linguistic, communicative, semiotic resources that people have, not abstracted and idealized (or ideologized) representations of such resources” (p. 102). This study takes a discourse centered approach to examine how semiotic signs, such as words, dress, gestures, and writing, also have material outcomes in real-world contexts (Dick, 2006; 2011a; De Genova, 2002; Orellana, 2009).

In addition, linguistic analyses of naturally occurring interactions in educational settings can illuminate sociocultural processes of concern to anthropologists. Anthropological traditions emphasize educational processes across contexts, such as within families or rituals, and anthropological approaches to educational research can help highlight the interplay between different educational processes to better understand schooling (Levinson, 1999). Linguistic anthropological approaches require ethnographic work to understand the “native point of view” of participants’ models and categories and the systematic analysis of language patterns across data. Below I briefly summarize the emergence of LAE in relation to the fields of Ethnography of Communication, Language Socialization, and Semiotic Approaches to Linguistic Anthropology. Although this project predominantly draws upon tools from semiotic approaches to Linguistic Anthropology, like the field of LAE, it is informed by each of these lineages. I then describe the linguistic anthropological concepts of communicative repertoires, recontextualization, social domain, and trajectories and how they are best suited to investigate the patterned and creative ways that students, fathers, and teachers deploy semiotic signs in schools and immigrant homes.

**Ethnography of Communication**

Linguistic anthropological approaches have been used in educational research over the past forty years (e.g., Heath, 1983; Wortham & Rymes, 2003). LAE grew out of Hymes’
foundational work of bridging anthropology and education, including his emphasis on communicative competence (1972), creation of the Ethnography of Communication (1964), and scholarship on the power of ethnography to combat social inequality (Hymes, 1980; Blommaert, 2009; Hornberger, 2009). Instead of studying linguistic competence as an ideal-speaker’s tacit knowledge about language structure (Chomsky, 1965), Hymes (1972) argued for a theory of language-in-use that accounts for a diversity of speech, repertoires, and ways of speaking. His emphasis on communicative competence emphasizes what a speaker needs to know in order to communicate appropriately within a situated context. As Blommaert explains, this is perhaps best represented by the differences that Hymes saw between language—what linguists study—and speech:

Speech is language-in-society, i.e., an active notion and one that deeply situates language in a web of relations of power, a dynamics of availability and accessibility, a situatedness of single acts vis-à-vis larger social and historical patterns such as genres and traditions. Speech is language in which people have made investments—social, cultural, political, individual-emotional ones. It is also language brought under social control—consequently language marked by sometimes extreme cleavages and inequalities in repertoires and opportunities (2009, p. 264).

The Ethnography of Communication is an approach that investigates these patterns of communicative behaviors and how they comprise cultural systems (Saville-Troike, 1996). Guided by overarching goals of social justice in order to combat inequality (Hornberger, 2009), this approach was largely taken up within educational institutions in non-mainstream communities in order to carefully trace the role language plays in education (e.g., Boggs, 1985; Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983). The focus on social justice also emphasized the materiality of discourse: Certain ways with words (Heath, 1983) were celebrated in institutional contexts such as schools and had real-world implications for students’ educational outcomes. A study on Emily and her family from this approach might examine the participant structures (Philips, 1983) of appropriate interactions among children and adults within the home environment and then
compare how these structures align or diverge from expectations within certain types of school-based events. Analytically I might look for patterns across the seven Mexican immigrant family homes to see how they are reflected and taken up within the school setting. This approach, however, fails to emphasize the unique communicative repertoires and histories of experiences that individuals draw upon across space and time (cf, Hymes, 1986). Although the excellent work by Heath (1983), Philips (1983), and Michaels (1981) demonstrated how patterns of language use and meaning were systematically different for groups such as African Americans or Native Americans in specific communities, research approached from this perspective often presupposes shared cultural norms and styles of speaking for each group (Wortham, 2003). Especially in a time of global migration, media, and transnationalism, such stable speech communities and patterns cannot adequately explain modern-day realities (Blommaert, 2010; Rampton, 1998). This is certainly true in a place like Marshall, Pennsylvania.

**Language Socialization**

Language socialization (LS) also grew out of linguistic anthropology and examines how people of all ages learn to use linguistic and paralinguistic signs in socially appropriate ways during everyday routines (Duff, 2007; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1996). Whereas the Ethnography of Communication was widely implemented in classroom settings, early LS work tended to focus on language acquisition and human development in societies across the globe, highlighting the range of ways people are socialized into becoming competent speakers (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004; Rymes, 2008). Traditionally LS focused on normative patterns rather than in-group heterogeneity, and critiques of this approach also emphasize the dangers of reifying notions of homogenous cultures, although this was not the intention of LS (or Ethnography of Communication) researchers (Mangual Figueroa, 2010; Wortham, 2008b). A traditional LS study on Emily and her
family might entail careful tracking of parent-child interactions within the small town near Puebla, Mexico, where Emily’s parents grew up, and explore normative patterns across families. Or, it might entail analyzing meal-time conversations for all seven Mexican immigrant families in Marshall to empirically investigate phenomena such as how family and gender roles are enacted through talk (e.g., Ochs & Taylor, 1992). More recent work in LS, however, has shifted away from the examination of homogenized sets of beliefs to explorations of the heterogeneity of learning processes through contextualized language use. For example, Mangual Figueroa’s (2010) work on diversity within mixed-status Mexican immigrant families in the US illustrates the flexibility and dynamic nature of learning and socialization within the same nuclear unit. In addition, Wortham’s work on trajectories of socialization, discussed in more detail below, draws on LS and offers a framework for following individuals across space and time. As Rymes emphasizes, LS approaches to research that can explore and explain the emergence of innovative forms of participation as well as individuals’ roles in their positioning across events are needed to overcome previous limits to this line of research (2008, p. 37).

Semiotic Approaches to Linguistic Anthropology

Building from the Ethnography of Communication and Language Socialization, which focus on revealing patterns of effective communication within diverse communities and cross-cultural comparison across communities, semiotic approaches to linguistic anthropology analyze the flexible deployment of sign systems with an eye toward the emergence of culturally relevant action (Rymes, 2008, p. 31). This line of research investigates how signs index, or point to, agreed upon meanings as well as how they sometimes are deployed innovatively to create unexpected and new meanings (Rymes, 2008; Silverstein, 1976). This approach emphasizes that all semiotic signs, such as talk or gestures, can only be understood within context (Silverstein,
1992; Wortham, 2008b). Unlike the Ethnography of Communication and Language Socialization approaches, which have been widely applied to educational research, a semiotic approach has less history in the field of education, and therefore fewer critiques thus far (Wortham, 2008b). Tools from a semiotic approach to linguistic anthropology permit a focus on heterogeneity rather than overarching patterns and offer an excellent toolkit to explore the range of ways people of all ages, such as Emily and her family, are socialized into multiple ways of talking and interacting (Rymes, 2008). This methodology also provides clearer pathways to trace semiotic resources and individuals across unique trajectories. This dissertation study draws most directly from semiotic approaches to linguistic anthropology and applies these tools to contexts of learning across homes and school. As I discuss below, individuals’ semiotic resources are analyzed from a communicative repertoires framework, which can provide an account of the complex ways participants’ repertoires grow, adapt, get recognized, and sometimes get overlooked across contexts of learning in homes and schools.

**Communicative Repertoires**

As Gumperz (1964), Hymes (1980) Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) and Rymes (2010) argue, there is heterogeneity in terms of how members of a given community speak and what they believe. As Blommaert emphasizes, “our real ‘language’ is very much a biographical given, the structure of which reflects our own histories and those of the communities in which we spent our lives” (2010, p. 103). Each individual’s repertoire depends upon her history of engagement with certain ways of talking and doing and although there may be greater overlap of repertoires for those with similar past experiences, repertoires are dynamic and unique. Like situational co-membership that focuses on bridges rather than barriers (Erickson & Schultz, 1982), people who
may appear to have nothing in common or a “language barrier” likely have some shared repertoire elements, that, if recognized, could be built upon to meet interactional goals.

Unlike “language” which indexes a standardized set of linguistic features, Rymes defines *communicative repertoires* as “the collection of ways individuals use language and literacy and other means of communication (gestures, dress, posture, accessories) to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate” (2010, p. 528). Each of these semiotic elements adds to an individual’s repertoire. Rymes builds upon Gumperz’s (1964) work on verbal repertoires, which described the intricate ways that individuals deployed varying linguistic resources in multilingual India to achieve communicative and social effects. This aligns with Hymes (1980) description of how a repertoire “comprises a set of ways of speaking” which includes the ways in which speech styles play out, according to relations of appropriateness, within contexts (p. 27). Thus, the concept of communicative repertoires highlights the interplay of an individual’s communicative goals with a given language use and the contextualizing factors of the social situation within which it occurs. Rymes (2010) explains how just as a pianist may have a well-developed “classical” repertoire but a limited “jazz” repertoire, an individual speaker may have an extensive “academic” repertoire but a limited “World of Warcraft” repertoire. And these repertoires are shifting and developing across a person’s lifetime. As we saw from Emily’s translanguaging in Excerpt 1, for individuals in bilingual communities such as the site for this project, real-world language use is not simply about speaking “English” and / or “Spanish,” but entails drawing upon more complex semiotic resources that make up repertoires. Below I return to the exchange between Emily and her family to illustrate the central tenets of communicative repertoires as an analytical frame for this project.

Rymes (2010) highlights four central aspects of a repertoires approach that can be seen throughout this brief interaction (Excerpt 1) in which participants drew upon a wide range of
semiotic resources in the linguistic codes of Spanish and English to achieve their desired interactional goals. First, “correctness” is secondary to communicative goals. Similar to work in LS in which one learns how to act appropriately through language-based interactions, an individual’s repertoire is dynamic and contingent upon use. Unlike LS, which traditionally tended to emphasize shared patterns, repertoires are not static rules or competencies. They are guidelines that are deployed improvisationally as people figure out how to make something work in a given context. Repertoires also change over historical time, as skills are applied across varying situations and people learn from experience. For example, Emily’s family did not prioritize grammatical accuracy when Emily said, “tiene una grandota cosa / has a thing big” (line 12). The adults did not correct her adjective order, but instead built upon her contribution to work toward their goal of a shared understanding. Although Emily’s drawing on linguistic resources in English such as “I want one daddy” (Line 5) and “They’re expensive” (Line 16-17) fit within patterns of Emily’s repertoire deployment in which she tended to address her father more in English because of his extensive English repertoire, she utilized these semiotic elements improvisationally within this interaction and in ways that differed greatly from the six other children from Mexican immigrant families in this study. And if this conversation had occurred several years earlier, prior to Emily’s English-medium schooling in which she was exposed to many of the English language signs in her repertoire, she would not have been able to deploy them. Communicative and interactional goals trumped grammatical correctness here and in many home-based interactions from this study. In this interaction family members wanted to achieve shared meanings about terms such as finca [estate] and fuente [fountain], wanted to include Emily within the conversation, and used these interactional experiences to help expand Emily’s repertoire in Spanish. As was common for both of her parents, in line 18 Paloma also used this interaction to
encourage Emily’s dedication to her schooling “When you’re big and you’re done studying and you begin to work, you buy it for yourself,” which Emily enthusiastically agreed with.

Second, Rymes emphasizes that accommodation is inevitable and directionality varies. Because the guidelines that make up repertoires are partial and flexible, and require implementation in context, participants must adjust to others as they communicate or work together across contexts. Adjustments can be required from various parties to the interaction, and sometimes from everyone involved. In this instance we saw Emily, who could more easily draw upon her extensive resources in English, accommodate to her family by putting forth the extra effort to communicate in Spanish. Her father also attempted to draw upon mass-mediated signs from a popular Spanish soap opera to establish shared meaning, although Emily’s mother assured him that this widely-circulating emblem from “La Dueña” in the adult Mexican immigrant community was not actually part of his daughter’s repertoire. Emily also appeared to attempt to draw on shared meanings by indexing “Federica’s that has a parking lot” (Line 11), although this was not taken up and therefore did not appear to be in her parents’ or uncle’s repertoires.

The commitment that Emily and her family made to understanding one another, rather than saying “no importa,” [never mind] a common response for some children and immigrant parents in similar interactions, may also be an indicator of the closeness of their relationships, of the work they were willing to invest to understand one another. It may also reflect their language ideologies, or “the abstract (and often implicit) belief systems related to language and linguistic behavior that affect speakers’ choices and interpretations of communicative interaction” (McGroarty, 2010, p. 2, drawing on Silverstein, 1998). For example, in Marshall English was often positioned as the language of education, opportunity, and advancement and as more important than Spanish in many contexts. Yet, many parents, such as Cristian and Paloma, believed that their children should know English and Spanish and viewed it as appropriate for
parent-child interactions within the home to occur predominantly in Spanish. Ideologies are also flexible and dynamic. For example, when Emily began Kindergarten her parents were very concerned about her limited repertoire in English and decided that everyone should only speak to her in English, even if they had limited English repertoires themselves. Over time and through their experiences in Latino parent resource rooms and leadership groups where many other parents and educators promoted pro-bilingualism ideologies, they decided that it would be beneficial for Emily to know both languages. This in turn led to changed patterns of accommodation in their household, in which repertoires from both languages, and predominantly Spanish, were drawn upon during everyday interactions. In other interactions, such as Cristian and Paloma’s meeting with Emily’s second-grade teacher or Emily completing a science-experiment with a Spanish-dominant classmate, different forms of accommodation emerged.

Third, Rymes advocates for awareness about our own and others’ repertoires. People must critically examine their own norms and beliefs, come to recognize others’, and learn how to switch among potential options to achieve understanding in a given situation. In this interaction we saw Emily recognize what Spanish-based elements she did not have at her disposal (e.g., fuente), and skillfully draw upon those that she did “I don’t know. What do you call that one that has a big thing, then a medium one, and then a little one?” (line 12) to achieve her communicative goals. She also drew upon other semiotic resources at her disposal, such as gesturing to embody a fountain spurring water (line 14) to help her family understand what she meant. Indeed children from Mexican immigrant families in this study regularly demonstrated high levels of metalinguistic awareness and incredible savvyness in achieving their communicative and interactional goals. And unlike the underlying assumption that mothers are often the primary language socializers, at least in the United States, fathers throughout this study proved especially important in terms of metalinguistic awareness. They often modeled and taught
their children strategies for discursive precision and innovation as well as other metacommunicative strategies (Chapter 5).

Finally, Rymes emphasizes that the ultimate goal is continual repertoire expansion for people of all ages. The expert is not always the adult or the English speaker, as each individual has elements in his repertoire that, if recognized, can be built upon and potentially acquired into his interlocutor’s repertoire. In this interaction we saw that Emily’s repertoire was expanding in Spanish to (potentially) include the linguistic signs of finca [estates] and fuente [fountain] for future interactions. Yet when Emily brought home her reading log for her parents to sign every night and had to explain the school-based procedure around reading goals, her parents’ repertoires also expanded. And when her second-grade teacher learned about her Mexican immigrant students’ families’ constant negotiations of staying in Marshall or returning to Mexico, her communicative repertoire also expanded. In many ways newly established immigrant communities like Marshall are ideal spaces to foster this awareness of and facility in others’ repertoires—because such repertoire expansion occurs most easily when individuals cross social boundaries and interact with people who are different from themselves (Rymes, 2010). In this study I explicitly trace repertoire growth and expansion through close attention to how semiotic forms are recontextualized, take on new meanings across domains, and travel across trajectories over time.

**Recontextualization, Social Domains, and Trajectories**

In this project I adopt an analytic approach of examining how semiotic signs travel across space and time in two related, but somewhat different, ways. The first type of analysis focuses explicitly on how semiotic resources, or signs, travel across contexts, are deployed in new ways, and take on varying interpretations for different people across space and time. The second type of
analysis tracks how participants align themselves with—and are positioned as—certain social types through the deployment of their semiotic resources across space and time. This level of analysis will examine the trajectories of socialization (Wortham, 2005) to reveal how individuals emerge as certain social types (e.g., overbearing fathers). The first type of analysis focuses on the trajectories of specific signs. The second focuses on the trajectories of individuals. Both examine processes of recontextualization, differences in social domain, and movement across trajectories. Finally, embedded in all of these processes are the differential power dynamics that influence when and how certain signs are recognized, built upon, and interpreted.

Recontextualization occurs when a sign is removed from its original context and incorporated into a new one, thus adopting new interpretive layers and meanings (Blommaert, 2005). Signs are contextualized, or given a certain interpretation, by participants based on the cues in the local surroundings and participants’ histories of experiences with that sign (Blommaert, 2005). Participants such as Mexican immigrant fathers, students, and teachers may attach different meanings to these semiotic forms. There are many possibilities for how a sign may become recontextualized across space and time. It may simply travel and take on a highly congruent meaning within the new context. Or, as it combines with elements of people’s communicative repertoires, it may take on new purposes. Recognition is a critical component to how semiotic forms get recontextualized, and how a sign is noticed and ‘read’ depends upon its social domain.

Agha’s (2007) emphasis on social domain, or the subset of people for whom the language use links to the intended meaning, is particularly important as it helps illuminate how different participants such as fathers, teachers, and students make sense of the same types of semiotic elements embedded within their daily interactions. The same sign may be recognized across social groupings, but used in very different ways (Rymes, 2012). For example, teachers may talk
about students’ ‘writing’ during a parent teacher conference, and Mexican immigrant parents would agree that it is very important. Yet ‘writing’ for this second-grade teacher meant putting creative thoughts on paper using different genres, which may include aspects of invented spelling. For most Mexican immigrant parents ‘writing’ signaled neat orthography and accurate grammar, often learned through copying printed materials. Even if parents and teachers were interested in helping a student improve her writing, what this meant and how they would go about it would look very different, as this sign indexed very different histories of experiences and expectations across these social groupings. Again, the reading of signs is not just about words, but may also entail differences in semiotic elements such as gesture, physical appearance, or prosodic features. For example, a father who maintained a very serious, unexpressive face during a parent teacher conference may have done so, even subconsciously, to demonstrate respect to his child’s teacher. These same facial gestures, however, may be taken up as ‘mean’ or ‘uninterested’ by the teacher. Over time and across events, her interpretation of him based on his deployment of this semiotic resource may contribute to this teacher’s positioning of the father as a certain type of (undesirable) parent.

Rymes (2012) also highlights how a certain semiotic feature may go relatively unnoticed by members in a certain social domain (e.g., teachers), but prove highly significant to members of another (e.g., students). For example, having a Justin Bieber sticker on a notebook may have signaled a student’s hip-ness to her classmates and may have become an object of envy for many, but may not even be noticed by her teacher. Of course that same sticker two months later, when Justin had become a thing of the past and all anyone was talking about was ‘beyblades,’ would index a different set of evaluations and linkages to her as a social persona. Similarly, teacher talk about being ‘good citizens’ may be one of many techniques she used to get students to behave, but to an undocumented student this loaded sign may bring forth a floodgate of fears
that could affect her learning and classroom participation. Each sign has a different social domain, which is constantly shifting. How a sign is recognized and given an interpretation changes across participants, contexts, and time, and does not do so in neutral ways.

There are often differential power dynamics at play that influence how signs are recognized, overlooked, or given certain meanings across recontextualizations (Blommaert, 2005), which can have real-world implications for students from Mexican immigrant families. This may depend on who deploys a given sign. As Hymes emphasized 25 years ago, “the same behaviors, the same verbal conduct [or deployment of a semiotic form], may have different implications for different actors” (1986, p. 87). For example, an 8 year-old Mexican heritage girl dropping an empty soda bottle on the sidewalk in front of her house would likely go unnoticed, or result in a quick reprimand, from the police officers passing by in their patrol car. Yet this same action by her father could draw the police officers’ attention, lead to his arrest for littering, and potentially lead to his deportation if he did not have documentation to reside in the United States. How a sign is interpreted may also depend upon the context in which it is deployed. Dropping a soda bottle on the ground at home, in school, or on the streets of Mexico may be interpreted differently across these spaces. Blommaert (2005) highlights how, as semiotic resources move across global and local contexts (from Mexico to the United States, from school to home), they often take on different meanings for varying participants, including changes in the purposes and values individuals attribute to them. As interlocutors accommodate to one another in face-to-face interaction, or as signs become embedded into new interactions, the meanings they are given are shaped by larger power dynamics:

Certain voices… systematically prevail over others, because the impact of certain centres of authority is bigger than that of others. The multiplicity of available batteries of norms does not mean that these batteries are equivalent, equally accessible or equally open to negotiation. Orders of indexicality are stratified and impose differences in value onto the
different modes of semiosis, systematically give preference to some over others, and exclude or disqualify particular modes (Blommaert, 2010, p. 41).

Blommaert argues that certain centres of authority, such as institutions like public schools in the US, tend to be more influential than others, such as a Mexican immigrant family. Or what are often perceived of as separate autonomous languages, such as English, may regularly be positioned as more important than others, such as Spanish. Blommaert’s point is that language shapes social relations, and rarely does so in a neutral way. Yet, as this study illustrates, although there may be normative generic patterns regarding whose interpretation of signs prevails, there are also idiosyncratic and surprising ways that signs come to be recognized and positioned across contexts. As I discuss in the following section, these pathways can best be examined through the careful tracking of semiotic resources across trajectories.

An investigation of trajectories entails examining the pathway of certain semiotic signs across space and time, including their interpretations across varying social domains, with an eye toward the linkages across these recontextualizations. For one type of analysis, I follow how semiotic resources from participants’ communicative repertoires get recognized, taken up, hybridly deployed, and given varying meanings for different people across space and time. I pay close attention to how repertoire elements from the autonomous languages of ‘Spanish’ and ‘English’ are transferrable across ‘languages’ and contexts. There are some patterns of how signs travel and get recognized, but there are also trajectories of idiosyncratic differences. This analysis, the focus of Chapter 5, also entails the careful tracking of the metacommunicative strategies that participants adapt to recognize, build upon, and deploy semiotic forms from their repertoires. This type of analysis focuses on the tracking of specific signs and their varying interpretations across trajectories.
The second type of analysis entails carefully tracking how participants negotiate their meanings through their semiotic choices, which are guided by their alignments to certain images of locally salient social types (Agha, 2007; Dick, 2010a; Goffman, 1981) such as “good student/father/child.” Social types are general personae that are associated with particular semiotic displays such as ways of talking, dressing, behaving, etc. (Agha, 2007). Although a participant may deploy semiotic resources to orient to one social type, her interlocutor may orient to a different model and position those semiotic resources differently. Social personae are sometimes generic stereotypes that link overgeneralized bundles of semiotic forms with individuals who index that social type. For example, a Spanish-speaking man with brown skin may index ‘Mexican immigrant’ for many white people in the United States. Along with the stereotypic persona of ‘Mexican immigrant’ may come an array of evaluative linkages such as ‘illegal,’ ‘uneducated,’ ‘machista,’ ‘uninvolved father,’ ‘drunk,’ ‘Catholic,’ etc. These larger circulating discourses about who people are tend to shape how we make sense of them and the other semiotic signs that they deploy across contexts.

Building from Agha’s (2007) concept of speech chains in which semiotic forms move across interactional events, Wortham (2005) analyzes trajectories of socialization. Socialization occurs across a trajectory similarly to how a sign is given meanings within a singular speech event (Wortham, 2005). In a speech event, a given sign sediments into a certain meaning when subsequent signs provide cues to help contextualize it. With trajectories, a given sign comes to be read in a certain way once subsequent signs across events help contextualize it. Meanings assigned to signs in previous events may also influence how signs in later events are understood. Over time, as patterns of role alignment to certain social personae solidify, a trajectory emerges (Wortham, 2005, p. 98). Over the course of a trajectory an individual becomes socialized as a recognizable type of person (Wortham, 2005, p. 98), at least for those from a shared social
domain. Attention to these alignments over time provides a more precise tool to trace trajectories, and to reveal how being recognized as a certain social type is imbued with power. Wortham (2005) illustrates an analytical approach that goes “beyond the speech event” in two ways (p. 97). First, he carefully traces intertextuality across speech events over the course of a school year, noting how linkages between signs and their interpretations sediment into certain interpretations over time. Second, he focuses on an individual rather than an overall generic trajectory, and empirically illustrates how one student’s positioning and academic identity takes unexpected turns. Semiotic-pragmatic approaches, such as the tracing of trajectories, make the study of social personae more ethnographically precise (Agha, 2007; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Dick, 2010; Irvine & Gal, 2000) and are effectively applied to contexts of migration (Koven, 2007; Dick, 2010; Mendoza-Denton, 2008). In this project I trace the trajectories of several Mexican immigrant fathers to examine how they were ‘read’ as certain types by educators in the focal elementary school (Chapter 6).

This chapter has provided the framework for this dissertation study and described how it is situated within the field of Linguistic Anthropology of Education. This framework permits a window into how signs are taken out of their original context and are reincorporated and repurposed within others. In the following chapter I present the ethnographic and discourse analytic methods that I draw upon to investigate the movement and recontextualization of fathers’, students’, and teachers’ communicative repertoires across ever-changing contexts of learning in the town of Marshall, Pennsylvania.
Chapter 3

Methods and Setting

An understanding of how semiotic forms from Mexican immigrant fathers’ and students’ communicative repertoires travel across contexts, are adapted in their new environment, and are understood by others is best revealed through an ethnographic research design that explicitly documents the discourse-level details of interactions among fathers, children, and teachers. In this chapter I first provide a brief overview of ethnographic research. I then describe my history in Marshall and the methods utilized for this study, highlighting how the data collection techniques across home and school contexts were well suited to systematically trace participants’ deployment of semiotic resources across space and time. I then explain my roles as a researcher and my data analysis. I close with the setting for this study, providing a description of Marshall, Grant Elementary, and the focal classrooms for this study. Although examples from focal families are included throughout this chapter, families will be introduced in depth in Chapter 4.

Ethnography

Ethnography is often defined as long-term observation of naturally occurring situations (Hymes, 1980) in which the ethnographer investigates people’s words and actions first hand (Hammersley, 2006). Below I illustrate several key components of ethnographic studies, how each component was incorporated into this study design, and how each of these elements enhanced the potential findings of a study that aimed to understand how Mexican immigrant fathers shape, and are shaped by, their children’s schooling.

Ethnography is an inductive science in which the ethnographer learns from participants and the data (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Hymes, 1980). The goal is to make sense of participants’
lived realities from their perspectives and to understand their (emic) categories, rather than researchers applying their own pre-determined (etic) categories to make sense of participants’ worlds. An inductive approach is particularly important to understand Latino father involvement in their children’s lives and non-mainstream approaches to parent involvement in school. Methodologically, many scholars have critiqued the majority of research that does exist on Latino fathers as it utilizes measures of father involvement transposed from European-American and/or maternal models, relies on mothers’ reporting of their husbands’ practices, and fails to address important themes such as how immigration experiences shape father involvement (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Cabrera & Garcia-Coll, 2004; Campos, 2008; Coltrane et al., 2004). A handful of studies, (cf., Coltrane et al., 2004; Taylor & Behnke, 2005) have begun to explore Mexican heritage fathers’ perspectives on father involvement in their children’s lives in Mexico and the United States using qualitative interviews. Although these scholars provide important insights on fathers’ perceptions and reported practices, ethnographic work, such as this study, is needed to account for what Latino fathers actually do and why it is important to them. Similar methodological critiques have been made about parent involvement studies in non-mainstream communities, which tend to transpose mainstream categories and models and evaluate how minoritized families do or do not adopt them (Barton et al., 2004; Doucet, 2011). Only by first understanding what Mexican immigrant fathers are already doing, which is best learned from this inductive approach, can policy designs build upon these forms of participation to encourage father engagement in schooling.

Unlike many quantitative studies that establish a hypothesis to prove or disprove, an ethnographic approach requires being open to the emergence of new foci during the course of fieldwork. Although ethnographers have a general sense of what they are interested in studying beforehand and establish questions to explore, their targets narrow as they become more familiar
with the lived complexities in their participants’ lives (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). In addition, major events or contextual factors may emerge during the course of data collection that greatly shape people’s lived realities. For example, prior to beginning this 12-month study I already knew most focal families well and knew that documentation status shaped their daily interactions and long-term trajectories in certain ways. Although it was not a requirement for participation, almost all of the families from this study were mixed-status families in which some members, such as children born in the US, were U.S. Citizens, and other members, such as parents born in Mexico, often were not. I had always conceived of Marshall as a relatively welcoming place, and during my four years prior to this study I knew of very few families that faced issues with deportations or arrests. As I discuss in detail in Chapter 7, halfway through this study this welcoming climate shifted: suddenly there was increased police vigilance that appeared to target Mexican immigrant men. Although not originally intended as a focal area, immigration practices emerged as a crucial topic that took on incredible importance in the day-to-day lives for many families in this study.

Another central tenet of ethnography is the focus on complexity rather than simplicity (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). As Blommaert and Jie highlight, “whereas in most other approaches the target of the scientific method is simplification and reduction of complexity, the target of ethnography is precisely the opposite. Reality is kaleidoscopic, complex, and complicated, often a patchwork of overlapping activities” (2010, p. 11). As will be discussed in Chapter 4, who in a given family does certain things with children during certain times is an intricate balance based on a variety of factors. How families navigate these decisions is never about simple categories or dichotomies such as Mexico vs. US, home vs. school, men vs. women, Spanish vs. English, or children vs. adults. And although the seven families from this study have some things in common, they also differ from one another in many ways. A focus on complexity is also needed because the travel of semiotic forms is not fully
predictable. How forms are taken up, interpreted, and evaluated is best revealed by ethnographic approaches that situate these semiotic elements within layers of context. Finally, ethnographic approaches aim to make sense of the interconnectedness among activities and gradations of overarching categories in ways that are often overlooked. For example, Chapter 7 explores the juxtaposition of two types of undocumented immigrants under the Obama administration; promising young students called “DREAMers” who are offered pathways to work and study and “dangerous criminals” who are targeted for deportation. As this study demonstrates, although these categories may appear very separate, in reality many Mexican immigrant fathers are targeted as “dangerous criminals” for minor infractions such as traffic violations, and their deportations create major obstacles for their children, a younger generation of DREAMers and U.S. Citizens. An ethnographic approach, which focuses on real-world complexities, is particularly well-suited to illuminate the realities of how immigration policies affect immigrant families.

Finally, ethnography has the potential of being counterhegemonic. Blommaert, drawing on Hymes, argues that ethnography in particular “is capable of constructing a discourse on social uses of language and social dimensions of meaningful behavior which differs strongly from established norms and expectations” (2009, p. 266). Such an approach is particularly important for a study on Mexican immigrant men, who are often invisible in some contexts and hyper-visible in others. As this study will illustrate, overall Mexican immigrant men are overlooked within their children’s schooling and within larger circulating discourses they are often positioned as “uninvolved fathers” or “machista” men (Campos, 2008; Mirandé, 2008). In contrast, Mexican immigrant men are the primary targets of deportation-based immigration practices, and therefore extremely visible within the gaze of police and immigration enforcement. An underlying theme in these somewhat contradictory forms of markedness is the facelessness of Mexican immigrant
men. Particularly within larger circulating discourses related to immigration policies, Mexican immigrant men are often referred to as statistics or anonymous, illegal masses. Ethnographic approaches provide the stories of human faces behind the numbers and stereotypes. This is especially important for people like Mexican immigrant men who are often dehumanized in many contexts. Overall the strengths of ethnography—an inductive approach that focuses on complexity and that has the capacity to combat hegemonic norms—is particularly well suited to investigate how Mexican immigrant fathers and children draw upon their communicative repertoires across contexts of learning over the course of a school year. In the following section I discuss the methods for this study.

**Methods**

In this section I discuss my introduction to Marshall, PA and the four years of ethnographic research I conducted with families and educators prior to this focal ethnographic study. I then provide a detailed description of my home-based and school-based methods, highlighting how they were well-suited to track the travel and negotiation of semiotic forms across space and time. Next I turn to a brief description of my consent and data sharing procedures. I close my methods section with an explanation of my own roles with varying participants over the course of the project to provide a clearer picture of how I fit—and stood out—within the landscapes of students’ school and homes.

**Introduction to Marshall**

I first met families in Marshall in 2006 when I began volunteering as an interpreter for parent teacher conferences at Grant Elementary School and as an English teacher for mothers at the local bilingual service agency. In 2008 I began working on ethnographic projects within Grant
Elementary that focused on a cohort of kindergarten students and their families from Mexico. I continued working with this cohort of students and their families through this 12-month study, which was conducted during students’ second grade year. The methods in this ethnographic study were developed and practiced through several years of methodologically similar projects in Marshall: They were all multisited (homes and school) and included weekly participant observation, video recording of routine activities, and interviews in English and Spanish across settings. Students in this cohort were very used to me, and my video camera, as we had been part of their schooling experiences since they began kindergarten. Throughout my years in Marshall I had the opportunity to get to know dozens of immigrant families and teachers through my participation in these projects as well as my deep involvement in many other initiatives to foster family-school relationships with Latino families. My long-term presence in Marshall led to trusting relationships with many families and educators. Without these trusting relationships it would have been very difficult to conduct this study with Mexican immigrant fathers during a period of strong anti-immigrant sentiment.

I invited seven Mexican immigrant families to participate in this study in order to better understand how fathers were engaged in their children’s educational lives in traditional and nontraditional ways. Over the years I was struck by the relative invisibility of immigrant fathers within the research literature and within educators’ talk in local schools, which stood in stark contrast to the extensive involvement many Mexican immigrant fathers I knew had in their children’s lives. I invited seven fathers, in conjunction with other family members that I had had the chance to get to know through previous projects and school-based initiatives. Several of these families I had known and worked with on projects since their children were in preschool. Others I had only had the chance to get to know the previous year. All agreed to participate.
Although the relationships I established with families and educators at Grant through previous projects were necessary for the success of this study, the findings presented in this dissertation focus on the data collected during students’ second-grade year. To further contextualize these data I occasionally draw upon select data from previous years. For example, an incident in kindergarten deeply shaped one father’s involvement in school-based events. I had been present during that kindergarten-based interaction, and therefore draw upon my data from it to situate how it had influenced his involvement during his daughter’s second-grade year. Below I describe the methods I used in immigrant families’ homes and children’s school for this focal study.

**Family-Based Methods**

My ethnographic design captures families’ home-based interactions through informal participant observation, formal audio-recorded interviews, self-filming using Flip cameras, and audio-recorded playback sessions. Regular extended participant observations permitted a window into some forms of father-child interactions, as well as how they fit within broader patterns of—or strayed from—household norms. They also served as a backdrop against which to contextualize, check, and enrich other data sources. In families’ homes I was an active participant, interacting with parents and children. My presence obviously shaped their activities and interactions in some ways, yet my time with them also allowed me to get a feel for their relationships and see them interact with one another. It also helped build or deepen our trusting relationships. Rather than setting static quotas for observations in each household, I instead tailored the quantity and types of my observations to fit the preferences of each family. For example, I would visit Alexis’ family at least once a week and if I missed a week they would often Skype video call me, wondering how I’d been after not seeing me for so long. In their home
I would join in their afternoon family routines, which often included sitting and talking in front of the large flat screen TV that broadcast Mexican news or game shows, or sitting at their table in the kitchen to a plate of *taquitos*. As we visited we would catch up on the latest from school, problems or successes from their job, and current events. Other families, who I had known since their kids were in preschool and who had worked with me on projects for several years, preferred less frequent visits, about every month, that were scheduled around playback sessions and interviews. We would always spend part of the time catching up and talking, and then would focus on the task at hand. I would also be in phone or computer contact with them between visits. In contrast Abi’s family was very used to having outside adults spend time with them—they had lived in a household with many of the father’s male friends for years, and it was normal to have different adults coming and going and doing things with them. They preferred for me to visit in this style and we would often spend time in their home or on outings together. I also thought Mateo, Abi’s father, would be returning to Mexico halfway through the project, so I proactively spent extensive time with them on the weekends and afterschool in the early months. In the end he did not return to Mexico, and I continued my frequent visits with them throughout the project. Just as I tailored my participant observations so that it was most comfortable for each family, in the following paragraphs I describe my flexible approach to family interviews.

Fathers and children were formally interviewed using an audio-recording device twice during the course of the project: once at the half-way point, and once at the end. The only father that I did not conduct a final interview with was Federico, as he had recently been deported to Mexico and due to the major life changes we were not able to coordinate an interview. Interviews provided a chance to talk in-depth about a range of topics that emerged over the course of the project. As I touched on the same themes within each interview type (fathers, kids), interviews also provided an array of perspectives on the same topic. During the interviews I would use
questions to guide our conversations, but overall would follow the participants’ talk and interests, tying in my questions to topics they brought up. Although I would have the paper with me, our interviews were more like conversations and I would usually only look at my question guide at the very end to ensure we had covered each theme.

Interviews with focal fathers usually occurred in families’ homes and were primarily conducted in Spanish. I asked each father or couple to decide who was involved in the father’s interview so that it would be most comfortable for them. In some cases the father and I would sit down in the living room and talk one-on-one, often with the kids playing in another room and the mother elsewhere in the house. Other couples preferred to participate together for the father’s interview. In these cases I oriented most of the questions to the father, but also sought out opportunities to include the mother, especially in terms of talking about her own father. One family preferred to have the first interview with the entire family present, although only the parents contributed to the conversation. The second interview was with both parents while the kids played in their kiddie pool out of earshot in the yard.

Formal interviews with children also took on several formats, and the success of these interviews varied. Many interviews occurred in school, and overall these interviews were more successful as students were very excited for the special attention of going with me to talk, and in some cases having the opportunity to miss class. One of these interviews was, based on their preference, a three student focus group. As I became nervous about using too much school time for interviews, I conducted some of the kid interviews in their homes. Some of these were very successful conversations in which we sat at their kitchen table and talked at length. Others, especially when the parents decided to be present for the interview and the kids wanted to be watching TV, resulted in single word answers and head nods or shakes. Even after 3 years of figuring out how to conduct interviews with young children, there is still great room for
improvement. In most cases I had one wonderful interview with a child, and one less successful one. Interviews with kids were conducted using Spanish and English, often taking on similar translanguaging formats to how we spoke on a regular basis. The formal interviews provided great insight on many topics, but they are also just one small subset of my data. In the following paragraphs I describe family’s self-filming and playback sessions.

Once every 2 months each family was lent a 120-minute Flip camera (a simple cell-phone sized video camera) with instructions to record fathers’ interactions with their children. Families were taught how to use the cameras and given free rein over what they recorded: The only criterion was that it include the father and second-grade child. It could also include anyone else and did not have to occur in their homes. Families greatly varied in what they recorded. Some families stuck with more traditional “school involvement” practices such as homework help, whereas others focused on family outings, family gatherings, or routine activities such as cooking dinner or playing video games. Some families were open to taking the camera with them other places such as Trick-or-Treating or to parties, whereas others were nervous the camera would get lost or damaged and kept to recording inside their homes. Self-filming with the Flip cameras enhanced participant observations (or an alternative methodological approach of my taping in their home environments) by capturing the smaller moments of father-child participation distributed across the week and the types of interactions they had when I was not physically present with them. This was especially important for many Mexican immigrant fathers who often worked multiple jobs with last-minute scheduling changes, which would make it difficult for me to schedule times to film when they were home.

What families recorded tended to reflect the types of things that fathers did with their children. For example, late night puzzles and weekend boxing enactments were common for Julio, a father that always worked long hours. Homework help and working with his daughter on
the computer were very common for Ignacio, who spent every afternoon with his daughter after school. Outings to restaurants and parks, short visits between jobs, snowy walks to the bus stop on his day off from work, and cooking Sunday morning breakfast were common recorded interactions for Cristian. And it was these impromptu interactions between fathers and their children—sometimes just a few minutes long—that Flip cameras could best document. Some fathers were incredibly open about being on camera with their children, whereas others were clearly nervous and often opted to be the one behind the camera during the interaction. Abi’s family preferred that I spend time with them and record their interactions instead, as I had done in previous projects, which I did. When I filmed these interactions I did my best to stay behind the camera, although I was also included in many of these interactions. They also had a handful of interactions that they taped with a Flip camera on their own, such as the interview interaction (Excerpt 1) in Chapter 1.

Although the original plan had been for each family to keep the camera for one week and then return it to me, it often took several weeks for families to finish recording. This was often due to busy schedules or forgetting to record when they first received the camera. Technological issues also arose from time to time, such as family members accidently erasing clips or the batteries running out in the middle of a recording. For example, one father accidentally erased all the videos on a camera filled with movies from a much-anticipated trip to Disney World. Despite our best attempts to recover the clips, it was not possible. His wife was much more upset than I was. In the end I received between 3 and 6 recordings per family, the mean quantity being 4 recordings.

After each individual recording, I then viewed and logged the video, marking explicit portions of interest to watch with participants. These playback sessions were incredibly useful for learning how fathers and children spent their time and for learning why their activities were
meaningful for them. As the highlights were based on interactions that they decided to record, they also provided a vehicle to have meaningful conversations about topics of importance in their lives. We would not watch the entire two hours of what they taped, only short highlights. Using IMovie, I would make clips ranging from 30 seconds to 5 minutes in length. I would watch approximately 5 to 10 clips with family members during each playback session. Usually fathers and mothers were present for the playback sessions, and usually children were also present, but not always. Several children were nervous to watch themselves on tape, or, due to logistics, I would have to schedule playback sessions during the school day with parents. Whenever children could not be present for a playback session I would make sure to find a way to talk to them, informally or formally, about topics that emerged from the clips.

For the playback session I would also prepare questions to guide our viewing and conversations about the clips. Although this was very time consuming, it helped focus my attention on points of interest and helped me make connections between home-based video-recordings and other themes I had noticed across contexts. I then watched these excerpts with family members and audio-recorded the playback session. These conversations provided insight regarding how fathers made sense of signs and practices that their children re-inserted into their home-based interactions and how participants drew upon their ever-shifting communicative repertoires to meet their interactional goals. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) emphasize, playback sessions or member checks do not signify that there is no alternative explanation, but serve as an important source of data to help clarify patterns and unique trajectories. Rather than asking generic questions, playback sessions provided real-world personal examples to talk about emergent themes. For example, rather than asking about a child’s translanguaging practices, I could show a 30-second clip from their family recordings that illustrated this, and use this as a point of departure to engage in a conversation regarding their communicative repertoires and
evaluations of using different autonomous languages within the same interaction. Or, instead of asking about two parents’ marital status in general terms during an interview, a clip they had recorded of a friend’s collective group wedding at the local church sparked a surprising conversation about why they had not decided to legally marry yet, how their lives in Mexico and the US played into these decisions, and how not being married influenced their property rights in Mexico. Similarly, instead of asking what challenges a father faced while completing English-based homework with his daughter, we could watch short clips of them completing homework to focus on the detailed semiotic resources in use.

In short, playback sessions provided context. In addition, unlike the interviews that tended to cover similar themes for all participants, playback sessions provided a consistent format to explore personalized topics of significance to each family. And interesting topics that emerged with one family would often be incorporated into general interview protocols, while maintaining each family’s anonymity, to better understand the range of experiences and perspectives related to a given theme. The incorporation of playback sessions also parallels the analytical approach of following individual trajectories: Focusing on individual families’ recordings, following up on those themes, and discussing the specific semiotic resources across contexts provided an effective methodological approach to follow these individual trajectories across space and time.

It is important to highlight that I explicitly sought out ways for participants to make choices regarding what they shared across data types. For example, prior to every interview I emphasized that we could always skip any question and erase anything we recorded. The same was true for all video recordings. Self-filming with Flip cameras permitted a large degree of choice in terms of what families’ recorded, erased, and shared with me. Some might argue that the main limitation of the Flip camera approach is that families have this complete control over what they choose to document and share. There is the possibility that they greatly censored their
recordings in order to portray certain images or what they believed I wished to see. Although this is an important concern, the reality is that similar processes can also occur during all forms of ethnographic data collection. Ultimately, I had to use my skills as an ethnographer to make sense of the data I received, check it against other sources of information, and work to build trusting relationships in which families felt comfortable sharing their everyday interactions with me.

My final source of family-based data collection was selected audio-recordings of conversations I had with participants during my visits to their home. For all of my audio-recordings (interviews, playback sessions) I used the “Voice Memos” feature on my IPhone. Very occasionally I would audio-record a home-based conversation or interaction (asking permission first), such as talk about recent deportations or parents’ interventions during an older son’s trouble in middle school. As I always had my phone on me, this was a convenient way to capture the semiotic details rather than relying on field notes. I used this sparingly though, trying to balance visits where we talked and did things with “interview” types of interactions that entailed recording. In the following section I describe my school-based methods.

**School-Based Methods**

School-based methods included participant observation and video-recording within two focal classrooms as well as during school-based family events, formal interviews, and occasional audio-recording of lunchtime student conversations. In-school observation provided necessary insight into daily family-school interactions, circulating discourses regarding Mexican immigrant men, the development of students’ communicative repertoires in English and Spanish, the recontextualizations of home-based signs and practices, and documentation of children’s school-based interactions.
I observed or filmed one half of a school-day in each of the focal classrooms every week from September through June. I always visited classrooms on separate days during the week and included lunch and recess with each visit whenever possible. Although I had originally planned to spend some of the lunch periods with teachers, the more teacher-fronted nature of second grade classes left fewer opportunities for students to talk openly than I had anticipated. I therefore decided to spend all lunch periods with students. I also rotated between visiting in the morning and the afternoon in each class in order to observe a variety of activities. During each visit I would shadow one of the seven focal students: I would follow him or her wherever he or she went (except the bathroom) during the school day. For example, if she went to English as a Second Language classes, played on the swings during recess, and did small group math work in a certain corner of the room, I would also go these places with her. I observed during approximately half of my visits, and video-recorded during the other half. I made sure to have equal numbers of observations and video recordings per student, and did my best to follow each student during different parts of the school day. Each student was taped 6 or 7 times over the course of the school year.

When a student was video recorded, she would wear a lavalier mic throughout the day. At the beginning of the year I recorded each type of teacher-fronted lesson and other teacher routines to have a baseline recording of these types of interaction. I would do the same if a new type of lesson were introduced throughout the year. Otherwise I would not video-record the entire half of a day, but would focus on the times when students were interacting with others. I would, however, take notes on the content of what was being taught and would also record occasional teacher-fronted interactions that stood out to me. For example, during a routine lesson one teacher and student teacher began talking about how it was against the law to send a species of butterfly that they were hatching across state lines. This also led to talk about predatory species of fish
from “somewhere in South America” that were using up all of the local resources and destroying native species. As this talk paralleled wider circulating discourses about immigration, I recorded it. The majority of my school-based recordings, however, were of students’ interactions. This included small group work with other students and / or the teacher, students’ contributions to whole-class lessons, and talk during transitions and free time such as recess. During whole-class lessons I would set up the camera so that I could have a clear shot of the focal student and record the instances that she contributed to the lesson. During small group work I would set up the camera near that student and then leave it there recording. I would keep my eye on it from across the room, but found that students tended to prioritize talking to me rather than each other or completing their work if I was too close. When possible I would also leave the video camera near the focal student in the cafeteria as I sat at the next table, giving students the responsibility of making sure the camera was safe, so that they could eat lunch on their own. The video camera was an excellent tool to capture student talk and interactions without my physical presence.

Prior to watching the taped interactions, I always wrote up separate field notes on the days that I video recorded. These notes focused on the parts of the day that I did not record, things that stood out to me related to the video recording, important aspects of what was occurring in parts of the classroom that were not within the camera lens, and any technological issues that came up. Of course video recording in classrooms on such a regular basis led to some technical difficulties. Although I would test the equipment before each use, occasionally the microphone batteries would quit part way through the day or a child would accidentally switch on the “mute” button. The microphone usually remained quite secure in students’ pockets, although it would also fall off from time to time, requiring me to re-secure it. I also used a lower-quality mic while kids were running around outside at recess, as it tended to fall off on a regular basis,
and I did not want to destroy the high quality microphone. A half-day filming in school usually yield 2 to 4 hours of video.

I would also audio-record small group lunches with focal students in the school’s “Cardinal Café,” a special place to eat outside of the main cafeteria. The Café had small round plastic tables that could seat six and was set off from the rest of the school by a faux white picket fence. There used to be umbrellas on the tables as well, but after an outbreak of bed bugs, all cloth materials, including the umbrellas, were removed from the school. Having an adult invite you to eat in the Cardinal Café was a prized occasion at Grant, and most students have only eaten there a few times during their schooling career. As a special birthday treat, I would allow the birthday student to invite 4 friends to eat with me in the Café. As many focal students would invite each other to their lunchtime celebration, I would often audio-record these conversations as a separate form of data. Students would talk about their weekends, things going on at school, and the most recent gossip. As the Café was much quieter than the cafeteria, and students had more time to talk at length than at any other point of the school day, these were helpful conversations to record.

Similar to the interviews that I conducted with focal fathers and children, I also conducted two audio-recorded interviews with the focal second grade teachers at the mid-way and end points of the study. These interviews were conducted in the school during teachers’ free time, usually before or after school, and were conducted in English. I also conducted a single interview at the end of the study with the school principal, the head of migrant education, and the second-grade ESL teacher. These interviews provided insight into educators’ background experiences, perspectives on immigrant families, awareness of and thoughts about immigration practices, and thoughts on individual students, families, fathers, and parent-teacher conferences. Although we regularly touched base briefly during the school day, educators were always
extremely busy, and these formal interviews were some of the few chances that we had to speak at length about these topics.

I also conducted participant observation and select video-recording during family-school events, the few occasions in which teachers and fathers met in person to discuss a student’s schooling. These included Back-to-School nights, parent teacher conferences, science fairs, homework explanation sessions, and other events. Officially and unofficially, I often took on the role of translator during these events. I only video-recorded the parent teacher conferences, and only those among focal families and focal teachers. Through the generous help of friends who took charge of the cameras as I ran around interpreting at conferences, I was able to record all 14 parent teacher conferences, one per family in the Fall and Spring. Interactions during family-school events provided important insight regarding how Mexican immigrant fathers’ semiotic forms were noticed, built upon, or overlooked within face-to-face interactions (Chapter 6).

I also emphasized the importance of choice within all of my school-based data gathering. For example, I emphasized to students and teachers alike that anything that was recorded could always be erased, and that I could turn the camera off at any time. Overall the teachers, especially wary of having a newly appointed principal and administration, wanted to ensure that the data collected from their classrooms was not shared with their bosses, which it was not. I also asked the focal student each day if he or she would like to wear the mic. Overall students were extremely enthusiastic about having their chance to wear the mic, and many non-focal students regularly begged to have a chance to wear it. From time to time a focal student was not in the mood to wear it, and in those cases I would simply ask another focal student. I also always asked permission before audio-recording interviews and emphasized that any topic they did not want to discuss could be skipped over easily. These small steps helped increase participants’ comfort with my data collection techniques, and were also part of my consent procedures, described below.
Consent and Data Sharing

Collecting data from interactions among so many participants across various contexts required detailed consent processes. All focal families signed consent forms for home-based and school-based recordings and interviews with them and their children. Per my IRB petition, other household members were able to give verbal—rather than signed—consent due to the sensitive nature of people’s documentation status in which signing official looking papers such as consent forms may have been intimidating. Within the school building, the two focal teachers, four specialty teachers (music, gym, library, and art), ESL teacher, Migrant Ed teacher, and principal all signed consent forms to record their routine school-based activities and to conduct interviews. An opt-out form was sent to the families of all non-focal second grade students, including those enrolled in the two non-focal classrooms, to account for taping during recess or mixed classes such as ESL. If a family signed and returned an opt-out form, then their child would not appear in any recorded observations. Likely because I had been completing similar projects with this cohort of students for three years and most families knew me, very few families returned the opt out forms. Out of the two focal classrooms, only one student was not permitted to be recorded.

In an attempt to make my recordings useful for participants, I also offered to share copies of data from their spaces with them. For example, I always provided families with a copy of their Flip recordings, and never showed their Flip recordings to anyone else in the project. I was also careful not to talk about families with other families or with teachers. Similarly, I provided teachers with select clips from their classrooms. I had specifically written this form of data sharing into the IRB and made sure that students and parents knew this was a possibility. I did not share clips with teachers as an additional data source—simply as a courtesy to them to reflect on their own classrooms if they desired. I also wanted them to feel comfortable with me there, and
the gesture of sharing was very important symbolically. Very early on the two focal teachers made clear to me that they were not interested in watching themselves on tape, and overall, amidst their extremely busy lives, they did not appear to watch the DVDs that I gave them at all. In an attempt to minimize the amount they would watch and to protect students from getting in trouble, I was very selective about the clips I gave to them. I never included clips when students were explicitly breaking classroom rules. Unlike a previous project I had co-conducted that had included a deeper level of exchange regarding classroom recordings with teachers, this was not a goal of this ethnographic study and was not a role that I took on. In the following section I describe my various roles across settings for this project on Mexican immigrant fathers and their children.

**Roles**

In ethnographic research the ethnographer herself is her primary tool, and how this tool is utilized depends upon her roles and relationships with different participants (Hornberger, 1988; Smith, 2006). Over the course of this study, my relationship with each family and teacher varied and I took on an array of roles in their lives. Most parents saw me as a resource to navigate their children’s schools and would regularly contact me with questions. They knew that I was often in the school building and could serve as a direct link to their child’s teacher. As an English and Spanish speaker, I could facilitate more direct communication between parents and teachers than would otherwise be possible. Teachers would ask me to communicate information with focal families, as they knew I was in regular contact with them. They would also ask me to translate notes or documents into Spanish. During school events I often served as an interpreter as well.

I took on many roles with families outside of school as well. I regularly interpreted for several families for specialized medical services, such as one infant girl’s eye appointments and
one father’s trips to the chiropractor after a work-related back injury. I helped many families with technology, especially computers, and occasionally accompanied fathers to stores to help ask technical questions about electronics. I also helped families buy plane tickets online for trips to Mexico. One family asked me to escort their child back from Mexico on a plane as her mother did not have documentation to re-enter the US and would have to clandestinely cross the border. I agreed to this, but in the end they were able to coordinate with a woman who regularly helped children fly in these circumstances, and we all agreed this was a better option since she knew the details of how to do this successfully. I regularly attended social events with many families and they also attended events in my home. And, after knowing several of these families for many years, I was often called to help navigate immigration issues. This included things such as calling local jails to figure out if male family members had been arrested when they had not returned home or serving as a character witness for family members fighting their deportation cases. For many of the families I worked with in this newly established immigrant community, I was one of the few bilingual adults and U.S. Citizens they knew well and could trust with these personal matters.

My identification as an Anglo female of approximately the same age as many of the fathers in this study created important dynamics in terms of trust, relationship formation, and forms of interaction that were comfortable for all participants. Many female researchers have commented on how it may be considered inappropriate for female non-family members to spend time with married men in Mexico (Dick, 2006; Hirsch, 2003). For example, from her research on gender relationships and reproduction in Mexico and the US, Jennifer Hirsch reflected, “interviewing the man was very awkward. Being recogida [well behaved] as a woman means not talking to men to whom one is not related, so there is little social precedent during fieldwork for these relatively intimate conversations with men whom I shared neither ties of blood or
compadrazgo” (Hirsch, 2003, p. 42). Although less has been documented about female researchers spending time with men from Mexico in the US, researchers such as Hirsch found it difficult to interview Mexican immigrant men in the US as well, and ultimately focused her study on women (Hirsch, 2003). It is important to note that Hirsch’s research focused on sensitive themes such as reproduction, included participants from small rural communities in Western Mexico whom she had recently met, and occurred in the late 1990’s. In contrast, I worked with families over a decade later from an array of urban, semi-urban, and rural locations in Mexico, focused on the theme of children and schools, and had the advantage of having already fostered trusting relationships with many mothers, fathers, and children over the years that I had known them in Marshall. And although I never felt uncomfortable in my interactions with fathers, I very intentionally followed parents’ lead to figure out their preferences for appropriateness. In some families I coordinated my visits and interviews through the mothers and in others I communicated more directly with fathers. In many families I communicated with both through an array of media, ranging from landlines, cell phones, instant messengers, Skype, and Facebook. For example, I would talk with the mother on the landline at home and receive a Facebook message from the father about the timing for the visit. I also went out of my way to make sure I never wore revealing clothing in school or in families’ homes, sometimes to the extent that it made me stand out even more. For example, when attending Emily’s Halloween birthday party, I selected a baggy, knee length costume that was anything but revealing. This stood in stark contrast to the dozens of other women at the party in skimpy costumes, such as the sexy pirate ensemble complete with thigh-high healed boots donned by her mother. Emily, trying to be polite, told me my costume was “pretty good,” clearly unimpressed. Overall, when attending social events with families, I immediately stood out because I was one of the few non-Mexican people there.
Ironically, by trying to dress in a conservative manner, I also made myself stand out in other ways as well.

Within the school building I also took on many roles. The students, who were very used to me from two previous years in their classrooms, called me Miss Sarah and often fought for my attention. I sat in the same areas as the students, students often pulling up a chair for me to smoosh in close to them. As a rather petite adult that fit into their tiny chairs, I would blend in quite well with these second graders—when other teachers entered the room it would often take them a few minutes to realize that I was there, and with a laugh they would comment that they thought I was one of the kids. During whole group sessions I would jot down notes in my notebook. I did my best not to distract students during teacher-fronted lessons, although many would try to whisper to me about things going on in their lives. During student work time I was sometimes an unofficial teacher’s helper, floating among students to help answer questions. On one hand students knew I was not their teacher, and most did not feel that they had to completely follow the rules when I was around. On the other hand I knew their parents, and although I regularly emphasized to students that I was not going to tell their parents about what went on at school, parents often positioned me as a disciplinary set of eyes within their classrooms to their children in order to emphasize the importance of their children’s good behavior. For example, in one recording in which Emily was telling her mom about her school day and how I had been in class, her mother emphasized, “Si tú no te portas bien Sarah nos va a decir” [if you do not behave Sarah is going to tell us.] Thus, although I spent 3 years with students in their classrooms and have a pretty good sense of how they act in school, it is also possible that they behaved a little bit better when I was around, in case I would talk to their parents. And although they knew that I knew their teachers, students appeared quite open in terms of telling me things that they knew
their teachers should not know, and seemed to trust that I would not pass these things along (which I did not).

My relationships with educators at Grant were also very positive. This was partially due to the fact that I had been in their school at least once a week for three years, and therefore knew most people who worked in the building. In an effort to follow school procedures I always checked in at the office and filled out a nametag. Part way through the year the secretary told me to stop wasting paper—they all knew who I was. I had also helped out at family-school events for five years, and most teachers saw me as a helpful resource to better communicate with families and students from Mexico. I had led some teacher professional development sessions with many teachers in the building as well. The two focal teachers that I worked with were extremely friendly and welcoming, always willing to help me out with anything that I needed. They had an open door policy in their classrooms, and although I did my best to stick to some sort of schedule, it was a relief to know that I could show up in their classrooms with my video camera at any point. And as a school with limited resources that was trying to figure out how to best work with newcomers from Mexico, as a whole educators were very open to working with other adults. On any given day it would be common to find push-in specialists (math, ESL writing, etc.), student teachers from local universities, and volunteer readers from a sorority in a given classroom. On certain days I would be lucky to get the last spot in the parking lot as there were so many adults in the building. Although my involvement was longer term and more consistent than most other non-teacher adults, I was one of many adults present in classrooms at Grant. This made my presence less marked than what other researchers may experience in schools.

Another aspect that set me apart from most other adults in the building was that I speak English and Spanish. Like most children in this study, I constantly had to negotiate my own translanguaging practices across home and school spaces. Overall I did my best to follow the
language practices of my interlocutors. For example, if a student spoke to me in predominantly Spanish or English in school, I would respond in the same language. Similarly, if he drew upon linguistic resources from both autonomous languages in the same interaction, I would do the same. Sometimes students appeared to strategically switch to Spanish within school to get me to interact with them rather than English-speaking peers vying for my attention in the vicinity. In these circumstances I would try to get the Spanish-speaker to interpret our conversation, or would do so myself, for others around. These same students would sometimes switch to English with me within their homes, what I sometimes saw as a strategy to get me to spend time with them rather than their parents who could not understand the majority of these conversations. In most cases I spoke predominantly in Spanish to all students within their homes, regardless of the language they addressed me in, as I knew their parents preferred Spanish to be spoken within the home. I also went out of my way to not “correct” people’s language use. My co-researchers and I noticed during our project with kindergartners that families initially appeared to assume we were evaluating students’ skills in Standard English, as we chose to work with families who spoke Spanish and English. As is clear from my conceptual framework, my approach to communication is not about matching idealized standard varieties—it is about achieving communicative goals. I would occasionally intervene regarding students’ language use, however, if they were likely to be misunderstood in a consequential way. For example, on the days that I would videotape Emily in school she would shout with glee “Miss Sarah is going to grab me, Miss Sarah is going to grab me today!” As the Spanish for “to film” is “grabar,” Emily was strategically drawing on cognates to communicate her ideas. For me and most of her Spanish speaking peers, we knew exactly what she meant. I worried, however, that English dominant adults in the building would not, and thus explained to Emily the different meanings of “grab” vs. “film” in Standard English. The data collected for this project included written, audio, and video representations of
participants’ communicative resources in English and Spanish. In the following section I describe how I analyzed these data.

**Analysis**

As is clear from this chapter, I collected a large amount of data, and had a wide variety of sources to analyze. This analysis occurred in many different phases and formats. Some types occurred during data collection to better focus my methodological lens while in the field. Other portions occurred post-data collection to gain a clearer understanding of what the entire corpus of data revealed. I describe these analyses below.

On any give day you would see me enter the school with an enormous 10 gallon Ziploc bag, to keep out potential “chinchas” [*bed bugs*], filled with my research supplies. Tucked inside you would always find one of my black moleskin notebooks. The outside of these notebooks were adorned with different stickers gifted to me over the course of the study, ranging from Justin Bieber posing with a popped collar in his jean jacket, Hannah Montana smiling in front of a pink starry background, and a small “I [heart] rap” sticker. The insides included a mix of colorful jottings of fieldnotes with a date and location at the top of each page, student-created drawings and short messages in every free inch of space, and long to-do lists to coordinate cameras and meetings with different families. In the back pocket you can find homemade valentines from students (“**Dear Ms. Sarah. You are like my mam**” and “**Dear Sare. I love on my hoert and you are my ferand**”), a receipt from picking up a student’s eyeglass prescription in the city for him, a student’s school photo that can clip onto your key ring, the one Cardinal Card I earned for good behavior in school all year, and old interview protocols, among other things. These notebooks went everywhere with me, and were the first line of analysis in many ways, because what made it into the notebooks and into my notes was based on what I noticed and deemed
important. As I sat in the classroom, during visits with families, or directly afterwards, I would jot down my observations, direct quotes, and things that struck me. That night, before falling asleep, I would write up my field notes from the different observations that day (school visits, visits to families’ homes, playback sessions, interviews, etc.), highlighting what I observed as well as my reactions or connections to these observations. I would often use a voice to text software to write these notes, which would then require a read through in large batches every few months to correct typos. These read throughs also helped keep the data fresh in my mind and bring together emergent themes, which I would type up in memos. I also kept a running list of prevalent themes that I imagined would be used later as codes.

As explained above, I would collect video and audio files from visits to classrooms and families’ homes as well. To not get behind in the data, I would make sure to watch and log these media files within one week of the date they were collected. My video and audio logs were very detailed, often including a large amount of verbatim interaction for many of the clips. To keep the content from the interviews and Cardinal Café focus group sessions fresh in my mind, I would often listen to them through my car stereo on my 25-minute commute to and from Marshall. I decided not to log the father and teacher interviews and had them transcribed by outside individuals instead. All of the Spanish interviews with fathers were transcribed by my research assistant, a young woman of Mexican heritage from Marshall who was beginning her freshman year at a local university. The teacher interviews, which were all conducted in English, were sent to a transcription company. I did not get the child interviews transcribed, but completed detailed logs of them myself. My research assistant and I also transcribed potentially useful segments from the videos that fit with key themes that emerged from coding, discussed below.

Once fieldwork was completed in July of 2011 I made sure the documents were free of typos and loaded all of them into the qualitative software program Atlas.ti. I had 221 field note
documents, 75 video logs, 47 logs of audio files (playback sessions, kid interviews, lunches in the Café), and 20 interview transcripts. My ethnographic analyses follow Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) and Maxwell (1996), iteratively drawing patterns out of these hundreds of fieldnotes, video logs, and transcribed interviews. I then used my running list of themes to compile a representative list of codes for the data. I coded all 363 documents, tailoring the codes as needed to best reflect emergent themes in the data. As I read through the data I also wrote 156 memos, highlighting connections I noticed among the data and things that stood out to me. This phase of analysis took months of long days in front of my computer. It also led to a much clearer understanding of my data, connections among the themes, and an opportunity to see participants change over the course of a year. The chapters that appear in this dissertation reflect the key findings that emerged from this hefty corpus of data. To begin to contextualize these data and set the stage for the remainder of this dissertation, I introduce the setting for this study in the following section.

Setting

Marshall, Pennsylvania

This study was conducted in the Pennsylvania town that I call Marshall. As a community of the New Latino Diaspora (NLD) (Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002), Marshall was a suburb of approximately 35,000 people that had become home to thousands of Latino (predominantly Mexican) immigrants over the past two decades. NLD communities are rural and increasingly suburban areas in the Midwest, the South and the Northeast where large numbers of Mexican-origin people are settling for the first time (Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002). The U.S. census illustrates changes in Marshall’s demographics in recent decades: From 1990 – 2010 the town went from 71% White, 26% African American and 3% Latino to 32% White, 35%
African American and 28% Latino. Within Marshall, white residents tended to live in the wealthier outskirts of town, areas comprised of single-family homes near Whole Foods grocery stores and Starbucks Cafés. Most African American and Latino residents, who constituted the majority of Marshall’s population, tended to live in the more economically depressed downtown area.  

My commute into Marshall illustrated the sharp contrasts between downtown Marshall and surrounding areas. After passing an array of new car dealerships and fast food restaurants a sign reading “Welcome to Marshall” signaled my arrival to the borough. Marshall, the county seat, also served as a primary transportation hub in the area. Via public transport or highways, Marshall was close to extensive shopping centers, office buildings, hotels, and wealthy suburbs with landscaped lawns. These locales provided potential work opportunities for newly settled immigrants. These work opportunities, combined with relatively inexpensive housing options, made Marshall an attractive place for many immigrants. 

As I passed through the streets of Marshall the local surroundings reflected the varying waves of immigration in this 200 year old town. An Italian church sat on the corner of a “Via” [Italian for ‘street’] renamed for the many Southern Italian immigrants who had settled here in the early to mid 1900s. A few blocks later a large Korean banquet hall, from a brief settlement of Korean immigrants in more recent years, faced a high-end Mexican eatery. An array of small businesses paved both sides of the street, ranging from small Mexican restaurants, Italian sub-shops, and tiendas [shops] that sold products from Mexico. A McDonalds and gas station sat in front of a major intersection, and served as a common place for day laborers to gather early in the mornings. The railroad tracks, used for a fast-paced commuter rail to the nearby city, literally

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7 Estimates from the 2010 U.S. Census show African Americans at 35%, Asians at 2%, people who identify as two or more races at 3% and non-Hispanic Whites at 32%.
divided the east and west sides of the downtown. Mrs. Drescher, a focal teacher from the project who grew up in Marshall, explained how these tracks segregated local populations across several generations:

The other side of the railroad tracks were the Irish and the Italians… Back in the ’20s and ’30s the Italians couldn’t leave the West End. They couldn’t live anywhere else, but now they own Marshall, because they bought all the land. They were smart, so no one’s telling them ‘you have to live over there.’ But then, of course, as they moved from that section, then the African-Americans lived there.

In the most recent iteration of local demographic divides, most immigrant families from this study lived across the tracks, alongside African American neighbors in the economically depressed downtown area that offered inexpensive housing in run-down row homes. This housing surrounded what was referred to by some non-Latino residents as “Mexican Main Street”—a thoroughfare with predominantly Mexican small businesses such as restaurants, small markets, and variety stores.

Marshall’s downtown felt like a small town in some aspects and a large city in others. As I walked down the streets, most people would smile and say a quick hello. The streets were usually very lively with people from the local neighborhood running errands, kids playing in side streets, or people talking with friends as they sat on their front stoop. In the early mornings the sidewalks would be filled with children waiting for school busses that often sped past at alarming speeds, and in the afternoons it was common to see mothers pushing strollers with small children as they ran errands. But when night fell most immigrant families felt it was unsafe to go out. A great deal of racial tension existed among many of the Mexican immigrant and African American residents and police were regularly present in this area. Muggings and robberies were somewhat common and several families delineated parts in their neighborhood that they would not walk to because of safety. Over the course of this study there were several shootings and stabbings on the
blocks where students lived. Although these serious crimes were rare occurrences, they were still a reality for children from Grant Elementary.

As in other NLD locations, long-time residents in Marshall had mixed reactions to the new immigrant population. Some praised immigrants as hard-working, family-oriented, religious people and credited Mexican newcomers for the revitalization of Marshall’s businesses and churches. Others decried the strain immigrants placed on the town’s already overtaxed social services. Overall Marshall took a welcoming approach to the growing Latino immigrant population, especially compared to neighboring communities that passed ordinances to punish landlords and employers who worked with undocumented immigrants. At varying times the police force had explicitly sought out ways to make members of the immigrant community feel welcome and to know they can and should call the police when problems arose. Although it is unclear why precisely, this welcoming climate shifted in the winter of 2011, during a period of heightened immigrant vigilance.

**Marshall Schools and Grant Elementary**

Demographic shifts in Marshall were mirrored in school district enrollments. From 1987 to 2011 the Latino student enrollment increased from 2% to 25%, with a larger concentration of Latino (almost entirely Mexican) students in the lower grades. Certain schools also housed more Latino students than others, and the focal school for this study had the largest percentage of Latino students out of the district.

The focal school for this study, Grant Elementary School, was one of six elementary schools in Marshall and was located in the downtown area. The school served approximately 400 students with relatively equal numbers of African American and Latino (predominantly Mexican) students. Over 96% qualified for free or reduced lunch. At the lower grade levels, Latinos were
the clear majority of students, with over 70% of kindergartners coming from Spanish-speaking households. Approximately one third of all Grant students were enrolled in English as a Second Language classes. Many of these students attended pull-out classes for 20 to 60 minutes a day, housed in the ESL classroom that was shared between the two ESL teachers. The ESL enrollment number also included students in push-in writing classes: One teacher per grade level would co-teach writing with the ESL teacher and the highest scoring ESL students (who were not yet exited from the program) would join this class for their instruction. Most classroom teachers did not have explicit training for working with emergent bilingual students.

Located in what many considered a dangerous part of town, Grant elementary was a welcoming and upbeat place. Before the start of the school day, children would run around the fenced in playground, tossing their backpacks to the ground to catch a few minutes of fun on the swing sets, jungle gym, or small soccer court. Parents, especially those from Mexico, often lined the fence to watch their children play before the whistle blew to start the school day. The front doors opened into a sunny entryway, adorned with student work and bright Mexican paintings. Once past the entryway you would come to a desk that was filled with pamphlets for parents in English and Spanish. When the budget permitted, a bilingual staff member would often sit to help answer parents’ questions. The first floor housed the kindergarteners, first graders, main office, nurse’s office, Cardinal Café, and Cafeneysium (combined Cafeteria and Gymnasium). Teachers (or classroom aides) regularly changed the bulletin boards outside of their rooms, using this space to demonstrate students’ work. The walls surrounding the Cardinal Café were also decorated with Student of the Month photos in each of the different subject areas, which honored students would

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8 Drawing from Ofelia García and colleagues, I use the term “emergent bilinguals” rather than “English Language Learners” to highlight students’ multilingual resources instead of solely focusing on their English learning (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008). As the classes that many emergent bilingual students were enrolled in were called English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, I maintain the use of ESL for their language support classes.
enthusiastically point out to me each time we passed. A large cement staircase, which looked pretty but resulted in occasional bloody injuries for students who fell on the hard steps, led to the second floor. This floor housed the second, third, and fourth grade classrooms, the ESL room, the library, and the teachers’ lounge. The second floor looked equally cheerful and welcoming.

The beginning of second grade meant the exciting move to a classroom upstairs. Unlike earlier grades in which teachers would mix students from across the classrooms for subjects such as math or reading, in second grade students tended to stay in their own classroom for the majority of the day. The year of this study also coincided with the arrival of a new principal, who brought with her new curricula as well. In addition to trying out some of the curricula for the first time, teachers were regularly juggling requests for last minute changes to their lessons or information they were supposed to share with students about school events. A typical second grader’s day would include morning work through announcements (worksheets of math practice or word activities), as students’ trickled in from late busses and breakfast in the cafeteria. They would then have science or social studies, followed by one of their special classes (art, gym, library, or music). Then would come writing before a break during recess and lunch. The afternoon began with math and then focused on different reading activities before a somewhat chaotic dismissal.

Focal families for this study came from the cohort of 2010-2011 second graders, in which approximately 65% of students came from Spanish-speaking households. There was constant movement in second grade classrooms, with a new classmate coming or going almost every week. Many students were moving among schools in the district: If you moved to a house zoned for a different school, you also moved schools. As most families from Grant (from Mexican immigrant and African American families) tended to live in low-cost rentals in very poor conditions, it was common for families to have to move on very short notice. When they looked
for a new place it as almost impossible to know if it would coincide with Grant Elementary: The intricate zoning laws meant that people who lived across the street from each other, or just up the block, actually attended separate schools. Although there used to be a feature on the school website to determine which school a child would attend based on his address, the district removed this feature because they felt families were misusing it to claim an address that would match with the school they wanted their children to attend. Although most immigrant families would not have the technological know-how to use this feature on their own, its removal meant that people at service agencies could no longer access this information to help guide families’ decisions.

Throughout the year new students arrived from the neighboring large city or other parts of the US. Although many students from Mexican immigrant families came to Grant during this year, rarely did they come directly from Mexico. Like most of the students from Spanish-speaking households at Grant, they were born in the US to Mexican immigrant parents, or came from Mexico with their parents at a young age. Overall it appeared that African American students came and went slightly more than students from Mexican heritage families.

Teachers at Grant were not reflective of the student body: They were almost entirely white middle class women who lived in wealthier suburbs. Most had limited experience with multilingual settings, were monolingual English speakers, and had only recently begun working with newcomers from Mexico. Most were relatively young, in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties, although a few were seasoned educators in their fifties or beyond. Out of over forty staff members, there were three male educators in the building: the lead teacher (similar to a vice principal), the music teacher, and a special education teacher. There were four people of color: the lead teacher, who was of Puerto Rican descent, the Principal and the Head of Migrant Education, who were both raised in Venezuela, and a teacher’s aide from India. There were also two teachers who were married to Latino-heritage men, and these teachers spoke conversational
Spanish well. These were the only five adults in the building with extensive repertoires in Spanish. Overall teachers were very welcoming to Mexican heritage students and their families and saw immigrant families as part of their school community. With the exception of the two Latina administrators and ESL teachers who knew immigrant families more personally, however, most Grant teachers knew very little about deportation-based immigration practices in Marshall or how they affected their students. This was true for the two focal second grade teachers for this study, Mrs. Drescher and Ms. Vega.

Mrs. Drescher was born and raised in Marshall and had been teaching at Grant Elementary for over 20 years. Her short gray hair, glasses, pale makeup-free face, and outfits of khaki pants and simple blouses stood out against the backdrop of younger and more fashionable teachers at Grant. She showed her students tough love—her lessons would include moments of booming reprimands if students were off task as well as calling kids honey and joking with them when they were getting things done. The students who were considered disciplinary problems were often assigned to her, and most students from the study were terrified of her, but also adored her positive attention. Their eyes would get wide with astonishment if her shouting began, and their faces would break into uncontrollable smiles when she was goofy or kindly teased them. Overall her classes were predominantly teacher-fronted, either as a whole class or in leveled groups with push-in teachers. Despite her plans to get to more student-based group work, they were almost always behind schedule and they would run out of time first. She was not afraid to stray from the somewhat scripted curriculum she was supposed to follow, and would regularly break from the primary lesson goals to follow-up on emergent themes or tell stories related to them. She loved to emphasize cross-curricular connections, as well as connections to the real-world. Although students found her somewhat mean and disliked that they rarely had more than
five minutes of recess because they were always behind schedule, they also seemed to enjoy her classroom.

She also showed deep care for her students, seeking out resources and solutions to help them or their families in ways that greatly surpassed many of her co-workers. She was positive about the growing Mexican immigrant community at Grant, especially in terms of family involvement, and often positioned newcomers as more involved than the African American families she had worked with over the decades. Her classroom always seemed to have other adults in it as well. She was the ESL push-in writing classroom for the grade and also the mentor teacher for Mrs. Banerjee, a woman originally from India who was completing her teaching certificate after years working as an aide at Grant. On a regular basis Mrs. Drescher would also have push in special education teachers and math specialists in her room, helping with small group work. She would engage these adults, including me, in conversation during a lesson, including them to ask a clarifying question or to have them provide an example.

Mrs. Drescher’s class had the highest number of students from Spanish-speaking families, including 4 focal students from this study, and it was common to hear students speaking Spanish during small group activities, transitions, and occasionally during whole group lessons. It was cool to be a Spanish-speaker in her classroom. Mrs. Drescher would sometimes use select Spanish forms herself, such as “Mira” [look], to get students’ attention. Many students who did not come from Spanish-speaking backgrounds would often try out Spanish words during class, although Mrs. Drescher would sometimes ask them to stop because she worried this would be interpreted as mocking. She also appeared to feel badly when students would speak Spanish in front of other students who could not understand it, and she would sometimes ask students to speak in English when possible to include others. On the one hand she encouraged students to speak Spanish and was enthusiastic about it, but on the other she regularly positioned English as
the common denominator language that should be used to be inclusive, which sent messages that Spanish was undesirable in school.

Ms. Vega had grown up in wealthier suburbs outside of Marshall and had been working at Grant for three years, since she had graduated from college. Her father was an upper middle class immigrant from Ecuador who had come to the area for boarding school and then college. While studying he met her mother, who was from the area and worked as a Spanish teacher. Ms. Vega was in her mid-twenties, very petite and attractive, with long brown hair and slightly tan skin. She spoke English with a notable local Pennsylvania accent and though she could understand a fair amount of Spanish, she did not speak very much herself. Students and families did not appear to realize that she had any Latino heritage, and she appeared to know little about the day-to-day realities in many of her students’ lives. Overall she was wary to learn much about students’ personal lives and sometimes appeared slightly dismissive about parents’ concerns because she did not see them as a big deal. She was friendly with students and their families, but did not appear to know them that well as individuals.

As a relatively new teacher she was consumed with lesson planning and execution, especially as the curriculum kept changing throughout the year. She would often arrive at school at 6am to plan for the day, and always appeared extremely prepared. Her lessons stuck very closely to the curriculum and rarely did her class get off track or behind. She also designed and implemented classroom routines that permitted a fair amount of small group work, and much less of her day was dedicated to whole-class teaching. She was also the one teacher in her grade with a SmartBoard, and she regularly incorporated various types of technology into her lessons. In addition, she was in the process of taking different Master level courses, and would often return on Monday, after a weekend of intensive classes, with new ideas that she would try to implement. This often included fun stretch breaks and interactive games they could do as a class. Ms. Vega
would only occasionally raise her voice, and certain students would regularly push the limits to see what they could get away with in her classroom. Overall students thought she was nice, and especially appreciated how she set up systems for them to earn small prizes like popcorn parties as a class.

Although at least half of the students in her classroom came from Spanish-speaking households, including 3 focal students from this study, students’ uses of Spanish were less noticeable in her classroom. This may have simply been because students’ friendships tended to be more mixed among first language Spanish and English speakers in her class, and therefore the more audible language tended to be English. Students would still use Spanish in some interactions as they completed small group work or during transitions, but not as noticeably as in Mrs. Drescher’s classroom or any of the classrooms I had been in over my three years at Grant. Ms. Vega would also try to incorporate Spanish into their daily routines, such as naming their tables the colors in Spanish and using terms like “hola” [hello] “casa” [home] and “escuela” [school] from time to time, especially to emphasize things she wanted students to tell their parents. Fewer adults tended to be in Ms. Vega’s room, and although we would often touch base in free moments throughout the school day, she did not address me in front of the entire class. These two teachers came from different backgrounds and had very different teaching styles. The seven focal students, who will be introduced in the next chapter, were students in Mrs. Drescher’s or Ms. Vega’s classes.

**Summary**

This chapter has illustrated the ethnographic design and settings for this study that investigates how families’ and teachers’ semiotic resources are deployed and understood across contexts of learning. This year of fieldwork kept me extremely busy and sometimes felt
somewhat chaotic. Balancing the logistics of camera exchanges, family visits, changing school schedules, and data logging sometimes felt overwhelming. Yet even in these busiest and most sleep-deprived moments I felt grateful for the amazing opportunity I had to immerse myself so completely in my fieldwork. It was truly a rare gift, and one that I realize I may never be afforded again. Simply put, I really enjoyed being an ethnographer. Perhaps Martina said it best when talking about me at school, “You look like a superstar. Because everybody come to you and then think you’re a superstar.” Whenever I entered the school building, students’ smiling faces would greet me, often accompanied by a running swarm of hugs, which did make me feel superstar-esque. I used to joke that if you needed an ego boost you should just become an ethnographic researcher at Grant Elementary. And of course, being so involved in people’s lives was also heartbreaking at times. When a father was deported, families dealt with difficult health issues, or children struggled in school, it felt deeply frustrating. On most levels I had very little in common with the fathers, children, and even teachers that I spent almost all of my time with during this year, yet we formed caring relationships that focused on our commonalities rather than our many differences. In this chapter I have begun to introduce the town, school, and teachers for this study and my relationships with participants throughout the year. In the following chapter I present each of the seven focal families in depth, examining how their background experiences shaped their day-to-day realities, gender relations among parents, and conceptions of fatherhood for focal fathers.
Chapter 4

Mexican Immigrant Men’s Navigation of “Two Worlds”

This chapter provides detailed portraits of the seven focal families, highlighting differences among families as well as changes within individual families over time. In this chapter I examine how gender relationships and fatherhood become transformed through familial processes of migration in the NLD community of Marshall. Although the children of immigrants have long been described as living between “two worlds” or “in translation” (e.g., Hall, 2002; Orellana, 2009; Sarroub, 2005) as they navigate differences in language, values, and practices across home and school contexts, this study focuses on children’s and fathers’ deployment of semiotic resources across space and time to demonstrate how the negotiations of these two worlds are familial processes, not engaged in purely by individual children. This chapter specifically explores the many ways individual fathers draw upon models of fatherhood and married life from their upbringings in Mexico as well as their journeys into family life in Marshall. Although all of the men from this study were born and raised in Mexico, the majority of their lives as husbands and fathers have occurred in the US. As fathers they too have to navigate “lives in translation” through their decisions regarding gender relations and fatherhood based on their exposure to Mexican and US-based projects of fatherhood, gender ideologies, and their individual experiences. Throughout these analyses I highlight how these “two worlds” are not concrete

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9 I use the term “father” for all seven focal adult men from this study. Six of these men were biological fathers to their second-grade children. Although the seventh was not the biological father of the focal child, he had taken on this role in the focal child’s life since he was a toddler and was the only father this child had ever known.

10 I use the term “husband” and “wife” for all couples in this study, even if they are not legally married. Three of the couples had been married while living in Mexico, one in Marshall, and three were not legally married but lived in long-term committed relationships reflective of legal marriages.
worlds comprised of separate sets of norms, such as “the Mexican way” and “the U.S. way”. Instead, there are many different worlds based upon individual experiences that looked and felt different for each father. Although fathers share many things in common, there are also critical differences. A clear understanding of their engagement in their children’s schooling requires an examination of all household members’ ever-shifting resources, roles, and opportunities. This includes an understanding of how families make decisions regarding who spends time with whom and how individuals align to certain images of “good father/husband” over the course of a year.

In the first part of the chapter I briefly summarize the literature on immigrants’ lives between two worlds and gender and migration. I then introduce each family through an exploration of the “gender bargain” (Smith, 2006) within each household by examining how gender ideologies, work opportunities, and communicative repertoires in English shape how fathers are involved in their children’s schooling. In this section I also focus on what fatherhood means and how it is lived for each of these fathers from this new generation of Mexican immigrant men. In the final section I explicitly investigate what machismo means for this cohort of fathers and if and how they feel “en el norte la mujer manda”[in the North women give the orders] (Hirsch, 2002, p. 354). Studying the semiotic ways that fathers negotiate their engagement provides a window into understanding the choices they make in how they participate in their children’s lives and how they make sense of their children’s schooling. Although certain fathers’ stories play a more central role than others’ in the remaining chapters of this dissertation (such as Mateo, Cristian, Ignacio, and Federico), this chapter provides a snapshot of each family’s life to illustrate the range of differences among seemingly similar families in the NLD community of Marshall.
Background Literature

“Two Worlds” Trope

The children of immigrants have long been described as living between “two worlds” or “in translation” (e.g., Hall, 2002; Orellana, 2009; Sarroub, 2005). Within this trope it is assumed that a child’s parents tie them to the world and ways of the family’s country of origin, whereas the child’s school presents a second world of the host country’s competing ways. Within schools young people are incorporated into national projects both explicitly through formal curricula as well as more subtly through the “hidden curriculum,” or the norms and values that are implicitly taught in everyday practice within schools (Giroux, 1983; Hall, 2002; McLaren, 2007). As the children of immigrants move between home and school, many have argued, they must negotiate what are often quite divergent “cultural worlds” relating to distinctive and often incommensurate sets of normative expectations for being and belonging.

Moving away from the relatively dichotomous version of the two worlds metaphor, other scholars have adapted more dynamic frameworks that account for the active ways that the children of immigrants produce situated identities. For example, Hall (2002) examines British Sikh youth through larger projects of nation formation and Abu El-Haj (2007) examines the complexities of Muslim youths’ identities over time post-9/11. Building upon these more dynamic frameworks, this study provides an empirical account of the two worlds trope by focusing on the deployment of semiotic resources within situated activities across Mexican immigrant homes and U.S. schools. This dissertation study complicates the limitations of the traditional two worlds trope prevalent within the anthropological studies of the children of immigrants, which have been limited given the relatively static application of notions of two worlds as well as the minimal attention given to shifting family dynamics as these two worlds
meet. As we will see here and in later chapters of this dissertation, I argue that tracking the movement of semiotic resources for seven families over the course of a year can reveal more nuanced understandings of both the separateness and porosity of home and school contexts, provide a more precise temporal account of the negotiations of orientations to US and Mexican-based centers of authority, and illustrate how these negotiations are imbued with power dynamics that unfold differently for categories of people such as Mexican immigrant fathers, mothers, and children.

In this chapter, which sets the foundation for the remainder of this dissertation, I focus on the ways in which Mexican immigrant men in particular must also negotiate multiple worlds as fathers and husbands in the US. They too must orient to various centers of authority (Blommaert, 2010) as they navigate fatherhood and married life in the US. From their own upbringings and experiences across contexts, fathers have multiple models to draw upon, which may overlap in some ways and compete in others. These negotiations include accounting for the ways that they adopt interactional alignments that invoke norms of “good fatherhood” which may be shaped from their own upbringing. For example, scholars have pointed out that salient Mexican centers of authority may include “saliendo adelante” [getting ahead] (Castellanos, 2007; Dick, 2010b; Messing, 2007), “viviendo la vida bonita” [living a moral life] (Dick, 2010b; Stack, 2003), and ensuring that their children are “bien educado” [well educated in terms of being moral and respecting] (Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas, 2002). Understanding their negotiations also includes accounting for their exposure to U.S. based projects of fatherhood, racial exclusion in U.S. contexts, and gender ideologies.

This chapter builds upon this literature by investigating how Mexican immigrant fathers describe and embody their masculinity across home and school contexts, with particular attention to how differences and changes within the borders of their household shape father-child
interactions. Orellana (2009) highlights that for many immigrant families in particular, changes in members’ abilities and resources regularly shape and are shaped by how other family members’ abilities unfold, and in NLD communities such as Marshall these changes are frequent and consequential. This chapter examines how these changes play out across couples, such as how differences in work opportunities or literacy in English may shape a father’s notions of being a “good father” and the choices he makes regarding interactions with his children. Yet, as I discuss in more depth in Chapter 5, these changes also develop as children, through their incorporation in public schooling, develop their communicative repertoires in English as well as the cultural norms and knowledge in which these repertories are enacted, in ways that are sometimes inaccessible to immigrant parents. Although this clearly plays out in challenging ways for mothers and fathers, I focus on understanding how it may shape roles, communication, and decision-making among fathers and children, as children may surpass their fathers in their ability to navigate and negotiate U.S. systems. This linguistic anthropological study tracks how, as these changes unfold, participants align to varying images of “good father/child” and how this shapes their existing behaviors and beliefs.

Studying the semiotic ways that fathers negotiate their embodiment of their masculinity matters for linguistic anthropology of education because it provides a window into understanding the choices they make in terms of how they participate in their children’s lives, how they make sense of their children’s schooling, and how they negotiate their participation across home and school contexts in which they, too, are confronting various projects of social incorporation and exclusion. Attention to fathers’ interactionally emergent practices over time, which shape and are shaped by other family members’ practices, offers a window into the power-laden nature of familial negotiations as members of immigrant families travel through multiple worlds. In the
following section I review the literature from gender and migration studies to better situate the descriptions of each focal family.

**Fatherhood and Gender and Migration**

This project offers important insights into gender and migration studies by examining how gender relationships become transformed through familial processes of migration in the NLD receiving context of Marshall, PA. Scholars have illustrated how the immigration process itself needs to be examined to understand couples’ gender ideologies and practices in U.S. receiving contexts (Hirsch, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Menjívar, 1999; Smith, 2006). Mexican immigrant men in particular provide a promising site of investigation due to potential differences in U.S. and Mexican contexts. For example, men in Mexico traditionally moved freely through public spaces and were considered the central breadwinner and authority within their households (Gutmann, 1996; Hirsch, 2003; Smith, 2006). This contrasts with U.S. receiving contexts in which they often become targets for immigration officials and payday muggings in public spaces (Dick 2011a, 2011b; Wortham et al., 2011) and may earn similar wages as their wives (Hirsch, 2003). Yet Smith’s (2006) work on transnational life has demonstrated how the “gender bargain” between couples is not a clear-cut dichotomy between living in Mexico and the US and studies of gender and migration cannot simply be understood as a “crisis of masculinity” or “liberating femininity” (p. 13). Hirsch (2002) reported similar sentiments, demonstrating that although Mexican heritage people on both sides of the border often believe “en el norte la mujer manda,” *[in the North women give the orders]* (p. 354) the simple act of crossing the border to the US does not guarantee gender equity or newfound economic prosperity for Mexican immigrant women.
Many scholars also highlight how gender relations and fatherhood have changed in significant ways within Mexican communities in recent decades (Gutmann, 1996; Hirsch, 2002, 2003; Smith, 2006). Gender relations in Mexico today, especially in traditional sending communities that have regular contact with people in the US, rarely reflect a traditional society of strict gender roles (Hirsch, 2003). Hirsch has described how marriages of younger generations tend to orient more toward companionate marriages in which couples share familial responsibilities such as childrearing and outside work in more egalitarian ways. Although Mexican couples’ enactments of companionate marriages may differ from U.S. middle class notions of gender equality between spouses, they stand in contrast to previous Mexican generations’ approaches to marriage with more segregated gender roles in which husbands controlled decisions (Hirsch, 2003). Ethnographic research provides an ideal toolkit to better understand the differences in gender ideologies across spaces (e.g., Mexico versus the US, differences in sending and receiving contexts) time (younger generations today versus their parents’ generation), and individual differences (Hirsch, 2003; Smith, 2006). For Mexican immigrant men, these shifting gender ideologies are also reflected in their roles as fathers.

In the research literature little is known about Latino fatherhood, and men from Mexico in particular are often stereotyped as machista and positioned as uninvolved in their children’s lives and schooling (Campos, 2008; Parke et al., 2004; Powell, 2004; Saracho & Spodek, 2008). Machismo references an “exaggerated masculinity, physical prowess, and male chauvinism” (Baca Zinn, 1994, p. 74) and indexes attributes such as spousal abuse, drunkenness, infidelity, and the abandonment of children (Gutmann, 1996, p. 15). Gutmann (1996) and others illustrate how a few early studies described Mexican origin men in this way, over-emphasizing the negative aspects of machismo and ignoring many of the positive aspects such as protecting and caring for their families (Mirandé, 1991; Saracho & Spodek, 2008). Gutmann further emphasizes
how in the United States the term machismo has an explicitly racist history, as it “has been associated with negative character traits not among men in general, but specifically among Mexican, Mexican American, and Latin American men” and “utilizes nonsexist pretensions to make denigrating generalizations about fictitious Mexican male culture traits” (p. 227). Although recent scholarship questions the reality of this stereotype (e.g., Gutmann, 1996; Mirandé, 2008; Smith, 2006; Taylor & Behnke, 2005), it still prevails across the literature and in public discourses such as those within some schools or the media. As Mayo (1997) highlights, this deprives all men, but particularly Latinos, of part of their humanity.

Mexican immigrant fathers present a useful case to examine the negotiation between “two worlds” because of the saliency of fatherhood in Mexican men’s lives and the complicated politics of recognition for Mexican immigrant men within the United States. Gutmann (1996) demonstrates the critical role fatherhood plays in working-class Mexicans’ manhood, and this saliency makes it an important site to explore the development and engagement of fatherhood in contexts of migration. He highlights how many modern day men in Mexico City often see themselves as “ni macho ni mandilón” [not macho or apron-wearing] (Gutmann, 1996, p. 95). And just as there is a wide array of gender ideologies for Mexican-origin couples on both sides of the border, there are many ways that Mexican origin men embody their masculinity across contexts. Smith’s (2006) fifteen year ethnography on transnational life between rural Tícuane, Mexico and New York City demonstrates how gender norms are constantly negotiated and mutually informed across these two very distinct contexts and how these negotiations have changed generationally. He explores how older fathers who were raised with a “macho ranchero masculinity” regularly renegotiated their own manhood across space and time. He illustrates how these renegotiations play out for individual fathers, and emphasizes the importance of shared gender ideologies within families, especially with children who are growing up in contexts in
which a “macho ranchero masculinity” rarely prevails. His work also highlights the various models of masculinity available to Mexican immigrant teenagers raised in this transnational community, including ranchero masculinity, the hard-working migrant, the middle class career man, the U.S. rapper, and Mexican gangster (Smith, 2006, p. 99), and how young men’s orientations to these various models were also context dependent and oftentimes idiosyncratic. Central to these projects on fatherhood for Mexican men is the importance of context and individual differences.

This study differs from much of the work in gender and migration in several ways, which uniquely position it to offer important insights to the field. First, rather than focusing on wives’ perspectives, I focus on those of husbands, which are often less prominent in this field (Gutmann, 2003; See Smith, 2006 and Taylor & Behnke, 2005 for notable exceptions). Second, unlike projects that focus on singular rural or urban sending communities in Mexico, this project explores Mexican immigrant fathers’ perspectives from a mix of geographical and social locations in Mexico. Fathers from this study came from rural, semi-urban, and urban communities in Mexico and from working-class and middle class families. Although they were often positioned as unilaterally the same by outsiders within U.S. receiving contexts, their stories below highlight many key differences in their background experiences, which shaped their roles as husbands and fathers. Finally, this study is situated within a single New Latino Diaspora receiving community and explores gender ideologies and fatherhood for a younger generation of Mexican immigrant fathers that are rarely present in the literature. I describe characteristics of this cohort of fathers below.

All of the fathers in this study were between 29 and 36 years of age with elementary school-aged children and infants. All of the fathers had been in the US for at least 7 years and all but two fathers had not returned to Mexico since their arrival due to the risks of re-crossing the
border without documentation. Most of these fathers had spent the majority or entirety of their married lives in the United States and became fathers here. They had never known the cyclical migratory life of pre-Immigration and Reform Control Act (IRCA) immigrants in which they travelled to the United States for the majority of the year on a short-term work visa and returned home on occasion to visit their wife and children who lived in Mexico (Dick, 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992). They were also not of the cohort of immigrants that had (predominantly male) relatives who were granted amnesty under the 1996 IRCA, and thus were able to apply for residency for their family members (Dick, 2006; Shutika, 2005). Only one of these focal fathers’ own fathers had lived or worked in the United States previously, and the focal father had moved to the United States with him. Although previous waves of Mexican immigrant fathers were used to living apart from their spouses and children for extended periods of time, most fathers I met in Marshall expected to be physically present in their children’s and wives’ lives.

The fathers of this project were reflective of the hundreds of Mexican immigrant fathers I met in Marshall over the years: They moved to Marshall in their early adult years with young children or started their families in the US. They were similar to the families described in other NLD ethnographic studies, such as those in Mangual Figueroa’s (2011) project of mixed-status families in which many parents and the oldest siblings were born in Mexico and did not have documentation to live in the US while younger siblings born in the US did. These were not the only types of Mexican immigrant fathers who lived in Marshall, but they were the most common in elementary schools. Just as Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992) illustrated key differences in gender relations among two distinct waves of Mexican immigrants (pre- and post-1965), this study may offer important insights into a range of perspectives regarding gender relations and fatherhood for a new wave of Mexican immigrant men settling into newly established NLD receiving contexts across the US. In the following sections I introduce each of the seven focal families with careful
attention to how gender relations and fatherhood shaped day-to-day interactions. As the ethnographic foundation for this dissertation project on Mexican immigrant fathers, I explicitly sought to incorporate fathers’ direct voices in this chapter, through their interviews or recorded interactions with their families, to hear from them rather than just about them. Although this resulted in a very lengthy chapter, I hope it provides a clearer portrait of each individual father. As I share their stories, I emphasize both differences among families and fathers as well as changes within the borders of individual families over time.

**Families’ Gender Bargains**

**Emily’s Family**

Emily’s parents, Cristian and Paloma, grew up with limited resources in a 5,000 person town in Puebla, Mexico. Similar to most kids they knew, they had attended school through the 6th grade, and then had to leave because their families could not afford to pay the costs associated with their schooling. Cristian (30 years old), a clean-cut and charismatic man with dark wavy hair and a contagious smile, moved to Marshall for work opportunities in his late teenage years. During a brief return to his hometown nearly a decade ago, he and Paloma (27 years old) began dating and after 3 months decided to return to Marshall together. Although they had never officially married, they had been in a monogamous relationship for over a decade and planned their life together as a family. Paloma also had a daughter from a previous relationship who she decided to leave in her mother’s care until she could bring her to Marshall. In Marshall their daughter Emily (8 years old) was born, and several years later their son Cristofer (1 year old) added to their family. Paloma’s sister Linda (32 years old), brother José (25 years old), and
brother Rambo (23 years old) eventually moved to Marshall and lived with them as well. Although Emily was in regular contact with her sister and grandma in Mexico, they had never met in person.

Emily was a cheerful and outgoing 8 year old who was regularly positioned as a model student within school. She was a tall and sturdy girl, often dressed in spunky pink outfits, who was always willing to stand up for others. She was well-liked by almost all students and teachers, and excelled academically in all areas. She had limited exposure to English repertoires upon entering kindergarten, and, by second grade, had tested out of English as a Second Language except for her participation in the push-in writing support. She always seemed happy at home and school and loved to help out with her little brother or talk to her sister in Mexico on the phone. She had her own bedroom filled with toys, such as a plastic kitchenette where her clay Mexican cups, sent from her grandmother, sat on the stove. She also loved to sing, play doctor, and stay up late reading library books under the covers with a flashlight. Below is a typical school-night interaction between Emily and her parents, which illustrates many of the central themes that influence gendered household responsibilities for Mexican immigrant families in Marshall.

*Cristian and Paloma’s gender bargain.* It was Wednesday evening as Emily (E) gave her father, Cristian (C) a huge hug before he departed for his second job as the manager of an office cleaning crew. They were in Emily’s bedroom, adorned with stuffed animals, pink stickers, and a toy karaoke machine. Cristian was seated on Emily’s pink Snow White comforter dressed in jeans and a beige polo shirt and Emily’s constant smiles at her father revealed the gap where her two front baby teeth had recently fallen out. Her mother, Paloma (P), filmed and occasionally joined in the discussion. This excerpt came from their family’s first self-filming footage and it appears that they used this as an opportunity to “introduce” each other to the camera, and, by extension, to
me. Their introductions and discussions offer a window into the roles and responsibilities within their family.

Excerpt 1

1. **E:** El es mi papi y es un poco difícil que él me pueda ayudar con la tarea porque él se tiene que ir a trabajar, y cuánto desearía que él se quedara aquí y yo sé que él quiere quedarse y dedicarme más tiempo, pero nada más por el trabajo no puede quedarse aquí. Papi, no entiendo por qué tienes que ir a trabajar.

2. **C:** Es un poco difícil de explicar. Desgraciadamente, o afortunadamente alguien tiene que trabajar. Necesitamos dinero para todo. Tu mamá no puede trabajar porque cuida a tu hermano, te tiene que cuidar a ti. Si yo me quedo, entonces mamá tiene que trabajar y es un poco más difícil. Prefiero que ella se quede con ustedes y les ponga más atención, es que son muy traviesos ((C smiles)).

3. **E:** Es porque también tú no sabes un poco leer.

4. **C:** Pero es que, bueno me gustaría quedarme contigo. Cuando puedo, lo hago.

5. **E:** Bueno, porque son los **Saturdays**, los **Sundays** a veces.

6. **C:** Los sábados y los domingos.

7. **E:** Pero no siempre los **Saturdays**.

8. **P:** ¿Y qué hacen cuando están juntos?

9. **E:** O cuando estamos juntos, a veces jugamos también.

10. **C:** ¿Con las peleas? ((Smiling))

11. **E:** **Mhm.** ((Pretends to hit C in the face.)) **Let’s fight.** ((E gets up, ready to play fight.))

12. **C:** **No, not now.**

13. **E:** Aww! …

14. **C:** Bueno cuando estamos juntos y miramos la oportunidad de estar, este—
E: —¡Aveces también jugamos a la cocinita!

C: Pero te llevo al cine, te llevo a comer, te llevo a mi trabajo.

E: Ajá, o y luego también lo que me gusta, aveces lo que me gusta es que mi papi me arregle los columpios. Hace mucho tiempo aquí, unos niños rompieron mis columpios y no me gustó. Y luego mi papi tuvo la oportunidad de arreglarlos otra vez. Nada más que uno está chueco porque debería de estar volteando hacía otro lado. Porque se pueden pegar con el tree, right daddy?

C: Mhmm…

E: Y todos hablamos English, right daddy?

C: I try, you speak a little bit more.

P: Mmm, ¿tu papá habla mucho inglés?

E: Mm, poquito como lo he escuchado, pero aveces I beat him up.

P: ¿Y tú les enseñas a tus papás hablar inglés?

((E and C Laugh))

P: ¿O no?

E: Si les enseño, pero aveces no saben cómo decirlo bien.

C: Who?

E: You, daddy.

C: Your mom?

E: She speaks really good.

C: She speaks it better than me?

E: Yea!

C: Nah!

((E laughs at her own jokes, as Cristian actually has an extensive English repertoire.))
E: Yes because she can read the books in English, and you can’t. See, I told you
daddy.

C: Ok mi amor, está bien pues. Bueno yo me tengo que ir a trabajar.

E: ¡Noooo!

C: Si mi amor, ya llegó la hora de trabajar. Te portas bien, ¿ok?

((C gives E a kiss on the forehead and they hug))

C: Haz tu tarea. Nos vemos al ratito, ¿ok?

P: No, al ratito no porque hay veces que ya no puedes encontrarlos despiertos.

C: Bueno, manaña nos vemos.

E: Pero, tampoco manaña en la manaña.

C: Si es cierto.

E: No es cierto porque— ((C starts to tickle her)) ¡no me hagas cosquillas!

C: Ok, cuidate mucho.

English Translation: ORIGINAL ENGLISH IN BOLD

1. **E:** This is my daddy and it’s a little hard for him to help me with my homework because
2. he has to go to work, and I wish he could stay here and I know he wishes he could
3. stay too and dedicate more time to me, but only because of his job he can’t stay
4. here. Daddy, I don’t understand why you have to go to work.
5. **C:** It’s a little hard to explain. Unfortunately, or fortunately somebody has to work.
6. We need money for everything. Your mom can’t work because she takes care of your
7. brother, she has to take care of you. If I stay, then mom has to go to work and it’s a
8. little harder. I’d rather her stay with you and pay more attention to you. It’s just that
9. you guys are too naughty ((C smiles)).
E: It’s also because you don’t know how to read a little bit.

C: But it’s that, well I’d like to stay with you. When I can, I do it.

E: Well, that’s because they’re Saturdays, Sundays sometimes.

C: Saturdays and Sundays.

E: But not all the Saturdays.

P: And what do you do when you’re together?

E: Oh, when we’re together, sometimes we play too.

C: With the fights? (Smiling)

E: Mhm. ((Pretends to hit C in the face)) Let’s fight. ((E gets up, ready to play fight.))

C: No, not now.

E: Aww! …

C: Well, when we’re together and we see the opportunity to—

E: —Sometimes, we also play with the little kitchen!

C: But I take you to the movies, I take you out to eat, I take you to my job.

E: Uh huh, and then I also like, sometimes what I like is for my dad to fix my swing set.

A long time ago, here, some kids broke my swing set and I didn’t like that.

And then my daddy had the opportunity to fix them again, except one of them is
crooked because it should be facing the other way.

Because you can get hit with the tree, right daddy?

C: Mhmm…

E: And we all speak English, right daddy?

C: I try, you speak a little bit more.

P: Mmm, does your dad speak a lot of English?

E: Hmm, a little from what I’ve heard him, but sometimes I beat him up.
34. **P:** And do you teach your parents how to speak English??
35. 
36. **P:** Or not?
37. **E:** I do teach them, but sometimes they don’t know how to say it right.
38. **C:** Who?
39. **E:** You daddy.
40. **C:** Your mom?
41. **E:** She speaks really good.
42. **C:** She speaks it better than me?
43. **E:** Yea!
44. **C:** Nah!
45. ((E laughs at her own jokes, as Cristian actually has an extensive English repertoire.))
46. **E:** Yes because she can read the books in English, and you can’t. See, I told you daddy.
47. **C:** Ok my love, it’s ok, well I have to go to work.
48. **E:** Noooo!
49. **C:** Yes my love, it’s time to go to work. Be good, ok?
50. ((C gives E a kiss on the forehead and they hug))
51. **C:** Do your homework. We’ll see each other later, ok?
52. **P:** No, not later because there are times when you can’t find them awake.
53. **C:** Well, we’ll see each other tomorrow then.
54. **E:** But, not tomorrow in the morning either.
55. **C:** Yes it’s true.
56. **E:** That’s not true because— ((C starts to tickle her)) don’t tickle me!
This interaction illustrates several factors that appeared to play an important role in shaping Mexican immigrant families’ decisions regarding gendered divisions of labor within their households in Marshall. I discuss each of these factors below for Emily’s family and then examine how, combined with Cristian’s perspectives on fatherhood, they shaped the gender bargains within their household. I then highlight the ways that the two worlds metaphor shaped his life as a father and husband as a Mexican immigrant man living in Marshall.

The first factor that played a significant role in the gendered division of labor within each household was outside employment opportunities. As Emily highlighted, her father was rarely present to help her with her homework because he was always working, except during some portions of the weekend (Lines 1 – 4; 12 – 14). At first glance, the gendered division of labor within their household may appear to reflect more traditional gender roles—the father as the primary wage earner and the mother as the primary caregiver. And Cristian’s explanation that Paloma had to take care of the baby and Emily because they are troublemakers (Lines 6 - 9) reflects, on some levels, a gender ideology that mothers should care for young children. Cristian and Paloma’s decisions regarding employment and childcare, however, were constantly shifting. For example, before Emily began kindergarten Paloma used to work two full-time jobs as well. Once Emily’s school started, Paloma decided to leave her afternoon job so that she could have more time with Emily in the afternoons, especially because Emily had a difficult transition into public schooling. Then, once their infant son was born several years later, she decided to leave her morning job to care for him. To make ends meet, Cristian worked long hours in landscaping during the warm months, and, because of his extensive repertoire in English (See below), was also able to work as the manager for cleaning offices in the evening. During the colder months he also took on a daytime job in a hotel. From time to time, when he was exhausted or wanted to
spend a little more time with the kids, Paloma would fill in for him at his evening job, as she used
to work in this office building and knew the work well. And, as Cristian (C) and Paloma (P)
explained below, once Cristofer was no longer breastfeeding, which required him to be with
Paloma every few hours as he had never taken to drinking from a bottle, they planned to shift this
balance again:

\[
C: So we have thought that she’ll work in the afternoon and I would work in the day. But
right now she can’t because Cristofer needs her. I think that in two or three months he is
going to be able to stop breastfeeding and that we’ll be able to um...share time with
Emily.
\]

\[
P: Share time with Emily and him. Work too. [Q1]
\]

A second factor that shaped the gender bargains within each household were parents’
practices and beliefs related to other in-home responsibilities, which I term gender ideologies. For
example, Paloma did the day-to-day cooking and cleaning in their home, and each time I visited
she would have arranged their spotless living room in a new way. Cristian, however, also enjoyed
cooking and would regularly try out recipes or fun cocktails he’d learn on Spanish-language
Television cooking shows. They also had the weekly tradition, seen in Chapter 2, of Cristian
cooking a large Sunday morning breakfast for the entire family. As he knew a lot about plants
from his line of work, he would sometimes arrange flowers on altars for different holidays within
their home, and maintained a small garden near their front porch. They would often do the large
errands such as grocery shopping together, especially because Paloma did not drive. When they
did things together as a family, such as attending parties, going out to eat, going to the park, or
having visitors like me in their home, Cristian and Paloma always appeared equally attentive to
their children. Similar to Gutmann’s (1996) emphasis on how common it was for working-class
men in Mexico City to carry their children around with them (rather than children being with their
mothers), Cristian would regularly have Cristofer or sometimes even Emily in his arms. He was
sweet and caring with them, careful to make sure his infant son was sleeping safely or that the slide was clean and free of hazards before they used it. Although he deeply lamented how much he had to work and be away from his family, he was extremely present and engaged with them during his free time from work.

Communicative repertoires in English comprised a third factor that appeared to shape who spent time with whom within a household, and especially who engaged with school-related materials. Differences emerged for some families, however, between spoken communicative repertories and literacy in English. For example, despite Emily’s joking that Cristian had a limited English repertoire (lines 30 - 45), he actually had an extensive repertoire in spoken English. He could fluidly communicate with Emily’s teacher during parent-teacher conferences, hold day-to-day conversations in stores or with neighbors, and had several close friends who were monolingual English speakers. Although his repertoire was not reflective of someone born and raised in the United States and Emily regularly taught him additional elements that she picked up in school and the neighborhood (line 34 – 37), his resources in spoken English greatly surpassed those of Paloma. Paloma appeared to understand a fair amount of spoken English in similar day-to-day interactions, although she was far less comfortable expressing herself in English. She was less outgoing than Cristian, had not formed close friendships with English-dominant speakers over the years, and through her job had not been exposed to extensive repertoires in English. Cristian’s English repertoire made him more readily employable than Paloma and also resulted in him taking on the responsibilities of direct communication with Emily’s school. As Emily frequently mentioned (such as lines 10 and 46), her father was less sure about reading in English than her mother. Although Cristian and Paloma appeared to have relatively similar literacy levels in Spanish (in which they could write well, with typical orthographic errors such as inverting the
use of ‘b’ and ‘v’) and Cristian knew how to read signs and handouts in English, he appeared less comfortable reading books. As Emily later explained in an interview:

I read them (books) with my mom a lot. Because my dad doesn’t know how to read yet. Like he doesn't know how to say them in-- he knows how to read but not like saying it in a story…He has never ever read to me. I think that he's afraid. Or he gets stuck in a word that he doesn't know. So my mom [is / tries] a little bit more harder. She tries her best.

These differences in written English repertoires, combined with her availability during the times that Emily completed homework, led to Paloma taking on a more direct role in helping or checking homework compared to Cristian. In addition, each parent’s more extensive repertoires in a certain modality (spoken versus written English) led to their engagement in more experiences to further develop those repertoires. The division of labor within their household meant that because Cristian communicated in spoken English with much greater ease, he was the person who regularly took on these responsibilities and therefore gained more practice. Similarly, as Paloma was slightly more confident reading in English and was the one who was present in the evenings when Emily read and completed homework, Paloma gained more experiences to further develop her repertoire in this area. As I discuss in the following section, the gender bargain within their household shaped and was shaped by Cristian’s approaches to fatherhood as well.

Cristian’s two worlds of fatherhood. Cristian became a father in the US and in reflecting upon fatherhood he regularly emphasized how he drew upon both his own upbringing in Mexico as well as models of fatherhood in his daily life in Marshall. In talking about his own father, Cristian remembered how he was very strict, which Cristian appreciated because he thought it taught him to be a responsible person who didn’t have to ask others for help. Cristian saw himself as a strict father as well, but with an affectionate and caring side that was never part of his own upbringing:
I have always tried to do good things with my children. For example, I am strict with them, I am patient with them… Emily, I hug her every day. I spoil her every day. I tell her that she is very important for me. That’s it. She is a part of me. She is like my hand. If she is sick, it hurts me. If she is sad, I am sad. I think I get too involved with her feelings, that’s why I say that I’m a good father…I focus more on the sentimental aspect with her so that when she’s older she won’t say that she needed more affection. I want her to feel protected by me. I want to be her Superman. I want to be her Superman always. Her Superdaddy. [Q2]

The importance of being a father was evident in Cristian’s hope of being his daughter’s hero, her “Superdaddy.” And Emily, in describing her father, did position him in similar ways, “My dad protects me. That’s why I love him. I love him so much.” Cristian described how his own father embodied his care for his children in different ways, ways that did not fully resonate with Cristian when he became a father at Emily’s birth:

I know that he loves me a lot, but he never demonstrated it. Very few times were the times he hugged me. He kissed me very few times. I don’t even remember any of that. He never told me he loved me. I know he loves me a lot because I’m his son. But he never showed it to me. So before Emily was born, I would never think of telling a child that he was beautiful, that he was an angel. When Emily was born, I began to feel all of those feelings. And I would say, “It feels so nice to hug my daughter.” I would see her like a little teddy bear and I would want to hug her and I would wonder why my dad never did this. [Q3]

Like most fathers from this study, Cristian saw himself as very different, and in certain ways better than, his own father. He felt that a father should be affectionate and caring with his children, something he had never known as a child. Although he knew that his own father also loved him in his own way, when Cristian became a father he wanted to embody it more openly. In the following paragraphs I describe how Cristian oriented to multiple centers of authority as he negotiated two worlds as a Mexican immigrant father, husband, and friend.

Cristian regularly reflected on the ways that he had to navigate living in two worlds by drawing upon an array of potential models available from his life experiences. In particular, he emphasized how his boss of over 10 years and close friend, a monolingual English-speaking
father from the US, had served as an alternative model of fatherhood that he oriented to in certain ways with his own children.

When I came (to the US), I had the mentality from there (Mexico). I came in 1999 or in 2000, I don’t remember. I was here for a year and eight months, and the person who I work with, he lives like that. He has his family, he has his children, and I would see that he was very affectionate with his children, and his daughters with him. And I would say, “I want a life like that.” With time, he was reaping a fruit. All of a sudden his daughters would get there and give him a kiss in front of anybody and I would say, “My father never did that.” And I would be shy to give my dad a kiss. I would say, “How am I going to give my dad a kiss in front of his friends, or my friends, what are the people going to think?” But when I went back to Mexico, I already had that idea, I had that illusion of forming a family. I really wanted to have a child. [Q4]

Here he described his surprise at a father showing affection with his children, something he could not ever imagine doing growing up. At other points he described how he loved to spend time with his entire family, doing things together, rather than just hanging out with other male friends, which is what his male relatives in his small town in Puebla often did. He also indexed other sources that informed his fathering practices. For example, even though he hated it as a child, his father made him wake up and do his homework at 4am. He didn’t have a say in it because his father was in charge. In contrast, he and Paloma guided Emily with an afternoon routine of downtime and a snack afterschool before evening homework time. He pointed to educational television and school-based programs that offered advice to parents as sources that helped guide what he saw as more informed decisions rather than stubborn opinions that his father used to enforce.

Cristian oriented to some ways of fathering that were more common in Mexico as well. For example, he regularly emphasized his children’s “educación” [moral education], especially that they be well mannered and respectful to others. He also believed that if children misbehaved in front of others they should not be corrected in public—that redirecting children was something that happened behind closed doors. He looked down upon parents from any background who
admonished their children in front of others, and especially those who used physical punishment with them. And although he was strict with Emily and had high expectations for her, he was also incredibly playful with her. And Emily was not docile: She was polite, but also creative and spunky. Just as his navigation of these two worlds shaped his interactions with his daughter, they also shaped life with friends in Marshall.

Cristian and Paloma discussed the delicate dance of navigating gender norms and expectations with Mexican immigrant friends also living in Marshall. For example, for their baby shower they decided to invite men and women because, as Cristian explained, “Supposedly the baby is also a part of the husband. So then he has to be here.” [Q5] They felt that although baby showers in Mexico and the US are traditionally for women only, as a couple they were both celebrating the arrival of their child, and men and women should participate. It was not only about a woman becoming a mother, but a man becoming a father. After watching a video clip during a playback session of a wedding they had attended where the bride was serving the guests, in the excerpt below they described the challenges of clashing expectations among their guests from Mexico during the many parties they hosted.

Excerpt 2

1. **C**: When we have a party here at the house, the customs are a little difficult,

2. controversial because our friends—some of our friends brought Mexican customs

3. from Puebla. So then—

4. **P**: —They arrive at the party and the host has to serve them EVERYTHING. Bring them

5. their plate of food. Bring them a glass of water. Bring them EVERYTHING...

6. **C**: And that’s where the controversy of the party starts. So then they think that we don’t

7. take care of them well or that we only invited them because we had to. They all think

8. differently, right?... Before everything starts I speak with everyone and I tell them
9. “You know what? This is a party. We’re all going to enjoy it. EVERYONE. Let’s eat.
10. And if everyone gets fed, good. And if not. Well, whoever didn’t eat didn’t eat. I’m
11. very sorry. There’s the food. There’s the drinks. Help yourself. Eat. Dance. Shout. Do
12. what you want. Have fun. I’m going to.” … Now it’s just that not everyone thinks like
13. us. And some take it the wrong way… Little by little we select our friends…Next
14. time we won’t invite them. Because I don’t want them ruining the party, right?

In Cristian’s description, it is obvious that not all Mexican immigrants navigate their own
versions of the two worlds in the same ways. Many of their friends from the same area in Mexico
preferred to maintain certain customs, such as being served by the hosts at parties (lines 2 – 6). In
contrast, Cristian and Paloma preferred what they saw as a more U.S.-style of guests serving
themselves so that everyone, including the hosts, could have a good time (lines 9 – 12). Cristian
discussed how, despite his efforts to set the tone for the party, interpersonal challenges emerged
because of differences in orientation to centers of authority—Mexican centers of hosts serving
guests versus U.S. centers of guests serving themselves. This in turn led to misunderstandings and
hurt feelings (lines 13 – 14). Ultimately they have opted to just invite like-minded friends, who,
in terms of appropriateness at parties, aligned with them. Cristian, out of all of the fathers from
this study, was most explicitly complimentary of life in the US. He regularly spoke about how
much he loved this country, and how it had given him opportunities that he would have never
experienced coming from a rural town in Mexico. He also emphasized his desire to become a
Citizen of the US if he were ever offered a pathway, and regularly posted pictures of the
American Flag and other symbols of the US on his Facebook page to comment on the greatness
of the US.

Like many Mexican immigrant fathers in NLD locations, Cristian and his family had to
negotiate their lives in translation by drawing upon various available models for gender relations,
fatherhood, and friendship. How Cristian and Paloma negotiated the gender bargain within their household was fluid and dynamic, contingent upon an array of outside factors that shifted over time. In addition, like most Mexican immigrant fathers in Marshall, Cristian had never been a husband or father in Mexico. He also felt that if he were to return to Mexico, he would maintain the same approaches to fathering: “I already have the pattern of my life, I would continue my habits. I feel that if I go to any other part of the world, I wouldn’t change because up until now, it has given me good results. I will follow that pattern.” [Q6] In the following section we turn to another focal family and examine similarities and differences in their gender bargain.

**Abi’s Family**

Abi’s parents, Mateo and Susana, were a very attractive couple who grew up in a semi-urban area outside the city of Puebla in Mexico. Susana (26 years old) was from a more middle class family compared to Mateo’s (29 years old) working-class background. Mateo sometimes joked that they were like Romeo and Juliet, star-crossed lovers that were not supposed to marry each other because of class differences. They had begun dating as teenagers and when Susana became pregnant with Abi (8 years old) they decided to get married. The following year Mateo moved to Marshall for work opportunities and shortly after, Susana joined him there. Abi lived with her grandparents in Puebla until her mother decided to return to Puebla a few years later. Susana and Abi then returned to Marshall together, crossing the US-Mexican border, right before the start of Abi’s kindergarten year. Although Mateo had been present for the first year of Abi’s life, her arrival to Marshall when she was 5 years old was her first memory of meeting him. Several years later, their second child, Carlitos (2 years old) was born in Marshall. For many years their family lived in a large house with many of Mateo’s male friends from work and an
elderly woman who cared for the kids. In the Fall of Abi’s second grade year, they moved into their own apartment for the first time.

Abi was an extremely outgoing second grader who had had a bumpy transition into public schooling. Because of a positive screening for tuberculosis following her first days of kindergarten in Marshall, she had to miss the next several weeks until her medication was complete. She was relatively disengaged with many of the classroom activities throughout kindergarten and often spoke of missing her grandparents in Mexico. Over the years, however, she became more engaged in her classes and was recognized by her teachers as having strong leadership skills, which sometimes bordered on bossiness. In second grade she had one of the least developed repertoires in English out of all of her classmates, and she attended 90 minutes of ESL class each day. Abi had very low self-confidence about her English literacy skills and talked openly about how she was not a good reader or writer. This contrasted with her incredible linguistic creativity and extensive repertoire in Spanish, something that was widely unrecognizable to her English-speaking teachers at school. She loved telling stories and jokes, watching her favorite animé cartoons on YouTube, playing with her baby brother, and dancing with her parents. Her personality was often at its fullest as she sat around her house with her father, the two of them poking fun at each other like a comedy duo.

Mateo and Susana’s gender bargain. The gendered division of labor within their household was very different from that of Emily’s parents. Although Mateo worked long hours in construction during the summer and cleaned offices in the evenings, Susana had much more steady work in a smoothie shop throughout the year and often worked afternoon and weekend shifts. This meant that in the winter months, afternoons, and weekends, Mateo was the primary caregiver for their children. They tried to arrange their work schedules so one of them could be home with the children, especially after they could no longer afford to pay for a babysitter. In
addition, by second grade Abi would sometimes be in charge of her brother for a few hours if
both of her parents had to be at work. As Susana (S) and Mateo (M) explained below, Susana was
financially responsible for the family’s primary expenses, especially during the winter months
when he worked little:

Excerpt 3

1. **S:** Now for example, the checks from my job, I save them to pay the rent.
2. And that way I have two free checks. One I save for the groceries. Mateo doesn’t pay for
   anything ... And the other check, well babysitting, so we’re left with nothing.
3. I haven’t been able to—
4. **M:** —The truth is that I don’t pay for anything in the house. I don’t have money. The
   one with the money is her.
5. **S:** I’m telling you that—
6. **M:** —The family depends on Susana. If she doesn’t work, we’re not anything.

Mateo often joked that the gender roles were reversed in their case, as Susana earned
more money and he spent more time with the kids. These divisions of labor were also reflected in
other household responsibilities. During many visits Susana would be working, and it would be
common for Mateo to be cooking a meal, sweeping up the kitchen, and changing Carlitos’
diapers. During one visit he asked if I’d noticed how he’d rearranged the furniture, something that
wives, who were often the ones who spent more time at home, appeared to do more frequently in
many other families. Their house was often messier than many other families’, with unwashed
dishes, clothes and toys strewn across the floor, and Mateo and Susana both lamented about how
difficult it was to keep things tidy with both kids and such busy lives. Susana also helped out with
household chores when she was around, and they often joked that although she cooked and
cleaned less frequently than Mateo, she did a better job than he did. Nonetheless, Mateo was
critical of the amount that Susana worked and felt that she should make more time for their family:

*Kids are completely wonderful. Even more when you have the time to be with them, to enjoy them. Not do what we do at the moment. Well I, with my son, maybe I am enjoying him. Not Susana. She doesn’t even know who Abi is, or the other one. It annoys me. But, oh well. She says that she has something well thought out, but it’s ok. I think that any other person—I am within my rights to claim time for us. Watch out! Don’t work so much, women. Or am I wrong? I think it’s the same. Just like men, women need time too. There comes a moment when you become used to being alone. Some time ago, I used to tell Susana about how she worked too much, that I needed to be with her. But since she didn’t listen, why are we going to listen to her? Like, I feel that the relationship between her and I has been breaking. Instead of being together, we are separating. [Q7]*

Mateo reflected on the stress that busy work lives as a young immigrant family trying to make ends meet had put on their personal relationship. Here, and throughout knowing him, Mateo positioned himself as united with his family, whereas Susana was more of an outsider that needed to join them. For example, he emphasized that “*But since she didn’t listen, why are we going to listen to her?*,” in which she is positioned against “us,” the family comprised of the father and children. Mateo was not arguing that women should not work—he was supportive of Susana working here or in Mexico. He did, however, question the sacrifices he saw her making as a parent and her prioritization of work over time with her children and with him. Their relationship had some rough patches over the years, and at times it appeared that they were fighting to stay together and make things work for their children.

They both agreed that their gender ideologies would not be different if they lived in Mexico. For example, Susana, who left school because of her pregnancy with Abi, was the only one of her sisters not to study a professional career, which is something she regretted. In thinking about being a stay-at-home mom she felt that it was just not who she was: “*There are women that are very home-oriented. They are always keeping the house very pretty, in order. And I’m not one of those. I’m more outside, working, right?*” [Q8] Although she regretted having to work so much
that it greatly limited her time with her family, she also felt it was necessary for her family’s financial survival and future.

Mateo and Susana also had very different repertoires in English. Although Mateo had officially lived in the US for more time than Susana, he had more limited formal schooling and overall less interest in developing his English repertoire. Through his work in construction, Mateo spent most of his time with other men from Mexico and rarely had to communicate with others in English. In contrast, Susana worked in a service industry, often behind the counter with a monolingual English-speaking co-worker from the US, and greatly expanded her abilities to speak, read, and write in English over the time that I knew her. Susana could easily navigate buying an item at a mall and was friendly and chatty with salespeople, whereas Mateo could manage to pay, but often called on Abi or others to translate less everyday aspects of the transaction. Because of her more extensive repertoire in English and formal schooling, Susana was the one who helped Abi with her homework when she was not working. Mateo, who had a more flexible work schedule, was the one who attended most school events, and understood very little of the materials sent home from school. Susana would often speak with her children in English—incorporating semiotic forms at her disposal in creative ways—whereas Mateo rarely drew upon English elements in his home-based interactions. Within their home Mateo preferred that Abi speak Spanish with him, and her intentional switches to English, which often occurred when she was angry at him, often led to further disagreement between the two.

*Mateo’s two worlds of fatherhood.* Like Cristian, most of Mateo’s life as a husband and father had occurred in the US, although via a somewhat different trajectory, as he lived apart from Abi for several years before she joined him in Marshall. Mateo described how difficult it was to be living in Marshall, surrounded by families, when he was apart from his own daughter:
I would see a lot of families already. Families already made, with children, wives, everything. Well, just imagine, me after I came over here, I didn’t even know what was going on. I would just see them and say, “That’s awesome, you have a family.” And I would be the same, like I should be with my daughter because, if you haven’t noticed already, I’m not like some dads that have children and they have them inside all the time. I don’t like to be like that with my children. I want people to see me, to know that I have a family. So that they can identify my family. So then, I go out with my children, and I go out proud of my children. I love my children a lot. And just imagine, how much it would hurt me to leave them. [Q9]

It appears that when Mateo first left Mexico for Marshall, he was not aware that many people lived there with their entire families. Seeing Mexican-heritage families living in Marshall likely informed their decision for Abi to join them there. And Mateo did love taking his kids places—his soccer matches each Sunday, the river to swim, different parties and celebrations, and errands around town or at nearby malls. He was always seen holding his kids’ hands and the affection between him and his children was visibly clear. Abi would lazily lay her head on his lap as they watched a movie and he stroked her hair and Carlitos would get showered with kisses and hugs until he erupted in enthusiastic squeals. Yet, as Abi and Mateo both reflected, their reunion in Marshall was somewhat strange at first. Abi, in making fun of the long hair that her father had when she met him, explained her first thoughts when she stepped out of the mini-van that had transported her from the US-Mexico border to Marshall, “When my daddy appeared—‘Like, whaaat?’...His LONG hair...She told me, ‘That is your daddy.’ I said, ‘Seriously?’ I even wanted to go back...His hair is what I didn’t like. Oh, daddy woman.” [Q10] Mateo shared how, “it was weird because she arrived, and then well no, she didn’t hug me. But she didn’t know what was going on, right? She knew I was her father, but she had never been with me. But afterwards she would be with me, if I would go to the store, she would go with me. She would be with me all the time, all the time with me.” [Q11] Their playful relationship was visible during each interaction, and Mateo didn’t want Abi to see him as an angry ogre, but as someone she could be open with and wanted to spend time with. Like Cristian, Mateo saw himself as different from the little he
knew of his own father, who had died in an accident when Mateo was four. Although he and his father physically looked alike, his father had been extremely strict, and this was not something that he wished to emulate.

A point of tension in Mateo and Susana’s relationship had been Mateo drinking too much with his friends from time to time. Since Mateo moved to Marshall when he was 20, he and Susana had lived with a cohort of younger men from Mexico who often threw rowdy parties in their home. Although similar behavior is an accepted norm among similarly-aged college kids in the US, men from Mexico who engage in these behaviors are oftentimes positioned as menacing and dangerous drunks. As Abi (A) and Mateo (M) explained to me (S) during an interview, on at least one occasion Mateo’s drinking led to a fight that Abi had overheard, in which he threatened to leave Susana.

Excerpt 4

1. **M:** I’m a very good father, I think.
2. **S:** Mhm, and why do you think you are a very good father?
3. **A:** Because he’s crazy in the head.
4. **((Laughter))
5. **A:** You say that you’re a good father, and when you used to get drunk how would you act? How would you act with me? That’s what you should tell her (S).
6. **M:** She hasn’t asked me.
7. **A:** When you’re drunk, what do you do? What do you do?
8. **M:** Nothing.
9. **A:** Now are you going to tell her? Why haven’t you told her about the day you wanted to leave the house. How you hurt me.
10. **M:** You {plural} / they ran me out, yes or no?
In this interaction Abi interrupted the interview to question Mateo’s self-positioning as a good father (line 3, 5 – 6, 15), reminding him about a time several years beforehand when he had had too much to drink and emotionally hurt her by threatening to leave. Mateo, using humor to deflect a very serious topic that Abi was not too shy to address with him, joked that they ran him off instead (line 12) and reasoned that he was still a good father because he didn’t actually go, as Abi had begged him to stay (line 16). In fact, recognizing that drinking heavily with friends was causing tension in their marriage and in his role as a father, several months earlier Mateo had become “jurado” [sworn not to drink]. Seated in the mall food court in front of Susana’s smoothie shop, he presented Susana and his children with a note promising not to drink for two years, which elicited a somewhat doubtful but relieved smile from his wife. Unlike the practice of swearing off alcohol for life and attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in the US, in Mexico it is common to swear off alcohol for a given amount of time, often going to a special place in the church to make this promise. Mateo instead made this promise to his family, and despite his constant jokes about drinking a chela, tequila, pomo, or cahuama, [different names of alcoholic drinks] it did not appear that he had had anything to drink since making his “juramento” [promise]. Mateo’s choice to orient to a more Mexican approach to stop drinking is one example of how he lived his life in translation in Marshall. Below I discuss other ways that this metaphor played out for him as a father and husband from Mexico.

Unlike Cristian who loved the US and wanted to live here forever, Mateo felt “encerrado” [enclosed] in Marshall and was regularly hoping to return to Mexico. His negotiation
of two worlds entailed constantly imagining his parallel lives between the two places. On a daily basis he navigated decisions regarding staying in Marshall or returning home to see his mother, whom he had not seen in nearly a decade. Susana also wanted to return to Mexico eventually—but in a few years, once they had saved up enough money for her to open a smoothie shop of her own in the tourist district in Puebla. For several years in a row they planned to return to Mexico the following winter, and there was often great tension regarding who would stay or go. For example, Mateo felt that his children were happiest by his side, but Susana wanted her kids to stay with her until she saved up enough money and returned. Mateo joked how it would be like the reverse of the male sojourner—he would be in Mexico, maybe with the children, waiting for Susana to return, and living off of her remittances. Mateo discussed the challenges of navigating these two worlds:

*It’s so hard. I live here now. I’m with my family now. It also isn’t fair that if I leave I would have to leave them, the whole package. Women, I’m telling you, there’s feminism... Women, just like men, think. There are strategies, and a lot of them. I didn’t count on that. And what do I do now? They have me here. I don’t leave. Feminist. I stay inside all day.* [Q12]

Here Mateo mentioned feminism, yet in ways that differ from wider-circulating definitions. He referenced Susana’s strategies to keep him in Marshall rather than returning to Mexico. For example, when they were having problems with their landlord in the large shared house, she had moved their family to their own apartment to live, even while knowing it would be nearly impossible for her to afford living there with the children if Mateo returned to Mexico. As Mateo could not bring himself to leave them under these circumstances, he decided to stay another year, in which Susana promised they would all return to Mexico together. Mateo felt trapped in Marshall, and also trapped in a life where, for an array of reasons including police vigilance that targeted Mexican immigrant men, no family car, and their household divisions of labor, he was at home for much of the day. But he also positioned feminism as the injustice that forced him to
give up his paternal rights because a woman’s rights as a mother took precedence. He regularly struggled with deciding between the two things that were most important to him: being with his children, and being back in Mexico. For example, in reflecting on what it means to be a father, he shared, “What does it mean to me to be a father? Truthfully, I don’t know. I can only say that I’m happy with my children. And before I ever leave them again, I don’t know. I’ll take them. Even if they’ll put me in jail with them. Haha.” [Q13] His references to being incarcerated were not about being a dead-beat dad that did not pay child support, but a loving father who considered stealing his children away so that they could be together. Abi, who also wanted to return to Mexico, often joked that she would hide in her father’s suitcase so she could also return. On one hand it is possible that, because they are in “el norte donde la mujer manda” Susana had more say in the decisions regarding if they live in the US or in Mexico. Nonetheless, both of them felt things would be the same if they were living in Mexico, and Susana had played a primary role in their previous decisions to move to the US from Mexico in the first place. In the end Mateo did not return to Mexico, and despite regular talk of potentially returning, his entire family still lives in Marshall.

Alexis’ Family

Daniel and Jessica grew up near the beach in Acapulco, Mexico, where they met and got married 11 years before. Daniel (31 years old), who shared a striking resemblance to a Mexican-looking Ludacris, had spent some time in the Mexican army before he and Jessica (35 years old) decided to move to York, Pennsylvania. While living in York their three children Daniel Jr. (11 years old), Alexis (8 years old), and Gaby (6 years old) were born. After Daniel hurt his knee and could no longer work in construction, they decided to move to Marshall because of family and work opportunities in the area. They lived in a neat 2-bedroom apartment with a small side-yard
where their kids could play soccer, swim in their kiddie-pool, or enjoy a family BBQ. Pictures of their family—ranging from an enormous print of their family picture with Santa Claus to Daniel Sr.’s drawings, lined the living room walls. They tended to spend all of their free time together as an entire family and Daniel and Jessica did not allow their children to play in the streets or to go over to friends’ houses unaccompanied. Daniel and Jessica also spent almost all of their time together, as they ran the kitchen in a local chain hotel during the morning shift. People often commented how they were like newlyweds—affectionate with one another and always by each other’s sides. Their household was always filled with laughter and they seemed to enjoy one another’s company, as well as time with their children.

Alexis was a somewhat shy young man with curly brown hair, a slender tanned body, and a large toothy smile. When he was called on in school he would often freeze because of his nerves, and then blush bright red before offering an answer. In school he excelled in math and, by second grade, he had placed out of ESL classes except for push-in writing. He loved to play soccer, draw, and sing—especially Big Time Rush. He was very close with his siblings, often referencing his big brother’s accomplishments to anyone who would listen and checking in on his kindergarten-aged sister during the school day to make sure she was doing well. He and his siblings were also notorious in the school: They looked so much alike that it was almost difficult to tell them apart, and his older brother had been a stand-out student in all areas. Teachers often cheered when they learned Alexis or his siblings would be in their class, as they were seen as a wonderful family with intelligent, well-behaved children.

Daniel and Jessica’s gender bargain. Throughout most of the year, Daniel and Jessica shared a work schedule, as they both opened up the kitchen at 5am in a local hotel and returned home before the end of the school day. The hotel was close enough to their home that one of them, often Jessica, could return quickly to make sure the kids got off to school. If a child was
sick or if there was a school event, Jessica would often take off from work to be with them. If the family needed to save up more money, such as before the start of the school year when the kids would need many new supplies, Daniel would take on additional shifts or get a second restaurant job as an economic buffer. He also worked as a DJ of Mexican music on the side, although this was more of a hobby than a money-making venture. Daniel also encouraged Jessica, who had a more advanced formal education and greater literacy skills than he did, to take an examination that would help prepare her for a more manager-like role. They reasoned that she already ran the hotel kitchen and did the equivalent work of a manager, and this credential would help her get paid and recognized for this work. They appeared to be the only two people from Mexico at the hotel and they often spoke about the many white Americans they worked with there. Although they were not US Citizens, they did have green cards to work in the US, and had much greater ease in finding dependable work than many other immigrant parents who did not have official working papers.

Daniel and Jessica’s balanced work bargain also paralleled their sharing of household responsibilities. Daniel regularly talked about how he helped maintain the house—sweeping the floor, doing the laundry, ironing, and keeping things clean and organized. He could not understand why many men did not help their wives with these household responsibilities, as he thought it was only fair. Nonetheless, Jessica was more in charge of the day-to-day cooking, and he was more in charge of the wheeling-and-dealing through local networks to find household items such as new electronics or furniture. Unlike other families that often had other people over or were always going to parties, they preferred to keep to themselves and really only visited with one other family and me. They were very warm and friendly people, but preferred to do things as a family rather than spend time with others.
Although Daniel and Jessica reported to have similar oral and literate repertoires in English, in practice Jessica could more fluidly communicate in many situations in English such as parent-teacher conferences or conversations on the street. And despite Daniel’s passion for electronics and the computer, she appeared to be more savvy than he was at remembering how to log into email, read things online in any language, or navigate web pages. Daniel, especially because of his extremely outgoing personality, could achieve his communicative goals drawing on the semiotic elements at his disposal. For example, he picked his kids up from school every day and always made small talk with the teachers in the process. He was a talkative and appropriately affectionate man, always offering me a handshake and a kiss on the cheek each time I saw him. When seeing an acquaintance at a local pool he greeted him with a colloquial, “Hey what's up my friend? How are you today? Nice to see you. My family here.” And although they predominantly spoke Spanish within their household, he would also say key phrases in English to his kids, such as his token “love you” to any of his children when they left the room.

Their school involvement practices were also reflective of their tight-knit family unit. Each evening all five of them would gather at the kitchen table for the three children to complete their homework. During this time Jessica appeared to take on more of an instructor role, helping along the way, whereas Daniel tended to check what each child had completed. The older siblings also helped the younger siblings complete their assignments. And although the family lived only blocks from the school, they often did not attend school events. For events such as conferences Jessica would often go with the kids, especially if Daniel was tired from working multiple jobs. Although he felt it was important for them to be visibly present in the school so they did not look bad and he did attend school events occasionally, he preferred to stay home.

Daniel’s two worlds of fatherhood. Like Cristian, Daniel became a father in the United States, and, like Mateo, he did not have much of a model to follow from his own upbringing in
Mexico. Daniel’s father had abandoned his mother to start a different family when he was a young boy, so he had practically raised himself and his sister because of his mother’s long hours selling goods in the market. Daniel wanted to be better than his own father and to do things differently than how he had been raised. For example, people regularly complimented him on his children and how much they helped one another. He explained that he had not been like this with his sister growing up—he felt it was something you had to teach your children: “But if you don’t teach a child—I wasn’t taught like that. I try to be better than what my parents taught me.” [Q14] For him a good father was someone who gave his kids everything that he could and spent time with them. As a talented and passionate person, Daniel loved to teach his kids the things he loved, such as how to use his DJ equipment, play soccer, shoot toy guns at Dave and Busters’, and swim. He always made sure they were all well-dressed and organized, taking the time to teach his kids how to do things through his own modeling. Like many fathers, he saw himself as a role model for his kids. He taught them to be educado [well educated morally], respectful, but sought not to “obligarlos,” or force them to do things just because he was their father. He was strict with his kids, but also reasonable.

As a father, he also wanted to have a close and trusting relationship with each of his children. For example, he became extremely distraught when his older son got in trouble at school because he had let another boy copy off of his paper. He worried that this would destroy his son’s reputation with the teachers, and could even mean he would fail the class and therefore the grade. Although this may be a potential outcome in Mexican schooling, it was unlikely to occur for such a minor offense in his son’s school in Marshall. Through a re-voicing of what he had told his son who had gotten in trouble for giving into peer pressure, Daniel spoke about how he saw himself as a father:
"Tell me the truth. I like to be told the truth. I don’t like for you to lie to me. I’m your daddy. I’m not your friend or anyone else because your daddy can help you in everything. A friend can’t help you with any problems." ...I tell him: "When I was a boy, I would’ve wanted to study like you. I want you to be better than me. I want you to surpass me." And he started to cry. Haha. [Q15]

Just as Daniel wanted to be better than his own father, he also wanted his kids to achieve more in life than he had. As their father he saw his role as providing them with the material, educational, and emotional resources to do this. In some ways he was orienting to both Mexican notions of salir adelante [getting ahead], as well as the American Dream of working hard and pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. He saw his children as having many more opportunities than he had ever had as a child and education as the key to their success.

Unlike Cristian who could explicitly name the different models of fatherhood that he oriented to from the US and Mexico, in the following excerpt with me (S) and Jessica (J), Daniel (D) explained how he could not answer questions about fatherhood in Mexico, or what it would be like for him, because he had never lived it:

Excerpt 5

1. **D:** I’m not responding like—

2. **S:** —And you weren’t parents—

3. **D:** —Exactly. You are asking me a question I can’t answer. I’m answering—

4. **J:** —Like the way we lived with our parents.

5. **D:** As kids. It’s very hard to tell you this.

For Daniel, being a father mostly meant being very different from what he had lived growing up. He did not think this was how all Mexican fathers were and was hesitant to make generalizations. He simply sought to proactively create a family in which they worked together, spent time together, and reached for loftier long-term goals for their children. Like many parents from Mexico, Daniel often lacked the specific knowledge of how to actually achieve those goals.
in the United States. For example, he wanted his children to attend college, but did not realize that highschool went all the way through 12th grade, that college was an additional four years, and that admission to college was based on things besides pure academics. Nonetheless, Daniel was proactive in seeking out resources to help his children meet their long-term goals and was open to the unknowns of negotiating fatherhood in the US.

**Martina’s Family**

Ignacio (36 years old) and Alejandra (31 years old) grew up in middle class families in towns near Puebla, Mexico. They had a more advanced level of study than most Mexican immigrant parents I met in Marshall, having nearly completed high school (Ignacio) and beyond (Alejandra). They met while living and working in Puebla and decided to move to Marshall together, soon after getting married. Their only child, Martina (8 years old) was born in Marshall. Ignacio had a warm smile behind his well trimmed mustache, and his more formal clothing at school events usually switched to flip flops and a backwards baseball cap at home. They lived in a multi-level row-house that they shared with some of Alejandra’s male relatives, although these relatives mostly stayed on the top floor of the house. Ignacio and Alejandra were more formal than many other parents from Mexico, always addressing me and many others as Ud [formal you. They also had fun-loving sides in which they would laugh uncontrollably at each other’s jokes.

Martina was a sweet and sentimental second grader who was always polite and complimentary of others. She was not overly popular among other students, but had several close female friends, such as her best friend Emily. Like Emily, Martina’s room was filled with toys, her fun pink and purple outfits with Hannah Montana-esque accents such as her black punk tutu skirt, and her video games. Having attended a bilingual preschool, she had never been placed in
ESL classes and by second grade she had tested out of her speech classes. Despite her excellent behavior and focus in school and her parents’ intensive efforts to support her academically, she struggled in many subject areas, especially writing. She was well-liked by her teachers because of her sweet personality, and she often went unnoticed in the classroom because of her quiet presence. Outside of school, however, she would giggle uncontrollably with her friends or parents and appeared to be a very happy child. In her free time she loved to go swimming with her parents, play on the computer with her dad, and be in touch with her relatives in Mexico who she met for the first time during her second grade year.

*Ignacio and Alejandra’s gender bargain.* The gender bargain in Martina’s household also looked different from that in other families, and was shaped by a work-related accident that Ignacio had experienced several years beforehand. When Martina was in preschool, Ignacio had fallen from a roof while working and was seriously injured, requiring many surgeries and a long-term recovery. He had a lawsuit pending from his arm injury, which deeply influenced his day-to-day interactions. Although there were some physical limitations to what he could do because of his arm, he also had to be incredibly careful because working or doing physical things in public, such as playing with his daughter or lifting heavy loads, could potentially compromise his case. Thus, he stayed home all day and was the primary caregiver for Martina afterschool and on the weekends. Alejandra worked two jobs in a chain restaurant and cleaning houses, which combined with the small income Ignacio received from workman’s compensation to meet their family expenses. Throughout the time I knew them Alejandra had changed jobs several times to find the schedule that allowed her the most time with Martina, and for the three of them to do things as a family.

Similar to Emily’s parents, Martina’s parents’ work and household responsibilities shifted over time, largely because of Ignacio’s accident. As Ignacio explained,
Well before, I would be working all the time. When I started to work, well truthfully, I earned a good amount. So then, it wasn’t necessary for her (Alejandra) to work. So then, she dedicated herself to the girl (Martina). She went out, she would go out and buy things at the store. We have the same routine. Just pretend that I’m the woman, and she’s the man. ((Laughter from Ignacio and Alejandra)).[Q16]

Similar to Abi’s parents, Ignacio and Alejandra joked about their gender role reversals in which “[he is] the woman, and she’s the man.” Although he would like to be working because he was bored at home all day, they only appeared uncomfortable with their gendered arrangement when they felt judged by others. For example, Alejandra explained how she would carry the heavy things when they were together, such as the groceries or laundry, and others would give them looks or comment, “Oh, look at him, his woman is carrying things and the way he is, he can’t carry it. ” [Q17] Both Alejandra and Ignacio were relatively shy and did not like to stand out, and although Ignacio appeared comfortable in his masculinity, he was not the type who was open to explaining his situation to strangers. In addition, Ignacio emphasized that, in terms of his household responsibilities, before the accident he had earned a decent living that allowed him to limit his work schedule so he would have time with his family. In the early years, he had also taken on childcare responsibilities such as changing Martina’s diapers and caring for her once Alejandra decided to go back to work part time. During Martina’s second grade year, it was clear that Ignacio spent a great deal of time with his daughter and took on many of the day-to-day household responsibilities. Alejandra, despite her work schedule, was still the main cook in their household though, and they appeared to share other responsibilities such as cleaning. Alejandra emphasized, however, that everything she learned about mothering and maintaining a house she learned in practice and by talking to her mother on the phone in Mexico, who would walk her through things step-by-step. Alejandra emphasized that she had always had a busy schedule working and studying in Mexico and had never learned these things there.
Alejandra and Ignacio also differed greatly in their spoken and written communicative repertoires in English. Unlike Emily, Abi, and Alexis, who could effectively express themselves in Spanish in most interactions and understand the majority of what their parents told them in Spanish, Martina had a much less developed repertoire in Spanish. Thus, her parents’ repertoires in English played an important role for in-family communication rather than solely with outsiders such as teachers or salesclerks. Alejandra regretted not having pushed herself to expand her English repertoires when she first arrived, but because she had not initially planned on staying in the US, she had not thought it was necessary. Ignacio had a more developed repertoire in English and Martina would often explain things to him in English, which he could mostly understand. She would also have her father serve as a translator between her and her mother when they could not understand each other. And although both parents helped her with her homework and read with her, alternating nights, Ignacio was often the only one who could pronounce written English in a way that Martina could (mostly) understand. He explained,

But her (Alejandra’s) reading level isn’t good. She (Martina) realizes. She (A) isn’t as clear as I am, well I read kind of clear now. So then, she (M) understands me more. That’s why I read to her and I tell her, I explain. So then, she understands. Because if she (A) tells her (M) in Spanish, she doesn’t understand a lot. [Q18]

He also appeared to have more of a knack for the math homework than Alejandra, and was often consulted on problems that Martina and Alejandra were not sure of how to solve. The combination of his extensive time with Martina at home and more expansive repertoire in English resulted in his playing a primary role in navigating Martina’s schooling via her homework and handouts sent home.

Ignacio’s two worlds of fatherhood. Like many of the other fathers from this study, Ignacio approached fatherhood by attempting to be very different from his own father. His father,
who had a limited formal education and ran a butcher shop, had a strong personality that Ignacio could not relate to:

My dad was, he had a strong character when he would get mad. When we would do something wrong, he would hit us. He would line us up. But he was stronger than my mom. Always, always always, and well it was always about work because he was always working. My dad was the one that didn’t understand something and SAS! There you go! But that was because my dad didn’t go to school. [Q19]

Ignacio saw himself as more similar to his mother, who had a kind and caring personality. As he and Alejandra made decisions regarding their own family, he was critical of his own upbringing as one of eight children and, despite Alejandra’s hopes for another baby, Ignacio only wanted one child. He explained,

I tell you that they didn’t pay much attention to us because there were a lot of us. I’m aware of this because I only have one (child). And well our one kid comes and asks us something and she’s the only one. So then, imagine eight people coming and asking you, “What do I do?” And my dad didn’t have a lot of education. So if you have a tough time with one, imagine with eight. I wouldn’t want to be in his shoes. [Q20]

Growing up in such a large family he felt that his parents, especially his father who was always working, did not give them enough individual attention. His vision and embodiment of fatherhood included knowing his child extremely well and fostering a close and caring relationship with her. He had certainly done this with Martina. For example, it would be common to see him blow affectionately on her face as she gave him a kiss on the cheek, both of them bobbing their feet as they lay on the bed doing homework, or her laying her head on his shoulder as she figured out a math problem. He regularly demonstrated detailed knowledge about Martina’s academic and personal development. He felt that being a good father was difficult enough with only one child, and did not want to be “in his father’s shoes” and try to do it with eight. Like Daniel, being a father for Ignacio meant not being like his own father.
As they explained below, another key difference with Ignacio (I) and Alejandra (A) was that they came from more middle class backgrounds compared to many other Mexican immigrant families in Marshall.

Excerpt 6

1. I: We are not in the situation that maybe a lot of the parents you have talked to are. With them the situation is different... Well, my family has always worked. And truthfully with very few limitations.
2. A: I tell you, well, I’ll comment to you, that I talk to him about how I have found out about many other people who, in their situation, that in reality have never thought about returning to their country (Mexico). They live in a situation so bad. Bad. That they practically don’t even have enough to eat.
3. I: So then all of those people are the types that, the ones she’s talking about, are the ones who do not want to return to their country for any reason. But that’s because their situation is very different, and because their situation where they live is very poor... So then we, at least I didn’t go through that. So then we aren’t rich, but middle class with work...But since we’ve heard many stories, friends we’ve made who talk about the conditions in their towns where they live. Compared to us, well, we live like kings.

Ignacio and Alejandra explained how their lives would not actually be that different if they were to move back to Mexico, as they had always been economically stable and able to secure well-paying jobs (lines 1 – 3). Ignacio’s siblings, for example, all had very professional jobs, such as psychologists back in Mexico, and he appeared to know a great deal about modern technology such as Mac computers in Mexico. Similar to Ignacio’s more middle class take on fatherhood in which a responsible father only had a few children that he could support both economically and
emotionally, his orientation to school involvement also had a very middle class feel (discussed more in Chapter 6). Thus his centers of authority appeared to be more related to a class background which cut across national borders, rather than Mexican or US-based models. Interestingly, although Ignacio and Alejandra came from a very different social position in Mexico, they were rarely differentiated within the receiving context in this way. As adults without documentation and with Alejandra’s somewhat limited English repertoire, her work opportunities and their friendship networks did not appear to differ in notable ways from the poorer families they described above (lines 6 – 7, 9 – 14). The negotiations of two worlds for Ignacio were in many ways about how he was understood in this new context, rather than how he oriented to different models of fatherhood.

**Benjamin’s Family**

Evaristo (35 years old) and Julia (33 years old) grew up in the same neighborhood in Mexico City and began dating as teenagers. Their three children Denise (12 years old), Evaristo Jr (11 years old) and Benjamin (8 years old) were all born in Mexico City. Evaristo earned a steady income as a truck driver, but when offered a better job in Marshall months before Benjamin was born, he decided to relocate, bringing their toddler-aged daughter with him. A year later, once Benjamin was old enough for the journey, Julia joined them in Marshall with their two sons. During their time in Marshall they lived in a handful of different apartments in the same neighborhood, often having to move because of problems with the landlord. They were a tight-knit unit that tended to keep a busy schedule filled with social gatherings with Julia’s extended family or school-based events. Their house was always lively with lots of kids running around—their 3 kids as well as other children that Julia cared for to supplement their income.
Benjamin was a sassy second grader who loved to be the center of attention. After attending an English-medium Head Start preschool program, he tested out of ESL classes before kindergarten. Although he was a bit behind in reading and writing, he excelled in math and was an enthusiastic participant in class. He had a large circle of primarily Mexican-heritage friends and was constantly involved in a petty fight with at least one of them, always adding a bit of drama to many group interactions. He sometimes adopted somewhat effeminate gender norms at home and school, a topic occasionally commented on by a few of his classmates. At home he oscillated between being his mother’s helper and what his parents saw as a rebellious child who would not listen. Teachers were always shocked to learn Benjamin did not always behave at home, as he was on point and always anxious to lend a helping hand in the classroom. He had a very sweet and caring side, which his teachers and parents all appreciated.

Evaristo and Julia’s gender bargain. Evaristo and Julia had more separate gender roles than most of the families in the study: Evaristo worked in construction and was the primary wage-earner for the family whereas Julia cared for the house and the children. Julia was a matriarch: She cooked every meal, washed the dishes, cleaned the house, and was often ordering everyone around, including Evaristo. Occasionally, when the family faced an economic hardship, Julia would find outside work to help supplement their family income more than the small amount she earned caring for other people’s children during the day. Overall, however, they felt the small amount of money she could earn working outside of their home was not worth the cost of having other people care for their kids, which Evaristo felt no one could do as well as Julia. Evaristo was the greater disciplinarian of the couple—Julia would often threaten to call Benjamin’s father when he would not listen to her at home, and Ben would then modify his behavior to evade the phone call. As I describe below, the gender bargain in their household included a large amount of family time.
Although Julia was predominantly in charge of the kids, they spent a great deal of time together as a family. During the day, if he was not working, Evaristo would drive Julia around to run errands. When Evaristo was working, his workday began at dawn, which meant he would usually be home by the late afternoon. Once home he would follow Julia’s instructions to run sundry errands. For example, this field note represents a typical afternoon for Evaristo:

Evaristo is not there when I first arrive because he is picking up the older kids from school. He then returns for a little while before going to the bus stop to get Benjamin. Julia calls him to ask where they are, why they are taking so long to get home, and it seems that it is because they have stopped for an ice cream. Evaristo later goes down to pay a portion of money they owe someone who has stopped by. He then goes to pick up pizzas from Little Caesars and also takes Julia to her mom’s house up the road to get the type of sour cream Julia likes. He is in and out, running lots of errands for the family. He wears a tank top that shows off all of his tattoos and long cargo shorts. His long, thick, graying curly hair is pulled back into a loosely hanging ponytail.

Their evenings and weekends were often jam-packed with events that they attended as a family as well. Much of Julia’s extended family lived in the area and they had a different party almost every weekend. During these parties Julia, who had a strong and outgoing personality, would often speak for her husband. In addition, Evaristo had a cleft palate, which made his speech difficult to understand in a loud space or if you were not used to speaking with him. He was a friendly and well-liked man, but much less talkative than his wife. Their family was also very involved in many community projects, such as district-wide Latino parent leadership meetings, a school-based family group, and different events at their church. They almost always appeared to travel as an entire family, Evaristo and Julia often giggling together like teenagers in love.

Evaristo and Julia also had different communicative repertoires in English. His spoken and written English resources greatly surpassed hers. Evaristo had several more years of formal education than Julia, as she had left school in the 6th grade. Through his work he was exposed to a fair amount of English and appeared relatively comfortable reading English, unlike Julia who was not. Because of these resources, the gender bargain in their household often meant he took on a
more primary role for Benjamin’s homework help or negotiating interactions with landlords or salespeople. As discussed in the following section, their gender bargain shaped and was shaped by Evaristo’s approaches to fatherhood.

*Evaristo’s two worlds of fatherhood.* Unlike most fathers in this study who positioned themselves as different from their own fathers, Evaristo felt he and his father were relatively similar, and that he had learned his strong work ethic from his dad. When asked what fatherhood meant for him, he talked about the responsibility of caring for your children and how it differed from being a bachelor.

*More responsibilities than when you are alone or single, you don’t have a lot of responsibilities and now, like a man, you have to get used to being a father. And to give their children a better life, not in the street, not give them bad things…One can’t go out any more, you get married, and that’s it. All of those privileges of going out are over, you have to take care of the kids. You either go to the store or take care of the kids… That’s a privilege that goes away.* [Q21]

Like most fathers from this study, most of Evaristo’s life as a father occurred in the US, including the year he spent caring for his toddler-aged daughter alone, before his wife and sons joined them in Marshall. His daily interactions aligned with his take on fatherhood, as a man who prioritized his free time to be with his family and to put them first. Despite his somewhat tough appearance—a relatively muscular man with many tattoos and a long ponytail—he was sweet and caring with his children and very attentive to his wife. At home he was often fixing things around the house, playing games like dominoes with Benjamin, or relaxing and watching TV with his wife. He also saw his role as providing for them, and Benjamin greatly appreciated the money and time his father put into planning special celebrations—Ben’s birthday party at Burger King, his school-based party, and the huge First Communion Party he had with his siblings. During this party Evaristo looked genuinely proud and happy—he had cut his long hair and traded in his Eagles’ jersey for a suit. He spent the night greeting people and ensuring the food was full for the
guests. In describing fatherhood he prioritized the responsibilities as well as the loss of privileges such as going out alone for fun. Although not directly mentioned, his emphasis on family time together contrasts with images of men in Mexico who leave their families at home in order to go out drinking with their male friends (discussed more in the machismo portion of the chapter below). Nonetheless, in Marshall it was clear that family time was his priority, and being a father and husband were things he was extremely proud of.

**Gregorio’s Family**

Gregorio’s parents Julio (29 years old) and Lucinda (30 years old) grew up in different parts of Mexico and met in Marshall. Julio, with soft caring eyes and a shy smile, had grown up in a small town in Puebla and moved to Marshall in his late teens to join his brother who was already working there. Lucinda had grown up near the beach in Guerrero and moved to Marshall with a boyfriend in her late teens. She became pregnant with Gregorio (8 years old) a few years later, but her relationship with Gregorio’s biological father did not last and Julio met Lucinda when Gregorio was 2 years old. Although he was not Greggy’s biological father, he was the only father Gregorio had ever known. Several years later Lucinda and Julio had their first daughter, Lily (2 years old), who had health issues in one eye that required intensive medical attention. The family lived with other male relatives who worked in the construction company Julio ran with several of his brothers. Their house usually seemed lively, filled with kids playing and relatives visiting.

Gregorio was a slender and athletic second grader who loved to draw and wore wire-rimmed glasses. He was always bubbling with energy—so much so that his parents were constantly searching for activities that would tire him out a little. Since infancy he had attended English-medium daycare and then preschool and he was much more comfortable expressing
himself in English than Spanish. He also attended speech class several times a week, which he enjoyed because of the special prizes, in order to foster greater fluidity when he spoke. Overall he excelled academically in school except in reading and writing, although his teacher often felt he was off task and not paying attention because of his constant fidgeting. He had an extremely curious mind, always wanting to learn more about how things worked or to share personal connections to a given topic. After school he often attended a homework help program at the local bilingual service agency, played with friends in the neighborhood from a mix of ethnic backgrounds, or ran around the house with his baby sister. His parents joked about how he loved to spend hours getting ready to go places, taking extra care to apply gel to his hair and an excessive amount of cologne. His parents appreciated Greggy’s many talents, although they did often wish that he valued the many material and educational resources he was afforded in Marshall that had never been a part of their lives in Mexico.

*Julio and Lucinda’s gender bargain*. Julio and Lucinda had extremely different personalities that complemented one another. Julio, like many people from Puebla, was more reserved and initially shy with new people. Lucinda, like many people from Guerrero, was much louder and outgoing, and loved listening to music and dancing around. Like Evaristo and Julia, their division of house and work responsibilities was quite separate: Julio worked extremely long hours in his construction business and Lucinda maintained everything in their home, including most of the childcare. This had not always been the case: As a single mother, Lucinda had worked long hours when Gregorio was young, and before Lily was born she also worked outside their home. Yet, upon Lily’s birth, they decided that it would be best for Lucinda to stay home and take care of the children. As Julio explained, "and Gregorio, when the people who took care of him were with him, they didn’t have patience to talk. So then since she (Lucinda) doesn’t work, she has the chance to be with the girl (their daughter Lily) and the girl learns." [Q22] As they
worried Gregorio’s limited repertoire in Spanish and overall speech issues may have been because he did not spend enough time with adults who spoke with him, Julio preferred Lucinda to be home with their daughter. Lily’s eye issues also required an additional level of care that they did not entrust to an outsider. And finally, Julio reasoned that it was not financially worth it for his wife to work, explaining, “I don’t believe that there’s any reason for you to work (Lucinda) if the money you earn you’re passing it on to the person that takes care of Lily.” [Q23] Lucinda, in contrast, often got bored being at home and did want to take on part time work as a chance to get out of the house and do something on her own. Ultimately, because of her daughter’s eye issues, she ended up staying at home. And although Julio worked grueling hours in a labor-intensive job and was often exhausted when he returned home, he also saw it as his job to help her: “You also have to help her because it’s tolerating everything. It’s being home all day, taking care of the kids. Believe me, that’s maddening.” [Q24] His helping out usually included fixing things around the house and playing with the kids—boxing, play wrestling, throwing darts, playing video games, and completing puzzles—and did not include other housework.

Like most other couples, there were also differences in their communicative repertoires in English. Julio had a more expansive spoken English repertoire, especially for work-related talk, although they often relied on Gregorio to communicate with English-dominant speakers in everyday service interactions. His parents regularly brought up the struggles they had communicating with Gregorio—his limited repertoire in Spanish and their limited repertoires in English required creative communication strategies to meet their interactional goals. Lucinda had more extensive literacy skills than Julio, which included reading and writing in English. As Julio regularly emphasized, he had only completed elementary school because his family did not have enough money for him to continue, whereas Lucinda had finished high school. Julio explained how she also took on the financial responsibilities of their household and oftentimes his business
as well, because things like managing the bills were difficult for him due to his more limited formal schooling. This division of labor carried over to almost all written transactions they had to complete as a family in English or Spanish—bills, medical forms, school information, etc. Like most couples who divided up tasks based on who was better equipped to handle them, Julio did not see the point in doing certain things himself because he knew Lucinda would always be there to do them, and she could do them better. As Lucinda was more regularly at home and had more formal education, she was the one who helped Gregorio with his homework if he could not attend the afterschool program, although she was often unsure of how to help. As Julio emphasized, however, he still wanted to know how Greggy was doing in school and tried to attend school events to learn about his progress: "I’m not helping him all the time, but it does interest me to know how he’s doing in school. Not just the mom.” [Q25] As Julio explained in the following section, being a father requires knowing the details of your children’s life.

Julio’s two worlds of fatherhood. Julio’s calm and level-headed approach to fathering is illustrated in the following excerpt, in which he tried to reason with Gregorio, who refused to eat his dinner. Lucinda, who they always said was much more gritona [a yeller], had given up on trying to get Gregorio to eat something besides hot dogs or pizza, when Julio stepped in.

Excerpt 7

1. **J:** So then, what is it that you like? Look. There are things in the fridge. So you’re going to cook...Not that. Grab your plate, now we’re going to cook.
2. **G:** I don’t like that.
3. **J:** Look. If you’re going to whine, go to your room and when you don’t want to cry anymore you’ll come, right?
4. **G:** I’m not going to eat that.
5. **J:** Then go {you formal} to your room. I don’t want to see you {formal} here. Until you
8. *{formal}* are hungry and you'll *{formal}* come eat by yourself.

9. **G:** No. I'm not going to eat.

Here, Julio calmly spoke with Gregorio, striking a deal that if Greg didn’t want to eat now, he could come back down and make himself something to eat, alone, later. As Julio explained when questioned about his switch from informal tú to formal Ud. (lines 7 – 8) during a playback session, he drew upon this semiotic form to soften the reprimand to his son. He also left the decision and its consequences in Gregorio’s hands. Regardless of his children’s antics, Julio never appeared to get worked up.

Like most fathers from this study, Julio’s entire time as a father had occurred in Marshall. When he first arrived as a teenager he had lived in a house with other young men and spent his free time exercising and socializing with friends. Over a decade later as a father, his life and friendship networks were very different:

> So then now I realize that if they (friends) invite me to their house—but there’s already a lot of kids. So I have mine and my children have fun. And theirs. And I do too. Lucinda is with my friend’s wife and all of that. And that way we all have fun. And before, it was just me with friends. We would drink some beers and then I would go home. And now it’s very different because I can’t do that—we went to a party. There’s always beer so then, “I can’t.” “Why?” “Because I’m going to drive.” [Q26]

He explained how they now spent their time with other families and that as a responsible father he could not drink because he had to drive his family home at the end of the evening. He explained, “Now my free time is for them. It should be for them. They need more time. Sometimes I want to leave them at home and go out—I can’t because they’re here.” [Q27]

Like other fathers from this study, Julio negotiated his version of two worlds of fatherhood as being different from his own father, a campesino [farmer] from rural Mexico. As one of 12 or 13 children, so many that “I don’t remember,” Julio compared his father’s approach to fatherhood with his own:
He was like in the time of the machistas. He was like that with my mother. Sometimes he would say things, and they’d get done. And sometimes it wouldn’t get done, so he was the person who’d say “I say this, and this is what’s going to be done.” It was very complicated because sometimes he was very aggressive. I’m not like that because sometimes—I don’t want my children to go through that. He talks to me like that. I can’t tell you frankly that I love him, or how much he loves me. So now he is more gentle. He loves people more. Before though he had kids to have kids, because he wasn’t so kind to us or wouldn’t hug us. But he can’t find the way or it just doesn’t come out of him to say “I love you”... I want to do it differently. By having so many kids he worried more about work and money so that he’d be able to support them. So then there wasn’t much attention, because if it wasn’t one of us, it was a different one. [Q28]

Julio described his father’s embodiment of his masculinity during what Julio calls the time of the machistas: As his child or wife you simply had to do what he said and he was a very aggressive and unaffectionate man (lines 1 – 3, 4 – 8). Although with old age Julio felt his dad had become more docile and loving (lines 5 – 6), Julio did not want to be like his father because he did not want to expose his children to a type of life he found very unpleasant (lines 3 – 4).

In contrast, Julio explained his own approach to fatherhood, “To be a father, it’s a great responsibility because you have to do everything. You must watch out for them. It’s a responsibility to be focused on them, you must be thinking about them all the time.” [Q29]

Although Julio probably had the heftiest work schedule out of all of the fathers from the study, he had very close and caring relationships with his children and sought out creative ways to be present in their lives even when he could not physically be with them. For example, he would speak to his children multiple times a day on the phone when he was away at work and always tried to figure out what types of activities would be of interest to Gregorio to foster his development. Like Ignacio who did not want to have many children because of his own upbringing in a large family, Julio also did not think he would have the energy to give each child adequate attention if they had a large family. He was very affectionate and caring with his children, even though Gregorio would no longer let his dad kiss him in front of others. Julio was also very knowledgeable about their development, such as the new words Lily could say. He
highlighted the importance of individual personalities in terms of fatherhood—he described his brother, who also lived in Marshall, as much more similar to their father, with an unaffectionate and seco [dry] relationship with his daughters.

Julio also discussed navigating the tricky terrain of when and how to tell Gregorio he was not his biological father. Julio emphasized that for him it was no big deal to have stepped in as Gregorio’s father when he was two years old, and how for Greggy, “there isn’t anyone else besides me.” Julio’s friends and family all knew that Gregorio was not his biological child, but no one ever brought it up and everyone saw him as Greggy’s father, without question. Julio also explained how two of his sisters in Mexico had children with men that they did not end up with, and how in his eyes, with single mothers, “if you love me, you love my child too.” Although Julio was the only nonbiological father during the time of this study, over the years in Marshall I met several fathers who were extremely caring and paternal to the young children their wives babysat in their homes (such as Evaristo) or who took on the stepfather role without question when reunited with their wife’s children from a previous relationship (such as Cristian the year after this study). The only uncertainty Julio ever expressed about his relationship with Gregorio was if or when to tell him he was not his biological father, and he saw both of his children, biological or not, as equally his.

A final way that Julio negotiated his masculinity between two worlds was his constant consideration of moving back to Mexico, or not. At many points Julio and Lucinda were on the brink of returning to Mexico, although that too would require different familial processes of negotiating different worlds. For example, Julio had saved up his money and built a house in his hometown in Puebla, but if Lucinda moved there she would not know anybody, would be very far away from her own family that lived on the coast, and would have to navigate cultural and lifestyle differences between Puebla and Guerrero. They also worried about navigating quality
medical care for Lily’s eye in a country with costly procedures, no health insurance, and what they saw as a lower quality of care. In addition, they worried how Gregorio, with his limited Spanish repertoire, would adjust to school there, especially because the equivalent of ESL classes were rarely available to support those without academic Spanish repertoires in Mexican public schools. Julio always emphasized the very heavy decisions they faced in terms of where they would live, and how navigating these decisions as a family was very different, and more difficult, than navigating them as an individual person. Nonetheless, although they may have fewer material goods in Mexico, Julio felt his approach to fathering would not differ if they returned.

**Princess’ Family**

Federico (32 years old) and Cinthia (32 years old) were both from Puebla, Mexico originally, and met while living in New York City (NYC). Federico had moved to NYC with his parents when he was 9 years old and lived with them until they divorced several years later. He then lived with his uncle until he left highschool in 10th grade and began working. Cinthia, in contrast, grew up in Puebla and moved to NYC in her later teens. While there she worked as a live-in nanny. Princess (8 years old) was born in NYC and when she was a toddler her parents decided to move to Marshall for work opportunities and a more tranquil life. During Princess’ second grade year her baby sister, Brenda (1 year old), was born. Some of Federico’s family also lived in the area. Federico oriented to different stylistic models than most immigrant fathers I met in Marshall: He was often dressed in a backwards Yankee’s cap, a Puebla York letterman jacket, and somewhat baggy clothes. He could fluently converse in English or Spanish and, from growing up in NYC, was very aware of how U.S. systems, such as schools, worked. He also listened to Hip Hop music, and when you reached his voice mail you would hear a long excerpt
of Pretty Ricky’s “Grind with Me.” They lived in a large row house and rented out a top floor to another couple from Mexico. Their family all slept in 1 large bedroom, but lived in all of the other rooms in the house. Hanging in their bedroom was a photograph of Princess as a toddler with her parents, with the words “Homies 4 Eva” stylishly spray-painted across the top.

Princess was a spunky second-grader who loved to play outside, watch kids programs in English on TV, and was often negotiating “amiga/enemiga” [frenemy] relationships with kids at school. Having attended a bilingual preschool, she had tested out of ESL at the beginning of kindergarten and although she excelled academically when she first entered public school, by second grade she struggled in most subject areas. She was insecure about her academic abilities and oscillated between energetic participation and withdrawal during classroom activities. She loved to be the teacher’s helper and was always eager to help new students who joined their class as well. She always dressed in fun, trendy outfits, such as a black shirt with a sparkly butterfly, black tights, white cutoff shorts with butterflies on the back pockets, and decorated mid-calf high top converse. She also loved sweets and junk food, although her parents tried to get her to eat healthy foods and to be active because she had gained a fair amount of weight during her second grade year. Princess, a very savvy and somewhat tricky little girl, often used this to her advantage, arguing that her parents should let her play outside more so that she could run around and be thinner.

Federico and Cinthia’s gender bargain. Federico and Cinthia’s gender bargain also differed from those of other families and shifted over time. For most of Princess’ public schooling, her father had worked as a cook at a restaurant during the morning shift and returned home by early afternoon. Her mother, in contrast, worked two jobs cleaning hotels and was often gone until the evening and on weekends. As Fede explained below, household responsibilities appeared to be relatively shared between the couple as well:
Well, normally she makes the food, and I help with homework. Since I went to school more, she went to school but she went in Mexico, and in Mexico the rigor isn’t the same. I know more about homework. She cooks, sometimes I have to clean the house on the weekend, or when there’s time in the week. Normally though, the weekend is when we clean well. [Q30]

Princess also had more household responsibilities, such as helping with chores and her baby sister, than most of her second grade peers. Overall, because of their work schedules, Federico was the primary caretaker for Princess afterschool and during the weekends. He also had a much more developed communicative repertoire in English than his wife, and spoke like someone who had grown up in the United States. His spoken Spanish repertoire was also very extensive, although it differed from Cinthia’s, as she had learned Spanish in Puebla rather than the NYC-version he was most familiar with. They sometimes misunderstood one another in Spanish, and Princess almost always sided with her father’s way of saying things, poking fun at her mom. Princess and her father would communicate in English or creative translanguaged mixes within their home, and Cinthia would often stop Princess to ask what they were talking about. Federico also had much more developed literacy skills in English and Spanish than Cinthia, and in many ways they were more advanced than most Mexican immigrant parents I had met throughout my time in Marshall. His expansive repertoires, more advanced formal schooling, work schedule, and familiarity with the US meant that he took the lead in everything related to Princess’ schooling. He helped her with her homework every evening, read through the handouts sent home, and usually attended events such as parent teacher conferences alone.

Their gender bargain shifted momentarily, however, when Princess’ baby sister was born and her mother left work for several months. Like Emily’s parents, Fede and Cinthia saw a new baby as something that should be celebrated for both parents. For example, they had a festive baby shower with friends and family in NYC, filled with men, women, and families. Many of the games focused on Federico’s role as a father—in one recording from the party he sat blindfolded
on the carpet, an enormous toy pacifier around his neck, as he had to race another man in changing a doll’s diaper and clothing. Once Brenda was born, Federico picked up a second job and also took over all of the household responsibilities, such as cleaning and cooking, while Cinthia healed from her cesarean. They also signed Princess up for homework help at the local bilingual service agency, as her father was less available to help her at this time and her mother was relatively unsure of how to help with her homework. Federico was utterly exhausted during these months and took up smoking more frequently than he had before because of the stress. Several months later Cinthia returned to work while Brenda was cared for by an extended family member during the day, and Federico cut back to his primary job. Their gender bargain returned to their status quo after this, and Federico seemed much more relaxed than he had in the exhausting months with a newborn baby.

_Federico’s two worlds of fatherhood._ Unlike the rest of the fathers from this study who had grown up until early adulthood in Mexico, Federico had spent the last part of his childhood in the United States. Like many other fathers, however, he wanted to approach fatherhood as being different from his own father: “And since I didn’t spend a lot of time with him, I try to do it with my daughter. So that she has what I didn’t have.” [Q31] And he did spend lots of time with her. As described above, their weekly routines included afternoons and evenings together, and during the weekends they went out to restaurants, movies, parks, Chuck E. Cheese, or to malls. He was also very knowledgeable of Princess’ personality and was skillful at reading her somewhat strong character and figuring out how to get her out of a funk. He often appeared more strict and serious than many other fathers, and he and Cinthia commented that Princess listened to him more because Cinthia was demasiado dulce [too sweet]. He had high expectations for Princess and taught her lots of things. People said that he and Princess had similar personalities, and they certainly knew how to push each other’s buttons. As the following excerpt with Fede (F),
Princess (P), and Cinthia (C) illustrates, their ways of demonstrating affection usually entailed teasing rather than hugs and kisses. In this interaction Federico was losing as he played a tennis video game in their bedroom, and Princess and Cinthia poked fun at his poor performance.

Excerpt 8
2. P: Ahorita va a sudar. ((Giggly))
3. F: Aw shit. ((Something bad happened in the game as he was playing)).
4. P: Daddy- you're doin pretty good?
5. ((C and P laugh. F smiles and does not respond.))
6. P: Are you losin, loser? How many are you? Get those— one two and five. Wow!
7. You have to beat her.
8. C: Que significa ‘beat’?
9. P: Um gánala

1. C: He’s going to sweat. Haha.
2. P: He’s going to sweat soon. ((Giggly))
3. F: Aw shit. ((Something bad happened in the game as he was playing.))
4. P: Daddy- you're doin pretty good?
5. ((C and P laugh. F smiles and does not respond.))
6. P: Are you losin, loser? How many are you? Get those— one two and five. Wow!
7. You have to beat her.
8. C: What does ‘beat’ mean?
9. P: Um beat her.
It was common to hear Princess jokingly call her dad a loser, and he would sometimes return the comments or jokingly tell her to “cállate” or “shut up.” When Cinthia was part of these translanguaged interactions, Princess often took on the role as translator, such as explaining that “beat” means “gánala” (line 9). Federico’s and Princess’ relationship appeared very different from Fede’s somewhat estranged relationship with his own father: Although they both lived in Marshall, they barely spoke with one another.

Federico’s navigation of two worlds of fatherhood perhaps became most apparent when their lives changed dramatically during the spring of Princess’ second grade year. As is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, he was arrested and deported for a minor infraction. After several months in holding facilities he returned to the world of rural Puebla, which was very unfamiliar and different for a man who had become a father and husband in NYC and Marshall. While there he had to negotiate fathering from a distance, living in a country he barely knew any more, and living in a place without family or friendship networks (they all lived in the United States). He also had to face others’ evaluations of his and Cinthia’s gender bargain, such as what most people in Puebla saw as a strange arrangement that his wife and children would not rejoin him as soon as he arrived in Mexico. In many ways, his return to Mexico was a very clear example of navigating two worlds and highlighted differences in gender ideologies for them in Marshall compared to what was expected in this smaller Mexican town where he was born.

A New Generation of Mexican Immigrant Fathers

As this chapter has illustrated, there were very different gender bargains across the seven families from this study. The stereotype that Mexican heritage men are the primary breadwinners and Mexican heritage women are in charge of the household was simply not true for many
families. Even when it was somewhat true for certain families during certain moments in time, it did not preclude fathers from playing important roles in their children’s lives and prioritizing their free time for their children. In addition to the many differences among fathers and families, this new generation of Mexican immigrant fathers did appear to have several things in common. All seven men valued time with their children, the importance of educación [moral education] in terms of well-mannered-ness, as well as education in terms of schooling opportunities. Most of these seven fathers also felt it was important to be affectionate and caring with their children, although they embodied this affection somewhat differently, such as teasing versus kisses. Hard work and sacrifice for their children also emerged as central in these fathers’ lives. Finally, all fathers distanced themselves from another common stereotype about Mexican men: That they are machista.

Most fathers saw machismo as a cultural model to which some people orient. Every father or couple could easily articulate characteristics of a machista man, as Ignacio (I) and Alejandra (A) explained in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 8

1. I: Well, for me machismo is “I am the macho of my house.” And the wife is the one who
2. is home and if you’re going out you have to ask for your husband’s permission… And
3. they are the ones that can have two, three, four women. And they are the machos. And
4. these machista people say to their sons “You have to be,” maybe a word the child
5. doesn’t even understand, “A BADASS”… Maybe you get into fights, that is a
6. macho… Or they grab young girls’ butts.
7. A: And his woman always has to be at home. “Women are made for cleaning, women
8. weren’t made to work, women weren’t made to study. Women were only made to
9. do housework. Women don’t have voice or vote. She does what I tell her”… And if
Similarly Evaristo explained that machismo is “that they deny their woman everything” [Q32] and Mateo emphasized that “it’s a very possessive man. Someone who says ‘Oh, my woman, I have her at home.’” [Q33] Parents appeared to disagree somewhat, however, on where and when machismo existed.

Similar to Julio’s earlier explanation that his father was from the time of los machistas, many focal fathers felt that machismo was a thing of the distant past and was far less common everywhere in 2011. For example, Julio explained, “I think in my family there aren’t many who are like that anymore. I think there are people like that. I think it’s like everything, there has to be a little bit of everything, right? But I hope it ends soon.” [Q34] Similar to Julio’s hope that all forms of machismo come to an end, Federico discussed how he felt it didn’t make sense as a mentality:

*It does exist, but a long time ago. It doesn’t work anymore. Today there’s no point because women are liberated and have the same rights as a man, or even more. They have it easier than a man, and before it wasn’t like that. Before, our minds were more closed, and not anymore... I help equally with things like cleaning, washing clothes. She cooks. I say that machismo did exist and that there’s still a Mexican here and there who claims to be machista. But they don’t know that women have rights too and that with a woman you can get more done than if you were alone. And she has helped me a lot, so I realized that being machista doesn’t work.* [Q35]

Several parents also believed a machista orientation to life reflected ignorance and something that was learned from one’s parents. For example, in the following excerpt Ignacio (I) and Alejandra (A) disapprovingly shared how some people in Mexico were taught this approach to gender relations and fatherhood from a very young age.

Excerpt 9

1. **I:** To me it’s ignorance.

2. **A:** And for me it comes from what people learn from their parents, and they want their
children to be the same as them. And that’s not right. Well, for me.

((Laughter))

I: That for me is ignorance, machista. Well, tell me, if I have a woman, then I depend on my woman. And if she wants to disappoint me, well that’s her problem. But there are people who are so ignorant that his woman has to ask him permission to go to the bathroom. Maybe it sounds bad, but it’s the truth... What happens is that in our country our parents teach us not to let ourselves get beat by anyone. My parents weren’t like that. I know people who had those kinds of parents who’d say “You have to obey your husband”...But those are the people who don’t go to school. That is machismo.

Similar to Ignacio and Alejandra’s earlier discussion of class-based differences among the Mexican immigrants in Marshall, here Ignacio emphasized how in many cases in “our country” [Mexico] “our parents” teach “us” (lines 8 – 9) to be this way. He then emphasized, however, that this was not the case in his household. Other fathers such as in Julio’s story above, however, discussed how their own fathers had been this way and this was how they were taught, yet it is not how they oriented to their gender ideologies or approaches to fatherhood. In the following excerpt Paloma (P) and Cristian (C) discussed their own upbringings and how Cristian’s gender bargain in his relationship with Paloma caused tension with his mother who oriented to a more machista version of gender bargains.

Excerpt 10

P: Once she gets married to that person, she can’t go anywhere. She always has to be there. There, there, there, there and nowhere else.

C: And unfortunately these people’s families support this.

P: It’s a custom. It’s a custom because that’s what they always say. “Ok, he can go out
whenever he wants because that’s how it was for your grandmother, me, always.”

C: My mother, the way that she is, was like that with me. It was always what we

disagreed about. She’d tell me “Your wife at home and you live your life the way you
always have.” “No, you’re wrong about that.” That’s what I told my mother. I want
to spend time with her (my wife) because when we were dating I barely got to see her.

So that started problems between me and my mother. That’s where the whole situation
of having different approaches to life started. It wasn’t fair because I felt we both had
the right to have fun together (C and P). If we were going to have fun, we’d do it
together. And if we wouldn’t, well, then we’d both stay sad.

Cristian’s case illustrates a clear instance in which growing up in a family that oriented toward a
machista outlook did not automatically result in having those same beliefs. For example, Cristian
saw his own parents as believing in machista relationships and his refusal to follow suit caused
great tension between him and his mother. He and Paloma regularly contrasted their relationships
as a couple and family with couples in their small town in Puebla. Cristian disapproved of his
male relatives back in Puebla who had kids and a wife at home, but still spent their weekends
hanging out at bars with friends as if they were still single. He loved doing things with his wife
and family, similar to the life he saw his boss living in the US, which caused great tension with
his own parents who did not accept this mentality.

Parallels were frequently drawn between machista men and liberated women. Many
parents emphasized that although machista approaches were more common in Mexico compared
to the US, and especially within rural Mexico, they were present to varying degrees everywhere.
Many parents felt that across the world, across cultures, there were always some men like this.
Others focused on how some Mexican immigrant men maintained this orientation to their lives,
even when moving to a new place. For example, in a conversation about gender relations Cristian
explained “I have lots of friends who practically keep living their life from over there” [Q36] and
Ignacio similarly highlighted people he’d met that “they continue with the same Mexican roots.”

An inverse relationship between machismo and women’s rights tended to emerge in
parents’ talk: The instances in which men were more machista often occurred within instances
that women had less voice and vote in their families’ lives. Nonetheless, they did not feel that
there was a guarantee that “women give orders in the North” for several reasons. For example,
many parents felt that in many parts of Mexico many women were more liberated than they used
to be. In addition, several parents also emphasized that “la mujer Americana,” or women from the
United States (not necessarily women from other countries who move to the United States) know
their rights and are more liberated as well. A few parents also highlighted how children raised in
the United States from any background, who learn in school to call 911 when they are being
mistreated, will also have more rights than their mothers’ generation. And just like their
explanations of machismo, parents felt women’s rights varied because they knew different
examples of couples on both sides of the border with different gender bargains.

One thing that all of these fathers agreed upon about machismo, however, was that they
themselves were not machista. Throughout these conversations, perhaps in part because they were
talking to “una mujer Americana,” each father went out of his way to emphasize his disapproval
of machismo and that he did not approach life in this way. Several wives also highlighted that
their husbands were not machista. Several parents, such as the example from Julio below,
described their evaluations of machismo and gender equity.

1. Like people who impose and only want to impose and don’t let their partner make a
decision too. Keep in mind that I’m not one of those people who come home and do that.
2. … Because a lot of people take advantage of—many men take advantage of women.
3. I say that’s not right, that’s from a long time ago. Because, for example, if I hit Lucinda
and Gregorio sees me, that’s not right… A woman is equal, let her have the same
Here is it clear that Julio disapproved of many of the characteristics associated with machismo, such as physical violence (lines 4 - 5), and he again highlighted the importance of not exposing children to this lifestyle (line 4 - 6).

This quote from Julio highlights a key insight from this chapter: Widely circulating discourses tended to lump together a host of characteristics about Mexican immigrant men. It was often assumed, on some level, that a Mexican immigrant man was the primary wage earner, did little housework, and spent little time with his children. For some people Mexican men may also be assumed to orient to a more machista approach to life and therefore were characterized as someone who drinks too much, is a womanizer, is physically violent, and does not believe men and women are equal. The fathers from this chapter illustrate how being a Mexican immigrant man is much more complex than this. For example, Cristian, Evaristo, and Julio were all the primary wage earners in their homes and did very little housework. Nonetheless, they still wanted to be very involved in their children’s lives and made the most of their free time to be with their families. Daniel and his wife worked together outside of their home, and each took on various household responsibilities as well. Mateo and Ignacio trooped upon the image of traditional gender norms in their references to being the “woman” of the relationship, recognizing and contesting the stereotypic gender bargain through their roles as primary caretakers of their children while their wives were the primary earners outside of their homes.

The reality of how the gender bargain was lived out in each of these cases may not have paralleled U.S. middle class norms of gender equity or co-parenting, but their underlying ideologies aimed for much greater equality with their wives than they had known in their upbringings in Mexico several decades ago. As I have illustrated through the stories of these seven men who often became fathers and husbands in the US, each of these fathers faced their
own negotiations of their two worlds of fatherhood and married life in varying ways. The examples in this chapter have shown that there are no two clearly delineated worlds such as Mexico and the US for participants in this study: Each individual had his own history of experiences and resources that were much more nuanced than the relatively static application of the traditional two worlds trope could represent. Perhaps Cristian captured it best by emphasizing, “Cada cabeza es un mundo. Cada quien piensa diferente y ha tenido una vida diferente.” [Every mind is a universe. Everyone thinks differently and has had a different life.] A repertoires approach provides the tools to capture each person’s unique experiences and resources. In the following chapter I focus on an important aspect of being a father in the US: making sense of their children’s English-based schooling. I shift my focus from all seven fathers to explore the movement of semiotic resources across home and school contexts for two second graders and their fathers.
Chapter 5

Communicative Repertoires across Home and School Contexts

This chapter explores trajectories of students’ semiotic resources across home and school contexts. I explore how signs from students’ communicative repertoires travel and get recognized, taken up, hybridly deployed, and given varying meanings for participants across institutional spaces. I focus on the cases of Emily and Abi to illustrate differences in how re-embedded semiotic elements get understood at home and school and how this facilitates or constrains communication about schooling. In the first part I briefly review semiotic trajectories (Chapter 2) and present the taxonomy that I use to analyze aspects of students’ repertoires. Framing the analysis for this chapter, this taxonomy provides a framework to talk about aspects smaller than entire repertoires and larger than semiotic elements that emerged as relevant for successful communication regarding schooling. I highlight differences between what students implicitly understand or adopt versus what they can pedagogically explain.

In the second part I explore how English school-based elements, which are part of school-based procedural routines, travel and take on meanings within students’ homes. By tracing the trajectory of semiotic signs across contexts of learning for Emily, I illustrate the ways in which she and her parents achieved their communicative goals. I compare this to the case of Abi, who had a difficult time successfully re-embedding school elements into interactions at home. I argue that factors such as students’ mastery of school-based procedural routines and parents’ stances towards repertoire expansion play more significant roles in facilitating communication about schooling than knowing discrete linguistic forms in English or Spanish. In this section I also highlight differences in teachers’ awareness regarding the ways Mexican immigrant students could talk about English school-based routines with their parents.
In the third section I examine the flow of repertoires from home to school. I explore how aspects of students’ repertoires that I call *metacommunicative strategies* were learned from their fathers and recognized, or overlooked, within the school day. I begin with an examination of the ways Abi developed metacommunicative strategies to creatively manage interpersonal relationships and draw attention to linguistic forms through interactions with her father. I then discuss the ways that these strategies, which Abi had predominantly mastered in Spanish, were overlooked within the English schooling context. Next, I examine Emily’s strategies related to linguistic dexterity and the ways she developed this skill through her father’s explicit lessons and implicit modeling. In this section I examine how Emily recontextualized these strategies about appropriateness and respect with her classmates during the school day, and how these metacommunicative strategies were recognized and celebrated by teachers. In the final section I discuss the educational and familial implications of these findings.

**Trajectories and Taxonomy of Communicative Repertoires**

**Semiotic Trajectories**

As I described in Chapter 2, I analyze the trajectories of specific semiotic resources by carefully tracing how they travel across contexts, are deployed in new ways, and take on varying interpretations for different people. By signs I mean semiotic forms (lexical items, gestures, etc.) that comprise the genres discussed in this chapter as well as metacommunicative strategies that participants adapt to recognize, build upon, and deploy semiotic forms across diverse repertoires. Recontextualization occurs when a sign is removed from its original context (such as school) and incorporated into a new one (such as home), thus adopting new interpretive layers and meanings (Blommaert, 2005). Signs are contextualized, or given a certain interpretation, by participants.
based on the cues in the local surroundings and participants’ histories of experiences with that sign (Blommaert, 2005). Some semiotic forms travel quite freely and take on highly congruent meanings across contexts, some adopt new meanings, and some simply do not travel successfully. For semiotic forms to get recontextualized, they must be *recognized* as meaningful: How a sign is noticed and ‘read’ depends upon its social domain, or the subset of people for whom the language use links to the intended meaning (Agha, 2007). In multilingual communities like Marshall, communication often entails finding ways to make repertoire elements recognizable across autonomous languages and institutional contexts. My analyses in this chapter focus on the tracking of specific signs related to schooling and their varying interpretations across trajectories.

**Taxonomy of Communicative Repertoires**

As many scholars emphasize (e.g., Blommaert, 2007; Gumperz, 1964; Rymes, 2010), what is often referred to as an individual’s “language” is better understood as her “repertoire.” As I describe in Chapter 2, a person’s communicative repertoire is everything that she is able to achieve with words and other semiotic resources. Repertoires expand based on experiences and interactions with others. In this chapter I focus on specific examples of things that students were able to do with their English, Spanish, translanguaged varieties, and other semiotic resources across home and school contexts. In order to facilitate discussion of these communicative resources, I have adopted the following taxonomy (Figure 1). This taxonomy provides terminology to more concretely discuss and understand different aspects of students’ repertoires and highlights components that emerged as highly significant in achieving meaningful communication about schooling across autonomous languages [Spanish and English] and institutional contexts [home and school]. My aim is not to create an exhaustive taxonomy that would account for all semiotic forms in an individual’s repertoire. Instead my goal is to provide
key terminology regarding aspects of students’ repertoires related to their schooling. This taxonomy is meant as a bridge between the larger entity of “repertoire” and the smaller entities of “semiotic signs/resources/elements/forms”.

Figure 1. Taxonomy of an individual’s communicative repertoires. An individual has some shared and some unique genres and metacommunicative strategies in each of her repertoires. She may have implicit and / or pedagogical familiarity with each genre and strategy.

Communicative repertoires. For bilingual students, I discuss them having repertoires in the plural because of the repertoire of things they can do in English and the repertoire of things they can do in Spanish. For example, most focal students could easily talk about reading logs predominantly in English or their primera comunión [first communion] predominantly in
Spanish, but not about their reading logs in Spanish or their first communion in English. As Figure 1 illustrates, repertoires in different languages are not necessarily balanced, and one may be more expansive than the other. In addition, as represented by the overlapping spheres, there is overlap among certain aspects. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, for translanguagers in multilingual communities their repertoires are also intimately connected because successful interactions require participants to draw upon resources across repertoires. As I discuss below, some things, such as certain types of genres, may transfer across an individual’s repertoires more easily than others. In addition, I argue that the development and deployment of metacommunicative strategies help an individual navigate among diverse repertoires.

**Genres.** An individual’s repertoires are comprised of many genres. Building upon Hymes (1974) and Briggs and Bauman (1992), I approach genres as “conventionalized yet highly flexible organizations of formal means and structures that constitute complex frames of reference for communicative practice” (Briggs & Bauman, 1992, p. 141). Genres include communicative practices such as interviews, teasing, gossip, or parent-teacher meetings. Genres are not universal across contexts and the same genre may vary across repertoires or even within an individual’s own repertoires (Briggs & Bauman, 1992). For example, Briggs (1986) demonstrated significant differences between the interview genre he had grown up with that is common in academics and Mexicanos’ conceptions of this same genre in Northern New Mexico. Through experiences with Mexicanos he was able to cultivate both interview genres in his own repertoires. Similarly, we can imagine that the genre of parent teacher meetings may vary for individuals whose repertoires were developed in rural Mexico versus suburban Pennsylvania. Like Hymes (1974), Briggs and Bauman (1992), and Blommaert (2007) I am not suggesting that all interactions can fit neatly into identifiable genres. Interactions are complex and people’s repertoires are comprised of different genres, styles, registers, and other hybrid semiotic acts (Blommaert, 2007). I focus on genres
(rather than styles, registers, etc.) because they help describe the broader types of somewhat patterned communicative interactions that made up a substantial portion of students’ communicative repertoires. As we saw in the example of Abi and Mateo’s interaction around interviewing in Chapter 1 (Excerpt 1), individuals develop genres into their communicative repertoires through exposure to them (e.g., watching them on TV), trying them out (e.g., interviewing her father), and explicitly being taught the nuanced semiotic components that are part of these communicative acts (e.g., instruction on how to hold the microphone). As Figure 1 illustrates, individuals may be able to deploy some genres in English, others in Spanish, and some in both.

One key genre that I discuss in this chapter I call procedural routines. By using the term “routine” I do not mean that they are scripted: Although they are likely to contain certain components, interactions unfold flexibly. In school in particular, there are certain routines that are a regular part of the week. For example, there are certain procedures used in a given classroom when transitioning among activities, discussing the math workbook, or completing a science experiment. These procedures travel from school to home contexts through students’ homework assignments and talk about their schooling. In an English-medium schooling environment like Grant that utilizes semi-scripted curricula throughout much of the day, these procedures often include highly specific lexical items in English (such as “reading log,” “number story,” etc.) that can be difficult for students to re-embed within their home-based interactions if they do not have a deep understanding of the procedural routines and what these terms represent conceptually. For the procedural routines genre, there are also common sub-genres for second graders at Grant. For example, the sub-genre of completing a “number story” for their math curriculum requires very specific steps that vary somewhat across problems, yet are highly structured.
As Figure 1 illustrates, I also differentiate between implicit and pedagogical familiarity of genres and sub-genres such as procedural routines. Students are implicitly familiar with a procedural routine if they can deploy it or understand it, but not necessarily explain it to others. Students have a pedagogical familiarity with a procedural routine if they have a metalevel understanding of it and can teach it to others. For example, a student who can complete a number story has implicit familiarity whereas a student who can explain the steps and reasoning for a number story has pedagogical familiarity. There are also home-based procedural routines that children may be familiar with, such as getting a younger sibling ready for bed, dinnertime negotiations of what they will eat, or translating for their parents at local stores. These procedural routines vary from child to child and tend to travel less into school-based interactions.

Metacommunicative strategies. Metacommunication is talk about communication. This includes evaluations, descriptions, interpretations, or reports about communicative acts (Briggs, 1986). I use the term “strategy,” (rather than “routine,” which is adopted by Briggs, 1986) to emphasize the intentionality of these metacommunicative acts. These acts are strategic ways with words that students adopt in order to manage interactions across repertoires and contexts. I focus on two types of metacommunicative strategies. The first I call implicit strategies, or strategies that students adopt into their repertoires to achieve communicative goals. The second I call pedagogical strategies, which include explicitly teaching others about how to use these metacommunicative strategies. For example, a student who adopts creative word play into her talk is utilizing an implicit strategy. A student who explains creative word play to others is utilizing a pedagogical strategy. Metacommunicative strategies helped students navigate among diverse repertoires. As Figure 1 shows, some strategies may be deployable across repertoires, but not always.
I focus on the trajectories of metacommunicative strategies in this chapter because they emerged as a significant factor regarding how students were able to navigate across diverse repertoires. In addition, compared to their more monolingual peers, bilingual children from this study had an abundance of metacommunicative strategies: Perhaps the necessity to navigate super diverse repertoires helped them develop these strategies. These strategies were also something that students regularly learned from their fathers. As I illustrate in the third section of this chapter, sometimes they were recognized and built upon in school, and sometimes they were not. Sometimes a student could effectively apply the strategy in Spanish and English, and sometimes she could not. Developing and employing pedagogical (rather than implicit) strategies in particular appeared to be highly significant for students’ navigation across contexts. Rather than just having an implicit understanding of different genres, procedural routines, or semiotic resources, students who had the ability to explain these aspects to their parents and teachers and expand these adults’ repertoires in the process appeared most successful at achieving communication regarding schooling from school to home and vice versa. For students from immigrant families in particular, this helped them create mutual understanding for the important adults in their lives across contexts of learning.

**Travel of Semiotic Elements from School to Home**

During the school-day students drew upon their communicative repertoires in English and Spanish to meet their academic and social goals, but English was the sole language of instruction, curricular materials, and assessment. Second grade teachers only drew upon English resources in their teaching, except for an occasional “mira” [look] to get students’ attention or “casa” [home] to emphasize things that should be shown to parents at home. When students talked about school at home—in informal conversations about their day, or more formally
through their homework—differences emerged in the types of things that many students could talk about with their parents. Below I trace a trajectory of signs from Emily’s English-based schooling into her home to illustrate how different genres travelled across contexts and how her family managed to achieve their interactional goals even when the precise linguistic signs were not part of their communicative repertoires.

This example began on a spring day in Mrs. Drescher’s class. Emily had just finished a social studies unit on geography, and one of the activities entailed labeling the continents and oceans on a map in English, which they were then allowed to take home. That afternoon, during a science lesson, Mrs. Drescher led a whole-group lesson regarding what things were edible and inedible. One student mentioned dirt, which resulted in an educational conversation regarding its edibility, as many students had younger siblings who were always putting dirt in their mouths. Mrs. Drescher agreed that little kids did like to do that. She explained that although a little is okay, overall you shouldn’t eat dirt because there could be little pieces of glass inside. She also warned that there could be chemicals or poison in the ground, and you wouldn’t even know it. Before moving on to the next term, she reasoned that overall it was best not to let your little siblings eat dirt.

That afternoon Emily (E) walked home from the bus stop with her mother Paloma (P) and baby brother Cristofer (C). Her dad had not yet returned home from his first job and they decided to sit outside on the porch to eat a snack and play. As her baby brother crawled around on the ground Emily took the map she had drawn out of her bag and began reading what she had written on the map to her mother.

Excerpt 1

1. E: I did this in the fourth, it was in the fourth month, and it was in the fifth. Eleven o’clock. “Continents are huge pieces of land. We have seven continents in the
world. They are North America, South America, Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Antarctica. We also have four oceans, Atlantic, Arctic, Pacific, Indian, and Arctic. It is important to try to keep it clean.”

P: ¿Qué quiere decir en español?
E: Es que a veces no sé todas las palabras que están en inglés en español.
P: ¿No?
E: ((E shakes her head no as she bites into a soft pretzel.)) Y éste es el mapa que yo hice.
P: Ajá, está muy bonito.
E: North America, South America, Arctic, Antarctica, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Australia, a little island.
P: ¿Cuándo lo hiciste?
E: Este lo hice en la clase, en el fourth y en el fifth, 2011.
P: Cristofer, ¿qué estás haciendo?
E: La hora que lo hice fue 11 o’clock.
A: Ok.
E: Cristofer, please don’t look inside there. Cristofer, Cristofer. Not good.
P: Cristofer, ¿qué hiciste? ¿Te echaste todo eso a la boca? ((C put a big piece of pretzel in his mouth.)) Ay Cristofer.
E: Sabías que Cristofer no debe comer—tenemos que ponerlo en otro lugar. ¿Sabes por qué?
P: ¿Por qué?
E: Dirt no es buena para las personas porque te mata. Porque no sabe que tienen. No sabes si tienen little chiquito vidrios.
P: Vidrios chiquitos.
27. **E:** O si este—

28. **P:** —¡Vidrios chiquitos!

29. **E:** Vidrios chiquitos, o también puede ser que ponieron **poison**—

30. **P:** —Pusieron, pusieron.

31. **E:** Pusieron **poison**. Y luego te puedes enfermar, y te mueres.

32. **P:** Ok.

33. **E:** El otro día dijo la maestra en la escuela.

34. **P:** ¿Oh sí?

35. ( **E** nods her head.)

36. **P:** ¿Cuándo les dijo?

37. **E:** Este día.

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**English Translation:** ORIGINAL ENGLISH IN BOLD

1. **E:** *I did this in the fourth, it was in the fourth month, and it was in the fifth. Eleven o’clock. “Continents are huge pieces of land. We have seven continents in the world. They are North America, South America, Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Antarctica. We also have four oceans, Atlantic, Arctic, Pacific, Indian, and Arctic. It is important to try to keep it clean.”*

2. **P:** What does that mean in Spanish?

3. **E:** It’s that, sometimes, I don’t know all of the English words in Spanish.

4. **P:** You don’t?

5. **E:** (( **E** shakes her head no as she bites into a soft pretzel.)) And this is the map I made.

6. **P:** Aha. It’s very pretty.

7. **E:** North America, South America, Arctic, Antarctica, Africa, Europe, Asia, and
12. **Australia, a little island.**

13. **P:** When did you make it?

14. **E:** I made this in my class, on the **fourth** and on the **fifth**, **2011**.

15. **P:** Cristofer, what are you doing?

16. **E:** The time when I made it was **11 o’clock**.

17. **A:** Ok.

18. **E:** **Cristofer, please don’t look inside there. Cristofer, Cristofer. Not good.**

19. **P:** Cristofer, what did you do? Did you put all of that in your mouth? ((C put a big piece of pretzel n his mouth.)) **Ay Cristofer.**

20. **E:** Did you know that Cristofer shouldn’t eat—we have to put him somewhere else.

21. Do you know why?

22. **P:** Why?

23. **E:** **Dirt** isn’t good for people because it kills them. Because you don’t know what’s in it.

24. You don’t know if it has pieces of glass **little**.

25. **P:** Little pieces of glass.

26. **E:** Of if um—

27. **P:** —Little pieces of glass!

28. **E:** Little pieces of glass, or also it could be that they putted **poison**—

29. **P:** —They put, they put.

30. **E:** They put **poison.** And then you can get sick and die.

31. **P:** Ok.

32. **E:** My teacher said that the other day at school.

33. **P:** Oh yeah?

34. ((E nods her head))
36. P: When did she tell you that?

37. E: Today.

This excerpt represents the recontextualization of signs from two distinct school-based genres that travelled unevenly into her home-based interactions. The first, her explanation of the map, was a more rigid genre of school-based procedural routines with which Emily had implicit familiarity. Emily did not have many of the semiotic resources within her Spanish repertoire or the deeper pedagogical knowledge of the academic content to creatively explain the central meanings through the Spanish resources at her disposal. The second, an educational conversation genre on the subject of eating dirt, with which she had clear pedagogical familiarity, was more easily deployed within her home-based interaction.

Emily’s translanguaging abilities and flexible repertoire deployment are most apparent in lines 18 - 37, when she re-embedded highly congruent content and the interactional force of her teacher’s educational conversation regarding the dangers of eating dirt. Her pedagogical familiarity with this genre (on the topic of eating dirt) is clear and she was able to step into the teacher role in her explanations. For example, she offered the known answer question “Do you know why?” (line 22) to her mother and then provided the various reasons for her argument (lines 24-25, 29, and 31). Throughout this interaction she did her best to accommodate to her mother’s Spanish-dominant repertoires and although it is clear that correctness came second to reaching their communicative goals, Paloma occasionally took on the expert role in terms of Spanish repertoire elements. For example, she corrected Emily’s adjective order of “chiquito vidrios” [pieces of glass little] (lines 25 – 29) and irregular verb conjugation of “ponieron” [putted] (lines 29 – 30) to try and expand her daughter’s communicative repertoires in standard Spanish. Thus, the recontextualization of these signs within her home also took on the new purpose of Spanish repertoire expansion for Emily. This school to home trajectory illustrates that, for this
conversation genre, Emily was able to deploy the referential meaning of the signs in Spanish, interactionally achieve her goal of not letting her brother eat dirt, and achieve the additional goal of Spanish repertoire expansion.

Emily’s home-based deployment of the procedural routine about her map (lines 1-16) was less successful in terms of sharing congruent academic content. She had implicit familiarity with these school-based procedures, such as writing the date and accurately reading English texts, as they were part of most assignments in second grade. Successfully deploying this sub-genre in school was assessed through the accurate production in English and the demonstration of geographical information. She also produced these English-based texts at home (lines 1 – 16), but her mother did not belong to the same social domain as her teachers and classmates: She could not recognize or assess Emily’s recontextualization of these signs in English and Emily could not produce them in Spanish. Unlike the educational conversation genre that Emily could also employ in Spanish, she was far less familiar with the Spanish forms for the procedural routine about the map, such as the names of the continents and oceans. Attention to the trajectories of these different signs illustrates that English school-based signs from different sub-genres travelled unevenly into Emily’s home-based interactions and that repertoire expansion occurred more readily when Emily had pedagogical familiarity with a sub-genre.

In Emily’s home, when signs could not be recontextualized for their referential meaning (e.g., “whale” means “ballena”), they often took on new interactional meanings that reinforced positive communication regarding schooling. For example, interactionally Emily and Paloma were less concerned about knowing exact facts like geographical terms in English than Emily was of making her mother proud of her school-based work and her literacy skills as she read off the map. As I describe below, the same process occurred when Cristian pretended to fully understand Emily’s English-based recontextualizations: He was less concerned about expanding his English
repertoire about sea creatures than he was about demonstrating enthusiasm for Emily’s learning. The trajectories of these semiotic resources in Emily’s worlds of home and school point to the importance of flexibility and openness to continual repertoire expansion for all participants, including her parents.

In the multilingual families I studied, communication about schooling often occurs in varying multilingual arrangements among different members, causing school-based signs to sometimes remain in English and sometimes to change to Spanish. For example, when interacting with her father one-on-one, Emily often used her resources in English to explain what she had learned or to talk about her school day. Her father, for example, would have shared her teachers’ social domain about the map reading routine. Despite his expansive English repertoire, however, Cristian emphasized that he didn’t always know what she was talking about. For example, she regularly talked to him about an ocean book she was writing and spoke with enthusiasm about the section on whales. He admitted the challenge of not having the key term “whale” as part of his English repertoire, and faking that he knew what she was talking about in English to keep her enthusiastic and motivated regarding the project. Thus, the re-contextualization of the school signs about “whales” took on the meaning of sharing enthusiasm about school-based learning. In addition Cristian was very comfortable with the fact that Emily was regularly expanding her repertoire by learning many new things in English in school every day.

Every day as she grows. It’s different and I see that she keeps getting more intelligent and every day she learns new things and sometimes I say, “when she’s 14 years old she’ll already know more about life than me.” Now I teach her because—or we teach her among us about life—she’s going to know much more than I do. So for me it makes me very happy. It makes me really happy that she’s going to be someone who’s really important. Here, in Mexico, wherever she is. She’s going to have a beautiful life and be a respectful person that values what, with time, she achieves. [Q1]

He and Paloma enjoyed expanding their own repertoires through the things that Emily taught them from school. This sometimes included academic content such as explanations of historical
events in the US, cultural information such as the politically correct ways to refer to people from various races, and lexical items in English such as “whale.” Even when Emily did not know a lexical item in Spanish or Cristian did not know a lexical item in English, through their translanguaging practices they were able to accommodate to one another to achieve meaningful communication about her schooling. The constant expectation that everyone would accommodate when necessary, learn from one another, and put in the interactional work led to recontextualizations about schooling in their family.

Although they did not discuss them in terms of genres, Emily and her parents were conscious of differences in the types of things that Emily could accomplish in English and Spanish and they were constantly seeking out ways to expand Emily’s and their own repertoires. For example, Emily demonstrated excellent awareness regarding the elements that were part of her Spanish repertoire, emphasizing, “It’s that sometimes I don’t know all of the English words in Spanish” (line 7). Her parents were also aware of the types of things from her English-based repertoire Emily could and could not explain to them in Spanish. To facilitate the travel of signs about schooling across contexts, Cristian emphasized communicating in “a way that she [Emily] understands, and that we understand. Because yeah, there are a lot of terms she doesn’t know. She knows it in English.” [Q2] Unlike school where knowing things usually meant being able to explain them in English, here Cristian revealed that within their family “not knowing terms” meant not knowing them in Spanish. As we saw in Excerpt 1, Paloma, who had a more truncated English repertoire, often used Emily’s recontextualizations of English signs as opportunities to expand Emily’s repertoire in Spanish. For example, Paloma’s opening question of “What does that mean in Spanish?” (line 6) often served as a strategy to help Emily test out and build her Spanish repertoire. As we saw in Chapter 2 (Excerpt 1), Cristian also helped expand Emily’s repertoire by explaining new terms such as “finca” [estate] to her. As I discuss below, unlike
Emily’s parents, teachers varied in their level of awareness regarding students’ redeployment of signs across repertoires.

Teachers demonstrated different perspectives regarding how English school-based signs traveled into the homes of Mexican immigrant families. For example, Ms. Vega, who had been teaching for three years and rarely asked children to draw upon their Spanish-based repertoires in school to aid in their learning, felt that children from her classroom could talk about almost all school-based genres at home in Spanish. She explained,

_I would think so, because a lot of it, the basic geography is pretty - I would think they’d be able to because we don’t get too in depth with it, so I think they would have like, the appropriate Spanish terms for… the continents—for most of the science, I would think so, like the evaporation, maybe not specifically, but in other kid-friendly term, they’d be able to explain it._

Ms. Vega saw school to home communication as a translation of referential meanings, which she believed her multilingual students could successfully achieve. Because she did not appear to differentiate between referential translation (saying the same lexical items in Spanish) and recontextualizing (re-embedding lexical items in meaningful ways), she overestimated many students’ abilities to talk about school-based learning at home. She did recognize that some of the specific math terms might be challenging for children, “even though essentially I think the parents would know what the kids were doing.” As we saw above, geographic terms were not part of Emily’s repertoire in Spanish and in reality most Mexican immigrant families (and likely all families at Grant) struggled with their children’s math homework. Even when directions were sent home in Spanish, many immigrant parents were still unsure of how to help their children because in most cases the issue was not only a lack of familiarity with the lexical term (e.g., “borrowing,” “denominators,” etc.), but also included unfamiliarity with the procedural routines. Most children did not have a pedagogical familiarity with most topics covered in the math homework, which included advanced questions on topics they had just been introduced to that
day. And most parents did not have implicit or pedagogical familiarity with the highly specific math curriculum used at Grant, although they were expected to help their children with their homework. Ms. Vega oriented to a notion of successful school to home communication that assumed families simply needed to translate the lexical items from English to Spanish to communicate about schooling. This outlook overlooked differences in genres that children were able to deploy in Spanish as well as the importance of students’ pedagogical understanding of the procedural routines in order to explain things in “kid-friendly terms” to their parents. As we saw with Emily, at this point in her schooling translating discrete English repertoire elements did not appear critical to positive communication about schooling. Emily’s pedagogical familiarity with different procedural routines, her family members’ accommodation toward one another, and their proactive stance toward repertoire expansion appeared far more important.

In contrast, Mrs. Drescher, who had been teaching for over twenty years and sometimes encouraged students to use Spanish if they were not sure of how to say things in English, felt most students from Spanish-dominant homes would not be able to appropriately recontextualize their school-based signs in English within their homes unless they had pedagogical familiarity with the procedural routine. She explained,

> Now you’re talking remembering what was learned in the morning and remembering the actual word, like the actual content. I think there could be some struggles with things like that.... And then knowing the word in Spanish... Because I noticed that, you know, sometimes I’ll say to the children, “Well, say it in Spanish.” And then they’ll get halfway through and then they’ll go, “You know, I don’t know what it’s called in Spanish either. I don’t know if there’s a Spanish word for it.”... But, you know, they don’t – I think that they really have to know what I’ve taught and understand it to be able to translate it at home for their parents.

In contrast to Ms. Vega, translation for Mrs. Drescher was not just about expressing the same referential meaning in another language. In her explanation, she highlighted the importance of deep understanding in order to recontextualize school-based semiotic signs into home-based
activities. The following examples, from Emily and Abi, illustrate the importance of understanding procedural routines in order to achieve recontextualizations across contexts. In Excerpt 1 below, Emily completes her homework with her mother while her father is at work. Unlike the procedural routine of explaining the map, which Emily could not do in Spanish, here Emily (E) effectively wrote a number story predominantly in Spanish. Her pedagogical familiarity with this sub-genre helped her explain the homework to her mother Paloma (P).

Excerpt 2

1. **E:** It’s about how you make the number **seven**...you have to find like seven ways to describe the number **seven** so that the teacher can give you a **point** or a **sticker**.
2. **P:** Ok. Let’s do it then... “What is the way, another way, that you could describe **seven**?”
3. ((Reading Spanish instruction of Math Homework))
4. **E:** Make a story.
5. **P:** A story? Make a story about what? ((Doubtful))
6. **E:** About birds... “I saw five birds. Two came. What did that make?”
7. **P:** What?
8. **E:** Like um I have five ((holds up 5 fingers)) and then there are two more ((holds up 2 fingers)).
9. **P:** Oh yeah, it’s **seven**, ok.

In this example Emily already knew the procedures for the homework. By glancing at her math workbook she was pedagogically familiar with the number story routine and could explain it to her mother using terms that were part of her repertoire in Spanish. Emily paraphrased her teacher’s school-based directions of having to describe the number seven in different ways (line 1). She was also able to contextualize this activity within school procedures, emphasizing her goal of getting a point or sticker from the teacher if she completed her homework (line 2).
Paloma, still unsure of the assignment, enthusiastically said “we’ll do it,” positioning the assignment as both her and Emily’s responsibility. Paloma read the Spanish directions that Mrs. Drescher also sent home with the homework (lines 3 – 4) and did not understand Emily’s suggestion of “hacer una historia,” [make a story] (line 5), which was Emily’s translation of terms from the school-based procedures in which they “make up a story.” Again Emily creatively drew upon terms in her repertoire to get her point across: Rather than the more standard “make up” as “inventar” which may not have been part of her Spanish repertoire, she knew “make” was “hacer.” Paloma was unsure of the procedural routine for most of Emily’s explanation, as was demonstrated by her light questioning of “A story?” (line 6) and “What?” (line 8) after Emily’s further explanation. Yet once Emily completed the problem, using other semiotic features such as her hand gestures to represent the birds in her story, Paloma was able to understand what the assignment was asking. Here Emily was confident and clear on the content of this assignment, and the quotidian language of this specific math assignment meant she could easily recontextualize this school-based procedure into Spanish at home. In the process she also helped expand her mom’s knowledge of school based procedures, such as how to make a number story and the positive reinforcement they received in school for completing their work. If, like many other students, Emily did not have pedagogical familiarity with the number story sub-genre before attempting this assignment with her mother, it may not have successfully travelled or taken on such congruent meanings.

In the following Excerpt Abi (A) discussed with me (S) her frustrations of trying to explain the procedural routines of a science experiment that she had only implicit familiarity with to her father.

Excerpt 3

1. S: You were telling me once that you were trying to tell to your dad about a
2. science experiment.

3. A: Nothing. He doesn’t get it.

4. S: No? Do you tell him things—like do you know all of the words in Spanish or do you use some of the words in English—

5. A: —Yeah but I don’t what—when you change the stuff how do you say it? I forgot it. Um. Um. When you-- when you wanna take the solid from the liquid how do you say it?


7. A: Yeah! Evaporates it! Ah I don’t know how to say it in Spanish. ¿Evaporó? I know it, but I forget. Se evaporó-- evaporó.

In this interaction Abi talked about her attempts to explain her favorite science experiment to her father, and how her attempts to recontextualize these signs were unsuccessful. Abi had a much more expansive repertoire in Spanish than all other students from this study, but rarely had pedagogical familiarity with the procedural routines she learned in school. For example, unlike Emily who was very familiar with the entire number story sub-genre, Abi often had difficulty recalling the content she had learned during the day and was sometimes unsure of the lexical items in English or Spanish, such as “evaporate” or “evaporó” (line 10) that would guide her explanation. Although discreet lexical items were not the most important factor for communication about schooling, they could help anchor the interaction. And although Abi could often draw on many metacommunicative strategies to achieve communication, such as recognizing the cognates (Cummins, 2005) of “evaporate” and “evaporó,” she and her father were often less willing to accommodate to one another when she would talk about school-based interactions at home.
One of the obstacles regarding their communication of school-based activities was shaped by their language ideologies. Within their home Mateo (M) preferred that Abi (A) speak Spanish with him, and translanguaging practices that incorporated English school-based terms by most other students were much less common in interactions among Abi and Mateo. In addition, as seen in the excerpt below, Abi’s intentional switches to English when she was angry at him often led to further disagreement between the two.

Excerpt 4

1. **M:** Habla español hija. Tienes que hablar en español. Hay papás que no hablan nada de inglés m’hija. No van a entender todo lo que dices.

3. **A:** Hello dad. My mom speak English.

5. **A:** —And you don't speak. And you don’t speak.

7. **A:** Yes.

8. **M:** Tú que—tú si no hablas inglés. ¿Qué toda la gente habla inglés? ¿Qué no decías?

10. **A:** I will not care. Because I know that I'm Mexican and I’m happy all right. I don’t have to be mad when someone do that.

12. **A:** —Blah blah blah!

---

1. **M:** Speak Spanish daughter. You have to speak in Spanish. There are parents who do not speak any English honey. They are not going to understand everything you say.

3. **A:** Hello dad. My mom speak English.

4. **M:** Your mom—
5. *A:* —And you don’t speak. And you don’t speak.
6. *M:* I don’t. But look—— Would you like it if they did this to you?
7. *A:* Yes.
8. *M:* You—you if you didn’t speak English. That everyone speaks English? Didn’t you say?
9. *A:* I will not care. Because I know that I’m Mexican and I’m happy alright. I don’t have to be mad when someone do that.
10. *M:* If you [xxx]—
11. *A:* —Blah blah blah!

Although Abi was usually more capable of saying things in Spanish, she often switched to English, a language of power that she knew her father did not control, as an additional weapon when fighting with him to try and gain the upper hand. Spanish-speakers in particular are positioned as less competent than English speakers in the US (Hill, 1998; Zentella, 2003). Abi was keenly aware of differences in her parents’ English repertoires (lines 3 – 5) and regularly positioned her father as “burro” [*dumb*] for not knowing more. This also parallels Abi’s blaming of her father, “he doesn’t get it” (line 3, Excerpt 2), in her comments about the failed explanation of the science experiment. The language ideologies of being smart and knowing English regularly infiltrated their household, and appeared to add to Mateo’s unwillingness to accommodate to Abi’s school-based English repertoires. In addition, unlike Cristian who celebrated his daughter’s repertoires and the things that she could teach him, in the following excerpt Mateo (*M*) shared with me (*S*) his reservations about his daughter’s repertoires surpassing his own:

Excerpt 5

1. *S:* And do you think it’s a good thing that she translates?
2. *M:* Well, I don’t think so, it makes me sad, right?...
3. *S:* Why does it make you sad?
4. **M:** Well because she knows how to speak English well and I don’t, or. You suppose

5. that I’m the one who teaches her, not that she teaches me.

Although there is no doubt that Mateo took great interest in Abi’s life and cared about her schooling, he also tried to create a home environment that was separate from her school-day (See Chapter 6). Part of this entailed less interest and enthusiasm for her English-based school repertoires, especially when she also adopted English as a tool to position herself as superior to him. Although he clearly wanted her to be expanding her repertoires—including lexical items and academic skills—he also worried about the power dynamics of their relationship at times. He was cautious about her knowing more than him, worrying about how that may shape their parent-child roles, especially for his precocious daughter who liked to act like she was in charge. As a caring father he was less accommodating to her English signs as a strategy to protect their relationship and family life.

Comparatively, several factors appeared to impede school-based signs from being recontextualized within Abi’s household. First, overall Abi had limited pedagogical familiarity with many of the school-based procedural routines, making them difficult to re-embed within her home-based interactions. Second, her father was less willing to accommodate to her English school-based repertoire deployment due to the ways language ideologies created a divisive environment within their household. Third, Mateo was less open to repertoire expansion in terms of learning things from Abi from school. As I illustrate in Chapter 6, this does not mean that Mateo was uninvolved in Abi’s schooling, or that he was negatively evaluated by her teachers. It simply means that he preferred to create a home-based environment in which Spanish repertoires were celebrated and that less formally academic repertoires were nurtured.

It is also important to highlight that Abi and Emily represent two extremes of student “types” in terms of school to home semiotic trajectories. Semiotic elements appeared to flow
most freely from school to Emily’s home and members of her family appeared most open and proactive in terms of repertoire expansion across languages and contexts. Abi appeared least successful at communicating about school at home and although she had the most expansive repertoire in Spanish and, over time, strong school-based repertoire expansion as well, there were fewer intersections of these different repertoires. Most other students fell at some point in between Emily and Abi. In the following section I explore the movement of semiotic elements in the opposite direction: from home to school. I focus on how students’ metacommunicative strategies, which were often learned from their fathers, helped them navigate across diverse repertoires.

**Travel of Semiotic Elements from Home to School**

Mothers are often positioned as the primary language developers for young children within the home, yet this study illustrated that Mexican immigrant fathers also played an important role in developing their second-graders’ communicative repertoires. As I will demonstrate through the cases of Abi and Emily below, fathers helped expand their children’s repertoires through both explicit instruction as well as implicit modeling during their routine interactions. These two cases illustrate the important roles that these fathers played in the development of metacommunicative strategies in particular—strategies about communication—and how these strategies travelled into their schooling environments.

**Mateo’s and Abi’s Metacommunicative Strategies**

Mateo and Abi had creative and witty ways with words and often adopted metacommunicative strategies to achieve communicative and interactional goals. Like Mateo’s roles in the interview genre interaction in Chapter 1 (Excerpt 1), he often modeled and explicitly
instructed Abi in different metacommunicative strategies, which Abi incorporated into her everyday interactions. In this section I focus on two strategies. The first I call *participant examples* (drawing from Wortham, 1994). Wortham (1994) illustrates how children and educators named students as hypothetical personae to explore curricular topics, which simultaneously positioned that named participant as a certain social type. My use of participant examples occurs across home and school contexts and focuses on Mateo’s and Abi’s creative incorporations of participants into songs and stories in order to achieve interpersonal work. The second strategy I call *lexical ambiguity*. This strategy focused on Mateo and Abi’s polysemic metalinguistic awareness, often through *albures*, or Mexican double-entendres. I explore Mateo’s modeling of these strategies and Abi’s adaptation of them across home and school contexts. I highlight how, despite their potential to enhance Abi’s literacy development and English repertoire expansion in school, they were rarely recognized or built upon due to their deployment in Spanish in an English Only environment.

*Participant examples.* Mateo and Abi’s application of the participant example strategy often occurred through listening to music or storytelling. Mateo loved music, and there was rarely a moment when one of his “canciones viejitas” [*old songs*] that Abi loved to tease about was not playing in the background. He would often interrupt any given interaction to have his interlocutors (me, Abi, Susana, friends) listen to specific lyrics that he found particularly meaningful. For example, one day during a visit he received a phone call as the three of us were listening to music. Part way through he made a gesture that looked like a volume dial, so I told Abi to turn the volume down so he could hear his phone call better. As soon as he hung up he asked why we hadn’t listened to him—he had been signaling for us to turn the volume up to hear some incredible lyrics! As he sang along he would also tailor the lyrics to his interlocutors and local surroundings, weaving in local participants to achieve interpersonal work. For example, one
afternoon he and Abi were flipping through a book of Spanish children’s songs and Abi (A) wanted Mateo (M) to sing one he didn’t know very well.

Excerpt 6

1. **M:** I don’t know this one daughter. It says “Let’s go to Abi’s house tun tun. To eat fish tun tun. Fried and grilled, tun tun. In a straw pan, tun tun. Let’s go to Abi’s house tun tun.”
2. **A:** Where’s “Abi?”
3. **M:** “To eat fish tun tun, red mouth, tun tun. In a straw pan, tun tun.” It’s here.
4. **A:** Where?
5. **M:** It says “Let’s go to Abi’s house.”
6. **A:** Where?! Where is my name?

In this typical example, Mateo replaced the lyrics of “to the sea” with a personalized example of “to Abi’s house.” This had the interactional effect of engaging her in the reading and singing of this Mexican folk song and to push her to try and read the lyrics written in Spanish. Abi also began to adapt this rhetorical effect in her speech and stories at home and school. For example, one afternoon during a dinner of eggs and green beans, her father kept trying to get her to listen to a song, so she started singing invented lyrics to poke fun at him: “Yeah, I heard there was a man named Mateo and that they detained him, and that they called him fatty, and that he was bald. Haha.” [Q3] Abi made up these song lyrics just a few days after the police had come to their house in search of a Mexican-looking criminal (See Chapter 7), which she incorporated into her lyrics about him being detained. He also had a shaved head, the constant topic of teasing within their family, as they had spotted a few bed bugs in their home and he had decided to shave his head to be safe. And, just like her innovative incorporation of talk about Mexicans who do not bathe in Chapter 1 (Excerpt 1), here she poked fun at his belly, which was a bit larger than normal
during the winter months when he did less physical labor and was not playing soccer. Abi and Mateo regularly adopted this strategy to tease one another, a sign of endearment and closeness in their personal relationships.

Abi also adopted the participant example strategy into her school-based literacy practices. For example, one day during ESL class she was supposed to fill out a chart of her favorite things by providing drawings, labels, and eventually short texts. She sketched a stick figure in a dress running and said, in Spanish, that it was me (Sarah). She then drew a picture of herself directly behind me and joked “I catch you.” Drawing upon linguistic resources in English and Spanish, I teased that I was too fast, which she rebuked by adding long flowing hair to my stick figure that was within her stick figure’s grasp. With a wink she then drew birds flying above, their droppings floating close to my head. Like many of her literacy practices, she drew upon resources in Spanish to provide a long, creative story about us running, filled with lively details and nuanced character voices. She wove in real-world details, such as my love for running and our conversations about her dad wanting a pet parrot. She creatively used her words, drawings, and other semiotic resources to sweetly poke fun at her interlocutors (me, in this case).

Unfortunately, by second grade, her spoken and written English repertoire were not developed enough to deploy these stories or strategies in English. It also took Abi a long time to focus her creative details into a streamlined format that met her written English repertoire, and the depth and humor within her spoken stories in Spanish became diluted recontextualizations that were difficult to follow in their written form. For her first three years of public schooling her monolingual English-speaking teachers were largely unaware of Abi’s linguistic creativity, storytelling abilities, or deployment of literacy genres that paralleled the various emergent literacy curricula such as “Kid Writing” and “Guided Reading.” Since Kindergarten Abi had struggled in developing her school-based literacy in English, and had continually been placed in
the lowest leveled groups with additional supports that focused primarily on issues of decoding. She became critical about her own literacy skills, often lamenting that she didn’t know how to read. Because her schooling was in English and her implicit and pedagogical expertise in this strategy was in Spanish, teachers were not able to build upon it to assist with her literacy instruction. In the following paragraphs I describe a second metacommunicative strategy that also went unnoticed at school.

**Lexical ambiguity.** A second notable metacommunicative strategy that Abi learned from her father was exploiting lexical ambiguity. Mateo’s daily talk often included the witty incorporation of albures, or a Mexican verbal art form that plays with polysemic ambiguity in order to trick or insult your interlocutor (Mendoza-Denton, 2008). Traditionally albures tend to index sexual content or undermine a person’s intelligence, and it is very possible that among friends Mateo tailored this strategy to these ends. With his daughter, however, the focus tended more towards exploiting lexical ambiguity to draw out the humor in the multiple meanings his utterances could index or to catch his interlocutors by surprise. Sometimes they were simple sayings such as, “Es una comida que pica, pero no le pica.” [*A food that is spicy, but it doesn’t bite.*] For a few months it was common to hear him jokingly say **“oh my gaatos,”** [*oh my cats*] instead of **“oh my god”** (an English phrase that many Spanish-speakers in Marshall incorporated into their everyday talk), taking advantage of the parallel sounds of “ga” in Spanish and “go” in “god.” In a similar play on beginning sounds, he would always say “sancho,” instead of “salud” when someone sneezed, a Mexican term that indexed your wife’s lover, and thus insinuated that she was cheating on you. I admittedly had a difficult time following his regular creative displays, and Abi often took on the role of interpreter, warning me not to answer him because he might try and catch me in a trap, or explaining the multiple meanings of the words he was using. She could
pedagogically explain uses of this metacommunicative strategy and paid great attention to the form of words, such as beginning sounds in Spanish.

Abi also adapted this strategy into her school-based interactions. For example, although not evident earlier in her schooling, by the end of second grade Abi herself began to talk about the “dos formas” [two meanings] of many different words. Similar to her pedagogical explanations of her dad’s double-talk, she would often stop me and others in school to explain how words like “circo” could mean “circuit” or “circus.” She predominantly demonstrated this polysemic metalinguistic awareness in Spanish and enjoyed taking on the role of the classroom Spanish expert, but also began applying this strategy to English as well, such as her realization of the different meanings for “girl” and “friend” and “girlfriend.” And although she and her father regularly exploited similar or beginning sounds in Spanish when applying this strategy (e.g., “sancho” versus “salud”), a primary goal of English phonemic awareness curricula at Grant that Abi struggled with, this strategy was never recognized or supported to help her with her English literacy or repertoire development. Again, because her schooling occurred in English and she most readily deployed this strategy in Spanish, her teachers were unable to recognize and expand upon these useful skills to aid in Abi’s academic development. In this vein Abi was similar to Heath’s (1983) working-class African American students who were skilled at making metaphorical links and using word play, additional “building blocks” for literacy development that often get overlooked in traditional schooling (Orellana & D’warte, 2010). Like Abi, these strategies were displayed in an unrecognizable form and were therefore overlooked in the early grades as teachers focused on the traditional building blocks of literacy (phonemic awareness, decoding) that they felt Trackton students lacked. Similarly, although Abi’s strategies had the potential to help guide her literacy development, expand her English repertoires through her awareness of relationships among words, and boost her self-esteem regarding her English literacy
development, they were rarely recognized and built upon in her early years of schooling. This contrasts with the case of Emily, who was able to deploy metacommunicative strategies in ways that were recognizable and built upon across repertoires and contexts.

**Cristian and Emily’s Metacommunicative Strategies**

*Linguistic dexterity.* When I first met Cristian several years before this project, our interactions often occurred at school-based events and I found him to be very formal. His clear and precise selection of lexical forms and telling examples stood out for many of Grant’s educators as well, so much so that they hoped to convince him to spearhead a new school-based Latino parents group because of his powerful oratory skills. As I had the chance to get to know him across contexts, however, I was surprised by his repertoire dexterity in Spanish and English and how seamlessly he adopted appropriate ways with words across situations. For example, on social occasions he was often the life of the party, almost like an unofficial MC as he energized party-goers with his jokes and enthusiasm. When hanging out with his brother-in-laws he would adapt a style of speech more common among young men from their small Puebla town that was almost impossible for me to follow. He intentionally modeled this strategy, which I call *linguistic dexterity*, and instructed his daughter in being proactive and knowledgeable about the words she used. In the following excerpt he discussed Emily’s use of the word “chido” [*cool*] without her knowing what it really meant and how he taught her to be more controlled in her repertoire deployment:

**Excerpt 7**

1. *And I turned around and I stayed there looking at her and I said to her “Mami you don’t know what that means. Don’t say that word. Because you don’t know. Maybe it’s a bad word. And because you heard it you’re going to say it? No mamita. Learn. Ask what it*
It was common for Cristian to voice his discussions with Emily during interviews and playback sessions, and as a father he appeared to place a high priority on pedagogical explanations regarding why she should or shouldn’t do certain things. Cristian nicely summarized this strategy as “[learning] when, how, and with whom you are going to use it [a given lexical item]” (lines 4 - 5).

Emily clearly listened to the lessons he taught her and often recontextualized this pedagogical strategy that she learned from him within her school-based interactions. For example, one day in school she was having fun with her classmates and Nhi, a new student from Vietnam, the only non-Spanish speaking immigrant student in the entire school. Nhi had a very limited repertoire in English when she first arrived and Emily and others took her under their wing. In this excerpt, which occurred on Nhi’s second day, her classmate Benjamin kept tapping people on the bum with a ruler, saying things to Nhi, and laughing. Nhi began doing this as well, and although Emily (E) was initially playing along too, she adopted the pedagogical strategy of linguistic dexterity to convince Benjamin and Abi that they should stop.

Excerpt 8

1. **E:** You see. Anything we do, she’ll do. It’s a single word. Maybe the words you said
2. might be bad for her. You have to think about this before anything, because what if
3. we said to her—-
4. 
5. ((Nhi tries to hit Abi with the ruler, and Abi backs away and laughs)).
6. **E:** What if what we say to her in her country is bad? Or that we’re laughing at her. The
7. things that we said maybe for her it’s a bad word.
Just like Emily’s pedagogical re-embedding of the educational conversation genre in Excerpt 1, here she applied a strategy learned from her father into her school-based interactions. Similar to how Cristian emphasized modeling appropriate behavior for his own children, Emily started out this interaction by explaining how they, as long-term students and new friends, needed to control their own actions, because they were models for their friend Nhi who may think this was an acceptable way to act (line 1). In addition, his central message, that you could be saying something bad if you use a repertoire element without knowledge of what it really means, (Excerpt 7, lines 2-3) echoes throughout Emily’s explanation to her classmates. For Emily, this included an understanding that signs they were deploying semiotically in English or in Spanish could belong to a different social domain for Nhi, a newcomer from Vietnam. In this specific context, their joking around (with the rulers) and repertoire deployment could be interpreted as inappropriate for their new friend.

Strategies of appropriateness, in word selection and comportment, were central to how Cristian saw himself as being involved in Emily’s schooling and education. As Cristian (C) explained to me (S) below, linguistic dexterity depended upon being educado [educated] and respectful of others, central components of the strategies that he taught his daughter.

Excerpt 9

1. **S:** *When you say “educar” do you mean in academic terms? —*
2. **C:** —No...Personally. *In academics we can’t teach Emily anything. Practically nothing.*
3. **Why? Because I studied until 6th grade. Nothing more. Practically they taught us to*
4. **read. Count. Divide. Add. Uh a little about Mexican history....Academically we can’t**
5. **teach them much. We can’t teach them much because we didn’t have an intensive**
6. **academic education. No no no. Personally I teach her about life. About herself as a**
7. **person. About how her personality must be. I can teach her all about this. To respect*
8. and value what she’ll get one day. In school. From whatever person. And respect.
9. That’s what I teach her. Nothing else. Because I think that’s where I can help her.
10. I think that when she’s going into 7th or 8th grade maybe I won’t be able to teach her
11. absolutely anything academic. Because she’ll know too much. MORE THAN ME
12. already.

Here Cristian explained his approach to parent involvement as being involved in Emily’s schooling by modeling and teaching her these aspects of her repertoires, rather than specific academic content. Like many parents from Mexico, he did not feel he had enough academic training from his few years of schooling in Mexico to teach her school-based subject matter (lines 2 – 7). He saw his role as educating her as a person, what he calls her “personal” side and teaching her about life, how to respect and appreciate whatever came her way each day (lines 7 – 11). This emphasis on making sure his child was bien educado [well educated and moral] in and out of school (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001; Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas, 2001) was a common value in Mexican immigrant families in Marshall, especially for many fathers.

And as we saw earlier in this chapter, his openness to Emily’s repertoire expansion and comfort with her repertoires surpassing his own (lines 10 – 12) helped facilitate school-based learning at home and vice versa.

This metacommunicative strategy, which Emily could deploy in Spanish and English, was recognized and built upon within Emily’s schooling. In fact, both Cristian and Emily were recognized by teachers for their linguistic dexterity and respect towards others. For example, Cristian was complemented by Emily’s teacher on his “beautiful English” and polite manners. In addition, Emily was celebrated as a model student who everyone liked, and who troublesome students should try to be more like. For example, during a classroom intervention led by the guidance counselor to try and change her classmates’ behavior, the counselor and teacher urged
other kids’ to use kind words like Emily, to act like Emily, and to be respectful like Emily. No other student was positioned in such a positive light. Similar to H. Samy Alim’s work on Black English in which he emphasized that most Black parents he knew wanted their children to fluently control multiple English varieties which included standard and Black Englishes (2010, p. 206), Cristian wanted Emily to control multiple varieties in English and Spanish and have metacommunicative strategies to seamlessly shift among them to meet her interactional goals. This strategy is also reflective of Jim Cummins’ (2005) emphasis on the importance of teachers’ recognizing and building upon crosslinguistic transfer and language awareness when working with multilingual students in English-medium classrooms. Cristian explicitly modeled and taught this to his daughter, and she adapted it well across contexts. It was also a strategy that was recognized and built upon in her schooling, although it was an official facet of the curriculum and was rarely initiated by teachers. In addition, it was one of the few instances that teachers’ accredited a students’ father for modeling and teaching things to his child. Like Cristian, Emily’s teacher Mrs. Drescher valued Cristian’s involvement in Emily’s schooling for what he could teach her about appropriateness and respect and saw this as preparing Emily to excel academically.

Discussion

In this chapter I have analyzed trajectories of signs from students’ communicative repertoires as they moved across school and home contexts. As semiotic resources move across global and local contexts (from Mexico to the United States, from school to home), they often take on different meanings for varying participants, including changes in the purposes and values individuals attribute to them (Blommaert, 2005). Through attention to the cases of two very different students, Emily and Abi, I have illustrated how, depending upon contextual factors and
local uptake, signs about schooling travelled unevenly across institutional contexts. I argue that 
communication about schooling can be best understood from a repertoires approach. When 
students are perceived as knowing an autonomous language such as Spanish or English, it 
becomes easy to see it as “all or nothing.” The solution to communication about schooling is the 
translation of lexical items from English to Spanish (or vice versa), which overlooks participants’ 
histories of experiences with those signs that they orient to as they make sense of them. A 
repertoires approach instead seeks to understand what students can actually do with language and 
other semiotic resources, often as translanguageers, in order to achieve their communicative goals. 
I found that attention to students’ pedagogical versus implicit familiarity with different school-
based procedural routines and metacommunicative strategies played important roles in achieving 
effective communication about schooling.

School to Home Trajectories

How signs travel from school to home has important implications for students’ schooling. 
As we saw, teachers had different understandings of bilingual students’ abilities to talk about 
English school-based interactions at home. Over my years at Grant I have encountered a few 
teachers with outlooks similar to Mrs. Drescher, who implied that students required a pedagogical 
understanding of school content in order to talk about it in Spanish at home. Most teachers, 
however, were more like Ms. Vega, who believed students could talk about most school-based 
topics at home in Spanish. As I have argued elsewhere, teachers at Grant often positioned their 
Mexican immigrant students as “bilinguals in the making,” and had optimistic yet relatively 
unrealistic expectations regarding their students’ Spanish repertoires (Gallo, Link, Allard, 
Wortham, & Mortimer, under review). Although their positive positioning of their students and
their multilingual abilities helped create a school environment in which students were proud of their Spanish language resources and felt that they belonged, it also posed logistical issues in terms of communication between school and home. For example, teachers very regularly relied on their students to relay messages to their parents regarding homework assignments, family events at school, or other logistics. Although certain genres were likely deployable for many emergent bilinguals, many were not.

In addition, differences in expectations for certain sub-genres such as homework completion created great anxiety for many Mexican immigrant parents. Teachers at Grant viewed homework as additional practice and something that students should try their best at, but not something that had to be completed with 100 percent accuracy. Most parents from Mexico, however, had grown up in schools where homework required exact precision and neatness, and incorrect answers would be highly penalized, which could potentially lead to a low grade or even repeating the school year. Thus, many parents went to extreme lengths to try and figure out the homework problems and got in regular disagreements with their children regarding the neatness and precision of their assignments. As parents had few opportunities to speak with teachers directly, they had to rely on their children to explain what mattered or didn’t in terms of doing well. Children sometimes had a difficult time convincing their parents of their teacher’s expectations due to such different orientations towards the homework sub-genre as well as difficulties students had recontextualizing their teachers’ English-based messages into Spanish.

How signs travelled from students’ school to homes also had important implications for their families. At stake were students’ abilities to communicate with their parents about the space where they spent most of their waking hours. For children from immigrant families, U.S. schools are particularly important spaces for inculcating desirable ways of being, which may differ from their parents’ conceptions. Young people are incorporated both explicitly through formal
curricula as well as more subtly through the “hidden curriculum,” or the norms and values that are implicitly taught in everyday practice within schools (Giroux, 1983; Hall, 2002; McLaren, 2007). As I have illustrated in this chapter, students’ abilities to navigate across diverse repertoires such as home and school and Spanish and English varied greatly. Meeting communicative goals, such as sharing about the school day, depended on participants’ accommodation toward one another, openness toward translanguaging, and openness toward repertoire expansion for children and parents. Emily and her parents were much more open and accommodating to this form of interaction than Abi and her father were, and were therefore more able to reach a shared understanding of their daughter’s school-based experiences.

Although this chapter focuses on Abi and Emily, these factors impacted communication about schooling for all students in this study. For example, Martina and Gregorio often achieved successful communication regarding schooling despite the fact that they had truncated Spanish repertoires to draw upon as they explained school-based interactions to their Spanish dominant parents in Spanish. Martina and her parents went to incredible lengths to accommodate to one another, especially during homework completion. For example, one day while completing math homework on reading clocks with her parents, Martina asked her father what time she had recess in school, but did not know the word for recess. After a lot of back and forth Martina offered associated words like “special,” her dad grabbed the Spanish-English dictionary to look it up, and finally Martina acted out swinging as she offered a form from within her repertoire “a jugar” [to play] that helped her parents understand she was talking about “recreo” [recess]. Gregorio, who was often unsure of the exact lexical items in Spanish and sometimes English, would use elaborate examples to get his point across, such as asking his mom in Spanish if he could go play football in the place where you park that is black, as he did not know the word for parking lot. Interestingly, some students, such as Princess, shared a great deal of overlap with her parents’
English and Spanish repertoires but did not invest as much in accommodating to them. If her parents did not understand something she was talking about from school, she would tell them “no importa” or “never mind” and move on to something else. For children from immigrant families in particular, it appears that accommodation and openness to repertoire expansion may play important roles regarding how families maintain communication and meaningful relationships as they navigate different ways of doing, thinking, and talking in a new country.

**Home to School Trajectories**

How signs travelled from home to school also has implications for students’ schooling. Just as it would be beneficial for immigrant parents to accommodate to their children’s English-based or translanguaged signs and to be open to repertoire expansion, it would be beneficial for teachers to accommodate to their students’ Spanish-based or translanguaged signs and to be open to repertoire expansion. It is interesting to reflect that although it feels perfectly reasonable to expect this flexibility from immigrant families within their homes, many may feel that it is an unrealistic expectation for educators in U.S. schools. This is partially because of deeply embedded ideologies in the United States that English is the language of belonging (Portes & Hao, 1998; Millard et al., 2004) and of schooling (Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999; Urciuoli, 1996; Zentella, 2003). Yet some scholars argue that many schools today engage in “subtractive schooling” practices by prioritizing the development of standard English over recognizing and building upon emergent bilinguals’ languaging resources (e.g., Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999). Although Grant educators positively positioned Spanish repertoires, the English only curricula, instructional model, and policies did not foster bilingualism or biliteracy for Mexican immigrant students and created clear challenges for students like Abi. Menken and colleagues (2012) suggest that schooling that builds upon students’ multilingual repertoires and
teaches first language literacy is the best way to avoid subtractive schooling pathways that often begin with subtractive schooling experiences in the early grades. Similarly, García, Flores, and Chu argue: “Any language-in-education approach—be it monolingual or bilingual—that does not acknowledge and build on the fluid language practices and the translanguaging in bilingual communities is more concerned with controlling language behavior than in educating (Cummins, 2007; García, 2009)” (2011, p. 9). The case of Abi illustrates how ignoring students’ Spanish repertoires, genres, and metacommunicative strategies can lead to subtractive schooling experiences and that new approaches are needed for emergent bilingual students.

García and colleagues (2011) instead present an approach to bilingualism and schooling that builds upon students’ hybrid language resources from across their repertoires. They envision educational practices designed “from the students up,” that reflect their real-world (trans)languaging skills, rather than relying on segregated standard languages. They advocate for autonomous learning environments in which emergent bilinguals can draw upon the range of semiotic resources at their disposal to meet educational goals. At Grant elementary, an emergent bilingual-centered approach could lead to bilingual programming that uses Mexican heritage students’ rich linguistic resources and develops their classmates’ interest in learning Spanish. For students like Abi, it could provide a space that recognizes and builds upon her expansive literacy resources and metacommunicative strategies in Spanish to provide successful school experiences. As I discuss in Chapter 7, rather than developing as a struggling reader through her English literacy instruction, it could provide opportunities for her to develop her literacy repertoires and confidence as a student. In addition, a “students up” approach may hold particular promise in New Latino Diaspora communities like Marshall where “inter-ethnic interaction related to the education of Latinos is primarily a new phenomenon and one where the habits and expectations that will steer that interaction are still far from set” (Hamann & Harklau, 2010, p. 161). Although
the promise of greater flexibility and better long-term schooling outcomes for Latino students
exists, changes that build upon students’ range of repertoires could help facilitate these changes.

Tracing the trajectories of school-related signs across home and school contexts sheds
light on communication about schooling, which is also reflective of approaches to parent
involvement. In this chapter we saw how Cristian approached his involvement as developing his
daughter’s appropriate ways with words and sharing his enthusiasm for her schooling, as he did
not feel he had the academic preparation to aid in her direct scholarly development. In the
following chapter I explore the topic of parent involvement through a repertoires approach,
examining the surprising trajectories of how Mateo and a second father Ignacio came to be
positioned in terms of their involvement over the course of the school year.
Chapter 6

Fathers’ Trajectories of Socialization into Parent Involvement

In this chapter I use the concept of trajectories of socialization to illustrate the surprising ways that individual Mexican immigrant men came to be positioned in terms of their school involvement. I begin the chapter with a brief overview of models of parent involvement. I then elaborate upon what I call a repertoires approach to parent involvement, which emphasizes the importance of accommodation in terms of face-to-face communication as well as an openness to expanding what “counts” as desirable parent involvement practices. Although the focus is on fathers’ socialization into parent involvement, a repertoires approach helps reveal teachers’ potential to flexibly navigate and build upon parent involvement practices that differ from traditional models. I then synthesize key features of parent involvement at Grant Elementary, including how, in most cases, Mexican immigrant fathers were overlooked by local educators.

The second half of the chapter focuses on two fathers’ trajectories of socialization. Unlike the trajectories of individual signs that were the topic of Chapter 5, this chapter focuses on how individuals align themselves and are positioned as certain social types over time. As individuals they travelled along a trajectory in which they became understood as kinds of people, such as “overbearing” or “involved” fathers. Through attention to fathers’ and teachers’ deployment and interpretation of semiotic resources across events, I trace the shifting pathways of how these fathers were positioned over the course of the year. Although trajectories are sometimes rigid and predictable across events, these analyses illustrate how they can also include surprising changes. Their trajectories are surprising for two reasons. First, because they include significant changes in how the same individual came to be positioned by educators over the course of the year. Second, because fathers’ actual home based involvement practices differed significantly from what
educators assumed. The first analysis describes how Ignacio, after initial praise for his deep involvement, came to be viewed as an overbearing father that potentially detracted from his daughter’s academic development. The negative turns in his trajectory occurred despite his practices that most closely mirrored those of an involved parent by traditional standards. The second analysis describes how Mateo went from being viewed as an irresponsible parent to a father who was very involved in his daughter’s academic development, despite his home-based practices that prioritized keeping home and school as separate spheres. In my conclusions I argue for the utility of a repertoires approach to parent involvement, as it provides a toolkit to understand home and school based involvement practices that are more nuanced than traditional models represent and illuminates the importance of accommodation in parent-teacher interactions.

Models of Parent Involvement

There are three basic ways that parent involvement has been conceptualized in the research literature, which, in work with Stanton Wortham, we have called traditional, mismatch, and repertoires (Gallo & Wortham, 2012; Gallo, Wortham, & Bennett, In Press). Although each approach can be useful in certain situations, we argue that a repertoires approach provides a more complete conceptual understanding of real-world involvement practices and can help practitioners better recognize and build upon families’ diverse practices. As I empirically illustrate below, a repertoires approach enhances the possibilities of recognizing a wider range of involvement practices, offers insight into how certain parents come to be positioned as involved (or not) based on face-to-face semiotic negotiations at events such as parent-teacher conferences, and focuses on the roles of parents and teachers in establishing effective communication regarding a child’s
schooling. In this section I briefly summarize traditional and mismatch models of parent involvement before explaining a repertoires approach in more detail.

Traditional parent involvement models assume that parents from all backgrounds are responsible for assisting educators with their children’s integration into mainstream schooling (Epstein & Sanders, 2003). This assistance includes parents’ help with school-sanctioned tasks (homework), attendance at school events, and volunteering for the school. The aim is to create “school-like” families in which parents (often mothers) take on a teacher-like role within the home environment and shape home based interactions to closely mirror school based procedural routines. Parents, especially those from non-traditional backgrounds, who do not eagerly engage in these types of practices in recognizable ways are often positioned by educators as not caring about their children’s education (e.g., Doucet, 2011; Torres-Guzman, 1991; Villenas, 2002). In her work on parent involvement as a ritualized practice, Fabienne Doucet (2011) has called this the cult of pedantocracy, in which schools have the power in determining what counts as parent involvement, and parents who are under-, over-, or differently-involved are negatively positioned by educators. Family-school communication from this approach is often unidirectional: Teachers are experts who tell parents about desirable school practices (Doucet, 2011; Epstein & Sanders, 2003). For immigrant families, this model makes the questionable assumption that parents are already familiar with mainstream practices in U.S. schools and that they possess the resources (such as English fluency and literacy) to engage in them (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

The cultural mismatch framework focuses on difference rather than deficiency. This approach reasons that non-mainstream families’ school involvement practices are not a reflection of apathy or inferiority (Heath, 1983; Mehan, Hubbard, Villanueva, & Lintz, 1996). Instead, non-mainstream families orient to different educational practices and educational ideals. From this perspective varying conceptualizations and approaches to education are equally valuable.
Mismatch-based parent involvement policies often propose bidirectional models, in which parents learn to navigate U.S. school systems and U.S. schools incorporate parents’ knowledges and practices into the curriculum (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008, p. 11). The mismatch approach aligns with Epstein’s (2003) work on overlapping spheres, in which the goals include creating more “family-like” schools as well as “school-like” families. This approach questions naturalized assumptions regarding the “best” way to do parent involvement and seeks to understand and incorporate alternative approaches. A mismatch approach tries to raise awareness about differences in mainstream and immigrant approaches to education and directly engages parents, educators, and community members in decisions regarding parent involvement policies and practices.

As Doucet (2011) highlights, parent involvement within most U.S. public schools greatly differs from approaches across the globe. A mismatch approach can help highlight these differences and point to the socially constructed nature of parent involvement expectations. This can be particularly helpful for educators who may not recognize the cultural specificity of their expectations. But the mismatch approach has been criticized for several reasons as well (Erickson, 1987; Varenne & McDermott, 1998). One key issue is the assumption made by most mismatch theorists that cultures are bounded and homogeneous, in which the focus is on shared overarching patterns rather than heterogeneous differences. As many argue, in today’s globalized and transnational world, assumptions about stable speech communities, homogenous cultures, and shared beliefs are no longer accurate (Blommaert, 2010; Rampton, 1998).

Mismatch approaches to parent involvement imply that all immigrant families from a given country share perspectives and practices about education and parenting—such as “the Mexican way” versus “the American way.” The seven families from this project clearly demonstrate their diverse backgrounds and home-based practices related to their children’s
schooling (Chapter 4). In addition, Doucet (2011) has questioned the cult of domesticity in which parent involvement is unquestionably positioned as women’s work. Like immigrant families’ from Doucet’s study, focal families from this project shared a wide range of gendered parent involvement practices from their own childhoods in Mexico, as none of them had parented school-aged children in Mexico themselves. In some cases focal parents’ own mothers from childhood tended to be more in charge of homework and attending school events, and in other cases their father took on these responsibilities. In many cases their parents did not help with the completion of homework, but did ensure that it was completed. The format of parent school events from their childhoods in Mexico also differed from US-based events for most focal parents: Events in Mexico often entailed families pitching in to care for the school building, group meetings with teachers in which grades and classroom information were shared with all parents as a collective, or individual meetings with a teacher if something serious had occurred (and the child could not return to school until the parents attended this meeting). For Mexican immigrant fathers in particular, a cultural mismatch model has the danger of promoting assumptions of more traditional gender roles in which Mexican mothers are solely responsible for children’s schooling, thus making fathers’ contributions invisible. Instead of presupposing a uniform Mexican immigrant set of norms and comparing how they do or do not map onto mainstream schooling in the US, this dissertation examines the complex ways participants drew upon their dynamically changing communicative repertoires across space and time to participate in their children’s schooling. It reveals the ways individuals traveled across unpredictable trajectories in which they became positioned as certain types of fathers over the course of the school year.

A third model, which Wortham and I have called a repertoires approach to parent involvement, applies Rymes’ (2010) work on communicative repertoires to family school
relationships. This approach differs from the underlying assumption of traditional and mismatch approaches: It does not treat culture as a homogeneous set of in-group practices and beliefs. Instead it explores individuals’ experiences with cultural practices that may reflect shared histories of engagement but also include differing abilities and beliefs among individuals from similar backgrounds (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). This approach acknowledges that there may be some widely shared elements in a given group due to similar background experiences but also recognizes that each individual member develops only a subset of the total set of practices and beliefs for a given group. In addition, there is often considerable overlap with out-group members’ repertoires, and individuals often belong to multiple communities. For example, Ignacio was a member of a Mexican community from Puebla, a middle class community in Puebla that had considerable overlap with US middle class parent involvement practices, and a Mexican immigrant community in which he became a father in Marshall. A repertoires approach to parent involvement focuses on the dynamic development of repertoires. Parent involvement practices become part of an individual’s repertoire based on exposure, recognition, use, and interactional conditions such as accommodation that facilitate repertoire expansion across groups such as Mexican immigrant fathers and US school teachers.

In a communicative repertoires approach to parent involvement, the goal is to achieve meaningful communication regarding a child’s schooling so that teachers and parents come to recognize and adopt some of each other’s repertoire elements that may differ from their own way of “doing” parent involvement. In such a scenario, members of neither group are “giving in” (Rymes, 2010, p. 538), because members of each group are expanding their own repertoires through contact with the other. This is not to say that immigrant parents and U.S. teachers have equally powerful voices in terms of what “counts” as parent involvement— for Latino immigrant families, relationships between parents and teachers often parallel these individuals’ locations in
society (Valdés, 1996) and many Latino parents report feeling that their practices and ideals are positioned as unimportant or inferior compared with middle class educators’ (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). For families at Grant, there are power dynamics at play in which teachers, as white middle class monolingual English-speakers backed by the school’s institutional authority, still had the upper-hand in most situations in deciding what “counted” as parent involvement and who they evaluated as “involved.” Yet approaching parent involvement from a repertoires framework offers a pathway to empirically trace the ways that these power dynamics unfolded within and across events. It also provides a window into the ways that teachers and immigrant parents did manage to expand their own repertoires through interactions and to meet their communicative goals to jointly support a child’s education, sometimes in ways that diverged from traditional parent involvement practices. In the following section I discuss the process of socialization into parent involvement for Mexican immigrant families at Grant. I highlight specific factors within the local context that shaped how Mexican immigrant fathers in particular were noticed and positioned within this schooling context.

Socialization into Parent Involvement at Grant

Parent Involvement at Grant Elementary

For most Mexican immigrant parents at Grant Elementary, practices and expectations related to family school relationships, most commonly referred to as parent involvement, were different from those that they had experienced as children growing up in Mexico. By focal students’ second grade year, all families from this project had already spent two years navigating their socialization into parent involvement practices within home and school contexts. Unlike
children’s daily direct socialization within U.S. public schools, parents’ socialization into parent involvement practices occurred across direct and indirect avenues at varying paces. The most direct ways that parents were socialized into parent involvement practices were through face-to-face encounters with their children’s teachers. In most cases these encounters were infrequent, usually occurring two or three times during the year for central events such as parent teacher conferences or back to school nights. It was during these brief encounters that parents and teachers formed the clearest understandings of each other as certain social types, based on the negotiations of semiotic forms that included linguistic and paralinguistic cues. How teachers evaluated parents in these events appeared to have less to do with the content of parents’ contributions, and often relied more on other semiotic signs such as body language, appearances, and eye contact.

As this analysis of these fathers’ unpredictable trajectories will reveal, the evaluations that teachers made of fathers during these brief encounters tended to shape how they made sense of subsequent signs and emblems. This included those deployed by fathers directly as well as those deployed by their children in school-based interactions. For example, students’ completion of homework, returning of school forms, and overall social and academic performance were widely attributed to the support they were perceived to be receiving within their homes. Similarly, much of parents’ engagement with the school occurred via the semiotic and material resources their children transported into their home on a daily basis, such as talk about school, homework assignments, and handouts. As many scholars have pointed out, homework in particular is a material artifact that travels from the school into families’ homes which tends to shape home-based interactions, including the roles and status of family members as they navigate these activities (Mangual Figueroa, 2011; Wingard, 2007). Although the few face-to-face parent-teacher encounters serve as the primary avenue for socialization into parent involvement, parents
(and teachers to a lesser degree) are indirectly positioned as shadow figures as children complete routine schooling practices across school and home contexts.

Parent involvement practices at Grant were reflective of those in traditional U.S. elementary schools in some ways and differed in others. Almost all of the educators at Grant Elementary were white middle class women and overall the expected practices were similar to those from a traditional model. Parents were expected to help with homework, respond to frequent handouts, be accessible by phone in case a problem arose, attend school-based events such as parent teacher conferences, and act like they “cared” about their children’s schooling.

In contrast, how Mexican immigrant families enacted these traditional parent involvement practices at Grant was not measured against the traditional white middle class family norm. Instead teachers tended to evaluate immigrant families’ involvement against the involvement of the other families at Grant—predominantly poor and working class African American families. Teachers’ evaluations of immigrant families at Grant differed from the deficit perspectives assigned to many Mexican immigrant families across the school district. Similar to the positioning of Latino families’ parent involvement in the research literature in which they have been found to be evaluated by teachers as not caring about their children’s education, (See Chavkin, 1989; Doucet, 2011; Moles, 1993; Torres-Guzmán, 1991 for critiques of this assumption), in other schools in the Marshall Area School District Mexican immigrant families were seen as uninvolved or uninterested in their children’s education as compared with their Anglo or Asian counterparts. For example, Wortham, Mortimer, and Allard (2009) illustrated how Mexican immigrants in Marshall were positioned as a model minority in public life, but not within the classroom. At Grant, however, teachers positioned Mexican immigrants as the model minority across contexts and as a group that cared about their children’s education. For example, Mrs. Drescher emphasized that she “like[d] the transition that the population has taken” at
Grant over the last 20 years. When asked to elaborate she explained that “our Latino families on the whole are intact, caring, working, [have a good] work ethic, [and] care about education, whereas we really had a lot of missing parents with our other population, not caring as much.” Like most teachers at Grant, she avoided explicitly saying African American families, and instead compared “our Latino families” with “English-speaking families” or “other parents” or “non-Hispanic parents.” At Grant over 95% of the non-Latino families were African-American. Overall teachers at Grant tended to believe Mexican immigrant families placed a high value on education, even if immigrant families sometimes did not have the explicit skills (to help with homework or respond to handouts) or resources (flexibility to miss work to attend school events) to engage in mainstream parent involvement practices. Overall Grant teachers were very sympathetic and welcoming to Mexican immigrant families.

Teachers at Grant also believed that children did better in school when their parents were involved at home. For example, Ms. Vega explained the importance of parent involvement in the following way:

If the parents are involved in the kids’ homework and has interest in what the kids are doing at school, it shows because the kids are more invested in it, interested in it at school. So it just shows. You can tell which parents want their students to do well and support them at home, because other students who don’t, seem less interested in general. They kind of reflect what the parents feel.

She believed students whose parents helped with homework increased students’ investment in their own work and that parents’ desires for their children to do well transferred into student interest in school. Similarly, Mrs. Drescher emphasized that even if parents could not attend school events, she could tell when they were involved at home “because the children care more…about learning” and that this greatly benefitted their learning within school. She felt she could tell through her daily interactions with her students, such as signed papers being returned to the school, students talking about reading at home, and the emphasis that Latino parents in
particular place on good behavior in school. Mrs. Cieza, the ESL teacher, emphasized how she believed students with involved parents may not always be the most academically advanced students, but they were the ones with the strongest connections to schooling:

I can’t say that those students are always the students who are the overachievers and the students that are on grade level and doing the best work, because I do have students with parents that are not so involved that are still doing well because of innate ability. But the students where the families are involved, I think, have a stronger connection to school and a stronger connection to what they’re doing.

Like most teachers in the US, teachers at Grant believed that parent involvement mattered and that they could differentiate between involved and uninvolved parents. Teachers tended to describe the importance less in terms of immediate academic successes, but more in terms about students’ orientation toward schooling and caring about education. Teachers’ positioning of parents came partially from in-person encounters with parents, but also relied heavily on the “signs” transported through their children’s schooling practices. In the following section I describe teachers’ gendered recognition of parent involvement.

**Cult of Domesticity and Fathers’ Invisibility**

The cult of domesticity described by Doucet (2011) undergirded teachers’ parent involvement practices at Grant. Teachers tended to mention, notice, and engage with mothers much more than fathers when it came to family-school relationships. Overall fathers from any racial or ethnic background, including Mexican immigrant fathers, were rarely recognized or talked about, even when they were physically present in schools and engaging in relatively mainstream parent involvement practices. Similar to the large body of research that focuses exclusively on the array of Latina mothers’ practices around their child’s schooling (e.g., Cooper & Christie, 2005; Dyrness, 2007, 2008; Valdés, 1996; Vasquez, 2004; Villenas, 2002), teachers at Grant also tended to focus on Mexican immigrant mothers. As I describe below, this tended to
happen in student-based interactions during the school day as well as within parent-based interactions at family events.

Within the classroom, teachers usually explicitly named mothers as the recipients of school-based information. This was particularly the case in Mrs. Drescher’s class in which she almost always named “moms” in reference to home-school communication and tasks. On a daily basis she would say things such as “Take this home. Give it to your MOMMMMMMMMM” or “Put this in the side that you will remember to tell your mom that this has to come back to school.” Occasionally she directly indexed moms in Spanish-speaking families, such as, “This paper is for Spanish speaking families. Please give this to your mom!” She also prioritized moms as the recipients of school based learning, such as her directions to students during a school-based activity: “So if you went home to talk to your mom today about the story that we read, you’d tell your mom...” There were occasional mentions of “parents” or “adults at home,” in her classroom, but these were very rare. As I discuss below, Abi’s father was the one exception in which she appeared to include fathers in her parent involvement talk to students. Overall Ms. Vega did reference moms on a regular basis, but also appeared more even-handed in asking students to take things home to “mom or dad or grandma” or “an adult at home.”

Teachers across the school also tended to reference a student’s mom coming to school for events such as conferences, even when both parents were present. For example, during Fall conferences I told Mrs. Drescher that Alexis’ parents were downstairs with his sister’s teacher and a few minutes later she confirmed with me “Alexis’ mom is downstairs, right?” This was especially surprising to me as she knew Alexis’ father quite well from their daily exchanges during afterschool pick up. Similarly, on the day of a meeting between Ms. Vega and Martina’s parents, Ms. Vega kept referring to “Martina’s mom” coming that afternoon despite my constant mentioning of her “parents” and the fact that Martina’s father had attended every teacher
meeting and event so far. Even as her parents walked up the stairs and waved hello to us Ms. Vega commented, “Oh, Martina’s mom is here.” Despite teachers’ failure to acknowledge them, fathers, especially Mexican immigrant fathers, were often present at school events. For example, a meeting on math strategies with parents and second grade teachers had more fathers than mothers present. In addition, it was common to see Mexican immigrant fathers attend conferences, pick their children up from school, and sign their kids up for kindergarten. Yet, even when physically present during typical parent involvement activities, fathers still tended to be overlooked.

Similarly teachers tended to remember academic conversations they had had previously with students’ fathers as having occurred with their mother instead. For example, Mrs. Drescher had met with one boy’s father during Fall conferences (his mother had to work) and during this conference they had discussed this boy’s tendency to be a bit distracted at the start of the day. During the spring conference, which both parents attended, Mrs. Drescher referenced this conversation, explicitly naming that she had had it with mom during Fall conferences. As I had been present as an interpreter at both conferences, I knew this was not the case. The boy’s parents did not correct her either. It appeared that even when Mexican immigrant fathers were actively participating in traditional school-based events in traditional ways, mothers were still accredited for their family’s involvement.

Finally, fathers from any ethnic background tended not to play a central role in the daily curriculum, although mothers were regularly mentioned. For example, mothers were often the protagonists in stories or portrayed as in charge of the kids and the household in sample math word problems. They were also the recipients of school-based creations, such as valentines cards created for “mommy.” Although this may not differ from most elementary schools across the country, it added to a climate in which fathers, including Mexican immigrant fathers who played
important roles in their children’s schooling, tended to be made invisible in terms of their involvement.

Within interviews, both focal teachers did reflect upon how they may have more directly indexed mothers, rather than fathers, with their students. Mrs. Drescher explained that over the twenty years she had been teaching at this school, many children tended not to have an active father figure at home. Her move to only mention mothers, she felt, was out of habit and an attempt to not make students without fathers feel badly. Ms. Vega, in contrast, reasoned that she probably mentioned mothers more because she felt students talked about their mothers much more than their fathers. She explained that “what they’ve talked to me and communicated to me at school, it’s been ‘Mom, Mom.’” She felt this may be why she focused on moms more than dads.

It is important to highlight that, in my observations, many students did talk about their fathers in school. Although it may have been somewhat less than students’ talk about their moms, it was still there. For example, Martina regularly referenced the things her father Ignacio taught her (such as drawing strategies, facts about animals, different jump rope techniques) and things she had done with him (going to the fair, taking a friend to the swimming pool with him, etc.). Many other students, focal and non-focal, from Mexican immigrant and other backgrounds, brought up their fathers in everyday school-based learning and interactions. Although I was likely hyper-focused on when students spoke about their fathers in school, teachers appeared to only hear what they said about their mothers.

In some ways Mexican immigrant fathers’ recognition within Grant was similar to Mexican immigrant men being positioned as undifferentiated anonymous masses in larger circulating discourses about immigration (See Chapter 7). A key difference, however, was that unlike the negative evaluations of “dangerous criminals” that prevailed in the media, Grant
teachers tended to position Mexican immigrant fathers in a positive—albeit impersonal—light. In the following section I trace the trajectories of two fathers who were actually noticed and talked about by teachers in the second grade. These two men stood out against a backdrop of Mexican immigrant fathers that went relatively unnoticed as individuals. In the analyses I draw upon a repertoires approach to parent involvement to empirically analyze the trajectories of Ignacio and Mateo as “involved fathers” over the course of the school year. I highlight the ways that they were understood by educators within and across events and the unforeseen changes in their trajectories as they became positioned as certain social types over the course of the school year.

**Fathers’ Trajectories**

The empirical analyses in this section follow the surprising trajectories of socialization travelled by two Mexican immigrant fathers as they were socialized into parent involvement practices at Grant elementary during their children’s second grade year. The analysis entails the careful tracking of how individuals negotiated their meanings through their semiotic choices, which were guided by their alignments to certain images of locally salient social types (Agha, 2007; Dick, 2010a; Goffman, 1981) such as “involved father.” As I discuss in Chapter 2, socialization occurs across a trajectory similarly to how a sign is given meanings within a singular speech event (Wortham, 2005). In a speech event, a sign sediments into a meaning when subsequent signs provide cues to help contextualize it. With trajectories, a sign comes to be read in a certain way once subsequent signs across events help contextualize it. Meanings assigned to signs in previous events may also influence how signs in later events are understood. Trajectories, however, are not always smooth, predictable curves that individuals move across in completely durable ways. Although fathers may deploy semiotic cues that are given a certain interpretation in
an event and contribute to their positioning as a certain social type across events, fathers can also move across events in unexpected ways, with their trajectory changing directions. In some cases fathers deployed their semiotic resources to orient to one social type, yet, due to differences in social domain, teachers oriented to a different model that positioned those semiotic resources differently. The differences in participants’ willingness to accommodate to one another also shaped how fathers were positioned as certain social types.

These two fathers’ trajectories took unexpected turns in which their positionings changed dramatically over time. The unique trajectories of these two fathers emerged across events, in which subsequent interactions were guided by previous alignments and positionings. Both fathers exhibited involvement in their children’s life and schooling, but did so very differently and were evaluated, over time, in surprising ways. Their positionings were surprising because they drastically changed over the course of the year and because teachers’ understanding of their involvement practices based on face-to-face interactions directly contradicted these fathers’ actual home-based parent involvement practices. Ignacio embodied more traditional middle class involvement, but, largely because of his critical stance towards Martina’s schooling and deployment of ‘colder’ paralinguistic cues in face-to-face teacher encounters, he came to be positioned as an impediment to Martina’s academic advancement. Mateo embodied less conventional parent involvement practices at home, but, due to his semiotic displays within conferences, was positively evaluated by teachers and came to be seen as the reason his daughter was improving. Although both students struggled academically, Ignacio came to be positioned as potentially contributing to his daughter’s challenges, whereas Mateo came to be seen as the solution to his daughter’s. I begin with a close examination of Ignacio’s positioning over the course of Martina’s second grade year.
Ignacio’s Trajectory

_The most involved father._ Over the course of the school year Ignacio went from being positioned as the most “involved” father in Ms. Vega’s classroom to being “overbearing” in his daughter’s schooling and as a potential reason for her academic struggles. An examination of his face-to-face encounters with teachers reveals how, over time, his deployment of semiotic resources meant to demonstrate his concern for his daughter’s academic growth instead led to his positioning as an overbearing father. As he travelled along this trajectory these evaluations occurred directly with Ignacio as well as indirectly via Martina’s school-based practices.

Ignacio’s parent involvement practices within the home were very reflective of white middle class norms and expectations. Nonetheless, his seriousness and anxious semiotic cues, combined with his and Ms. Vega’s limited willingness to accommodate to one another, contributed to his eventual positioning as an undesirable social type. I trace this emergence of this trajectory below.

Although Ignacio had attended several school-based events earlier in the fall, the first time Ms. Vega recalled having met him was during parent teacher conferences on November 24th. During this conference Ignacio initially deployed warm paralinguistic cues—he was smiling and friendly. Ms. Vega began the conference by asking them to sign in, directing her comments, eye gaze, and positioning of documents to Alejandra rather than both parents. She then spent the first 15 minutes of the conference covering her talking points related to second grade without pause. Throughout this extensive turn she used authoritative school documents such as report cards or a summary of the math curriculum to guide and support her explanations. Ignacio's body language shifted dramatically when she shared the reading spectrum in which Martina had recently scored at a kindergarten rather than a second-grade level. His smile melted into a furrowed brow and he spent the rest of the conference switching among resting his face on his palm, tightly crossing his arms across his chest, or fidgeting.
After 15 excruciating minutes in which Ignacio was visibly frustrated, Ms. Vega provided the first opportunity for Martina’s parents to speak by asking if there were “any other questions.” They had not been given an opportunity to get a word in edgewise, let alone a question, before this point. Ignacio gave a nervous smile—“muchas preguntas” [many questions] and then went into a long explanation of the things they had noticed at home with Martina’s learning and their concerns about how, through school and home, they could better support Martina’s academic development. Ms. Vega suggested that Martina get more practice, such as regular reading at night. She also encouraged Ignacio and Alejandra to be more encouraging with Martina as she felt that the second-grader lacked confidence. She did not dwell on this point, but mentioned it as one possibility of things they could try at home.

Ignacio, in contrast, focused on their belief that problems with writing were directly related to problems in reading. He regularly compared the pedagogical approaches in Mexico, in which the teacher sat with a child to help her figure out how to read, with what they had noticed here. He mentioned how Martina’s grade of 2 out of 4, which in Marshall indicated a scoring from the statewide standardized assessment of approaching competency in the desired skill. In Mexico, however, 2 out of 4 (a 50 percent score), would be considered failing and would be enough to have to repeat the year. Here and throughout his meetings with Ms. Vega he could clearly articulate the procedural routines from his upbringing in Mexico that formed his repertoire, and recognized they were different from those at Grant. He did not, however, have pedagogical or oftentimes even implicit understandings of the procedural routines at Grant—such as the positive reinforcement outlook or grading system. Ms. Vega, in contrast, seemed relatively unaware of the specificity of the procedural routines within their schooling system. Ignacio diplomatically shared his frustrations that they had been hearing the same thing from teachers about Martina for 3 years and he wanted to figure out if she simply learned at a different pace or
if she might have legitimate learning difficulties that required attention. Like many middle class parents in the US, he advocated for his daughter and put pressure on the school to help determine the issues, while simultaneously offering to help at home in any way possible. Upon Alejandra's request, they decided to talk in a few months to learn the specifics of how Ms. Vega had seen Martina develop academically.

During an interview on December 7th, two weeks after the conference, Ms. Vega reflected on the parents she had met during conferences and highlighted how Ignacio stood out to her as the most involved father. She explained, “This year really the only father parent that stuck out to me as being extremely the most interested was Martina’s father, who seemed like he was talking the most and seemed like he knew her strengths and weaknesses, kind of more aware of where she was academically.” She also discussed how she was surprised that Martina’s parents were surprised by Martina’s reading grades if they could see at home she was not a proficient reader. She did not appear to recognize the local specificity of the grading system, and how it was often difficult for parents (especially from Mexico) to fully make sense of.

Nonetheless, Ignacio had stood out as the most (and really only) “involved father” for Ms. Vega during fall conferences, and she appeared to appreciate his careful attention to Martina’s academic development. She regularly emphasized early in the year how supportive Martina’s parents were.

An overbearing father. On February 11th, Ms. Vega met with Ignacio and Alejandra again as part of the follow-up they had discussed in the fall conference. A few months beforehand, in an effort to help support Martina’s academic development at home, Ms. Vega had started sending home a special purple folder with extra literacy practice. Her directions, however, were not entirely clear to Martina’s parents, and they felt they were supposed to finish it all at once. Ms. Vega often relied on Martina to relay information such as instructions to her parents orally, which
Martina could not easily recontextualize (especially into Spanish) at home. This led to confusion regarding how much Martina was supposed to complete each night. Martina had also started a special invite-only afterschool literacy program, which kept her busy until 5:30pm every day afterschool. Ironically, Ignacio and Alejandra felt that the purple folder in addition to Martina’s regular homework and afterschool program were simply too much academics, but they felt they should comply with the teacher’s request. Ms. Vega also felt Martina’s parents put too much pressure on her and wanted her to do too much, but she thought her parents wanted Martina to keep doing the additional practice, so she kept sending it home. Martina was the only student with a special folder and the only one who had a February parent meeting. Although the meeting was between both of Martina’s parents, all day long Ms. Vega kept referring to Martina’s mother coming, which made me think maybe Ignacio could not make it. His presence at the meeting highlighted the subtle ways that Mexican immigrant fathers regularly went unnoticed within Grant.

This meeting unfolded very similarly to the fall conference—Ms. Vega shared very similar updates on Martina’s progress and Ignacio and Alejandra sought answers regarding how to explicitly support their daughter’s learning. Ignacio in particular provided insight into Martina’s home-based literacy interests, such as her love of copying lyrics to songs, which met the expectations of “writing” from their upbringing in Mexico. Extending this activity to meet the curricular writing goals at Grant based on creation rather than copying, Ms. Vega suggested that Martina could try to write her own lyrics as well. The meeting, however, included very little new information regarding Martina’s academic development. By the end of the meeting Alejandra and especially Ignacio were visibly frustrated, which Ms. Vega clearly picked up on. After this conference Ms. Vega began regularly sharing her concern that Martina needed more encouragement and that her father in particular appeared very serious and overbearing. Her
understanding of Martina’s participation in school presupposed parents that were not encouraging and that placed too much pressure on Martina on being accurate. For example, when discussing Martina’s writing she felt that she kept holding back because she was too scared to make a mistake, maybe because her parents placed too much emphasis on accuracy. By this point in the year Ignacio had become positioned as involved in Martina’s schooling, but not in ways that were helpful to her academic growth.

The spring parent-teacher conference provided much of the same. Ms. Vega re-explained many of the same points and tried to clarify different perspectives regarding Martina’s struggles in math by modeling the problems for Martina’s parents. After almost 12 minutes of looking frustrated and constantly checking the clock, Ignacio spoke up in the midst of Ms. Vega’s modeling of fractions. With a spurt of fidgety gestures, as if he could not contain himself for another moment, he interrupted, “That is not the problem. The problem is adding, multiplying, subtracting…” [Q1] He laughed nervously as he and his wife explained again the specific issues they saw their daughter having, which were not the things that Ms. Vega was trying to model for them. To try and lighten the mood and again explain that they had different approaches to math, perhaps from growing up in Mexico, Ignacio added with a sheepish smile and soft laughter, “The problem is—well, we are different and they are different.” [Q2] He was warm and smiling as he and Alejandra explained the procedural routines for math that they had grown up with which required a solid foundation in basic numeracy, a set of procedures they had tried with Martina, but that clearly did not match what she was learning in school. Rather than engaging in a conversation to try and understand differences in their repertoires, Ms. Vega returned to her modeling of fractions. Throughout the conference Ignacio politely disagreed with Ms. Vega’s long-winded explanations and offered explanations of the areas they had noticed at home. He did
not shy away from disagreement and instead of accommodating to one another, Ms. Vega, Ignacio, and Alejandra appeared to be competing for the floor.

Rather than moving toward repertoire expansion, a tension arose between aspects of Ms. Vega’s U.S. school-based repertoire and Ignacio’s own repertoire from his upbringing in Mexico. This tension could be seen during the following exchange between Ignacio (I) and Martina (M) as they completed her literacy homework of reading a list of words, including the focal term ‘wash:’

Excerpt 1

1. M: Um ‘wish.’
2. I: ‘Wash.’
4. I: No, no es ‘wish.’ Es ‘wash.’
5. M: No. Es ‘wish.’
6. I: No ‘wish.’ Why ‘wish?’
7. M: Lo voy a decir a mi maestra.
8. I: Es ‘wash.’
9. M: Lo voy a decir a mi maestra.
10. I: Martí, ¿quién sabe más, tú o tu maestra?
11. M: ¿Hm?
12. I: Quién sabe más, ¿yo o tu maestra?

*English Translation: ORIGINAL ENGLISH IN BOLD*
1. **M:** Um ‘wish.’
2. **I:** ‘Wash.’
3. **M:** ‘Wash?’ It's ‘wish.’
4. **I:** No, it's not ‘wish.’ Es ‘wash.’
5. **M:** No. It’s ‘wish.’
6. **I:** No ‘wish.’ Why ‘wish?’
7. **M:** I’m going to tell my teacher.
8. **I:** It’s ‘wash.’
9. **M:** I’m going to tell my teacher.
10. **I:** Marti, who knows more, you or your teacher?
11. **M:** Hm?
12. **I:** Who knows more, me or your teacher?
13. **M:** My teacher.
14. **I:** I don’t know.

In this exchange Martina and Ignacio disagreed on how to correctly complete her English-based homework. Martina was convinced the correct word and pronunciation, based on what she had heard at school, was “wish” rather than “wash,” (lines 1, 3, 5) but Ignacio knew this was not correct (lines 2, 4, 8). He also knew that the goal of this homework was to learn how to quickly recognize simple words in English, something Martina struggled with, not creatively spell or write words. Her word choice in Spanish, “Lo voy a decir a mi maestra” (line 7, 9) literally means “I’m going to tell my teacher,” as if she were tattling on her parents’ errors. Although she may have meant it more as “I am going to ask my teacher,” this tension regarding the correct ways to say and do things regularly emerged in their homework completion routines, and Martina often called upon her teacher’s authority, to which she had direct access and her parents did not, to
bolster her viewpoint. Sometimes Ignacio believed her if he was not certain of the correct answer. Here, in contrast, he rebuked her call to the teacher’s authority by asking who knew more, him or the teacher (line 12). Although he mis-spoke when he first asked this question, leading to Martina’s confusion (lines 10 – 11), Martina answered her teacher (line 13), which Ignacio, in a somewhat joking manner, said he was not sure about (line 14). Although there was a jocular tone to this exchange, there was also an underlying kernel of truth—over time his repertoire came to be positioned as competing with the school-based repertoire, partially because he could not fully access the school procedural routines. Ignacio never claimed that his own routines for academic development were correct and that Ms. Vega’s were wrong, but he did regularly voice his concerns about potentially confusing his daughter with so many different approaches. In addition, as I discuss below, Ignacio was relatively uncomfortable in the school building, which may have contributed to his anxious deployment of semiotic resources within face-to-face encounters that contributed to his negative positioning over time.

In home-based interactions Ignacio often had the type of smile that made the edges of his eyes crinkle in delight. As described in Chapter 4, although he could sometimes be serious, he was caring and fun loving with his daughter and the two of them had an extremely close relationship. For example, when asked about her favorite memory with her father, Martina broke down into tears of happiness and explained several times “he’s always there for me.” This side of Ignacio, however, did not travel well into his school-based interactions. In fact, due to a previous school-based incident, he was very uncomfortable within the school building, which may have contributed to his colder and more anxious semiotic cues.

In the spring of Martina’s kindergarten year Ignacio had agreed to chaperone a field trip to a local farm. Martina had many allergies, and if the school nurse could not travel on a field trip, one of her parents would have to go in case she needed medicine. If a parent could not attend,
Martina could not participate. This fieldtrip occurred several years after Ignacio’s accident that, because of an arm injury, prevented him from working or lifting heavy objects. During this field trip the teachers made no efforts to communicate with Ignacio except to ask him and Benjamin’s father to move heavy boxes of the school lunches from the bus to the picnic tables. This was another example of how Mexican immigrant men were widely overlooked in schools, except when they could be used for physical labor, quite literally as “strong arms,” just like the Bracero immigration program. Despite his better judgment, Ignacio helped move the lunches. Several years later Ignacio reflected upon how that incident, combined with the uncensored attention that he sometimes received from children if they saw the scars on his arm, made him uncomfortable at school. His avoidance of school field trips was a form of resistance to parent involvement practices at Grant, and as a couple they decided it was better for Alejandra to take off from work, even though she was the only one who could work in the couple, to attend field trips to avoid further incidents. During conferences Ignacio was often bundled up in several long-sleeved shirts, sometimes wearing a coat on one side over his injured arm (which looked a bit awkward), to hide the excessive scarring. His nervousness and colder cues could have partially been from his overall discomfort in school, a discomfort that grew out of racializing incidents several years beforehand. His deployment of semiotic resources at school led Martina’s teacher to assume this was who he was as a static social type, and she appeared to assume that he was the same way across interactions, such as with his daughter at home.

Aspects of Ignacio’s parent involvement repertoire, in contrast, were reflective of his middle class background, which differed greatly from the majority of the parents at Grant Elementary. He and Alejandra were more willing to openly share the exact details and perspectives on Martina’s academic development and disagree, although very politely, with Ms. Vega’s suggestions. Unlike most other Mexican immigrant parents, Ignacio did not quietly
acquiesce to explanations that were unhelpful—he let them go on for a short time, but continually returned to what he and his wife saw as the central issues. This more closely aligns with Lareau’s (2000) work on class-based differences in parent involvement. She found that middle class parents were more likely to embody school-sanctioned parent involvement practices reflective of the traditional model, had more confidence in helping their children with homework, and perceived teachers as equals (or inferiors) and thus did not hesitate to question teachers’ professional expertise. Despite Ignacio’s and Alejandra’s self-alignment to a more middle class lifestyle, including their approaches to helping Martina with school, within the receiving context of Marshall they tended to be lumped together with undocumented Mexican immigrants who were assumed to come from scarcer resources and limited formal education. Ms. Vega, who belonged to a social domain that could not differentiate among different types of Mexican immigrants, appeared to position Ignacio in this way. It is interesting to consider how Ignacio’s deployment of parent involvement practices—serious demeanor, asking difficult questions to advocate for his daughter’s academic development, and clear knowledge of his daughter’s strengths and challenges—would have been positioned by Ms. Vega if he were a white middle class father rather than a brown-skinned immigrant from Mexico. Although there were no white middle class parents at Grant to empirically compare him with, it appears that “middle class involved Mexican immigrant father” was not an available social type for Ms. Vega to orient to, and that instead Ignacio came to be positioned in undesirable ways.

Over time Ms. Vega came to view some of Martina’s academic struggles as being exacerbated by her parents’—and especially her father’s—lack of encouragement. For example, in June she explained, “I kind of have this feeling that—I don’t know if her work at home is a little bit too, I don’t know, if the parents are—because I see that she’s a little bit too much a perfectionist, especially in writing where she’s so much focused on trying to get it right that
she’ll write one sentence in an hour.” She then went on to emphasize, unsolicited, “He can seem very disappointed easily in Martina. And I don’t know if that’s really gonna bring forth the kind of, I don’t know, follow through that he wants to see. I think if he’s a little more positive it might be better.” Both Ignacio and Ms. Vega were somewhat unwilling to accommodate to one another’s repertoires, and they oriented to different social domains regarding his deployment of semiotic resources in face-to-face interactions. Over time Ms. Vega appeared to interpret Ignacio’s paralinguistic cues (that were somewhat out of his control) of deep concern and frustration about his daughter’s academic development as an overly rigid, overbearing father who reduced his daughter's confidence by not adopting a more “positive reinforcement” approach. In contrast, Ignacio often voiced his hope in private that Martina could have a stricter teacher who would push her more in terms of her academic development.

As this analysis of his trajectory shows, over time Ignacio went from being positioned as the most “involved” father in her classroom to being “involved” in the wrong kind of way. His parent involvement practices were very reminiscent of mainstream middle class norms—daily homework help, careful attention to his daughter’s development, seeking out extracurricular activities such as violin and art lessons, regular educational excursions, and organizing a school-based birthday party that was the envy of most of Martina’s classmates. Yet, based largely on his semiotic cues in face-to-face interactions and potentially Ms. Vega’s limited categories for types of Mexican immigrant fathers, he came to be positioned in an unfavorable light. His serious demeanor and critique of school-based practices led Ms. Vega to believe that Ignacio maintained this serious demeanor and critical approach with his daughter as well. Although he “walked the walk” of desired parent involvement practices at Grant, he could not “talk the talk” in face-to-face encounters, which led to his unfavorable positioning. In the following example I present an analysis of a second father’s trajectory, which unfolded in very different ways.
Mateo’s Trajectory

*An inaccessible father.* Over the course of the school year Mateo went from being positioned as an “inaccessible” and somewhat irresponsible parent to being “wonderfully involved” in his daughter’s schooling and as a key reason for her academic growth. An examination of his face-to-face events at school reveals how he deployed resources from his repertoire to establish a friendly and meaningful relationship with Abi’s teacher, Mrs. Drescher. This positive evaluation from their first meeting, bolstered by Mrs. Drescher’s proactive accommodations to Mateo as a caring father and handsome man, contributed to a trajectory in which Mateo was increasingly evaluated as an incredibly involved father. These evaluations occurred directly with Mateo as well as indirectly via Abi’s school-based practices. Mateo’s embodiment of parent involvement within their home, however, differed greatly from the traditional practices celebrated within Abi’s school. In the following section I begin with a field note from October 13th that highlights how Abi’s parents, including Mateo, were initially viewed as “inaccessible” by educators at the start of the year, before their first face-to-face interactions.

Last Thursday I received an e-mail from Mrs. Gonzalez, the migrant education coordinator and educator responsible for contacting Spanish-speaking families, asking if I could help get in touch with Abi’s family as she had not been successful. She had sent home many different notes and had tried calling the different numbers they had listed, but without any success. She needed them to come in and fill out a form immediately. I ended up e-mailing and calling them and got a response from Abi’s mom, Susana. When I talked to Mrs. Gonzalez she explained that Mateo had stopped by on Tuesday and done the paperwork. She was frustrated about how difficult it was to get in touch with them, and I got the feeling that she thought it was worse than the majority of other families. I agreed with her that it is tricky to get in touch with them, although they are relatively responsive to e-mail. She did not ask to have their e-mail address when I bring this up.

Here, and at multiple times during Abi’s schooling career, Abi’s parents were negatively positioned because of their inaccessibility. Their family had experienced a lot of economic hardship over the years—they did not have a landline in their home and regularly changed cell phone numbers depending upon when they could afford to have them. They also frequently
changed jobs and did not have relatives that lived in the area for backup contact numbers. Although they were very responsive to less traditional forms of contact, such as email, Facebook messages, or simply dropping by their home, the school focused on the traditional form of telephone contact and became frustrated at how difficult it was to communicate with them. This evaluation was extended to both of Abi’s parents, as educators did not know either of them well at this point. In the opening months of Abi’s second grade year, her teacher Mrs. Drescher was somewhat aware of these issues as well as the limited responses she received from documents she sent home to her parents.

*A wonderfully involved father.* These evaluations changed, however, when Mrs. Drescher met Abi’s father Mateo during parent teacher conferences on November 24th. Due to work schedules, Mateo attended the conference without Susana. He and his two children had walked the 1.5 miles from their home and during the conference Abi was in charge of watching her toddler-aged brother. Throughout the conference Mateo maintained a very serious face, often focused on the details of the report card written in Spanish. Later he explained that he felt his serious face reflected the seriousness of the occasion—a one-on-one conference with his daughter’s teachers. He predominantly avoided direct eye contact with Mrs. Drescher, due to respect and language differences, but regularly looked to me (serving as an interpreter) or Mrs. Cieza (the ESL teacher) when we provided explanations in Spanish. Despite his serious-looking demeanor, he also broke into regular smiles and occasional laughter that was somewhat nervous, but genuine. Overall, throughout the conference, he agreed with what the teachers said, often adding that he has noticed similar things about Abi at home. He openly accepted the teacher’s suggestions with a smile and brought up academic points he was hoping to focus on, such as helping with Abi’s reading development. Unlike most Mexican immigrant parents at Grant who accepted teachers’ suggestions but did not introduce conference topics or solutions to academic
issues themselves, Mateo wondered if the teachers had books that Abi would be able to write in to focus on the words she knew. Collaboratively they came up with the solution of sending home highlighting tape for Abi to use. By the end of the conference Mrs. D highlighted that Abi’s growth so far that year was “wonderful” and emphasized to Mateo: “You’re doing a great job.” Unlike many teachers who tended to refer to parents working with interpreters in the 3rd person (e.g., “He’s doing a great job”), Mrs. D directed her talk to Mateo directly, referring to him in the second person “you” as a move to foster direct communication with him. Throughout the conference she drew upon the semiotic resources at her disposal—a few lexical items in Spanish such as “uno” and “gracias,” regular hand gestures, compliments about their toddler-aged son also present, and regular smiles.

With parents in general, Mrs. Drescher sought out ways to accommodate to her interlocutors to establish meaningful communication in conferences. This accommodation may have been even more notable in Mateo’s conferences because, as she later confided, she found him very handsome. When asked what her overall conference goals were, Mrs. Drescher spoke about the importance of establishing rapport with parents:

I just try to be accepting. Let them know that it’s okay if you can’t say everything in English, that you can say it in Spanish and even like, write notes and we can find somebody to translate it…I just try to be friendly, yet respectful…But I kind of try to do that with every parent. I try to use that time to kind of get to know them. You know, it’s not much time to go over lots of specific things educationally. If I could form a bond where we can contact each other later and I give them a paper that says this and they see and they have questions, that they can feel comfortable to then ask me questions, I feel like I’ve done my job. You know, I want them comfortable to come into the building. I want them coming back, I want them writing notes.

This response contrasts dramatically with most other teachers I have known over the years at Grant, such as Ms. Vega, who discussed her primary goal of conferences as having as many parents attend her conferences as possible. The form and content of Mrs. Drescher’s conferences largely reflected her stated goals: Besides the report card she tended to rely less on formal
documents to guide her conferences and spent a large portion of the time trying to talk with parents in order to get to know them on a personal level. Overall her conferences were less scripted than most other teachers, such as Ms. Vega who tended to discuss the same topics in the same sequence with similar wording for all families.

For Mrs. Drescher, in contrast, this parent-teacher conference was a chance for her to start getting to know Mateo as an individual. Within the event she came to position him very positively, likely with a greater degree of communicative accommodation and eagerness to align with him than she usually demonstrated with other parents because of his good looks. Several weeks later she also shared that she was impressed that he had come to Abi’s conference alone as a father. She felt that usually if a mother could not come, neither parent would come. It is interesting to note that there was at least one other father who had done the same thing from her conferences, although he did not stand out in her mind the same way that Mateo did. This again points to the possibility that other factors (such as his good looks) contributed to her noticing him as an individual. As I discuss below, this positive evaluation of him from this initial conference carried over in somewhat surprising ways to many of Mrs. Drescher’s school-based interactions with Abi.

On the morning of January 14th Mrs. Drescher and I caught up as she prepared the materials for the day. She mentioned that Abi often got to class a bit late, and wondered if I knew why. As I had her parents’ permission to discuss this if it came up, I explained that they had moved houses, but they did not have a way to prove that they lived there because nothing was in their name. Abi, therefore, could not change bus stops and because they did not have a car, they had to walk about a mile to her old bus stop or the school. Often a family friend gave Abi a ride to school, but they sometimes arrived late. Mrs. Drescher said she’d talk to the principal about it, trying to see how she could help. Later in the day she was going through students’ take-home
folders and Abi’s had not been checked by anyone at home. Instead of reprimanding Abi for not doing her “job” of making sure her family looked at it as she often did when folders went untouched, she explained that she knew Abi must have been in a rush that morning and she understood that her father may not have had time. She then explained the key sheets to me, and asked if I would talk to her father, as she knew I would be seeing him that afternoon. I found myself surprised that she did not seem accusatory of Abi’s family at any point. She appeared incredibly sympathetic to their situation, which contrasted with Mrs. Gonzalez’s and other educators’ frustration with the family. In addition, in contrast to her constant reference to “moms” who needed to check students’ folders or follow-through with school communication, Mateo was the only father Mrs. Drescher ever explicitly referenced in terms of parent involvement practices. She continued this practice throughout the year, such as the following excerpt in which Mrs. Drescher (Mrs. D) gave directions to Abi (A) who was seated next to me (S).

Excerpt 2

1. ((Mrs. D hands out photocopies of homework directions in Spanish to students.))
2. A: Thank you.
3. Mrs. D: And as we do this— ((to other student)).
4. A: ((Raises hand)). Oh, Mrs. Drescher. Do we have, um, to cut it?
5. Mrs. D: No. This is for mommy and daddy.
6. A: Ok.
7. Mrs. D: You don't do anything with this, mommy and daddy—there's even an extra ruler there for the homework, when we have rulers. You just give that to
8. mommy and daddy. They'll hold on to that, ok.
10. Mrs. D to S: She's so caring.
In this interaction Mrs. Drescher explicitly referenced Abi’s father multiple times (lines 5, 7, 9), which stands in stark contrast to her usual reference to mothers alone. She also positively evaluated Abi to me (line 11), presumably based on her asking a clarifying question about the homework, which normally would not elicit such glowing praise.

These interactions appeared to expand Mrs. Drescher’s communicative repertoire. First, through the case of Mateo, she began to incorporate fathers’ involvement in their children’s schooling into her talk and expectations. In addition, she learned about some of the challenges that immigrant families sometimes faced, such as not being able to get leases or energy bills in their own names, which were required to prove where a child lived for school placement. Although she always appeared open with all of her students’ families, her interest in Abi’s family as individuals, and extensive sympathy toward challenges in their lives, also fostered opportunities for her to learn more about some of the realities in immigrant students’ lives.

On March 24th Mateo also attended Abi’s Spring parent teacher conference without his wife, who had to work. This conference included the participation of Mateo, Mrs. Drescher, Mrs. Banerjee the student teacher, Mrs. Cieza the ESL teacher, myself as an interpreter, and occasional additions from Abi herself who sat at a nearby computer pretending not to listen in. Post-conference Mrs. Drescher and Mrs. Banerjee commented again about how handsome Mateo was, almost like a model, and how he was “easy on the eyes.” At the very beginning of the conference these two late middle-aged women appeared to exchange quick smirks with one another, likely related to this topic. As always, everyone was very professional and appropriate in the conference. Mateo and Mrs. Drescher’s communication unfolded in very similar ways in this second face-to-face meeting: He maintained a serious face with limited eye contact with the English speaking teachers, he largely agreed with what Mrs. Drescher said and offered similar observations that he had noticed at home, and his serious demeanor gave way to warm smiles.
from time to time. Mrs. Drescher maintained her approach to communicative accommodation and
by the end of the conference Mateo and Mrs. Drescher managed to creatively draw upon their
communicative resources to establish direct communication.

In the following excerpt Mateo (M) was seated at the conference with Mrs. Drescher
(Mrs. D), the student teacher (Mrs. B), and me (S) as the interpreter. They had just given Mateo
the letter from the nurse about Abi’s Body Mass Index, which was sent home for every student.
Mateo asked about the letter and Mrs. Drescher explained that it was nothing to be worried about.
They both agreed that although Abi was a bit heftier than most children, she would grow and she
was healthy. Mateo then commented about Abi’s participation in sports with him, which led to a
conversation about local sporting facilities.
Excerpt 3
1. M: De todos modos los domingos hace deportes conmigo.
2. S: And every Sunday she runs around and does sports with him.
3. Mrs. D: Good. Aww soccer?
4. M: Uh huh. ((Directing his gaze to Mrs. D. with shy smile))
5. Mrs. D: Aah. Where do you play?
6. S: ¿Dónde juegos?
8. ((Looks at S who shrugs and then back to Mrs. D.))
10. M: Yeah. ((Looking at Mrs. D.))
11. Mrs. D: My son played lacrosse there. ((Generates cradling lacrosse ball and smiles.))
12. M: Yeah? ((Smiling, looking at Mrs. D).)
1. **M:** Anyway, on Sundays she plays sports with me.

2. **S:** And every Sunday she runs around and does sports with him.

3. **Mrs. D:** Good. Aww soccer?

4. **M:** Uh huh. ((Directing his gaze to Mrs. D. with shy smile))

5. **Mrs. D:** Aah. Where do you play?

6. **S:** Where do you play?

7. **M:** Here in, what’s it called? ((Looks upward to think)) 452 in Siracusa.

8. ((Looks at S who shrugs and then back to Mrs. D.))

9. **Mrs. D:** Oh Siracusa. 452 Sports complex.

10. **M:** Yeah. ((Looking at Mrs. D))

11. **Mrs. D:** My son played lacrosse there ((Gestures cradling lacrosse ball and smiles)).

12. **M:** Yeah? ((Smiling, looking at Mrs. D)).

This interaction differs greatly from the majority of Mateo’s, and most Mexican immigrant parents’, interactions with teachers during conferences, which tend to occur “through” the interpreter rather than direct communication among participants. In this brief interaction Mrs. D used a lexical item in English within Mateo’s repertoires, “soccer” (line 3), which lead to his direct response without interpretation (line 4). Mrs. D then drew upon her limited Spanish repertoires to recognize the numbers Mateo said in Spanish, as well as her local knowledge of sports facilities and nearby towns to comprehend his response (line 7). Drawing upon the semiotic resources at her disposal, such as clear speech and gestures, she then explained that her son played lacrosse there, which Mateo appeared to understand via his direct response (lines 11 – 12). In this interaction, despite limited shared linguistic resources in English and Spanish, Mateo and Mrs. Drescher were able to establish direct communication about a sports complex. More importantly, they were able to accomplish the interactional work of getting to know one another.
as well as finding things that they had in common. This parallels findings from Erickson and Shultz’s (1982) work on gatekeeping encounters among academic counselors and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In their microethnographic study, attention to participants’ deployment of semiotic and cultural resources within the encounter could best explain how participants were able to foster positive relationships and co-membership rather than orienting to the differences that divided them. A similar form of accommodation appeared to be central to the success of this interaction and Mrs. Drescher’s positive evaluations of Mateo, which contrasts greatly with the barriers that formed between Ms. Vega and Ignacio in Martina’s conferences. A communicative repertoires approach highlights that this positive relationship formed by both participants’ willingness to accommodate to one another. In this interaction they skillfully drew upon the semiotic resources at their disposal to align themselves with certain social types, such as “good teacher” and “involved father.” As I discuss below, Mateo’s deployment of semiotic resources in these school-based events differed significantly from the ways he embodied being a “good father” in other contexts.

Out of the five years that I have known Mateo, these conferences were the only times I recall him taking on such a serious demeanor, which greatly contrasted with his everyday outgoing nature in which he never appeared to stop joking around. Even in other intense encounters—talking about the police coming to his home or at the chiropractor when he damaged his sciatic nerve at work and could barely move because of the pain—he maintained a jovial, humorous tone that could be heard across the room. His storytelling, linguistic creativity, and fun-loving relationship with his children were the key aspects of him I had gotten to know over the years. In conferences, however, he chose his words carefully and delivered them in a quiet, shy voice with a serious face. On several occasions Mrs. Drescher mentioned how serious and strict she thought he was and often interpreted his paralinguistic cues, such as his noticing of Abi’s
lower math grade before I was there to interpret, through a lens of a strict father with extremely high expectations for his daughter. In other conversations she brought him up and talked about how “refined” he seemed, emphasizing how quiet and reserved he always was. Although Mateo was many wonderful things, refined is likely not an adjective most people outside of the school would use to describe him. Mrs. Drescher’s understandings of him were based on a limited number of highly specific encounters (conferences), and her initial face-to-face impressions framed how she interpreted his and Abi’s future practices regarding Abi’s schooling. By positioning him as a highly involved father, Mrs. Drescher appeared to assume that he (and his wife) were embodying certain sets of home-based practices. In the following section I analyze how Mateo’s desirable parent involvement in school-based events with teachers were not accompanied by stereotypical mainstream home-based involvement practices. Instead, being an involved father for Mateo entailed actively creating an environment that differed from the academics of school.

Separate home and school spheres. Unlike the overlapping spheres model of parent involvement celebrated by Joyce Epstein and colleagues (2003), Mateo’s orientation to desirable parent involvement included maintaining a home environment that was not too school-like. In the following set of excerpts I analyze Mateo and Abi’s talk about reading logs, a school-based assignment that was supposed to be completed at home. These three excerpts illustrate that although Mateo was able to engage teachers in conversations regarding home-based procedural routines expected from the school in ways that contributed to their positive evaluation of him as an “involved father,” he adopted home-based practices that prioritized family time over academic time. I use these examples to highlight how Mateo’s approaches to involvement cannot be captured via traditional or mismatch models, and thus require a more nuanced approach such as a
repertoires model. I begin with an explanation of the emergence of a new procedural routine called reading logs.

Since mid-October teachers across the school had adopted a new procedural routine aimed at getting students to read 30 minutes a night using a rewards-based system. To document their reading students were supposed to fill in a worksheet called a “reading log” and then have an adult sign it to verify their reading. If a student submitted a complete reading log in a given month (requiring 12 days of reading), she would be able to participate in a school-based celebration of a special lunch, popcorn, face painting, and prizes. There was a lot of hype throughout the entire school about reading logs and celebrations, and by the early winter almost all second graders were submitting their logs. Abi was one of the few students who had not submitted a complete log, and she regularly complained that her parents would not listen to her and they refused to sign it. This first excerpt occurred in Abi’s home on March 5th, almost three weeks prior to the second parent teacher conference. I had been visiting her family at home and Abi could not find her backpack that she had put all of her reading materials in, including her reading logs. In this interaction Abi (A) tried to enlist Mateo (M) to help her find it with my (S) help, and he claimed to not understand what she was talking about.

Excerpt 4

1. **M:** Why do you want your backpack, huh?
2. **A:** Why? For my **reading log**.
3. **M:** What’s that?
4. **A:** ((Exhales dramatically.))
5. **S:** Explain it.
6. **A:** To read. I need to write there so that—Sarah explain how. So that I fill out a **reading log** and am in the celebration.
8.  **M:** Oh yeah. What’s that?

9.  **A:** When they eat ((Hitting **M** on the leg in annoyance)).

10.  **M:** ((Large exaggerated yawn.))

11.  **A:** They can eat popcorn. Popcorn at school. But you need the thing.

12.  **M:** Aw I don’t believe it.

13.  ((**A** hits **M**’s leg in annoyance.))

In this interaction it was not clear if Mateo really did not know what a reading log was, or if he was just pretending that he didn’t know so that it did not become a regular part of their home-based routine. Abi’s annoyance with him was demonstrated through her exaggerated exhalation (line 4) and hitting of his legs (lines 9, 13). Like every student from Grant, Abi drew upon the English-based term “reading log” (line 7) as no one seemed sure how to say the equivalent in Spanish. She also articulated the school-based rewards for submitting “the thing” (i.e., the reading log, line 11) to earn the celebration. Mateo, in his normal joking manner to avoid things he did not want to do, provided an exaggerated yawn (line 10) as if bored with Abi’s explanation, and claimed he did not believe what she was saying (line 12). Several weeks later, however, he demonstrated his understanding of this school-based procedure with Abi’s teachers. In this excerpt from the March 24th parent teacher conference, Mateo (**M**) initiated a conversation with Abi’s classroom teacher Mrs. Drescher (**Mrs. D**) and ESL teacher Mrs. Cieza (**Mrs. C**) about the reading logs. Abi (**A**), seated at a nearby computer as she eavesdropped on the conversation, also interrupted to contribute her side of the story in which her parents would not listen to her.

Excerpt 5

1.  **M:** Bueno. Lleva una hoja donde ella nota los nombres de los libros. Que tengo que
2.  firmar. ((Gesture of signing paper.))
3.  **Mrs. D:** Reading log.
M: Y la verdad es que—a yo hasta apenas no había—ayer que me la enseñó.

A: Because I read two books in one day but they don't believe me ((At computer)).

M: Entonces—

Mrs. D: —It's ok ((to A))

M: Yo le he visto leyendo pero pues tampoco firmé toda la hoja porque—

Mrs. D: —He can put two books down.

Mrs. C: You can do two books.

M: A lo mejor, ¿si me regalan despúes otra? Para que—ella porque ella llega leerlo. Dos

pone a leer. Y hacía por lo menos ya voy poniendo por día cada libro que lee....

1. M: So. She brings a sheet where she has to write down the names of books. That I have
to sign. ((Gesture of signing paper.))

3. Mrs. D: Reading log.

4. M: And the truth is—I only just, there wasn't—she showed it to me yesterday.

5. A: Because I read two books in one day but they don't believe me ((At computer)).

6. M: So—

7. Mrs. D: —It's ok ((to A)).

8. M: I have seen her reading but well I didn’t sign the sheet because—

9. Mrs. D: —He can put two books down.

10. Mrs. C: You can do two books.

11. M: Maybe you can give me another one? So that—she because she can read it. She’ll

read two. And she did, at least now I’ll go and put every book she reads each day...

In this interaction Mateo directed his eye gaze, talk, and gestures predominantly to Mrs. Cieza
who spoke Spanish, although Mrs. Drescher was the one in charge of the reading logs. Mrs.
Drescher was carefully monitoring Mateo’s talk, and through his semiotic displays of signing a paper, she was able to contextualize his talk and name the topic (lines 1 – 3). Mateo claimed that Abi had only shown him the reading logs the previous day (line 4), which caused Abi to interject in English to clarify that her parents did not believe her when she told them that she reads (line 5). Mrs. Drescher, as empathetic as always to Abi and her father, evaluated that “It’s ok” (line 7) and, mis-guessing Mateo’s question because of Abi’s contributions, confirmed that it is fine to list two books in a single day (line 9). Mateo, positioning himself as a concerned and involved parent who wanted to ensure his daughter was really reading before he signed anything, was also able to get more reading logs to sign (line 11). This move suggested that the reason they were not signing them before was because they didn’t have them, rather than him not listening to Abi’s pleas and explanations of school based procedures. His introduction of the topic of reading logs, as a father, again contrasts with Mrs. Drescher’s daily references to mothers as those in charge of signing them for children. For example, in school she would tell students that “mom has to sign it” (meaning any adult, but naming mom explicitly) for a reading log to count. In the final line he claimed that now, because they had the reading logs, he would make sure to sign them. When I (S) spoke to Abi (A) about this several months later on June 22nd, however, she complained that her father was never willing to help her with her reading or sign the logs.

Excerpt 6

1. S: What types of things would you tell your dad about school?
2. A: He doesn’t listen to me.
3. S: How come?
4. A: Where do you think why he doesn’t listen to me.
5. S: Why?
7. S: Mm.
8. A: Or like now.
10. A: What does he’s doin?
13. S: Hmm. Do you ever try to tell him about reading logs?
14. A: Yeah. But he act like like he’s sleepin. So sometimes when I don't have no one to
   listen to me I write it in my book.
15. S: Hmm. Good idea. Do you ever talk to him about the reading celebration? The fun
   things that you did.
16. A: He doesn’t listen to that.

Several months after Mateo’s talk about reading logs with Abi’s teachers, Abi emphasized that
her father did not help her with school-based things such as reading logs because he was too busy
playing on the computer or sleeping. She frequently complained that her parents would not help
her with homework because they were always working, sleeping, or engaged in technology.
Although her mother sometimes helped her with homework and her father did many non-school
based activities with her, she became frustrated that she could not get more help in certain areas
from them.

Abi’s teachers, however, positioned Abi’s parents and father in particular as extremely
involved and assumed that she was receiving extensive academic support at home. For example,
directly after the conference on March 24th Mrs. Drescher and her student teacher commented
about what great parents Abi appeared to have and how they seemed to help her with a lot of
things. On the one hand, because Mrs. Drescher positioned Abi’s father as involved, she tended to
frame all of Abi’s family’s actions in an extremely positive light. For example, on April 15th Mrs. Drescher pointed out to me that Abi’s parents had sent in a new homework folder for her to use. Rather than being annoyed that they appeared to have lost the old one, as she had been on other occasions when she reminded other children who did not have their folder that they “cost 15 cents at Wal-Mart and their mom can buy them there,” in this case she gave a frown-smile look as she held up the folder to me, as if to say “how caring.” Again, for Abi she made the exception to mention both parents, rather than just her mom as well. On the other hand, Mrs. Drescher was relatively unaware of the limited types of additional academic support Abi was receiving at home. Within her social domain, a father that exhibited desirable parent involvement practices in face-to-face interactions was also engaging in a range of desirable practices at home, such as homework help. It is unclear if there were any additional academic supports that Mrs. Drescher could have offered if she had a more nuanced understanding of Mateo’s home-based practices. At this point in Abi’s schooling the fact that Mrs. Drescher positively evaluated all of Abi’s practices related to home-based involvement seemed to outweigh this misconception.

Mrs. Drescher’s positioning of Mateo as an extremely involved father also appeared to influence her expectations for Abi’s long-term academic trajectory. In the final interview on June 13th, Mrs. Drescher discussed students’ future trajectories and emphasized how she could see Abi in particular attending college because of her parents’ (and mostly father’s) push and support. She explained,

**But I see Abi’s family caring more about furthering an education past high school….Just like Abi’s dad is very quiet here. But yet I can see them wanting to push her to go on to do something whether it be college or whether it be, I don’t know, you know, go be a hairdresser – but I can see because they just push her so. I don’t see them stopping that, you know, they’re just gonna keep pushing her and they’ll find something, some way, for her.**
Abi was the least academically successful student out of all of the focal students in this project, yet one of two that Mrs. Drescher could explicitly imagine continuing on to college. Although Mateo had initially been positioned by Grant educators as inaccessible and somewhat irresponsible, based on her limited face-to-face interactions with him she had come to see him as an extremely involved father, above and beyond the rest. Her evaluations of him from these encounters carried over across space and time. For example, she came to understand Abi’s practices from a framework of having incredibly involved parents, and an exemplary father in terms of parent involvement practices. She also saw this shaping Abi’s long-term trajectory, expecting her to attend schooling beyond high school largely because of her impression of Abi’s parents. Mrs. Drescher had not ever met Abi’s mom, so this impression was widely based on her meetings with Mateo. Although Abi’s parents did hope Abi would pursue a career in the US or Mexico, they were less explicitly proactive about her receiving a college education compared to most other families from this study. Mrs. Drescher assumed that his model involvement within conferences equaled her version of model involvement of traditional school-based parent involvement practices within their home. As I discuss in the following section, Mateo explicitly sought to create a home environment that was not dramatically shaped by school-based practices such as homework completion, talk about the details of the school day, or time spent filling out reading logs. I describe their home-based practices in more detail below.

Unlike U.S. notions of parent involvement in which parents are responsible for creating a learning environment in which school-based activities like homework shape how they spend their time, the roles they take on, and the status that they are sometimes assigned based on their abilities to help with homework (Mangual Figueroa, 2011), Mateo preferred to maintain a family-oriented home environment that was based on having fun together rather than regular academic procedures. For example, when Abi was doing better academically at the beginning of second
grade, her mother attributed Abi’s success to the fact that she had had a fun summer with her father in which she got a break from all of the academics and stress. Although there were certain instances in which Mateo would engage with Abi about her school day, check to make sure her homework was complete, and help her with reading (Chapter 5), he also tried to limit these types of interactions and prioritized them joking around with one another and going out and doing things. For example, during one Sunday visit in March Abi kept trying to get people to make up “number stories” with her and then graph them. Mateo, frustrated at spending their time together focused on this kept saying in a loud, exaggerated voice “Leave school at school. It’s Sunday! It’s always study study study study.” [Q3] At other times he would act as if he became so bored that he’d pretend fall asleep when Abi would repeatedly try to show off her math skills or write a story. He used several interactional moves such as direct statements to “leave school at school,” humor, and feigned boredom to avoid school-based activities.

Mateo did see himself as being involved in Abi’s schooling. He regularly emphasized that he felt that he did help support Abi’s education, but not necessarily by creating a school-like environment at home. He was critical of the purely academic focus at her school, suggesting that they take more time to focus on sports and arts and to create family events in which he could see his daughter shine as an individual rather than just talk about her academic progress or watch her perform an activity as an entire class. It is possible that he also rejected activities such as English-based homework and reading because of the tensions related to language choice and status within their household, in which Abi often invoked English to position herself as more intelligent than her father (Chapter 5). He also emphasized how he supported his daughter’s education by giving her consejos [advice], “With homework, well, I pretty much don’t have time. Her mom does more of that. I give her advice. I explain to her what things are right…in things like that, that her mom can’t see, she talks about them with me. But I try to make it more fun, taking our time, having
patience. *We always talk about things.*” [Q4] He regularly talked about the importance of guiding her choices and fostering a relationship with her in which she could talk to him. In addition, Abi regularly embedded things she learned from the experiential and improvisational educational interactions she had with her father into her school-based practices. For example, she applied metacommunicative strategies learned from her father to her literacy practices (Chapter 5), explained content such as how snakes breathed with their tongues to other students in Spanish when they were reading a non-fiction book together, and often drew upon her experiences with her father as the basis for her writing and stories. Although these forms of involvement were less noticeable to her teachers, they played an important role in how Abi navigated school. And although the combination of proactive communication at family-school events and avoiding school-like activities at home may not easily map onto traditional models of parent involvement in the US, a repertoires approach helps highlight the nuances of how individuals such as Mexican immigrant fathers navigate meaningful engagement in their children’s schooling.

Over the course of Abi’s second grade year Mateo went from being positioned as “inaccessible” to “wonderfully involved.” His skilled deployment of semiotic resources during face-to-face interactions were welcomed by Mrs. Drescher, who adopted different strategies to accommodate to parents’ within conferences and prioritized getting to know them as individuals. Although most fathers tended to be somewhat overlooked within the school and her classroom, what she saw as his model-like looks helped him stand out and led to changes in Mrs. Drescher’s approaches to parent involvement. For example, she expanded her own repertoire by starting to notice fathers’ contributions and by learning about some of the lived realities in immigrant families’ lives. Mateo also demonstrated dynamic aspects of being an involved father. His deployment of semiotic resources for the parent meeting genre included a serious yet warm proactive demeanor with teachers in which he engaged with questions about his daughter’s
academic development in a welcoming way as well as home-based practices that protected their home from becoming a rigid extension of the school day. Although these repertoires may appear contradictory from a traditional or even mismatch approach to parent involvement that focus on homogenous sets of norms, his embodiment of an “involved father” fits within a more flexible repertoires approach to parent involvement.

Discussion

The analysis illustrates the utility of trajectories of socialization as a conceptual tool to understand how parents are positioned as involved in their children’s schooling. Attention to fathers’ positionings and alignments over time provided a more precise tool to reveal how being recognized as a certain social type (e.g., “inaccessible,” “overbearing,” or “involved”) was imbued with power dynamics in which teachers had more say in what counted as parent involvement practices and who could be positioned as involved. Both fathers exhibited involvement in their children’s lives and schooling, but did so in very different ways and were evaluated, over time, in surprising ways. These trajectories took unanticipated turns because, over the course of the school year, these individual fathers came to be positioned very differently by educators in their daughters’ school. In addition, teachers’ evaluations of fathers based on short face-to-face interactions tended to map onto relatively static and inaccurate notions of home-based involvement. For Ignacio, Ms. Vega assumed that this father who she perceived as rigid and critical was the same with his daughter at home. Over time Ms. Vega came to attribute some of Martina’s academic struggles to what she perceived as her father’s lack of positive reinforcement. For Mateo, Mrs. Drescher assumed that this wonderfully involved father from conferences adopted highly involved practices at home, and she came to evaluate many of Abi’s
school-based practices and imagined future from this perspective. Similar to Wortham’s work on academic socialization within the classroom, this analysis reveals how Ignacio and Mateo’s emergent positionings as certain social types, as well as their daughter’s positionings in school, could only be understood through attention to intertextual links across events. As I discuss below, it also points to the utility of a repertoires approach to parent involvement, as it can best capture the range of parent involvement practices across home and school contexts. This includes nuanced ways of being an involved parent, such as Mateo creating an un-school-like home environment while also raising pedagogical issues in parent teacher conferences, which may not map onto overarching “involved” types.

Understanding parent involvement from a communicative repertoires approach shifts the focus from a bundled list of things that parents are supposed to do (homework help, attend school events, volunteer, etc.) to “count” as being involved to understanding how parents and teachers negotiate their understandings of supporting children’s schooling. The analyses highlight that “counting” as an involved father at Grant was not about aligning to a traditional parent involvement model. If this were the case, Ignacio would have been evaluated much more positively. In addition, the vast differences in Ignacio and Mateo’s involvement practices alone illustrate the distinct versions of “the Mexican way” of being involved, highlighting the limitations of a mis-match model. A focus on participants’ repertoires provides a window into their background experiences and an understanding of the ways that they supported their children’s schooling. These may be more traditional practices such as homework help, but they may also differ somewhat, such as giving consejos [advice] and trying to create environments that extend beyond academics.

A repertoires approach also provides a window into the subtle ways participants are willing to accommodate to one another, use innovative communicative strategies, and expand
their own repertoires regarding parent involvement that may differ from traditional middle class rituals. As this chapter has illustrated, teachers’ openness to accommodation and alternative practices greatly shaped how individual fathers were recognized and positioned in terms of their involvement, which in turn influenced how teachers’ made sense of students’ academic contributions and future trajectories. A repertoires approach can explain how Mateo embodied his involvement, which may appear contradictory from more traditional or mismatch approaches. It provided a window into his unique sets of practices and beliefs regarding supporting his child’s schooling, such as engagement in educational topics at conferences and carefully creating a home context (sometimes through humor and other tactics to avoid doing homework and speaking English at home) that was not an extension of Abi’s English-based schoolday. A repertoires approach also helps explain why Ignacio came to be negatively positioned over time. Both he and Ms. Vega were unable to accommodate to one another despite the many things they had in common, such as shared goals for Martina and similar middle class expectations regarding parent involvement practices at home. Unlike the strong rapport that Mateo and Mrs. Drescher were able to build, Ignacio and Ms. Vega appeared to focus more on their differences. Analytically and practically a repertoires approach creates opportunities to move away from trying to get culturally and linguistically diverse families to “do” parent involvement in mainstream ways, and instead focuses on the ways schools can create more inclusive rituals (Doucet, 2011) in terms of initiatives and communicative approaches with families.

A repertoires approach also highlights how class, ethnicity, national origin, and gender intersect to influence what “counts” as parent involvement. Teachers at Grant mostly adopted a cult of domesticity outlook in which they assumed that mothers were in charge of children’s schooling. In the few instances that fathers were explicitly noticed, such as Ignacio and Mateo, class-based differences were potentially misread by teachers. In her work on white class-based
parent involvement practices, Annette Lareau (2000) highlights how lower-class parents greatly valued their children’s schooling and were willing to put forth extensive efforts to help their children, however “what they did not do were things that lay outside their cultural repertoire” (2000, p. xii). Although both fathers were critical of their daughter’s schooling experiences, they embodied these critiques in class-based ways, reflective of their own backgrounds and repertoires. Mateo was from a working class Mexican background and he ensured he was respectful to Abi’s teachers, taking on a quiet and serious demeanor in their presence, agreeing with their every suggestion, and carefully contributing similar observations from Abi’s home-based interactions. His critiques of Abi’s schooling happened behind closed doors. Perhaps partially because of his good looks, he was evaluated by Abi’s teacher as refined. In contrast, Ignatio’s open questioning of schooling practices to Martina’s teacher were reflective of his more middle class background, but were not taken up that way by his daughter’s teacher. Instead, he was racialized as a Mexican immigrant man and positioned as overbearing, an impediment to Marti’s schooling. In this context it appears that Ignacio’s middle class repertoire failed him, as it was misinterpreted in this local context because of larger circulating discourses regarding Mexican immigrants. In the following chapter I continue explorations of Mexican immigrant men’s racialization across contexts through an examination of how shifting immigration practices targeted Mexican immigrant men and affected their children’s schooling.
Chapter 7
The Effects of Gendered Immigration Policy Enforcement on Biliteracy Development

Shame shame.
I don't want to go to Mexico
No more more more.
There's a big fat policeman
At my door door door.
He grabbed me by the collar.
He made me pay a dollar.
I don't want to go to Mex-i-co
No more more— Shut the door!
- Princess

This rhyme was sung by Princess, the child of Mexican immigrants, as she was seated at her Barbie play table during the Spring of her first-grade year. This was a popular rhyme among Mexican heritage students and although they appeared to pay little attention to the meaning of the lyrics, the words represented realities faced by many Mexican heritage children in the New Latino Diaspora town of Marshall during a period of strong anti-immigrant sentiment. In this chapter I examine how these immigration practices, which targeted Mexican adult males, shaped their children’s biliteracy development and schooling in powerful and sometimes surprising ways. For example, this gendered vigilance led to father-child separations, incredible stress for children, and the positioning of children as mediators in high-stakes encounters between the police and their parents. Yet it also led to real-world opportunities and motivation for biliteracy development across home and school contexts that hold great potential to contribute to students’ school-based literacy practices.

In this chapter I first describe the theoretical framing that I draw upon to examine the implementational complexities of how immigration policies are racializing discourses that target
Mexican adult males, yet affect children’s lives, schooling, and biliteracy development. I then trace two cases of the “undocumented” biliterate lives of Mexican immigrant fathers and their children. I call these undocumented for several reasons. First, this chapter adds to the limited body of research on the “legal characteristic” (Mangual Figueroa, 2011, p. 263) of living and going to school in the United States when family members do not have “papers.” Next, it presents the largely untold stories of the presumed “dangerous criminals” who are often targeted under these policies. In addition, unlike much of the research on immigration practices and schooling that focuses on adolescents and DREAMers (those who would benefit from the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, if it were passed), I focus on middle childhood. Very little is known about how immigration status shapes young children’s schooling, and this research captures a moment in time in which second graders are grappling with their growing awareness of living in an undocumented family (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Finally, I explore how local immigration enforcement shaped these students’ biliteracy practices, practices which are often overlooked in English-medium schooling in which narrowly defined literacy skills deployed in English tend to be the only ones that “count” (Orellana & D’warte, 2010).

In the first case I explore how Princess’ father’s deportation during the Spring of her second grade year sparked her biliteracy practices. In the second case I present Abi and Mateo’s co-narration of an incident in which police officers came to their door in search of a Mexican-looking criminal. During this incident Abi had to draw upon her translation skills to negotiate this interaction. I selected these two cases because of important contrasts between them regarding immigration practices and middle childhood. For example, as a second grader born in the US Princess knew very little about immigration practices or differences in documentation status until her father was arrested and then deported. In contrast, Abi had crossed the border without
documentation when she was 4 years old and the realities of living in an undocumented family were regularly discussed, joked about, and referenced in her household. In addition, it is important to highlight how immigration practices shape childhoods and schooling not only for children whose parent is deported, like Princess, but also for those who live with the daily possibility of their father’s deportation, like Abi. These two cases also share several things in common. Both highlight how shifting immigration practices, which targeted Mexican adult males, created a context for these second graders to deploy and develop real-world biliteracy skills. These skills, which each student largely learned from her father, also hold potential to contribute to their school-based literacy practices. In the final section I discuss the larger implications of this work. I highlight the complexities of the two-pronged approach of current federal immigration policies that seek to create pathways for promising young people on one hand and deport adults who are positioned as dangerous criminals on the other. I also explore how these cases inform pedagogical approaches that can tap into students’ personal narratives and build upon their real-world biliteracy practices to develop their school-based academic literacies.

**Theoretical Framing**

In this article I build upon previous research that has discursively examined immigration policies as racializing discourses (e.g., De Genova, 2002, Dick, 2011a, 2011b; Hill, 2005) by drawing upon ethnographic research to explore the real-world complexities of their implementation for immigrant families. Within racializing discourses, those who phenotypically “look Mexican” (e.g., skin tone, facial features, stature) or “sound Mexican” (e.g., speaking Spanish) are positioned as dangerous Others who are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement based on their appearances (Dick, 2011a, 2011b). I emphasize the gendered nature of these racializing discourses—in practice, these policies target men, not women—and the
effects that they have on immigrant childhoods and schooling. In the sections below I first present
a framework for understanding immigration policies as racializing discourses. I then review
research on immigrant children in undocumented households and schooling, emphasizing the
potential to build upon family-based biliteracy practices within academic contexts.

**Conceptualizing Immigration Policies as Racializing Discourses**

Mexican immigrants have long been racialized within U.S. immigration policies and
within the media (Chavez, 2008; De Genova, 2002; Dick, 2011a, 2011b). Drawing from Hilary
Dick, I see racialization as a social process that separates and marks certain people as indescript,
inferior, immoral and dangerous Others (2011a, p. 229). They are differentiated from the Anglo
white middle class, which is assumed to be the “normal” status quo, and are positioned as
undesirable or illegitimate in these White public spaces (Dick, 2011a; Hill, 1998; Reynolds &
Orellana, 2009). Many scholars have discursively analyzed the ways in which U.S. federal
immigration policies have racialized and criminalized immigrants from Mexico and other parts of
Latin America by recruiting them as inexpensive labor without offering pathways for residency
and belonging (Chock, 1996; De Genova, 2005; Dick, 2011a, 2011b; Durand, Massey, &
Capoferro, 2005; Santa Ana 1999, 2002). Over time these policies have created the association
between “Mexican” and “illegal alien” regardless of documentation status (Chavez, 2008; De
Genova, 2002; Dick, 2011a; Hill, 2005). Illegality is framed as a problem within immigrants
themselves, who are breaking the law by their presence without documentation in the US, rather
than a problem of immigration policies (Dick, 2011a; Menjivar & Abrego, 2012). The lines
between illegality and criminality have also become increasingly blurred under recent
immigration policies: Oftentimes immigrants are labeled criminal simply based on their
unauthorized presence in the US (Dick, 2011a; Menjivar & Abrego, 2012). Current federal
immigration policies emphasize targeting “dangerous criminals” for “serious criminal offenses,” although these terms are left undefined (Chaundry et al., 2010).

Racializing discourses are actual tokens of spoken or written language that separate and mark certain people as dangerous Others (Dick & Wirtz, 2011, p. 2). Unlike overt racializing discourses such as racial slurs, these discourses are often covert: They racialize without explicitly naming aspects of race (Dick & Wirtz, 2011; Hill, 2008). In the US today, immigration policies are racializing discourses because, over time, they have come to normalize the association between “illegal” and “Mexican immigrant” (Dick, 2011a). In addition, anyone who “looks Mexican,” based on phenotypic stereotypes, is often assumed to be “illegal” (Dick, 2011a; Zentella, 1990). Language is an additional marker of Otherness. When brown-skinned people speak Spanish, they are often racialized as unintelligent and lazy (Hill, 1998) and their Spanish-speaking further indexes illegality (Dick, 2011a; Hill, 2001). Presumed immigration status is used as a proxy for race, and Mexican looking and sounding people are disproportionally racialized in this way (Dick, 2011a).

Racializing discourses also depend on space and time, and current immigration policies have created even stronger linkages between Mexican-ness and presumed illegality. As Santa Ana (2002) argues, from the 1950s to the 1990s Mexicans, as a group, were referred to as “the Sleepy Giant,” which evoked a less threatening image of relatively unnoticed, submissive workers (Santa Ana, 2002). Then, in the early 1990s, anti-immigrant Propositions such as 187 in California were introduced, which sought to restrict access to public services such as schooling. These propositions coincided with racializing discourses that problematized immigrants and equated them with illegality among other negative metaphors (Santa Ana, 2002). More recently, state immigration policies such as SB 1070 in Arizona and HB56 in Alabama, which require police and other government workers to check immigrants’ documentation in a wide variety of
quotidian activities, are more extreme examples of racializing discourses. The enforcement of these policies requires officers to rely on certain indicators, even subconsciously, to determine who may be an immigrant. In a country where “Mexican” has become equated with “immigrant,” and predominantly “illegal immigrant,” “looking Mexican,” and “sounding Mexican” may be indicators used to enforce these policies. Even in places like Pennsylvania that do not have such policies, federal programs have created new approaches to immigration enforcement in which immigrants may have their documentation status checked by local police officers, rather than only immigration officials, for even minor infractions. For example, Secure Communities is a data sharing program in which local police officers submit a person’s information to Immigration and Custom’s Enforcement (ICE) when a person is stopped for any infraction, ranging from an arrest for an aggravated felony to a minor infraction such as a speeding ticket (Kohli, Markowitz, & Chavez, 2011). If this person does not have documentation to be residing in the US he can be apprehended by ICE and undergo the deportation process.

Many of these racializing discourses also dehumanize Mexican immigrants. Santa Ana (1999, 2002) has documented how the primary metaphor for immigrants in print media in the 1990s was “immigrant as animal” and how the primary metaphor for immigration was one of “water,” evoking notions of uncountable faceless masses. These racializing discourses also have real-world implications (De Genova, 2005; Dick, 2011a; Santa Ana, 2002). As immigrants are repeatedly talked about as “less than” U.S. Citizens, they become positioned as illegal and immoral Others and, oftentimes, as less than human (Chavez, 2008; Dick, 2011a; Massey, 2007; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Santa Ana, 2002). Within these discourses “Mexican looking” immigrants are positioned as anonymous, illegal masses that pose a problem to the United States (Chavez, 2008). And the solution to this problem is creating immigration policies to keep them out (Coutin, 2005; Dick, 2011a). By dehumanizing immigrants, it is easier to create and vote for
immigration policies that foster such difficult living conditions for immigrants and their families (Chavez, 2008; Dick, 2011a).

It is important to point out that not all immigrant discourses are dehumanizing, although discourses of belonging tend to center on immigrant children and women. This point is clearly illustrated in President Barack Obama’s 2012 announcement about DREAMers in which he differentiated among types of undocumented immigrants. In his speech from the Rose Garden he juxtaposed two groups: “We focus and use our discretion about who we prosecute, focusing on criminals who endanger our communities rather than students who are earning their education” (Barack Obama, 15 June 2012, Washington, D.C.). In this speech he painted a detailed picture of DREAMers as “talented, driven, patriotic young people.” In contrast, he depicted the targeted criminals as faceless masses via statistics such as, “[t]oday deportation of criminals is up 80 percent.” And although gender does not explicitly play into these categorizations in Obama’s speech, it does in other media. For example, Hamann and Reeves (2012) illustrate through their analysis of print media following ICE workplace raids that many of the storylines focused on the innocence of children and the immorality of separating children from their parents, especially their mothers. In some cases discourses of belonging were explicitly extended to include many immigrant mothers who were often released on humanitarian grounds to care for their children under the condition that the mothers wore an electronic anklet to trace their location (Hamann & Reeves, 2012). The storylines for these women, who became known as “las mujeres de braceletas” [the bracelet women] highlighted their roles as mothers rather than as undocumented workers (Hamann & Reeves, 2012, p. 34 – 35). These examples illustrate how context shapes racializing discourses: Within these historical moments and locations many immigrants were humanized through their portrayal as innocent children and nurturing mothers.
Yet largely absent from these accounts was the humanization of Mexican immigrant men. For example, rarely were fathers released on humanitarian grounds to care for their children and in the media their personal stories remained largely untold. As one father from my study, Julio, emphasized when talking about the widespread arrests of local Mexican immigrant men for minor infractions, “No one has put forward any interest in what is happening over here. Only the authorities know what is happening...No television station around here has come in and caught any of this...I think that as long as that doesn’t happen, it’s going to keep on going and going.”

In addition, Mexican immigrant men I knew who were released with electronic trackers because of overcrowding in deportation centers were not talked about as wearing “braceletas” [bracelets], but “grilletes” [shackles]. The ways that immigrants are talked about and categorized—as promising young students versus dangerous criminals, for example—has real-world consequences for their pathways.

These real-world consequences are reflected in the disproportionate rate of deportations of Mexican males from the United States. For example, it is estimated that 58 percent of the 11.2 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States in 2010 were from Mexico, yet Mexican nationals constituted 73 percent of deportations from the US (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Motel, 2011, p. 12). Similarly, migration trends from Mexico that were previously primarily seasonal male laborers have gone through waves of migration in which women, and oftentimes intact two-parent families, are now settling in parts of the United States (Durand et al., 2005). Although there are roughly equal numbers of male and female Mexican immigrants in the United States (54 percent male versus 46 percent female), 87 percent of Mexican nationals deported from the US were male (Passel, Cohn, Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012, p. 26). As Salcido and Menjívar (2012) note in their work on the restrictive pathways to amnesty-based legal residency for female immigrants, immigration policies that appear gender neutral are often implemented in gendered ways. As
these numbers illustrate, in practice Mexican looking adult males are the ones positioned as the dangerous criminals that are juxtaposed against promising DREAMers.

By examining these racializing discourses in practice I make the case that gender needs to be considered as a central tenet when describing immigration policies as racializing discourses. In contrast to prevalent stereotypes that often dehumanize immigrant men as faceless masses, this chapter presents ethnographic stories that depict the realities of the enforcement of immigration policies for two fathers, Federico and Mateo, as well as the effects this enforcement has on immigrant childhoods, schooling, and biliteracy development. As Suárez-Orozco and colleagues remind us, little is known about immigration policies and childhoods beyond the “brute numbers” (2011, p. 439) and this chapter is an attempt to illustrate the complex familial realities of immigration policy enforcement today. I illustrate that targeting Mexican adult males, especially for minor infractions, is likely to create educational challenges for their children, a younger generation of DREAMers and U.S. Citizens. In the following section I review the literature on immigrant children, schooling, and biliteracy development.

**Children, Immigration, Schooling, and Biliteracy Development**

National debates about immigration tend to focus on adults, and overlook the families and children that are affected in the process (Chaundry et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011). Yet it is estimated that there are 5.5 million children in the US who live in families with unauthorized immigrants, 75 percent of these children being U.S. Citizens (Chaundry et al., 2010, p.11). To put this in perspective, this is equivalent to two children per U.S. classroom living in families with unauthorized immigrants, and therefore dealing with the potential effects of harsh immigration practices (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011, p. 462). As several
scholars emphasize, actual and potential deportations affect entire families (e.g., Brabeck, Lykes, & Hershberg, 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

I focus on middle childhood in particular, an age group that has received little to no attention in the research literature (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011), in a receiving context in which small-scale arrests under the Secure Communities program quietly shaped many immigrant children’s lives while going unnoticed by the non-immigrant community, including their teachers. Unlike the large-scale ICE raids discussed by Hamann and Reeves (2012) that received media attention and often catalyzed community resources for affected families (Chaundry et al., 2010), immigrant families in Marshall had to navigate these changes with little assistance. As Chaundry and colleagues (2010) emphasize in their work on immigration enforcement and childhoods across a range of contexts, family hardships for those in places like Marshall were at least as high as those in large-scale raids, yet the levels of assistance, including from children’s schools, was much lower due to the invisibility of these practices. In addition, although large-scale raids garner media attention, they have led to fewer arrests than the more subtle enforcement under programs such as Secure Communities (Chaundry et al., 2010). In this chapter I explore how these covert forms of vigilance created a context in which second graders began to gain awareness regarding immigration status in a high-stakes setting, a moment in time in which children’s “concern over the family’s legal vulnerabilities [began] to seep into consciousness. [When] they become more cognizant of the culture of fear in which they live” (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011, p. 452). The cases I discuss focus on how immigration policies target Mexican immigrant men, not women. Although the effects on immigrant middle childhoods may be similar when mothers are targeted and deported, in practice only Mexican immigrant fathers were the targets of this increased vigilance, which, in turn, shaped their children’s lives, schooling, and biliteracy development.
In this chapter I focus on how immigration practices shape children’s schooling and biliteracy development in order to envision schooling practices that build upon students’ biliteracy repertoires and knowledges about immigration practices to meet academic goals. Drawing on Nancy Hornberger’s work on language and literacy development across multilingual contexts, I define biliteracy as “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (Hornberger, 1990, p. 213). This approach to (bi)literacy differs from an autonomous model of literacy that focuses on discreet cognitive skills like decoding and phonemic awareness (Street, 2003), and instead explores literacies as communicative repertoires. From a communicative repertoires approach, I consider the range of socially mediated experiences children have around reading and writing across autonomous languages, with an emphasis on the connections between oral language use and literacy development (Hornberger, 1990; Orellana, Martínez, Lee, & Montaño, 2012; Rymes, 2010). Viewing literacies as communicative repertoires provides insight into a wider range of family-based biliteracy practices than those that traditionally “count” as school-based literacies and, if drawn upon, can inform pedagogical approaches to combat subtractive schooling for the children of immigrants (Orellana et al., 2012).

Subtractive schooling is often described as educational practices that prioritize the development of Standard English and an autonomous model of literacy over building upon emergent bilinguals’ diverse repertoires (Menken et al., 2012; Valenzuela, 1999). One approach to combating subtractive schooling is through first language literacy development (Menken et al., 2012). Rather than transitional or maintenance models of programming for emergent bilingual students, enrichment models develop first language skills (Hornberger, 1991). Such programs can effectively prepare students from a range of linguistic backgrounds for successful futures in the US or abroad (Orellana & D’warte, 2010; Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011). Yet many emergent
bilinguals, such as the children in this study, attend English-medium schooling in which first language literacy is not taught. In this chapter I focus on emergent bilinguals’ real-world family literacy repertoires, which were deployed and developed in new ways in the face of shifting immigration practices, and explore how they could be used as alternative pathways to achieve school-based literacies (Orellana & D’warte, 2010). For example, the children of immigrants are often skilled translators. When translating, children use important literacy strategies such as shifting voices for audiences and para-phrasing, that, if recognized, could be built upon to foster their school-based literacy development (Martínez, Orellana, Pacheco, & Carbone, 2008; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003; Orellana et al., 2012).

In exploring alternative approaches to literacy development for emergent bilingual students from immigrant families, I also consider how educators can create educational spaces in which students can write about their real-world stories and experiences, such as the immigration practices that they may be experiencing. This includes opportunities for educators to open up “implementational and ideological spaces” (Hornberger, 2002, 2005; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007) within existing classroom practices to promote students’ fluid multilingual resources and identities (Hornberger, 2005; Hornberger & Link, 2012). It also includes a focus on the content of students’ writing, an important accompaniment to the form of their biliteracies. I draw upon the work of Gerald Campano (2007), who advocates for the creation of “second classrooms,” or literacy curricula that celebrate and authentically build upon immigrant students’ real-world knowledges, stories, and identities. Campano posits that in modern day schools structured around the first classroom of high-stakes test preparation and scripted curriculum, a second classroom “that occurs during the margins and in the between periods of the school day” (p. 39) can foster spaces to build upon immigrant students’ knowledges. The second classroom relies on teacher-student relationships as they access students’ personal narratives. Although this pedagogical
approach is rarely compensated, Campano (2007) argues that it may be even more important than
the first classroom, especially for immigrant students who are often positioned through deficit
lenses. For example, emergent bilinguals are often seen as lacking Standard English resources
and literacy rather than having multilingual repertoires (Ruiz, 1984). As I discuss with the cases
of Princess and Abi below, an emphasis on second classrooms could help create educational
contexts in which immigrant students draw upon their experiences with shifting immigration
practices to contribute to their school-based literacy development.

**Findings**

**Gendered Immigration Policies as Racializing Discourses in Marshall**

During the winter of 2011 the usually bustling downtown of “Mexican Main Street”
suddenly appeared empty. Every Mexican immigrant family I spoke with brought up the
“retenes” [checkpoints], which were disproportionally located in predominantly immigrant
neighborhoods, so that anyone without a U.S. license had to pay a $500 ticket and have their car
impounded. As undocumented immigrants could not get their license in Pennsylvania, many had
to pay these costly fines. Yet there were also rumors of immigration officials being present at
some of these check-points, which could lead to deportations for those without documentation.
These check-points were the first indication of shifting immigration practices in Marshall that
targeted Mexican adult males, but impacted children’s lives, schooling, and biliteracy
development.

I use the phrase “immigration practices” to mean the enforcement of deportation-based
immigration policies by various groups. This includes officers from Immigration and Customs
Enforcement (ICE), who, in the town of Marshall, sometimes orchestrated small-scale raids at work places such as restaurants, sites where day laborers gathered, or in people’s homes. I also include local police officers in this enforcement because under the Secure Communities program anyone stopped by a local police officer could have their information sent to ICE. From January to April of 2011 many Mexican immigrants were stopped by local police officers for an array of infractions. Although some arrests were likely for very serious crimes, among the immigrant families I knew most included arrests for unpaid parking tickets and littering. Others were arrested by “mistaken identity” (having the same name as someone on a warrant) or for being present as a person without documentation when the police had come to a home with a warrant for someone else’s arrest. Although the Secure Communities program had been in effect in Marshall since 2008, during this time period in 2011 there appeared to be a more direct collaboration than in the past between local police officers and ICE, and Mexican looking people were being stopped and arrested at unprecedented rates. Once people were in ICE’s custody, the deportation process would begin, even if their original arrest was a mistake.

As I spoke to families about recent immigration practices, everyone had a story of someone close to them who had been stopped for a minor infraction and was now undergoing the deportation process. Over time I started to realize an alarming pattern: With the exception of one small workplace raid, every story I heard was about a Mexican looking man, not a woman. As Eduardo explained, “but, really the ones who are in more danger are almost only the men, they (women) pretty much aren’t.” When asked why, his wife Julia replied “because of the children” [Q2]. Like the families in Hamann and Reeves (2012) news articles, mothers in Marshall were rarely targeted for arrests and, if taken in, were commonly released on humanitarian grounds to care for their children. Paralleling national deportation rates that disproportionately target Mexican adult males, it became clear that local immigration practices disproportionately centered
on “Mexican looking” men as well, and most fathers had a story of how he (and not his wife) had become hyper-visible to local police officials.

Although it did not always lead to their deportation, most fathers I spoke with had stories of being pulled over by the local police, and many felt it was because they “look Mexican.” Often these stories were about alleged traffic infractions that fathers felt they had not committed, but, as Julio reasoned “We aren’t going to say anything else because it’s the police against me...you aren’t going to beat the police.” [Q3] Others spoke about male family members with U.S. documentation being approached by police to show their U.S. license while they were at the gas station, which they felt was purely based on their “Mexican look” as no one else was asked to show their license while pumping gas. Many shared their feelings that local police officers had become “más racista” [more racist] and that they were targeting men for looking Mexican, regardless of documentation status.

Mateo highlighted the complexity of their relationship with the local police force: “Instead of feeling safe with the police, we’re even afraid of them.” [Q4] Others, such as Cristian, felt that the police were there to help them. Both Cristian and Mateo felt part of the problem was that people from Mexico did not always follow the laws and norms of the US, sometimes playing their music too loud, getting into physical altercations, or driving under the influence. Mateo emphasized, “because of a few, they come for all of us.” [Q5] Unlike circulating discourses in the media that tended to lump together all immigrants as “dangerous criminals” regardless of the severity of their infraction, many immigrant parents differentiated between those they saw as good, hard working people who were being arrested for petty infractions from those who committed felonies. Most immigrant parents agreed with the premise of the Secure Communities program: They too wanted safer communities and agreed that dangerous criminals should be deported. Yet they felt that hard-working Mexican immigrant men were being targeted for minor
infractions like traffic violations by these policies, and that this skewed enforcement led to a culture of fear for them and their families.

Many fathers described how this increased vigilance impacted daily life for them and their families. The stress of immigration practices did not just impact those who were deported, but everyone living in undocumented families due to potential deportation (Brabeck et al., 2011; De Genova, 2005; Menjivar & Abrego, 2012; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). For example, every family I knew had a plan for what would happen to their children if one or both parents were detained and families tried to minimize their risk by staying inside. Eduardo explained how “We don’t even go out anywhere. The more afraid we get, the more immigration gets us.” [Q6] Mateo highlighted how “they make us hide ourselves. We’re playing cat and mouse, aren’t we? They look for us, and we hide.” [Q7] In contrast, a few families did not let the heightened vigilance shape their decisions or daily routines. Cristian and his family felt they knew that, as undocumented immigrants, this was the risk they were taking by living in the US. Cristian spoke about avoiding problems by following the straight and narrow, which aligns with studies that have shown that noncitizens are less likely than U.S. Citizens to engage in criminal behavior (Kohli et al., 2011, p. 6). Like most parents I knew, he went out of his way to ensure he was abiding by the laws because he knew one small mis-step, such as an un-paid parking ticket, could lead to his arrest and deportation. Fathers also knew that their deportation would not only change their lives, but their children’s as well (Brabeck et al., 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Shifting immigration practices created a context in which children in middle childhood gained awareness regarding realities of living in an undocumented family, and at the forefront of many fathers’ minds was how to explain these harsh realities to their 8 year-old children. On the one hand many fathers felt that their children were too young to learn about documentation status, but at the same time they wanted to prepare their children in case they were detained or if their
children started to hear about immigration practices from others. As Ignacio explained about speaking with his daughter: “She listens to the news or something like that, because she knows, because she does ask sometimes. But, sometimes we don’t even know what to tell her.” [Q8] Ultimately some parents did talk to their children, whereas others did not, and 2nd-graders had very different levels of awareness regarding immigration practices and documentation status.

Across Marshall in the Spring of 2011 it was evident that police vigilance had increased and that “Mexican looking” men were often the targets of this vigilance. Participants were not recruited to participate in this study based on family documentation status or experiences with immigration practices, yet after knowing most of these families for at least three years, shifting immigration practices created a new context in which immigration enforcement deeply shaped their children’s lives. Seventy one percent (5/7) of the focal children from my study had firsthand experience with immigration practices such as deportations of close family members or serving as an intermediary between their family and the police. For example, in 2012 Benjamin’s father Eduardo was violently arrested at home in front of his children when he was mistaken for someone with the same name. Although ultimately no charges were pressed against him, he had been turned over to ICE during his mistaken arrest and is now fighting his deportation. Gregorio’s uncle had been arrested for a minor infraction in late 2011 and was turned over to ICE. Gregorio became very aware of immigration practices due to his close relationship with his uncle and because his father Julio took on the primary role of managing the uncle’s deportation case. This included the great financial burden of funding approximately $25,000 to fight the uncle’s deportation. After almost 10 years in Marshall, Emily’s mother Paloma decided to return to Mexico in late 2011 to bring her daughter from a previous relationship to live with them. Although her daughter made it across the border safely, Paloma was apprehended by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and imprisoned in Arizona for a year for an aggravated felony:
using a false identity to try and successfully cross the border. Although immigration enforcement (by ICE) in places like Marshall was highly gendered, border enforcement (by Customs and Border Control) was not. Due to Paloma’s apprehension, imprisonment, and return to Mexico, Emily’s father Cristian became a single father raising three children, including Paloma’s daughter who he met for the first time when she arrived in Marshall.

Although 71 percent of the children in this study were U.S. Citizens themselves, 100 percent of them had at least one undocumented parent. The increased vigilance and deportations of Mexican immigrant men in Marshall created a new context in which these children became aware of immigration practices and faced fear about their families’ safety and future trajectories. Although informal conversations with other families I knew from the community point to immigration practices shaping many children’s lives in Marshall, my closeness, trust, and weekly involvement with these particular families in their homes and school permitted a window into the depths of how immigration practices that targeted Mexican immigrant men shaped middle childhood, schooling, and biliteracy development. In the following section I ethnographically explore the case of Federico and Princess, describing how his deportation for a minor infraction created obstacles in her schooling as well as new biliteracy practices.

I Don’t Wanna Go to Mexico No More More More: Effects of Fathers’ Deportations

Federico was one of the hundreds of Mexican immigrant men who have been deported under the Secure Communities program in Marshall, Pennsylvania and his story illustrates one type of “dangerous criminal” who is targeted under current immigration policies. Unlike most immigrant parents in Marshall who had arrived to the US in recent years, Federico moved to New York City (NYC) as a child and was a relatively balanced bilingual from his schooling there. He met Princess’ mother Cinthia, also from Mexico, in NYC and when Princess was a toddler they
decided to move to Marshall for a more peaceful life. In Marshall he worked the early shift as a cook in a restaurant, which allowed him to care for Princess and her newborn sister in the afternoons and during most weekends while Cinthia worked cleaning hotels. As I discussed in Chapter 4, because of his schedule, balanced biliteracy, and greater familiarity with U.S. systems, he also took on the primary role of involvement in Princess’s school. This included traditional forms of involvement such as helping her with homework, navigating the papers sent home, and attending school events such as conferences. He was quite strict and set high expectations for Princess, and he also had a fun-loving side in which he and Princess would tease each other as they played.

As he had barely been to Mexico in 20 years and all of his family lived in the US, Federico always emphasized, “for life, I don’t like Mexico anymore.” [Q9] Unlike many immigrant parents in Marshall who were often considering their return to Mexico, Federico could not imagine living there or adapting to the life there, as it was an unfamiliar place for him. Princess had similar sentiments about going to Mexico, often telling her mom, who had much closer ties to Mexico, things like “I don’t want to go to your Mexico. Mexico is ugly” and “I’m not going to separate myself from my country (the US).” [Q10] Although children from this study demonstrated a wide range of feelings about Mexico, Princess most regularly voiced her desire to never visit or live in Mexico. Federico and Princess’ views of life in Mexico changed, however, when he was deported one year after she taped herself singing the rhyme about Mexican repatriation.

Below is a fieldnote from the day after Federico’s arrest.

I go outside for recess and Princess tells me she has to talk to me. In a tiny tiny voice she tells me in Spanish that the police took her father and he is going back to Mexico. Loretta, her cousin, is talking about seeing him being handcuffed, his hands behind his back, and put in a police car. This happened right outside their house. Princess’ eyes start to well up with tears. We decide to eat lunch together to talk. The time until the end
of recess seems to pass one tick-tock at a time. After a year of what have felt like 5 minute recesses, this one feels like it lasts an eternity. An eternity.

I later spoke with Princess’ mom, Cinthia, and learned that Federico had signed his automatic deportation to return to Mexico because they did not have the tens of thousands of dollars to pay for bail and an immigration lawyer. I did not ask the specifics of what happened, but Cinthia brought up that Federico had been outside and the police saw him drop a bottle of soda. Several housemates saw this happen and it appeared that the police arrested him for this. She emphasized it was just a little thing, nothing bad or terrible, and how these little things can change everything. Although this is just one example of those who are often referred to as “criminals who endanger our communities” that are being deported at a greater rate than at any point in recent history (Lopez et al., 2012), Federico’s case is representative in many ways. Under the Secure Communities program 93 percent of those arrested are Latino, 93 percent of those arrested are male, and over half are arrested for petty infractions such as traffic violations rather than serious felonies (Kohli et al., 2011, pp. 2 - 3). These policies serve as racializing discourses that not only disproportionately target those who “look Mexican,” but also disproportionately target men.

Federico’s deportation process also highlighted the blurred lines between human illegality and criminality. As Dick highlights, “since racialized groups are also often criminalized, and are thus morally suspect, their membership even in the category of ‘moral beings’ can become tenuous” (2011a, p. 42). Cinthia drew a clear distinction between being held due to immigration violations and criminality, regularly clarifying that he was in immigration rather than “la cárcel” [jail] with those serving their “cadena” [sentence]. Like many parents’ perspectives on those being deported, she knew Federico as a kind and hard-working man who had been arrested for a petty infraction. Again, he is representative of those arrested in Marshall under the Secure Communities: Only 19 percent of deportations have been due to serious crimes, rather than
immigration violations or less-serious infractions such as traffic violations (Jacobs, 2012). Yet for
the next 3 months Federico was moved around to different immigration holding facilities in the
US and did not have the opportunity to go before a judge for a considerable amount of time.
During these months Federico and his wife were in regular phone contact to arrange the details of
his return to Mexico. He also spoke with Princess on the phone, but did not want her to visit him
because he did not want her to see him looking like an inmate. When her cousin made references
to Federico being in jail Princess did not correct her, and like the larger circulating discourses that
tend to conflate human illegality with criminality, the distinction appeared less clear to these
young children. Similar to 90 percent of those who are deported under Secure Communities
(Kohli et al., 2011, p. 7), Federico was not released prior to his deportation to Mexico, and thus
did not have the opportunity to gather his things or say good-bye to his family, including his
daughters.

Although Federico’s deportation shaped Princess’ childhood and schooling in many
ways, it also created a context for Princess to develop additional real-world biliteracy practices. In
school Princess had been a reluctant writer, yet written letters were one of the few ways that
Princess could correspond with her father once he was detained. She would bubble with
excitement each time she received a letter from him, and one afternoon exclaimed how she
planned to hang his card and new photo next to her Justin Bieber poster at home. She also started
borrowing my notebook during school to write him short letters in English, explaining how much
she loved and missed him. Eventually she started asking how to spell things in Spanish,
embarking for the first time in Spanish literacy, as it had real-world purposes. Interestingly these
biliteracy practices were not incorporated into the school-sanctioned literacy curriculum, as they
might be in a “second classroom.” Instead they occurred in the margins of the classroom,
unrecognized by Princess’ teacher.
Federico’s deportation also sparked Princess’ biliteracy development in other forms. He encouraged and coached Cinthia on how to teach Princess to read and write in Spanish, as their family separation across borders cemented the possibility that Princess may actually attend school in Mexico one day. As they knew from their own childhoods and Federico’s inquiries once he returned to Puebla that there were likely no second language supports for Spanish-language learners in Mexico (such as affordable bilingual schooling or the equivalent of ESL), they decided that Princess would need to develop Spanish literacy to succeed. In addition, they acquired their family’s first computer so that Princess would be able to communicate with her father once he returned to Mexico. Cinthia reasoned that it would not have to be that different from the past: If Princess had a question regarding her homework, she could try contacting her father online. The computer also provided real-world opportunities for Princess to increase her technological literacies and write electronically with family members (in English and Spanish) in Mexico. Like several other students, these digital conversations with relatives across borders were some of their greatest opportunities for Spanish literacy development.

Princess’ responsibilities regarding parent involvement changed with Federico’s absence, and although this caused many academic strains, it also created additional biliteracy practices that hold great potential for her school-based literacy development. Prior to his deportation Federico helped Princess with her homework every day, went through her backpack to manage the information sent from the school, and attended all family events. Once he was deported, Cinthia had to take on additional jobs in order to make ends meet, and, although she wished she could be home with her daughters, she was often gone during all of Princess’ waking hours. Princess had to take charge of her own homework completion, but would also seek out creative ways to work with her mom. For example, as her mom cleaned offices during the evening shift, Princess would read to her over the phone. Princess also took over responsibility for the barrage of information
sent home from her school each week. She was responsible for surveying all of the handouts (sent in English and Spanish), determining which ones were important, and “para-phraseing” (Orellana et al., 2003) these written texts into spoken Spanish for her mother. In many ways, this literacy activity was more complex than many of Princess’ school-based literacy practices, as it required her to navigate a wide range of genres, engage with written and oral media, and provide explanations across linguistic borders (Orellana et al., 2012). Yet Princess was categorized as a struggling reader in school, and these biliteracy practices represent untapped potential that could contribute to her school-based literacy development.

In fact, Princess’ teacher Ms. Vega was completely unaware of these changes in Princess’ life. Most teachers at Grant Elementary were white monolingual English-speaking middle class women who lived in neighboring suburbs. Although they were very welcoming to Mexican immigrant students and their families, they knew very little about local immigration practices or how they were affecting their students’ lives. For example, at the end of the year, when I gave a brief explanation of overall immigration practices to Ms. Vega, she responded, “We’ve had so much going on to think about (e.g., curricular changes) that we haven’t had a change to really address anything else.” Cinthia and Princess, like most immigrant families I knew, decided not to tell Princess’ teacher about Federico’s deportation because they feared it would make them appear deviant or criminal. Like most teachers at Grant, Ms. Vega knew almost nothing about local immigration practices in general, including specifics of how increased deportations that targeted Mexican immigrant men were impacting individual students like Princess.

As can be imagined, Princess became withdrawn, distracted, and easily upset in school after her father’s detainment and deportation. When I asked her how she was doing, she would often answer with a sad “mal” [bad], and then she would explain that her father was all she could
think about. For example, during literacy centers one afternoon Princess was putting together large sentence strip manipulatives and created a sentence about spending time with her father. In confidence she talked to me about how much she missed spending time with him and how she felt he was kinder and more fun than her mom, who now yelled so much. In class Princess would occasionally act up in uncharacteristic ways, and when reprimanded she would become inconsolable. Although academic problems, depression, anxiety, and behavioral issues are all common effects of parent-child separations due to deportations (Brabeck et al., 2011), Ms. Vega did not know about Federico’s deportation and therefore lacked important information to contextualize Princess’ behavior. She knew that Princess was acting differently, but did not have any idea why. A few months after Federico’s deportation Ms Vega explained the following about Princess:

She spends just so much time, especially in the past couple of months, just so much time concerned about other people, that she isn’t getting anything done. She likes to be in control so much. So I just hope she can stay focused on herself in general. I think she’d be happier.

As local immigration practices were outside Ms. Vega’s repertoires of knowledge, she was not able to recontextualize Princess’ changing behavior, nor was she able to create implementational or ideological spaces for Princess to talk or write about how immigration practices shaped her life.

Shifting immigration practices led to a context in which “looking Mexican” and “male” may have played a role, even subconsciously, in local police officers noticing Federico dropping a soda bottle outside his home. This simple act as an undocumented adult led to his deportation, and deeply impacted his daughter’s schooling. In many ways, this marked a major change in Princess’ childhood: Cinthia described how she now talked with Princess like an adult rather than “una niña” [a little girl]. This included explaining for the first time realities about documentation
status: how things were different for Cinthia and Federico because they were not born in this country, something Princess had known little about before. Due to this incident Princess went from a stable two-parent household with academic support to a single-parent household in which Princess took on many new responsibilities. All of these changed were difficult for Princess. Unsolicited during an interview she shared “I don't wanna I don't wanna go to Mexico… I wish he can come back… I don't like my life anymore.” Princess deeply missed her father and the life she had when he was in Marshall. Like many children who have been separated from parents due to deportations, she struggled with feelings of depression, abandonment, and fear, as well as increased economic hardship (Brabeck et al., 2011). Like many young students at Grant I knew who were dealing with separations from their parents, she was searching for outlets to deal with these changes, especially in school. Federico’s deportation also provided real-world contexts for biliteracy and technological literacy development (Genishi & Dyson, 2009). Yet, like the immigration practices that changed her childhood, these biliterate repertoires were not visible or built upon within her second grade classroom. In the following section I present the case of a second student, Abi, who also drew upon her biliterate repertoires to navigate local immigration practices that targeted her father. Although her father was not deported, I illustrate how local immigration practices created similar struggles for Abi, as well as contexts for Abi’s deployment and development of biliterate repertoires that hold promise to contribute to her school-based literacy development.

There’s a Big Fat Policeman at My Door Door Door: Children as Translators

The second example focuses on Mateo and his daughter Abi as they co-narrate a story about police officers coming to their door in search of a Mexican looking man who was suspected of involvement in the drug trade. In contrast to Princess who knew very little about immigration
practices until her father’s deportation, Abi was very aware of lived differences due to
documentation status prior to this incident, as she had crossed the border with her mother before
the start of her kindergarten year and immigration practices were a regular topic of conversation
in their household. As I describe in Chapter 5, although Abi was characterized as a struggling
reader and writer in her English-based schooling, she had an extensive communicative repertoire
in Spanish, including wonderful metacommunicative strategies and narrative skills that she
predominantly learned from her father. Although Abi had the least developed English resources
out of all of the students in the study, they greatly surpassed those of her father and, like many
children of immigrants, she was often called on to serve as a translator, such as when police
officers came to their door in the incident below.

The story below was recorded by me (S) during an afternoon visit to Mateo (M) and
Abi’s (A) apartment. I had stopped by to drop off a camera, and we were sitting around their
kitchen table eating dinner when they mentioned that Abi had not gone to school the previous day
because the police came to their door. I then asked them to tell me the story, which they co-
narrated. Mateo began by explaining that he had been standing in the window, waiting to see if
Abi’s ride to school had arrived yet. A passing police car saw him, causing the police officers to
pull over and knock on the door of their apartment, one of six units in the building. Abi had to
translate the interaction, in which they learned that the police did not have a warrant, but wanted
to speak with them anyway. Feeling they had no other choice, they opened the door and spoke
with the police officers. Those officers then left, but several hours later other officers arrived at
their door. Mateo and Abi explained the second half of the story below:

Excerpt 1

1. **M:** Afterwards another policeman came already with the—

2. **S:** —Another one arrived?
3. **M:** Afterwards, a long time after at like twelve, two hours later.

4. **S:** And did they go to a lot of people's houses? Or just your house?

5. **M:** Just ours.

6. **A:** Just this one. They knocked on this one, the middle door first then the one upstairs, then the one downstairs.

7. **S:** Hmm, and do you think that they stopped because they saw you at the window, or did they have...

8. **A:** And dad. But when I said, “Can you show your papers?” He said Um, "What's going on there?"

9. **S:** When your dad said, “Can I see the papers to come in?” That? Or the policeman said something about papers?

10. **A:** No. He said. My dad said, “Where are the papers?” I said to him—

11. **M:** —Yeah. But then after that the other policeman arrived—

12. **A:** —He said to me. He said, “What's goin on on there?”

13. **S:** The other policeman arrived?

14. **M:** The same thing. They told us to open the door. And I told her to ask what it is that they wanted. Now this policeman told us, “Yes I’m looking for a person. Open the door. If not, I’ll enter with force.” And then I open the door for him. Once he sees me he then grabs his radio and says, “No. It's not the same person.” And they open up a paper with a—

15. **A:** —man—

16. **M:** —with the picture of a person

17. **S:** A person from Mex—

18. **M:** —Hispanic.
27. **S:** Hispanic. But Mexican or not?


29. **A:** —And he left.

30. **S:** He left?

31. **A:** —He asks Abi why she hasn’t gone to school.

32. **S:** Ha. And what did you say?

33. **A:** “No. It’s because I got scared in the morning when you were knocking the door.” And he said, “What?” “Because I thought that you were going to bring my dad to the police.”

In this encounter notions of white public space (Hill, 1998; Reynolds & Orellana, 2009) were extended into the privacy of their home as Mateo, as well as Abi through her role as translator, were racialized as Mexican looking Spanish speakers. Mateo’s appearance as a Mexican looking man was enough for the police to target him. Although Mateo knew that the police needed a warrant to enter their home, which the police did not have, he and Abi felt that they had no option but to open the door because of the police officers’ threats (lines 18 – 21). Eight-year-old Abi, as the translator, had to negotiate this decision. Unlike reports throughout Marshall in which immigrant families opened their doors to the police who then proceeded to take away adults (predominantly men) without documentation, this did not happen to Mateo. This may have been because the police lacked a warrant for their address, because no other adults were home to care for the children, or simply because he was lucky. Although this encounter did not
lead to Mateo’s deportation, the police’s vigilance over him as a Mexican looking man still impacted Abi’s childhood, schooling, and biliteracy development.

One clear way that this incident impacted Abi’s schooling was that it caused her to miss school. In lines 36 – 38 she boldly explained to the police officers that she was not in school because she worried her father would be taken away. Later Mateo lamented about Abi being exposed to the harsh realities of living without documentation and the anxiety it caused her:

*She knows that it could happen. She has seen on TV that they arrive, they take their parents, and they stay alone, don’t they? I mean, what child isn’t going to be afraid? Like for the police, instead of trusting in them, now it’s fear. And it’s not only our fear now, but also our children’s fear.* [Q11]

It was common for other students at Grant to miss school during periods of heightened vigilance as well. Immigrant families would often call one another to warn of the occasional rumored ICE raid, and some families kept their children at home to avoid risks of being in public. Although Mateo has never been detained or arrested, the omnipresent threat of his deportation caused great anxiety for Abi, which impacted her schooling in similar ways to Princess (Brabeck et al., 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Although she also kept her knowledge about immigration practices from educators at school, she would often confide in me that she was worried about her father when I noticed her distraction during classroom activities or uncharacteristically somber moods.

Like Ms. Vega, Abi’s teacher Mrs. Drescher had no knowledge about local immigration practices in general, or how they were affecting particular students, such as Abi.

In this incident Abi also served as a translator between her father and the police. Abi, like most children in this study, often took on the role as translator across contexts such as school, stores, and home and overall she enjoyed helping others through her translation. Similar to Marjorie Orellana’s (2009) work on older children as translators, data from my study highlight how younger children serving as translators was normative, important, enjoyable and beneficial.
for them, their families, and many sectors of the community. This was particularly true in New Latino Diaspora communities like Marshall, in which there were few bilingual adults. Yet also like the older children in Reynolds and Orellana’s study (2009), Abi did not like translating during such high-stakes encounters. Although translating was a discursive practice, it had real-world, material consequences for her and her family (Orellana, 2009; Reynolds & Orellana, 2009), such as the police potentially taking Mateo away if she said the wrong thing. In this encounter Abi was also exposed to suspicions regarding her family’s legitimacy and belonging in this community. For example, the police came because her father looked similar enough to a Hispanic criminal. In addition, Abi’s voicing of the police officer’s, “What's going on there?” (line 16) illustrates presumptions of deviance rather than what was actually going on behind their closed door— Mateo getting Abi ready for school. Although this racialization focused on Mateo, in her role as translator Abi was also racialized by her own words.

Abi’s translation skills illustrated in this encounter highlight an untapped biliteracy practice that, if implementational and ideological spaces were opened up in Marshall classrooms, could be built upon in her schooling. As Orellana and colleague (2003) highlight, translation is a languaging practice that draws upon languaging strategies similar to those needed to decipher written texts, which, if recognized and built upon, could contribute to emergent bilinguals’ school-based literacy development. While translating, such as between her father and the police officers, Abi had to carefully navigate the presentation of her interlocutors’ words so that they were appropriately presented for each audience. For example, when Mateo said to Abi, likely in Spanish, “Where are the papers?” (line 14), she carefully softened the question to “Can you show your papers?” (line 11) when addressing the police officer, shifting the force of the statement for the new audience. When developing as writers, students need to learn to write from various perspectives and to create persuasive essays for different audiences. As many
students from immigrant families have experiences as translators, school-based literacy development that validates these skills, builds critical language awareness regarding how students’ deploy them, and then ties these languaging strategies to literacy practices is an example of how students’ real-world family biliteracy practices can enhance school-based literacy development (Martínez et al., 2008).

Unlike Princess, Abi was keenly aware of immigration practices, although there were no spaces within her schooling to draw upon this repertoire to aid in her literacy development. For example, when Abi would question her dad about their plans for the day he would jokingly retort “what are you, police? Well, I won’t speak until I have my lawyer.” [Q12] Abi would play along, joking back and forth with him, demonstrating her cultural knowledge of immigration practices. Unlike many other 8-year-olds from this study who seemed less aware about the realities of not having papers, Abi would often ask me questions like if I was nervous that I would get stopped by the police while driving. In these moments Mateo’s jocular tone would immediately soften and he would sweetly explain to Abi that I had a license so if I got stopped by the police they would not take my car or arrest me. Yet within school Abi kept these knowledges and anxieties regarding potential deportations to herself. And like her translation skills and expansive communicative repertoire in Spanish discussed in Chapter 5, Abi’s home-based repertoires were not built upon within her schooling that prioritized English-based literacy skills such as phonemic awareness and decoding.

Like Princess, shifting immigration practices created real-world contexts for Abi to deploy biliterate repertoires and knowledges that went unseen by most of Grant’s educators. As Mrs. Gonzalez, one of the few educators who worked closely with immigrant families at their school and who knew about the stress many students were facing due to immigration practices that predominantly targeted their fathers explained:
Students don’t want to talk about it. They’re going through the anxieties, they keep it to themselves...I don’t think that they [teachers] are aware of what’s going on...Because immigration, yes, they know what immigration is about. Do they know the laws on immigration? No, because they haven’t had the need to. So yes, they [teachers] may hear it but they can’t feel their [students’] pain. They cannot feel their pain.

As immigration practices became increasingly harsh in Marshall, Mrs. Gonzalez found herself at a loss regarding how to comfort students. She used to take a stance similar to many Mexican immigrant parents: If you and your family follow the straight and narrow, you will not get in trouble by the police. Through her students she learned that immigration practices extended beyond targeting dangerous criminals and had begun to include vigilance within families’ homes, such as Mateo’s case, and arrests for minor infractions, such as Federico’s. She learned about students like Abi who had to take on the role of translator in these high-stakes encounters, and witnessed first hand the anxiety many students faced from interactions where their own words could be used against their parents. Through her close relationships with immigrant families she became aware of the intense realities in many immigrant students’ lives, although she did not share this with other teachers at the school because she did not think it was her place. In the final section I discuss the implications of these gendered immigration practices for policy-makers and educators.

Implementational Complexities of DREAMers vs. Criminals

Policy Implications

On June 15th, 2012, President Barack Obama made a speech to unveil a new approach to immigration that would “lift the shadow of deportation” for many young undocumented students. In this speech he juxtaposed the two main approaches to immigration enforcement under his
administration: creating pathways for promising young people known as DREAMers and deporting those who are often categorized as dangerous criminals. A great deal of media attention has been given to the personal narratives of DREAMers, and many people in the United States believe, like Obama, that creating a mechanism for them to live, study, work, and thrive in the United States is “the right thing to do.” Much less is known, however, about the personal stories of those often labeled “dangerous criminals” who have been deported in recent years, or the effects their deportation has on their families residing in the US. Although there are certainly dangerous criminals who have been deported under these policies, as they were designed to zero in on the most dangerous criminal offenders, in practice it appears that they also target much less serious offenders.

This chapter complicates the delineation of these two policies by ethnographically tracing the implementational realities of deportation-based immigration practices. I have argued that, in practice, immigration practices are racializing discourses that disproportionately target Mexican immigrant men, yet influence immigrant children’s schooling and biliteracy development in important ways. Throughout Marshall it was clear that Mexican immigrant men were targeted by law enforcement, whereas women rarely were. Here it was not simply that “Mexican” equaled “illegal,” but that “Mexican adult male” equaled “illegal” and often “criminal.” These empirical data point to the importance of considering gender as a central tenet to immigration policies as racializing discourses.

In this chapter I have tried to share the perspectives and stories of some of the men labeled “criminals” under current immigration policies. As we have seen, their crimes are often minor infractions, and their deportations shape their families and children’s lives. Unlike the majority of research that focuses on immigration policies and schooling for adolescents such as DREAMers (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011), I have illustrated the powerful impacts these policies
have on middle childhood, which is rarely considered. The two primary examples in this article illustrate how these two approaches to immigration overlap in complex ways: By targeting and deporting predominantly Mexican looking men, these policies create additional educational obstacles for their children, a younger generation of DREAMers and U.S. Citizens. For example, in the process of targeting and deporting Federico, Princess became extremely detached in school and went from living in a secure two-parent household to spending extended hours alone because of her father’s absence and mother’s increased workload. In the process of targeting Mateo as a potential “Mexican looking” criminal, Abi was positioned as a translator and negotiator in an extremely high-stakes interaction. This, along with her constant worry that her father may be deported, shaped her schooling in equally powerful ways. Both of these examples demonstrate how targeting Mexican looking men has the potential to create obstacles so that their children are less likely to excel academically and become the “talented, driven, and patriotic young people” described by Obama.

**Educational Implications**

This research speaks to the call for more work that depicts the realities of living in mixed-status families and how documentation status permeates daily life and schooling (Mangual Figueroa, 2011). It is clear that shifting immigration practices led to a context in which young children were grappling with their growing awareness of living in an undocumented family. Most of their teachers, in contrast, knew little about these realities. Not only were teachers unaware of individual students’ struggles with immigration practices (e.g., Princess’ or Abi’s), they were largely unaware of the overall climate of increased vigilance and the repercussions in students’ lives. The passage of the U.S. Supreme Court Case Plyler v. Doe [457 U.S. 202] in 1982, in which school employees cannot inquire about students’ or parents’ documentation status, is
meant to protect immigrant families against discrimination. Although it does this in important ways, at Grant Elementary it also added to a context in which most teachers knew very little about the realities of living in an undocumented family. In fact, some teachers shared how, as public school teachers, they were nervous to ask students anything personal about their lives. In accordance with Plyler v. Doe I am not arguing that immigrant families should be forced to share their immigration status, especially if it could be used against them. Yet I would argue that educators would benefit from having a clearer sense of overall immigration practices, especially in NLD locations where most educators have limited experiences with immigrant families. It could also be useful to create outlets to help support young people struggling with the day-to-day realities of living in undocumented families as well as the major changes that occur if a parent is deported. Instead of something that has to be hidden and therefore appears illicit and suspect, more openness on the topic of living in an undocumented family could help normalize these realities and provide necessary spaces for children struggling with them.

Princess’ experiences as a third grader provide a window into the potential of educators creating second classroom spaces in which students can draw upon their experiences with immigration practices and biliterate repertories as a resource in their literacy development. Although I officially ended fieldwork at the end of students’ second grade year, I remained in contact with families and teachers and also had access to regular updates through Holly Link’s continued work with this cohort of students and families through third and fourth grade. In third grade Princess developed a close and trusting relationship with her teacher, who was able to access Princess’ personal narrative regarding her father’s deportation. Her teacher created outlets for Princess to deal with the challenges of her father’s deportation, such as getting her to meet with a group of students who had been separated from their fathers for a host of reasons, and accessing counseling services for Princess to navigate the challenges she was facing from his
absence. Instead of positioning Princess as a struggling reader and writer, her teacher encouraged Princess to use these repertoires in her writing, such as through journaling about her father. Her teacher also ran a bilingual school newspaper project in her classroom, and, recognizing Princess’ interests in biliteracy practices, specifically asked Princess to be a member of the translation team. Although this teacher was not bilingual or biliterate herself, she created ways to validate and encourage her students’ biliterate repertoires and to have them contribute to their school-based literacy practices. Like Campano’s description of second classrooms, her 3rd grade teacher used the crevices between test prep to form meaningful relationships with her students and sought creative pedagogical approaches to tap into their biliteracy resources. This teacher “prod[ded] actively toward more favorable ideological spaces in the face of restrictive [English-Only language] policies” (Hornberger, 2005, p. 606) to also open up implementational spaces to recognize students’ biliteracy practices.

In most classrooms at Grant, however, relatively narrow definitions of literacy created a context in which emergent bilingual students’ real-world biliteracy practices tended to be overlooked. Orellana and D’warte ask an important question regarding immigrant students and schooling: “Whose talents go unseen when we measure children from nondominant groups on dominant-culture yardsticks, and what are the implications for those children’s developmental pathways?” (2010, p. 297). One way to answer this question is to think about alternative approaches to schooling for nondominant children like Princess and Abi. For example, one alternative would be enrichment bilingual schooling to combat their subtractive schooling experiences. We can imagine that under enrichment bilingual practices Abi’s vast communicative repertoire and metacommunicative strategies in Spanish would have been recognized and built upon, likely creating a very different educational pathway than the struggling reader and writer that she is at Grant today. In addition, the same schooling experiences would help prepare
Princess for potential repatriation to Mexican schools, in which academic literacy in Spanish is required for educational success.

A second alternative is envisioning how to expand our pedagogical approaches to literacy development in English-medium schooling in order to better recognize and build upon students’ real-world biliteracy repertoires, such as Princess’ text-to-talk paraphrasing of school handouts and Abi’s shifting voices while translating. As Orellana and colleagues emphasize, immigrant families’ literacy practices (such as translating) differ from middle class families’ literacy practices (such as bedtime stories), yet this does not mean that they are less meaningful for literacy development. In fact, they may actually be more complex and diverse than many of the school-based practices children are expected to develop in the early grades. Rather than emphasizing what many emergent bilingual students do not do well (such as decoding in English), educators could envision new pedagogical approaches to capture their home-based biliteracy practices that are already part of their repertoires.

Through the stories of Princess and Federico and Abi and Mateo, I have shown the familial and educational realities of current immigration policies. Like the undocumented families studied by Suárez-Orozco and colleagues (2011) and Chavez (2008), it is clear that “in facing the perfect storm, unauthorized families exhibit strength and resilience and undoubtedly deploy many assets” (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011, p. 462). Part of these incredible assets include their biliterate repertoires that hold great potential for students’ schooling. In fact, students from immigrant families like Abi and Princess, who have extensive experiences navigating linguistic and cultural borders, may actually be the best prepared to develop the flexible literacies that are likely to be required in our globalized, multicultural, and transnational futures (Orellana & D’warte, 2010). Perhaps if these assets are recognized and built upon, children like the emergent bilingual
students in Marshall will continually develop into the promising young people described by President Obama.
Chapter 8: 

Looking Forward

In this dissertation I have used ethnographic and discourse analytic methods to explore how Mexican immigrant fathers’ engagement in their children’s education shapes and gets shaped by their children’s schooling. In this final chapter I discuss several themes that have emerged throughout this study. I first highlight the many ways that I have sought to make the invisible visible in terms of Mexican immigrant fathers’ engagement in their children’s schooling. I then reflect upon how a communicative repertoires approach best helps us capture and build upon nontraditional approaches to communication, family-school relationships, and literacy development. A communicative repertoires approach also reveals the centrality of interpersonal relationships among the various participant types in this study (e.g., fathers, children, teachers). I argue that the value of tapping into individuals’ stories and experiences should not be underestimated, especially in communities of the New Latino Diaspora in which students, teachers, and parents are regularly crossing linguistic and cultural borders in search of shared understandings. I then explore how the findings from this study not only inform educational approaches to prepare students for futures in the US, the emphasis of the previous chapters, but also to inform potential transnational futures in Mexico as well. In the final section I revisit the opening excerpt in chapter 1 to discuss how findings from this study point to areas for future research.

Making the Invisible Visible

In her work on Central American immigration to the US, Cecilia Menjivar often emphasizes the importance of “making the invisible visible” (2010, p. 20), a theme that has
continually emerged throughout this dissertation. This study grew from a dissonance that I came to recognize while working with families and schools in Marshall for several years: Mexican immigrant fathers were very involved in their children’s lives and schooling, yet their contributions went widely unrecognized within local schools, the research literature, and the media. My aim has been to focus on Mexican immigrant fathers’ stories and perspectives, stories that are rarely heard, and to envision the educational possibilities of positively recognizing and building upon their engagement in their children’s lives.

Throughout this study I have illustrated how, despite educators’ best intentions, Mexican immigrant fathers were predominantly overlooked or misinterpreted in terms of their engagement in their children’s schooling (Chapter 6). I have also revealed how immigrant families’ real-world biliteracy practices, which became especially pronounced during a period of increased vigilance, tended to be overlooked despite their potential to contribute to school-based literacy development (Chapter 7). Yet the complex politics of recognition regarding Mexican immigrant men also extended beyond the school building. Whereas in schools Mexican immigrant fathers tended to go unrecognized, in public spaces racializing discourses positioned them as likely “criminals” and led to their hyper-visibility for local law enforcement. Yet invisible in these larger circulating discourses were the details and familial effects of their “crimes.” This included the simplicity of the infractions that often led to their deportation, and the effects that this vigilance had on their children’s lives and schooling. In addition, this study brings attention to immigration practices and schooling for those in middle childhood, a group that has received little attention. A common thread throughout these instances is that the racialization of the category of Mexican men makes invisible their roles as family men and fathers. The effects of their racialization, however, deeply shape their children’s educational lives. I believe that attention to these entangled realities is needed in order for change to occur. This study, which draws upon ethnographic tools to present
voices that are often rendered silent, is an attempt to share seven Mexican immigrant men’s stories as fathers and husbands in a community of the New Latino Diaspora.

**Communicative Repertoires**

In this dissertation I have drawn upon tools from semiotic approaches to linguistic anthropology in order to understand the heterogeneous and dynamic nature of fathers’ and children’s communicative repertoires. I have illustrated how a communicative repertoires approach can help us move away from the “common sense” mainstream ways of how things “should be” done. It instead lets us begin with a clean slate in order to understand the nuanced, creative, and flexible ways that people draw upon a range of semiotic resources in English and Spanish in order to achieve their communicative, interactional, and educational goals. Only by first understanding people’s actual real-world practices can we begin to build upon them. This includes imagining approaches to family-school relationships by recognizing fathers’ real-world practices (Chapters 4, 5, 6), schooling for emergent bilinguals based on their real-world translanguaging practices (Chapters 5, 7), and pedagogical approaches to literacy development that build upon students’ family literacy practices like translation and para-phrasing (Chapter 7).

Another theme that has emerged related to communicative repertoires, which focuses on the salience of accommodation, is the centrality of interpersonal relationships. For example, families such as Emily’s demonstrated the importance of parents and children working to understand one another across diverse repertoires in order to maintain their close relationships and support their children’s schooling (Chapter 5). Such closeness may be particularly important for immigrant parents and their children, who may orient to very distinct centers of authority (Blommaert, 2005) from their upbringings across national borders. Similarly, teachers’ abilities to
get to know parents as individuals, such as Mrs. Drescher’s personal investment in getting to know Mateo, provided a vehicle to expand teachers’ repertoires regarding what counted as parent involvement, including closer attention to fathers’ contributions (Chapter 6). Princess’ close relationship with her third grade teacher, in which her teacher was able to access Princess’ personal narrative and build upon the unique set of knowledges and biliterate practices that she brought to the classroom, helped combat subtractive schooling (Chapter 7).

As a researcher I have also experienced how a repertoires approach affords new grounds for affinity. I have learned how sharing more of myself with the families I worked with, a difficult terrain to navigate for most ethnographers, has also created spaces for us to understand each other across axes of difference. For example, I was never sure of how to discuss my sexual orientation with families, as I worried about how it would shape our relationships. In the end, these were some of the most honest and heartfelt conversations I have ever had. I will never forget sitting for hours in Alexis’ living room as his father Daniel and I engaged in a long conversation regarding sexual orientation, gender identification, and same-sex couples’ “gender bargains.” I will always be thankful for the spaces these conversations created for families to talk about their own children, and how to support their children as they explore their identities over time. I will never forget the same message I heard from families during these conversations: As Mexican immigrants we know how it feels to be discriminated against, and we try not to discriminate against others. By drawing upon our shared semiotic resources and experiences of discrimination we were able to achieve meaningful engagement that might not have happened if we had relied on a priori demographic categories of language, national background, sexuality, and gender. Instead, we were able to find overlap in nuanced points of connection that developed into real human relationships. These interpersonal relationships, which can be foregrounded from a repertoires approach, created opportunities for us to learn about and engage with difference in
productive ways. I believe, like Campano (2007) and his work with second classrooms, that engagement in meaningful relationships holds great promise as a pathway for envisioning collaborative approaches (among parents, educators, children, and researchers) to combat subtractive schooling for children in immigrant families.

Transnational Futures

In this dissertation I have explored how gender relationships, fatherhoods, childhoods, and schooling become transformed through familial processes of migration. Through a semiotic examination of the “two worlds” trope, I explored how these worlds can be better understood through attention to histories of experiences that contain nuanced points of overlap rather than categorical distinctions of home and school, Mexico and The United States, or father and teacher. Traditional iterations of the two worlds trope are similar to the mis-match model for parent involvement: They assume that a child’s parents tie them to the ways of the family’s country of origin, that the child’s school presents a second world of the host country’s competing ways, and that it is primarily the children of immigrants who navigate these divergent worlds. I have illustrated that there are no two clearly delineated worlds for participants in this study: Each individual had his own history of experiences and resources that were much more nuanced than the relatively static application of the two worlds trope could represent. Although there were some similarities and patterns among families, a repertoires approach that focused on individuals’ experiences helped highlight in-group heterogeneity. It permitted a window into the real-world travel, uptake, and refashioning of the diverse semiotic resources for individual students and fathers, and pointed to the wide array of educational and familial realities that they navigated with the semiotic resources at their disposal. Through a study design that examined children and
fathers across home and school contexts, I illustrated a simple fact that is sometimes overlooked: The navigation of divergent norms across contexts in immigrant communities is transversed by entire families, not children alone. Focal fathers, for example, had to navigate various worlds through their upbringings in Mexico and their lives as husbands and fathers in the US as well as their engagement in their children’s schooling. Through attention to the movement of semiotic resources across home and school contexts, I have emphasized the realized and potential porosity of these spaces to support children’s schooling and academic futures in the US.

In some ways my study has been similar to much of the work on immigrant education in the United States: It has examined participants’ histories of experiences from Mexico to the US, with an eye toward how to best prepare students for a successful educational pathway in the US. As these chapters have illustrated, I believe that this is best achieved by building upon the array of resources that students and families bring to their education, which requires expanding traditional notions of parent involvement, literacy development, and schooling. Yet my experiences with families have also left me with an important question that is less frequently considered by educational researchers in the US— how are students’ educational experiences preparing them not only for futures in the US, but potentially transnational futures in Mexico. I explore this question below.

**Changes in US-Mexican Migration**

International migration between Mexico and the US is often assumed to move unidirectionally (from Mexico to the US), creating a context in which repatriated students to Mexico are rarely considered (Hamann, Zúñiga, & García, 2010). Yet travel from Mexico to the US appears to have decreased dramatically in recent years, including a 70 percent reduction in the number of apprehensions at the border since 2005 (Passel et al., 2012, p. 7). Mexicans and their
children who returned from the US to Mexico between 2005 and 2010, however, rose to 1.4 million, which is approximately double the number of the previous five years (Passel et al., 2012, p. 8). For transnational students—those with schooling experiences in more than one nation-state (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011)—it is estimated that approximately 300,000 U.S.-born children returned to Mexico for schooling between 2005 and 2010 (Passel et al., 2012, p. 8). This estimate does not include Mexican-born children with U.S. schooling experiences who were also repatriated. As most Mexican immigrant parents in Marshall emphasized, Mexican schools rarely offered second language supports common in U.S. schools such as “Spanish as a Second Language,” and Hamann and Zúñiga’s work on repatriated students has illustrated the limited accommodations made for diverse repertoires within Mexican schools (Hamann et al., 2010; Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011). In addition, Hamann and colleagues found that 30 percent of students with U.S. schooling experiences in Mexico were held back at least one grade, making them three times more likely than their classmates who had attended all of their schooling in Mexico (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011, p. 142). Hamann and colleagues ask an important question regarding immigrant education: What are our responsibilities for preparing students not only for successful local and national educational futures, but for transnational ones as well? As I discuss below, although this topic is rarely considered in schooling designs for the children of Mexican immigrants, especially in New Latino Diaspora locations far from the border, it is a topic that directly shaped Mexican immigrant families’ migration decisions.

Families and Transnational Futures

Deportations in Marshall often created a context in which families weighed heavy decisions regarding family separations, educational possibilities in Mexican schools, and risky returns to the US for the deported parent. No solution was an easy one, and each brought with it
potential consequences. As I described in Chapter 7, Princess’ father was deported for a minor infraction during her second grade year, which sparked her biliteracy practices. Her family’s decisions regarding their reunification in Mexico largely revolved around schooling and literacy development. They wanted Princess to have strong English literacy before her return so that she could continue to develop her English repertoire, which would serve her well on either side of the border. Yet they also knew that she would need Spanish literacy in order to succeed in Mexican schools, sparking her home-based Spanish literacy instruction. After many difficult months apart and a realization that it would take years for Princess to have their desired levels of literacy before a move, Federico decided to risk a return to the US so he could reunite with his family. Unfortunately, he was caught during his return, and, because of his previous deportation, he is now serving a two-year sentence in New York for his immigration violation. When he is re-deported to Mexico in 2014, Princess’ family will re-evaluate their decisions regarding family separation, biliteracy development, and schooling.

Similarly, Emily’s mother Paloma was apprehended when she tried to cross the border with her 11 year-old daughter who had been living in Mexico with Paloma’s mother. As I discuss in Chapter 7, Paloma served one year in prison in Arizona because she had used someone else’s documentation while attempting to cross the border. After her return to Mexico she eventually decided to attempt to re-cross to be with her children, yet was apprehended again. As she is now back in Mexico again, Cristian and Paloma are deciding how to move forward as a family. The past year and a half has been very challenging for Cristian, who has lived as a single father of three children, has worked to provide for his family, and has dealt with the hardship of family separation and incarceration due to the realities of immigration practices. While talking to Emily in school six months after her mother’s initial apprehension, Emily let out a big exhale and a nervous smile as she explained how nice it was to finally have someone to talk to about her
mother’s absence, a topic she did not bring up in school. Their current plan is for the children to return to Mexico for an extended amount of time, attending school there, so that they can be with their mother again. They are optimistic that Emily, who has emerged as a model student in Marshall, will be able to apply her repertoires and savvy metacommunicative strategies to be successful in Mexican schooling.

Benjamin’s father, Evaristo, is also currently fighting his deportation case after a mistaken arrest. Unlike most other parents, Benjamin’s mother spoke candidly with her children’s teachers about these changes in their life. She was particularly concerned because her children experienced great anxiety after witnessing their father’s violent arrest, and wanted to make sure the school was also there to support them. If Evaristo is ultimately deported, his family has not yet decided if they will return to Mexico or remain in Marshall. For Princess, Emily, and Benjamin, immigration practices have led to likely parent-child separations across borders. These three families, as well as the ones I discuss below, shared their uncertainty of how their children would adapt to Mexican schooling and how to develop their Spanish repertoires to better prepare them for transnational futures.

Although their parents have not faced deportation, the other four families have also considered returning to Mexico. Central to these decisions were the potential effects on their children’s educational trajectories. For example, Alexis’ family always talked about returning to Acapulco to open a restaurant with their savings, although no specific timelines were ever discussed. For the time being they opted to stay in the US, a place that they perceived as having more educational opportunities, especially for their oldest son who had developed into an extremely successful student. Martina’s parents have sent her on trips to visit family in Mexico over the past two years, trips that they cannot take with her because, like other parents without documentation, it would be very difficult for them to re-enter the US. Although they do not plan
to return to Mexico, they also realize that as people without documentation these decisions are widely out of their control. Unlike other families that come from rural or working-class backgrounds, they were confident that they could re-settle comfortably back in Mexico. They did worry, however, about Martina’s schooling in Mexico due to her limited Spanish repertoire and literacies. Gregorio’s parents were also regularly considering a family relocation to Mexico. In fact, his mother bought tickets for them to return when her grandmother was on her deathbed, as the thought of not saying goodbye to the woman who had raised her was unbearable. Yet when they missed their flight (unaware that you have to arrive several hours early), they decided to remain in Marshall. One main factor that has kept them from returning was their concern about how Gregorio, who had a less expansive Spanish repertoire than most other students in this study, would fare in Mexican schools. Although they were hopeful that he would adjust with time, they were worried that it would be very difficult for him. Finally, for years Abi’s family has talked about returning to Mexico, planning their return as soon as they had saved up enough money to open their own smoothie business in Puebla. Again, their concern about Abi’s schooling was a significant factor in their decision. They feared that she was already behind in English literacy and had not yet developed literacy in Spanish, which meant she would have to start “at zero” in Mexican schools. Abi often shared with a sheepish smile that she would have to go to a special school in Mexico, not the same one that her cousin attended, because she didn’t know how to read in Spanish. For all of these families, migration decisions were deeply tied to questions of educational possibilities based on students’ English and Spanish spoken and literate repertoires. Educators at Grant and in Marshall, however, were widely unaware of these concerns.

At a district-wide Latino parent meeting many years ago, I remember a father named José asking why they had to erase their children’s Spanish repertoires so that they could do well in English-medium schooling, and then have their children re-learn Spanish in college, starting from
scratch. His focus, like mine in much of this dissertation, was based on a U.S. educational trajectory. As I touch upon in Chapter 7, enrichment models of bilingual schooling provide great promise to combat subtractive schooling and prepare students from an array of backgrounds for futures in which they must cross linguistic and cultural borders in the US. Such an approach to schooling was at the heart of José’s question at the district-wide meeting and mattered to families from this study. They wanted their children to do well in their English-medium schooling, but most did not believe that meant removing their Spanish repertoires. As these chapters have illustrated, parents constantly created contexts for children to experience, develop, and deploy their repertoires in Spanish, English, and translanguaged combinations. Families aspired to have bilingual and biliterate children, although most were unsure of when or how to teach their children Spanish literacy. Enrichment bilingual programming would be one approach to helping families and students achieve these aspirations.

Yet these same schooling models also hold great promise to prepare students for transnational schooling trajectories, as they would develop students’ Spanish literacy, a necessary repertoire for school success in Mexico. This, especially as immigration practices led to increased family separations across borders and the increased potential for children to attend school in Mexico, was also an increasingly important consideration for most families from this study. As schooling in Mexico is about much more than just language and literacy, U.S. schooling that prepares students to flexibly navigate diverse contexts is also important. Perhaps schooling that becomes more “immigrant family-like,” in which students are taught metacommunicative strategies such as those modeled by Cristian and Mateo (Chapter 6), can prepare students to navigate diverse contexts and schooling across national borders. As I describe below, there is much more work to be done in terms of how we draw upon and develop students’ and families’ repertoires to prepare them for an array of educational futures.
Future Research

I return now to where I began: In the opening excerpt (Excerpt 1, Chapter 1) Mateo and his wife developed Abi’s communicative repertoires by modeling and instructing her on how to conduct an interview regarding men’s housework responsibilities. This brief educational interaction, which lasted three minutes in their kitchen on a Sunday afternoon, represents many of the key themes in this dissertation. Below I revisit portions of this interaction in order to present new questions that have emerged related to the areas of multilingual education, gender and migration studies, and immigration studies.

When we examine this simple interaction from a repertoires approach, what could be dismissed as a family joking around in Spanish becomes transformed into an educational activity that demonstrates Mateo’s deep involvement in Abi’s schooling and literacy development. I argue for the utility of a repertoires approach to parent involvement, as it provides a toolkit to understand home and school based involvement practices that are more nuanced than traditional or mis-match models. For Mateo, engagement in Abi’s schooling centered on creating real-world learning opportunities that differed from her school-based experiences. He modeled and prioritized creativity, such as his and Abi’s witty contributions regarding making him her servant (lines 30 – 33), as well as linguistic dexterity, such as Abi’s interpersonal work through her reference to Mexicans who do not bathe (lines 44 – 47). Analytically and practically a repertoires approach creates opportunities to move away from trying to get ethnolinguistically diverse families to “do” parent involvement in mainstream ways, and instead focuses on the ways schools can create more inclusive rituals (Doucet, 2011) for family-teacher collaborations. Such an approach recognizes Mateo as a support to his daughter’s schooling and literacy development: Through his detailed instruction of the nuanced semiotic resources required for a successful
interview, he helped teach Abi the importance of adopting the precise lexicon, dress, and gesture in order to achieve her interpersonal and communicative goals. Like Abi’s translation and paraphrasing practices discussed in other parts of this dissertation, I would also consider this interaction a literacy activity in which Abi was learning genre specific components (in this case, an interview) and how to critically analyze an argument (such as her father’s explanation regarding gender roles). As Orellana and D’warte (2010) argue, schooling that can recognize these flexible repertoires and literacy practices holds great promise for building upon immigrant families’ strengths:

Rather than a singular focus on narrow standards of literacy excellence—such as the ability to spell conventionally, give “correct” responses to predetermined comprehension questions, and distinguish discrete sounds in isolated words, we might examine the breadth and flexibility of linguistic expertise: the ability to adapt how one speaks, reads, and writes in different contexts and relationships and for different purposes, as well as the critical language awareness that may come from grappling with this kind of decision making (p. 297).

More collaborative work with practitioners is needed to explore innovative curricula that can tap into the real-world languaging and literacy resources that students like Abi bring to their schooling, especially at the early elementary school level.

This interaction also highlights important questions for gender and migration studies. During this interview enactment Mateo named his beliefs that men cooking at home was unremarkable, “that’s how it’s supposed to be,” (line 27) “because not all of the work is for women” (line 29). His and Susana’s daily interactions were reflective of their gender bargain in which he was fully engaged in childcare, traditional and untraditional parent involvement practices, and other activities that are often considered “women’s work.” Although each family’s gender bargain differed and changed over time, similar to all seven fathers from this study he drew upon models of fatherhood and married life from his upbringing in Mexico and journey into family life in Marshall. This study privileged the perspectives of fathers like Mateo, a new
generation of Mexican immigrant fathers in new settlement areas, who are rarely captured in the
gender and migration literature. These findings highlight new questions as well. For example,
how do Mateo’s perspectives and experiences regarding gender roles and masculinities compare
with other modern-day Mexican immigrant men in more traditional U.S. settlement areas? How
do they compare with his brothers and childhood friends in Puebla who have never lived in the
US? More work is needed that compares contemporary Mexican-origin men across contexts in
order to better understand how processes of immigration, racialization, and reception shape their
lives as husbands and fathers on both sides of the border.

This interaction also occurred 10 feet from Abi and Mateo’s front door, the physical
location where Abi translated exchanges with several police officers in search of a Mexican
looking criminal less than two weeks prior to the recording of this interview interaction. In some
ways this is astounding: I find myself wondering how they can be going about such typical
familial and educational activities just two weeks later. Through getting to know families, and
watching them struggle with the harsh realities of shifting immigration practices that target
Mexican immigrant men like Mateo yet permeate their entire family’s personal and educational
lives, I have come to understand that carving out spaces to continue with their everyday activities
like an impromptu interview enactment is not easy. And, as I illustrate in Chapter 7, these
immigration practices certainly caused great anxiety for children and affected their childhoods
and schooling. Perhaps because immigration practices were largely outside of their control and
may (or may) not completely change their lives at any moment, immigrant parents put forth a
great deal of effort to maintain everyday family practices like this simple educational activity.
The ethnographic portraits of families like Abi’s present the educational and familial effects of
immigration enforcement in one community, yet more needs to be known about how these
practices shape middle childhoods and schooling in a variety of contexts and across the middle
years. In addition, work that illustrates the successes—of how schools have managed to work with immigrant families navigating these significant changes—is needed to help guide educators like Mrs. Drescher and Ms. Vega who are tackling these challenging situations.

As a researcher in the field of education I seek to understand how larger issues, such as emergent migration patterns and immigration practices, shape children’s lives and schooling. In this study I have examined fathers in relation to their children. For example, I explore their perspectives on fatherhood, their traditional and innovative forms of engagement in their children’s schooling, and the effects of immigration practices (which target them) on their children’s lives and education. Yet I also think that we as researchers need to do more to understand Mexican immigrant men—not in relation to their children—but in their own right. Although creating pathways for the children of immigrants who are DREAMers and U.S. Citizens is “the right thing to do,” (President Barack Obama, 15 June 2012, Washington, D.C.,) it is important to ask ourselves how promoting one type of immigrant may simultaneously justify the mistreatment of other types. More research and attention is needed that takes Mexican immigrant men as the central focus to push back against the covert racializing discourses that still tend to dehumanize them. This would, in my opinion, also be “the right thing to do.”
### Appendix A

**Focal Family Members Living in the US at Time of Study (2010-2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Child</th>
<th>Names and Relations</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abi</td>
<td>Mateo, father</td>
<td>Puebla, Mexico</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Susana, mother</td>
<td>Puebla, Mexico</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carlitos, brother</td>
<td>Marshall, PA</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>Daniel, father</td>
<td>Guerrero, Mexico</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jessica, mother</td>
<td>Guerrero, Mexico</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel Jr., brother</td>
<td>York, PA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaby, sister</td>
<td>York, PA</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>Evaristo, father</td>
<td>Mexico City, Mexico</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julia, mother</td>
<td>Mexico City, Mexico</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denise, sister</td>
<td>Mexico City, Mexico</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaristo Jr., brother</td>
<td>Mexico City, Mexico</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Cristian, father</td>
<td>Puebla, Mexico</td>
<td>8</td>
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Appendix B

Transcription Conventions

Transcript Conventions:
Plain text Spanish: Text originally said in Spanish
Italicized English: Translation of text originally said in Spanish (See Appendix C for original)
Bold: Text originally said in English
— Interruption
... Omitted portion of interaction/transcript
CAPS: Spoken with emphasis
[ ]: Uncertainty of wording
(( )): Description of accompanying actions
{ }: Clarification on person. All ‘you’ translations are singular informal unless otherwise noted.
( ): Clarification of person/thing/place/etc. being referenced. E.g., She (Laura) said.
Appendix C

Original Excerpts and Quotes in Spanish

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Chapter 3: Methods and Setting

Chapter 4: Mexican Immigrant Men’s Navigation of “Two Worlds”

Q1: C: Entonces hemos pensado que ella trabajaba en la tarde y yo trabajaba en el día. Pero por ahora no se puede porque Cristofer la necesita a ella. Yo creo que en unos dos meses tres meses él va a dejar este de comer de ella y vamos a poder de este…compartir el tiempo con Emily. 
P: Compartir el tiempo con Emily y él. Trabaja también

Q2: Siempre he tratado de hacer buenas cosas con mis hijos. Por ejemplo yo soy estricto con ellos, soy paciente con ellos..,La [Emily] abrazo todos los días, la consento todos los días. Le digo que ella es muy importante para mí. Es todo. Ella es una parte mía. Ella es como mi mano. Si ella está enferma, a mí me duele. Si ella está triste, estoy triste. Creo que me involucro demasiado con sus sentimientos, por eso yo digo que soy un buen padre…Yo me enfoco más en lo sentimental con ella para que cuando esté grande no diga que le faltó cariño. Yo quiero que ella se sienta protejida por mí. Qué ella me vea como su hero. Yo quiero ser su Superman. Yo quiero ser su Superman siempre. Su Superdaddy.

Q3: Yo sé que él me quiere mucho, pero nunca me lo demostró. Muy pocas veces me abrazaba. Muy pocas veces me besó. Es más no me acuerdo de nada de eso. Nunca me dijo que me quería. Yo sé que sí me quiere demasiado porque soy su hijo. Pero nunca me lo demostró. Entonces yo antes de que naciera Emily no me nació de decirle a un ino que estaba bonito, que era un angelito. Cuando nació Emily, empecé a sentir todos esos sentimientos.Y decía “Ay qué bonito se siente abrazar a m’hija.” Yo la veía como un osito de peluche y quería abrazarla entonces yo decía a mi papá porque nunca hizo esto.

Q4: Cuando yo me vine (a los EEUU), yo tenía la mentalidad de allá [Mexico]. Yo me vine el 1999 o en el 2000, no me acuerdo. Estaba aquí un año y ocho meses, y la persona con la que yo trabajo, él vive así. El tiene su familia, tiene sus hijos y yo veía que él era muy cariñoso con sus hijos, y sus hijas con él. Y yo decía, “Yo quiero una vida así.” Con el tiempo él estaba cosechando un fruto. De repente llegaban sus hijas y le daban un beso delante de quien fuera y yo decía, “Mi padre nunca hizo eso.” Y a mí me da pena darle un beso a mi pa. Yo decía, “¿Como le voy a dar un beso a mi papá delante de sus amigos o de mis amigos?, ¿qué van a pensar las personas?” Pero cuando yo regresé a Mexico, yo ya tenía esa idea, tenía esa ilusión de formar una familia. Yo tenía muchas ganas de tener a un hijo.
Q5: “Se supone que es parte de su esposo también del bebe. Entonces tiene que estar él aquí.”

Excerpt 2
1. C: Cuando hacemos una fiesta aquí en la casa, la costumbre es un poco difícil,
2. controvertida porque nuestros amigos— parte de nuestros amigos traen las
3. costumbres mexicanas alla de Puebla. Entonces sí—
4. P: —De que ellos llegan a una fiesta tiene uno que servirles TODO. Traerles el plato de
5. comida. Traerles un vaso con agua. Traerles TODO…
6. C: Y allá empieza la controversia de la fiesta. Entonces ellos piensan que uno no los
7. atiende o que uno no quiso o que los invitamos por compromiso. Todos piensan
8. diferente, ¿verdad? Antes de que empiece todo yo hablo con todos y les digo “¿Saben
9. qué? Eso es una fiesta. Vamos a disfrutar de ella TODOS. A comer. Y si alcanzan
10. todos buenos. Y si no. Bueno él que no se comió no se comió. Lo siento mucho. Allá
12. quieran. Diviértense. Quien yo voy a hacer lo mismo.”… Ahora nada más que no todas
13. las personas piensan como nosotros. Y algunos lo tomaron a mal… Poco a poco vamos
14. seleccionando amigos… Para la próxima vez no les invitamos porque no quiero que me
15. estén amargando la fiesta, ¿verdad?

Q6: “Yo ya llevo el patrón de mi vida, seguiría mi costumbre. Yo siento que si voy a cualquier
1. otra parte del mundo, yo no cambiaría porque hasta ahorita me ha resultado, Ya voy a seguir ese
2. patrón.”

Excerpt 3
1. S: Ahora por ejemplo yo dos cheques de mi trabajo, los guardo para pagar la renta. Y así
2. me quedan dos cheques libres. Uno lo guardo para la marketa. Mateo no paga
3. nada… Y el otro cheque, pues babysitting. Así que nos quedamos sin nada. Yo ya no
4. he podido—
5. M: —La verdad es que yo no pago nada en la casa. Yo no tengo dinero. La del dinero es
6. ella.
7. S: Te digo que—

Q7: Son bonitos los niños completamente. Más cuando tienes el tiempo para estar con ellos,
1. disfrutarlos. No hacerlo que nosotros hacemos actualmente. Bueno yo, con mi'ijo tal vez lo estoy
disfrutando. Susana no. No sabe ni lo que es Abi, ní qué es el otro… Me hace una coraje. Pero ní
modo. Dice que tiene algo pensado bien, pero, está bien. Yo creo que cualquier otra persona—
estoy en mi derecho de reclamar un tiempo para nosotros. Agas. No trabajan mucho mujeres. ¿O
mi equivoco? Yo creo que igual. Tanto cómo mujer como hombre necesita tiempo. Llega un
momento en que ya nos acostumbrá a estar solos. Hace un tiempo como le reclamaba Susana de
que trabajaba mucho, que necesitaba estar con ella, pero. Cómo no hizo caso, ¿nosotros por qué le
vamos a hacer caso entonces? ¿Cómo qué? Siento que se ha ido quebrando la relación entre ella y
yo. En vez de estar juntos nos estamos separando.

Q8: “Hay mujeres que son muy hogareñas. Siempre andan con la casa muy bonita, ordinada. Y
1. yo no soy de estas. Soy más afuera, de trabajar, ¿no?”
Q9: Yo veía a las muchas familias ya. Ya familias realizadas ya, pues hijos, esposas, todo. Pues imagine, yo después de que vine acá y no sabía ni que onda. Pues veía y decía “ah, qué buena onda, tienes familia.” Si yo igual, como debería con mi’ja porque, no sé si has notado ah, pero yo no soy como algunos papás que tienen hijos y todo el tiempo los tienen a su casa. A mí no me gusta ser así con mis hijos. Qué la gente me vea. Qué sepa que tengo familia. Qué identifiquen a mi familia. Entonces yo salgo con mis hijos y salgo orgulloso de mis hijos...Los quiero mucho a mis hijos. Y imagine que tanto no— que tanto me dolía dejarla.

Q10: “Cuando apareció mi papi—‘Como queeeé?’... Sus cabellos LARGOS...Me dijo ‘él es tu papi.’ Yo dije ‘¿en serio?’ Yo hasta quería regresar...Su cabello es lo que no me gustaba. Ay papi mujer.”

Q11: “fue raro porque llegó ella y este, pues no, no me abrazó. Pero pues no sabía que es lo que pasaba, ¿no? Sabía que era yo su papá, pero no había estado conmigo. Pero ya después andaba como es, que voy a la tienda y ahí iba conmigo. Ella todo el tiempo conmigo, todo el tiempo conmigo.”

Excerpt 4

2. S: Mhm, ¿y por qué piensas que eres muy buen padre?
3. A: Porque está loco de la cabeza.
4. ((Laughter))
5. A: Dices que eres buen padre, ¿y cuando te emborrachabas cómo te ponías? ¿Cómo te ponías conmigo? Eso es lo que debes de decir.
6. M: No me ha preguntado.
7. A: ¿Cuándo estás borracho qué es lo que haces? ¿Qué es lo que haces?
9. A: Ahora le vas a decir, ¿por qué no le has contado del día que te querías ir de la casa?
10. ¿Cómo me lastimaste?
11. M: Me corrieron, ¿si o no?
12. A: Ay te corrieron, tú te quisiste ir.
13. ((Laughter))
15. M: Y no me fui, me quedé, ¿no? Me fuiste a rogar.

Q12: Me pone muy difícil. Ya vivo acá. Estoy con mi familia ya. Y es tampoco justo que yo me vaya y tengo que dejarles todo el paquete. Las mujeres, te digo que hay femenismo...La mujer igual como el hombre piensa. Estrategias hay, y muchas. Yo no me contaba con el...¿Y ahora qué hago? Aquí me tienen. No salgo. Femenista. Me quedo todo el día en la casa.


Q14: “Pero si tú no le enseña el niño— A mí no me enseñaron así. Yo trato de ser mejor que me enseñaron mis papás.”
Q15: “A mi dime la verdad. A mí me gusta que me digan la verdad. No me gusta que me mientas. Soy tu papi. No soy tu amigo, ni nadie más porque tu papi te puede ayudar en todo. Un amigo no te puede ayudar en nada de problemas”… Yo le digo: “Cuando yo fui niño yo quisiera estudiar así como estás tú. Yo quiero que seas mejor que yo. Espero que tu superas de mí.” Y él empezó a llorar, jaja.

Excerpt 5
1. D: No estoy respondiendo cómo—
2. S: —Y ustedes no eran papás—
3. D: Exactamente. Me estás haciendo una pregunta que no puedo contestarla, te la estoy contestando—
5. D: Como niños. Es muy difícil pues, decirte eso.

Q16: No pues antes, todo el tiempo yo no trabajaba, cuando yo empecé a trabajar, pues la verdad yo ganaba bien. Entonces, no había necesidad de que ella trabajara. Entonces, ella se dedicaba con la niña. Salía, se iba a comprar por ahí a la tienda. Igual, la misma rutina que tenemos. Pero haga de cuenta que yo soy la mujer, y ella el hombre. ((Laughter from Ignacio and Alejandra)).

Q17: “Ay, miralo que su mujer anda cargando y él estando como está como no puede cargarlo.”

Q18: Pero es que su lectura de ella (A) no es bueno. Se da cuenta (M). No está tan clara ella como yo pues que ya más o menos le leyo bien así claramente. Entonces ella me entiende más. Es por eso que yo le leyo y le digo, le explico…entonces entiende. Porque si le dice en español no entiende mucho.

Q19: Mi papá era, era cuando se enojaba pues era de carácter fuerte. Cuando hacíamos algo mal, nos pegaba. Nos alineaba. Pero él era más fuerte que mi mamá. Siempre siempre siempre, y bueno siempre era de trabajo pues porque siempre estaba trabajando. Mi papá era él que no comprendía y Sas! Ahí le va. Pero por lo mismo de que mi papá no fue a la escuela.

Q20: Le digo que no nos ponían atención porque somos muchos. Yo me doy cuenta porque solo tengo una. Y pues una viene y nos pregunta cualquier cosa y es la única. Entonces imagínate que vengan ocho personas y le digan, “Que hago?” Y mi papá no tuvo mucho estudio. Entonces sí con uno uno sufre, ahora con ocho. No quisiera estar en sus zapatos.

Excerpt 6
1. I: Nosotros no estamos en la situación que alomejor muchos padres que ha platicado Ud con ellos, la situación es bien diferente… Bueno, mi familia pues siempre ha trabajado. Y la verdad, de limitaciones muy pocas.
2. A: Le digo, bueno le comento, le platico a él, de que me he enterado de muchas personas que en qué situación, que en realidad nunca han pensado, ni por aquí que les pase regresar a su país. Que viven en una situación ya bien mal, mal. Que casi no tiene ni para comer.
3. I: Entonces todas esas personas son de las que, esas personas de las que cuenta ella, son de las personas que por ningún motivo quieren regresar a su país. Pero porque su
10. situación es bien diferente, y porque su situación donde viven es bien pobre... Entonces
11. nosotros, bueno por lo menos yo no pasé eso. Entonces, no estamos ricos, pero una
12. clase media y con trabajo... Pero como hemos escuchado historias, amigos que hemos
13. encontrado así que platican de sus estados, de sus pueblos donde ellos viven. A
14. comparación como nosotros estamos, no pues estamos como reyes.

Q21: Más responsabilidades, que cuando uno anda solo o soltero, no tiene muchas
responsabilidades y ya uno como hombre tiene que acostumbrase a ser padre. Y a sus hijos darles
una vida mejor, no en la calle, no darle malo... Uno ya no puede salir, se casa. Y ya se le acabaron
todos esos privilegios de salir, y ir a pasear, tienes que cuidar a los niños. O vas a la tienda o
cuidas a los niños... Ese es un privilegio que se nos va.

Q22: “Y Gregorio cuando las personas que lo cuidaban le tenían, no tenían una paciencia para
hablar... y entonces como ella no trabaja, tiene chance de estar con la niña y la niña aprende.”

Q23: “No creo que tenga caso a que tu trabajes [Lucinda] si el dinero no más lo estás pasando a la
persona que cuida Lily.”

Q24: “También uno debe de ayudarle a ella, porque es soportar todo. Es estar en la casa todo el
día, cuidar los niños. Esperarme, es desesperante eso.”

Q25: “No estoy todo el tiempo ayudándole, pero sí me interesa como va él en la escuela. No no
más la mamá.”

Excerpt 7
2. poner a cocinar tú... Eso no. Agarra tu plato, ya vamos a cocinar.
3. G: Eso no me gusta.
4. J: Mira. Si vas a chillar, vete a tu cuarto y cuando te acaban las ganas de chillar te vienes
5. a comer, ¿no?
6. G: Yo no voy a comer eso.
7. J: Entonces vayase a tu cuarto. No lo quiero ver aquí. Hasta que tenga hambre se viene a
8. comer Ud solo. ¿Escuchó?

Q26: Entonces ahora me di cuenta que si me invitan (los amigos) a su casa—pero ya hay muchos
niños. Entonces yo tengo los míos y se divierten mis hijos y los de ellos y tanto yo. Lucinda con la
esposa de un amigo y todo eso. Y ya nos divertimos todos a la vez. Y antes era yo solo con
amigos por allí... tomamos unas cervezas y luego me dejó en mi casa. Y ahora es muy diferente
porque no lo puedo hacer— fuimos a una fiesta. Siempre hay cerveza... entonces “Yo no puedo.”
“¿Por qué?” “Porque voy a manejar.”

veces yo quiero dejarlos en la casa y salir—no puedo. Porque están ellos.”

Q28
1. Estaba como en el tiempo de machistas. El con mi madre, él era así, a veces él lo que él
decía, se hacía. Y a veces no se hacía, entonces él era la persona que decía, “Yo digo esto, y esto se va hacer.” Era muy complicado, porque a veces era muy agresivo. Yo no soy así, de esa forma, porque a veces yo no quiero que mis hijos pasen eso… Me habla así, no te puedo decir francamente lo que yo lo quiero o lo que ‘él me quiere. Entonces ahora, es más dócil. Quiere más a las personas… Pero antes tenía hijos porque tenía hijos, porque no era tan amables con nosotros o que nos abrazara así… Pero no encuentra la forma, o no le sale decírnos algo así como, “Te quiero.” … Yo lo quiero ser de otra forma… Por tener tantos hijos ‘él se preocupaba más por trabajar y tener dinero con que mantenerlos…

Entonces no había tanta atención porque si no era uno era otro como.

Q29: “Para ser padre, es una gran responsabilidad porque es todo hacía uno… Tú debes ver por ellos. Es una responsabilidad estar enfocado en ellos, que debes de estar pensando en ellos siempre.”

Q30: Pues normalmente ella hace la comida, y yo le ayudo con la tarea. Como yo fui más a la escuela, ella sí fue pero fue en Mexico y como que en Mexico no es igual el empeño. Como que tengo más conocimiento yo en la tarea. Ella cocina, a veces me toca limpiar la casa en el fin de semana, o cuando hay tiempo entre semana. Pero normalmente el fin de semana limpiamos bien.

Q31: “Y como yo no pasé mucho tiempo con él, trato de hacerlo con mi hija. Para que ella tenga lo que yo no tuve.”

Excerpt 8
1. I: Bueno para mí el machismo es el “Yo soy el macho de mi casa.” Y la esposa es la que está en la casa y que si vas a salir tienes que pedrile permiso al marido… Y ellos son que pueden tener, dos, tres, cuatro mujeres, y son de los machos…. Y esa gente que es machista, le dice a los niños “tú tienes que ser,” alomejor una palabra que ni entiende, “CABRON”… Alomejor te agarras a golpes ese es el macho…. O a las chamaquitas les agarran las pompas…
2. A: “Y la mujer siempre tiene que estar en la casa. La mujer se hizo para él que hacer, la mujer no se hizo para trabajar, la mujer no se hizo para estudiar. La mujer no más se hizo para los que hace domésticos, la mujer no tiene voz ni voto, se hace lo que yo digo”. … Y si la mujer dice algo, ahí te va el trancazo.

Q32: “que le nieguen a su mujer”

Q33: “es un hombre muy posesivo. Alguien que dice ‘ah, mi mujer, yo la tengo en mi casa.’”

Q34: “Yo creo que, en mi familia ya no hay tanto así. Yo creo que sí hay gente así. Yo creo que es como todo, debe de haber de todo un poco, ¿verdad? Pero espero que se acabe pronto.”

Q35: Sí existe, pero hace muchos años. Ya no sirve. En esta época temprana, no tiene caso porque una mujer es liberada y los mismos derechos que un hombre, o hasta más. Tienen más facilidad que un hombre y antes no era así. Antes nuestra mente era más cerrada y ahora ya no… Yo ayudo igual en cosas de limpiar, lavar. Cocina ella. Yo digo que el machismo sí existía y que todavía hay uno que otro mexicano que es machista. Pero no saben que las mujeres tienen
derechos también y que con la mujer se puede hacer más que uno solo. Y ella me ha ayudado mucho entonces yo me di cuenta que ser machista no sirve.

Excerpt 9
1. I: Para mí eso es ignorante.
2. A: Y para mí que eso viene de que lo aprenden de los papás, y quieren que sus hijos sean igual que ellos, y eso no está bien. Bueno, para mí.
3. ((Laughter))
4. I: Eso para mí es ser ignorante, machista. Pues digame, si yo tengo mi mujer pues yo depende de mi mujer, y ya si quiere defraudarme pues es cosa de ella. Pero hay gente que es tan ignorante que la mujer le tiene que pedir permiso hasta para ir al baño.
5. Alomejor se escucha feo pero es la verdad….Lo que pasa que en nuestro país, nuestros papás nos inculcan desde chamaquitos a no dejarse. Mis papás no fueron así.
6. Yo conozco personas que sus papás eran de los que sus papás les decían, “Es que tu tienes que obedecer al marido”… Pero esas son las personas que no tienen estudio. Eso es el machismo.

Excerpt 10
1. P: Desde que se casa con esa persona, no puede salir a ningún lado. Todo el tiempo tiene que estar ahí, ahí ahí ahí nada más.
2. C: Y desgraciadamente la familia de las personas apoyan eso.
3. P: Es una costumbre, es una costumbre porque así lo dicen siempre. Ok él ya puede salirse a donde queira porque tu abuelita lo vivió, yo lo viví, así fue siempre.
4. C: Mi madre, el aspecto que tenía ella es que yo fuera así con ella. Fue también de lo que nos alimos de acuerdo. Es que me decía, “Es que tú ya, tu esposa en tu casa y tú haz tu vida como siempre lo has hecho.” “No en eso. Si estás equivocada” yo le dije a mi madre. Yo quiero pasar tiempo con ella porque cuando éramos novios solo la veía un momento. Entonces eso empezó a generar problemas con mi madre y conmigo. Por ahí empezó el asunto porque teníamos sentimientos diferentes de mi vida. No era justo porque yo sentía que los dos teníamos el derecho de divertirnos juntos. Si vamos a divertirnos vamos juntos. Y si no podemos, pues bueno, los dos nos quedamos ahí tristes.

Q36: “Yo tengo muchos amigos que prácticamente siguen viviendo su vida de allá.”

Q37: “siguen con las mismas raíces de mexico.”

Q38
1. Como personas que imponen y no más quieren imponer y que no dejan que su pareja tenga también una decisión. Hay que tomar de cuenta yo no soy de esas personas que no más llegan y así. …Porque muchas personas se aprovechan de, muchos hombres se aprovechan de las mujeres. Eso digo que no está bien, eso quedó mucho tiempo atrás. Porque por ejemplo si yo agarro a golpes a Lucinda y Gregorio me ve. Eso no está bien…. A una mujer es igual, deja que tenga oportunidad de cualquier cosa.
Chapter 5: Communicative Repertoires across Home and School Contexts

Q1: Cada día que va creciendo es diferente y veo que va siendo más inteligente y todos los días aprende cosas nuevas y yo a veces digo, “Cuando ella tenga 14 años va a saber más de la vida que yo.” Ahora la enseño porque—o le enseñamos entre todos eh lo que es la vida. Va a saber mucho más que yo. Entonces para mí me da mucho gusto. Me da mucho gusto que ella va a ser alguien muy importante. Aquí, en Mexico, en donde quiera que este. Que tenga una vida bonita y que sea una persona que respete y que valore lo que, pues, con el tiempo logre.

Q2: “una forma de que ella entienda, y que nosotros entiendamos. Porque sí, hay muchos términos que ella no sabe. Lo sabe en inglés.”

Excerpt 2
1. E: Se trata de cómo vas a hacer el número **seven**...tiene que encontrar como siete maneras
2. que tiene que describir el número **seven** para que así luego la maestra te de un **point** o
3. te de un **sticker**.
4. P: Ok. Vamos a hacerlo pues... “¿Cuál es la forma que tú piensas, otra forma, que puede
5. describir una **seven**?” ((Reading Spanish instruction of Math Homework))
7. P: ¿Una historia? ¿Hacer una historia de qué? ((Doubtful))
8. E: De pájaros... “Yo vi cinco pájaros. Dos vinieron. ¿Qué hizo?”
9. P: ¿Cómo?
10. E: Como este tengo cinco ((holds up 5 fingers)) y ya son dos más ((holds up 2 fingers)).
11. P: Oh yeah, es un **seven**, ok.

Excerpt 5
1. S: ¿Y piensa qué es una cosa buena que ella traduzca?
2. M: Pues yo creo que no, porque me da pena ¿no?...
3. S: ¿Por qué te da pena?
4. M: Pues porque ella sabe hablar bien el inglés y yo no, o sea. Se supone que él que le
5. enseña soy yo, no ella a mí.

Excerpt 6
1. M: No me la sé hija. Dice “Vamos a la casa de Abi, tun tun. A comer pesacado, tun
2. tun. Frito y asado, tun tun. En sartén de palo, tun tun. Vamos a la casa de Abi, tun
3. tun.”
4. A: ¿Dónde está Abi?
6. acá.
7. A: ¿Dónde?
8. M: Dice, “Vamos a la casa de Abi.”
9. A: ¡Dónde! ¿Dónde esta mi nombre?

Q3: “Sí, oí que un señor se llamaba Mateo y que lo detenían, y que se llamaba gordo, y que estaba pelón. Jaja.”
Excerpt 7
1. Y yo volteaba y le quedaba viendo y yo le decía “Mami tú no sabes que quiere decir eso.
2. No digas esa palabra. Porque no sabes. Quizás es una palabra mala. ¿Y porque la
3. escuchaste la vas a decir? No mamita. Aprende. Pregunta qué quiere decir. Y si es algo
4. que tú puedes decir, lo vas a decir. Y aprende cuándo, cómo, y con quien lo vas a decir.”

Excerpt 8
1. E: Viste, cualquier cosa que hacemos, ella lo va hacer. Es una sola palabra. Alomejor las
2. palabras que dijiste pueden ser malas para ella. Hay que pensar en eso antes de
3. cualquier cosa, porque que tal lo que dijimos—
4. ((Nhi tries to hit Abi with the ruler, and Abi backs away and laughs)).
5. E: ¿Qué tal si es que le decimos que su country está mala? O qué nos estamos riendo de
6. ella. Las cosas que decimos alomejor para ella es una mala palabra.

Excerpt 9
1. S: ¿Cuándo dicen educar hablan en términos de las cosas académicas—
2. C: —No...Personalmente. Académicas nosotros no podemos enseñarla Emily nada.
5. historia de Mexico…. Academicamente no podemos enseñarles mucho. No podemos
6. enseñarles mucho porque no tuvimos una educación académica muy intensa. No no no
7. no no mucho. Personalmente yo le enseño para [hació] la vida. Hacia su persona. A
8. como tiene que ser eh su personalidad de ella. Todo eso yo es lo que puedo enseñar. A
9. respetar y a valorar lo que día día consigue de cualquier forma. En escuela. De
10. cualquier personas. Y el respeto. Es lo que yo le enseño. Nada más porque. Creo yo
11. que hasta allí es donde yo la puedo ayudar. Como te digo yo pienso cuando ella o
12. cuando vaya en el grado siete ocho quizás ya no la puedo enseñar academicamente
13. completamente nada. Porque ella va a saber demasiado. MAS QUE YO todavía.

Chapter 6: Fathers’ Trajectories of Socialization into Parent Involvement

Q1: El problema no es eso. El problema es sumar, multiplicar, restar…”.

Q2: “El problema es que—bueno, nosotros somos diferentes y ellos diferente.”

Excerpt 4
1. M: ¿Para qué quieres tu mochila, a ver?
2. A: ¿Para qué!? Por mi reading log.
3. M: ¿Qué es eso?
4. A: ((Exhales dramatically.))
5. S: Explicalo.
6. A: Para leer. Necesito escribir allí para que— Sarah explique cómo. Para que yo llene un
7. reading log y esté en la celebración.
8. M: Aw si. ¿Qué es eso?
9. A: Cuando comen. ((Hitting M on the leg in annoyance)).
10. M: ((Large exaggerated yawn)).
11. **A:** Pueden comer **popcorn. Popcorn** en la escuela. Pero necesitas la cosa.
12. **M:** Aw no creo.
13. ((A hits M’s leg in annoyance.))

Q3: “Deja la escuela allá en la escuela. ¡Es el domingo! Es siempre estudiar estudiar estudiar.”

Q4: “Con la tarea, pues, casi no tengo tiempo. Se dedica más su mamá. Yo le doy consejos. Le explico que cosas están bien… En cosas así, que con su mamá no puede ver, se dirige conmigo. Pero yo trato de hacerlo más divertido, con tiempo, con paciencia. Todo el tiempo lo ponemos en plática.”

**Chapter 7: The Effects of Gendered Immigration Policy Enforcement on Biliteracy Development**

Q1: “Nadie ha puesto interés en lo que está pasando acá. Nada más la autoridad sabe que está pasando…No ha metido ninguna televisor por aquí que capte todo eso…Yo creo que mientras nos sucede eso, eso va a seguir y seguir.”

Q2: “Pero, casi los que corremos riesgo somos casi los puros hombres, ellas casi no.” When asked why, his wife Julia replied “por los hijos.”

Q3: “No vamos a decir nada más porque es el policía contra mí…no lo vas a ganar las policías.”

Q4: “En vez de sentirnos seguros con la policía, hasta miedo le tenemos”

Q5: “por culpa de algunos, van por todos.”

Q6: “Nosotros ni salimos a ningún lado. Entre más miedo nos den, más nos agarra la migra.

Q7: “nos hacen escondernos. Jugamos al gato y al ratón, ¿no? Ellos nos buscan, y nosotros nos escondemos.”

Q8: “Escucha las noticias o algo así, porque ella sabe, porque a veces sí pregunta. Pero uno no sabe ni que decirle a veces. Le decimos, no es que no tenemos papeles, ‘No nacimos aquí’.”

Q9: “para la vida México a mí ya no me gusta”

Q10: “Yo no quiero ir a tu México, tu México está feo” y “no voy a separarme de mi país (los EEUU).”

**Excerpt 1**

1. **M:** Y después que llega otro policía ya con los—
2. **S:** —¿Llegó otra?
3. **M:** Después, mucho después como a las doce, dos horas después.
4. **S:** ¿Y fueron a las casas de muchas personas? ¿O la casa de Uds no más?
5. **M:** Nada más la nuestra.
6. **A:** Solamente esta. Tocaron el primero, esta la de en medio, luego la de arriba, luego la
7. de abajo.
8. S: Hmm, ¿y piensan que pararon porque vieron en la ventana o tenían alguien…
9. A: Y Pa. Pero when I said, “Can you show your papers?” He said um, “What’s going on there?”
10. S: Cuando tu papá dijo, “¿Puedo ver los papeles para entrar?” ¿Eso? ¿O la policía dijo algo sobre papeles?
11. A: No. He said. My dad said, “Where are the papers?” I said to him—
13. A: —He said to me. He said, “What’s goin on on there?”
14. S: ¿Te llegó la otra policía?
15. M: Igual lo mismo. Nos decía que abriéramos la puerta, que era la policía. Y ya que le digo a ella que le preguntara qué que es lo que querían. Ya ese policía nos dijo, “Sí vengo buscando una persona. Abreme la puerta. Si no, voy a entrar a la fuerza.” Y ya que le abro. Ya que me ve, y ya que agarra su radio, y que dice, “No, no es, no es la persona.” Y ya me enseño un papel con un—
16. A: —hombre—
17. M: — con la foto de una foto de una persona.
18. S: Una persona Mex—
20. S: Hispana. ¿Pero Mexicana o no?
23. S: ¿Se fue?
25. M: ¿Qué le pregunta a Abi que por qué no había ido a la escuela.
26. S: —Ja. ¿Y qué dijiste?
27. A: “No. It’s because I got scared in the morning when you were knocking the door.” And he said. And he said, “What?” “Because I thought that you were going to bring my dad to the police.”

Q11: Ella sabe que puede pasar, ha visto en la tele que llegan, se llevan a sus papáes, y se quedan solos, ¿no? Digo, ¿que niño no se va espantar, no? Como a la policía, en vez de tenerles confianza, ahora ya es miedo. Y ya no es solo miedo nuestro, sino también de nuestros hijos.

Q12: “¿qué es, policía? Pues yo no hablo hasta cuando no tenga yo mi abogado.”
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